

Funding for Systemic Change action enquiry
Learning paper #4:

A framework for place based systems change

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Introduction



The project

The Funding for Systemic Change project is chaired by Save the Children UK. It is overseen by a steering group of individuals from a range of social sector organisations including national charities, agencies and individuals (for full list see page 10).

The steering group provides project oversight and direction, engages with outputs and findings to inform the direction of the project, and shares access to contacts, networks and other relevant opportunities.

All members of the project have a deep understanding of community or place-based initiatives, systems change and complexity.

The key issue this group will examine is: **how to manage funds to best support long-term, place-based systemic change (PBSC).**

It will also explore how to reach that goal, moving away from short-term, simplistic and output-based approaches to resourcing social change.

The first phase of this work, led by Renaisi on behalf of the steering group, is designed to:

- build an understanding of how funding can best support local, place-based organisations and leaders in ‘systems change’ work;
- work with traditional funders and the national charity sector to explore ways to better fund and support this type of work,
- develop a range of practical tools and/or proposed approaches which could be tested or piloted in future stages of work; and,
- strengthen the understanding, relationships and interest in this area between steering group members and wider stakeholders.

This learning paper

This paper sets out a framework for thinking about place based systems change for those in practice and those looking to fund practice.

It sets out different approaches and levels of working, and includes guidance on what it takes to progress and develop practice further.

The paper builds on insight from the previous papers, but particularly those with funders (learning paper two) and with examples of practice (learning paper three). The next paper in the series (learning paper five) sets out some proposed next steps for a range of stakeholders to take forward this framework.

In summary, this paper sets out:

1. A definition for PBCS
2. A framework for understanding and developing PBSC
3. A draft tool for funders to use in applying the framework

A definition of PBSC



The working definition that was developed by the group, building from their own practice and from a discussion, was then developed in work with funders (see learning paper 2) and places (see learning paper 3) to finish with this definition.

It is that place-based systemic change is an approach to social change, rather than an outcome of it, and is defined by:

1. Focus	It is not limited to a single organisation or service, but rather about collective and interrelated practice within a geography
2. Time horizon	It is long-term in ambition and practice, although it may well achieve things in the short-term
3. Approach	It is engaged in building and developing ongoing and evolving relationships between people and organisations, it is flexible and responsive, and it explicitly engages in questions of complexity
4. Scale	It is focussed on geographies that are understood by those who live in them, and to the systemic challenge.
5. Intentionality	It is attempting to unlock structural change, and is conscious of the different roles that need to be taken to achieve this. As a result it builds learning and adaptation into its work.

A framework for PBSC



In practice, place-based systemic change is defined by the area it covers and the relationships, practices, assumptions and ultimately systems which shape that place. It is not something that skims the surface nor something that is simply replicable from place to place.

Whatever approach one takes to PBSC, and however different the journey, every instance of it involves digging into the issues, relationships and dynamics of a place, with a view to learning what can shift social problems.

This framework brings together insight from a highly diverse range of practice (paper 3) and funding (paper 2) to build a way to understand, codify, develop and fund PBSC.

The core assumption is that there is more similarity across approaches to social change than the language that describes those approaches would suggest. The framework has three key variables within it:

1. **Approaches:** the different types of ways into PBSC are the approaches. It is possible to work in any of these ways towards PBSC, and there are likely others too.
2. **Levels:** the different levels of work that are typically moved through as the practice gets deeper. Some may move through them in different orders, repeat some, or bring in elements of later ones at earlier stages. In the main, however, there is a process of digging through to deeper levels and a consistent trajectory.
3. **Step-changes:** the big challenge for all approaches to PBSC is how to move to the next degree of sustainably. Different approaches will touch on elements of the levels, but not sustainably. These step-changes, therefore, are often where the most external support, advice and resource is needed.

