Building an effective analysis of strengths-based early action/prevention programmes

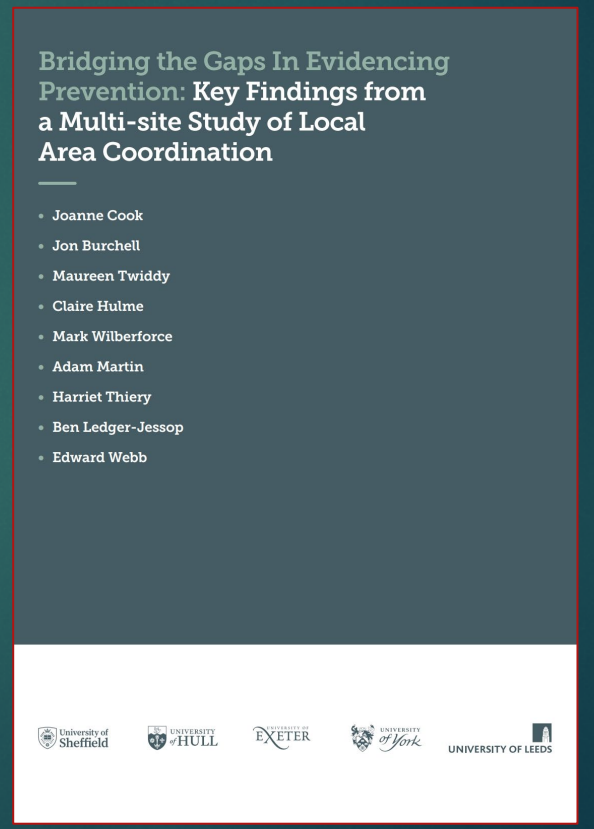
JON BURCHELL, JOE COOK, HARRIET THIERY, KATY ADAMS, AMANGELDI KENJEGALIEV (UNIVERSITIES OF SHEFFIELD AND HULL)

Understanding the value of collaborative strengths/place-based approaches.

- Three major projects







Prevention Paradox

- Estimates suggests that preventative interventions could lead to a 33% reduction in ill health and GDP increase of £320bn over 20 years.
- HOWEVER, the number of councils taking a positive investment strategy for prevention services dropped from 44% (2023/24) to 29% (2024/25).
- Application of innovative second wave models often small-scale, short-term and struggling to retain investment. Many excellent initiatives are being cancelled or functioning at reduced capacity.
  - Investment restricted by need to meet statutory commitments and commit resources to acute care rather than prevention.
  - Exacerbated by a relatively weak evidence base for impact of prevention initiatives.



