



Co-operative Councils

Innovation Network



Cooperative Case Studies

2024



Cooperative solutions in local government

How the CCIN and Cooperative Councils are addressing
the challenges in our communities

Download: bit.ly/CCIN-projects

“Today, in the face of the cost-of-living crisis and the financial challenges facing the public sector, our collective work is crucial. Together, we must continue reclaiming the traditions of community action, community engagement, and civic empowerment that can transform communities. It has always been the purpose of the Network to share our developing good practice and to support one another in our cooperative aims and values.”



Councillor Louise Gittins

Chair of the Cooperative Councils' Innovation Network
Leader of Cheshire West & Chester Council



It is one of the most challenging periods in local government history. Public Sector funding continues to decline and councils are having to look for innovative ways of providing services with reducing budgets. The Cooperative Councils' Innovation Network (CCIN) was borne out of this uncertainty – a direct public sector response to delivering services differently, using the cooperative values and principles of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity.

These Case Studies demonstrate some of the many ways that Cooperative Councils are working with local people to build strong and resilient neighbourhoods. See more at councils.coop/case-studies.

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Member Benefits





Co-operative Councils

Innovation Network



The Cooperative Councils' Innovation Network comprises more than 140 councils, organisations and supporters from across the UK who are committed to finding better ways of working for, and with, local people for the benefit of their local community.

The Network is a non-party-political active hub for cooperative policy development, innovation and advocacy which is:

- Action-focused: a vehicle for helping councils translate cooperative policy and principles into practice
- Membership-based: funded by modest membership subscriptions from its member councils
- Open to all UK councils: members share the belief that working cooperatively with communities holds the key to tackling today's challenges
- Part of the local government family: the network is a Special Interest Group registered with the Local Government Association where we work to promote innovation in local government.

The **Cooperative Approach** to Public Service

Council policy is informed by experience and practice, drawing on, influencing, and framing national and international policy and political debates about the future of public services, local democracy, and communities across the country. It has enormous potential for sharing its approach elsewhere in the UK and overseas. Our work recognises the need to define a new model for local government built on civic leadership, with councils working in equal partnership with local people to shape and strengthen communities; replacing traditional models of top-down governance and service delivery with local leadership, genuine cooperation, built on the founding traditions of the cooperative movement: collective action, cooperation, empowerment, and enterprise.

The cooperative business model allows people and communities to meet their needs and aspirations, offering a unique answer to contemporary problems. The model is a proven self-help model.

Cooperative enterprises play a significant role in driving our economy, showing resilience in tough economic times by creating jobs, adapting to social change, and continuing growth and success.



councils.coop

 **Member**
Co-operative Councils
Innovation Network

- Adur Council
- Barking & Dagenham Council ●●●
- Birmingham City Council ●●●
- Brent Council ●●●
- Bury Council ●●
- Cardiff Council ●●
- Cheshire West & Chester Council ●●●
- Darlington Council ●
- Glasgow City Council ●
- Greater Manchester Combined Authority ●●
- Royal Borough of Greenwich ●●●●
- Hackney Council ●●●
- Hounslow Council ●●●
- Hull City Council
- Inverclyde Council ●
- Kirklees Council ●●
- Knowsley Council ●
- Lewes District Council
- Lewisham Council ●●
- Liverpool City Council ●●
- Manchester City Council ●●
- Milton Keynes City Council ●●
- Newcastle City Council ●●●
- Newham Council ●●
- North Hertfordshire District Council ●
- Oldham Council ●●●
- Oxford City Council ●●●
- Oxfordshire County Council ●
- Peterborough City Council
- Plymouth City Council ●
- Preston City Council ●●●
- Rochdale Borough Council ●●
- South Ribble Borough Council ●
- South Tyneside Council ●●
- Stevenage Borough Council ●
- Stroud District Council
- Sunderland City Council ●●●
- Swansea Council ●
- Swindon Borough Council ●
- Tamworth Borough Council
- Tameside Borough Council ●

- Telford and Wrekin Council
- Trafford Council ●●●
- Warrington Borough Council
- Westminster City Council ●●
- Wigan Council ●●

 **Associate Member**
Co-operative Councils
Innovation Network

- Billingham Town Council ●
- Burntwood Town Council
- Central Swindon North Parish Council
- Gloucester Labour Group
- Great Dawley Town Council
- Halewood Town Council ●
- Hillingdon Labour Group
- Kidsgrove Labour Group
- Llanelli Town Council
- Loggerheads Parish Council
- Midcounties Gloucester & Swindon Coop Party Council
- Newcastle-U-Lyme Labour & Co-op Group
- North Warwickshire Labour Group
- Polesworth Parish Council
- Renfrewshire Labour Group
- Seaton Valley Community Council ●
- Shropshire Green Group
- South Swindon Parish Council
- Staffordshire Labour & Co-op Group
- Winsford Town Council ●
- Witney Town Council
- Woughton Community Council ●

 **Affiliate Member**
Co-operative Councils
Innovation Network

- 4OC
- Action Together
- The Active Wellbeing Society ●
- Anthony Collins Solicitors
- Bates Wells ●
- Branding.coop
- C.Co
- Co-operative and Mutual Solutions
- Co-operative Care Colne Valley ●
- Co-operative College

- Co-operative Futures
- Co-operative Heritage Trust
- Co-operatives UK ●●
- Community Broadband Network Ltd
- Constellia ●
- Cooperatives West Midlands
- Crystalisr Co-operative Society Ltd
- Cwmpas ●
- Development.coop
- E3M/SBI
- eCulture Solutions
- Governance International
- Greenwich Cooperative Development Agency ●
- ICS.AI Ltd
- Ideas Alliance
- Innovation Cooperative
- Lambeth GP Food Coop
- LocalGov Drupal
- Locality ●
- Marks Out Of Tenancy
- Midcounties Coop
- Mutual Ventures
- Outlandish ●
- Oxygen Finance
- Peopletoo
- Plinth
- POhWER ●
- Power to Change ●
- Public Service Transformation Academy
- RedQuadrant
- Refernet
- Stir to Action
- Sunbelt Rentals ●
- TechResort
- Two Generations CIC
- Trueman Change
- Unlimited Potential ●●
- Urban Agriculture Consortium

Key:

- Fair Tax Accredited
- Living Wage Employer
- Modern Slavery Charter
- Welsh Gov't's Code of Practice: Ethical Employment in Supply Chains

CCIN Statement of Values and Principles

Our **values** are what we believe in

Whilst not a registered cooperative, the Cooperative Councils' Innovation Network has adopted the Cooperative Values developed by the International Cooperative Alliance.

Cooperatives are based on the values of:

- Self-help
- Self-responsibility
- Democracy
- Equality
- Equity
- Solidarity.

In the tradition of their founders, cooperative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others.

Our **principles** guide the way we and our members put our **values** into action

The Cooperative Councils' Innovation Network endorses the principles of the International Cooperative Alliance:

- Democratic member control.
- Member economic participation.
- Autonomy and independence.
- Education, training and information.
- Cooperation among cooperatives.
- Concern for community.

In acknowledging that Councils are not in themselves registered cooperatives, we and our members have developed principles that have grown from those of the International Cooperative Alliance and are relevant within the context of local government.



The CCIN has developed 10 icons to illustrate these principles which we have included alongside the Case Studies.



Social partnership

We will strengthen the co operative partnership between citizens, communities, enterprises and Councils, based on a shared sense of responsibility for wellbeing and mutual benefit.



Democratic engagement

We will support the active engagement of the full range of residents in decision making and priority setting.



Co-production

We will develop systems that enable citizens to be equal partners in designing and commissioning public services and in determining the use of public resources.



Enterprise and social economy

We will promote community-based approaches to economic development that focus on supporting the creation of jobs, social enterprises and other businesses and providing an environment for cooperative and mutual enterprises to thrive.



Learning

We will capture and 'expand' the experience and learning from individual projects and approaches in order to encourage broader application of cooperative principles within individual member Councils and across the Network.



Maximising social value

We will support the development of a framework and criteria for social value, giving substance to the concept and supporting Councils with the tools to ensure better local social and economic outcomes.



Walking the talk

As a membership organisation we will make this statement of our principles operational by:

- Cooperation among members: Our members work together to help each other implement our values, sharing experiences and learning.
- Openness of membership: Full, Associate and Affiliate Membership is open to any qualifying Council, organisation or individual who shares our values and is committed to putting them into action.
- Co-production of the Network's work: Members help shape the Network's work programme and the content of events and written products.
- Action-focused: The network is a vehicle for helping councils translate cooperative values and principles into policy and practice.
- Membership-based: The network is majority funded by modest membership subscriptions from its member Councils, Associates and Affiliates.
- Non-party-political: Members share the belief that working cooperatively within and across communities holds the key to tackling today's challenges.



Community leadership and a new role for councillors

We will explore ways for councils to act as a platform for helping the community to contribute to local outcomes, and to re-think the role of councillors as community connectors, brokers and leaders.



New models of meeting priority needs

In exploring new ways of meeting the priority needs of our communities we will encourage models, such as cooperatives and mutuals, which give greater influence and voice to staff and users in designing and commissioning public services and in determining the use of public resources.



Innovation

We will embrace innovation in how we work with local communities to drive positive change.

To find out more, visit:
bit.ly/CCIN-Principles

Funded Projects

Each year CCIN Members are encouraged to suggest projects where they can work with other members to find cooperative policy solutions to local government challenges. We are open to all ideas; the more innovative, the better! Find out more about the process here: councils.coop/funded-projects. Here's a taster of those already published:

From Co-operative Councils to Co-operative Places (2017) – Led by Oldham Council. The context for Cooperative Councils has been stark. Massive demand challenges and a climate of fiscal austerity. Big-ticket reform areas in health, education, criminal justice and welfare are re-shaping the landscape they operate. The emergence of devolution and city-regional working as the new vehicle for growth and public service reform within places. And latterly, the Brexit vote illustrates a profound disconnect between some civic institutions and the people they represent and serve. “We know more about what we don’t want than what we do...” It is up to Co-operative Councils to take the intellectual and policy risks required of their strong social ethos.
bit.ly/CCIN-coop-places

Community-Led Housing (2018) – The Housing Commission was led by Croydon Council, with a practical focus on encouraging local authorities to foster cooperative, community-led solutions to the housing crisis.
bit.ly/CCIN-housing

Cooperatives Unleashed: as seen from the Grassroots (2020) – Led by Plymouth City Council, this project was designed to inspire ambition and tenacity – with the people, policy, funders, projects, and business ideas and training – to put wealth directly into communities. The finished product included a report, comprehensive toolkit and supporting documentation.
bit.ly/CCIN-CoopsUnleashed

Beyond Asset Transfer – harnessing community asset transfer to create stronger local communities (2021) – Led by Newcastle City Council and completed by Mutual Ventures. Transferring assets to communities or not-for-profit organisations is not always easy, even when you know it is the right solution. This report seeks to demystify the Asset Transfer process and encourage more councils to be bold in their plans for community assets.
bit.ly/CCIN-Asset-Transfer

Understanding the Digital Divide (2022) – Led by Cheshire West & Chester Council, this practical toolkit helps tackle Digital Poverty and the Digital Divide. The gap between those who can confidently and conveniently go online and those who cannot.
bit.ly/CCIN-digital

Cooperative Approaches to Reaching Net Zero (2022) – Led by Kirklees Council. Reaching Net Zero is the biggest and most crucial shared challenge we face globally and locally. This report and toolkit showcase how Cooperative Councils achieve this and provide resources to rapidly implement approaches most applicable to your places.
bit.ly/CCIN-Net-Zero

The Cooperative Difference in Care (2022) – Compiled by Peopletoo. Our Members’ wide variety of work places a spotlight on how the cooperative principles can be applied to create new and effective ways of working, help support communities, and become part of a solution to the care crisis.
bit.ly/CCIN-care

Community Economic Development Plans (2022) – Led by Birmingham City Council and Cooperative Futures. Community economic development planning (CEDP) is a process of economic development within a specific geographic area to make the economy in that area work well for that community. This report shows the value of Councils working in cooperation with communities to undertake community economic development planning.
bit.ly/CCIN-comm-econ-devt-plans

Cooperation at the Grassroots (2022) – Burntwood Town Council, North Herts District Council, Stevenage Borough Council and Sunderland City Council, worked together throughout the policy lab to demonstrate how cooperative councils can embed neighbourhood working to deliver better outcomes and better value for money, through a cooperative model of organisation and delivery at a local level. This report includes a fabulous set of video case studies.
bit.ly/CCIN-coop-grassroots

