

# Exploring common evaluation frameworks:

## Measuring the impact of cash first interventions

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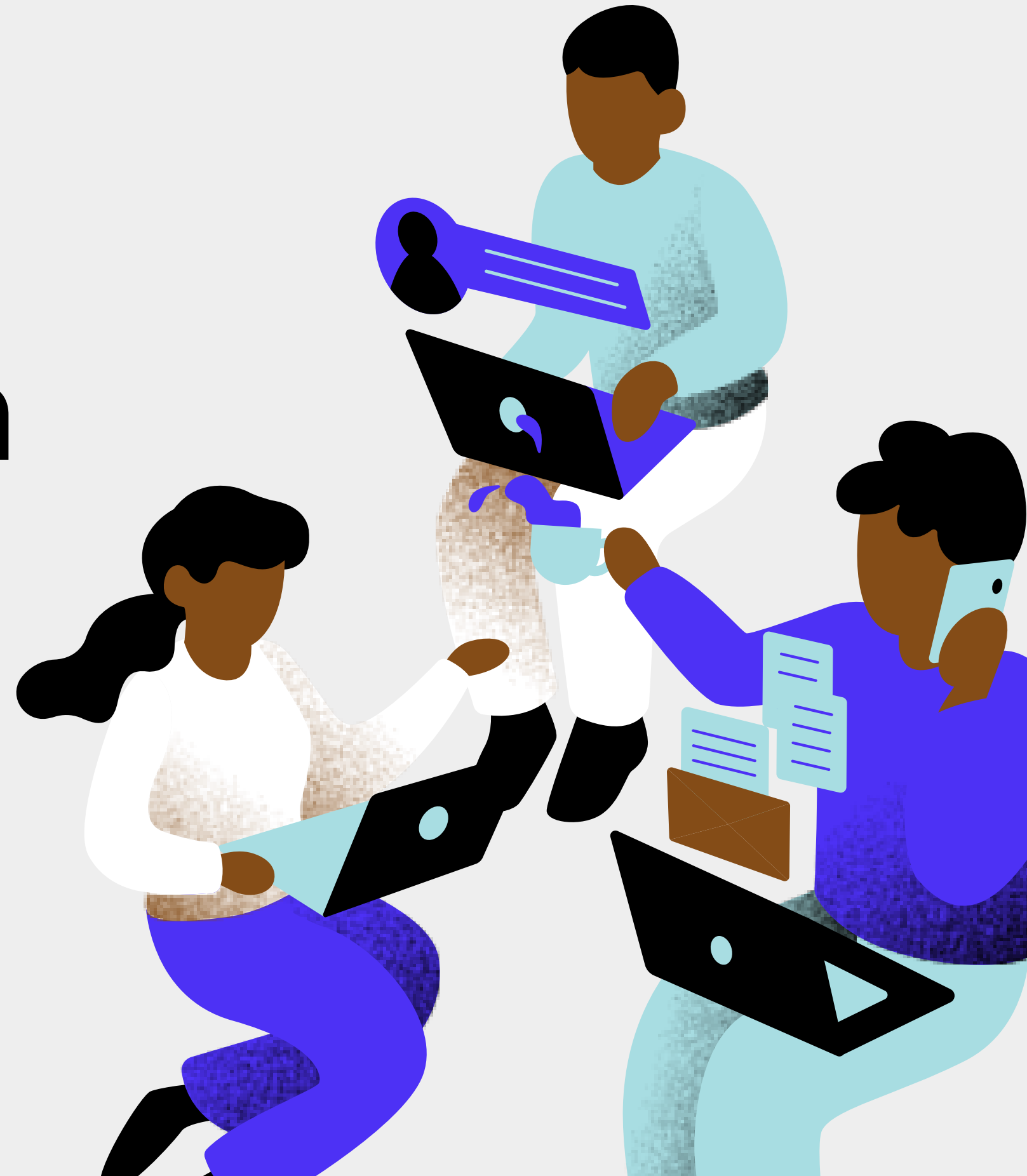
# Plan for the workshop

- Why evaluate and some key evaluation principles
- Varying approaches to Cash First Interventions – and arising evaluation challenges.
- Using a Theory of Change to help inform an evaluation plan
  - Practical application: Fife Case Study (or your own!)
- Discussion: exploring scope for common evaluation framework
  - Approaches
  - Evaluation outcomes



# Why evaluate and some key evaluation principles

Dr Rachel Loopstra



# Why evaluate?

To understand if an intervention works

Avoid doing harm

Inform future intervention and scaling out

Inform financial decisions – is it worth the investment  
[compared to other options/doing nothing?]

Test assumptions:  
for who and in  
what context?

# Types of evaluations



## Outcome evaluation

- What were the outcomes of the intervention?
  - Can be positive or negative; intended or unintended.
  - Efficacy, effectiveness, equity, safety, cost-effectiveness.

THEORY OF CHANGE



## Process evaluation

- What was delivered and who did it reach?
  - Uptake, acceptability, feasibility, fidelity
    - What was the meaning and experience among those involved?

