

Tales from the Field:
stories of transformation and change

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Raising Rochdale:
A story of change and hope

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Introduction

*This first paper in the series **Tales from the Field** outlines how, over a three-year period, an initiative which began with schools and colleges has become a Borough wide call to arms across the local wellbeing system for all involved in improving the life chances of children and young people in Rochdale. It highlights some of challenges and complexities within the schooling and wellbeing systems, considers the process of systems improvement and partnership engagement together with suggesting a new, key role for schools as system shapers.*

Inspired by the Rochdale Principles set out in 1844 by the **Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers**, Raising Rochdale was initially conceived and led by Headteachers, College Principals and some MAT CEO's across all Key Stages of the local school system to shape their approach to sector-led improvement.

Clearly defined behaviours and a commitment to a common moral purpose, created a framework of **collective accountability**, which underpins a shared goal of delivering an excellent education for all children and young people in Rochdale, seeking excellence through **equity** and the development of *inclusive practice* which leaves no child behind.

Anton Florek
Series Editor



The national context



‘The education system in England is increasingly fragmented and lacks coherence, locally, regionally and at the national level. Since 2010 the role of local authorities (LAs) in education has been partly eroded by design due to a shift from an LA led and coordinated system to one that is less rooted in place. Schools and trusts now operate in a more autonomous environment that has incentivised greater competition between individual schools, coming at the expense of inclusion.’ (ADCS, 2023)¹

This systemic lack of coherence suggested by ADCS in 2023, has been compounded by the plethora of policy-led initiatives from central government, which since 2010 in particular, have created a schooling system where there are examples of academic brilliance and inclusive wonder contrasted with unhealthy competition, exclusion and fragmentation.

The list of centrally generated initiatives which have a significant impact on the lives of children, young people and their families is long. Of these, Family Hubs, (Priority) Education Investment Areas, Mockingbird Fostering, Developing Better Value in SEND, Attendance focus, the SEND and AP Change programmes in particular, have been dutifully woven together at place and neighbourhood level, wherever this has been possible or appropriate. All of these programmes feature some central government oversight and different reporting lines into the Department of Education. All of these impact upon the lives of children and families and in turn, schools. Yet amidst this flurry of programmes, schools can unintentionally be seen as (or indeed perceive themselves to be,) separate and disconnected from the wider wellbeing system which is supporting children and families.

This is unfortunate given that for most children and families, schools remain the most familiar, accessible and recognisable state funded social institution and should therefore be at the centre of every local wellbeing system. Furthermore, as a unit of public resource, schools represent a significant investment by the State and cannot remain merely as emporiums of knowledge transfer, the success of which is measured by formal examinations and attainment scores. (Darling-Hammond, 2010)² In 2024, this simply will not do. At the very least there is a major policy disconnect which needs addressing urgently.

¹ adcs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/ADCS_A_future_vision_for_the_education_system_FINAL.pdf

² Darling-Hammond, L., & Lieberman, A. (2012). *Teacher education around the world: Changing policies and practices*. London: Routledge.

Connecting the wellbeing system: the balcony view *(Heifetz et al)*³

Over the past decade in particular, the English schooling system has undoubtedly become more challenging (Ainscow et al)⁴ with perverse incentives to exclude rather than include. The growth strategies of Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) rooted in competition, a centralised governance model that is often unhelpful and can duplicate effort and resources and a special educational needs and disability (SEND) system that is significantly under resourced, create demand and expectation of all stakeholders that sadly all too often fails to help the child and family in a way that is meaningful and effective. Put simply, we have become skilled at pathologizing difference and “othering”⁵ those that present personal or institutional challenge.

However, if we put all of this aside for a second and climb to the balcony and look down at the dance floor we are likely to spot committed people trying to do good things. The environment in which they work might have some of the perverse incentives and elephant traps outlined above which are a feature of a system that is fragmented and overwhelmed at times but despite these challenges, there are places where people are dancing together and magic is happening. Rochdale is one of these places.

