Appendix F: Prioritisation exercises – Facilitator briefing

Prioritising

Thank you for agreeing to facilitate the prioritisation exercises. At this stage, participants will have gathered a range of ideas, opportunities, gaps, and potential actions during their earlier discussions. Now, your role is to guide them through four structured exercises to reduce the very long list of ideas to a short list of key priorities. The exercises are "Control and Influence", "Impact and Effort", "Urgency and Importance", and finally mapping the remaining priorities against the Positive Pathways Model. The outcome will be a clear set of high-impact, feasible priorities ready for more detailed planning.

Your job is to ensure that each exercise runs smoothly, that the group collaborates openly, that the lowest priority ideas are set aside, and that everyone's perspective is heard. You will also need to document the output of each exercise – by photographing the resulting matrices or diagrams – so that the project lead can capture final priorities and develop a coherent action plan.

Preparing for the exercises

Materials

- **Sticky notes**
  Participants will already have ideas written on sticky notes from previous sessions. These are removed from the previous flipcharts and brough forward to these exercises. Make sure you have enough extra sticky notes if new insights emerge or to group related ideas together.

- **Markers and flipcharts**
  You'll be drawing up or displaying the target diagram, matrix grids, and the Positive Pathways Model.

- **Digital camera or mobile phone**
  You'll need to capture clear, high-resolution photos of each completed grid or diagram.

- **Positive Pathways Model Printouts**
  Each table should have a copy for easy reference.

Set the tone

- Emphasise to participants that these exercises are practical and aim to narrow down what can realistically be tackled.

- Encourage honest reflection. Some ideas may be great but not immediately doable; others might be quick wins with high impact. People's first impressions are usually correct. These are intended to be rapid exercises. Keep the pace high.

- Remind participants that it's normal to let go of certain ideas if they fall outside the group's direct influence, require prohibitive levels of effort, or don't align with wider local priorities.

Inclusivity and consensus

- During each exercise, invite contributions from everyone. Some participants may naturally dominate the conversation; your role is to balance the room so that quieter voices are also heard.

- If disagreements arise (e.g., someone thinks an action belongs in one quadrant while another disagrees), encourage discussion until a consensus is found or a middle ground is established.
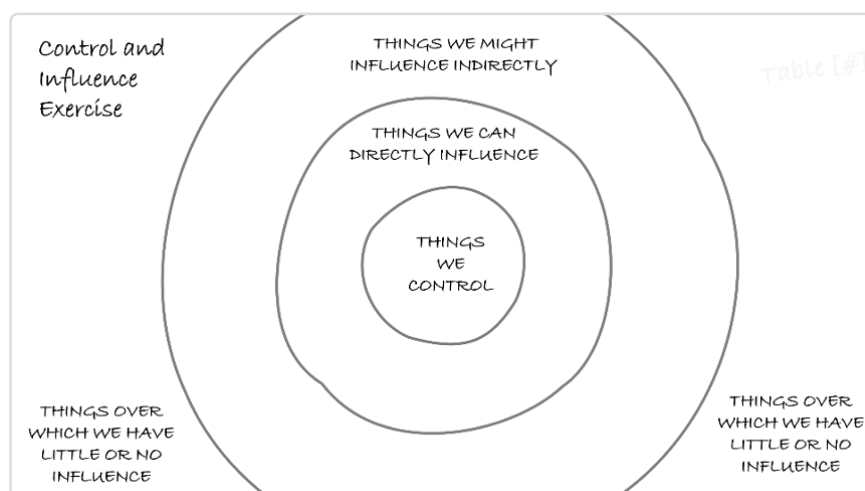
Prioritisation exercise 1: Control and influence

Objectives

- To help participants realistically assess their ability to implement or shape each proposed idea, action, or pledge.

- To set aside ideas, issues, or actions over which the group has little or no influence.

