

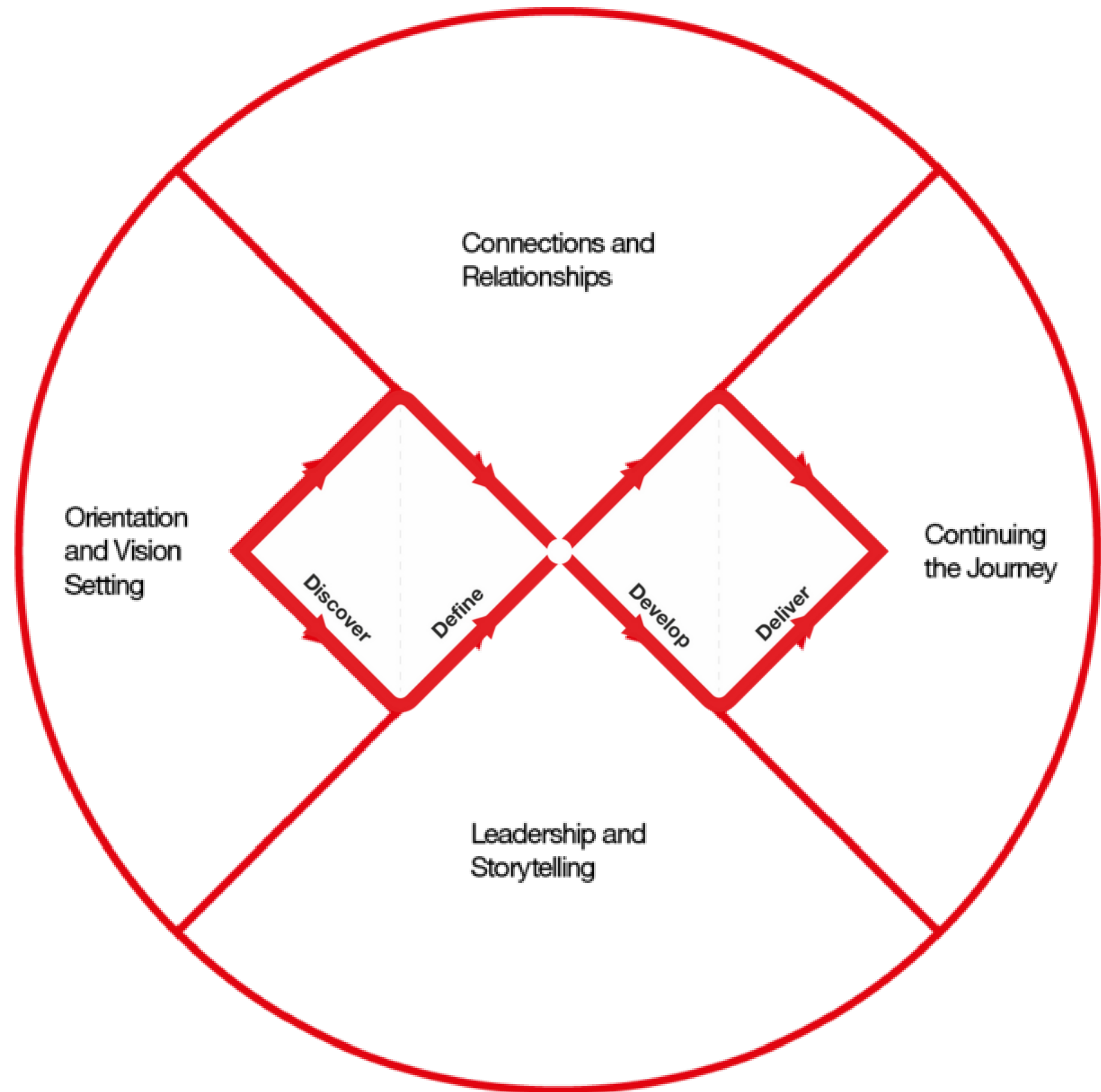
# poverty truth Ilfracombe

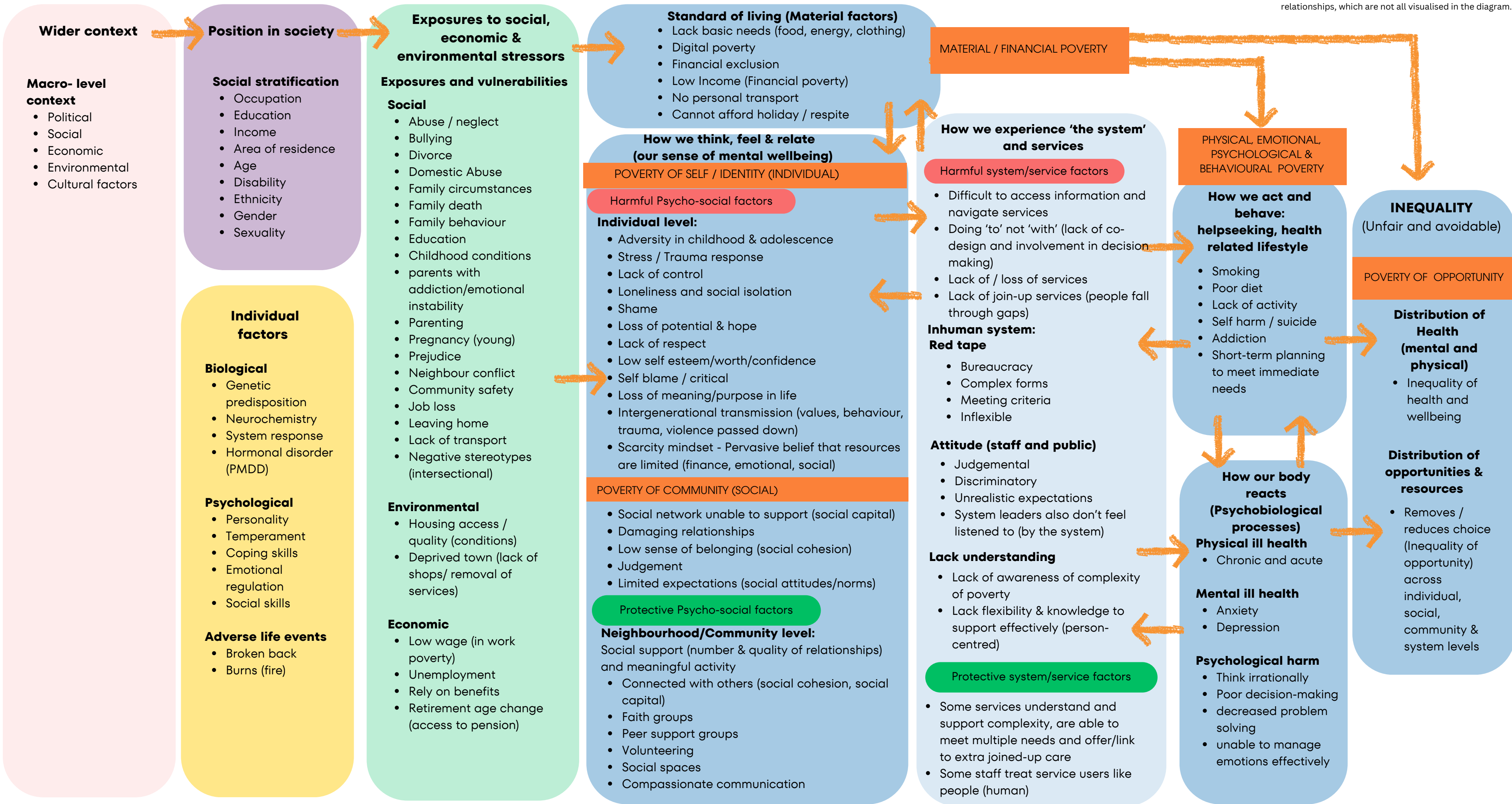
January 2026 update

# The design approach

Guided by the *Systemic Design Framework* by the Design Council, we took time to **discover** people's real experiences of poverty and the system, **define** the issues that matter most, selecting the themes to focus on. Commissioners then **develop** ideas together, using lived experience to shape practical, grounded solutions, before looking to **deliver** changes that improve services or influence policy.

