

A GUIDE TO PROTOTYPING NEW IDEAS



NESTA Making Innovation Flourish thinkpublic







- p 4 INTRODUCTION TO PROTOTYPING
- p 6 CHECKLIST
- p 8 THE PROCESS DIAGRAM

#### p 10 DOING THE GROUNDWORK

- p 12 IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITY
- p 14 BUILD YOUR TEAM
- p 16 MAP EXISTING SERVICES
- p 18 CHOOSE A LOCATION TO TEST
- p 20 IDENTIFY TARGET USERS
- p 22 GENERATE IDEAS
- p 24 PAUSE POINT 1

#### p 26 PROTOTYPING PHASE 1

- p 28 CREATE A SET OF PROTOTYPES
- p 30 TEST PROTOTYPES
- p 32 EVALUATE
- p 34 PAUSE POINT 2

#### p 36 PROTOTYPING PHASE 2

- p 38 LIVE PROTOTYPE PLANNING
- p 40 ITERATE AS YOU PROTOTYPE
- p 42 EVALUATE
- p 44 PAUSE POINT 3

#### p 46 EVALUATE AND ENTERPRISE

- p 48 CREATING A BLUEPRINT
- p 51 FOR MORE INFORMATION

#### WHAT ACTUALLY IS PROTOTYPING?

Prototyping is an approach to developing, testing, and improving ideas at an early stage before large-scale resources are committed to implementation. It is a way of project and team working which allows you to experiment, evaluate, learn, refine and adapt. Ensuring that ideas are fully explored before any conclusions are drawn.

#### Prototyping:

- Involves relevant people at an early stage
- Develops ideas with the people who will help you find the answers
- Makes ideas tangible and tests them
- Refines those ideas
- Informs and improves any eventual project framework for change

#### WHY WOULD I USE A PROTOTYPING APPROACH?

- Prototyping allows you to try out your ideas without the pressure of getting everything right straight away.
- Prototyping also enables you to involve a wide range of stakeholders in the testing process, providing a better understanding of how your ideas will work.
- Compared to a pilot, prototyping is a low cost process and can be done within short to medium timescales.
- Prototyping also provides an iterative learning approach so ideas can develop as you go along.

You should think about prototyping before you start thinking about piloting. Prototyping is not an alternative to piloting. It helps you build a better specification for what a pilot might be. It may even help you see that your idea isn't going to work and save you the time and cost of a pilot.

#### **HOW DO I DO IT?**

The prototyping process outlined in this document was developed through the Prototype Barnet project which used this process to build and test a proposed new service called Community Coaches.

Depending on what you are prototyping you may find different stages of this process are more relevant than others, but the diagram provides a framework from which you can structure your own approach.

During the Prototype Barnet project, many of the stakeholders felt the language around prototyping was inaccessible. So we asked some people from the council to share a story of where they had prototyped something in their own life.

"When cooking a new recipe I prototype. I try the recipe on myself first, and make small changes as I go along, adding more flavour here and there, and writing in my recipe book what I would change next time. I'd then try the recipe out again with some friends making the changes I'd learnt the first time, and see how they like it.

I would probably just keep making small changes to recipes until I found the perfect combination of flavours. It is rare that you'd get it right first time"





"I recently prototyped my journey to work. I moved house and wanted to know the best route in, so I tested out three modes of transport. The first day I got the train, the second day I took the bus, the third day I cycled. I wanted to know which was quicker, cheaper, and which was most enjoyable. Cycling turned out to be the cheapest and the nicest, so I've opted for that, except on Tuesdays when I need to be early, so I use the train... we test things out all the time, without calling it prototyping"

#### **BEFORE YOU BEGIN**



#### HAVE YOU COME UP WITH **IDEAS FOR CHANGE BUT** YOU WANT TO EXPLORE AND TEST THESE IDEAS?

Yes

No

If you have answered no, you are not ready to prototype. You should only prototype once you have an idea or opportunity in mind.

#### HAVE YOU GOT LOTS **OF QUESTIONS ABOUT** YOUR IDEA?

Yes No

If you have answered no, stop thinking you have all the answers, the chances are you don't know it all. Prototyping will help you learn from others and build on your existing knowledge.

ARE YOU OPEN TO LEARNING ABOUT THE GOOD, AND THE BAD BITS OF YOUR IDEA?

Yes

No

If you have answered no, then you are not yet ready to prototype. Prototyping demands a mind-set that is open to learning and open to change.

ARE YOU COMFORTABLE WITH THE IDEA IT MIGHT **NOT WORK?** 

Yes

No

If you have answered no, then you are definitely not yet ready to prototype. When prototyping, learning what doesn't work is just as valuable as learning what does.

**HAVE YOU GOT TIME AND** RESOURCE TO ENABLE YOU TO PROTOTYPE YOUR IDEA **APPROPRIATELY?** 

Yes

No

If you have answered no, you will need time and you will need resources. Talk to your manager or the people you work with to ensure that you can secure the time and support required and run a prototyping project.

#### HAVE YOU GOT PERMISSION FROM SENIOR MANAGEMENT TO START THIS PROJECT?

Yes

No

If you have answered no, it is really important you are supported to prototype. It is important to get their support at the start so plan a conversation with your senior management into the process.

ARE YOU OPEN TO TRYING A NEW WAY OF WORKING AND PERSISTING WHEN IT GETS DIFFICULT?

Yes

No

If you have answered no, toughen up. It'll be hard, but it should be fun, and it'll definitely be interesting!

ARE YOU READY TO GET CREATIVE AND MAKE THINGS HAPPEN?

Yes

No

If you have answered no make sure you or someone on your team has the creative

energy to drive the project forward. It is important to approach prototyping with a proactive 'can do' attitude. Less talk, more doing.

If you answered yes to most or all of those questions then you are ready to crack on.

EMBRACE IT.
KEEP GOING.
ENJOY THE PROCESS.

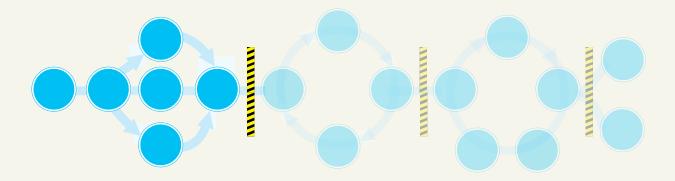


Barnet Council staff and partners prototyping boats.

