



NEW REALITIES

**A 'CAN-DO' COLLABORATIVE
AGREEMENT BETWEEN SEFTON
COUNCIL & SEFTON'S VOLUNTARY,
COMMUNITY & FAITH SECTOR**

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND LOCAL
COMMUNITIES ARE CHANGING**

**"AT THE HEART OF THE CHANGES THAT ARE UNDER WAY
IS A 'RE-IMAGINING' OF LOCAL RELATIONSHIPS, WITHIN
WHICH THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW, BETTER, MORE
EQUAL AND PRODUCTIVE PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN
LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES IS KEY"**

CLLR. TRISH HARDY, CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES & HOUSING, SEFTON MBC

2021
EDITION

Sefton Council 

 **Sefton CVS**

NEW REALITIES IN A COLLABORATION BETWEEN SEFTON COUNCIL &
SEFTON COUNCIL FOR VOLUNTARY SERVICE (CVS) REGISTERED CHARITY NO. 1024546.
REGISTERED IN ENGLAND, COMPANY LTD. BY GUARANTEE NO. 2832920.



INTRODUCTION

We recognise that as the needs of Sefton's communities change overtime we must adapt and continuously improve the way we work together, in order to facilitate changes which have a positive, lasting impact on the lives and wellbeing of local people.

To help achieve this, since 2015, we have established an operational framework that strengthens working relationships between the local authority and the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector. This meant that, during 2020, as Sefton experienced the impact of Covid-19 locally, we were well placed to respond and mitigate the effects.

The 'new normal' has yet to be fully understood, but one certainty is that we must continue to work together, strengthening our new ways of working and networks across organisations as we move towards recovery and life beyond lockdown.

Sefton as a Borough is also moving to become part of an Integrated Care System (ICS), bringing together local health and care organisations and councils to re-design care and improve population health, the scene is set for even stronger partnership working with joint objectives and shared campaigns and resources.

THE VISION

Our overall aim is to help to make Sefton a great place to be and to improve the health and wellbeing of everyone in our communities by creating a culture which stimulates and encourages innovation. This enabling culture will be supported by:

- **Systems** - developing constructive ways to improve systems and procedures, to remove barriers and improve consistency to reflect the needs of our communities

- **Relationships** - developing measures that challenge negative / deficit attitudes, which often underpin procedural barriers, and developing measures that promote positive and constructive partnerships. That challenge negative/deficit attitudes that often underpin procedural barriers.
- **Collaboration** and co-produced solutions must become the norm and the added social value they bring must be recognised. This must become a shared approach.
- **Expectations** – communicating and planning together more effectively will enable us to develop realistic and informed expectations for the future. The Voluntary, Community and Faith sector offer vital, local support and services but cannot always be expected to 'pick up the pieces', and communities need to recognise that it is not 'business as usual' for local authorities.
- **Creative solutions** - the ways in which we combine and adapt existing approaches will have to be imaginative and ingenious. Promoting a culture of creativity, social innovation and identifying what creative solutions look like in practice will be a priority
- **Sharing** – the assets unique to our own organisations or areas of work, such as; skills, sharing, expertise, costs, learning. We also share a vision, respect for each other's organisation and success.
- **Adapting** – quickly to unanticipated threats and redesigning how we operate in order to focus priorities to where they most needed and have the biggest impact in Sefton. Public support for each other's roles when tackling common issues.



WHY ARE WE DOING THIS?

Our motivations remain the same as they were since we first launched New Realities in 2015.

Because...

- **It is crucial we make the most of ALL available resources.** Not losing sight of this as the ultimate aim is vital.
- **The role of the local authority is changing** in its nature, form and function and we recognise the dramatic impact this is having in communities. In addition, the local health economy is transforming, as it moves towards delivering an integrated model of care and adopts new ways of working.
- **Resources are scarce...** meaning we need to pool resources and think differently about how they are utilised, demands better ways of working together strategically and operationally.
- **Creative solutions are needed.** The core assumptions underpinning the 'status quo' have been challenged and the changes that we all face are sweeping. If we are to make a difference in our communities, we need solutions that reflect the growing importance of collaboration and partnership, and challenge practices that prevent this from happening.
- **Being involved is important** - recognising the changing realities and possibilities in local communities, improving involvement by communities, including local leadership through joint design and delivery of local services.
- **...And yet there are untapped assets in all of our communities.** At times of resource scarcity, identifying untapped assets is critical – the buildings, networks, 'below the radar' services and support, the finances, skills, energy and the goodwill. These assets must be recognised and more effectively mobilised in the years ahead to strengthen our communities and neighbourhoods.
- **More resilient communities** will be needed in the years ahead. Communities will need to be capable of organising, mobilising and responding to the long term changes that are now under way. All partners must come together to enable this to happen.



