

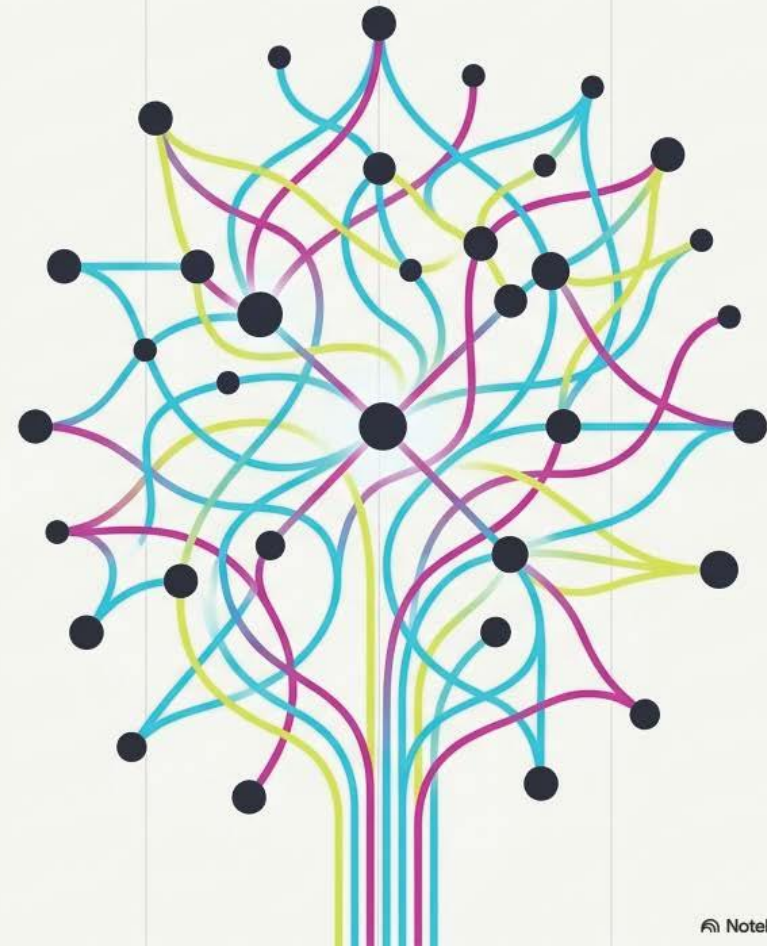
# Hartlepool Sport: Strategic Insights for Leading Through Change and System Innovation

Place Expansion Insight – November 2025

## LEADING THE MOVEMENT: ARCHITECTING CHANGE IN COMPLEX SYSTEMS

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From system-wide theory to  
community-led blueprints.



# The Danger of Acting with Yesterday's Logic

## The Context

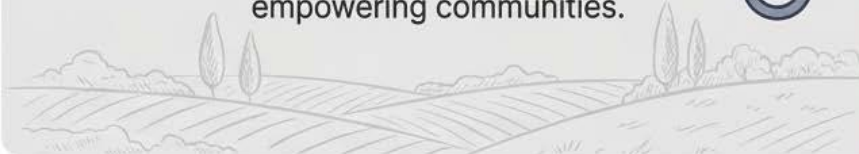


### Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) & Devolution



Streamlining to single-tier unitary councils presents a unique opportunity to empower local communities, drive economic growth, and stop to reimagine better outcomes.

This landmark reform is at the heart of empowering communities.



## The Challenge



### The Knowing-Doing Gap

We possess a good sense of the action needed to create change, but executing it within complex systems remains intensely difficult.

Structural change demands a fundamental shift in cognitive approach.

