

## **ActEarly:Holme Wood - Community engagement final report**

This report has been written by Mallory Moorhead of ActEarly and Lauren Batty of OutLOUD to capture some of the activities, methodology, data, challenges, learning and reflections from the community engagement work that has taken place in Holme Wood during 2020-2021 funded by Bradford for Everyone.

### **Programme Overview**

In January 2020, data scientists, community practitioners, service providers, and policymakers came together for an Alan Turing Institute-sponsored workshop: Improving Lives Through Place-Based Urban Analytics. The workshop focused on Holmewood, one of the most deprived communities in Bradford (and the country). Holmewood has been a focus for concern, action and investment for many years. Numerous projects, including large scale investments, appear to have failed to achieve their goals. A common complaint is of 'top down' interventions, where residents and local organisations receive support, advice of investment, against objectives and targets set by others, and often proved to be unattainable. We were committed to making Act Early: Holme Wood different. The workshop's goal was to identify Holmewood's most pressing challenges, then narrow those down to topics that can be explored via data science.

Out of that workshop came priority areas and 6 data science project topics, including:

- Healthy Choices, Healthy Lives
- The Impact of Poor Mental Health on Individuals, the Community & Services
- Life Choices & Aspirations
- Dental Health
- Crime
- Developing a Data Workflow

The Alan Turing Institute funded what has now become the ActEarly: Holmewood programme to improve people's lives through the application of data science. The Integrated Communities Programme (Bradford for Everyone) funded 12 months of community engagement for the programme, which was commissioned to a local organisation, OutLOUD. The project collaborates between Bradford Council, Bradford's Centre for Applied Education Research, Leeds Institute of Data Analytics, local health services and schools, Bradford For Everyone, and Bradford's Opportunity Area.

Data scientists from the Turing Institute, Leeds Institute of Data Analytics, and Regional Universities were linked to one or more of the project areas to analyse relevant public datasets and identify patterns and issues. Three data projects launched in October 2020, and 3 more in April 2021.

The projects were open to and shaped by the people who live and work in Holme Wood. The first phase of activity saw us reaching out to the community, testing the issues identified by practitioners and others against residents' perceptions and experiences of what matters, what works, and what needs to change. This took place alongside similar testing of the issues by data scientists. We adapted our action research projects to consider what both of these important groups tell us. Projects encourage participation by



residents, taking part and supported to act as citizen scientists. Projects will be governed by groups, including members of the community. We aim to adhere to a principle of working together in a place-based, data-led and more coherent planning and delivery of services that are beneficial to our residents, communities, and citizens.

Act Early: Holme Wood has two important goals:

- For Holme Wood, it will propose to Bradford's decision-makers and service planners ways to more effectively align and target services, focusing on early intervention. It will suggest ways to empower communities to make informed choices, take more ownership of issues, and improve access to services. Local decision-makers are already represented on our Act Early: Holme Wood 'leadership group' and have committed to participate fully in the action research projects and to take serious recommendations for change.
- For Bradford and beyond, this project will test, model, and share a process that brings cutting edge data science into the conversation about public services and public policy to improve outcomes for all. Our vision is of a process (a "place-based approach" to working) that can be replicated across Bradford, adopted by other communities, and help those involved in policymaking at a national level, design programmes that can adapt to local circumstances. We anticipate that Act Early: Holme Wood will allow the scientific community to sharpen its techniques and data science tools.

## Methodology

Phase 1, 2, 3 and 4 of this project happened between November 2020 and November 2021 and was funded by Bradford for Everyone. Phase 5 and 6 are yet to happen and are funded by The Alan Turing Institute, Bradford 2025 and The LEAP.

### Phase 1:

We asked data scientists to link to research projects related to the stakeholder-identified priority areas. The scientists used anonymised local and national datasets to identify patterns and relationships relevant to the identified issues. The data scientists were connected through the community engagement partner OutLOUD to local residents and service providers to refine further their research questions related to the priority areas.

### Phase 2:

Community residents and service providers were invited to participate in research activities such as interviews and asset mapping for ActEarly programme staff to understand better-existing resources on Holme Wood and what is needed there.