NEW REALITIES PRINCIPLES

- **Common purpose** – if changes are to be constructive and enduring, the way forward must involve the strengthening of goodwill and trust between all parties in pursuit of common goals.
- **Solutions focused** – if change is to be effective, all parties must be focused on the development of collective solutions as the starting point for working and interacting – a ‘can do’ attitude. We need to establish ‘reasons to do things’ as the norm – rather than ‘reasons why we can’t’.
- **Mutual respect** – relationships and roles are changing; the importance of demonstrating mutual respect, acknowledging the contributions made by all parties and recognising the need to adapt and change together underpins our approach.
- **Risk ‘aware’** – A shift is needed within the local authorities away from a norm that is ‘risk averse’, to one in which risks are identified, analysed and managed in partnership with communities. Moving from ‘Gatekeeper’ to ‘Facilitator’ cannot happen without this shift.
- **Support an inclusive Sefton** - diversity, equality and being a place of welcome and opportunity underpins the social and economic fabric of our borough, where all individuals with protected characteristics are able to thrive free from discrimination and inequality.

ACTIONS

- Local authority and the Voluntary, Community and Faith sector **meeting regularly** to measure how far the local authority has changed and moved towards an enabling culture as a 2 year goal.
- **Use of case studies** – how do you highlight what effective partnership working might look like and how do you disseminate this for impact? Recognising that good practice exists all around us – capturing examples of this so that people can see what ‘success’ looks like as well as highlighting challenges that remain.
- **What if...** would asking the question ‘what if it had been done differently’ be a useful method for addressing problems or system failures? What might ‘differently’ look like?
- **Collaborative Learning Programme** working with all parties – ‘changing together’. This will provide learning for both good and poor practice and will include local authority officers, the Voluntary, Community and Faith sector and elected members. This will be linked to annual events to review progress and celebrate success.
- **Solutions Framework** – establishing mechanisms through which system failures or cultural blockages may be challenged and dealt with quickly and effectively to produce constructive outcomes as well as providing important lessons for all involved.



MEASURES OF SUCCESS

Outcome 1: Increased investment in the Sefton economy.

- Successful joint investment programmes that access external funding, based on
 - Pooling of knowledge and skills – models and impact.
 - Use of other funds to bring in additional investment.
- Employment opportunities for local people in the Sefton economy arising from improved collaborative working.

Outcome 2: An engaged community working effectively in partnership.

- Collaboration in action - combining the human, social, technical and financial resources of the local authority and communities to produce tangible, beneficial outcomes, for example;
 - Repurposing resources, for example, bring a redundant building or space back into use.
 - Delivery of joint events or actions making a difference at a local level e.g. activities to improve community spirit, 'fun days' or seasonal events, actions to restore community pride, such as litter picks, 'grotspot' clean ups, planting and renovation.
 - Develop a new facilities.
 - Launch a service that is jointly managed and delivered (public/VCF partnership)
 - Embark on a new way of working – co-location, shared services and co-design, such as provider collaboratives and consortia.

- Effective and timely solutions are achieved when 'system blockages' are identified, for example;
 - Issues identified quickly and acknowledged.
 - Steps taken to address.
 - Resolution and positive outcomes achieved.
 - Learning identified and effectively disseminated.

Outcome 3: Improved health and wellbeing for residents and communities point 1 will this be included elsewhere or in a narrative about building on what works?