“In times of change, the greatest danger is not the change itself, but to act with yesterday's logic.”  
— Peter Drucker



# The Foundation of System Leadership

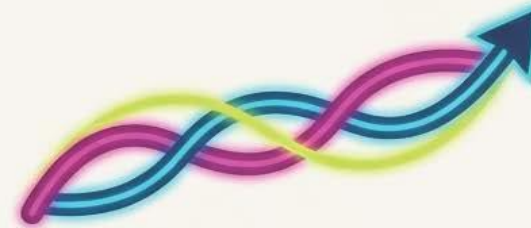
## The Drained Leader



### Navigating Unrelenting Change

- Constant pressure and scrutiny
- Rapid change and instability
- Intense emotional demands from teams
- Decline in focus and decision-making
- Increased stress and reactivity
- Decreased overall productivity

## The Resilient Leader

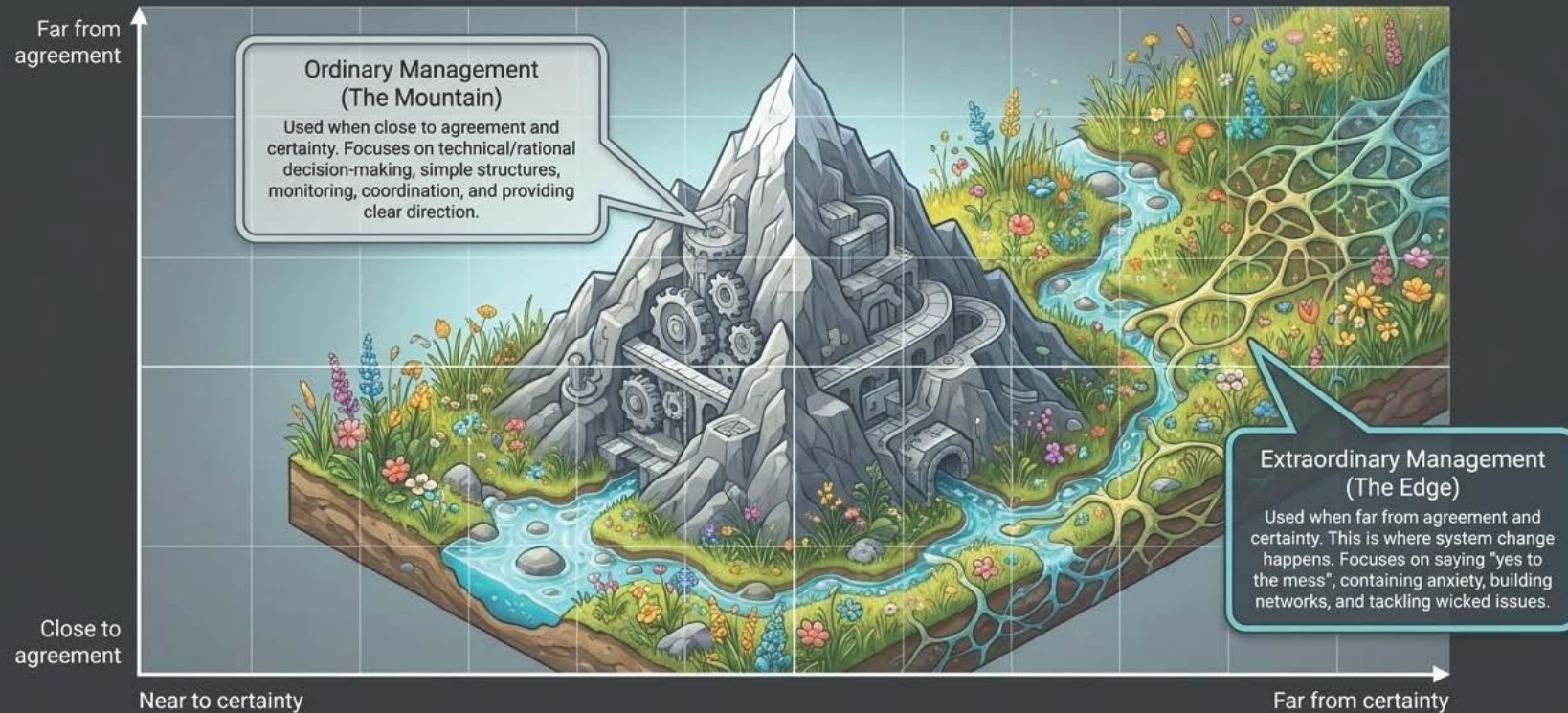


### Building the Capacity to Lead

**Resilience depends heavily on the strength of our social networks, our sense of belonging, and our access to collective resources.**

