

IF NOT  
NOW,  
WHEN?

# Citizen. Community. System.

Mayday's Strengths-based Area Strategy - creating fair and human public service systems alongside people currently facing the most barriers and being let down by public services.



Mayday Trust is a charity and company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales.  
Charity Registration Number: 1035524 Company Registration Number: 2911222

# Who are we?

Mayday Trust is a small organisation with HUGE ambition, drawing on over ten years of listening to and learning from people navigating public services and seeking help through tough times. We strive to end the negative impact these systems can have on people's lives and create a fairer and more human alternative.

Through the following slides, we will share more about why we believe change is needed and our vision of achieving it through our Strengths-based Area Strategy.





# The Inequalities Challenge

Public services work well for most people, most of the time.

But current systems **consistently fail** some people:



Access to support, and outcomes, are worse for some minoritised groups



When people have multiple support needs and/or spend a long time in service systems, the system can become part of the problem, as it keeps them apart from 'ordinary life'. People can cycle in and out of crisis.

For these groups of people, outcomes are created by systems, not by any one service.



# Service and care 'pathways' can be narrow and fixed

You're going through a tough time

We choose your out-comes

We fix X before we can help you with Y

We track your progress

We close your case

A service's next step may not be what's important to the person.

When people are on multiple service pathways they get pulled in different directions. **The system itself becomes the problem.**

# People who can't see themselves in services often become excluded from help

What good looks like to services isn't always important or relevant to people, particularly people from groups and communities who weren't part of designing that pathway.

These dysfunctional relationships with services can lead to people being labelled as having '**Severe and Multiple Disadvantage**', being '**hard to reach**' or becoming '**High Intensity Users**' of emergency services.

Some people are repeatedly offered services which don't work for them, or remain stuck in services designed to '*move them on*'. Others, often out of frustration, stop engaging with services, stop paying their council tax, or engage in anti-social behaviour.





“I don’t need two years of key working just because I’m homeless. All I need to be able to get my forklift licence so I can get a job and move out with my partner and new baby.”

Wisdom from the Street, Mayday Trust 2011





# What is the alternative?

We can never simplify service pathways enough to be easy for people who need to navigate complexity in their lives and complex service systems.

Instead, we tackle inequalities from the ground up:

1

Use **equalities data & deep listening** to identify who's being most let down. With community organisations, find individuals from those groups.

2

Use Coaching to build **trusting relationships**, identify **meaningful goals** and **co-design support** that enables people to move on.

3

Use System Convening to identify **themes** from individual work. Bring the **learning** - and **people** themselves - back into service design and workforce development.

