Children's Information:
Improving lives through better listening and better data

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: The project

- **Nuffield Foundation Strategic Fund** (Oct. 2021 – Sept. 2026)

- **Aims:**
  - *to improve the way that information about and from children, young people and families is used in local and national government in England*
  - *in order to shape the support and services provided to meet and respond to diverse needs and voices of children, young people and families*

- **Collaboration between:**
  - 4 Local Authority sites
  - 5 Universities
  - Research in Practice

- **To:**
  - Co-produce and evaluate an 'information use project' in each LA site
  - Share with wider Learning Network, test, develop and learn
  - Inform local and national government policy

Administrative information, data and voice

- Reliance on statutory data returns and administrative data: data items determined by government; purposes, uses and meaningfulness of data are questionable
- Richer information, including voice information, exists within local authority management information systems, including case records (Holmes, 2019)
- Voices of children & young people are not consistently included in official statistics: eg. parental voice often used as proxy (Office for Statistics Regulation, 2022)
- Children and young people in care feel they have limited opportunities to participate in decisions; those more vulnerable are less likely to be involved (van Bijleveld et al, 2015)
- Involvement of children and family in record keeping throughout care experience can be beneficial to them (MIRRA, UCL)
- Highly important to accommodate diverse voices within children's information (Capella & Boddy, 2021)

"To make other people's experience positive, always listen and don't presume you know how we feel."
(Care leaver)

Data and information?

Data are quantitative and may be analysed statistically

Data can be quantitative and qualitative and analysed in many ways

Information is everywhere; it only becomes Data when selected, recorded and/or codified with intention to use

Data are everywhere but only when interpreted/analysed do they become Information

Children's Information

Voice?

Multiple Voices

- Children, young people, parents/carers, practitioners, managers, policy makers, wider community

- Diversity of voices within groups

- Voices at individual and collective levels

Voices AS information

Views, experiences, wishes and feelings included within children's information

Voice ABOUT information

Views, wishes and feelings about how children's information is gathered, processed, shared and used.

Recognising voices

- Explicit *and* implicit
- Accessible *and* more hidden/seldom heard
- Verbal *and* nonverbal or silent
- 'Sensible' *and* challenging
- Invited *and* spontaneous
- Expressed formally *and* in the everyday
- Relational, situated and mediated in contexts (which may enable, constrain and shift voice)
- Expressed individually *and* collectivelu *and* at scale
- Listened to (?) operationally *and* strategically