### Phase 3:

The data scientists' findings were presented to the community (service providers and residents) to hear their feedback and develop a richer understanding of the issues and the lived experiences of residents and service providers to help inform their data analysis.

### Phase 4:

Community events have and will bring together residents to contribute data (quantitative and qualitative) related to the priority areas. Based on their responses and the data science findings, this is where we begin thinking about specific recommendations for local decision-makers around changes in services,



policies, and interventions. The recommendations will be finalised and include clear project timelines and steps required.

#### **Phase 5:**

Residents and policymakers come together for discussions about recommended changes. Visualisations of relevant data will be provided to help guide conversations, including some routine data and the newly generated data from the Holme Wood events.

#### **Phase 6:**

Final recommendations for change will be made to local decision-makers in a written deliverable - this will be signed off by the community and decision-makers.

### **Impact of pandemic**

Delivering community engagement activities during the unusual times of COVID 19 has been challenging. It has required us to constantly change our approaches and activities to ensure we remain in line with the ever-changing landscape and government guidelines. We determined online engagement was not going to be the most successful method of engagement for this particular community due to limited access to technology and literacy skills. With this in mind, we decided to run online activities only for local professionals and not for community members. The safety of our staff and community members was paramount. Throughout the project we had to delay large groups of in-person activities and deliver in groups of no more than 6 people to ensure participants could adhere to social distancing.

### **Outputs/activities**

#### **Semi-structured interviews/focus groups with local service providers -**

In autumn and winter 2020, semi-structured interviews and a focus group were scheduled between Holme Wood service providers and the ActEarly project manager and/or the data scientists working on the project, to better understand the local context and help researchers develop their final research questions.

**Mapping exercise** - It was necessary in order to coordinate services and build on the capacity and potential of existing resources in Holme Wood, to understand:

1. where locals define the boundaries of the area
2. to understand what current resources are there and being used

Therefore, we introduced asset mapping as an activity. This involved participants identifying where the boundaries of Holme Wood are, then assets in the area related to places where residents go:

- to keep healthy or be outside
- For food and non-food shopping
- For health services
- To receive education and youth services
- For employment
- For other resources

This relied on a strengths-based approach rather than focusing on what is wrong with the area. Approximately 50 participants engaged in the asset mapping activity.

**Gathering Feedback on the Data** - Once we had the findings from the first 3 projects (Healthy Choices, Mental Health, and Life Choices/Aspirations), we presented them virtually to local service providers and



decision-makers. Our overall objectives were to hear from the participants if they thought the findings were accurate based on their local experience and start gathering information on what could be done in Holme Wood to address the issues. 21 participants engaged in this.

**Community event** - We wanted to collect data from residents of Holme Wood, to supplement the existing routine datasets and to engage them in the process of using data science to drive policy. For this, we held the first of 5 community events in October, a Halloween-themed event intended not to be too burdensome for participants not familiar with the research process. To start, we introduced questions related to the data science projects. Participants were invited to answer multiple-choice questions about Healthy Choices at the first event by way of voting with gems/rocks (quantitative data collected) and then to engage in conversation about the needs of Holme Wood (qualitative data collected). There were also non-research craft activities to engage children and adults alike.

## Highlights & Findings from Activities

### Interviews/Focus Groups - Autumn/Winter 2020

Local service providers (some of whom are Holme Wood residents) had meetings with data scientists and the project manager, either in a semi-structured interview or focus group setting. Service providers were able to shape the questions that researchers asked and to provide rich information on the local context, specifically information on:

- Factors that influence the various priority areas (mental health, life choices/aspirations, etc in Holme Wood)
- Existing interventions and services
- Where to find more local data and what issues might occur or what information might be missing within existing datasets
- What the focus within each priority area should be (e.g. within life choices/aspirations, there could be a focus on transition from primary to secondary school, reading ability, educational outcomes such as test results, undiagnosed or underdiagnosed mental health issues, household characteristics, school exclusions, etc.)

### Mapping - Summer/Autumn 2021

The boundaries of Holme Wood differed from person to person but there was general agreement about what makes up the central part of Holme Wood. In terms of asset identification, nearly every person responded with a place or something that they enjoy about Holme Wood. Less assets were identified for categories such as non-food shopping, where health services are provided, and where there is employment.