Setup

- Draw or display a target diagram on flipchart paper or a large poster. Don't forget to include your table number. The centre represents high control over an issue, while each concentric circle moving outward represents less control and more reliance on external parties or factors. It should look something like this:

Control and Influence Exercise

THINGS WE MIGHT INFLUENCE INDIRECTLY

THINGS WE CAN DIRECTLY INFLUENCE

THINGS WE CONTROL

THINGS OVER WHICH WE HAVE LITTLE OR NO INFLUENCE

THINGS OVER WHICH WE HAVE LITTLE OR NO INFLUENCE

Introducing the concept

- Remind participants that organisations or individuals may fully control some aspects (e.g., internal policies or budgets), whereas other factors might only be influenced via advocacy, partnership, or lobbying.

- Reiterate that it is still valuable to note items in the "influence" zone, as multi-agency collaboration can lead to progress even if direct control is limited.

- Encourage people to start with the ideas or actions over which they feel most control or influence using their "gut instinct".

Definitions:

Control

Participants or their organisation have direct power and authority to implement the necessary action or make the change independently. They can decide and act without needing permission from others.

E.g., if a participant's organisation can introduce a homelessness referral policy or process within their own team, they have control.

Influence

Participants or their organisation cannot make the change alone, but could encourage, persuade, or partner with others who have the power to act. They have the ability to shape decisions or support progress, even if the final outcome depends on the decisions or resources of others.

E.g., if a participant wants to improve access to mental health services but needs the NHS or another provider to agree, they have influence.

Placing sticky notes

- Ask participants to gather the sticky notes summarising the key actions, gaps, or ideas from previous sessions.

- For each item, prompt them: "Do we fully control this? Do we have limited control but potential influence? Or is this mostly outside our sphere of influence?"

- Participants should place their sticky notes in the target diagram accordingly.

Discussion and consensus

- Facilitate a collective conversation around each note's placement. If disagreements occur, encourage participants to share their reasoning. If necessary, play devil's advocate, being sceptical of the degree of control, remembering that the purpose of the exercise is to narrow the number of ideas and actions.

- Aim for a consensus or an agreed compromise. The precise location might vary (e.g., near the boundary between "control" and "influence").

Documenting outputs

- Once all notes are placed, take a high-resolution photograph of the diagram, ensuring the text is legible. At this point the diagram should look something like this:

- Gently challenge the group: "Should we exclude items that lie on the outer circles where we have very little influence?" Encourage participants to remove or set aside unrealistic items so the workshop can focus on feasible areas.

- If there are a large number of sticky notes and participants are reluctant to set aside any aside, state that the maximum number they can take forward is 10. Starting at the outside of the target, set aside the ideas, issues, or actions moving towards the centre until only 10 remain.
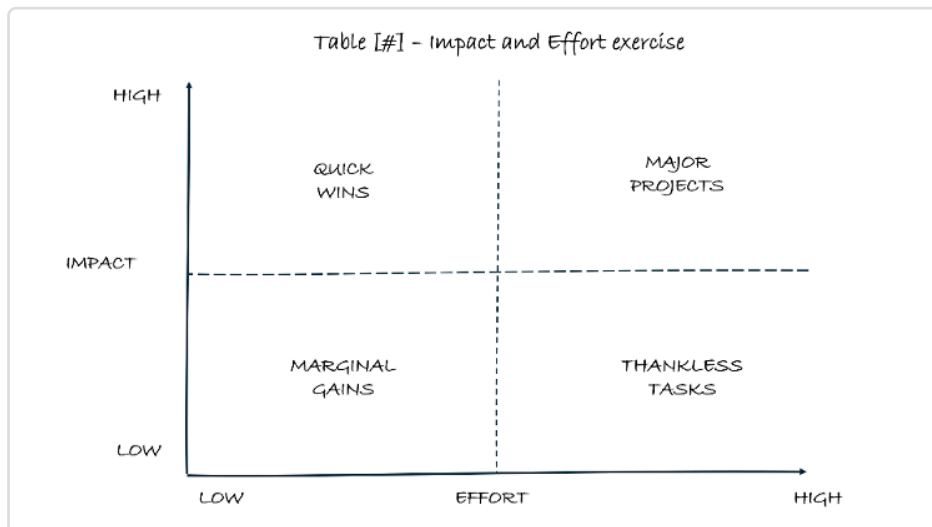
Prioritisation exercise 2: Impact and effort

Objective

- To evaluate each remaining idea based on its potential impact and level of effort required, thus further refining the list.

