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# Realising and recording impacts for the public's health: Embracing opportunities and responding to challenges within UKPRP

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# The Community of Practice

## Impact Development Theme

- **CoP Impact theme has allowed:**
  - Sharing of experiences and approaches to 'impact activity';
  - Scrutiny and analysis of 'impact agendas' – e.g.:
    - “Is the REF framing of impact fit for (UKPRP’s) purpose?”
  - Generation of report and paper for peer-review
- **Critical questions concerning 'impact' include:**
  - Recognition of UKPRP framing and its 'internal' challenges:
    - Complexity, systems, long-term impact, non-linearity, plural epistemic bases
  - 'External' academic challenges: distinct disciplinary understandings (of impact itself and of evidencing impact), influence of REF...
  - Broader contexts: values-base of UKPRP agenda; real-world impact



Tackling Root causes Upstream of Unhealthy Urban Development

# Comparing impact understandings and approaches across the UKPRP Community of Practice

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University Consortium



Local Authority Partners



Research Funders



Professional Membership Partners



## 12 Interview Question Areas

1. Impact definition
2. Impacts expected
3. Pathways to impact
4. Evaluation
5. Challenges
6. Influence of UKPRP aims/objectives
7. Feasibility
8. Wider research environment
9. Barriers
10. Stakeholder engagement and co-production
11. Covid
12. Online working

## 6 Emergent Themes

1. **Defining impact**
2. **Programme theory (& theory of change)**
3. **Stakeholder analysis & co-production**
4. **Measuring & reporting impact**
5. **Challenges, structural barriers & lessons learned**
6. **Funder influence**

- Wide range of understandings
- No discernible consistency
- Some attempted to establish a consensus - mixed results
- Some at ease with the plurality; others not
- Plurality of definitions requiring considerable work and time to resolve

## Wide range of impacts cited

- Communications (bulletins) and media outputs
- Academic papers
- The securing of ongoing research funding
- The development of knowledge and skills
- Number of PhDs
- Changes to policy documents
- Empowerment of communities
- Improved access to evidence
- Trust and credibility
- Academic career advancement and research expansion
- Submitting evidence to Parliamentary Committee hearings
- Changes to public discourse
- Number of engagements with stakeholders
- Shifting the way people think
- How it fits with REF (impact case study)
- Local leaders “*understanding and engaging*” in the research
- Changes in financial expenditure
- “*The good researchers can do*”

*“It does sometimes feel like we’re talking at cross purposes...”*

*...we’re trying to get them to understand the version of impact that we’re working towards, that UKPRP are asking for...that’s the challenging bit.”*

- Range of different approaches to impact planning
- Considerable uncertainty as to the optimal process
- Broad acknowledgement of the challenge of trying to create meaningful change (given scale, complexity)
- Some recognition of more ‘traditional’ public health approach being overly reductionist / simplistic
- General expectation of need to have relatively fixed plan up front (and top down)

*“I haven’t looked at the logic model for some time.  
But I think the idea was ultimately...was a bit  
reductionist actually...”*

*“we did try to have a different Theory of Change for  
each work package at one and then that just became  
impossible”*

*(No specific question on the meaning of co-production, yet a wide range of views emerging regardless)*

- Dominant focus on:
  - Development or maintaining of long-term relationships with ‘policy-makers’
  - Role of researchers placed within partner or stakeholder organisations
- May indicate experience in policy development (given time required), but...
  - ...possibly naïve to complexity?
  - ...apparent lack of understanding or experience in how to work with practitioners

*“we had quite a good relationship already, we had a few members of the team that sat on the Public Health Team”*

*...obviously academic outputs like conferences, papers are important but it’s not important to the policy partners...that’s a really important point of learning.”*

- Clear recognition of the challenge
- General support for comprehensive logging / tracking
- Yet also notable scepticism (e.g not measuring/tracking what is important)
- Parallels to impact planning and co-production (e.g. fixed up front, with known/consistent stakeholders)
- Design strategies (e.g. reliance on anticipation; based less on tracking and more on qualitative post hoc assessment)
- Acknowledgement that evaluation approaches could be or needed to be improved, as well as better resourced

*“Trying to map out all those different potential impacts across all these different complex systems [over] ten, twenty, fifty years...*

