

The Conditions for an **Ordinary** Life

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The fact in front of us

England | June 2026

Around 2,100 people with a learning disability or autism live in mental health hospitals in England. Many have been there for years.

Almost half

could be in the
community if the support
around them held.

£250,000

per placement per
year, on average.

£500 million

the visible cost
of the failure,
every year.

IT IS NOT INEVITABLE.

The argument.

Citizenship has to be held by someone they trust.

The condition that makes this possible is stability.

Our procurement-led architecture cannot reliably protect it.

Commissioning has to become stewardship of a local care ecosystem.

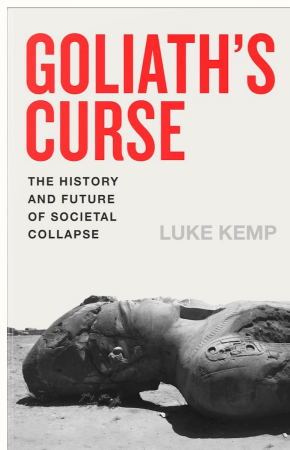
And the duty to secure an ordinary life has moved to those who hold public money and public lives.



The Goliath's Curse

Luke Kemp | 2025

Kemp studied 324 collapsed civilisations across 4,000 years.



Inequality is the Achilles' heel that sooner or later causes all Goliaths to buckle

*This is not ancient history.
This is happening now, in every sector.*

The pattern is consistent:

Inequality widens

Elites extract more, invest less

Democracy disappears

Power concentrates, voices silenced

Systems become brittle

Size brings fragility, not strength

What Kemp Found

32

**They didn't fall to invaders.
They collapsed from within.**

4

collapsed civilisations over
4,000 years

When the people closest to the ground
lose their voice, collapse follows.

Not with a bang. With a slow withdrawal
of trust, honesty, and participation.

What does this look like in our world?

**Stop commissioning care.
Start commissioning **stability.****



Sylvia Pankhurst, East London. 1913.

Not Emmeline. Not Christabel. Sylvia.

"I wanted to rouse these women to be, not merely the argument of more fortunate people, but fighters on their own account, demanding for themselves and their families a full share of the benefits of civilisation and progress."

The Suffragette Movement, pp. 416–417

She didn't just campaign. She built.

- Nurseries for working mothers
- Cost-price restaurants - 400 meals a day
- A cooperative toy factory paying a living wage
- A mother-and-baby clinic in a converted pub

Citizenship doesn't happen without inconvenience to people in powerful positions.



But Our World Is Different

Sylvia Pankhurst told working women: you can fight for yourselves. Those women had voices. They had been ignored, not incapable.

The people we support — people with learning disabilities, people with serious mental health conditions — many of them cannot stand up and say: this is what I need, this is what's drifting, this is what's wrong.

**So the duty moves.
It moves to you.**

Without you, they don't have a voice. That is the most serious responsibility any of us carry.

Tolpuddle, Dorset. 1834.

