



STRONGER CONNECTED EMPOWERED

The impact of Rudheath
and Witton Together



Contents

Section 1: Introduction	2
Welcome to the story of Rudheath and Witton Together	2
About us	2
Our partnership board	2
Our Big Local area	4
What we set out to achieve	5
<i>A decade in numbers</i>	7
What did our community say?.....	7
Section 2: Our approach	8
Section 3: Reducing loneliness and bringing the community together	9
Case study: Shurlach Over 55s Afternoon Club.....	10
Case study: Covid-19 Pandemic	11
Case study: Warm Space - All Friends Together.....	12
Section 4: Improving community spaces	13
Case Study: Northwich Skate Park (Sheeran Skate Park)	13
Case study: Rudheath Bowling Club	14
Section 5: Supporting families and young people	15
Case study: Support for local schools	15
Case study: Recipe bags	16
Section 6: One person at a time	17
Case study: Rachael Rathbone - Hula Daze	18
Case study: Jaimie Jewrey - Baubles in a Box.....	19
Case study: Nic Williams - RWT Partnership Member	20
Section 7: What we've learned and what comes next	21
So what comes next?	22
Thank you	23
Appendix	24

Section 1:

Introduction

Welcome to the story of Rudheath and Witton Together

We are Rudheath and Witton Together and for the last ten years we've been working to make our area a better place to live for all.

The project began in 2013 and ends in March 2024. This report shares the difference we made, what we've learned along the way and what comes next.

About us

Rudheath and Witton Together (RWT) is a resident-led group that has used £1.2 million of lottery funding over the last decade to make lasting positive change in our area.

We are part of a programme called Big Local and are one of 150 Big Local areas across England. The funding gives us the freedom to support projects that will lead to positive outcomes for our community.

Being resident-led means that it's local people, through our partnership board, who make the important decisions about what is best for the area and how the money should be spent.

Big Local is funded by the National Lottery Community Fund and managed by Local Trust.

Our partnership board

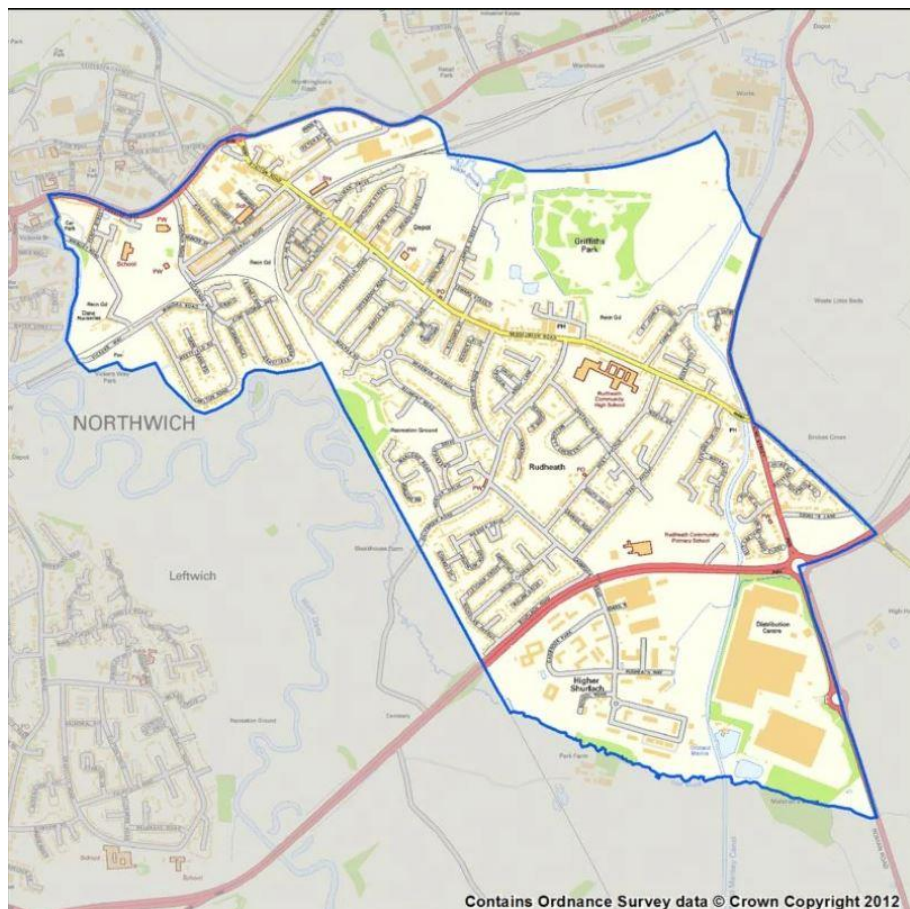
The RWT Partnership board has been responsible for developing and delivering our Big Local plan. The partnership currently has six members, all residents in the area with a range of skills, experience, and local knowledge. Over the last ten years over 30 residents have given time and commitment as part of our Partnership board.