# Some (ideal) evaluation principles

What has changed compared to what things were like before?

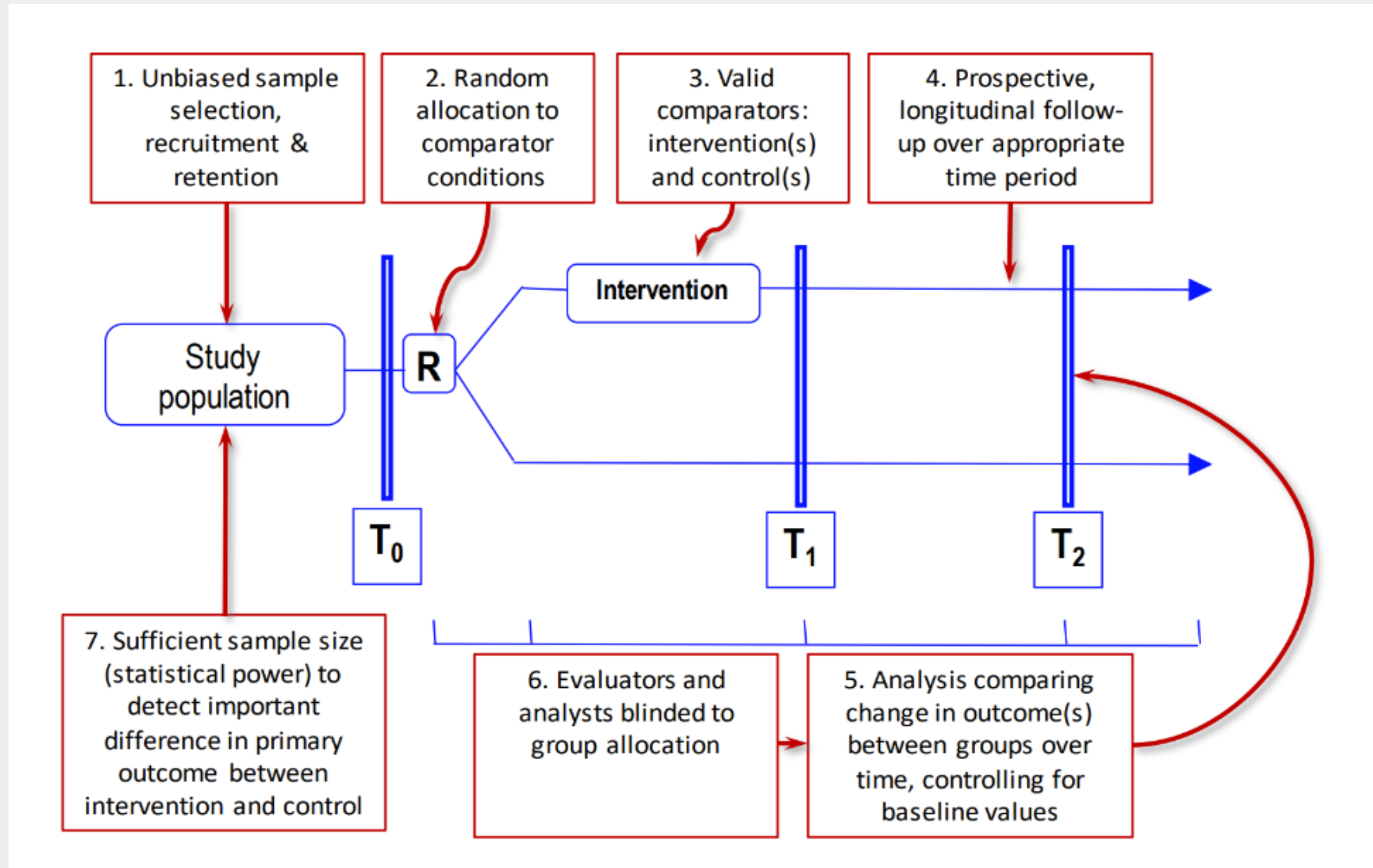
- Comparison of data before and after the intervention was delivered.

Ideally, comparison of the intervention condition with a fair comparator (“control” or “counterfactual”).

