# DATA DRIVE INSIGHTS LAB



**HOW-TO:** Host an ELOM data party

# How to host a data party with your ELOM data

This how-to guide supports teams to make sense of their ELOM data together before deciding what to do next. While reports provide important insights, meaningful action rarely happens through individual reading alone. Teams need time and space to look at the data collectively, ask questions, surface different perspectives, and build a shared understanding of what the findings might mean in practice. A data party is a structured way to do exactly that by creating the conditions for thoughtful and realistic reflection, and collective decisions about where to focus improvement efforts.

## What is a data party?

A data party is a structured, facilitated session or workshop where the team comes together to look at their data, talk through what they are noticing, and make sense of the findings collectively. Using simple facilitation steps and creative activities, teams explore the data from different angles, build a shared understanding of what it is really saying about their programme, and narrow in on one or two priority insights that feel actionable.

**The focus is not on fixing everything or systematic planning, but just on agreeing what matters most right now and why.**

### When should you host a data party?
- after receiving your ELOM report
- before any individual reflection or official action planning
- ideally within 1–3 weeks of receiving the report

Ideal time: 3.5 hours

### Who should be in the room?
- Aim for 6–12 people
- Programme staff, at least one decision-maker, someone close to practice (mentors, coaches, senior practitioners).

Do not over-invite. Psychological safety matters more than representation.

## Preparation needed

- Print copies of key pages of your ELOM report for the team
- Print copies of your intention-setting postcard for the team
- Print 3 - 4 sets of the Playful Provocation cards
- Cut the Playful Provocation cards out

- Arrange:
  - A venue with tables and wall space
  - A flipchart or whiteboard
  - Markers
  - Sticky notes
  - Dot stickers

# Step-by-step guidelines

## STEP ONE: Introduction / setting the stage  🕐 15 mins

> **Purpose:** Set expectations, reduce anxiety, and establish shared rules for engagement.

Start this step by clearly explaining why you are meeting, for example:

*"Today is not about performance, blame, or having the right answers. It's about understanding what the data is telling us and making sense of it together."*

Briefly explain what a data party is and is not, and then collectively agree on ground rules, and write them up on a flipchart to keep displayed throughout the session.

Prompt the group with questions like:
- "What do we need from each other to feel safe having honest conversations today?"
- "What would make this discussion unhelpful or uncomfortable?"
- "What should we agree not to do today?"

Common rules often include:
- No blaming individuals
- Curiosity over defensiveness
- Speak from experience, not assumptions
- It's okay not to know
- Disagree respectfully
- Listen with an open mind

## STEP TWO: Reconnect to the study's intentions  🕐 15 mins

> **Purpose: Anchor the data in why it was collected.**

Ask participants to silently read the original intention-setting postcard, with the following questions in mind (written on a flipchart):
- "What were we hoping to learn when we started this?"
- "What still feels important, and what has changed?"

Ask each person to write one sentence on a sticky note and place it on the flipchart:

"One thing I'm holding as I look at this data today is..."

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# STEP THREE: Collective noticing  🕐 **20 mins**

**Purpose: Build shared understanding before interpretation or judgement.**

Display three pages of flipchart pages, each titled with its own question:
1. "What stands out to you?"
2. "What feels uncomfortable, unclear, or awkward?"
3. "What feels expected, familiar, or confirmatory?"

Lay out selected pages of the ELOM report (not the full report), briefly reminding the team of the key findings. Ask the team to answer each question on a sticky note and then stick them onto the respective pages. In plenary, read through each person's note - clustering similar ideas together. Summarise what the group is noticing overall (no debating, explaining, or problem-solving).

# STEP FOUR: Priority-setting  🕐 **25 mins**

**Purpose: Decide what the team needs to focus on.**

As a group, review the key issues that emerged from the previous step. Explain that the goal is not to prioritise everything, and not to solve problems yet, but to agree on a manageable set of priorities to explore further (e.g., low Gross Motor Development scores, a decrease in the number of children On Track, or high levels of stunting).

Ask:
- "Which issues feel most important to respond to now, not eventually?"
- "Which issues are currently within our influence as a team?"

Invite the team to share openly, noting ideas on the flipchart. Once all ideas have surfaced, invite each person to vote (using stickers or markers) on the issues they believe should be prioritised. Select up to three to five priority issues with the strongest support, using the questions above as filters to prioritise: urgency/relevance and organisational scope/influence.

☕ **10 min tea break**

# STEP FIVE: Creative problem-solving  🕐 **50 mins**

**Purpose: Explore the data from new angles and disrupt habitual thinking.**

Split into small groups (3 - 4 people) and assign one priority identified in step three to each small group.

Assign one priority issue per group. If there are fewer groups than priorities, select the most pressing priorities first; if there are more groups than priorities, allow more than one group to work on the same issue.

Each group receives a set of Playful Provocation cards. Explain the purpose clearly:
"*The purpose of this activity is to open up **thinking** about how we might respond to this issue. You are not expected to design a full solution.*" (read more about this activity here).

Groups should work through the cards for 20 minutes, using the prompts to explore different ways of responding to their assigned issue. Encourage the groups to notice ideas that feel unexpected and to capture thoughts, sketches, or questions on sticky notes or flipchart paper.

In plenary, ask each group to share one or two promising directions, ideas, or shifts in perspective that emerged during the activity, capturing these visibly. As each group presents, identify and capture **signals for change** by answering together:
- "What is this idea really suggesting?"
- "What principle or need is sitting underneath it?"
- "What behaviour or condition is this idea trying to change?"


# STEP SIX: Ideating microchanges  🕐 **50 mins**

**Purpose: Translate creative exploration into realistic, testable next steps.**

Start this step by picking up the signals identified in step five:
"*We've identified a set of signals underlying the ideas from the provocations. We now need to decide which of these are worth responding to, and how we might do that in small, practical ways.*"

As a full group, review the list of signals captured in step five.

Ask the team to prioritise signals by voting using dot stickers. Each person gets 2 dots to place next to the signals they believe are most important to act on now. Tally the votes and collectively agree on one or two priorities.

As a group, discuss how best to address these priorities using microchanges. Ask:
- "What is a small, quick change that could move us in this direction?"
- "What could we try without significant new funding or training?"
- "What could be tested in one site, one session, or one week?"

Close this step by agreeing on actionable next steps.

**1. Which microchange(s) will be taken forward first.**
Choose one or two microchanges to move into action-planning. Emphasise that choosing fewer increases the chance of follow-through.

**2. Who will take responsibility for the next step**.
Name a person or small team responsible for carrying this forward and driving coordination among relevant team members.

**3. What the immediate next step are.**
Define concrete, actionable next steps (e.g. "coordinate meeting with X," "amend document X," "convene trainer meeting").

**4. When the group will check back in**
Agree on a rough timeframe to revisit progress.

> **What is a microchange?**
> A microchange is a low-risk, short-term adjustment to an existing activity, routine, or approach, introduced in response to a specific insight from the data. Microchanges are designed to test whether a small shift makes a difference, rather than to fix everything at once. They are meant to be tried, observed, and refined over time, rather than implemented as permanent solutions.
> Read about how organisations have responded to their ELOM data with microchanges here.

🍵 **10 min tea break**

## STEP SEVEN: Closing 🕐 **20 mins**

**Purpose: Reconnect to the original purpose of the study.**

Ask the team to revisit the flipchart with their reflections on the study's intentions (step two).
Reflect collectively: "*Does the work we've done today speak to our original intentions of the study?*"
Note potential further steps needed to address particular intentions, adding them to the next steps identified in step six.

Close the workshop by asking each person to name one thing that feels exciting to them.

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