School Age Futures

Poking the future to design better policy

April 2025

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What we'll cover today

Context and scene setting **10'**

Design Futures and our approach **10'**

The project journey **10'**

The outcomes **5'**

Learnings and reflections **5'**

Questions and discussion **20'**

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Who are we?

Fionn Tynan-O'Mahony
Andthen

Santini Basra
Andthen

Gillian Munro
Scottish Government

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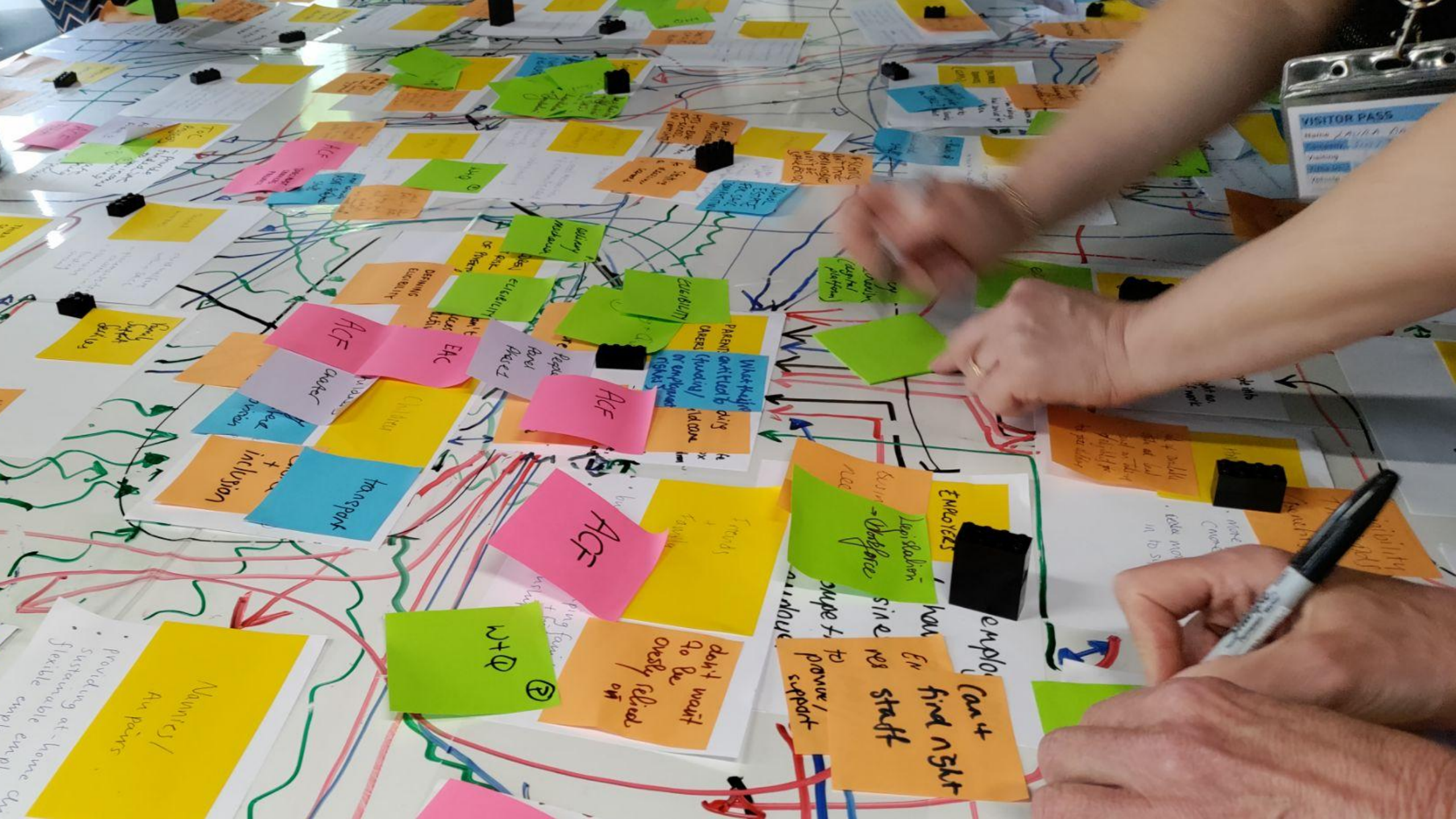
Our vision

A rights based, dynamic school age childcare offer for children and young people, which supports choice and growth, enabling families and communities to reach their full potential.

Realising our vision - What our programme will deliver

"Scotland will have a system of accessible and affordable school age childcare providing care before and after school and during the holidays for primary school children from low income households. Children will be able to access healthy and nutritious food as part of this offer."

Why are we doing it?

Tackling Child Poverty

Parents from targeted families are able to access childcare that supports them to take up, sustain and/or increase their hours of work. Reducing barriers to employment by improving access to childcare for targeted families.

Improving outcomes for children

Reducing inequalities which exist in access to a wide range of activities for children from targeted families. Improving family wellbeing by supporting and increasing access to integrated childcare, food and activities.

Who will it help?

Our work is focused on supporting low income families, particularly those within the six priority family groups most likely to be living in poverty.

- ☑ Minority Ethnic families
- ☑ Large families (3+ Children)
- ☑ Families with a baby (aged < 1)
- ☑ Mothers aged <25
- ☑ Families with a disabled adult or child
- ☑ Lone Parents

How will we do it?

We will design our school age childcare system around people's needs and what's important to communities.

Place based

People Centred

Vision and drivers

Understand the context

Align around a clear and tangible direction

Prototype the service

Futures studies involves systematic and explicit thinking about alternative futures, with the aim to demystify the future and make possibilities for the future more known to us (Bell, 1997).

Design futures acknowledges the inherent difficulties in exploring future scenarios — they are hard to personally connect with, and heavily dependent on subject matter expertise. By incorporating experiential methods, design futures aims to make future explorations more tangible and relatable (Candy and Dunagan, 2016).

What's a 'provotype'?

A tool to glimpse into the future and agree what the future should hold.

