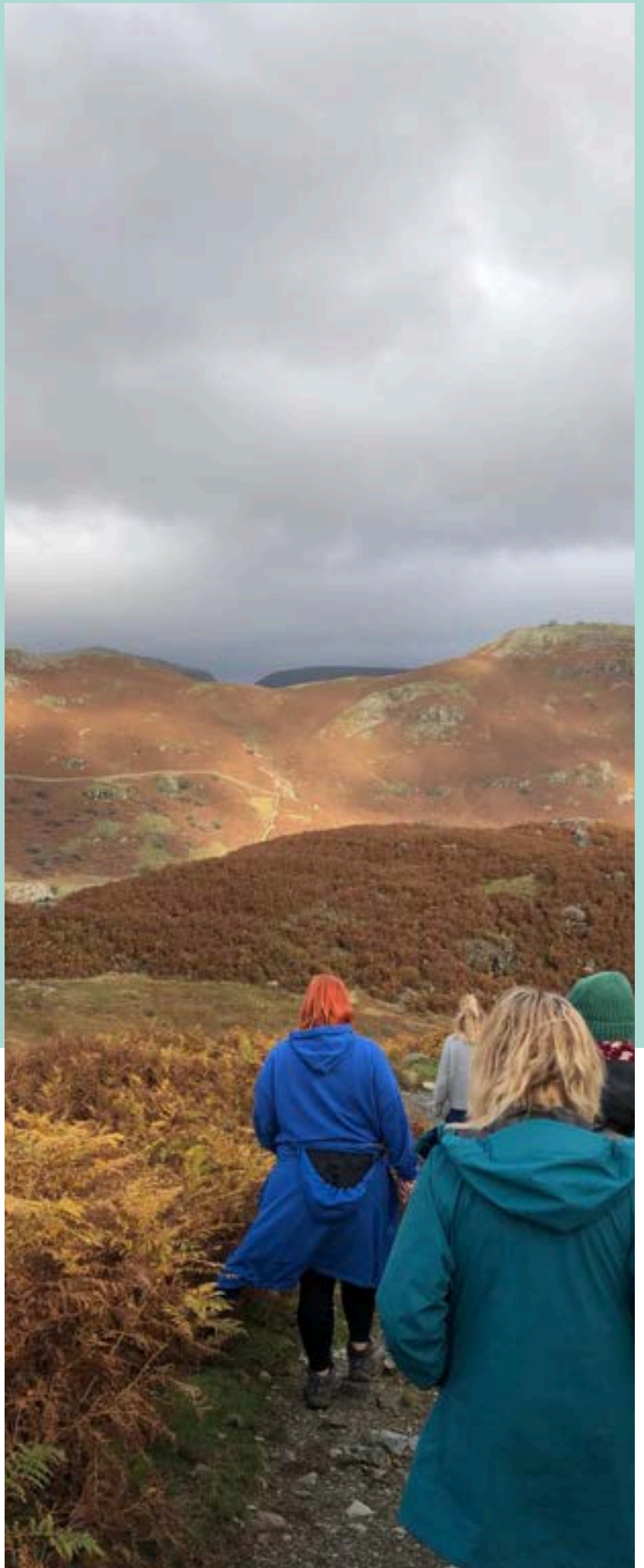


# ANNUAL REPORT 1ST SEPT 2023- 31ST AUG 2024



Community Interest  
Company

NO: 13552867



# MISSION

**IT IS OUR OUR MISSION TO CULTIVATE A SELF ORGANISING AND RENOVATING COMMUNITY THAT KEEPS HOLD OF PEOPLE, PLACE AND WEALTH FOR THE COMMON GOOD OF ALL**

**This reporting year we have invested energy and resource into:**

- **Cultivating a rich associational life in Springfield, Beech Hill & Gidlow (Wigan West).**
- **Offering services that are of Service, Based on knowing what exists between us & what we might require support with. Expertise on tap rather than on top.**
- **Investing in people and socially traded businesses that see people as producers**
- **Investing in and growing wider circles and networks that centre principles of solidarity and mutuality and work towards alternative futures rooted in social, economic, racial and climate justice.**
- **Building relationships with Local and Global solidarity mission-focused groups that support participatory grant making, trust-based resourcing, and redistribution to grassroots groups and organisations.**

**This annual report provides progress against this mission along with details of investment received and monies shared and redistributed.**

**There are 5 parts:**

- 1. The Local - The Neighbourhood as The Primary Unit of Change**
- 2. Solidarity, Networks & Greater Manchester System Changers**
- 3. The Money - sharing & redistributing**
- 4. Conduits and Changes**
- 5. What's Gently Bubbling? Looking Ahead**



# 1. THE LOCAL

## THE NEIGHBOURHOOD AS THE PRIMARY UNIT OF CHANGE

The predominant pedagogy underpinning the local work is **Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) through a justice and systemic lens**. ABCD is a weaving process that starts with what's strong in order to uncover and connect the local eco system enabling new life to naturally and organically emerge, connect and act collectively for the common good.