**Self-care is not selfish; it is a foundational leadership performance tool required to survive rapid change and build resilient communities.**

# The Topography of Management



You cannot solve complex problems with the same mindset that created them.  
Leaders must intentionally leave the mountain to frequently visit the edge.

# The Two Perspectives of a System Leader

**The Balcony**  
Observing the overarching system. Identifying broad patterns, structural bottlenecks, and network connectivity.

Effective leaders do not stay stagnant. They continuously oscillate between the kinetic energy of the dance floor and the strategic visibility of the balcony.

**The Dance Floor**  
Ground-level action. Engaging directly with the chaos, executing real work, and building one-to-one human relationships.

# Rules of Engagement for System Innovation



## Trust & Pacing

### Progress Moves at the Speed of Trust

Building relationships takes time and cannot be skipped. Holding our nerve is essential to prevent defaulting to old ways of working.



## Embrace the Mess

### Start Anywhere, Follow it Everywhere

Be stubborn on the vision, but flexible on the details. There are no simple answers; let investments be guided by evolving needs.



## Co-Creation

### People Own What They Help Create

Those who do the work do the change. Real change happens in real work, not just in strategies, plans, or MOUs.



## Bridge the Gap

### Connect the System to More of Itself

Push aside preconceptions, challenge assumptions, and go where the energy is. Find places with common purpose and start there.

## From Theory to Architecture

How do we build a structure that actually holds this complexity?

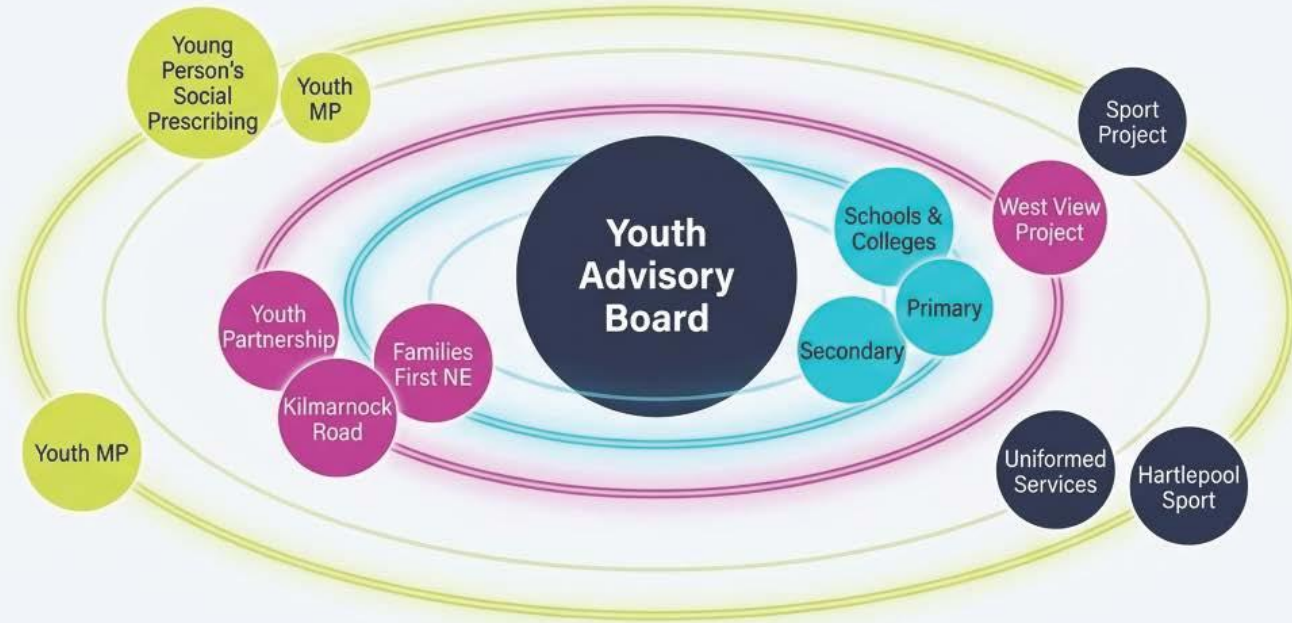
**Case Study Blueprint: The Hartlepool Youth Advisory Board (Pride in Place)**