Across the Rochdale system there are some excellent examples of practice and collaboration, with colleagues coming together to wrestle with pressures and challenges within the system. For example, there has been a commitment from some early adopters to engage in poverty proofing audits in collaboration with Children North East, where schools undertake a 360 degree audit of the school day, involving every child in the school. This process is undertaken with a view to changing policy and practice which unintentionally marginalises or negatively impacts upon children living in poverty.

Additionally, excellent and successful inter-school collaborative practice is emerging from schools. In addition to the countless day to day large and small victories with individual children, we have also seen great practice on a range of collective or systemic issues. For example, tackling knife crime and serious violence, innovative approaches to creating an inclusive curriculum, inspiring work with children and families who are international new arrivals to Rochdale, and the voice and influence work to create a truly child-led children and young people plan. In short, despite the national systemic challenges outlined above, at local level, schools very often are finding a way through.

³ Heifetz, Ronald A., Marty Linsky, and Alexander Grashow. *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*. Harvard Business Press, 2009.

⁴ <https://thestaffcollege.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Turning-the-Tide-The-Staff-College-Manchester-University.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.otheringandbelonging.org/the-problem-of-othering/>

The power of common moral purpose

Changing systems is difficult. (Mulgan and Leadbeater 2013)⁶. As Leadbeater (ibid.) suggests,



The very features that make systems so powerful – the way they bring together different components to achieve a purpose – also make them difficult to change. Setting out to change an entire system, in all its complexity, often seems hopelessly ambitious. The result is that would be systems reformers do little more than tinker at the edges, changing a part of a system but leaving the rest untouched.”

Leadbeater (ibid.) helpfully describes a system as “... a set of elements that are brought together, sometimes by design but often through evolution, to achieve a purpose. Though systems share family resemblances they also have their own personalities. We now live with systems inherited from different eras, with quite different models of organisation.” Interestingly, Leadbeater specifically names education as an example of a complex system and his quotation includes many of the features currently present in the English schooling system.

So, given our complex English schooling system and the even more complex wider wellbeing system how can we line up behind a common cause, how can we create a currency of common endeavour which will enable us to tackle whole system change despite the challenges facing us? In the public sector, the “thing” that generally binds us is the reason we came into public service in the first place. We want to make a difference; to help, support and enable. We want to see children, young people and families thrive. We want communities to contribute and help create conditions for future success. This is a moral purpose; to improve the lives of the citizens we serve and this is generally true regardless of where we are placed in the system, or at what level. The Civil service, Inspectorates, Local Government, all state funded schools (including Multi-Academy Trusts), The NHS in all of its forms, voluntary and community groups etc. are all bound by a commitment to the common good and the delivery of worthwhile public value propositions (Moore 1995)⁷ which make a difference to people’s lives.

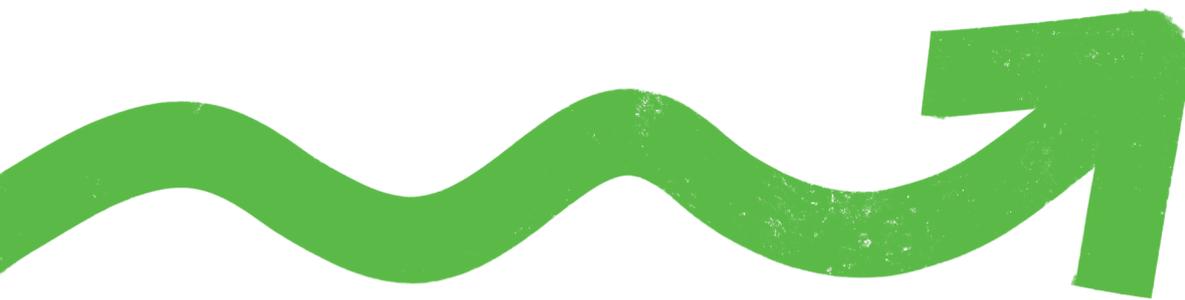
In practice however, this common bedrock commitment is all too often diluted by service centric thinking, silo working and “boundary dancing” where “agency ego” gets in the way of truly collective endeavour. If we are serious about genuine inclusion for example, it shouldn’t matter what the shape of the delivery model is and arguably we should care less about what the badge says on the front of

⁶ <https://ingbrief.wordpress.com/2013/08/23/systems-innovation-mulgan-leadbeater-nesta/>

⁷ Moore, M.H. (1995) Creating Public Value: Strategic Management in Government. Harvard University Press, London.

our organisation, school or wherever we are. Furthermore, we must move away from “inclusive education’ being so often synonymous with the education of children with disabilities and adopt “inclusive practice” as a systemic approach to difference and diversity. (Schuelka)⁸ This move from “inclusion” as an activity to inclusive practice being the norm will enable us to create a whole system default culture of belonging (Riley, 2022)⁹ based on equity and social justice where all can find their rightful place and the “othering” of difference is banished for good!

