

City | Help & Support

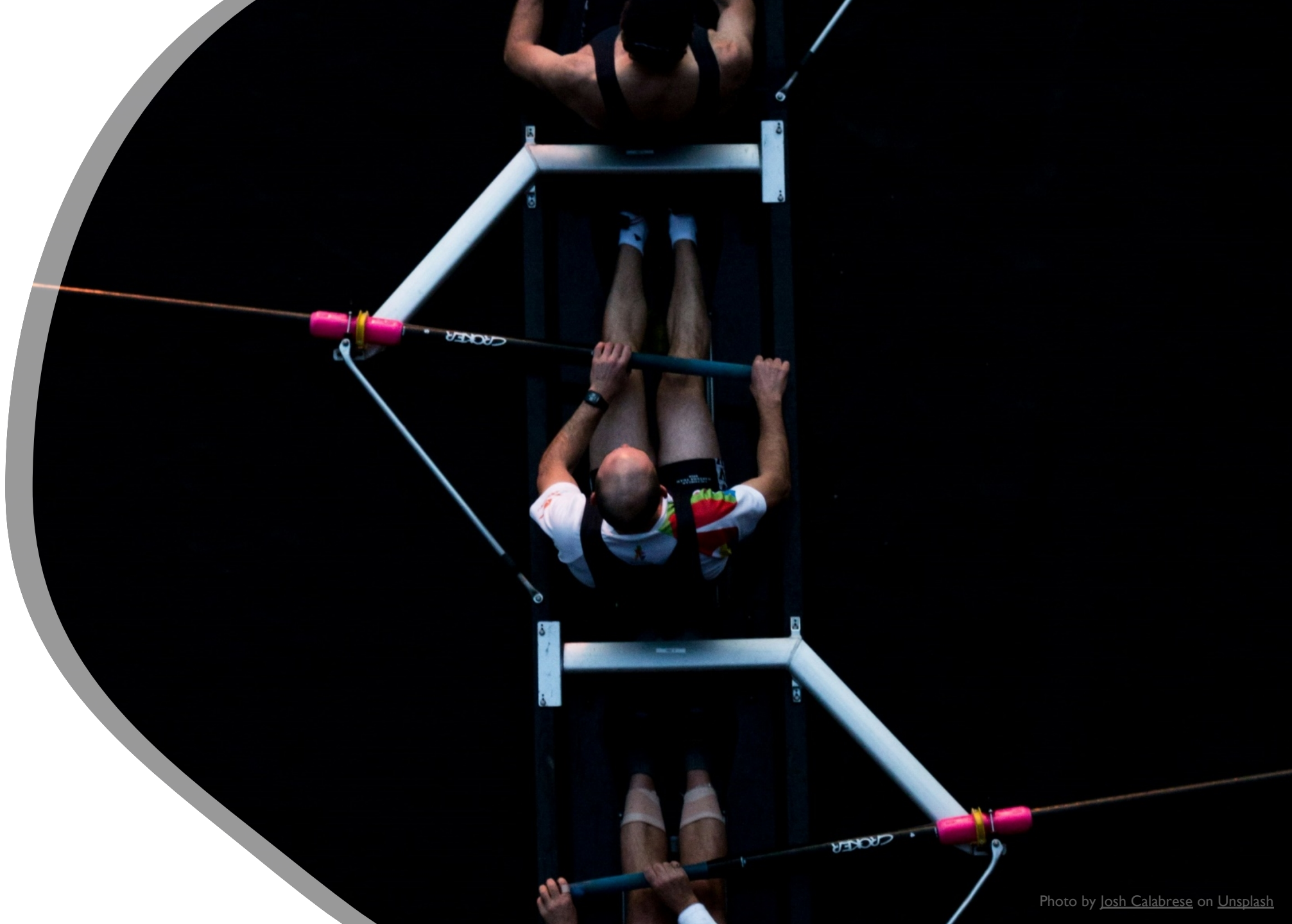


Photo by [Josh Calabrese](#) on [Unsplash](#)

The case for change

City Help & Support is concerned with people and the complex systems that serve them.

