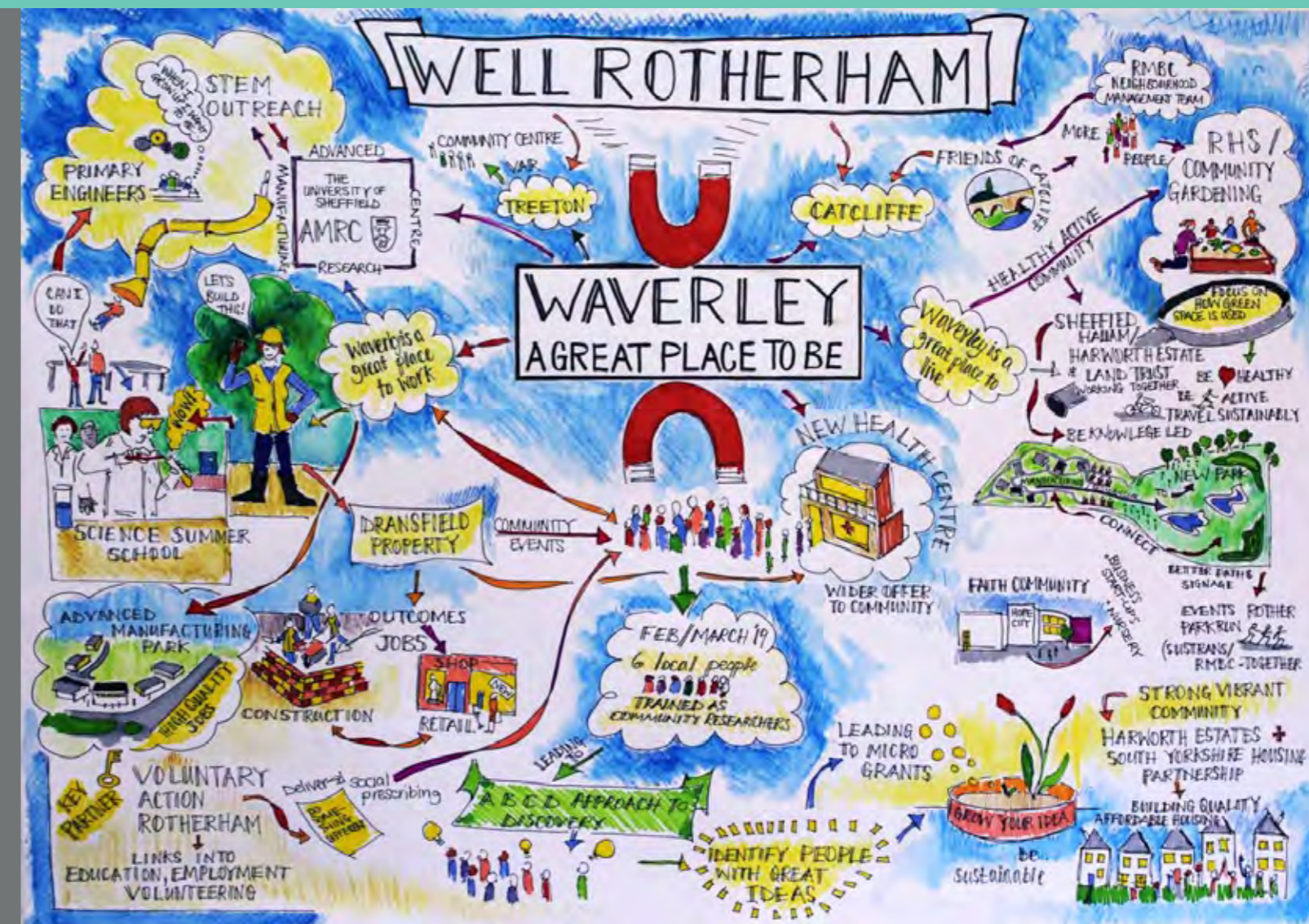


**South  
Yorkshire  
Housing  
Association**

# September 2021



**Well Rotherham was one of 10 innovation platforms established through the Well North initiative. These nationally celebrated programmes were funded by Public Health England to explore how strengths-based and entrepreneurial approaches can tackle health inequalities and collaborate with communities to make positive changes.**

Hosted by South Yorkshire Housing Association, Well Rotherham supported inspirational local people with great ideas to improve their communities. Based in the Rother Valley, the project ran for 3 years and finished in July 2021.

