

# Change Points:

**A toolkit for designing  
interventions that unlock  
unsustainable practices**

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# The team

This toolkit has been designed and developed by a multi-disciplinary team of academics, practitioners and policy makers, led by the University of Manchester.



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# Introduction

**The Change Points toolkit supports users in developing interventions that unlock unsustainable practices so that alternative, less intensive patterns of consumption can emerge. It is not like any existing behaviour change toolkit. Rather than focussing on the individual – ‘the customer’, ‘the user’, ‘the consumer’ – this toolkit aids users to explore possibilities for ambitious, innovative forms of intervention that engage in the social and material fabric of everyday life.**

There is growing recognition of the need for rapid and substantial changes to the way in which resources are used in everyday life. In all key resource domains (energy, food, water), organisations are working to find effective ways of transforming patterns of consumption, to reduce the amount of energy that is used to heat and light homes, or to travel for work or entertainment; to reduce water use; to shift diets towards healthy, less resource-intensive produce; or to reduce the amount of waste that is produced and ensure it is disposed of effectively.

Yet unsustainable routines remain surprisingly impervious to interventions that seek to change them, a result of ‘lock-in’. Lock-in occurs because everyday action and the cultural, political and technological context in which it takes place is symbiotic. The context in which behaviour occurs influences the types of behaviour that take place. At the same time, the more people that participate in unsustainable practices, and the more regularly they do so, the stronger the lock-in effect becomes.

Lock-in means that though people may understand the implications of their actions and even have the desire to change; their capacity to act in different ways is limited. But for most people, most of the time, the combination of cultural, political and technological elements that surround them are satisfactory, permitting access to services such as cleanliness, comfort or convenience so effectively that they become invisible or else so taken-for-granted that life without them is difficult to imagine.

If more sustainable patterns of consumption are to emerge, then it is not individual behaviour change that is required, but societal change. The shared cultural, political and technological elements that shape everyday activity must now be reconfigured to support less intensive routines. This is an ambitious aim that stretches the scope of conventional intervention. It calls for recognition of the distributed people, objects and actions that shape everyday resource use, and heightened sensitivity to people’s different situations and vulnerabilities.

This toolkit offers a new way of thinking about how patterns of consumption emerge and may be changed. The process draws on ideas from social practices research and related approaches that offer exciting new insights to the challenge of behaviour change. There is now a large body of research that understands consumption and social change through reference to the dynamics of social practices. We do not attempt to synthesise this information in this toolkit (though for background and further reading see page 17). Instead, this toolkit presents a series of workshop tools designed to translate and apply these insights into usable applications for policy makers and practitioners.



# How it works

## What is this toolkit for?

These are the sorts of questions that we had in mind when developing this toolkit:

- How can we reduce domestic demand for energy and water?
- How can we reduce food waste whilst ensuring food safety?
- How can we encourage people to take shorter / fewer showers?
- How can we reduce the volume of fats, oils and grease disposed of down the drain?
- How can we make hair care less water (and energy) intensive?
- How can we tackle invisible waste streams (e.g. plastics from the bathroom)?

This toolkit enables users to explore innovative and ambitious forms of intervention that respond to questions like these.

You might also be interested in exploring how to increase the uptake and impact of technological interventions (e.g. increase participation in leaky loos projects, increase the uptake of water or energy efficient devices, and encourage the switch to smart meters). If you are, the toolkit will enable you to consider the wider influences on technological uptake, and the routines in which technologies are embroiled.

You may be able to apply the toolkit to other resource related questions, and to explore creative responses to other societal challenges where some form of behavioural change is seen to be desirable (e.g. to address fuel / food poverty, increase access to sanitation, ensure gender parity, or ensure just transitions are pursued). We haven't tested the toolkit for these purposes or problem framings. But encourage you to try!

## How do I use this toolkit?

This toolkit contains instructions designed to guide a workshop process. It enables users to explore the complexity of everyday life and develop innovative policies and interventions that benefit sustainability objectives.

**Exercises:** Facilitator instructions are provided for six exercises. These are based on our own experiences of researching social practices and running workshops. The exercises first open-up the problem space and explore everyday action, before identifying possible routes to intervene and then selecting and refining a number of these into practical action.

**Worksheets:** Worksheets to accompany each exercise are provided at the end of this report. These are optional, intended to provide visual aids and add structure to discussions.

In addition to these, you will need lots (and lots!) of sticky-notes and marker pens, as well as Blu-Tack and flip-charts.

## Set-up

The process will work best if participants are seated at a table large enough they have some personal space, but small enough they can reach a flipchart in its centre. Space to stand and a large blank wall or white board is also desirable.

There is little preparation required but the following may help:

- Prepare an introduction that describes the overall process, the different exercises and styles of thinking (see page 8-9).
- For Exercise 2, 3 and 4: You may wish to use a timer with an audible alert to signal a change in focus for each prompt.
- For Exercise 6: Print a copy of the instructions for each participant, this will allow participants to follow (or lead) the process easily.
- Worksheets: If you chose to use worksheets, print them. If not, consider whether you will use other tools to facilitate discussion.
- Have a flip chart to 'park' questions and concerns that arise. Introduce this at the start of the process and revisit at the end. You could also pose questions like "who else should be involved in this discussion" that participants can respond to if and when ideas arise.

## Common questions

We developed this toolkit in close collaboration with policy-makers and practitioners and the most common questions we encountered are answered here:

### **“How much time will I need?”**

The exercises contained in this toolkit are modular and can be combined in a single workshop or divided over a series. We recommend at least a full day to explore a challenge, examine options for intervention, design a selection of intervention programmes, and to identify necessary steps to implement new thinking. That said the exercises can be adapted to fit as much or as little time as you can afford (each exercise will take around an hour, Exercises 1 and 6 could take slightly less, and Exercise 5 will benefit from more). Overall, more time for these exercises will mean more exploration, leading to higher quality outputs invested with even greater confidence.