This process is contained within building connections and relationships, vision setting, facilitated 'gatherings' that promote storytelling to share lived experiences, culminating in efforts to embed the learning and work to 'continue the journey'.



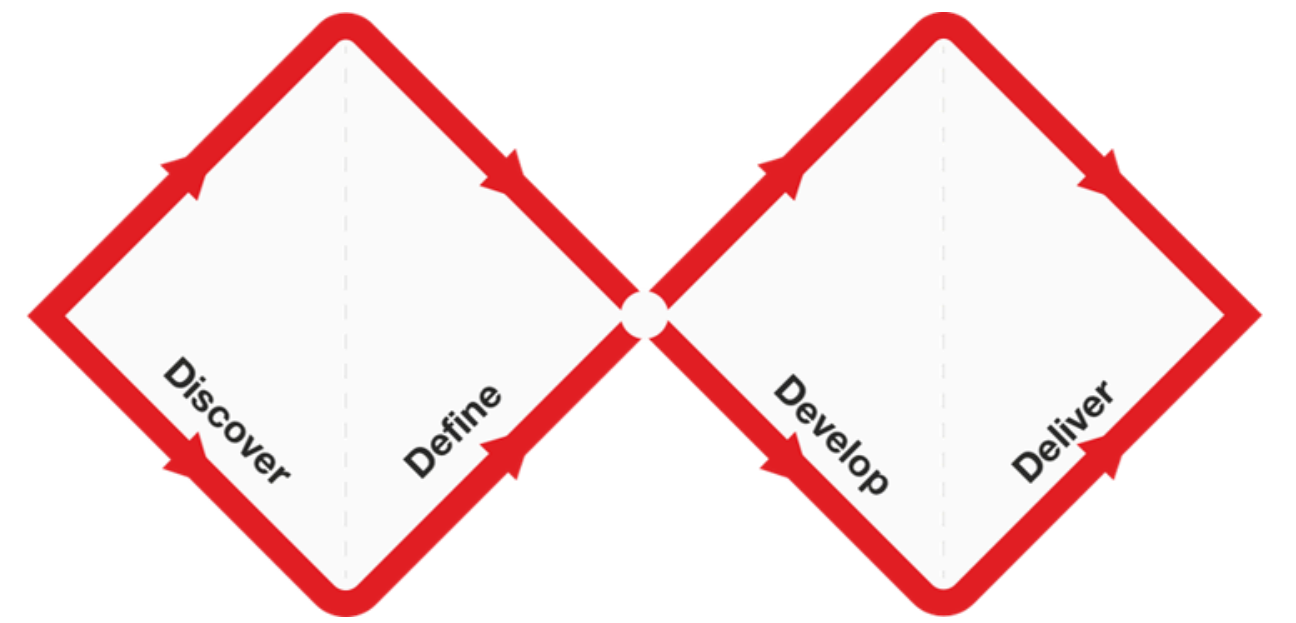




# OUR UNDERSTANDING OF POVERTY

PEOPLE WITH EXPERIENCE OF POVERTY AND SERVICE PROVIDERS  
CAME TOGETHER TO DEVELOP A SHARED UNDERSTANDING.

# 3 Themes



- 1 Housing
- 2 Adult education, training & employment
- 3 Humanising services

# Theme: Housing

Social housing

Private rentals

# 'Healthy Homes Ilfracombe'



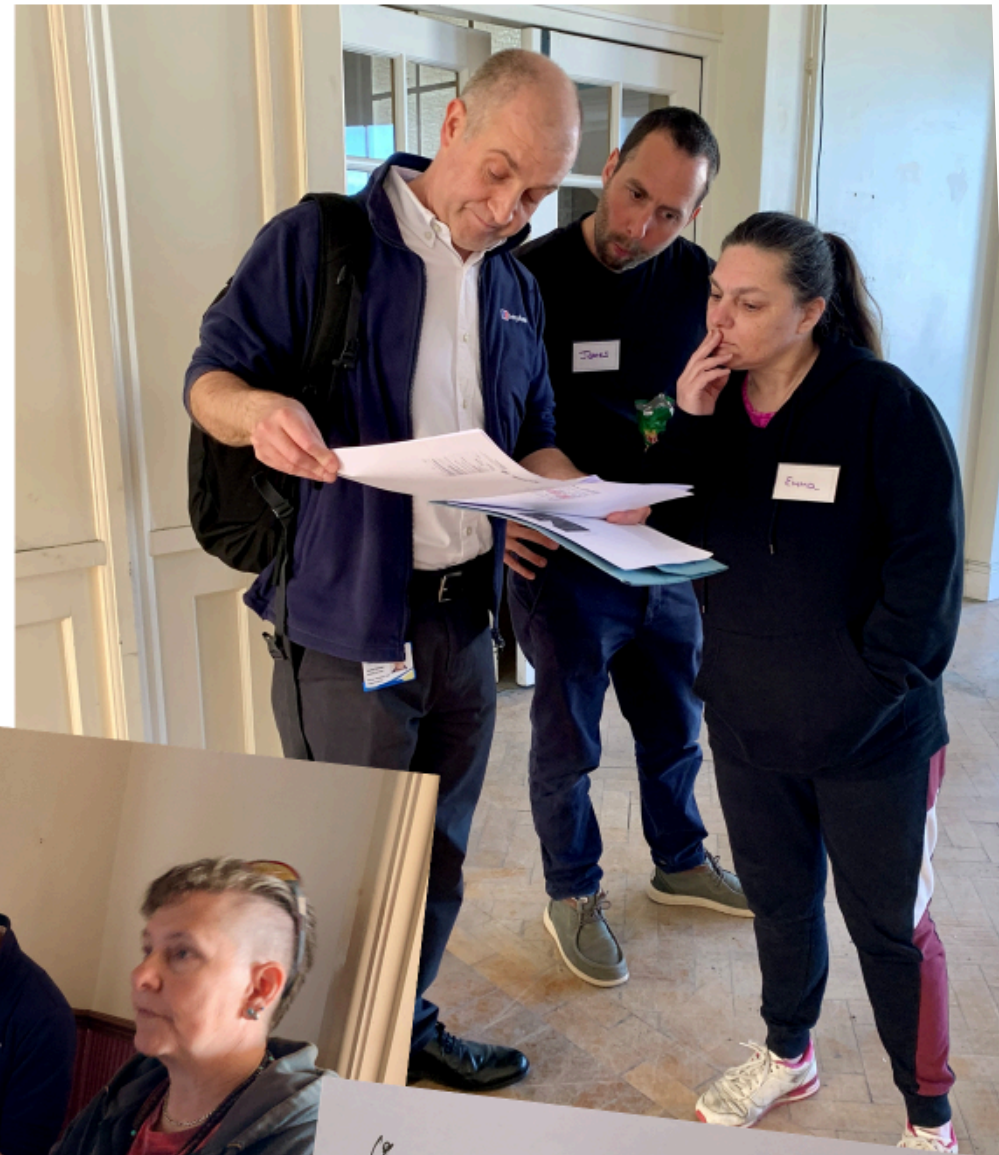
What did we **discover** about **social housing** in Ilfracombe?

