

Community Decision-Making Project

For WMCA Wellbeing Board

3rd July 2023

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Overview

Rationale:

- Project aim: to explore the **feasibility of creating a replicable community-based decision-making model** within NHS strategic processes through a race equity lens and **understand what good engagement, co-design and accountability looks like** in tackling structural inequalities in health.
- Responding to: **structural racism and inequalities in health and wider determinants** exposed by Covid-19, recognising that action on health inequalities must reflect all ethnic identities and address power imbalance between different groups.

Key elements:

- Funding source: **Birmingham Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (BCHCT) and West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA)**
- Delivery partners: **Flourish** (collective of grassroots health & social care organisations in West Birmingham) selected because it is rooted in community-based decision-making and has strategic levers at **Ladywood & Perry Barr Locality Partnership**.
- Opportunity: These relationships established a good opportunity to deliver the project and draw out learning to influence **how decision-making is shared at a strategic level** in new NHS structures with the prospect for exploring sustainable organisational change to other 4 locality areas in the Birmingham & Solihull ICS.
- Pilot: Flourish delivered the community decision-making '**Roadmap Project**' which provides support for parents of children with special educational needs.
- Evaluation: **New Economics Foundation was commissioned**, and the evaluation was **co-designed** with the WMCA and Flourish team. It focused on whether Flourish is achieving its aims in relation to service users, community organisations and healthcare providers, identifying good practice and advantages of the model and assessing the potential replicability and race equity approach of Flourish as a community-based decision-making model .

Why was the WMCA involved?

- Support the development and discussion on **sustainable funding models for VCS in health** as evaluation will support case for future funding for Flourish
- Funding **good practice with ambition to scale up** this learning across the ICS, sharing decision making with communities is key element for NHS anchors action on wider determinants [here](#)
- Unpicking and **calling out tricky issues** around power imbalance and race inequity
- **Supporting and influencing health system transition** to ICBs and ICPs with focus on community partnership working and sharing power

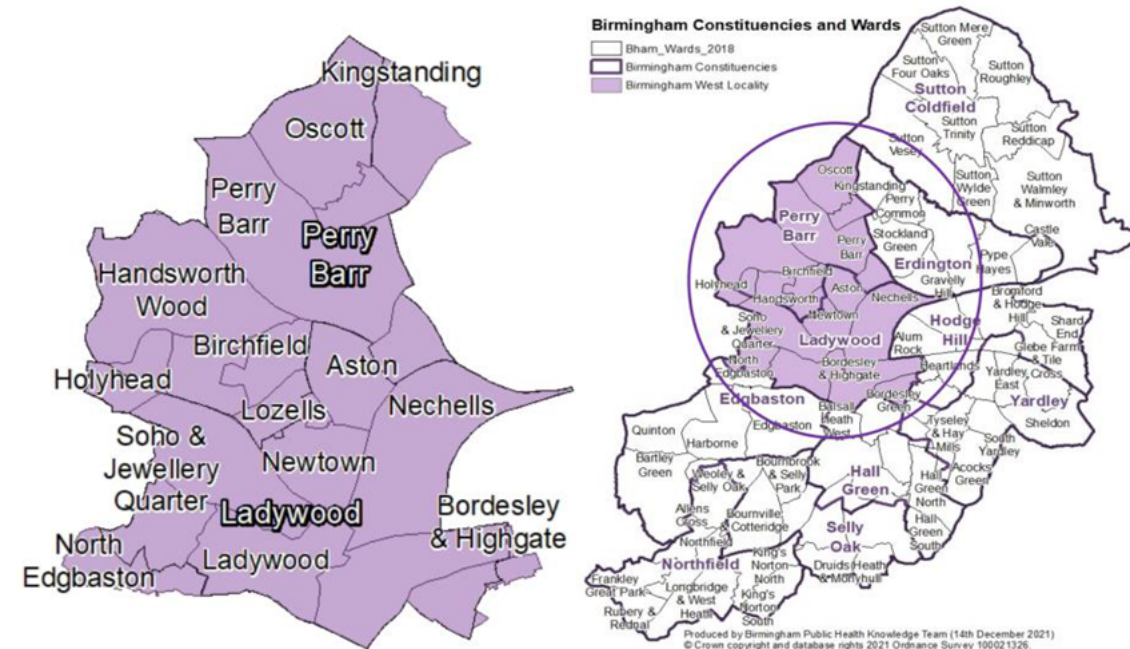


Figure 1: Birmingham West locality map and Birmingham map

What is the Flourish model?



Who:

- Flourish is a new **collective of micro and hyper-local community organisations** working in and around the health and social care space in West Birmingham (Perry Barr and Ladywood constituencies).