The 3 strategic themes were:

- A great place to live
- A great place to work
- An active community

## A great place to live

We launched our community activity by starting a conversation to find out what people love about their community, what else they would like to see and what they could offer to make their community even better. This led on to the Great Ideas micro-grant programme to support individuals to bring their ideas to life and improve their community. As relationships and ideas grew a number of larger grant projects were initiated.



## A great place to work

Our North Star Science School event, headlined by Professor Brian Cox, was attended by more than 2000 young people from South Yorkshire and beyond.

Our innovative business accelerator supported businesses to improve social connectivity within their communities.

## An active community

Being active and accessing nature is essential to wellbeing. The Rother Valley is rich in natural beauty with a wealth of green and blue spaces.

Well Rotherham supported community led projects which inspired people to get out and active in nature.



## Strengths Based Approaches

A strengths-based approach discovers and builds on people's strengths, rather than on problems.

This increases hope and self-reliance, and shows that everyone has the power to learn, grow and change. It builds relationships, and community members participate in decisions, make choices, and determine the direction of actions.

By building a network of existing resources and networks, strengths-based approaches build the autonomy and resilience of neighbourhoods and communities.

## Asset Based Community Development (ABCD)

ABCD builds on the assets within a community, and links them so that everyone can grow together.

Every community or neighbourhood is different, and has its own set of unique assets which can be developed for everyone's benefit. These assets could be people or organisations – we believe that everyone in the community has something to contribute – or place based assets (for example, a community hub or marketplace). By bringing all these assets together, the community is more connected, stronger, and able to sustain their own development.

Well Rotherham supported community led projects which inspired people to get out and active in nature.



**We know that stronger communities are healthier communities. Asset Based Community Development is an approach which draws on the strengths of the people and resources in communities to help them thrive. The Well North programme championed finding people in communities with great ideas and backing them.**



**Our Great Ideas Grant was co-produced from early community conversations and offered micro grants of £300 and free training to community members, as well as larger funding opportunities for bigger projects.**

A whole host of projects have been funded, both big and small. The micro grants have helped fund:

- A Little Library (community book swap)
- A community recycling point
- New equipment for Catcliffe Indoor Bowling Club to allow them to increase membership
- Raised planting beds for Treeton Youth Club
- A strimmer for a community allotment
- Plus many others



**Physical assets are key enablers of strong communities. Places to meet, share ideas and build strong connections. They also provide the opportunity for enterprise to allow communities to support themselves into the future.**

The community at Waverley repeatedly told us they wanted a community space. In response we worked with the Community Council and Harworth to commission a community garden room. The beautiful timber frame structure with a green roof will sit within the Waverley Buds community garden. Owned and run by the community, it will generate sustainable income to support future community building at Waverley.

**Treeton Community Centre is a well established example of great asset based community development in action.**

Ran by and for the community by Terry and Andy, it's a base for a youth club, luncheon club, community events and local enterprise. We really learnt a lot from the great work they are doing and both were incredibly generous sharing their knowledge with others.

We partnered with the team to match fund a new community garden and gardening group at the centre.

Terry and Andy from Treeton community centre receiving an award from the Mayor of Rotherham



## At Well Rotherham, we believe that communities hold the knowledge to make themselves stronger.

To capture this learning, we worked with the amazing community connectors we came across as part of the programme to pull together a guide to support others to become more active in their communities.

Our 'Guide to getting active in your community' is a free to access digital resource for anyone who wants to start building communities and is interested in learning from the experience of others.

It is designed to be used by individuals or groups and describes 8 key stages for getting organised in your community.

You could use any stage to help you and others to dream big, share ideas, possible solutions and more.

To access the Guide to getting active in your community or find out more visit our website:

[www.syha.co.uk/growing-communities](http://www.syha.co.uk/growing-communities)



**“Speak to people... listen to what they want....Give a hook for people to get involved... something that’ll make them do more. It’s a two-way thing... Show good will... it counts for a lot.”**

Community builder and activist

Community organiser and connector

**“Gives me pride personally and of the place.”**

**“I like to think I’ve achieved a bit in my time....Makes me feel proud.”**

Community builder and activist

*it's  
all  
about the  
people*

# A Great Place to Work



**In December 2020, we welcomed over 2000 students from the South Yorkshire region to our first ever North Star Science School. A blended live and digital programme showcased the cutting edge of science and engineering, exposing students to the fascinating range of opportunities a career in STEAM can offer.**



Throughout the North Star event week, young people attended inspirational talks from leading scientists and engineers and engaged in interactive and creative activities delivered by our partners. Professor Brian Cox CBE joined us for the launch day, giving his own keynote lecture on 'Space, Time and Black Holes', before answering questions from the audience.