# 1

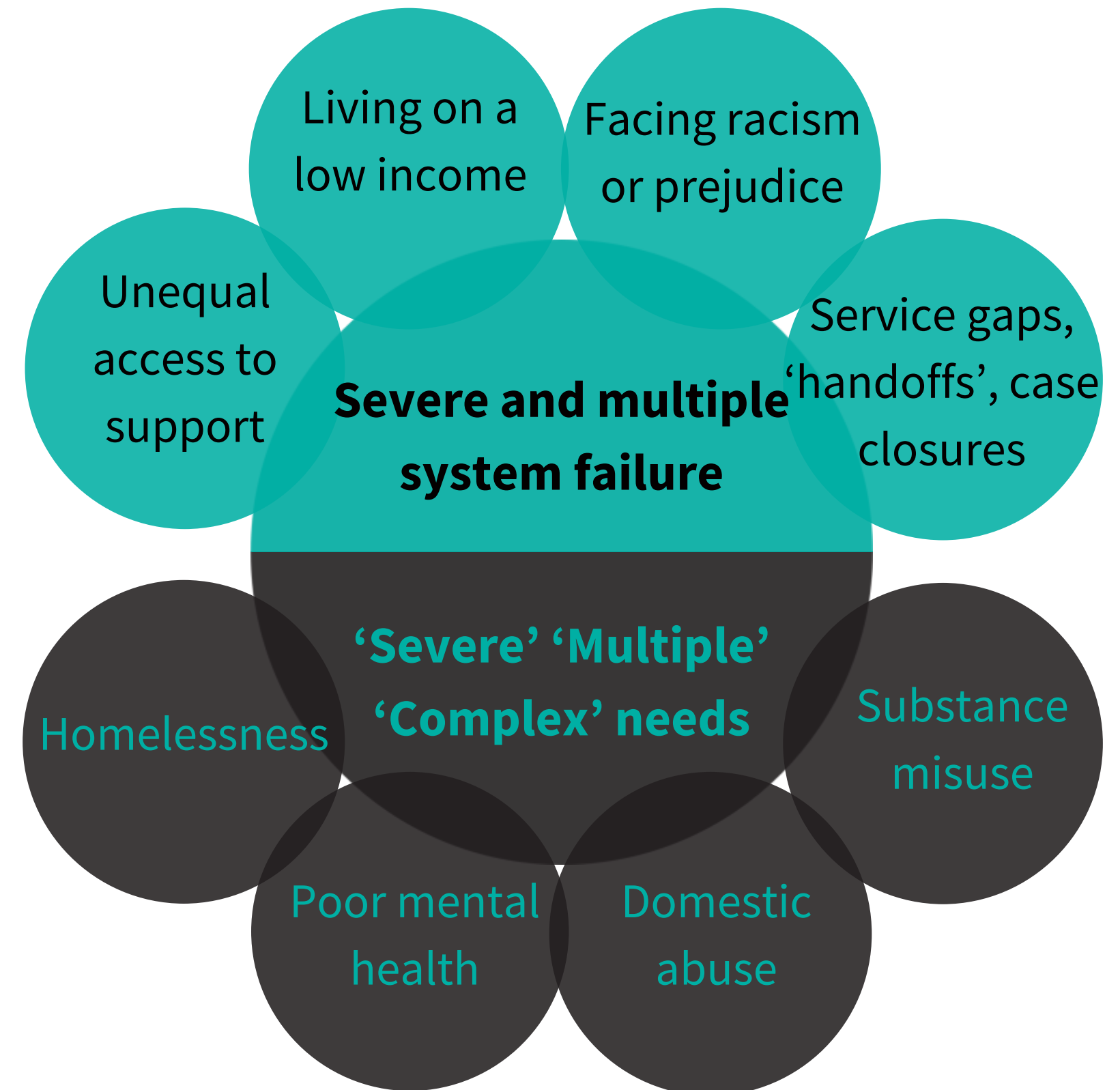
## Find people who are facing inequalities

People labelled as having **multiple problems**...

...are usually facing **multiple inequalities**.

It's time to flip the narrative.

The problem is with the **system**. Not the **person**.