What:

- Flourish brings groups together and **navigates decision-making spaces**, as well as direct delivery of support to local service users.
- The collective aims to present a **viable and sustainable alternative option for investment into the community**, providing better support and better health and wellbeing services for local residents.
- Flourish assists micro and often hyper-local organisations in the area through funding, facilitation, and other forms of support.

How:

- Its role is to **tap into the existing work in local communities**, and act as a connective tissue between the NHS and other healthcare providers, communities, and grassroots organisations.
- Its model is rooted in a commitment to **co-production and work is driven by needs and priorities as defined by the community itself**, particularly in the health and social care space.
- There is a strong emphasis on community buy-in and membership is open and free.
- Flourish has a light-touch governance structure, with five issue-based subgroups: building trust; primary care access; best start in life; diabetes, obesity & asthma and; communications.

System:

- Flourish is part of **Ladywood & Perry Barr Locality Partnership** with key organisations from Health and Care including NHS Provider and Commissioners alongside Birmingham City Council social care.
- This enables Flourish to effectively influence local decision making and **resource allocation**.

Key learnings from first year of Flourish's work:

Building of connective tissue

- Between community organisations, statutory services and service users (communities)
- Created place at decision-making table for community organisations
- Increasing legitimacy, credibility and direct trusted pathways to local people

Rebuilding trust and building community capacity to self-support

- Service users feel listened to and increased understanding how healthcare system works and how to self-support

Building good practice and foundations for future work and impact

- Providing time and space for people to come together
- Moving from listening to action
- Building capacity within member community organisations
- Building relationships and local approach to co-production to respond to local needs

Indirect impact on tackling racial inequalities in health

- Through geographic delivery context operating in a location with high proportion of ethnic minority communities and focus on empowering community organisations which represent local people and their needs

N.B. Flourish is a young partnership – and these findings reflect what has been achieved in the first year of its work, in line with the **short-term outcomes set out in its Theory of Change**. There is still “a lot work to be done” as highlighted by Flourish partners and its early evaluation sends a clear signal that Flourish is open to scrutiny as it continues to develop.

Design characteristics to replicate a similar model:

collective grassroots organisations for community-based decision-making with a seat at the strategic table



Find people who are deeply connected to their community and are trusted



Understand barriers to trust between organisations



Avoid membership fees for community organisations



Power and voice should be distributed within the collaborative network



Enable influence and flexibility with funding to respond to needs



Have slim governance and reporting requirements for small projects



Recommendations to continue to progress impact of Flourish model in working with communities

1. Embed monitoring and evaluation funding and activity into wider Flourish delivery
2. Use these short-term outcomes to further assess the foundations being built by Flourish and statutory services for future work
3. Consider what data is needed to assess medium-term outcomes in the theory of change
4. Encourage partnership between statutory and research institutes to support gathering and analysing this data at local level to further understand impact
5. Include and embed racial equity in vision and priorities to allow for deeper assessment of tackling this issue
6. Use these insights and design characteristics to inform and influence conversations in other localities

Strategic links for the project's legacy

Name	Description	Link to project/ legacy activity
Mental Health Commission	Aims to 'add value' in pursuit of a mentally healthier region, building on existing local and national work, by: 1. Supporting a clear regional understanding of the differential mental health and wellbeing impacts of COVID-19 on local people; 2. Understanding the response to the pandemic, particularly local innovation and good practice; 3. Co-developing priority actions for the WMCA and partners to make further contributions towards a mentally healthier region, and to reduce inequalities in mental health. Since MHC completion, an implementation plan has been devised to identify delivery levers for point 3.	Learning from this project and potential to explore continuing the relationship with Flourish in this space is well-aligned to MHC Implementation idea (3) "Reinforce the role of voluntary, community and faith sector in meeting diverse, unmet MH needs" particularly meeting potential project elements (b) develop opportunities between ICS and VCS, (c) utilising small grants and (d) co-develop capacity building.
Race Equalities Taskforce	Independent group working to improve equality of opportunity for all of our communities with a five year strategy (2023-2028) which included a health & wellbeing theme	Learning from this project can support/ contribute to the following priority actions in the HWB thematic area of the RET's strategy: Support regional health literacy to help communities navigate support. • Take forward action in Mental Health, through reviewing services and creating a community campaign. • Support activity to encourage healthier behaviours, such as developing culturally appropriate health incentives. • Contribute to the Taskforce's cross cutting priorities around building cultural intelligence resources and exploring the potential of a West Midlands ethnicity data standard.
Inclusive Growth	A more deliberate and socially purposeful model of growth. The IG Framework measures growth against a set of social & environmental missions i.e. the 8 Fundamentals. Those relevant to this project are 'power and participation' (the extent to which people and have a voice in influencing the things that matter to them) and 'health & wellbeing' (people living longer, healthier, and happier lives, regardless of their social circumstances)	Learning/ activity from this project helps WMCA delivery against fundamentals within the framework. Shared learning for Inclusive Economies Partnership work in the pipeline for developing community power in place.
WMCA comms	Alignment with narrative for Economy, Skills & Communities directorate	Promote work and key messages with stakeholders including Birmingham & Solihull ICS colleagues.
WMCA website	Health of the Region landing page	Upload evaluation report and promote good practice – link this to other examples of good practice across WMCA patch
Community Connexions	2-year scheme led by (BCHC) and Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust. Funded by the Clinical Research Network. Aston University key partner. Seeking to capture the lived experiences of local communities, in order to adapt healthcare services to inform future health research and better meet local needs. Used activity to develop community engagement toolkit.	Strategic learning from project for toolkit i.e. the sustainability and value of collective orgs such as Flourish which support grassroot orgs in their work with communities. Learning from the toolkit helpful for WMCA work on what does good look like for community engagement
Birmingham & Solihull ICS	Role out model to other 4 localities in ICS patch	Utilise learning across patch and put case forward for Fairer Futures Fund for Flourish and other similar grassroots infrastructure orgs in patch.
Flourish	Win additional funding to support sustainability and continued operation of Flourish's activities and the grassroots infrastructure and community engagement and co-design it supports	Value-add of Flourish demonstrated in early evaluation with much more to continue to understand. Opportunity to continue use of Theory of Change to monitor medium to longer term impact.