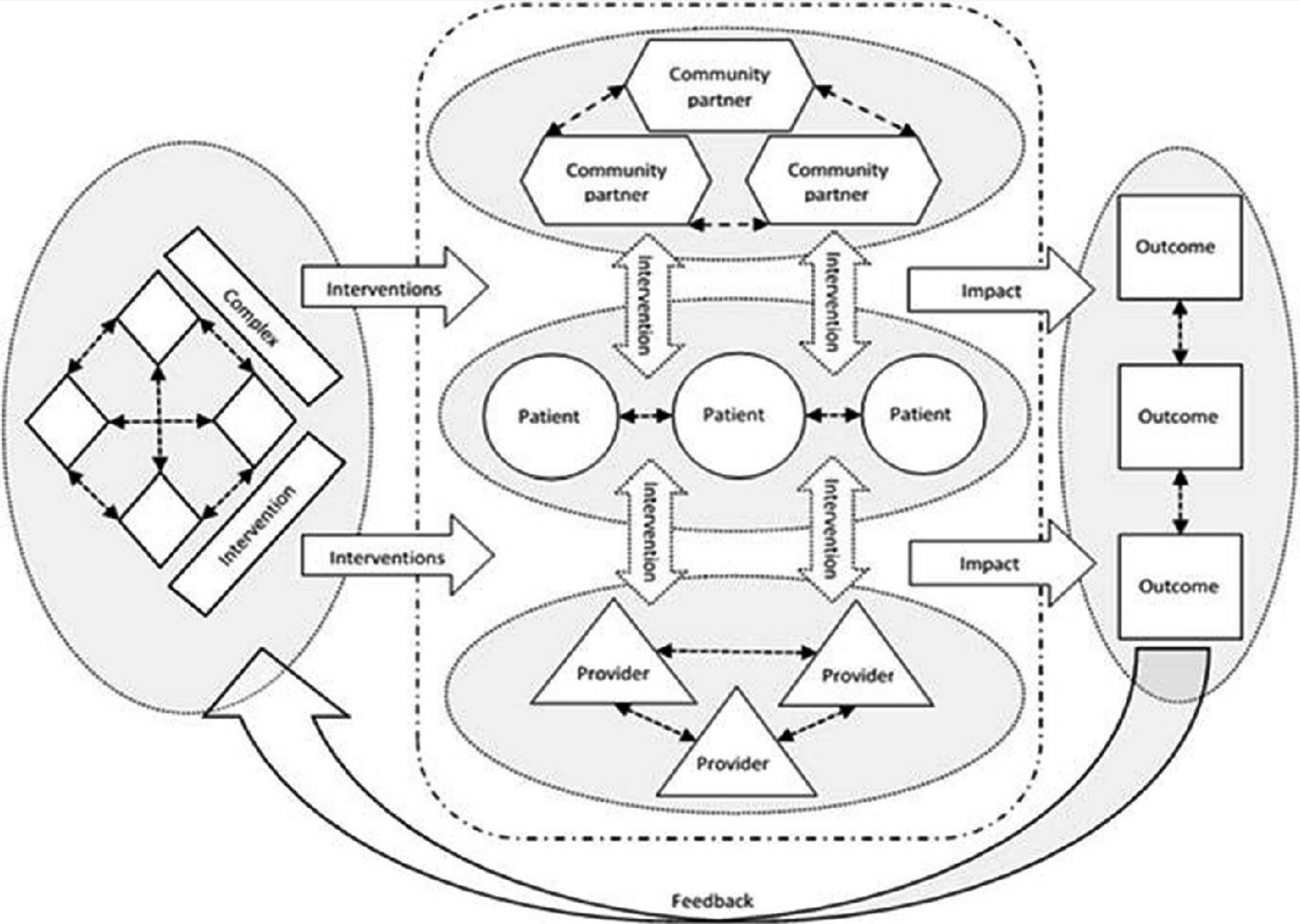
Being aware of sources of bias:

- Who received the intervention? Are they comparable to the “control”?
  - Objective vs. subjective measures
- Social desirability or recall bias
- Can results be generalised to other places?
- Who is interpreting the results?