**It's a way of being and doing that enables communities to rekindle form and function without fear of displacement, replacement or harm.**



### **Cultivating a rich and deep associational life is foundational to the mission**

In pursuit, we have:

- **Taken on a 5-year lease (with a two-year break clause) for CommUnity Corner** and protected it as a space for associational life - citizenship, friendship, clubs, groups and organising.
- **Rooted new community led traditions** - the Springfield Dog Show is now in its 4th year, Community Awards are in their third year, as is the Women and Young Girls Food Share. The Halloween Walk and annual CommUnity Party are in their second years.
- **Written two more editions of Ey Up - It's Wigan West CommUnity News** and worked as a community to deliver to every letterbox in the community (ward). Secured, via the mutual aid groups application to Awards for All, two more years of investment for four more issues and training for local people in Community Reporting.
- **Hosted and facilitated Community Play** at half term and summer holidays. See pages 5 and 6.
- With attention to hosting style, **continued to grow the community Facebook group** as a place of mutuality, reciprocity and generosity with 3,600 local members. Launched and started to grow a WhatsApp community with 14 groups and 165 members.
- **Secured Investing in Communities trust based funding from Wigan Council** to grow Pop Ins and resource peer support as a community function.
- Created the conditions for a range of **new community led groups and clubs to grow from the ground up**. Hosted new spaces and commissioned new groups that are of service. (See diagram, page 5).



# COMMUNITY PLAY

## Rekindling Care as a Community Function

**Play and joyful opportunities are very important to this community.** We heard this loud and clear during early listening campaigns and in every survey, conversation group and street conversation we've held and hosted. One of the passions that parents have been more than happy to organise around is community play.

Doing things for the children is in the bones and DNA of this community. **There's much we'd like to grow and nurture over time as local alternatives to the care system.**



Austerity almost destroyed play and youth provision for local children and families and the model of delivery prior to austerity had caused some harm to the social fabric of family and community life, almost telling parents that it's the job of others to look after their children. Luckily, some members of this community began to spot this, noticing that over the last generation, parents and carers have retreated from the streets and, in doing so, have affected the natural community safety systems of the neighbourhood. In addition to the diminishing role of community, it was also noted, thanks to a freedom of information request, that there was an unequal distribution of government Holiday Activity Fund monies flowing into the local area, and any money that was was mainly flowing out to large organisations.

Together, we set about changing this picture, exploring available resources and possible shifts to enable this community to rekindle its function. The predominant national and Government prescribed model of Holiday Activity Fund (HAF) is to take children who are living with poverty away from their parents. To leave parents at home and let someone else play with, entertain and feed their children. Whilst there is a need for new opportunities and enrichment activities, there's a need too for families and communities to come together and to play and experience joy in each other's company regardless of economic status.

That's currently under-resourced at a community level. For the last two to three years, we've been building the case for and demonstrating what might happen when we all play together in freely available spaces, away from the marketplace, where parents know they can leave their purses at home. Playful spaces that encourage connection rather than schemes that breed division when so many people are having a tough time making ends meet. We know a more flexible approach is possible as we saw and experienced it with our own eyes during the pandemic.

**We've worked hard during 2023 - 2024, bringing in £8550 from the Council's Holiday Activity Fund programme and £2500 from the local Cllr's Brighter Borough monies to enable a community play offer from local community buildings and the green spaces we are blessed with.**

# COMMUNITY PLAY



During the Christmas holidays, a coach full of families enjoyed each other's company at a pantomime in Bolton. Easter 2024 saw the return of the Playbox, thanks to a gift from Emma Bearman of Playful Anywhere and financial support from Cllrs Ramsdale and Woods for haulage costs. Families also enjoyed a much-loved trip to Bolton for an Easter pantomime.



Summer saw 13 organised events, from day trips to Lytham and Skipton Lido, to party in the park and fire making in the woods. 3 of the trips were organised by Planos, Pies and Pirouettes and 2 by a local parent. 548 children took part in the summer offer. Of the 454 school-aged children, 72 % of them were HAF eligible.



We hope that the summer of monitoring is enough to demonstrate that an open to all community-led offer naturally reaches those whom services often intend to target in a more inclusive and community-centred way.