*...the complexity is just so vast that even, we're almost, you know, wondering just how robust and realistic that type of impact measurement can ever be”*

- Specific capacity gaps: e.g. communications, impact, design/visuals
- Specific challenges: lack of time/resource, staff turnover, recruitment (skill sets fitting role required)
- General recognition of need to go beyond traditional (which are “deterministic, reductionist”)
- But some worry “*whether they’ll be able to keep funding going in this sort of area give how difficult it will be*”

*“..what has been challenging is that just the time, the capacity...”*

*“...part of the challenge is ensuring that all of the work and activity that’s taking place is aligned towards our overarching impact goals...”*

- UKPRP seen as (very) different to previous research approaches, particularly in terms of stakeholder co-production
- Agreement with and excited by UKPRP's vision, ambition and willingness to do things a little differently
- Taking a systems approach - new for many
- Encouraging collaboration between disciplines

*“[UKPRP is] an important step forward”*

*“Where it would have shaped us would be making sure that we had...an actual work package that looked at systems”*

*“The other thing it did was promote collaboration; I mean interdisciplinary collaboration...I think it's raised the quality of Public Health Research”*

## Paper

- Interview rationale, method, findings, discussion

### Paper title:

Comparing impact understandings and  
approaches across a UK Prevention Research  
Community of Practice

### Target Journal:

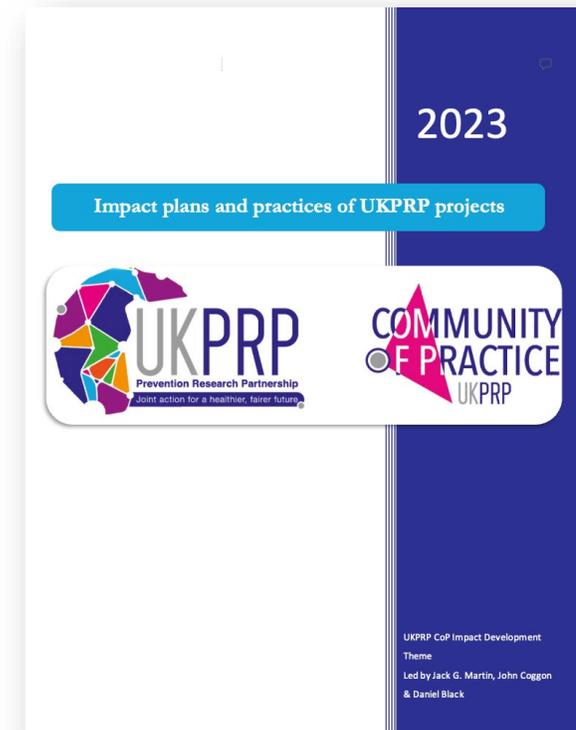
*Research Evaluation (Oxford Academic)*

### Target Submission Date:

*End '23*

## Report

- Foundational understandings (language, methods)
- Headline interview findings
- Documentary analysis



# Acknowledgements

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Weblink: <https://ukprp.org/>



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*City of*  
**BRADFORD**  
METROPOLITAN DISTRICT COUNCIL





# IMPACT CHALLENGES

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Science Communication and Impact Officer  
GroundsWell

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HOW DO YOU  
DEFINE  
IMPACT?