Growing an inclusive Cooperative Economy (2022)

– Led by Oxford City Council, this policy lab report captures learning from test-and-learn pilots in Oxford, Stevenage and Torbay on areas such as embedding social value in procurement across anchor organisations; community mapping; financial support; advice and awareness-raising. bit.ly/CCIN-inclusive

Study visit to Mondragon (2022) – The CCIN led a study visit to the Mondragon Corporation in the Basque Country in October 2022. Over two intensive days, 15 delegates underwent an immersive experience visiting their headquarters, industrial and R&D enterprises, and the university campus.

bit.ly/CCIN-Mondragon

Coop Option Training (2023) – Led by Kirklees Council and delivered by Stir to Action – Coop Option Training is designed to increase the knowledge and capacity around alternative business models of the following: Business development workers of local authorities and LEPs; Community development workers; and Social Enterprise Advisors. The training comprises a core module on supporting alternative business models and two optional modules for those wanting a deeper dive.

bit.ly/CCIN-coop-option

This is not a manual on coproduction (2023) – Led by Rochdale Council, this project was an extension of a Policy Prototype undertaken in Rochdale borough which developed a toolkit for community engagement. A group of CCIN councils, affiliates and citizens from the various places, got together to share their practice and experience around Co-production. Through workshops and enquiries, they developed an encyclopaedia of ideas about how local government is and can engage communities in local democracy. The product is a reflection and a set of tools to help those who want to think and act co-operatively when they are making things happen together.

bit.ly/CCIN-Democratising-Policy

Arts and Culture for Social Cohesion (2023) – Led by North Herts District Council, this project aimed to raise the profile of arts and culture events and activities locally. Culture and the arts can be strong drivers of development, social cohesion, and change. At the heart of social cohesion is social inclusion. Communities with low social cohesion often have low involvement or access to civic engagement, economic opportunity, and social participation. Supporting the role of culture is vital to building social cohesion. Culture is essential for avoiding and resolving conflicts. It is an ideal means of communicating across language barriers, empowering people, and facilitating social cohesion, including among refugees, migrants, and host populations. It prevents the marginalisation of people based on their cultural identity, socioeconomic status, age, and other factors.

bit.ly/CCIN-arts-culture

Study Visit to Emilia-Romagna (2024) – The CCIN led a study visit to Emilia-Romagna. The region is known worldwide for its dense network of cooperatives that contribute to 30% of the region’s GDP and involve 2/3rds of the population as members. Cooperatives in Emilia-Romagna are present in most sectors of the economy, including retail, agribusiness, social services, financial services, insurance, and transportation. Learning from other network members is an important benefit of Network membership, and this visit allowed elected members and officers to see first-hand how a cooperative region operates. During the three-day visit, 25 delegates from across the UK met the Presidents of several Italian cooperatives.

bit.ly/CCIN-Emilia-Romagna





Community

Birmingham City Council

Save Birmingham Campaign to Protect Community Places

In September 2023 Birmingham City Council was forced to make a momentous decision. The largest local authority in Europe declared itself unable to balance its budget and issued a Section 114 Notice.

The council's financial crisis is part of the wider pressure on local authorities, through rapidly increasing service demand combined with long-term underfunding and the recent spike in inflation. But it was made worse by mistakes made in Birmingham, resulting in significant potential liabilities for equal pay claims and costs to put right a failed IT system.

The crisis meant that Birmingham had to make savings of £300m over two years. The council also applied for £1.2bn Emergency Financial Support from the government. This comes in the form of "capitalisation" permission, giving the council the ability to sell capital assets and convert the proceeds into revenue funding. This has led to a wholesale review of property assets.

Inevitably, the sheer scale of these cuts will impact on community services and facilities that are vital to local neighbourhoods across the city. In response, the local cooperative movement, spearheaded by Cooperatives West Midlands, established the Save Birmingham campaign.

Bringing together a range of partners, it aims to give residents the ability and resources to protect and improve the community spaces and services they care about. The partnership includes national organisations that are experts in providing advice and support to communities, including Co-operatives UK, Plunkett Foundation, Locality and Power to Change. Local partners include Birmingham Community Matters, Birmingham Voluntary Services Council and Birmingham Open Spaces Forum. Funding has been primarily provided by the local cooperatives and charitable funder Barrow Cadbury Trust, as well as small donations from residents.

Protecting community places

The Localism Act 2011 gives communities the power to have buildings, parks and other venues declared "assets of community value". It also gives them the right to bid for these assets, should they come up for sale.

Within weeks of launching, the Save Birmingham campaign launched an interactive map on its website, to encourage residents to nominate community assets that they care about as a first step to protecting them. This led to thousands of residents nominating around 200 community places right across the city – including libraries and leisure centres, swimming pools and community centres, heritage venues and theatres, parks and open spaces, allotments and playing fields.

As residents have nominated community places, the Save Birmingham campaign has worked with partners including support organisation Birmingham Community Matters, as well as the Neighbourhood Development and Support Unit within Birmingham City Council, to support residents and community groups to officially designate community places as Assets of Community Value through a mixture of information sessions and one-to-one support.

Registering Assets of Community Value both helps to protect them from damaging 'fire sales' that would leave communities worse off, while also sending a strong signal about how much residents care about their community places.

Promoting Community Ownership

But the Save Birmingham campaign is about more than demonstrating the value of community assets. Because it was born out of the cooperative movement, it also aims to promote community ownership and cooperative solutions for council-owned or run spaces and services.



The launch of the Save Birmingham campaign

This includes supporting residents to explore Community Asset Transfers, where there is local interest to take on the running or ownership of community places. Supported by partner organisations, the campaign aims to build the capacity and capability of communities to ensure that every community has the opportunity to pursue these options.

Cooperative models can also be applied at a citywide level as well as for individual community assets. As Birmingham City Council begins to fundamentally review how its services operate, it has an opportunity to work with Save Birmingham to embed cooperative principles and models.

Working collaboratively together

While at first, the campaign may have seemed quite threatening to the city council, pursuing a positive and constructive approach, helped by cross-party support helped to break down barriers to collaborative working. This built on previous work by Birmingham City Council to build

an approach to Community Wealth Building and existing membership of the Co-operative Councils' Innovation Network.

Community ownership isn't new to the city council. It has a well-established Community Asset Transfer programme, which includes a leading approach to recognising social value through its 'valuing worth' tool. But the onset of the council's financial challenges has provided an opportunity to develop a more strategic approach to community ownership.

Birmingham was not the first local authority to issue a section 114 notice, nor is it likely to be the last. But it is the first to adopt a community-led response built on cooperative and collaborative approaches, with practical and positive solutions.

While it was born of crisis and necessity, other councils may well follow what may become known as the 'Birmingham blueprint' to protect and improve their community places in the face of increasing financial challenges and uncertainty.

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Save Birmingham
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Community

Brent Council

Digital Inclusion at Brent Council

Brent Council's digital transformation programme is underpinned by an investment in the digital inclusion of residents to support them with digital skills, access to devices and connectivity and supporting each resident who wants to get online to do so. Brent is committed to helping every resident improve their digital skills, job opportunities and boost confidence, so that nobody gets left behind with rapid changes in technology. The investment in promoting digital inclusion plays a crucial part in getting better outcomes for all communities.

As part of Brent's Digital strategy, we have been working to address digital exclusion by providing solutions for residents and businesses not only by supplying over 3,000 devices to digitally excluded individuals but assisting them with essential training to help them get connected. This included our Digital Support Fund for Businesses where 100 SMEs received devices, training, and connectivity to support their business get online and adapt to changing consumer habits. Alongside this, over 900 pupils received devices and connectivity in our first two rounds of support for young people, allowing them to participate in online homework sessions and develop their digital skills. As well as this, all eligible residents are able to apply for the Digital Resident Support Fund which provides digitally excluded residents with a device and 12 months free fibre connectivity in their home. To ensure the sustainability of residents remaining digitally included we have also worked closely with local fibre providers to develop a Brent resident social tariff for £5 per month.

The digital inclusion programme also recognises the importance of different resident needs and therefore have a variety of types of devices and connectivity that can be provided. One example of this is the initiative for homeless residents which provides residents with a mobile device and up to 12 months mobile data through the Good Things Foundation databank. By providing devices which have the flexibility to be used in multiple different locations it has enabled these residents to remain digitally included



Brent has distributed over 3,000 digital devices to digitally excluded residents.

if they move to a different property. To ensure that these devices also deliver the expected benefits, each recipient is supported to develop their digital skills by a voluntary partner using the LearnMyWay platform.

We have also introduced digital champions within our front-line and community and voluntary services to support residents with digital queries and assist them to develop their knowledge of different technologies. This approach supports a 'Make every contact count' model for promoting digital skills as part of every interaction with council services. We currently have over 200 digital champions across libraries, Brent Hubs, AgeUK and health partners.

The digital inclusion programme recognises the important role our community and voluntary partners play in assisting residents to get online. That's why we have established a Digital inclusion network which has over 100 partners as



Digital drop-ins take place at Community Hubs to assist residents with accessing council and universal online services.

members. The network meets on a regular basis to problem solve digital exclusion issues in the borough, promote different opportunities for providing support and as a means for collaboratively developing the council's digital inclusion programme. Most recently the network and the residents which are supported through the work have been crucial in completing a detailed analysis of the current digital needs of the borough and current digital exclusion levels as part of our data analysis with Yonder.

Alongside this, a digital platform called Springboard, provides residents access to over 2,000 technology-related courses. Over 50,000 residents have accessed this platform, and this is now being accessed by residents and businesses across London. Helping residents upskill means they can

access council services more easily through online channels if they want to, improving accessibility and, potentially, the citizen experience. Having a digitally skilled resident base also improves employability, creating an economically stronger community and lowering dependence on the council. And it can help attract more businesses and investment into the borough who want to access a digitally enabled talent pool. It becomes a virtuous circle.

Altogether, Brent council recognises the importance of supporting residents to become digitally included, not only to improve their experience when interacting with the council but also supporting them to access universal services and opportunities that are available via the utilisation of technology.

For further information, contact:

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Strategy

Bury Council

LET'S Do It!

Bury's neighbourhood model, as set out in our *LET'S Do It!* strategy describes how collectively we'll drive inclusive growth and tackle deprivation to improve local outcomes.

In particular it outlines how we will transform the way in which we organise ourselves for case management through Neighbourhood-focussed practitioner networks, and the way we engage people & communities in a place embedding the LET's principles of:

- **Local** neighbourhoods – focusing in granular detail at the specific nature, opportunities, risks and insights of each part of the Borough.
- **Enterprising** Spirit – working differently to maximise and target our collective resource
- Working **Together** – both as public services and without communities of interest, experience and place.
- Through a **Strengths-Based** Approach – building on the assets in our communities.

To drive LETS at place we've established Public Service Leadership Teams. PSLTs are place-based individuals leading the delivery of activity at a neighbourhood level from across each pillar of our neighbourhood model.

Each local leadership team is responsible for:

- Developing and understanding place insight, which includes:
 - data for evidence-led discussions
 - key local assets (networks, groups and places), such as through Ward placemats
 - key local practitioners from across the neighbourhood model,
 - oversight of case management information (volumes, trends and learning)
- Identifying and coordinating integrated response to place-based issues
- Develop relationships and connections, including identifying workforce development needs and opportunities.

- Oversight of case activity within their neighbourhood area to ensure cases are being dealt with by the most appropriate part of the system and that this is joined up to ensure effectiveness – in particular to provide collective complex case direction at leadership level
- Ensuring connectivity between case work and community activity through the Community Hub, nurturing relationships and connectivity with community capacity to support the prevention, resilience and supporting step-downs from formal services
- Provide place based leadership for the delivery of a respective People and Communities Plans in their neighbourhood, delivering *Let's Do It!* at place – which bring together the new approach to neighbourhood engagement on community led priorities to empower local residents alongside reformed public services with local practitioners working together to ensure early, joined up and targeted support
- Provide local leadership for the delivery of partnership activity at place, to inform the targeting of system responses, such as support in relation to the cost of living and anti-poverty measures.

Examples of success:

PSLTs have played a pivotal role in the development and delivery of Bury's Cost of Living and Anti Poverty Strategy. By using collective insight from across the system, this has allowed for greater targeting of resources, including the national Household Support Fund, and local cost of living measures through:

- The identification of individuals and households demonstrating socio-economic vulnerabilities but that wouldn't necessary show up on data (eg. because they weren't eligible for welfare support measures), including reaching into local pastoral teams to identify young people without appropriate winter clothing or food provisions

- Integrated responses to place-specific vulnerabilities or risks, such as joint pop-up events, engagement and leafleting in specific Lower Super Output Areas and working with local community groups to develop tailored solutions to address cultural sensitivities, such as a kosher exchange voucher with independent stores in Prestwich.

