

# GM Policy Hub Seminar

Beyond behaviour change: making local  
environmental policy and action more  
inclusive



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**Wednesday, 19 March**  
1:00 - 2:30pm



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# Beyond behaviour change: making local environmental policy and action more inclusive

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Director, JUST Centre  
University of Manchester



# Outline

- I. Background: why 'beyond' behaviour change? Why 'more inclusive'?
- II. Local research projects: aims & methods
- III. Key insights from our research
- IV. Recommendations & calls to action



Research team (left to right): Nafhesa Ali, Saima Ansari, Zarina Ahmad. Not shown: Tally Katz-Gerro, Paul Tobin, Saabira Abdirahman, Nuura Ahmed

# I. Background: Behaviour change

- Dominance of **behaviour change policy paradigm** since mid-2000s
- Comes out of the behavioural sciences
- Central place in 'scientific, evidence-based' policy-making
- Controversial in academic circles, yet widely accepted as relatively benign/positive in policy circles
- Time to question it? Time for different language? A paradigm shift?



“The debate on behaviour change needs to move on. While there is a tendency to talk in terms of ‘nudges’ and ‘tools’ for behaviour change, the challenge is more profound. We need an account of the role of behaviour change that is *more political and social, and brings questions of limits, power and social justice to the fore* in order to appreciate how questions of responsibility and agency are unevenly distributed within and between societies. This leads to a more holistic understanding of behaviour, as just one node within an ecosystem of transformation that bridges the individual and systemic.”

Newell P, Twena M, Daley F (2021). ‘Scaling behaviour change for a 1.5- degree world: challenges and opportunities’. *Global Sustainability* 4, e22, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1017/sus.2021.23> 9

# Argument for moving 'beyond' behaviour change

- i) Insufficient understanding of social, political, cultural and spatial contexts, and of diversity within and between places/people
- ii) Focus on individual responsibility for change deflects attention from need for deeper system change
- iii) Framing is disciplinary; not conducive to gaining public trust and support

# Argument for more inclusive environmental policy

- i) Environmental field is very far from inclusive
- ii) Risk of policies exacerbating existing inequalities and creating new ones if not inclusive
- iii) Inclusion of more forms of knowledge on which to base better policy decisions
- iv) People more likely to participate if they are included, so increased likelihood of policy success
- v) It's the right thing to do

‘Social inclusion is about working together as a society to foster active participation of, and equity for, all citizens... [and to] **change dominant systems of knowledge, power, and decision-making**’

Teelucksingh, C. (2019) ‘Diverse environmentalism and inclusivity in Toronto’s green economy’, *Environmental Sociology*, 5:1, 47-58.

**See our new report: ‘Beyond the tick-box: meaningful inclusion of racialised communities in UK net zero policy’ (link coming soon)**



## II. Local research projects since 2017

- Place-based, situated approach
- Mixed methods and co-production
- Research with people in marginalised communities/areas
- Aim to challenge assumptions that stem from behaviour change paradigm



Artist: Ricardo Levins Morales

# Talking Rubbish in Moss Side



## Talking Rubbish in Moss Side

Exploring the problem of litter in the streets and alleys  
of a deprived neighbourhood with a large student population

By Shellys MacGregor & Simon Pardo 2018. Research conducted in 2017 in collaboration with Upping It



MANCHESTER  
1624  
The United City of Manchester  
Social Media Campaigns in a Global

Upping It  
in Moss Side & Rushmore

Mi  
Mossimpact

*‘They have stereotyped our street and think we don’t sort our bins.’*



# Everyday sustainabilities in Somali households



*'It's what I've always done'*





# Toward inclusive environmental sustainabilities (TIES)



### III. Key insights from our research

- No significant difference in levels of environmental concern or engagement in 'green' practices between UK born and GS born participants
- High level of engagement and concern among participants
- Cultural and religious motivations
- Importance of ties to people and land back home
- Different information sources and trust therein
- Contradictory messages and messages lacking resonance
- Not 'hard to reach' but believe 'it's not for us'

## IV. Recommendations from the research

**Question and challenge** the assumption that GS-origin communities are 'hard to reach' and/or uninterested in environmental issues.