### **“How many people should I invite?”**

Our instructions are written with a single group of 3-5 people in mind. They may also be followed by an individual or smaller group. If facilitating a larger group, we recommend that participants are divided into sub-groups of 3-5. This will ensure everyone is able to contribute to discussions. It also allows sub-groups to consider different aspects of a common challenge. It is useful to allow time at the end of each exercise for sub-groups to share ideas.

### **“Why are there so many sticky notes?!”**

Sticky notes are a great tool! They're accessible and encourage quick creative thinking. But your participants will generate a lot. It helps to let them know this, and that sense will be distilled from the mountains of ideas. This is easier if participants only write one or two words per note!

### **“Who should I invite?”**

The toolkit is designed to be used by policy-makers and practitioners that develop and implement policies and/or intervention programmes. The workshop(s) could be carried out in-house or in collaboration with other organisations.

### **Try it and see...**

This toolkit is designed to be flexible, so we encourage you to explore the resources provided to decide what would work best for you and your team. We'd love to hear your feedback!

## Facilitator tips and tricks

Having tried and tested this toolkit, we have the following suggestions to make the most of the process:

### **Creative, critical or constructive?**

Different parts of this toolkit ask participants to think in different ways, incorporating investigative, analytical, creative, and practical modes of thinking to stretch users' understandings of sustainability challenges.

- **Creative thinking:** focus on new ideas with potential value.
- **Critical thinking:** discuss, reason, analyse to clarify ideas.
- **Constructive thinking:** structure ideas to develop purpose.

The toolkit is designed to get beyond the limitations of conventional behaviour change initiatives. As a result, ideas that arise may feel unintuitive, possibly daft. It is important that ideas are not dismissed too soon. Facilitators must encourage participants to share and make note of all ideas, especially the ones which seem 'weird' when first suggested.

### **“Thinking fast”**

There are several stages in this toolkit where participants are required to 'think fast'. For these exercises, let participants know that ideas need to flow quickly. No-one is looking for “the right answer”, nor even a refined one. Clap or use an audible alert to keep the exercises moving.

### **“Silent and solo”**

The purpose of this term is to ensure individuals have a moment to collect their thoughts before group discussion. Some people need time to think in order to contribute effectively, and all participants' are likely to make more considered contributions if given a moment for quiet reflection.

### **“Share and compare”**

Simple! Have participants discuss together the ideas they came up with individually. The facilitator's role here is to ensure everyone is able to contribute, and that everyone's ideas are heard, especially if one person's perspective differs from another.

### **“Group chat”**

The purpose of these 'chats' is to enable participants to work together to discuss ideas or analyse questions. The facilitator's role is to make sure everyone has the opportunity to contribute, and that conversation doesn't become dominated by any one person's agenda. Allow time to talk and repeat the question if necessary to keep conversation moving.

# The Exercises

This toolkit contains six exercises that, when combined, enable participants to examine everyday actions, their resource implications, and possibilities for intervention. Using ideas from social practices research these tools chart the cultural, political and technological context of everyday action, consider the multiple opportunities for change therein, and identify practical pathways for intervention. Each exercise presents a question and explores some answers, gradually building towards outcomes that users should be able to take away and develop into practical intervention or policy pathways.

# 1. Problem Scoping

Develop a shared understanding of the problem, the nature and extent of changes sought, and a vision for success.



IDENTIFY

# 2. Change Points

Chart sequences of activity that shape resource use and waste. Use these to identify where interventions might be targeted.

# 3. Diversity

Examine how routine varies, and why it matters to identify clusters within the population where tailored intervention may be effective.

INVESTIGATE

## 4. Influence Mapping

Identify opportunities for intervention by tracing the social and material foundations of everyday action, and who influences these.

EXPAND

## 5. Reframing

Revisit the problem to identify ambitious new avenues for intervention based on an extended understanding of behaviour.

CREATE

## 6. Ideas into Action

Prepare ideas for implementation by establishing constructive and coherent project plans, and methods for evaluation.

PLAN



# Problem scoping

## 1

This introduction allows participants to build a shared understanding of the challenge they seek to address. It is also an icebreaker, easing people into group discussion. It should feel straightforward to participants. Worksheet 1 can be used to add structure.

### Stage 1 Define the challenge

Your workshop has probably been organised around a specific challenge, but before you begin, have participants define this challenge for themselves and clarify their understanding of it.

Silent and solo: Allow participants two minutes to consider the following questions and make a note of ideas:

1a. What is the challenge you'll focus on today?

Alternatively, if the challenge is pre-defined:

1b. What does this challenge mean to you? Why is this important?

Share and compare: Ask participants to share their ideas with the group, and agree on the key aspects of the challenge. Begin to complete worksheet 1.

### Stage 2 Set the scene

Silent and solo: Allow participants two minutes to consider the following:

2. What would be a successful outcome from interventions?

3. How do peoples' current practices contribute to this challenge?

Share and compare: Ask participants to share ideas and agree on key points.

### Stage 3 Identifying the change

Group chat: Ask participants to discuss and answer the following:

4. What is the critical change that must occur in order to resolve your identified challenge?

For the remainder of the workshop participants will examine different aspects of this challenge, and consider how their role in supporting this change.

#### **Additional discussion point: Where are we now?**

Group chat: Ask participants to consider the following questions:

- How do current initiatives try to influence people's everyday practices?
- What does and doesn't work in these initiatives?
- What is needed to increase the effectiveness of these initiatives?

