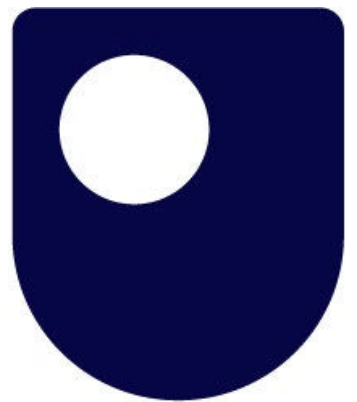


Leadership for Learning

individual, organisational and
strategic influence in
landscapes of practice

Gillian Ferguson, Leadership Links, Feb 2026



**The Open
University**



A bit of a tour through...

Learning environments

Learning cultures

Learning organisations

Learning landscapes

Learning ecologies

...and a bit of Ziggy Stardust



in health and social services

everyone is a learner

everyone is an educator

everyone is a leader

When David Bowie Created Ziggy Stardust

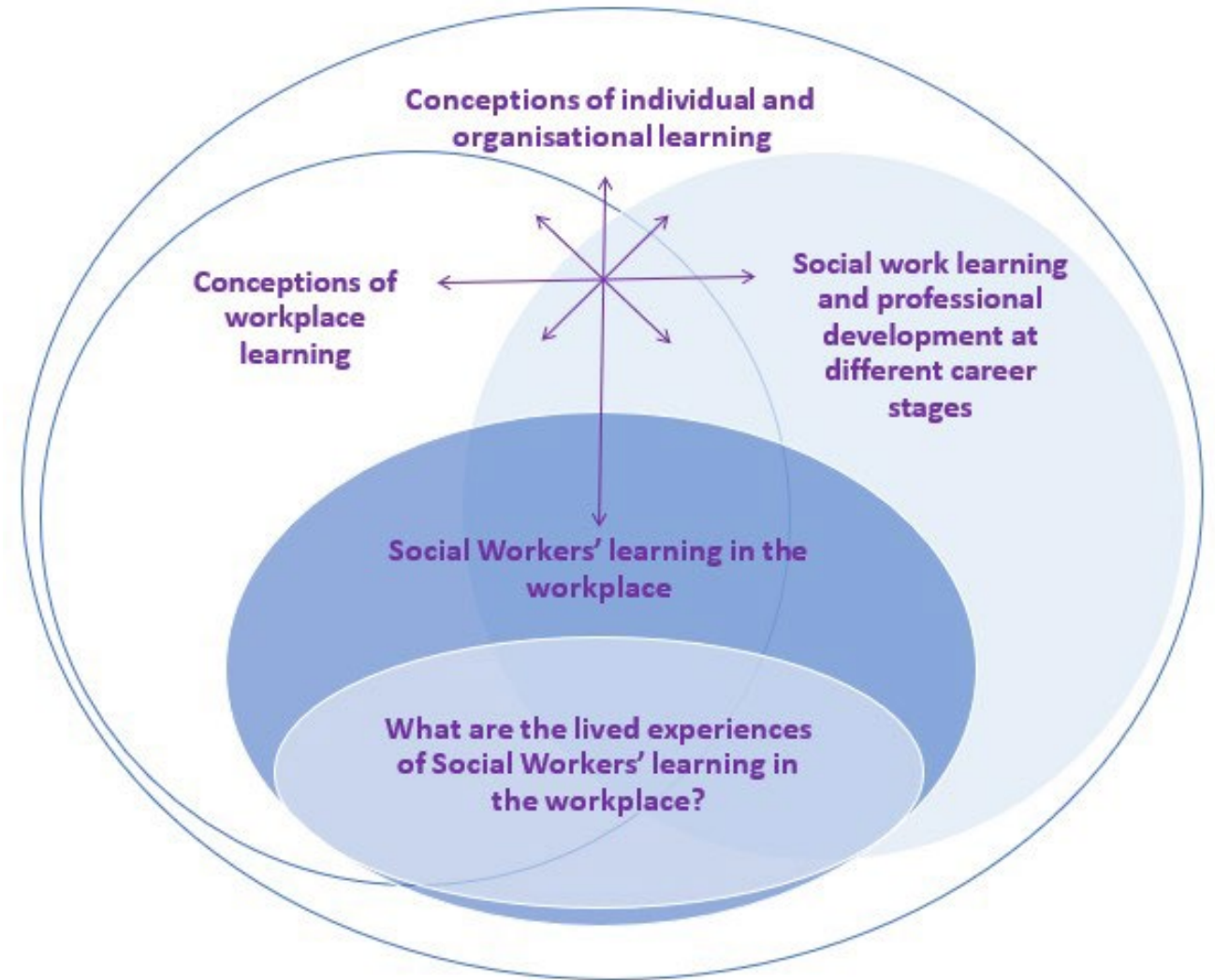
learning in direct practice

what are we even talking about when we say learning?

specific professional/workforce needs

the importance of workplace learning

how do we plan?



