

**Oldham Positive Action Network (OPAN).  
Working alongside communities in Oldham to  
shape responsive support.**



## How-to Guide

This guide offers more detailed information and advice for those who may be interested in adopting or adapting the initiative in their local area.

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<b>Title</b>	Oldham Positive Action Network (OPAN). Working alongside communities to shape responsive support.
<b>Lead Organisation</b>	Primarily, Action Together.
<b>All Organisations</b>	OPAN is a network of individuals and organisations, hosted by, Action Together a local Chairity. Some partners give their time un-paid or through existing funding, some are commissioned to help deliver aspects of the project. OPAN is funded through LocalMotion a partnership of Foundations: City Bridge Foundation, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Lankelly Chase Foundation, Lloyds Bank Foundation, Paul Hamlyn Foundation.
<b>Category</b>	Emerging.
<b>Poverty Impact</b>	Mitigate. Awareness.
<b>Introduction to the Project</b>	
<p>The Oldham Positive Action Network comprises volunteers, residents, and professionals who work together to transform existing systems and services in the area. OPAN collaborates across sectors, working with communities across Oldham to empower unheard voices, tackle systemic issues relating to poverty, pave pathways into employment, and nurture community pride. At its core, this project wants to see real people make real change that can improve the lives for people in Oldham.</p>	

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**Initial Idea**

<b>Who had the initial idea?</b>	CEO's of charitable foundations.
<b>How did the idea for the project come about?</b>	
Chief Executives from six foundations in the UK wanted to tackle root causes of poverty (coming together as LocalMotion). This was driven by a number of the CEO's being new in role, and coming together through a learning visit to the US, were inspired to try something similar in the UK. Within Oldham, there was a Poverty Truth Commission that were well placed to take forward work locally.	
<b>Were plans informed by any published reports / papers / research evidence or practice from elsewhere?</b>	Yes
There was a similar project in the United States of America, and there was a will to see if this would work in the UK.	
<b>Was anyone else involved in developing the initial idea of the project?</b>	No
<b>Were those with lived experience of poverty involved in developing the initial idea of the project?</b>	Yes
LocalMotion Projects are driven by and developed with local community engagement and input.	

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<b>Was funding required to support the development of the initial idea of the project?</b>	Yes
<b>Which organisation provided funding?</b>	City Bridge Foundation. Esmee Fairbairn Foundation. Lankelly Chase Foundation. Lloyds Bank Foundation. Paul Hamlyn Foundation. Tudor Trust started as part of the group but left due to a change in their strategic priorities.
<b>How much was required?</b>	Primary Grant driven.
<b>What was the specific source of funding?</b>	£2.5 Million across the full eight years – In Oldham that was a discovery phase test ideas and develop a long-term vision to put into the 8-year agreement, this was around £200k.
<b>Were specific resources – other than funding - needed when developing the initial idea of the project?</b>	Yes
<b>Staff/Volunteer Time</b>	Although LocalMotion has a principle of remunerating organisations for their time and did make payments during the discovery phase to support organisations taking part. There was also time committed by public and community sector employees and local residents volunteering their time and their local knowledge to ensure the project was a good fit for Oldham and designed with local needs in mind.
<b>Facilities / Workspace</b>	Not specified.
<b>Equipment</b>	Not specified.
<b>Local Knowledge</b>	Local community .
<b>Food and Drink</b>	Not specified.

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<b>Did any barriers have to be overcome when developing the initial idea of the project?</b>	Yes
<p>Those involved with developing the idea had to be willing to donate time and facilities for free. Also, the reliance on fellow voluntary sector organisation who are already working with minimal resources and staff could cause challenges as there was a reliance on the passion to see change. As the approach was intentionally innovative and needed to be co-designed between national foundations and the local community, there was a lot of time spent getting organised, testing and designing the project before the 8-year funding was secured.</p>	
<b>Did anything in particular enable development of the initial idea of the project?</b>	Yes
<p>The National Coordinator working with the Foundations worked together to source funding and design the entire programme.</p>	
<b>How long did it take between having the initial idea and starting the project?</b>	Two years.
<b>Who made the decision to introduce the project?</b>	Joint collaborative decision between the Foundations, although each individual organisation has to get approval from their own Trustees.

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**Early Development**

<b>Was there a pilot project or feasibility study or test of change?</b>	No
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**Accessing the Service and Engaging with Service Users**

<b>Are potential users referred to your Initiative.?</b>	No
<b>Are there ways, other than referral, that are used to make potential users aware of your Initiative.?</b>	Yes
OPAN is proactive rather than reactive. So instead of relying on referrals, they will go out into the community to seek out people who will benefit from the project.	
<b>What is the most common way through which users typically access your Initiative.?</b>	
Not applicable as community led.	
<b>Do you take steps to keep in touch / reach out to users?</b>	Yes
Reaching out and engaging with community members is central to LocalMotion's work.	