Other examples include

- Collaborated to co-produce awareness and engagement of 'This Is Me passport' to support individuals with dementia, providing a system response to a Health INT derived priority.
- Addressed sites of multiple system demands within the proximity of the Metrolink Station and joint engagement with Transport for Greater Manchester.
- Facilitation of *Coffee Cake Collaborate* to connect community organisations at place and transition to this being community led, including as a forum to co-produce Bury's Family Hub model
- Partnership approach to public service interaction with local festivals from Purim to Parklife.

We know that the theory of an integrated approach in itself is not innovative – what we believe is different is the bringing together of 'place' and 'case' to provide neighbourhood based leadership and that this is built upon local community relationships, through our LET's Do It! Approach. As such it is about spirit, values and behaviours; about relationships at place not just across public services, or with communities, but fundamentally resetting the dial on both.

This has been most acutely realised in Radcliffe where the PSLT is driving the delivery of Radcliffe's People & Communities Plan as a blueprint for each neighbourhood having a co-produced place based plan. This sets out a shared understanding of a neighbourhoods strengths, assets and priorities of local communities and it is accompanied by a tailored performance framework where performance indicators have been specifically selected with granular data to demonstrate progress at a neighbourhood level.

The People and Communities Plans are central to the regeneration activity in the Borough by fundamentally



LET'S Do It Challenge

routing the work back to the Borough's vision, one of inclusive growth that is intrinsically linked to reducing deprivation, and so improving life chances for local people. As such the People & Communities Plans set out the means by which local people will be best placed to take advantage, now and in future generations, of physical infrastructure developments. Priorities have been drawn in each neighbourhood from significant local engagement across public and voluntary services and alignment of public service planning to this. As such what were once meetings on Radcliffe regeneration which focused exclusively on bricks, glass and carbon fibre, it now includes deep dives on community and social priorities, the development of community capacity and collaborative prevention approaches, as well as on the further integration of public services for those families facing multiple complexities.

To bring this to life over 1,200 local public service colleagues and community leads have taken part in the *LET'S Do It* Challenge during the summer of 2023. This was an immersive organisational development activity which brought people together to better understand the purpose, principles and deliverables of the LETS approach. The session guided through a series of interactive activities across Local-Enterprising-Together-Strengths to increase knowledge of the Borough, partnership working and to challenge colleagues to deliver through these principles to achieve common outcomes for the Borough. A rolling training programme continues as more people complete the challenge!

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Young People

Cardiff Council

Becoming a UNICEF Child Friendly City

In October 2023 Cardiff was officially declared a UNICEF Child Friendly City – the first of its kind in the UK.

Cardiff Council and its partners joined UNICEF UK's Child Friendly Cities & Communities programme in 2017. To achieve Child Friendly City recognition, UNICEF UK lists three priority areas which city organisations must work towards:

- 1. Cooperation & Leadership:** People work together to make the city better for children and young people. They give children the opportunity to be involved in decision-making. All adult decisionmakers value the importance of incorporating children's rights. They work together and have the skills to make this happen.
- 2. Communication:** All children and young people understand how they can find information they need – information about their rights and support that might make their lives easier, healthier, safer and happier.
- 3. Culture:** Children and young people should consistently enjoy interaction with city organisations' staff and people within their community who know and understand how to use a child rights-based approach to improve their work. People value and respect children and young people and know about and respect children's rights.

Working with Cardiff's children and young people, the Council identified three further priority areas:

- 4. Healthy:** Giving children the best start in life and getting it right for families in the first 1,000 days – from conception to their second birthday.
- 5. Family & belonging:** A place where all families are supported to be together and can enjoy activities around the city.
- 6. Education & learning:** Making sure schools embed child rights practices where the voices of young people are heard and acted upon. Children will leave school with the life skills they need to succeed, including the ability to make well-balanced decisions; manage personal finances; develop a healthy lifestyle; and maintain good social relationships.

These priorities were enshrined in Cardiff's Child Friendly Strategy in 2018. Since then, the Council has been implementing strategies to embed children's rights – as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child – into its policies and services.

At the start of 2023 for the final phase of the Child Friendly Cities programme, the Council submitted a self-assessment setting out the city's progress and achievements; an independent evaluation capturing children and young people's views on, and experiences of, the city's progress; a draft Sustainability Plan; and approximately 120 pieces of evidence in support of local impact.

The evidence demonstrated that the Council and its partners have made good progress across all six priority areas:

- Strong and sustained commitment from city leadership, including extensive elected member engagement training, and valued opportunities for children and young people to take part in scrutiny boards and other decision-making forums
- Increasing use of children's rights to frame core local strategies, such as the corporate parenting, safeguarding and children's services plans
- Embedding consideration of children's rights in the council's overarching impact assessment framework
- Establishing a permanent child rights unit, a substantial commitment in economically challenging times
- Demonstrable commitment to making communications accessible and child friendly.
- Successfully advocating to the Home Office and changing guidance to secure school places for children and young people seeking asylum
- Addressing barriers that prevent some groups of children and young people from accessing services, including child refugees and children seeking asylum, care-experienced children, and children in 'education other than at school'
- Developing a suite of targeted support, mentoring,

resources and events for young people transitioning out of care, or out of non-mainstream education

- Empowering children with knowledge of their rights at school by implementing the Rights Respecting School Award across two-thirds of the city's schools
- Establishing a Youth Health Board to empower young people to influence local health policy
- Developing a holistic safeguarding referral protocol for 16- and 17-year-olds attending accident and emergency services
- Enthusiastically championing children and young people across the city and fostering an increased sense of belonging for children through child-centered festivals, play streets, story trails, and youth-led media
- Being accountable to children by establishing a 'Young Committee of Experts' to understand the city's progress towards advancing children's rights from the perspective of children and young people.

Working in partnership with organisations across the city, a significant number of projects, initiatives and actions have been undertaken to ensure that children and young people are able to claim their rights, thrive and reach their potential, whilst addressing the barriers which may limit their life chances. Some of the highlights from Cardiff's journey towards becoming a UNICEF Child Friendly City are:

- 42,254 children and young people have accessed early help and support since April 2019 via the new Family Support Gateway which is underpinned by child rights principles
- 66,324 children aged 5-14 have accessed local authority play provision since April 2020
- 73% of Cardiff schools are working to embed children's rights as part of the UNICEF UK Rights Respecting Schools Award
- Over 700 opportunities have been made available to children and young people to meaningfully participate



in Cardiff Council decision-making

- 50 teams of children were engaged with to design new areas of the city through Minecraft Education
- 2,785 children have participated in design, monitoring and evaluation of Council services
- 5,519 council and partner staff have completed child rights training, and 3,595 children and young people have received participation and rights training
- More than 155,000 products have been delivered to schools to support Cardiff's commitment to promote period dignity since March 2019
- 19 streets helping to reduce traffic at 22 schools have been made safer through the School Streets Scheme
- 43 partners have delivered hundreds of initiatives for young people in areas such as science and technology, arts and culture, and health and wellbeing to enrich their learning experiences within and beyond the classroom.

Watch our video here: youtu.be/ZOxRWFtuYwk

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Community

Cheshire West and Chester Council

Play Your Part

In 2024, Cheshire West and Council refreshed the vision for the borough, asking local communities to 'play your part towards a stronger future,' where we all work together to tackle shared challenges. This is a continuation of the play-your-part approach set out in 2020 and a recognition that social partnership is fundamental to enabling a stronger future for the borough, where local communities are integral to the planning and delivery of the support that they draw on.

This is not a new approach, but one that proved its worth during the local community response to the pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis and the need to welcome and house guests from Ukraine. Cheshire West and Chester Council are working to develop a council-wide and borough-wide approach to social partnership, building on the many existing activities within the Council and local communities.

Community led working

The Council is developing a community-led support approach, driven by a comprehensive transformation programme within adult social care, to design and deliver different ways of working which maximise the strengths and community connections of people locally. This has meant establishing five 'Let's Talk' sites that offer community drop-in, conversation and face-to-face advice about, and signposting to, wellbeing and wider support and services available locally. Work is ongoing to boost the number of people who opt for a Direct Payment and take greater control of how their care and support needs are met, but also to encourage the wide development of micro-enterprises that offer a range of choices of alternative, outcome focused care and support providers.

Community groups are being supported through projects such as **Cheshire West Crowd**, a community crowdfunding programme that has enabled £2million funding for over a hundred local projects, from a slow-cooker loan scheme to

a village arts trail. Enabling local people to take ownership of and finance their own ideas, for every £1 the Council has invested it has generated another £1.89 in project success. Not only that but it has made funding more accessible to a wider range of smaller, local organisations and community groups.

The Council is also supporting community groups to take on the management and operation of local land and buildings, and maximise local benefit, through a **community asset transfer framework**. Most recently the Ellesmere Port branch of Men in Sheds, who help older men combat loneliness and isolation brought about through retirement and bereavement, took over the control of the empty and dilapidated Overpool Community Centre and are working to renovate it and make it their new 'shedquarters.'

Responding to the climate emergency

Residents are central to our **climate emergency** response, whether by recycling over 57% of local waste, contributing to our climate emergency taskforce or supporting the group-buying scheme that brings interested households together to benefit from economies of scale when installing solar panels. Our **Inspire** website provides a place for communities to share ideas, stories and tips about tackling climate change. This includes the work that the **Mersey Forest Partnership**, hosted by Cheshire West and Chester Council, has undertaken with local landowners and communities to plant more than nine million trees over 25 years. This is equivalent to five new trees for every person living within the Forest area and has created a growing network of woodlands and green spaces across Cheshire and Merseyside. This has given more people easier access to woodlands in which to exercise and play, and engaged local communities in planting and maintaining trees, but also helped to combat both climate change and habitat loss.

Responding to the poverty emergency

In early 2020 the Council declared a **poverty emergency**. This built on the learning from two local Poverty Truth Commissions, and it made the poverty truth philosophy of 'nothing about us without us is for us' central to the Council's ongoing poverty response. A Poverty Truth Advisory Board was established, bringing together local people with lived experience of poverty, called community inspirers with local civic and business leaders. The board informs and supports policy development and service design and coproduced the Fairer Future Strategy, an ambitious ten-year plan to reduce poverty. Community inspirers and the board have also played a key role in shaping the Council's customer services, and particularly the 'no wrong front door' approach to ensure that however someone first contacts the Council, they will be welcomed and supported to access the services they need.

The board has also helped guide the borough's response to the **cost of living crisis**, working with council services, voluntary and community groups to identify and roll out a network of **welcoming spaces** and ensure that they were advertised and designed to be truly welcoming, safe spaces. The board also influenced the successful deployment of a £500,000 winter poverty fund, including £50,000 allocated towards a Tackling Poverty Crowdfunder to support local projects backed by communities with clear social benefits.

Tackling rough sleeping and homelessness

The local Multi-Agency Rough Sleeping partnership (MARS) is a group made up of the Council and partners from statutory and third sector agencies which meets fortnightly to discuss referrals of disengaged and entrenched rough sleepers to help find the best pathway off the streets into accommodation and mainstream services. Through our new ways of working, nearly 75% of the individuals we worked with – who were rough sleeping or at considerable risk of doing so – were supported into accommodation and have been empowered not to return to a situation of homelessness. This focus on rough sleepers benefits from wider projects such as '**End Homelessness in Chester**,' a collaborative project between the Council, Chester Business Improvement District and the local charities which provide outreach, support, drop-in facilities and life skills training to homeless people. The project supports people to 'tap to donate' so they know how money will be spent and can donate even without carrying cash.

Local people, public, private and community sector organisations are coming together in West Cheshire to play their part in a social partnership with a shared sense of responsibility in our mutual wellbeing.

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Community

Greater Manchester Combined Authority

Greater Manchester Violence Reduction Unit (VRU)

Community-led approach

The community-led approach to violence reduction, means the VRU works closely with communities to understand the strengths, challenges, and needs of the community and determine how local investments will be made.

When communities are affected by violence often the key to sustainable solutions can often be found by speaking to local residents about the underlying causes of crime, working with rather than deciding for them.

Working place-based, these initiatives are about learning the priorities in each community and co-designing services with local people that will benefit their community. All ten boroughs across the city region have received funding from the VRU as part of its investment in community-led programmes.

