Naomi: Welcome to the Place Change Makers podcast series, brought to you by Sport England and our place partners. In this series, we dive into the world of place-based approaches to tackle physical inactivity. Join us as we explore the skills, mindsets, and behaviours all crucial for driving change across local systems.

Discover practical examples, challenges faced and the transformative experiences of those at the heart of this work. Tune in for insights and inspiration for your own journey towards positive change. You can also watch these episodes and access the transcripts by visiting www.sportengland.org/placepartnerships

Kath Lord-Green (Host): In episode four, we discussed building meaningful relationships, exploring the dynamics and successes behind impactful collaborations, from forging partnership, navigating partnership dynamic, to sustaining meaningful relationships in systemic initiatives.

Let’s introduce today’s guests, their Richard Croker. Active Calderdale. Claire Beney from Active Devon and Mark Fishpool from You’ve Got This South Tees. So, can you just tell us a little bit about yourself? That would be great.

Claire Beney: Oh, thanks, Kath so I’m Claire Beney and my job title is Director of Strategic Relationships.

That’s probably quite handy for today. And yeah, as you mentioned, I’m from Active Devon. So, working predominantly across two areas within Devon. So within across Plymouth and Torbay. And I’ve also got a national part of my role. That’s mostly focused on people, leadership and systems leadership.

Mark Fishpool: I’m Mark Fishpool.

I’m programme director for You’ve Got This. Which is the Sport England Place Partnership in Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland, which we collectively call South Tees. My background is actually in environmental sustainability in the voluntary sector, so I worked in the BCS for over 25 years, and I came to this role particularly because of the opportunity to start to rethink how we build partnerships and using systems based approaches to increasing physical activity.

Richard Croker: Yeah. Hi, I’m Richard Croker. So I’m the Active Calderdale programme manager and we’re based in Calderdale, which is for those of you not familiar, small West Yorkshire Borough and we’re sort of sandwiched between Leeds and greater Manchester. I’m based within the Calderdale Council Public
Health. And we’ve been a Place Partner with Sport England now since yeah, since 2017.

So the start of the Local Delivery Pilot.

**Kath Lord-Green:** Now some of you did explain a little bit more about your background and experience. Could you just give us a little bit more on that?

**Claire Beney:** Yeah, I’ve got a bit of a random career path really. So, I probably started out post university in social services for about five years working in children’s services.

I then moved to HR and worked across a few corporate organisations for about a decade and then joined Active Devon. So, I’ve been here for about five and a half years. I guess, the common thread has probably been outside of work and that real belief, in being active myself, and really attracted me to, to join in an organisation where some of that past experience around social services and that inequality piece and the, relationship side of HR came together with, I guess a personal love for being active.

**Mark Fishpool:** My background is essentially in the voluntary sector. I worked for over 25 years. I’m very much working around environmental sustainability and working at a community level. Really working with individuals, community groups, looking at things like behaviour change around environmental sustainability.

And I think what I started to realise towards the end of my time in the BCS is that we could do lots of really great work that could help people change their behaviours, live lifestyles of greater quality of life. But there was like a glass ceiling in there, which was around how do you change policy? How do you change the environment? How do you change those wider determinants that impact on people? That enable them to be more active and change their behaviours? And what this role does and what this programme does is really start to address all those levels of the system, rather than just focusing on individual behaviour change.

**Richard Croker:** Yeah, my background, I’ve been working in the sport and physical activity sector for probably the past 15 years across three different so subsections of the sector area. I’ve worked for a national governing body of sport. It’s kind of where I started really, which was football and that came about through a passion growing up playing football and then going into coaching and that led me to wanting, yeah, to encourage more people to participate in football.
From there I actually went into an Active Partnership working in London and various different roles, managing projects and programs, through to - I was there for nearly six years, through to a more strategic role. And that was with the kind of changing landscape of, sport and physical activity and working in more of a kind of whole system way and rather than focusing on individual behaviour.

