



Glasgow Caledonian
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University for the Common Good

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How do community-led organisations impact on health and wellbeing in disadvantaged areas in the UK?

FUNDED BY

NIHR | National Institute for
Health and Care Research



WWW COMMONHEALTHASSETS.UK



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under PEER
REVIEW



CLOs community-led organisations

Place based

Community owned and led

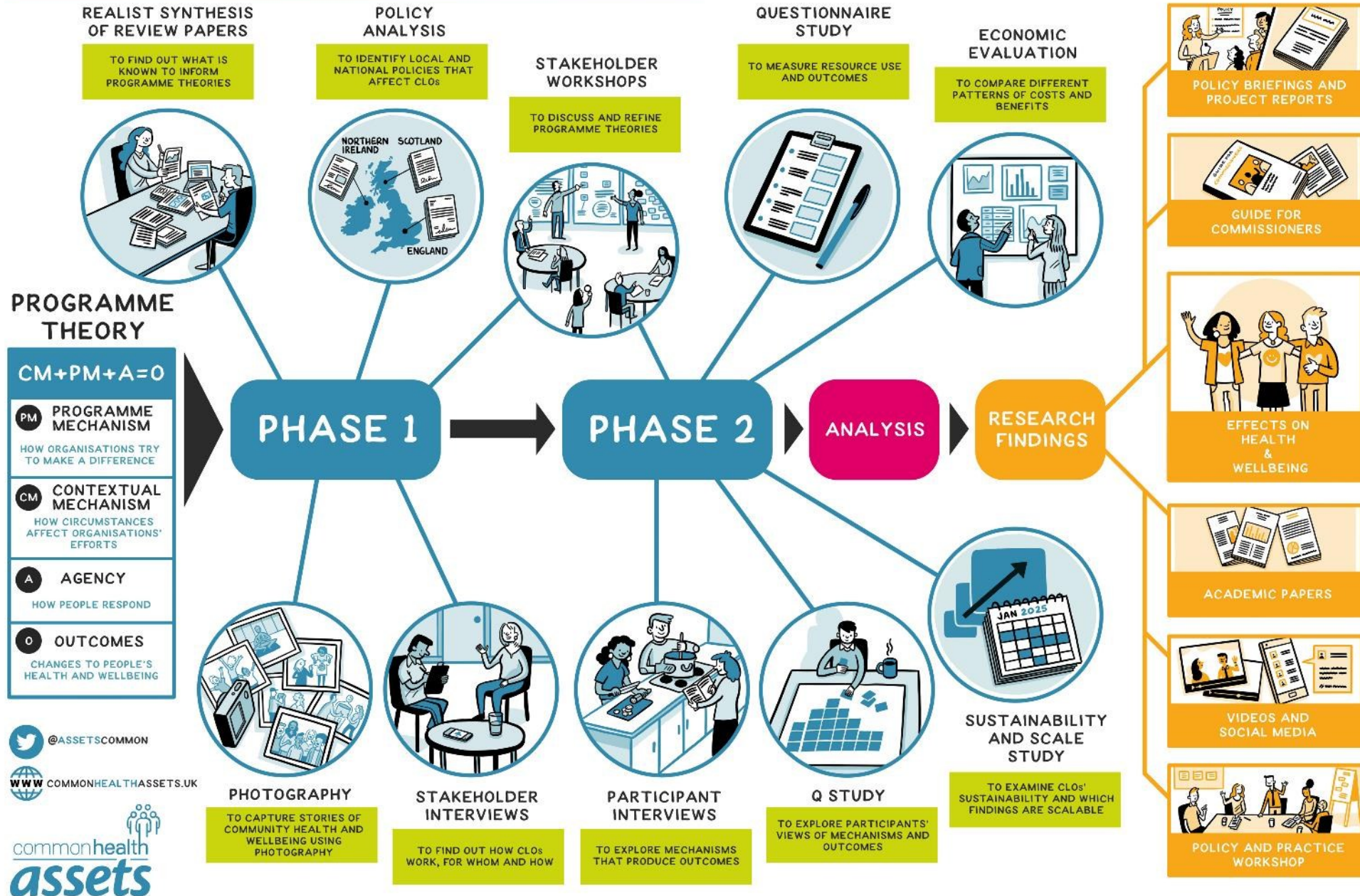
"community anchors"

"healthy living centres"

Activities

- Gardening
- Arts and crafts
- Café
- Radio
- Transport
- Social/cultural events
- Health and wellbeing
- Family and children
- Finances ...





