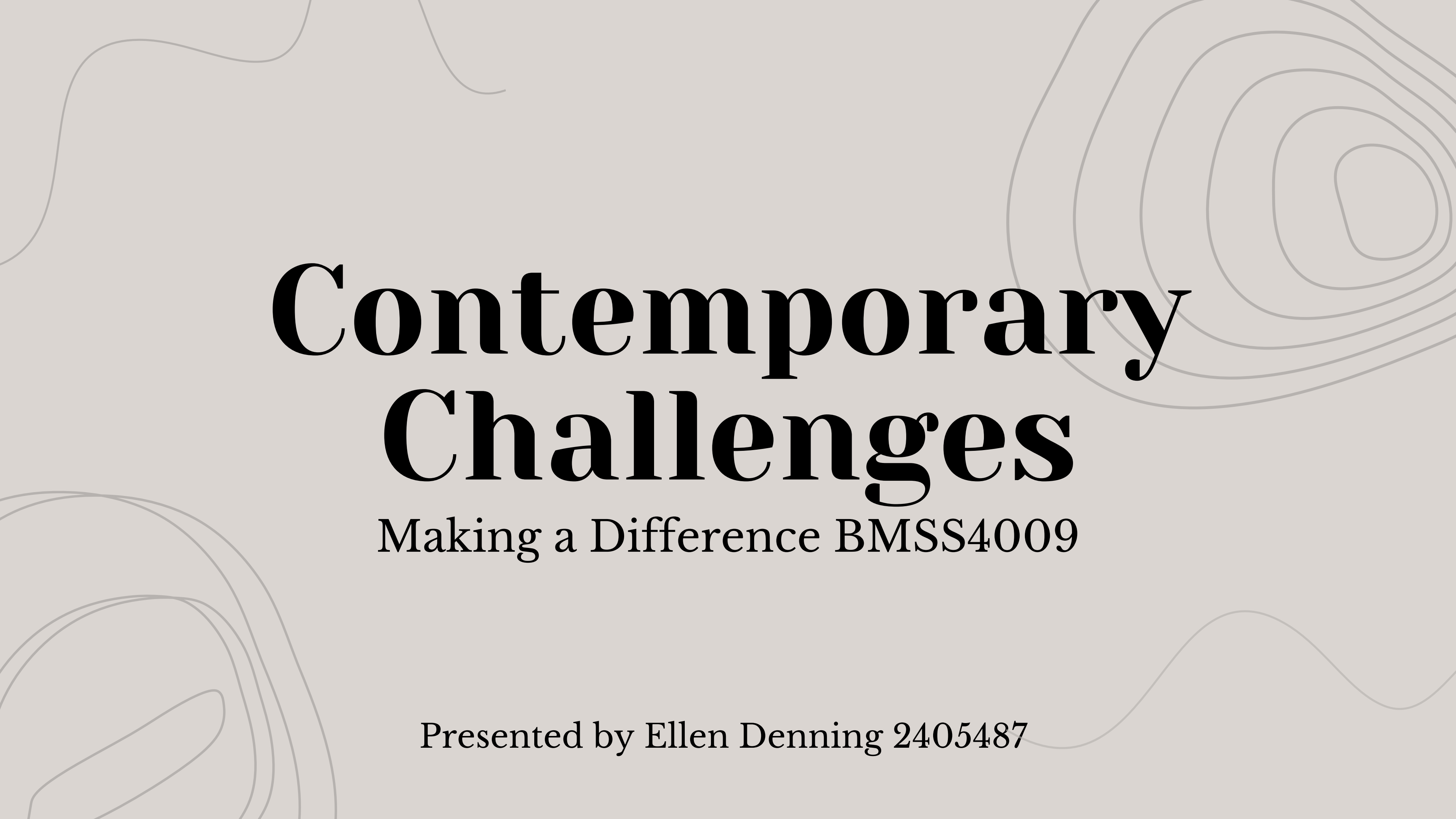




Contemporary Challenges

Making a Difference BMSS4009

Presented by Ellen Denning 2405487

Making a Difference

Introduction

Tree Planting at Cynefin

This activity, led by Maia from Aderyn Pembs, acted as a stimulus for a discussion around “Wicked Problems”.