Applying asset-based, network-driven principles to local governance.

## Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD)

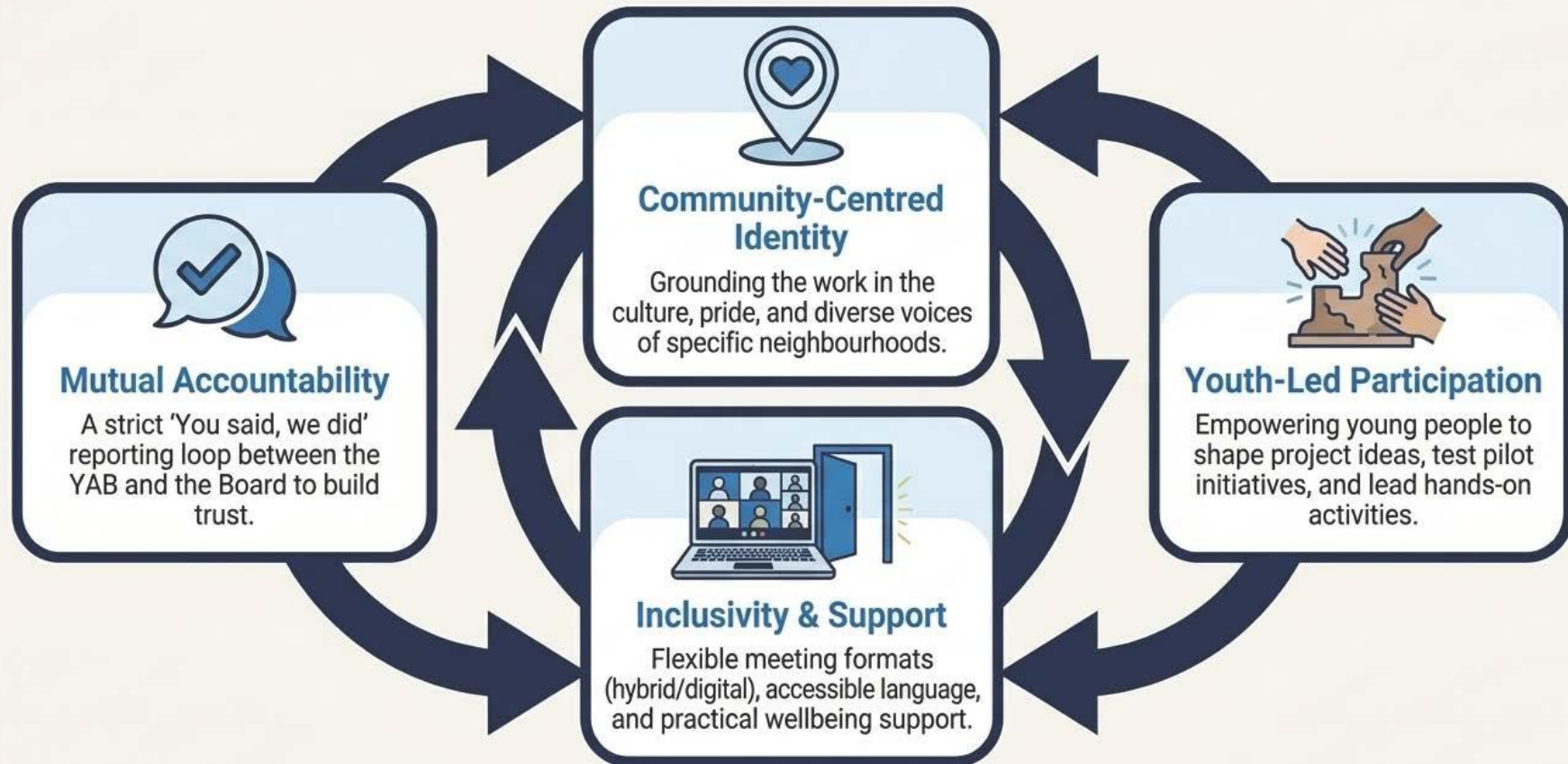
Instead of starting with deficits, the board maps and connects the unique strengths, skills, and community knowledge that each group already brings.