North Star has now been handed over to the Work-Wise foundation and has become an annual event. They are expanding the year-round programme to build practical links between world-class businesses and our partner schools in the South Yorkshire Region. The 2021 event will be taking place on November 24th at Gulliver's Valley Theme Park Resort in Rotherham.





**“The advanced manufacturing park, and the area as a whole, has a key role to play in our aim of making the UK the best place in the world to do science.”**

Professor Brian Cox

**“We have had a great time working on this project and cannot wait until we can visit UK AEA on site. I was really proud of the students today.”**

Park Academy, Sheffield

**Well Rotherham strongly believes that communities have the solutions to their own challenges. As part of this we wanted to nurture social entrepreneurs across the region.**

Using a strengths-based approach, we launched a Social Value Accelerator to challenge local entrepreneurs to build a better society. Each business needed a viable idea to increase social connectivity in their community.

From numerous applications, we selected 8 businesses to proceed through 12 weeks of intensive business coaching, culminating in a funding pitch event. The business which showed the greatest potential to increase social connectivity received a £10k business grant.

Aaron Probert of Labre's Hope was awarded this year's grant. 4 other founders have gone on to build viable businesses aiming to increase social inclusion.

**"The South Yorkshire Housing Association grant means the world to Labre's Hope and myself because It has empowered us to empower others. We now have the ability to create tangible change in the Rotherham and Sheffield areas by supporting the people living on our streets."**

Aaron Probert, Labre's Hope



# An Active Community



Being physically active, connecting with others and spending time in nature are beneficial to our wellbeing.

The Rother Valley is rich in natural beauty with a wealth green and blue spaces. We wanted to make people aware of the assets on their doorstep and encourage people to move more and connect with the natural environment. Well Rotherham supported community led projects which inspired people to get out and be active in nature.

Waverley Lakes Wildlife Trail



We worked in partnership with the local mountain biking club the Rother Valley Riders, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council and Harworth Group. Together we developed a range of cycling facilities including a learn to ride track at Waverley and all-weather beginner mountain bike tracks in Rother Valley Country Park.

We back a vision for the Rother Valley to become a national cycling destination and have laid the foundations for this.