This term was introduced by Design Theorists Horst Rittel and Melvin Webber who identified ten unique characteristics of these challenges that can exist on a global, national and local level and are especially difficult to resolve. (Rittel and Webber, 1973.) They include ever-changing features and therefore endless permutations with an unlimited number of solutions.



Making a Difference

Tree Planting at Cynefin

This task involved splitting into small groups and planting a variety of trees. There were aspects to consider before starting, such as species of tree, where to plant for the best outcome and how to prepare the site.

Some tree species such as willow like their roots to be in wet ground. Others, like birch, thrive when they are planted together in a grove. We discussed the fixed obstacles, such as fences and overhead powerlines around the planting area.

It became increasingly clear to the group that planning and preparation would be vital to give the sapling the best chance of growing successfully.

Making a Difference

Tree Planting at Cynefin

Once we had identified a viable place to plant our tree, we had to work as a team to prepare the ground for the sapling. A lot of long, tough grass had to be cleared away from the planting site. This made digging a large enough hole easier. Lastly, we marked out the newly planted sapling to prevent damage by strimming or trampling. Our teamwork was successful in creating a nurturing, protective environment.



Making a Difference

Tree Planting at Cynefin

The group generally agreed that the project engendered a feeling of wellbeing amongst the participants.

“There is increasing evidence that connecting to nature through biophilic pathways has the potential to increase total health”

according to Sheffield and Lumber (Donnelly et al., 2020 p.10). Physical activity outdoors can positively affect mood especially if connected to an intention to help protect the environment.

Making a Difference

Tree Planting at Cynefin



The activity generated ideas and discussion around wicked problems.

Carefully considering the best place for the tree could be compared to selecting the best place to target limited funds when setting up a community project.

It often seems that projects can get off to a good start but if that initial investment is not kept up as is the case when funding might be discontinued, then the benefit is short-lived and can even be abandoned. For example, the funding cuts to Natural Resources Wales. (Messenger and Bryer, 2024).

Making a Difference

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Making a Difference

Historical and Current Issue

National Initiative: The CAE

The “Migrant Crisis” can be viewed as an example of a Wicked Problem.

It is a complex issue with multiple factors that could make it difficult to solve, stemming from causes including conflict, persecution, climate change, poverty and hunger.

Using the model of What? So what? Now what? innovated by Kolb (Kolb, 2014), what follows is a personal reflection on the themes examined by the group, inspired by a visit from guest lecturers from The Cae.

Making a Difference

The CAE

Humans have moved around the globe for centuries, possibly thousands of years, sometimes to trade, find work or to escape impossible situations.

It is currently estimated that there are approximately **10,000 refugees living in Wales**, just 0.3% of the population.

Amnesty International defines an asylum seeker as “a person who has left their country and is seeking protection from persecution and serious human rights violations in another country” (Amnesty International, 2024).

Many of those people have attempted the journey here, taking huge risks, sometimes at great expense and tragically for those who perish in the attempt, paying the ultimate price with their lives.

Making a Difference

The CAE

Bearing in mind the traumatic events and dangerous environments that lead people to make the awful decision to leave their home, it is more than concerning to consider the hostility they might be met with when they arrive.

Held in poor conditions, claims can take an agonisingly long time to process. After that, refugees may find that they are not permitted to work, possibly leading to hardship, poverty or homelessness.

Once placed in the community, they may be treated with suspicion and experience racism.



Making a Difference

The CAE

The CAE is an organisation established in 2015, that works to help refugees to settle and become part of their community. Through training schemes and by facilitating social connections they,

“aspire to make Wales a vibrant hub of opportunities, growth and inclusivity, where diversity is celebrated, ambition is fostered and innovation supported”(Caentr, 2023).

This approach could be instrumental in improving the mental well-being of refugees and in helping them to build new lives.