## Mapping an Asset-Based Youth Ecosystem



True representation means pulling the entire fragmented ecosystem into a shared orbit to inform Pride in Place priorities.

# The Operating Engine: Moving Beyond Consultation



# The Representation Dilemma



## The Delegate

(Chosen by a group to speak on their behalf)



## Appointed Independent

(Selected for personal agency/lived experience)

### Pros

- Clear mandate
- Strong accountability
- Broad legitimacy
- Consistent feedback loops

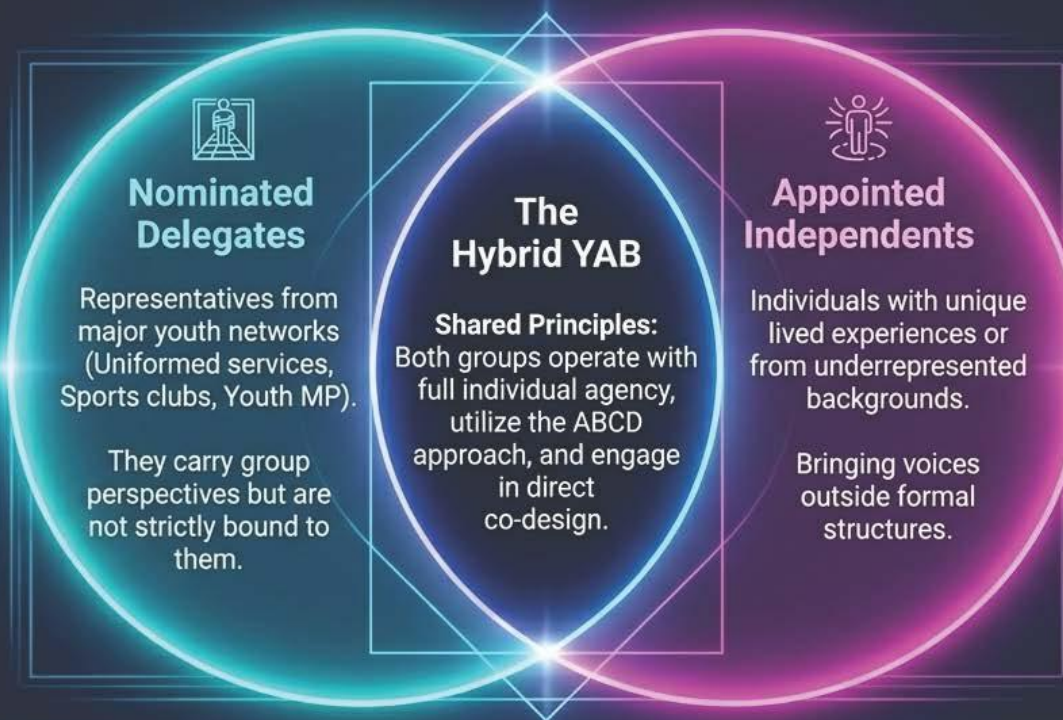
- Highly flexible
- Innovation-friendly
- Empowering to the individual
- Inclusive of unaffiliated youth

### Cons

- Narrower perspective
- Slower decision-making
- Pressure to perfectly represent others

- Less direct accountability
- Potential representation gaps
- Risk of perceived illegitimacy

# The Synthesis: Architecting the Hybrid Model



This structure prevents narrow representation, avoids questions of legitimacy, and balances collective backing with disruptive innovation.