The Partnership has been supported by our Groundwork CLM (Cheshire, Lancashire and Merseyside), our 'locally trusted organisation'. Most Big Local areas appoint a 'locally trusted organisation' to look after the money awarded, make sure it is properly accounted for and to support the Partnership board.

Groundwork employed a paid project manager to oversee the project and the Partnership commissioned Changing Lives Together to employ a paid Community Engagement worker to deliver many of our events and projects.

Our Big Local area

Rudheath and Witton are two areas on the eastern side of Northwich, Cheshire (see map), within the borough of Cheshire West and Chester.



The population of our area is 8000, with 3864 households, slightly above the average Big Local area. Older people make up 18% of the population and lone parent households with dependent children make up 27%. Like most places, our community faces a number of challenges that our activities aim to address.

We benefit from a range of community assets including nine parks, play areas, green spaces, two thriving community venues, great local primary schools, a senior school right in the middle of the area, a Grozone facility and three churches, all of whom have been involved in one or more of our projects.

What we set out to achieve

Our vision is **'in the community, with the community, for the community.'**

Over the life of the project, we listened to and took our lead from people living in Rudheath and Witton. These are the things that people cared about most:

- Bringing the community together and reducing loneliness
- Improving our community spaces
- Supporting families and young people
- Developing new skills

This report will share the difference Big Local has made here in Rudheath and Witton. There have been so many RWT projects and activities over the last ten years - too many to detail here - so this report shares just a few of the highlights.



A decade in numbers

We've crunched the numbers and here's what they told us about the difference RWT has made over the last ten years.



We gave **69** grants to community projects worth **£119k**



We organised over **300** community events that brought people together



We gave out nearly **3000** meals / food and recipe bags



We worked with **4** schools in our area supporting **1,372** students



We ran **24** different projects



We held over **100** warm space sessions

What did our community say?

At the end of 2023 we asked residents to share their views on the work of Rudheath and Witton Together. 85 residents completed the survey.

- **78%** of people agreed that taking part in RWT activities supported their or their family's mental health and helped them feel less isolated.
- **60%** of people agreed that taking part in RWT activities supported their or their family's physical health
- **98%** of people agreed that RWT brought the community closer together.
- **95%** of people agreed that RWT offered good support to the community
- **19%** of people said involvement in our projects had led them to volunteer

Section 2: Our approach

The key to our success is our Big Local resident-led approach. Our community has been central to setting the priorities that we focused on for each phase of the project.

Through focus groups and surveys, residents told us what they thought was needed in the community from skate parks and defibrillators to activities that support wellbeing and community togetherness.

Guided by our community, we implemented four Big Local plans over the last ten years. Each plan focused on key themes, for example supporting young people or mental health and wellbeing.



Once each plan was agreed, the Partnership board of local residents, together with our paid workers, focused on delivering these outcomes for the wider community.

The Partnership met once a month to discuss progress, decide on where the funding goes and to ensure that the plan is being delivered successfully by the paid workers.

In addition to this, the Partnership responded to the emerging and changing needs of the community, for example the Covid-19 pandemic and holiday hunger projects.

“This Big Local project has empowered us all to make a difference in our local community. We have pulled together to hold various different events and clubs. As Chair of the partnership I speak for us all when I say we are very proud of having made a big difference.”

Kathi, RWT Chair

Section 3: Reducing loneliness and bringing the community together

An important part of our work has been bringing the Rudheath and Witton community together so that people feel less lonely and isolated.

We have done this in a number of ways, hosting a variety of events and activities for all age ranges as well as bringing families and different generations together. These have ranged from big one-off events to weekly groups. By providing regular opportunities for residents, we have strengthened our connections to one another.

Highlights have included our Bingo sessions, ‘Crafternoon Teas’, activity days for primary-age children, and Halloween discos. Each year we hosted Christmas activities and gave out boxes of food and gifts to people who are isolated in our community.

The next three case studies bring some of this work to life.



Case study: Shurlach Over 55s Afternoon Club

In 2017 we set up a group providing activities for older people to get together and socialise. It grew quickly and soon had 20-30 people attending weekly. A year later, the Over 55s group became independent, with ongoing support from RWT. The dedicated committee have worked hard to reach isolated older people and they are now at 90 members, having moved to a new location at Rudheath Social Club to accommodate their growing numbers.

The group provides friendship, talks, trips and activities on a weekly basis as well as special events for the Jubilee and Coronation. The support and connection they offer is a huge success and one of the proudest legacies of the Big Local Project.

“It’s just good for [people’s] mental health. They enjoy the trips out and entertainment.” Rose, Over 55s Committee Member

Case study: Covid-19 Pandemic

When Covid-19 hit during delivery of our Phase 3 plan, everything changed. But we adapted quickly to support our community during the pandemic and to deliver our Big Local outcomes.

