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PACE

Session One
The art of Behavioural Insight

The brief

Each member of the PACE cohort has significant, complex challenges to meet around regeneration, levelling up, net zero, active travel and air quality; with significant obstacles to overcome in meeting these challenges such as funding, time, politicians and communities to name a few.

This first session focuses on the art of behavioural insight and hopes to help the cohort with tools and shared insights to identify key challenges that hold back change, by focusing on understanding, managing and influencing stakeholder behaviour.

Tools were provided to help probe into those challenges, as it is not always about finding solutions, but encouraging free minds and disruptive thought leadership that promotes new thinking and new actions.

19th May 2023

Behavioural change interventions

Behaviour is defined as anything a person does in response to internal or external events, be that overt (walking, talking, brushing teeth) or covert (breathing, tongue movement).

A behaviour change intervention is therefore defined as any action or activity that aims to get an individual or population to behave differently from how they would have acted without such an intervention.

Examples of such an intervention are varied and widespread but might be a professional conversation, posters, a TV advert, group counselling, peer support, leaflets, websites and mobile apps, legislation and pricing.

The question for anyone designing a behavioural change intervention programme is will that intervention significantly improve the specific behaviour to be changed.

ISLAGIATT – it sounded like a good idea at the time

The science of behaviour change is real, but it is not always applied when it comes to deciding what actions to take. Many interventions are designed according to the ISLAGIATT principle, relying on hunches, past experience and things that worked elsewhere.

However, while common sense interventions can work well they can also lead to unintended consequences. The classic Australian example of the government programme giving life-like baby dolls to teenagers to highlight the realities of parenthood, actually increased the incidence of teenage pregnancy.

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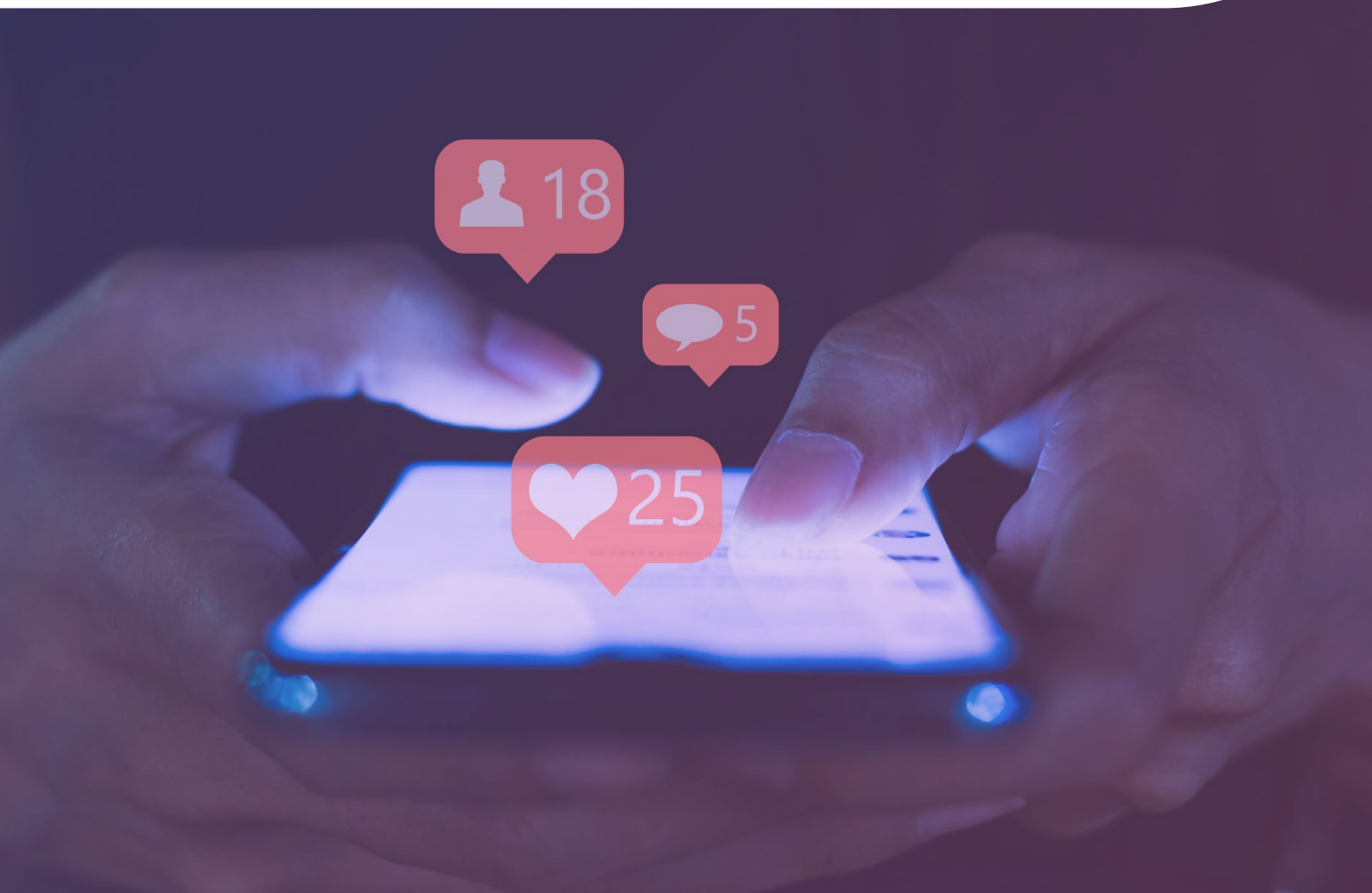
Behaviour Change Wheel Approach