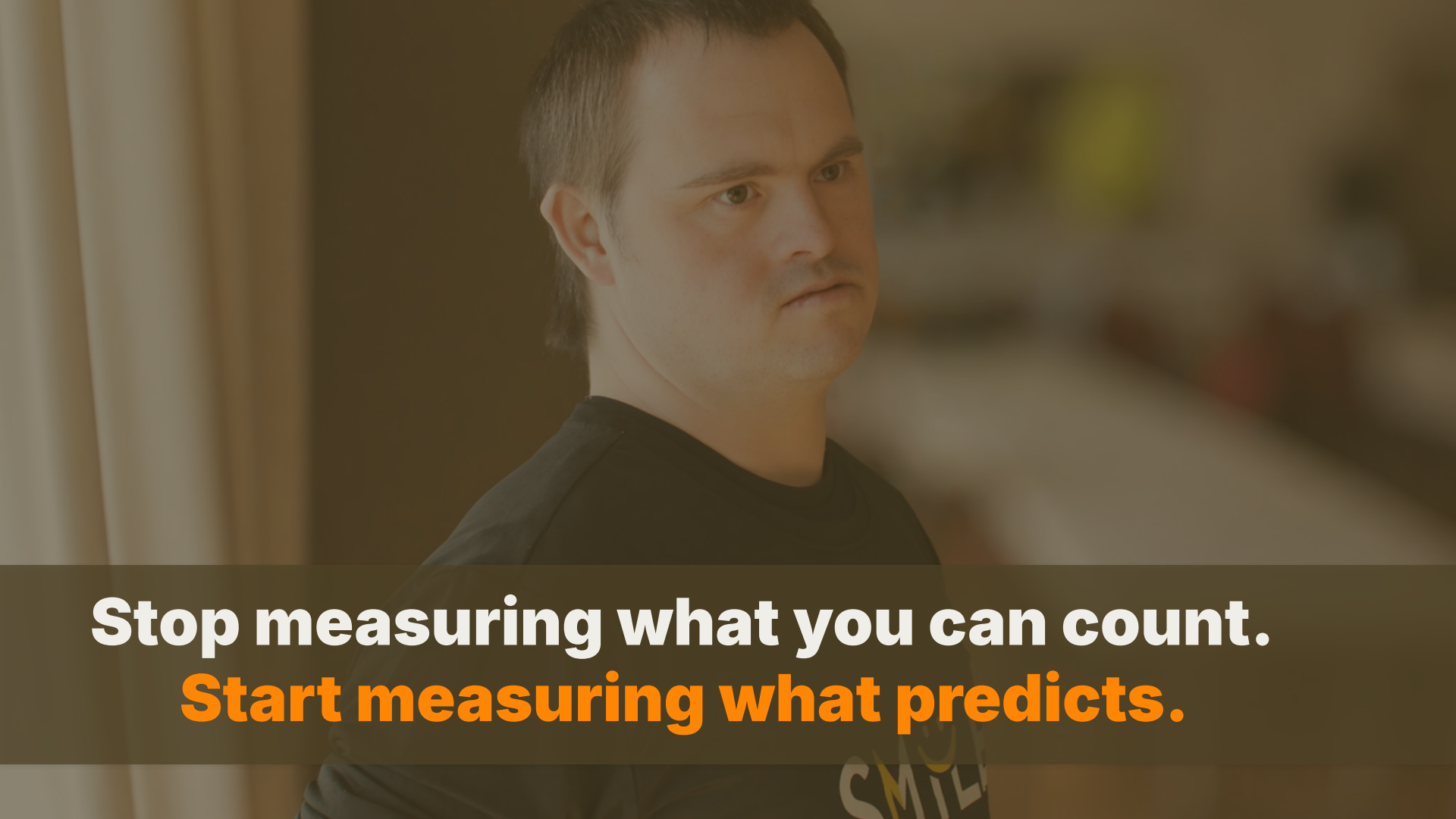
Six farm labourers. Led by George Loveless.

*"We have injured no man's reputation, character, person or property.
We were uniting together to preserve ourselves, our wives
and our children from utter degradation and starvation."*



**They weren't punished for doing harm.
They were punished for organising honestly.**

When honesty becomes inconvenient to those in power, the system is already failing.

A man with short brown hair and a serious expression is looking off to the side. He is wearing a black t-shirt. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be a room with a lamp and some furniture. A semi-transparent dark brown banner is overlaid at the bottom of the image, containing white and orange text.

Stop measuring what you can count.
Start measuring what predicts.

*“Attention is the
rarest and purest
form of generosity.”*

Simone Weil | Philosopher



Skate to Where the Puck Is Going

Wayne Gretzky | via Angus Fletcher, Primal Intelligence

*"I skate to where the puck is going to be,
not where it has been."*

Fletcher explains what made Gretzky different:

His coach Wally taught him to read opponents — to anticipate their thoughts before they act. But Gretzky went further. He stored patterns, read the unique traits of every player on the ice, and developed independent vision.

KPIs = skating to where the puck has been

Signals = skating to where it's going

Not prediction. Pattern recognition. Judgement developed through experience.