**Participants have now defined their challenge and established a sense of the direction and extent of changes sought. The next exercise begins to unravel how this challenge relates to everyday action and wider cultural, political and technological developments.**



# 2

# Change Points

Change points are distinct moments in people's routines where their actions have consequences for the policy problems. They are also moments where change could be effected. Change points reveal the connections between peoples' routines, the actions of others, and wider cultural, political, and technological factors. Exercise 2 identifies sequences of change points to trace the influences on action and identify opportunities for intervention.

## Stage 1 Charting everyday action

Silent and solo: Allow participants five minutes to consider the following. Be patient. Remind participants that the aim is to generate many ideas, even if they feel peripheral or unusual.

1. Thinking about how people go about their days, what do they do that's relevant to the focal change point that you've identified?

Offer prompts, allowing participants a minute to consider each. For example:

"What do people do ...?"

- At different times of day, week or year?
- At home, work or school?
- For leisure? Outside? Or in company?

## Stage 2 Identifying change points

Group chat: Ask participants to discuss their ideas and cluster common themes. As a group, have them identify up to five and add these to a flip-chart (or use Worksheet 2). If they have a sequence, plot it.

## Stage 3 Exploring connections

Group chat: Ask participants to describe what people do at each of the selected Change Points and consider how their actions have consequences for the challenge discussed in Exercise 1.

## Stage 4 Identifying desirable futures

Group chat: For each shortlisted Change Point, have participants discuss the following and indicate their thoughts on their flipchart or worksheet.

- 4a. What do you hope to see more of at each Change Point?
- 4b. What do you hope to see less of?
- 4c. What could people be doing differently?

**Participants have examined how people's routines relate to the challenge they identified in Exercise 1. They have identified some opportunities for intervention, and discussed the direction of change they intend to support. Display the outputs, these will be returned to in Exercise 4. The next exercise examines variation in people's everyday routines.**

# 3

# Recognising diversity

People's routines vary intensely. Yet, thanks to overarching influences such as work schedules, shared infrastructure and social norms, there are recognisable patterns of behaviour. This exercise enables participants to identify groups whose different routines affect their resource use and consider the impacts of intervention on potentially vulnerable groups.

## Stage 1 Recognising diversity

Silent and solo: Allow participants five minutes to consider the following and make a note of ideas. Remind participants that the aim is to think creatively.

1. Thinking about why, how and how often people undertake the actions identified in Exercise 2, identify different types of behaviour.

Allow participants a minute to consider each of the following prompts:

- High impact
- Depending on physical ability
- In a hurry
- Low impact
- Unusually
- At their leisure
- Multi-cultural
- Old-fashioned

## Stage 2 Share and compare

Group chat: Ask participants to share ideas.

2. Select up to four different types of behaviour to focus on, and for each describe what people do and the differences that matter.

## Stage 3 Identifying desirable futures

Group chat: Discuss how these different practices relate to the challenge identified in Exercise 1. Ask participants to consider:

- 3a. How common is this practice? Is it becoming more common, or less?
- 3b. Which practices would you hope to encourage and discourage?
- 3c. What could people do differently?

## Stage 4 Understanding diversity

Group chat: Ask participants, discuss whether the people behaving in this way share any common characteristics (for example: Are they particularly time scarce? Do they any social or cultural expectations? Is there anything significant about their family, home, or where they live?)

## Stage 5 Recognising vulnerabilities

Group chat: Have participants consider whether there are risks associated with changing this behaviour? Could doing things differently cause unintended impacts (positive or negative)? Who for?

**Participants' have identified patterns of practice and extended their understanding of individual difference, the types of change they want to see, and where potential unintended consequences might lie. Give each pattern a name and display the outputs to inform Exercise 4.**

# Influence mapping

## 4

This exercise encourages participants to map the influences on action at each change point and/or for different patterns, before focussing on designing interventions in Exercise 5. It guides participants in exploring the connections between individual behaviour and wider cultural, political and technological developments. Challenge participants to identify as many influences as possible, nothing is too trivial.

### Stage 1 Taking stock

Have participants review the outputs from Exercise 2 and 3.

### Stage 2 Mapping influences

Silent and solo: Ask participants to consider the following question. Have them make a note of each influence on separate sticky notes.

1. "What shapes what people do?"

Think fast: After an initial five minutes begin to prompt, allowing participants a minute to consider each of the following. Encourage them to get creative:

- Time
- Nature
- Ability
- Objects and material things
- Images & representations
- Meanings & expectations
- Within the home
- Outside the home
- The body

### Stage 3 Cluster and expand

Share and compare: Have participants discuss their ideas and add them to a flipchart, clustering related ideas. Then, focusing separately on each change point and/or pattern previously identified, ask them to ensure they have captured as many influences as possible.

### Stage 4 *Who* influences action?

Group chat: Ask participants to identify *who* influences action, whether they do so intentionally or not. Add these to the flipchart using a different colour sticky note.

### Stage 5 Stand back and discuss

Group chat: Allow participants time to reflect on the influences and actors that they have identified. Consider the following:

- Which are the most influential?
- Which are the most overlooked in existing initiatives?

**Participants should now have a very broad understanding everyday routine and the various influences on individual action. The outputs may appear very broad, but these are now used as the basis to generate ideas for intervention.**

# Reframing

## 5

**Building on the previous outputs, this exercise supports participants in developing ambitious new ideas for intervention. Participants will select and develop two or more initiatives to achieve the change identified in Exercise 1. The longer participants spend on this process the more refined these ideas will be and the more confidence participants will have in them. At least an hour is needed, ideally more.**

**Preparation: Take a break before this exercise. Display all previous outputs and have copies of worksheet 5, and blank wall space available.**

### Stage 1 Generate ideas

Silent and solo: Give participants five minutes to consider the following question. Challenge them to produce eight distinct ideas.