# 1

Find people who are facing inequalities

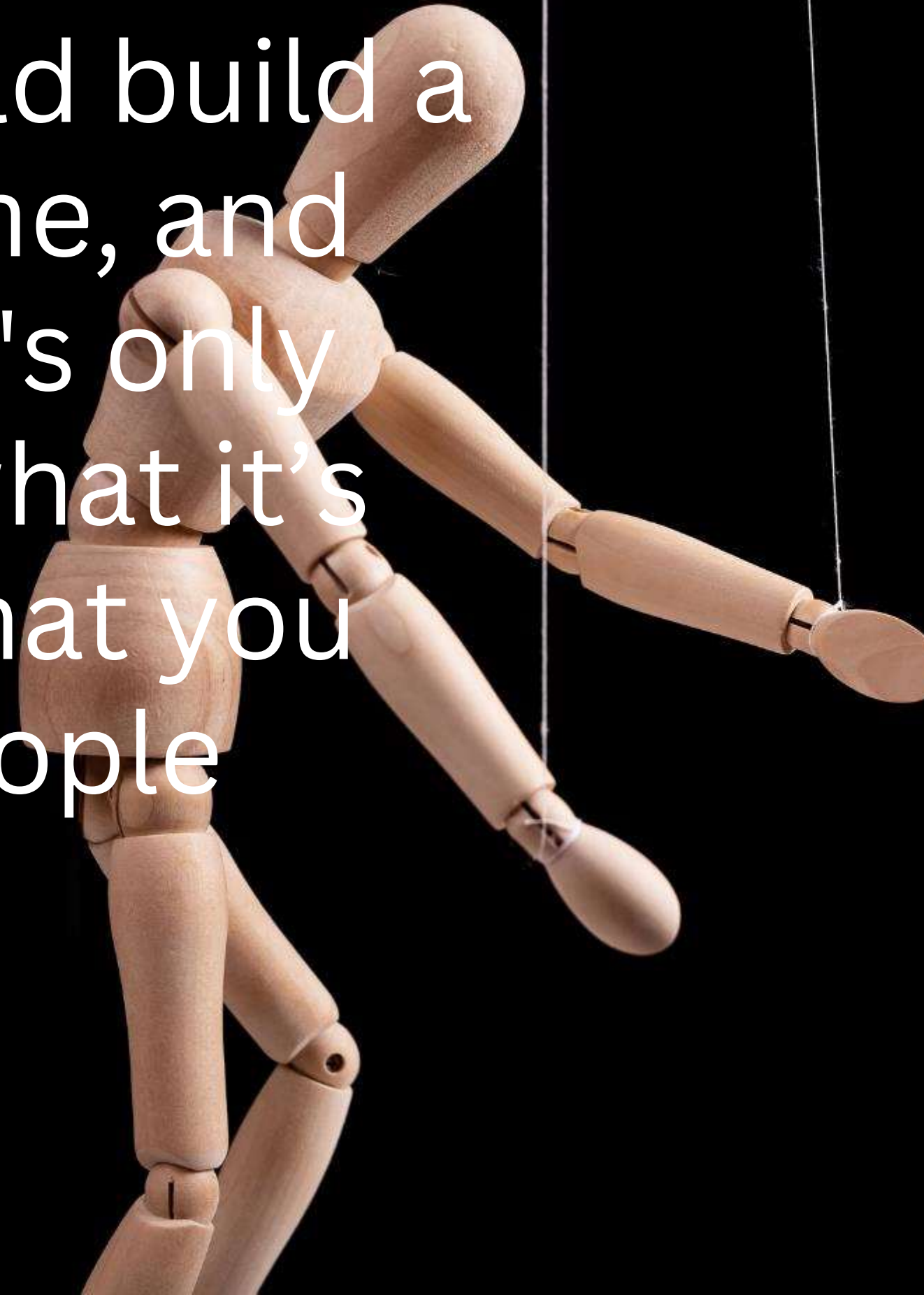
## The Wisdoms Approach to Learning

-  Person-led listening codesigned with local stakeholders and delivered by teams drawn from across systems and communities.
-  Starting with what matters most to people, in their own words.
-  We ask what role do services and systems play in the lives of people using, and excluded from, services? What could that role be?