A significant number of Plymouth citizens are falling through the gaps and require a crisis intervention from the council. These interventions are costly and often don't represent the best outcome for the person/family being supported.

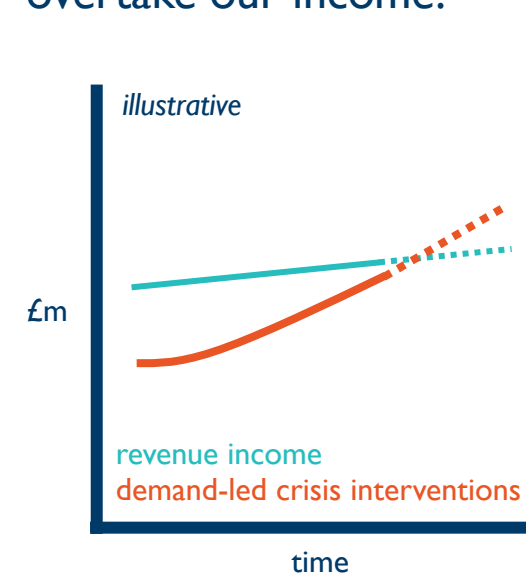
The reasons are multiple, complex and often outside the control of any one organisation.

Some examples of high-cost crisis interventions include:

- 449 households in temporary accommodation (Sep 25);
 - Of which 234 households have children,
 - 268 households are in a B&B or holiday let.
- 528 children are in our care (Oct).
- Independent Special School Placements have increased by **257%** since 2021.
- The cost of Home to School Transport has increased **132%** over the same period.
- In Adult Social Care, over the past year, people requiring
 - Domiciliary Care has increased by **9%**;
 - Long-Term Nursing by **9%**; and
 - Short Term Placements by **40%**

The rise in demand combined with increased costs is not sustainable.

In common with most Local Authorities, unless we can act earlier and address the causes for these statutory interventions, our expenditure will overtake our income.



However, if we act, we can not only improve the lives of individuals and families but also build stronger, more self-reliant communities.

Built on strong foundations

This programme does not stand in isolation. It builds upon the existing long-term vision and strategic priorities for our city. By grounding our work in established council and partnership strategies, we ensure that our efforts are cohesive, efficient, and supported by a city-wide consensus.



What our staff are saying

We asked the Extended Leadership Team to imagine Plymouth three years from now if prevention efforts succeed, to identify the barriers to achieving that vision, and to explore how we can overcome them.

What success looks like

A thriving city with empowered residents and communities. This success is measured by a reduction in demand for services, less time spent on crisis management, and controlled budgets. We will have good quality employment, affordable housing, and visible investment in our city. Silos will be gone, with staff and departments working together seamlessly across the council and city.

The challenges

The biggest barrier is cultural change and a lack of belief that a prevention-first approach is possible. We are currently stuck in a cycle of short-term, reactive crisis management, using our limited resources for statutory services instead of proactive prevention.



The path forward

To overcome this, we must make a brave, fundamental shift. The most important action is to break down silos and work across departments and sectors. We need to ring-fence spending on preventative services and invest in data and technology to drive our decisions. We can achieve this by fostering a culture of hope and a shared sense of responsibility.

What we're already doing

Our commitment to prevention is not just on paper; it is already delivering results across the city through several key initiatives, including but not limited to:



Families First Partnership (FFP)

This national-led reform is the biggest shake-up of Children's Social Care for a generation, driven by the government strategy *Safer Homes Built on Love*.

Its core aim is to fundamentally re-balance the system towards early intervention and family help, ensuring vulnerable children are supported before needs escalate to crisis, representing a significant prevention opportunity for Plymouth.

Health & Wellbeing Hubs / Family Hubs

We have invested in a network of Family Hubs and Wellbeing Hubs across the city. These integrated hubs provide high-quality support, advice, new life skills, and health promotion in the heart of our communities.