# UKPRP IMPACT

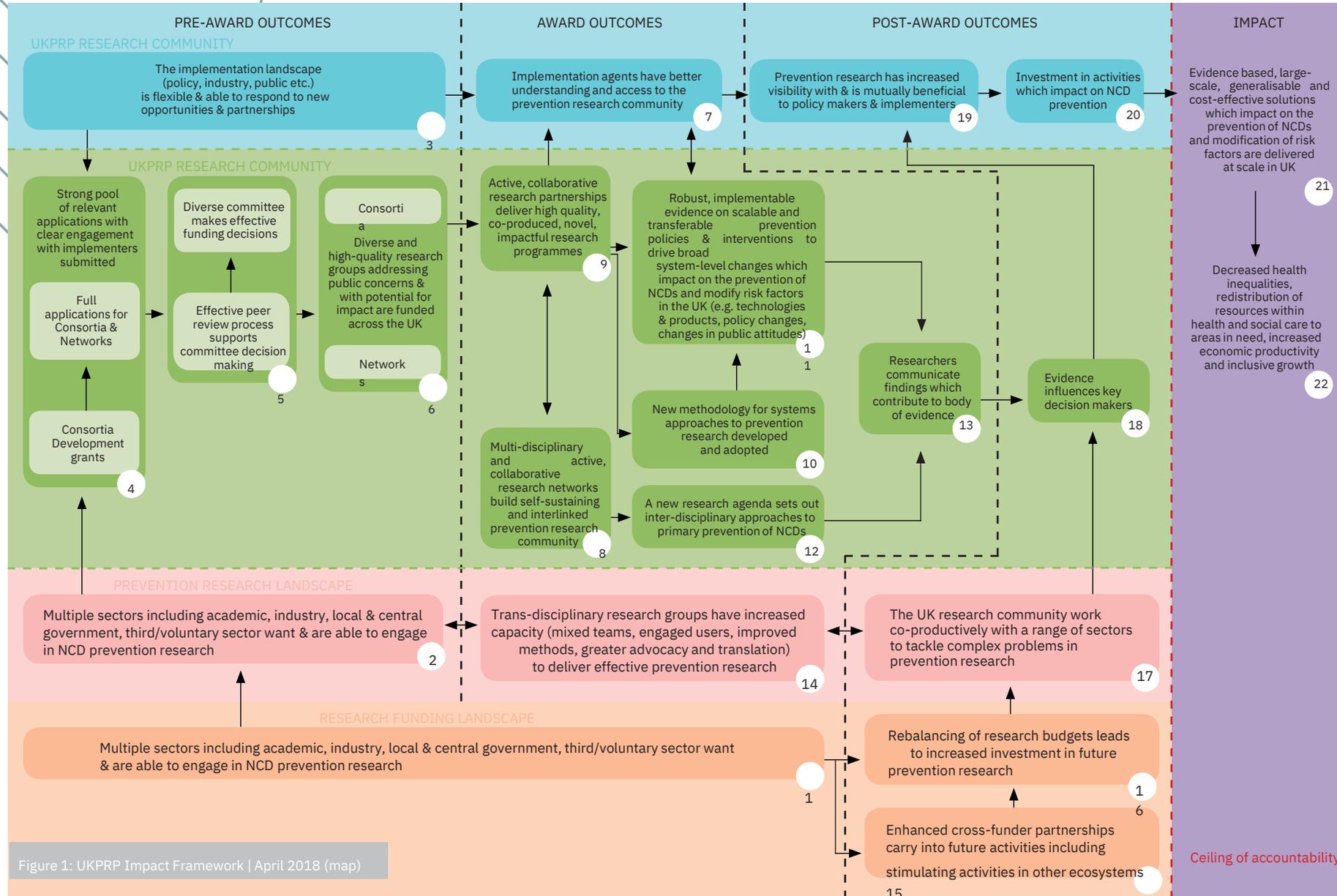


Figure 1: UKPRP Impact Framework | April 2018 (map)

Ceiling of accountability

# IMPACT SYSTEMS

PATHWAYS



IMPACT



OUTCOMES

# UNEXPECTED IMPACT

STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

Not just at the outset of a project

NARRATIVE

Does the story we want to tell have blind spots?