1. "What could be done to encourage the change identified in Exercise 1?"

After five minutes, prompt participants to generate up to eight new ideas:

- Societal expectations
- Time
- Things in the home
- Things on the body
- Cities
- Things outside the home
- "The weirdest/ most imaginative intervention you can envision?"

### Stage 2 Share and compare

Ask participants to stand together and share ideas. Cluster common themes.

### Stage 3 Refine

Have participants discuss the relevance of each cluster (and any outliers) to the previous outputs from the exercises. Groups may need to divide into pairs if time is short or there are many clusters. Consider the following:

2a. How would the proposed initiative engage with wider cultural, political and technological developments that shape people's routines? Refer to Exercise 4.

2b. What would be the targets of this initiative? Does it support change at a specific change point, or practice variant? Refer to Exercise 2 & 3.

### Stage 4 Select ideas to pursue

Allow participants to discuss and select two to three ideas to develop further. The selected ideas should be ambitious, novel and reflect earlier discussions. Remember: ideas can be 'parked' to consider at a later date, so aim to focus on ideas that feel stretching, exciting, and not too similar to existing initiatives.

### Stage 5 Clarify

Have participants complete worksheet 5.

**Facilitator note:** Discourage the selection of ideas that; a) position consumers as the key change agent (e.g. contain a consumer-focussed call to action or lack a partnership model); or b) provide information (e.g. via a letter or calculator), without any embodied learning experience. It is not impossible that initiatives with these elements could deliver deep changes, but research shows initiatives are likely to have greater long-term effect if they also engage with the cultural, political and material factors that influence everyday action (see page 17).

**Participants should now have at least two ambitious and imaginative ideas for intervention, grounded in a thorough understanding of every day action.**

# Ideas into action

## 6

This exercise encourages participants to commit to a specific idea from the workshop process and identify the next steps to put plans into action. This may refer to one or more of the outputs from Exercise 5, but could also be used progress a general idea arising within a previous Exercise. Each stage asks users to consider the practical tasks involved in responding meaningfully and ambitiously to the challenges identified in Exercise 1. Worksheet 6 is a copy of these questions for participants to lead their own planning process.

### Stage 1 Laying foundations

Group chat: Ask participants to consider the following questions:

- What do you need to know / what needs to happen before you begin?
- How could you develop a case for support?
- Are any existing timelines significant to your launch?

### Stage 2 Identifying action points

Group chat: Ask participants to identify actions:

- What are the deliverables? When will they happen?
- Who can you work with? How will you establish a relationship?

### Stage 3 Thinking through evaluation

Group chat: Ask participants to consider the following questions:

- What are the signs of the desired change occurring?
- How will you know that this initiative has been successful in two, five and ten years' time?
- What are the warning signs that the desired change is not occurring?
- What data is available to monitor change?

### Stage 4 Reflecting on the process

Group chat: Ask participants to reflect on the outputs from Exercise 1:

- How will this initiative change the unsustainable practices identified?
- How will it contribute to addressing the challenge identified?
- What is currently missing from your initiative / what are its limitations?
- What could you do differently?

### Stage 5 Establishing commitment

Group chat: Ask participants to consider the following:

- What feels exciting about the plans you've discussed?
- What are you most committed to?
- Are there aspects that still feel uncertain or doubtful?
- What will you do next?

**Participants now have at least two specific ideas for intervention, and have thought through some of the practical steps needed to implement these within their organisation.**



# Behind the scenes

This toolkit is based on ideas from social practices research and allied approaches found in human geography and sociology. It translates the insights from this now expansive body of literature to inform policy and industry practice. Social practices research shifts attention from individual behaviour to a systematic consideration of the multiple cultural, political and material factors that shape what people routinely do. In doing so, the approach extends behaviour change approaches and calls for interventions that confront the complexity of everyday life.

## Intervening to change consumption

People seldom 'choose' to consume resources such as water or energy, nor directly consider the consequences of everyday action. Instead resources are used as practices (e.g. cleaning, bathing or cooking) are carried out to achieve certain ends, for example getting ready for work or caring for a family. These ends are not fixed, but instead influenced by social norms and expectations, as well as people's routines. The options available to achieve these ends depend on what infrastructure is provided, as well as the objects and appliances in our homes. Social practices research focuses on how these social, material and habitual dynamics connect.

Bringing about change in routines requires interventions that engage with these dynamics. There is guidance on how to reimagine intervention within the literature on social practices and a growing number of organisations have become interested in the practical applications of these ideas. To date however, insights from this body of literature have yet to be systematically put into practice. This toolkit does exactly that, building on cutting-edge social science research to support users in developing ambitious, evidence-based intervention programs that reflect the most up-to-date understanding of resource consumption.

The tools provided embed three themes: Embracing Complexity; Tracing Connections; and Recognising Diversity. These themes are the backbones of the theory behind the toolkit and are described here, with suggestions for further reading provided at the end of this section.

## Embracing complexity

**Key point:** The shift from people - and their attitudes and behaviours - to practices is a purposeful move, designed to draw attention to the cultural, political and material factors that influence everyday action.

These factors include **social elements**, such as conventions, expectations and meanings. For example, how we heat our homes is not only founded on an understanding of temperature, comfort and heat. It relates to what is normal, affordable and acceptable, what we consider to be appropriate given the other people and pets we might live with, our ideas of 'homeliness', and what we perceive visitors to our homes might expect. These understandings are not static but constantly evolving, informed by our everyday experiences, and wider social and technological circumstances. Consequently, what we do is not only based on these social understandings, but also contributes to their evolution.