- To set aside ideas, issues, or actions that will have low impact or require too much effort.

Setup

- Draw or display an Impact-Effort Matrix with four quadrants (remembering to include your table number). It should look something like this:

Table [#] – Impact and Effort exercise

HIGH

QUICK WINS

MAJOR PROJECTS

IMPACT

MARGINAL GAINS

THANKLESS TASKS

LOW

LOW   EFFORT   HIGH

Definitions:

Impact

The positive difference or benefit that resolving the issue or implementing the action will have on preventing and relieving homelessness. A high-impact action would significantly improve outcomes for people at risk of or experiencing homelessness. A low-impact action would result in only a small or limited improvement.

Effort

The time, resources, and complexity required to implement the action. A low-effort action is quick and easy to achieve, requiring minimal time or resources. A high-effort action is more complex, potentially requiring significant planning, funding, or multi-stakeholder collaboration over an extended period.

Reviewing sticky notes

- Only focus on those notes remaining after the Control and Influence exercise.

- Invite participants to think carefully about each note and answer two questions:

  - What impact would implementing this action have on preventing or relieving homelessness?

  - How much effort (time, resources, coordination) would it require?

Definitions:

Impact

The positive difference or benefit that resolving the issue or implementing the action will have on preventing and relieving homelessness. A high-impact action would significantly improve outcomes for people at risk of or experiencing homelessness. A low-impact action would result in only a small or limited improvement.

Effort

The time, resources, and complexity required to implement the action. A low-effort action is quick and easy to achieve, requiring minimal time or resources. A high-effort action is more complex, potentially requiring significant planning, funding, or multi-stakeholder collaboration over an extended period. Reviewing sticky notes

Placing the notes

- One by one, participants place sticky notes in the quadrant they believe best fits the action. For this to happen quickly, you could ask participants to work in pairs.

- Encourage robust discussion around each note. If participants disagree about the level of impact or effort, guide them to clarify whether the issue creates significant positive impact for a wide group or requires substantial resources.

Discussion and filtering

- Summarise or read out the items in each quadrant. The group should collectively decide: "Which quadrant do we prioritise?"

- Typically, you might emphasise the following to take through:

  - Quick Wins (High Impact, Low Effort)

  - Major Projects (High Impact, High Effort)

- However, remind participants that some Marginal Gains might be worth pursuing if they require very little effort.

Documenting outputs

- Take a clear, high-resolution photo of the final Impact-Effort Matrix. It should look something like this:

Table [#] – Impact and Effort exercise
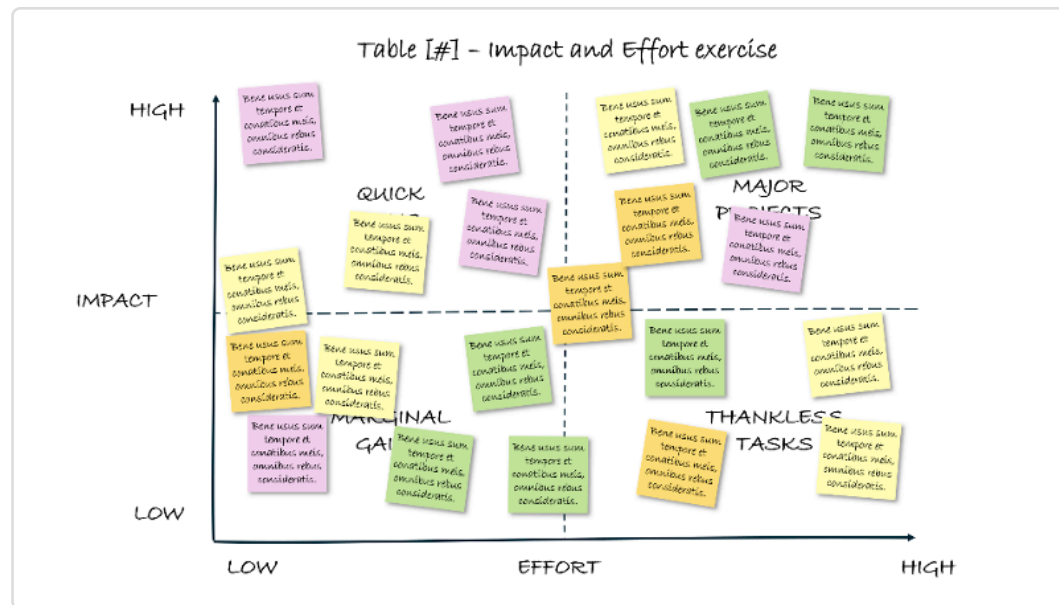
- Encourage the group to eliminate items that lie in "Thankless Tasks" or seem unlikely to happen.