## THE PROBLEM

- A **severe shortage of suitable social housing** means that social housing is out of reach for many who need it most
- People are **trapped in unaffordable, unsafe, or overcrowded living conditions**
- **Long waiting lists** and a **mismatch** between available properties and people's actual needs
- The **lack of secure, affordable housing contributes to poor health, instability, and ongoing poverty**
- There is a pressing need to significantly increase the supply of quality, accessible, and appropriate social housing, so that everyone has a safe and stable place to call home

How did we **define** the problem as a design challenge?

How might we increase the availability, and quantity, of suitable social housing, ensuring that people experiencing poverty have access to safe, stable, and affordable homes that meet their diverse needs and provide long-term security?



"There's no way that NDDC would have involved lived experience in the housing project in Ilfracombe without the Commission"  
Ken, CEO, NDDC '91





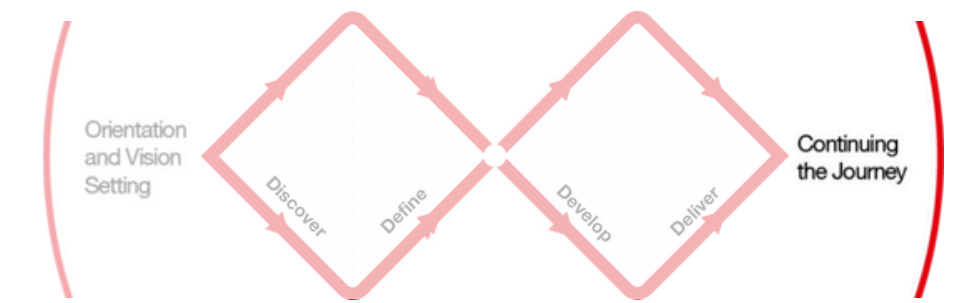
# Healthy Homes Ilfracombe

## How did we develop this idea?

Creating the first new social housing in Ilfracombe for many years, North Devon District Council purchased the old Post office and buildings on Oxford Grove for retro-fit. The aim was to improve the living environment to achieve better social, physical and mental health outcomes for tenants.

The PTC housing group:

- Enabled the District Council, Community Commissioners, North Devon Homes and 361 Energy to work together, incorporating the learning from the experiences of Community Commissioners.
- We visited the acquired properties with a senior building surveyor
- The Head of Environmental Health & Housing shared architect drawings
- Senior building surveyor reports on progress
- **We co-created a retro-fit specification**



## What next?

### Short term:

- District Council raising additional funds to meet specified requirements
- Housing group **determining opportunities to influence related policies** (pets, tenancy, section 8 impact)

### Medium term:

- Construction - Housing will be in place by the end of 2026
- **Measure outcome** to demonstrate benefits and any unintended outcomes

### Long term:

- District Council and North Devon Homes intend to continue to involve people with lived experiences in planning in future social housing initiatives

# Landlords Charter

What did we **discover** about the private rented sector in Ilfracombe

## THE PROBLEM

- The **private rented sector can be an insecure, unaffordable, and disempowering** place to live.
- Many face **poor housing conditions, short-term tenancies, discrimination, and a lack of accountability from landlords**—all while struggling to meet **high rents**.
- Navigating this system often means **limited rights, fear of eviction, and few safe alternatives**.
- Current systems offer **little protection or support** for renters on low incomes.
- There is a need to create fairer, more transparent, and more supportive housing experiences that treat tenants with dignity, ensure basic standards, and give people greater stability and voice in where and how they live.



**DESIGN  
CHALLENGE**

How did we **define** the problem as a design challenge?

How might we transform the private rented sector into a more secure, affordable, and supportive environment for people experiencing poverty, ensuring tenants have fair treatment, stable housing, and a voice in their living conditions?



## How did we develop this idea?

- Outline aims and opportunities for a Charter, including existing and emerging legislation opportunities
- Created draft 'I will statements' for tenants and Landlords
- Discussed support for Landlords
- Invited Letting agencies to begin to build in a new perspective
- 361 Energy submitted a funding bid to support Landlord/letting agency engagement

### Aims of charter

Create an attractive charter (to increase motivation to sign and adhere to Charter) that helps to build a trusted relationship between Tenant and Landlord

### For Landlords

- Communicate Landlords responsibility
- Promote and communicate relevant legislation / standards (to make this the norm)
- Support (not just penalise) Landlords, helping them improve (policy, maintenance, customer service)
- Improve access and understanding to relevant Information and support
- Highlight good practice

### For Tenants

- Communicate tenants' responsibility
- Improve living conditions (Housing quality)
- Protect tenants from bullying, discrimination and unfair eviction
- Ensure access to housing support

## What next?

### Short term:

- Continue housing group in 2026, involving more Landlords and Letting agencies
- Set out timeline for delivery of Charter
- Define NDDC policies that can be changed to promote voluntary adoption of charter
- Include emerging consumer/regulatory standards

### Medium term:

- Determine who could award and enforce Charter
- Determine a package of support available to tenants and landlords
- Reference current/emerging legislation
- Landlord Engagement plan to communicate benefits of signing Charter
- wider public consultation
- Present to Council housing committees for adoption

### Long term:

- Finalise Charter
- Create easy read versions
- Signup Landlords and letting agencies

# Adult Education, skills and employment



## What did we discover about adult education, skills and employment in Ilfracombe?

### THE PROBLEM

- Many individuals facing long-term unemployment, especially those dealing with disability, mental health issues, age-related challenges, and living in detrimental social and environmental conditions, encounter **systemic barriers that prevent them from accessing training, having positive skills development experiences and re-entering the workforce.**
- The existing support systems, like Job Centres, often **fail to provide adequate resources** and can show **a lack of empathy**, leaving **people feeling unworthy, unheard, and unsupported.**
- Additionally, there are **many untapped opportunities for skill development** that are not fully accessible due to financial pressures, fear of how they could affect benefits, health concerns, or lack of flexibility in existing programs.

## How did we define the problem as a design challenge?

How might we support individuals experiencing long-term unemployment and disability, with a focus on dignity, empowerment, and the development of skills for self-sufficiency. Providing long-term stability, pathways to employment and personal growth opportunities for people who are often overlooked by traditional employment systems.



# Adult Education, skills and employment

## How did we develop this?

Our working group included the Academy, Junior school, DWP and Community Commissioners. Petroc, Learn Devon and the Town Council/ One Ilfracombe joined as guests. We considered the types of relevant courses (skills gaps), places to promote courses and how people can be supported to access and progress their learning.