In conclusion, a co-designed, collaborative vision for innovation and change linked to social justice and a powerfully articulated statement of collective purpose can help to navigate the often choppy waters of alliances, partnerships and systems change. To do this means creating a call to arms for change – in short, a unifying common moral purpose which all can sign up to. This is how Raising Rochdale started.



***unifying common
moral purpose which
all can sign up to.***

⁸ Schuelka, M.J. (2018) Implementing Inclusive Education. K4D Helpdesk Report, Institute of Development Studies, Brighton.

⁹ Riley, K. (2022) *Compassionate Leadership For School Belonging*. ICL Press. London

The local context in Rochdale

The local authority of Rochdale, which forms part of Greater Manchester and the Pennine Hills, has approximately 55000 children and young people aged 0-17. This equates to around 24% of the total population of the Borough. There is a higher proportion of children and young people with SEND needs than the national average with approximately just over 10000 children in the Borough with some kind of identified SEND need.

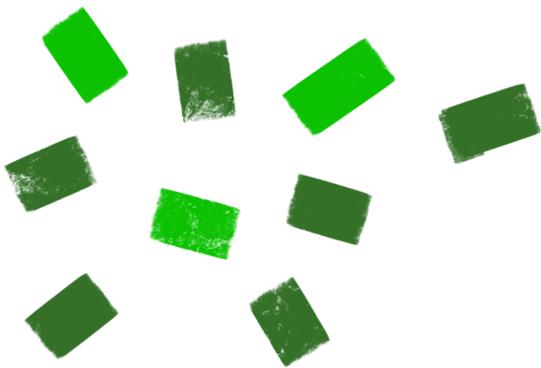
As with any system which is dynamic there are challenges which are common to most, if not all, of the English local authorities. For Rochdale, these include:

- Financial constraints with some services or schools
- Inclusion, including suspension and exclusions
- Sufficiency of SEND provision
- A national policy dynamic that often has not connected coherently
- Impact upon headteacher and wider workforce wellbeing
- Shifts within the national and local health systems
- Recruitment challenges in some key service areas
- Rising levels of poverty and wider demand
- Impact of the cost of living crisis on communities

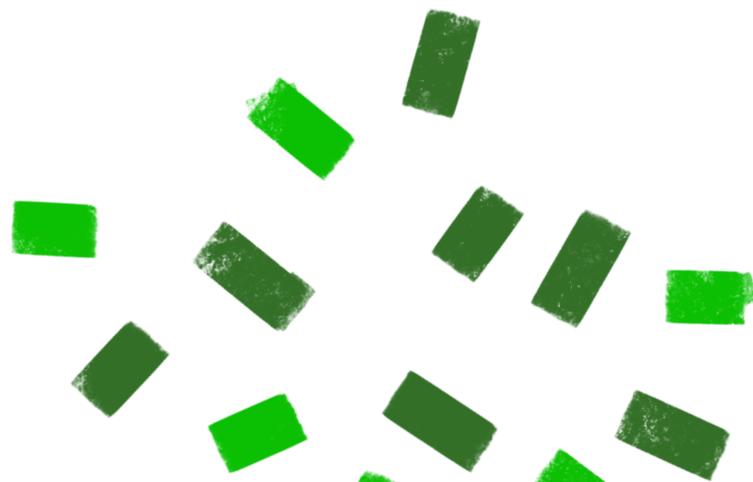
Furthermore, like many areas in England, Rochdale has been subject to a number of centrally funded programmes over recent years. It's a Priority Education Investment Area (PEIA), has undertaken the Developing Better Value in SEND programme, established Family Hubs, been part of the SEND and Alternative Provision (AP) Change programme and implemented Mockingbird Fostering, No Wrong Door and Family Safeguarding. Some of these programmes are practice-led, building on good evidence and some are Government policy initiatives designed to support implementation of policy in various parts of the system. Most have been welcomed and the LA and partners have done their best to ensure that these initiatives have impacted in the best way possible for children, young people and their families. However, one of the challenges of a programme led-system, which many areas have experienced, is the separate and disconnected reporting lines, which can often present the challenge (and opportunity) of "resource weaving" at place level to ensure the necessary coherence within the local system. (Needham, 2024)¹⁰