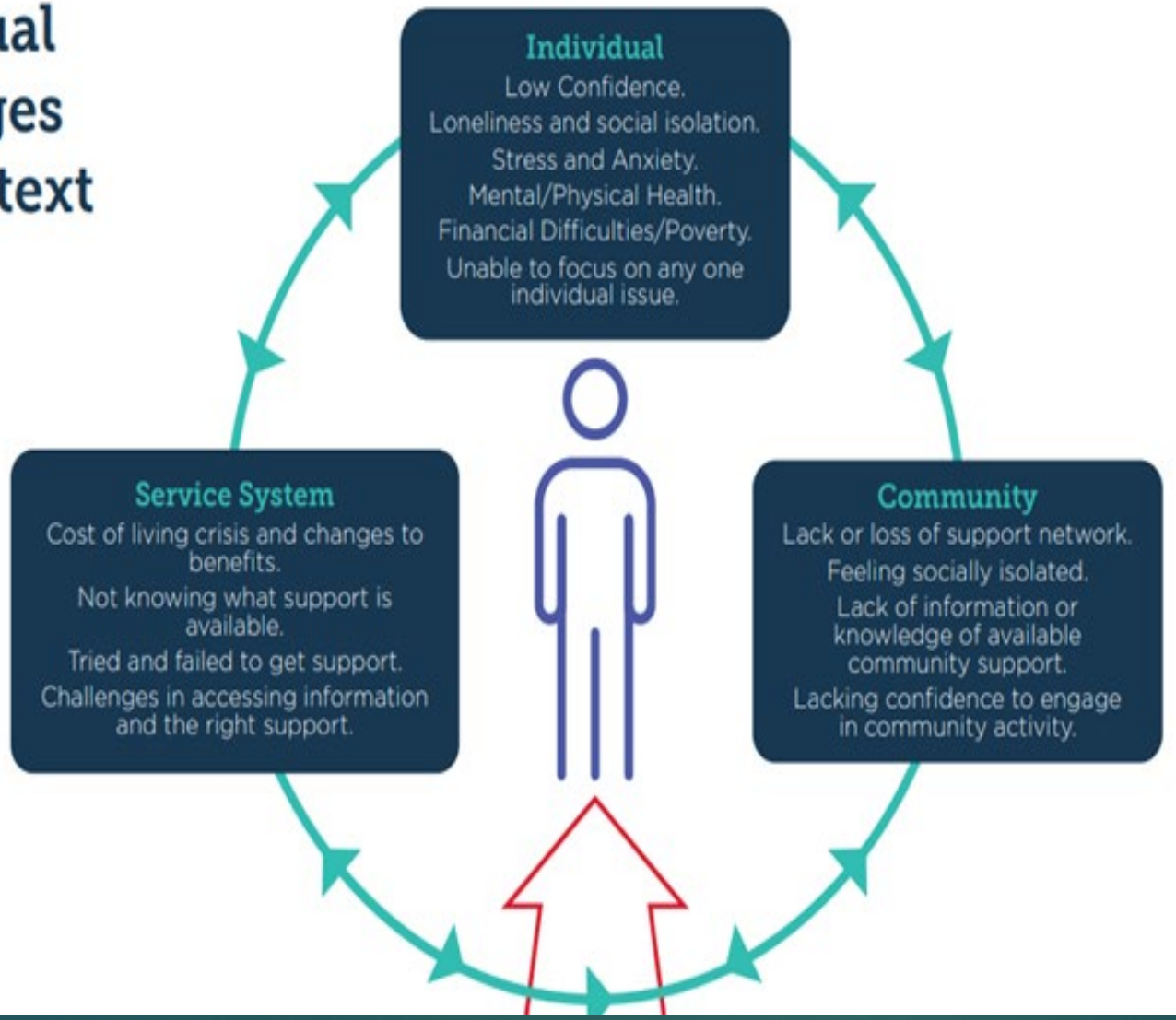
What are the challenges for evidencing the impact of preventative initiatives?

- To fit with policy frameworks and accepted measurement processes and impact indicators you are driven to start from a problem
- You have to show how the activity solves the problem
- Results in a recording and evidencing process set within this paradigm, i.e. What is the problem the individual presents with? What did you do with them? How has this led to a change in the individual's original problem?
- Having to measure a strengths-based approach through a deficits-based framework
- This explains partly why it is difficult to capture the impact of the work that many groups are undertaking