It was more important than ever to make sure that people weren't left isolated. Partnering with local organisations like Northwich Community Support and Cheshire Without Abuse, we mobilised to help with shopping, food parcels, prescriptions and welfare calls.

Members of the community also sewed masks and scrubs for the NHS, provided online quizzes and bingo and the Over 55s group delivered the Covid Courier to their members. We also held a hugely successful Scarecrow Competition.

“Being a part of the RWT Community, especially during lockdown, has had a great impact on my mental health. The sewing group gave me a focus with making masks/ scrubs etc. Also being on the partnership board at the time made me feel I was still part of a community even though we were all isolated.” RWT Resident



Case study: Warm Space - All Friends Together

In response to the cost-of-living crisis RWT decided to introduce 'warm space' sessions. In addition to our weekly session at Rudheath Social Club, we provided funding to Bethel and St Helen's (Witton) Churches to ensure people had somewhere to go three days a week.

The sessions included a chance to meet others and a warming meal, such as soup or stew and importantly somewhere to go to keep warm.

These sessions have gone from strength to strength. Both churches have continued the sessions with funding from elsewhere and between us we have delivered over 100 sessions, with a plan in place to continue well into the future through Changing Lives Together.



"I have made such lovely friends. If this wasn't going on I'd be sitting at home." Marie

"I like coming here, lots of people to talk to." Kath

"Encouraged me to find myself! Take time out for me, I have made new friendships, emotional support, too many things to mention, kept me warm with lovely soups and sandwiches!"

Warm Space attendee

Section 4: Improving community spaces

Our area is home to several community spaces including parks, play areas and other facilities. While well maintained by the Parish and Town councils, residents saw room for improvement. Together with community partners, we brought their ideas to life, investing in these spaces through projects both big and small. This means we now have community assets that will benefit the future generation.

Case Study: Northwich Skate Park (Sheeran Skate Park)

Our proudest achievement, and one which took three years to complete, was our contribution to the new and improved skate park near Vicarsway Park. Working with Northwich Town Council and other partners we were able to contribute a larger grant towards this. The new park opened in September 2023 and is already a big hit with the young people in the community.



68% of our survey respondents said the skate park had made a difference to the community

Case study: Rudheath Bowling Club

A huge legacy for RWT is the support we gave to Rudheath Bowls, which meant they could buy the land where the bowls club is based when it was put up for sale in 2017. Through a grant and the innovative use of a loan through Big Local the club was able to secure the site to protect it for now and future generations.



“Accepting the grant and loan was the best thing we’ve ever done. [Without RWT] the bowls club would have been finished, sold.”
Dave Wilding, Rudheath Bowls

Section 5:

Supporting families and young people

Over the life of the project we have delivered lots of activities to support young people and families. This was identified as a priority by residents and has been a part of all our Big Local delivery plans.

We believe that young people are the key to the future resilience of our community, and we have developed several projects specifically for families and young people. Here are two highlights among many.

Case study: Support for local schools

RWT has worked closely with the four schools in our Big Local area offering various support responding to the needs of the children and young people.

We supported **The Rudheath Senior Academy** with several grants, including funding to upgrade their multi-use sports pitch for use by both students and the wider community. We've also provided grants for library books, new benches, social activities, training for anti-bullying ambassadors and mental health and resilience support.



Victoria Road Primary has received support in several ways. We've funded after-school sessions, resilience training, cooking classes and social events.

We gave **Witton Church Walk C of E Primary** a grant for ongoing counselling support to students following the pandemic, as well as help to buy equipment following a flood in 2021.

Rudheath Primary Academy received support for their early years provision as well as various events and support post-pandemic.

Case study: Recipe bags



Recognising an increased need for food support during school holidays, we put in place 'holiday hunger' projects. We brought in additional funding and provided recipe bags, activities, and lunches during the school holidays to over **500** families.

This idea began during the Covid-19 pandemic, offering food during the holidays but also encouraging young people to learn essential cooking skills at home and continued until the close of the project.

“Thank you RWT, the food bag is wonderful as always, Great way to learn to cook, recipes are great to follow.”



“During lockdown the recipe boxes helped us out so much as me and my partner are both self-employed and completely unable to work for a few months.”

“We really enjoyed the food bags. Spending time together making meals. The children were extremely proud.”

Section 6: One person at a time

A key focus of our last two Big Local plans has been to offer support to individual members of our community, either through coaching, training or practical support and advice.

All the Partnership board members, both past and present, have been given training opportunities as well as the chance to be involved in some of the Big Local programmes, such as the Community Leadership Academy, as well as a chance to go to the annual conference ‘Connects’ to meet and share experiences with others involved in Big Locals across the country.