This summer, we learned that HAF criteria and definitions of eligibility are narrow and can be exclusive, especially given the levels of poverty within families with pre-school children. We evidenced that families like to do things together in the place they call home. We reinforced the importance of the trusted relationship with the locally rooted organisation for participation. This really shone through.







## Cultivating Community Power - Actions

- **Supported the hosting of the Springfield, Beech Hill and Gidlow CommUnity (SBHG) organising circle.** Bringing together the organisers of new groups that have sprung to life and seek to work in solidarity. Growing practices and processes together that are circular and deepen democracy.
- **Supported a group of local children to lead a campaign,** crowdfund, fundraise, pitch to local businesses and secure a permanent Playbox in Beech Hill Play Park. This is the first asset the community has raised funds for together and now owns. Northern Heart & Soul CiC act as custodians for now.
- **Through Community Cash and circular and consensus decision-making processes,** shared £1819.50 with 11 community members and groups who want to do good stuff in the local community. Invested in the following ideas:

*October half term family play day at St Andrew's hosted by the church community; help with the costs to enable Ali to grow Chair Yoga in the community; £200 to Ben to help grow Community Toolmates at St Anne's Garden;*

*Christmas family fun at St Andrew's; £200 to the Playbox Campaign after a brilliant pitch from the young people; £250 to enable Janet to offer free reiki attunements in the community; a contribution to enable the Family Craft club to offer a children's Christmas party at St Anne's; £195 to 4 teenage boys who wanted to grow a gardening business;*

*£100 to Give it a Grow towards the cost of soil at St Anne's Community Garden and £117.50 to a young man to host a treasure hunt at the annual Community Party.*

*Funds were also added to the pot by Phil, a previous pitcher. He'd had his idea for the bike recycling project fully supported and chose to reinvest £200 to get other good ideas off the ground.*



- **Created a signed up membership** and welcomed the first 100 members.
- **Continued to practice the art of shared decision making and disagreeing** well through the Facebook Group, SBHG Circle, Peer Support Circle and hosted groups.
- **Launched a private members community lottery** and started to practice making shared decisions around resource allocation.



# 2. SOLIDARITY CIRCLES & NETWORKS

If the mission to become a self organising and self renovating neighbourhood is to be realised, then we require a different way of doing and deciding together; of being in community together. One that enables all to realise their gifts, skills and capacities, share them collectively in community and step into community power together.

A purposeful shift away from the master servant paradigm, where representative democracy is *the* measure of democracy, the leader is the idol and colonial practices are deeply steeped within organisations. Moving from power over towards power with. Travelling towards a much deeper idea than the practice or idea of giving power to people. Rather, the idea and practice of cultivating the conditions that enable power to grow within, between and from. Stewarding for the common good and connectorship that has shared accountability at its core.

This takes some work if future generations are to feel the fruits of the labour. Locally the work is in its infancy and evolving with deep gratitude to local, regional, national and global community builders, organisers, doers, thinkers and creative economists.

**Here in Wigan, we are paying attention to:**

- 1. Developing a local organising circle and cultivating the democratic muscle & functions of community.**
- 2. Supporting the growth of Wigan and Leigh, Makerfield Womens Network.**
- 3. Founding and nurturing the growth of GRoW - Grass Roots of Wigan.**
- 4. Growing movements - Camerados and the Asset Based Community Development Network.**
- 5. Acting with others as Temporary Stewards for Greater Manchester System Changers and as System Shapers for the Greater Manchester Live Well Community Power movement.**





# 2. SOLIDARITY

## LOCAL

### 1. Developing a local organising circle and cultivating the democratic muscle & functions of community

Rekindling democracy within the community during times of purposeful market-driven polarisation is a challenge in itself. Add to that the toxicity of political systems, and it's no wonder that the turnout in this ward at the local elections stood at 24.9% on 2nd May 2024. In the early days of the work, it became clear that if we were to create something new, something with community at the centre and where everyone was needed, then the old systems of powerful leaders must be hospiced to enable new ideas of leaders as connectors to emerge.

It was noticed that many of the existing ways of organising within the local community were soaked in power over practices. And the conditioned tendencies in those existing environments felt harmful. We knew we needed to cultivate something outside of and without the involvement of representative democracy and public bodies that came with their own agendas to impose on communities. In order to disrupt and rebalance power dynamics, it felt important to build the collective muscle before inviting in those who may be more familiar with controlled systems and less familiar with consensus and collective decision-making and working with emergence and messiness.

This is constant, deep, and intensive long-term work in communities as old patterns re-emerge, splinters, and fractures appear. Local work is greatly impacted by domineering systems and the rise of global extremism.

**At this current contextual point, the local strategy has a few strands. Here are four that we've been paying attention to over the last year;** you can see some examples on page 6.