- Provokes discussion

- Often depictions of potential future scenarios

- Entry point into intangible topics

- Intentionally controversial
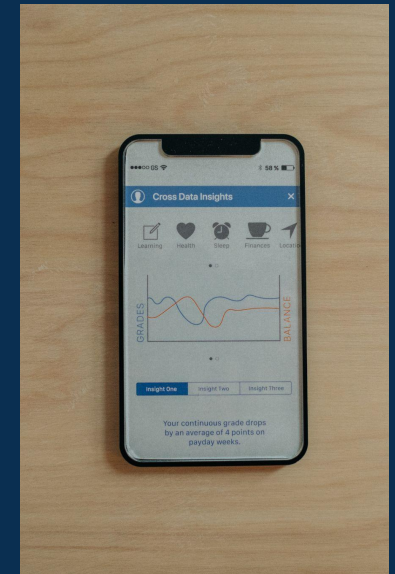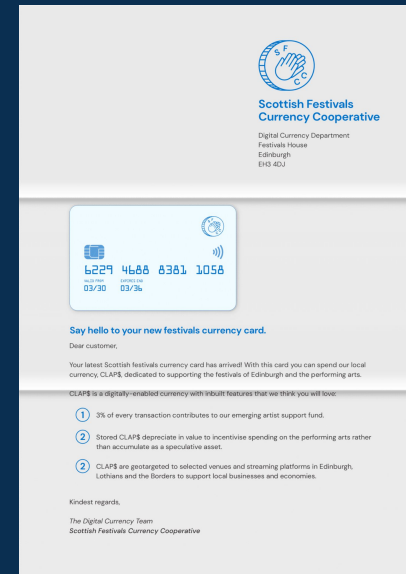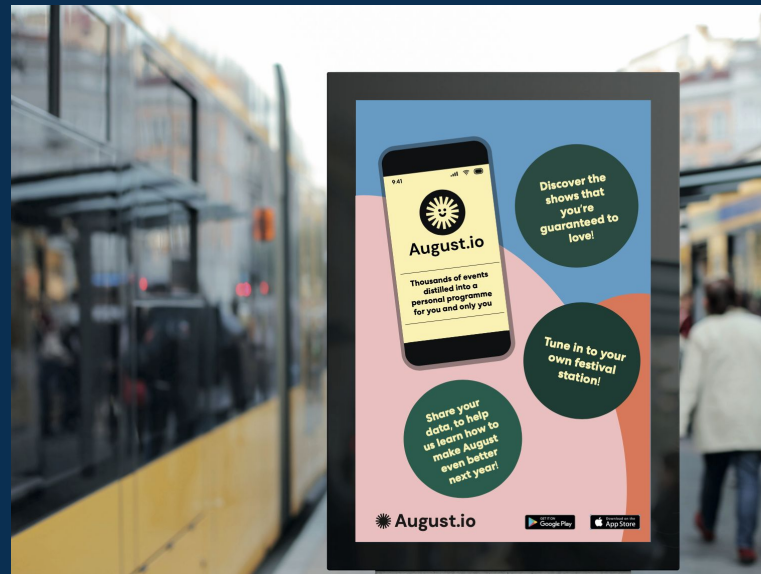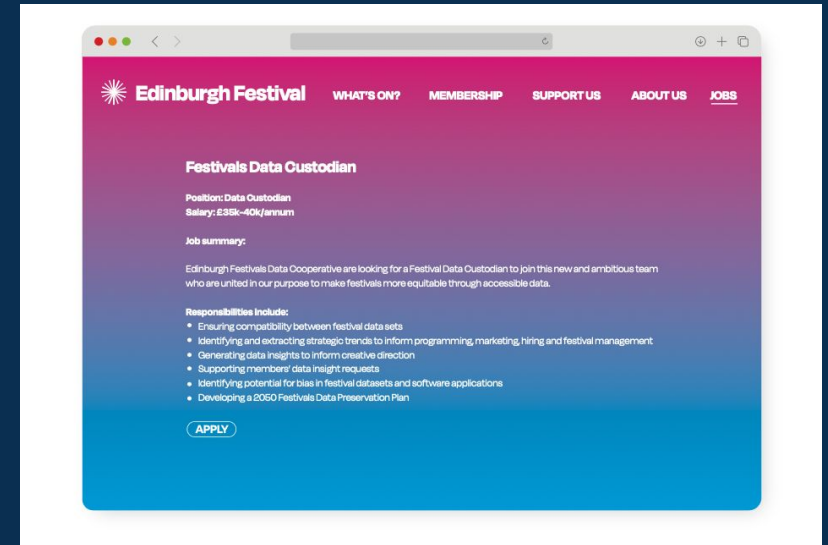
Intended Outcomes

1

Bring the existing vision to life

Add detail to the existing vision, bring it to life, explore what it might mean in practice, and help accelerate alignment around what the programme

2

Align colleagues and stakeholders

Create dialogue and discussion with colleagues to build a shared understanding and vocabulary of the future

3

Create tools and artefacts for communication

Translate discussions and ideas of the future into tools and artefacts that can we used to better communicate the vision

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A note on engagement

We decided to focus on engaging internal stakeholders as this was…

1

A **convergent** phase of work

2

Focussed on aligning **internal** stakeholders

3

Synthesising **existing** knowledge

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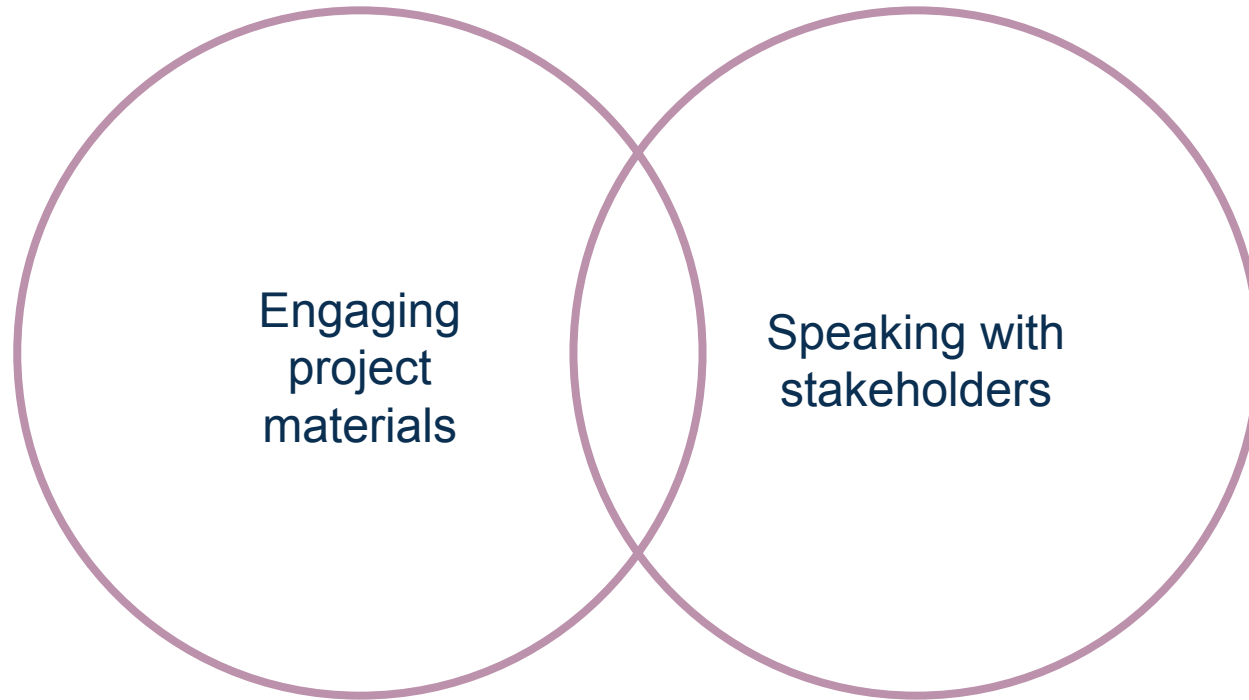
Three central phases