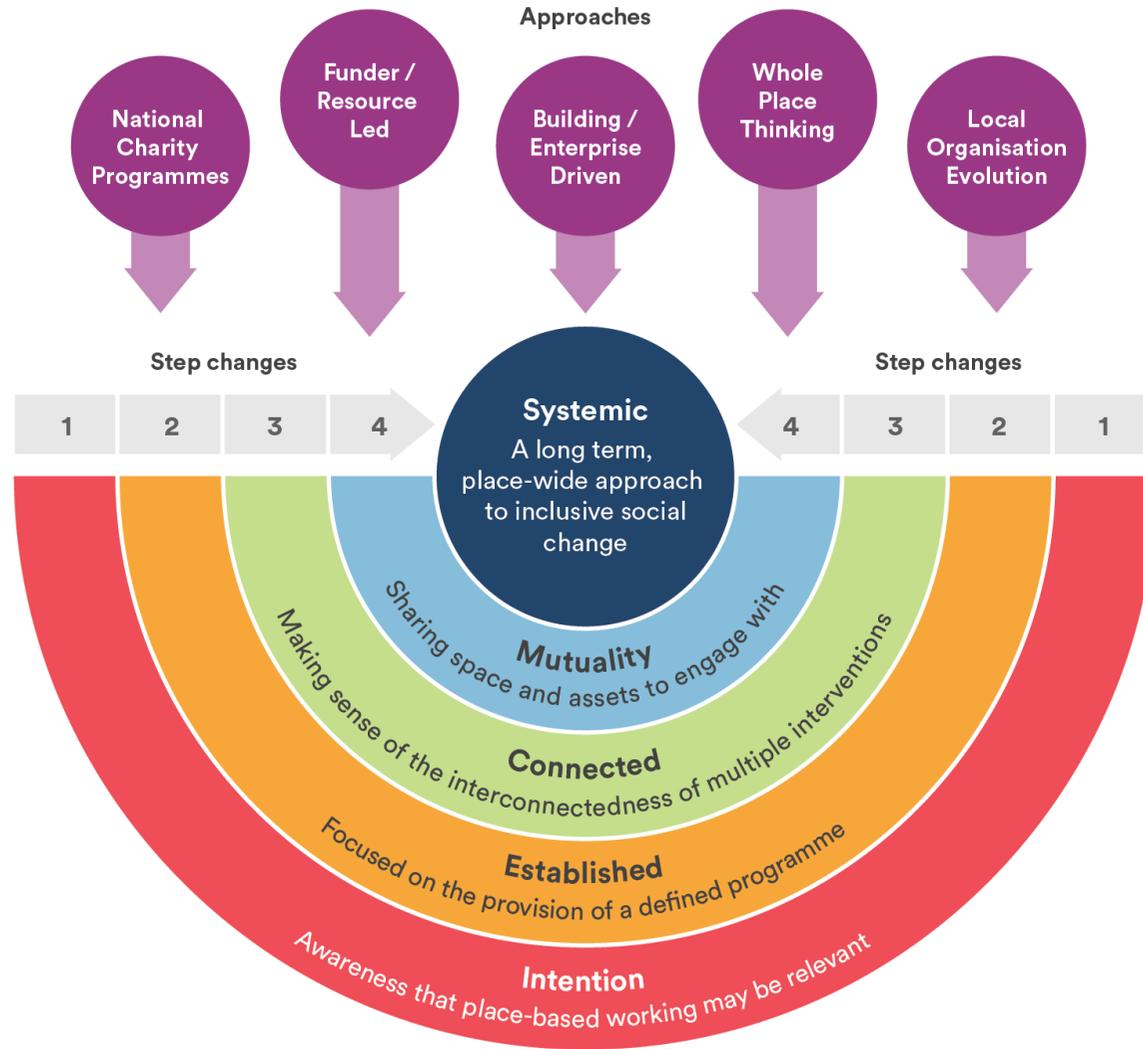
The below visual shows that there are different approaches, all of which provide different routes into this way of working. There are then different levels of work, which tend to move from the outside of a place with an intention, into the systemic core of practice that all approaches are aiming for. They get there in different ways, but the big challenges are the sustainable steps changes – which is where funders look to focus their efforts.

It is important to note that, given all of the uncertainties about PBSC which were described in papers two and three, this framework is not the final word. It is the starting point for hopefully much more work.

This project was designed as phase one of further work on place-based systemic change, and so the framework should be seen as a model to be tested and developed.

Learning paper five explores ways to take the ideas and potential of this framework forward.

Place-based Systemic Change Framework



Approaches

There were five approaches identified in the research. There are likely others, and there may be different ways to define the practice. As the following section on levels reinforces, they all tend to move from an initial approach or context, into thinking more widely about place, and then potentially onto systems. Their specific approach gives them different opportunities for working in a PBSC way.