As well as these social factors, everyday action is also influenced by **the material worlds** that we inhabit, which shapes what is possible and probable under specific circumstances. These include the material elements involved in infrastructures (e.g. pipes, heaters, taps, and fridges) that mediate how resources are made accessible to consumers. They also include objects that create demand for products and services, and those that determine how demand is fulfilled. These include spaces and objects in the home, such as gardens, airing cupboards, cold storage and baths as well as things on or of the body like clothing and hair. Though the material context may seem relatively stable, change occurs continuously, with slower changes (e.g. to infrastructures) influenced by faster changes (e.g. to objects and technologies and their use).

Overlaying all these aspects are **the spatial patterns and temporal rhythms** of everyday life. That what people do, at any given time, is inseparable from the broader routines that structure their days, weeks and years, and the practices in which people participate. These routines have both spatial and temporal geographies, and so choreograph patterns of activity in ways which both enable and constrain individual capacity for action.

To effectively bring about changes in consumption, or 'change behaviour', interventions must not only recognise the complexity of everyday action, but actively participate in its configuration. This requires that understand of the myriad influences on individual routines and design holistic modes of intervention that create space for more sustainable routines to emerge.

## Tracing connections

**Key point:** What happens in peoples' homes is connected to what goes on outside the home and, therefore, to the actions of many other people and organisations.



The principal approach on which this toolkit builds is the *Change Points* approach. Change Points outlines a process to systematically trace sequences of interrelated activities that influence how practices are performed, and their outcomes for resource use and waste production. For example, while the act of wasting food might appear as an isolated behaviour; it connects to the ways in which people buy, store, prepare, eat and dispose of food.

Each of these moments - buying, preparing, eating, storing and disposing - is a change point; an instance in which multiple possible courses of action could be pursued, each with different direct or indirect consequences in terms of the use of resources or production of waste. In each moment there are multiple influences on individual action, and many actors who have capacity to influence the direction of action undertaken. Although most food is wasted in people's homes, several other people and organisations (from supermarkets to celebrity chefs) help configure the food-related activities that ultimately result in waste. It follows that responsibilities for the waste attributed to households and consumers are in fact distributed across a range of actors and organisations.

Tracing change points immediately highlights the connections and overlaps between different policy concerns. It broadens the view of the direct and indirect causes of unsustainable practices. Rather than focusing on small measurable changes to tightly defined behaviours, Change Points emphasises connections between household practices and wider cultural, political, technological and infrastructural developments.

To effectively bring about change in everyday consumption, or 'change behaviour', the Change Points approach proposes that interventions must observe the interconnectedness of everyday practices. This requires that we develop ways of tracing the sequences of ordinary activities in which people engage to identify opportunities for intervention and understand the desirable pathways for future action. It also requires that questions are asked about the locus of responsibility for negative outcomes and who is best placed to facilitate positive change.

## **Recognising diversity**

**Key point:** What people do in their day-to-day lives varies substantially. Acknowledging diversity helps us to identify different opportunities for intervention, and avoid designing interventions that are at best ineffective, or at worst expose vulnerable people to unintended

outcomes, or cast judgement on the (in)actions of particular groups of people.

When we explore practices – whether that be in a detailed study of peoples' lives, or a large survey exploring population level patterns – it is obvious that there is both much diversity in what people do, and observable, societal patterns. This diversity tends to get lost, or overly simplified, in favour of the idea of an average consumer. It is popular to develop segmentation strategies, as a way of understanding differentiation. Segmentation creates typologies of how people consume resources based on statistics, such as their environmental attitudes or basic socio-demographic characteristics. Such characteristics are fairly poor predictors of how and why different people consume resources in different ways, and it is uncommon that such statistics directly identify opportunities for intervention certain ways.

Social practices research has a different way of thinking about the variation and diversity in everyday practices. Changes in practices may emerge due to changing life stages or circumstances (e.g. having a child, which introduces new commitments and routines, or changing jobs which influences a commute); as a result of infrastructure of our houses and cities (e.g. whether the rental house you live in has a shower or a bath); and the wider cultural norms that influence everyday action (e.g. gendered norms, social and cultural expectations, working and family lives). Practice-based research draws attention to the diversity of resource consumption in our societies, and the patterns that emerge from that diversity.

This perspective reframes how intervention is conceptualised. That is, to effectively bring about change in everyday consumption, or 'change behaviour' it is necessary to acknowledge that there is no silver bullet. Recognising diversity helps to create more informed intervention programs that might have greater effect in larger proportions of the population. Furthermore, situating discussions about intervention within wider understandings of societal diversity enables practitioners to remain sensitive and responsive to the differentiated experiences of vulnerable communities.

## **Reimagining intervention**

Practice-based research points to interventions that are both more ambitious in their scope and more humble in their objectives. The tools in this toolkit extend beyond the usual remit of behaviour change, but in a way that complements existing activities and raises awareness of important factors that these typically neglect. By enabling the

identification of the sequences of action that contribute to policy problems, acknowledging the diversity of everyday experience, and mapping the social, cultural, and material relations within which actions occur the toolkit considers how to change practices systematically.

## Further reading

Papers and reports in this list are all open access and free to read online. Books, or sections of books, may be available to read online or are otherwise available to order from the publisher.

Browne, A.L., Medd, W., Pullinger, M., and Anderson, B., 2014. Distributed Demand and the sociology of water efficiency. In: K. Adeyeye, ed. *Water efficiency in buildings: Theory and practice*. UK: John Wiley & Sons, pp. 74–84.

