

The Future of Care Work in Rural and Island Scotland: Understanding Workforce Shortages Through Participatory Research

How can Scotland sustain its rural and island care workforce in the face of demographic change and growing demand for care?



The Policy Challenge

Rural and island Scotland faces persistent shortages in care provision, with difficulties in recruitment and retainment placing increasing pressure on families, communities, and employers. This is a workforce issue, as accessible care directly enables people to enter and remain in employment.

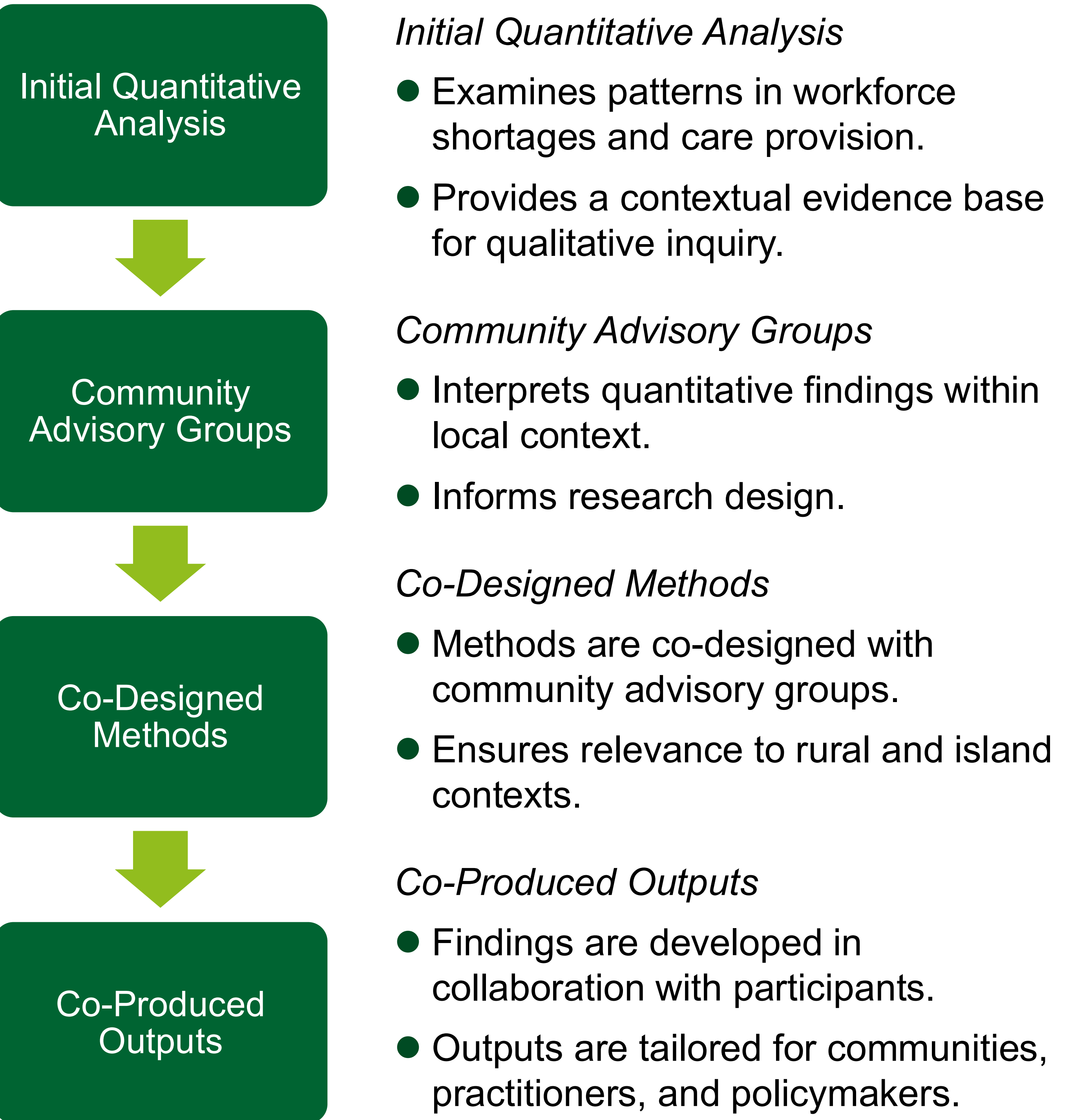
- As the population ages and demographic change accelerates, sustaining the rural and island care workforce is one of the most pressing workforce challenges facing Scotland.
- This research aims to support more place-based and responsive approaches to sustaining Scotland's care workforce.