- A connection was made with the One Ilfracombe 'Employment and skills' group to share insights. This group have enabled a local employment hub, are engaging with businesses to increase skills development opportunities and are organising a jobs fair in Feb 2026.
- **New adult education courses** from Petroc and Learn Devon were held in Ilfracombe's junior school (Maths and English for parents and carers) and Academy (Art and Design and Woodwork skills), making access for parents easier. This is the first time in 20 years that free adult learning courses have been held in the Academy.
- We worked with the DCC employment hub to support individuals to access courses
- A letter of support for a transport bid to improve access to offsite courses
- The Library and DCC employment hub offered to **support people to sign up if unable to access online**
- **DWP outreach service extended and connected** with the DCC employment hub

## What next?

### Short term:

- Produce communications plan to enable access to courses
- Build lived experience involvement into the One Ilfracombe work and skills group

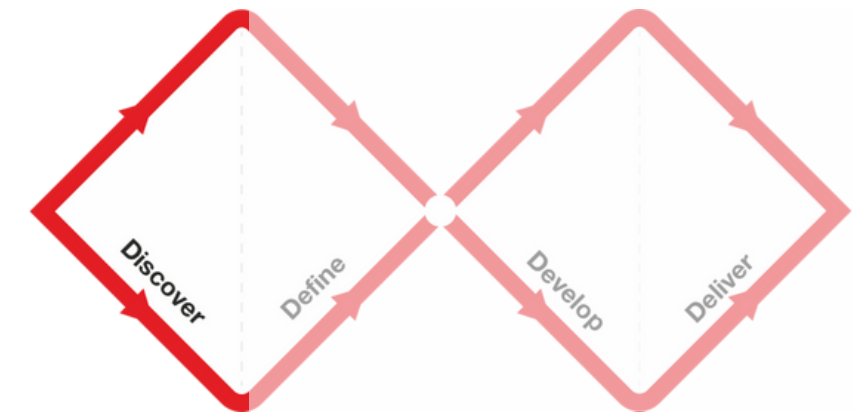
### Medium term:

- Enable courses to continue and develop
- Course providers and DWP must work together to build on any successes and understand the barriers that stop people accessing these opportunities to help reduce any fears or concerns and increase access
- Gather feedback (access, experience and outcomes) to build understanding of how attendees can be best supported to progress their learning
- Connect with emerging 'humanise work' (incl. campus model)

### Long term:

- An established supported learning programme in Ilfracombe

# Humanising Services



## What did we discover about service delivery?

### People experiencing poverty often feel:

- let down by services meant to support them
- forgotten
- misunderstood
- dismissed

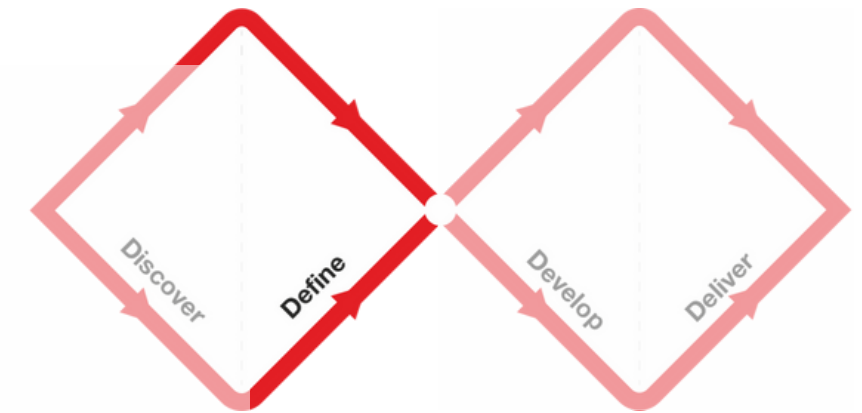
leading to deeper harm and disconnection

### Services can feel:

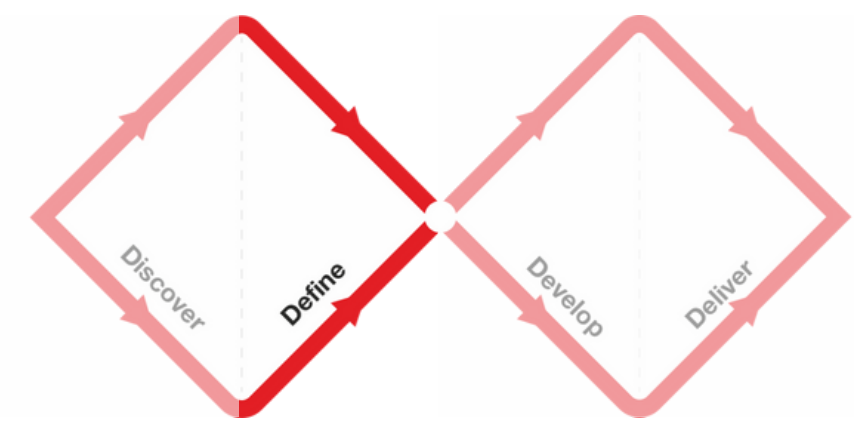
- cold
- rigid and bureaucratic
- inaccessible
- judgmental
- constrained by unsuitable eligibility criteria
- and lack a timely, compassionate human response.

### We defined 4 key problems:

- People struggle to access and understand information and navigate the system
- Fixed and rigid processes are harming people
- Staff attitudes and understanding of poverty can be a barrier
- Many key services in Ilfracombe are simply not available, not effective or disconnected



Moving from problems to possibilities,  
we set ourselves four design challenges:



We need services that move

from...

to...



1 Rigid



flexible processes

2 Confusing



clear and accessible information

3 Transactional



compassionate interactions  
rooted in dignity and understanding

4 Out of reach and  
fragmented



available, effective and connected

...so that people feel heard, supported and not lost in a cold, complex system.

# Humanise principles

## We need

- Accessible, flexible, inclusive and responsive services
- Information that is available and inclusive
- Person-Centred navigation
- Proactive guidance

## Delivered by staff and volunteers with

- Compassionate understanding of poverty
- Non-judgemental attitude
- Transparency and credibility

## To ensure

- Timely access to support
- Simplified data/story capture
- Coordinated and consistent pathways (Integration)

## What next?

### Short-term

More work is needed to win hearts and minds as to why these standards and principles need to be adopted and/or there are some commissioners/providers whom appear willing/on board, so it is important to:

- Ensure there is continued feedback loop to update Commissioners on progress in 2026
- Shared the learning across the system to get others to follow suit
- As Devon Mental Health Alliance feels it's largely compliant with the standards and principles- ask them to present how this has been achieved and how they would audit them
- Present the findings to the System Change Action Alliance (date to be confirmed) and the [Public Health] Commissioning Network

### Medium-term

- Include the standards and principles within the next substance use competitive process and promote them within the Public Health department (Richard M)
- Ensure the impact of those that do adopt principles is monitored
- Try to get the principles used by the System Change Action Alliance and the Commissioning Network as a reference tool- that way commissioners/providers can identify which of the statements they feel a) able to adopt and b) fit with their service offer/values (recognise the risk here is organisations only select the standards and principles they feel they are already adhering to and therefore very little changes).
- Create training opportunities for staff to share principles
- Build the standards into the specification for the new Neighbourhood Teams (Ginny, ICB addition)

### Long-term

- A set of principles and standards that are used to Commission new services and audit existing services
- Staff trained to deliver in line with principles

# Staff resources

From transactional to compassionate staff interactions rooted in dignity and a greater understanding of poverty



# Staff resources

## **What's next?**

### **Short-term**

- Finalise personas
- Continue to develop reflective activity for staff (piloted in NDH)
- Create a space to host resources as we build them
- Pilot 'Your story' tool

### **Medium-term**

- Develop opportunities to continue to co-develop resources with people with 'experts by experience'
- Secure volunteer management so that experts by experience are valued, supported and can access supervision and training opportunities.
- Reflective practice, support and supervision for frontline staff

### **Long-term**

- Embed resources and experts by experience to improve service experience and outcomes across the campus

Rigid  flexible processes

**We need to go beyond** a 'No', door closed

'we cant help'