The first step should be to assess whether existing structures, barriers and processes are to blame for perceived lack of engagement rather than deficiencies within these communities.



**Listen to and accept GS-originating knowledge and experience as valuable.**

Incorporate 'translocational knowledge' into public campaigns about how to address climate threats and accelerate the move to net zero.

See this contribution as an asset to collective sustainability efforts, thereby challenging the assumption that people who have moved here from GS countries lack motivation and need to be educated in order to 'change their behaviour'.

**Create culturally relevant environmental messaging for citizens with GS migration backgrounds.**

Design campaigns that use accessible language and language that reflects the cultural values and knowledge of their communities.

Tailor messages to resonate with religious teachings and migration experiences, acknowledging the diversity of sustainability practices across groups.

**Engage** religious communities and their leaders in sustainability efforts. Partner with faith-based institutions and recognise the influential role of religious leaders in promoting sustainable practices within their communities.

**Organise** advisory bodies and public forums where GS-origin communities can discuss and contribute to local environmental policies in their own languages if desired. Ensure meetings include language interpreters for those who need it, have gender-sensitive arrangements, and are scheduled at times that are sensitive to religious practices.

# Call to action

- **Ask:** are you saying 'behaviour change' out of habit? Could you use different language?
- **Read:** our reports (TIES project on SCI website)
- **Join:** the JUST Centre mailing list





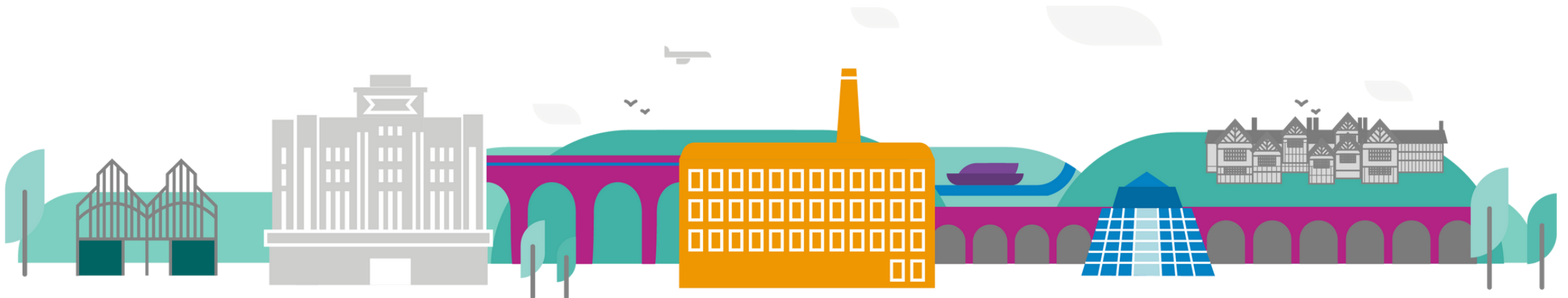
**STOCKPORT**  
METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Ambitious Stockport,  
creating opportunities  
*for everyone***