- Further development of existing networks and sharing of good practice.
- Evidence of improved referral and signposting between community, statutory and other services.
- Evidence of improved, ongoing joint planning and resource allocation at local levels.
- Common endeavour - effective, combined planning and action to address specific issue or event, for example; winter, emergency, flood, covid19
- Respond jointly to unanticipated threats, such as pandemics



THE NEW REALITIES APPROACH

DRIVING COLLABORATIVE CHANGE IN SEFTON

Since its inception in 2015, New Realities has helped to champion collaborative change in Sefton through the following outcomes;

- Established shared values and behaviours which are now embedded within the Professional Development Reviews (PDR's) of Sefton Council staff, resulting in the New Realities ways of working in day to day practice.
- Embedded the New Realities approach into the recruitment and induction process including Councillor's Induction Programmes, which ensures a consistent leadership and governance process across the Council.
- Over 1,400 staff from VCF sector, Department of Work and Pensions, Council and Health and Elected Members trained in Making Every Contact Count (MECC) in 2018/19.
- Participating in this training enables those trained to better engage with local people in conversations about improving their health and wellbeing.
- Improved access to shared Training and Workforce Development opportunities with over 7,627 staff taking up opportunities in the last three years.
- With funding from Barrow Cadbury Trust, Sefton CVS led an intensive capacity building programme for CEO's looking to improve skills, knowledge and access to social investors informed by Sefton Council commissioner priorities.

The impact is that 66% of those organisations are now making applications to investors for project and business ideas.

- Over the last four years, the introduction of a 'New Realities' awards for Sefton MBC staff at the Annual Council Awards (STAR Awards), enables VCF sector organisations to nominate those Council staff who have demonstrated the New Realities approach in their practice.
- By linking the Communications Officers between the Council, CVS, the CCG's, and local VCF sector organisations improving social messaging between agencies, celebrating good news and raising awareness of local services to assist our residents.
- An intelligent commissioning approach adopted by Sefton Council enabled a consortium of local VCF Sector providers through Sefton CVS, as a Lead Contract holder, to come together. This resulted in the creation of Living Well Sefton, a community-based Public Health Programme which adopted common referral pathways, IT and workforce development, with a programme of community grants to meet needs and start up new health and wellbeing initiatives.
- New Realities is embedded within all formal Council papers requiring New Realities principles to be considered in all Council decisions.
- The New Realities approach has been nationally recognised for partnership working through Compact Voice, NHS Health Education England and National Housing Federation Community Impact Awards.



THE NEW REALITIES APPROACH CONT.

- Sefton Council invited expressions of interest from VCF sector organisations to re-imagine usage of redundant buildings leading to the development of new and improved facilities in local community settings. These include the SWAN Centre, Ykidz Centre and Venus.
- The Council's purchase of the Strand Shopping Centre in Bootle enabled the development of a social highway alongside retail outlets enabling VCF sector organisations such as Bootle Tool Shed, the Veterans in Sefton, Strand By Me, Ykidz, In Another Place and others to provide easier access to services for residents.
- Developed new ways of working across our organisations in response to Covid-19. Staff from all agencies worked together quickly to implement a new process which saw timely referrals into new VCF sector pathways to offer support and signposting to 1,252 residents required to shield and 1,615 residents not required to shield but who needed support.
- Worked together to promote volunteering roles and support the recruitment and placement of volunteers to respond to Covid19 (Sefton Council's community response offer, and the local CCG's Testing and Vaccination sites)
- At the start of lockdown during March 2020, we streamlined our communications across organisations webpages to make sure messages were clear and consistent so that people could access a wide range of local, regional and national information.
- Engaged with VS6 who are providing the VCF sector conduit through to the Metro Mayor, LEP and Combined Authority. Engagement with the Social Justice Advisory Panel, Social Solidarity Panel and actively engaged and supported the LCR Build Back Better submission to central govt.
- VCF sector groups participated in VS6 assemblies sharing intelligence, practice and recommendations focused on the themes of Children and Young people, Vulnerable Shielded and Carers, Mental Health and two events in relations to Equalities Both Covid-19 response and recovery.

NEW REALITIES **CREATIVE SOLUTIONS**
EXPECTATIONS
RELATIONSHIPS
COLLABORATION

CASE STUDIES - NEW REALITIES IN ACTION

CASE STUDY 1: ASYLUM SEEKERS AND COVID-19

THE CHALLENGE

At the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Home Office and Serco, arranged for 127 asylum seekers to be housed in the Scarisbrick Hotel in Southport whilst they awaited the outcome of asylum applications or appeals. This was an unprecedented arrangement locally which was made more complex given the impact of Covid-19.