And then that, that led me to this role that I’m in now, which I’ve been in for the past nearly six years. And yeah, what attracted me to this was, the opportunity to do things a bit differently and this new way of working and looking at moving away from thinking about this problem as an individual problem to a kind of system problem and, and how we better design and create conditions that enable people to be more physically active.

And, I suppose one thing to say is actually, I did my, studies from university were in physical activity and health. So, it’s kind of. I’ve kind of stayed in and around this area and now putting into practice a lot of, yeah, what I learned through my studies.

**Kath Lord-Green:** You’ll all have different approaches and lots to discuss here.

So what’s your approach to initiating a relationship?

**Claire Beney:** I think for me there’s probably, that comes before the approach and it’s probably about the why. So why is it important for us to kind of build relationships in the first place? And I think if we consider Uniting the Movement and the kind of the big goals that are in that strategy around creating happy and, healthier communities, tackling the inequalities that we know are really prevalent in sport and physical activity and kind of mirror those wider societal challenges, I think there’s a real recognition that we can’t do it on our own. And that we need to work collaboratively with pioneers. We need to go beyond our own sector and create those partnerships so that other people can be advocating for the power of sport and physical activity and not just us, so that voice and impact of our work is really key.

So, I guess that’s probably the why, which kind of probably bleeds into my approach. And that’s really focused around that common purpose. So, I guess, particularly when you’re trying to work with people you haven’t worked with before, you know, that real, you know, what’s important to you and your work, you know,
that understanding and, I think some of the recognition that people aren’t necessarily going to come to us and that, you know, being a bit humble about that and kind of going, actually, we can listen to you and what’s important to you can we find a way to work together? So, we’ve probably worked through a few frameworks. So again, in our work in Plymouth, we’ve used an Appreciative Inquiry model to kind of support us with identifying that common purpose. Similarly in Torbay, we used SOAR framework. And in each of those, it’s trying to hear from as many different voices as possible, that real diversity that we’re not hearing just from, groups within SPOR, just through clubs, even though they play a really key role.

We’re hearing from charities, we’re hearing from organisations with reach to people that, that might not naturally come to us. And I think through that, listening to what’s important, identifying where there’s things in common, might be that we’re both trying to focus on the same health inequality or we’re, both interested in working with a certain group, you’ve been able to start and initiate our relationship, start seeing that and kind of find common ground.

And then I think it, you know, really builds from there. But it’s probably for me, key in that, what’s the, what have we got in common?

Mark Fishpool: It’s interesting what Claire is saying there about taking time and listening, because the temptation, I mean, we’ve all been pushed into it by funding perhaps in the past is you kind of make a few relationships and then you’re going to get on and do something, but in the kind of work that you’re doing.

We’re all involved in that, that talking to people, that understanding and the listening, and the listening is particularly important, is the work initially to start to try and develop that, that kind of common purpose. So, understanding what other people’s priorities are, whether they’re communities, whether they’re professionals.

And then looking for the kind of ways in which we have that shared purpose, that common purpose to start taking some work forward. And amongst the techniques we’ve used, with insight, collecting insights being really important in our place, partnership, and some of that’s around data, and numbers, but really kind of building on that with those conversations using techniques.

Like collecting stories from communities and from professionals that really puts meat on the bone of the data and helps us to understand the different perspectives and the different priorities of our partner organisations.
Richard Croker: Yeah, there’s a lot of similarities. I think the listening is the key thing, isn’t it?

We - for us, it’s starting by seeking to understand what’s the one of the big things we found is asking good questions is, is, is a real part of it. And we start off with that. What’s really important to the organisation that we’re trying to build that relationship with to help us get a better understanding of how we align and how we can add value.

I think what we know about relationships and partnerships is that there’s got to be value from both sides. And I think at the start, the start of that process is then for us to really understand much more about the organisation, what matters to them, what’s important to them? What are their biggest challenges? What are their biggest concerns?

And then for us to then be able to take that away and start to think about, actually, I know how we can add value to them because I don’t think it’s always obvious at the start for them necessarily because we’re working with a lot of less non-traditional partners, which, who actually a conversation around physical activity might be might not be that obvious to them and their role in that.