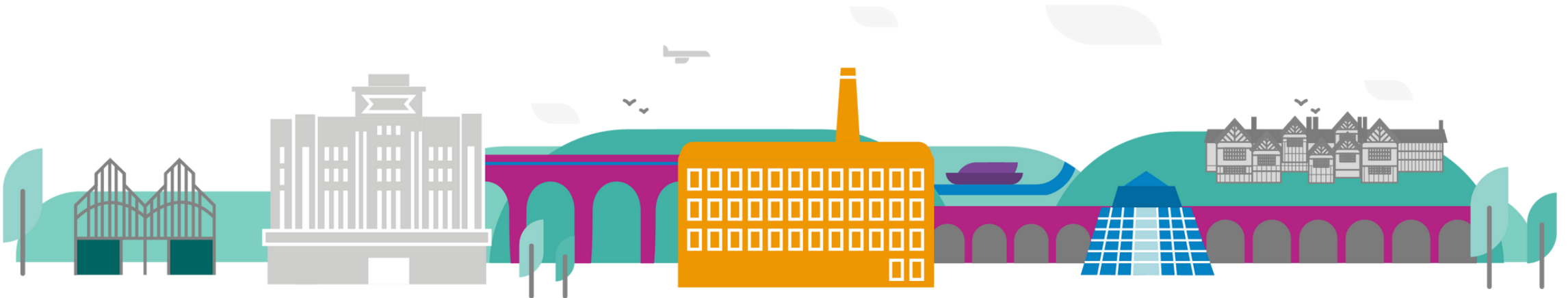


# Liz Atherton

CAN Programme Manager, Stockport Council



1. Climate-friendly borough engagement
2. Moving forward..
3. Resilience4Communities – co-developing climate resilience





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# Initial engagement approach

- Awareness raising and education > leading to behaviour change
- Defined strands > target engagement
- Peer led spaces and appreciative inquiry principles
- Theory of change – positive, fun, action-led!



ANNUAL CAN SUMMIT

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# Communities

- Stockport Green Network
  - Peer collaboration space
  - Becoming community led
  - Network testing new approaches to engagement



