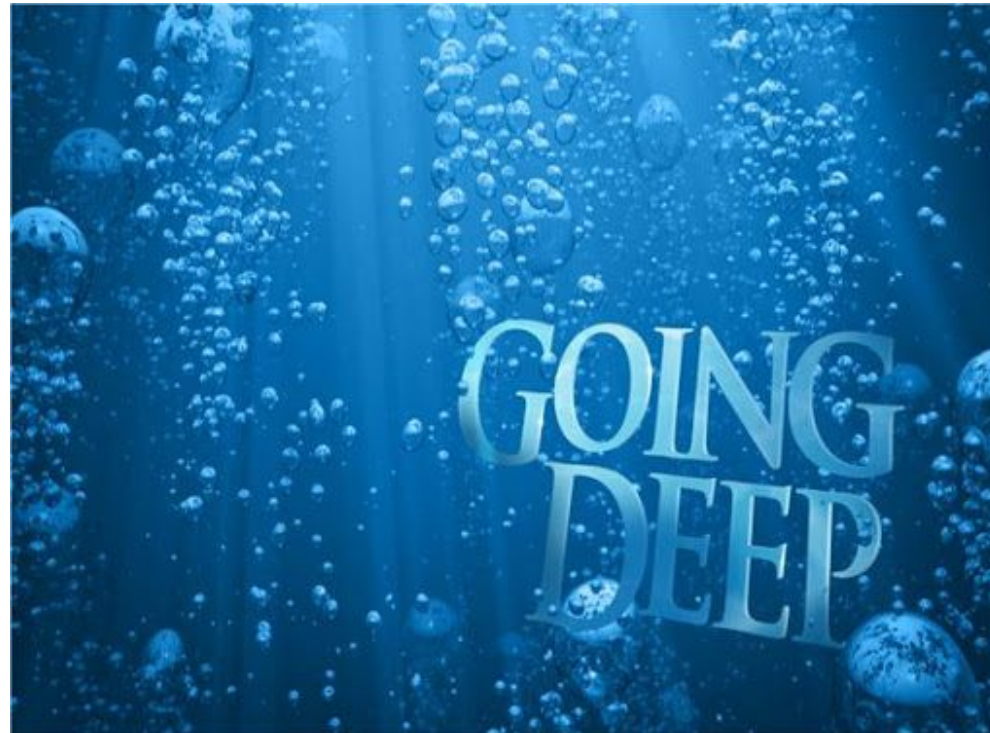
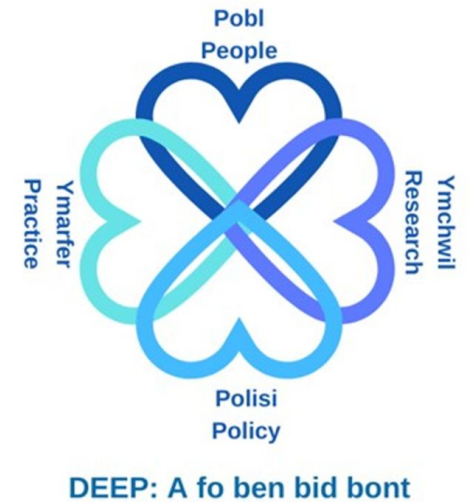


# ***Developing Evidence Enriched Practice (DEEP): an introduction to Most Significant Change***



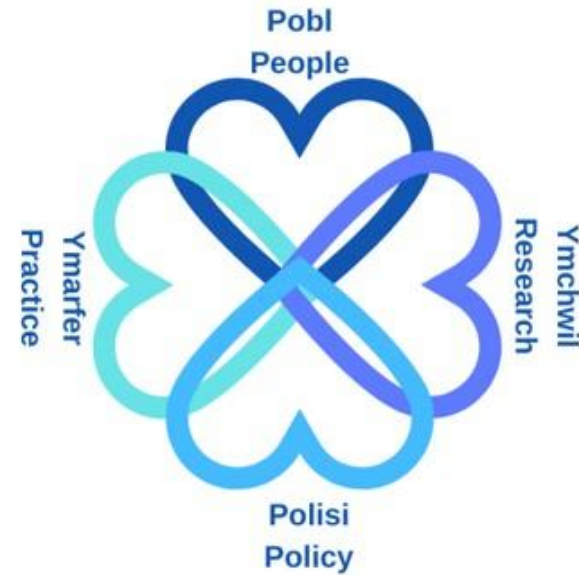
Nick Andrews, Swansea University



# A definition of DEEP

DEEP is a co-production approach to gathering, exploring and using diverse types of evidence in learning and development using story and dialogue methods.