Boab - experience of workplace learning



Journey of self

Personal routes and paths
Being self while creating
another self
Screwing on a different head



Navigating landscape and places

Like a minefield
Adapting to culture
Sense of isolation
The true nature of problems
Crucial importance of the
socio-economic context
People are so traumatised
that they do not value
anything



Navigating task

Learning the art of practice
Strangeness yet ordinariness
of task
Personal and unique nature of
task
Ambiguity of task
Looking for answers
No rule book



Learning through the body

Emotional context
Feeling sad
Feeling appalled
Feeling shocked

Learning experiences as a complex web



**Journey of the
self**



**Navigating
landscape and
place**



Navigating tasks



**Learning
through the
body**



**Learning through
others**

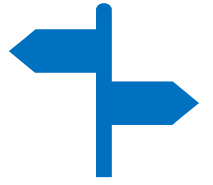


**Practices and
conceptions of
learning**



**Learning by
chance**

Practices and conceptions of learning



Ingredients

Triggers

Thinking
practices

Individual
conceptions
of learning



Journey of the self



Readiness
and
motivation

Realising it
is serious
stuff

Fit

Learning to
use and
manage self

Impact on
life

Becoming



Navigating landscape and place



Diverse places

Isolation

No route map

Different worlds

Battle

Aspects and elements



Navigating tasks



Ambiguity

Possibilities
of practice

Making a
case

Life and
death

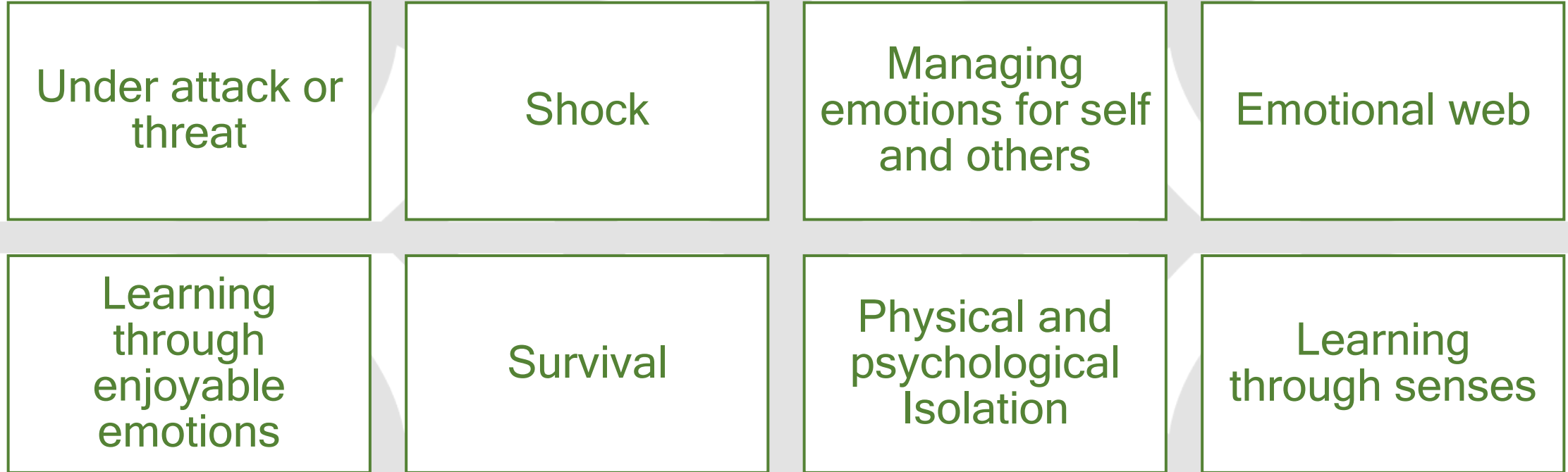
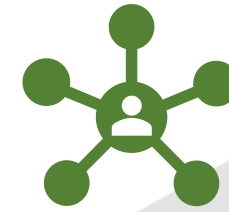
Ordinary,
extraordinary
and extreme

