

# A review of ABCD in Leeds Pathfinder sites (2019-2025)

*A six-year journey from seeds to trees.*

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#unlockingcommunitypower



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**Carmel Langstaff**

**Chief Officer**

**Transformation & Innovation**

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# Ed Whiting

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Leeds City Council



# **Councillor Adrian McCluskey**

**Deputy Executive Member  
for Adult Social Care**



# Caroline Baria

Director of Adults and Health

Leeds City Council





# Verity O'Hara

ABCD Manager

Transformation and Innovation

Adults and Health

Leeds City Council



# ABCD in Leeds

- ABCD Model: Third Sector - Community Builder - Community connector - Asset Mapping - Small Sparks - Celebration!
- ABCD Plan on a Page - 4 Key priority areas
- ABCD and Asset-Based training for all council staff
- ABCD and Asset-Based training in the Third, Public, Private sector in Leeds.
- Community Power Network open to all council staff
- Leeds Community
- Leeds Ambitions: Healthy-Growing- Thriving- Resilient



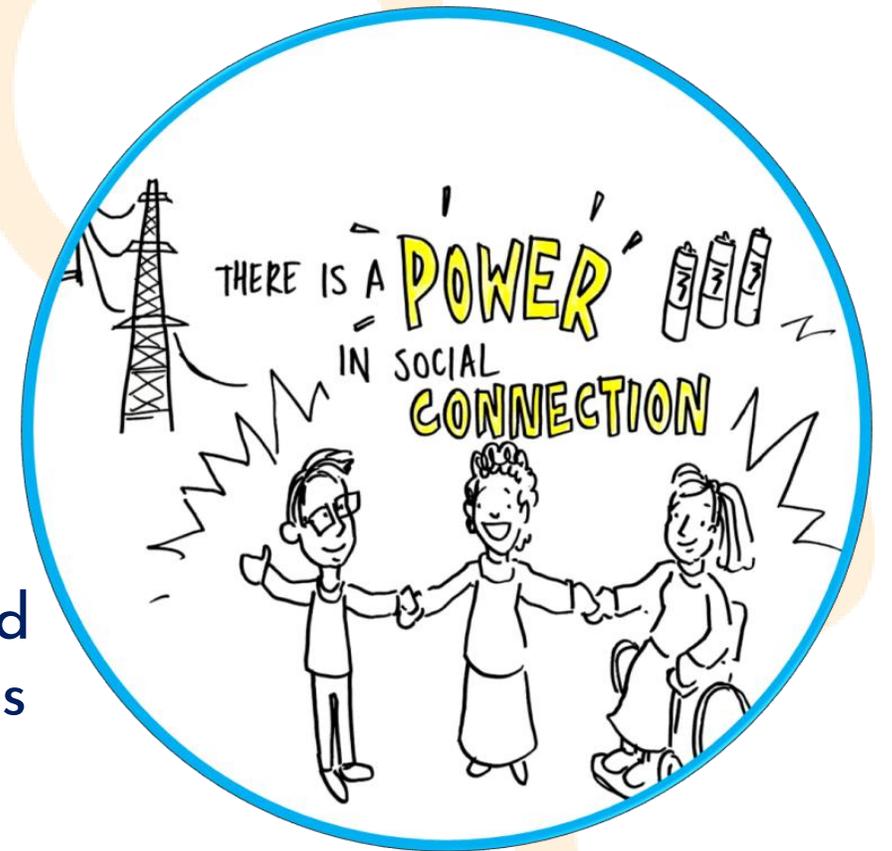
A review of ABCD in  
Leeds Pathfinder sites  
(2019 -2025)

A six-year journey from seeds to trees



# Why...

- What were the positive impacts of investing in an ABCD model at a neighbourhood level?
- Was there evidence of a wider impact to other organisations/institutions in those areas?
- Has continuing to invest in an ABCD model raised the profile of asset-based approaches to creating a culture shift in how we work as a Council?
- Is there evidence of a sustainability projects and activities that will continue once the funding has finished, creating a legacy?
- Are there any challenges or drawbacks to funding the model?



# What we did...



- Worked in partnership with the six ABCD Pathfinder sites, led by ABCD Team over an 11-month period.
- The Review was based on ABCD principles: People driven - Relationship orientated, Asset-based - Place-based - Inclusion focused.

## Four level approach:

- **Grassroots level:** we see this as people living in neighbourhoods and community.
- **Practitioners:** for the purpose of the review the ABCD Community Builders.
- **Service Level** - ABCD Pathfinder site managers
- **Whole System** - Key partners we had worked with for over 10 years; this would also include Leeds City Council stakeholders.
- Interview questions co-designed, worked together to collate and capture evidence, and ABCD Pathfinder sites acted as critical friends throughout the process.

# What we did...

- Collection Methods - Interviews, Experiences, Reflections, Quotes, Stories, Photographs, Small Sparks awarded, Number of Connections.
- Re-visited the Social Return on Investment study to help with future funding applications to support continuing the ABCD builder role.





## Key Findings

- Investing in trust-based funding works!
- ABCD Community Builder role is key to successful ABCD activity.
- Community Engagement and Cohesion- cross cutting connections created: true meaningful friendships.
- Small Sparks created legacy projects and groups.

