

Leaning into Learning

Place-based learning
and emerging themes

March 2025

No
Wrong
Door
Scotland



Local learning cycles

Where is the learning happening? Local learning is on **3 levels**:



Person level

What the frontline worker and people using the 'centre-point' service are noticing.



Organisational level

What the centre-point is noticing across cases – Aberdeen Foyer, Cyrenians, Penumbra and Turning Point Scotland.



Cross-organisational level

What the local cross-sector learning group is noticing – about shared experiences, patterns and themes.

With 3 learning questions



Learning questions



What doors are open?

This question is to help identify and do more of what works:

- a. Where are things going well, and for whom?
- b. What positive patterns do you notice?
- c. Why is it working and how do we do more of this?



What 'business as usual' are you challenging?

This questions is about getting out our lanes and testing new ways of working:

- a. Where are things not going so well and for who?
- b. How will you change or improve it?
- c. What are you going to improve and by how much?



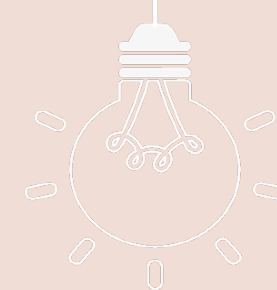
What do you need?

This question is about clarifying what is needed to make the changes identified. Is it about:

- a. Policy: local or national.
- b. Resources: time, money or supplies.
- c. Mindsets: culture, values, assumptions, attitudes or beliefs.

What the
**Centre
Points are
noticing**





Dundee

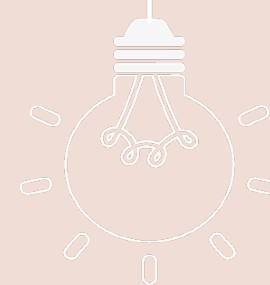
- [Hope Point](#) providing accessible support for people experiencing distress. Open to all through a local drop-in or by phone or text.
- Going beyond 'signposting' to connect people with other support and services.
- Tolerance toward people who present under the influence of substances, recognising that substance use is closely intertwined with trauma and mental health challenges.
- Robust relations across sectors formed, including formal pathways with NHS and Police.

Edinburgh

- [Hospital in-reach](#) operating in three hospital sites, creating learning relevant to admission and discharge practices in health and other settings.
- Working with City of Edinburgh Council who have been selected by Scottish Health Equity Research Unit as a site from which to provide critical analysis of systems and processes and introduce new ways of working which could reduce entrenched health inequalities. This will include a preventative focus on housing and employment.

Fife

- Recruitment of 3 Community Navigators to support the [Whole System Approach](#) and to help people reach support and services earlier and more easily.
- Budget pressures driving closer alignment of departments and services but better positioned for prevention and early intervention.
- National and local focus on child poverty is enabling conversations about prevention and place.
- Broader council transformation programmes create opportunities for considerations relating to the 'hard edges' group.



Dundee

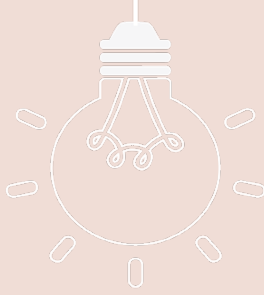
- When only some services are inclusive and accessible locally, they can become the conduit and the first door to chap, but this risks a shirking of statutory responsibilities.
- But also noticing staff burnout and compassion fatigue in statutory services. On top of the impact on frontline staff, this can result in sub-standard services and people feeling unheard, rejected or not valued.
- Medical model considered the status quo when so many other resources and solutions would be more beneficial.

Edinburgh

- Exploring whether more referrals is broader reach or a limited impact on the root causes of health inequality.
- The housing emergency means no fast track to housing for people identified at risk of homelessness while in hospital. It must be the case that early intervention and preventative programmes are armed with the practical solutions and resources that prevent people's disconnection from a service and demotivation among staff.
- How delayed discharge will interact with prevention duties.

Fife

- High caseloads can prevent staff from moving across service 'lanes' in the way they want to.
- The budget 'lanes' consolidate the status quo and make it more difficult to do things differently.
- Impact of GDPR and sharing data and information is key challenge and consideration.
- Make services available where people go – or create places for people to go. Increase 'face to face' interaction with people.
- No clear mental health pathway, which creates a weak point for disconnection with services.



Dundee

- Shift of resources to community based and accessible supports.
- Competent workforce - training and awareness.
- Infrastructure to support and value staff teams across different sectors.
- Equitable pay scales across health and social care.
- Stabilise funding for third sector service provision.

Edinburgh

- A tipping point which is less about filling gaps in an unchanged or inflexible system, and more about changing systems to better meet the needs of the 'hard edges' group.
- Homelessness needs recognised within the planning, commissioning and delivery of all Integrated Joint Boards to better meet people with multiple and complex needs.

Fife

- Plan for services that meet the needs of society's most vulnerable to reduce the financial impact on all services.
- Create dedicated roles focused on cross-sector connections so that this is prioritised.
- To enable and equip staff at a local level on a similar basis to the pandemic response.