*“A fo ben bid bont”* (from Mabinogion – a 12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> Century Welsh story)



DEEP: A fo ben bid bont



# The three stages of DEEP

- Stage 1: Prepare the ground  
(create the right environment for learning and development)
- Stage 2: Gather and prepare the seeds (gather and present diverse types of evidence)
- Stage 3: Sow and grow the seeds  
(explore and apply evidence in context)



# *Most Significant Change* – a storytelling approach to learning focused evaluation



Nick Andrews, Swansea University

# Moving beyond being moved by stories



# Most Significant Change (MSC) is a *relational* approach to the evaluation of *change* outcomes



Four key benefits of MSC:

- It can be ‘therapeutic’
- It captures complex outcomes
- It supports individual and collective learning
- It builds relationships and mutual understanding

Not stand-alone  
and compliments  
metrics



# MSC aligns with Human Learning Systems



# The context in which MSC was developed

Complex community development and public health programmes which are focused on **positive change**, in which:

- Control is limited
- Prediction is difficult
- Outcomes can be unexpected
- There is more benefit from *action* and *learning* from it, rather than *planning everything* to death in advance



# Some examples of where MSC has been used

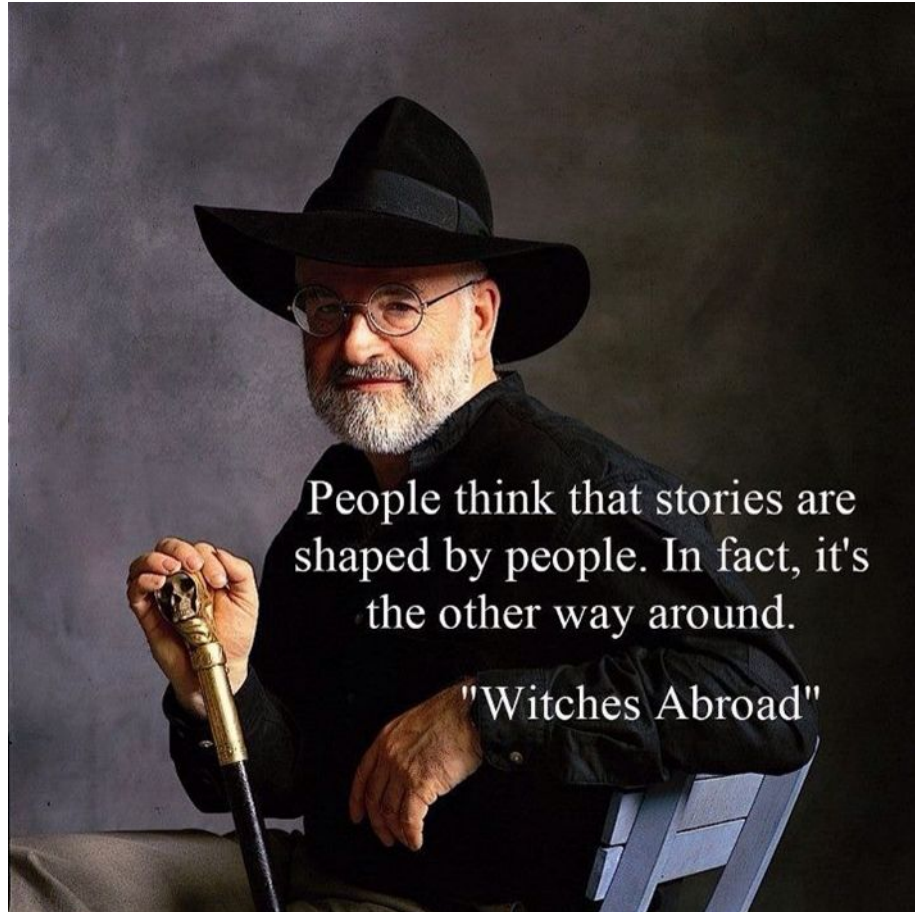
- Prevention work in Pembrokeshire and Monmouthshire
- Evaluating Connect 5 training in Gwent and Circles of Support training in Pembrokeshire
- Evaluating community development in Cardiff
- Evaluating the impact of peer-support amongst parents and supporting co-production with C&F services in N&PT
- Evaluating community-based and coproduced stroke and head injury rehab in ABUHB
- Evaluation and building community in C&V MH Recovery College
- Evaluating creative use of Short Breaks Fund with Carers Trust Wales
- Evaluating community arts – People Speak Up!