PROTOTYPE PLANNING:



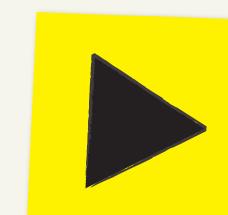
#### PROTOTYPING PHASE 1 PROTOTYPING-PHASE 2 **LEARN DOING THE GROUNDWORK** AND Doing upfront work to get people and ideas ready Testing the specification **EVALUATE** To build a specification You have ideas but are unsure how each element You have a clear idea about the way the service or touchpoint of the service would function, should function and feel, and are ready to test that you need to test, learn and refine the service. in the real world. **TEST THE** PROTOTYPES MAP PEOPLE **RUN SMAL** WITH USERS LIVE AND PLACES **PROTOTYPE** CREATE A BUSINESS CASE. **IDENTIFY** CREATE SET OF PROTOTYPES **BUILD OBSERVE** GENERATE IDEAS PPORTUNITIES IDENTIFIED PROTOTYPE PLANNING GET REGULAR FEEDBACK TARGET USERS YOUR AND GAIN TEAM FEEDBACK **MEASURE** THE IMPACT **EVALUATE** CHOOSE LOCATION THE TESTS AND FEEDBACK **EVALUATE** ITERATE AS APPROPRIATE TO TEST SERVICE IMPACT PAUSE POINT 1 **PAUSE POINT 2 PAUSE POINT 3 Proof of Concept** Build for wider engagement Decision Making PROTOTYPING THE BUSINESS MODEL



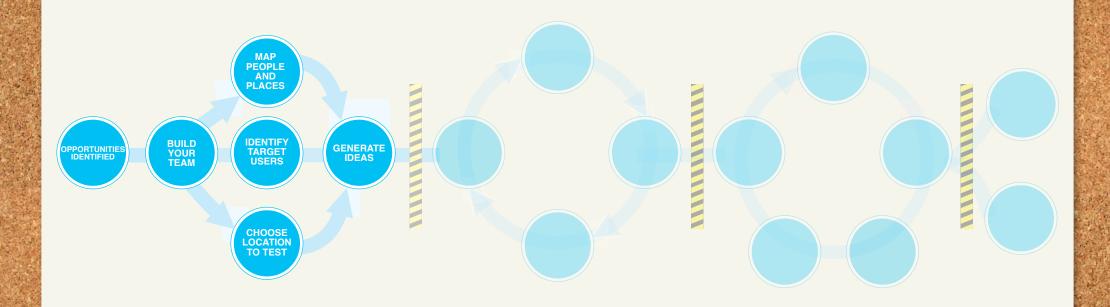
# DOING THE GROUND WORK

Getting people and ideas ready to prototype





#### WHERE YOU ARE



# IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITY

#### WHY?

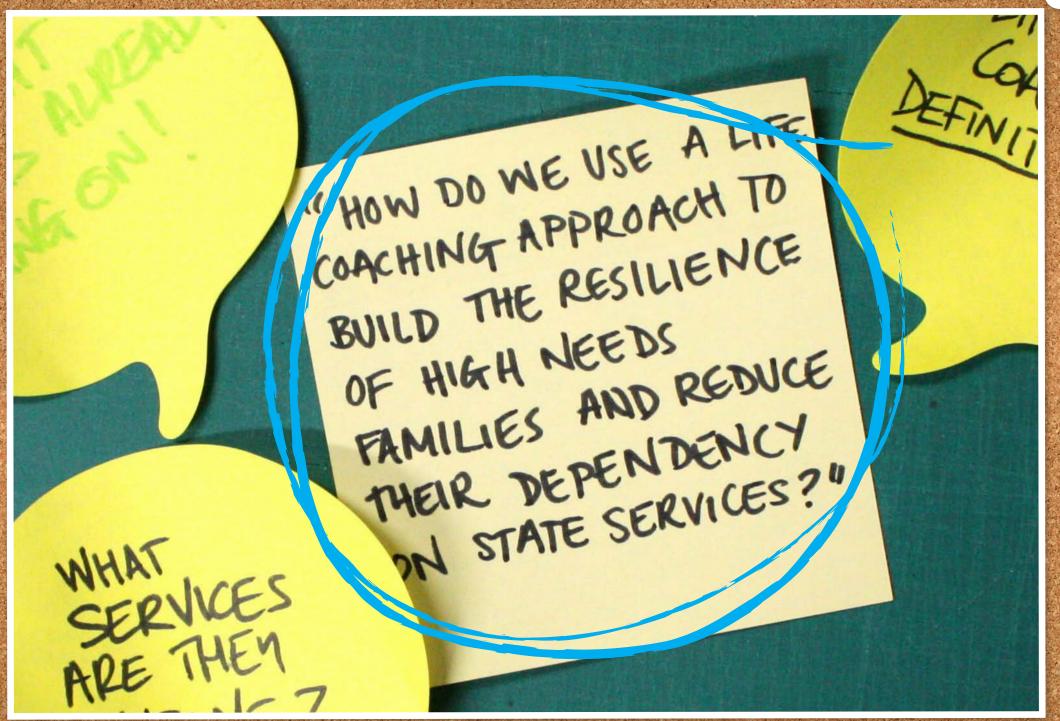
- Before you start a prototyping project you must have identified an opportunity.
   You need to be able to explain what you want to change, why you want to change it, and how it will benefit service users.
   Better still if you can also identify what will be different as a result of the prototype.
- This will help you get the project off to a good start and help shape the vision and objectives for your project team.

#### HOW?

- Give yourself time to read through any previous research, and talk to any relevant experts to make sure you fully understand the context of this opportunity.
- You might want to turn the opportunity into a question or mission statement to help you frame your work.

#### TOP TIP

Don't rush into prototyping before you are ready. To make it work you need a good solid starting point and a clear vision for what you are trying to achieve.



#### BUILD YOUR TEAM

## BUILDING A TEAM AROUND THE OPPORTUNITY

#### WHY:

It is important to build a strong and diverse team around your opportunity, involving people who can offer different and relevant expertise.

You may need to involve certain community groups to ensure they are involved in the project from the start. You may need to involve commissioners or decision makers to ensure ideas respond to the need and will be affordable. You may want to involve people who have previous experience of the subject or of prototyping.

All of these people will help give you feedback to make your prototyping a success.

#### HOW:

Think about who needs to be involved from all angles; service users, service deliverers, experts, senior leaders.

