

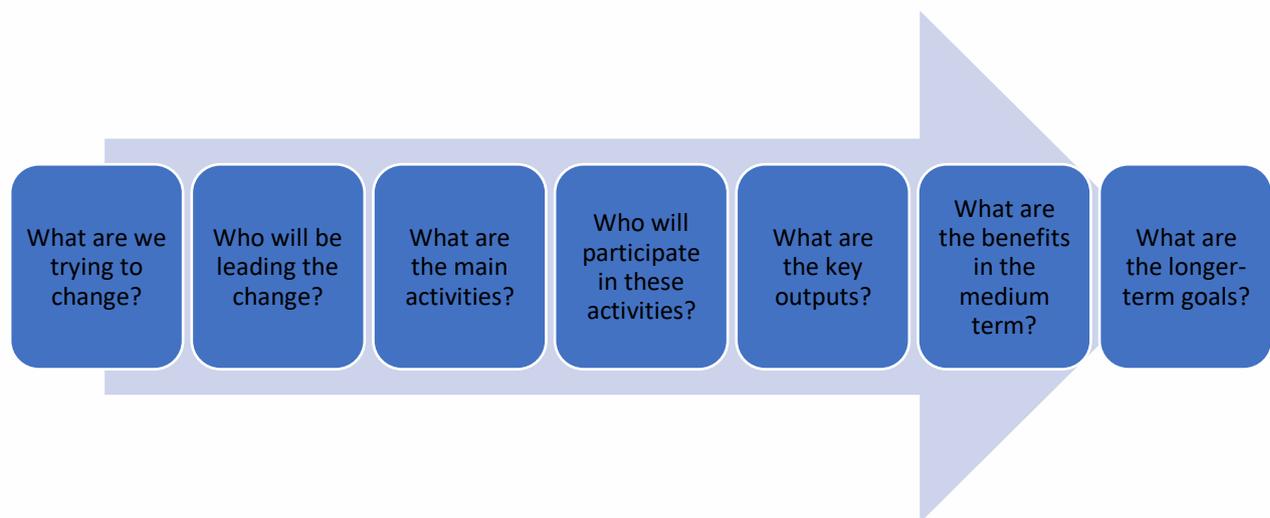
Guidance for creating a Theory of Change

What is a Theory of Change?

Simply put, a Theory of Change is “a process for thinking about and describing; the change you want to see; and your plans for achieving that change.”¹

“The terminology and the different options can be confusing at first. We even hear that the phrase ‘Theory of Change’ is off-putting because it sounds ‘jargony’ or ‘academic’.”

A Theory of Change is ‘the description of a sequence of events that is expected to lead to a desired outcome’.²



Why develop a Theory of Change?

A Theory of Change will outline how the work you do as a group will lead to practical progress and improve choice and control in adult social care. It will map out the strategies you will use to achieve effective change in your area, and will highlight why you think change will happen in this way. It also:

- “builds a shared understanding of desired change you hope to achieve as a group, and how you will achieve it;
- the process helps to identify hidden assumptions/different views that members of the group have and enables you to discuss these in order to reach consensus”.³

Developing a Theory of Change is as an opportunity to discuss and fully understand what you as a group would like to change, what you can do to create this change, and then decide on an ‘action plan’ for your local network. Based on the topic you've discussed during these sessions, explore what you've shared and learnt, what you know so far, and what you need to do next - a Theory of Change approach can help you to work towards creating your action plan.

¹ <https://www.thinknpc.org/resource-hub/ten-steps/#content>

² <http://mandenews.blogspot.co.uk/2012/04/criteria-for-assessing-evaluability-of.html>

³ <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/documents/447/Step-by-Step-Guide-May-2016.pdf>

How do we develop a Theory of Change?

It's helpful to break down the process of creating a Theory of Change into steps.

This is a [helpful video](#) which explains a Theory of Change in 6 minutes.

This is a [useful document](#) which explains Theory of Change in detail, and is the basis of most of this guidance. Below are a series of steps and questions to help you develop your Theory of Change.

You can think of this process as being like developing a person-centred plan for your next steps, working backwards from the outcomes you want to achieve.

Step 1: Identifying long-term goals

“To develop a Theory of Change you begin by identifying the group you are working with, setting out their needs and characteristics, and clarifying the final goal(s) that you want to achieve.”⁴ Some questions to consider:

- What is/are the final goal/s? (But don't choose too many)
- What are you trying to change?
- What is the desired situation?
- What is the impact you want to have?

Step 2: Identify your context and define your assumptions:

In your first and second local network meetings, you have worked to explore what's happening in your local area, so you can draw on those discussions to answer questions like:

- What is the issue? Why are you working on this project? What has brought you here?
- What is causing challenges? This could be national policy issues, practise issues, local issues, previous change initiatives
- Who is impacted? Who are you focusing on this issue for?

IMPACT's reports from the local network meetings will help you with this step, and the IMPACT team can work with you on this.

Define your assumptions: Identifying your basic assumptions about the context helps you to define as a group what you all know to be true. Sometimes these things are knowledge that you just know from experience, or are 'common sense'; it's helpful to state these explicitly so that everyone is on the same page. You might learn some helpful assumptions here from all of your different perspectives.

- What are the conditions or resources you feel are needed to succeed in meeting your goal?
- What evidence (including lived experience, practise knowledge, academic research) do you have to suggest your ideas and activities will be effective?