# “Gold standard”: A Randomised, Controlled Trial

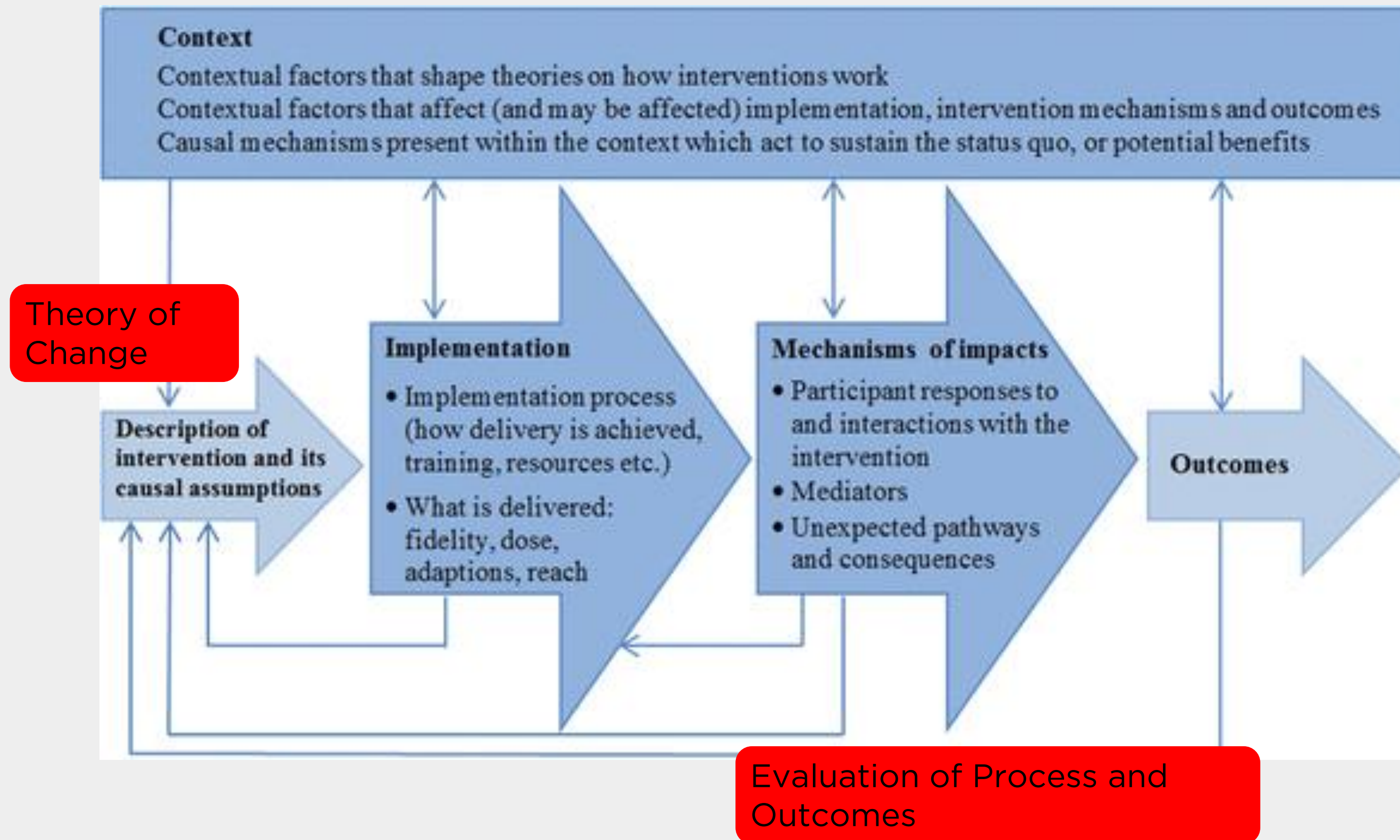


# The reality of complex interventions





# The reality of complex interventions



# Varying approaches to Cash First Interventions – and arising evaluation challenges

Dr Miesbeth Knottenbelt



Animate



# Local Authorities' Cash First interventions

Miesbeth Knottenbelt (Nourish Scotland)  
(on behalf of Learning Partners Nourish and Animate)

# Cash First Learning Partner Project

Animate



- 8 Local Authorities selected to implement Cash First interventions
- 2 - year projects, each £200k, running from Nov 2023
- 'Learning Partner' (Nourish Scotland and Animate) support LA partnerships with:
  - Regular online partnerships' meetings and individual support
  - Mapping tools and other resources
  - Themed in-person 'learning events'
- Work with an independent evaluator

## The interventions differ in terms of

- Who is involved in the partnerships
- Governance, funding and project management processes
- What the interventions build on
  
- A range of stated objectives and activities
  - Target populations
  - Themes they focus on

# Who is involved in the partnerships

Animate



## Commonly:

- LAs (Community, (Child) Poverty, Housing, Education,...)
- Foodbanks, pantries, other community food aid
- Citizen Advice Bureaux
- NHS (public health, primary care)
- Third Sector focussed on: finance and debt management, housing, energy cost, employment skills, addiction support, general resilience building, BAME and asylum seekers...
- academics

# Governance, funding and project management processes

Animate



- Staggered starts
- Building on previous work, parallel projects
- Existing boards, committees and partnerships and/or new structures
- The same amount of funding for different-sized LAs - different contexts
- Existing protocols (around evaluation)

# What the interventions build on

Animate



- National policy priorities e.g. Child Poverty Action
- Local approaches such as *No Wrong Door, No One Left Behind, Glasgow Helps ...*
- Local surveys or pilots on what is working/not working
- Specific identified challenges or pilots
- A mapping of (and improving) existing services
- Engagement with elected councillors