Voice and information
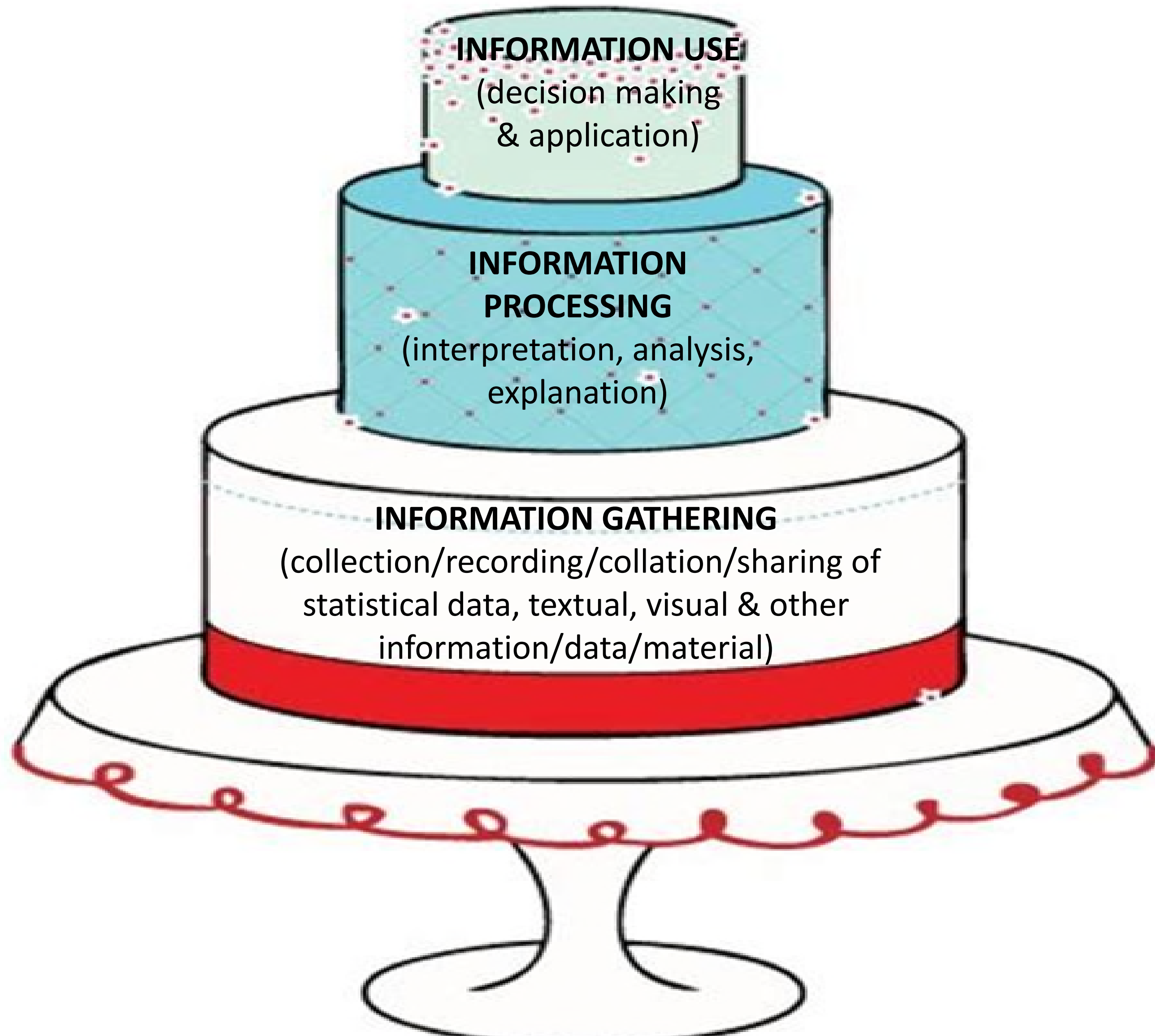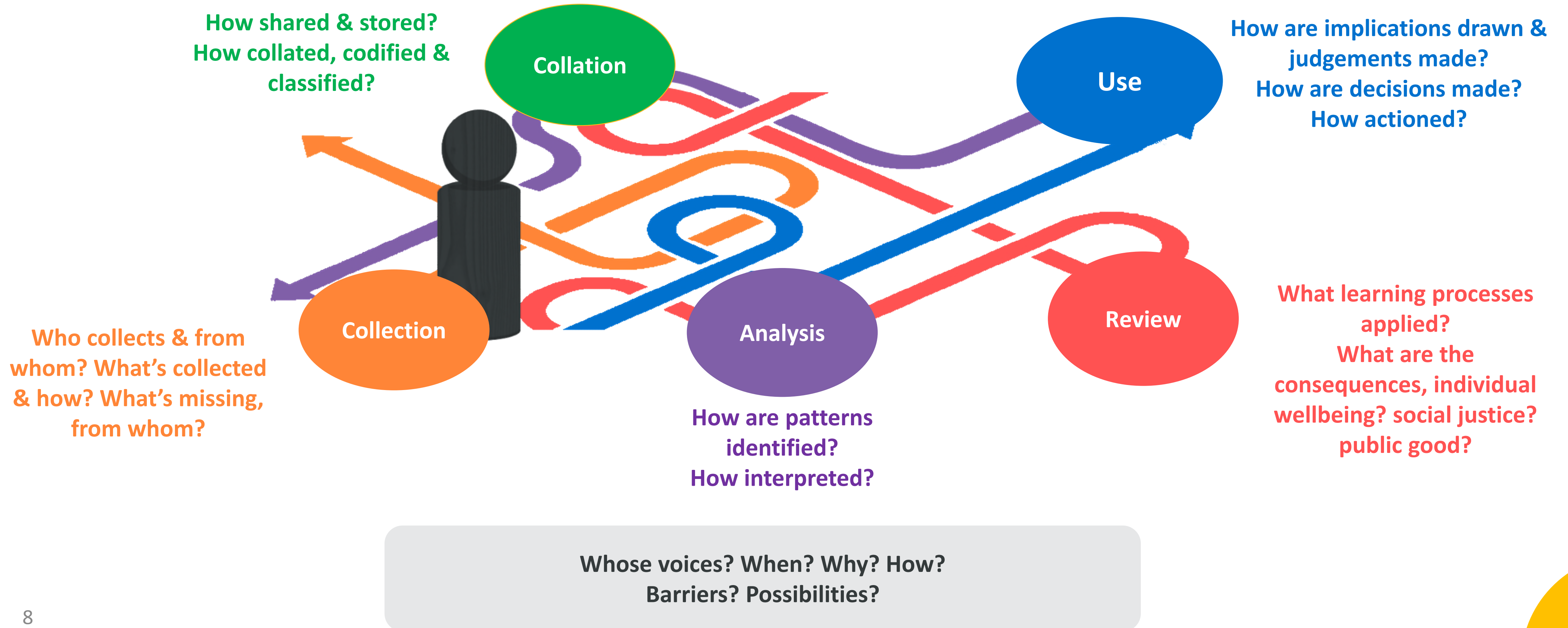
Information use project: Example

- How can children's social care and their partner agencies most effectively and efficiently meet the needs of care leavers?

- What are the necessary support mechanisms to improve the outcomes, and life chances of care leavers?

