



# Theory of Change

Superhighways,  
August 2024



# What is a Theory of Change? What is its purpose?

The Theory of Change (ToC) technique is a method of mapping out how services or products lead to impact within the context of a wider system, and exploring the assumptions behind this.

Theories of change can serve multiple purposes:

- Communicating effectively how services and products lead to impact or support strategic planning
- Helping to align the efforts of all members of a team and bring everyone 'onto the same page'
- It's a powerful tool in the design process of a new product or service

There are lots of different formats of ToCs with different terminology used for different elements. Typical elements include: the situation (problem(s), target audience, and stakeholders), impact goal, an outcomes pathway, activities, and assumptions.





# What is the purpose of Superhighways' ToC? How was it designed?

The main purpose of the Theory of Change for Superhighways is to help the team think about and implement better evaluation practices across a number of funded programmes and therefore help to measure the value added by its various tech, digital, digital inclusion and data projects and services across London.



Superhighways' Theory of Change is the result of a collective and participatory design process, encompassing two half-day and in-person workshops and two online feedback sessions.

All of Superhighways' staff were involved in the sessions and contributed their specific experience and perspectives. The design process and development of the Theory of Change was supported by **inFocus Consulting**. This document presents the Superhighways Theory of Change and outlines its main elements.

Looking ahead, Superhighways is keen to use the results from updated Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning processes to have proactive discussions with funders about how their funding enables a holistic digital support offer to small charities and community groups in London.

# Superhighways' goals and approach

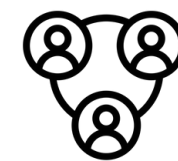
Superhighways is a friendly team with a passion for helping local communities make best use of technology for social impact.

We're on a mission to help small charities and community groups gain essential digital and data skills backed by the right tech to achieve their goals.

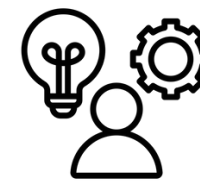
We believe in strong, adaptable communities confidently using digital, data and tech to meet their needs and aspirations.

Our approach helps us deliver high quality services and activities alongside, and for, small charities, grassroots organisations and our partners.

We are:



**Relationship centred:** we build meaningful relationships based on respect, honesty and care



**Capability-minded:** we are approachable and patient, encouraging learning by doing, where no question is a silly question



**Committed to value:** we meet people and teams where they are, finding the most appropriate and forward-thinking solutions



**Enthusiastically curious:** we are always discovering new techniques and tools, offering engaging ways of learning and bringing fun and playfulness to all we do



**Community spirited:** we foster collaboration and togetherness, connecting people with shared experiences for the good of the whole community, leading when appropriate



# What Superhighways does to drive change:

## Our activities

Superhighways' activities support organisations to develop key skills to use free and affordable digital & data tools, and set up a fit for purpose tech infrastructure.

Key topics include:

- working and collaborating online
- collecting, analysing and sharing data to evidence need and influence change
- planning communications and using e-mail marketing, social media, presentations and multi-media
- creating and developing websites
- helping local residents learn basic digital skills



### Training

Free or low cost interactive and practical live training to develop digital, data and tech skills. Attendees learn in a small group to help gain complex technical skills and learn from each other.



### Tech support

Year-round support service for members to keep IT systems running smoothly. Support with managing systems e.g, M365, purchasing, setting up workspaces, security and more.



### Data systems development

Developing new and improved data tools, user groups, communities of practice and database support for systemic change in data use.



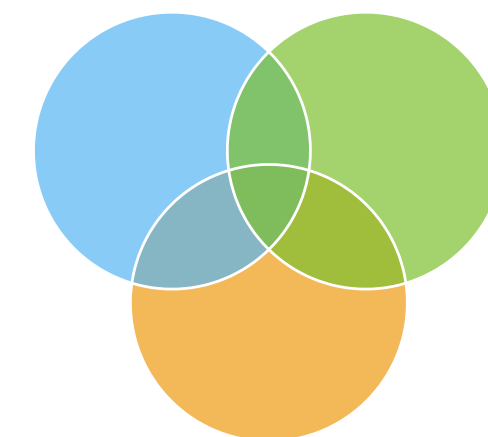
### Resources

Step-by-step guides, video tutorials, and curated libraries of useful free and affordable technology suitable for small charities and community organisations.