Complexity
of task and
role

The machine



Learning through the body



Learning through others



Learning through the team

Motivation of others

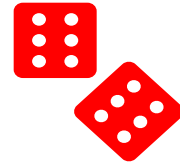
People's lives

Other social workers

Other professionals



Learning by chance



Paths lead to
different places

Specific cases

Accidental most
significant
learning

Can't prepare



Practice = Learning

learning comes from practice ... and informs practice

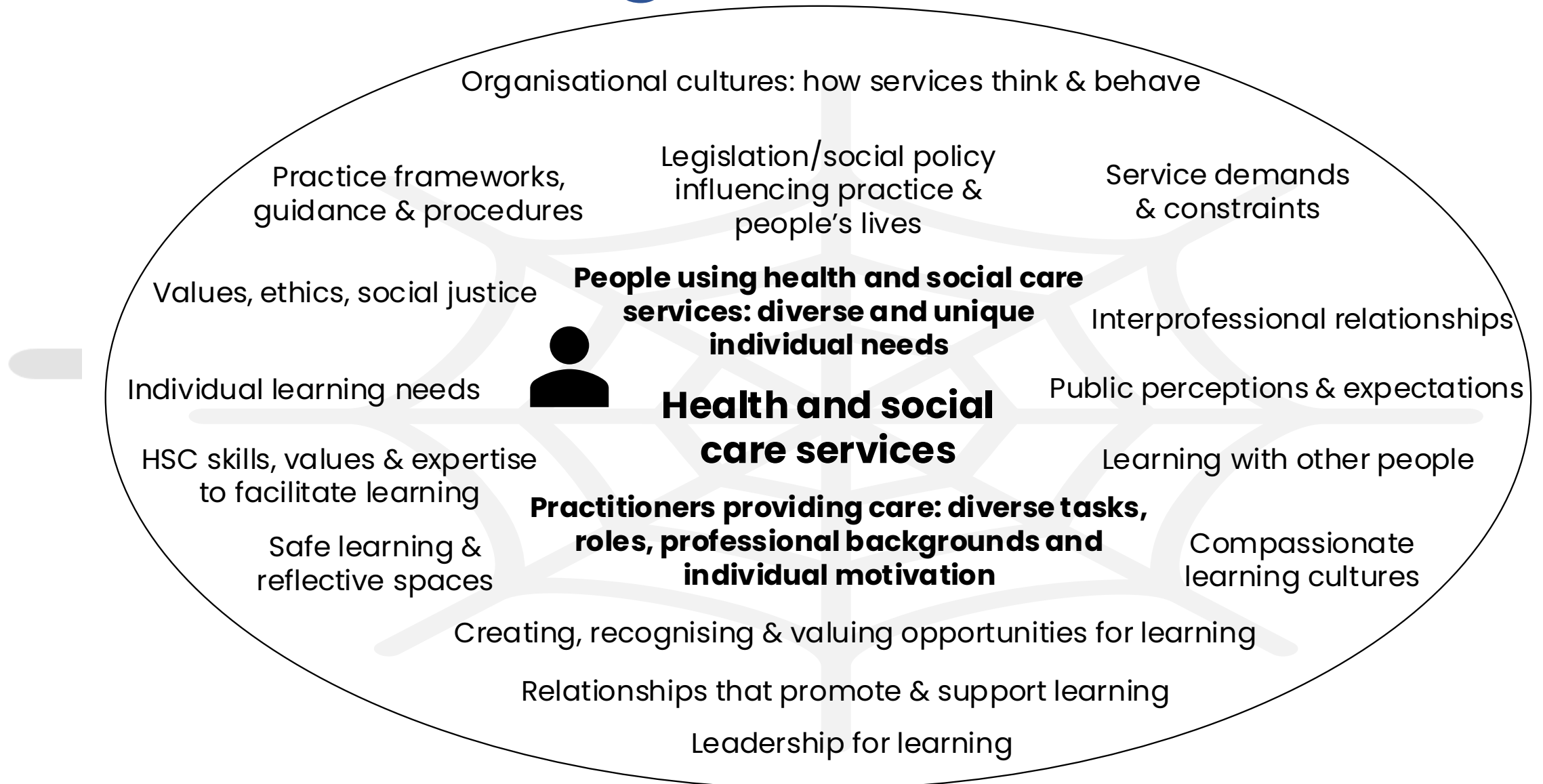
In health or care roles we are not talking about ordinary learning