- Who has knowledge and expertise in the subject?
- Who are the commissioners or decision makers who will be key to making your idea happen?
- Who will be using or delivering this idea in the future?
- Who has the passion, creativity, and drive to make this project a success?

## WHO SHOULD I PROTOTYPE WITH?

Try to involve everyone who will be affected.

- Service users
- Deliverers
- Commissioners
- Relevant community organisations

#### DOWNLOADABLE TOOLS

1:WHO TO INVOLVE

1.1 TEAM PERSONA CARDS

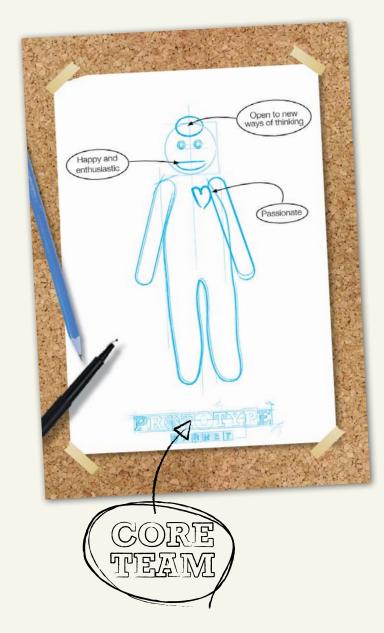
1.2 ACTIVITY SHEET

See Additional Resources on page 51

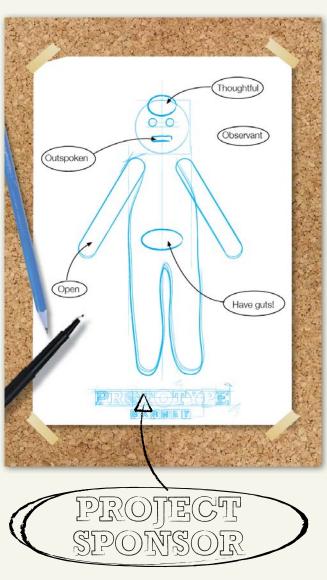


Make sure you keep the Core Project team quite small. This team need to get their hands dirty doing the work, not just sit in a room talking.

It is important you get people involved who have the right values and attitude, this is as important as their skills and experience. We created three team persona cards to help you identify the right people for the job.



Their job is to help build, run and test the prototype.



Their job is to champion the project and help remove barriers.



Their job is to cast a critical eye over the process and ask challenging questions.



# MAP EXISTING SERVICES

#### WHY:

To get a clearer idea of what is currently happening, where there are gaps and overlaps and what you can learn from them.

It will also help inspire you about the different models currently being used.

#### HOW:

A lot of this information will be available on-line. You could also talk to expert individuals or organisations who can help you build this picture.

And don't just think about council services. Consider who is active in the community and where informal services might be on offer?

# **TOP TIP** Make sure you talk to people who know the area you are focussing on. There will be a lot of knowledge and information locked up inside people's brains.



# CHOOSE A LOCATION TO TEST

#### WHY:

A test site will enable you to have one consistent place were you can run your testing. This could be a community, a building, a website, or a department within the council.

#### HOW:

By having a clear idea of the opportunity you should be able to identify a suitable test site. Link with other individuals and organisations who have knowledge in the test site to help you create the right connections.

#### TOP TIP

If your test site is a physical place, make sure you go visit and talk to people about what you are doing. It is important that from the start of your project people are kept updated on what you are doing and why. The more people who understand your objectives, the more support you will receive.









# IDENTIFY TARGET USERS

#### WHY:

In order to test your idea with the right people, you must identify up-front who you will need to involve in the prototyping. While some prototyping activities could be done internally within the project team, there will be some that require a wider test group.

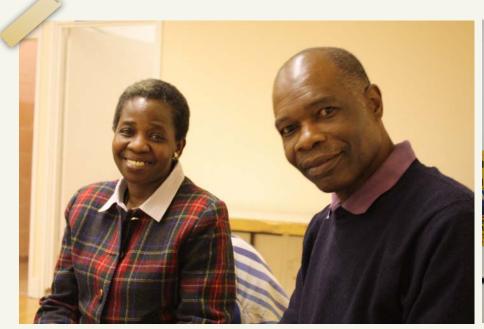
#### HOW:

Use trusted links into networks and communities to help you identify and connect with the right people. When deciding who to involve in the testing, think about;

- Who might be involved in the service/idea in the future?
- Who knows the target group well and would have insight to share?
- Who has experience and knowledge that will build your knowledge of the idea?

#### **TOP TIP**

Make the most of the trusted links that are already established across communities and within networks. You will not always be the right person to establish those relationships.









# GENERATE IDEAS

#### WHY:

Before you start prototyping you will need to turn your opportunity into an idea. You will not be able to prototype something that is not a defined idea.

#### HOW:

Get people within your team together to attend a brainstorming session. Use the research you have around your opportunity to inspire their thinking.

Encourage the team to think differently and generate bold and innovative ideas. You could get an external facilitator to help you in the session, to challenge the team to think differently. You could also try running the session in a different place, somewhere people find unfamiliar and inspiring.

#### DOWNLOADABLE TOOLS

# 2: THE 6 THINKING HATS de Bono

See Additional Resources on page 51

#### **TOP TIP**

It is really important that you don't start prototyping too soon.

There is nothing wrong with taking time to further develop your thinking and define some ideas before you start.





### PAUSE POINT 1

#### BEFORE YOU START TO PROTOTYPE YOUR IDEA(S), YOU NEED TO PROVE THE CONCEPT.

A Proof of Concept is a demonstration of an idea which is usually still incomplete. This could be a verbal, written or visual demonstration, and is used to establish whether the idea is likely to work.

The idea must be formed enough that it can be communicated and tested, but not so locked down as to be inflexible.

It is also important here to start thinking about the sustainability and business model for your idea.