Policy and research context

Policy / research	Overview	Links
<p>The Hewitt Review: an independent review of integrated care systems (April 23) and Government Response (June 23)</p>	<p>The review set out to consider the oversight and governance of integrated care systems. ICSs) represent the best opportunity in a generation for a transformation in our health and care system. Relevant to this project, effective change includes delivering on the promise of systems and specifically, for local accountability and priority setting.</p> <p>Govt supports Hewitt’s recommendation and states that Health & Care Act 2022 enables this. However, more consideration is needed for most appropriate way to achieve this aim.</p>	<p>Just as the care and treatment of individuals must be based on ‘no decision about me without me’, so local communities must be involved through a continual process of engagement, consultation and co-production in design and decisionmaking about local services. Strong and visible local accountability, recognising the principle of subsidiarity, also plays an important role in promoting legitimacy with the local population through empowering, accountable and transparent decision-making. The Flourish model is taking steps for the how to do the hardwiring into the Bsol system.</p>
<p>New Local and Joseph Rowntree Foundation: ‘Designing out the most severe forms hardship in local areas’ (May 23)</p>	<p>Framework to support local areas to make progress towards designing out the most severe forms of hardship. Based upon research exploring how local public services, voluntary and community organisations, community groups and other partners are working tenaciously and creatively to both mitigate the impact of poverty and attempt to fundamentally tackle the root causes of it.</p> <p>Areas of the framework relevant to this project are: shifting power and redesigning the system and creating the conditions for sustainable change.</p>	<p>Correlation between most severe forms of hardship and those experiencing health inequalities. Flourish model seeks to shift decision-making power to community, deliver services in the community based on their needs and pave way for sustainable funding and change across NHS structures.</p>
<p>Government mandate to NHS (June 23)</p>	<p>The government’s priorities to NHS June 23-24 are to cut waiting lists and recover performance, technology and workforce</p>	<p>Lack of priorities centred around public health restoration: a missed opportunity to boost the important shift to focus on promoting good health and prevention and flagged by NHS Confed here. The Flourish model supports bottom-up promotion of good health and prevention.</p>
<p>WHO Health for All: Transforming economies to deliver what matters (May 23)</p>	<p>The WHO Council on the Economics of Health for All has called for shifts in economic thinking – in each country, region and globally – to prioritize Health for All. Recommendation relevant to this project are: Strengthening public sector capacity for Health for All through Build trust: Demonstrate transparency and meaningful public engagement to hold governments accountable for the common good</p>	<p>Building trust through meaningful engagement is key to the Flourish model and highlighted by WHO: Meaningful public engagement, accountability and trust are critical to ensure governments can anticipate new needs and set goals that resonate with people, and to build support for changes required to reshape economies to support goals. Participatory mechanisms must be adopted that capture and reflect the public’s opinions in central decision-making. Amplifying people’s voices increases legitimacy of the policy-making process, rendering governments more responsive to the needs of the population.</p>
<p>Kings Fund Prevention and policy (May 23)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • government consulted on Advancing our health: prevention in the 2020s and has not followed it up • upcoming major conditions strategy will have a preventive component, mostly focused on secondary prevention • Levelling up health mission but no health disparities white paper 	<p>Evaluation findings demonstrate how Flourish is supporting preventative care within the community and contributing to overall Govt strategic direction and filling the blanks on the how to.</p>