'that's not our responsibility'

'your not eligible'

'your on the waiting list'

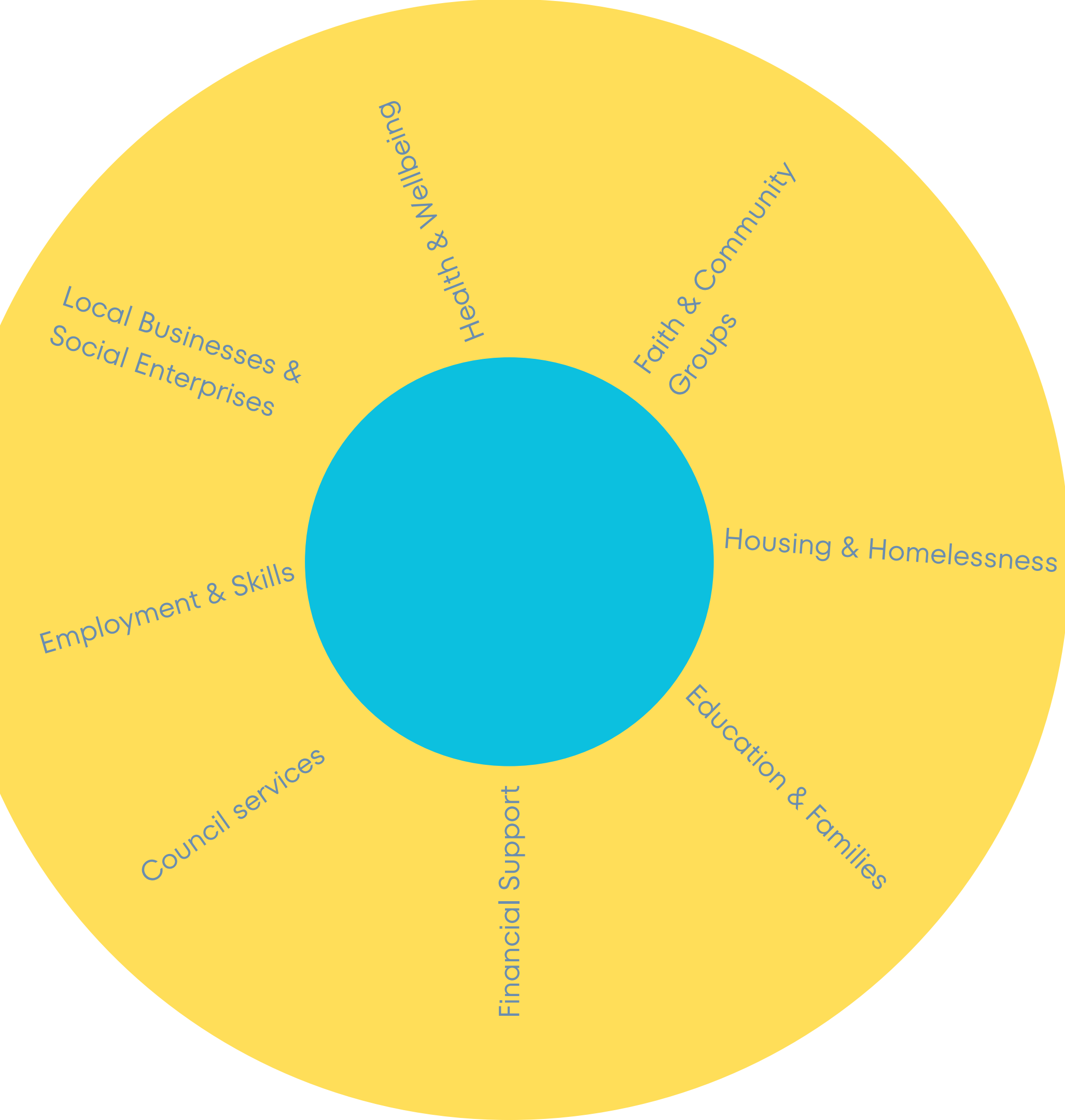
'No, but...'  
alternative offer  
approach

**Move towards**

- We recognise you still have needs
- We recognise we have a responsibility
- We will work with you to connect you to practical support, information and others that can help you

# Ifracombe Campus

"any door is the right door"



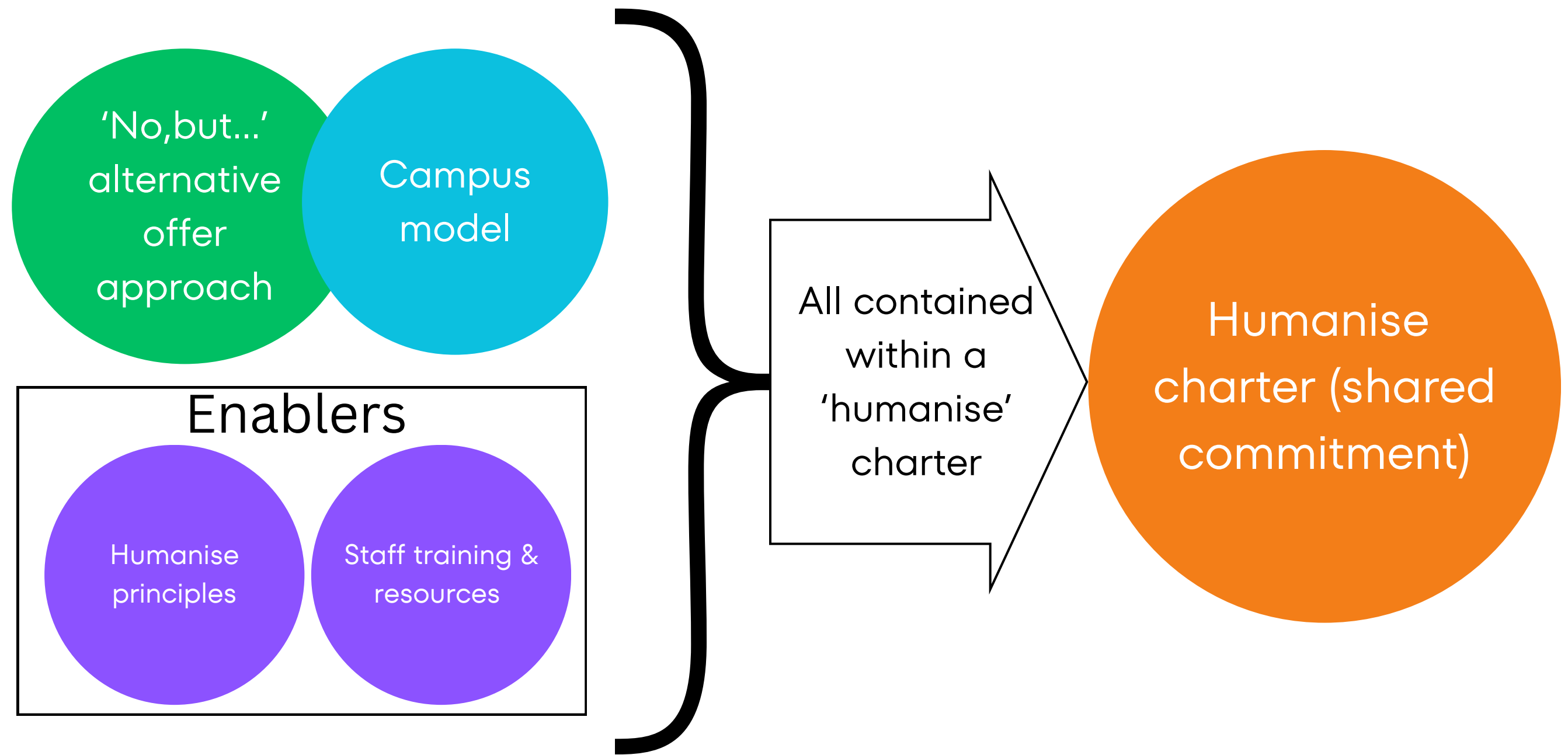
**This approach is rooted in our 4 challenges**