# Sustaining the Living Ecosystem

01

## Safe & Accessible Engagement

Bi-monthly meetings held in hybrid formats. Strict adherence to safeguarding, ethical participation, and wellbeing support.

02

## Growth & Pathways

Building leadership capacity through training, mentoring, and the awarding of formal recognition (certificates, digital badges, references).

03

## Continuity & Review

Embedding the YAB as a long-term governance structure. Refreshing membership regularly while maintaining institutional knowledge and conducting youth-led reviews.

# Takeaways for System Leaders

## Idea

System change does not happen on the mountain of ordinary management; it requires visiting the edge of disruption.



## Action

Architect hybrid representation models to balance network accountability with the creative disruption of individual agency.



## Connection

Connect the system to more of itself. Strategies don't deliver change—empowered people and connected relationships do.



# Strategic Insights for Leading Through Change and System Innovation

## Executive Summary

This briefing document synthesizes key concepts and frameworks from a series of leadership summits and governance proposals, primarily focused on "Leading the Movement" in sports and community development, as well as the establishment of a Youth Advisory Board (YAB) for Hartlepool's "Pride in Place" initiative.

The central thesis across these sources is that traditional "ordinary management"—characterized by technical, rational decision-making—is insufficient for navigating complex systems and periods of significant change. Instead, leadership must evolve toward "extraordinary management," which embraces uncertainty, prioritizes social connectivity, and bridges the "knowing-doing" gap through innovation and co-creation. Key takeaways include the critical role of self-care as a leadership performance tool, the necessity of asset-based community development (ABCD), and the implementation of inclusive, representative governance structures that value lived experience alongside formal representation.



## I. Leadership in Complex Systems

The sources distinguish between management in stable environments versus leadership within complex, uncertain systems. This transition is visualized through the Stacey Matrix and the concept of "Extraordinary Management."

### Ordinary vs. Extraordinary Management

The Stacey Matrix illustrates the requirements for working in complex systems based on the level of agreement and certainty:

- **Ordinary Management:** Best suited for conditions close to agreement and certainty. It relies on:

- Technical and rational decision-making.
- Simple structures and effective procedures.
- Monitoring, coordination, and providing clear direction.
- **Extraordinary Management (Leadership):** Required when conditions are far from agreement and certainty. Key behaviors include:
  - **Saying "yes" to the mess:** Embracing experiments and uncertainty.
  - **Encouraging connectivity:** Building networks and fostering conversation.
  - **Focusing on purpose:** Serving "wicked issues" and containing anxiety.
  - **Power Dynamics:** Amplifying differences and reducing power differentials while challenging existing habits and assumptions.

### **System Innovation and Change**

System change does not occur in the center of bureaucracy but at the "edge." The sources use a landscape metaphor to describe this:

- **The Mountain of Bureaucracy:** Where order, process, and ordinary management occur.
- **The Meadow of Disruption:** A space of risk and innovation where ideas and creativity happen.
- **The Edge:** The specific zone where system innovation and change are most likely to take root. Leaders are encouraged to commit time and space to visit "the edge" frequently.

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## **II. Principles for Leading Through Uncertainty**

Navigating systemic change requires a shift in mindset and operational principles. The documents outline several guiding pillars for this transition.

### **Guiding Principles for Learning**

1. **Trust-Based Progress:** Progress moves at the speed of trust; building relationships cannot be skipped.
2. **Strategic Flexibility:** Leaders should be "stubborn on the vision" but "flexible on the detail," letting investments be guided by need.
3. **Resilience of Nerve:** Believing in the mission and staying true to goals is essential to prevent defaulting to old ways of working.
4. **Bridging the Empathy Gap:** This involves pushing aside preconceptions and adapting communication to support changes emerging directly from communities.
5. **Non-Linear Problem Solving:** Acknowledging that no simple answers exist and responding to evolving needs.
6. **Energy-Led Action:** Going where the energy is and starting in places where common purpose and enthusiasm already exist.