## Greenstock 2024





# Young People



## Climate Action

Stockport Schools Climate Assembly  
Primary



## Democracy In Action

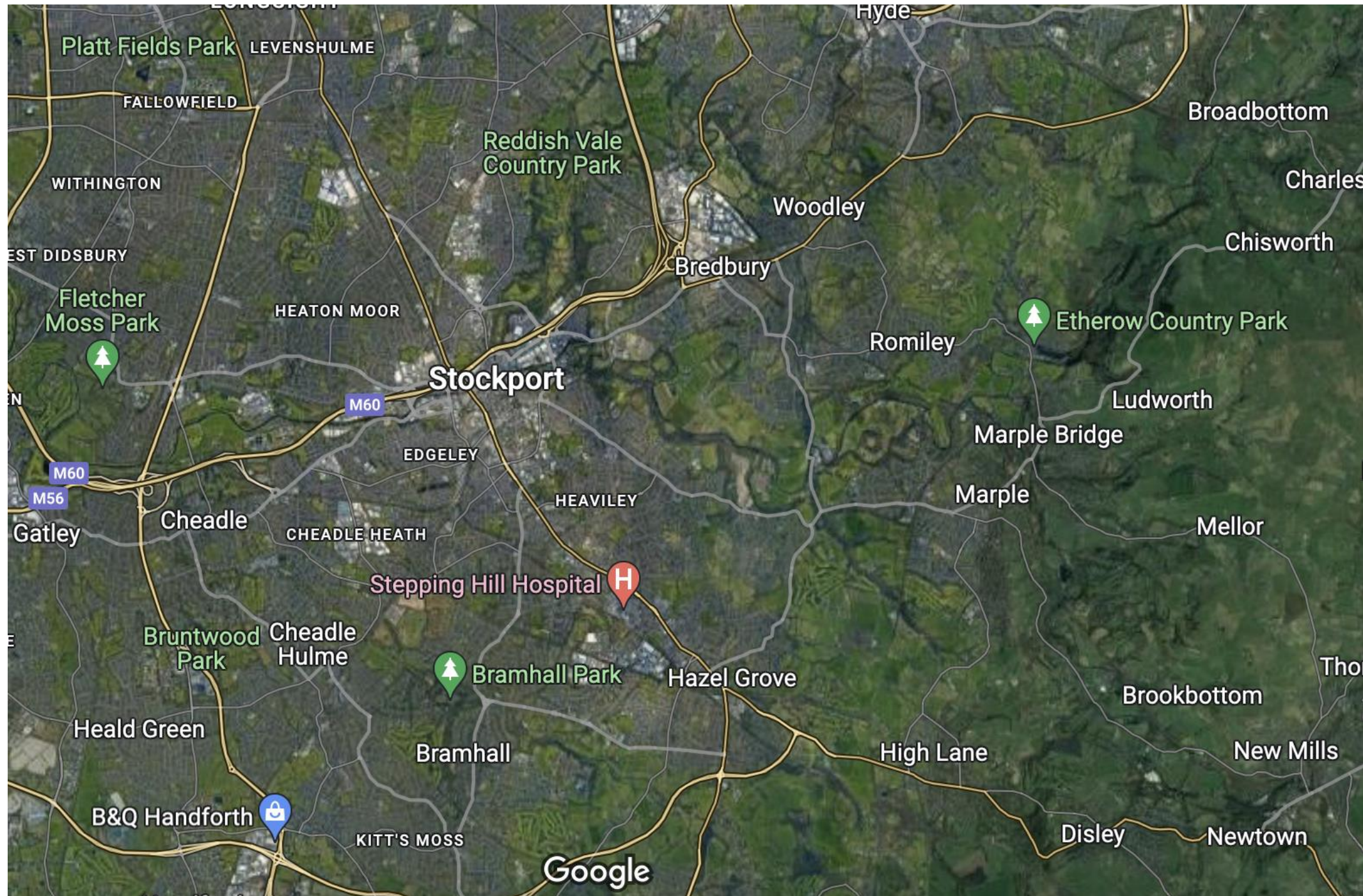
Stockport Schools Climate Assembly



- Schools and Youth Climate Assemblies
- Insights from young people every year
- Results in action
  - Eco-friendly period products
  - Book Worms gardening clubs
  - Swap shops
  - Composting