Within categories of assets included, the following were common responses:

- Places You Like:** Knowles Park, St Christopher's Church, The Sutton Centre, The TFD Centre, Valley Project
- Places to Go Outside/Be Healthy:** Knowles Park, Black Carr Woods, Sutton Centre
- Places to Buy Food:** ALDI, ASDA, Iceland, Morrison's
- Other Shopping:** Bradford city centre
- Places of Education:** Carrwood Primary, Knowleswood Primary, Ryecroft Primary
- Places for Child/Youth Services:** Sutton Centre, TFD Centre, Hope Centre, Valley Project, Bradford Youth Services
- Places for Employment:** Cutler Heights Business Park, Sutton Centre



Some participants included their recommendations for changes on Holme Wood. These were:

- Better parks and play spaces needed for children/youth
- The addition of a supermarket on the estate
- More places to go in general on the estate, especially for youth
- Road safety measures are needed, especially on Lymington Drive

## **Focus Group Feedback from Service Providers on Data Projects - Summer 2021**

### **Healthy Choices**

The data scientist on this project wanted to understand the food environment better, so they created a toolkit with a map showing food outlets in the area and their distance from postcodes in Holmewood. The map also has overlays with various data points related to food and health. Childhood obesity rates are over 30%. The number of individuals at higher risk of food insecurity is over 40% on Holmewood.

Stakeholders in Holmewood report a lack of local access to healthy, affordable food. Below are some of the highlights on the subject, taken from the focus groups with local stakeholders:

- Supermarkets are furthest away and therefore the least accessible for the majority of the estate. There is better access to convenience stores and specialty outlets.
- There are many takeaways in a short distance from most postcodes.
- A lot of families do not have cars and have to walk to access food
- Most people do micro-shops for what they can carry while walking. There isn't long-term planning while shopping.
- Some families share taxis and go to ASDA on Rooley Lane.
- You can get chicken and chips for £2. Fast food is easily available and cheap
- There was a free shuttle bus from ASDA but it stopped after a few years. It would go all over the estate and was well-used while it was there. It no longer exists.
- At weekly food shares, vegetables are always the last item to go. People may not know how to cook them or be afraid to cook them.

### **Mental Health**

The data scientist working on this project wanted to understand better mental health service usage and referral pathways (how individuals enter the system) among young people on Holme Wood. Her analysis showed:

- BD4, where Holme Wood is located, has the second-highest number of CYP mental health referrals in Bradford.
- In BD4, the top 5 mental health referral sources for CYP are: education services (26%), school nurses (21%), social services (10%), CAMHS (10%) and GPs (8%). Compared to Bradford overall, the number of referrals by school nurses is nearly double for BD4.
- The top mental health referral reasons for CYP in BD4 are self-care issues, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, and depression.



In Holmewood, stakeholders report many mental health challenges and issues with accessing timely and appropriate mental health support and services. Below are some of the highlights on the subject, taken from the focus groups with local stakeholders:

- Parents tend to open up more to voluntary organisations than statutory organisations. They are more trusting of voluntary organisations.
- When a voluntary organisation sends referrals through, there is less response than if a school makes a referral.
- There is a poorer and slower response from healthcare, social services, etc. if the person or family being referred for services is from Holmewood. Families here receive second-rate services.
- It's not just about the ability to access the service. Most families are comfortable with just not getting help. They've convinced themselves there's no point in getting the service or this is normal. So why access the service
- People want to know that they are invested in, over the years, there have been a lot of coming and going with projects, teams etc.
- It's about creating projects that don't focus on the deficits but on strength-based models. Venue is also key, health centres, schools, etc can be seen as negative and would better delivered in spaces that the community trust like voluntary sector community centres, Valley project etc

### **Life choices & Aspirations**

Data scientists wanted to understand better what factors might influence a child's educational outcomes and participation in crime/antisocial behaviour. They built a predictive model based on data from the national Millenium Cohort Study data, which has followed UK children from birth until adolescence currently. The analysis showed that a lack of aspirations of family and teachers and support from the family are likely important in predicting a young person's participation in antisocial behaviours. Children with poorer relationships with friends and family are perceived by teachers as having less chance of attending university. Children with positive home environments and family/friend relationships are perceived as having more excellent future educational prospects.