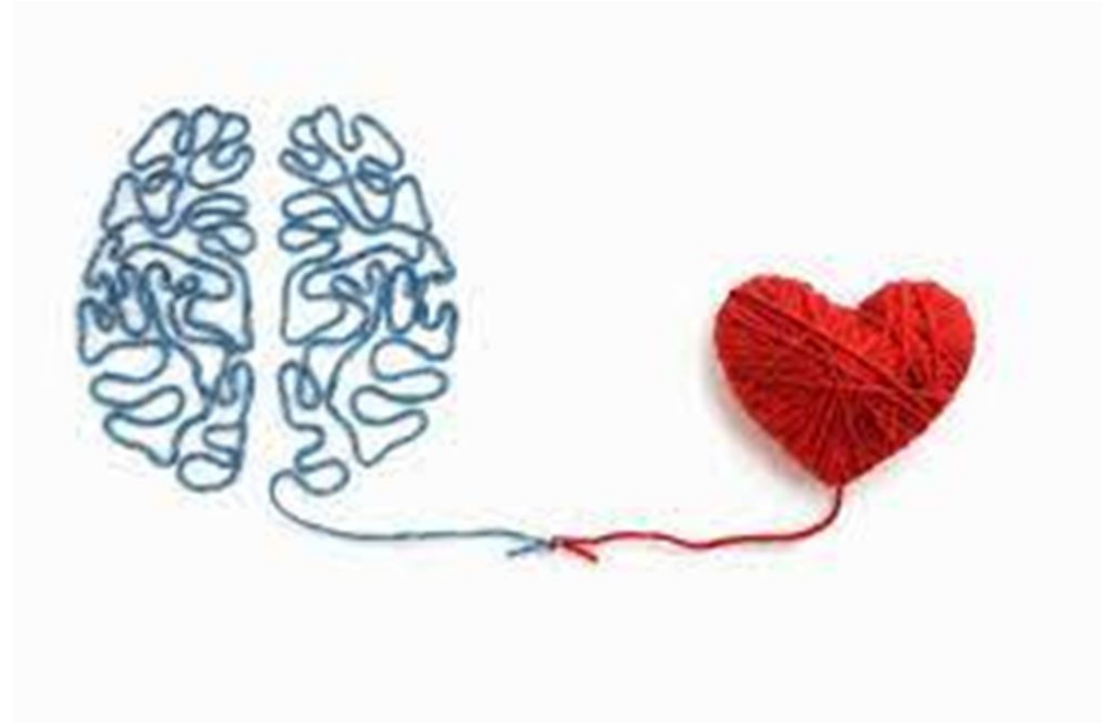
# What lies at the heart of MSC?



