



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

A four-stage recipe for using data to deliver compelling narratives

How to communicate a clear data story to multiple audiences

10:40 – 11:30

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About me



UNIVERSITY OF
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Innovation Fellow

- Making research applicable
- Developing tools and sharing knowledge
- Running workshops



Consultant

- Research and evaluation
- Strategic development
- Data literacy and data strategies

Recipe for: building compelling data stories that can be used in different contexts

- 1 – Understand your audience(s)
- 2 – Articulate the ‘shift’ in *attitude* or *action* that you want to see
- 3 – Consider what data you can use to support your story
- 4 – Mix it all together, put it in the oven and watch it rise!

What's a data story?

- Communication in which data (qualitative, quantitative, or both) are used to either support your narrative, or are put at the centre of the narrative

Philanthropy in action

Taking a place-based, community philanthropy approach, as community foundations do, harnesses the best of philanthropy. Through bringing communities together to share knowledge, aims and resources, we can support a more connected and resilient region.

This locally-focused approach helps to address the wider critiques of philanthropy. Donors can collaborate over shared goals, see the impact of their funding, build relationships with people doing the work and adjust their focus as needs shift. And crucially, trust is built and funding programmes are designed with local communities in mind, avoiding some of the pitfalls of a 'one-size-fits-all' mindset that can make national or international funding streams less effective than they might be.

This can be especially valuable in the most disadvantaged areas which, contrary to expectations, often have the lowest numbers of charities per head than other areas. These areas require a much longer-term approach to building community assets, leadership and engagement than isolated grants can provide.

“

I think, a bit like us, Quartet has been around for a very long time in the city. It takes a long time to try and understand the city - the nuances, the differences and the similarities between different neighbourhoods.

”

—Philanthropy research participant organisation²⁰

Vital statistics



In Quartet's 35 years we've received an incredible £47m in donations to our endowment fund and £56m in donations for immediate need, the majority from local people and organisations wanting to support their communities.

Of the people we surveyed locally, 99% reported donating money to charitable organisations in any typical year, ranging from less than £100 up to £200,000 (with median giving of £500 - 999).¹



89% reported having particular causes or organisations that they've been donating to for a year or more, indicating high engagement with giving.¹



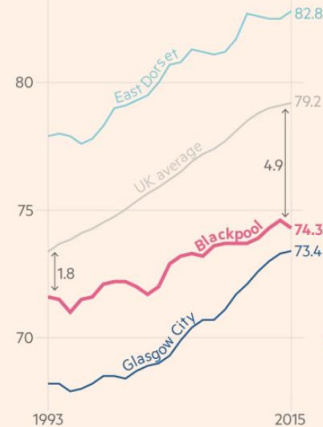
71% of people responding to our survey also reported volunteering for local charitable or community organisations.¹

84% vs 31%

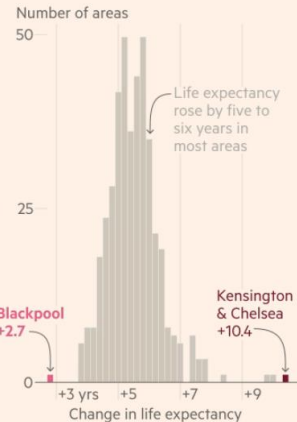
Perhaps unsurprisingly, Quartet's fund holders are 2-3 times more likely to give to local charities (84%) than to national ones (31%). This indicates the efficacy of a locally-focused approach in getting resources to smaller charities.¹

Boys born in **Blackpool** can expect to live just 74 years — the second lowest in the UK, and up by just 2.7 years since 1993

Male life expectancy at birth in selected local authorities, 1993-2015



Distribution of change in male life expectancy at birth from 1993 to 2015, all UK local authorities



Source: ONS
Graphic by John Burn-Murdoch / @burnmurdoch
© FT

Charts showing life expectancy in Blackpool © FT

Why a data story?

Why a story?

- We're used to hearing stories, and retelling them
- Communicate complex ideas in a simple way
- Engage with people emotionally and not just rationally, moving us away from processes and towards people

Why data?

- Move from opinion to facts and evidence
- Show you understand the context in which you are operating and the change you are trying to create
- Demonstrate your expertise and gain legitimacy
- Engage people visually

The data pyramid



Wisdom

Knowing *when* and *how* to apply knowledge

Knowledge

Information that tells a story. We can act on it.