Causal explanations

Individual/ impacts

- Self-Worth, Empowerment, Confidence
- Purpose, Productivity, Connection
- Healthy living
- Space, social interaction, and inclusion
- Volunteering

Organisational/ sustainability

- Trust, Community, and Partnerships
- Outreach
- Adaptability and funding

Context-mechanism-outcome

Measuring the impact of CLOs on participants – and comparing benefits to costs



QUESTIONNAIRE STUDY

TO MEASURE RESOURCE USE
AND OUTCOMES



ECONOMIC EVALUATION

TO COMPARE DIFFERENT
PATTERNS OF COSTS AND
BENEFITS

Study Methods: A Longitudinal Approach

WHAT WE DID

- Recruited 350 participants across 14 CLOs
- Four time points over 12 months
- 86% retention rate

WHAT WE MEASURED

Four validated wellbeing outcomes:

- Capability wellbeing (ICECAP-A)
- Mental wellbeing (SWEMWBS)
- Health-related quality of life (EQ-5D-5L)
- Social connectedness (SCS-R)

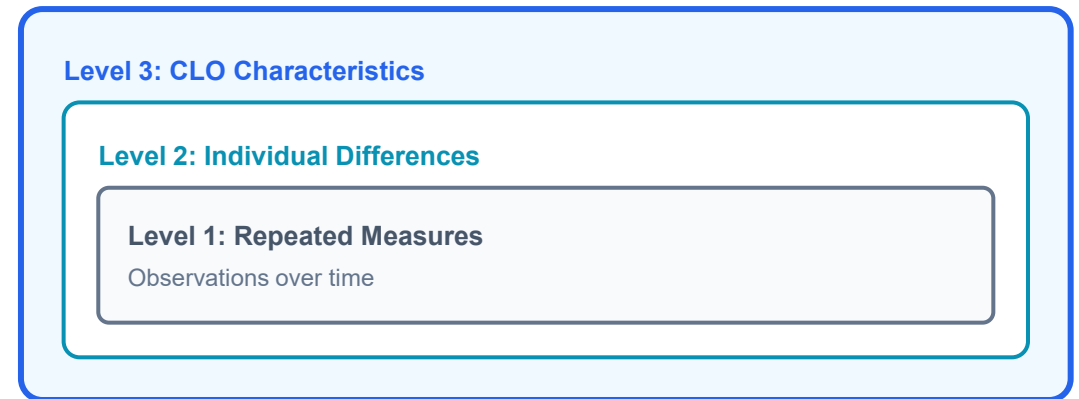
PARTICIPATION PATTERNS

- Total engagement across activities
- Activity-specific types and frequency
- Changes over the study period

HOW WE ANALYSED IT

Multilevel Modelling

Accounts for nested data structure



Controls for demographics, socioeconomic status, and organisational factors

Key Findings



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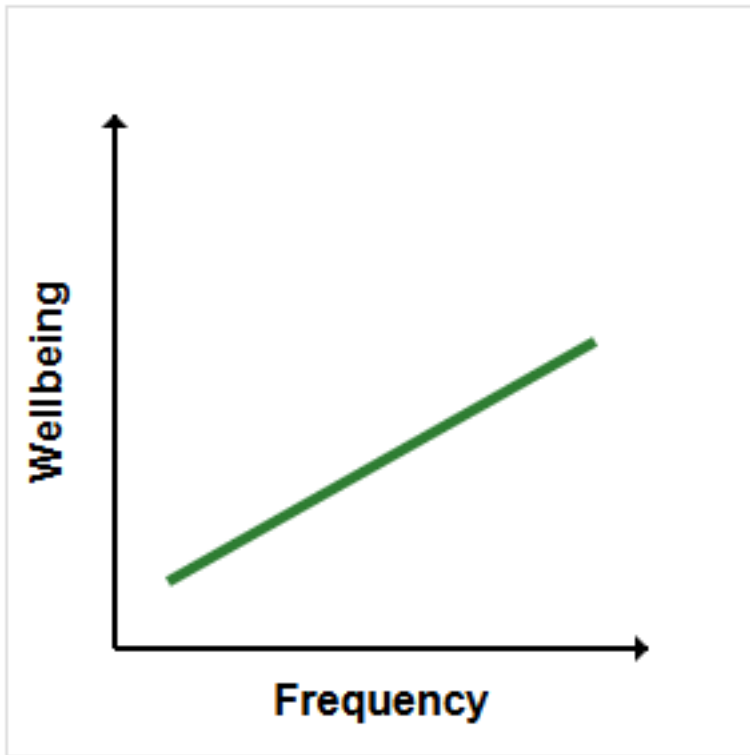
Headline	Details
Engagement with CLOs leads to improved wellbeing	Overall engagement of participants with CLOs is associated with better capability wellbeing (ICECAP) and mental wellbeing (SWEMWBS)
Benefits emerge at different speeds	We can see evidence that social connectedness improves quickly (by 1 month), whilst improvements in other wellbeing dimensions take longer to emerge
Socially prescribed and new participants start lower but catch up	Participants who entered the CLO via social prescription and less experienced (new) participants had worse wellbeing across all measures at baseline but catch up to other participants over the year