**People need -**

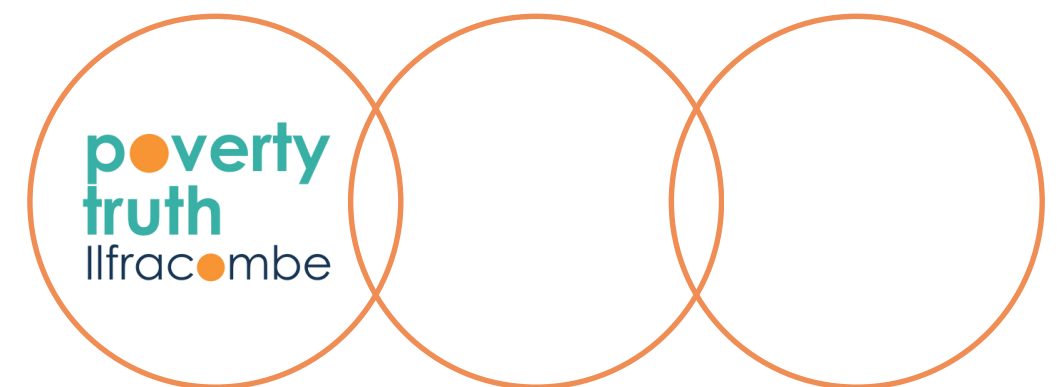
- need info
- services connected (people to services and services to people)
- Shared values and culture so people feel supported so they don't feel like they are in the wrong place or being left alone

**You will walk in any door and you know you will get:**

- a warm welcome
- the information you need
- connected to the services you need
- treated with compassion and understanding
- an alternative offer of support if your request can't be met
- a feeling that services are working together to help you



*What did we learn about developing relationships and creating a shared understanding?*



*How our relationships  
have developed over time*

Connected  
human to human,  
seeing each other  
as people

No  
preconceived  
ideas or  
opinions, a  
privilege to  
listen

Mutual  
respect

Non  
judgemental

Better  
understanding  
as people's  
stories unfold

Acting as a  
team, where  
everyone has  
a role

Working  
towards one  
end goal,  
together

Building a  
common  
purpose

*'I felt heard, finally. It was almost like a eureka moment, finally someone has listened to me'*

Community Commissioner

*I feel like its not two different kinds of commissioners – it's a group of people working towards an end goal. Its 'us' rather than 'them and us'.*

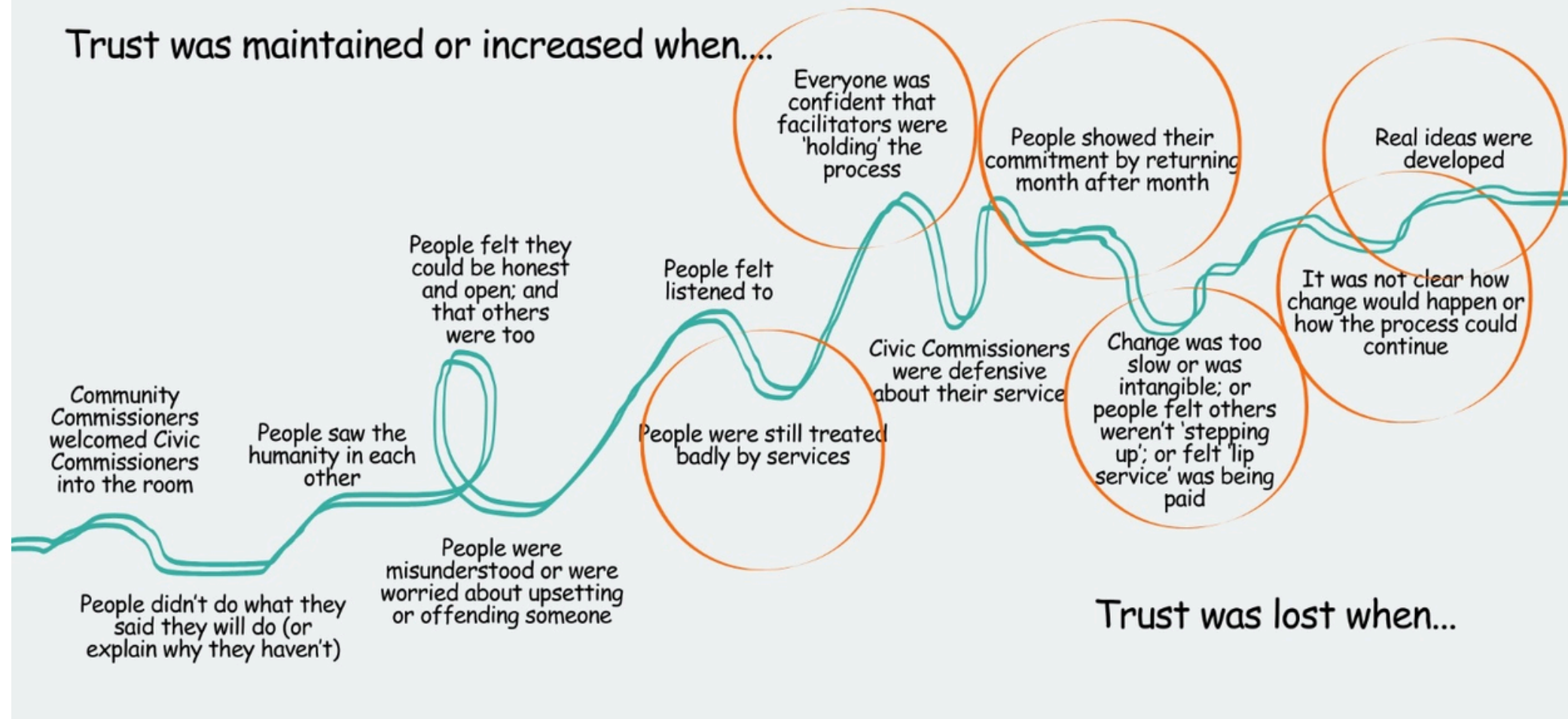
*Community Commissioner*

*I don't feel that all of my **expectations** have been met ...we managed to establish relationships with our Civic Commissioners based upon trust... and the willingness to strive for a mutually achievable goal. Unfortunately I feel that much of what has been proposed there has been a **shortfall** in those promises...*

*I don't feel **hope** anymore as such because I feel **confident** there will be change... somewhere in the process that started changing, I became confident ... that we would come up with something and put something in place... It's not just a big hope that things can be different, but you can see a **pathway**.*

# Timeline of trust

Trust was maintained or increased when....



## A reflection on (the fragility of) trust

The work we do together is based on relationships, **how we work together (as well as what we do) is an enabler of creating change.** It is so important and so easily damaged. Drawing on the interviews and observations she made, Jennie reflected this as part of sharing the learning on what increases, maintains and loses trust when working together. As we continue into 2026 we can use this reflection to not only maintain (and hopefully increase) the trust we have between us but also to build trust outside the Commission as try to build relationships across Ilfracombe and beyond to enable the change we want to see happen in 2026.

