EPISODE 5:

The power of reflective practice
In this episode we will hear about what reflective practice means and why it’s important in driving systemic change. We’ll hear stories of reflection and its impact on continuous improvement. We’ll explore the values, skills, knowledge, behaviours and conditions that enable it to become embedded into every day practice.

“\textit{It’s what you do as a result of reflective practice that makes it meaningful.}”

\textbf{Katy Thompson}
What is it and why is it important?

Reflecting on actions/behaviours/events; slowing down or pausing to think about what went well, less well and why, and how we can change and improve things in future.

If we don’t stop and consider whether what we are doing is working, we might not be having the biggest chance of impact, despite efforts!

Should be treated as a process that happens throughout a project, not just at the end/retrospectively, so that you can make the biggest difference at the earliest opportunity.

It’s not all about acknowledging success – knowing about failure is essential to learning how we can do things differently in the future.

“People appreciate the nudges, because when they get to that reflective space, there’s so much appreciation for it.”

Emily Brady-Young
The speakers

Emily Brady-Young
Research and Evaluation Lead – Together an Active Future

My current role is Research Lead with Pennine Lancashire’s Local Delivery Pilot, now place partner, Together an Active Future (TaAF). Although my title suggests I do research, I have a great team of researchers and a communications team, I play a bit more of a strategic role and see myself as facilitating learning and development within and across organisations. I have a background in higher education and social psychology, in particular children and young people’s PA, H&WB. Former roles have included leading PGCE and education programmes at Edge Hill University and the University of Gloucestershire. I have also worked in international development with NGOs and INGOs such as UNICEF and USAID, across research and research and strategy on access to education.

Katy Thompson
Program Manager, National Sport Welfare Officer Network – Active Partnership National Organisation

My current role is with the Active Partnership National team as the Programme Manager for the National Sport Welfare Officer Network. Previously I was Partnership Manager within an Active Partnership – County Durham Sport leading their place-based work. I facilitated a cross-sector network of strategic and operational partners. Prior to the roles, I spent 11 years as a police officer at Northumbria. I engage in reflective practice personally, and support others to do so by not only advocating for learning and reflection but also by facilitating spaces and implementing approaches to support reflective practice as a way of working.

Jen Hall
Senior Research Fellow – Born in Bradford

Senior Research Fellow leading the process evaluation of the Bradford local delivery pilot. I have an academic background, following my degree in Sport Science I worked briefly in the physical activity field. I have over 10 years’ experience conducting qualitative research focused on physical activity and health, and developing and evaluating complex interventions. In my current role I engage in reflective practice but also support others to do so through facilitating research activities and establishing formal and informal learning processes.
Skills, mindsets and behaviours that are important

Open and honest
- Curious
- Open and honest
- Humble
- Egoless
- Approachable
- Open-minded
- Empathy
- Vulnerable
- Critical thinking
- Willing to embrace failure
- Analytical
- Willing to do things differently
- Value of learning
- Open-mindedness
- Perseverance
- Sense-making
- Ability to translate learning into action
- Objectivity
- Logical thinking
- Listening and seeing things from other people’s perspectives.

Enabling conditions
- To build a culture where reflective practice is seen as part of the work needs senior level buy-in as well as operational level buy-in to ensure it is valued and time is committed.
- Create purposeful time and space – for people to reflect regularly, supported with external/objective facilitation to make sense of the learning and how this translates into meaningful action.
- To create a safe and secure environment to be honest and talk about failure without consequences.
- Find and nurture learning champions – modelling behaviours to others can help to encourage them to be more reflective.
“Everybody has engaged in reflective practice in their lives.”

Jen Hall
"Having an open mind, being willing to think critically about your working processes is key to enabling change."

Katy Thompson

**Models/tools/weblinks**

- **National Decision-Making Model**
  Model used by the police to help improve decision-making in challenging and high-pressure environments and helps apply that learning to future decisions.

- **Thought Partner Practice: Learning Pods**
  Pairing people up with others they don’t usually work with. Biweekly meetings or walk and talks – a round of appreciative enquiry model – look back and look ahead process.

- **Learning Cycle Model: What, So What, Now What?**

- **Ripple Effect Mapping**
  Collaborative discussion to reflect on existing practices/ways of working to influence change. Development and evaluation tool, visual tool, hands on, sensory activity. Make complexity colourful, visual, look and feel good: [Introduction to Ripple Effects Mapping](#).

- **CliftonStrengths**
  A great door opener. Focuses on strengths, helps step into the culture change and how those relationships across partners change.

**10 Conditions for tackling inequalities in physical activity**

Take a look at the learning and resources developed by Sport England’s National Evaluation & Learning Partner and people working in local place partnerships. Access the recordings from the ‘conditions for change’ learning series. Episodes of interest include:

- **Cycles of learning and action**

**Putting it into practice**

Check out the Sport England resource ‘putting it into practice’, which brings to life some of the approaches, models, and tools used by places taking a place-based, whole system approach. Content you might be interested in includes:

- **Capacity & time to reflect**