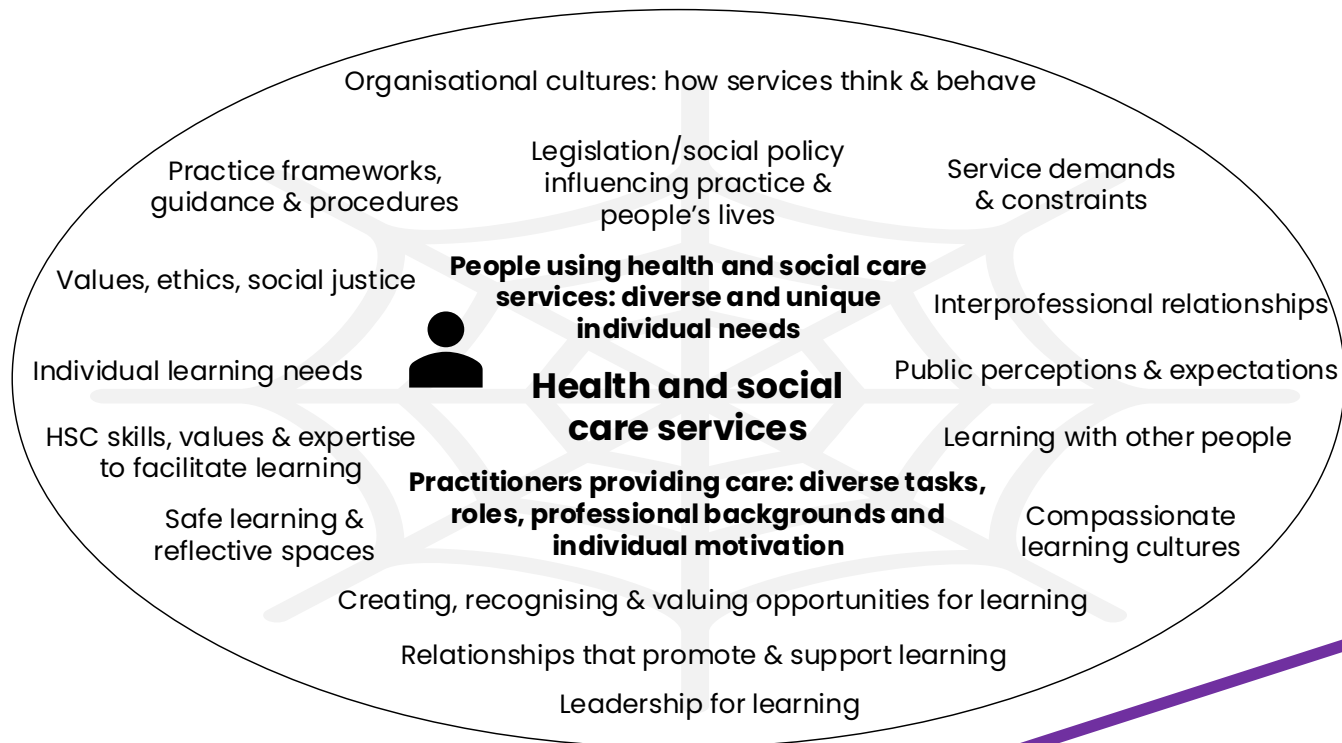
Learning is a deeply personal individual journey within an extraordinary practice setting

Workplace learning environments are crucial to learning

Leadership for learning is about our **Strategic, organisational** and **individual** influence