Some of the challenges that presented were;

- Language barriers, particularly regarding communicating key information relating to covid-19
- The local healthcare system responding to an influx of demand and needing to navigate cultural sensitivities
- Concerns being raised by members of the public regarding the suitability of the accommodation and the basic needs of the residents being met
- Incidents of racial hatred.



THE RESPONSE

NHS Sefton Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG's) invited Sefton Council and local VCF sector partners, notably Sefton CVS, to work together, with Serco, in order to ensure the asylum seekers were registered with local GP services and any additional needs were met and address some of the presenting issues. Regular meetings were arranged and all partners attended to consider what support/actions could be taken to assist seekers during their stay in Southport.

Examples of actions undertaken which demonstrate the collaborative and innovative values of the New Realities approach include:

- The group became aware that national communications around covid had been sent out in plain English and not in the language of choice which meant many of the residents in the hotel were at risk of being ill informed around covid messaging. The VCF had already worked with the CCG around the NHS England shielding letter that had similarly been sent out in plain English which was brought to the attention of all Sefton GP services with BAME and other patients being contacted regarding the shielding information. This resulted in all CCG's in the Liverpool City Region, following Sefton's approach.

This outcome was replicated by the partners working together to compile Information around COVID for the residents in the hotel and subsequent information regarding the vaccine programme.

- Residents were supported to register with local GP Practices in order to access healthcare services. GP Practices were provided with information about cultural sensitivities which were presenting, alongside direct work with the asylum seekers to increase understanding of

how primary care worked in England and explain basic protocols which should be followed. This approach was welcomed by the GPs and resulted in a more efficient and calmer interaction with primary care services for all involved.

- The Sefton district of the British Red Cross and local church leaders/community groups though not members of the partnership group provided a much needed drop-in facility which enabled asylum seekers to obtain items such as clothing and toiletries, as well information about getting to know the local area.
- Following an incident at the hotel where far right members briefly entered the hotel and began taking photographs and asking questions of residents, it was discovered that the event had not been recorded by the local Community Safety Partnership as a Hate Crime. This was raised by the VCF sector group at the Sefton hate crime joint action group (JAG) resulting with the incident being recorded correctly. Moving forward members of the JAG partnership are to deliver additional training to ensure services are fully aware of what constitutes a hate incident, that will hopefully improve the situation for all involved, the asylum seekers themselves, and the wider BAME community across the Liverpool City Region.
- The Serco lead on the partnership emailed the partnership thanking all those involved CCG and VCF members for their support throughout period the asylum seekers were in the hotel and to work with all involved again.

CASE STUDIES - NEW REALITIES IN ACTION

CASE STUDY 2: ALLEYWAY IMPROVEMENT

THE CHALLENGE

During lockdown local residents of Rufford Road in Bootle realised how much potential there was to create a usable outdoor space in the alleyway which ran to the rear of their properties.

The alleyway was had become overgrown with weeds and was filled with rubbish, as well as abandoned white goods and unwanted household appliance

Local residents contacted Sefton Council about making improvements to the alleyway. Neighbourhood teams in the Council supported with cleansing, removal of all rubbish and helped with the clean-up. Ward Councillors supported with £500 towards plants and planters.



Image: Liverpool Echo

THE RESPONSE

Local residents worked together to clean up the alleyways and make an inviting space. The area has now been decorated with bunting and garlands along with flower pots, hanging baskets and planters to grow small fruits and herbs.

The alleyway is now an inviting safe space for residents, neighbours can socialise and it is a safe space for children.

The approach demonstrates how local residents, not only have the ability to directly improve their local areas, but the way in which it is achieved, by working together and sharing resources, also strengthens community cohesion and connectivity, as residents work towards a shared goal and benefit from the creation of a space to socialise and connect.



Image: Liverpool Echo

CASE STUDIES - NEW REALITIES IN ACTION

CASE STUDY 3: LIVING WELL SEFTON COMMUNITY RESILIENCE GRANTS

BACKGROUND

Living Well Sefton is a wellbeing organisation with a focus on supporting people with matters that may be affecting their health and wellbeing. Funded through Sefton Council’s Public Health Team. It is a collaboration of various Sefton organisations which have the expertise and knowledge to help people reach realistic lifestyle goals. This supports the New Realities approach of working together, sharing knowledge, resources and recognising the unique benefits each partner brings in order to improve the lives of people in Sefton.

