

PROJECT

Place-based systems work with Save the Children

PRACTITIONER

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APPROX. DATE

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SITUATION AND CONTEXT

Save the Children UK wanted to shift from direct service delivery to enabling local systems change in deprived communities. The challenge was how to work with complexity, rather than delivering simple programmes.

SYSTEM OF INTEREST

Local systems of support for children and families—across services, voluntary groups, and communities.

APPROACH TAKEN

We introduced boundary critique and systems mapping tools, helping staff shift from programme design to systemic facilitation.

MODELS AND INSIGHTS DEVELOPED

- Boundary critique revealed different assumptions and purposes across partners
- Stakeholder mapping made power relationships visible
- Systems maps helped teams move from linear logic models to complex realities

KEY INTERVENTIONS UNDERTAKEN

- Ran local workshops using systems tools
- Trained staff in systemic methods
- Supported early community-led initiatives

RESULTS

- Staff confidence in systems change increased
- Pilot areas moved toward more collaborative approaches
- National strategy began to shift toward enabling systems

AFTERTHOUGHTS

Systems thinking helped staff give up control in favour of deeper influence.

CONCLUSION

Save the Children's shift toward systems change was made real through grounded, practical systems thinking tools.