Activities improve different dimensions of wellbeing

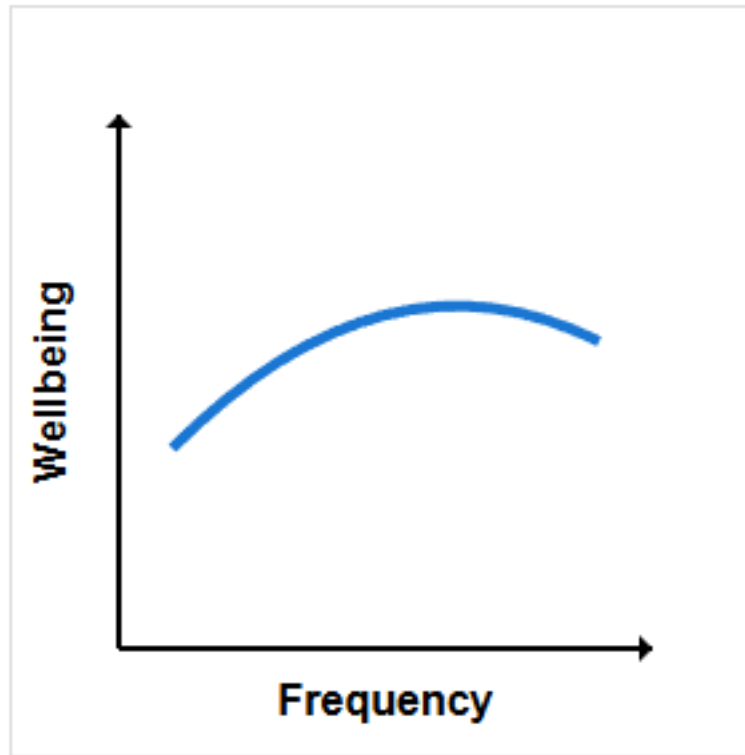
Activity Type	Capability Wellbeing	Mental Wellbeing	Health-Related Quality of Life	Social Connectedness
Psychological support	✓	✓	✓	✓
Child/family activities	✓	✓	✓	✓
Outdoor activities	✓	✓	✓	✓
Volunteering	✓			✓
Physical activities	✓			
Arts/Cultural		✓		
Educational		✓	✓	