Evans, D., 2018. Rethinking material cultures of sustainability: Commodity consumption, cultural biographies, and following the thing. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 43 (1), 110–121.

Foden, M., Browne, A.L., Evans, D.M., Sharp, L., and Watson, M., 2018. The water-energy-food nexus at home: New opportunities for policy interventions in household sustainability. *The Geographical Journal*, 0, 1–13.

Hampton, S. and Adams, R., 2018. Behavioural economics vs social practice theory: Perspectives from inside the United Kingdom government. *Energy Research and Social Science*, 46, 214–224.

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Hoolohan, C., McLachlan, C., Mander, S. (2016) Trends and drivers of end-use energy demand and the implications for managing energy in food supply chains: Synthesising insights from the social sciences, *Sustainable Production and Consumption*, 8, 1-17.

Kuijjer, L., 2014. *Implications of Social Practice Theory for Sustainable Design*. PhD Thesis. de Technische Universiteit Delft.

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Sharp, L., 2006. Water demand management in England and Wales: Constructions of the domestic water user. *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management*, 49 (6), 869–889.

Shove, E., Pantzar, M., and Watson, M., 2012. *The Dynamics of Social Practice: Everyday Life and how it changes*. London: SAGE Publications.

Strengers, Y. and Maller, C., 2015. *Social practices, Intervention and Sustainability: beyond Behaviour Change*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Vihalemm, T., Keller, M., and Küsel, M., 2015. *From Intervention to Social Change: A guide to reshaping everyday practices*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing.

Watson M (2012) How theories of practice can inform transition to a decarbonised transport system. *Journal of Transport Geography* 24: 488–496.

# The Worksheets

To complement each exercise, we've designed a worksheet to add structure, and encourage participants to take ownership of the process and their ideas. These are optional, intended to provide visual aids to guide discussions. Several are designed to be printed large so that groups can work together to share and refine ideas (e.g. Exercise 1 which complements A3 printing; and Exercise 2 and 4 which suit A1 or larger). They are all simple, so that they may be replicated on a white board or flipchart.



# PROBLEM SCOPING

1a) What is the challenge you'll focus on today?

1b) Why is this important? What does it mean to you personally?

<input type="checkbox"/>	.....
<input type="checkbox"/>	.....
<input type="checkbox"/>	.....
<input type="checkbox"/>	.....
<input type="checkbox"/>	.....

2) What will success look like?

3) How do people's practices contribute to this challenge?

<input type="checkbox"/>	.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	.....
<input type="checkbox"/>	.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	.....
<input type="checkbox"/>	.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	.....

4) What is the critical change that must occur in order to resolve your identified challenge?





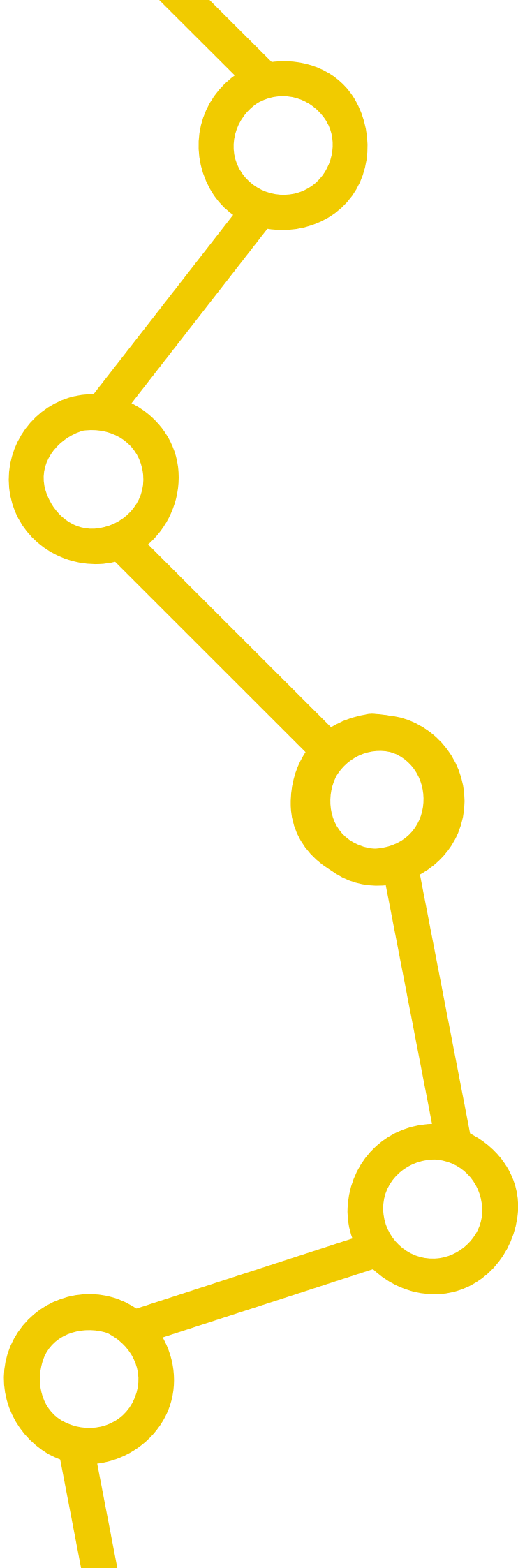
# CHANGE POINTS

Stage 1: Discuss: Thinking about how they go about their days, what do people do that's relevant to your focal change point? (e.g. getting ready, cooking, waste disposal).

Stage 2: Choose one sticky note colour and identify up to five key change points. Add these to the chart below, in sequence if they have one.

Stage 3: Choose another colour sticky note and describe what occurs at each Change Point, related to your identified problem.