Information

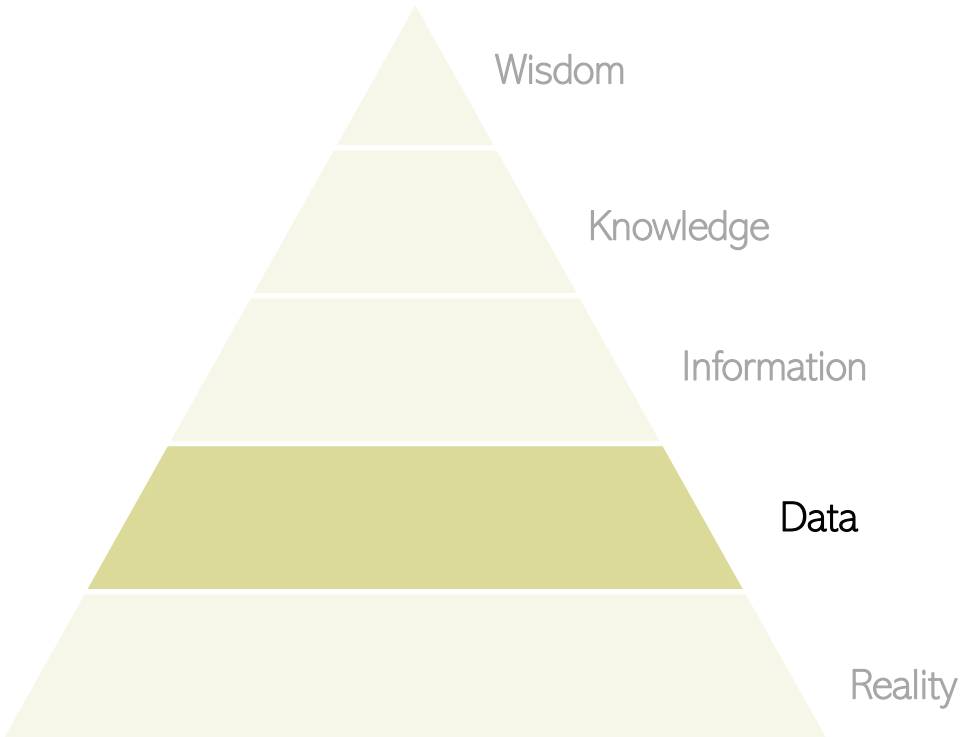
Data that has been structured

Data

Observations of reality

Reality

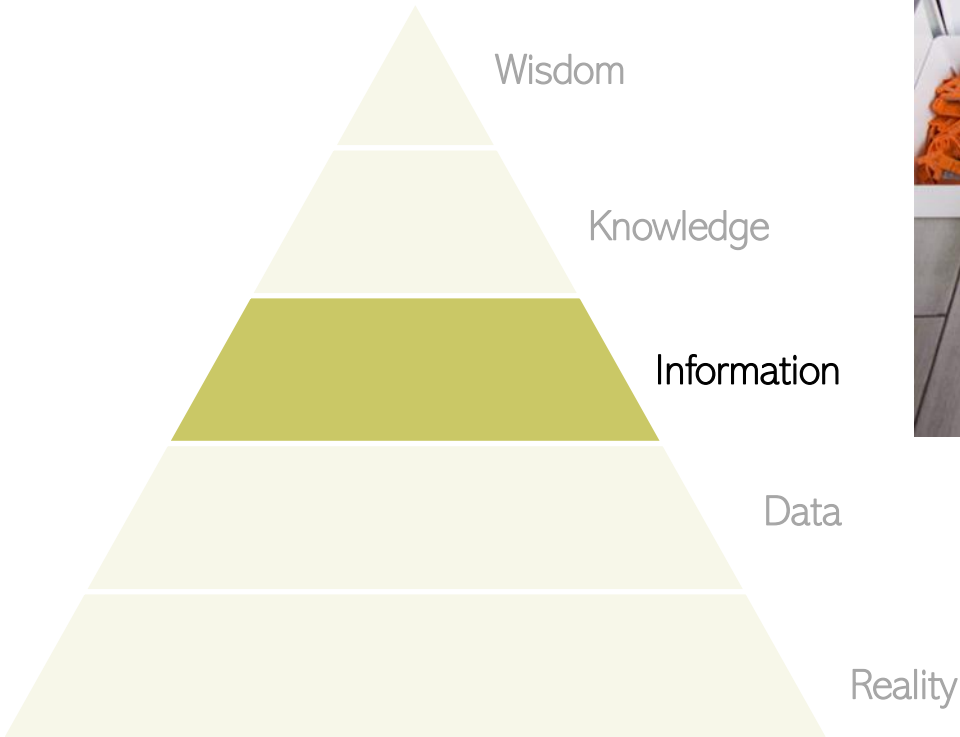
Messy, lacks structure



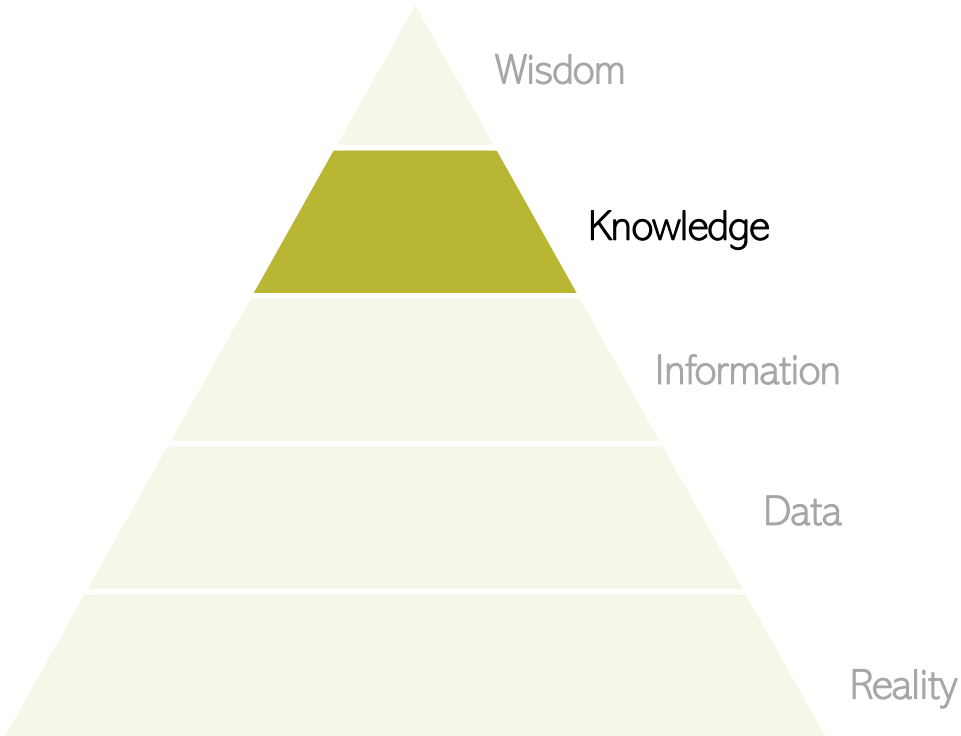
Data: A representation of the world





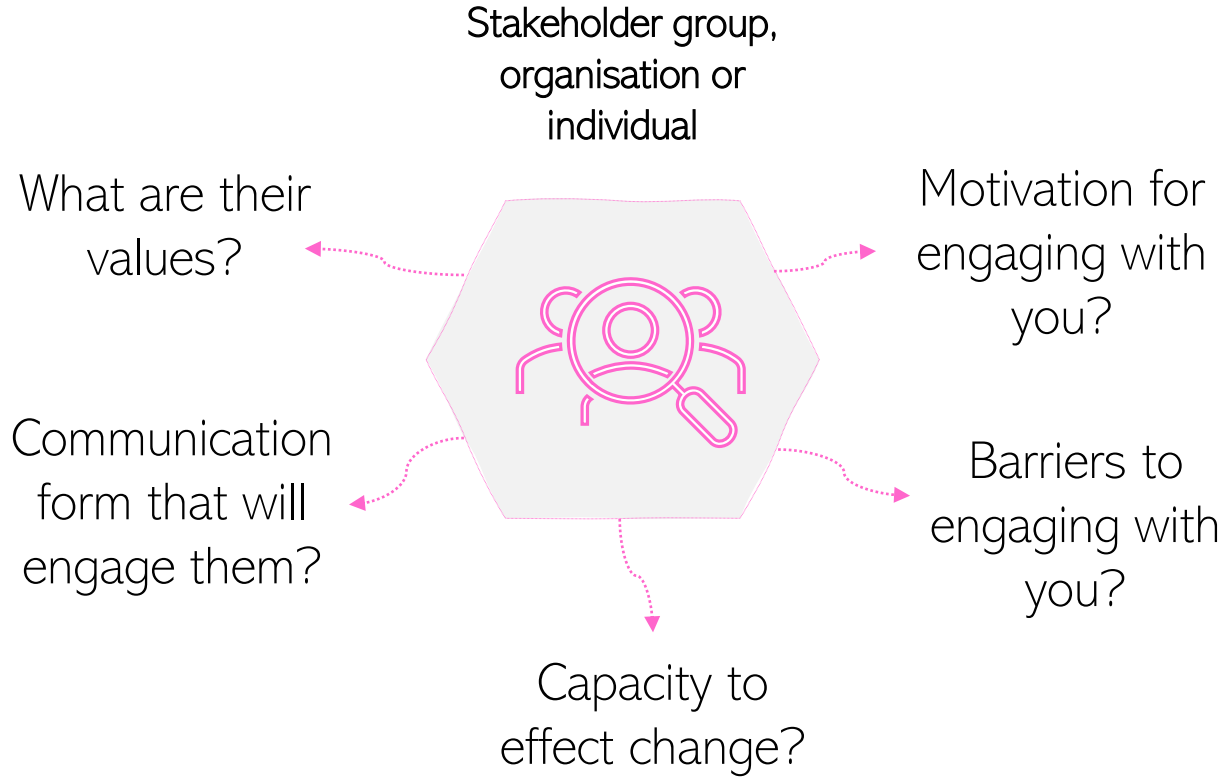


Information: Data that has been structured, but we don't know what to do with it



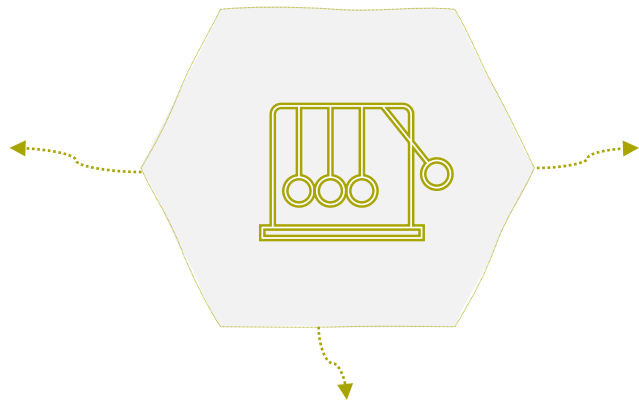
Knowledge: Data organised in a way that helps us to tell a story

