SPORT ENGLAND

Innovation Unit
Creating impact
Reducing inequalities
Transforming systems

Innovation Playbook

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

Contents

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

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.

Read More

Our digital definition and 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 mindsets

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.

"I'm / it's not innovative"	I / it can be innovative if it is designed to solve a real-life problem
"Innovation is all about products"	Innovation is more than just products, it can be processes and skills too
"Innovation must be shiny and new"	Innovation can be small and incremental
"My mind doesn't work like that"	Innovation is a mindset that can be learnt and practised

Innovation spectrum

Innovation can be 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

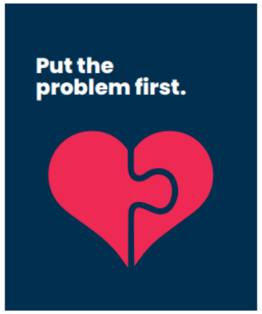
Innovation and digital best practices

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.

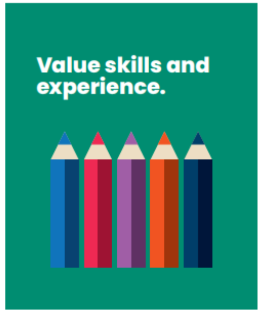
These have been synthesised and distilled into our own set of practical approaches to foster innovation and digital in our work. The illustrations capture the imagination and reinforce the link between innovation and creativity.

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

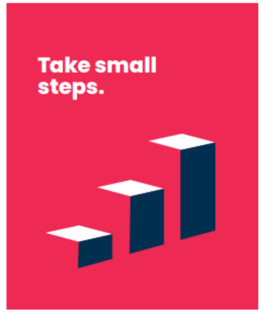


Put the problem first.
Love the problem, not the solution.

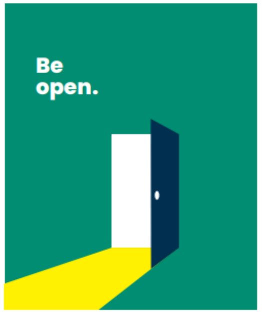
Be people-centred.
Put real people's need at the heart of everything.



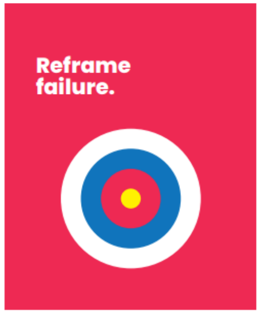
Value skills and experience.
Assemble a diverse, multidisciplinary team.



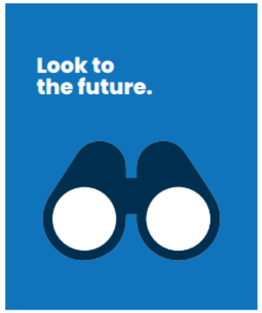
Take small steps.
Continually adapt.



Be open.
Share as you go.



Reframe failure.
Prioritise learning when things don't go to plan.



Look to the future.
Think long-term, prioritise all forms of sustainability.

Embrace the uncertainty.
Welcome new approaches.

Read More

[Innovation and Digital Best Practices]

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.

How to use this Innovation Playbook

Each section of the Playbook 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

Sometimes we have examples without a 'Tool' introductory page – where this content is a stand-alone and a best practice approach or recommendation

Templates

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

Look out for this icon to find the tool template

Download the template

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.

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 and generate learning questions.
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. You can continue to add to your Knowledge board as you learn more to answer your learning questions.

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:
	  o What we know (things we know for certain)
	  o What we think we know (things we need more evidence for)
	  o What we don't know (things we need to find out)
	• Create your learning questions to support you to answer what you need to find out next.

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**

Collaborate by using dot voting to help you to reflect on which learning areas are the most important to answer first.

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.

Download the template

Personas

Name: Bibi

Summary

Bibi hated PE in school – having to wear shorts, a highly competitive culture and running around a muddy field.

Bibi started doing online Yoga in the pandemic and now she's mad that she wasted so many years thinking she "wasn't sporty".