1. **Shifting language from 'volunteering' to 'citizenizing together'.**
2. **Creating a sense of belonging to something that needs you and you can contribute to.**
3. **Exercising the democratic muscle with lots of different ways and methods to contribute.**
4. **Cultivating more circular and consensus-based governance forms with one eye on stewarding assets and homes as the long ball game.**



# 2. SOLIDARITY

## WOMEN - SPACES, CIRCLES & NETWORKS

### 2. Supporting the growth of Wigan and Leigh, Makerfield Womens Network

We have been keen to support and offer resources to the growth of the Wigan and Leigh Makerfield Women's Network, a network with solidarity and peer support at its heart. We see this as a spine for the local women's and young girls' work. This year we have:

- **Created and supported women and young girls' regular events** at CommUnity Corner and St Anne's Community Centre, including food shares, crafting space, walking groups and wellbeing sessions.
- **Offered a Seasons of the Soul** monthly healing space for women working with intergenerational trauma, oppression and toxic systems.
- **Contributed to an amazing offer during International Women's Day/month**, which Alice of ReMade Wigan pulled together for the Wigan, Leigh, and Makerfield Women's Network.
- **Interviewed and shared the stories of 21 women and girls** about their work in the world and what women could achieve by coming together to improve lives for all.
- **Worked with Theatre in Flow** to begin preparing for a Long Table event focusing on what a Wigan where Women are safe and flourish might look like.
- **Invested in women-led social enterprises** via mentoring and financial resources.
- **Invited 4 local women to the GM System Changers Participatory Grantmaking process** to develop their work around joint enterprise, suicide prevention, women's spaces and research.





# 2. SOLIDARITY

## GRASS ROOTS OF WIGAN (GROW)

### 3. Founding and nurturing the growth of GRoW - Grass Roots of Wigan

Whilst GRoW is firmly rooted in the grassroots, we managed to get it off the ground this year. The network grew out of a group of women experimenting with participatory budgeting in the communities they live in.

We all had in common the commitment to see resources shared fairly across the town and create a community led network for people who want to make changes to the places in which they live. Founding members wanted to create a people-centred, open network where we have the space to bounce ideas around, offer and receive mutual support, learn together and from each other and stand together in solidarity. A network where everyone is listened to and everyone's ideas matter.

**Over the last year, we have:**

- **Created a website, Facebook group and social media platforms**
- **Shared £2920 between 18 pitches over two gatherings**
- **Planned a third gathering for September in collaboration with GM System Changers**
- **Grown a membership of 69**
- **Began to grow offers and needs market practices**

Fundamental to the growth of GRoW is a shift in the way we make decisions. We wanted to spread the principles of the local Community Cash events to a wider geographical area, spreading trust and, in turn, growing the solidarity economy. Starting small with pitches for good ideas of up to £200 enables us to build trust together and practice shared accountability. Pitches are relationship-based and invited in through trusted relationships with founding members and / or locally trusted and rooted organisations. This enables us to protect the space, the resource and each other.



# 2. SOLIDARITY

## GRASS ROOTS OF WIGAN (GROW)

**The founding members have put time into considering the mechanics of GRoW in line with its mission of solidarity. The mechanics include:**

- **The removal of competition and a winner.** Competition is replaced by collaboration. There's a pot in the middle that's there to be shared, and everyone in the room decides how to spend it. If proposals are larger than the pot, then those in the room work out how best to use the resource. Once competition is removed, collaboration takes over. It's amazing how many collaborations have rippled out. We'll be excited to share the learning next year.
- **The act of sitting in a circle and deciding together.** No matter where the money comes from, the power is between us. Everyone gets to ask questions of each other. It's in this space that understanding deepens, and collaborations naturally emerge.
- **The intergenerational nature.** Rekindling the muscle of the community green, the place where people would come together to make decisions-long before the colonisation of decision-making, that took the processes behind closed doors with agendas and redacted minutes. Children pitch too, vote, count votes & announce agreements.
- **The intentional growth of accountability to the circle.** To return and talk about or show how you used the resource is the ask. To witness through relational presencing is a joy that feeds all our souls. Shared wisdom is the icing on the cake.

The mechanics are intentional and informed by the practices of our ancestors and the present day practice of Erika Rushton, Kindred, GM System Changers and all that influence them. Starting small with pots of £200 attracts people and groups that are creative and resourceful, connects them together, and promotes collaboration, enabling trust to grow on many levels.

Whilst maintaining accessible access to small sparks funds, possibilities also emerge for larger trust-based investments based on trusted track records.