# How does change happen?



**Everyone is heard** by hearing our Community Commissioners, we understand better how poverty affects every aspect of someone's life; and learn about the social barriers to getting out of poverty.

**We create a collective understanding** by sharing our experiences of services and of poverty, we create a new kind of knowledge not possible otherwise

Participants in the PTC told us they:

- Saw things differently because of what they'd learned
- Could be more open and honest about their experiences and challenges
- Were more confident to speak up
- Felt connected, appreciated and better understood
- Could accept services may not be providing in the way they intended
- Were hopeful that change could happen

**This led to a transformative space...**Our deep engagement created a space where we could think, act and behave differently. The space we created together is radical and transformative. By respecting everyone as equal, we create a space where human relationships deepen and we feel an increased responsibility to make change happen.

When everyone is heard, there is a new collective understanding and a transformative space is created, this can result in **the creation of a set of 'conditions for change'** (things that enable future change):

- A different set of relationships
- A change in the conversation
- A shared set of values and principles

and these, in turn, help to create **'tangible' outputs.**

# BUT... there are challenges

- Embedding system change is slow, but the Commission is short
- It is a challenge to ensure that work is followed through, embedded and resourced, after the Commission ends
- Finding ways to connect with and expand the work to other residents and those working 'on the ground' in the town
- There is a tension between working to address specific local issues, and the Devon wide/regional remit many Civic Commissioners have
- A shifting policy context (e.g. Local Government Reorganisation; Integrated Care Board cuts) and lack of resources or new funding impacts on the possibilities for change
- Timeliness - just as it is a challenge, policy and strategy changes towards neighbourhood health (the Integrated Care Board), the shift from 'hospital to community' (Ten year health plan): a focus on health inequalities (Devon Partnership Trust); young people, employment and skills (Devon County Council) provide future opportunities

# What next?

*'The thought that it is ending is impossible to conceive of, it doesn't make sense to not carry on in some way... we feel like a whole, not individual people... we can't go back'*

*Community Commissioner*

*'The success won't be at the end of this, 'what have we done? Or we've achieved this and something has changed'. It's like, 'what have we set in place to keep that change that we've made?...how do we keep that change going?'*

*Civic Commissioner*

# Commitments to support the Commission (from event 4/12/25)

Civic Commissioners and guests were asked to share how they would be supporting the next steps of our work and pledge to support the Commission.

Person	Role	Organisation	Pledge
Chris Tidman	Deputy CEO	Royal Devon NHS Trust	Create a collaborative business case for Ilfracombe that states 'we have a vision and are looking for investment'
Phil Hariss	Community Developer	Devon Mental Health Alliance / Devon Mind	2 days/per week facilitation time to support delivery of PTC products; submitted a proposal to Sonja (DPT) to support a funding application for volunteer navigators as part of the campus model approach.
MP Ian Roome	Member of Parliament	Liberal Democrats	Try to get parliament to commit resources to Ilfracombe - 'give me the tools to mouth off about it'; Support the creation of an integrated health hub
Alun Dobson	Trustee	Northern Devon Food Bank	Become a member of the Ilfracombe campus model; seek funding to increase Citizens Advice availability; continue to provide essentials for families in need via foodbank; Lobby the ICB to secure 'healthy start vitamins' for families
Simon Kitchen	Head of Communities	Devon County Council	Co-design the distribution of the new 'crisis and resilience fund' (replacing the Household support fund in April 2026) building this into the campus model approach; Invite support for the work of the commission, help to build trusted relationships with 'those that don't get it' and are 'not in the room'.
Jody Le Bredonchel	Headmaster	Ilfracombe Junior School	Drive a focus on young people (and their families) experiencing poverty through the Ilfracombe Futures Forum
Tony George	JCP Partnership manager	Job Centre Plus (DWP)	Measure impact on customers
Richard Blackwell	Associate Director of Insight	Health Innovation South West	Co-produce metrics and measurements to demonstrate the value of relational work to provide quantitative data to inform decision making
Ben Lyon-Ross	Head of talent and participation	Landmark theatres	Provide venues and facilitation for creative engagement; explore partnership funding bids to support the co-design of cultural experience initiatives that aim to improve health outcomes and reduce health and social inequalities incl. changing how people access and experience services
Laura Donovan	Proper Officer / Town Clerk	Ilfracombe Town Council	Recognising that the town Council has very little power but that they can be part of the IPTC collaborative I Commit to help to bring town Councillors on board; advocate for the campus model approach; and promote to town clerk network to help spread awareness beyond Ilfracombe
Richard Preston	Sector Inspector – North Devon	Devon and Cornwall Police	Capitalise on the opportunity of IPTC knowledge generated to address community issues through police partnership working
Marie Gould	CEO	North Devon Council for Voluntary Services	Support listening to and involving the VCFSE sector
Lynsey Webb	Deputy Medical Director – Community Care Group	Royal Devon NHS Trust	Involve the IPTC in the development of the emerging Integrated Neighbourhood Health and Care teams incl. ensuring VCFSE buy in (part of NHSE 10yr plan rollout); Create Health and wellbeing sessions in Ilfracombe; Incorporate the Health Inequalities focus into my organisations work
Sabrina Maine-Blatherwick	Digital and transformation lead	North Devon Coastal Primary Care Network (PCN)	Adopt a 'No, but' (alternative offer) approach and improve the navigation of services; implement trauma/poverty informed training for staff
Marc Rostock	Director of Neighbourhoods	North Devon Homes	Commit One Ilfracombe to support the continuation of IPTC in 2026, recognising the importance of facilitation and managing change / delivery
Rebecca Brady	Wellbeing team manager	Caen Medical centre	Share learning resources with staff; sign up to the humanise charter
Cate Blatherwick	Curriculum Coordinator	Learn Devon	Create more opportunities to support adult and young people (16-24) into education in Ilfracombe

# Our products and embedding

In January 2026 we embedded the products created by the commission across partner organisations to finalise any work not yet completed and to build on the momentum generated

## Housing (North Devon District Council: Ken & North Devon Homes: Marc)

- The District Council have purchased local properties to create new social housing, the commission co-created a **'Healthy Homes' specification** to inform the retrofit of these properties
- A **Landlords Charter** to help increase the quality of local (private) housing and support (not just penalise) private landlords to make improvements

## Adult Education, Skills and Employment (One Ilfracombe: Charmain)

- New **adult education courses** delivered by Petroc and Learn Devon, supported by an employment hub and connected to a jobs fair in Feb 2026. DWP are also extending their outreach service in Ilfracombe.

## Campus model

### (One Ilfracombe: 1. Infrastructure group; and 2. Delivery group)

- The concept of a **campus model** that proposes building a network of cross-sector organisations and groups
- A shared commitment (via a **Humanise charter**) to working differently to support people experiencing poverty
- Receiving a 'No' (we can't help / not our remit) can Worsen a situation. There is a need for warm handovers and supported, alternative offers. We call this the **'No, but' approach**

### includes Wellbeing Hub - Wellbeing Wednesday

- We have created a **design brief for a wellbeing hub** that builds on work in the area to enable people to access information and navigate services from within trusted social spaces that already exist

### includes The Ilfracombe centre improvements

- To improve the experience of accessing information and navigate services at our local one stop shop a **quality improvement proposal for the Ilfracombe centre** was created
- The town Council agreed to dedicate a window at the Ilfracombe centre to be used as a **information window** to display relevant information

## Community vibrancy (One Ilfracombe: Charmain)

- A **Cultural bid** (Arts Council England) was created using Poverty Truth values to ensure local people are directly involved in co-creating cultural activities. Sadly, this bid was unsuccessful but a second 'pride in our town' bid is in creation also using the Poverty Truth values.

