

October 2022

GM Moving Process Learning Report October 2022

Report by

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Executive Summary

Report Method, Content and Structure

This report relates to the process learnings gathered between April and September 2022. Building on learnings from the sequence of process and impact evaluations prepared since 2019 in this report we have chosen to focus on three areas of whole systems development as they relate to our five prioritised features of system maturity, or system enablers, that were introduced in March 2020. The three features we have chosen to focus on are:

- New Governance Structures for Policy Implementation
- Sustainable Collaboration
- Entrusting Community Leadership

Our consideration of these aspects is informed by a series of deep dive enquiries across the localities that are at the heart of the GM Local Pilot, the focus for which was determined collaboratively by the locality teams themselves and our embedded researchers. In each case we set out:

- A summary of related learning accumulated ahead of this round of reporting and what is new
- Our expectations or hypothesis and related working assumptions
- The detail from the deep dive case study of what has been happening in place
- Comparisons with examples from across the localities
- Revisions to our overall programme theory and working assumptions informed by the learning

Finally, we present some summary conclusions and reflective questions.

New Governance Structures for Policy Implementation

Several GM localities have been working towards absorbing the LP's principles and values, ways of working and prioritisation of PA (as part of community wellbeing) into new embedded, integrated policy landscapes.

Our working assumption is that to achieve this there is a need to focus *resources, a shared sense of purpose and collective duty through new processes* to promote and facilitate PA across all organisations, institutions, and departments.

In July 2022, Stockport LP disbanded their Steering Group which can be seen as a practical step to phase out the language and structures of the LP and further integrate approaches across the system. The ONE Stockport Active Communities Strategy 2022-2030 shows how the elements for successfully integrating PA and LP principles may be practically adopted in a governance structure. Six key actions are identified:

1. Policy and programmes to support PA
2. Built and natural environment to facilitate PA
3. Work across partners to embed PA for all

4. Support community groups to enable PA
5. Develop partnership interventions in communities to enable PA
6. Use insight from communities to develop interventions and programmes to support PA

The extensive consultation in the preparation of the strategy has led to shared ownership because people feel their views have been incorporated into the vision. Having a senior strategic leader (RB) alongside some long-standing LP group members has supported translation of some of the principles into the new structures because they have clarity about what may be needed, experience and confidence of what has worked in the past which imparts confidence in others. Practically dismantling the structures surrounding the LP was important as it indicated that this was no longer an experiment, sitting outside other roles and responsibilities but integrated with existing and familiar structures. In addition, new structures are supported to ensure routine engagement and involvement of all relevant stakeholders including communities and voluntary sector organisations.

Cross-locality analysis has reinforced and elaborated these assumptions stressing the importance of strategic decision makers to be active in the work, dismantling unhelpful processes and/or language that position the current 'pilot' work as 'outside' the system itself. A shared sense of purpose and collective duty has been instilled through sustained engagement with partners, and clarification of ways of working, roles, reporting structures, and responsibilities. This is an important foundation which provides a degree of psychological safety upon which people can be more innovative and make decisions in their sphere of influence.

Sustainable Collaboration

Many GM localities have been working towards effective cross and between sector working with our working assumption being that ongoing opportunities to jointly solve problems help embed practices and processes for sustainable collaboration as parties develop mutual appreciation of, and trust in, each other's skills and competencies.

In Salford we had previously reported on partnership work between Salford Community Leisure (SCL) and Salford Youth Service (SYS) in establishing a youth centre, "The Den". Sport and PA is now recognised as both a means to help support the health and wellbeing of the young people in Salford, as well as to combat community safety issues and health inequalities. Increased demand for services creates a challenge for SCL to deliver effectively and members of both teams have been working more and more closely to try to address the issue with substantively different way of working emerging. Capacity and capability for this shift has been linked to the LP work in five important ways:

- Time, afforded by the LP and ringfenced to build the collaboration.
- Ethos, of the LP – *"being solutions driven and tearing up the rule book"*.
- Synergy with Salford principles of being youth led.