#### HOW

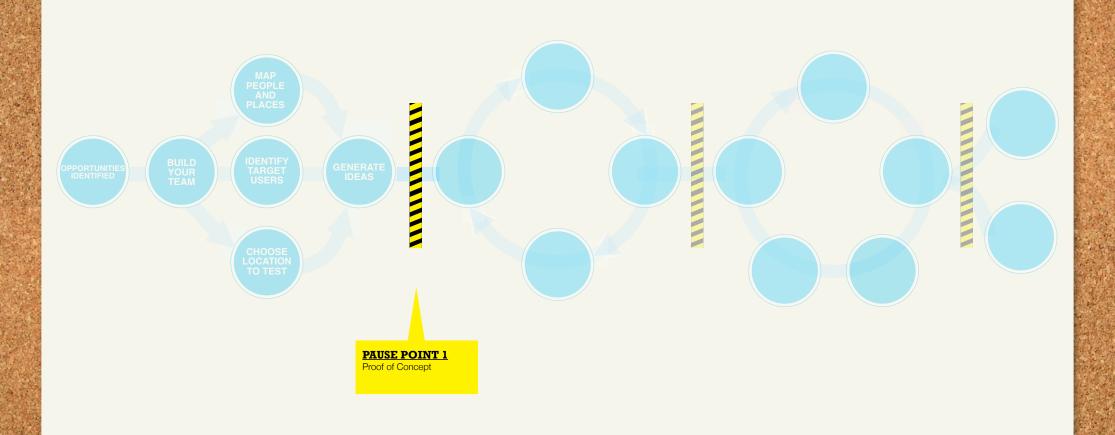
Select a group of people who will be able to offer you the insight required to prove the concept.

You will need to involve:

- The decision makers, the people who need to give you permission to take this idea into prototyping and beyond.
- Investors or commissioners who would know if there are resources to develop the idea, what kind of regulation might be expected, how saturated the market is, and what kind of demand there has been for similar products, as well as what sort of competition exists.

Once you have proved the concept with the relevant people, then the prototyping can begin.

#### WHERE YOU ARE



# PROTOTYPING PHASE ONE

### Building a specification

The purpose of this phase is to use prototyping to test different elements of your idea in order to build a clearer specification for your service/product.

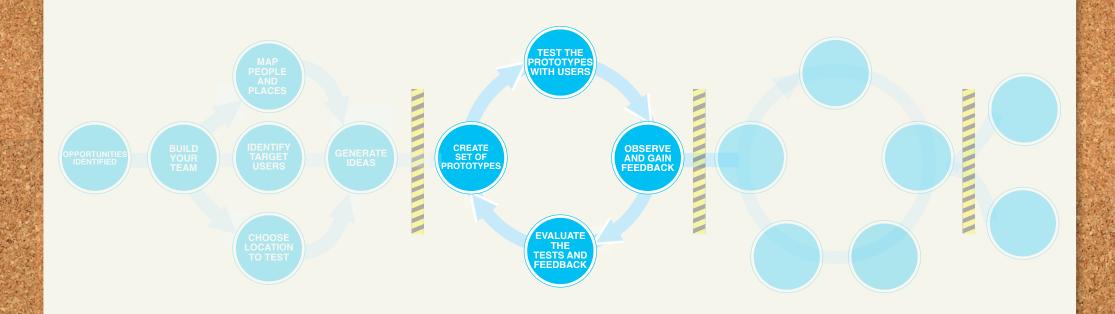
During this stage in the process you are really getting stuck into prototyping in different and creative ways.

This stage is deliberately drawn as a cycle, because of its iterative nature. You may need to go through this cycle of activities multiple times before you are ready to move into phase two.

If you were designing a chair for example, this is the stage where you would test out the materials used, the length of the legs, the angle of the seat etc. You are not yet ready to build the chair in its entirety.



#### WHERE YOU ARE



# CREATE A SET OF PROTOTYPES

#### WHY:

In order to clarify and test out your idea and elements of your idea with people, it is important to make prototypes that bring your idea to life. Making something tangible for people to see, touch, and understand.

#### HOW:

Firstly decide which parts of your service need further thought and clarification. Then decide which elements of the service you need to communicate and discuss with others. It is important to prioritise what you want to prototype according to what you most need to discover. You might be able to prototype everything all at once or you may need to break it down into very small chunks.

You can create your prototypes in a number of ways, at this stage it is all about making your ideas visual.

Below are two methods that have been used successfully in a local authority context in the past.

#### See it:

By making storyboards you can build a visual representation of a service idea, breaking down the service into stages which help structure both your explanation of your idea, and how people feed in their ideas.

A storyboard might not always be appropriate, it could be a simple sketch of your idea.

#### **Build it:**

By building low-tech models out of paper and other materials you can make a tangible product, space, or touch-point within a service. This helps people feel and see the idea.

Building materials can include plasticine, Lego and/or cardboard.

When creating prototypes in Barnet, we mocked up basic potential service environments by using Lego as service users and providers, and old shoe-boxes to create the rooms in which the service would be delivered.

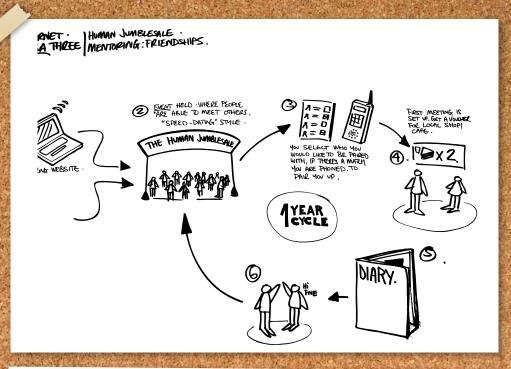
#### DOWNLOADABLE TOOLS

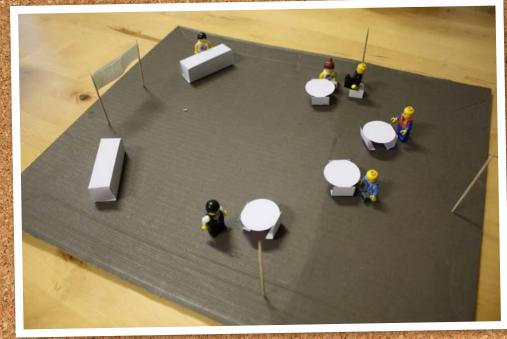
#### 3: STORYBOARD

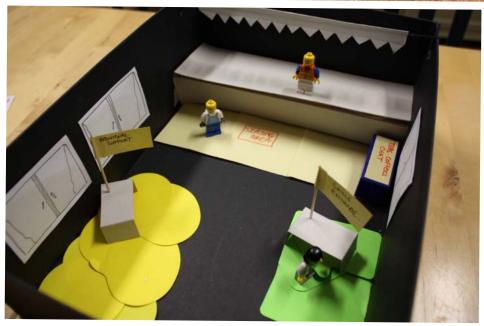
See Additional Resources on page 51

#### **TOP TIP**

You could think about involving other support at this stage to help you create the prototypes. A designer, for example, might be very helpful.