“I needed services which would build a system with that worked for me, and where I felt more in control. It's only when you have experienced what it's actually like to be homeless that you can really understand how people think and feel.”

[Navigating Invisibility and Regaining Control, an account shared by Brook](#)





# 2

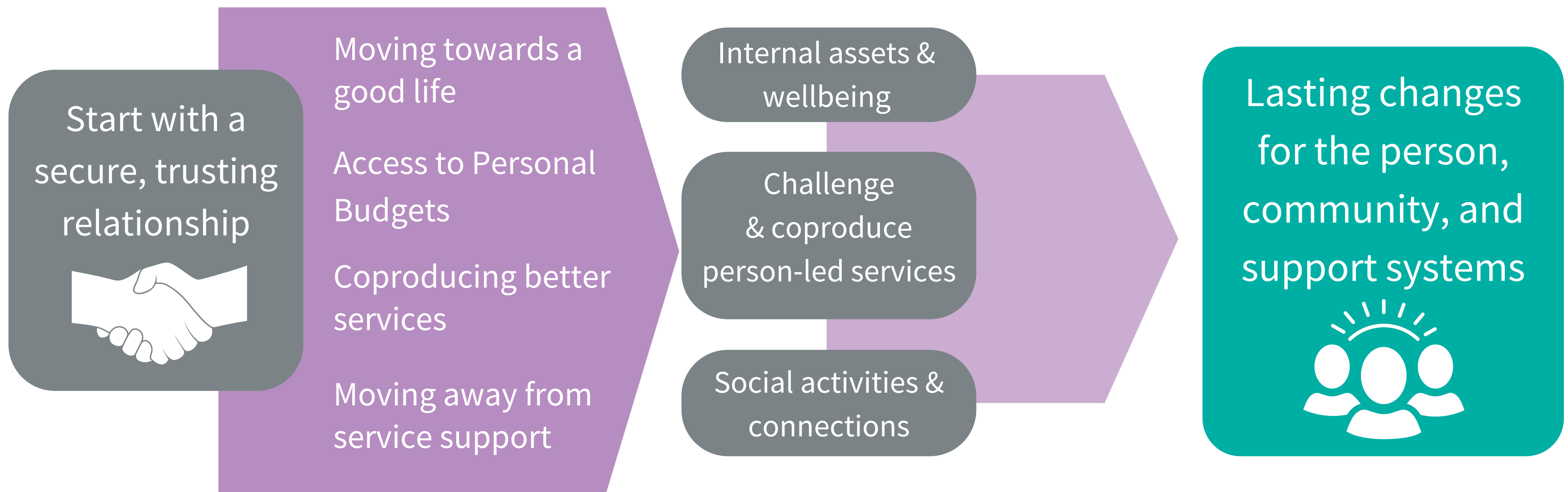
A relationship-first approach creates a base on which people can build real changes.