Understanding context and identifying tensions

Building worlds and designing provocations

Translating reactions into visions of the future

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Understanding context

Engaging project materials

Speaking with stakeholders

…and identifying tensions

Identifying
tensions

Engaging
project
materials

Speaking with
stakeholders

- Something important to the programme was described vaguely or understood differently between different people
- A clear and often opposing positions that people in the programme felt about the policy direction
- Impasses / things that stop the team from progressing

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Government's role

What role should Scottish Government be playing in Childcare?

Summary

There are many different ways that the Scottish Government might intervene in the childcare system. We need to explore Government's role here and reconcile the challenges between the programme's place-based, person-centred (bottom-up) approach with more traditional, top-down approaches. We also need to do this through the lens of resource constraints and what might be feasible within current budget positions.

Provocations
- What are we here for?
- How much control and influence should SG have over provision?
- How much power should it cede to local communities?
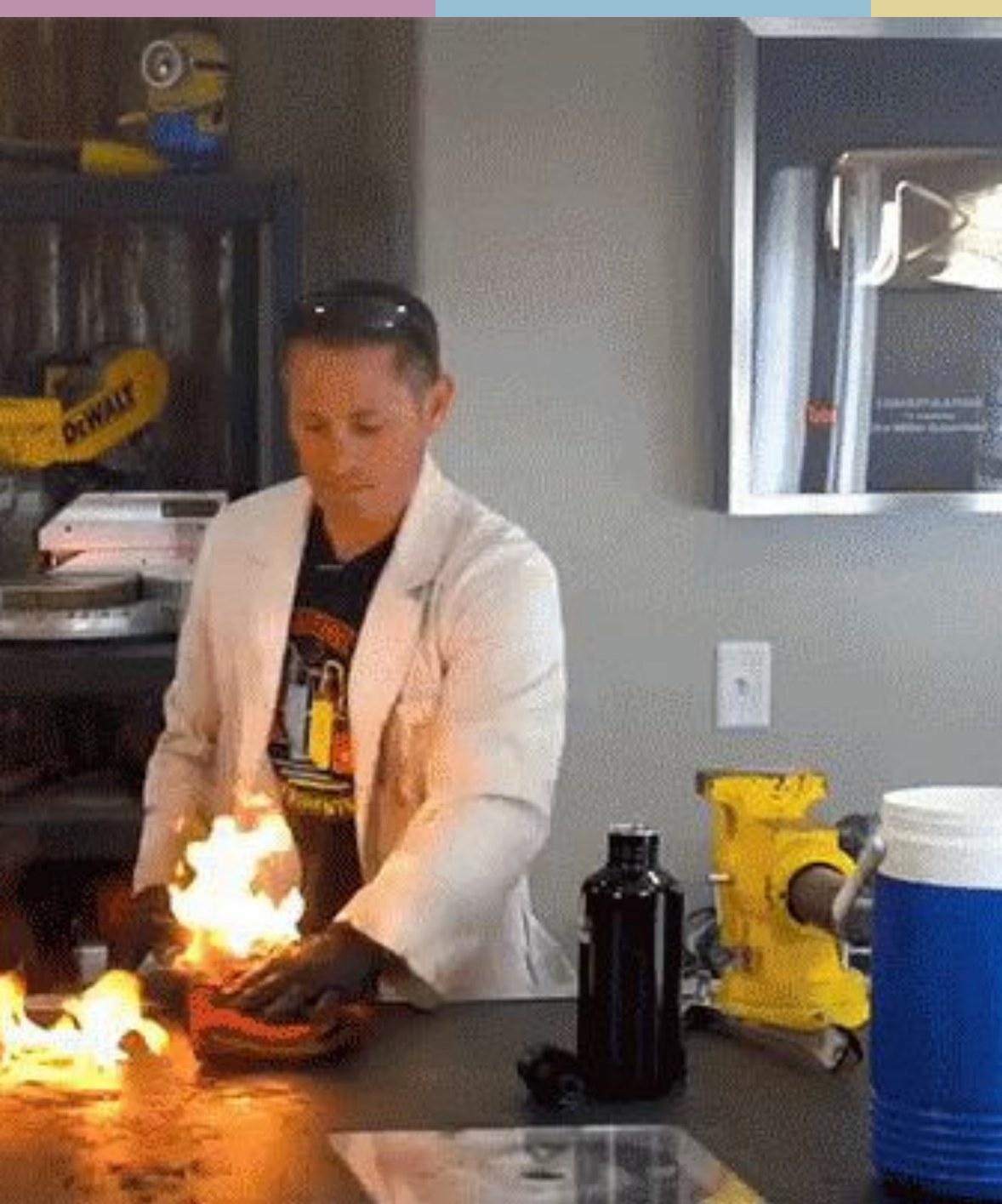
Do we put out fires or rebuild?

Should we address the immediate challenges in the childcare system or reimagine the system?