Approach	Description
1. National charity programmes	These are national organisations that have a focus on a specific issue or social problem that have been or are starting to work more consciously in a place as a method to achieve their objectives. Their national structure and thematic ambitions, without a defined location or region to work in, gives them a particular approach to PBSC and the potential to influence systems in a specific way.
2. Funder or resource initiated	These are approaches that are designed by a funder or are explicitly led by the resource. It often builds off or sparks some practice locally (which could be anything from a community group to a local institution), but the role of the funder shapes and adds to how it is seen and understood. This can give a programmatic feel, but it can also bring significant potential for systemic change.
3. Building and enterprise-driven	These are organisations that start from a local building or a local enterprise (often both). They evolve from the singular business model of that space or enterprise, to connect with a range of issues within their place, which affords them opportunities to influence systems. Their enterprising and community approach gives them a particular way into systemic challenges.
3. Whole place, thinking	These are approaches that start and end by thinking about the whole of a specific place, whether through the ambition of a group of local people, or a highly defined and funded intervention. They start by thinking about the whole, and so there is a potential to work systemically quickly. Their novelty and ambition are both their systemic strength and challenge.
4. Local organisation evolution	These are local organisations, often charities, that have begun to use place-based approaches to achieve their initial objectives, working outside of their 'core-business' and across the community to do much more. There are similarities to the national group, but their local nature means that they have different opportunities to influence systems.

Depths

Each approach has different depths through which it moves. All examples described a journey towards systemic working, although they were not all at the same point, and their contextual differences were great. They shared ambition and an intention that meant they conformed to the definition of PBSC.

Depth	1 - Intention	2 – Established	3 – Connection	4 – Mutuality	5 - Systemic
National charity programmes	<p>Planning how to bring their programmes to a place, and aware that place-based working may be pertinent or relevant to their objectives as a national organisation. It is likely that some strategic or commissioning conversations are taking place to ensure that the work fits with the local context.</p>	<p>Delivering one programme and doing so well, but mainly in isolation from other organisations and issues as the focus is on building operational quality, strengths, and impact.</p> <p>Local engagement is happening, targeting beneficiaries and building functional relationships.</p> <p>Strategic commitment to the place is linked to contract length, and about a scale that is defined by the contract.</p>	<p>Delivering multiple programmes or outcome areas and trying to get them to connect across a place that makes sense to their work, including through some longer term partnerships with other organisations.</p> <p>This means that connections and relationships are valued more, and engagement is broader. It suggests that the organisation is locked into this area for at least the medium term.</p>	<p>Working collaboratively with agencies outside of their organisation and focusing on whole place outcomes such as social action, voluntary activity, civic strengths, local resilience and vulnerability as key elements of their work. Shares spaces and assets and engages with issues outside of its 'core' work, as that is seen as supporting the core obliquely. Inclusion is much more important than targeting, and power is shared with all stakeholders who share values. Team members take on and spread wider local leadership roles in the place.</p>	<p>This is shared across all approaches:</p> <p>A long term, place-wide approach to social change that is meaningful to different stakeholders, conscious about inclusivity across the place, using shared spaces in creative ways and building on the different assets of the organisations and groups in that place. It is working on both strengthening social and civic capacity and improving specific outcomes through approaches</p>

Depth	1 - Intention	2 – Established	3 – Connection	4 – Mutuality	5 - Systemic
Funder or resource led	<p>A funder is interested in working in places in a different way, and identifies some kind of local spark in an area that they feel they could support or develop.</p> <p>They begin having local conversations, working out the best way to begin to intervene and support what is going on.</p>	<p>The place is starting to develop an idea with the support of the funder and is taking ownership of that idea and their sense of efficacy to do something about it.</p> <p>It is driven by a group of committed individuals who may have been existing leaders, or who have been energised by the issue.</p>	<p>Connections are being made across the place to other issues and sectors, meaning the idea that started the work may only be one facet of what is going on, and the programme is feeling more of an integral part of the community.</p> <p>Leadership is becoming wider and more inclusive.</p>	<p>The work has the capacity to add value to lots of other work, organisations and activity, and some legacy of the initial funder intervention is now a local anchor or backbone in the place.</p> <p>The place has local leadership, assets, power and resilience, and is seen as a key collaborator by agencies that have a larger scale.</p>	<p>that tackle structural and systemic issues. Through patient resourcing and external connections, it can influence across the place and to other geographic scales.</p>
Building and enterprise-driven	<p>Local people and/or entrepreneurs see an asset in the area that has potential for that place and for their community. This could be a disused building, or an opportunity to rethink a local business, and work is done to engage with the key stakeholders of that asset .</p>	<p>The asset is taken over, or the business is set up. All focus is on making the new enterprise work, through applying for grants, support, and through identifying customers and users. Scale and relationships are defined through transactional relationships at this stage, and a community grows around the users/ customers.</p>	<p>Developing a sustainable business model for the community becomes more important, as the experience of delivery has made the scale clear, and there is an intention to think longer-term and about sustainability. This develops connections into new needs, communities and ideas, broadening out from the transactional and into the place.</p>	<p>The building or enterprise is a collaborative platform for so much more than its own work, with the whole communities using it and working with it to address different needs, to develop new projects and ideas and to be a place for collaboration and connection. It is a hub in a genuine sense of that word that can facilitate work beyond its initial ambitions.</p>	