Person-led,  
Transitional &  
Strength-based  
Response  
By Mayday Trust



The **PTS Coaching** model:



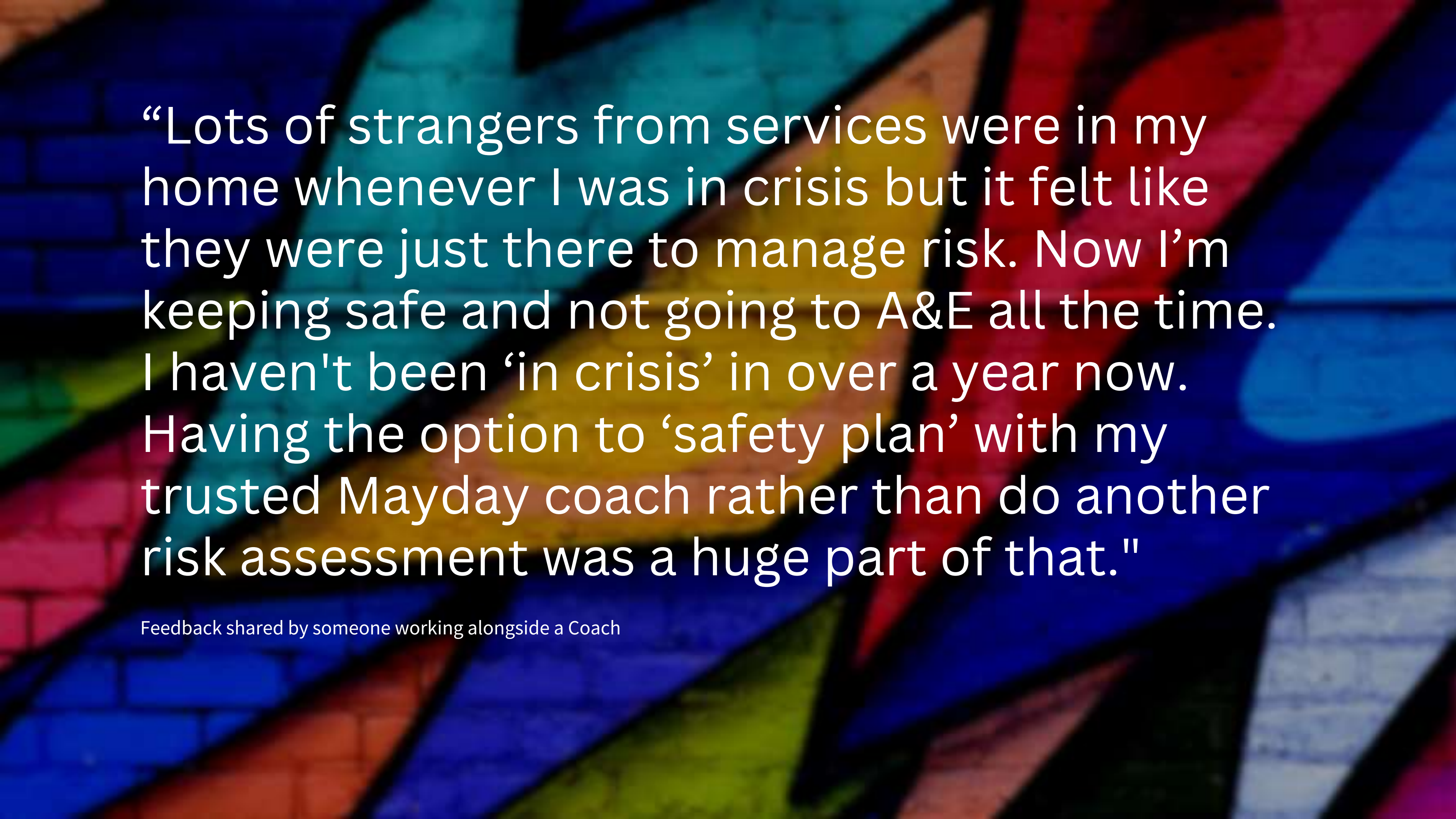
# 2 Coaching enables individuals to codesign new support approaches & community activities



