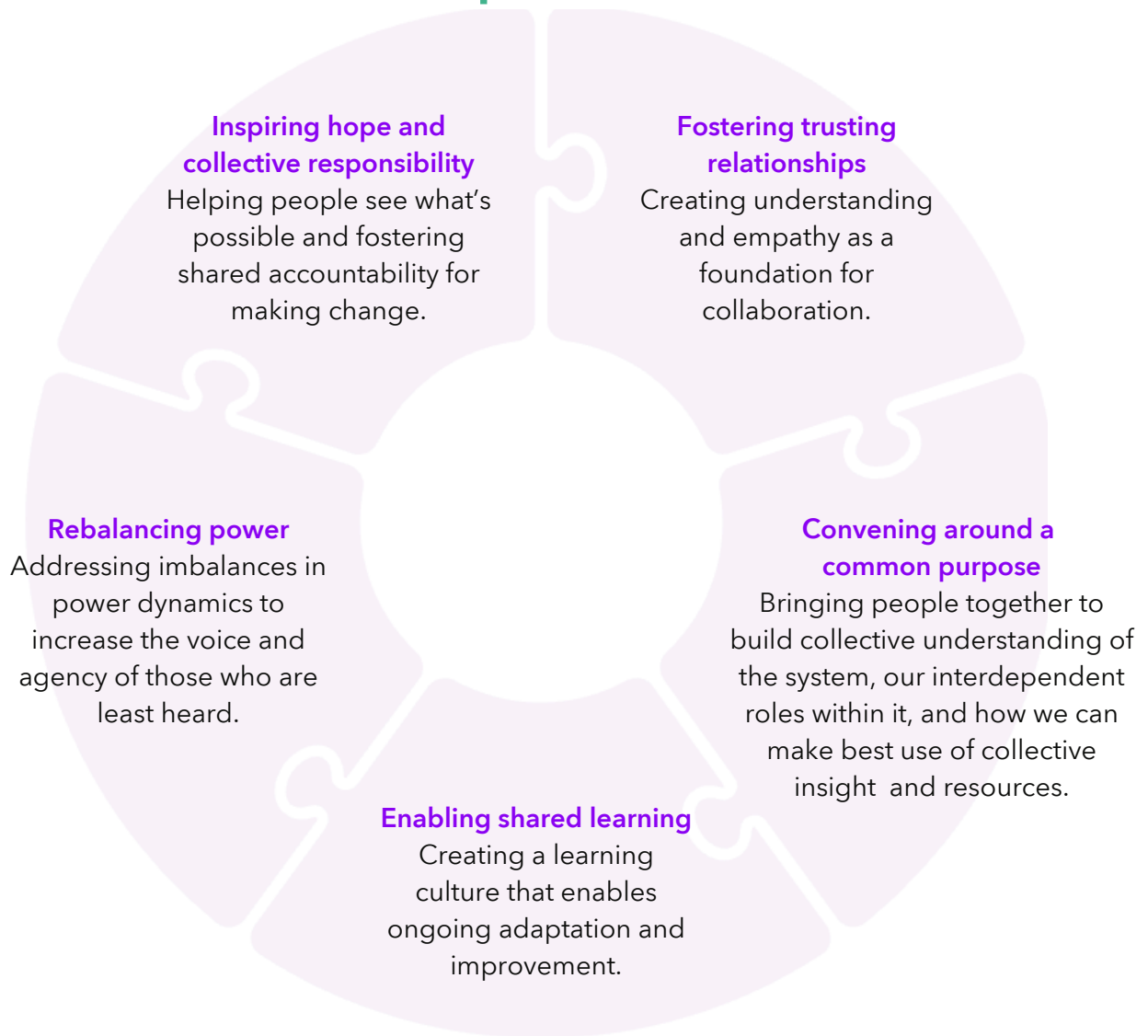# System stewardship: a summary

System stewardship is the work of purposefully nurturing healthier systems. This is about developing the conditions that help people and places to flourish.

Stewards bring together actors to see themselves as a system, build trusting relationships, share power and learn and act together. Developing these conditions helps make best use of collective relationships, insights and resources to achieve shared goals.

Practices of stewardship

Inspiring hope and collective responsibility
Helping people see what's possible and fostering shared accountability for making change.

Fostering trusting relationships
Creating understanding and empathy as a foundation for collaboration.

Rebalancing power
Addressing imbalances in power dynamics to increase the voice and agency of those who are least heard.

Convening around a common purpose
Bringing people together to build collective understanding of the system, our interdependent roles within it, and how we can make best use of collective insight and resources.

Enabling shared learning
Creating a learning culture that enables ongoing adaptation and improvement.

See more in our resource: "Systems Stewardship in practice"

HUMAN LEARNING SYSTEMS

collaborate for social change

Principles of Stewardship

1

Be collaborative
Help everyone in the system to understand it better and connect. Don't underestimate the value of time spent learning and understanding.

2

Be purposeful
Keep returning to core purpose and positive outcomes for people. Serve the outcomes of the system, not your own needs or those of individual organisations.

3

Be curious
Never miss an opportunity to surface insight. Follow your curiosity. Don't be afraid to not know the answer. In fact, always question certainty.

4

Be patient
Don't worry if not everyone's with you from the start. Play the long game, start with fellow travellers and keep bringing new people in.

5

Be human
Behave with honesty and authenticity. Don't sit in your office; get out, meet people and get to know what makes them tick.

6

Be fractal
In the spaces you convene, model the behaviours you want to see in the wider system. Stewardship behaviours can spread virally.

7

Be brave
Don't be afraid to cross boundaries, take risks and question rules if this can shift something that is preventing change.

8

Be equitable
Continually redistribute power and resources. Keep asking who is not in the room and which perspectives are missing.

9

Be hopeful
Balance ambition with pragmatism; recognise small achievements to foster hope, but make space for anger.

10

Be humble
Don't see yourself as indispensable. Know when to step back. Recognise the emotional toll of the work and practise self-care.

HUMAN LEARNING SYSTEMS

collaborate for social change