Three Frequency patterns

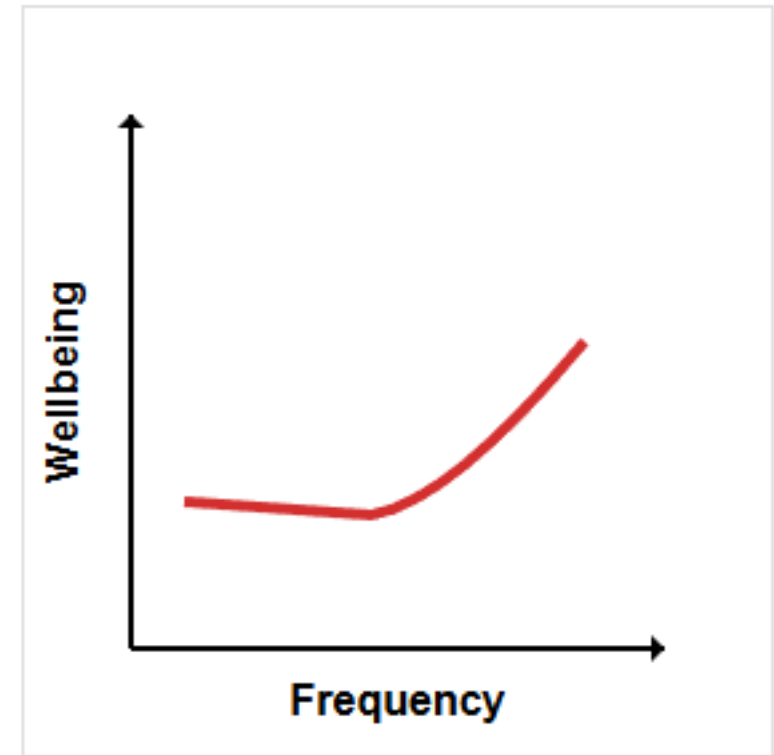
**Outdoor/Cultural Activities
(Linear)**



**Volunteering
(Inverted U-shaped)**



**Physical/Educational/
Arts (Threshold)**



Findings

Explanation

CLOs have high potential for cost-effectiveness for generating health and capability wellbeing

Additional cost for each Year in Full Capability generated
<£36,000

UK population would pay ~£66,500 for a YFC²

Additional cost for each Quality Adjusted Life Year gained < £30,000

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence typically recommends interventions with values between £20-30,000 per QALY gained

CLOs may not reduce overall healthcare resource utilisation

CLOs may complement rather than replace clinical care
Ongoing clinical care and moments of emergency need are unavoidable in chronic ill health

CLOs reduce utilisation of some front-line crisis services

Less use of direct mental health service, NHS 24 (111), and housing support service
Suggests CLO participants may have been better equipped to deal with some crisis moments and/or had reduced frequency of crisis moments

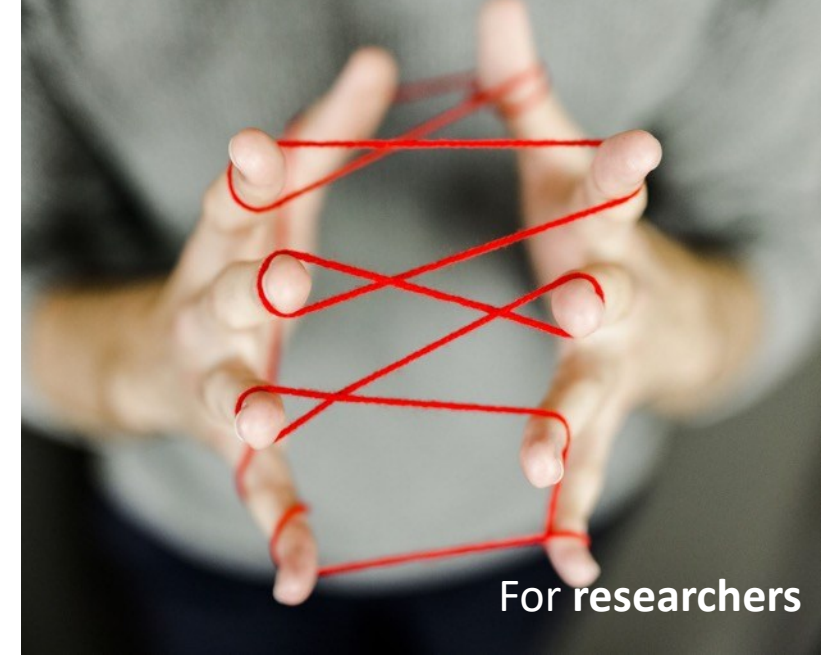
¹ Mason H, Irvine N, Manoukian S, Rendall J, Donaldson C, Steiner A, Roy MJ, McLean J, Kelly MP, Bertotti M, Galway K, Baker R (2025). Economic evaluation of participation in community led organisations for individuals living in disadvantaged areas in the UK. *Soc Sci Med*, 389, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2025.118761>

² Himmler, S., Van Exel, J., & Brouwer, W. (2020). Estimating the monetary value of health and capability well-being applying the well-being valuation approach. *The European Journal of Health Economics*, 21, 1235-1244.