### Website development

Consultancy and funded support to help organisations create and develop websites quickly and easily using a free community web building platform.



# How Superhighways is resourced: Our inputs

Superhighways is a small team of 9 people bringing a wealth of experience and expertise across the overlapping areas of digital, data and tech. Our activities are funded by a mix of funding from trusts and foundations, with generated income from consultancy services.

	Training	All funded programmes and consultancy
	Data Essentials	Trust for London (Stronger Voices programme) and City Bridge Foundation for the Datawise London programme
	Digital Basics	The National Lottery Community Fund
	Tech Support	Membership fee, consultancy and Royal Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames
	Websites	Royal Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames, The National Lottery Community Fund and consultancy
	Digital Inclusion	Royal Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames, The Good Things Foundation
	Communicate	The National Lottery Fund
	Digital Leaders	All funded programmes and consultancy

# Superhighways' Theory of Change Summary

## Outcomes Pathways

### Challenges:

- Many small charities and community groups don't use tech to its full potential, at the stage of maturity appropriate for them.
- They are overwhelmed by the number of tools available and struggle to select and implement the best one for them.
- Their digital/data/tech infrastructure is not fit for purpose.

### Digital, Data and Tech for individuals and organisations

Our advice, support and training activities

Increase understanding of and practical skills in digital, data and tech processes and solutions relevant to their needs

Have the confidence to apply learning in practice

### Funders and providers...

Have a better awareness of sector digital, data & tech needs

Adapt their grants, support and processes to include digital, data and tech

Design and develop solutions to better need meets

As a result of changes in the external environment, Increased funding for digital, data and tech is available

More 'tried and tested' solutions are easily available

Individuals and organisations are more digital, data and tech informed in their service design, evaluation and decision making.

### As a result:

- An increased number of beneficiaries experience services that better meet their needs
- Organisations are better able to advocate/ influence
- Communities are less digitally excluded
- Organisations are better able to plan ahead and assess new digital, data & tech opportunities

### Impact:

A digital, data and tech enabled charity and community sector can better meet the needs and aspirations of Londoners

Become 'champions' and share the knowledge/ benefits with wider partners & communities

Apply digital, data and tech processes and tools within their organisation to ensure a stable, secure, reliable infrastructure

Processes and tools are applied to other projects throughout the organisation

Individuals apply compliance and best practice to their organisations

More organisations have a stable, secure, reliable infrastructure

### Our approach:



Relationship centred



Capability minded



Committed to value



Enthusiastically curious



Community spirited

# What are the challenges Superhighways is seeking to tackle?

Effects

Inefficient services impact negatively on communities or limit impact

Inefficient working practices (instead of smart practices)

Unmanaged risks to data

Talking about impact is a challenge

Threat to organisation's existence

Negative impact on individual staff members and teams

Challenges

Charities don't use tech to its full potential at the stage of maturity appropriate for them

Charities are overwhelmed by the number of tools available and selecting and implementing the best one for them