#### TEST AND GET FEEDBACK ON PROTOTYPES

#### WHY:

Testing your prototypes will help you gain feedback and insight on what works well and what can be improved. Feedback from the testing goes straight into re-designed prototypes. This can be a rapid process, with changes being made quickly along the way.

#### HOW:

Consider who you want to gain feedback from, including both service users and the people delivering a service. At this stage use the expertise in your wider stakeholder group to help you identify the right people to test with.

 Think about what information you want to gain from the testing and write a list to use as a reminder when undertaking the activities.  Capture key comments and insights using film, photos, written notes, a Dictaphone, drawings, or anything else which helps.

#### Act It:

Role play can be used as a method to help you and your group test out the idea.

For example, if you were prototyping a new way for the customer service staff to greet residents, you could get different people to role play the scenario, testing out different ways this could work.

This is a useful method to use internally if you are testing your ideas within your project team.

#### DOWNLOADABLE TOOLS

4. TESTING PLAN

4.1 ACTIVITY SHEET

4.2 TELEPHONE TEMPLATE

5. METHOD CARDS

See Additional Resources on page 51

#### **TOP TIP**

Make sure you capture the feedback from stakeholders in a way that is easy to analyse and use. You don't always need to facilitate a large testing event to make this work.

Keep it simple.



#### **EVALUATE**

THIS IS THE STAGE WHERE
YOU REVIEW YOUR LEARNING
FROM THE TESTING, AND USE
THIS LEARNING TO BUILD A
GREATER UNDERSTANDING
OF YOUR IDEA, AND MAKE A
MORE DEVELOPED NEW SET
OF PROTOTYPES.

#### WHY:

Prototyping is an iterative process, as you learn more, your idea will adapt and the testing can continue as these changes happen.

#### HOW:

After you have captured insight from the testing, you will need to come back together with your team, review the testing insights, spot opportunities for change, and re-do your prototypes.

Make sure you revisit the testing plan you created in the previous stage.

The testing can happen many times before you feel you have sufficient information to move into phase two.

#### **TOP TIP**

Don't take too long over this. This first phase of testing should feel rapid.





#### PAUSE POINT 2

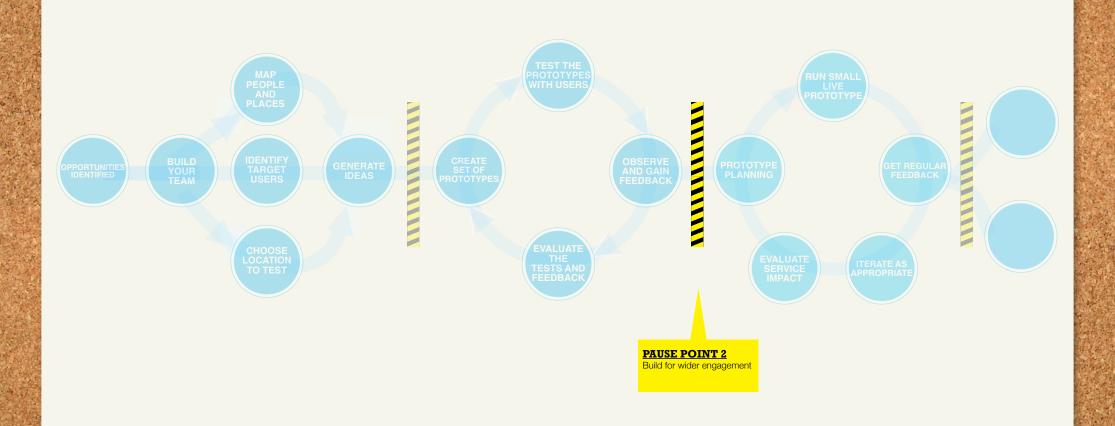
BEFORE YOU MOVE FROM PHASE ONE TO PHASE TWO YOU NEED TO KNOW WHETHER YOU HAVE ENOUGH INFORMATION TO LIVE PROTOTYPE.

# YOU ARE READY TO LIVE PROTOTYPE IF YOU:

- 1. Have a clear and complete specification of an idea.
- 2. Have the resource, capacity, and time to facilitate a live test.
- 3. Have answered most of your original questions.
- 4. Have a few well-defined questions still to explore.
- 5. Have senior buy-in, and agreement from key stakeholders (such as the decision makers and commissioners).
- 6. Understand the sustainability and business model.

Live prototyping is a chance to build your complete idea to test its functionality and impact. It is not a pilot, but is an opportunity to better understand how a larger-scale pilot would work, and how you would measure success.

#### WHERE YOU ARE



# PROTOTYPING PHASE TWO

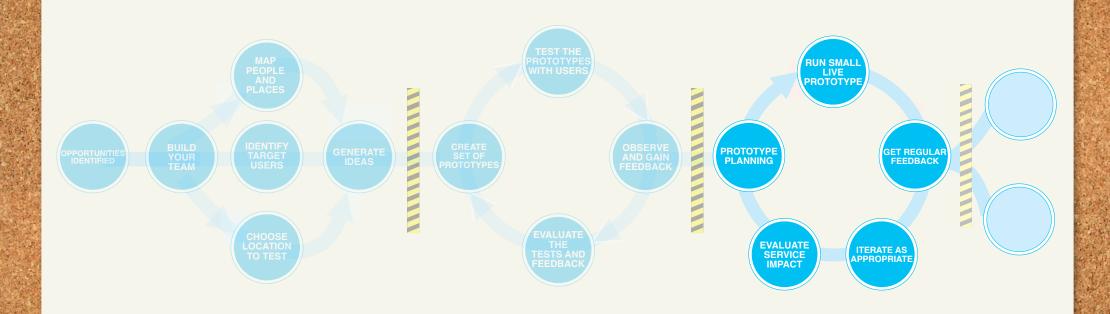
### Testing the specification

The purpose of this phase is to use all your learning from phase one to build a more complete model of your service/product to test in a real situation. This is called Live Prototyping.

If designing a chair for example, in phase one you would have learnt about the materials used, the length and angle of the legs, and height of the back and you are ready to build a complete chair. This phase would let you give the chair to your target consumer to test out over a period of time, and get much more in depth feedback.



## WHERE YOU ARE



## LIVE PROTOTYPE PLANNING

## WHY:

To plan how you want to gain more detailed feedback from users in a 'real world' environment about what works well and what can be improved.

## HOW:

Work with your team to build a complete specification of your idea, and turn this into a working model. This could be a product, or a service.