Rother Valley Cycling Trail

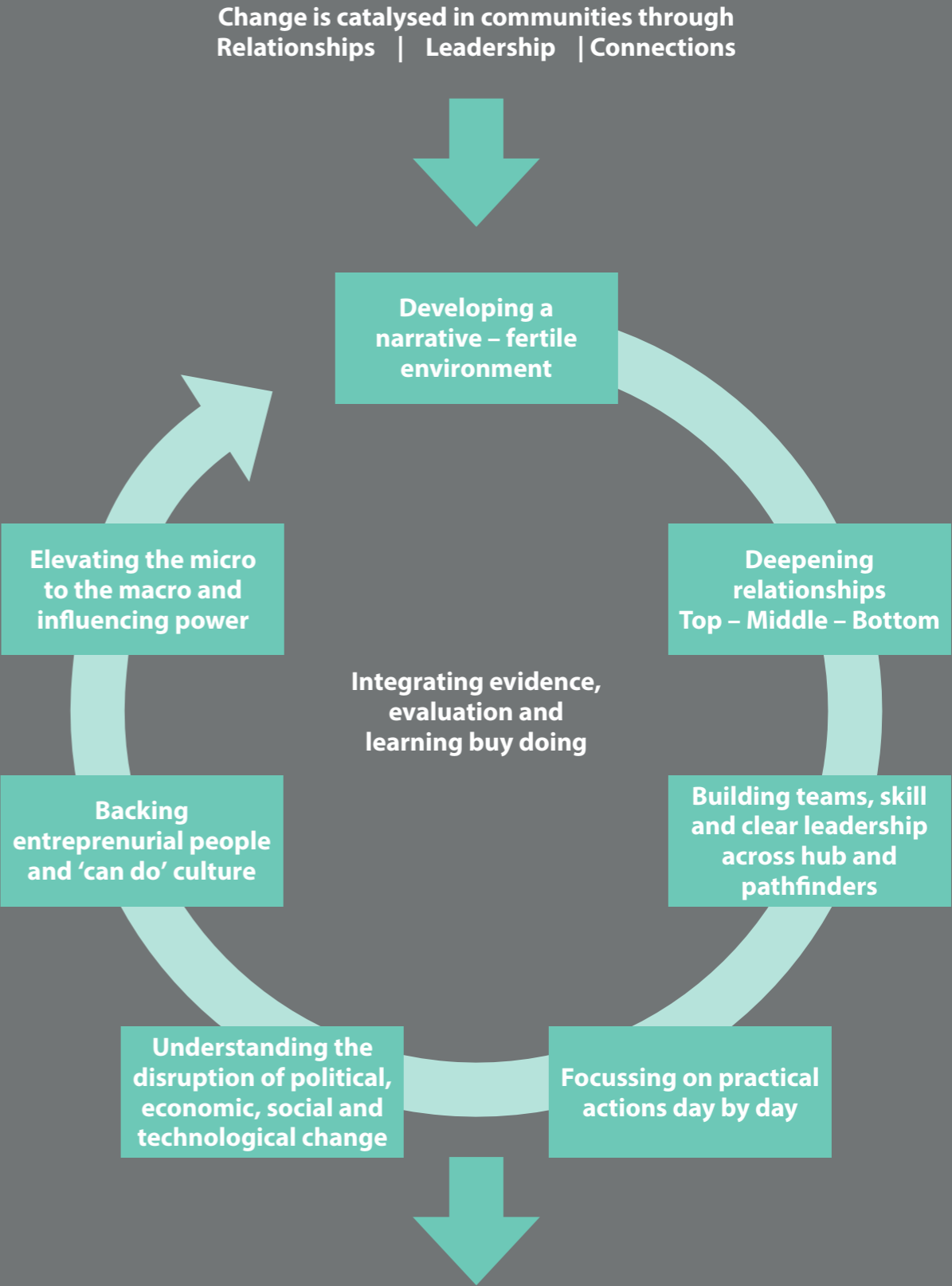


# We had a great time delivering Well Rotherham but did it make a difference?

Transforming communities takes time and you need a long-term commitment. Change happens over many years and it is hard to link change to any particular intervention. That said, we thought we should try!

In our final year of the project, we commissioned local Data for Good expert