Interests

Graphic design
Social media content creation
Singing in a band
Online yoga

Motivations

Wants to see more 'not sporty' girls like her enjoying moving and having strong bodies
Passion for equality

Positive influences

Enjoys spending time with her friends at school and showing them her 3-minute head stand

Blockers / negative influences

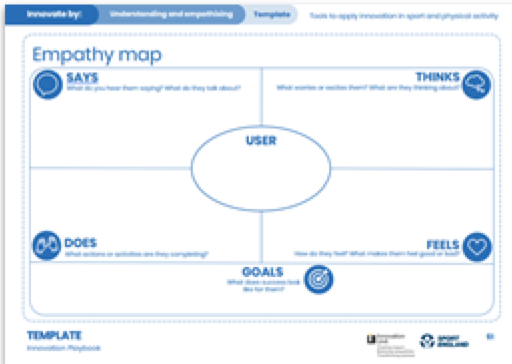
Still hates people seeing her in shorts
Feels that adults don't listen or take her seriously

Empathy map

What	An empathy map is a simple frame that encourages you and your team to put yourselves in the shoes of a user. It helps you capture their needs, feelings and behaviours in a specific scenario which you'll have uncovered in your user research.
Why	An empathy map provides a holistic view of a user's experience. It helps to unearth hidden motivations and barriers which are important to consider when you come to designing potential solutions. It also present a user's experience in a digestible format for your project team.
When	When you're conducting user research, then as a prompt when you're using your research findings to help you design ideas for solutions.
How	• Use the empathy map template individually or with your team. • If you've built personas (see Personas tool) you could create an empathy map for each audience group • Review the user insight you've gathered from your research and then fill out the quadrants of the map • Note down not just what the user has said but also their actions and behaviours as this can untap hidden needs and challenges • Synthesise your empathy map content into needs (verbs, activities, desires) and insights (information that could help you solve the problem you're addressing).

Key information

Time: 30-45 minutes
Difficulty: Medium



Download the template

Empathy map

SAYS

What do you hear them saying?
What do they talk about?

"I might seem old fashioned, but I prefer face-to-face communication over online"

"I deal with chronic pain so activities need to be easy and adaptable"

"I can get online and do basic things but nothing too advanced and find some websites very unusable"

THINKS

What worries or excites them?
What are they thinking about?

Worried about personal security online

Needs to know a lot of information up front to decide if something they find online is suitable

Worried about wrap around planning e.g. accessible parking

USER

67-year-old

Has a long-term health condition which causes pain and mobility issues

Situation : finding sport / physical activity opportunities online

DOES

What actions or activities are they completing?

Goes to Google to look for activities but often gives up after a few minutes

Sometimes goes to aqua aerobics but the process to sign up over the phone is long and tedious

Seems dismissive of social media – pulls a face of no interest when Facebook is mentioned

FEELS

How do they feel? What makes them feel good or bad?

Inclusive imagery that shows people like them taking part feels encouraging

Seems nervous about the prospect of going to a class where they don't know anyone. Self conscious that they're not very "sporty"

Recognises that the internet is a good place to find lots of opportunities but feels overwhelmed – doesn't know where to start

GOALS

What does success look like for them?

Knowledge of where to look online for suitable opportunities

Doing more physical activity to gain confidence, feel fitter and feel able to manage condition better

Keen to try something different and meet new people

The option to speak to someone human if struggling with online experience

Innovate by:

Generating ideas

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.

Ideation mindsets

Ideation is all about generating a wide range of ideas. We can adopt ideation mindsets to encourage creativity, experimentation and collaboration to solve problems.

Our ideation mindsets bring our Innovation and Digital Best Practices to life, in particular:

- Put the problem first – ensure you ideate in relation to the right problem for the right people
- Embrace the uncertainty – welcome new approaches
- Value skills and experience – prioritise having a balance of perspectives

You could use the template as a slide when you're introducing an ideation session.

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.
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.
"Yes and..."	Build on the ideas you like to take them a step further.

How might we?

What	The "How might we…" activity is an approach to generating multiple ideas around a specific challenge or problem by reframing it as an opportunity.
Why	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.
When	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).
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. • The next step is to do some creative rounds of ideation using the How might we statements as a frame. Rapid 8s (the next tool in this Playbook) is a great activity for this.

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 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?"