- If participants are reluctant to set aside any of the sticky notes, challenge them to carry forward at most five key issues or actions from this exercise, ensuring a manageable workload for the next steps.

Prioritisation exercise 3: Urgency and importance

Objective

- To further narrow down the critical actions by assessing their urgency and importance.

- To set aside idea, issues, or actions that are not a current priority.

Setup

- Prepare or display a four-quadrant matrix labelled by Urgency (high/low) and Importance (high/low). It should look something like this:

Table [#] – Urgency and Importance exercise
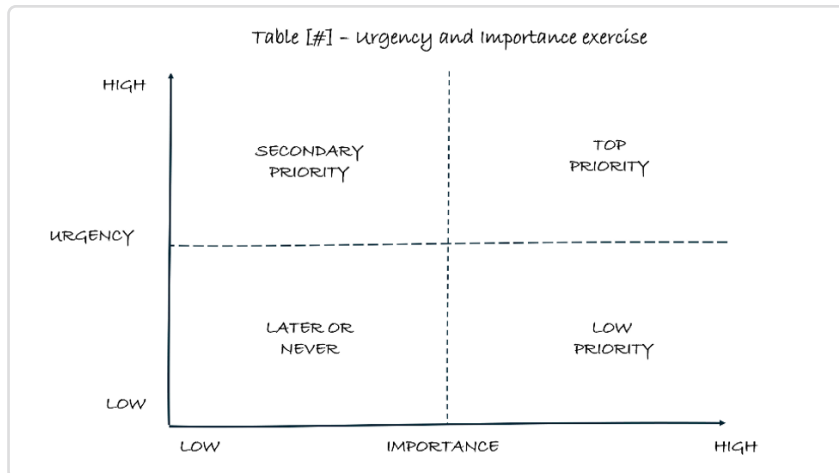
Definitions:

Urgency

Urgency refers to the time sensitivity of an action or issue. It reflects how quickly the action needs to be taken to prevent a negative outcome or to seize a critical opportunity. An issue is also considered urgent if delaying action could significantly worsen the situation. Lower urgency suggests the action can reasonably wait without immediate significant consequences.

Importance

Importance relates to the potential impact and long-term significance of resolving an issue. It reflects how much the action contributes to preventing and relieving homelessness or improving support pathways. An action is highly important if it addresses a root cause, improves outcomes for multiple people, or drives positive systemic change. An issue or action may be important because it significantly promotes (or frustrates) existing strategic objectives or policies. Lower importance suggests the action has a limited or narrow impact, affecting fewer individuals or representing a marginal improvement, or does not align with strategic or policy objectives.

Introducing the exercise

- Remind participants that "urgent" means the action needs to happen quickly (e.g., to prevent immediate negative outcomes), whereas "important" means the action strongly contributes to preventing or relieving homelessness in a significant way.

- Encourage them to consider both short-term pressures (like pending eviction crises) and long-term strategic goals (like establishing sustainable housing pathways).

Placing the notes

- Only consider the sticky notes that survived the previous two exercises. Ask participants to place each note in the Urgency-Importance matrix.

- Facilitate open discussion about why a note may be urgent, important, both, or neither. If you sense hesitation, encourage participants to articulate their reasoning.