Tom French to conduct an evaluation to understand how people and organisations have engaged with the activities and what has changed for people as a consequence.

This section sets out the findings against our outcome model (opposite).





## Findings: Changes for People and Place

### Finding 1

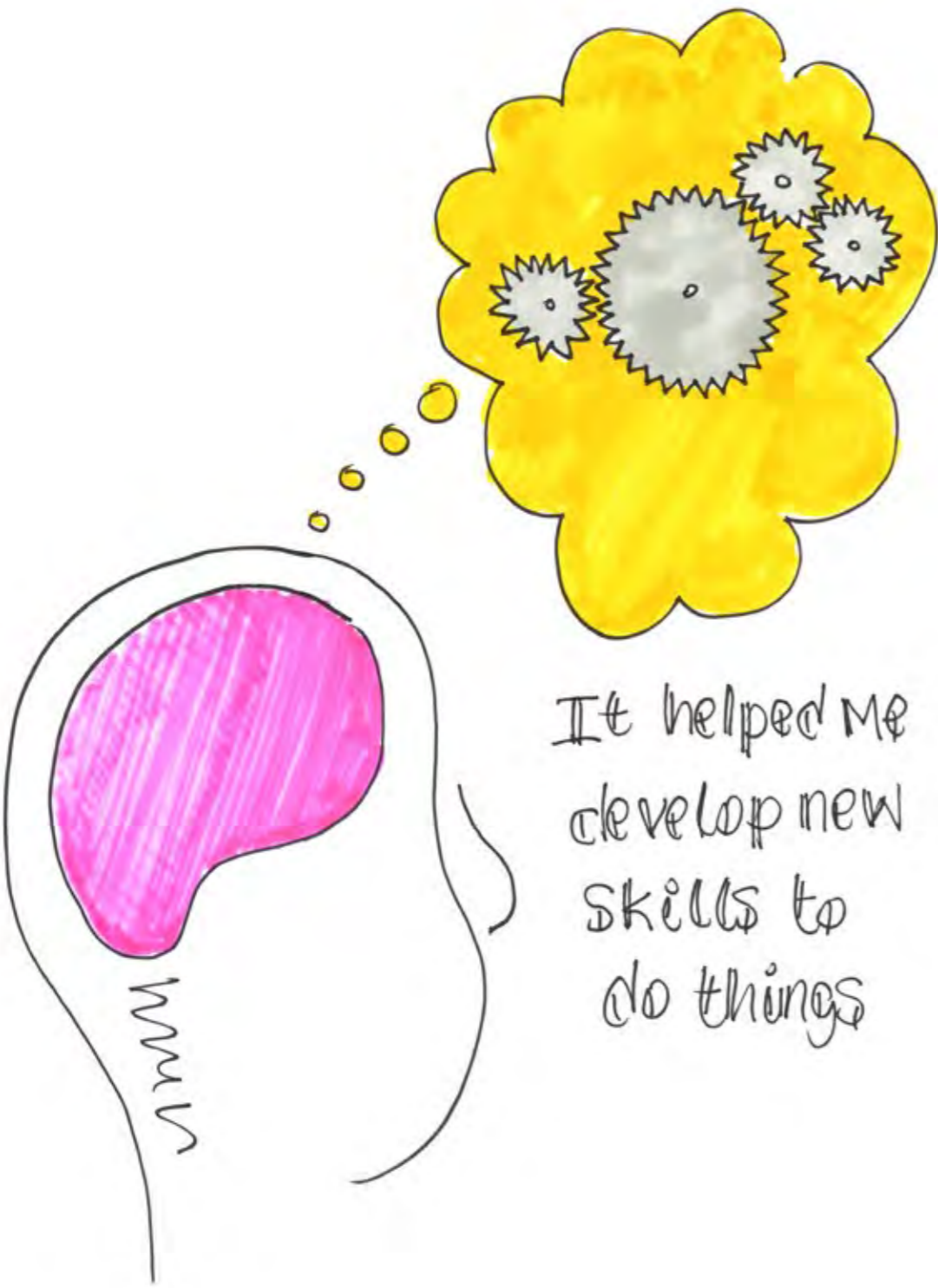
People feel a sense of **pride and belonging** from being involved in community activities.