Rapid 8's

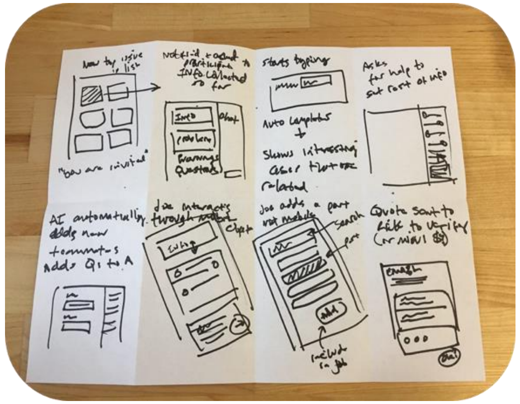
What	Rapid 8's is a fast-paced activity to help you generate a lot of ideas in a short amount of time. It involves getting ideas down in written and sketch form.
Why	Rapid 8's enables you and your team to create lots of ideas to solve a problem and can unlock ideas you might not have thought of by working at pace. It also encourages team members to build on each other's ideas and refine potential solutions by combining everyone's thinking.
When	Once you've defined the problems you're looking to solve for your users and you've developed your 'how might we' statements.
How	• Rapid 8's is most effective when run with people experiencing the problem you're looking to solve. If this is not possible, you can bring in other tools such as personas or empathy mapping to build participant's understanding the problems you're looking to solve. • Fold a sheet of A4 paper in half three times to make eight equally sized panels. • Set a timer for eight minutes. You'll have one minute per panel to write or sketch an idea. • Use the "How might we..." statements to frame your ideas. Focus on quantity over quality - try to fill all eight panels. Anything which comes to mind that feels like it has potential. Your idea could be a process, an action, a service – big or small, there is no right or wrong. • Afterwards, in groups share your top ideas. When everyone has shared back, vote on which ideas you like best. It could be a combination of features from different ideas. • The next step would be to prioritise the ideas. In the "Finding Clarity" section of this Playbook you'll find some options for potential activities you could run next.

Key information

Time: 40-60 minutes
Difficulty: Medium

Tip

You might find that people start to struggle for ideas towards the end. Reassure them if they don't manage to come up with eight not to worry! Ask them to share the ideas they're comfortable sharing.



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.

Effort and impact matrix

What

An adjustable matrix to help you and your team consider and decide on a route or idea against different credentials.

Why

To build confidence in an idea or approach to take forward when there are multiple options to decide between

When

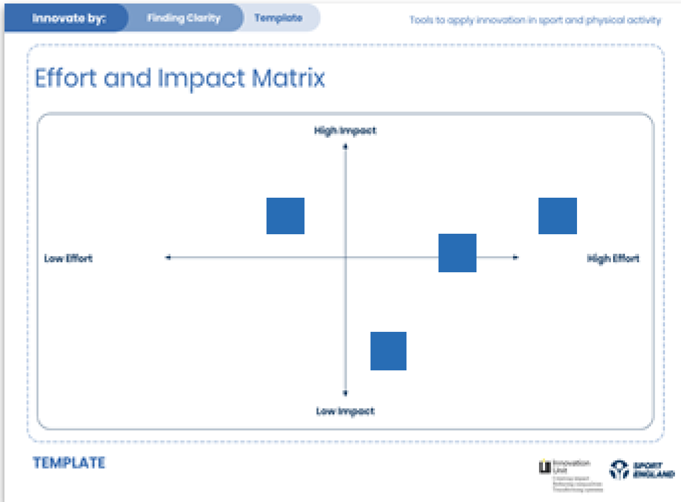
When you have a range of different ideas which you need to prioritise (e.g. using the 'How Might We' tool included in this Innovation Playbook).

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



Download the template

Criteria

What	A quick decision-making tool to help prioritise ideas based on specific criteria.
Why	Helps narrow down ideas to the most feasible and impactful options, aligning the team around clear priorities.
When	After generating multiple ideas, to decide which ones to develop further.
How	• Set criteria based on your project's goals (e.g., impact, feasibility, desirability, viability, internal readiness). You will often need to balance internal vs external outcomes and your criteria should reflect these as best as possible. • Score each idea against the criteria and conduct a dot voting exercise where each team member places dots on their preferred ideas. • Discuss the top-voted ideas together, comparing scores and considering different perspectives before making a final decision.