Community Spotlights

Our Community Spotlight Series was launched to amplify the positive stories of young people, community leaders, those with lived experience and other stakeholders from the communities we serve. The series hears from young people who are facilitating positive change within their communities, the work that community organisations are doing within Greater Manchester and real stories of positive change.

Manchester Community Spotlight - bit.ly/43RuhGT

Salford Community Spotlight - bit.ly/3vJ2iwj

Oldham Community Spotlight - bit.ly/3JaCtsd

Bury Community Spotlight - bit.ly/3J6p5W9



Manchester Community Spotlight – Safia’s Story

Greater than Violence Strategy – capturing voices of young people

Launched in December 2023, **the Greater than Violence strategy** commits to working with individuals and communities to understand their strengths, challenges, and ideas to tackle violence.

Led by the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Greater Manchester, the strategy will work to improve lives by preventing violence, supporting victims, families and communities affected, and providing positive opportunities to those at risk of becoming victims, witnesses, or perpetrators, including education programmes, community sports, targeted mentoring, opportunities to develop new skills and therapeutic support.

The strategy is founded on two pillars: preventing violence from happening and responding swiftly and appropriately when it occurs. The VRU partnered with Manchester Metropolitan University’s Manchester Centre for Youth Studies (MCYS) to ensure the voices of young people from across Greater Manchester are captured in the strategy.

MCYS is an award-winning interdisciplinary research centre specialising in participatory, youth-informed research that positively influences the lives of young people.



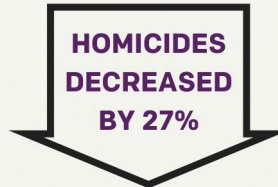
To date, through MCYS, 70 young people have shared their experiences and thoughts on the causes of violence, where violence happens, what makes them feel safe/unsafe and what would help to address violence through a series of detailed conversations and facilitated workshops. This insight has helped to shape the principles and commitments included in the strategy – engagement will continue as implementation plans are developed.

Through the VRU’s community-led programmes, young people and community members from across Greater Manchester have shared their experiences of violence and ideas for change, including the importance of long-term funding for community-led initiatives.

Fatima Women’s Association – developing educational opportunities for disadvantaged women in Oldham



KNIFE-ENABLED HOMICIDES DECREASED BY 19%



KNIFE CRIME DECREASED BY 13.5% FOR VICTIMS UNDER AGE 25



KNIFE CRIME DECREASED BY 12.5% ACROSS ALL AGES



HOSPITAL ADMISSIONS DUE TO ASSAULT WITH A KNIFE OR SHARP OBJECT DECREASED BY 17% FOR VICTIMS UNDER AGE 25

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GMCA GREATER MANCHESTER COMBINED AUTHORITY



Community

Royal Borough of Greenwich & Greenwich Co-operative Development Agency

Engaging and Empowering the Residents of Woolwich Common Estate

In July 2023, the Royal Borough of Greenwich commissioned Greenwich Co-operative Development Agency (GCDA) a third sector organisation, to develop and deliver a joint pilot community cooperative proof of concept (POC) on the Woolwich Common Estate.

For more than 40 years, GCDA has been helping people reach their full potential through community hubs, free training programmes, enterprise support and food projects, and so were deemed best placed to deliver the POC, with established community contacts and relationships.

Woolwich Common was identified as a location because of the number of anti-social behaviour concerns raised and the need to reengage residents to positively contribute to the care of the environment in and around their estate. GCDA already had a substantial presence on the estate including existing infrastructure and reach, and these resources were utilised to maximise delivery to achieve the outcomes being sought. Like many places, residents within Woolwich Common felt left behind, particularly following COVID-19, and as a community, unloved. The estate is an area which has a higher level of deprivation than others in the borough and suffers higher levels of crime and anti-social behaviour.

The project's aim was to encourage more tenants to become actively engaged to help improve the overall safety, security and the look and feel of Woolwich Common estate.

The initiative employed a local coordinator to work with a range of partners to encourage people to volunteer, be trained and to explore potential employment opportunities alongside Greenwich Local Labour and Business (GLLaB). A key requirement was to enable the Council to identify how it could better share information with delivery partners regarding local crime and disorder, as well as broader issues such as environmental crime, with the added bonus of tenants being and feeling



Estate clear up

much safer on the estate. A wider requirement was for this pilot to provide the foundation for how the voluntary sector and local communities can be better engaged in tackling community and public safety concerns in their neighbourhoods. The tenants' and residents' association (TRA) for Woolwich Common Estate has been involved in the pilot and have attended community meetings and assisted on clear ups.

If successful, the intention is for the POC to be a potential beacon of best practice for other estates within Royal Greenwich, if not wider.

Working with the residents, GCDA identified opportunities to empower volunteers and estate residents in the following ways:

- Taking community ownership to maintain green spaces across the estate, including planting and growing food.

This encourages residents to make full use of the space as well as helping with maintenance. The improvement of green spaces contributes to the feeling of health and wellbeing of all residents

- Encouraging recycling and reducing fly tipping and littering by introducing additional bins and collections, which are monitored by local community stewards. This encourages pride in neighbourhoods which in turn improved the look and feel of the estate and sense of wellbeing and safety for tenants, as well as reducing levels of anti-social behaviour
- Providing, at a cost only basis, handy-person services for residents seeking to improve the safety and security of their homes (e.g. ring door-bell installations)
- Tackling dog fouling, without need for enforcement, through education and engagement and the development of 'dog parks' within the estate. Thus improving safety and wellbeing for all.

Once engaged, and where appropriate, residents were supported to consider training and employment opportunities, being referred to the Greenwich Local Labour and Business service (GLLaB), who work in partnership with a range of organisations to provide support for residents including:

- Help with employment
- Help to learn new skills to re-train or up-skill for a new career
- Help for residents who want to get back to work after a break
- Help for residents looking for their first job
- Help with applying for apprenticeships or pre-apprenticeship programmes
- Providing financial advice from Welfare Rights Service on benefits and better off calculations based on job options
- Providing housing advice from the Housing Inclusion Team for support for tenants and people at risk of becoming homeless.

A resident who did volunteer work during the project was interviewed and recruited to work one day a week at Woolwich Common Community Centre. They performed well and now work full-time at another GCDA Community Centre.

The Council and GCDA is currently recruiting for a role to support the growing activity of the project.

Key outcomes achieved through this initiative included:

- Decreased littering and flytipping
- Improved resident satisfaction
- Increased resident engagement and participation
- Development of employment and training opportunities for local people
- Established information sharing processes
- A written blueprint for use by other estates/areas wishing to achieve the same or similar outcomes.

Moving forward, the Royal Borough of Greenwich continues to show its commitment to the improvement of Woolwich Common and its management. A total of just under £210,000 of UK Shared Prosperity or Levelling Up Funding has been allocated towards the physical improvement of the area around Leslie Smith Square, the main local shopping parade for the estate.

To implement the changes that local people want, landscape designers will be working with residents, through GCDA, to co-design improvements and ensure work already underway in this pilot positively influences any physical improvements. The decision to invest this resource over the coming year reflects the excellent work underway in gaining resident engagement via this community cooperative approach.

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Poverty

Hackney Council

Tackling Poverty & Inequalities Through System Convening

Two new roles and an approach to tackling poverty and inequalities, built on the learnings from the Covid-19 pandemic of the need to work differently with council colleagues, health and community partners.

In September 2022, Hackney Council hired two 'System Conveners,' roles that were the first of their kind in the council. They came on the heels of the Council's Poverty Reduction Framework that outlined as a priority the need to work differently to respond to the material needs of poverty and act preventatively.

During the pandemic Hackney, like many other councils, worked together with community and health partners in new ways to support residents most impacted by the pandemic. The System Conveners roles have been a way to acknowledge that learning and create roles specifically designed to continue working in a connected way.

The System Conveners' first steps

The initial brief to the two System Conveners was to 'get out there' -- be in the community meeting with organisations and council colleagues.

They began working within some of the networks that already existed-- community navigators, the food network, the advice partnership. In these spaces, they sought to understand what the worries were, where resources could be pooled, and what insight from the ground they could surface and feed back to the system.

They were tasked with not having an agenda beyond trying to understand what someone needed or who/what was getting stuck in the system. When opportunities arose, like the Warm Hubs initiative, they would provide modelling, introductions, and even challenges.

They took the following approach to visiting local partners:

- **Get Involved** – do not observe passively, talk to the people attending the service, ask if there is anything you can do to help.
- **Be Open** – try not to have a set of questions you need answered. Be flexible and listen. You will learn more about that organisation and the way they approach their work.
- **Have a Warm Introduction** – if someone trusted introduces vouches for you, you can build bonds more quickly

In the first week a community partner said to the conveners that 'the Council' usually visits their service in a smart shirt and lanyard, hiding behind a clipboard with a set of pre ordained questions making it hard to connect with them or express the value of their work.

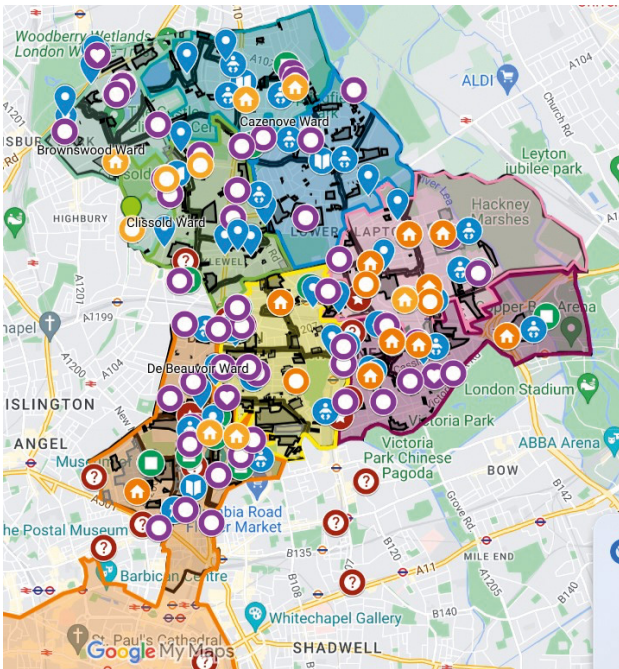
System Conveners have the opportunity to go out to our partners and listen without an agenda and try to form meaningful relationships with those organisations.

Beyond building relationships, the system conveners have also been building understanding of who and what the system is composed of. In many spaces, the conveners have been hearing pleas for a directory: "If we only had a list of services to refer residents to!"

However, they knew that any list would be out of date as soon as it was published. Instead, they started building an internal map of the system-- the borough's wards, the housing estates, the GP practices, health and care neighbourhoods, the advice providers, food organisations, and other local charities. They would use this map to understand who is nearby one another and where connections between organisations and people could be strengthened in a local, place-based way.

System convening 18 months into the journey

Over the first year and a half of the System Conveners' work,



Map of services across Hackney that the System Conveners developed

they've done some of the following:

- Connecting colleagues around housing– Working with the Council Housing service to deliver advice sessions in community and health settings while uncovering some of the recurrent housing issues that people continuously face
- Supported the 13 council funded Warm Hubs and brought the evaluation of that work to our colleagues in Public Health for their work on 'Social Isolation'
- Hosting the Hackney Food Network, a coalition of those working to address Food Poverty in Hackney
- Meeting with residents, partners in the VCS, Health and Council colleagues to understand the needs of families living in Temporary Accommodation and looking to co-produce ways to support them
- Supporting our 24 Community Infrastructure Organisations, who have received core funding from the council for three years in recognition of the holistic approach to supporting residents and their trusted role in communities puts them in a vital position to work preventatively.

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Not just a role, but a wider approach

We also view convening as a responsibility for the whole Policy and Strategic Delivery team. For instance, since July 2022 our service has run a session called 'Poverty Reduction: Tools for frontline staff' which brings together frontline staff (and senior decision makers) working across sectors in Hackney. On the call, people share information about how to best support residents and make connections with each other.

It has taken time, and consistency, to make it into a diverse, democratic space that is both practical and transformational. In the last session our Council Tax Collection Service, who have been attending the session regularly, opened their processes up by holding a discussion with community partners around better working with residents and each other around Council Tax Issues.

What's next

From what we've learned so far, building relationships in a complex system takes time and is never straightforward. It has even been dismissed at times as not 'doing the real work'. However, we believe that the System Conveners and broader team ethos has been slowly breaking down the fear of working in this way.