By supporting thousands of people, they ensure that help is accessible, universal, and targeted to keep people well, physically and mentally.

Proactive Adult Services

We are proactively applying the proven model of reablement (helping adults regain independence after a hospital stay) to the community setting.

This approach is being used to help prevent adults from going into hospital in the first place, ensuring they can stay safe, healthy, and independent in their own homes for longer.

What we're already doing

We also have delivered innovation which has provided powerful evidence for our approach to prevention:



Changing Futures

This programme tackles the most complex cases by focusing on individuals facing multiple disadvantages (such as homelessness, substance misuse, mental health issues, and domestic abuse).

It works to enhance existing services, promote trauma-informed practices, and improve service coordination across multiple agencies, leading to long-term systemic change rather than short-term fixes.

The Alliance

This pioneering, co-designed model supports adults facing the most complex and multiple disadvantages. It transformed the service landscape by uniting over twenty-five previously siloed contracts under a single alliance agreement.

This creates a unified, person-centred system, ensuring flexible, comprehensive support that delivers the right care, at the right time, for the city's most vulnerable residents.

Community Builders

This innovative, city-wide initiative tackles health inequalities by actively empowering communities through an asset-based approach.

Community Builders act as trusted connectors, building deep relationships and fostering a stronger sense of belonging and resilience, which is independently proven to reduce isolation and improve overall wellbeing.

Why do we need this programme?

Existing prevention work operates in silos.



CHS will deliver cross-cutting initiatives (data, place-based, commissioning), taking learning from best practice.

Existing prevention work is not meeting the scale of the challenge.



CHS will grow what works, moving pilot initiatives into business as usual, and share tools and practices across the organisation (and partners)

The system needs to be rebalanced.



CHS will provide strong, coherent partnership system leadership, laser focus, capital investment, cultural *and* structural change.

What will be delivered?

If you are going to put your life on hold until you get the answers, you're going to be on hold until the end of time.

Richard Clarke, National Security Advisor

We are not reinventing the wheel, or starting with a blank sheet of paper, instead we will:

- **Grow what works**, learning and principles over scaling the delivery model.
- **Be pragmatic**, deliver quickly and improve iteratively.
- **Test and learn** but avoid pilot initiatives where possible.

These are some of the projects we are looking to commence during the first year.

Single Citizen View

- Predictive analytics that identify households at risk of homelessness so preventative interventions (provided by the council or partners) can be delivered earlier.
- Dashboard for schools to identify pupils at risk of low attendance, enabling the school to wrap around support, reducing likelihood of a local authority intervention.

Alignment with neighbourhoods

- Place-based community systems leadership.
- Development of multi-disciplinary teams (MDTs) within locality areas, starting with Children Services.
- Alignment where possible with NHS Integrated Neighbourhood Teams and Test, Learn, Grow.
- Utilising community assets (Family Hubs, Health & Wellbeing Hubs, Libraries).

Commissioning for Prevention

- Ensuring the council's spending power supports prevention.
- Learning from Plymouth Alliance.
- Outcomes Based Accountability (or other outcomes focussed approach).
- Social value for social impact..

Community Capacity Building

- Single View of My Community (data).
- Community Builders support.
- Local decision-making / governance / micro-grants and commissioning.
- Inclusive growth.

Integrated Domestic Abuse Services

- Ensuring DA knowledge and skills are integrated throughout Adult and Children's Service areas.

No Wrong Door

- Circuit breaker for adolescents who are at the edge of entering residential care.

Reablement at the Front Door

- Focused interventions to support return to independence.
- Tech Enabled Care supports independence and target Dom Care resources.

Our guiding principles

Prevention, not reaction

It is always better to stop a problem before it starts. Instead of waiting for a situation to become a crisis, we will focus on addressing challenges at the earliest possible moment. This means proactively identifying and tackling the root causes of problems, rather than simply reacting to the outcomes.