Key information

Time: 45 - 90 minutes
Difficulty: Medium

Tips

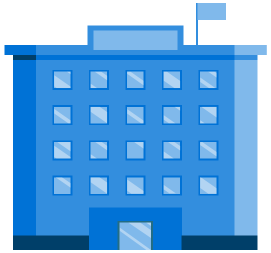
Having criteria that everyone agrees on and a simple method of scoring helps the team reach a decision that everyone supports.

Download the template

Criteria example

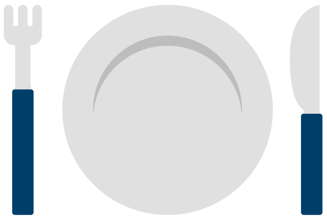
Feasibility

We can do it



Internal desirability

Organisational ways of working, public profile and expectations



External desirability

Appetite from user

Viability

It would work

Impactful

Creates the change we're looking to make

It is important to have clear and relevant criteria when judging your ideas. In this case, we were looking for the ideas that align with our goals and deliver the most value for our users.

Delta 6

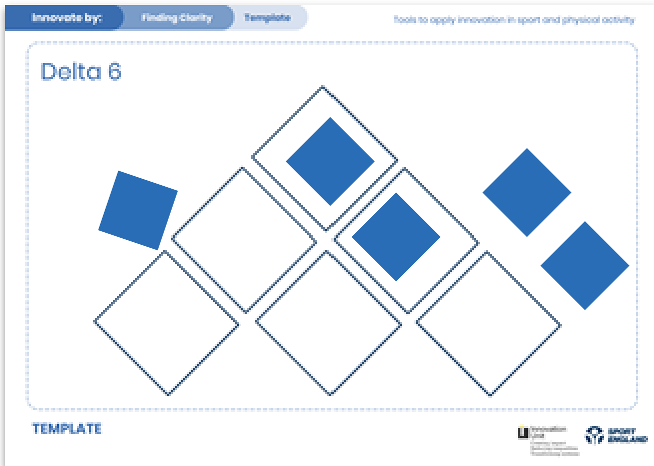
What	Delta 6 is a workshop tool designed to help people collectively prioritise a long list of issues or ideas. It facilitates conversations between people, enabling them to discuss important topics or ideas together.
Why	This tool can be used to come to a consensus about the focus of a project or the importance of particular challenges. It can also be used as 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.



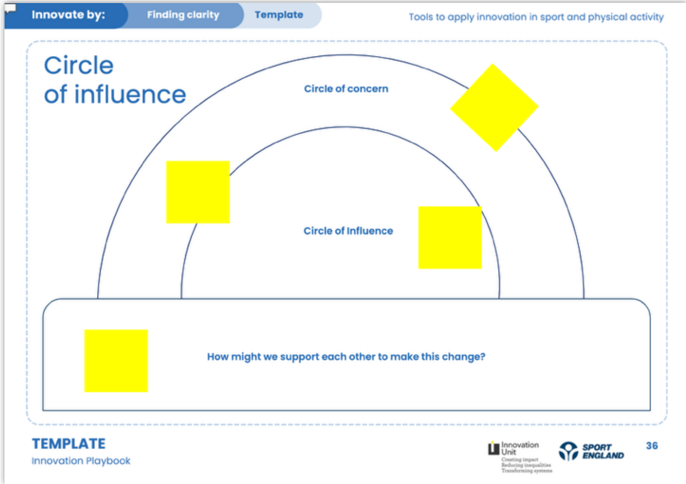
Download the template

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



Download the template

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.

Reflective mindsets

Reflection is all about examining our experiences to learn from them. We can adopt reflective mindsets to gain a greater understanding of what's going well and why, to reframe failure and to continually adapt.

Our reflective mindsets bring our Innovation and Digital Best Practices to life, in particular:

- Take small steps - Reflect regularly to continue with what's working and adjust what's not
- Be open - Capture what you're learning as you go, and share both successes and mistakes along the way
- Reframe failure – Normalise talking about failure
- Look to the future - Acknowledge that what you create probably won't be around forever, so build in regular reviews to adapt or stop.

You can use the template as a slide when you're introducing a reflection session (also known as a Retro).

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.