### MEASUREMENT:

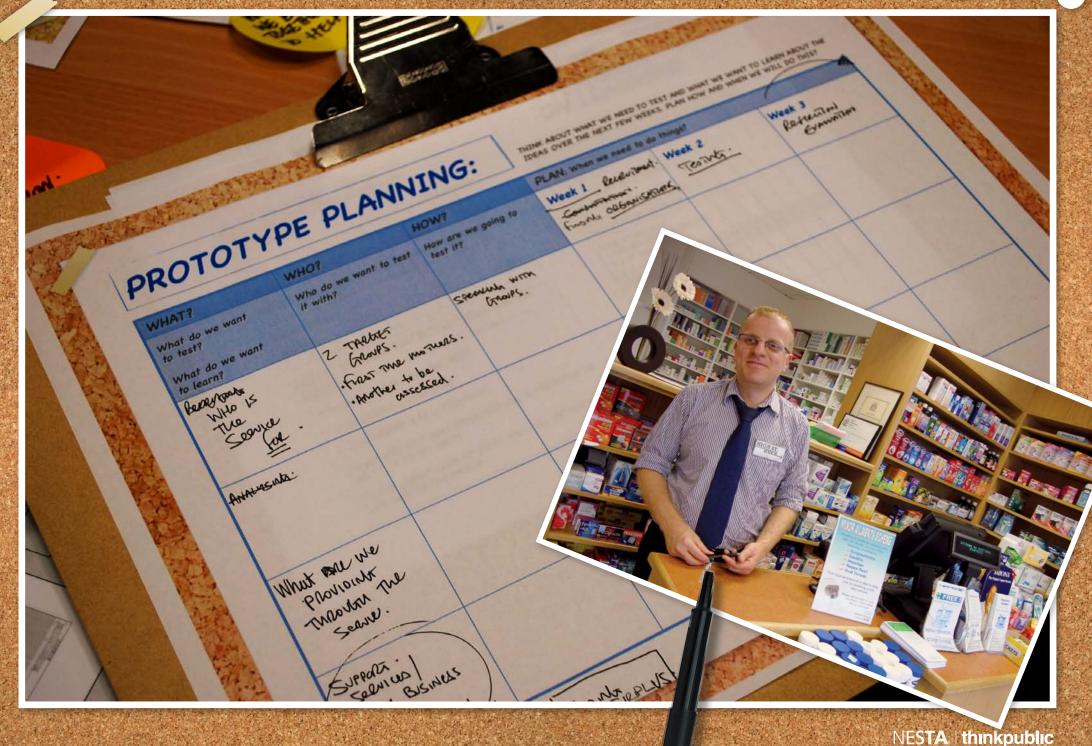
Identify what you want to test and how you will do this. There may be a number of things, and it is important that you keep focussed on these throughout the testing to ensure you are structuring your learning.

When you have identified what you want to test, think about how you will know you've achieved success. For example, when live prototyping the Community Coach service, one of the things we wanted to test was the support required by volunteers. Success would mean that the volunteers felt supported and self-confident and did not rely on support outside of the peer group.

Whilst this is happening, set up an internal meeting to plan potential business models Bring in key advisors and commissioners. Be focussed on what data you need to collect during live testing to support the business model and scale of your idea.

## TOP TIP

When Live Testing with real people, it is really important that your communication is clear and open. Tell people what you are testing, why and for how long. And don't make false promises. You are learning as you go and there is no guarantee that what you are testing will be a success.



## ITERATE AS YOU PROTOTYPE

## WHY:

During the Live Prototyping you should still feel able to quickly redesign and improve existing prototypes based on peoples' feedback and your observations.

## HOW:

Consider what is the best way to gain feedback on what works well and what can be improved.

Use different approaches to gain feedback; ask for people's verbal feedback, watch and observe people using the prototypes (often, what they say, think or will do, is different from how they actually interact).

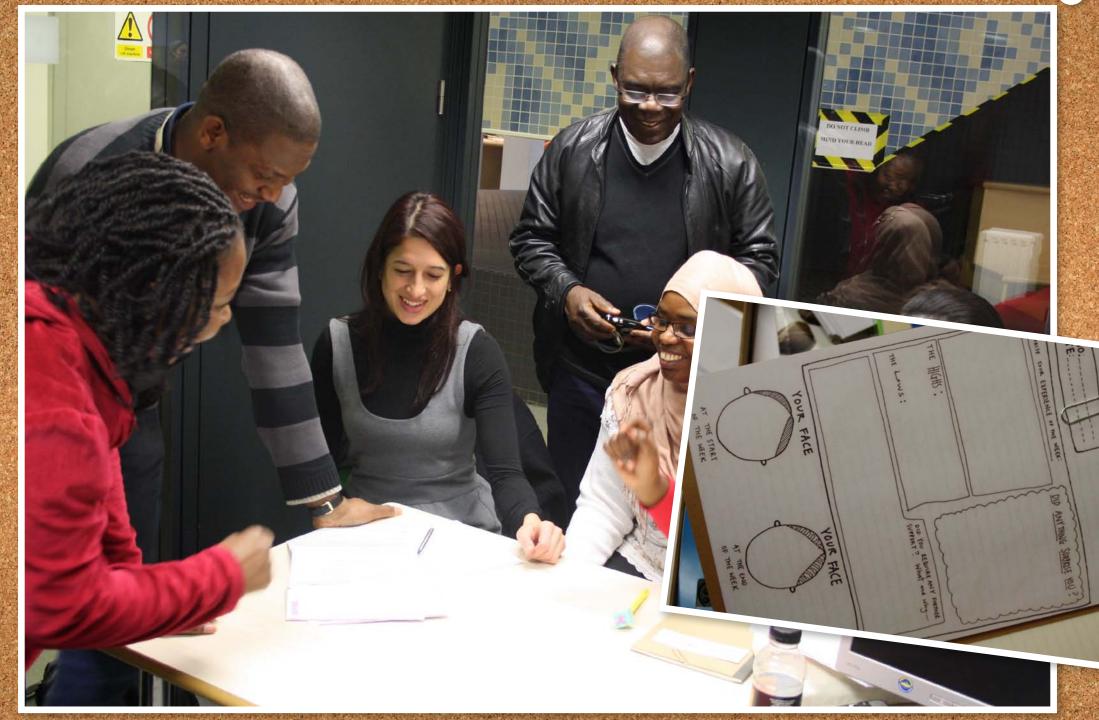
Take the key insights from the feedback and think about ways to redesign the service touch-point accordingly. For example based on feedback and observation of how the support for volunteers worked we were able to establish some of the most effective methods and levels of support.

