Learning Review
Summary

CR Stocks-Rankin

Introduction

In order to evaluate the learning during the 'Set Up' and 'Discovering Your Communities Experiences' phase of the project (https://bit.ly/2ZmIrjg) a learning review was conducted. The following pages share a summary of some of the insights offered from project participants which answer the following questions:

1 → **Impacts**
What is changing for people involved in the project?

2 → **Drivers for change**
What processes have supported people to make changes?

For the full, unedited report visit: https://bit.ly/3m0F8Il.

## What is the Relationships First project?

Relationships First is a participatory design project which supports care leavers and members of the workforce in Falkirk Council co-design services which put love and relationships at the heart of leaving care service provision. This project was initiated as a "demonstration project". Based on the interviews with team members, the demonstration nature of this project seems to be enabling participants to be the change they'd like to see. To the evaluator, this movement seems to be crux of a "demonstration project". This suggests to the evaluator that the Relationships First project has been operating on an implicit assumption that system change is best served by personal and interpersonal changes. A final evaluation will be able to demonstrate total impacts, but it seems that the project is demonstrating the following pathway to system change: change the personal, change the relationship, change the system.

What is a learning review?

The term learning review has been used to clarify that evidence in this report is focused on team members' learning. This research has used appreciative inquiry which helps people learn about their strengths so that they know what to build on, whilst sharing evidence about tensions which can be used to support reflection and development.

What evidence are we working with?

The evidence presented in this summary is based on insights from 21 interviews with everyone involved in the project; people with experience of leaving care (Citizens), people who work for Falkirk Council (Public Servants); and people who are supporting, leading designing and facilitating the project (Co-ordination Crew/ Project Leads).
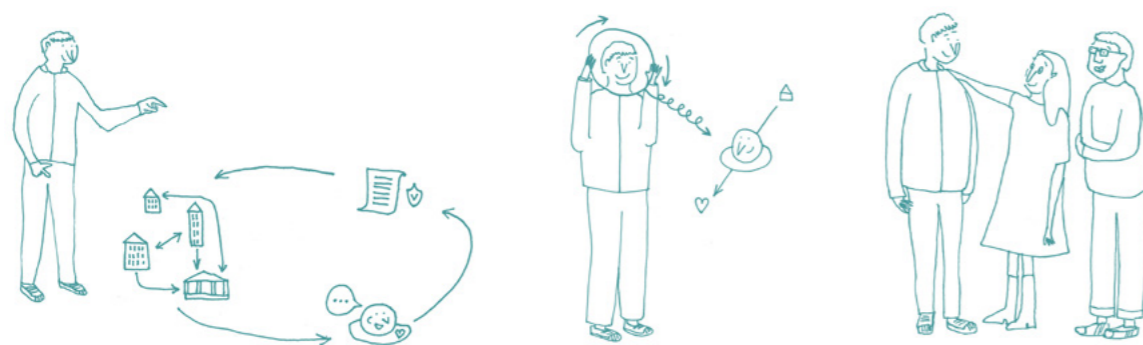
About the author

Dr. Catherine-Rose Stocks-Rankin is a researcher, knowledge mobiliser and evaluator. She has expertise in both the theory and practice of knowledge translation and evidence into action. She describes her methods as 'creating a bridge between policy, practice and community with a focus on generating evidence that leads to meaningful social change.' Find out more at LinkedIn and connect @thisiscrsr.

Part 1: Impacts

What is changing for people involved in the project?

The learning that team members have undertaken is crucial to the success of the project, which depends on collaboration, group working, and co-design as methods.

Team members described three key impacts for the changes they experienced. First, they spoke directly and indirectly about what they have been **learning**. Second, team members described **changing their own mindsets** and behaviours, as well as their way of connecting with others. In this way, team members are moving beyond just imagining new possibilities and opportunities for change, beyond the way 'things have always' been done, and beyond the 'hidden rules' of relationships as they exist today. They are moving into a living example of how things can be. Third, the experience of forming and developing **relationships and connections** offered space for the meaningful development of trust.

The insights that participants shared were rich in emotion and very reflective. This indicates that participants were taking part in a change process - in something that was changing them as people and changing their perspectives.