Building a better evidence-frame: the Strengths-Based Model

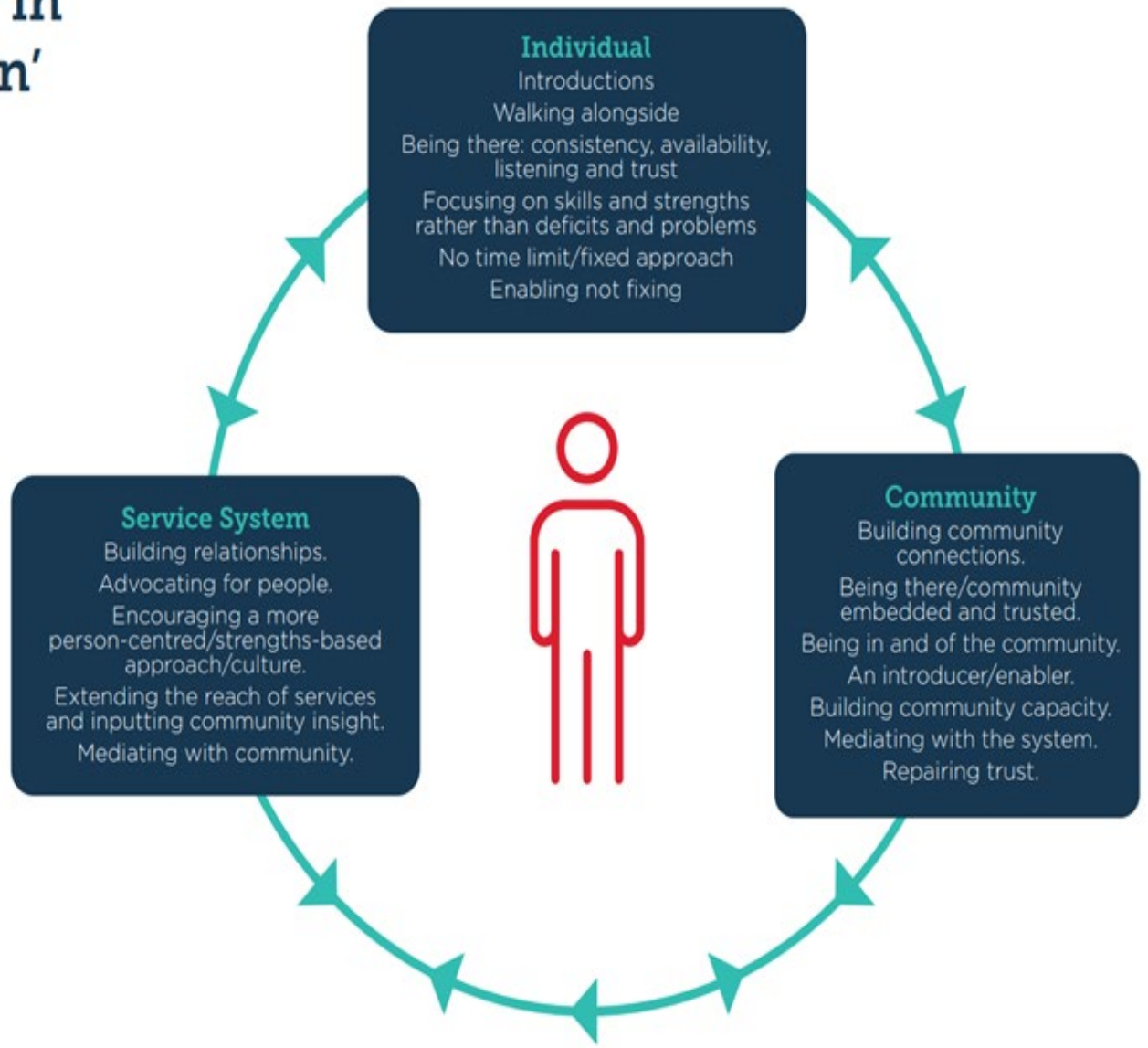
- By developing a clearer understanding of how strengths-based prevention programmes work, it is possible to build better data systems to capture, evidence and measure impact
- Our model starts from the broader lived experience of the individuals receiving support, rather than the specific problems they present with
- The model acknowledges that an individual's engagement with support is often not a simple linear progression of 'presenting problem-action-outcome' but is more cyclical