## **TOP TIP**

If you engage many people in testing your idea, you may be getting a lot of feedback, which is often conflicting.

Take into account all feedback but make sure decisions are made based on the original opportunity

No service will ever please all people!



# EVALUATE AGAINST ORIGINAL TESTING PLAN

## WHY:

At this final stage you are in a position to pull all your learning together from phase one and two and make decisions about what your product or service should be and how it should work.

## HOW:

Bring your team back together for a reviewing insights working session. Include some outside influence in this session to bring a fresh perspective. It is likely you will be immersed in the project and fresh eyes will be useful.

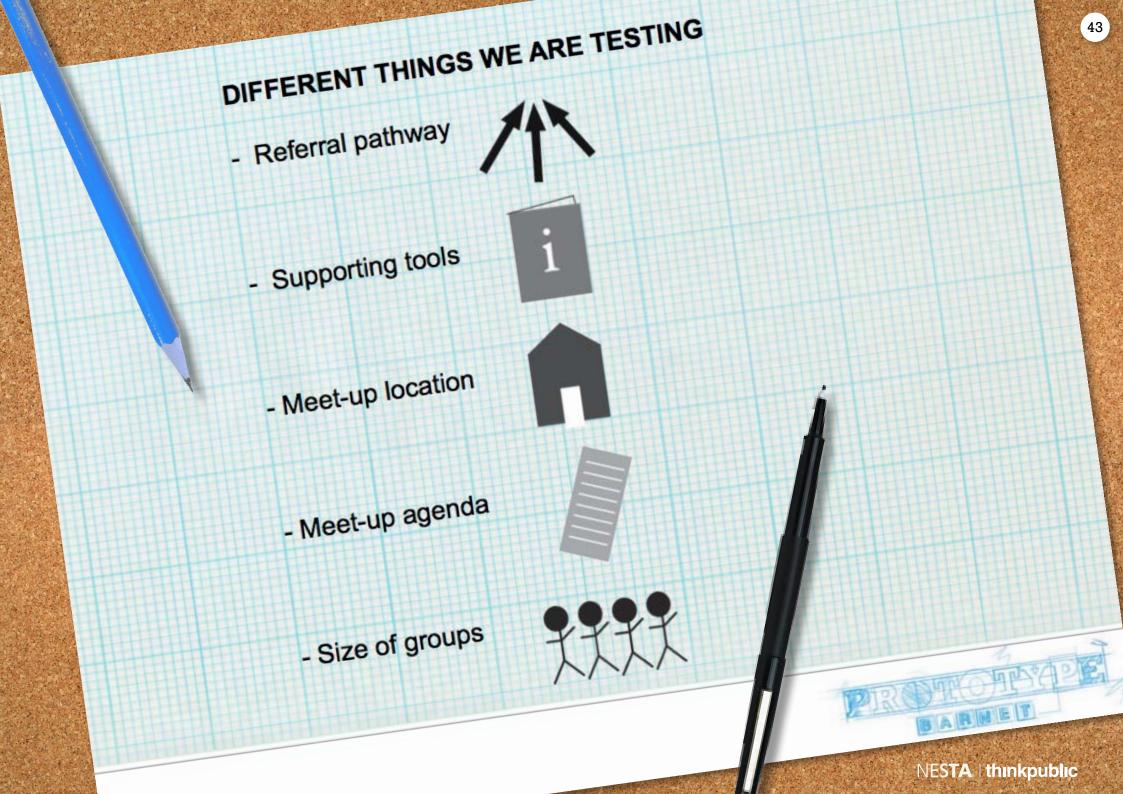
There will be a few conclusions to this session;

- 1. You have sufficient information and insight in order to build a final blueprint or business plan for your idea. This will move you to Pause Point Three.
- 2. You identify some areas where more information is needed, and you go through Phase Two again with a revised specification.
- 3. There are a great number of areas in the idea that need further development. Go through Pause Point One again into Phase One.

## **TOP TIP**

Make sure along the way you have captured insights in a structured way, it will make this stage a lot easier!

Don't worry if the prototype hasn't worked or if a decision is made not to pursue it. The point of prototyping is to learn about what works and what doesn't.





## PAUSE POINT 3

YOU HAVE DECIDED TO MOVE FORWARD TO THE FINAL DEVELOPMENT OF YOUR IDEA.

YOU FEEL YOU HAVE SUFFICIENT INFORMATION AND INSIGHT IN ORDER TO BUILD A FINAL BLUEPRINT OR BUSINESS PLAN FOR YOUR IDEA.

IT MAY BE BENEFICIAL TO PILOT YOUR SERVICE IN ORDER TO GET MORE DETAILED FEEDBACK.

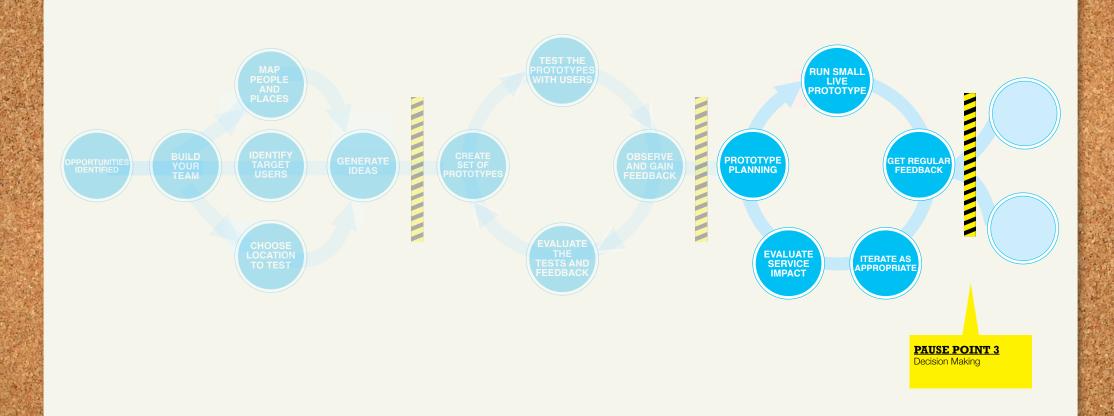
YOU WILL HOWEVER NEED TO RE-ENGAGE WITH THE KEY DECISION MAKERS AT THIS POINT TO ENSURE THAT THERE IS BUY-IN AND SUPPORT FOR TAKING YOUR IDEA OUT OF THE PROTOTYPING STAGE.

