



Who's in our alliance?

Deeplish Community Centre
Awakening Minds
Aspire 2 Inspire
Water Your Soul
The Lighthouse Project
Citizens Advice Bureau
Maverick Lab CIC
Independant Poverty Activist
Action Together
Rochdale Council

About our work

Growing collective power to make better decisions for people, with people

Challenge

Rochdale has explicitly recognised the link between poverty and poor health and wellbeing outcomes via the establishment of the anti-poverty strategy. However, traditional ways of working means decision-making often happens further away from communities, particularly those facing additional barriers like poverty.

Our idea

Develop an anti-poverty foundation group made up of VCFSE and community leader to lead the decision-making, governance and accountability of anti-poverty work in Rochdale. Grow power across partners, leaders and communities to make better decisions and direct investment towards tackling the root causes of poverty.

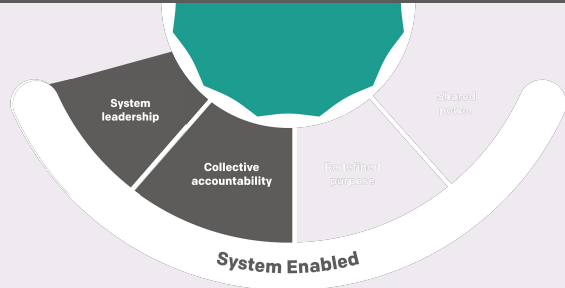
Our intended impact

Community leaders make, shape and change decisions around poverty, supported by confident system allies. Decision-making is community-led, equitable and values diverse experiences and expertise. Resources are directed upstream to the root causes of poverty

Our journey
Bringing our idea to life

How might we use the anti-poverty work to shift power and decision-making so communities are working alongside those with positional power?

Live Well Rochdale are changing the way the council, partners, and the community work together to make better decisions for people, reimagining and shifting power, governance and accountability around the borough's anti-poverty strategy.



Identify the opportunity		Mobilise energy & people		Grow collective power		Reshape decision-making		Next steps	
								- Anti-Poverty Foundation Group now lead the priorities, implementation and accountability of anti-poverty work across the system - Grow this approach across Rochdale's Live Well implementation and 5 year plan for neighbourhoods, as part of Our Co-operative Communities model - Embed Community Power principles and approach in the above, following community-led and lived experience-led whole system research into Community Power	
What we did		Set an ambition to change how decision-making worked in Rochdale. It became clear that testing this work through the anti-poverty strategy was where we could have the most impact.		Gathering interest and allyship of key system leaders. Recruited a community-led Anti-Poverty Foundation Group (APFG) of VCFSE and community leaders, using a supportive and person-centered process. Recruited a 'Power Growers' group of system leaders and colleagues to participate in peer action learning around power shifting. Recruited a skilled, empathetic facilitator with a dedicated role to support both spaces.		Each group needed separate, safe spaces to grow agency in order to collaborate brilliantly. Facilitated co-created sessions to nurture relationships, trust and empathy, and clarify a shared purpose. Secured permissions and payment for participation. Over time, brought different groups together - to work on a project or a plan.		APFG influenced Household Support Fund, increasing investment upstream/to VCFSE. Made poverty a priority in ICPC 5 year strategy, included in APFG's words - ensuring accountability and resources. Formalised new power in governance arrangements: renamed the council's anti-poverty space, began co-chairing, and created terms of reference cementing the leadership role of APFG. Co-designed ideas for investment to address gaps in Rochdale relating to poverty.	
How our alliance worked		Developed the opportunity to wrap this work around the anti-poverty strategy through trusted conversations with key leaders, to garner support. Submitted a successful bid to the National Lottery Accelerator Programme.		Bringing the right people into the mix by being explicit about purpose and values, and seeking those who share them. Connecting informally with people and listening to what they need to participate.		Prioritised in-person spaces and took the time it needed to grow safety and readiness for shifting power. Attentive to group dynamics, encouraged care, critical friendship and curiosity.		Spent time getting really clear on APFG priorities and investment ideas, using community insights and through facilitated group deliberation. Worked closely, 1:1 with key system leaders to formalise power in way system would understand, through formal ToR and language.	
Key learning		Finding the right opportunity for redesigning decision-making was crucial. Alongside strategic buy in, the focus on a present challenge like poverty, rather than designing a one off health and wellbeing project, felt more impactful for our communities.		When forming a Foundation Group, it was important to pay attention to people's motivations, not just diversity of thought/ experience. We looked for people who were collaborative, thought systemically, and were willing to look beyond their own individual organisations to work on a bigger, collective vision for the borough.		It's really easy in the early stages to jump at opportunities to influence things, particularly if they feel like 'quick wins'. It felt important that we protected time to focus on the long term ambition whilst choosing short term areas we could quickly make progress on - maintaining momentum whilst holding accountability to addressing root causes.		Holding and using power and attached responsibility is an ongoing process. Big leaps in power gained can feel 'alien' to people who have been made to feel powerless. Growing confidence to make decisions and take up space requires consistent, active facilitation, care and patience.	