# MSC taps into the power of stories in learning

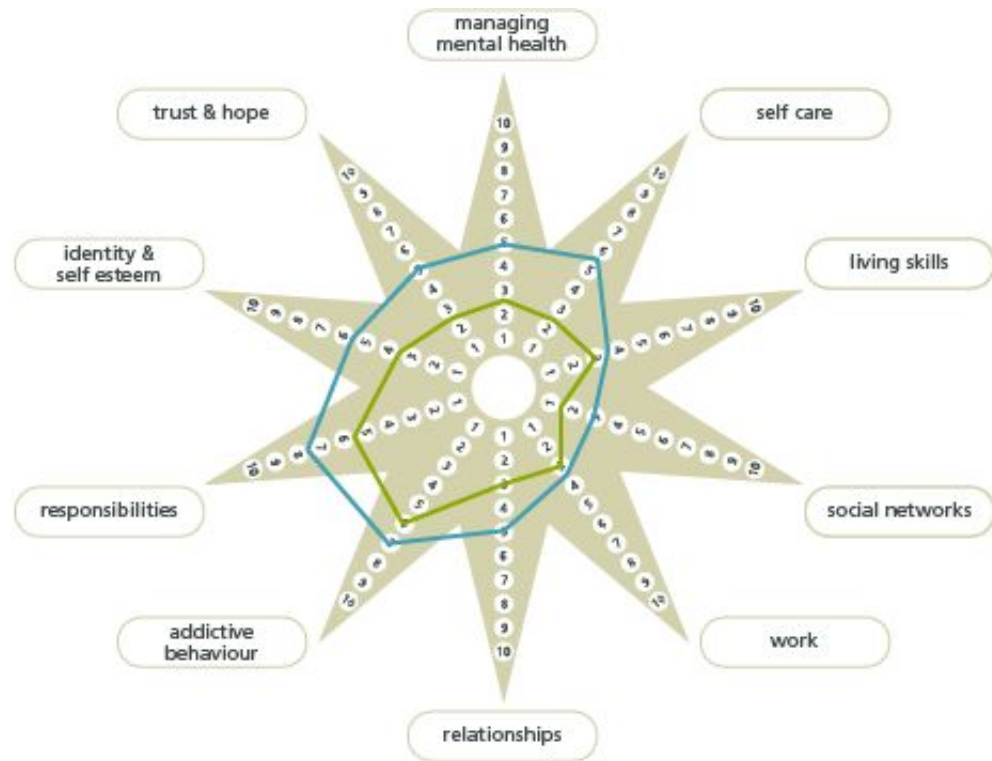


Terry Pratchett



*"Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all!"* (Wrongly attributed to Aristotle)