Charities digital/ data infrastructure is not fit for purpose

Root causes

Poor advice and information available particularly for smaller charities

Lack of knowledge, skills and confidence leads to fear of tech

Lack of funding

Complexity of the technology involved

Organisational culture e.g. resistance to change and lack of digital leadership

Lack of capacity and headspace

Key

**Green outline:**

Problems we can influence

**Amber outline:**



Problems we can partially influence

**Pink outline:**

Problems we can't influence

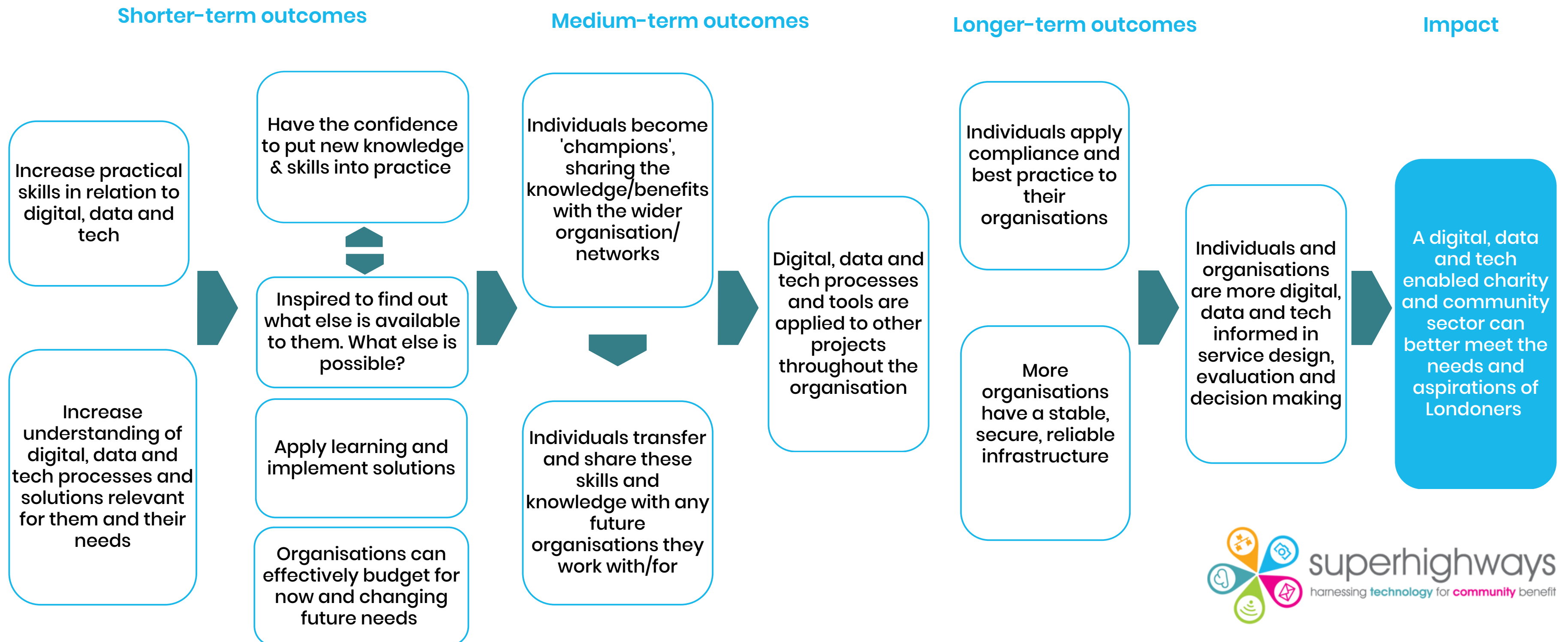


# Who are our main stakeholders?

Target audience (audiences that we aim to impact) 		Partners & other stakeholders (stakeholders who we influence and who influence us) 			
Social sector organisations (we help or could help)	Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) networks	CVSSs	Member organisations (Tech Support, Trustees, Staff)	Freelancers and consultants	Technical and digital agencies
Councils for Voluntary Service (CVSSs) and local infrastructure organisations	Member organisations (Tech Support, Trustees, Staff)	VCSE networks, e.g. local Black and Ethnic Minority forums	Kingston Voluntary Action (KVA) and KVA trustees	Data support providers	Volunteers
Activists, e.g. individuals, HEAR Network/ lived experience	Superhighways' own volunteers	Partners in programmes e.g. Refugee Council	Superhighways' staff and team	Product suppliers	Activists, e.g. HEAR Network/ lived experience
Local residents		Specialist infrastructure organisations & communities	Policy-makers, e.g. local authority/ Greater London Authority (GLA), health and Integrated Care Systems (ICSSs)	Universities/ academia	Funders (our funders, funder plus models, commissioners, especially in Kingston. London Funders)