⁴ <https://www.thinknpc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Creating-your-theory-of-change1.pdf>

Define your enablers: What is needed to enable you to succeed? What conditions do you need, or resources?

There are two kinds of enablers:

Internal enablers need to exist inside an organisation for a Theory of Change to work, and are mostly within an organisation or project's control. Internal enablers describe the mechanisms by which an organisation delivers its work (such as the quality of services, relationships and the values and attitudes of staff).

External enablers need to exist in the external environment for a Theory of Change to work, and are often beyond an organisation or project's immediate control. External enablers describe the context in which an organisation works (such as social, cultural, economic and political factors, laws, regulations, and working with other organisations) (ThinkNPC).

Step 3: Plan your activities

In a Theory of Change process, you start by identifying your goals, identify your context, and work backwards to figure out what you need to do to make your goal happen- **like a person-centred plan**. This allows you to take into account all the information, knowledge and evidence from the previous step to inform your activities.

Your activities need to be measurable so you can communicate and prove how your activity made a difference:

- These are the things you have chosen to do as a group to help you meet your goal.
- You will use the knowledge you gained from context/assumptions and evidence to inform these activities.
- Involving all stakeholders in this process helps to ensure you have a good range of perspectives and viewpoints when putting together your action plan.

Consider:

- Who will resource these? How will your actions trigger change?
- Who needs to lead the change? Who else needs to be involved?
- What is key to delivering impact?
- How will you measure the impact of your activity?
- How will you know if it's been effective?

Define your Inputs: Inputs are usually resources you need to enable your activities, e.g.

- Budget, such as financial resources to pay people
- Allocated staff time to participate in the activities
- Physical resources
- Relationships/connections with people or organisations

Step 4: State your outputs

Outputs are the things you anticipate will happen as a result of your activities, the outcomes of your activities that help you to meet your end goal that you stated at the beginning. It should be clear how these outputs contribute to the final goal and they need to be measurable so you can prove how your activities have led to this output. These can be called 'results' or 'impact' – the change you can evidence that you've made. Examples could include

things like: number of people trained, engagement events undertaken or processes redesigned.

Step 5: Think about how you could measure change

The IMPACT team can support you to explore and develop indicators to measure the outputs of your changes and activities.

What do you want to measure?

- Is there already any evidence that suggests your outputs will be effective?
- Focus on the most important outcomes - things you directly influence and are important in meeting your goal

Think about different types of evidence: This could be statistics, case studies, comparison, observations from stakeholders etc.

How could you capture the data? Who will the data come from and when will you collect it? (e.g. before/ during/after your activities)

Step 6: Write up your Theory of Change

You can choose to write your Theory of Change as a narrative, or a diagram - we have included a template on the next page which might be helpful.

Step 7: Learning and improvement

Once your Theory of Change is complete, what next? You could use what you know to improve your local area, projects and services. IMPACT can also work with you to share knowledge more widely to help people in other areas to make change. We can help you to develop different types of outputs: e.g. written case studies, blogs, videos, etc.

Summary

1. Start by stating your end goals.
2. Identify the context you're working in and your basic assumptions- you can use the IMPACT discussion materials from sessions 1 and 2 to help you do this.
3. Plan your activities, and what resources you need for your activities- IMPACT can help you develop activities.
4. Plan what you think your outputs will be as a result of your activities.
5. Think about how you'll measure your impact- IMPACT can help you do this.
6. Write all of this into a narrative or structure that makes sense to you and is easy to follow- you can use the template over the page to help with this.
7. Consider measuring and evaluating any changes that have occurred, and share your learning - IMPACT can help you do this.

Template Theory of Change

| What is the local & national context? | What are we trying to change? | Who will be leading the change? | What are the main activities? | Who will participate in these activities? | What are the key outputs? | What are the benefits in the medium term? | What are the longer-term goals? |
|---|--|--|---|---|--|---|---|
| <p>Local issues / opportunities</p> <p>Previous change initiatives</p> <p>National policy & practice issues</p> | <p>Think about current situation and how change will be measured</p> | <p>Lead organisation / partners</p> <p>Co-production with people and communities</p> <p>Stakeholder group / governance</p> | <p>What are the core activities that will lead to the change?</p> <p>Who will resource these?</p> | <p>Which stakeholder groups should engage in these activities?</p> <p>What will encourage their engagement?</p> | <p>Initial outputs from the activities, e.g.</p> <p>Number of people trained</p> <p>Process redesigned</p> <p>Engagement events undertaken</p> | <p>What outcomes would be expected in 3 years?</p> <p>How will these be evaluated?</p> | <p>What wider benefits would be expected in 5 years and beyond?</p> <p>How will these be evaluated?</p> |
| Key Assumptions | Key Assumptions | Key Assumptions | Key Assumptions | Key Assumptions | Key Assumptions | Key Assumptions | Key Assumptions |
| <p>What has led to these local issues?</p> | <p>What do we know already as a starting point locally and nationally?</p> | <p>Why are these the right people to lead?</p> | <p>What will result in these activities bringing about change?</p> | <p>What is their role in achieving the change?</p> | <p>What makes these outputs achievable?</p> | <p>How will the activities result in these outcomes?</p> <p>What else needs to be in place?</p> | <p>What would lead to these wider benefits?</p> <p>Who would need to be engaged?</p> |