How our model is different:

Area	Traditional Support Work	Strengths-based & Person-led
Referral	Appointment, eligibility & assessment. Support planning early on.	Meet safely on your terms. Get to know each other first.
Support	Led by service's priorities and timetable.	Person-led goals & schedule. Brokerage & personal budgets.
More help needed	Refer on to multiple specialist services.	Coach draws on and works alongside experts from other agencies.
If things don't work	Aim for service user's engagement and compliance.	Support individual to challenge and change what doesn't work.
Endings	Signposting to underfunded services. Cliff edges at the end of support.	Option to pause / vary support. Build alternatives to reduce need for us.





“Lots of strangers from services were in my home whenever I was in crisis but it felt like they were just there to manage risk. Now I’m keeping safe and not going to A&E all the time. I haven't been ‘in crisis’ in over a year now. Having the option to ‘safety plan’ with my trusted Mayday coach rather than do another risk assessment was a huge part of that.”

Feedback shared by someone working alongside a Coach

# 3


## Systems Conveners organise groups and activities around emerging themes




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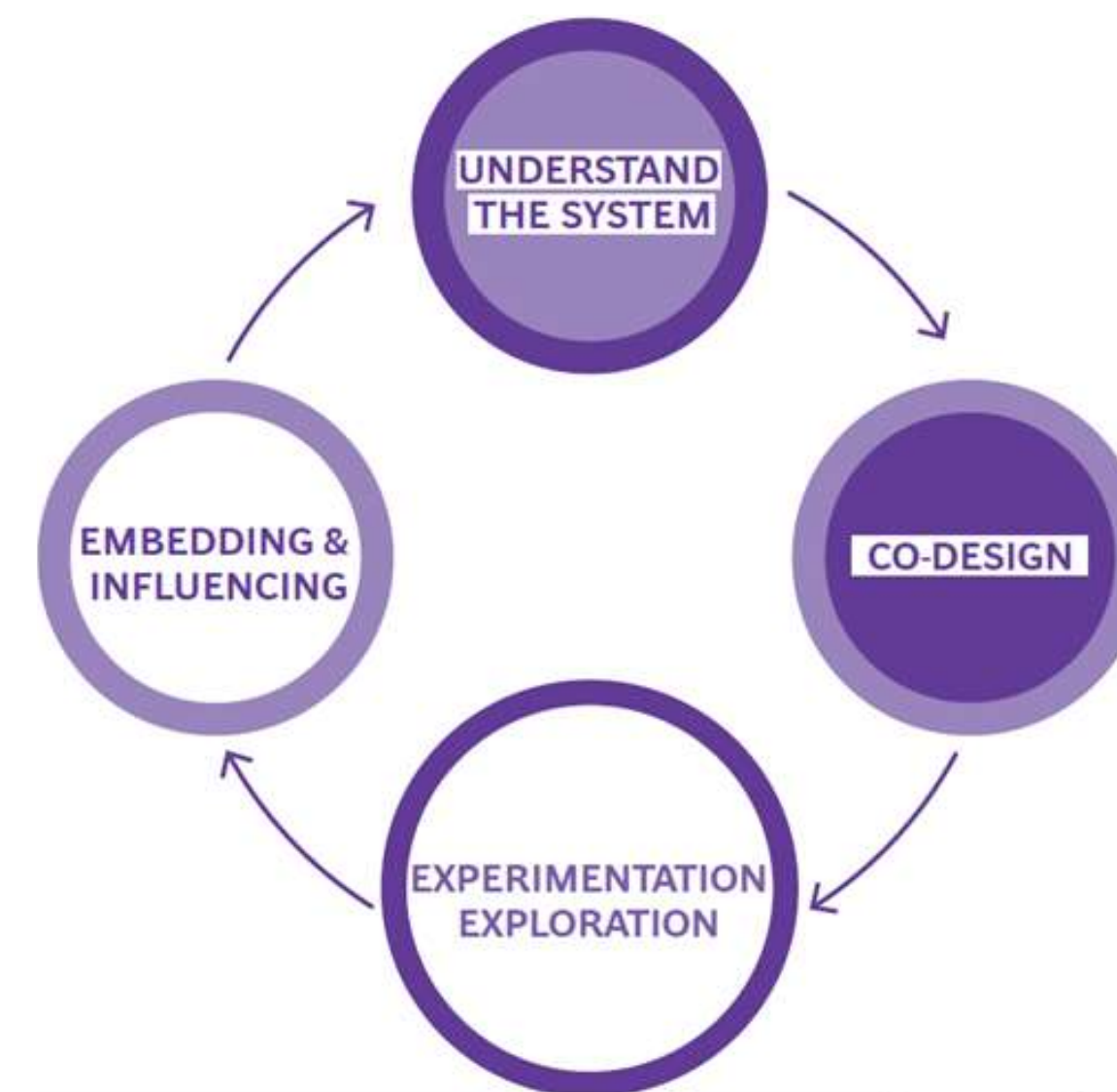


The Systems Convener role builds system health:

 They convene learning groups involving coaches, citizens, managers and leaders to identify themes emerging from coaching and community.

 This group codesigns experiments for more effective, strengths-based practice and analyses data and stories produced.

 This group feeds recommendations to leadership and strategic groups.