Making a Difference

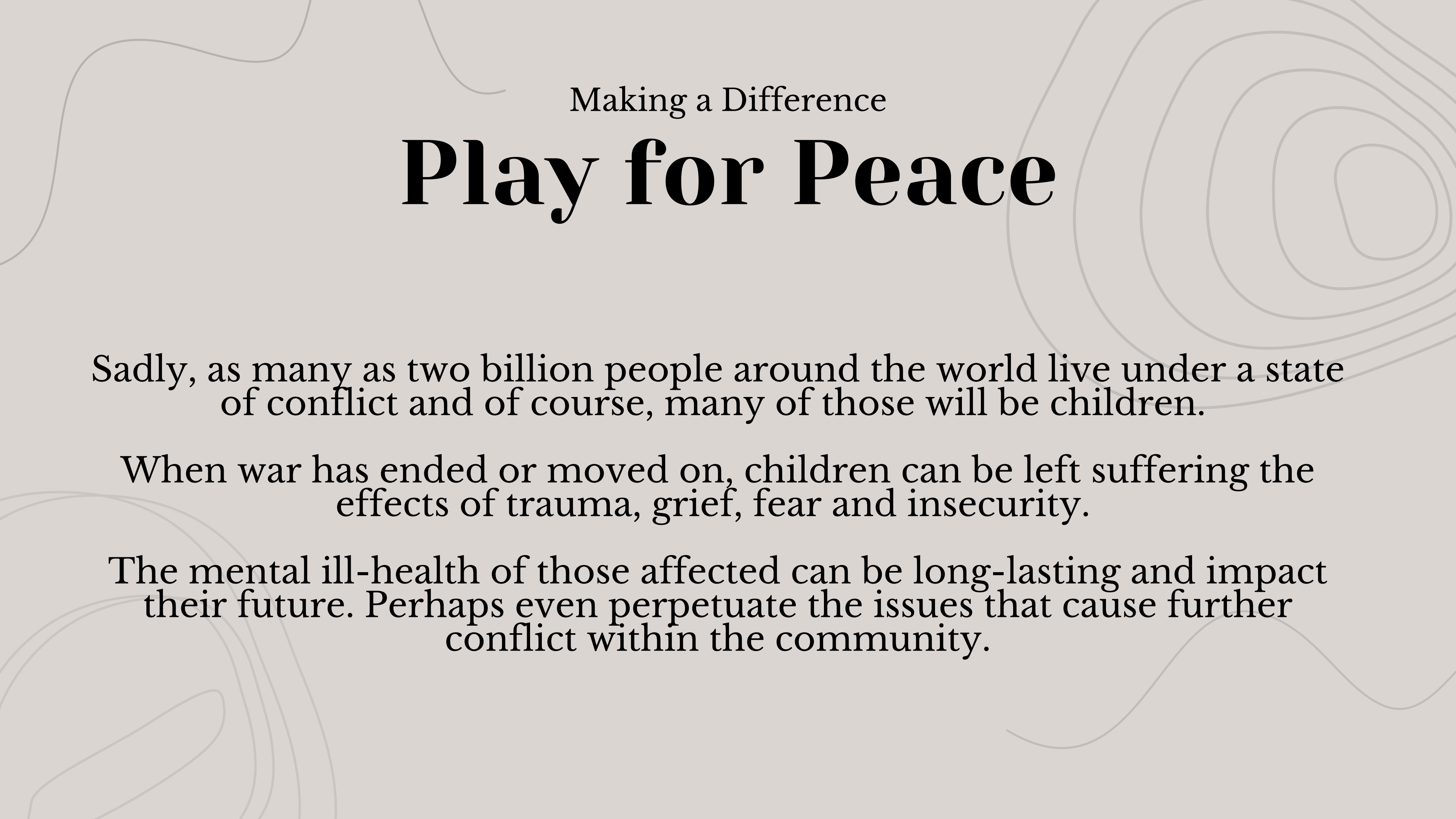
International Initiative

Play for Peace

Founded twenty-five years ago, Play for Peace is an organisation dedicated to promoting peace through compassion and cooperative play.

Their fundamental belief is that laughter and play help children recover from the effects of conflict.

It can be a powerful tool to enable connections between communities, unifying them and helping people from different backgrounds to find common ground.



Making a Difference

Play for Peace

Sadly, as many as two billion people around the world live under a state of conflict and of course, many of those will be children.

When war has ended or moved on, children can be left suffering the effects of trauma, grief, fear and insecurity.

The mental ill-health of those affected can be long-lasting and impact their future. Perhaps even perpetuate the issues that cause further conflict within the community.