So, for us, the initiating bit is, is really seeking to understand. We’re really getting to really understand what’s important to them and listening. But I think that involves really good questions. Thinking about what questions you want to ask and being able to then take that away and start to think about, actually, I can help them on the journey of where we can add value.

So, there’s the common purpose bit, but there’s also what I might describe as we used shared value. There’ll be a common thing that unites us and often in our work, it’s inequalities and it’s, it’s things around improving people’s lives, but actually, what’s the value? What’s the value for them as an organisation, where and where can we add that?

Kath Lord-Green: Could you give me a little example of a non-traditional partner?

Richard Croker: I would say non-traditional partners might be your voluntary and community sector organisations that are non-sport and physical activity might be a charity, might be as much as a charity or a small community group that come together through a kind of social purpose right through to kind of services and programmes.
So, we’ve done a lot of work in Calderdale with the likes of family support services. Children’s services. So yeah, it’s, I guess it’s those that, that aren’t necessarily core purpose sport and physical activity, but actually have a real crucial role in, yeah, in, our whole system approach to tackling and addressing physical inactivity.

Hopefully that answers it.

**Kath Lord-Green:** How do you then grow that relationship?

**Mark Fishpool:** I think for us and I’m sure for others, building trust is at the heart of this. And that means working very, very differently. So traditional transactional relationships don’t leave a lot of space for building trust. Whereas the kind of relational work that we’ve all been trying to do, is, is very much focused on building a two-way relationship that’s based on trust.

And a lot of that comes down to the attribute of, of the people who are doing the work, whether that’s us in our role, or the people that we’re working with. And some of those, those key attributes, I think, for building trust are things like openness, honesty, transparency but also things like holding your nerve and being very, you know, being very honest and open about what can and can’t be done.

I think often when we’re in negotiating situations, we think about compromise, but sometimes in the work that we’ve all been doing, there is actually some value in, in being honest and saying no, perhaps to some things that are more traditional and, and that way, encouraging people to think a bit differently and understand that what we’re out to do isn’t the same as some other things we have done before.

**Claire Beney:** They similarly to, to Mark, the first thing I would have said would, would be trust. And, and I, I do think you, you build that through a level of credibility as well in your work and that reliability as well. So, I think those things are really key. Really, really good communication. So how are we keeping partners updated with what we’re doing? How are we following through on things? I think the ability to kind of, understand some of the language of other sectors and other partners as well is really key, especially if we’re trying to align with partners in health, you know, understanding some of their health terminology really helps that you know you’re on you’re on the same page, but I, you know, I think when you’ve, when we’ve done that first bit right, and we know why we’re, why we’re collaborating and why we’re working together, I do think that you can get some really, you know, that the growth of that relationship can happen quite quickly.
And I do think it can happen when you say no as well. And I, and I do think that can strengthen what you, where you, where you go with something. If not, you know what with, you might be thinking that what we’re coming to is a 12-week program on this. It’s not really what we’re about. You know, this is about how do we, you know, make those changes to the system so that we’re really making a long-term change.

And I think people are really up for our message at the moment and really coming towards that because it’s probably a lot of people are recognising, you know, reduced resources, reduced ability to kind of just make things happen. So that kind of we’re in this for the long term, I think is really, really resonating with people as well, that we’re not wanting just to parachute something in, I think is, is really helping.

Sorry, Richard, I’ll come to you.

Richard Croker: There’s a couple of things for me that I think are really important in terms of initiating and growing and getting things off the ground, I think where we’ve had our best successes is giving something up quite quickly can be powerful and not that that might be it might be something small.

It might be something you’re not 100 percent aligned, but actually giving something up to let people know you’re prepared to do that to get the relationship and the, the, the partnership off the ground, having something to offer can also help something quick and easy to, to enable them to say, actually, yeah, it’s something that’s, that adds value to them.