By adopting a prevention mindset, we aim to build resilience in individuals and families, and in doing so, reduce long-term dependency on costly, high-intensity services like children's social care, temporary accommodation, or specialist support for adults. This approach is about doing the right thing at the right time.

For example, by providing early support to a family facing financial difficulty, we can help them avoid the risk of homelessness and the significant distress and cost that comes with it.

Focus on strengths

For too long, the focus has been on what is wrong with people and communities. This programme is about looking at what's strong. We will shift our focus to an asset-based approach, working with people to build on their skills, resources, and talents.

This means recognising that every person and community has something valuable to offer. For instance, a community with strong local groups and volunteers has the power to support its own members, creating local solutions to local challenges.

By fostering this approach, we will enable people to feel more confident and in control of their own lives, helping them to lift themselves and their families out of difficulty and build a positive future.



Working together

Plymouth City Council cannot deliver this alone. A prevention mindset is for the whole city. We will work side by side with local groups, charities, businesses, and most importantly, with residents.

This means breaking down traditional departmental silos within the Council and building new, productive collaborative partnerships with other public service providers, such as the NHS, police, and voluntary organisations.

By sharing resources, data, and a common vision, we can eliminate duplication, improve coordination, and deliver better, more holistic outcomes for our communities.

This partnership approach will ensure that support is joined-up and easy to access, meaning people only tell their story once to get the help they need.

A city for everyone

The most important part of this approach is its promise to all the people of Plymouth. We want to create a city where everyone has a fair chance to live a healthy, safe, and happy life, and where inequalities are addressed.

This means ensuring our support is accessible to all parts of the city and helps to reduce unfairness. We will measure our success by the improvements we see in the lives of individuals, families, and neighbourhoods across Plymouth, from the least to the most deprived communities.

By building a fairer city, we can ensure that everyone can feel safe, valued, and included, no matter who they are or where they live. This is about building a sustainable future where every resident has the opportunity to thrive.



What are the enablers?

1. One team



We will break down barriers between departments and create a single, unified approach to prevention. This means that teams from different services, such as social care, housing, commissioning and public health, will work as one to serve residents more effectively.

This ensures that help is joined up and that everyone is working towards the same goal. By creating cross-functional teams and shared goals, we will eliminate the "siloed" way of working that can make it difficult for people to get the help they need.

This new approach will allow us to move from a reactive, department-by-department response to a proactive, whole-council approach to a person's needs.

3. Engaging and uplifting communities



We will work alongside our residents, listening to what they need and supporting them to be part of the solution. This is about recognising the strengths that already exist within our communities and helping them grow.

By sharing knowledge, skills, and resources, we can help local groups and organisations lead on prevention efforts in their own neighbourhoods. Our approach will be to support community-led initiatives and build new partnerships with local groups and the voluntary sector.

We will move away from a top-down model and instead embrace an asset-based approach, focusing on what's strong in a community rather than what's wrong with it. This will build long-term social capacity and resilience from the ground up.

2. Data and technology



We will use data to get a clear and complete picture of the challenges facing our city. By using insights and intelligence, we can make smarter, evidence-based decisions and target our resources where they are needed most.

Technology will also help us make our services more efficient and easier for people to access. This means developing a new Data, Insights, and AI as a Service (DIAS) to provide a powerful tool for our staff and partners.