Noticing

Common Themes



Follow the people, not the money

Local systems and services move toward the money.

This is a useful lever when you hold the lever – but a barrier when you don't. Sometimes the money even takes a retrograde step.

A better system would ensure resources follow people and the type of services and support they want. This needs commissioners and funders championing the types of services that meet people where they choose to be. Not all services can reach the hard edges group - stable funding for those that can is critical to connect with people.

Funding is the solid foundation that enables stability, continuity and shared learning across services and systems. This creates the maturity that in turn can enable progressive culture change that makes for better services and better supported people.

A shift of resources to community-based prevention and intervention can reach people earlier and closer to home.

National ripples, local waves

We are noticing that national conversations have a direct impact on leveraging local action.

For example, Scottish Government's focus on tackling child poverty creates spaces for conversations on people at the hard edges and especially to the adverse childhood experiences of adults today.

And about new duties to prevent homelessness across a wider range of relevant bodies creating opportunities to join up services. And how a public health approach to housing in Scotland is enabling preventative work in hospitals, a method that could apply to admission and discharge practices in health and other settings.

What we need more of is national conversations that focus on people at the hard edges and on the inflexibility of the systems that support them. About what it will take to focus on system change, rather than quick fixes. And about recognising the responsibility of national government, through policy priority and funding, to make a deep dent in deep disadvantage at local level.

Relational systems

The centre-points highlight the positive impact on people when services ‘get out their lanes’.

This is evident in several different ways – including through the co-location of diverse services, formal pathways between public bodies and third sector organisations, community link workers, being where people are – and by going beyond simple ‘signposting’ to introduce and connect people to other services and supports.

We also notice that post-Covid there has been a reduction in the number of face-to-face engagements, with more people expected to access support and advice services online and by phone across both public and third sector services.

While having a range of options for people to engage is important, there are growing concerns that ‘quicker’ online engagement can be at the expense of the relationship building that is needed to support people effectively.

People who support people

Our expectations on people working in direct service and support roles are huge – sometimes unreasonably so.

To build relationships, to support, enable and advise people, to connect people with services and support - and to stay motivated despite the often lack of options or routes to offer people.

Constant pressures include workforce shortages, rising demand, systemic challenges – all amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic and persisting in 2025. The combination of high responsibility, low remuneration work is also a serious factor.

Services at the hard edges have an additional layer of pressure, due to the range and complexity of issues people face. Emotional and psychosocial stress and bureaucratic frustrations - of workers and the people they are supporting - are key themes from the frontline.

We need No Wrong Door Scotland to platform these themes through our work and in the national framework that we co-design.

Journeys shared once

Data sharing is a frustrating obstacle from the perspective of people both providing and navigating services.

The scope of the obstacle is also inconsistently interpreted. We notice data protection is more often used out of caution and fear to say “no” rather than constructively used to find a way to say “yes”.

Limitations and lack of clarity on data sharing, whether real or self-imposed, burdens people with a repeated disclosure of their personal, sensitive and sometimes traumatic experiences. And for services – hampering their ability to provide bespoke support and seamless services.

Is there a big or ideal solution to effectively, safely and legally share data across sectors and services? Is there a ‘better than now’ solution that would take a step in the right direction?

Role of the

National Learning Set



? On the 5 common themes



By pooling our knowledge, line of vision and sphere of influence:

Q: Are there other **common themes** that you notice?

Q: What can we do to **challenge business as usual?**

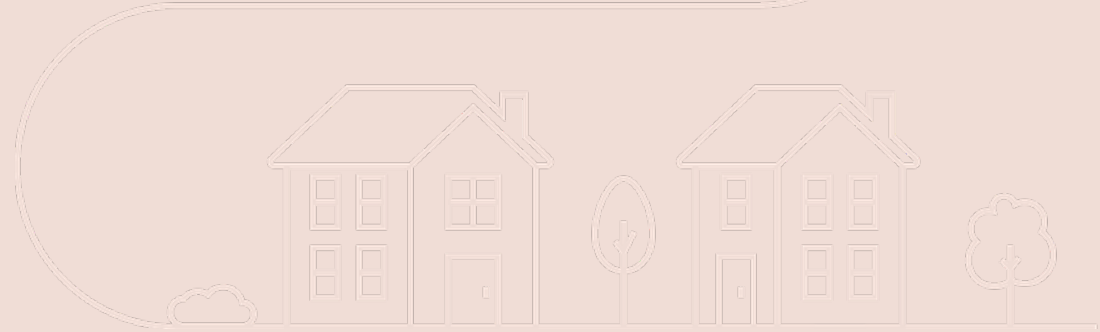
Q: What can we do to help **deliver what is needed?**

▼ What might this include?

- Sharing experiences, advice or evidence on these themes.
- Committing to sharing the theme – at an external meeting, or with key decision makers, for example.
- Doing a ‘deep dive’ at a future meeting to create a theme for the national framework.



Change Challenge



Thinking about each local learning cycle:

Discuss and define a **change challenge** for the centre-point to progress and feedback in September 2025.

- ▼ This can be a provocation, an idea to try, a desire for more information or insights – or something else.