Using behavioural science to support behaviour change

(Michie et al., 2011; 2014)
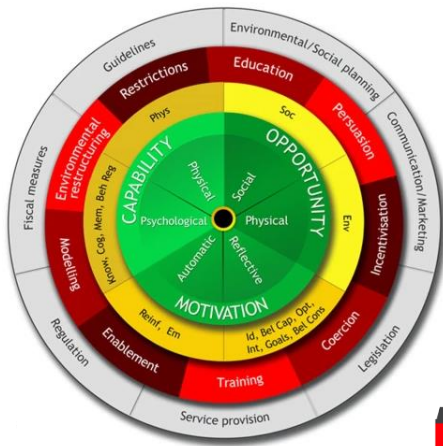
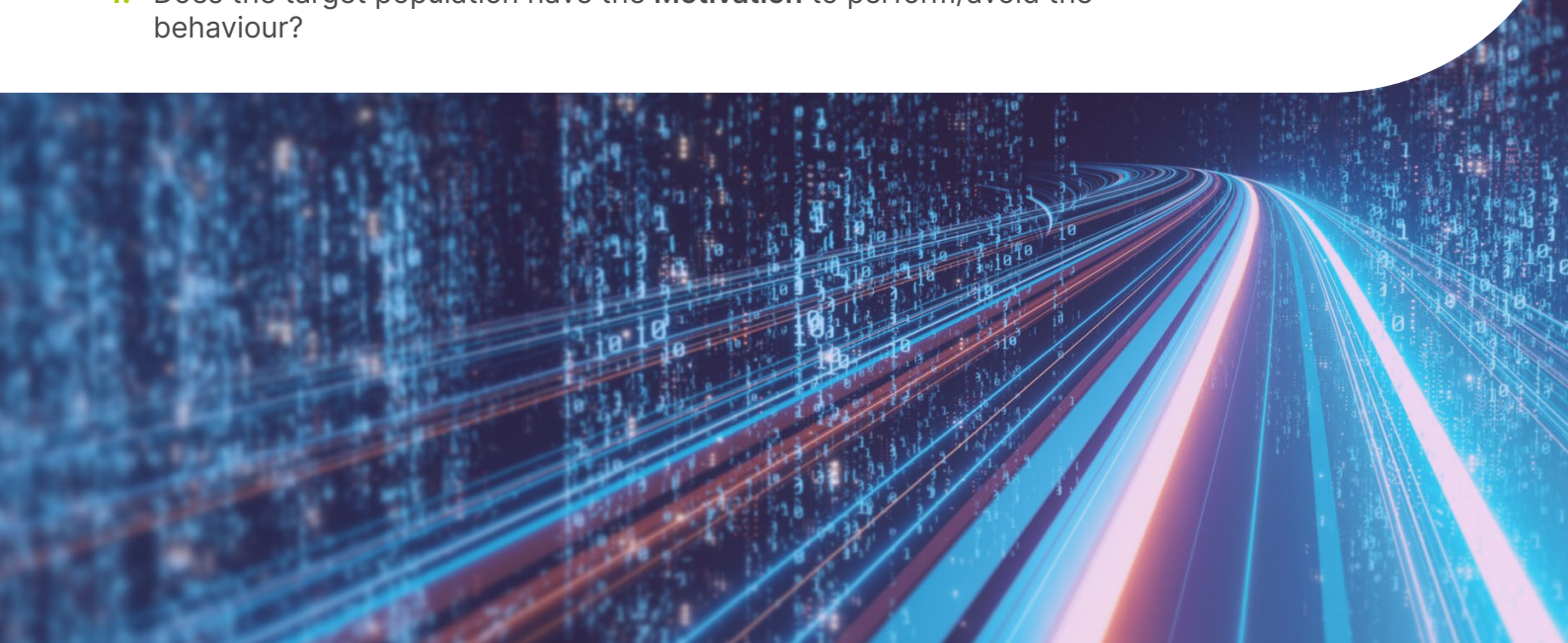| Behaviour |
| --- |
| COM-B |
| Theoretical Domains Framework (TDF) |
| Intervention Types (Functions) |
| Policy Options (Categories) |
| Behaviour Change Technique Taxonomy V1 (BCTTv1) |

