

Redbridge Community Hubs Programme

Insights and Learning 2021-2022

The **Community Hubs programme** is an exciting initiative from Redbridge Council working with residents and partners to improve people's lives by bringing communities together, improve the quality and accessibility of services, and meet local need.

The Hubs will bring together different services across the borough such as libraries, children's services and GPs, and provide a place where residents can come together and run activities.

The Programme aims to deliver five new purpose-built **Community Hubs**, and a central **Civic Hub** in Ilford.

The Programme contributes to three strategic aims of the Council:

- 1. To change the relationship between local people and the council*
- 2. To improve access to high-quality, integrated services and support*
- 3. To maximise the impact of the borough's resources*

Local people in Redbridge sustain a thriving faith, voluntary and community sector, supporting each other, meeting needs and creating togetherness.

As a council, we can do more to enable and empower people who have something to offer their community, and make it easier to collaborate in providing the services and support they need.

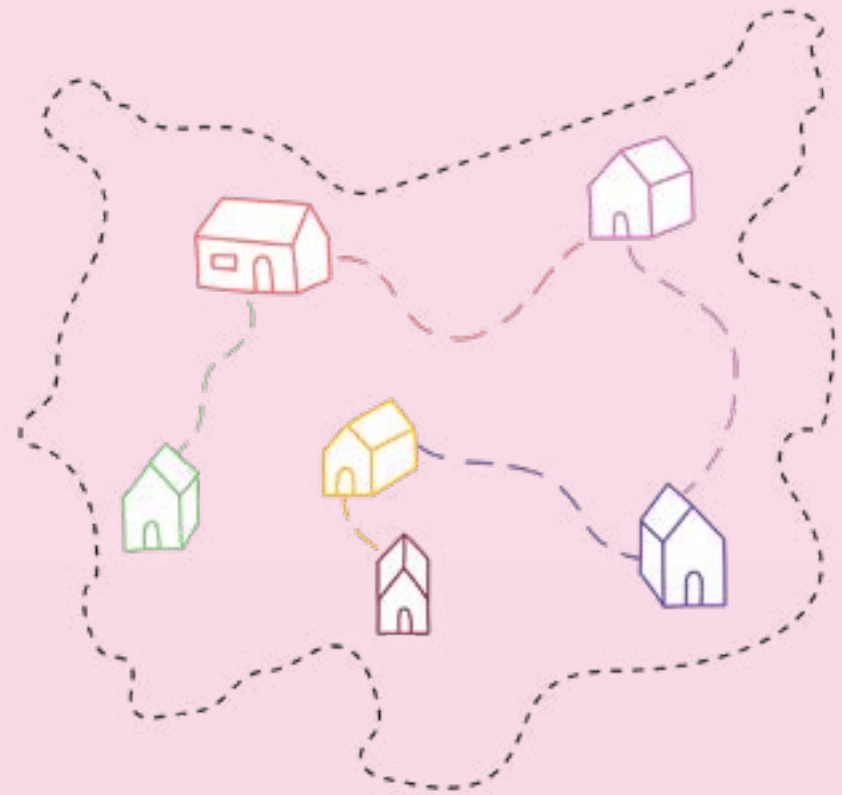
By doing this, we aim to improve outcomes for residents, by making the most of Redbridge's assets and strengths.

The purpose of the Hubs programme **approach** is to support people who live and work in Redbridge to **collaborate** and build **trusting relationships** with each other.

Why is collaboration important?

The challenges that Redbridge Council, partners and local people want to work on together - improving outcomes for local people, and making Redbridge a safer, cleaner, greener, healthier and fairer home for everyone - are all complex. This means:

- We can't be certain what will work in our local context, so we need to learn about Redbridge with those who know it well, and try things out together
- We can't be certain that our perspective on what works and what's important is shared by others in the local area, so we need to help everyone to learn about each other's view of the world so we can work together
- We can't be certain that what worked yesterday will work tomorrow, so we need to keep learning and working together as a continuous process.