This approach has also led to 10 members of the community being supported to start their own small business. Among these, two stand out:

Case study: Rachael Rathbone - Hula Daze

Rachael started her business in 2018, starting with a series of Hula-Hoop classes for the community with support from RWT and funding to attend specialist training. During Covid Rachael did a series of online classes and her business has gone from strength to strength - she now offers children's parties, circus skills and hula classes.



“RWT supported me with starting my own business with their grant scheme. They believed in my vision and abilities and that support gave me the confidence to start my own Hula Hoop classes. Since then my business has gone from strength to strength and is continuing to develop and grow. I just wanted to say 'thank you' to RWT for giving me the boost I needed.”

Rachael Rathbone, Hula Daze

Case study: Jaimie Jewrey - Baubles in a Box

Jaimie accessed our self-employment programme and was given one-to-one support/coaching from a specialist who helped her to get her crafts business up and running. Jaimie provided the table decorations for RWT's 2022 Community Awards, and she also has been the tutor for several of our Crafternoon tea sessions in 2023.



Case study: Nic Williams - RWT Partnership Member



Nic has been involved in the RWT Partnership since 2018, having joined to do some volunteering while at university. She's been involved in a huge number of RWT events and activities, including the Summer Holiday activity sessions.

Nic has grown in confidence during her time with RWT. Starting as a volunteer she eventually went on to be Chair of the RWT Partnership, leading the Partnership meetings and presenting an award at the RWT Awards in 2022. Along with other members, she has taken part in the Local Trust Leadership Academy to help gain new skills and confidence.

'Being part of RWT has made me get out and about more and meet new people. I've enjoyed being part of the events. Being Chair challenged me and made me realise I can do much more.'

Nic Williams - RWT Partnership member

Section 7:

What we've learned and what comes next

What are the most important things we have learned collectively as a partnership board and as a Big Local?

- Building the skills and confidence of everyone involved in the programme helps to create a long-term legacy of community empowerment.
- Like all communities, we face challenges. By learning to focus on our strengths, we have made a greater impact. We have improved our play areas and green spaces, built an even stronger community spirit, and broadened the range of community groups, with something on offer for everyone.
- By working closely with long-standing organisations in our community like our schools, churches and the council, projects have the best chance of having a longer-term impact.
- Building great relationships with community partners and strengthening connections is really important.
- Some of the biggest impact has come from community groups that we helped get started, like the Over 55s group.
- We learned to be flexible, and willing to change plans when it's best for the community. This helped us adapt quickly to supporting the community during the pandemic.

We have also met our Big Local outcomes:

- Communities will be better able to identify local needs and take action in response to them.
- People will have increased skills and confidence, so they continue to identify and respond to needs in the future.
- The community will make a difference to the needs it prioritises.
- People will feel that their area is an even better place to live.

So what comes next?

Rudheath and Witton Together comes to a close with the end of Big Local funding in March 2024. But the legacy of our work continues.

The strength of our partnership board is a vital part of our legacy. Over the last five years, partnership members have undertaken an extensive programme of training. This has included safeguarding, first aid, mental health first aid, confidence and communication skills and attendance at a variety of Big Local training including the Big Local Community Leadership Academy.

We've made a difference to new and existing community groups, and through our support several have grown in confidence and funding success and will be continuing their brilliant work post Big Local. This includes the Over 55s group, the Knit and Natter group and Rudheath Bowling Club. In addition the warm space sessions will continue for the foreseeable future.

Our funding has made a difference to the physical environment too. The Skate Park, Grozone, the Bowling Club and Social Club have all benefited from Big Local and leave a lasting legacy for our community.

The greatest legacy we will leave is the support, encouragement and equipment we have given people on an individual, group and community level. Residents and groups have grown in confidence and have the skills and expertise to support our community's needs for the longer-term.

“You have given your time and support to lots of RWT residents, adults and children and it HAS made a difference. Thank you.”

RWT resident

Thank you

Thank you to everyone in Rudheath and Witton for your support and trust in us to make your ideas happen. Without your time, inspiration and commitment none of this could have been achieved.

- Together we have made Rudheath and Witton a better place to live.
- Together we have brought the community together, helped people feel happier and less lonely.
- We have improved facilities and skills, and most importantly provided some fun for young people and families.
- We have helped people to learn new skills and to set up new groups and projects.
- Our community spaces and assets are in better shape than before, and our collective skills and confidence have grown and flourished.

Thank you to everyone who was a member of our partnership board, to all our volunteers, to our fantastic community partners.

All of you were an integral part of making this change happen.



Appendix

How we spent our money

Our grants and expenditure

Total received from Local Trust: £1,209,500

Getting People Involved (pre-Big Local)	Phase 1 Plan	Phase 2 Plan	Phase 3 Plan	Phase 4 Plan
£30,000	£208,499.79	£276,853	£367,592.60	£326,554.61