To answer the common question: "When there are so many theories and models, how do you navigate your way through?" the Behaviour Change Wheel Approach can be very helpful.

This brings to together the main factors influencing behaviour and uses a number of key models including:

COM-B model of behaviour change helps understand what is influencing behaviour

Consider four simple things:

1. What and whose - **Behaviour** needs to change to achieve the desired outcome?

2. Does the target population have the **Capability** to enact the behaviour?

3. Does the target population have the **Opportunity** to enable the behaviour?

4. Does the target population have the **Motivation** to perform/avoid the behaviour?

Theoretical Domains Framework (TDF) can help to understand and address behavioural change based on the assumption that this change is influenced by a wide range of factors, such as beliefs, social norms, environmental constraints, and organisational factors.

The Behaviour Change Wheel Approach puts behaviour at the centre of the wheel then uses COM-B and TDF to help to define the best interventions and policy actions.

A process to use the Behaviour Change Wheel

The BCW: Michie et al., 2011; 2014
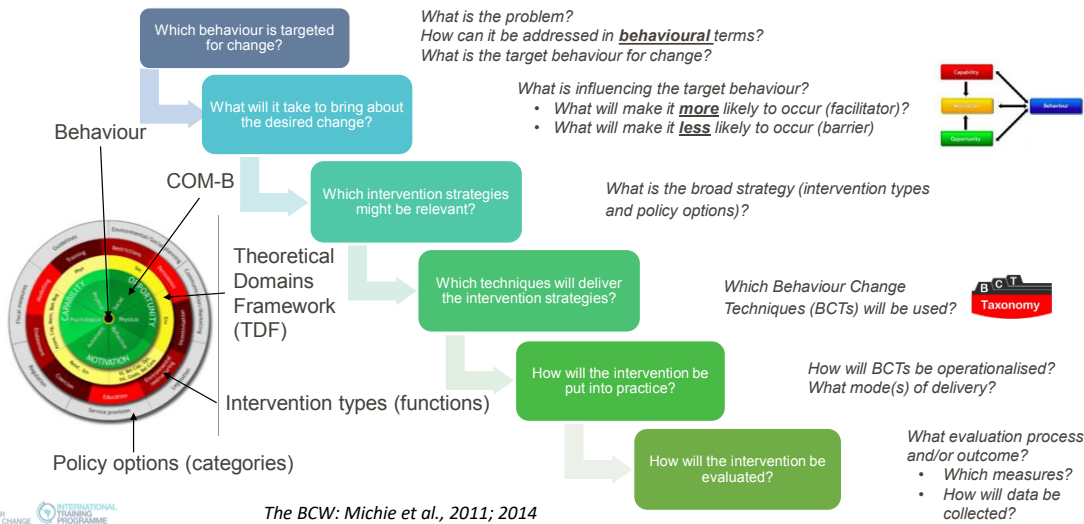
> "To identify the behaviour, start by defining a positive outcome. What is the overall 'problem' now? What would you like to be better in the future?"
>
> **Prof. Angel Chater, University of Bedfordshire**

Advice for approaching the problem

- Take one step at a time
- It is an iterative process
- Use co-creation with key stakeholders
- Does not have to be linear
- Engage with a behavioural scientist.

For example... What stops people engaging in physical activity?

- **Lacking Capability** – "I don't know where to go or what to do; my knees are too weak."
- **Lacking Opportunity** – "I don't have the right clothes; I can't get to classes; it's too expensive."
- **Lacking Motivation** – "It's too much effort; life gets in the way; it's too cold or too difficult."

Useful tools to help guide the most appropriate intervention strategy

The APEASE criteria can help design the intervention strategy

- **Acceptability** - Does the person want to do it? Is it the right time in their life? Do they understand how it could help them to reach their goal?
- **Practicability** - Are the actions specific, realistic and possible to carry out for that person?
- **Effectiveness/cost effectiveness** - is the action measurable? How much will the action(s) influence the desired goal?