We've seen some of the ripple effects of system convening play out across our work. For instance, a few other teams across the Council have been working with us to bring convening roles, job descriptions and principles to their work. We also regularly get asked for introductions or insight from the relationships that the Conveners have built. In the coming months, we'll build out our convening approach through work we're calling Fairer Help. Alongside this work, we'll be working with an external evaluator to help us better understand the impact of System Convening.

Ultimately, many of our colleagues do this work above and beyond their roles, not just the System Conveners. Real system leadership for 2024 and beyond in local government requires convening across the system, breaking down silos and putting residents at the centre.



Young People

London Borough of Hounslow

Grow for the Future

Hounslow Council has launched the UK’s first-ever policy to transform wasteland into new allotments, community gardens and orchards to grow food in a cost-of-living crisis and pair them with local schools to teach urban children in often deprived areas about healthy living, sustainability and biodiversity.

Up to 27-acres of wasteland have been identified in the first phase of Grow for the Future which will help tackle the enormous demand for allotments and growing spaces since the pandemic and allow residents to cultivate their own fresh produce in the face of rocketing food costs.

For the first time ever in the UK, the Council will look to pair each new site with a local school and dedicate a portion of it to teach urban children in often deprived areas about where their food comes from, the importance of good nutrition and how to live healthy lives.

The food grown by the schools can also be donated to support children who are going hungry at a time when the cost of food is soaring, and over 100,000 children in England may be missing out on free school meals.

As a first-of-its-kind policy, Hounslow Council was able to advocate for it in the national media including the BBC, i, Independent and the Evening Standard among over 200 outlets, calling on councils across the country to provide space for state school kids in urban environments to receive the same opportunities children in the countryside and in private schools often receive.

This helped to win backing from the government and the Greater London Authority, with £165,000 from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)

Hounslow Council now hopes that the government’s support for this grassroots policy will encourage councils across the country to come forward with similar initiatives.

Support for Grow for the Future has also come from the Downton Abbey actor Jim Carter OBE who has urged Britain’s councils to follow Hounslow’s lead so kids can get more green time and less screen time following the pandemic.

The Emmy-nominated actor is a patron of Greenfingers, a charity creating magical gardens for children’s hospices, alongside his wife Imelda Staunton. He recently gave evidence to the House of Lords Horticulture Select Committee arguing that gardening should be taught in schools to get children outside where they can get their hands dirty.

Jim Carter said: “I am delighted to add my wholehearted support to Hounslow Council’s Grow for the Future initiative. The brilliance of this project lies in its simplicity. Take unused wasteland and utilise it for the benefit of young people who have little or no access to outside space.

“I urge all local councils to take a lead from Hounslow and to introduce similar initiatives in their own boroughs. This is an idea whose time has come. Grow for the Future.”

Hounslow Council expects to be able to create 500 new spaces for food growing from the first phase alone and then bring online four new sites per year.

The first orchard project is already transforming an underused, empty space in Westmacott Drive Open Space in Feltham.

The wildflower meadow will be seeded, and fruit trees alongside raspberry and blackberry bushes will be planted in the upcoming season. Local school children are collaborating with the activities including growing sunflowers for the new site.

The second orchard project will open up a neglected Cranford space currently targeted by fly-tipping and anti-



Launch of Grow For The Future with Hounslow Councillors and local schoolchildren

social behaviour where new fruit trees and bushes will be planted.

Both sites are now coming into bloom and a third site will see new allotments brought to Hatton.

Cllr Salman Shaheen, Cabinet Member for Parking, Parks & Leisure on Hounslow Council, said: "It is a scandal that in 21st century Britain, children are going to school hungry and families are forced to choose between heating and eating.

"Grow for the Future will provide hundreds of new growing spaces for Hounslow's residents to put food on their plates. Land once going to waste will be repurposed to educate children on leading healthy lives and how to grow nutritious fruit and veg. And what our schools grow, they can donate to feed vulnerable children missing out on free school meals as the cost-of-living crisis bites.

"I want to give everyone in urban environments, young and old, so often disconnected from nature, the opportunity to cultivate land they can call their own and understand where our food comes from. To learn, and grow, for the future."

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Climate Change & Environment

Hull City Council

Living with Water Ambassadors

Living with Water is a partnership between Yorkshire Water, Hull City Council, East Riding of Yorkshire Council, the Environment Agency, and the University of Hull - all of which play a role in managing water in Hull and the East Riding.

One of Living with Water’s key objectives is to build resilience through raising awareness of flood risks within communities and deliver practical advice and information to help local people protect their homes and businesses, and to make them feel safe. Our aim is to achieve a year-on-year reduction in flood risk.

To help build a positive relationship with the communities we work in, we have worked with a team of Hull and East Yorkshire (HEY) volunteers to recruit and train Living with Water ambassadors. As well as joining our team at a variety of community events and playdays, the ambassadors have been involved in a range of projects such as knowledge shares with students at the University of Hull, attending Virtual Horizons plays to discuss flood resilience with the audience, and aiding the development of a flood resilience board game. In 2023, the Living with Water ambassadors donated 125 official hours, as well as the many occasions where they have shared their knowledge with their own friends and neighbours in an unofficial capacity.

This year, we are working with the ambassadors to build an annual programme of events that allows at least one session per month to build their knowledge or allow them to learn about their own areas of interest, including a guided



Living With Water ambassadors overlooking the River Hull

tour of Tophill Low Nature Reserve, a talk at the Humber Tidal Barrier and a session about Hull’s history of water with Dr Hannah Worthen from Risky Cities.

The Living with Water ambassadors are integral to helping build community confidence and flood resilience as they have shared experiences of events, such as the 2007 floods, and a closer relationship with the members of the community that they are part of. People and communities are at the heart of change, and we are trying to encourage positive perception and action changes for the benefit of these communities, now and in the future.

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What works in community asset transfer?

What are the barriers?

What makes them successful?

Download: bit.ly/CCIN-Asset-Transfer

councils.coop

 Co-operative Councils
Innovation Network

 People-centred councils
driving social innovation
putting people first



Community

Inverclyde Council

Inverclyde Culture Collective

Inverclyde Culture Collective created a context for artists to experiment with alternate modes of sharing practice, developing partnerships and engaging with communities. The external evaluation report concluded that the stakeholders were extremely positive about the Culture Collective and that sustained and consistent progress has been made in building and expanding local arts infrastructure and in developing and supporting an impactful creative approach in our communities.

The Inverclyde Culture Collective Steering Group was awarded £275,000 from Creative Scotland to deliver 18 months of activities in Inverclyde, followed by an additional £198,000 for 12 more months of activity. The lead partners in this work were Inverclyde Council, CVS Inverclyde, RIG Arts, Beacon Arts Centre and Inverclyde Youth Theatre (Kayos). More detail can be found at on the website at inverclydeculturecollective.co.uk

The funding was allocated to support the following objectives:

1. Arts and cultural organisations and creative freelancers will have built sustainable partnerships with other sectors, agencies and organisations in the place, and arts and culture will be fully reflected in local plans and strategies
2. Local creative organisations and freelancers will be more resilient
3. Inequality and barriers to access will be addressed, and everyone given the opportunity to experience and to be inspired by arts and culture
4. Inverclyde will be a better place to live, work or visit.

Inverclyde Culture Collective was established to facilitate artist experimentation with different methods of sharing practice and test approaches to new community projects

with no pre-determined outcomes. It had a focus on key areas specific to Inverclyde: Health and Social Care (with a focus on adult Mental Health), young people, regeneration of communities, outdoor work and engaging with Inverclyde communities that have low arts engagement.

The Culture Collective was managed by a Steering Group which included all partner organisations and was chaired by Inverclyde Council’s Libraries, Educational Development and Arts Manager. The lead partners for the Inverclyde Culture Collective were Inverclyde Council, CVS Inverclyde, RIG Arts, Beacon Arts Centre and Inverclyde Youth Theatre (Kayos). The Collective reported formally through the Council and Community Planning structures to enable visibility of the work, including research on arts activity in the area, and the links between arts and health and social care.

Inverclyde Culture Collective set out to deliver 21 projects and 40 paid opportunities, and this was exceeded:

- 32 projects were funded;
- 791 sessions were held, engaging with 2,456 community participants;
- 56 community partners were involved, and
- In addition to the co-ordinating team, 116 freelance opportunities were created undertaking 2,625 hours of paid work.

The projects varied significantly, including:

- Exploring Health, Illness, Disability and Long term Conditions – which involved artist research and a participatory project with Your Voice Recovery, Chronic Pain Group and Dance For Parkinsons
- Creativity in Mind – a pilot arts mental health project for adults in Inverclyde using creativity as a means of self-expression to support recovery, manage symptoms and build self-esteem
- Inside Out – weekly intergenerational workshops

focusing on the creative regeneration of community greenspaces of the Auchmountain Glen area

- Writer In Residence – Writer-in-residence post based in Inverclyde libraries.

The sessions took place in 38 unique locations across Inverclyde with half of these delivered in the 10% most deprived datazones in the local authority.

The full evaluation report is available at via bit.ly/Inverclyde-Council-Culture-Heritage. The partners believe that through this approach local arts and cultural organisations and freelancers developed sustainable partnerships with other sectors and organisations. The resilience of the sector was increased by supporting projects at scale and over an extended period and by supporting delivery of a large part of the Inverclyde Arts Action Plan which would otherwise have been funded in a more fragmented way. The funding of two facilitator posts in the Inverclyde Culture Collective team helped to develop the broader partnership. Barriers to accessing culture and arts were addressed through building up relationships with marginalised groups.

The evaluation found that in relation to participants:

- 91% agreed that taking part in this makes them glad to live in Inverclyde;
- 81% agreed that they had met local people that they didn't know before;
- 94% stated that they had the chance to try new things, 91% agreed that they feel more creative because they took part.

In terms of artists:

- 100% felt embedded in the local community;
- 100% agreed with the statement "I undertook work that would not have happened if Inverclyde Culture Collective had not funded my role";
- 95% agreed that it will help them in their future career;
- 77% agreed that they made lasting professional contacts, and
- 43% agreed that it has opened up further new paid opportunities.

As the strategic planning cycle for the Inverclyde Community Planning Partnership renewed in 2023 the importance of the ongoing development of arts and culture to achieving a "thriving place" was recognised with the inclusion of "Easy access to attractive and safe public spaces, and high-quality arts and cultural opportunities" as a key outcome for all partners, including Inverclyde Council, to achieve.

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Community Wealth Building

Kirklees Council

Business for West Yorkshire Programme

Partnership approach sees £500k Business for Good West Yorkshire programme established to promote cooperatives and social enterprises.

West Yorkshire has a new programme supporting start up and growth of cooperatives and social enterprises – Business for Good West Yorkshire (BfGWY). The £500k, 18-month partnership-delivered programme delivered by Third Sector Leaders Kirklees (TSL), aims to create 25 new businesses, provide non-financial support to 90 businesses and see a total of 26 jobs created or safeguarded. It is the result of a successful bid to the West Yorkshire Combined Authority's (WYCA) open call for pilot proposals to support 'alternative business models', and is part funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF).

The bid built on the work TSL, the local VCSE Infrastructure organisation, has done over the past few years in establishing a Social Enterprise Sounding Board following development of the Kirklees VCSE Investment Strategy (IS) – a shared strategy to strengthen the third sector in Kirklees. While the Council has directly supported the creation of Co-operative Care Colne Valley and the Dewsbury Arcade Group – who plan to take on management of the Dewsbury Arcade as the first community-run shopping centre in the country, TSL has delivered and promoted the Kirklees Social Enterprise Competition to profile social entrepreneurs in the borough.

When the open call was released, the Council were clear that the proposal should – if at all possible – address both cooperatives and social enterprises, but also that in line with Priority 2 of the IS "Invest in whoever is best placed to provide the service or support" that TSL should take the lead. The Council's role was to support and enable the development of the proposal. TSL built the third sector partnership through participation in proposal development sessions with VCSE partners from across West Yorkshire and the School for Social Entrepreneurs while Kirklees Council liaised with the other West Yorkshire councils to understand their priorities and build support for a West Yorkshire-wide proposal. This approach was possible due to the existing

relationship of trust between the organisations and key individuals involved. The resulting partnership led by TSL Kirklees, includes local specialist organisations Participate and Voluntary Action Leeds, See Ahead and Co-op Culture and two national organisations Co-operatives UK, School for Social Entrepreneurs, as well as CCIN affiliate member Stir to Action.