Summary

There is enormous pressure to just keep fixing immediate issues in the childcare system - often with funding, or guidance, or information. While some of these 'quick wins' might not be quick, or easy - they do address immediate need. But do they tackle the systemic roots of the problems or are they simply filled pot-holes? Would it be better to reimagine the system from the ground-up? Do we need to be thinking about regulatory changes? Or legislative (such as determining what people can use existing benefits towards)?
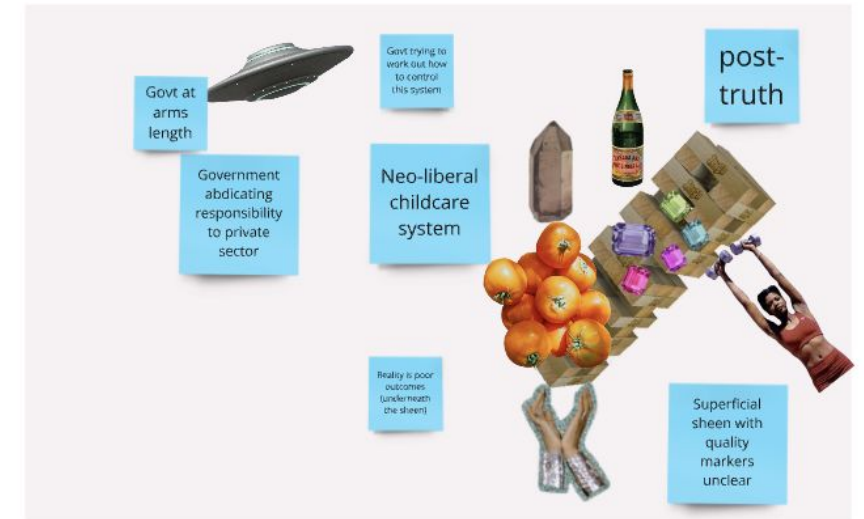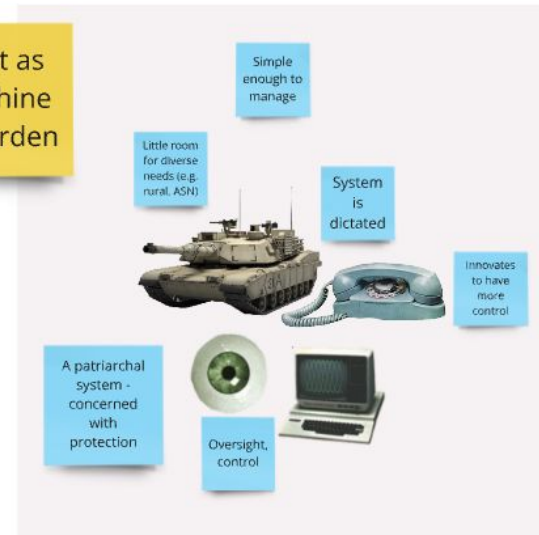
Provocations
- How do we relieve immediate pressures on parents?
- How do we relieve immediate pressures on childcare providers?
- What is actually on fire? What are the most pressing issues?
- Is it indulgent / naive to try to reimagine the system?

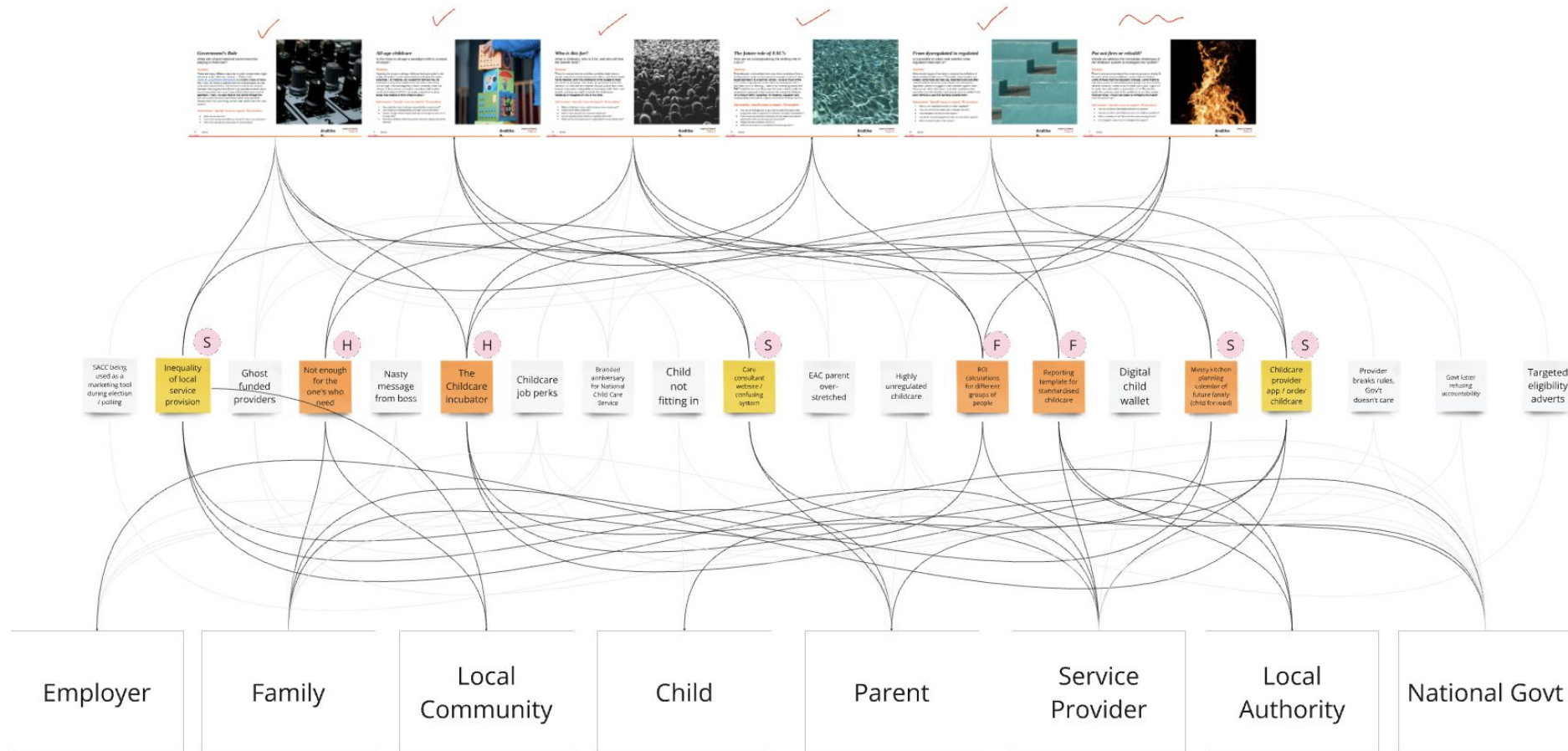# But how do we move from 'tension' to 'provotype'?

Tension ● ·············▶ Provotype

We started by expanding the tensions into worlds…

Imagined moments to seed provotypes

Mapped moments to actors and user groups

And translated these 'moments' into provotypes

What if childcare looks vastly different in different areas?

Monday night club
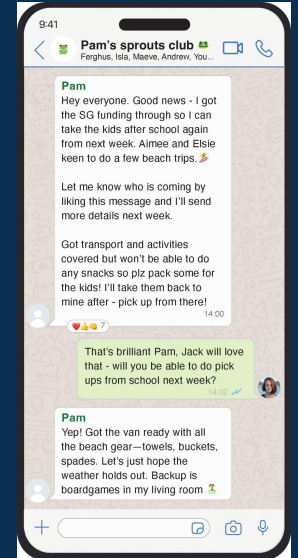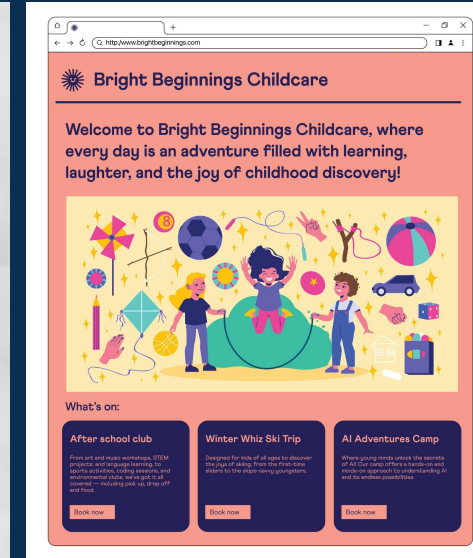Sign up form

Child name:_____

Age:_____

Meal option:

○ I've enclosed £5 for a snack   ○ My child will come with a snack

Preferences

Please note we do not have space for each child to do each activity, please let us know your childs preferences by numbering them below and we will aim to accomodate them.