Making a Difference

Play for Peace

Play for Peace aim to provide experiences that enable children to heal through co-operative games.

Local organisations provide volunteers and the infrastructure to deliver the activities, helping to build a culture of teamwork and trust.

By training young people, aged 15 to 25, around the world to become facilitators, they hope to spread compassion and peace.

For example, in India, where tensions around religious differences and the caste system can cause conflict to arise, the organisation has reported that when parents from varying backgrounds see their children playing together, making friends and having fun, it can form connections between the adults, helping to unite the community.

Making a Difference

Play for Peace

Playing and laughing have a direct effect on brain development and enhance cognitive growth and neuroplasticity, laying the foundation for learning.

“Beyond cognitive benefits, cooperative play fosters emotional intelligence by teaching empathy, self-regulation, and social interaction.” (Gough, 2024)

It reduces stress and anxiety, allowing a release of emotions in a safe and structured environment and promotes a sense of mindfulness and presence.

Making a Difference



HUTS (Help Us To Survive) therapeutic workshop is a charity in West Wales providing a range of activities and support for adults with learning difficulties and mental health concerns. The charity mainly works in partnership with the local health board.

Making a Difference

HUTS Case Study

Members are offered the opportunity to explore their creativity through artistic expression and a variety of crafts such as pottery, woodwork, jewellery and textiles.



Service users (members) are often referred by a GP at the Medical Centre.



Both men and women, from the age of eighteen can take advantage of the service.



The organisation (established in 1996) is almost entirely funded by grants and donations.

Making a Difference

HUTS Case Study

Personal Reflection

The friendly welcome from the staff immediately put me at ease and I imagined how a new attendee might feel, especially when walking into the building for the first time. Beautiful artwork created by the members is displayed on the walls, shelves and windowsills, showing how highly the organisation values and respects what is produced during the workshop sessions.

There is clearly a need for this type of safe and nurturing environment. A place where someone who may be struggling with depression, feelings of loneliness, stress or a lack of confidence, can be encouraged to express themselves creatively and connect with others in a calm, accepting space. Here the members are given support and provided with skills through social interaction to enable them to re-integrate back into the community.

Making a Difference

HUTS Case Study

While being shown around, I became aware of how important crafting in a workshop setting is to the supportive atmosphere.

In the printed leaflet a member is quoted as saying,

“...I’m not judged here”(Gweithdy, 2024).

The members sit alongside, rather than facing, each other, facilitating conversation in a less intimidating way. I was reminded of the time I was sat in a circle during a group counselling session and how difficult it felt to share information about myself. I felt exposed and self-conscious.



Making a Difference

HUTS Case Study



The organisation also has a “Call & Chat Service”. This phone line is manned by dedicated staff, from Monday to Friday between 10am – 4pm offering members the chance to have a confidential conversation.

Staff can signpost members to Advocacy groups, the Citizens Advice Bureau and other relevant organisations.