Learning

New insights have been gained about the care system, leadership, co-design, Falkirk Council and its readiness for change. Learning seems to have had the following features:

→ Learning about the **system**, i.e. legislation and policy, organisation of services, and experiences of people who have accessed care.

→ Learning about the **tools** that can change the system.

→ Learning about **one's self and one's capacity** to make change.

→ Learning about groups and **how people come together** to make change.

→ A challenge for learning has been the **emotional work**.

→ Learning is enabled by **reflection**.
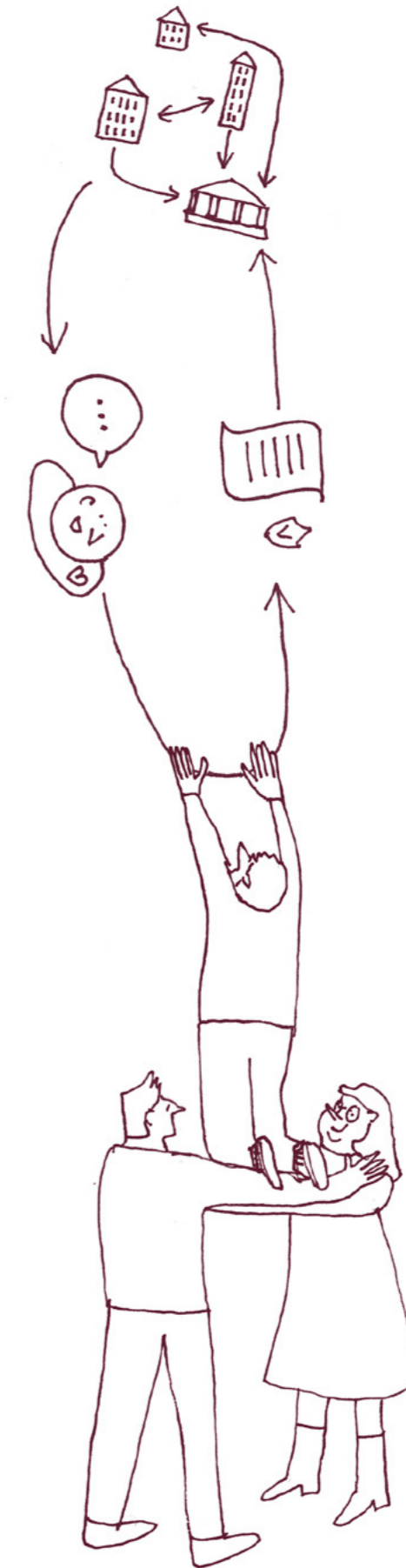
Learning about groups and how people come together to make change.

Changing mindsets

Deep personal reflection leading to a changed mindset and changed behaviours. Changing mindsets seems to have had the following features:

→ Changing **perceptions** about the diversity of care experiences and that many factors affect the care system.

→ Changing mindset through adopting **more non-judgemental approaches** to other people and their circumstances.

→ Changing mindset around **one's role and purpose**.

→ A challenge for changing mindsets is **uncertainty**.

→ Changing mindset has been enabled by the **combination of personal and professional experience** on this project.
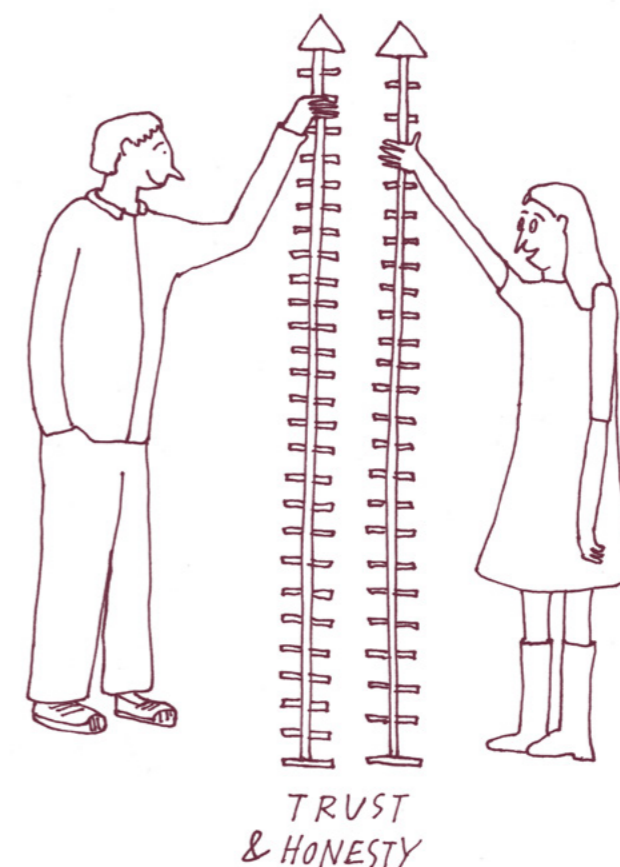
Relationships and connection