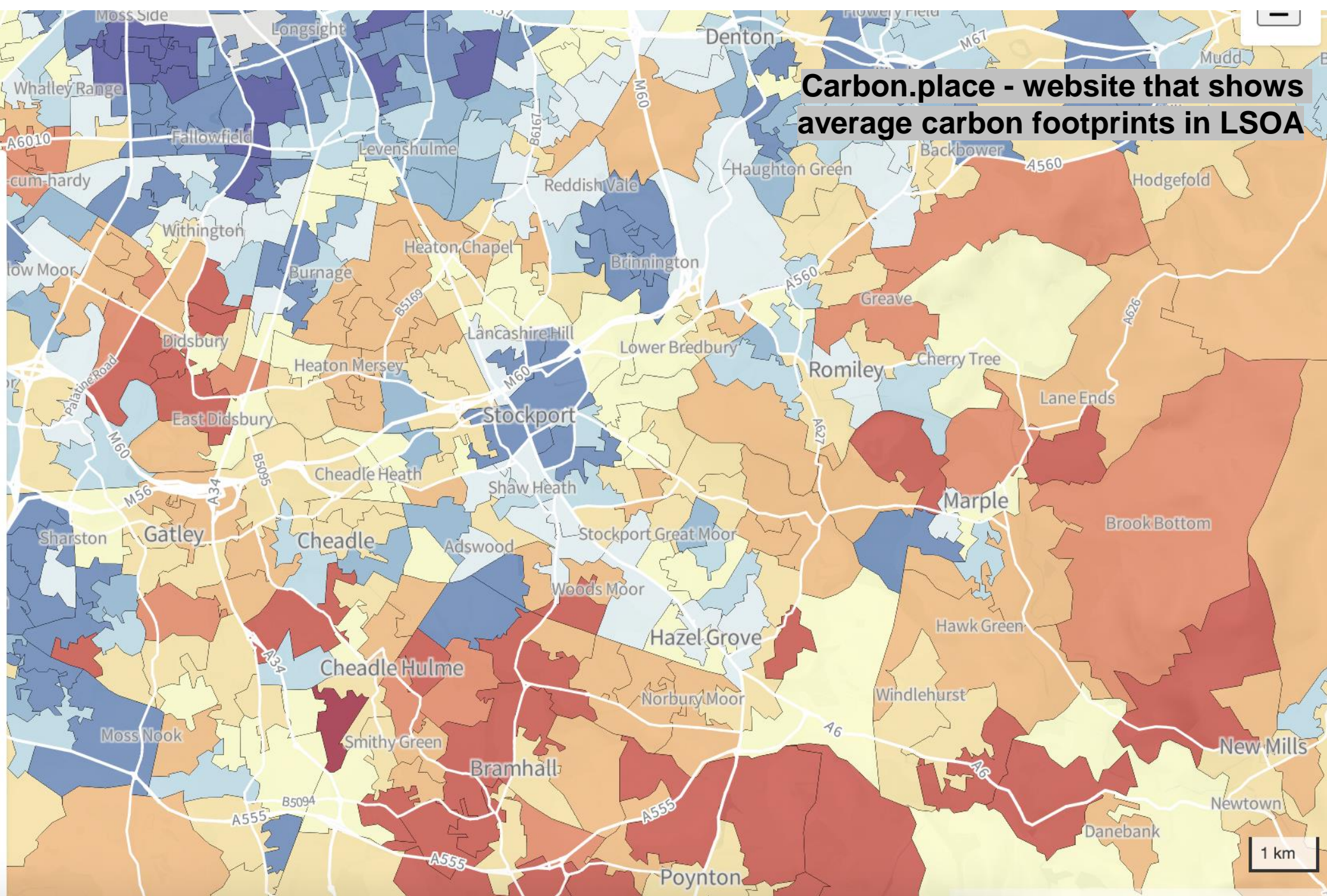
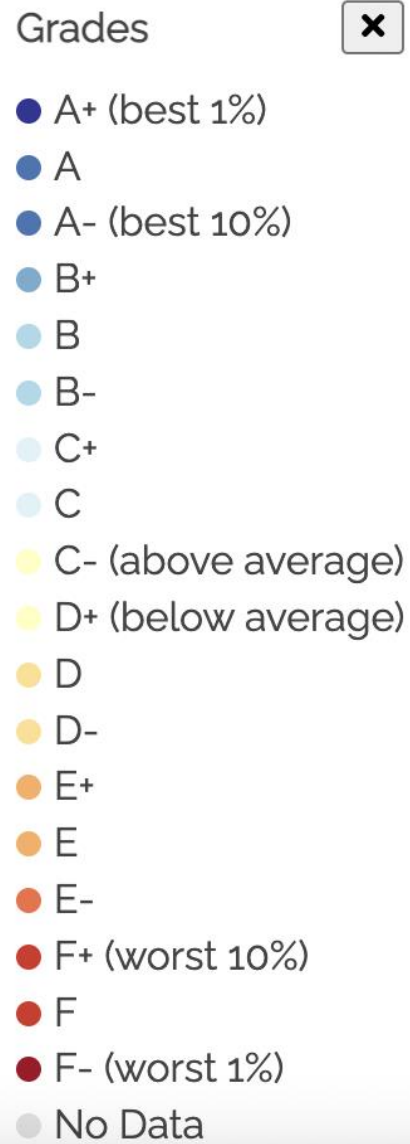