Retros

What	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?
Why	Retros create 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.
When	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.
How	• 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

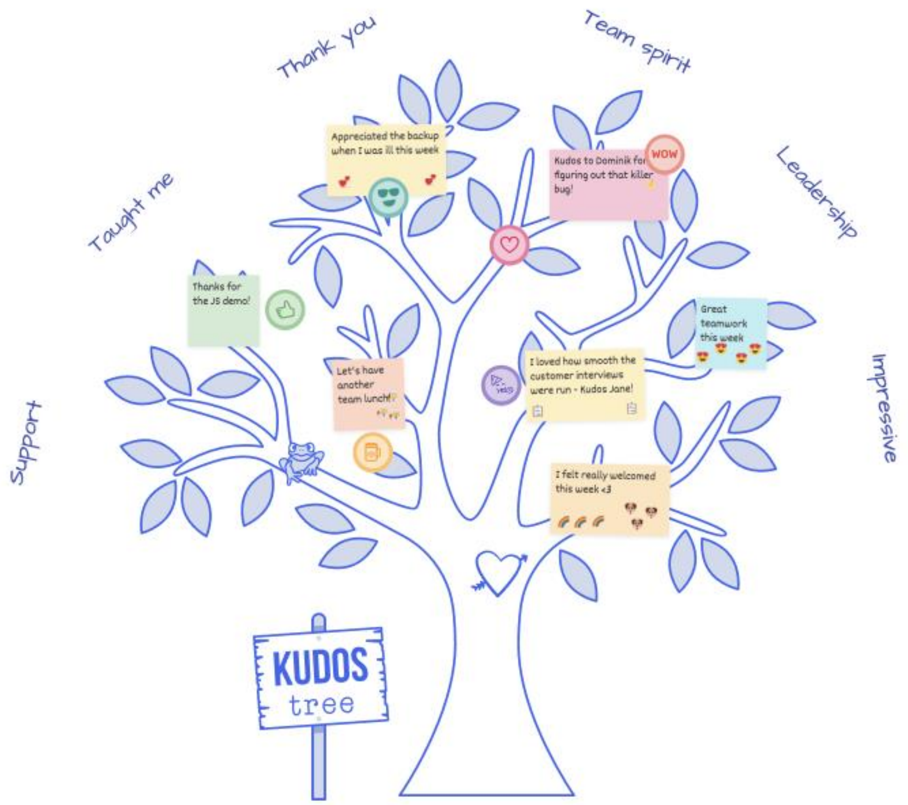
Time: 60 minutes
Difficulty: Medium

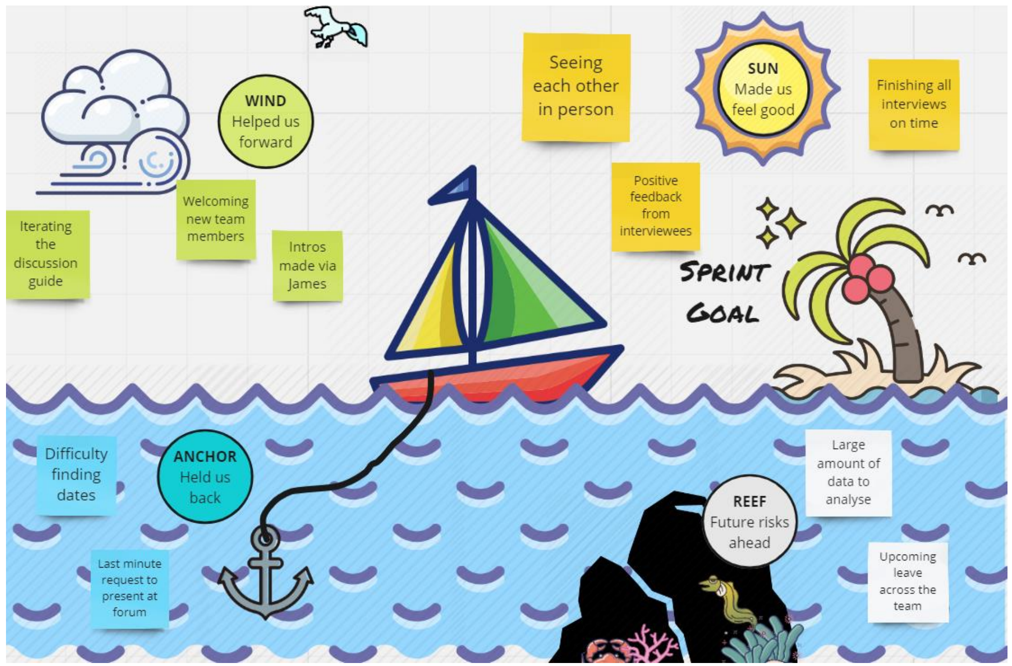
Tips

Get creative with the theme and format for your retro. You could ask different team members to design the theme or you can use the same format to build familiarity if the team is new to retros.