Depth	1 - Intention	2 – Established	3 – Connection	4 – Mutuality	5 - Systemic
Whole place, thinking	<p>Local people, organisations or stakeholders begin to discuss ideas for a significant change to their place. This could be around an issue like a regeneration site, or improving the situation for all young people in the area.</p> <p>The place is defined from the start, and the issue is significant and bound up with the place in a cross-cutting way.</p>	<p>Some start-up funding is gained, typically through a funder or philanthropist, but perhaps through a project idea, to begin to make it real.</p> <p>Through this, the intentionality of working in a place-based way is also set, and it is the intention which drives delivery.</p>	<p>Once this has proven itself, the approach brings in others, connections are made more explicitly, and the idea begins to grow and become more embedded in the place. This takes it away from the initial group, but also opens it out and sets a more inclusive approach.</p>	<p>The initial ambition becomes deeper through those connections, responding to the need of the place and adapting to diverse and community-based needs rather than certain initial metrics, taking them more into social action or other work.</p> <p>They are responding to the structural and systemic challenge and working obliquely and collaboratively with others who share their values and ambitions for the place, as much of the work is seen as additive rather than zero-sum.</p>	
Local organisation evolution	<p>A charity, community group or local organisation starts to campaign for or highlight a single issue in a local area, such as the exclusion of a demographic group, or an outcome gap.</p> <p>There is passion around the issue, but an</p>	<p>The group begins to turn that campaign or challenge into a vehicle that can start to do something about that, and influence change.</p> <p>This tends to mean the creation of a charity or other social organisation, or the explicit evolution</p>	<p>Building up sufficient credibility and influence locally to start to be referenced or worked with on wider or supporting issues, taking the organisation away from its initial narrow role. This is often as a result of the credibility of</p>	<p>Working on a much wider range of issues in the local place intentionally, because the stakeholders of the organisation see the value and connection of doing so, and so collaboration becomes a currency and a way to support and further the</p>	

Depth	1 - Intention	2 – Established	3 – Connection	4 – Mutuality	5 - Systemic
	<p>awareness that the boundaries of the place matter to the solving of that issue.</p>	<p>of an existing organisation to do that.</p> <p>It starts to work on the issue, demonstrating to others locally that something can be done about the problem.</p>	<p>its approach to relationships.</p>	<p>initial objectives, as well as the place as a whole.</p> <p>The organisation is now a key local stakeholder, even if it remains small in scale, and its voice and values are trusted by a range of local stakeholders.</p>	

Depths

Each approach has different depths through which it moves. All examples described a journey towards systemic working, although they were not all at the same point, and their contextual differences were great. They shared ambition and an intention that meant they conformed to the definition of PBSC.

Depth	Description	Challenges	Risks	Opportunities	PBSC definition
Moving from intention to established	<p>There is enough drive, commitment and assets to make a vision or idea into a reality and set up a new project in a place.</p> <p>It may need capacity and skills, or it may need local contextual understanding to make this work.</p>	<p>The key challenge is one of delivery.</p> <p>It is all about finding the right users for a programme, approach or enterprise, and ensuring that they can get something that they want and need.</p>	<p>The risks are standard programmatic risks - can this idea meet a need and prove its value in the real world of communities and people and social change?</p>	<p>The opportunity is to build credibility through the effectiveness of the approach, which is what draws others to the approach.</p>	<p>The key element of the PBSC definition that can be made evident is the approach. The values of that way of working are available from the start.</p>
Moving from established to connection	<p>The right spatial scale is defined around a project to make it a place.</p> <p>There is a growing focus on connection and relationships across the whole place.</p> <p>It needs engagement and organising skills, communication skills and empathy.</p>	<p>The key challenge is one of inclusion.</p> <p>In this move, the route to connection is all about working with people who are not your usual customers/ beneficiaries/ community, when everything that was learnt previously suggests doing that well matters.</p>	<p>The risk is that the approach does not become inclusive of the whole place, and it is partial to certain communities or excludes others. This will undermine the capacity for change in future.</p> <p>There is also the risk of this focus weakening delivery.</p>	<p>The opportunities of focussing on inclusivity allow for new ideas and assets to deal with systemic challenges. Resources must be brought to achieve this.</p>	<p>At this point, scale becomes more clear, and the place is defined more explicitly.</p> <p>The time horizon is starting to lengthen.</p>