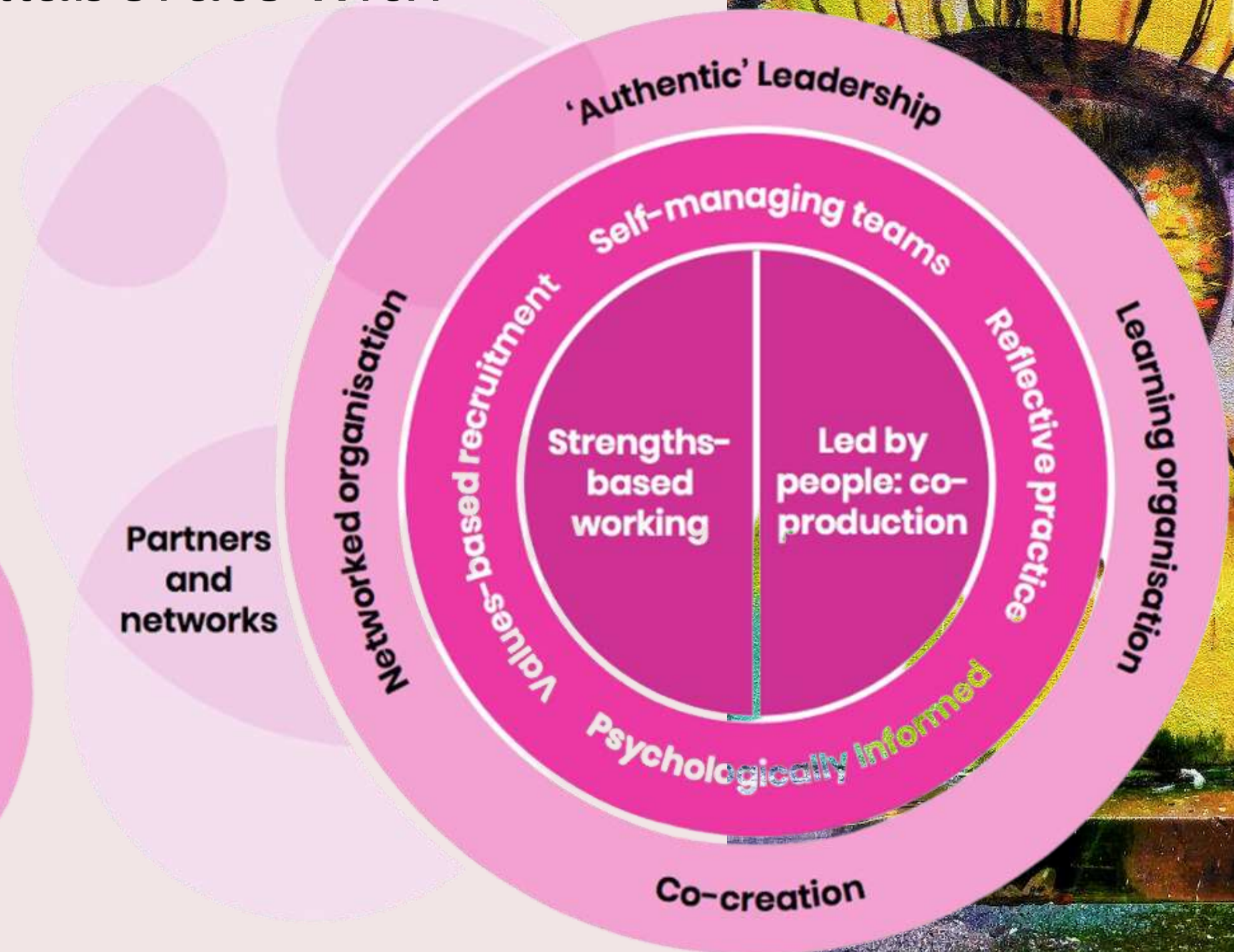
**HUMAN**  
LEARNING SYSTEMS



# 3 Learning informs service design

We share our learning and collaborate with others:

How we lost sight of the point of public services





# 3

## Learning informs **workforce** development

We share our learning to help others grow:

### System Reflect Sessions



Reflection on deficit and needs-based systems



A different way of working: how and why we developed the 'relationship-first' PTS Response



Reflection on the impact of current systems on the people we work with



Strengths-based, person-led approach in practice



Internal culture change and external influencing









# 3

## Learning informs **organisation** development

We share our learning to support others:

The Mayday Strengths-based  
  
**Network**

A place for strengths-based practitioners and organisations to:

-  Find support
-  Connect with others
-  Share learning
-  Grow knowledge

*"Strength-based work should be the norm. It makes no sense that we even have to say that."*