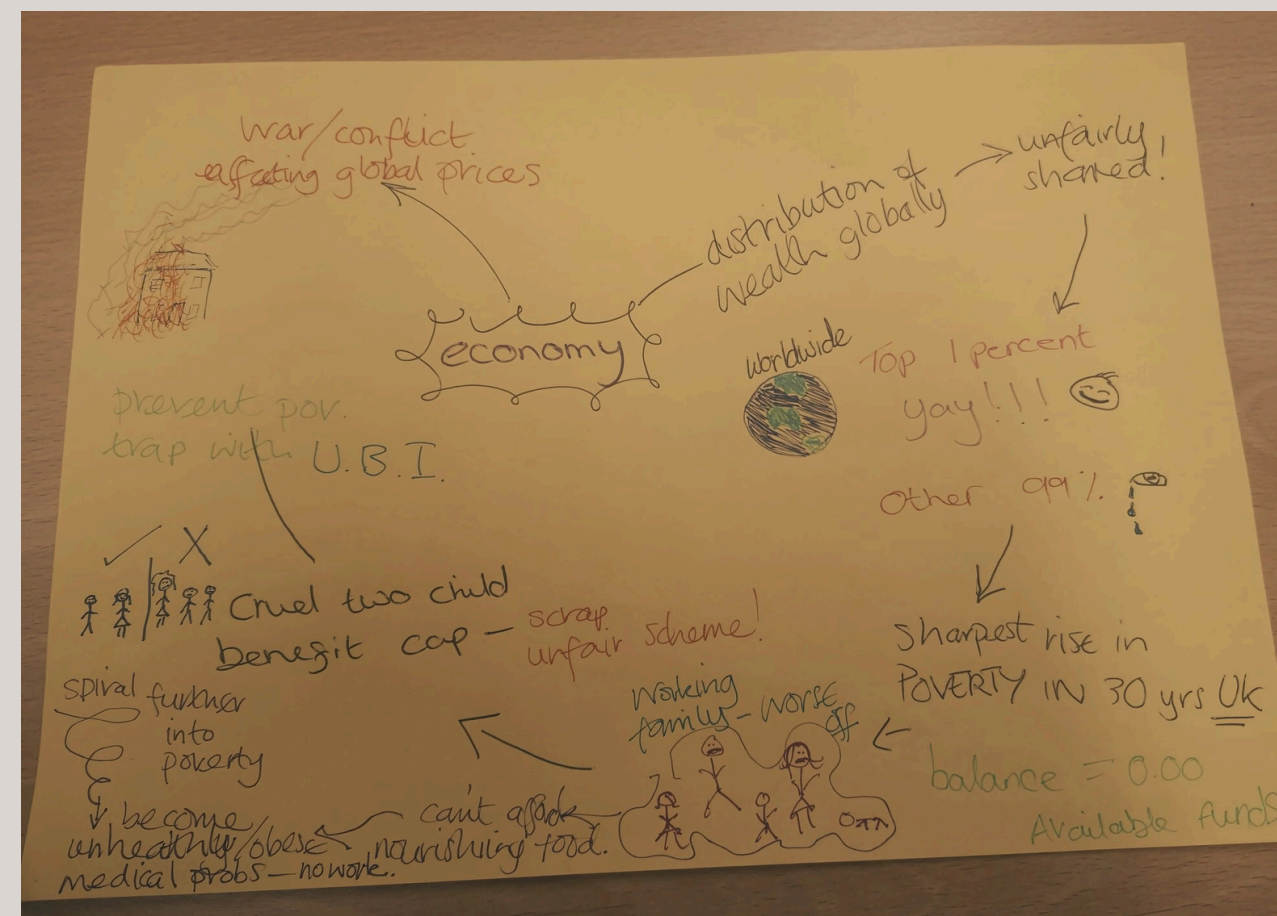
This could provide a lifeline for anyone in a state of crisis and was put in place during the COVID-19 pandemic when the workshop was forced to close.