Depth	Description	Challenges	Risks	Opportunities	PBSC definition
Moving from connection to mutuality	<p>The focus on the long term and intention commitment to changing or challenging systems in a place are established or embedded at this point.</p> <p>The approach and focus are now built on and nurtured.</p>	<p>The key challenge is one of letting go.</p> <p>At this point, there is a move away from the core business of the organisation, and something has to be given away through the trusting relationships that have been built.</p>	<p>The risk is that too much is weakened in this shift, and the organisations become defensive if things do not work quickly. There needs to be a strong narrative and value set for letting go.</p>	<p>The opportunity is about completely new assets coming towards the approach, individuals within the community tend to see the values, and this changes their relationship with the approach.</p>	<p>At this point, the focus becomes more clear. A practice is collaborative outside of organisational boundaries.</p>
Moving from mutuality to systemic	<p>Other organisations and funders see the value of the work and begin to change with it to enable patient finance and long term assets to support the work.</p>	<p>The key challenge is one of resourcing uncertainty.</p> <p>There is a need for some kind of patient resource to enable risk-taking and work on oblique, systemic challenges.</p>	<p>The risk is that one funder changes, but others do not. This takes a lot of resources to manage, and burn out for those leading the approach or engaged with it can be the result.</p>	<p>The opportunity is to meaningfully change how the place works into the long term.</p>	<p>This is when all elements of the definition are in evidence, both within the approach, other actors, and funders/ commissioners.</p>

Diagnostic for funders



This diagnostic is to be used by a funder/ grant manager who is: interested in furthering the values and ways of working of the PBSC approach; thinks that they would like to explore whether they can support organisations to do more; and will invest more resource into this kind of work.

It is designed to focus on the relationship between the funder and the place/grantee, but first includes some introductory questions about strategy and balance of funding.

These questions would be explored in partnership with relevant stakeholders/ grantees, alongside the framework.

Introductory questions	
What is the relevance of place to your strategy as a funder/ foundation and do you have a clear idea of what you want to achieve?	
<p>Are there specific places that you want to work with – if so which, why and what do you know about them?</p> <p>If not, are you more interested in place-based approaches to specific issues – if so, what evidence have you developed about this issue that needs to be furthered in place?</p>	
What role are you currently taking, and do you want to become more active/ involved? What kind of relationship do you want with the place, and are you willing to change?	
How do you think about value and impact currently, and is this way of working going to be a challenge for that internal understanding? Are you comfortable exploring any tensions that may emerge with this kind of practice?	

Funding analysis (select grantees that are/might be working in this way)	
How much have you invested in different approaches to PBSC?	
What levels of PBSC are you investing in?	
Does this balance fit with your strategy and ambitions for place?	

Taking individual grantees	
How does this framework fit with their work and ambitions?	
What support are they getting outside of your funding?	
Is this support helping them make a step-change?	
What could you do to support that step-change sooner?	

Notes



Funding for Systemic Change Steering group

The membership of the steering group includes:

- The Children's Society
- Collaborate CIC
- Dartington Service Design Lab
- Homeless Link
- Save the Children UK
- Lankelly Chase
- The MEAM Coalition
- The National Lottery Community Fund
- New Philanthropy Capital (NPC)
- North Camden Children's Zone/ the Winch
- West London Zone

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About Renaisi



We're passionate about creating the conditions for strong, inclusive communities to thrive.

We're constantly learning from the different perspectives we see working directly with communities, with the providers of services and the investors in communities. It gives us a unique perspective on how systems work and how to improve places fairly.

The combination of our research and evaluation consultancy with significant community programme delivery experience, makes Renaisi a uniquely well-rounded learning partner for the voluntary and community sector.

Find out more at www.renaisi.com

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