For community leaders and practitioners



For researchers



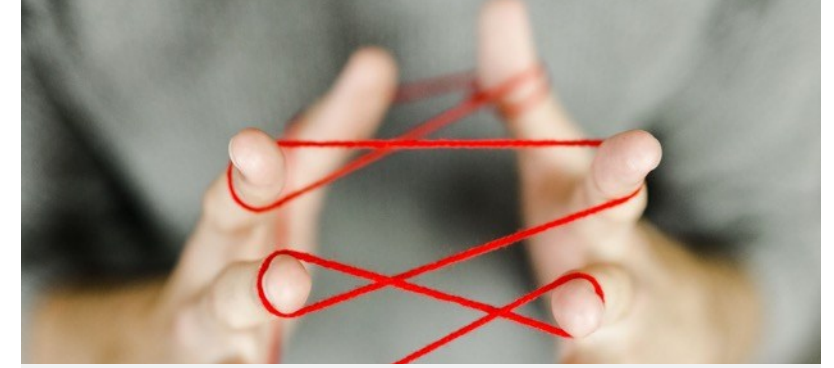
For commissioners and funders of VCSE



For public health professionals / 'deepend' GPs



It IS what you do and it's the way that you do it



The old ways (e.g. randomized controlled trials) don't work here



Results point to the importance of longer term, infrastructure funding



CLOs improve wellbeing, social connection and purpose are key.
'Holding people well'

Lessons to learn from CommonHealth Assets

- Gather stories as well as numbers: Combine hard numbers (e.g., attendance counts, service hours) with short, human quotes or case studies that show *why* your work matters.
- Build in routine evaluation and keep it light: Build simple feedback habits into your existing activities, like a quick 2-minute chat at the end of a session or a one-question digital poll so you can pick away at evaluation instead of it being a one-time big ordeal.
- Get some theories of change together for each project: Before starting a project, write down a simple chain: *What resources go in? What activities happen? What changes immediately for the people taking part?* This helps to guide the evaluation.
- Borrow pre-structured tools from academia: You can adapt academic frameworks (like tracking subjective wellbeing, confidence, or social connection over time) into simple, friendly questionnaires that your team can easily analyse.