Individual challenges and context



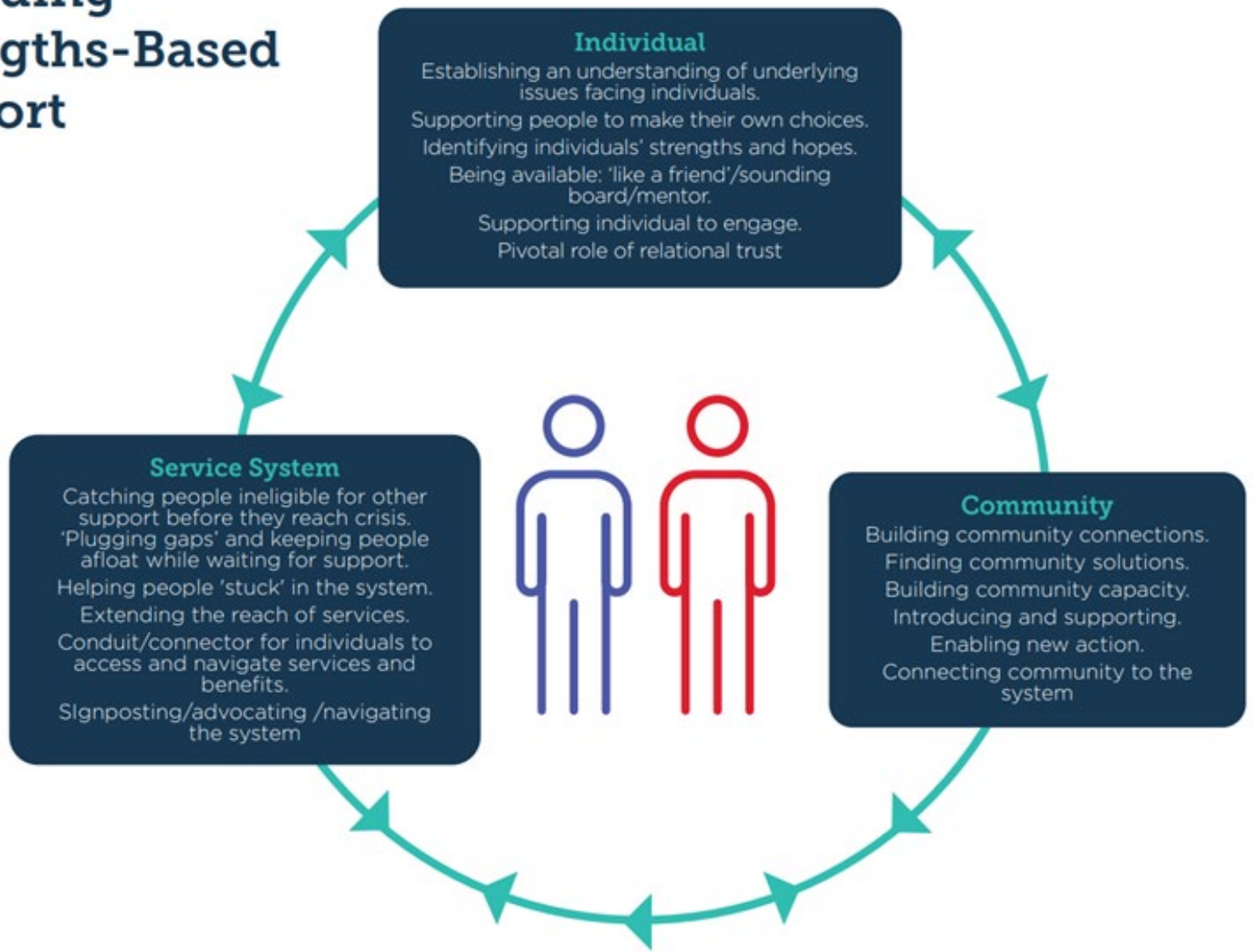
The triggers which cause people to seek support are often multifaceted and interactive, extending beyond the presenting issue and impacting at individual, community and service system levels.

Navigating the 'Spaces in Between'