RESOURCE

It takes considerable effort and time to evidence this

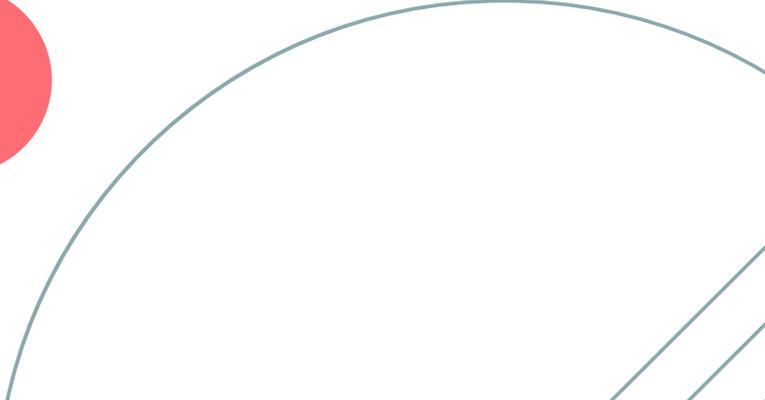


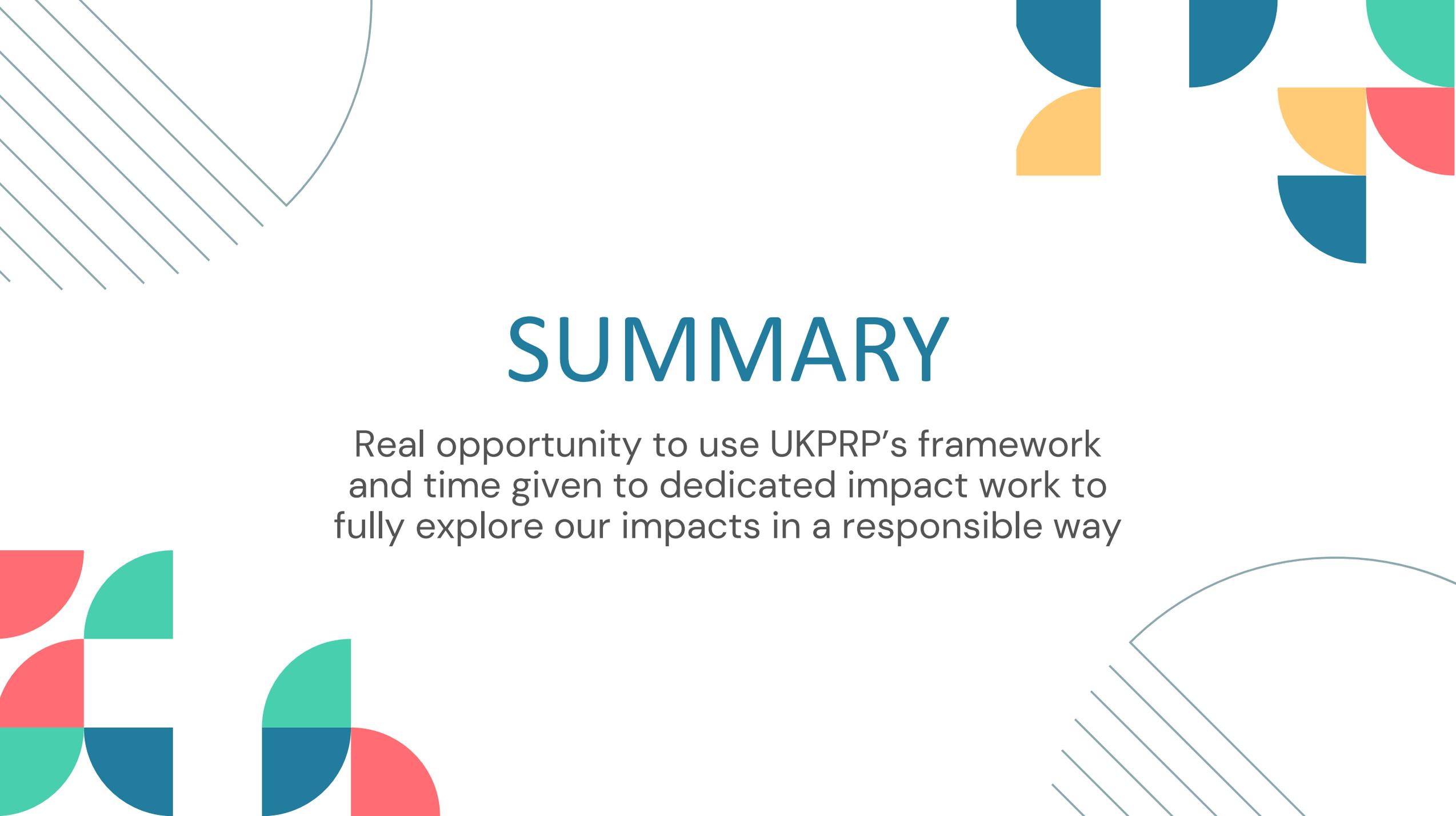


# ETHICS OF IMPACT

- Undeclared conflicts of interest
- How vulnerable groups are used to corroborate impact
- Positive bias in the presentation of impact

HOW CAN WE COLLECT IMPACT RESPONSIBLY?





# SUMMARY

Real opportunity to use UKPRP's framework and time given to dedicated impact work to fully explore our impacts in a responsible way



THANK YOU