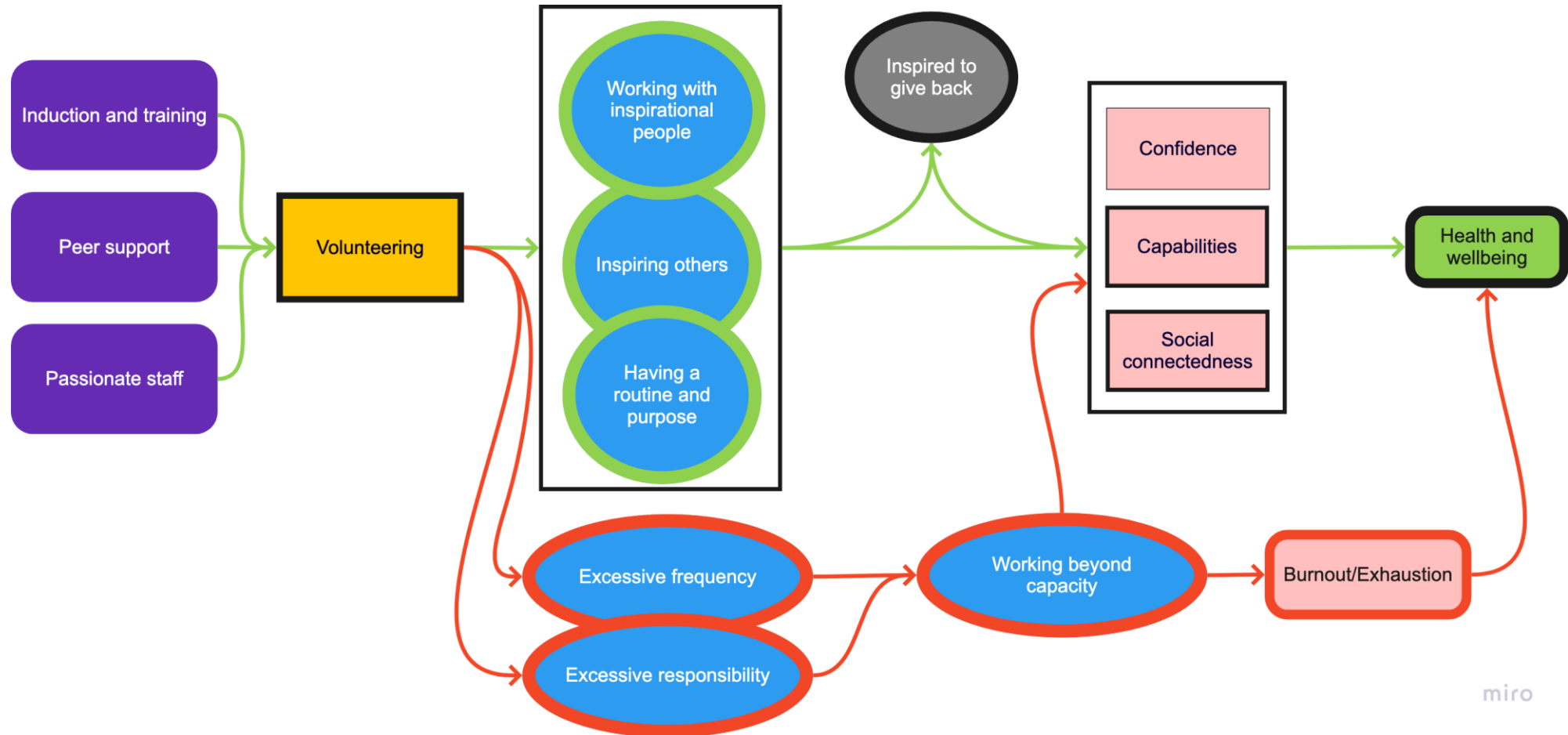


THANK YOU



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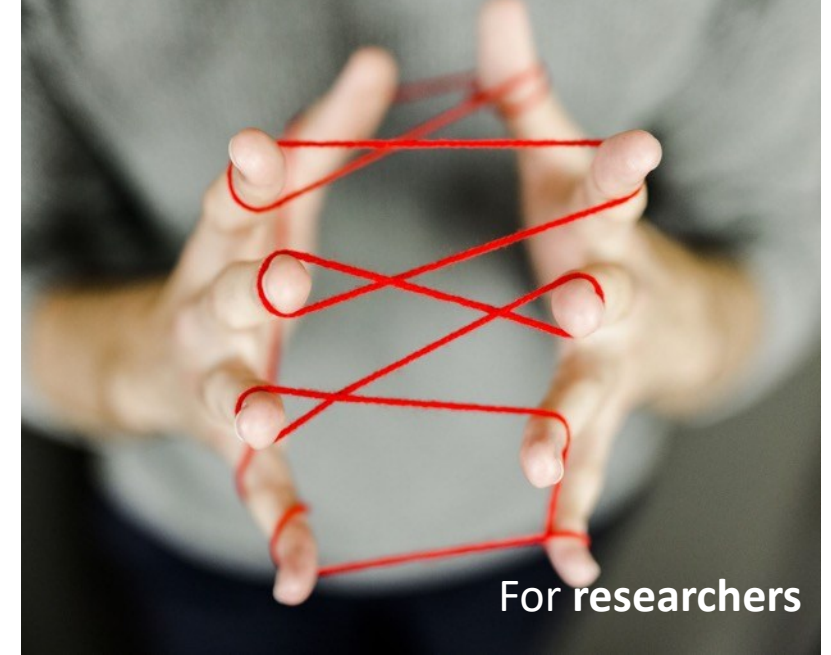
Volunteering