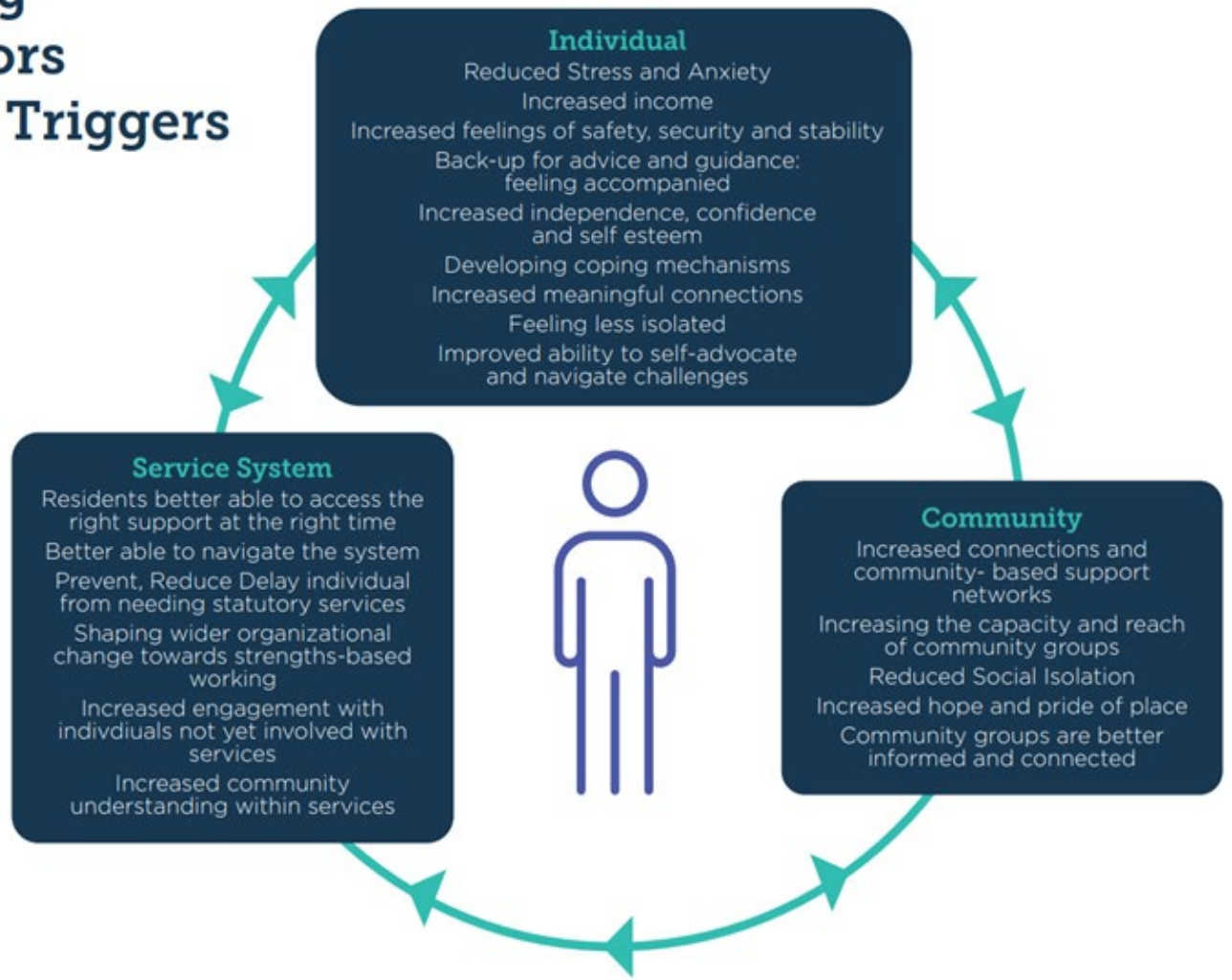
Successful strengths-based approaches position support between the different levels. Navigators devote time and resources to developing relationships and trust, building connections and capacity

Providing Strengths-Based Support



Individuals receive support tailored to their needs and are strengthened to use their own abilities to respond to challenges and navigate wider service systems. Individuals are reassured by someone 'being there' for them whenever they are needed.

Creating Insulators against Triggers



The person-centred perspective of strengths-based approaches, combined with the increased systemic connectivity it creates, enables individuals to become better 'insulated' against future challenges which could tip them into crisis.