## A range of stated objectives and activities

Addressing the lack of sufficient funding for tackling food insecurity

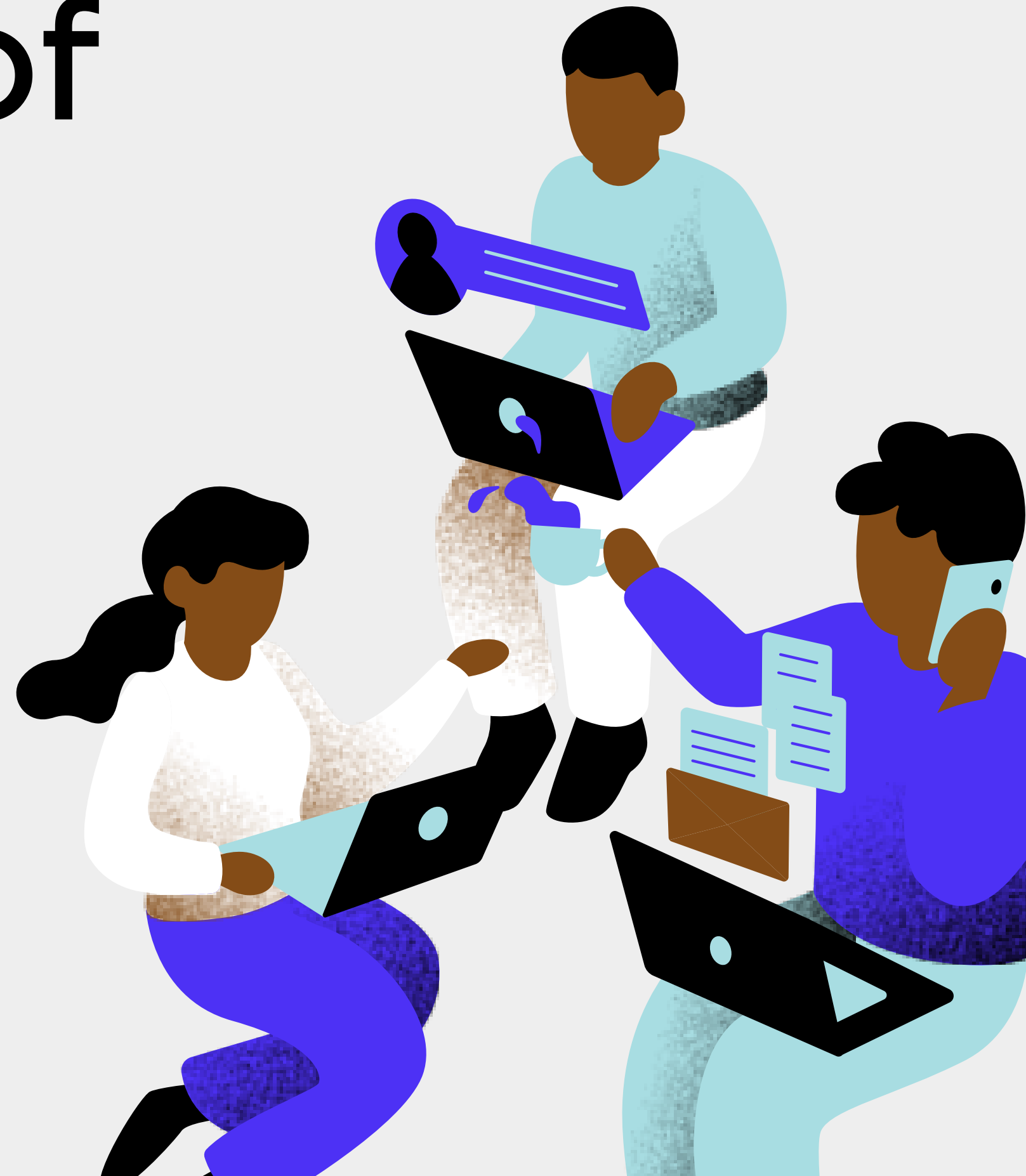
Reducing the provision of emergency food aid

Enabling access to crisis payments and tackling specific barriers e.g.

- Shame and stigma
- Lack of awareness of existing moneys
- Reluctance to pay cash out
- Gaps in current support
- Staff and volunteers' confidence and knowledge
- Disjointed service providers