What we've achieved so far:

In 2018, Redbridge Cabinet approved a proposal to create 5 community hubs and a Civic Hub. During 2019, initial engagement established a priorities for the Gants Hill site, and an outline design of the Seven Kings Hub. This supported Cabinet, in September 2019, to determine which services will be delivered from the hubs, and conversations with other services and partners began. At the end of 2020, the Community Hubs team was formed, providing the capacity to work locally in three hub areas simultaneously: Seven Kings, Gants Hill and Hainault. Since this team has been in place, we have:

- Completed a detailed co-design process for the Seven Kings Hub building, through a combination of in-depth workshops and broader engagement with local residents
- Developed a proposed model for Seven Kings Hub, including governance, management and operational approach, approved by Cabinet in February 2020
- Run listening campaigns, engaging 230 local people in more than 100 hours of conversation about their experience of living in Seven Kings, Gants Hill or Hainault
- Developed and delivered community events, projects and activities in each hub area, in collaboration with local partners, talking with people about the changes they would like to see in their area
- Created area profiles and asset and stakeholder maps, bringing together data from national and local sources to deepen our shared understanding of each hub area
- Produced a theory of change and learning approach for the programme, co-developed with colleagues, partners and community groups
- Redesigned and relaunched our programme governance, recruiting resident and voluntary sector representatives to our decision-making boards
- Developed a 'virtual walkthrough' of the Seven Kings Hub, and an accompanying app to collect feedback on the design from local people, council colleagues and other partners
- In March 2022, secured Cabinet approval to progress the development of all three hub buildings, in line with the best practice RIBA stages



Who is involved, and how?

A large number of people across Redbridge want to build greater collaboration and share how we are doing this. We have developed the following structure to harness all of the energy and ideas of our partners, facilitated by the core Hubs team:

- **Area Working Groups:** local people working with the hubs team, colleagues and other organisations in each locality to co-produce and test new ways to support and meet needs, identify insights, enablers and barriers to progress
- **Programme Board:** council, partner, resident and voluntary sector representatives from across Redbridge, working to support and inform key milestones and outputs, identify emerging themes in each hub area, and sharing learning within and outside the council, to encourage wider collaboration
- **Strategic Oversight Board:** senior leaders in the council, alongside resident and voluntary sector representatives, working to unlock barriers identified by the Area Working Groups and Programme Board, to enable new and better ways to collaborate.
- **Cabinet and Members:** providing oversight, accountability and leadership, our Cabinet and elected members play a crucial role in ensuring that the development of each Hub is informed by local needs and priorities, and enriched by the energy and ideas of people living in each hub area



What we've heard - stories & insights from our work with local people and partners

- Helping local people navigate a complex professional system:**
Community-led research in Gants Hill highlighted a concern around litter in the area, and one of the local people involved in the research wanted to start an anti-litter campaign and other activity to support clean public spaces. In the course of trying to kick off this piece of work the community organiser supporting this resident had to speak with and seek permission from dozens of local professionals both inside and outside the Council. The resident and community organiser persisted, and are now beginning community-led activity in this space, although it involved significant set-up time and support to navigate the system.
- Helping professionals navigate the system to meet complex needs:**
We have many outstanding services we can be proud of in the Council, but we also know there is more we can do to be efficient and effective. We have heard from staff across the council who create workarounds to shortcut council bureaucracy to help local people with their bespoke needs. We also hear from others who feel constrained by existing systems and processes, and unable to support local people in the best way they can.
- Letting local people lead:**
A community gathering event in Seven Kings saw 6 local people present on issues that mattered to them - developing creative community projects, mental health support for parents and young people, reducing violence against women and girls, providing safe spaces for young people, supporting a transition to a more sustainable future, and creating cleaner, more welcoming streets. Building on this momentum, one of the presenters has now established a regular 'community conversation' group to discuss, develop and deliver ideas for change in the area.
- Sharing power and influence with local people**
The Hubs programme has a governance structure which is designed to ensure that the voice of our communities is heard at every level. In early 2022, we recruited a group of 9 resident and voluntary sector representatives to sit on our Programme Board and Strategic Oversight Board. Their insight and perspectives have already supported the Hubs team, our colleagues and partners to develop a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities in developing each Hub, and the ways in which this can support broader changes across the Council and the borough as a whole.