I think, I think works well. I think the other thing we found as well is, is being clear is, is really important. I think you’d go back to my point about the non-traditional organisations. I think at the start of it, we’ve experienced them saying actually, physical activities, not us. That’s something that public health do or sport and leisure do.

And so, there’s often, what, what’s the expectation of us and the clearer we can be in terms of what the ask is, if you like, and having something to offer helps build that relationship. People can then say, okay, I understand. Yeah, you know, where you want us to get to, we wouldn’t don’t necessarily know how to get there.

And I think that’s the partnership. We would then move into co designing how we get there with the organisation. They understand their context well. And they understand, you know, the challenges within that. But I think being really clear at
the start by saying, you know, this is, this is, this is where, you know, this is why we, we want to develop the relationship.

This is ideally where we want to get things progress things to and then working with them on that. I think that’s, that’s helped us initiate and grow relationships with different partners.

**Mark Fishpool:** It can be easy to imagine that relationships just grow in one direction. We developed a common purpose model with our academic partners.

It’s very much based on how we develop relationships with trust and how things develop over time. But you recognize in that, that sometimes you know, those relationships will go backwards and, and that’s not something that I’m to be concerned about. It’s, it’s a natural process of relationships developing and ebbing and flowing. And it’s okay if people. You know, don’t engage for a while, but then come back, may well come back later when the time is right and more appropriate for them.

**Claire Beney:** Linking to something that Richard just said around being kind of space to develop how you’re going to work with partners and there’s a piece of work in Plymouth that’s funded by Sport England, which is really focused on increasing resilience in children & young people within education settings. So, for us, sport and physical activity is the route to do that. So, it’s, how do you support young people? They are young people that have either experienced trauma or a special educational need. And our kind of, I suppose, working hypothesis is that, You know, taking part in sport and physical activity can improve that, but working with, you know, safeguarding teams, teachers, head of year within, within schools, it’s really, we’re in this with you to figure out if this works and how can we adapt and work in, in your ways of working rather than expecting them to come to us. So that figuring out together, learning together because what we’ve put at the centre of that work is the young people, which is obviously for those people in education, what they’re really focused on, I think is, is helping that piece of work. And again, relationships have ebbed and flowed within that. But I think the integrity of what we’re trying to do is probably really helping.

**Kath Lord-Green:** So, you’ve built the trust, you’re being real, authentic. There’s a win win there because you’re giving them value, you’re listening to them and you’re communicating. How do you then maintain that?
Because sometimes we know what it's like, you build a relationship, you think, we’ve got this relationship, we’ve got this partnership, you’ve got to keep that going, got to keep it growing. How do you maintain that relationship?

**Mark Fishpool:** I think we spoke a lot about attributes and how our behaviours impact on those partners.

I think another aspect of that is, is the ways in which we work. With other people. So, if we try to build trusting relationships and we put all that investment into the, and time into, you know, developing relationships, other people gathering insight, understanding what their priorities are, if we then work with them in a purely transactional way, the way we always have, that will diminish that trust very, very rapidly.

So, for example, here with You’ve Got This, two of the changes in ways of working that we introduced, one was to change our actual partnership structure. So, it isn’t a traditional kind of program partnership based on accountability where we’re there to get set of outcomes. Other people there to contribute or perhaps criticise what we’re doing but trying to develop that shared purpose in the partnership where we’re all working together towards a common aim, but also changing the way in which we commission work.

So, moving away from competitive processes. Into ones where we use our insight base and then encourage our partners to collaborate together to come up with a piece of work that will help address the, you know, the findings of that insight.

**Claire Beney:** I think that again, I you’ve set out with how you’re trying to grow that relationship So if you’ve got the first bit, bit right. And then for us, it’s trying to keep connected. So, whether that’s through network meetings, having a steering group, having comms that goes out so you don’t leave people. And I think it is very easy to, to maintain that where whilst you’ve got an active piece of, of work and, and some of often dinner can, can last for a couple of years.