# Using a Theory of Change to help inform an evaluation plan

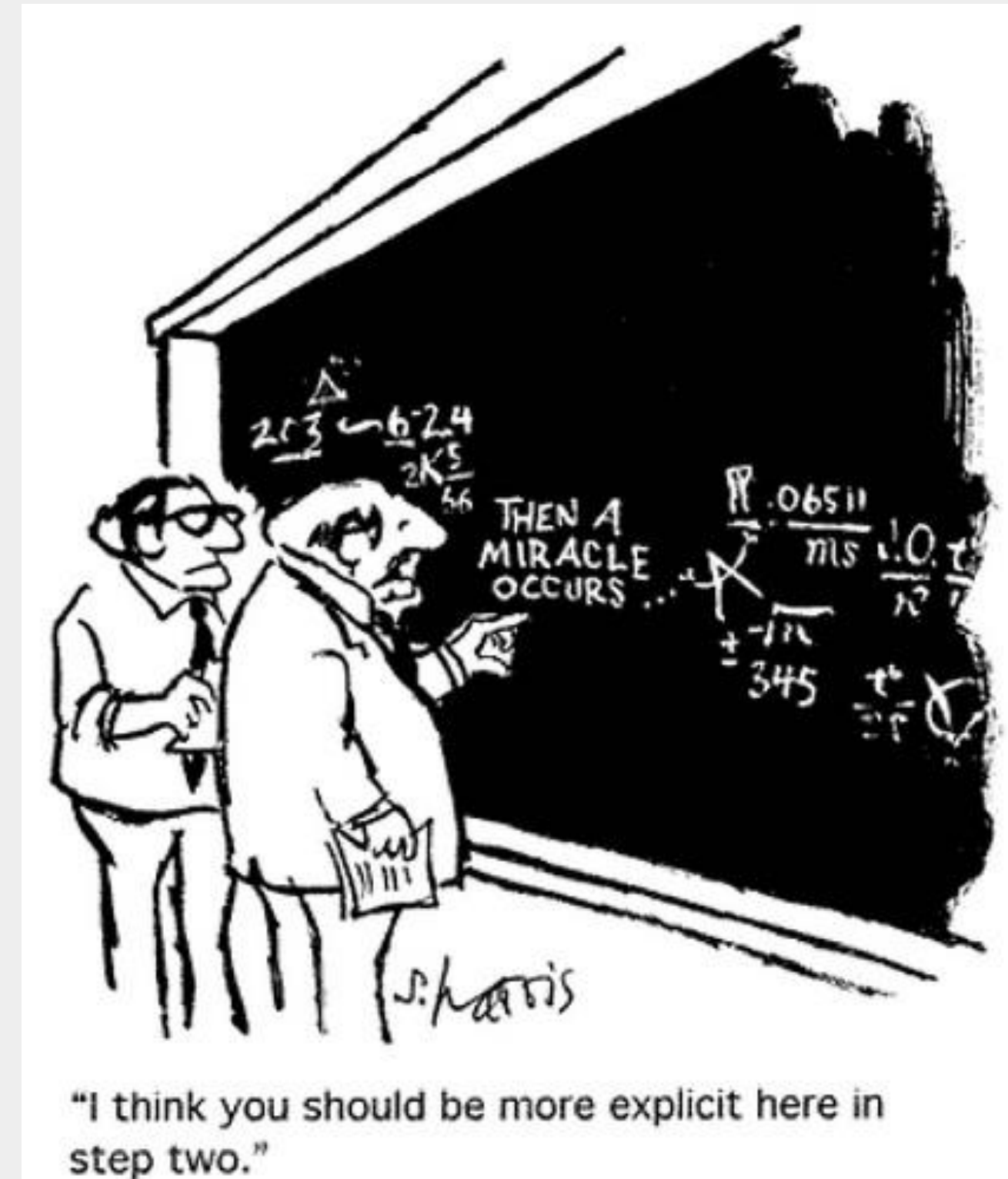
Dr Juanita Bernal



# Theory of change

A comprehensive description and illustration of how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context.

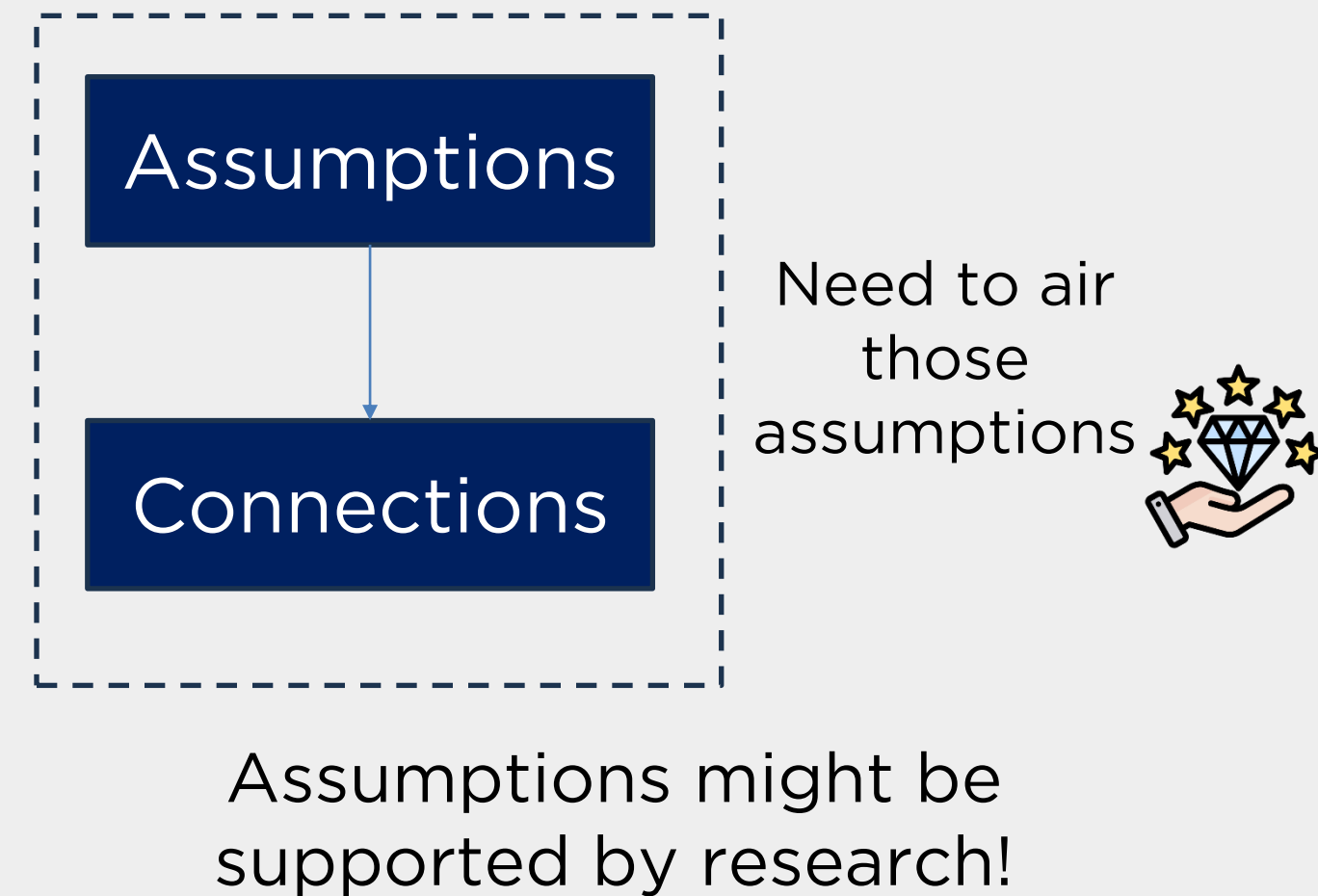
Mapping out or filling in the “missing middle” between what an intervention does and how it leads to desired goals being achieved.