Look at this webpage for inspiration: https://www.funretrospectives.com/category/retrospective/

Retros





Credits: [Metro Retro](#) and [Miro](#)

Reflective rollercoaster

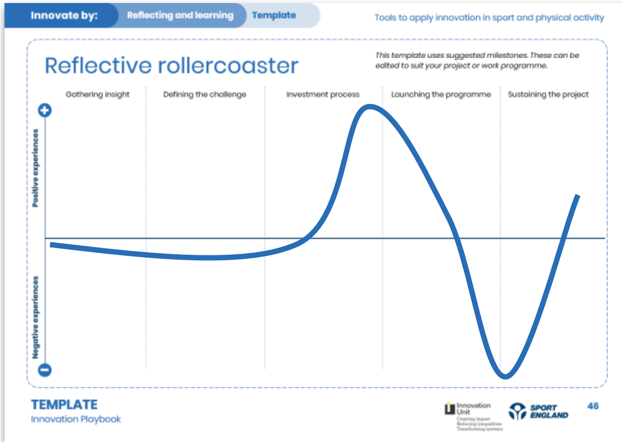
What	'Reflective rollercoaster' is a tool to look back on a project from start to finish and extract key learning in a creative way.
Why	When looking back at work that's completed, it's easy to say it went 'well' or 'badly', forgetting the highs and lows that happened along the way. A reflective rollercoaster 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.



Download the template

Reflective journalling

What	A learning journal exercise that encourages a team to reflect on a specific experience or learning focus.
Why	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.
How	• You might wish to come prepared with specific question 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.

A twist on this activity could be to invite the group to write a reflective letter to someone else within the working group, or to someone who is influential to the work. People can add their name or stay anonymous.

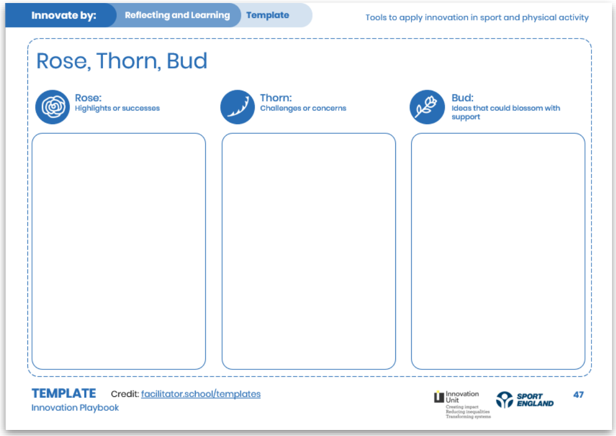
Rose, Thorn, Bud

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



Download the template

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

Download the template

4 Ls

What	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

Download the template

Stinky fish

What	'Stinky Fish' is a short activity to play around with your fears, anxieties and uncertainties about the future of a project.
Why	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.
When	Useful when you're adapting, improving or scaling existing work.
How	• 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?

Credit: Hyperisland

Key information

Time: 20-30 minutes
Difficulty: Easy

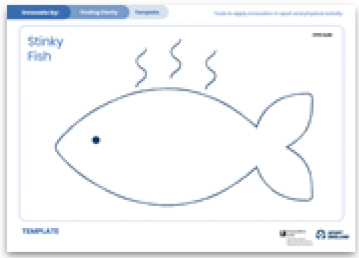
Tips

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).