1: Understand your audience(s)



2: Articulate the 'shift' in attitude or action that you want to see as a result of your story

From
not knowing we exist
To
knowing who we are,
what we do, and why
we do this work



From
wondering why *your* services should
be funded
To
agreeing that you provide a
specialist service that has an impact
and should be funded

From
not understanding the outcomes of
a previous programme
To
understanding the outcomes, and
what should be repeated / changed

Mapping stakeholders and the 'shifts' we want to bring about

Completed by:

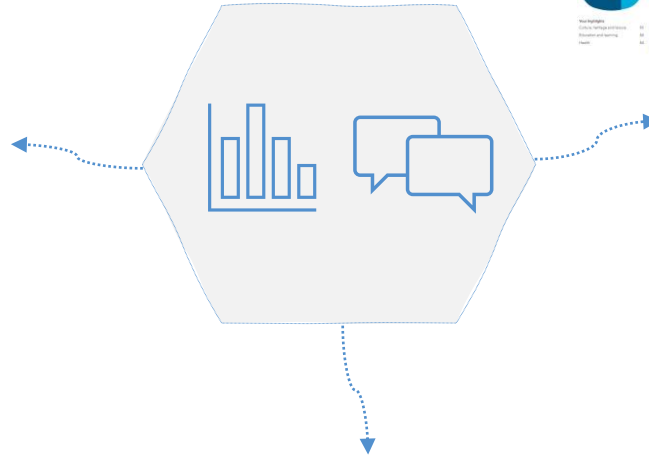
Date:

Stakeholder group or org/individual name			
Their values in three words or phrases			
Motivation for engaging with you			
Barriers to engaging with you			
Capacity to effect change (1-5 scale)			
Communication form that will engage them			
The shift that you want your communication to create: 'From...' 'To...'			