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**Working with People with Lived Experience of Poverty**

<b>Are those with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>delivering</u> the project?</b>	Yes
Working with people with lived experience of the issues OPAN looks at is a key principle. There are 'Lived Experience Advisors' within the project who direct what issues are focused on, use their own experience as insights and co-design and deliver the interventions, through discovery sessions, to test and learn experiments.	
<b>Are people with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>managing</u> the project or in project <u>governance</u>?</b>	Yes
There are people with Lived Experience on the local stewarding group and all other levels of decision making within the network (all Projects). For more information on LocalMotion please visit: <a href="https://localmotion.org.uk/">https://localmotion.org.uk/</a>	
<b>Are people with lived experience of poverty involved <u>in any other aspect</u> of the project?</b>	Yes
OPAN uses Lived Experience Advisors to influence positive change within the community and the transformation of systems and services. They also work to support others in the community to share their experience, empowering Oldham. Example Solidarity Lockers test and learn Pilot (homeless individuals).	

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**Leadership, Governance and Partnership Working**

<b>Who is responsible for managing the project?</b>	
There is not one overall manager of the project, however John Atherton is the lead organisation strategic Manager.	
<b>Is this the only responsibility of the person managing the project?</b>	No
Strategic Organisation Manager role (responsible for funding, organisational co-ordination, data collation and reporting of, and team management).	
<b>What proportion of the manager’s overall workload is given over to this project?</b>	
Most of it.	
<b>Is there a Project Steering or Advisory Group?</b>	Yes
<b>Who is involved?</b>	The Stewarding Group.
<b>How does it work?</b>	The group is comprised of some local public sector employees, lived experience advisors and local community organisations. They act as a steering committee, providing strategic oversight, budget allocations and all decision-making not delegated to sub-groups.
<b>Are any other governance arrangements in place to review strategy and performance?</b>	Yes
Although not in a traditional sense as the Project does not want to incentivise behaviour through specific targets and measures. The role of the local stewarding group, feeding into the national group is to create a learning framework to gather and share all learning from the project (data driven initiative).	

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**Links to Wider Policies, Strategies and Statutory Requirements**

<b>To the best of your knowledge, is the project aligned with national and/or local anti-poverty strategies and priorities (e.g., local authority or health board priorities)?</b>	Yes
OPAN pre-dates the Greater Manchester Combined Authorities “Live Well” strategy but is very aligned to it. In Oldham the local roll-out and implementation of that strategy is building on the learnings from OPAN. Please refer to, <a href="https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/live-well/">https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/live-well/</a> for more detailed information on the Live well strategy.	
<b>In your opinion, has the project benefitted from being part of this anti-poverty strategy?</b>	Yes
It has allowed multi-level organisational and community cooperation and insight. Additionally, it has provided reference material in the form of a published framework for widespread and adaptable guidance (for example trauma informed practice, and initiating conversations around Poverty).	
<b>Is the project part of any other strategy?</b>	No

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**Funding**

<b>Is funding used to support the work?</b>	Yes
<b>Has external funding been secured to support the work?</b>	Yes
<b>Which organisation provided funding?</b>	City Bridge Foundation. Esmee Fairbairn Foundation. Lankelly Chase Foundation. Lloyds Bank Foundation. Paul Hamlyn Foundation.
<b>What was the specific funding stream/source/scheme?</b>	Grant giving (primarily Action Together).
<b>How much funding was secured?</b>	Grant giving (primarily Action Together).
<b>For how long has funding been secured?</b>	£2.5 million
<b>Is future funding from the same external source a possibility?</b>	No
<b>Has a specific sum been secured from your organisation to support this work?</b>	No
<b>Is future funding from your organisation a possibility?</b>	No
<b>Is future funding dependent on achieving pre-agreed outcomes or outputs?</b>	N/A
<b>What are the future - longer-term - prospects for this work if existing funding sources were no longer available?</b>	
The hope is that the project will take on a life of itself, i.e., that the need for OPAN will no longer be there but smaller groups that continue to work within the community.	

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**Staffing and Resources**

<b>Do existing staff from your organisation contribute toward the work of this project?</b>	No , as the Project is community driven.
<b>Have additional paid staff been employed to contribute toward the work of this project?</b>	No
<b>Are volunteers involved in delivering the project??</b>	Yes
<p><b>Role:</b> Volunteers within the Project can get involved in a variety of ways; from fundraising and marketing to events volunteers. The networks Lived Experience Advisors also act as volunteers.</p> <p>Due to this project acting as a network of different organisations etc., the different groups working within the network will have their own volunteers.</p>	
<b>Are specific resources – other than staff/volunteer time and money - needed to support the delivery of the project?</b>	Yes
<b>Facilities / Workspace</b>	Spaces that can host their bi-monthly meetings and their ‘engineering change’ workshops.
<b>Equipment</b>	No
<b>Local Knowledge</b>	OPAN relies on local residents with lived experience and local organisations with professional contacts and expertise to ensure we are gathering the right insights and co-designing test and learn that will be relevant and impactful to local issues.
<b>Food and Drink</b>	No
<b>Are any of the resources needed to deliver the project provided in-kind, rather than budgeted from project funds?</b>	Yes
<p><b>Who provides:</b> Events are often held in community spaces, such as community centres, that are often free to rent.</p>	
<b>Were new IT systems, additional software, or upgrades existing software (databases, Apps) required to deliver this project?</b>	No