Funded via Sefton Council, Community Resilience Grants were made available to community groups as a way of increasing wellbeing for their local areas. During the pandemic there were two rounds of funding in which 28 groups received a share of £44,000 to deliver projects to improve wellbeing.

Many of them had to adapt the original way the project was to be delivered due to ongoing changes to restrictions or lockdowns being introduced. Overall, Sefton’s communities were helped to remain strong and resilient in the face of Covid-19’s impact. The approach demonstrates how large organisations can encourage innovation by funding smaller organisations to deliver activities within their local communities.

[Read more about the case study here...](#)

GRANT FUNDING DISTRIBUTED

Two Scout Groups received **£2,996** to run ambitious camping projects designed to instil environmentally sustainable ways of living and teach valuable life skills.

Big Love Sista received **£2,000** which specialises in arts-in-health projects, overcame the coronavirus obstacles by developing on-line resources that local residents could access.

Tyred Rides received **£2,000** to run workshop for young people around bicycle restoration and maintenance.

Inclusion Network received **£855** to run a their project 'Get Out, Get Active' was for young people in Bootle to meet up on a Saturday and get walking whilst improving mental wellbeing and tackling social isolation along the way.

Galloways Society for the Blind received **£800** to run their 'A Brush of Fresh Air, workshop to improve the health and wellbeing of blind and partially sighted people by giving them the chance to create artwork outside with natural materials.



CASE STUDY 4: YKIDS & ORRELL LIBRARY

In 2014, Bootle-based charity YKids submitted an expression of interest to Sefton MBC for the acquisition of the Orrell Library site, which was scheduled for closure. Ykids discussed options of acquiring the building with Sefton MBC, who committed to helping YKids, adopting a New Realities approach to overcome barriers.

The initial agreement issued for the building through Sefton Council's legal department proposed a rental cost of £1 a year for the first 5 years, followed by full rent after 5 years – which was an unrealistic request, especially as the original tender had stated 25 year commitment. Following further discussions with Sefton MBC, it was accepted this was wrong approach, as YKids would be unable to access external funds without a longer commitment. YKids then secured a long term lease for 25 years at £1 a year.

In early 2018, YKids announced the official launch of the new site and the change in premises enabled the charity to install a state-of-the-art creative kitchen space and expand their services.

CASE STUDY 5: THE SWAN CENTRE & LITHERLAND LIBRARY

In February 2015, The SWAN Centre contacted Sefton MBC to enquire about the Litherland Library site located on the corner of Linacre Road and Bridge Road as a possible new premises for the charity. This went through a tendering process, with The SWAN centre successful in acquisition.

A challenging refurbishment programme proceeded, with the charity receiving support from the council, The SWAN Centre officially opened the new site in May 2017 and this securing a safe and accessible location for the charity and it's clients. Since 2017, the transformation has allowed for the development of new services and improved community access, enhancing the future sustainability of The Swan Centre and the offer available to women to achieve mental wellbeing.



CASE STUDIES - NEW REALITIES IN ACTION

CASE STUDY 6: RESPONSE TO COVID-19 IN SEFTON

THE CHALLENGE

As Sefton experienced the impact of Covid-19 locally and the first national lockdown was announced, our incredible voluntary, community and faith sector came together, with Sefton Council and NHS Sefton Clinical Commissioning groups to identify residents who were particularly vulnerable to the threat of the pandemic.

In particular, concentration turned to residents who had been advised by the government that they needed to shield for 12 weeks, as well as those residents who weren't clinically required to shield, yet nonetheless had other vulnerabilities which resulted in the need for extra help and support.

[Read more about the COVID-19 Support Pathways](#)

THE OUTCOMES

- 2867** residents assisted with activities such as; shopping, collecting medication and social contact.
- 632** residents were provided with shopping services and a total of **5705 shops** were completed across all partners.
- 120** Active volunteers per week were supporting clients during the peak of the pandemic.

In addition to practical support, wellness checks were conducted with residents. Subsequently, volunteers were identified and supported to keep regular contact with those clients feeling isolated to offer support and companionship over the phone.