3: Consider what data you can use to support your story

Internal data

- Operational
- Financial
- Service User
- Engagement
- Outcomes



External - context



Public health profiles



External – expert evidence



For keeping a record of your internal data...

What do we collect?	What format is it in?	Where do we store it?	How do we use it?	Who do we share it with?	How long do we plan to keep it for?	Who is responsible for managing it?

Data audit template

Breakout rooms

When thinking about telling data stories, consider:

1: Who are your audiences?

2: What shift are you trying to create in their *attitudes* or *action*?

3: What data can you use to help this shift take place?

4: Mix it all together, put it in the oven and watch it rise!

Beginning  Middle  End

Twist or
Conflict

"If a story doesn't have conflict, a twist, or point of tension, it's just a report."

The Story Behind The Story

Plot 

Ending 

Telling a story with data – the narrative arc

Completed by:

Date:

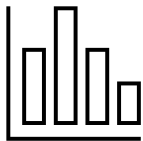
Takeaway Title

Childhood obesity rates in the UK are high

Main body of text

When compared with other countries of a similar size, we can see that childhood obesity rates in the UK are high

Data visualisation or description

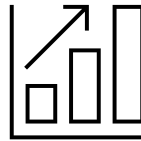


Context

Set the scene, make sure the audience understands the background

In fact, childhood obesity is getting worse

Overall, childhood obesity is worsening, and particularly in deprived areas



Rising Action

What tension, issue, or conflict exists? How can you first describe it?

We must act now!

To prevent substantial increases in heart disease, diabetes, cancer caused by obesity



Climax

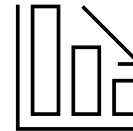
What's the maximum point of tension, the biggest issue or thing the audience should care the most about?

From not appreciating the scale of childhood obesity

To understanding the scale and feeling compelled to support our activities

We know programmes like ours work

Similar programmes, and early suggestions from our own work, shows that our programmes work to reduce childhood obesity



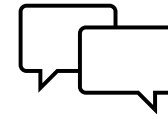
Falling Action

Bring the audience down by suggesting a solution, or an outcome

Support our programme!

By funding our programme, we can reduce childhood obesity rates.

Our programmes leave a lasting impact on the children that take part:



Ending

This is the resolution, or the call to action.

The Big Idea, or the story in a sentence: In the UK, we have increasing rates of childhood obesity. We know that programmes like ours are part of the solution.

When thinking about data use, consider...

- How you will **use** the data you collect, and how it links to your **strategic aims**
- Who you can use it to **communicate** with, and for what **purpose**
- How the data is **collected**, what it is *really* telling you, and what **limitations** it may have
- If your data is **structured**, and if so, does it **make sense** to other people
- Who could be **affected** by you using data in this way

Strategic Data Use Template

Completed by:

Date:

Linear process

What is your strategic question or aim ?	What internal data can you use?	What external data can you use?	How will you communicate this? What story are you trying to tell?

Cyclical process

Ethics and responsibility	Data quality and limitations	Ownership and culture	Sharing and storage	Capacity and tools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who could be affected by you using data in this way? Do you have the necessary data policies and agreements in place? What steps could you take to minimise any risk of harm? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the data formatted in a standardised way? Do you know the source of the data, and any limitations of it or biases it may contain? What level of detail is provided, and what other data can it be linked to? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who is responsible for the ethical use of data in the organisation? Is data use supported by senior management and trustees? Is data used to question practice? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you know what data is stored where? Do the right people within the organisation have access to the right data? Who outside of the organisation would benefit from having access to this data? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What could be done to increase organisational capacity for data use? Are you using the right software and approaches for the questions you are trying to answer?

Recipe for: building compelling data stories that can be used in different contexts

- 1 – Understand your audience(s)
- 2 – Articulate the ‘shift’ in *attitude* or *action* that you want to see
- 3 – Consider what data you can use to support your story
- 4 – Write takeaway titles which lead to a rise and fall...