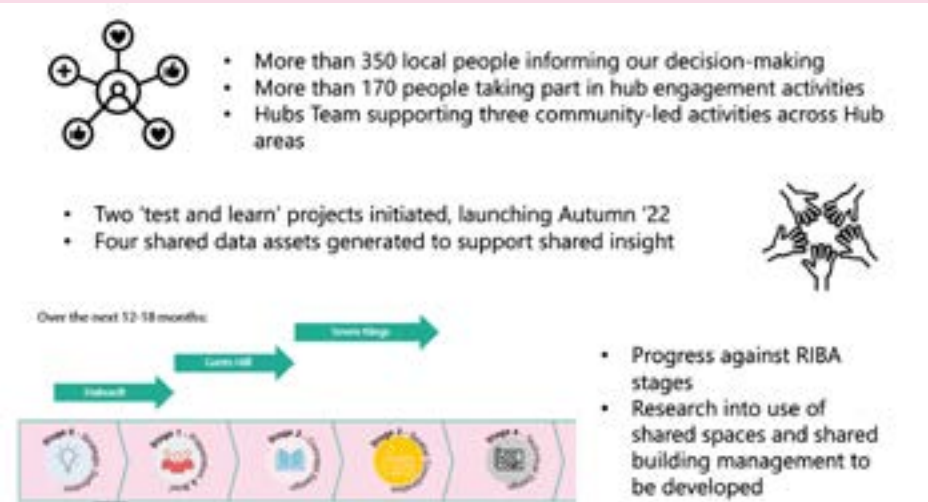


What we've learned:

- Lots of people are interested in the work we're doing, and want to explore different ways of working with the council to solve local problems
- Many people are already taking the lead in their communities in a wide variety of ways, which are often not visible or recognised by the council and other partners
- Local people have highly varied perspectives on what the key issues are in their neighbourhood, but common themes are: encouraging greater connection and togetherness, helping people feel more safe, valuing green spaces, providing spaces and activities for young people, navigating council services, and reducing litter
- Ensuring that designers and architects incorporate feedback from co-design processes into each stage of a building's development requires a very 'hands-on' approach
- Many council staff are interested in exploring new ways of working with local people, but feel constrained and limited by current processes which is frustrating for both staff and the community participants in this work
- The role of senior leaders in the council in providing space for staff to experiment with different and unusual ways of working is critical to the success of this work