Encouraging consensus

- If disagreements arise, ask clarifying questions: "What urgent consequences might occur if this is delayed?" or "Is this truly pivotal to our overall strategy?"

- Emphasise the value of different perspectives, but aim for consensus on each item's placement.

Documenting and final filtering

- Take a high-resolution photograph of the resulting matrix. It should look something like this:

Table [#] – Urgency and Importance exercise
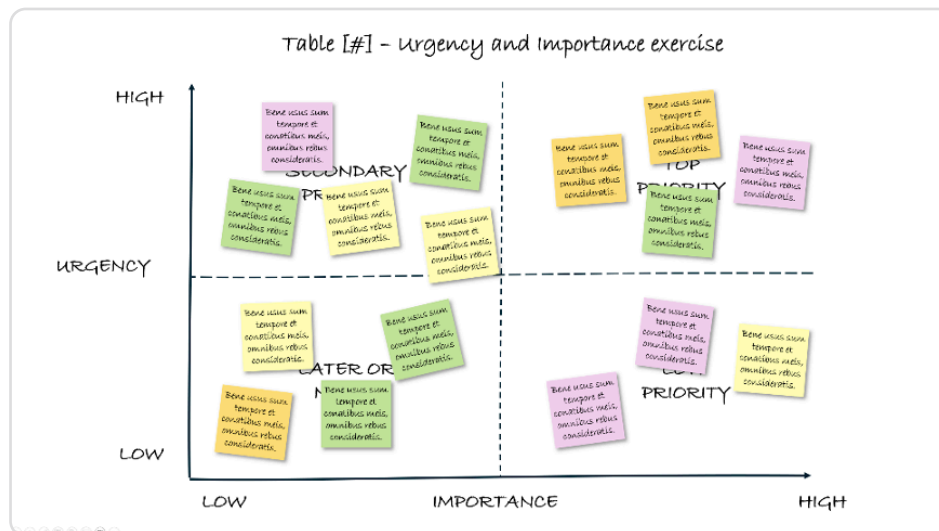
- Encourage participants to eliminate any ideas in the "Later or Never" and "Low Priority" quadrants.

- If participants are reluctant to set aside anything, challenge them to keep only their top three sticky notes or, if necessary, to combine related items that are essentially duplicates.

- The goal is to be highly selective about which actions move forward to the mapping exercise.

Prioritisation exercise 4: Mapping to the Positive Pathways Model

Objective

- To ensure the final priorities clearly align with the Positive Pathways Model, covering prevention, help, and longer-term pathways.

- In the unlikely event at this stage that any emerging priorities are not relevant to the model, to set them aside.

Whole-group vs. table level

- The main facilitator will decide whether this step happens at each table or as one collective group. Check-in with the main facilitator to find out.

- If you choose a group-wide approach, gather the sticky notes from all tables and place them onto a single large Positive Pathways diagram. The main facilitator will then lead the whole room through this exercise. This can be beneficial to help everyone see overlaps and potential collaborations.

- If a table level approach is taken, then take the steps as follows.