¹⁰ birmingham.ac.uk/schools/social-policy/research/the-21st-century-public-servant

Unlike many other localities, Rochdale Borough still has a large number of schools that have chosen to remain with the local authority, rather than move towards Academy Trust governance with approximately 74% still being LA maintained. This has meant that despite some of the nationally driven fragmentation and the endemic challenges with SEND, inclusion and post Covid recovery, relationships with MATs, the LA and schools are generally strong and this provided a platform for possible new systemic thinking and innovative practice which led to Raising Rochdale.



***New systemic thinking
and innovative practice
which led to Raising
Rochdale.***



Making a start: The early days

It's early in 2021 and education leaders in Rochdale are grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic. Their days are peppered with regular briefing meetings with rapid responses to guidance raining in by the hour as they and the LA try to meet the challenges in schools together with the social issues that children, young people and families are facing within the communities they serve.

During this period there was an increased emphasis on collaboration, with the LA seeking to ensure that the responses to both assessing and meeting needs in the context of ever changing risk and impact was co-ordinated. This was also a time when the local schooling system was changing to welcome an increasing number of Multi-Academy Trusts and new Headteachers into Rochdale. These changes, and the accommodation of various layers of governance and institutional arrangements within the education system became the ingredients for an emerging new local schooling system.

These significant systemic shifts called for the serious consideration of what was being created so together with the Pioneers Trust (a company limited by guarantee consisting of all maintained secondary schools, colleges and Multi-Academy Trusts in Rochdale), the LA started to think about what they were making. Working together as Colleges, MATs and maintained schools with the LA, the AD for Early Help and Schools, together with the Pioneers Trust brought in an external consultant with significant experience of systems change to act as the strategic adviser with an initial remit to facilitate the early dialogue and introduce national and international examples of school-led improvement systems.

Following an initial on-line briefing session to the Pioneers Trust Executive members in February 2021, a small 'narrative working group' was formed to work with the external adviser on creating a common moral purpose statement and associated narrative.

These early discussions with secondary phase headteachers and MAT CEOs proved to be seminal as they not only addressed what was important to the Pioneers Trust and its improvement planning but also provided time and space to consider critical questions such as "what is the purpose of schooling?" together with defining the most pressing local issues which required collective action. In short, what is our common moral purpose which transcends all issues of governance and systemic barriers to change?

This group met a number of times over the spring period during which the concept of 'Raising Rochdale' emerged. This proved to be a potential compelling call to arms for everyone involved in improving the educational outcomes and life chances of all children and young people in the Borough. This led to the development of a powerful logo image which provided a graphic overview of

the Borough. This was the brainchild of one particular member of the group who became a passionate champion of the values which underpin Raising Rochdale.

With the logo and the underlying philosophy agreed, the working group presented the outcomes of their meetings to the full Pioneer Trust membership in September 2021. Approval and adoption of Raising Rochdale as the driving principle for the work of the Pioneers Trust followed and, some months later, the Improvement plan for the Pioneers Trust based on the agreed principles of Raising Rochdale emerged.

Note 1: At this time, the Pioneers Trust was made up of some Multi-Academy Trust Chief Executives, Head-teachers and College Principals with a focus on Secondary and Post 16 Education. As Raising Rochdale emerged, this was to develop within the next year towards a Separate MAT CEOs' forum, as the LA identified the need for the CEOs to have the space to develop as system leaders for place and enable the Headteachers to co-ordinate and develop responses to the schools system.