Meaningful development of trust with others in the project team leading to strong working relationships, and even family-like connections. Feature of relationships and connection in this project include:

→ One of the most significant findings to emerge is the sense that for some Citizens, the relationships they are forming resemble a **family**.

→ Relationships and connections have been strengthened by the **level of honesty** that exists in the group, and their ability to have disagreements and work through them.

→ A challenge for relationships and connection is the **different perceptions** of these relationships being family or work like.

→ Relationships and connections have been enabled by the **Working Together agreement** and **WhatsApp Group**.
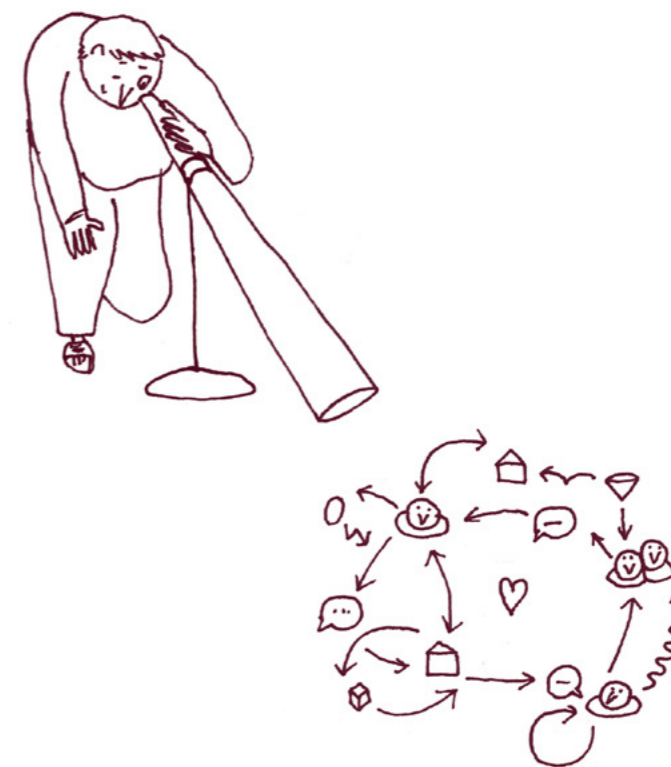
Changing perceptions about the diversity of care experiences and that many factors affect the care system.

TRUST & HONESTY

Relationships and connections have been strengthened by the level of honesty that exists in the group, and their ability to have disagreements and work through them.

Part 2: Drivers

What's driving these changes?

As a demonstration project, the process of the Relationships First project has a significant role to play in the impacts that team members are experiencing.

Team members described three core drivers for the changes they experienced. First, the importance of **time for preparation**. Second, the diversity of knowledge, **life experience and personal experience**, which is being shared as part of the project. Third, the role of **coordination** to ensure that the project will make wider changes on the care system.

The drivers for change that team members described are emotional and reflexive, which is in keeping with the change process that people are experiencing.

Time for preparation

Time for preparation has the following features on this project:

→ For the Public Servants, preparation was focused on ensuring that the workforce representatives had sufficient **knowledge** of the care system, the kinds of experiences that can occur within the care system and the transitions to and from that system of support.

→ For the Citizen Team, preparation seems to have be focused on **confidence-building** for the team, to ensure that Citizens were comfortable and prepared to bring their knowledge of the care system into the work with the Public Servants.