**It's a nourishing experience. A place where relationships form & collaborations deepen.**





# 2. SOLIDARITY

## SUPPORTING MOVEMENTS - CAMERADOS AND ABCD

Whilst we believe the neighbourhood to be the primary unit of change, we also understand the importance of generating a critical mass of change makers and enabling connections between them.

The Lankelly Chase Foundation investment enabled the development of Greater Manchester System Changers at a regional level and that too needs to be in place at a local level.

The development of Grass Roots of Wigan and Wigan, Leigh and Makerfield Womens Network are key to this, along with two enablers that help create the critical mass of people and organisations to make shifts and realignments.

This year, we have focused on creating a network of people interested in exploring power and resource relocation through Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) and bringing together people interested in the solidarity offered through Camerado Public Living Rooms.

Within this annual reporting year, we hosted the first ABCD network gathering and a Public Living Room shindig in Wigan town centre as part of Community Day. We worked with Wigan Public Living Rooms set up by Andy at Wigan Libraries and the folk at Rebuild with Hope to make this happen.



### ABCD NETWORK

A Wigan Borough Network  
hosted by Northern Heart Soul CIC

#### WHAT IS ABCD?

Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) is a way of being in communities that starts with what's strong rather than what's wrong. It's a powerful process that enables communities and those who work alongside to get into right relationship so that communities can flourish & rekindle functions without fear of displacement, replacement or harm.

#### WHO IS IT FOR?

- ABCD Practitioners
- People who are interested in / curious about ABCD
- Anyone supporting or working in communities

The network is open to people working at all levels and across all sectors.

#### WHEN?

- Fri 28th June: 3 - 4.30pm
- Mon 2nd Sept: 4 - 5.30pm (little people welcome)
- Fri 8th Nov: 1-2.30pm
- Mon 15th Jan: 9.30 - 11am

At CommUnity Corner, 55A Park Rd, Wigan. WN6 7AA

#### WHAT WILL HAPPEN?

At each gathering we'll explore an idea, principle or story. We'll practice the art of hosting, use powerful questions, appreciative inquiry & small group practice to gather collective wisdom.

We'll agree to talk about our opinions and not from them, and, let go of the idea of being wrong as we want try to be right.

Interested?  
Email: [angelasripens.co.uk](mailto:angelasripens.co.uk)  
Text: 07961583169



# 2. SOLIDARITY

## GREATER MANCHESTER SYSTEM CHANGERS & SHAPERS

**Acting with others as Temporary Stewards for Greater Manchester System Changers. A spine, container and collective for radical disruption work that rattles shackles whilst creating and demonstrating alternative futures in the mission towards collective liberation.**

Northern Heart & Soul CiC became involved with GM System Changers before NH&S existed as an entity. The relationship began when the two founders first nurtured ideas of becoming a self-organising community by organising a mutual aid group to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. They were also very aware of the levels of violence and harm against women and girls within the local community. They came across the GM System Changers Spaces Fund and successfully pitched for some resource to bring women together. **The way that this story and journey for Lankelly, the Greater Manchester System Changers and Temporary Stewards, has played out is rich in learning, and there are useful lessons for context and future work both locally and regionally.**

The journey towards establishing Greater Manchester Systems Changers (GM SC) began in the mid-2010s with Lankelly Chase's commitment to creating systems-level change in Greater Manchester. Initially, the work focused on changing systems that perpetuated severe and multiple disadvantages (SMD). Over time, and thanks to people with lived experience of systems of oppression leading and shaping this work, Lankelly Chase recognised the limitations of this framing and widened its field of vision to look at how to challenge and shift systems that are designed to marginalise, exploit and oppress people based on ethnicity, class, gender, disability and geography.

In 2015, Lankelly Chase defined its role as a funder of systems change and social innovation specifically for people with lived experience of severe and multiple disadvantages (SMD). This saw the launch of System Changers, a programme specifically for frontline workers and people with lived experience of SMD in the North West. Between 2016 and 2018, Lankelly Chase awarded several grants instrumental in creating the network that would eventually evolve into GM SC.

Thanks to close relationships with grantees like Our Agency and the Elephants in the Room, it soon became clear that the concept of SMD had limitations. Ultimately, there was a recognition that true systems change requires a shift from top-down decision-making to devolving power directly to those affected by systemic oppression. **This led to a focus towards community-led governance, where resources and control are returned to the people.**





# 2. SOLIDARITY

## GREATER MANCHESTER SYSTEM CHANGERS & SHAPERS

**In 2019, the groundwork laid by Lankelly Chase evolved into a new phase.** Lankelly explored what devolving decision-making into local groups could look like. This led to the creation of Greater Manchester Systems Changers (GM SC) core team and over the next two years, they focused on a 'power with' rather than a 'power over' approach.