### Finding 2

It's **hard to get people through 'the door'** and to be involved in the first instance but once they are connected, they see the benefit. **People feel better and say it does them good.**

### Finding 3

True **reciprocal relationships** have been established between the project, team, partners and the public. Being proactive in this regard and asking people what they want to develop leads to mutual benefits and has helped find common ground.



## Findings: Changes for People and Place

- Finding 4**

It is important to be mindful of the fact that **people are exposed** when working in their own communities.
- Finding 5**

Well Rotherham has **created opportunities** for local people to be exposed to things that they wouldn't have been previously.
- Finding 6**

Well Rotherham acts as a **catalyst** for local independent projects to get off the ground. This occurs because people see what is possible even though they aren't directly connected to it.



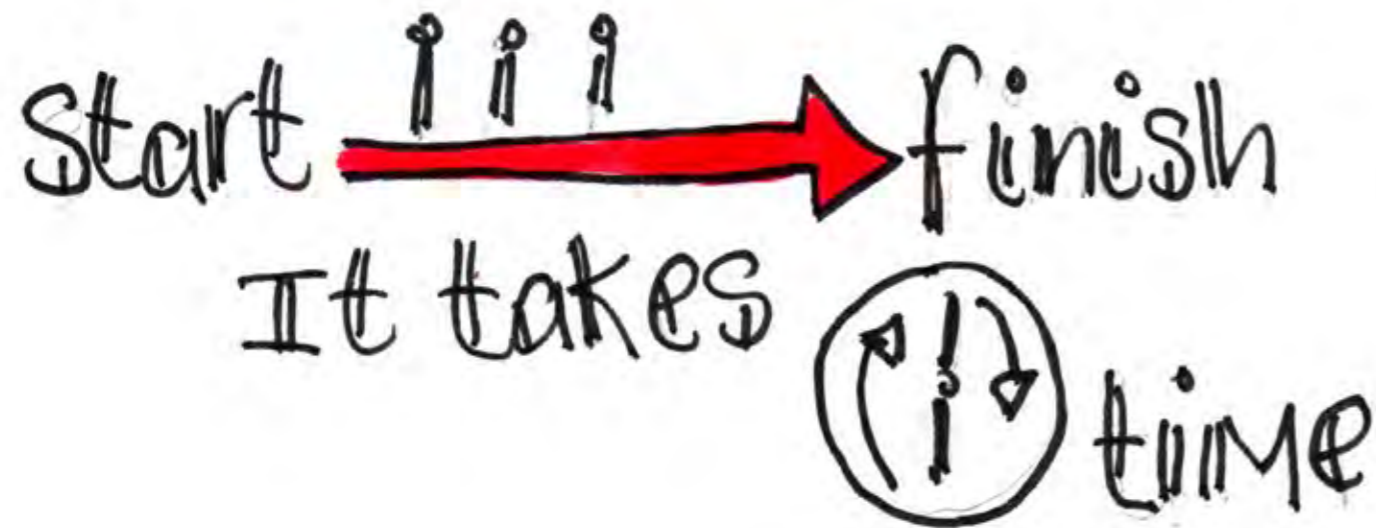
## Findings: The way the project works

- Finding 1** Having a **consistent driving force** keeps momentum and helps to **join the dots** locally but **it can be quite a load for one individual**.
- 
- Finding 2** Having a **common purpose arising from equal conversation** brings like-minded people together. This helps them overcome a lack of confidence in organising things themselves.
- 
- Finding 3** **Bringing people together** is an essential component. And it's complicated. It's hard and it takes time to build up necessary trust and overcome historic tensions.
- 
- Finding 4** **Flexibility** and a **lack of restriction** in how the grants are spent has been beneficial.



## Findings: The way the project works

- Finding 5** Building **partnerships** with organisations and groups is crucial in **establishing trust**. But this takes **time and resources** before these yield sustainable outcomes.
- 
- Finding 6** The project means **different things to different people**. This is fine but it can increase communication time.
- 
- Finding 7** **People in defined roles need to let go of control and recognise the power they hold**. There is a danger of people taking over ideas from partners rather than sharing responsibility.
- 
- Finding 8** Existing organisations and structures have acted as **barriers to community action**.



## Findings: What the future might look like

**Finding 1** Issues around sustaining the project will be different for partners and residents.

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**Finding 2** Things will stop unless:

- there is a way to fund them beyond the project period
- there is a clear driving force or guidance.

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**Finding 3** The next steps must build on what has gone before so that people do not start from scratch, tread on each other's toes or duplicate good work that has already been done.



## Findings: What the future might look like

**Finding 4** There are new **opportunities to develop further partnerships which have already been identified**, including with educational institutions to build on the North Star project.

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**Finding 5** There may be value in adopting the project process in **neighbouring areas of Rotherham** to catalyse activities and refine approaches tried so far. In turn, this may pave the way for greater social impact.

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**Finding 6** **Covid-19** is of course a challenge and it may de-prioritise any initiatives which aren't deemed to be critical locally. But it also represents an **opportunity** to do things differently and galvanise wide support around a shared aim.



**"It is the first time I've been involved in something like this. Really had my eyes widened by the way in which they have brought people together."**

Programme Stakeholder

**"This is a big part of wellbeing - doing activities that bring people together. The project has facilitated that."**

Programme Stakeholder

## **Well Rotherham has delivered a significant legacy and has acted as a catalyst for further opportunities including:**

- Ongoing work with Rotherham Council, Harworth Group and Well North Enterprises to establish Rotherham as a national innovation platform
- Pioneering the first community space at Waverley based on a social enterprise model to ensure sustainable funding for the local community
- South Yorkshire Housing Association has established a new approach to working in our communities across South Yorkshire
- £374k delivered in grants for community projects - £187k from £300k programme budget and £187k in match funding secured
- North Star Science School established as an annual event in the Sheffield City Region

- 4 viable social businesses in Rotherham looking to increase social connectivity
- Creation of the Rother Valley Way, a fully signed and accessible route from Waverley through the Rother Valley
- A vision in place to establish the Rother Valley as a national destination for mountain biking
- A community gardening space in each programme area

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**We're keen to share the learning for Well Rotherham and our wider journey to transition to a strengths-based organisation. For more information get in touch or visit our website**

**[www.syha.co.uk/growing-communities](http://www.syha.co.uk/growing-communities)**

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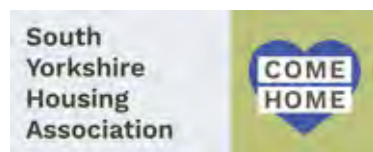
# Thank you for reading.

For further information visit our website:

[www.syha.co.uk/growing-communities](http://www.syha.co.uk/growing-communities)

Or email the Enterprise Team at South Yorkshire  
Housing Association:

[enterprise@syha.co.uk](mailto:enterprise@syha.co.uk)



## We'd like to offer special thanks and credit to:

All the amazing people and community organisations  
we met and worked with over the programme

Well North Enterprises for paving the way

Aligned Consultancy for advice on all things community

Matt Worden for the amazing artistry

Rotherham Council and Harworth Group and many  
others for their commitment to the partnership