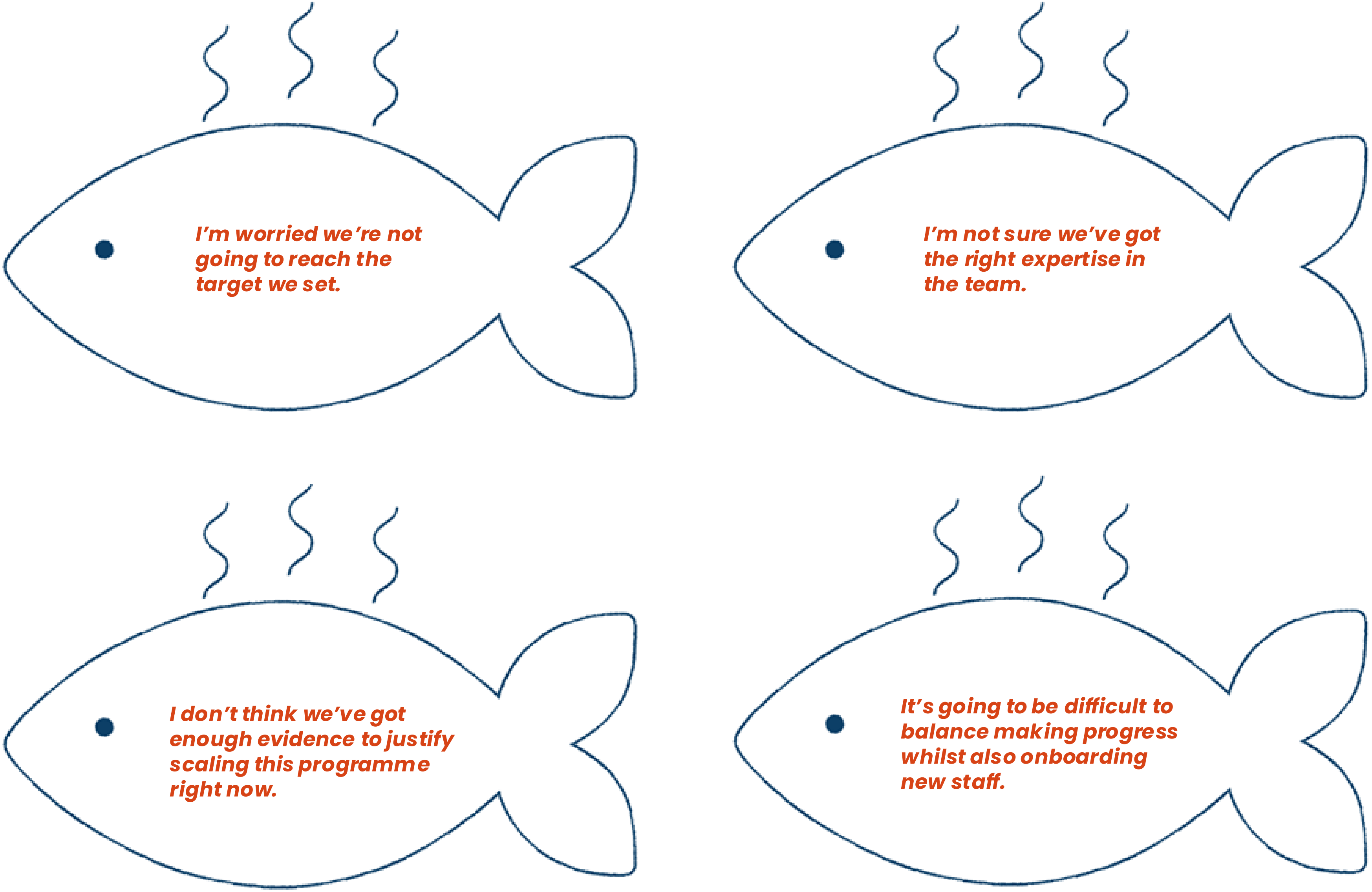
It's also a chance to decide which fish can be released back into the water!

"Thought this was a juicy exercise and actually very revealing."

Workshop participant, Moving Healthcare Professionals reflective session



Download the template



Credit: [HyperIsland]

Innovate by:

Connecting and collaborating

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.

Check ins and check outs

What	Check ins and check outs are simple activities designed to top and tail a meeting. You can connect your check in or check out to your session outcomes e.g. getting creative before ideating.
Why	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.
When	At the start and end of meetings. Particularly when you are bringing new groups of people together for the first time.
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 or activities

Check in

Highlight of your week / weekend?

Which **GIF** represents how your week has been?
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 did you want to be when you **grew up (or when you grow up!)?**

Have a go at 30 circles exercise to spark some creative thinking.