- **Affordability** - Can they afford the planned action?
- **Side effects/safety** - Is the action going to affect any other part of their life (for good or bad?) Is it going to affect anyone around them?
- **Equity** - Do they have a fair opportunity to engage in the intervention?

The GROW model can help define the intervention

- **G – Goal:** "What do you want to achieve?"
- **R – Reality:** "What is currently stopping you?"
- **O – Options:** "Who could help you?"
- **W - Will/ Way forward:** "How will you reward yourself?"

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Taking a behavioural approach

We are all over-confident; we all over-estimate the accuracy of our knowledge. The more senior and experienced we are, the more over-confident we tend to become.

To best use behavioural science to make better decisions we should start by having humility about what we actually know; and therefore, the likely impacts that our interventions might have.

Over-confidence tends to make the best negotiators over-estimate their chances of success; over-confidence can make people more able and willing to take risks. However, over-confidence can also lead to an under-estimation of the value of the risk and trade-offs being made.

Influencing Behaviour

There are three main ways to influence people's behaviour:

1. **Information** – telling people what to do.
2. **Incentives** – either imposing fines or offering subsidies.
3. **Regulation** – to either ban or permit activities.

Behavioural science helps make the traditional tools more effective and informed but also offers additional ways to interact and influence behaviour.

The term nudge is often used to describe techniques in which environments can help to alter people's behaviour in predictable ways. While nudge is certainly part of behavioural science, it is really a simplified technique which risks unintended consequences.

We are all choice architects

The choices that every human makes in their life are not made in a vacuum but are influenced by the environment around us and the influences, noticed and unnoticed, that this exerts on our thinking, behaviour and decisions.

The person who creates that environment is a choice architect – using behavioural science to link a desired outcome to an appropriate influence. We can modify the choice architecture to influence behaviour but must be aware of the risks of unintended consequences.

Examples might be:

- Reducing domestic energy consumption by making information on utilities bills easier to understand.