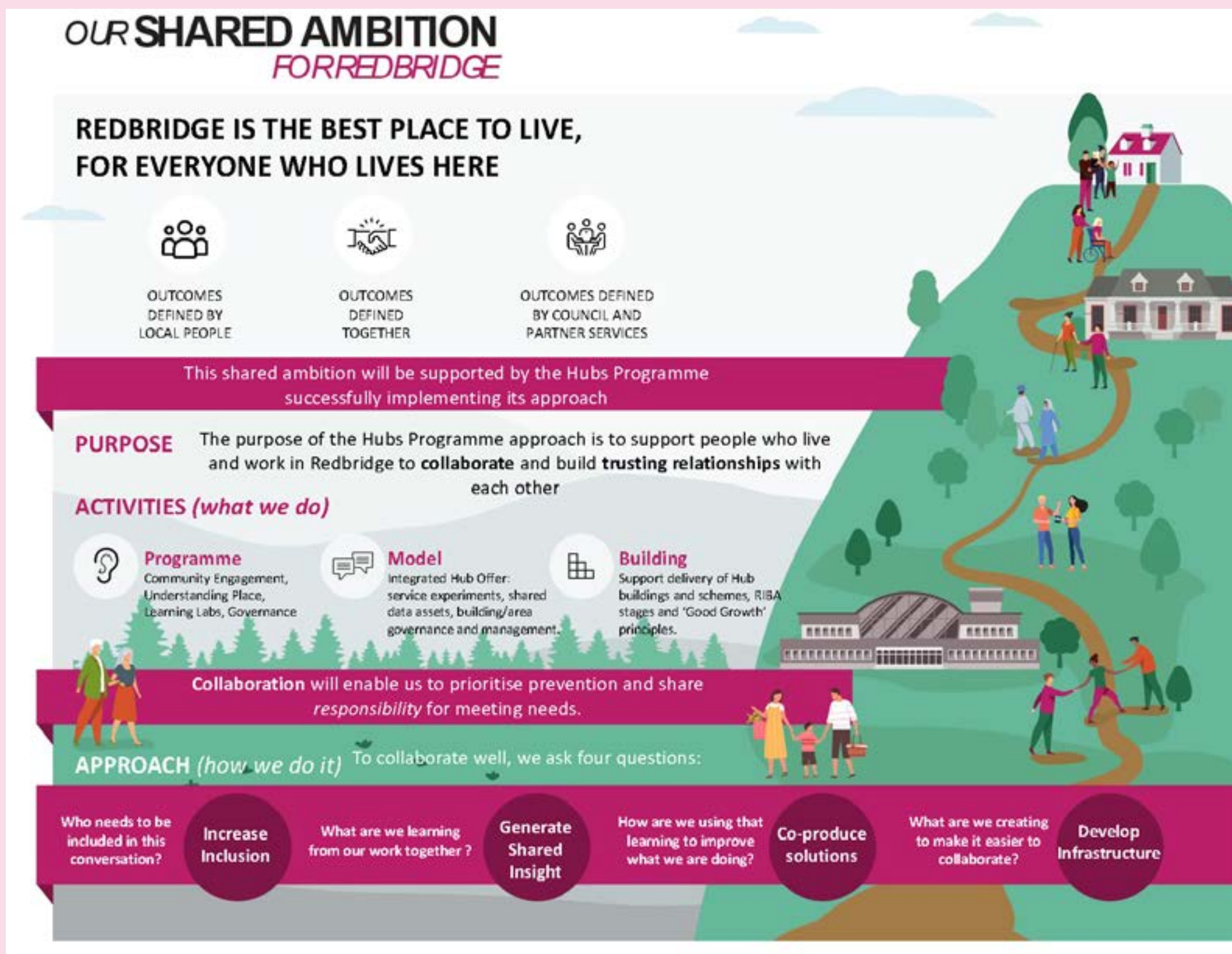
Barriers to experimenting with different types of collaboration include:

- Professionals lack time and space to think about how their roles and work could be improved
- The data we collect on its own doesn't help us to understand complex systems - we need more stories from local people and professionals working on the ground
- Some professional cultures struggle to prioritise and value learning and collaboration
- Local people are often missing from existing collaboration and learning activities, which is further hindered by absence of infrastructure and processes for collaboration
- Senior leaders supporting and modelling collaboration is critical to the cultures that develop in different parts of the council



Our Theory of Change

The change which we can bring about - together - through delivering a set of Community Hubs goes beyond the buildings themselves. Our Theory of Change sets out the key ingredients of collaboration - our 'how' - which are embedded in every aspect of the programme.



What we're doing in 2022-23:

We continue to listen to communities to understand what matters to them, and we'll keep learning how we can collaborate better. We want to focus on these areas:

- In **Seven Kings**, we'll be aiming to finalise building designs, secure planning permission and start construction of the Hub scheme, running 'test and learn' collaborations with council colleagues, partners and local people, and developing a tender to commission a partner to operate the building.
- In **Gants Hill** and **Hainault** we will be developing a community vision with local people, which will inform a co-design process with architects to develop plans for each Hub building, developing full site plans in Gants Hill, and producing a feasibility report and design principles in Hainault.

Across all of our work, we will be asking two questions:

How can we better collaborate with local people, and put substantial power in their hands?
How can the Council's management and leadership best support collaboration?

If you live or work in Redbridge, we want to collaborate and learn with you.

To find out more about the Hubs Programme, and how you can get involved, please visit [this page](#) or email the Hubs Team: hubs@redbridge.gov.uk