So even in that is quite easy because you, naturally keep coming back together, but equally you can have a piece of work that’s finished, that you’ve worked on, that’s gone well, or there’s learning to be heard. What we’re really keen is that you don’t then leave people. So we, we do try and offer routes to be connected, offer routes to come in, whether it’s a workforce offer, a training offer, a celebration event that you’re still trying to keep people with you even when there’s not something that you’re necessarily working on right at that moment.
And for us generally of that connection and that maintenance of that relationship there, you tend to find you do end up working together on something because you’re sat in a room, somebody starts talking about something, you think, oh, we can help with that. Well, you can help with this and it, and you’re off again and you’re picking something up.

So it’s that. The danger point for me is the lull when you’re not actively working with that particular partner or group. And how do you kind of make sure that through great comms really, that you’re, you’re not leaving people. Because we you know, you were here at one point and then you left us, you know, and, and I think we’re all really aware of the risk of that, particularly funding cycles, the way we’re funded, the way many of the partners, you know, Richard mentioned, you know, smaller charities and organisations that we’re working very closely with, some of that funding really matters, you know, it’s, it’s really key.

And if we’re not in a position to support with that, and, and frequently we’re not, you, you want to be offering more than just, we’re a, we’re a funding partner. It’s got to As Mark said, from that transaction to that partnership, we’re in it, we’re in it together.

**Richard Croker:** Starting the relationship off with, so it’s not transactional and ensuring that there’s reasons for the organisation to do whatever we need them to do and reasons that are important to them.

So, the value for them is really important. And I think there’s always a common purpose. And I think there is always something that binds us. But in actual fact, organisations that we work with, resources are tight. So the reality is that it has to, whatever we’re asking them to do, it has to be adding value to them as an organisation.

So, I think if we started off on that foot and we’ve given them the right reasons to do it and reasons that are important to them, I think that’s something that, that, that is a big factor in, in the work maintaining beyond like Claire says, beyond us being there and being present. I think beyond that, I think there’s, there’s ensuring we’re, we’re celebrating quick wins and the success that we’re both having, whether it’s the value that it’s delivering for them or for us, I think that’s a really important factor.

And that can be, inviting partners to showcase to other people, to other areas of the work that they’re doing. I think that always is a good kind of ingredient for, for continue, you know, building that motivation to keep and want to do it. I think there
is also something to consider about, I think we often think that the partnership, it’s
the lack of motivation that stops you, but actually I think often we find it’s the lack
of skills and knowledge and capability sometimes.

So, for us, it’s how we work with them to understand that actually, if there’s
something getting in the way and it’s proving difficult, you know, we’re there to
help with that. I think that’s a really important factor. It’s up to us to continually
check in with them. Is there anything additional that’s needed?

And, and any support that’s required. I think focusing in on what is it delivering the
outcomes and the value that they needed, because I think that’s a really, really
important factor in it. And the challenge, like Claire says, I think is, is that when
we’re not there and beyond this, there’s been any investment needed, what
happens and how do we create the environment?

So, it’s make sure we’ve got networks or partnership groups that people can stay
connected to that for us are a bit less capacity and on one to one handholding
with organisations, but they do offer that opportunity for kind of social influence
and social support across a wider group of people. So it’s kind of different tactics
that we use to try and hopefully continue that partnership beyond the initial
stages.

Kath Lord-Green: So basically you’re leaving that door open, aren’t you? You’re
leaving that door open for people, maintaining comms, having partnership
groups, networks, things like that, where people can continue to know they’re
going to be listened to still, I guess, and still, that you’re still there long beyond the
program.

So, what has been your learning?

Claire Beney: Focus on who’s not in the room, so whether that is you don’t have
lived experience in the room or you don’t have an organisation that holds that so
are you rushing to make decisions or to suggest a way of working and actually
they’re not fully informed.

So, I think, yeah. all the time, who are you not talking to, who’s, who’s not in the
room. They, we, you know, that’s an example where we were quite late on with
delivering a strategic piece of work. And we actually found out that we’d been
talking and keeping the stakeholder updated and it was the wrong one.
So always check who wants to know the progress of your work. Well, because that was a stressful, stressful moment. But yeah, I think it’s that real authenticity in what we’re trying to do, real learning when things don’t go well. And, and we have had a real focus thing, if I think particularly in our Plymouth work of, we just want to know.