The involvement of Co-operatives UK and cooperative partners, was facilitated by the Council identifying a common aim across all partners of breaking down the siloed way of working and approach to individuals and groups who want to establish alternative businesses with clear social or community purpose that support both people and places. This brought significant partners from the coops sector locally and nationally into the proposal and also leveraged assets such as the Coop Option Training previously funded by CCIN. We hope this programme will go some way to breaking down barriers between the worlds of cooperatives and social enterprise and to development of a rounded view of the relative benefits of the two different approaches.

The programme consists of four strands:

1. Free enterprise coaching and start up workshops for individuals or groups with a new idea
2. Free enterprise coaching and Growth & Resilience grants of up to £2,499 for existing alternative businesses
3. Support to grow or safeguard existing jobs through a Growth & Resilience Learning and Development programme delivered jointly by Co-operatives UK and the School for Social Entrepreneurs
4. Free business options training for business advisors and other business support professionals.

As a VCSE-led programme there is a significant focus on driving an inclusive economy, with the clear intention of engaging marginalised communities. This is being done through six place-based Alternative Business Advisors – Enterprise Coaches – building on the trusted relationships of local VCSE groups and specifically – the existing community anchor networks.

UK SPF Intervention	Output (OP) / Outcome (OC) Description	Number (EDI Targets)
E23: Strengthening local entrepreneurial ecosystems	OP14: Number of potential entrepreneurs assisted to be enterprise ready	60 BAME: 22 Women: 40 Disabled: 5
E24: Training hubs, business support offers, incubators & accelerators	OP24: Number of enterprises receiving grants	25 BAME: 8 Women: 12 Disabled: 1
	OP23: Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support	91 BAME: 31 Women: 58 Disabled: 5
E26: Support for growing the local social economy, including community businesses, cooperatives and social enterprises	OP18: Number of people attending training sessions	45 BAME: 5 Women: 15 Disabled: 0
E23: Strengthening local entrepreneurial ecosystems	OC1: Jobs created as a result of support	5
	OC26: Number of enterprises adopting new to the firm technologies or processes	5
	OC27: Number of enterprises engaged in new markets	15
	OC23: Number of new enterprises created as a result of support	25
E24: Training hubs, business support offers, incubators & accelerators	OC1: Jobs created as a result of support	7
	OC2: Jobs safeguarded as a result of support	14
	OC28: Number of early-stage enterprises which increase their revenue following support	20



Business for Good West Yorkshire UK SPF Interventions, Outputs, Outcomes and Targets

The programme is overseen by an advisory group that brings together representatives from the councils and VCSE from all five districts as well as WYCA and Co-operatives UK. As well as providing oversight of delivery the group has a clear focus on developing a long-term vision for the role of alternative business models in West Yorkshire and funding and design of a long-term programme to succeed the pilot that can bring this vision into fruition.

Part of doing this will involve the group's engagement in the development of the emerging West Yorkshire Economic Strategy as well as the Kirklees Inclusive Economy Strategy and those of other districts.

The partnership is realistic that the current pilot has restricted capacity and timescales and must deliver against the UK SPF outcomes listed in the table below. That said, the programme aims to build local assets and infrastructure so

that, with or without future funding, the democratic and social economy can continue to grow in West Yorkshire.

The Business for Good West Yorkshire project is part-funded by the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, delivered by TSL Kirklees. In West Yorkshire the West Yorkshire Combined Authority leads the implementation of the Fund as part of the Mayor's ambition to make West Yorkshire the best place to work, learn and live.

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund is a central pillar of the UK government's Levelling Up agenda and provides £2.6 billion of funding for local investment by March 2025. The Fund aims to improve pride in place and increase life chances across the UK investing in communities and place, supporting local business, and people and skills. For more information, visit [gov.uk/government/publications/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-prospectus](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-prospectus)

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Community

Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council

Knowsley Better Together in Action

Through its Knowsley Better Together approach, Knowsley Council continues to bring people and organisations together for the benefit of its residents and the wider borough - helping us support local residents and businesses as we look towards Knowsley's ambitious goals for the future.

Despite the significant financial challenges facing local authorities across the country, Knowsley Council's longstanding Knowsley Better Together principles and robust financial management is continuing to help the Council and its partners work together to support local communities to thrive.

The work of Knowsley Council and its partners continues to be underpinned by the belief that more can be achieved when organisations, groups and individuals pool resources, expertise and ideas and work together in line with its Knowsley Better Together principles:

- Be a strong community leader and always champion Knowsley
- Build better partnerships and work with others cooperatively to improve Knowsley
- Spend locally, invest locally and recruit locally to build social value
- Help people to be independent, doing more for themselves and each other
- Prevent problems occurring or stop them getting worse
- Listen to the community when making decisions
- Use the best way of delivering services that leads to improved outcomes for Knowsley.

This Knowsley Better Together approach demonstrates how

true collaboration with partners and co-production with communities drives forward improvements in Knowsley. It ensures that services, support, investment and much more is aligned to local need. In practice, this approach is embedded throughout the Council in all its work: from budget planning and service delivery, to staff inductions and resident engagement.

These principles have been essential in the ongoing delivery of the Knowsley Council Plan - with its vision to support those in need, develop inclusive skills and growth, and tackle the climate emergency. Within this context (and that of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the national cost of living crisis), the Council, working alongside its partners and community groups, has offered an extended model of bespoke and targeted support to local communities. Advice, services and support have been aligned to local needs, identified through an extensive consultation carried out to develop "The Knowsley Offer" - a co-produced directory of information, services, advice, facilities and more accessible in one place, aiming to help residents to thrive and not just survive.

Some examples of funded support include: -

- Support for community organisations to provide community-based food and essentials to residents in need
- Housing support offered to residents in both social and private sector rented housing. A Registered Social Landlord Social Impact Fund supports social housing providers to extend existing support, such as fuel, access to food, and hygiene packs
- Funding for local community and voluntary sector groups to provide advice to residents on finances. This includes a bespoke advice offer for people who are engaged with local health services and debt management support.

Supporting the Cost of Living

- Over **5,000** residents supported each month with food and household essentials
- Over **5,000** households received fuel vouchers
- Over **8,500** pupils receiving free school meals during school holidays
- Over **5,000** children and young people access free activities during Easter and Summer school holidays

Visit www.knowsleynews.co.uk/cost-of-living-support

Knowsley Council | Better Together | Cost of Living Support

This support has been funded by the Council’s own investment of over £4.9m in a Knowsley Better Together Hardship Fund (complemented by the application of the Government’s Household Support Fund) – with plans now being implemented to create additional long-term support for people in the borough struggling with the cost of living.

In March 2024, the Council set a balanced budget for 2024/25 and – through its robust financial management and decision-making – was able to permanently invest £30.6m in key services and initiatives for the future. The investment package is possible due to the sustained growth of the Borough, which as well as enhancing the housing offer and attracting more businesses into Knowsley, has also helped to create jobs for local people.

Included in the investment package is permanent additional funding to meet the growing demand for Adult Social Care and Children’s Social Care services, whilst simultaneously delivering a range of prevention and early intervention initiatives – designed to address issues at an early stage and prevent escalation. In addition to the

permanent funding, over £3m of one-off investments have been confirmed to support:

- Extended library opening hours
- Environmental enforcement including fly tipping
- Support for children with special educational needs and their families
- Support for healthy school meals
- Climate change adaptations to Council buildings.

Delivering better outcomes for local communities is a key priority for the Council and its Knowsley Better Together partners. A strong partnership approach, and strong leadership, is pivotal to success which is evident in Knowsley, particularly with how it has responded to the pandemic and the cost of living crisis as well as being able to invest in local support and services that are aligned to local needs.

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Knowsley Council



Community Wealth Building

Lewes District Council

Building Community Wealth in Lewes

For the last four years, Lewes DC has embraced a community wealth building approach to its work. This is about ensuring that local people and the local economy are placed at the centre of how the council operates and how we work with our partners.

We will continue to work with key local institutions; our county council, local businesses, police and NHS partners (anchor institutions) to change procurement practices to focus on local providers where possible. We aim to provide more local employment through all of our activities. We will support the development of social enterprises and identify where additional social value can be achieved in local communities.

Local spending

In addition to an increase from £5.3m to nearly £10m in spending with local suppliers over the last financial year, the policy is also supporting local employment, with 95% of council staff (760 full time equivalents) living in East Sussex, more than a fifth of whom live in Lewes district.

A modular housing framework has been established for the council, and other councils, to use. Local contractor, Boutique Modern have, through this framework, been able to establish a substantial program of works, using modern sustainable construction techniques.

Use of land and assets

The council has moved its offices from Lewes to the vacant Marine Workshops in Newhaven, a former technical college, which was acquired by the council in June 2022 in order to support the regeneration of Newhaven town. The building is being developed into a mixed hub supporting marine and education, commercial space and new public space.



Southover House, former council offices now leased by Charleston Trust

The council has maintained a presence in Lewes by repurposing a vacant shop in the town centre to provide a customer contact centre. Meanwhile, the former council office building in Lewes has been leased to Charleston Trust, an arts and heritage organisation who are using the building as a gallery and exhibition space which will contribute to community wealth by further developing the strong visitor and cultural economy of the town. Since opening its exhibition space in September 2023 Charleston in Lewes has welcomed more than 30,000 visitors and said early research indicates that three quarters of them have gone on to visit shops and other town attractions.

Making financial power work for local places

Lewes District Council has secured a place on a national pilot scheme that allows the council a more flexible approach to how it uses £37 million in government funding allocations. Lewes District Council is one of only 10 local authorities nationally that has been invited onto the pilot. It consolidates the Future High Streets Fund, Town Deal and Levelling Up Fund capital funding programmes being delivered in Newhaven.



Marine Workshops, former technical college and new site of council offices in Newhaven

Most significantly, with a main contractor now appointed, the announcement accelerates updated proposals for Newhaven Square. This includes the relocation of two doctor's surgeries to new healthcare facilities and the expansion of Wave Active facilities at Seahaven Swim & Fitness to support the rehabilitation of patients and promotion of healthier, more active lifestyles. Space for a new pharmacy and accommodation for a creative hub and start-up businesses are also part of the development.

Another aspect of the regeneration in Newhaven is the 'capturing the value of the catch' project in Newhaven. The project aims to: Provide two new fish landing stages to accommodate 16 small vessels from the Newhaven fishing fleet, build a New Centre of Excellence for Seafood Processing in the town including an auction room and marketplace, and create a new restaurant and community destination on the promenade area by West Beach. The purpose of this project is to retain spending in Newhaven for longer and stimulate a local market for fish, creating jobs and wealth locally.

Plural ownership of the economy

Encouraging entrepreneurialism is a fundamental component in building a resilient and vibrant economy.

As a Community Wealth Building council, Lewes District Council is committed to developing and growing small enterprises, community organisations, cooperatives and municipal ownership, as locally owned enterprises are more likely to employ, buy and invest locally.

Building on the success of previous business start-up programmes funded by the Council since 2013, the Council is now looking to interested parties to come forward with proposals for the next phase of the Lewes District start-up programme. This entrepreneurial service will support any resident with a business idea or early-stage business, including those who want to develop a socially productive business, to give them the skills, knowledge and confidence they need to start and grow a successful enterprise in the Lewes district.

Conclusion

The council has affirmed its commitment to building community wealth in its new Corporate Plan 2024-2028 and intends to work with partners to develop further opportunities for generating and retaining wealth in the local economy, creating new jobs and livelihoods for residents.

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Lewes District Council



Social Outcomes

London Borough of Lewisham

A Warm Welcome for All: Tackling the Cost-of-living Crisis

Coming out of a pandemic, with a looming cost of living crisis and rising inflation, we knew that Lewisham communities would find it tough, especially as they tend to trend below the London average.

Research told us that four out of ten Lewisham households were in fuel or food poverty, with local food banks seeing a 400% rise in referrals with falling donations. We could see an increase in payment arrears and debt and, locally, a rise in Universal Credit claimants. New vulnerable groups emerged that hadn't previously been considered at risk, and nearly three out of 10 Lewisham residents reported high anxiety levels.

Through our Local Strategic Partnership, we worked with our partner **Lewisham Local**, to deliver a small grants programme providing warm spaces and outreach activities to help people navigate the cost of living crisis and ensure they know how to access support and not feel isolated. The grants were worth a total of £65,000 and were distributed to 25 spaces to enhance/enable their winter offer. Following the success of this Warm Welcomes programme, a further £74,000 was identified to fund additional social prescribing, community transport, and outreach advice to support the hubs in offering more to residents.

The project team at Lewisham Local (four officers sharing a full-time role) worked collaboratively with the council's cost-of-living programme manager, plus three members of the council's Insight and Delivery team, to coordinate monitoring, communications, and evaluation.