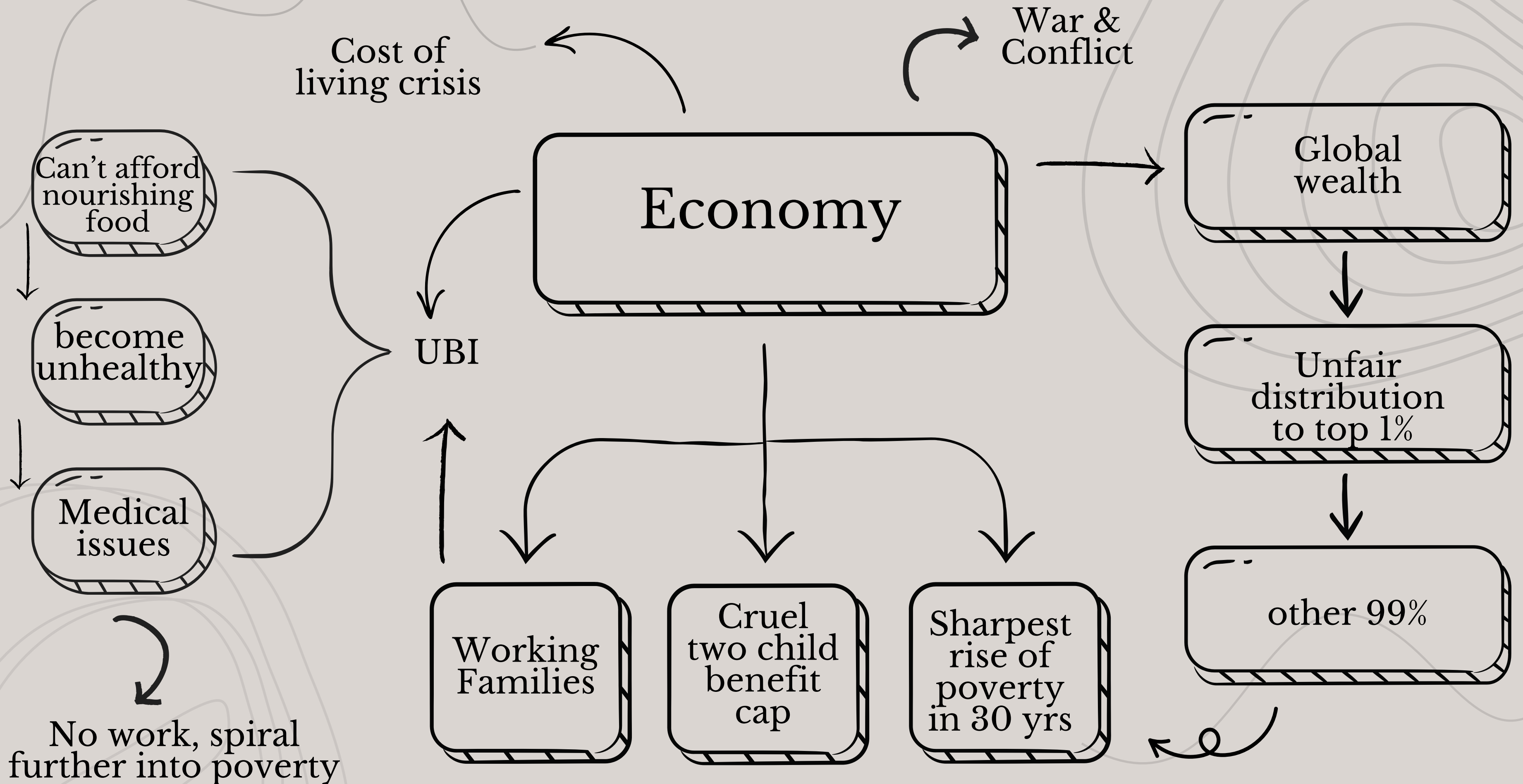
The lockdown was a particularly difficult time for those already suffering with mental health conditions.

Making a Difference

Collabortive Piece: The Economy

When considering the economy, we tend to think first about how we are personally affected in day-to-day life. I worked with a partner to generate ideas and create a mind map focussing on poverty.





Making a Difference

The Economy

The cost of living always seems to be rising with ever increasing food and heating bills busting the budget of ordinary people. Pay fails to keep pace with unavoidable expenses such as rent, travel costs and council tax. However, the money in our pocket is subject to global events and consequently, prices. How shocking to realise the uneven distribution of global wealth means that the top ten percent of the world's population owns 85% of it!

The sharpest rise in poverty in the UK for thirty years was recently announced (Morrison, 2024). Specifically, along with statistics concerning child poverty for 2022-23, it seems that even when those children are in families where both parents are working there may not enough money to take care of basic needs.

Making a Difference

The Economy

Families may need to buy cheap, nutrient poor, processed food or use food banks which necessarily can offer little in the way of fresh ingredients.

A lack of affordable housing is another factor in the poverty trap. Bed and breakfast accommodation is unlikely to have ample cooking facilities.

Stress, anxiety, depression and insecurity can lead to poor mental health. A perfect storm then for chronic disease.

