

Theory of change

Knowing isn't doing. Plan for what people will do differently, and how you'll know.

Programme _____

Team and date _____

1 The problem

What's happening now, and why does it matter? Who is affected, and what gets in the way?

2 Who needs to do what differently?

Name the people and the behaviour: who, does what, when and where. Be specific enough to observe it.

3 The dot on the horizon

If this works, what's different in three to five years? Describe it so anyone would recognise it.

Four levels of change

4 What we'll do

5 What will change

6 How we'll know

Individual

Do people understand why, feel able to act, and feel recognised for it?

Culture

Do peers and leaders model it? Is it becoming normal?

Structures

Do roles, policies, incentives and rewards back it up?

Infrastructure

Do tools, systems and support make it easy to do?

7 What must be true?

The assumptions behind each step, and the evidence for them. Which are you least sure of?

8 Who benefits, and who could lose out?

Who gains, who carries the cost, and how could it be gamed or turn into a tick-box?

9 Check your activities

☐ **Open minds:** why it matters

☐ **Provide training:** how to do it

☐ **Embed knowledge:** peers share it

☐ **Normalise:** recognise and reward it

Worked example

A theory of change based on Play Aid's Gamers vs. Depression programme.

Programme Gamers vs. Depression

Team and date Play Aid

1 The problem

Many young gamers struggle with their mental health, and young men are less likely to seek help. Friends and teammates notice first but don't know what to say or where to point them.

2 Who needs to do what differently?

Team captains spot signs of distress, start a supportive conversation and signpost to their training lead or outside support, as needed.

3 The dot on the horizon

Players look out for each other, and anyone struggling gets support early, in the places they already spend time.

Four levels of change

4 What we'll do

5 What will change

6 How we'll know

Individual

Do people understand why, feel able to act, and feel recognised for it?

Psychological first aid training built for online spaces, plus short refreshers.

Captains and training leads know the signs, feel confident to start a conversation and know where to signpost.

Confidence and knowledge before and after training; supportive conversations logged.

Culture

Do peers and leaders model it? Is it becoming normal?

Esports societies and pro teams adopt the training; captains take it and well-known gamers talk about it.

Checking in on someone becomes a normal part of the community.

A short community survey on norms; how many societies and teams take part.

Structures

Do roles, policies, incentives and rewards back it up?

Build links with universities, set clear standards and expectations, and recognise groups that engage well.

Support is part of the role, not an extra, and it gets noticed.

Guidelines updated; share of training leads and coaches trained and active.

Infrastructure

Do tools, systems and support make it easy to do?

On-demand training to remove barriers, an online peer support community and clear information.

Getting someone the right help takes minutes, not guesswork.

Uptake of on-demand training; applications for accreditation.

7 What must be true?

Society members and pro teams must have the time and the will to engage. Communities welcome mental health conversations. Least sure: whether captains will take it on.

8 Who benefits, and who could lose out?

Players gain most. Training leads and team captains carry the cost, so build in support for them too. Risk: training becomes a tick-box, so track conversations, not attendance.

9 Check your activities

- ✓ **Open minds:** gamers talking about it
- ✓ **Embed knowledge:** peer support community
- ✓ **Provide training:** first aid course
- ✓ **Normalise:** recognise engaged groups