And, you know, we wrote a report that had some real criticisms in thereof, no, it’s not delivered where you said it was going to deliver. But the, the value of knowing and why things hadn’t worked and why it was difficult has been really, really impactful. And I think quite often, actually, the, the biggest impact comes from that, like, oh, no, it’s not, it’s not that easy.

Or no, you know, this is frustrating. And we have repeatedly said, tell us that and we have kind of embraced an evaluation method called process learning, just hearing the stories that they mark, you mentioned stories earlier, and it’s hearing from people involved in our work, how has this helped you? Or how has it hindered you?

And I think, you know, if I think about people in education and you’ve got very, very busy people who are really focused on kind of academic achievements and attainments for, for young people and, you know, we’re obviously focused on that wellbeing and that health side and, and how do we make sure that works?

And again, when it does fantastic outcomes when it doesn’t understanding why it’s been really, really key. So probably leaving the ego at the door. So, when, when you’re hearing something, you’re like, okay, cool. What do we need to do differently? Not what do you need to do differently? Because obviously you didn’t get this.

Oh, we’ve missed something here. And keep reflecting and keep trying again. And, you know, there’s, you know, where, where I would say things have been less successful because we’ve tried our best to be ego less. We’ve gone, what can we do differently? What about if we do this? And people may not yet, let’s go again.

And so I think overall, you know, some, some great work we can be proud of, but yeah, probably being humble and really listening to what others really need and whether we’re delivering against that and whether it’s having those outcomes.

Richard Croker: Yeah, I agree with, yeah, a lot of what Claire’s covered there.

I think one of the things I would say is you need capacity to be able to do this. I think there’s, there’s consistent and constantly opportunities that emerge for
relationships, partnerships, but you need to have you need to have the capacity to be able to yeah, to follow it through. And there’s always a danger you start something, but then you realise you don’t have enough capacity and it’s not a great way to start a relationship.

So I think capacity is really, really important. You can’t do this without that. I think I would say that the learning is taking time for, for us, it was taking the time to understand. not just the common purpose, but the shared value, which I’ve said a few times, the shared value is really, really important.

The longevity of the partnership will last if, if both partners are getting, getting the value that they need from it. I think that’s really important. I think, yeah, it’s recognising, I think, I think Mark touched on it earlier that it’s not always linear and the relationship will just be, yeah, it progresses, it progresses.

Yeah, it, it moves, it doesn’t always move it, yeah, in that way or that speed. So it’s recognising that it’s being comfortable with that. I think you kind of feel like you’re not doing something right if things aren’t progressing. Actually, it might be wider context and circumstances that are affecting people’s ability to think about this and do this.

So, I think that’s something to recognise and be aware of. You often think actually, well, if, if it’s not progressing, it’s something that we’re not doing right. I think there are wider contextual things sometimes that you just can’t do anything about. And I think it’s having one, I don’t think we’ve probably talked about it.

Having actual empathy is really important in this process. And I think it’s sometimes you want to move a little bit quicker, the actually, come on, we could do this, but actually understanding why people might not be able to, and accepting that is really important. And I think that’s a really important part of how you build trust, recognising that people’s circumstances, where are they at?

What are they able to do now? And not being too forceful with it. I think that really helps develop the relationship and I think something looking back at the start, you think actually, yeah, we probably needed to think about that a little bit more at the start and not be as, yeah, sort of impatient to, to want to see progress so quickly.

Mark Fishpool: And I think for me, and, and both Claire and Richard have talked about the importance of learning at various points in the conversation and creating that learning culture in the place underpins a lot of the other things that
we’ve talked about. So, we’re not coming into a place with a solution, with all the answers for something.