- Test & Learn – *“if something didn’t work we could turn to the youth voice to understand why not and try something new”*.
- A focus on quality provision for targeted groups – not numbers through the door, but what the individual’s journey is and what impact it has.

Whilst initially the focus was on the practical aspects of collaboration – networks and linking up different ‘assets’ in a local area - success seems to have been born out of the mutual understanding, respect and trust in each other’s roles and competencies, and to an extent a slight blurring of this knowledge and skill set which has reinforced the reciprocity in the relationship. This has not only increased capacity to deliver but has led to increased satisfaction and boosted morale from working together.

For people to collaborate they must not only see the benefits of working in partnership, but have conviction that it will not cause harm to their own job or organisational security. As such sustainable collaboration may be supported by:

- Common values and principles as well as common purpose or agenda.
- Some degree of blurring of skills and knowledge.
- Regular opportunities to collaborate and extend.

Entrusting Community Leadership

A common core principle underpinning work across GM localities has been a focus on community engagement and involving local people, despite some challenges in accomplishing this on a routine basis. Our working assumption being that if we facilitate community leadership by enabling community members to follow through on their ideas, working with local partners, then we will build assets that are used by local people because they resonate with them, and they have some ownership of them.

In Manchester, the Heart and Soul project is a community-led project built around support for Community Researchers to provide a platform to make Woodhouse Park a healthier place to live. The Community Researchers’ exposure to partners and involvement in gathering intelligence themselves has helped to build connections and developed relationships in the local area. They have also been able to build their confidence, resilience and future direction in their roles. Speaking in public and being the face of Heart & Soul they have inspired other residents in the local area to see that their involvement can materialise to make Woodhouse Park a healthier place to live.

The findings highlight further mechanisms for change in drawing out the role of the facilitator to consistently nurture, support, build capacity, where needed, provide opportunities and to be careful not to slip into ‘fixing’ mindsets. They also illustrate the tendency for community leadership to be transitory, with individuals moving in and out of leadership roles. This may, in fact, illustrate the wider societal and emancipatory benefits of the approach but must be factored into planning and resourcing. Cross locality analysis has illustrated that there are different routes to community leadership, including both the utilisation of existing leadership in place as well as investment of time in building

capabilities, capacity, and leadership abilities. Both involve investment in relationship building and require officers to take a facilitative and supportive role.

Supplementary Material

Alongside the [full report here](#) we are presenting a range of supplementary material. This includes first hand testimony in the form of audio-visual recordings linked to passages in the report as well as self-contained and more detailed deep dive case studies, summary 'story on a page' infographics and audio-visual updates to our evolving programme theories.

Summary Conclusions and Reflective Questions

Our explorations of new governance structures for policy implementation highlighted the importance of dismantling separate LP structures whilst having a strategic senior work leader alongside those working on the LP to absorb principles and have clarity and enough confidence in the approach to become a wider champion.

Reflection questions.

To what extent do we have strategic leadership involvement and investment in structures that absorb the principles and objectives of the pilot into business as usual across all of our places?

How might we support the absorption of LP principles and objectives into wider system practice?

Successful sustained collaboration appears to be born out of mutual understanding, respect and trust in each other's roles and competencies, driving not only increased capacity but greater satisfaction and morale from working together and a sense that partnership working will enhance rather than cause harm to people's own job or organisational security.

How might we create space for building trust and belief in the benefits of partnership working at a time of funding constraints and insecurity?

Whilst entrusting community leadership has been a foundational principle of the LP, its realisation has at times been more elusive given the overriding importance of investing time in building relationships through engagement in what might be unfamiliar facilitative and supportive roles. This can be challenging and frustrating in the context of a tendency for community leadership to be transitory, with individuals moving in and out of leadership roles. Whilst this may, in fact, illustrate the wider societal and emancipatory benefits of the approach it also has planning and resource implications.

How might we re-calibrate the success of community leadership development in ways that recognise personal as well as collective journeys?

How might we mobilise those personal journeys to support capacity and community leader 'pipeline' development?