Holme Wood stakeholders report a lack of positive role models for children living on the estate. Stakeholders believe the lack of role models could lead to poor decisions and a higher likelihood of antisocial behaviours and crime involvement. Below are some of the highlights on the subject, taken from the focus groups with local stakeholders:

- Parental engagement is a big indicator. The children often have the capacity and intelligence but are falling behind at school and need support in learning.
- Parental aspirations and attitudes about aspirations are important. Many of the families are in a cycle of intergenerational deprivation and poor aspirations.
- Find creative ways to engage family units in the early stages. Drama, music, dance, outdoor activities, etc. It can have a negative effect to provide parenting classes (and call them that) and make parents feel like failures to begin with.
- Children are not aware of the wider world and what jobs are available. It would be good to expose them to more jobs.
- Community organisations could help out with aspirations-related interventions.



- Children should be aware that there are other hands-on and active jobs they can have, not just jobs that require university and are more academic.

### Community event - Autumn 2021

We asked participants multiple choice questions, primarily related to the theme of Healthy Choices. The participants were also invited for qualitative discussions on what they want for Holme Wood. Below are some of the conversation highlights:

- Road safety is a significant issue on Holme Wood. There is concern that speeding vehicles will injure or kill a resident if nothing is done.
- Parks on Holme Wood are not safe for children due to antisocial behaviour, drug activity, litter, outdated equipment, etc there
- There are not enough items available in local shops. Fresh food is not available. Often people have to travel quite a distance for fresh food shopping/supermarket access.
- There is a fruit/veg shop at the local church, but people are not aware of it
- Residents have tried to petition or reach out to policy makers in the past about needed changes without much success

### Feedback from participants

*“Was a interesting event today glad to have got my points across to what is needed in holmewood meet some really friendly people see you all soon and the effort you all put in was amazing glad to have been part of it.”*

*“Can't wait for the next one. I really enjoyed myself and it's nice to know that someone is listening to those that live around here instead of just judging us all for where we are from.”*

### Reflections & learning on community engagement

The funding from Bradford for Everyone has enabled the work outlined in this report to happen. It has been essential to ensure the community's voice was part of the overall ActEarly:Holmewood program. Having a local team who are embedded in the community commissioned for this work was vital, the in-depth understanding of the community along with existing relationships provided a solid foundation to start this work. This is just the start, the Act Early project isn't a short term venture and we hope as time goes on more community members will become engaged in the project to help drive and shape the data so it's an accurate reflection of their life and experiences and can go onto impact policy changes. We have learned there is a lot of groundwork needed within a community to deliver community engagement well. Even with existing trusted relationships within the community that helped us to get a head start on gathering people. We have discovered that this initial phase is the most important. Developing community leaders/volunteers has taken longer than anticipated but once they are trained and empowered to lead on activities and events the initial investment in training and recruitment pays off. There is power in having local people take a lead on projects like this, rather than having people and organisations from outside the community trying to deliver activities.



## **Ethics Approval**

Not having ethical approval caused a significant delay with starting any community engagement activities, this was something that wasn't considered when the project started. Having a greater understanding of all that is needed to be in place before activities can start would avoid delays like this happening in future. Ethics approval can take a number of weeks or even months to be approved so it's important to have a good understanding of the project activities as early as possible to allow the ethics application to be submitted and reduce the likelihood of any further delays.

## **Data teams to work closer with communities rather than in isolation**

The way the data projects had been set up meant that the data teams worked very much in isolation from the community and in some cases had finished their research before any community engagement activities had started. Having a continuous dialogue with the data teams and community would've been ideal and allowing the community voice to inspire and lead the data teams rather than the other way round. From the community engagement events we have obtained some rich and valuable insights from the community, it would've been useful to have data teams to feed this information back to so that it could further inform their research rather than their been done through open source data. A two way conversation between the community and the data teams would've helped the data teams to gain a greater understanding of the project themes and how they affect the community. In the future having community engagement activities running as early as possible and creating a continuous feedback/conversation loop would provide more in depth data and insights.