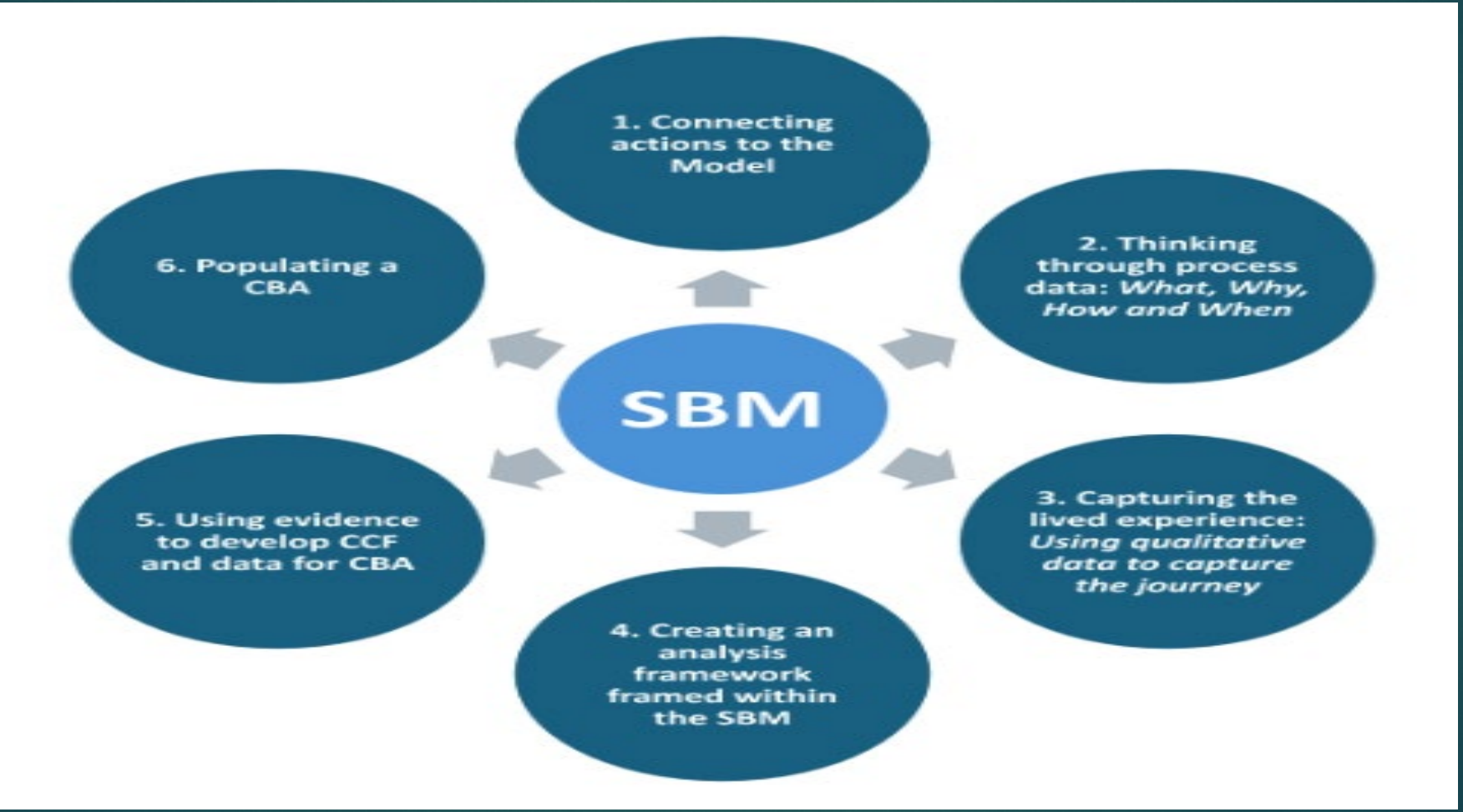
Applying the strengths-based model & developing a cost benefit analysis

- • Five key questions:
- 1. What are the individual challenges and context of those seeking support?
- 2. How does the support provided navigate the 'spaces in between', helping to prevent people from falling through the gaps?
- 3. How do the programme/initiative/workers provide strengths-based support?
- 4. What insulators against triggers are created as a result?
- 5. How can the economic value of this preventative impact be calculated?

We can answer these questions through:

- gathering and systematically analysing quantitative and qualitative data
- combining our findings in a structured fashion to tell a persuasive, evidence-based story of the difference a programme or initiative makes
- using our findings to populate a template which helps us understand the economic value of preventative working

Applying the SBM through 6 key stages



Application and Implementation of the SBM

- **Direct evaluation:** Research team working with Local authority and VCFS partners to produce evaluation reports of different preventative initiatives.
- **Training and Support:** Training and support package developed to teach teams how to utilise and apply the SBM through a step-by step online or in-person programme.

Contact us:

- For further information contact:

- Dr. Jon Burchell , J.Burchell@sheffield.ac.uk
- Dr. Katy Adams, K.Adams2@hull.ac.uk