Aims:

- improve quality and depth of data analysis
- bring more young person and family voice, and practitioner voice into the picture
- sharpen use of information to drive policy and practice
- evaluate impact to support further improvement
- share learning with wider network and receive further quality assurance
- learn from these activities to shape and inform national policy and practice
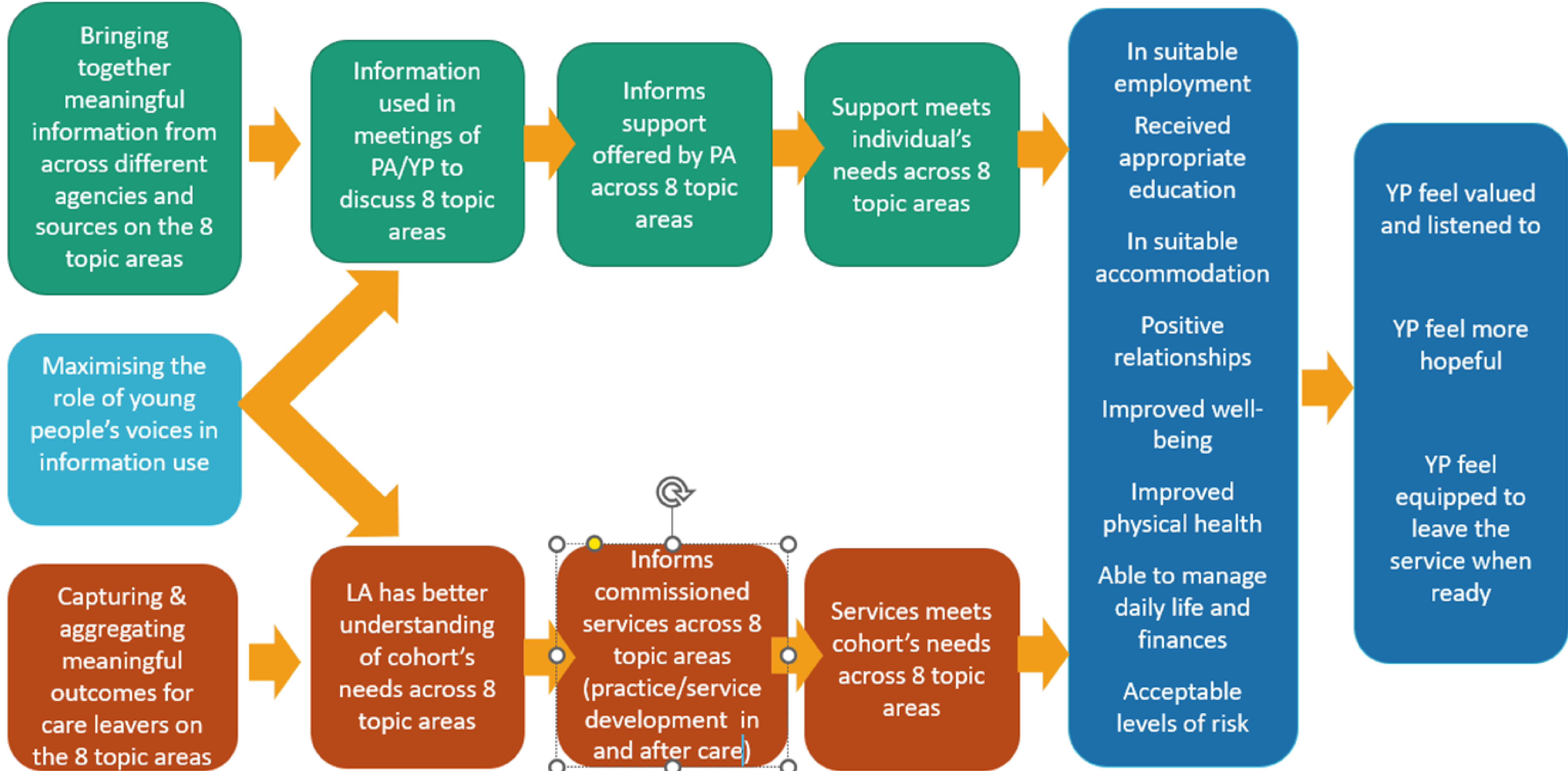
Early insights.....

Observations

- practice model emphasises strong relationships and openness
- 'informal collection' of information while talking
- recording with young person as potential reader
- data collection processes change everyday relationships of care
- where young voices are integral to everyday practice and recording, they become more easily embedded within data

Emerging questions

- does variety of mechanisms (eg. surveys, Mind of My Own) offer possibilities to voice differently?
- 'meaningfulness' of existing/additional measures?
- Do young people trust of workers to record information accurately?

'It's all about relationships.'

''Getting away from you've got to sit down and fill out my form because that is entirely the wrong way.'

'Write it as if you're going to read it yourself in five years time….. Would you be happy if you were the young person reading that?'