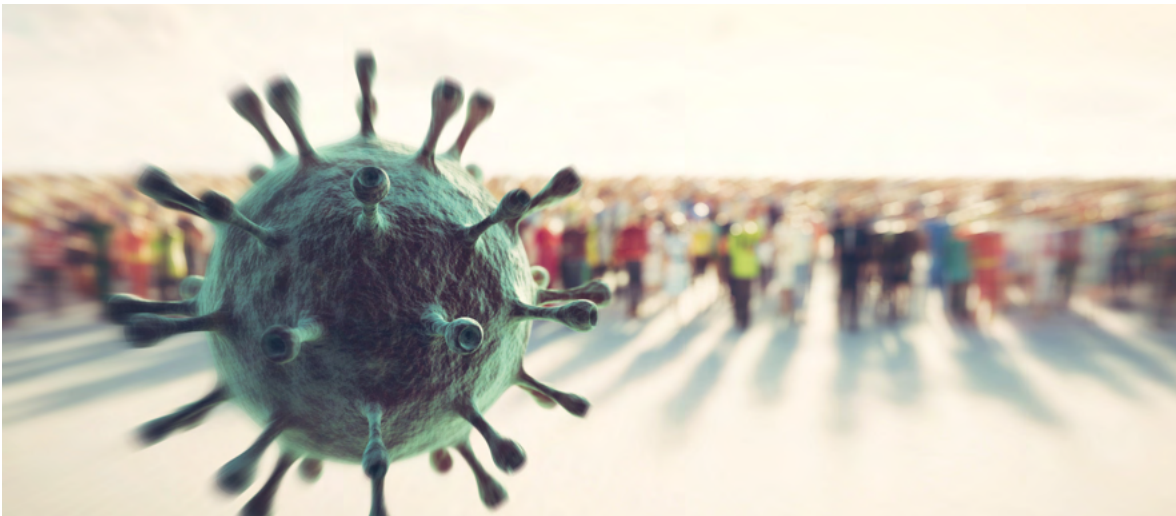
THE RESPONSE

Residents who had been advised by the government that they needed to shield for 12 weeks were contacted by Sefton Council to identify what their needs were regarding social contact, food and medication. Supported by a family of local voluntary and community sector groups and organisations, Living Well Sefton triaged the enquiries, then forwarded to Sefton CVS whereby Living Well Mentors, local Social Prescribing Link Workers and the Community Connectors, provided ongoing assistance which was supported by a dedicated team of local volunteers. The service offered a response within 4 days For others in need of help and support, but who were not on the shielded extremely vulnerable list, a referral pathway was established to advise people they could access information and help by calling the Council's Contact Centre or by completing an online form.

The Council's Contact Centre then shared the information Sefton CVS , following which the referral was triaged and people were connected with appropriate support which met their needs. Support included signposting people into various localised offers across our borough, so residents received a localised response where possible. The service offered a response within 3 days.

National support for shielded residents was withdrawn from 1st August 2020; the partnership of VCF groups worked in partnership with Sefton Council to identify those residents who would require ongoing support. There were 64 individuals identified by Sefton Council, of which only 25 were not known to VCF partners. Contact was made with these individuals in order to determine level of need and appropriate referrals to partner organisations. The main request was for ongoing telephone befriending or support to reduce isolation. The VCF organisations remained on standby to work with the Council should shielding be reintroduced nationally.

[Watch the COVID-19 Response video here](#)





ACTIONS AND VISION FOR 2020 - 2025

- Under take a **full refresh of the New Realities** way of working and focus on ensuring the approach is discussed at relevant Senior Leadership Teams.
- Encourage other Public Partners to **adopt the New Realities approach** both Strategically and Operationally.
- Sefton 2030 Vision - Identify the **key priorities** in which the New Realities approach can achieve positive outcomes.
- Continue to **extend workforce development opportunities** through shared investment programmes, improved access & encourage new initiatives.
- **Two-way shadowing programme** between local authority and VCF sector.
- Identify 2 areas of work for **impact and critique**. Aspire to invest in Common Leadership programmes between Sectors.
- Aspire to the **principles and values of the 21st century Public Servant**;
 - Benevolence
 - Predictability
 - Ability
 - Integrity
- **Climate Change in Sefton**. By working in partnership with Sefton MBC and in line with their motion to be a 'net-zero' local authority by 2030, we will seek to encourage a common approach within the sector by sharing best practice and future learning.
- **Develop a Toolkit and Training** to both promote and establish 'A New Realities Approach' across the partnership.

[More information here](#)