



Charity

# How evaluation reframed our understanding of success

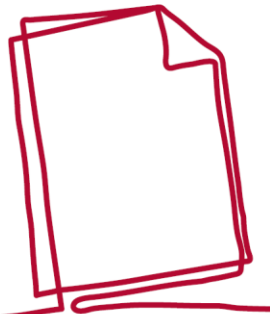
Jane Dowden

St Martin in the Fields Charity



“The purpose of evaluation is to improve  
not to prove.”

Daniel Stufflebeam 1960s/70s

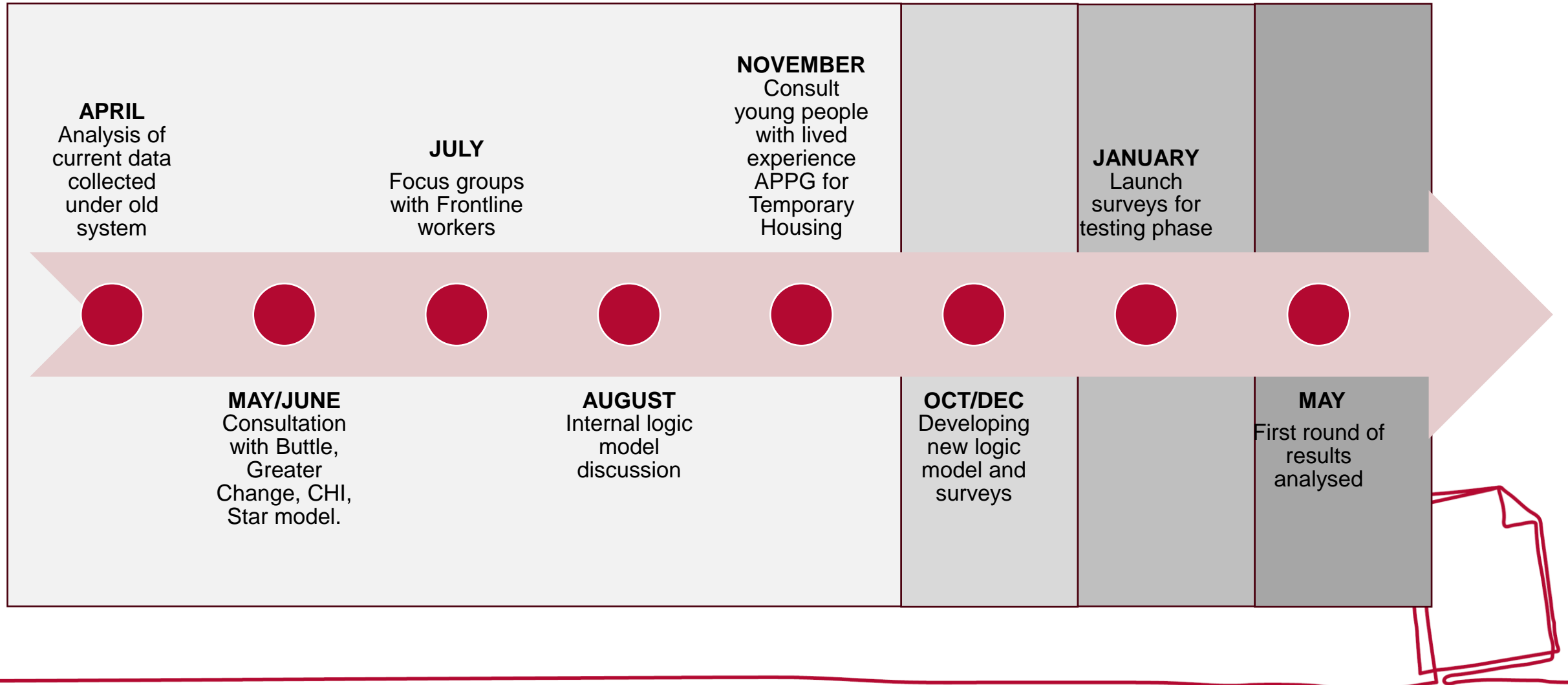


# Context

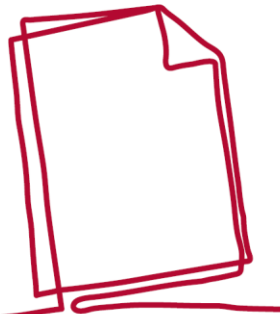
- Small grants to individuals of up to £500
- For preventing eviction or accessing accommodation
- Approx. 4500 grants awarded each year
- Applied for by a support worker on behalf of the beneficiary



# Evaluation timeline



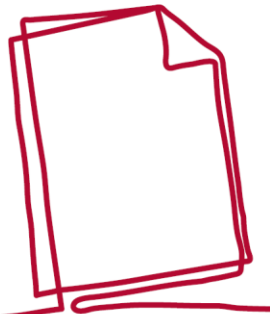
“We know what the outcomes are going to be for this person when we're doing the application to begin with. So the day that they're awarded it...we know what the outcome is for them.”