Introducing the model

- Point out the printout of the Positive Pathways Model and remind participants of the three categories and six stages:
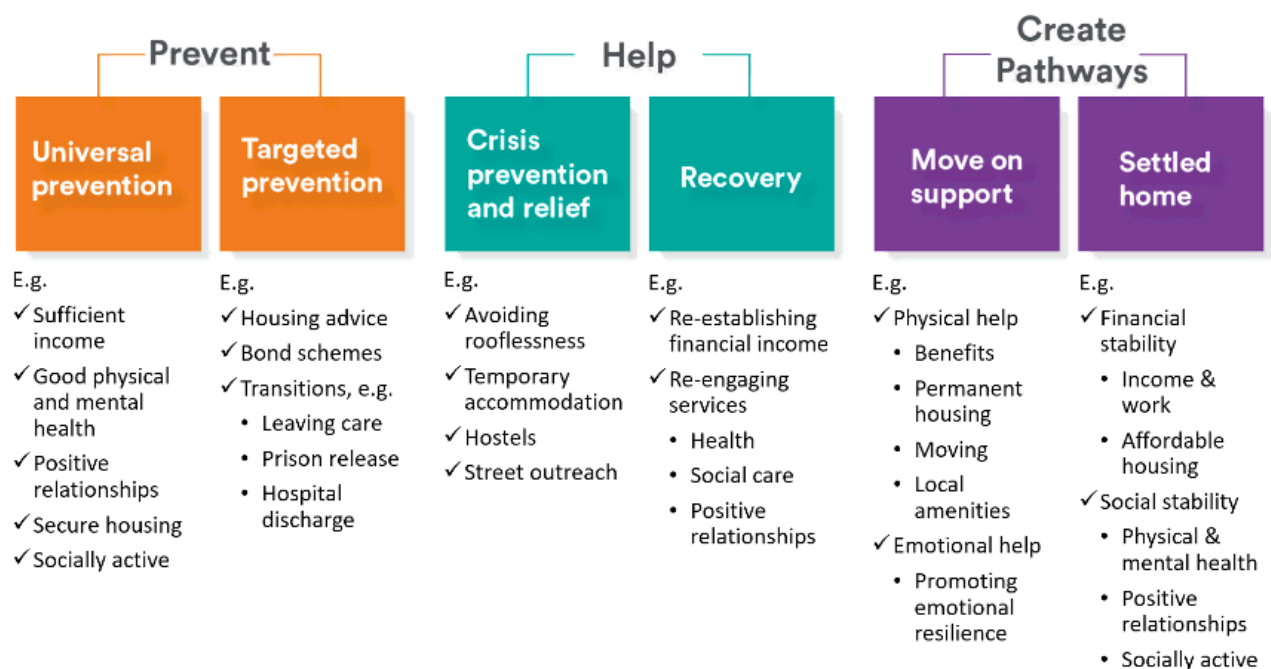
- Your flip chart should be prepared to look something like this:

Table [#] – Key priorities for action

PREVENT	HELP	CREATE PATHWAYS
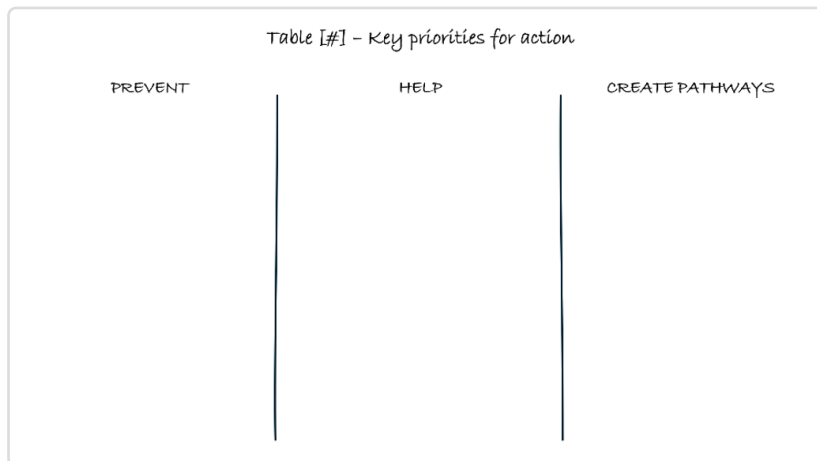
Placing remaining sticky notes

- Ask participants to revisit the handful of actions that remain after the previous exercises.

- Each note should be placed in the segment of the model where the group believes it has the greatest impact.

- Sometimes an action might address more than one stage. In that case, participants can choose the most dominant stage or place it on a boundary.

Final checks and adjustments

- While the notes are being placed, participants might realise that some actions are duplicates or that certain actions do not fit well at any stage.

- This is a good time to remove any further outliers, combine duplicates, or group related sticky notes together.

- Once you have a concise set of actions placed on the model, take a clear photograph to ensure the final arrangement is documented.

- This could look something like this:

Table [#] – Key priorities for action

PREVENT	HELP	CREATE PATHWAYS