7. **Mindset Shifts:** Solving problems requires a different mindset than the one that created them; this includes challenging cultural rules regarding physical inactivity.
8. **Progress over Perfection:** Focusing on real barriers to inactivity rather than rushing to provide "perfect" interventions.

### Myron's Maxims for Change

System change is driven by people and relationships rather than formal documents:

- People own what they help create.
- Real change happens in real work.
- Those who do the work do the change.
- Connect the system to more of itself.
- Start anywhere, but follow it everywhere.
- The process used to get to the future *is* the future.

### III. Resilience and Self-Care

Resilience is framed not just as an individual trait but as a collective and strategic necessity.

#### The Community Resilience Framework

Resilience in times of change depends on three core pillars:

- **Social Networks:** The strength and breadth of connections.
- **Belonging:** A shared sense of community identity.
- **Collective Resources:** Access to shared assets and support.

#### Self-Care as a Leadership Tool

The documents explicitly state: "**Self-care is not selfish, it is a leadership performance tool.**" Leaders in high-pressure environments like sport face constant scrutiny, rapid instability, and high emotional demands.

Impact of Neglecting Self-Care	Consequences for Leadership
Decline in focus	Poor decision-making
Increased stress	Heightened reactivity
Decreased productivity	Reduced team effectiveness

### IV. Structural Reform and the "Knowing-Doing" Gap

Local Government Reform (LGR) and Devolution (Devo) are identified as catalysts for reimagining public services.

- **LGR and Devolution Vision:** The government aims to replace two-tier systems with single-tier unitary councils. These are intended to be "close enough to care, but strong enough to reform public services."
- **The Knowing-Doing Gap:** Organizations often have a good sense of the action needed to create change but find the execution difficult within complex systems. LGR provides an opportunity to "stop and think" and co-create better outcomes with communities.
- **Strategic Perspective (Balcony and Dance Floor):** Leaders must alternate between the "dance floor" (the day-to-day activity) and the "balcony" (a higher-level perspective) to understand the full picture of the movement they are leading.

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## V. Governance Case Study: Youth Advisory Board (YAB)

The Hartlepool "Pride in Place" initiative provides a blueprint for asset-based, inclusive governance through its Youth Advisory Board.

### Core Principles of the YAB

- **Asset-Based Focus:** Starting with the strengths, skills, and knowledge of young people rather than using deficit-based language.
- **Representative Ecosystem:** Bringing together diverse groups, including Youth Transformation, Sports Clubs, Uniformed Services (Scouts, Guides, Cadets), and the Youth Parliament.
- **Co-Creation:** Moving beyond consultation to co-design and shared decision-making.
- **Mutual Accountability:** Utilizing a "You said, we did" reporting structure to close the feedback loop.

### Membership Models: Delegate vs. Appointed Representative

The YAB explores two primary models of participation:

1. **Delegate Model:** Members are chosen by a group to speak on their behalf.
  - *Pros:* Clear mandate, high accountability, broad legitimacy.
  - *Cons:* Narrower perspective, slower decision-making, risk of tokenism.
2. **Appointed Representative (Individual Agency):** Members are selected to contribute independently.
  - *Pros:* Greater flexibility, innovation-friendly, builds individual confidence.
  - *Cons:* Less direct accountability, potential representation gaps.

### The Hybrid Membership Model

To maximize effectiveness, the YAB proposes a hybrid model:

- **Nominated Delegates:** Represent key networks (schools, sports clubs, faith groups) but are empowered to contribute in their own voice.

- **Independent Members:** A smaller number of seats reserved for individuals not affiliated with formal groups, particularly those from underrepresented backgrounds or with unique lived experiences.

This hybrid approach ensures legitimacy while fostering the creativity and individual agency necessary for system innovation.