# What makes accommodation a home?

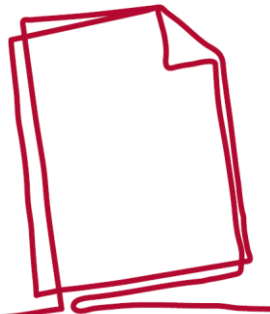
**Danny:** Knowing you can wake up the next morning without having to worry about how to get your next meal, whether you can afford your gas and/or electric and living in a good area and feeling comfortable where you are.

**Julia:** Little things can make a house a home. A place where you can call a space your own and decorate it with things that you like to make you feel more settled and safer in your own space.



# What did we learn?

- Binary system not nuanced enough and is unreliable (not repeatable)
- Keep it proportionate and be aware of time of frontline workers and beneficiaries
- We need to listen to beneficiaries, and it is possible to involve them
- Be aware of different, even conflicting, values
- The idea of 'home' is subjective
- 'Accessing accommodation' and 'preventing eviction' are outputs rather than outcomes of our grant and don't allow measure of change in people's lives

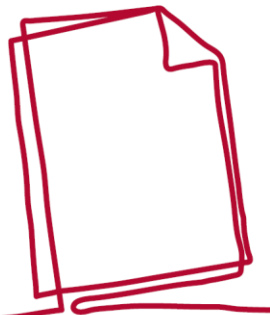


# Impact: Awareness of values

“All measures, all evidence, all valuations of success are built on values and assumptions about what matters, and worldviews that determine what ‘good’ or ‘success’ looks like.”

Griffith Centre for Systems Innovation

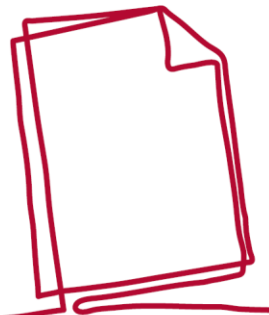
[Diversifying evidence and value. 7 everyday patterns for systems change | by Griffith Centre for Systems Innovation | Good Shift | Medium](#)