○ Xbox   ○ Drawing   ○ Football
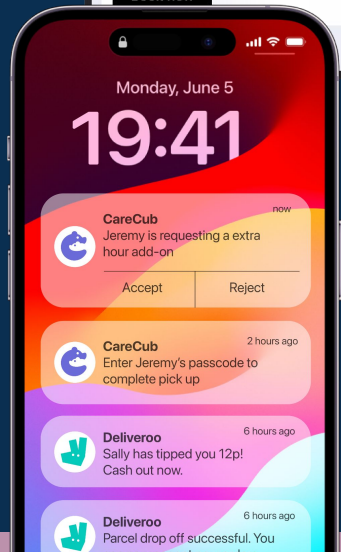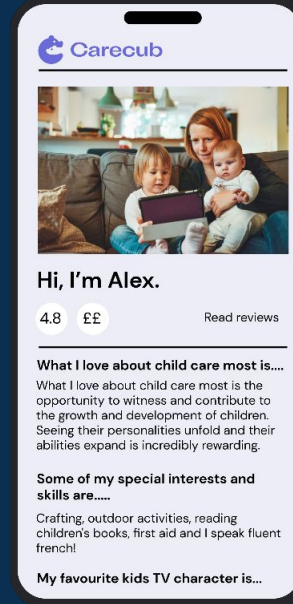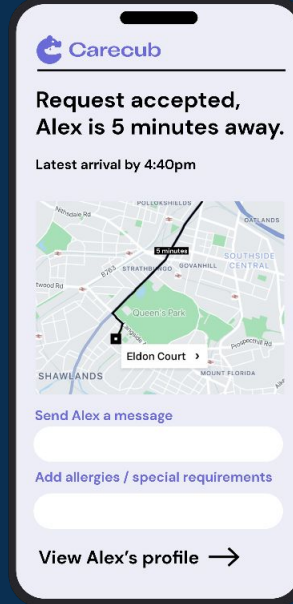○ Reading   ○ School yard games   ○ Skipping

http://www.brightbeginnings.com

Bright Beginnings Childcare

Welcome to Bright Beginnings Childcare, where every day is an adventure filled with learning, laughter, and the joy of childhood discovery!

What's on:

After school club
From art and music workshops, STEM projects, and language learning, to sports activities, coding sessions, and environmental clubs, we've got it all covered — including pick up, drop off and food.

Book now

Winter Whiz Ski Trip
Designed for kids of all ages to discover the joys of skiing, from the first-time sliders to the slope-savvy youngsters.

Book now

AI Adventures Camp
Where young minds unlock the secrets of AI! Our camp offers a hands-on and interactive approach to understanding AI and its endless possibilities.

Book now

Pam's sprouts club
Ferghus, Isla, Maeve, Andrew, You...

Pam
Hey everyone. Good news - I got the SG funding through so I can take the kids after school again from next week. Aimee and Elsie keen to do a few beach trips. 🎉

Let me know who is coming by liking this message and I'll send more details next week.

Got transport and activities covered but won't be able to do any snacks so plz pack some for the kids! I'll take them back to mine after - pick up from there! 14:00

That's brilliant Pam, Jack will love that - will you be able to do pick ups from school next week?

Pam
Yep! Got the van ready with all the beach gear—towels, buckets, spades. Let's just hope the weather holds out. Backup is boardgames in my living room 🏝️

What if those in least need are receiving funded support?

montymckay

Liked by jonnyburns,thesebastien, cooladvibes

montymckay Summer mornings taken care of for the mini-McKays! Those Kids Breakfast Clubs are a lifesaver. 🙌
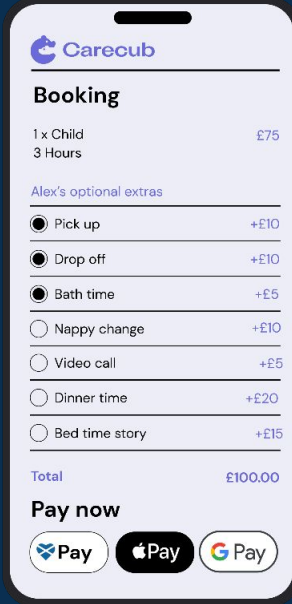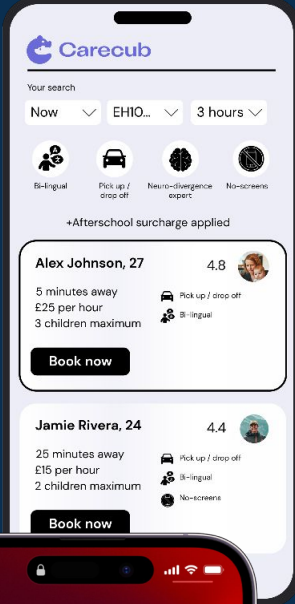
7 MINUTES AGO

Add a comment...

NEWS | NEWS | SPORT | POLITICS | WEATHER | BUSINESS

Government childcare support fiasco. Are Government Grants Missing the Mark? Who's Pocketing Your Childcare Support?

- This family had no idea that they were eligible for support
- They said that they wouldn't even know who to ask
- "I don't think this kind of support is for families like us" Adnan Omar, local parent

What if we only used an economic lens to make decisions around who we support?

What if childcare was treated as a convenience service?

Provotypes are not the end goal...

- They're an engagement tool.
- They help people connect to the future.
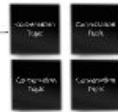- And they help us understand how people are responding to that future.

We created space to provoke conversation and reflection

Workshop 1, 8-10 Tuesday

1 Intro
What's the plan? Where do we want to get to? What mindset should you approach this with?
10:00-10:15

2 Provotype Discussions
Breakout discussion around provotypes. Facilitator takes notes and asks probing questions - start open and then get more specific. Capture key conversation points and map them to the tensions.
10:15 - 12:10 (incl 15 min break)
25 mins per pair of provotypes

3 Cluster and label
Across lunch, cluster and label the conversation points for each tension.
12:10 - 12:40

4 Present Back + Dot vote
Replay some of the conversations from the morning from across each group. Ask the team to vote on which conversation areas they would most like to discuss.
12:40 - 13:00

5 Breakout discussions
Discuss up to 4 conversation topics further across 2 groups. Recap conversations to the other group.
13:00 - 13:50

6 Postcard vision + wrap
Individually, and anonymously, share what you think the 10 year vision is for the SACC programme. Be specific (using prompts)
13:50 - 14:00

We created space to provoke conversation and reflection

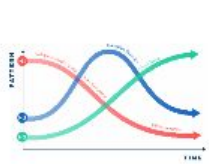# And translated these 'moments' into provotypes

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What if those in least need are receiving funded support?