Check out

Gem / square/ circle:
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 **'Aha!'** moment?

Read More

Random check in generator

Build Your Creative Confidence: 30 Circles Exercise - IDEO

Huddles

What	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.
Why	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.
When	You can run Huddles on a continual basis throughout the lifetime of a piece of work.
How	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.

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?
7. **The anti-structure** - Feelings over thinking. Stream of consciousness.

Cat Clements 09/06 15:12

Weeknote 09/06/23

Afternoon everyone,

Please see our weeknote from this week below 🙂

First Service Team Weeknote 09/06/2023 📅

Here is what we have been up to the past week..

Us and our work in a nutshell

We are a multidisciplinary team exploring how Sport England might organise our work by the services we provide to our 'users' – that's our partners, community organisations, as well as the people who use the sport and physical activities they provide ('end users').

It's a different way of working for the organisation because we usually organise our work by the teams we're in, or the projects we run. The hope is that by structuring around the services we offer we'll be better guided by those who we want to serve and closer to the impact we wish to have. You can read more about our work in Nilen's news article: Can 'service design' help us add value more quickly? Each week we will publish/send out weeknotes to update you on our progress. We aim to be very honest and not just celebrate our victories but also admit when we're worried or something hasn't gone the way we expected. If you have questions or feedback, please reach out to any of the First Service Team or the Transformation team.

Things we did

This week we:

- Met with Active Communities Network and SQL Sports Leaders to hear more about their views and experiences of supporting and working with LTOs and the barriers young people and children from culturally diverse communities face in being active.
- Connected further with our Place Relationship colleagues to help us link to a wide variety of LTOs across the country
- Worked together to better structure our filing and collaborative work space
- Spent time revisiting our roles, skills and areas for growth

Things we learned

- We have lots of skills and experiences we can draw on across the Service Team
- Lots of learnings about the problems we are seeking to help solve from our partners and organisations so far
- We enjoy getting into the user research and this brings to life what we are trying to do.

Difficulties

- We are getting to grips with connecting across the system and getting closer to the ground, thanks to our very helpful colleagues, but this remains a learning curve for us.

What's next

- Kicking off reaching out to local organisations with our Place colleagues.
- Attending a Bradford based learning event on a project called JUMP.
- Planning our next face to face at the end of June.

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 tells

What	'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.
Why	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.
When	Show and tells usually have a regular slot each week, fortnight or month.
How	• 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.

User manual for me

What

A user manual for me is an opportunity for you and your team to lay out your preferences about how you like to work.

Why

We all like to work in different ways, but members of a team might make assumptions about the preferences and needs of their colleagues. This can lead to misunderstandings and difficult team dynamics. The user manual for me is a quick way to understand the basics of how someone works and make these preferences really clear so there is no guess work needed. This will hopefully lead to better cohesion across your team.

When

This is a great activity to run when you're establishing a new team at the start of a project.

How

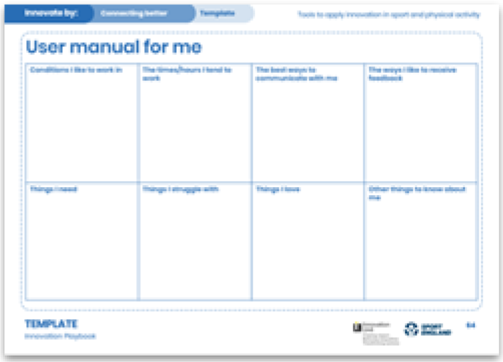
- Agree the prompts you'd like to include in the manual e.g. conditions I like to work in, my working pattern, how I like to be communicated with etc.
- Be clear with your team about the purpose of the exercise.
- Make sure everyone understands that not all preferences might be able to be met, but there is still hopefully a benefit in sharing them.
- Give people 10-15 minutes to complete their individual manuals.
- Let people complete them however they like – how they interpret the questions can also tell you a lot about them!
- Invite everyone to talk through their manual, but if someone doesn't want to share back then that's their choice.
- Discuss as a group if there are any ways you could factor in people's preferences into how you will work together on this project.

Key information

Time: 30-60 minutes
Difficulty: Easy

Tips

You can flex the questions to suit you and your team. You could keep it strictly work-related, or be as personal as your team likes.



Download the template

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**