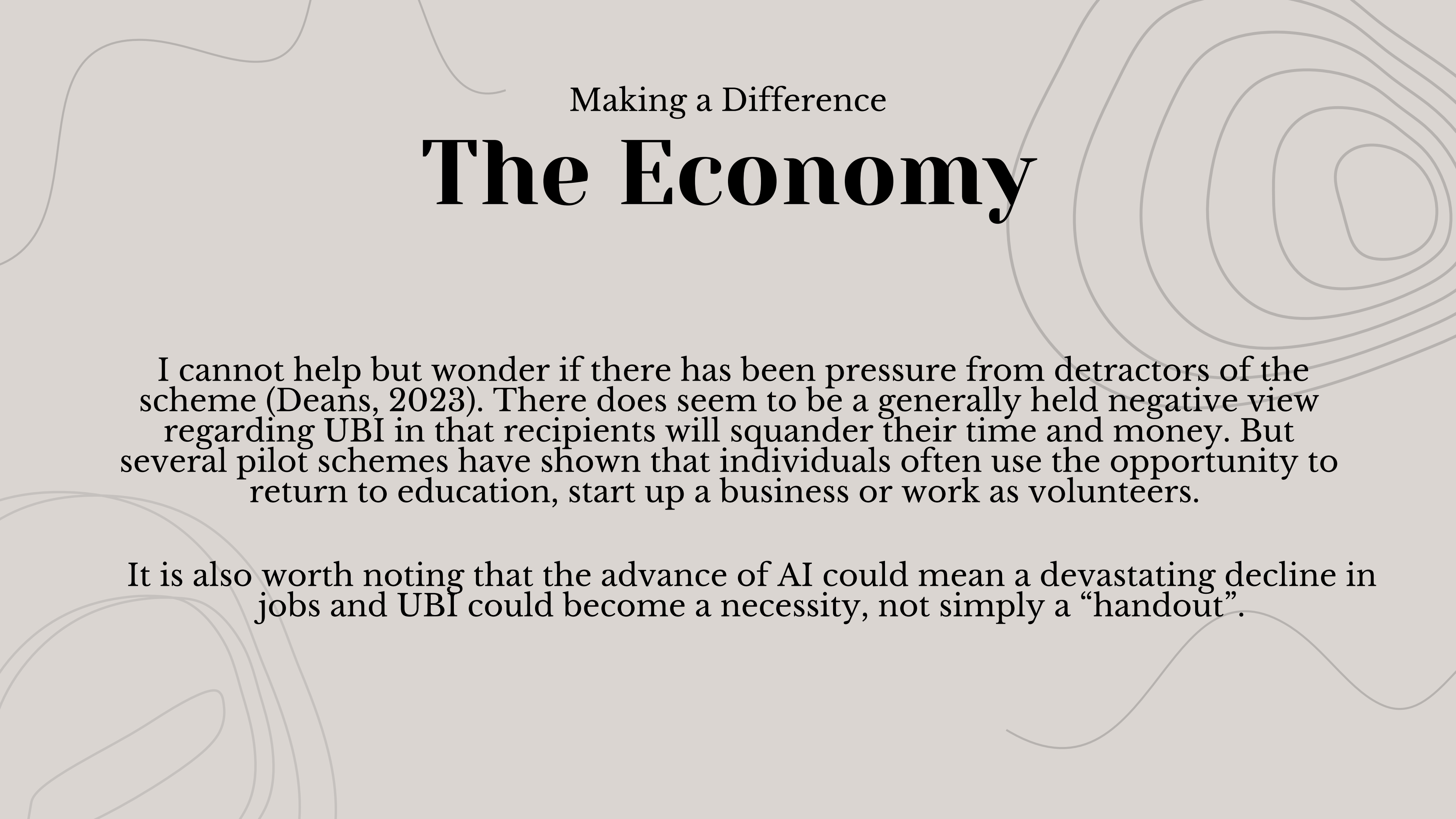
Making a Difference

The Economy

Putting pressure on governments to address these wicked problems through policy change would seem to be a starting point. For example, the two-child benefit cap is not just cruel and unfair but also shortsighted in its effect on the population's health.

Another idea that is gaining traction is Universal Basic Income (UBI). A scheme has been trialled in Wales with £1,600 per month initially paid to 635 care leavers.

Unfortunately, the Welsh government has concluded that it is too costly to continue, and the scheme will end a year early next April (Salford, 2023).



Making a Difference

The Economy

I cannot help but wonder if there has been pressure from detractors of the scheme (Deans, 2023). There does seem to be a generally held negative view regarding UBI in that recipients will squander their time and money. But several pilot schemes have shown that individuals often use the opportunity to return to education, start up a business or work as volunteers.

It is also worth noting that the advance of AI could mean a devastating decline in jobs and UBI could become a necessity, not simply a “handout”.

Making a Difference

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Thank You

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