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What if we only used an economic lens to make decisions around who we support?

What if childcare was treated as a convenience service?

Monday, June 5
19:41

CareCub — now
Jeremy is requesting a extra hour add-on
Accept | Reject

CareCub — 2 hours ago
Enter Jeremy's passcode to complete pick up

Deliveroo — 6 hours ago
Sally has tipped you 12p! Cash out now.

Deliveroo — 6 hours ago
Parcel drop off successful. You

Carecub

Your search
Now | EH10... | 3 hours

Bi-lingual | Pick up / drop off | Neuro-divergence expert | No-screens

+Afterschool surcharge applied

Alex Johnson, 27 — 4.8
5 minutes away
£25 per hour
3 children maximum
Pick up / drop off
Bi-lingual
Book now

Jamie Rivera, 24 — 4.4
25 minutes away
£15 per hour
2 children maximum
Pick up / drop off
Bi-lingual
No-screens
Book now

Carecub

Booking

1 x Child — £75
3 Hours

Alex's optional extras
- Pick up — +£10
- Drop off — +£10
- Bath time — +£5
- Nappy change — +£10
- Video call — +£5
- Dinner time — +£20
- Bed time story — +£15

Total — £100.00

Pay now
Pay | Apple Pay | G Pay

Carecub

Request accepted, Alex is 5 minutes away.

Latest arrival by 4:40pm

Send Alex a message

Add allergies / special requirements

View Alex's profile →

Carecub

Hi, I'm Alex.
4.8 | ££ | Read reviews

What I love about child care most is....
What I love about child care most is the opportunity to witness and contribute to the growth and development of children. Seeing their personalities unfold and their abilities expand is incredibly rewarding.

Some of my special interests and skills are.....
Crafting, outdoor activities, reading children's books, first aid and I speak fluent french!

My favourite kids TV character is...

---

6. EAC learning update_Mar27
docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1--kl6a1ONP5l1pFT58dnyUeldl_iFp21noHQCyy5dFY/edit#gid=0

Key Groups	Gross Value Added per £1 spent		
	After School Clubs	Holiday clubs	Breakfast clubs
Unemployed parents	£1.19	£1.51	£1.39
Underemployed parents	£10.42	£14.32	£10.01
Underemployed parents from minority ethnic groups	£1.09	£0.93	£1.01
Families in extreme poverty (urban)	£0.78	£0.74	£0.62
Families in extreme poverty (rural)	£0.36	£0.49	£0.41
Parents under 25	£1.18	£1.42	£1.29
Parents 25 - 35 year old	£5.94	£4.42	£4.91
Lone parents	£0.52	£0.73	£0.64
Families with children w/ ASN's	£1.65	£1.72	£1.98

MOST GROUPS NOT VALUABLE DISCUSS W/ MINISTER

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And synthesised these into coherent vision statements

Synthesising 2- and 10-year statements →
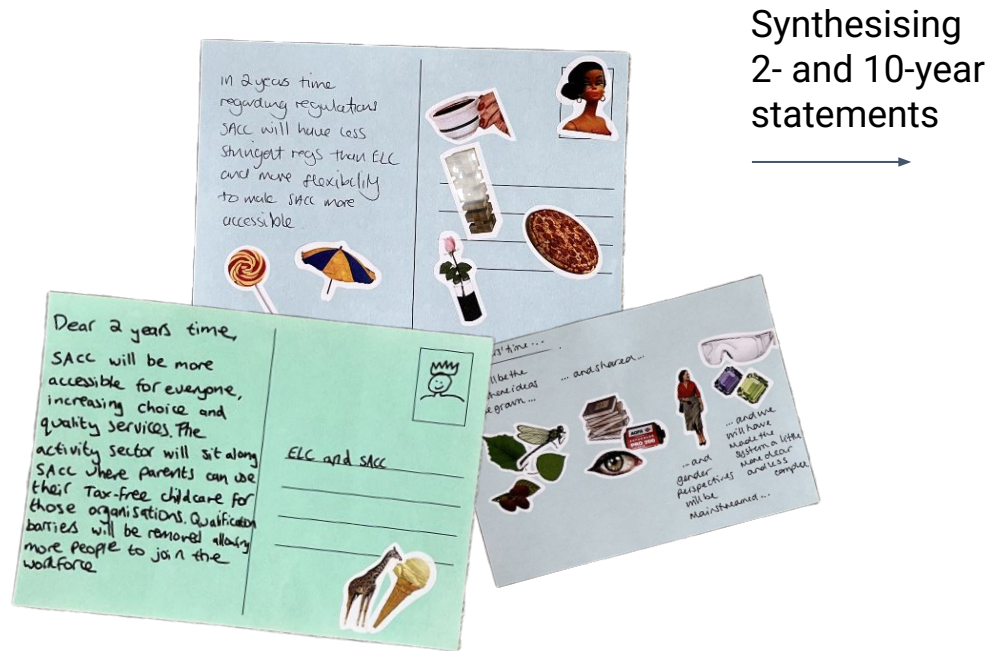
Government's Role

In 2 years…

Government will move away from directly funding service delivery to creating the conditions for childcare development at local and national levels. We will ensure that childcare is reflected in existing statutory reporting by local authorities, and that existing statutory childcare duties are enforced.
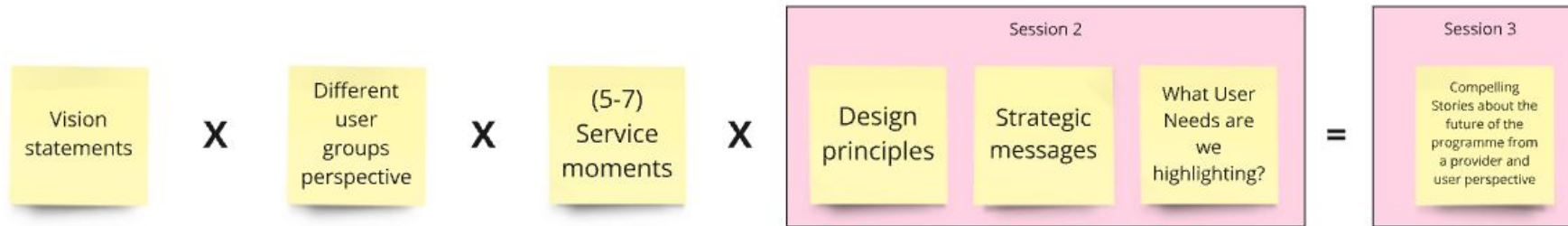
In 10 years…

Government will enable and unblock the system at a national level to work more effectively for everyone at a local level.