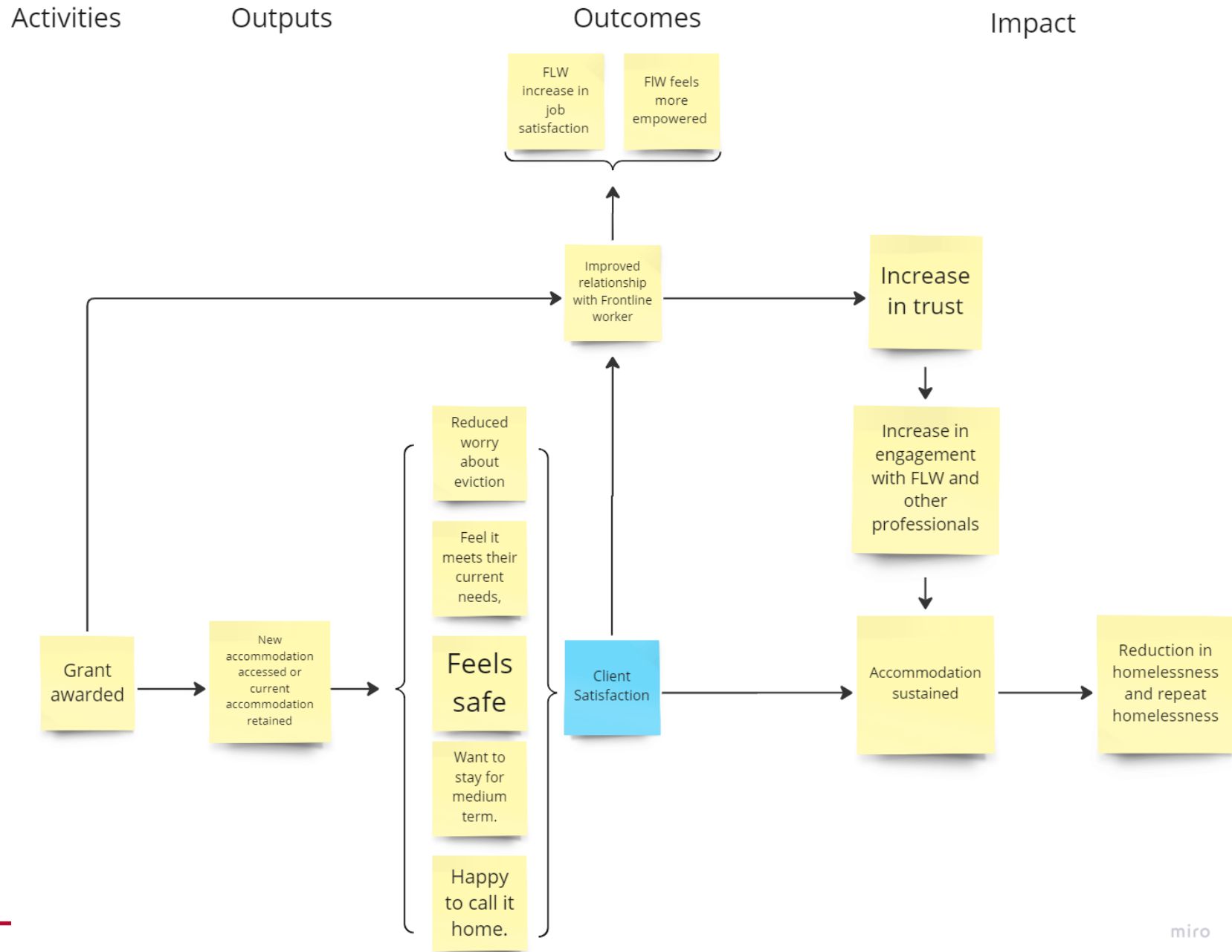


# Comparing value systems

Our values	Our users' values
Strength of tenure	Living close to relatives
Housing type	Access to school
Accommodation standard	Feeling part of the local community



# Impact: Logic Model



## Old system

1. Objective indicators including accommodation type, strength of tenure, non-housing indicators such as employment and physical health which we have little influence over.
2. Reported by frontline worker
3. Immediate feedback (2 - 6 weeks after the grant awarded)
4. Binary responses with limited qualitative options
5. Responses shown not to be repeatable.
6. Use of technical housing terms
7. No extended qualitative feedback

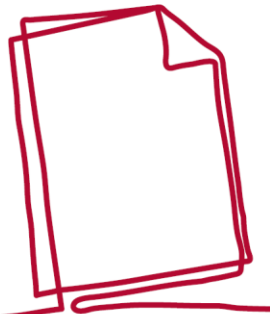
## New system

1. Subjective indicators focusing on “home” rather than “accommodation” and how the client and frontline worker feel.
2. Involves both frontline worker and client
3. Short-term feedback (3 months)
4. Scalar measures with qualitative response options
5. Triangulation of client and frontline worker responses to check reliability
6. Plain, everyday language
7. Planned qualitative evaluation through Most Significant Change interviews to gather data on unplanned

# Qualitative feedback from VRF outcomes surveys

*This fits my needs at present, I am warm and comfortable, ideally would like something bigger to allow my children to stay over as this is a small 1 bed apt. Before was living with parents, the grant has allowed me to have my own space and live independently.*

*This grant has changed the lives of both myself and my daughter. We now have somewhere to call home and we're both super happy where we are. Finally feel safe after fleeing domestic violence. It's the fresh start we needed.*



# Impact: Collaboration

- Collaborative planning of outcomes with stakeholders
- Collaborative interpretation of data both internally and with external stakeholders





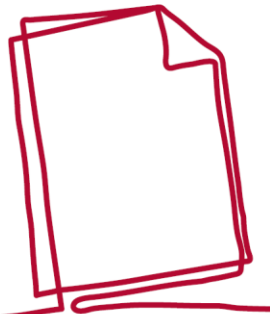
# Impact: Learning culture

- How do we capture our learning?
- How do we track the change in our understanding of this programme, its context, and how it leads to change?
- How can we use learning cycles and embed learning in the way we work?



# Looking forward

- Most significant change – question our current values and identify different values of our stakeholders
- Collaborative interpretation of data
- Engaging with frontline workers and people lived experience as a proxy for clients



# Discussion

- How can we manage different value systems when measuring outcomes?
- How can we measure our value in a complex system?
- Is it possible to use theory-based evaluation whilst taking a more agile approach using test and learn cycles?

