



**Our time  
to think**

## **Action learning sets...**

...space for learning, reflecting, taking action and supporting each other...

## **...information pack**

Run by Yes We Can



For Thriving Communities Learning Together



# Our time to think action learning sets

*Our time to think* action learning sets are open to everyone part of the Thriving Communities network in the North East, North Cumbria and Yorkshire.

There are four *Our time to think* action learning sets and each set will meet four times between October 2022 and February 2023. We'll meet online using Zoom for all sessions.

The action learning sets are to give you time and space to think, plan, take action and learn with your peers to work through current problems and plan for the future. And also connect with each other and grow stronger networks in the region. We know time to reflect and work with peers on tricky problems can be in short supply for people in leadership roles. Our intention is to rebalance the scales.

By taking part in an action learning set we start with a simple intention, to share and explore together and in doing so give ourselves moments of safe space and time to restore our energy, gain clarity of our challenges and take action from a grounded state of mind.

The action learning sets are facilitated by Duncan O'Brien, Robert Laycock and Stephanie Cole from Yes We Can.

- ◆ Duncan [duncan@yeswecan.community](mailto:duncan@yeswecan.community)
- ◆ Robert [robert@yeswecan.community](mailto:robert@yeswecan.community)
- ◆ Stephanie [stephanie@yeswecan.community](mailto:stephanie@yeswecan.community)

## Yes We Can

Yes We Can develops social leadership in the north east. But we don't, and can't, do this alone. We're part of an ecosystem that supports and develops social leadership across our region. Together we work so our civil society is impactful, resilient and influential. We work with social leaders to be better leaders, managers, trustees, networkers, collaborators, facilitators, coaches and mentors. We offer training programmes, workshops, coaching, mentoring, facilitation and other initiatives.

The Yes We Can team is Robert Laycock, Stephanie Cole, Duncan O'Brien, Cath Brown and Marie Foalle. We've been working together since 2016.

## Stay in touch with us

[www.yeswecan.community](http://www.yeswecan.community)  
Twitter/Medium @ywccommunity

# Our 2022-23 *Our time to think* programme

Here are the dates and times for the four *Our time to think* action learning sets.

Set	Set One	Set Two	Set Three	Set Four
Day	Tuesdays	Wednesdays	Thursdays	Fridays
Dates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 25 October, 9:30-12:30</li> <li>● 22 November, 9:30-12:00</li> <li>● 24 January, 9:30-12:00</li> <li>● 21 February, 9:30-12:30</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 26 October, 14:30-17:30</li> <li>● 30 November, 9:30-12:00</li> <li>● 25 January, 14:30-17:00</li> <li>● 22 February, 9:30-12:30</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 20 October, 9:30-12:30</li> <li>● 17 November, 13:00-15:30</li> <li>● 19 January, 13:00-15:30</li> <li>● 23 February, 9:30-12:30</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 21 October, 9:30-12:30</li> <li>● 18 November, 9:30-12:00</li> <li>● 20 January, 9:30-12:00</li> <li>● 17 February, 9:30-12:30</li> </ul>
With	Robert	Stephanie	Duncan	Stephanie

Please only sign up to an action learning set if you know at the time of joining you can attend all four sessions and, as much as you are able, are confident you can protect this time in your diary for you to think, reflect and grow. We ask you to commit to this when you sign up.

To sign up to an action learning set, use our online form <https://forms.gle/nH36hw9tfWqYehkq5> to choose your preferred dates. The closing date is **Friday 14 October 2022**.

# What is action learning?

Action learning sets are confidential and safe reflective learning spaces to explore topics and subjects that are important to you with support from peers and with guidance from a skilled and experienced facilitator. It is a continuous process of learning and reflection working on real issues with the support of a group or 'set' of peers with the intention of getting things done. You learn with and from each other, and take action with each others' support.