## Staff resources (Devon ICB: Ginny & Royal Devon NHS Trust: Amber)

We created **staff resources** to improve understanding of, and attitude towards, poverty:

- 'our understanding of poverty' video ([link](#)) and model
- a photovoice exhibition
- personas based on lived experience to support service designers
- a reflective practice activity for staff

## Your story (Royal Devon NHS Trust: Amber)

- A **'Your story' tool** for staff, to help reduce the times a person has to retell their story

## Team Around the Person (TAP) approach

### (Royal Devon NHS Trust, Health & Justice pilot: Simon)

- For those with the most complex needs, we recommend a **'team around a person' approach**, promoting person-led support to ensure people access the support that really matters to them

## PHM tool (Royal Devon NHS Trust: Andrea)

- The inclusion of 'poverty' as a risk factor in a new **Population Health Management tool** that identifies people at risk to ensure to increase their opportunity of accessing support

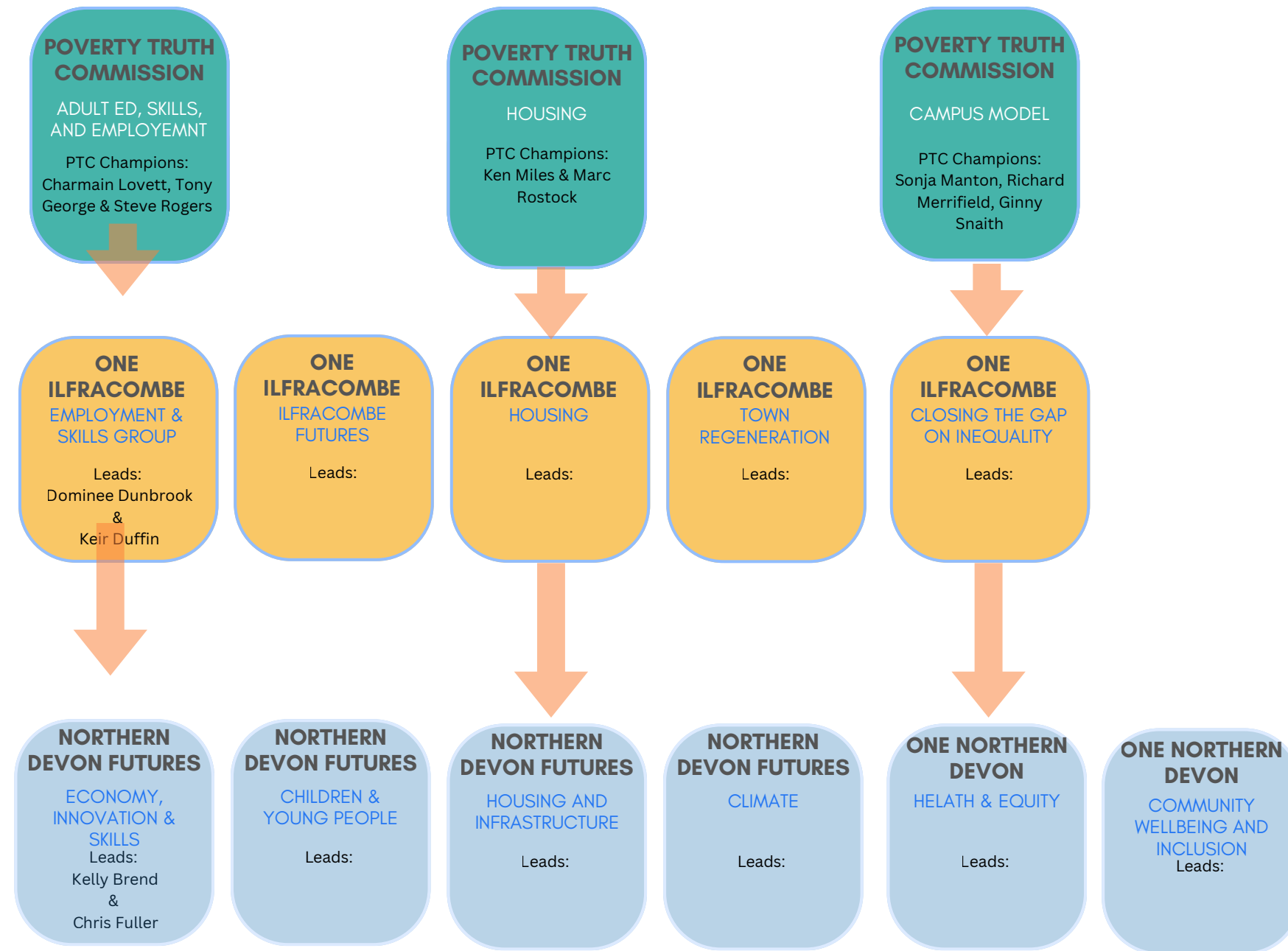
## Commissioning principles (Public Health Devon: Richard & Devon ICB: Ginny)

- A set of **Commissioning principles** for informing the commissioning of Public Health services in Ilfracombe and wider

# Embedding infrastructure

In January 2026 the Commission agreed to embed some of the ongoing work within One Ilfracombe's programme to:

- ensure our work has support in 2026 (and beyond)
- ensure the work has the support of wider partners
- able to apply for funding
- connected to wider Northern Devon partnerships (Some of the Civic Commissioners are already members of One Ilfracombe, One Northern Devon and Northern Devon Futures)
- all will benefit from One Ilfracombe's cross-cutting themes (Making the case for equitable (fair) funding; Population and town statistics; Community engagement)



poverty truth Ilfracombe

one ilfracombe  
our future, our choice

**ONE ILFRACOMBE BOARD**  
CHAIR: KEN MILES

**NORTHERN DEVON CULTURAL BOARD**

onenortherndevon    NORTHERN DEVON FUTURES

**ONE NORTHERN DEVON**  
CHAIR: KATHERINE ALLEN & PETE MORRISH

**NORTHERN DEVON FUTURES**  
CHAIR: PETE MORRISH

## Campus and alternative offer approach align with Neighbourhood health

Starting with a joint offer and building in the VCFSE support (incl. peer support/navigator volunteer roles)

- Positions Ilfracombe as a 'learning and evidence site', setting a foundation for the neighbourhood model which can be scaled in the future
- Embraces a Test and Learn approach to enable continuous improvement
- Enables systems to build services tailored to local needs, existing infrastructure and relationships
- Connects people to wider public services and VCFSE support (Integrated Neighbourhood)
- Based on 'humanise' principles co-created by the Commission
- 'No, but, alternative offer' approach seeks to connect people experiencing poverty (a 'rising risk' group) to alternative offers of support whilst they wait (waiting well) - this is a preventative approach to reduce the number of people moving into a higher risk group
- 'Team around the person' approach is being developed within the 'Health and justice' pilot in Ilfracombe

# What will you do to support...

1. Integrated neighbourhood work (Campus/no, but alternative offer approach)?
2. Shared communications

# poverty truth Ilfracombe

[For more info about the Ilfracombe Poverty Truth Commission \(IPTC\), please visit the IPTC webpage](#)

[The essential guide to understanding poverty in the UK \(Joseph Rowntree Foundation\)](#)