Note 2: It's important at this stage to emphasise that this was not 'owned' by any one MAT, School or the LA – this was seen (and remains) a collective endeavour.



Raising Rochdale: a gift to the wider local wellbeing system

As the concept of Raising Rochdale crystallised, the working group realised that as a construct it was much bigger than the Pioneers Trust and, more importantly, it had the potential to be the means by which a coherent wellbeing system for children and young people might be achieved. The group concluded that it should be “gifted” to the broader system starting with primary school colleagues through the Rochdale Association of Primary School Headteachers (RAPH).

Raising Rochdale as a construct was shared at the RAPH annual conference in November 2021 and subsequently a representative working group was formed by the RAPH Executive and a series of development workshops agreed which were all facilitated by the external adviser. The group met regularly over some six months or so and through a co-produced, iterative process, the RAPH group built upon the early work of the Pioneers Trust and in doing so realised that the work should include early years providers. Consequently, RAPH broadened its membership to become The Rochdale Association of Early Years and Primary School Headteachers (RAEYPH).

The results of the work of the working group were presented at the annual RAEYPH conference in June 2022 and approved by the membership with the agreement that the working group would continue to develop RAEYPH’s commitment to Raising Rochdale by becoming the Raising Rochdale Education Task Group. All of this work was then shared at the meeting of the Pioneers Trust in January 2023 and endorsed.

Having adopted and extended the principles of Raising Rochdale originally created by their secondary peers, a final all-schools and colleges version of the single page common moral purpose statement emerged in the autumn of 2023. This became (and still is) the formal description of the “schooling system’s” collective contribution to Raising Rochdale and is outlined below.

Our contribution to raising Rochdale is:

To equip every child with the knowledge skills, values and opportunities to enable them to lead a happy, healthy & purposeful life.

To achieve this, we will:



Be collectively accountable for improving the life chances of all Rochdale children



Know, value and support every child and place of learning to achieve Create a sense of hope and belonging in our schools, early years settings and colleges where children are proud of the present and ambitious for their future



Provide welcoming learning communities which build positive relationships with children and their families through respect, openness and trust



Foster pride in Rochdale and its heritage of cooperation and achievement



Frame our work through understanding the lived experiences of our children and families.

This means:

Supporting and challenging each other so that no child or learning place is left behind by:

- Building a collaborative learning community, sharing our success, innovation and evidence-based practice
- Driving improvement, seeking excellence through equity
- Working creatively, beyond institutional boundaries, to raise standards and maximise the learning opportunities for all
- Creating curriculum development opportunities which will link educational settings, cultural and heritage sites, industry and the local communities to create shared knowledge of our heritage and pride in our area
- Establishing links with our local employers and training providers to develop opportunities to learn about the world of work
- Ensuring well planned, positive transitions across our local learning system
- Investing in our educational workforce by sharing expertise across our learning settings and providing high quality training and professional development opportunities for our workforce
- Contributing to an inclusive education and learning policy which places children first and provides a robust set of agreed principles to guide inclusive practice which is underpinned by the philosophy of excellence through equity
- Foster reflective practice and open dialogue to improve the educational outcomes for all our children and young people

Developing a system response: towards a coherent local wellbeing system

 Your capacity to innovate will depend on who is part of your alliance. Creating new products relies on creative teams. Changing entire systems, however, requires alliances of partners who will be co-innovators working alongside you and distributors who will take the product to market. Successful systems innovators create constellations of other actors aligned around them.” Leadbeater (2013)¹

As the above quotation from Charles Leadbeater suggests, changing systems requires an alliance of the willing if it's to be successful. In the Rochdale context, this meant a growing engagement with all of the local stakeholders with a role in improving the lives of all children, young people and their families in the Borough. The principles of engagement were simply to ask the question “How does your work contribute to Raising Rochdale? There was no prescription or presumption, just the expectation that each and every agency/organisation or group working on improving the lives of children, young people and their families would produce an answer to the question on no more than a single sheet of A4 paper!