Objectives

Our objectives were to reach 10,000 residents (measured by attendance) and for residents to feel supported, knowing that the Council and its partners were ensuring they were not left behind. This was measured by qualitative feedback, pulse surveys and comments from volunteers/library staff, which demonstrated that the programme fulfilled its objectives.



Co-producing with our partners – a direct impact on positive outcomes

The approach to 'Warm Welcomes' was to bring Strategic Partnership members' plans and ideas around 'warm spaces' together and support partners to promote their own spaces and initiatives using a joint, borough-wide brand.

We wanted people to feel welcome and avoid potential stigma around the use of 'warm spaces', acknowledging that many people might be accessing Council services of this nature for the first time. We also knew that we couldn't do it alone, so we looked to a partnership model to approach this challenge.

The programme's success was enhanced by buy-in from the Strategic Partnership, who were key to sharing the offer widely, using marketing collateral and signposting. 25 voluntary and community sector (VCS) partners could access small grants to extend their offer, and another 25 stepped up voluntarily with no additional funding, creating a network of 50 spaces. This amounted to 11,355 hours donated over the three months as warm spaces, or the equivalent of £31,000 worth of heating!



The Warm Welcomes partnership facilitated improved connections between services and fostered a network of learning, sharing best practices and cross-referrals between the hubs, local authorities, and other VCS services. This network has extended beyond the Warm Welcomes programme and continues to be used to share information across the community.

One of the most demonstrable successes is that the evaluation carried out for the 2022-23 programme, particularly the positive effect on people’s mental health, led to the local Mental Health Alliance advocating for Integrated Care Board funding to enable us to rerun the programme for the 2023-24 winter.

This year, we have built on feedback and are evolving the offer to include co-location between Warm Welcomes and various services, such as mental health support, our local ‘Bank of Things’, advice, and social prescribing. All of this has helped residents better connect with the support offers available in Lewisham, providing value for money for the Council.

The success of the Warm Welcomes partnership has formed the blueprint for our Essentials Goods grant scheme, which was launched in August 2023. This is another small grant programme to enable community partners to purchase essential items for residents, where the item will make a key difference in the resident’s life, but where they don’t have

the means to purchase it themselves, for example, bikes for transport to work, white goods, ID documentation, essential uniforms.

Further evaluation is showing us this strategic approach is working. Between October 2022 and March 2023 we saw an uplift of 29% in visits to our dedicated webpage and an increase of 30 seconds on dwell time. By monitoring click-throughs and heat mapping the page, we have responded to resident needs by tailoring our offer and strengthening elements of the partnership, which we know is in demand.

Over 18,000 residents have accessed our warm spaces and engaged with the partnerships’ support programme, exceeding our target of 10,000. Regarding value for money, it costs us only 8p per resident to act and visit a warm space and access support.

Our qualitative evaluation told us that 84% of visitors found the spaces helped them feel more connected and reduced social isolation. This was corroborated through interviews with several residents who visited the spaces. One lady was very open about her experiences, attributing her attendance at a local Warm Welcome to alleviating her suicidal thoughts. Just incredible!

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Community

Liverpool City Council

Eurovision in Liverpool: Cultural Events Connecting People and Places

Liverpool City Council has long recognised its cultural and creative sector as the beating heart of the city.

Major event programming is central to cultural provision, and Liverpool is a global leader in this area. A crucial element of its success has been recognising the need for such programming to build on, and foster, the social partnerships which exist between cultural organisations, artists, social enterprises, and communities to deliver improved outcomes for citizens.

Never has this been more evident than in May 2023, when Liverpool won the opportunity to host the Eurovision Song Contest on behalf of Ukraine with a compelling, creative, empathetic and fun bid.

This wasn't the City Council's Eurovision, it was everyone's – residents, schools, community groups, businesses and stakeholders were encouraged to grab this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and make the most of it.

EuroFestival was a two-week cultural festival featuring 24 brand new commissions – 19 of which were collaborations between UK and Ukrainian artists – with the majority of activities being free to ensure there was no monetary barrier to being part of this experience.

Along with this, Culture Liverpool commissioned more than 40 projects which would form part of EuroLearn – an education programme aimed at early years, primary, secondary and special education settings, offering a varied programme to ensure young people felt part of Eurovision. With three main strands of music, visual arts and storytelling, the creativity that emerged was unparalleled.

As part of EuroLearn, the Pysanka Egg project saw commissioned artists visiting primary schools across Liverpool and Wirral. They facilitated activities which would ultimately result in the design and creation of beautifully decorated large eggs – recreating a Ukrainian tradition – which went on display in a prominent city centre location.



Solidarity Disco Banquet, copyright Liverpool City Council

But that wasn't all. A EuroStreet initiative saw communities across the region get involved, take part and deliver more than 60 celebratory Eurovision events from chess competitions (a nod to the popularity of the game in Ukraine) through to a Festival of Europe which celebrated the culture and heritage of all Eurovision nationalities. A Toxteth-based social enterprise, Squash Nutrition, came up with the innovative idea to host four 'Solidarity Disco Banquets' at different community venues. People were invited to cook Ukrainian dishes then eat together while being entertained by live Ukrainian music performances. It brought together different nationalities and ages in a unique and unforgettable experience – one attendee described it as "a priceless interaction".

Care homes across the Liverpool City Region also were on the receiving end of some Eurovision sparkle courtesy of NWowo Arts – a local collective which specialises in developing and performing theatre in community venues. They researched the history of Eurovision, then spent time with care home residents, engaging with those living with dementia, Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases and recording their memories of the competition and of music. The result? A touring theatre show which was performed at local care homes 27 times across two weeks.



Eurovision Village, copyright Liverpool City Council

All this was the result of months of hard work by artists, musicians, poets and writers working to bring Eurovision to classrooms and streets, care homes, hospitals, parks, churches, village halls and refuges.

And if what was being commissioned and curated by Culture Liverpool wasn't enough, EuroGrants were introduced, which offered funding of up to £2,000 for community organisations to hold their events – whether it be street parties, fashion shows or even mini Eurovision contests.

The message was simple – when it came to Eurovision there were no barriers. And if you couldn't come to Eurovision, we'd bring it to you.

A comprehensive evaluation by external partners showed the impact. There was a £54million boost to the local economy and nearly half a million visitors. The EuroStreet and EuroLearn programmes engaged with



Children with Pysanka Eggs, copyright Liverpool City Council

367 organisations and directly with 50,000 people, young and old – with the overall host city programme reaching 2 million people. Of those surveyed, 93 per cent of residents expressed pride in how Liverpool had staged the event, and businesses across the city reported a boost in profits in May.

It was without doubt a milestone moment in the city's cultural heritage, but it didn't end when that last sequin was swept up on 13 May 2023.

The City Council is already looking at the legacy of this experience, how we can build on this success with a continued passion and commitment that genuinely hasn't waned since we were awarded the European Capital of Culture accolade more than 20 years ago. Our learning on this is invaluable, our social partnerships have been strengthened and our delivery and creativity pushed boundaries.

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Young People

Manchester City Council

Creating a Social Value Ecosystem

Putting residents first

'Our Manchester – Forward to 2025' is the current 10-year strategy for our city. It provides an overarching framework, underpinned by resident views, which guides our work towards making Manchester fairer, sustainable, and more inclusive. Different priorities flow from this, one of which is maximising the impact of social value. We recognise that social value needs to happen beyond procurement. As such, we have a Social Value Governance Board where senior cross-directorate colleagues (with Executive Members) coordinate this work; seeing it as a broader mechanism which can respond to strategic priorities and locality needs.

Bespoke partner initiatives

We also create bespoke initiatives with partners that respond to specific opportunities:

(1) Incentivising employment: Our Town Hall

The Our Town Hall project designed 18 employability-focused into an incentivisation model – if suppliers underdeliver against their social value commitments, they pay a fee. If they overachieve, they receive a retrospective payment. Five years into the Town Hall transformation, suppliers are over-performing on 14 KPIs, creating 239 jobs.

(2) Highways: cleaner transport

The MCC Highways Team developed a suite of KPIs that incorporate traditional outcomes (e.g., apprenticeships),

address Manchester priorities (e.g., digital inclusion), and tackle Highways-specific needs (e.g., safer and cleaner transport). They established a social value supplier subgroup and support organisations to evidence impact. Since 2020, they have generated £40,434,487 of social value, including over 1,700 weeks of apprenticeships and 83.67 tonnes of reduced waste.

(3) Championing inherent social value: PaSH

PaSH is a collaboration between three local charities that were jointly commissioned to deliver services to people living with HIV. Manchester City Council values the expertise of the third sector and their ability to address some of the biggest challenges facing our communities. We also appreciate that rigorous social value asks within bids can create a barrier for some organisations. The agreed social value commitments were proportional to the contract, focused on their strengths (volunteering and community engagement) and recognised the inherent social value that the PaSH partners hold.

What's next?

The MCC Social Value Governance Board has set ambitious priorities for 2024-2026, including a focus on brokerage models and evidencing systems. We have also appointed a new Social Value Programme Lead to further embed this work. Most importantly, we will keep our focus on residents; working collaboratively so that social value creates lasting benefits for communities, the local economy, and the environment.

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**MANCHESTER
CITY COUNCIL**



Young People

Manchester City Council

Creating the Environment of a Corporate Family for Children

Manchester City Council is underpinned by a children's rights approach in how we shape and deliver services for the children and families we serve. This has been reflected in practice as the move from a traditional Corporate Parenting Committee to a more radical child-led Corporate Family Cooperative, named as such by Our Children and Care leavers to reflect their expectations and desires.

To make this a success we have created the opportunity to be a Care Consultant paid on a sessional basis, by the hour at living wage.

The Cooperative meets quarterly, with a thematic focus on one of the four outcomes we want to achieve for Our Children; Happy, Healthy, Safe and Successful. Care Consultants plan and lead the sessions and hold us to account for our impact against the priorities set by Our Children. They use a workshop style, challenging Members and Professionals to unpick the way services support (or otherwise), best outcomes on this theme. There are no observers everyone is expected to operate cooperatively to debate, agree and action the challenges to improve their experience based on what is important to them.

There are no 'minutes' from the sessions, we produce an impact report and a shorter on-a-page impact summary co-written with a Care Consultant.

Impact:

There has been impact for the individuals who are Care Consultants in terms of their confidence, skills and experience and the opportunity to drive change.

The impact on the effectiveness in Manchester of meeting our corporate parent responsibilities has been similarly significant including:

- Increased the leaving care grant by 50%
- Care Leaver as a protected characteristic
- Corporate Family Cooperative as the 'family firm', ring fencing six apprenticeships for care experienced children
- Linked 100 children to clubs and activities they have been interested in trying
- Coproducing a 'handbook' for foster carers on how to recognise, and respond where children in their care may have mental health problems and self-harming behaviours.

The impact on the Members, officers, and partners is a stronger understanding of what is important to children who experience our care to make it better. The corporate parenting role is active and present and embedded in upholding the rights of Our Children.

In the words of a Care Consultant, Aliyah: "The best things for me is being able to make a change for the future of children and young people in care. The biggest thing is that plans moving forward, are part of what young people themselves feel like need putting in place, it shows real meaning behind Manchester as a collective being child centred and child friendly. Don't know if it could get better than that!"

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**MANCHESTER
CITY COUNCIL**



Climate Change & Environment

Newham Council

Linking Climate and Social Justice in the UK's First Local Authority Just Transition Plan

Summary

Newham Council launched the UK's first Just Transition Plan in December 2023 to support its local net-zero targets. This plan is the result of recognising the need for a comprehensive and collaborative approach to address the climate emergency reflective of the unique intersection of social, economic, and environmental challenges at Newham.

The plan shifts focus from a purely decarbonisation approach to a wider stance embedding core principles of increasing equity for residents and adapting to the worsening impacts of climate change for a fairer, greener borough, adopting a co-production approach.

Background

Despite being amongst the lowest carbon-emitting boroughs in the UK (per capita emissions), Newham is one of the London boroughs most exposed to extreme flood and overheating risks due to climate change. These risks are further exacerbated by Newham's demographic and socio-economic picture. More than half of our residents are born outside of the UK, and 69% of our residents are from Black, Asian, or other ethnic backgrounds, including Arab (Census, 2021), making Newham the most diverse borough in London.

Recent statistics show that people of colour in the UK are four times as likely to live in areas at high risk of dangerous heat. On top of that, a quarter of our residents earn below the London living wage, and one in two children live in poverty, with an increasing number of residents living in temporary accommodation.