# Theory of change

## It is a participatory process:

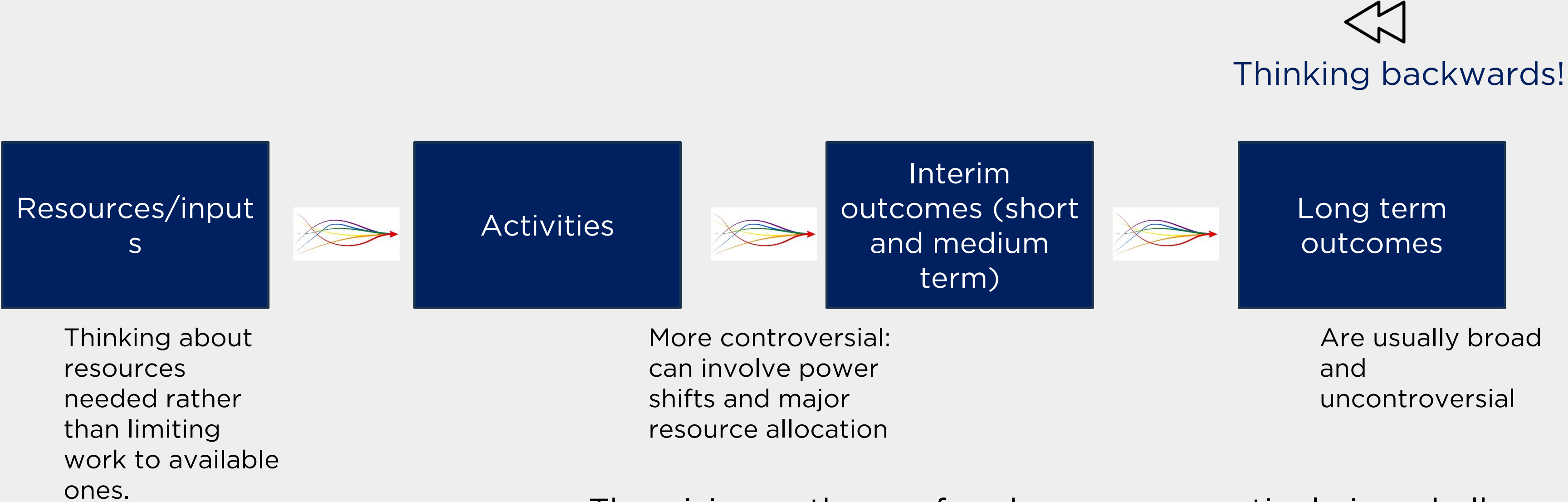
- Stakeholders identify the conditions they believe have to unfold for the long-term goals to be met.
- Needs participants to be clear on long-term goals, identify measurable indicators of success, and formulate actions to achieve goals.
- Different perspectives are crucial. Different expertise will prioritise different outcomes. Having different perspectives can help minimise unintended consequences



Uses a systems approach (next slide): parts of an intervention don't exist in isolation

Considers contextual factors (including the policy environment)

# Building a Theory of Change



Theorising pathways for change prospectively is a challenge!

There are multiple strands (economic, political and social) operating at different levels

ToCs must be co-constructed through a collaborative process

A ToC will possibly evolve over the course of the initiative

# What is a good Theory of Change?

## Plausible

Do evidence and common sense suggest that the activities, if implemented, will lead to desired outcomes?

## Doable

Will the economic, technical, political, institutional, and human resources be available to carry out the initiative?

## Testable

Is the theory of change specific and complete enough for an evaluator to track its progress in credible and useful ways?

## Meaningful

Relevance to the stakeholder groups!