Whilst the work of the RAEYPH working group (now the Education Task Group) continued as outlined above, from 2023 onwards, senior colleagues from the LA including the Head of Schools (who had been an member of the RAEYPH group), supported by the strategic adviser began the process of key stakeholder engagement through services briefing meetings, attendance at local conferences and meetings of agencies or workstream groups in order to present Raising Rochdale, promote the interconnected nature of various systems (e.g., education, social services, healthcare) and articulate how Raising Rochdale was the means of creating common purpose and synergy amongst them.

¹https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/systems_innovation_discussion_paper.pdf

Wider system development

The dissemination vehicle for making Raising Rochdale as a system wide proposition was the revision of the Children and Young Peoples Partnership. This is a group of senior leaders, chaired by the Director of Children Services with the remit to focus on collaboration with and on behalf of children, young people and families across the Borough.

The focus on the whole system through an agreed common moral purpose made sense to colleagues across the partnership. The dialogue moved quickly towards seeking collaborative advantage (Kanter 1994)¹² and attempting to work through what this might mean for Rochdale. Education leaders who had only previously been represented by one Headteacher started to attend the partnership in larger numbers, with the Chairs of the Primary and Secondary representative groups regularly contributing to partnership meetings. This level of commitment by schools to the wider wellbeing system is now becoming the norm driven by the underlying principles of Raising Rochdale.

What has changed: how has Raising Rochdale begun to shape the local wellbeing system?

There have been a number of key developments that have emerged as a result of the systemic approach that the Raising Rochdale initiative has enabled. This is not exhaustive and gives a flavour of the collaborative approaches that have been enhanced by the systemic commitment to Raising Rochdale and its public value proposition of collective accountability for improving the lives of children and young people:

- The development of a Raising Rochdale Children and Young Peoples Plan, that for the first time has been shaped by 8000 voices of children and young people from the Borough
- A re-imagining of the SEND system across the Borough, starting with the development of an Outcomes Framework designed with children, families and interagency partners focusing on the whole child.
- An All-Age Skills Strategy is under development, linking key transition points at each stage of a resident's education, career and life journey with a focus on prevention rather than later intervention. A wide range of partners are involved at each key transitional point, including guidance and health colleagues;

¹²<https://hbr.org/1994/07/collaborative-advantage-the-art-of-alliances>

- A think piece has been commissioned with system leaders to look at potential skills gaps within primary, secondary and post 16 provision;
- An All Age Poverty Strategy for the Borough;
- An All Age Prevention Strategy for the Borough;
- Establishing the first Raising Rochdale Education Awards for the Borough, celebrating schools, colleges, teachers and educational support colleagues. This will take place in the autumn of 2024 through a high profile event, with private sector engagement and sponsorship;
- The restructuring of educational governance with a clear MAT CEO role at place level;
- Establishing a whole children's system transformation team, as the LA has recognised that all aspects of the system impact upon each other, so there is a need to ensure robust focus and rigour to changes that need to be made;
- Trialling the Team Around the School model, focusing on inter-agency support for schools where all of the issues experienced by a school are considered. This is an interesting pre-cursor to the development of focused neighbourhood working;
- The development of a revised 'Raising Rochdale' SEND Strategy which is co-produced and reshaped by the voices of children, young people and families;
- The implementation of a SEND Advice Line – aimed at Parents, Carers, young people and SENDCo's – helping them to navigate the SEND system;
- Collaborative Commissioning between the LA and Schools. This approach has developed over the last two or so years where the LA is seeking to maximise impact via collaboration. This has included commissioning a challenge partner, Right to Succeed, to work with the system on inclusion, ensuring that inclusion issues are understood, owned and the strategic approach towards solutions is "owned" by all stakeholders;
- The emergence of collaborative, child-focused commissioning of some alternative provision with the LA and schools;
- As part of a national pilot with AEC and ISOS research, a focus on support for vulnerable children within education, with Rochdale focussing on severe absence over the last two years, reshaping practice and

interventions. This has included granular level understanding about a child and families lived experience of these issues – changing the way that we as a system approach severe absence and nonattendance. This work has now contributed to the national focus on this field of work and also influenced the development of work on severe absence across Greater Manchester as part of the GM Local Attendance Action Alliance. This approach on severe absence has led the LA to “curate” an audit of school exclusions by bringing Head-teachers, MAT CEOs, health and LA colleagues together to review the process and reasons for permanent exclusions through detailed examination of lived experience case studies. Approaching these challenges without blame or ego has been important. The Raising Rochdale common moral purpose has become the framework for tackling what is a system problem and therefore needs a collaborative, system response;