KPIs vs Signals

KPIs

What happened?

Where we are.

Retrospective

Signals



What are we noticing?

Where things may be heading.

Preventative

Both matter. But in complex support, signals help prevent problems that KPIs only record.

Ask yourself - am I recording what happened, or noticing what's coming?

Eight signals of system stability

An earlier layer of attention — noticing drift while there is still time to act

1

Continuity
around the
person

2

Judgement
close to
everyday life

3

Leadership
presence where
the work happens

4

Psychological
safety and
speaking up

5

Learning
stays in the
system

6

Colleagues
treated as trusted
professionals

7

Families and
circles of trust as
partners

8

Working
relationships across
organisations

A photograph of three men in a room, all with their arms raised in a celebratory gesture. The man on the left is a young man with curly brown hair, wearing a grey jacket over a white t-shirt. The man in the center is a middle-aged man with short brown hair, wearing a light pink button-down shirt. The man on the right is an older man with short grey hair, wearing a dark blue sweater. They are all smiling and appear to be shouting or cheering. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. The text 'Stop consulting' is in white, 'Start deciding with them.' is in orange, and 'People' is in white and partially obscured by the orange text.

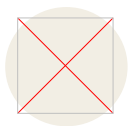
Stop consulting Start deciding with them. People

The council's six-month consultation produced a decision the council had already drafted. The next consultation had half the attendance.

What the foundation actually is

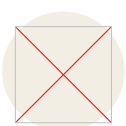
The things that hold an ordinary life, quietly, when they are present

AN ORDINARY LIFE



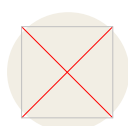
A place to live

that you belong in



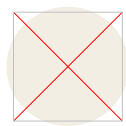
Routines

that give the week shape



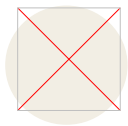
Work

even imperfect work



Friendships

peer support, recognition



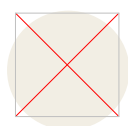
Community spaces

cafés, libraries, halls



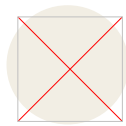
Adult education

genuinely open



Walking groups

friendship circles



A reason to leave

the house

When these are present, most people do not need a specialist package.

The conditions of an ordinary life are being held by the place around them.

CITIZENSHIP — THE FRAME

Individual control where it can work

Personal budgets. Individual Service Funds. Direct payments. Families and circles of trust around those who cannot self-direct.

A plural ecosystem of local providers

Small, medium, federated. Of any legal form. Designed for closeness to the person, doing the relational work.

Foundational support, funded for everyone

The community layer. Funded ahead of need. Available to all. Places, routines, work, learning, friendship, peer support.

The floor under everything else, not a discretionary grant.

STEWARDSHIP — THE STATE HOLDS THE ARCHITECTURE

What other countries have built

The architecture is not theoretical. It exists.



New Zealand

Enabling Good Lives. Disabled-led leadership groups with real authority. Connectors instead of case managers. Mana Whaikaha since 2018.



Australia

Foundational Supports. A funded community layer for everyone, alongside individual insurance for those who need it. State stewardship of the whole. Bonyhady, 2023 review.



Scotland and Wales

Self-Directed Support Act 2013. Statutory right to choose how social care is delivered. Care workforce professionally registered. England is the outlier.

What is coming. The next ten years.

Three predictions a commissioner should plan for now.

1

The procurement core of commissioning disappears.

Tendering, contract administration, compliance monitoring, eligibility processing — all absorbed by machines within ten years. What is left is stewardship.

2

Care becomes one of the largest sectors of paid human work.

As rules-based knowledge work shrinks, the relational work that cannot be automated grows in scale and status. The sector at the edge becomes the centre.

3

Foundational community support becomes funded architecture, not grants.

Following Australia's lead — a community layer for everyone, funded ahead of need, structurally protected. The floor under specialist provision.

The duty is moving. The architecture has to move with it.

**It is the question
that enlightens.**

Over to you.



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