They launched participatory grant-making programmes, cultivated a critical mass and critical connections between grassroots groups, and established a structure that centred individuals, collectives and organisations of activists, artists, changemakers, and dreamers working towards Collective Liberation. And so, in 2020, the GM SC core team was assembled and launched at the start of lockdown. The core team wanted to be temporary. **They did not want to recreate the hierarchy, power and resource hoarding that exist within philanthropy because of a fundamental belief in justice over charity and instead had a dream to:**

**“Establish a self-organising and governing network of grassroots communities and organisations working towards Collective Liberation in Greater Manchester.”**

**To achieve this ‘mission’ the objectives were to:**

- **Generate a critical mass of changemakers.**
- **Create critical connections between these change-makers.**

**And the strategy to do this initially would be to:**

- **Redirect the flow of money and other resources towards marginalised grassroots communities and movement builders.**

This new focus was launched with Spaces: a participatory grant-making and learning programme. To put the principle of "power with" into action, the core team designed the Spaces participatory grant-making (PGM) programme, which launched in November 2020. After three months of decision-making and due diligence, £250,000 was allocated in grants to support a critical mass of independent, creative Spaces led by and for marginalised women and young people of colour (but not exclusively), where they could come together to, either:

- Reveal, question, and dismantle systems that perpetuate harm.
- Or explore how to heal, reimagine and renew systems so that all people can live with dignity and opportunity in supportive communities.

Grants of up to £8,000 were awarded, and recipients were invited to participate in a six-month learning journey. This was a vital component of the programme, helping to create a sense of community, mutual learning and solidarity between people.



# 2. SOLIDARITY

## GREATER MANCHESTER SYSTEM CHANGERS & SHAPERS

**Through Spaces, the core team put financial resources directly into the hands of communities to do the work they wanted to do, in ways they wanted to do it.** The initiative marked a shift in focus, prioritising funding a critical mass and forming critical connections between people working and organising at the grassroots level.

For many, Spaces was transformative for a few reasons. For some, it was the first time they'd received any funding, especially with very few restrictions. For all of them, it felt like a thoughtful, nurturing application process and communal learning space. As the Spaces groups spent more time together, there were two clear requests. The first request was for additional, longer-term funding to sustain their work and their own well-being, and the second was not to compete with each other.

Recognising these wants and needs, the core team made a case to Lankelly Chase for additional funding, which was granted in 2022. **The core team designed the follow-on funding structure across three levels to meet the distinct needs of grassroots organisations and collectives working in social justice.**

- **Small grants up to £20,000 initially for one year:** These provided “breathing space” and stability for small or often volunteer-led organisations like De Butterflies, Obado, and Safety For Sisters.

- **Medium grants up to £40,000 per year for two years:** To support emerging collectives and networks navigating systemic reform and youth engagement, such as 84 Youth, Elevate Young Minds and the Black Youth Forum, Wraparound Partnerships, and ZIWO.

- **A few larger grants of between £50,000–£70,000 per year for two years:** For organisations or collectives seeking to make systemic interventions or working on neighbourhood transformations (what would become Islands of Sanctuary), such as Rekindle, Roots, and Wigan Northern Heart & Soul CiC.



In addition to core funding, Global Arts and Community Arts North West received funds to redistribute (commissioning budget) amongst their own network of artists experiencing marginalisation.



# 2. SOLIDARITY

**In late 2021, the core team gathered to reflect on the insights from the Spaces PGM work.** This sense-making session was guided by Shamshad Khan. Through this process, they confirmed a commitment to move away from place-based systems.

The team also recognised the need to strengthen the "critical connections" between partners, as a key objective moving forward. By shifting their approach, GM SC set the stage for a community-led model of justice and liberation in Greater Manchester, where resources flow directly to grassroots groups without the constraints of top-down funding models.

The original plan of the Spaces programme included holding a celebratory gathering to witness the creative work that women and young people of the network were doing, but Covid-19 delayed the DreamWeaver festival to June 2022.

After DreamWeavers, the core team held their annual sense-making session to reflect on learning from the past year and adapt their strategy. Inspired by Adrienne Marie Brown's Emergent Strategy, they developed a framework to move beyond funding. The approach seeks to 'deepen relationships, build trust, and political alignment' and to think 'beyond competition, binaries, and linear, short-term outcomes.' They noticed a pattern across some partners' work around specific social justice themes, such as healing, land, economy, and transformative governance and started from there to encourage cross-organisation collaboration.

**Several partners, including Rekindle, SAWN, Wigan Northern Heart and Soul, and Middleton Co-operating, became known as 'Islands of Sanctuary'.** These organisations and collectives are experimenting with neighbourhood transformation and community wealth building, interweaving themes of housing justice, food sovereignty, and radical governance to build self-organising, intergenerational, and democratic neighbourhoods.