→ A challenge for preparation has been the **different levels of readiness** for group members.

→ An enabler for preparation has been **strong motivation** amongst team members and **good beginning**.
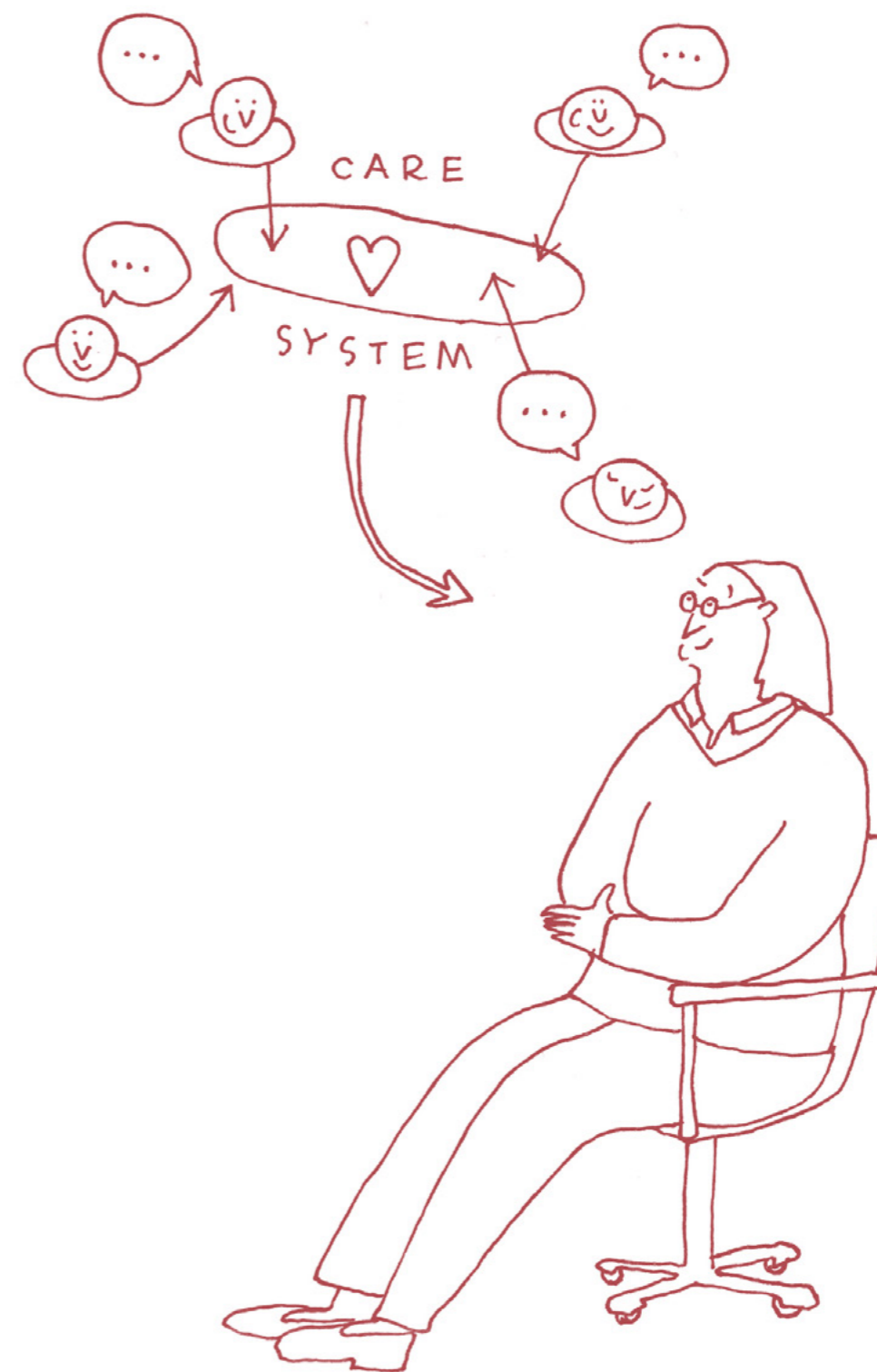
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# Different kinds of knowledge and experience in the project team

Knowledge and experience has the following features on this project:

→ The knowledge and experience that people brought to this project is based on their **life experience**.

