



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 given 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:

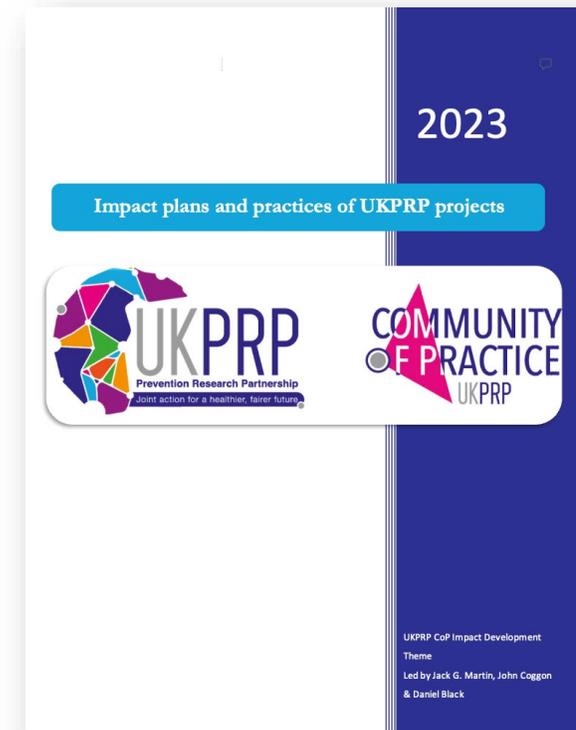
Research Evaluation (Oxford Academic)

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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Bradford City Council



City of
BRADFORD
METROPOLITAN DISTRICT COUNCIL





IMPACT CHALLENGES

Elly King
Science Communication and Impact Officer
GroundsWell

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HOW DO YOU
DEFINE
IMPACT?

UKPRP IMPACT

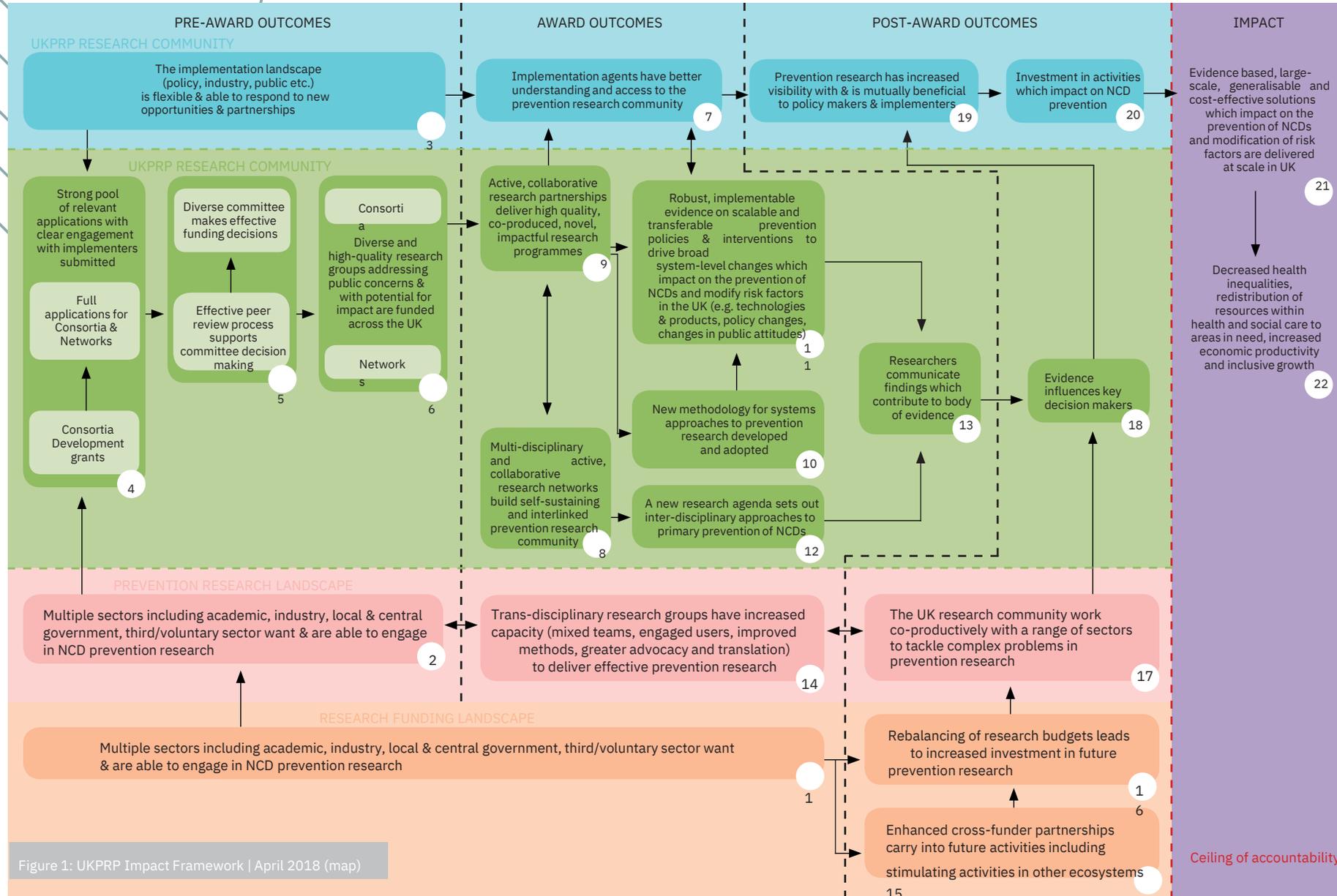


Figure 1: UKPRP Impact Framework | April 2018 (map)