# What are the intended outcomes pathways?

## Digital, Data and Tech for Individuals and Organisations





# What are the intended outcomes pathways?

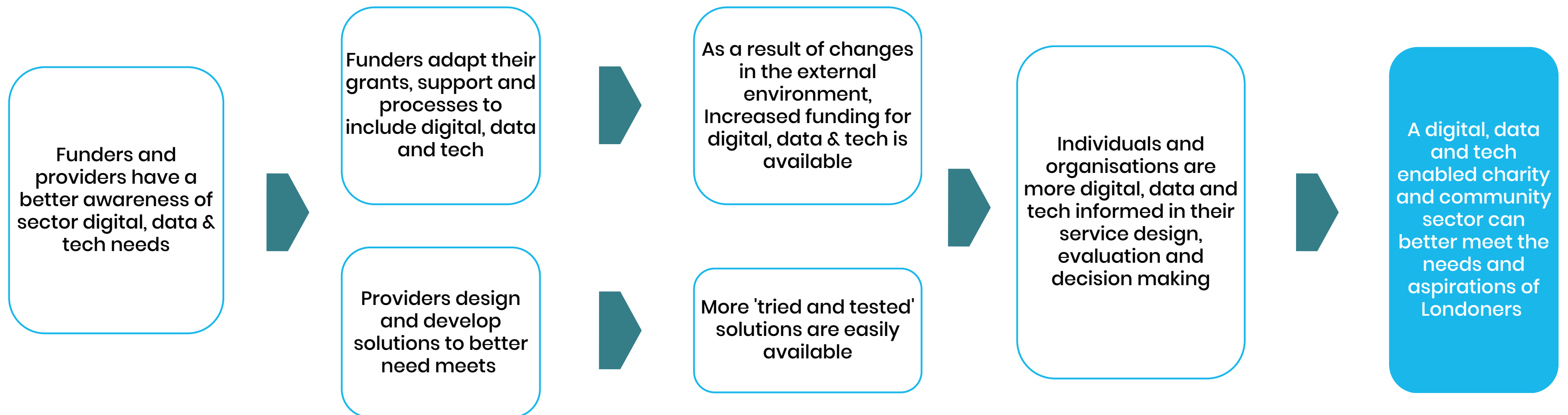
## Funders and Tech Providers

### Shorter-term outcomes

### Medium-term outcomes

### Longer-term outcomes

### Impact



# What are our underlying assumptions?

These are the core beliefs that underpin our thinking when defining the change to which we want to contribute. We will monitor and update our assumptions through our impact measurement and consulting further with our target audiences and stakeholders.

These are our assumptions about:

The individuals & organisations we support	Our delivery models	The wider sector	Digital, data and tech	Other factors influencing our work
<p>Charities will continue to receive discounted or free software/ devices; however, they and the wider social sector might be hindered by the quality, affordability and availability of tools and software.</p> <p>Digital &amp; data culture and practice have to be fostered because they are not prioritised in many organisations.</p> <p>The organisations approaching us want to change.</p>	<p>Our small group technical skills courses are better than webinars to achieve learning goals; however, our approach is flexible responding to the appetite and preferences of the learners. Our focus is on training people to do things themselves.</p> <p>We remain quality driven as opposed to aiming for large scale delivery.</p> <p>We have the right internal skills set to continue to develop relevant services responding to sector needs.</p>	<p>Sometimes charities and community groups are best placed to provide activities and services for local communities.</p> <p>Funders are also increasingly paying attention to smaller organisations with lived experience and prioritising funding for equity led and grassroots groups who often need early-stage support.</p> <p>Small charities are forced to close due to reduced funding available.</p>	<p>Tech is fast moving – we need to keep up and be a step ahead. There is an increasing number of digital tools and complexity that organisations need to navigate,</p> <p>Society shifts towards increased digital ability.</p> <p>There is a greater focus on non mainstream tech, e.g. Catalyst’s move to liberatory / ethical tech.</p>	<p>Funders are able to invest in digital, data and tech.</p> <p>Due to limits in our reach, we need to train/ influence other providers.</p> <p>There may be future emergency situations that will require further digital, data or tech knowledge.</p> <p>Paid and voluntary roles in the sector will change with AI and increased automation.</p>





# Get in touch



## Superhighways



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Our attempt at creating what we do in plasticine at an early workshop! Meet Martha and her trusty digital, data and tech toolbox.