→ Many people in the project have knowledge which is rooted in **lived experience** of the care system, kinship care, and are carers themselves.

→ Public Servants and the Coordination Crew are bringing **practice-based knowledge**.

→ A challenge for using this knowledge is the issue of **representation**.

→ Enablers for using this knowledge is **translation and the diversity of group members**.

Coordination

Coordination has the following features on this project:

→ **Coordination** has an instrumental role to play in facilitating, responding to need, planning ahead, securing strategic support and communicating about the project.

→ Members of the Coordination Crew, like the rest of the project's membership, are **motivated by a strong commitment to changing the care system, and changing power imbalances**.

→ Coordination involves a **focus on the day-to-day** projec **impact** on the Council.

→ A challenge for coordination is **balancing responsiveness and 'sticking to the plan'**.

→ An enabler for coordination is the ability to **communicate the value of experiential learning**.
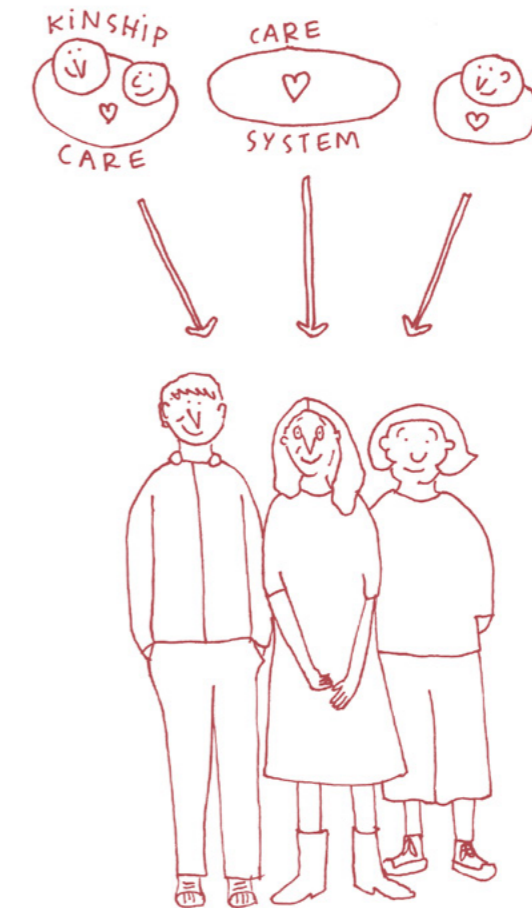
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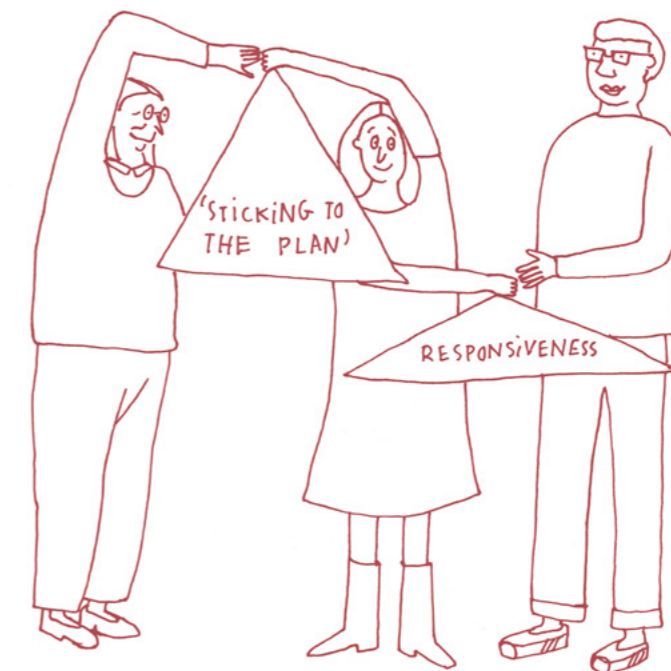
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