**Carbon.place - website that shows average carbon footprints in LSOA**

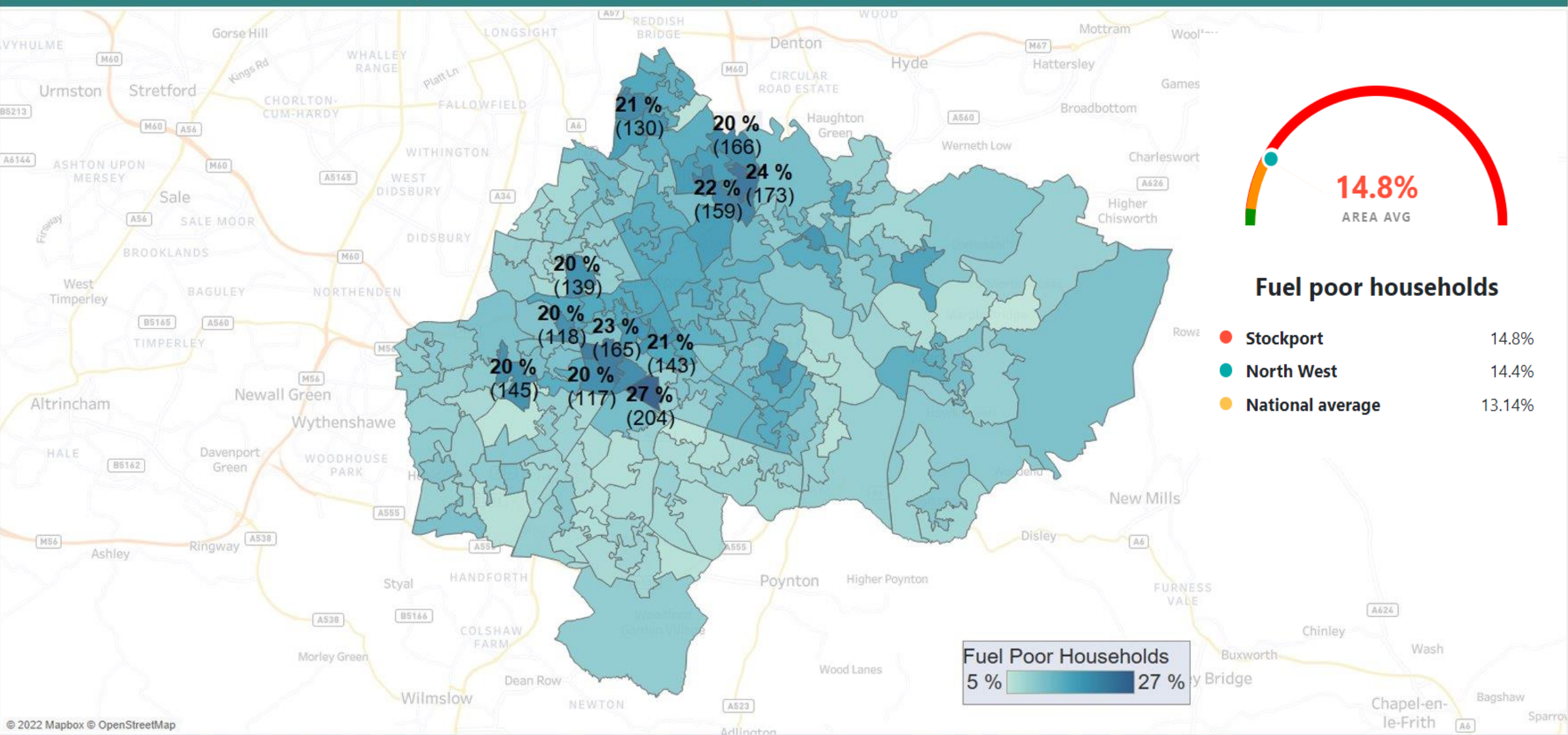




## Where are Stockport's fuel-poor households?

Fuel poor households exist in all areas of Stockport, at least 5% of households per small area.

More than 20% of households are fuel-poor some small areas in Brinnington and South West of the town centre.





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# Moving forward



How can we reach  
high-emitting  
communities with  
behaviour change  
messaging?