Action learning sets bring people together to

- work on and through problems or opportunities of managing and organising
- work on problems that personally engage set members
- check individual perceptions of the problem to clarify and make it more manageable and to create and explore alternatives to action
- take action in the light of new insight
- provide the balance of support and challenge
- be aware of group processes and develop effective teamwork

Professor Reg Revans developed action learning as a formal approach in the early 80s, based on his work with the Coal Board in the 1940s, to help people

- learn from experience
- share that experience with others
- have colleagues constructively critique and share knowledge and/or experience
- take action and implement it
- review actions taken and lessons learned

# What is reflective learning?

Action learning sets are a form of reflective learning. Reflective learning

- offers the opportunity to think about the work you are doing, as you do it, or after you have done it.
- allows us to change and develop our style and practice
- offers a greater or deeper degree of processing of material to be learned
- challenges assumptions and tests out our ideas
- surfaces our thoughts, assumptions, feelings and attitudes
- raises our awareness of thoughts and feelings and brings unconscious to conscious
- helps turn experience into learning

# What are the guiding principles for *Our time to think* action learning sets?

The principles guiding the *Our time to think* action learning sets are

- 1. Your learning at the centre** Because action learning sets put you at the centre of your learning, it respects you, where you're coming from, your values and your right to learn at your own pace in a non-hierarchical, democratic environment. We are person-centred and create an environment of respect, empathy, genuineness and unconditional positive regard
- 2. Confidential and trusting environment** We create and come together in a confidential and trusting environment, where it is safe to be open and vulnerable and to know learning starts with not knowing. We agree how we'll work together by creating ground rules
- 3. Learning together as resourceful equals** We work together as equals, knowing we are each resourceful, listening without judgement, helping each other discover our own solutions, without giving advice. We are supportive and challenging with each other
- 4. Time and space for you to think and reflect** It gives you time, space (and permission, if you need it) to think about and reflect on yourself and your work. For some this may mean the set is a place of calm, reflection and sanity, a haven from chaos and busy-ness, a chance to slow down
- 5. Focus on action and change** We support each other to work on our current real life issues, to explore, understand, judge and learn from our situation and experiences, to realise our feelings, and decide to take action
- 6. Collaborative, collective and reciprocal** We learn with and from each other, and we share the time equally
- 7. Being your whole self** It involves the whole person, your feelings and values as well as thoughts and skills
- 8. Open and shared learning process and practice** It is an open, collaborative, shared learning process. We spend time together learning and reflecting on this process to improve our practice both within the set and outside

We will review these together in session 1.

# What is the action learning process?

We meet regularly together in a group (a set) of up to around eight people for an agreed time. For the *Our time to think* action learning sets, we meet for four sessions. The format or process for a typical session is shown below. The first and last sessions will be a little longer and a little different as we look to start well and make connections with each other and end well by reflecting on our learning together.



1. Check in
2. Agree agenda and running order, agreeing which set member will bring their issue
3. Share and review progress from last time
4. *Our time to think* see page 6 for this process
5. Review action learning set process
6. Check out
7. Take action outside the set

## Our time to think process



1. You share your issue, challenge or opportunity
2. Set members clarify the issue by asking clarifying questions
3. Set members help you to think using open questioning and active listening
4. You agree your actions
5. You and set members review learning

# How will the *Our time to think* action learning programme work?

There are four *Our time to think* action learning sessions: sessions 2 and 3 will follow the action learning set process shown on pages 5 and 6 above, and sessions 1 and 4 will be slightly longer with extra elements to start and end the programme well. There will be eight opportunities to present issues so we'll need to work out together how we share the time between us all.

1

*Our time to think*: Getting started with action learning including

- learning about each other and forming ourselves as a group
- agreeing our ground rules for how we'll work together
- *Our time to think* x 2 (two people to present their issue)
- reflecting on the session

2

*Our time to think* session including

- agreeing who will present today
- sharing and reviewing progress from last time
- *Our time to think* x 2 (two people to present their issue)
- reflecting on the session

3

*Our time to think*: Ending action learning well including

- agreeing who will present today
- sharing and reviewing progress from last time
- *Our time to think* x 2 (two people to present their issue)
- reflecting on the *Our time to think* programme
- agreeing your next steps as a set

4