Barriers to Sustainable Rural Care Provision

- Remoteness, long travel distances, adverse weather, and limited transport infrastructure.
- Low pay, and limited career progression and professional development opportunities.
- Depopulation and ageing populations.
- Recruitment and retention challenges.
- Rising costs of service delivery.
- Limited housing availability.



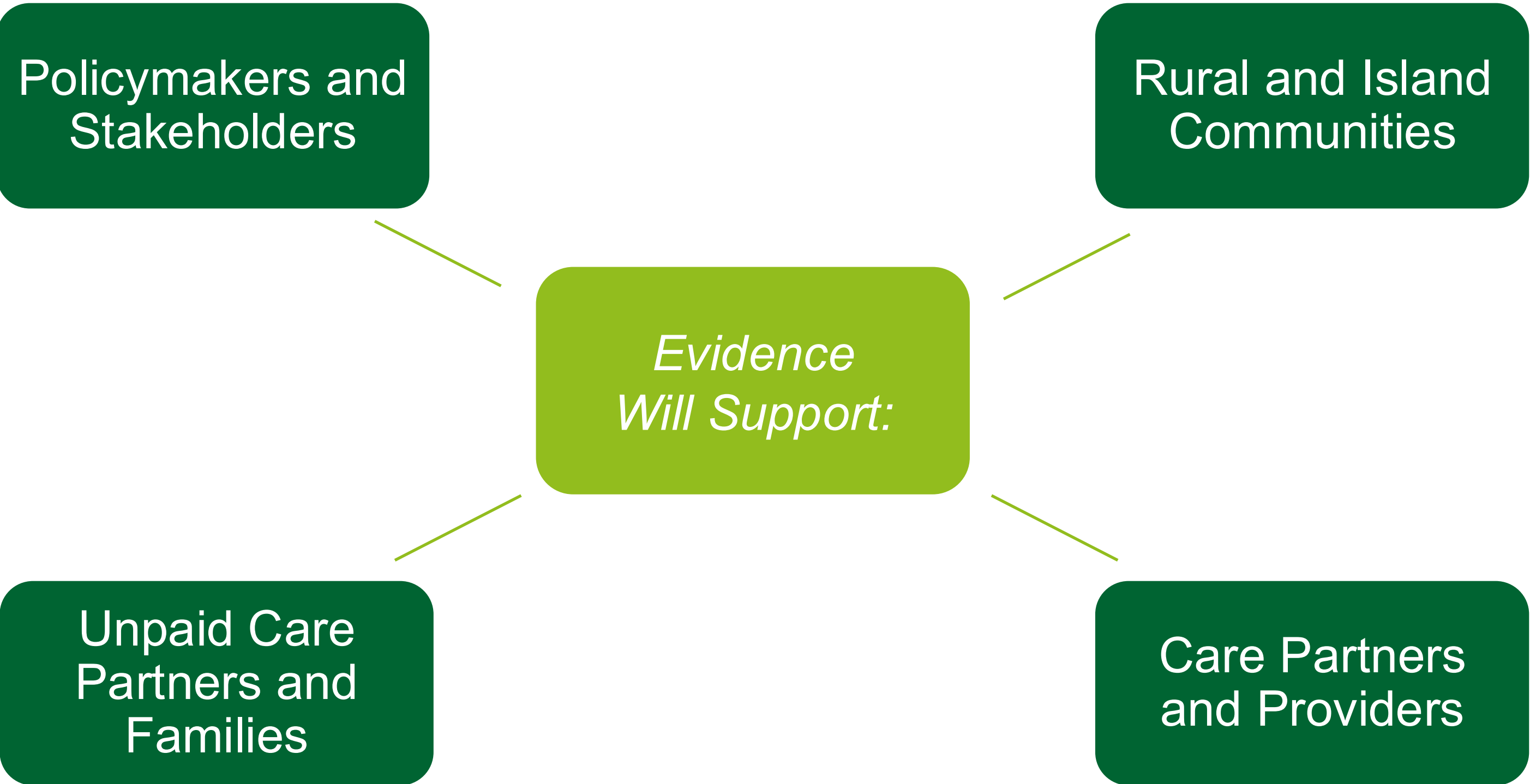
Participatory Research Process



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Implications for Policy and Practice



This research will **inform policy on sustaining Scotland's rural and island care workforce**, by gathering evidence on:

- Structural and social factors shaping care recruitment and retention in rural and island settings.
- The role of unpaid care within local systems and its implications for workforce planning.
- Barriers and enabling conditions for developing sustainable care work.
- Opportunities to strengthen rural proofing within care and workforce policy.
- Place-based approaches to improving long-term community and workforce sustainability in rural and island contexts.