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<b>Was additional training – for staff or volunteers - required to deliver this project?</b>	No
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**Monitoring and Evaluation**

<b>Do you – or other organisations - collect data on the project for monitoring or evaluation purposes?</b>		Yes, informally.
<b>Is there baseline data to describe what things were like before the start of the project?</b>		Yes
Action Together baseline Data.		
<b>Is the difference that the project is making measured or monitored by the host organisation?</b>		Yes, although not formally.
<b>Who within the host organisation is responsible for monitoring the impact of the project</b>	Action Together.	
<b>How often is the impact of the project monitored or measured by the host organisation</b>	Varies as it is all community driven and reliant on community engagement and participation.	
<b>What methods, techniques or strategies are used by the host organisation to impact of the project</b>	Primarily qualitative.	
<b>What information is collected by the host organisation about the project?</b>		
<b>Number of users</b>		Yes, informally.
<b>Profile of users</b>		No
<b>Experience of users</b>		Yes, informally at point of contact.
<b>Outcomes for users</b>		N/A
<b>Anything else</b>		N/A
N/A		

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<b>Has the data that has been collected by the host organisation been used to adapt the way the project works?</b>	N/A
N/A given the nature of the Project.	
<b>Has an external organisation been employed to formally evaluate the project?</b>	No
<b>Is there an intention to employ an external organisation to evaluate the impact of the project in the future?</b>	No
<b>Is there an intention to undertake your own formal evaluation in the future to estimate the impact of the project?</b>	No

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**Impact**

<b>To what extent have the aims of the project been achieved?</b>	Making progress toward meeting Aims.
<b>What difference has the project made?</b>	
<p>The project is keeping to its core principles but due to it still being at the beginning, there is still more to do and learn.</p> <p>The work of OPAN has seen culture shifts within places like the job centre when dealing with people who have been unemployed long term.</p> <p>The Lived Experience Advisors have also benefitted from participation.</p> <p>There has also been a culture shift within the local authority, which has acknowledged the positive impact of working with those in the community and is now willing to have a more proactive approach in challenging social issues within Oldham.</p>	
<b>Have conditions or demand changed since the project was introduced?</b>	Yes
<p>The challenges brought about by housing and the wider economy have stayed the same, but the current social tensions related to a more diverse local population has driven the need for change. A local increase in immigration has resulted in changing community needs and associated problems. To meet current local community needs, more associated holistic, socioeconomic and political systemic conversations are required.</p>	
<b>Has the project had the capacity to meet these changing conditions and demand?</b>	Yes
<b>Has the project changed through time?</b>	Yes
<b>What changed</b>	Local populace and socioeconomic conditions.
<b>Why has it changed</b>	The project at its core is designed to adapt to new challenges faced by the community in Oldham; the input from the community and the Lived Experience Advisors influences how the network responds.
<b>Has the project had any unexpected or unintended outcomes?</b>	yes
eated more interagency communications	

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**In your opinion, is the project having an impact on tackling poverty?**

Yes

The collaboration of several organisations within the network allows for the sharing of sometimes limited resources within the charity sectors. By working together, there is a more substantial impact had on those experiencing poverty and the ability to influence structural changes within the Oldham community.

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**Learning from Experience**

**What is working well?**

OPAN is staying true to their goals: they now have proactive work streams operating in the community where they observe what is working well, from the perspective of people who have lived experience of that particular systemic issue and what matters most to them. Having the freedom to experiment has been helpful for self-reflection and learning. The model adopted by OPAN means that they can get the right people around the table quickly, alongside experts by experience. For more information on OPAN please visit: <https://www.actiontogether.org.uk/oldham-positive-action-network>

**What, if anything, is working less well?**

A slight lack of public awareness of the issues that need to be addressed related to a change in population diversity and associated changes to community needs. There is a need to come up with a better way of capturing learning from everybody, but not in a way that feels like paperwork, but capturing the stories and struggles from those in Oldham. Wanting to keep users engaged in other topics that do not directly relate to them (related to diverse population needs and communication barriers).

**What are the key learning points that you'd like to share with other practitioners?**

The importance of having people with lived experience involved with the project. Ensure you are valuing staff and volunteers' contribution. Practice with different methods of participation. Embrace self-reflection. Be okay with not having all the answers straight away.

**Are there plans to develop or expand the project in the future?**

Yes

There is a hope to have more of Oldham involved in their work, and influence work across Greater Manchester.

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**How easily do you think this project could be replicated in another setting?**

Funding is the main obstacle. OPAN has had the good fortune of having flexible funding, but many funders will ask for strict project requirements and tightly defined outcomes, which may not be compatible with OPAN's organisational co-production model (Community informed practice model). However, having people involved and around the table who have lived experience with social and economic issues, and meaningfully take on board their concerns is simple.

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