## **Fancy dress and thematic event**

The initial stages of community engagement can be challenging especially in a community where many people have a lack of trust and are fatigued by projects that are going to try to 'make the community a better place to live.' We found using themed events to gather the community really useful and far more appealing than something that seemed 'official' or formal. Using themes created intrigue in the community and encouraged people to attend, the events were fun and current to the time of year, for example; Halloween or Christmas. Once the community we're at the event it meant we were able to then engage with them around some of the data and themes of the Act Early Project in a less formal and more creative way. If we'd have hosted events that were advertised as 'data driven' events I don't think we wouldn't have attracted as many community members. The use of fancy dress for staff and volunteers helped break down barriers when having conversations with the community members. It helped them to feel more at ease and disarmed to share their experiences and opinions. It also helped distinguish who was staff or volunteers of the event and who were participants.

## **Research Fellow to be part of activities**

Having an Act Early research fellow to be part of the planning and execution of activities has been invaluable, however this wasn't something that was planned with the community engagement activities. As a community based organisation our expertise is in the community in which we work, not in the practices of research and data. So delivering focus groups, designing surveys and other data driven activities in a non biased, ethical way does not fall into our experiences and expertise. We have been lucky enough to have the support of an Act Early research fellow who has co designed and supported on delivery of most of the activities but this is in addition to his existing role, he did this to help rather than because it was his responsibility to do so. Having the expertise of this research fellow has meant all the activities we have delivered have been done with the correct methodology.





## Local organisations are vital

When working with a new community having a local partner who is well established within the area will help to forge local connections and help to gain a greater understanding of the needs of the community and what assets already exist. Building connections and trust with local communities and organisations take a significant amount of time so working with a non statutory, embedded, grass root organisations is key as these are the people who are working on ground and have the trust of the community and know them best.

## Demographics

All participants engaged with were White British

Total number of people engaged	189
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Age	Number
Under 16	22
16-24	42
25-30	37
31-40	48
41-50	21
50+	19

Male	Female	Non Binary
38	140	11

## Future Plans

There are 3 more upcoming themed community events planned that will build on the activities funded by Bradford for Everyone. These include:

- January 2022 - residents will be invited to participate in focus group-style discussions and begin thinking about what specific change recommendations will be made for Holmewood related to the ActEarly: Holmewood priority areas. From this meal, final recommendations will be formed to include in a "community cookbook." Similar to a traditional food recipe, each recommendation will



have ingredients, time involved and the steps needed to achieve the change. The cookbook will be used as a way to communicate the community wants and needs with policymakers

- February 2022 - Policy makers will be invited to an event for the community engagement team to share with policy makers from Bradford/Holmewood what the community recommends through the community cookbook. This will be an opportunity for policy makers to give feedback and make pledges to the community that can be fed back.
- March 2022 - one final event will occur, this time with the policymakers and the community. This will act as an accountability event, in which policy makers will report back on further thoughts and reflections from the previous event and share with the community what has been done/will be done. This will also be an opportunity for the community to reflect on the process.

As of yet there is no further funding secured to continue building on this work post March 2022 but the hope is we will continue to be funded as key stakeholders see the importance of this work and the momentum that has been created. We want to keep hearing the voice of the community and ensure this is central to the Act Early programme and beyond. We also hope to further support our community volunteers to be the leaders within their community and equip them with tools that can help them to feel empowered to make positive changes.

We anticipate that the entire Holmewood process - identifying priority areas, analysing data, engaging locals with the data, forming recommendations and the steps needed to achieve these can be replicated again in Holmewood to address additional priority areas but also elsewhere in Bradford and the UK, using a place-based approach that can be adapted to local circumstances.

This project has been a collaborative effort from a variety of different people and organisations, the community is made up of many people and has so many different facets and complexities to it and this project is reflective of that.

A special thanks to:

- Bradford for Everyone for funding the first 12 months of this community engagement programme.
- Act Early research fellow Shahid Islam for continuous support and involvement in the community engagement activities.
- The Alan Turing Trust for funding the secondary part of this project
- Bradford 2025 and The LEAP for funding the community cookbook to help demonstrate to policy makers the recipes for community development.

***“There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about.”  
Margaret J. Wheatley***