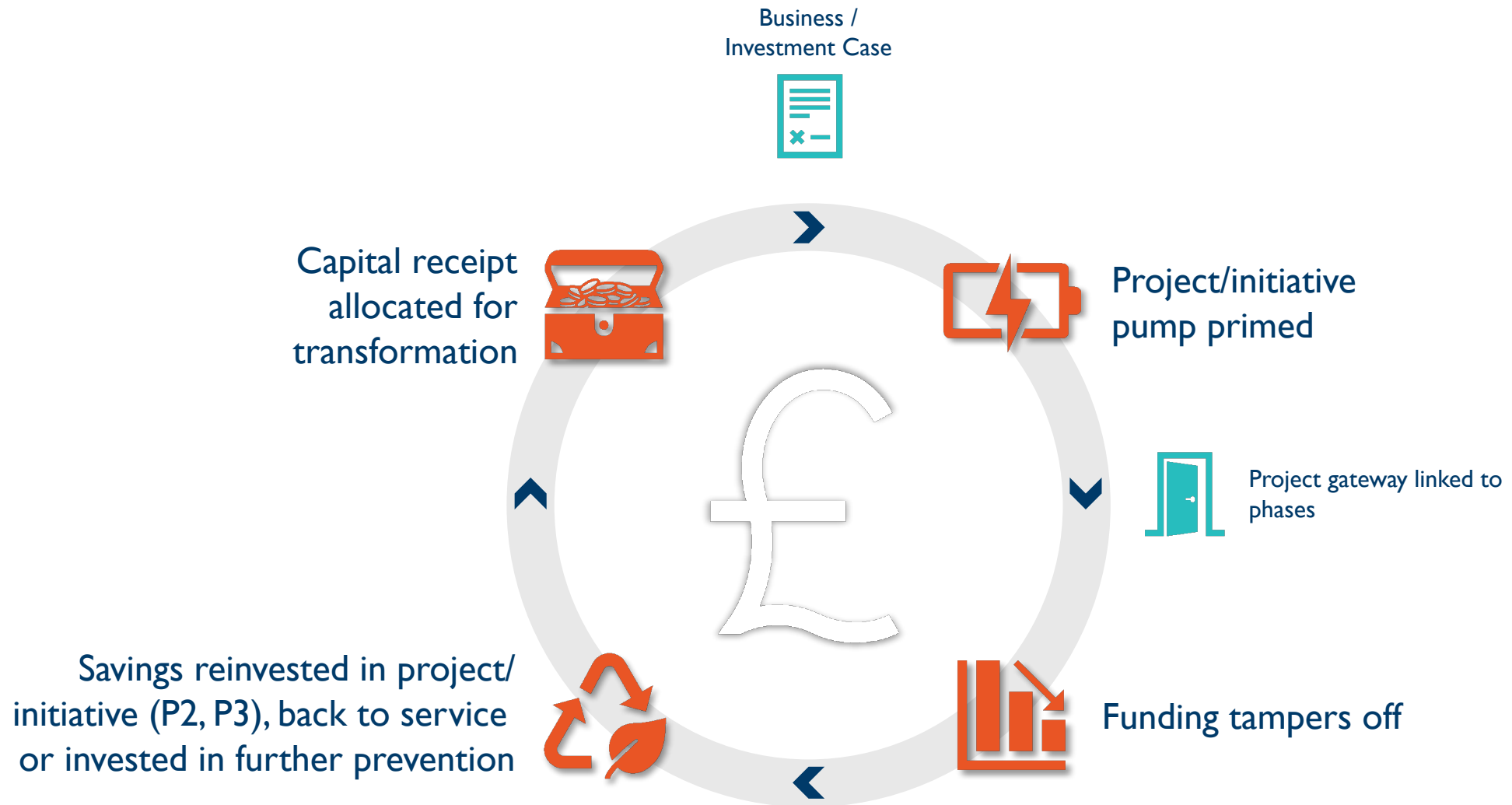
By connecting data from different sources, we can identify emerging trends, understand what works, and predict where problems might arise. This will help us to shift from simply responding to demand to managing and even preventing it.