Be more specific by…

- Explicitly stating that government will set minimum standards.
- Outlining the differences in roles between local and national governments

7   *Workshop outputs*

Andthen.   sopra steria next

So, we pivoted towards 'vignettes' of the future

What we want to achieve

Vision statements X Different user groups perspective X (5-7) Service moments X

Session 2
Design principles   Strategic messages   What User Needs are we highlighting?

=

Session 3
Compelling Stories about the future of the programme from a provider and user perspective

Our formula for creating vignettes

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Large landscape that described the 'world'

Individual vignettes that captured people's stories

That started to look like this..

1 A broader qualification landscape will make it easier for providers to engage workers and volunteers.

2 Through early stages of work on a digital childcare service, we will understand how to make it easier for families to find and access their entitlements.

3 Providers will leverage tools emerging from the early adopter communities to set up new services.

7 Childcare will consider the needs of families and children through all stages of their life, with providers coordinating to better support key transitions.

We'll work towards

A rights based, dynamic school age childcare offer for children and young people, which supports choice and growth, enabling families and communities to reach their full potential.

4 Early adopter communities will be engaged to share their experiences and learnings, which will be packaged and shared with others.

6 Better evidence about the impact of childcare will help us target those most likely to benefit, while new regulation will broaden the landscape of providers.

5 Regulatory changes will include activity providers in the childcare sector, increasing access to provision for everyone.

1 Continued growth in the sector will not only support improved outcomes for children, but will also contribute to growth in employment, the economy, and tax revenues for other services.

2 Local Authorities are able to provide local funding to meet local needs whilst parents will be able to access real-time information on childcare providers and manage their childcare easily through a national service

3 Government will continue to unblock the system at a national level, and will support development of a national approach to make local childcare systems more effective.

4 Early Adopter Communities have become an independent means of consulting and creating with Government, informing and shaping policy across lots of subjects.

5 Regulation will be more proportionate to children's age and stage, encouraging innovation and growth in the sector.

6 We'll have a wide variety of childcare services contributing to a system designed primarily for those most in need, but which is inclusive and works for all families.

7 There will be new services and better coordination which provide more joined up options for all ages, and facilitate smooth transitions between age groups.

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What's happening?

Evidence about impact

We understand more about the impact of childcare on poverty.

Changing regulation

New regulation has broadened the landscape of funded providers.
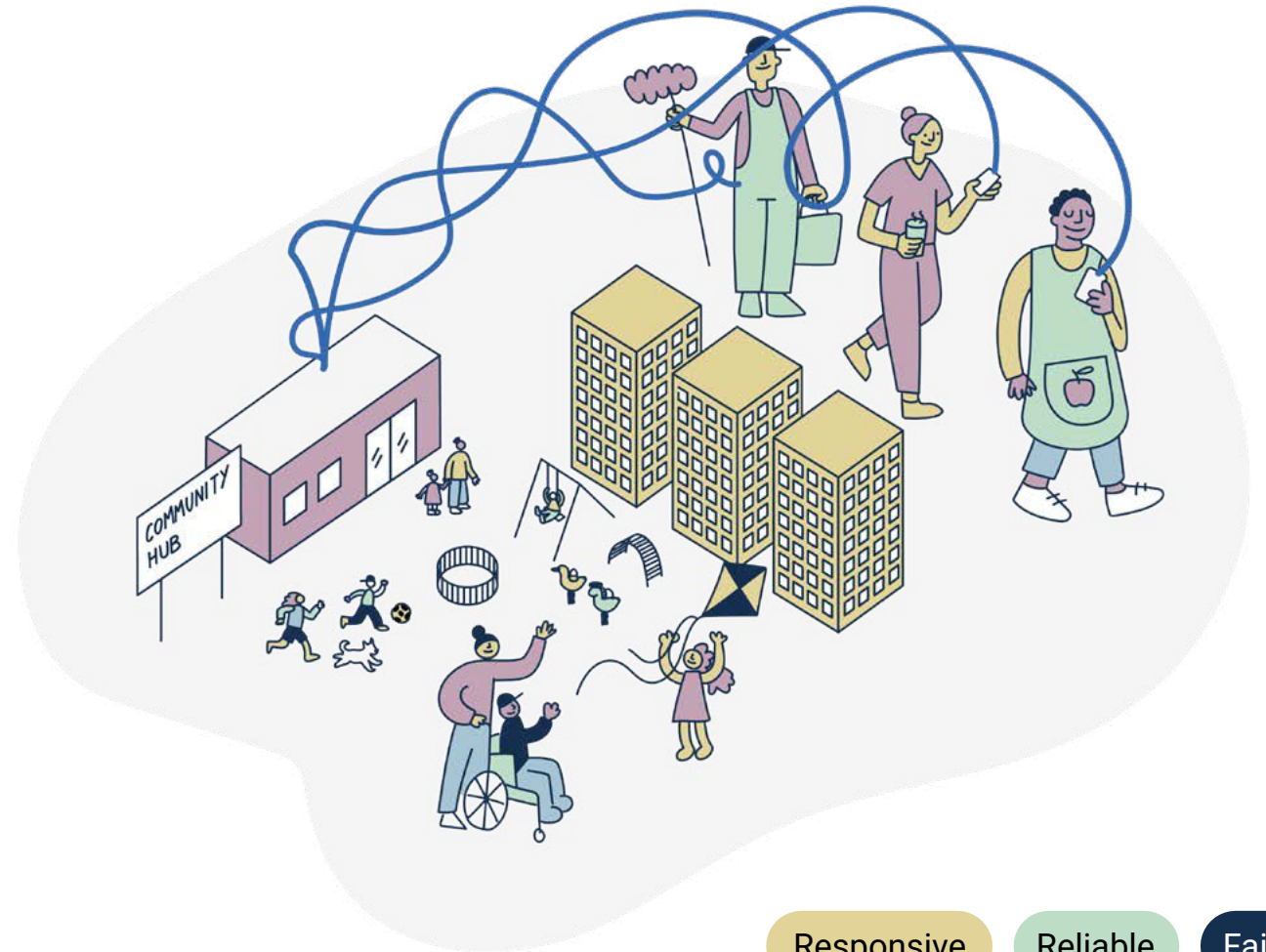
Reassurance in quality

Quality frameworks ensure that parents can be confident.