The Emergent Strategy renewed GM SC's ambition to devolve power from the core team and distribute decision-making more widely. Lankelly Chase's decision to cease operations as a philanthropic organisation accelerated this transition.



# 2. SOLIDARITY

In 2023, the team began preparing for this shift. The budget was transferred to Social Change Nest, following positive outcomes with the Food Sovereignty Network. By late 2023/early 2024, 18 people, mostly existing partners, were invited to step into new roles as Temporary Stewards, reflecting GM SC's commitment to shared leadership and a period of forums and conversations will take place over late summer moving towards sense making days in the Autumn 2024.

Right now, as stewards, we are curiously reflecting on these questions:

- Can GM SC truly become a self-organising, self-governed network when grant-making and funding are central to our history?
- How do we built trust with each other when we exist in systems designed to foster mistrust, extraction and competition?
- What accountability mechanisms do we need to put in place so we can call each other in and out with rigour, tenderness and grace?
- How can we really practice solidarity with each other?
- How can we trust to let go when the systems we exist within taught us to fear messiness and uncertainty rather than embrace them?

Concurrently and somewhat intertwined with this is the growth of the Community Power movement across Greater Manchester and the work of Live Well. **Northern Heart and Soul CiC have contributed to events held to date this year as part of Greater Manchester System Shapers which included hosting a Public Living Room at the launch of the Community Power movement.**

Thanks to GM System Changers for the production of the timeline.



# 3. THE MONEY & REDISTRIBUTION

*“Today, money serves private wealth. That, indeed, is the fundamental principle of usury. Yet the age of usury is coming to an end; soon, money shall serve another master. Life itself has become a consumer item. The time is here for the reverse process to begin in earnest - to remove things from the realm of goods and services and return them to the realm of gifts, reciprocity, self-sufficiency, and community sharing.*

*Make money sacred by backing it with the things that have become sacred to us. Money - its true purpose - a connector of gifts and needs and as a magical talisman that coordinates human creativity towards a common end.”*

Sacred Economics. Money, Gift and Society in the Age of Transition. Charles Eisenstein.

It is important to us as a Community Interest Company (CiC) to model a level of transparency that isn't required of a CiC. While we want to enjoy the flexibility that CiC governance enables, we also believe in the importance of openness and accountability to the community and those who trust to invest in the mission.

## INCOME

Between 1st September 2023 to 31st August 2024 we received **£246,160.75** in grant income.

**£5372.75 was held on behalf of the Playbox Campaign Fund** and £1000 was held on behalf of the Mutual Aid group, Springfield, Beech Hill and Gidlow CommUnity

**£70,000 was year two of GM System Changers** core grant

**£100,000 was community ownership** and redistribution monies from GM System Changers

**£5,000 was received from GM System Changers** to enable participation in the Systemic Action Research programme with the Institute for Development Studies

**£27,643 was received from Wigan Councils Investing in Communities** monies to enable community led and based peer support

**£15,000 was received from Necessity** with £5,000 for local healing work, £5,000 for Grass Roots of Wigan (GRoW) and £5000 for Wigan, Leigh and Makerfield Womens Network

**£4,975 was received from the Brighter Boroughs** fund of two local councillors, Dave Woods and Sheila Ramsdale for contributions to Playbox haulage, Community Corner set up, coach trips, sewing machines and Ey Up - It's Wigan West Community News printing costs

**£8550 was received from Wigan Council from the Holiday Activity Fund** for family and community play.



# 3. THE MONEY & REDISTRIBUTION

## EXPENDITURE AND INVESTMENT

We spent £74,641.30 on the salaries of 3 Directors. The 1st director was employed in November 2023 as a part time trainee community builder and the two founding directors shifted from freelance contracts to employees in April 2024. All three directors live and spend within the local economy.

**We earmarked £50,000 of funds for two years' rent and running costs at CommUnity Corner** and £10,000 for renovations to enable the facility to be opened for social connection and community organising. This was a direct response to the lack of free access to associational space in the community.

**We redistributed £51,305 to local people, freelance workers, local businesses and four mentors** from Doncaster (People Focus Group - peer support mentoring), Leeds (Playful Anywhere - Playbox), Manchester (Paul Connery - Seasons of the Soul) and Rochdale (Theatre in Flow - Long Table). Representing 28% of annual expenditure.