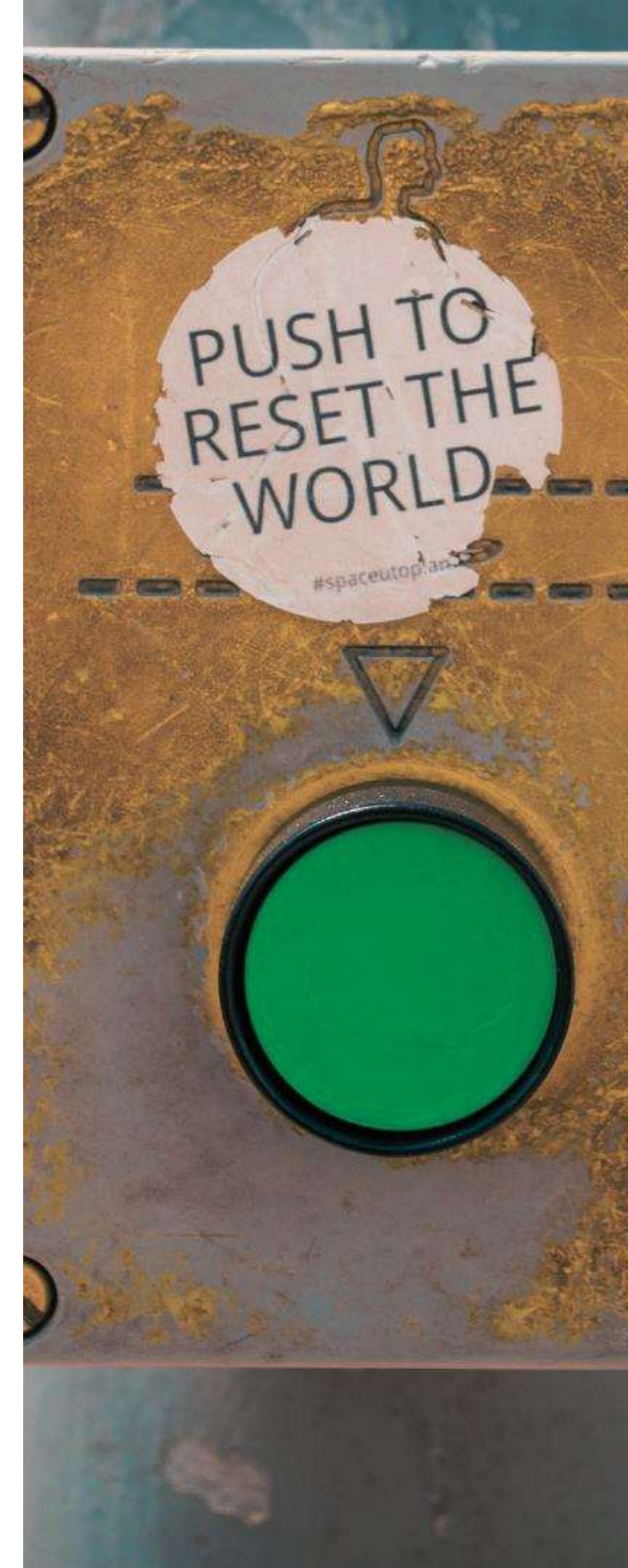
# 3 Learning informs **System** design

We share our learning and grow with others:

## Strengths-based areas need to:

1. Co-design a new **vision** and co-produce a **plan**
2. Invest in **simple and human** systems to get into, through & out of support
3. Use their money and power intentionally for service change, with a strong focus on reducing inequality
4. Co-produce a shared picture of **what good looks like** and user-friendly ways to **track its achievement**

[Paper: What next for Strengths-based Areas?](#)





# 3

## System redesign: **behaviour** changes at every level

PEOPLE WITH POWER	WORKERS AND VOLUNTEERS	CITIZENS
We show empathy and humanity, and feel valued	We show empathy and humanity, and feel valued	We show empathy and humanity, and feel valued
We are open to change and being led by others, and are present in our community, and build alliances	We work alongside (not for) citizens, connecting ourselves and others	We are active – doing and starting stuff in the community, and we are well-connected with others
We are happy in our roles, creating healthy, learning workplaces, and roles in which people are able to thrive and build deep relationships	We are happy in our roles and help people to live good lives, working with their capacity not just their needs	We pursue good lives and are happier, and expect support to help us live our idea of a good life
We aim for wellbeing and measure the good and bad impacts of our work	We are confident we do what matters to people rather than the system, showing humility and courage at the right times	We define the lives we want to live and the roles we want any organisations to play; feeling confident to feed back and take the lead



Strengths-based areas **listen, learn** and **grow** with **EVERYONE**, creating fair and human systems for all.



People who are being let down by systems surrounding public services are **seen** and **heard**

Lessons learnt from the **realities of people's lives** are fed back into service and system design. Professionals, leaders and citizens **come together** to drive **change**.

People receive **strengths-based** and **person-led** support, are able to move on from tough times and **live a good life**.





**To find out more about Mayday's work:**

Visit [www.maydaytrust.org.uk](http://www.maydaytrust.org.uk).

Contact [alex.fox@maydaytrust.org.uk](mailto:alex.fox@maydaytrust.org.uk)

**Interested in strengths-based work?**

Join the New System Alliance, a free network providing monthly events, news and a strengths-based directory.

**NEW SYSTEM**  
**ALLIANCE**  
Person-led • Transitional • Strength-based