Stage 4: For each Change Point, indicate  
a) what you hope to see more of;  
b) what do you hope to see less of; and  
c) what people could be doing differently?





# RECOGNISING DIVERSITY

YOU'LL NEED ONE SHEET FOR EACH PATTERN

DESCRIBE WHAT PEOPLE DO THAT IS DIFFERENT?

.....

.....

.....

WHY IS THIS OF INTEREST?

For example, is it very common? Is it dying out?

Do you want to see more or less of it?

<input type="checkbox"/>	.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	.....
<input type="checkbox"/>	.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	.....
<input type="checkbox"/>	.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	.....

DO THE PEOPLE WHO DO THIS SHARE ANY CHARACTERISTICS?

.....

.....

.....

Are there any risks associated with changing this behaviour?

Could doing things differently cause unintended impacts

(positive or negative)? Who for?

<input type="checkbox"/>	.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	.....
<input type="checkbox"/>	.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	.....
<input type="checkbox"/>	.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	.....

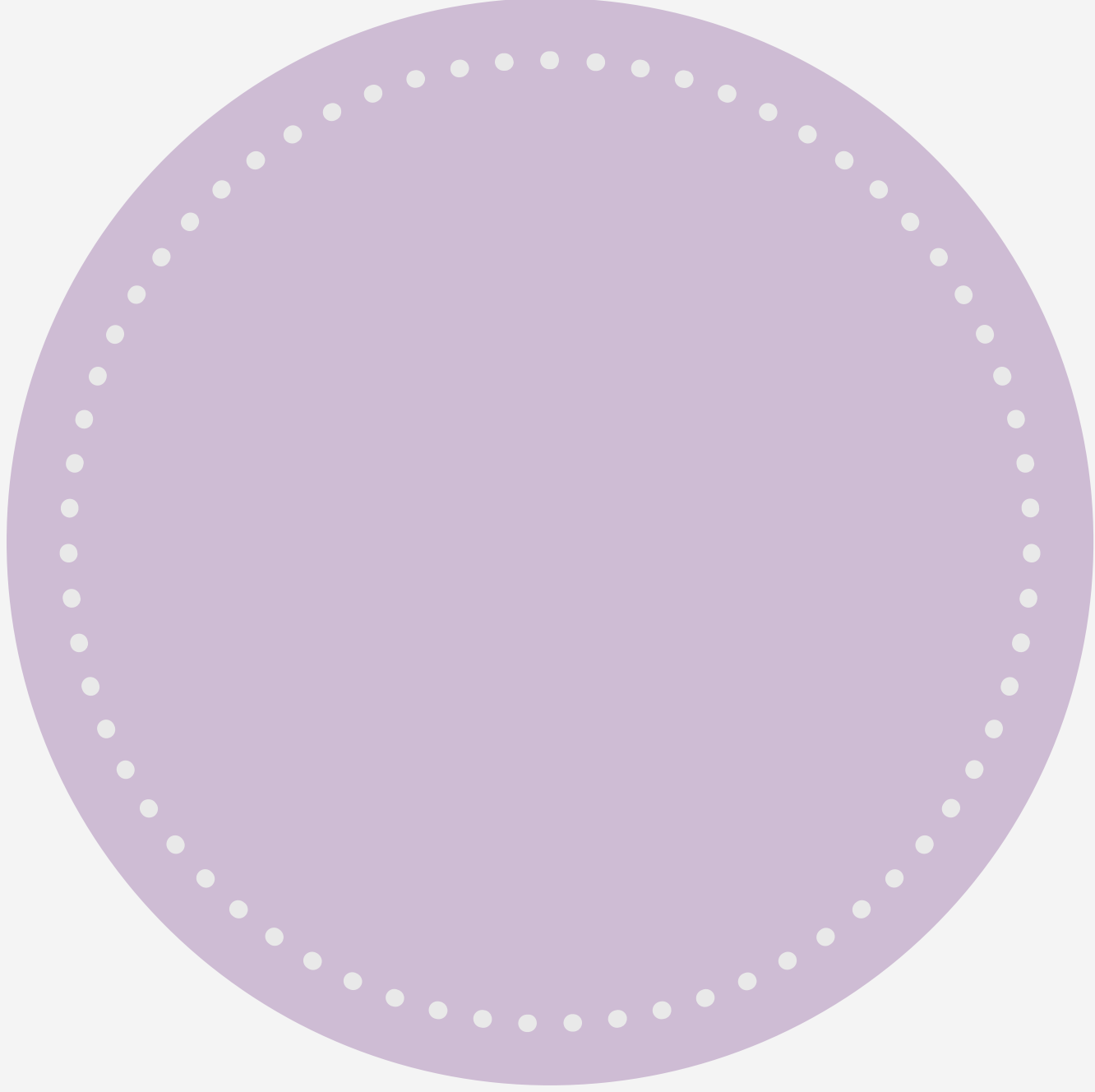
NAME:

.....