4. Managing our community assets



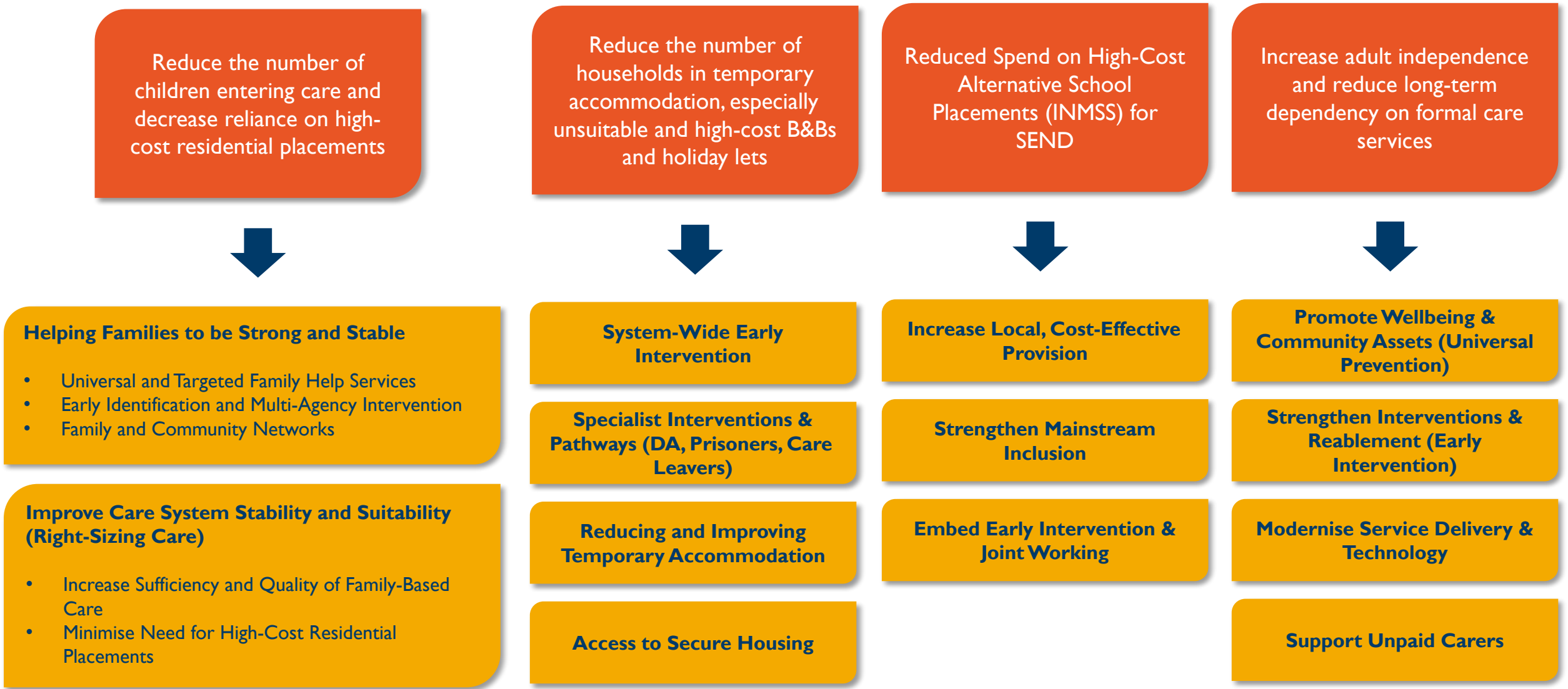
We will make sure that the places we own and use, such as our libraries and community hubs, are welcoming and accessible spaces that support our prevention approach. We will ensure that these spaces are used in the best way possible to provide help and support to residents. Our aim is to make these spaces work for communities, where people can access a range of services, meet with partners, and get the right support at the right time.

The financial cycle



How will we know we are succeeding?

A Theory of Change and programme KPIs, aligned with the MTFP are in development and being considered by the programme board in November.



How will ensure that we succeed?

- **Investment Decisions:**
Meets monthly to critically assess and approve new investment cases and funding proposals.
- **Performance Monitoring:**
Oversees the delivery and performance of existing projects, ensuring they remain on track to meet stated outcomes.
- **Strategic Reflection:**
Dedicates additional time each quarter to conduct a deeper reflection on the organisation's overall strategic approach to prevention, ensuring the programme remains relevant and impactful.