# Key Findings

- ABCD funded areas, combined with the council's learning and development offer supported a culture shift in some service design.
- *"ABCD is embedded into our Get Set Leeds Local project and is now being embedded into the wider team. It's often not easy (or quick) work, but when it's in action you can see it's fundamentally the right way of working. Having a shared vision as the pathfinders and community builders is helpful to enhance our collaborative work within our key priority communities."*
- *Karen Peck - Active Leeds, Development Officer*

## Key Findings

- ABCD Pathfinder is cost effect model, the upper value of £36.90 of social value returned for every £1 invested in an ABCD Pathfinder site.
- Ripple effects - building capacity and sustainability.
- The 'power to bring about change' - Community Power in action!



# Ingredients for success!

- Building trust with the Third Sector/Community
- Leadership support
- Culture of permission / innovation
- No wrong door
- Willingness to cede control / accept risk
- Being Brave!



# Thank-you

- Better Action for Families (BAFF)
- Horsforth Community Assets Project (HCAP)
- LS14 Trust
- Older People's Action in the Locality (OPAL)
- St Luke's Cares
- Touchstone
- Third Sector organisation and LCC key stakeholders
- Anne-Marie Bagnall - Leeds Beckett University



# Lynn Bailey



# Anne-Marie Bagnall

Professor of Health & Wellbeing Evidence Director  
Centre for Health Promotion Research  
Leeds Beckett University



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# Leeds ABCD: Social Return on Investment analysis 2025

Professor Anne-Marie Bagnall, 19<sup>th</sup> March 2026



## What is social value?

- Increasingly, organisations are considering their activities holistically, taking account of the wider economic, social and environmental effects of their actions.
- **Social Value** is an umbrella term for these broader effects, and organisations which make a conscious effort to ensure that these effects are positive can be seen as adding social value by contributing to the long-term wellbeing and resilience of individuals, communities and society in general.

- <https://socialvalueportal.com/what-is-social-value/>

# What is Social Return on Investment?

- An outcomes-based measurement tool that helps organisations to understand and quantify the social, environmental and economic value they are creating.
- Participative approach with 6 steps.
- Captures in monetised form the value of a wide range of outcomes, whether these already have a financial value or not.



- Produces a ratio that states how much social value (in £) is created for every £1 of investment.
- **It's NOT about how much money is saved!**

# What outcomes did we use?



## ABCD Leeds Outcomes

- People have good friends
- Individuals and communities are better connected
- Communities identify and work to bring about the changes they want to see

## Other Outcomes

- Wellbeing and benefits of volunteering to the volunteer
- Time given by community connectors

# Where do the £ values come from?



- Economic studies
- Wellbeing lens
- HACT Social value bank
- Global value exchange

# People have good friends



- New social groups, or with new members (n=314)
- Value of friendship = £15,500 per person per year\*
- **Total value = £5,223,500**

\* *Nattavudh Powdthavee (2008) Putting a price tag on friends, relatives, and neighbours, Journal of Socio-Economics 37(4), 1459-1480*

# Individuals and communities are better connected



- Not a quantitative measure, so no £ value could be found.
- Instead, time given by community connectors was estimated at 2 hours per week each for 314 connectors
- Value attached = £12.21 per hour (national minimum wage)
- **Total value = £383,394**

# Bringing about Change



- Decision to change something (n=130)
- Sense of autonomy and control valued at £1400 per person per year (pppy)\*
- **Total value = £182,000**

\* *Global Value Exchange*



## Other: Wellbeing benefits to volunteers

- 314 community connectors
- Wellbeing benefits of volunteering valued at £13,500 per person\*
- **Total value = £4,239,000**
- \* *Wellbeing & Civil Society UK gov publication*

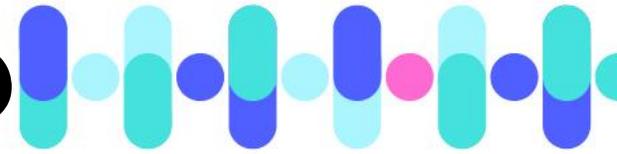
# Adjustments



## What did we adjust for?

- Attribution (influence of other changes): 50%
- Drop off/ duration of benefits: 50%
- Deadweight (how much benefit without ABCD): 17%
  
- **Sensitivity analysis for social connections:** lower value for 'being a member of a social group' **£1850** pppy than 'having good friends' (£15500 pppy)

# Inputs vs benefits for Leeds ABCD



- Inputs: Grants from LCC to each site over 6 years = £150,000
- 314 community connectors; 337 social connections; 130 social changes

<b>Social value of ABCD work:</b>	
<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Social value</b>
People have good friends	£1850 <sup>1</sup> - £15,500 <sup>2</sup> per person per year
Communities identify and work to bring about the changes they want to see	£1400 <sup>3</sup> per person per year
Wellbeing benefits of volunteering to the volunteer	£13,500 <sup>4</sup> per person per year
Time given by Community Connectors	£12.21 per hour (National Minimum Wage)



# Social Return on Investment

- Six pathfinder sites
- To estimate the 'social value' of ABCD using SROI
- Method
  - Valued outcomes using pre-existing studies
  - Adjustments applied
  - Sense-checked



Between  
**£2.69** and  
**£36.90** of social  
value returned  
for every **£1**  
invested

# Clarrie Ramsden

ABCD Community Builder

LS14 Trust





# Rory Wells

## ABCD Community Builder

Touchstone



# Q&A session

Councillor McCluskey - Leeds City Council

Verity O'Hara - ABCD Leeds City Council

Anne-Marie Bagnall - Leeds Beckett University

Clarrie Ramsden-ABCD Community Builder

Rory Wells - ABCD Community Builder

# Final Reflections Close - Slide TBC

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### **Our Ambition**

To expand Asset Based Community Development across Leeds, shifting power to people and supporting communities to thrive.