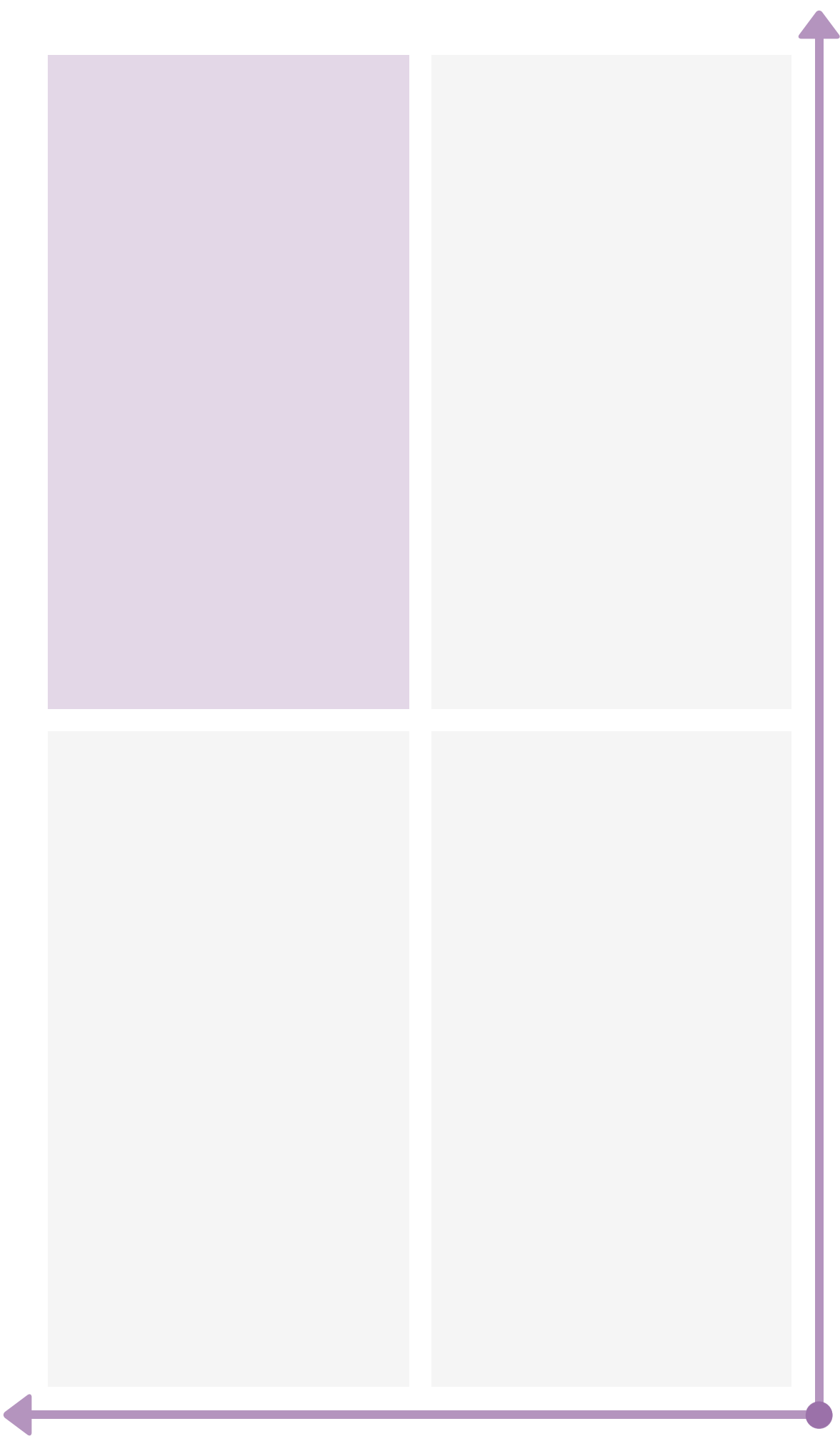
## INFLUENCE MAPPING

What influences what people do (inner circle), and who has responsibility / ability to shape these influences (outer circle).



## INFLUENCE MAPPING

For the influences and actors that you have identified, consider those that are most influential, and most overlooked in existing initiatives.



# CLARIFYING IDEAS

The ideas you have generated so far may feel a long way from the discussions you had at the start, but they are built on strong foundations. The following helps to reconnect the dots.

You'll need one of these sheets for each intervention.

## A) What is the change that you are trying to achieve?

Refer to the outputs from Exercise 1.

## B) How would the proposed initiative engage with wider cultural, political and technological influences on people's routines? Refer to Exercise 4.

- |         |         |
|---------|---------|
| ● _____ | ● _____ |
| ● _____ | ● _____ |
| ● _____ | ● _____ |

## C) What would be the targets of this initiative? Does it support change at a specific change point, or practice variant? Refer to Exercise 2 and 3.

- |         |         |
|---------|---------|
| ● _____ | ● _____ |
| ● _____ | ● _____ |

## D) What will you do? Describe the intervention. Consider all outputs to specify how the desired change will be supported.

## E) Who could you work with in order for this to be more effective? What could they do? Refer to Exercise 4.

- |         |         |
|---------|---------|
| ● _____ | ● _____ |
| ● _____ | ● _____ |
| ● _____ | ● _____ |





# IDEAS INTO ACTION

## Stage 1: Laying foundations

- What do you need to know / needs to happen before you can begin?
- How could you develop a case for support?
- Are any existing timelines significant to your launch?




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## Stage 2: Identifying actions

- What are the deliverables?
- When will they happen?
- Who can you work with? How will you establish a relationship? (refer to Exercise 4, Stage 4.)

## Stage 3: Thinking about evaluation

- What are the signs of the desired change occurring?
- How will you know that this initiative has been successful in two, five and ten years' time?
- What are the warning signs that the desired change is not occurring?
- What data is available to you to monitor? (Are there partnerships through which you might gain access to further data?)




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## Stage 4: Reflect

Look again at the outputs from Exercise 1.

- How will this initiative change the unsustainable practices identified?
- How will it contribute to addressing the sustainability challenges identified?
- What is currently missing from your initiative / what are its limitations?
- What could you do differently?

## Stage 5: Build commitment

Look again at the outputs from Exercise 1.

- What feels exciting about the plans you've discussed?
- What are you most committed to?
- Are there aspects that still feel uncertain or doubtful?
- What will you do next?




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Please cite this report as:

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