# Stories embrace complexity when reductionist methods struggle

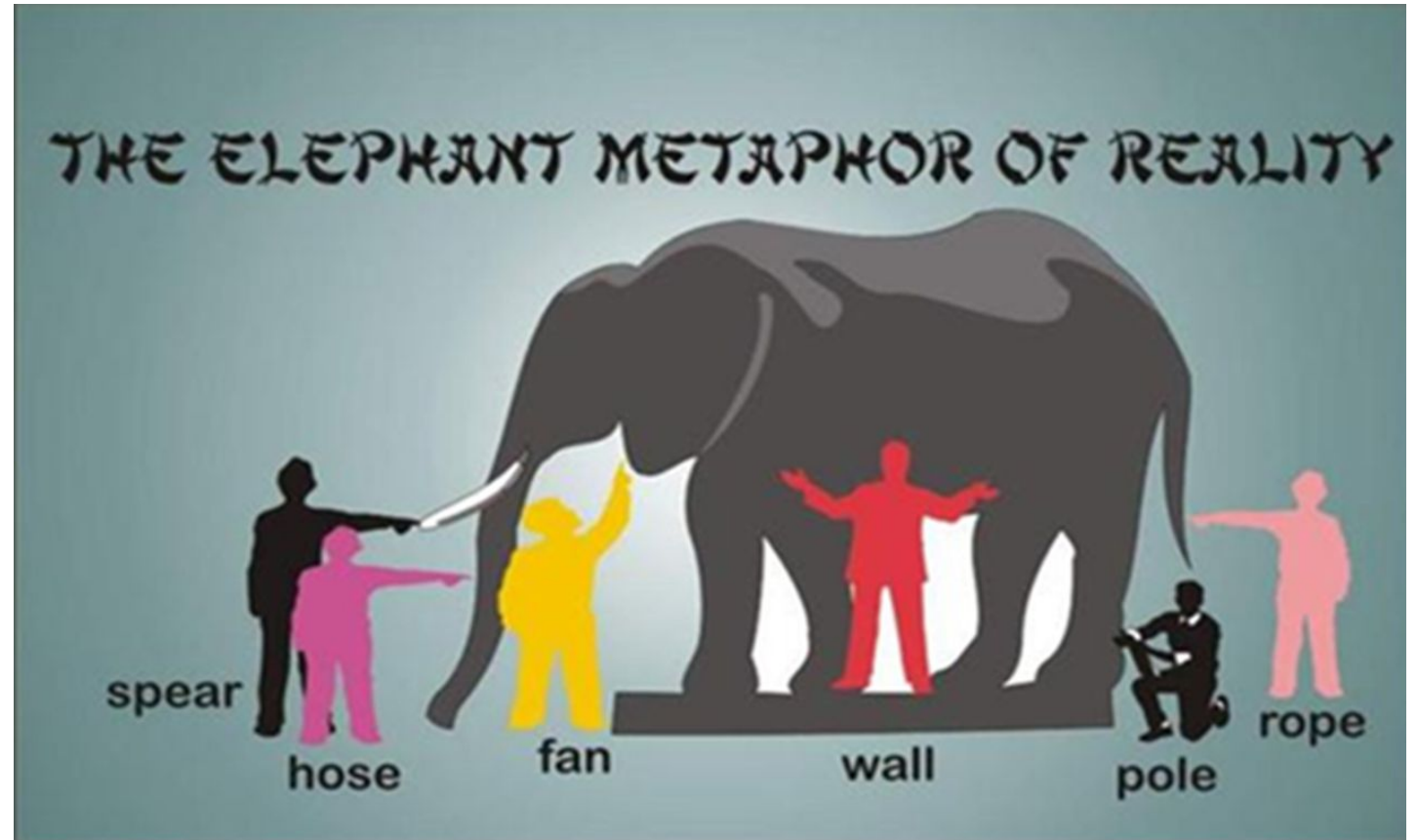


# We need to talk about as well as hear stories

Three ways of talking together

- Disputational talk
- Cumulative talk
- **Exploratory** talk

(Mercer 2025)



# Dialogue is more than just talking together...

*It is ....*

*‘Responding to others because they really matter  
and building dispositions to seek out, value and  
learn from the differences between us’*

Rupert Higham, Cambridge Educational Dialogue Research Group



# Talking and thinking together about stories creates community

A social change programme involves numerous people, swimming in slightly different directions. MSC helps the 'fish' to communicate around the question '***where do we really want to go?***'