- Understanding when a fine is a fine and the unintended consequence that it is seen as a payment for, say, parking illegally and so encourages the behaviour it is designed to discourage.

- Paying attention to defaults to ensure that, say, automatic subscriptions are designed with good intension – to ensure customers don't miss out – rather than bad – to ensure customers unwittingly pay for unwanted services.

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The power of COM-B – a worked example

Adjusting the flow temperature on your boiler should save money – so what stops people doing this simple task? Understanding which of the barriers along the journey are **capability**, **opportunity** or **motivation** barriers is a vital step in overcoming them.

> **Step 1** - Understand this is an attractive and easy task.

- Lack of knowledge about boiler settings vs heating temperature – capability barrier
- Smaller savings compared to turning heating down or off – motivation barrier

> **Step 2** - Check you have an appropriate boiler.

- Technical language used in boiler instructions – capability barrier
- Not all boilers can be adjusted – opportunity barrier

> **Step 3** - Make the adjustment.

- Fear of causing fire or damage – motivation barriers
- Not all boiler controls are the same – capability barrier

The key to using behavioural science to influence this change is to identify specifically what outcome you are trying to achieve; then focus on the environment and observe what is happening at each step of the process. Interventions can then be designed to overcome the observed barriers.

"Identifying what a good outcome will be is the right place to start. The most humane solution is usually the one that makes things easier."

Max Mawby, Founder, Thinks Insight & Strategy

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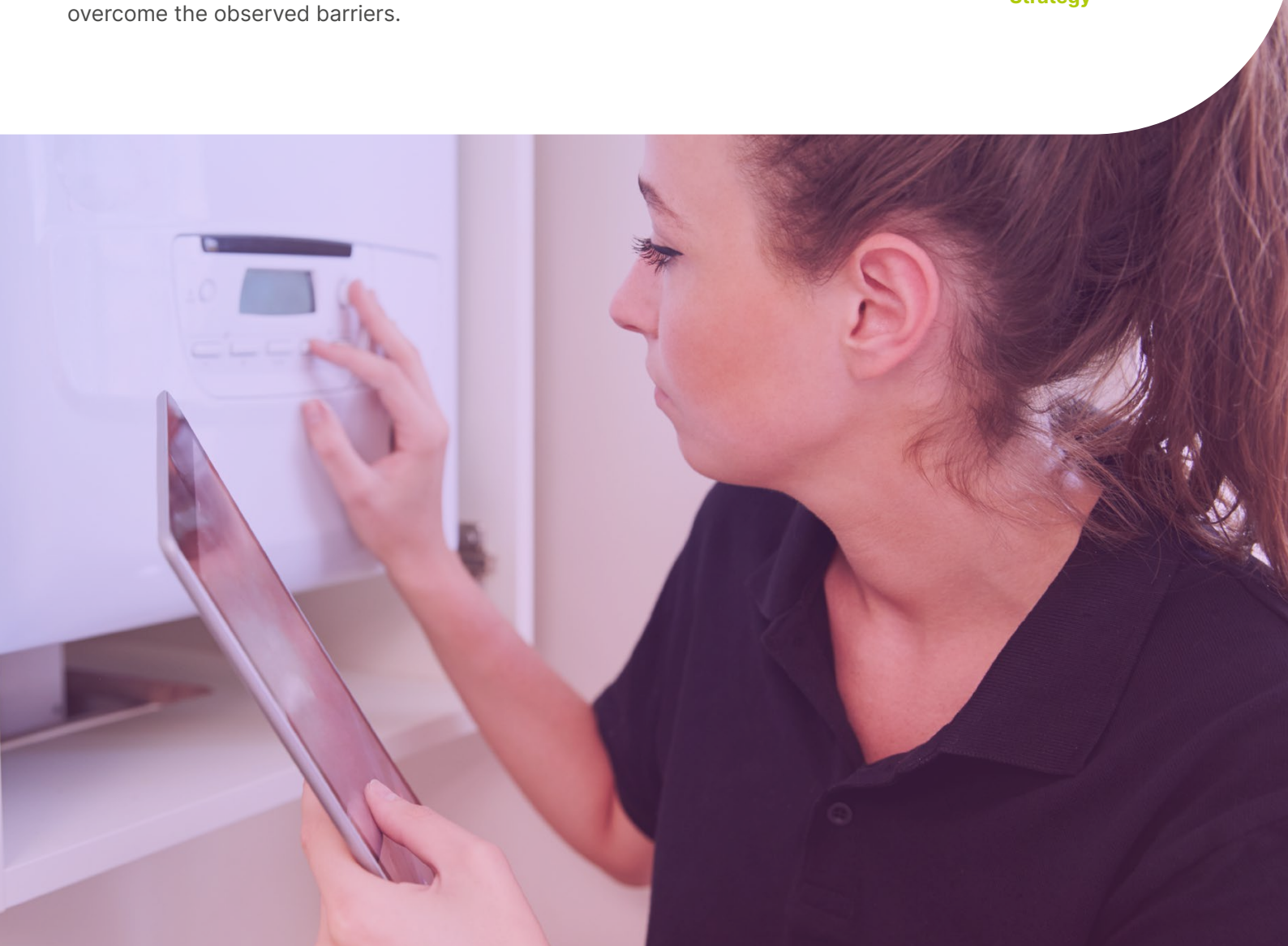
Activity Reflection Questions