For community leaders and practitioners



For researchers



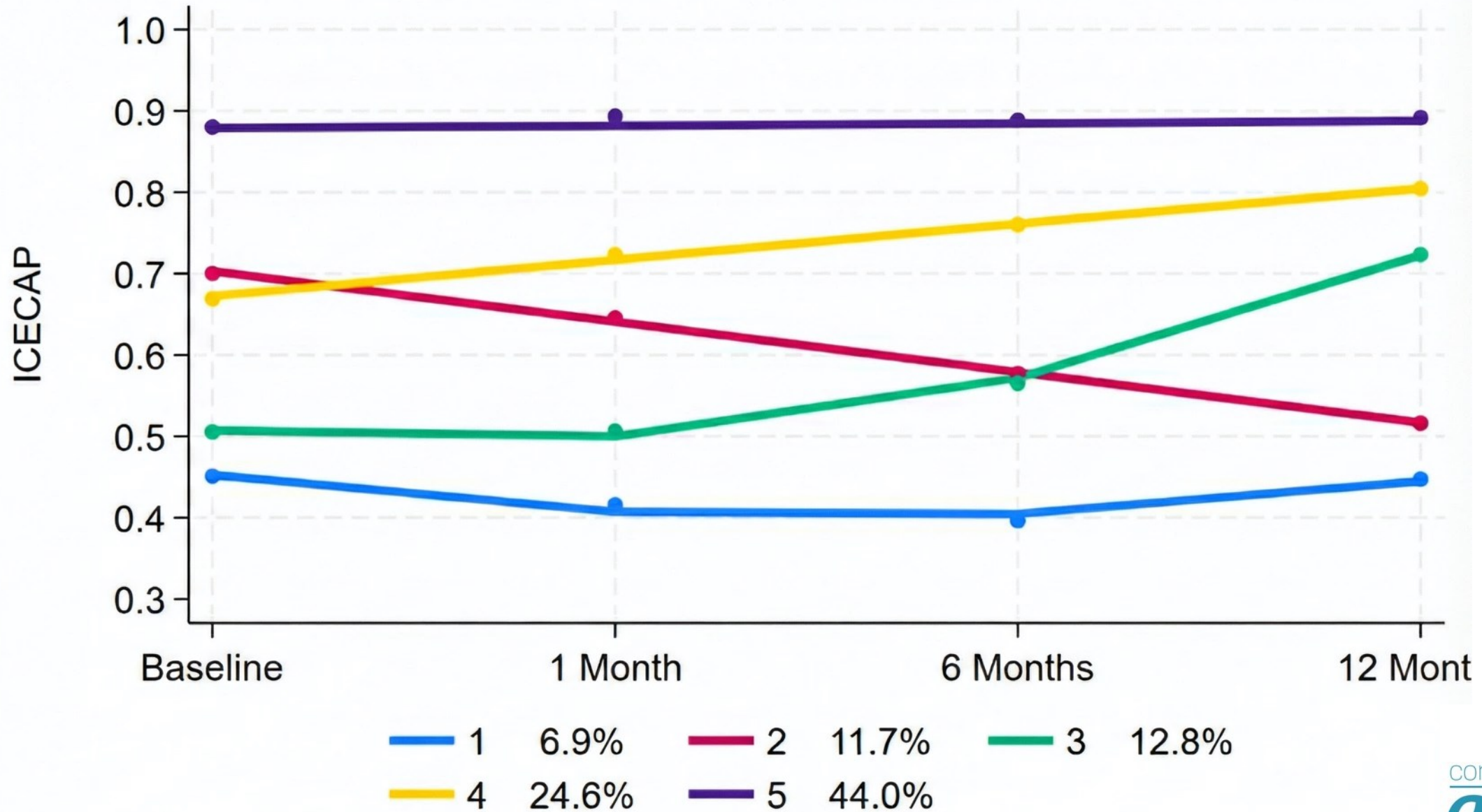
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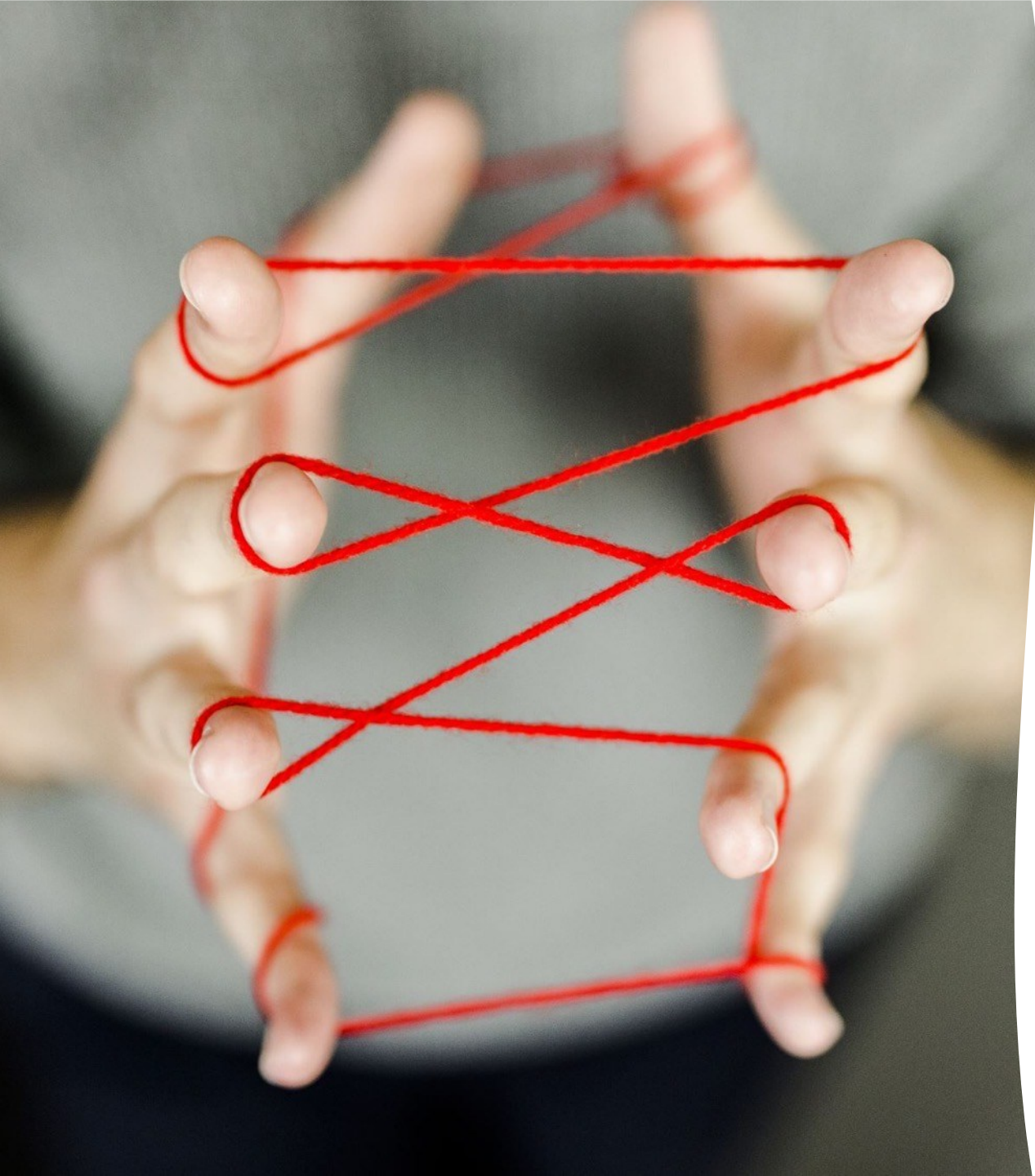