Ceiling of accountability

IMPACT SYSTEMS

PATHWAYS



IMPACT



OUTCOMES

UNEXPECTED IMPACT

STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

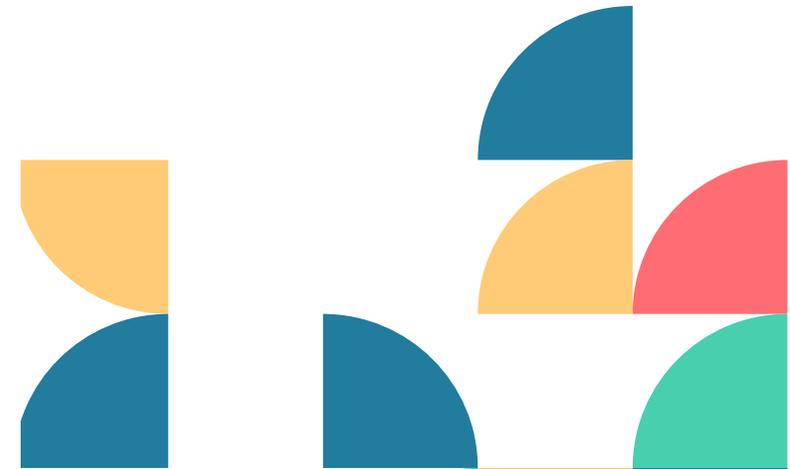
Not just at the outset of a project

NARRATIVE

Does the story we want to tell have blind spots?

RESOURCE

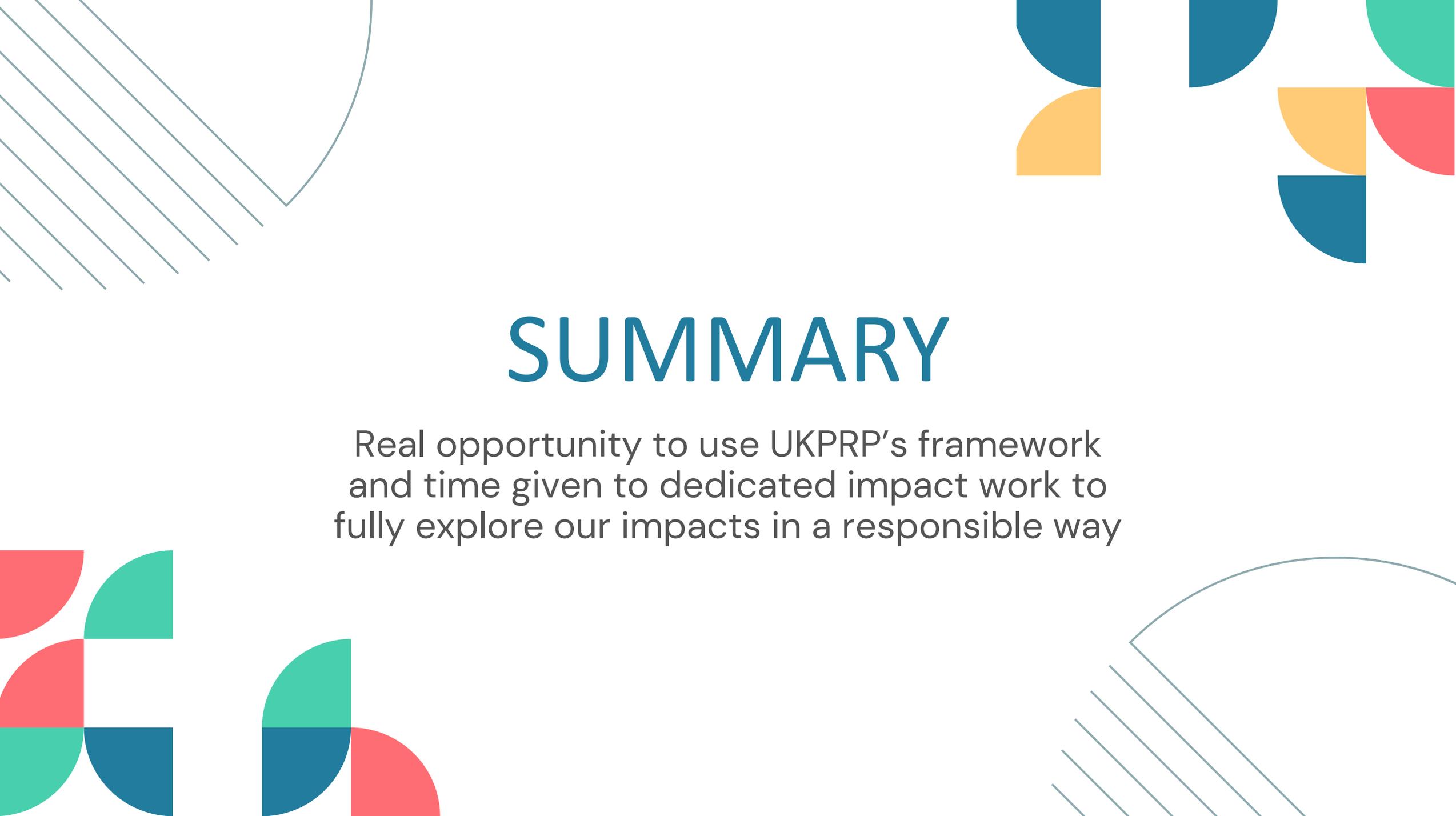
It takes considerable effort and time to evidence this



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