1. What is your current approach to behaviour change?

2. What might be your barriers to using behavioural science?

3. What problem are you trying to address?

4. What needs to be done differently and by whom to reach a desired outcome?

5. What is your target behaviour?

6. Who is your target audience?

7. What is the desired outcome?

8. What are the influences on the target behaviour in relation to:
   - Capability,
   - Opportunity and
   - Motivation?

9. What intervention strategies (intervention types and policy options) will you use?

10. What Behaviour Change Techniques (BCTs) will you use?

11. What is your mode of delivery?

12. How will you evaluate behaviour change and impact?

Workshop 1: Prioritising challenges and stakeholders

Four key challenges were identified and agreed by the groups to be taken forward into future PACE sessions:

- We have lost focus when balancing community and customer care with operational efficiency.
- The organisation has to be better able to adapt to change.
- People drive their cars too much.
- We need more focus on consistent strategic decision making rather than following political cycles.

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Workshop 2: Identifying blockers to change

Key blockers to change were identified for each of the challenges as follows:

We have lost focus when balancing community and customer care with operational efficiency.

- Easier to look inwards.
- Easier to measure progress.
- Lack of time.
- Lack of clarity over what the community and customer is or wants or needs.
- Lack of money.
- Too little leadership buy-in.
- Lack of expertise.
- Too much silo thinking.

The organisation has to be better able to adapt to change.

- Perception of risk.
- Lack of familiarity.
- Time and the ability to see things through.
- Custom and practice – habits.
- Bravery and the ability to hold nerve.
- Lack of leadership commitment.

People drive their cars too much.

- Perception of or actual lack of alternatives.
- Cars are too high in hierarchy.
- Cars have too much social status.
- Economics drive decision making.
- Perceived or real convenience.

We need more focus on consistent strategic decision making rather than following political cycles.

- Politicians demand speed; bureaucrats want things done properly.
- Ability to hold political nerve.
- Tactical decisions trump strategic decisions.

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Next steps - structuring sessions two and three

The cohort felt it would be useful to focus on three key challenges going forward:

- **Internal challenge 1:** "We need more focus on consistent strategic decision making rather than following political cycles."
- **Internal challenge 2:** "We have lost focus when balancing community and customer care with operational efficiency."
- **External challenge:** "People drive their cars too much."

Points for reflection and discussion

- How have you developed your understanding and mindset towards behaviour change?
- Have you started to consider your key challenges and how behaviour change could offer opportunity for change?
- Do you have any concerns about understanding and implementing behaviour change techniques?

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