- Poverty proofing audits across a number of schools. In partnership with Children North East we have been seeking to poverty proof the school day, speaking to 100% of children within a school over a week. This culminates in the production of a report for the Headteacher to examine policies and practice that could unintentionally marginalise or negatively impact upon children in the school who are living in poverty. There has been some excellent buy in and contributions from school colleagues for this work;
- A revised approach to neighbourhood delivery by thinking through how we can adapt, co-locate and enable prevention to be a key building block in reducing unnecessary escalation by getting the right support to families at the right time.
- This has also included the implementation of Family Safeguarding and a refreshed Family Hubs model;
- Trialling restorative approaches across a number of primary schools, where we have seen impact upon the reduction of suspensions and exclusions. This inclusion focus has been highly impactful with an ambition to create ‘everyone’ schools;
- Commissioning a series of films via the Local Care Organisation to tell the story of how Raising Rochdale has emerged, how colleagues can contribute to it and how it will develop in future. These will be launched in September 2024, in conjunction with the Children and Young People’s Plan.

Conclusions: so, what have we learnt?

There can be no doubt that Raising Rochdale has made (and still is making) a profound difference to policy and practice in Rochdale. It is a testament to the potential of schools to be shapers not only of their own system but also of the wider wellbeing ecosystem. What started as a labour of love by a small group of headteachers has grown over three years into a wider system approach which can only do good as it becomes the systemic catalyst for the collective accountability for improving the lives of children, young people and their families.

The focus on the system is crucial, as the challenges faced by children and families are rarely singular and a solution can't be found through a response from a single person or service. In trying to improve outcomes to enable children and families to be safe, healthy or successful for example, it is crucial to appreciate that this is going to look different depending on which part of the system you are looking from. This is why service-centric thinking is unhelpful and rarely successful. In addition, the systemic challenges that are the backdrop for many areas such as mental health, poverty, housing and the cost of living crisis (to name but a few) all remain constant and are likely to remain so in the immediate future.

As part of the Raising Rochdale developments, the LA has worked with the Council for Disabled Children¹³, exploring the concept of developing an outcomes framework with children and families. This was a significantly involved and collaborative piece of work that was genuinely co-produced with inter-agency professionals, parents, carers and children and young people.

This work has been influential and become an important foundational building block of Raising Rochdale as an initiative. Linked to the belief that children and families should be central to the work and the focus should be on outcomes, rather than service activity, the framework calls for all involved to play their part in the collective endeavour of collaborative advantage through which the resources of the state at local level are maximised for the benefit of our children, young people and their families.



¹³ *Raising Rochdale Outcomes-Based Commissioning Case Study* (councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk)

Clearly, there is still much to do as the work isn't finished and there are parts of the Rochdale wellbeing system that haven't yet joined the cause. However, the experience to date suggests that the power of common moral purpose, leadership with kindness, having all local schools and colleges as key players in the broader wellbeing system and putting children and families first, are powerful agents for change in how publicly funded services make a positive difference to people's lives.

That this can happen is reflected powerfully in a recent comment from one of the original MAT CEO architects of Raising Rochdale. "A relatively little thing, but I'm wondering whether the LA's intentional and relentless script-building of locality being more important than institutions is...strongly evidenced in the MAT CEO group (with its Memorandum of Understanding) and the engagement of Right to Succeed to facilitate yet another level of supported collaboration across traditional boundaries. I'm thinking also that the growing trend of sharing space (two MATs now host SEND provision for maintained special schools with plans for similar arrangements for learners with SEMH needs) is evidence of a real and sustained systemic impact."

This is surely encouraging, positive empirical evidence of schools becoming system shapers and the systemic impact of the Raising Rochdale effect.



Postscript: *at the publication of this article, the Assistant Director of Early Help and Schools has moved on to the role of Director of Schools and Employability at Birmingham City Council.*



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