How can we reach  
climate concerned  
but not yet active  
residents?

How can we work with  
communities to build  
climate resilience?

How can we co-  
develop these  
approaches?

# Resilience 4 Communities



- Aim – create behaviour change in communities that will increase resilience to extreme heat
- Behavioural insights led – informed by household surveys, stakeholder interviews and research
- Co-developing solutions



# 5 sources of Community Resilience

Community resilience is a capacity that can be improved by **tapping into the different sources of capital**



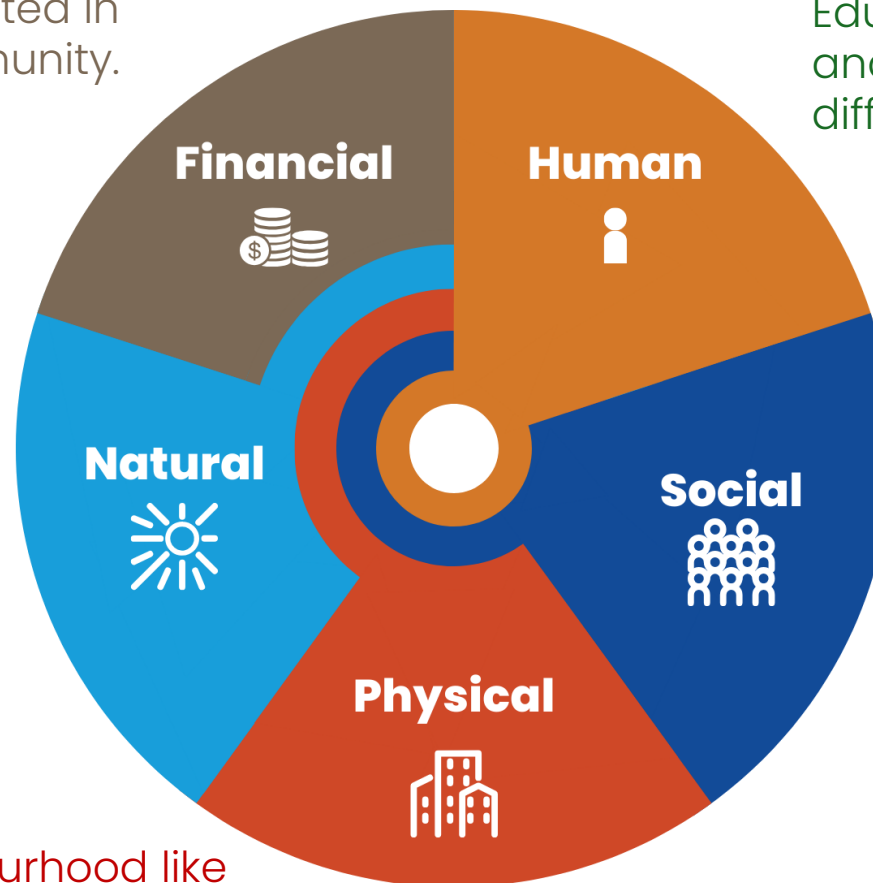
Money available to individuals in the community and invested in the community.

Education, skills, ability to work, and good health to pursue different economic activities.

Natural features like trees, rivers and the type of land in the community.

Relationships and bonds between the community that help them work together, trust each other, and share ideas and resources.

Built things in the neighbourhood like roads and buildings.





# Edgeley



Edgeley

MDC town centre west





# Tracking the mission: Where are we now?

## PROGRAM INITIATION & SELECTION OF TWO COMMUNITIES

(June 2023 – September 2023)

### Key activities

Governance, monitoring evaluation framework, and communities of focus agreed

KNOWLEDGE

COMMUNICATION

ADVOCACY

## RESEARCH & ASSESSMENT

(October 2023 – July 2024)

### Key activities

Direct involvement of communities in identifying gaps & obstacles to address their unique challenges using tested methodology.