MSC helps to develop shared *semantics* and a shared *vision*



# The MSC process



# Stage 1: Gathering MSC stories



# 1. Take an ethical approach to story gathering

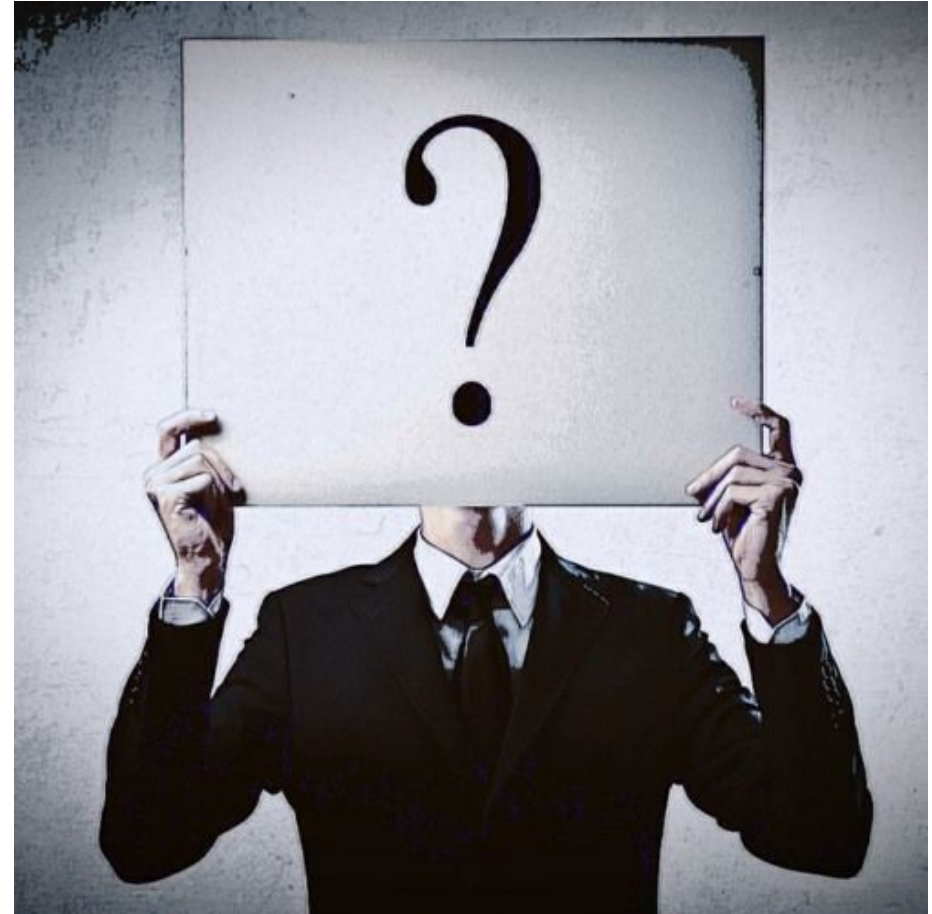
Stories are personal and belong to the people who tell them. They must be handled with care and respect. The story gatherer must:

- Explain why the stories are being gathered and how they might be used
- Check if the storyteller gives consent for their story to be shared
- Check if the storyteller wishes to be anonymous
- If stories include third parties, be sensitive and avoid anything libellous!
- Even when consent is given, if stories go on to be used in media releases – double check with storyteller first

## 2. Set the scene

You need to bear in mind that the story will go to people who do not know the person or their context.

You therefore need to gather a bit of background information about the person.



### 3. Ask an open MSC question

- *‘Looking back over the last..., what good or bad changes have come about as a result of...?’*



## 4. Explore all sorts of changes?

- Changes for individuals – physical, psychological, social, financial, attitudinal etc
- Changes in other individuals, e.g. family members, work colleagues
- Changes in a group or community
- Changes in organisational policies and procedures, e.g. paperwork, the way people work

## 5. Focus in on their most significant change

Of all the changes you have listed  
– which is the most significant to  
you and why?

Regarding this most significant  
change:

What was it like before?

What is it like now?

And what do you think brought  
about the change?



## 6. Finish off with a snappy title



# How to capture MSC stories and from who?

- By interview in pairs
- As a group activity
- Some (but not many) people can write their own story directly
- **ALWAYS** in the storytellers own words (MSC stories are **by** people not **about** people – unlike case studies)
- They can be gathered by taking notes or on a phone or voice recorder
- Stories can be from *anyone* involved in the service or project – the more diverse the stories the better

## An example MSC story



## Step 2: Story selection panels



# The key aim of story selection panels

- The aim of story selection panels is **NOT** to choose the 'best' story (like the Booker Prize ) but **to wrestle with significant themes in each of the stories** to gain a DEEPer and more shared understanding about what matters most and what needs to be done in response
- Having to collectively choose just **one** story as the 'most significant' enables this



# The core functions of story selection panels

- To learn from the stories
- To learn about each other and develop 'common knowledge' (Edwards 2012) i.e. what matters to different people
- To recognise and value different perspectives
- To question and challenge each another in respectful and constructive ways
- To develop a shared and rich understanding of what's *significant* in the stories
- To support the development of shared semantics (understanding of words)
- To work towards consensus
- To explore the implications of what has been learnt

## Step 3: The feedback report

- The story the panel selected as being the most significant
- Why that story was selected
- What the panel learnt from exploring all the stories
- What the panel intends to do in response to what was learnt



# Exploring an MSC story in small groups