Learning environments

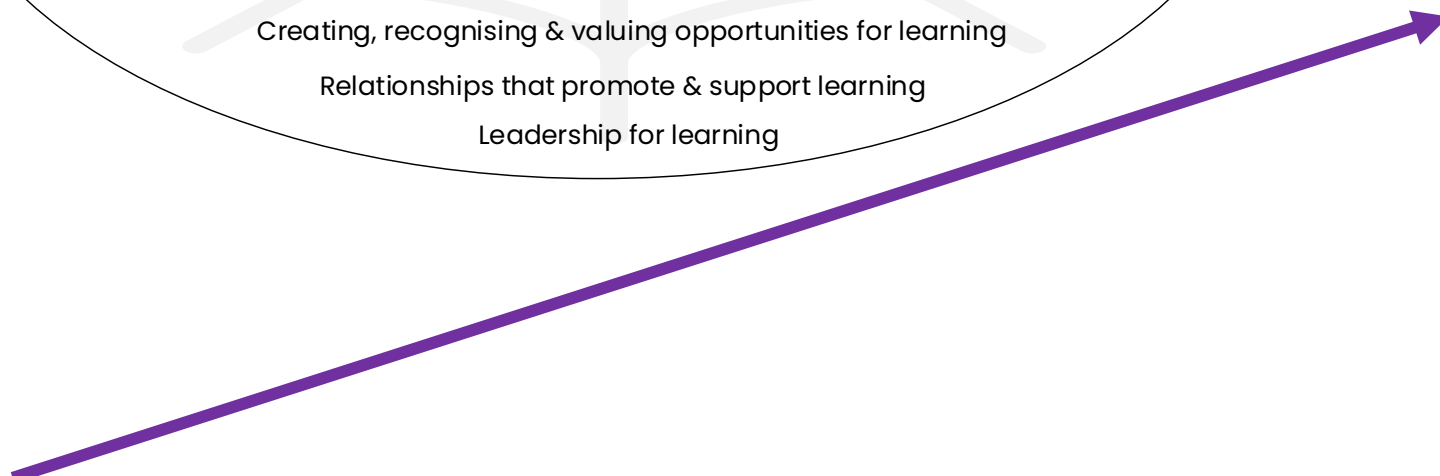




How people learn

What people need to learn

What people actually learn

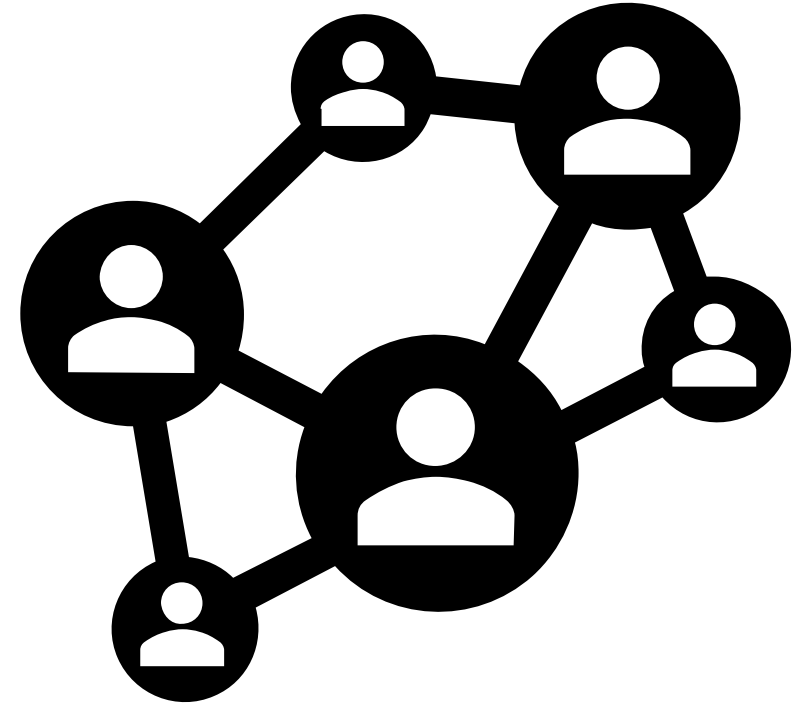


How is learning valued and promoted in your organisation or team?

What are the wider influences on the learning environment from policy and guidance?

Are people at the heart of learning in your area of practice?

What are the most important ingredients of an effective learning environment?



Beginning to think about the system

Learning environments

Learning cultures

Learning organisations

Learning landscapes

Learning ecologies



Learning cultures

What are the ways that things are done?
How is learning conceptualised or valued?

Learning organisations

'a place where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole (reality) together.' (Senge, 2006, p3)



Communities of practice

Landscapes of practice

Practicescapes

Learning ecologies



Learning ecologies

'A system of people, content, technology, culture and strategy with multiple connections and feedback loops that enable growth' (Jackson, 2019)

It is our behaviour within this that matters



A vibrant learning ecosystem involves connections across people and systems that are encouraged to flourish

Leadership for learning is where energy, skills, experience and support are fed into the ecosystem at any level



Who is responsible for leading learning?

What are your opportunities to lead learning in health and social services?
(individual, organisational, strategic?)

How would you visualise a cohesive, effective learning ecosystem for health and social services in Scotland?

“There is a window of time now, in relation to seeing the system and aligning the planets, but this will go by and we can miss the opportunity”

Where do you drop seeds?



in health and social services

everyone is a learner

everyone is an educator

everyone is a leader

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