Story

Eilidh works in healthcare, and like many in her community has an unpredictable shift pattern. Recently the community hub has started offering more **flexible** childcare, and she can pay for it using her existing benefits. As a result, her child Lee, who has additional support needs, is able to spend the day with their siblings and friends helping them feel **included** in the community. Eilidh has been reassured by the **reliability** of this childcare, and has **chosen** to increase her work hours. Now, she's saving for a camping trip in the Highlands while getting some much needed rest.

In 10 years…

We'll have a wide variety of childcare services contributing to a system designed primarily for those most in need, but which is inclusive and works for all families.

Responsive   Reliable   Fair

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What's happening?

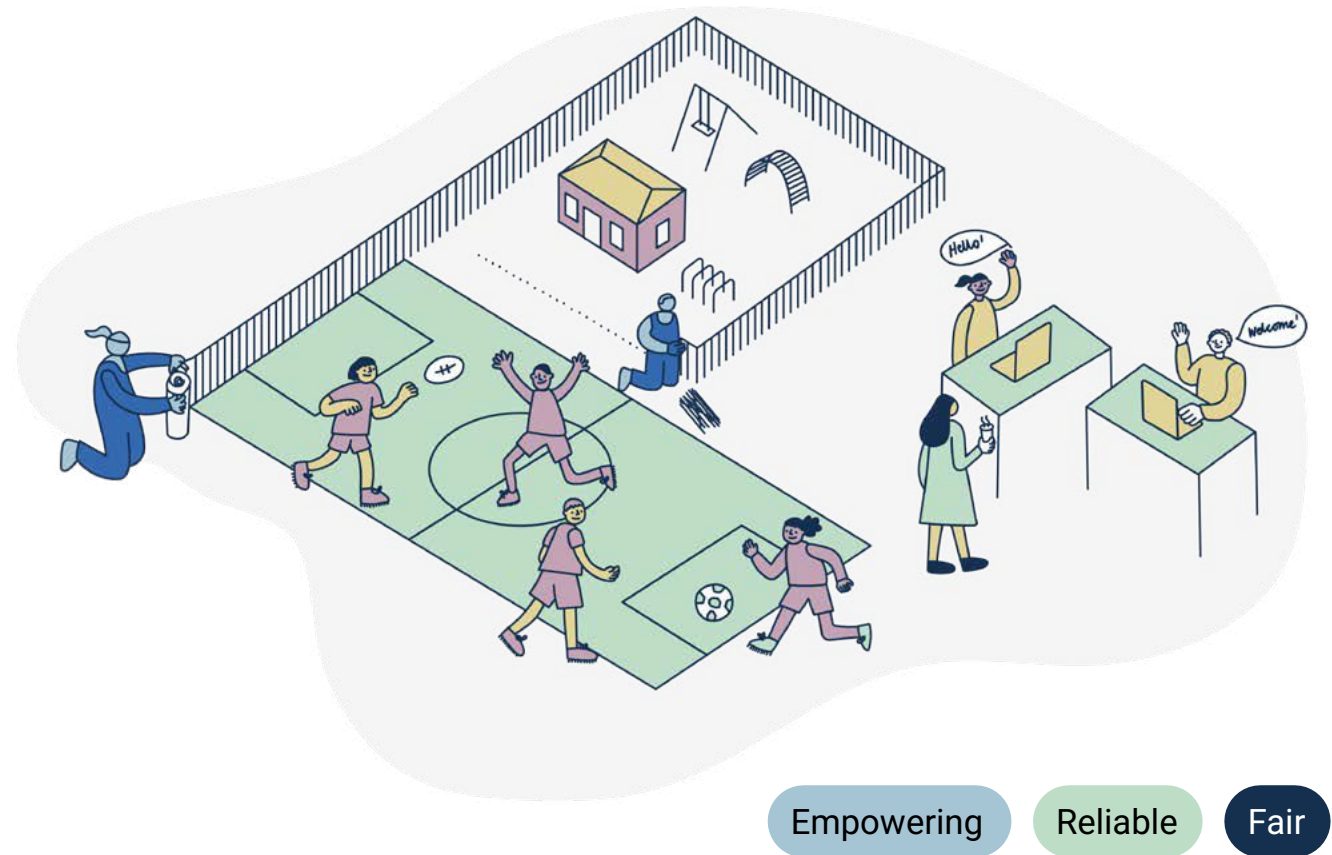| New forms of childcare	Workforce participation	Accessible provision
Regulatory change has included activity providers in the childcare sector.	Increased supply of childcare has enabled parents to work more.	More childcare provision has improved access for everyone.

Story

Yomi, a single parent, has been struggling to enter the workforce. While she does get government support which she can use for childcare, there aren't enough **affordable** childcare facilities in her area. This has made it difficult to **consistently** go to work, so she hasn't been pursuing job opportunities.

However, recently she found out that several new after-school activity clubs are accepting payments through tax free childcare and Universal Credit. Now, her child Ali is attending a sports club after school each day, and Yomi feels **empowered** to start work at a new full time job.

In 10 years…

Regulation will be more proportionate to children's age and stage, encouraging innovation and growth in the sector.

Empowering   Reliable   Fair

2 Through early stages of work on a digital childcare service, we will understand how to make it easier for families to find and access their entitlements.

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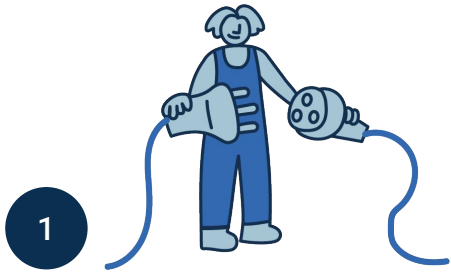
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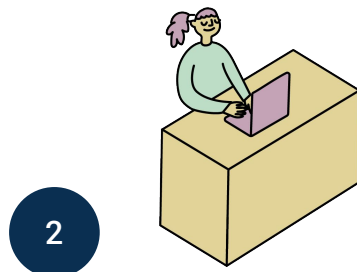
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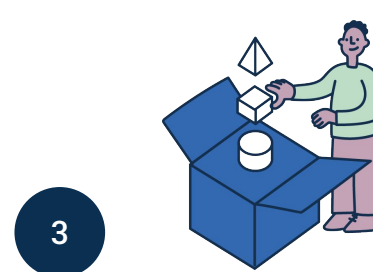
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What's happened since?

1 We've used these narratives of the future to communicate the tangibility of changes to ministers and stakeholders

2 The vision has informed programme prioritisation

3 Tell the story of EACs and place in wider programme of work

4 Day-to-day conversations about the tensions, in a more intentional way

And what have we learned?

1   Project made very clear the role of design in thinking about systems and policy

2   The power of making and its ability to progress conversations

3   This is a type of non-economic modelling

4   The approach was emergent, adapting and changing to the circumstances

Thanks for listening!
Any questions?

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