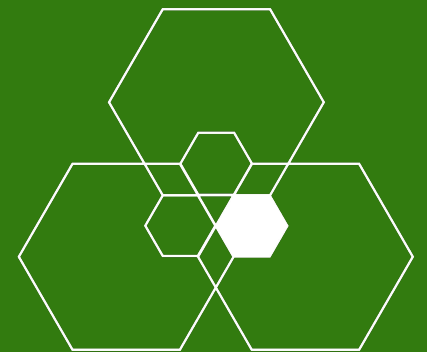


# The Wishing Tree Approach

A creative and interactive approach to hearing families' voices using a physical 'Wishing Tree' installation, to shape support provision in a local area.





# What is it?

**In 2023, Salford CVS, Salford Family Hub Partnership and The Lowry set up The Wishing Tree Seeds of Change Project aimed at creatively engaging children, young people and families in sharing their wishes to inform the delivery of the Family Hub partnership.**

The Lowry commissioned a local artist to design and deliver arts and crafts sessions to facilitate engagement with the Wishing Tree. This engagement highlighted that families' wishes and needs ranged across more play and stay sessions, SEND provision, to better parks and green environments, and the findings were shared and adopted into planning and delivery in Family Hubs, Salford neighbourhood management teams and beyond.

The project's success encouraged Salford to develop the Wishing Tree model - a physical, colourful 3D tree that children, young people and families can 'hang' their wishes on, which are collected by teams and partners to inform support provision.

The approach is being adopted in schools. Often implemented by engagement leads in a school, the approach enables the voice of pupils and their families to shape the wider support a school can coordinate and provide. School leads use the insights to work together with partners and join up the range of existing local offers, as well as developing additional and bespoke support where required.

# What difference has it made?

Deep Dive: Dukessgate School





## What has the Wishing Tree approach looked like in your school? How do families and others engage with it?

It is a physical tree. We gather and add contributions to the tree in a number of ways, so that everyone is able and feels comfortable to share their views:

- Coffee mornings
- Parent breakfasts
- Litter picks
- Questionnaires/surveys
- Informal chats with parents in the playground
- Asking pupils in assembly
- 'Leave us a comment' sheets, at e.g. toddler groups

This engages community members in conversation about the best things about living in Little Hulton and what they would change / care enough about to show up to be part of making that change.

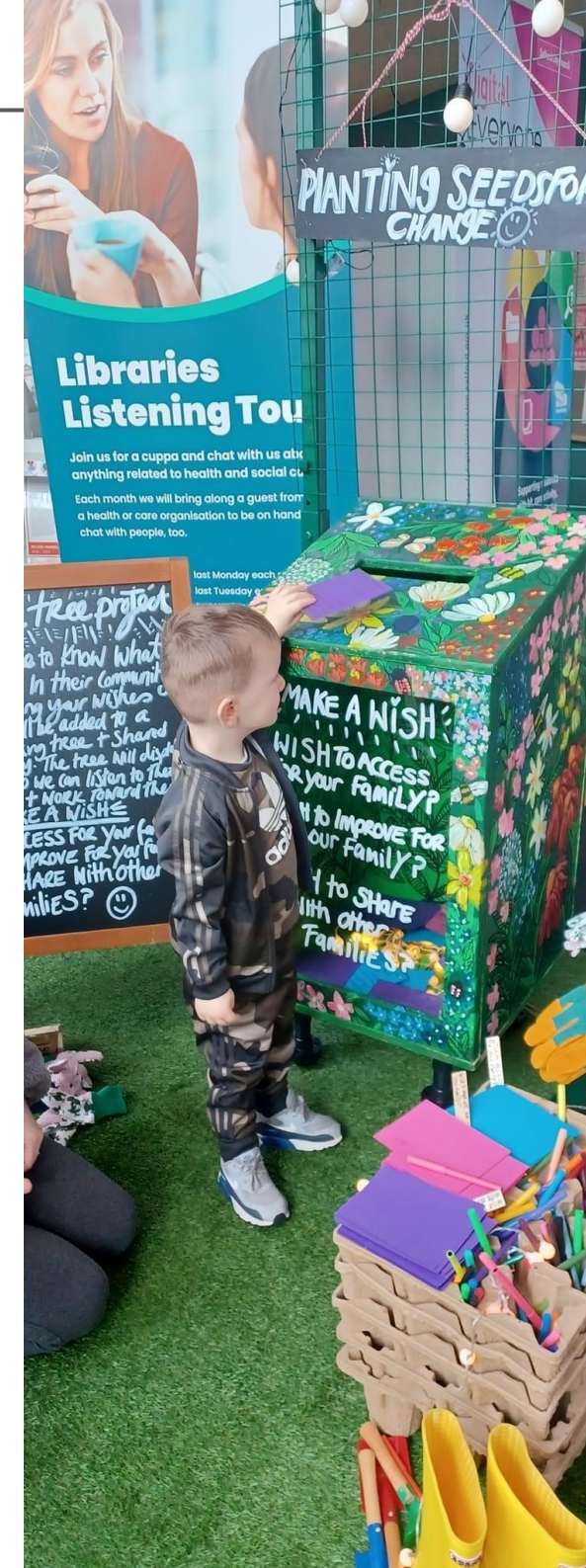
We have worked with other organisations to collect and share information about the community view e.g. Living Streets, Street Games, UK Active and Community Little Hulton.

The wishes are put into an action plan and linked this to the school development plan. These are RAG rated termly by the Steering Group, the Principal, the Hub lead and the pastoral staff team, to enable us to reflect on what our next steps are.

## Deep Dive: Dukessgate School

# From your experience embedding the approach, what does it take to make this work well?

- Someone who has this as their **designated role**.
- **This work takes time**. We tend to miss the listening stage. It is essential that you do not make assumptions about what people would like or benefit from.
- **Select partners carefully**. Your ethos and vision should align then you will have a shared purpose from the start.
- **People need to feel valued** - notice this and actively make sure to thank and feed back to those who have been involved.
- **Do a few things well** rather than lots of things badly.
- **Make sure the leadership of the school is in full support** - this makes taking action so much easier.
- **Make sure staff and leaders have appropriate training** e.g. ABCD
- **Involve as many voices as possible** - talk to everyone and keep doing it!





Deep Dive: Dukessgate School

## What difference has this made to your work with families? What is special about this?

Working in this asset based way has made the following difference to the way we engage with families:

- **Given families another option** when they are in crisis and need urgent and very specific support.
- **Provided support** to staff who are on the front line when things are difficult for families.
- Made families feel that they matter more.
- **We listen much more and in a much better way** - families feel valued and that we have time for them.
- **We look for the positive** - build on what is strong and not what is wrong. This is a much more uplifting feeling for everyone and families have responded really well.

Our ultimate aim is always to encourage projects for the community, by the community, to ensure action is sustainable and rooted in the community. We now have a toddler group run by parents and a yoga group for women taught by a parent.





# The Wishing Tree Seeds of Change Project 2023 Report