### Did our ToC work? (think about this conditions when building the ToC)

- A **well-specified** and **plausible** ToC was built.
- Activities were **implemented** at **expected thresholds**
- No **pervasive contextual shift** occurred that could otherwise account for all predicted sequences of activities and outcomes

# Application of Theory of Change: Fife Cash First Partnership

## Key elements of intervention

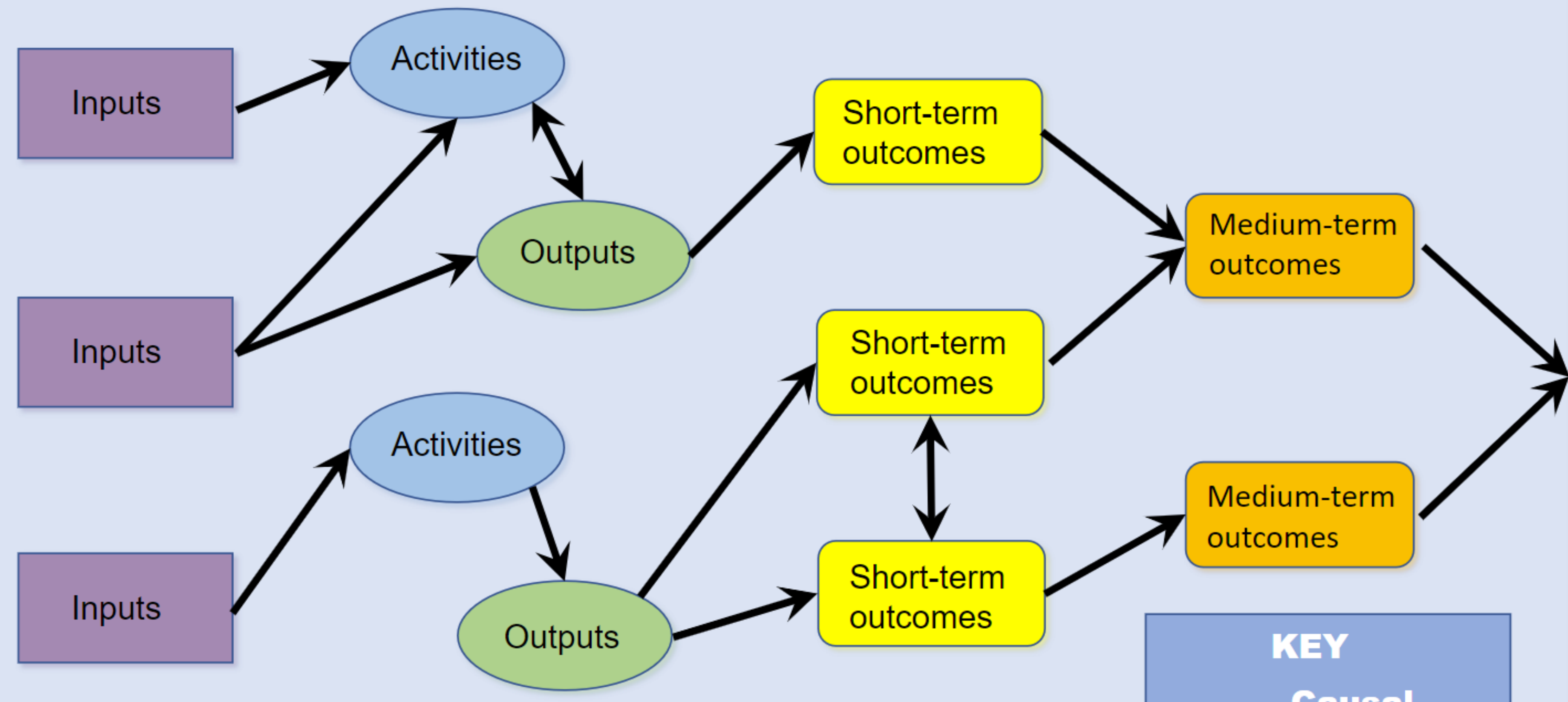
- Provision of urgent access to cash (e.g. in the form of prepaid credit cards) over a six-month period, coupled with guided and connected handovers to relevant wider sources of support, including income maximisation
- Support to address specific local barriers, e.g. payment of travel costs or enhanced cash payments for people in rural areas
- Work with people with direct experience to shape and test enhanced responses to financial crisis
- Work with partners to develop pathways to wraparound supports, including money advice, health, housing and community supports, building on the new Fife Advice Framework

## Complexity!

- ✓ Multiple interventions at once
- ✓ Multiple delivery partners
- ✓ Adaptations to intervention overtime
- ✓ Multiple dependencies

**CONTEXT/PROBLEM**

TIMELINE



**IMPACT/LONG-TERM OUTCOMES**

**KEY**

**Causal links**

Assumptions

Risks



## Discussion

Use of Theory  
of Change?

Potential for  
common  
evaluation  
questions?

Potential for  
common  
outcome  
measures?





## TIME TO MEASURE AND MONITOR LOCAL FOOD INSECURITY:

The case for a harmonised approach  
across local authority areas



- Limitations of current data availability at local level.
- Identified a clear need to support local areas to overcome barriers to local level measurement.
- Identified opportunity for multiple local areas to come together to measure and monitor local level food insecurity in order to foster efficiencies and avoid the duplication of efforts, as well as generate comparative data.
- Efforts to measure local level food insecurity can be justified with a clear rationale of the value of measurement and monitoring and with a clear plan for disseminating findings and using them to inform action.

# References

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