## WHEN SHARING YOUR WORK WITH THE DECISION MAKERS, ENSURE YOU ARE HAVE ANSWERS TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

- How has prototyping helped shape this product/service and ensure it is fit for purpose?
- 2. What is the demonstrable value of this new product/service?
- 3. How can it go from a prototype to a functioning product/service?
- 4. Who are the partners, what is the cost, where is the revenue?

There will be a number of things you will need to demonstrate before building your business plan; the Business Planning tool in the next section should help you.

## WHERE YOU ARE



# EVALUATE AND ENTERPRISE

## WHERE YOU ARE



## CREATING A BLUEPRINT/ BUSINESS PLAN

## WHY:

This stage will enable you to structure a plan for turning your product/service into a functioning model.

## HOW:

You should have pulled together the insights from the prototyping and testing and made decisions on the final design.

Use the Business Planning tool below to help frame your insights.

## DOWNLOADABLE TOOLS

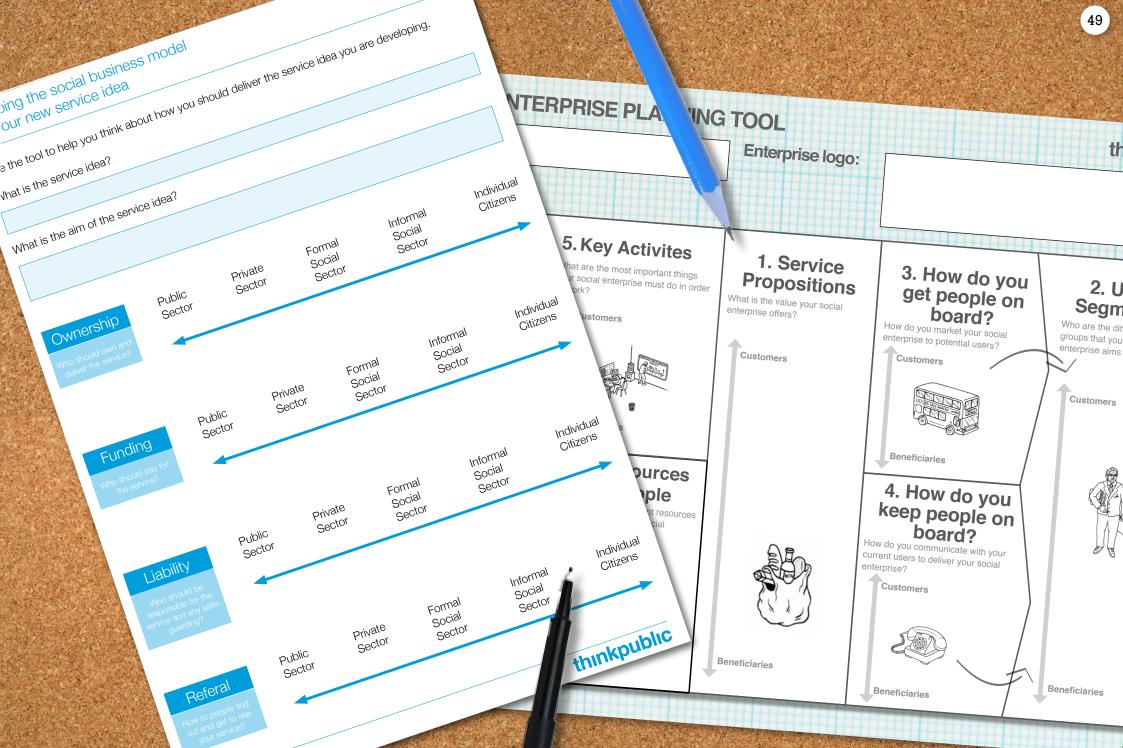
- 6. BUSINESS PLAN TEMPLATE
- **6.1 MAPPING SCALES**

See Additional Resources on page 51

## **TOP TIP**

Consider what information you need to communicate which is critical to the business model, don't try and squeeze everything into the final plan.

NESTA | thinkpublic



ONCO CHATTERIA
FOR REFERRAL

QUICK SET UP GUIDE

ONCO ALERT



What are we doing?

What are we doing?

What are we doing?

What are we doing as who case less began that the case less began as who case is the present inside to cover any place case in the present inside to cover any the same that the case deposed closer to be radie in the case.

What are we do the case in the present inside to cover any the case of the cas

OncoAlert Set up guide



## **Additional Resources:**

These additional resources were created as part of the Prototype Barnet project, this was supported by thinkpublic, NESTA and the Innovation Unit. They may help you to plan and carry out your prototyping activity.

## Pg. 14

1. Who to involve in Prototyping: http://www.nesta.org.uk/library/documents/Prototyping\_SPS\_v2.pdf

1.1 Team Persona Cards: http://www.nesta.org.uk/library/documents/1.pdf

1.2 Activity Sheet: http://www.nesta.org.uk/library/documents/1.1.pdf

## Pg. 22

2. The 6 Thinking Hats: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Six\_Thinking\_Hats

## Pg. 28

3. Storyboard: http://www.nesta.org.uk/library/documents/3.Storyboard.pdf

## Pg. 30

- 4. Testing plan: http://www.nesta.org.uk/library/documents/4TestingPlan.pdf
  - 4.1. Activity Sheet: http://www.nesta.org.uk/library/documents/4.1ActivitySheet.pdf
  - 4.2. Telephone Template: http://www.nesta.org.uk/library/documents/4.2TelephoneTemplate.pdf
- 5. Method Cards: http://www.nesta.org.uk/library/documents/5MethodCards.pdf

## Pg. 48

6. Business plan template:

http://www.nesta.org.uk/library/documents/6BusinessplanTemplate.pdf

6.1. Mapping scales http://www.nesta.org.uk/library/documents/6.1MappingScales.pdf

## For more information about prototyping:

http://thinkpublic.com/our-services/co-production-and-prototyping/

http://www.nesta.org.uk/publications/reports/assets/features/radical\_efficiency

http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/ about-design/how-designers-work/ design-methods/physical-prototyping/

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http://www.youngfoundation.org/our-work/ local-innovation/strands/local-governmentinnovation/innovation-methods-localgovernment/14

Prototyping in Public Services: An introduction to the use of prototyping in the development of public services. NESTA and the Innovation Unit.