## CO-PRODUCING ACTIONS AND PLANS WITH THE COMMUNITY

June 2024– January 2025

### Key activities

Community, city, and other stakeholders engaged in project preparation process. Policy recommendations developed and funding opportunities are mapped.

## DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION

February 2025– April 2026

### Key activities

Identified interventions designed and implemented, increasing the communities resilience to climate hazards.

CAPACITY BUILDING

AWARENESS

POLICY INFLUENCE

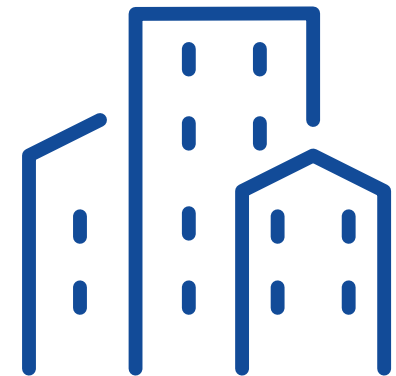




**The Resilience Hub** aims to transform Park View into a vibrant, community-driven space anchored in climate resilience and social cohesion.



This initiative builds on the findings of the **Community Resilience Assessment** and leverages ongoing efforts in the Stockport8 area to address socio-economic and environmental challenges while promoting adaptive capacity.







## In practice:

- Mum in tower blocks that overheat - brought her young children who have autism to play in the space over summer so they could cool down
- Family who asked to hold child's party in the space, had never hosted a party before, were helped by the What If team – now volunteering in the hub

# Objectives



**Community Empowerment:**  
Establish local governance structures.



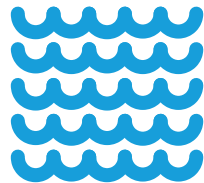
**Social Infrastructure:** Build trust through inclusive programming.



**Climate Resilience:**  
Infrastructure upgrades to combat climate risks.



**Scalability:**  
Develop a replicable hub model.

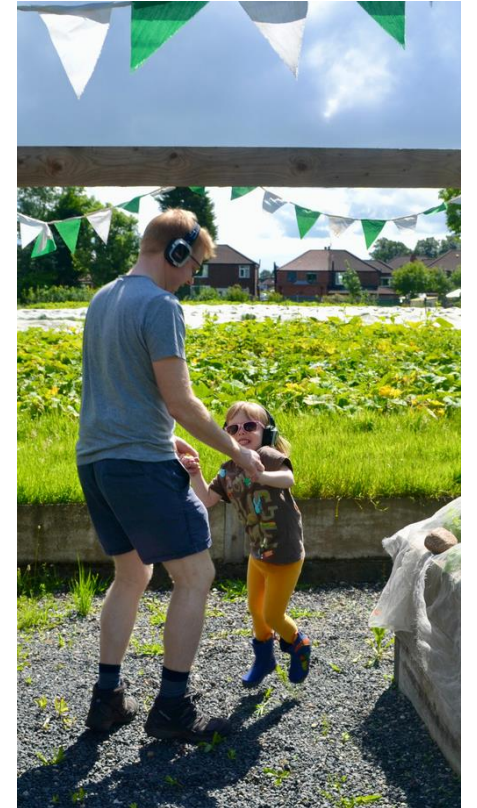


**Emergency Preparedness:**  
Equip Park View as a crisis resource centre.



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# Thank you



Questions?



# Join our next GM Policy Hub Seminar

## Attending to absence: Supporting schools to increase school attendance

**Prof. Caroline  
Bond**

Senior Lecturer,  
Manchester Institute  
of Education

**Chair: Prof.  
Arpana Verma**

Policy@Manchester  
Co-Director

**Dr Matthew  
Fletcher**

Educational and  
Child Psychologist,  
Wirral Council



**Wednesday, 7 May**  
1:00 - 2:30pm



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[policy.manchester.ac.uk](http://policy.manchester.ac.uk)