Tackling physical inactivity is a really complex issue, there’s no easy way solving that. It is about creating collaborations and partnerships. And understanding that we’re not here to come with answers to a problem, but to work together over time to actually start to address some of these key underlying factors and recognising we’re going to get things wrong.

We’re all going to get things, you know, things that don’t work the way that we wanted and it’s too easy to dismiss them rather than thinking about, you know, the why, the process, why did that happen the way it did here and how do we learn from that and how do we adapt and change? And when we start to take that kind of learning, a lot of those personal attributes start to come out as well because they require transparency, honesty, holding our nerve when things aren’t going the way that we plan and all of that.

The kind of core elements of then building those trusting relationships that we want to develop. If we’re going to do this work together in our collaborative partnerships.

**Kath Lord-Green:** Learning from what has gone wrong is really, really forward thinking and that is really going to take everyone miles.

**Claire Beney:** Mark was saying about complexity.

I think that’s probably if there’s something to hold on to, it is that it isn’t just this, we’re taking something from A and we’re going to B and it’s just, if you just follow these steps. You know, we’re working with humans, we’re working with people that are complex, we’re trying to solve something that’s complex, and therefore leaning on each other’s strengths and really understanding what those are, where we’re able to, and what we’re trying to achieve, I think it’s got the best, the best potential for really successful outcomes.

And as you say, Kath, that learning from failure and really embracing that and being okay with that. Cause you know, it’s, it’s big stuff we’re trying to do and it’s, you know, it’s great that we’re in this work and it’s, it’s yeah, great to do, but it doesn’t always go smoothly.

**Richard Croker:** Yeah. I think in some of the, some of the things that do help that we’ve maybe not touched upon is.
Is where you can have kind of senior leadership commitment and support to the work to open doors for you. I think that that helps. I know we might not be, you know, the top down now. I think that does help. It helps initiate and start a relationship. And I think for it to be successful, you need, you know, the middle out.

You need people within that system, the organisation to be bought into it, but actually getting things started. Is having senior leadership kind of signal that this is important and it is helpful. I think it doesn’t guarantee success, but it’s certainly a really good starting point. I think the other thing to say is where we’ve had the most success in developing long lasting kind of partnerships where organisations continue to work on the physical activity agenda is involving them in what we refer to as the design process, in the change process.

We know where we want to get to, but actually it’s up to them to help us work through how we, how we work together to get there and involving as many people as possible from the organisation or the service in that process means that you’ve got, you’ve got champions, you’ve got advocates within that organisation and it goes a long way to success.

I think the other thing for us is try and make it exciting, try and make it a bit of a different from their kind of day to day jobs. I think that always helps. People get excited about it and kind of want to be involved. Despite that they might have a lot on, other things on, and we’ve had a lot of we had a couple of examples where people get involved at the start and then think, Oh, why, why are we here? And it’s often because we’ve managed to get senior leadership buy in and they start off with actually I’m not sure about this, but actually by the end of the process, because we’ve designed it in such a way, which participative and exciting and involving them in the process. I think they often go away from it, or they do go away from saying, actually, I really enjoyed that.

I really enjoyed being involved in that. It was something different. It was something new. It’s something exciting to be a part of. I think they make a big difference.

Mark Fishpool: I think that point with Richard is, is really valuable about the importance of leadership and getting senior leaders on board. But I think we have to be honest about our expectations of them as well, because a lot of the ways of working that we are looking to do are not things that they’ve done naturally.

And we can’t expect them to have all the answers just like we don’t. And. Finally, I suppose it isn’t then just about leadership at a senior level to sustain this work and
sustain these partnerships. It’s then about how do we develop leaders at all levels of the system who see it as their role to take this work forward rather than us.

**Naomi:** Thanks for joining us for this episode of the Place Change Makers podcast series. Remember though, conversation doesn’t have to end here. Check out our other episodes and take a look at our online resources by visiting www.sportengland.org/placepartnerships. Why don’t you come and join our community of learning where we’ll keep you connected to the latest thinking and learning being surfaced by places.

So until next time, stay curious and keep exploring.