For public health professionals / 'deepend' GPs



Wellbeing trajectories over time of CLO participants





Researchers and methodologists

- Realist research has huge potential for evaluation of complex interventions in systems – CLOs are complex but we have understanding about how they work
- Bringing economic evaluation together with realist evaluation is an area of development and innovation
- Holding people well – and challenges for evaluation
- ‘Inverse evidence law’ and thinking beyond evidence hierarchy in health sciences

Attribute

Stability

- I am able to feel settled and secure in all areas of my life
- I am able to feel settled and secure in many areas of my life
- I am able to feel settled and secure in a few areas of my life
- I am unable to feel settled and secure in any areas of my life

Attachment

- I can have a lot of love, friendship and support
- I can have quite a lot of love, friendship and support
- I can have a little love, friendship and support
- I cannot have any love, friendship and support

Autonomy

- I am able to be completely independent
- I am able to be independent in many things
- I am able to be independent in a few things
- I am unable to be at all independent

Achievement

- I can achieve and progress in all aspects of my life
- I can achieve and progress in many aspects of my life
- I can achieve and progress in a few aspects of my life
- I cannot achieve and progress in any aspects of my life

Enjoyment

- I can have a lot of enjoyment and pleasure
 - I can have quite a lot of enjoyment and pleasure
 - I can have a little enjoyment and pleasure
 - I cannot have any enjoyment and pleasure
- 