**£49,275 of redistributed monies was spent within the borough** supporting the circular economy.

**We invested in 8 local people through freelance agreements** and developed one of those arrangements into a job.

**We contracted and collaborated with 24 local businesses** and provided one CiC with a trust based grant of £11,000.

We provided flexible microfinance to **enable three women-led businesses to test out their ideas.**

**We shared £5,000 with Grass Roots of Wigan (GRoW)** to enable grass-roots groups to associate, network, collaborate, and share resources and £5,000 with Wigan, Leigh, and Makerfields Women's Network to enable the community to connect and grow.

**We spent £2500 on training, enabling 26 community members** to become more suicide-aware, 8 community members to achieve accreditations in First Aid and Food Hygiene, and 8 organisations with similar aims to take part in Asset Based Community Development Discovery training with Nurture Development.

**We invited 4 groups that we collaborated with to participate in the GM System Changers Participatory Grant Making process,** which brought a further £35,000 investment into Wigan: JENGBA, Epic Hope, Idaraya Life, and ReMade CiC.



# 4. CONDUITS & CHANGES

**Over the last year, some of the local, regional, national, and global relationships developed during the pandemic have begun to move, join together, and create collective local action.**

Whether that be via the Greater Manchester System Changers organising themes, relationships grown in online community builder Zoom rooms hosted by Axiom News, Spoon Rooms hosted by Camerados, or the founding of the Neighbourhood Democracy Movement during the pandemic.

**Through these relationships we have been able to bring new knowledge and practices into the borough.**

For example, the mentoring relationship with People Focus Group in Doncaster and the sessions we held in the borough this year enabled us to put forward a case for community led peer support and build the case for investment.

The fact that the investment from the Council was trust-based is directly related to how the local work has grown as a consequence of trust-based investment from Greater Manchester System Changers. That trust-based relationship that's growing with the Council has, in turn, opened up more doors with other departments.

This has enabled a flexible approach to Community Play, ensured a speedy licence for the Playbox in a local park, brought play team staff in to work alongside community, opened the door to collaborations with Family Hubs and enabled us to begin thinking together about safeguarding in community contexts. There's movement, too, on thinking about what a more open approach to the VCFSE infrastructure might look like.

Regionally, through Greater Manchester System Changers we've worked collectively on taking forward work on Basic Income, developing solidarity, and sharing skills around food sovereignty thanks to Northern Lily and Movement Ecology training. And relationships are deepening with the Islands of Sanctuary and grass root change makers across Greater Manchester thanks to being Temporary Stewards.

Something needs to be said for the determination and hard work of the people deep in this work. Our ability to work against the grain and hold complexity. The ability to open a building whilst strategising and being present in spaces across Greater Manchester.

The courage to hold this difficult work and be aware and experienced enough to consider and balance the risks when making change, growing collective power and employing local people in neighbourhoods that have been historically and intergenerationally impacted by poverty, oppression, toxic systems and power over practices.



# 5. WHAT'S BUBBLING?

**Whilst annual reports capture a period in time the work keeps on moving and much of what we've written here is also understood by knowing where we are heading to in the next steps in the journey.**

Locally, we believe we are at a stage in the work where we can begin to bring systems closer to community, with communities at the centre. We can see that many folk within systems see the possibility of a future that starts with what communities can do for themselves (through an economic justice rather than a Big Society lens). We are working towards a learning event in late Spring 2025.

**This Autumn, we'll undertake the annual community survey and commence training 10 local people in ripple effect mapping.** We will add this new data to the data and stories we've collected over the last few years and share the local journey at the event. We may offer some online events. We hope, too, that plans to cultivate a stronger grassroots network across the borough will be in place so that we can collectively share our work in neighbourhoods at the learning event.

**We've secured a place on the 2025 People and Place Programme** which will see us join together with community innovators in nine places across the country. We'll receive Footwork's support to realise bold ambitions for positive change in the neighbourhood, particularly around creating governance and ownership. We are particularly looking forward to the support from Jess Steele.

**We'll continue to be with Greater Manchester System Changers and the Islands of Sanctuary** as we explore how we might organise for collective liberation. We'll seek to influence Live Wells Community Power movement and local infrastructure developments that direct resources to grassroots groups rooted in solidarity, justice and alternative futures.

We know this work isn't easy, and we're aware of not becoming the very thing we complain about. This next year, we'll explore more community circles and think more about splinters, fractures, conflict, and community safeguarding.

Most importantly, we'll secure the revenue costs to enable this work to continue and the business plan to move us closer to our mission of becoming a self-organising and self-renovating community.

## **Directors 2023 - 2024**

*No Change*

Angela Fell

Gill Wright

Alice Coren

New

*Ben McNamara*

*Lisa Sedgwick*

*Resigned*

Joanne McAvoy

With thanks and gratitude to GM  
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the images used within this report