This has meant that despite being the least contributors towards carbon emissions and climate change, our residents disproportionately face its most damaging

consequences. Our communities pay, as a proportion of income, the most towards implementing climate policy responses but benefit least from these policies and are often overlooked in key decision-making. This highlighted the need for a long-term and systemic view to address the personal, social and environmental factors that determine the way climate change will affect people, places, and organisations.

Newham's Just Transition Plan

The Just Transition Plan acts as a blueprint to address the unequal impacts of climate change on society to build a fairer borough that is more equitable, has lower emissions and is future-ready. It comes as a collaborative effort from internal and external stakeholders, bringing the latest thinking globally through its partnership with sustainability consultants Dark Matter Labs and ARUP. The plan will ensure equity considerations are embedded into climate change policies and activities as well as building climate into our understanding of other areas of governance.

Based on a newly developed 3-6-5 framework, it features:

Three Principles – guiding beliefs to inform actions, based on:

1. Increase equity
2. Reduce emissions
3. Build long-term resilience.

Six Futures – our ambitions and focus areas for key delivery:

- Homes, workplaces and schools are comfortable, healthy, and efficient
- The energy system is resilient, equitable and not dependent on fossil fuels
- Residents walk, cycle, or use public transport and goods are safely moved without polluting streets
- Sharing is increased and waste is reduced, building a

Just Transition Plan for the London Borough of Newham

3-6-5: a plan towards 2030

December, 2023

sharing and circular economy

- Residents eat well and sustainably
- Newham neighbourhoods are resilient, connected, and green

Five Enablers – our methods to ensure effective delivery of the futures:

- Growing the Council’s climate action capacity and effectiveness
- Targeting and increasing investment
- Partnering with Newham’s anchor institutions
- Enabling civic and place-based action
- Working beyond Newham’s borders.

Impact

As a result of the wide engagement conducted during the development of the plan through the formation of the Climate Action Working Group, there is now greater support for Net Zero across a broader range of council departments including our social care and housing teams. There is increasing recognition of the interconnected nature of Net Zero policy and initiatives and the co-benefits which exist between them and wider policy objectives. Embracing these synergies is already presenting good opportunities for cross-departmental working for the betterment of the local community.

The plan also builds a socioeconomic case for the need to act now and focus on adaptation and building resilience. The current projections show a dangerous rise in the use of materials, consumption of energy, and greenhouse gas emissions which will not only increase the effects of climate change, but also place higher financial costs on the economy. Adaptation goals have the potential to encourage investment and create value, as well as reduce risk, in speaking to the particularities of a place. The plan addresses this urgency through reimagining our material and ecological interconnections for our move towards a green economy through innovative investment models. This will involve continued work towards building green skills and the creation of new jobs in partnership with our Community Wealth Building and Housing team.

Challenges

One of our challenges continues to be the need for more funding to deliver our plan, which acknowledges the need for further financial support from national government to make sure we can successfully reach our targets. That’s why, to coincide with the launch of our Just Transition Plan, our mayor has also written a letter to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, asking the Government to provide much needed funding to deliver social housing retrofits which are at an estimated cost of over £800m for Newham’s council housing stock alone.

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 **Newham London**



Community

North Herts Council

Community Investment Fund

In February 2023, North Herts Council's Executive Member for Finance and IT announced the intention to launch a community fund of £100,000 from council reserves, at a meeting of Cabinet.

Following this, officers worked on developing the details of how this fund would operate, with guidance from the relevant Executive Members. The Members involved wanted the fund to enable community groups who offer important services and support to North Herts residents to improve and increase their capacity. By enabling community groups to invest in themselves, wider benefits to the community could be made possible. The fund was therefore named the Community Investment Fund.

Officers began developing a policy and criteria for the Community Investment Fund. The criteria established that the fund would be available for capacity building activities which would ultimately result in community value.

The policy highlighted that capacity building activities could include training or mentoring for staff or volunteers to fill skills gaps; developing a business plan; engaging a wider audience; doing more work in the community; purchase of resources or equipment; developing financial resources or fundraising capabilities; activities to attract or retain volunteers; or building a network of contacts to work with.

Ultimately, the capacity building activities should enable the community group to operate on a long-term basis, increasing their resilience and ability to meet the challenges that they experience.

Community value was defined as where the community benefits in terms of economic support and opportunities, social opportunities, wellbeing, or environmental protection and improvement.

It was decided that grant values would range from £5,000 to £20,000.

Once the Officer and Member group agreed the policy and criteria, the decision was taken in August 2023 to establish the Community Investment Fund, with a launch date of 11th September 2023.

By the application deadline in November 2023, the fund was oversubscribed by three times. A scoring matrix was developed from the criteria to ensure a fair and transparent assessment process. Two officers were responsible for the initial scoring of the applications, and peer-reviewed each other's scoring. Once this initial scoring had taken place, other officers were involved with verifying the scoring in order to produce a shortlist of the top scoring applicants, with senior officer sign off, to then be put forward to the Grants Panel.

Eight applications were put forward to the grants panel, including from groups working on mental health support, building resilience in young people, reducing energy usage and carbon emissions, and supporting families facing crisis situations.

The panel recommended the grants for approval by the Executive Member for Community and Partnerships, and the Service Director for Legal and Community. The grants were subsequently approved, and the successful applicants informed in February 2024.

We are looking forward to seeing the progress of the capacity building projects over the next year, and the community value that these produce.

The project reflects a number of the CCIN's values and principles. The values of **self-help** and **self-responsibility** are key to the project, as the fund encourages community groups to identify where their capacity could be developed and enables them to improve their service through skills development, fundraising capabilities, and attracting more volunteers, for example. The group is therefore responsible for finding ways to help themselves

and taking responsibility for ensuring that they can continue to operate on a long-term basis.

The principle of **Social Partnership** is also integral to the project, with the fund being made available from the council for community groups due to a shared sense of responsibility for the wellbeing of our residents and communities.

While the Council already runs a community grants programme, the Community Investment Fund also marked an **innovative** approach in making funds available for community groups to invest in themselves to ensure longer term sustainability. In doing so, we are able to **maximise the social value** that is delivered by these community groups, thereby creating better social and economic outcomes for North Herts residents.

The full list of projects funded is as follows:

Growing Resilience in Teens, a registered charity in Hitchin, towards hiring a fundraiser to develop their fundraising capacity.

The Creative Mental Health Charity PoetsIN, which currently mainly works in Hitchin, to cover the costs of a salaried project worker to expand their extensive programme across the district, which is structured so that it continues to offer ongoing layers of support.

Baldock Allotment and Leisure Gardeners Association towards redeveloping land in Baldock to create 30 half-plots to meet local demand.

Active in the Community, a CIC covering the whole district, to develop a comprehensive database of active sports clubs in North Herts, and look specifically into clubs' challenges with a focus on volunteering, to help create more sustainable clubs.

Green Heat Coop to develop and launch a home energy and retrofit advice service to improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions, initially in the Royston area with a view to expanding to all of North Herts.

Home-Start Royston and South Cambs towards training new volunteers who will support and visit local vulnerable families struggling with diverse and complex issues facing possible crisis situations, such as family breakdown and children being taken into care.

Royston Museum Trust towards an educational consultant to develop sessions aimed at local Key Stage 1 and 2 pupils, to strengthen their education offering to local schools and other educational groups.

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Poverty

Oldham Council

Embedding the Voice of Lived Experience in Service Design and Delivery Through Co-production: Oldham Poverty Truth Commission

Poverty Truth Commissions (PTC) are a national model pioneered by the Poverty Truth Network. They seek to identify different approaches to addressing poverty through direct experience, strong relationships and humanising people as well as systems.

Oldham's Poverty Truth Commission brought together a dozen people with lived experience of poverty alongside a dozen people with power, influence or authority from across a range of council and health services, businesses and voluntary sector. Its aim was to better understand the causes of poverty, the challenges it presents both for the people experiencing it and the wider system – and identify ways to address these.

The PTC was formally launched in September 2021 with seed funding from Joseph Rowntree Foundation and funding from Oldham Council and Oldham Clinical Commissioning Group.

Modelling co-production from the start, colleagues at Shared Health and Action Together, Oldham's voluntary and community sector infrastructure organisation, worked for a year prior to the launch to recruit, support, and build the confidence and capacity of the lived experience commissioners to engage with and shape the PTC. This support continued throughout the process and was important for those commissioners still facing hardship and difficult circumstances, establishing relationships of trust as a solid foundation for their ongoing participation. The Council's Corporate Policy team similarly recruited and supported the engagement of the business and civic commissioners.

Over the next 12 months the PTC met regularly to define and address the issues they wanted to prioritise. Unlike many other PTC's Oldham focused on the identification of themes rather than specific target-driven projects, reflecting the commissioners' awareness of the need to



Oldham Poverty Action Network

tackle relational, structural and system barriers to achieve lasting change.

Three key themes were identified:

- Welcoming points of contact: Services that have time to listen well and show understanding and empathy towards people who contact them for help.
- Reducing stigma and raising hope: Helping to meet people's basic needs whilst also giving them opportunities to thrive and achieve.
- Places of belonging, knowledge and hope: Places where people can belong to a supportive community

Embedding the 3 themes began whilst the PTC was still underway, the escalating Cost of Living crisis providing an opportunity to take forward "Welcoming Points of Contact".

The grassroots commissioners co-designed and helped to deliver the borough's Cost of Living response, working alongside senior officers and customer-facing staff from a range of organisations at the Cost of Living Summit in July 2022, to produce an Action Plan to support residents through the winter.

The Action Plan required all services and staff to adopt a strengths-based, trauma informed approach to supporting people in or facing crisis. The lived experience commissioners partnered with Council and Action Together staff to deliver face to face training to approximately 360 colleagues from a range of services and organisations. Going forwards, the Council is embedding a trauma informed approach across the workforce and an action plan is being developed to support this, led by Public Health.

Following the conclusion of the Commission in September 2022, work has continued to embed the PTC themes and lived experience at strategic and operational levels.

Strategically, the Oldham Poverty Action Network (OPAN) has taken up the PTC mantle and, with a core of the PTC's grassroots commissioners, has drawn in more partners from across the public and voluntary sector, together with funding from the Local Motion group of national foundations. Facilitated by Action Together three task groups have been established to make progress on their shared areas of work which continue to translate the PTC themes into action.

- 1) Building out from the cost-of-living response
- 2) Hope and aspirations: creating routes out of poverty
- 3) Building a joined-up approach to poverty alleviation & prevention

With a budget of £100,000 OPAN is able to test out ideas and develop proposals for longer term funding. Task Group 2 is currently focused on developing a model of volunteering which will 'reclaim volunteering for people experiencing hardship' and begin to operationalise routes out of poverty using a strengths-based approach. The aim is to recognise the ways people in poverty often already participate in their communities and build on these strengths as a route out of spiralling hardship whilst also improving their own skills, health and wellbeing.



Oldham Poverty Truth Commission

Taking forward the theme of creating places of belonging, lived experience commissioners have attended Planning for Real events in each of Oldham's five districts, helping to identify key community assets as part of a mapping exercise to inform future decisions in relation to the place-based integration of services. It is intended that the district hubs are welcoming places where residents can get help, information and advice when they need it, make links to other services and access opportunities for learning and development.

From the outset, the PTC aimed to raise awareness of the stigma associated with poverty which together with structural and system barriers, made it difficult for people experiencing hardship to get the right help and advice easily, quickly and in a way that recognised their individual strengths. This work continues now through OPAN and the development of the Oldham Systems Conditions Forum. The Forum is a newly created space to explore and tackle system conditions that are preventing people moving out of poverty, involving people with lived experience equitably alongside system partners.

In memory of Lynda Smith, Oldham Poverty Truth Commissioner.

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Oldham
Council





Community Wealth Building

Oxford City Council

Growing Oxford's Social Economy Through Collaboration not Competition

Oxford City Council have been leading a CCIN-sponsored policy lab to develop a Social Value Toolkit for Cooperative Councils. The toolkit is a collaboration between a number of councils, academics and legal experts, and will highlight a range of practical commissioning approaches that can help deliver social value that aligns with the values of the network.

One issue this seeks to address is that the tightly regulated process of public procurement can often be complex and confusing, presenting a 'barrier to entry' for smaller, socially purposeful organisations which often embody the values promoted by the network. There is often an assumption that competition (through procurement) is the only way to guarantee value for money and maximise performance outcomes but there are situations where this isn't necessarily true.

A sometimes-overlooked but legally compliant alternative can be to award funding through grants rather than through a competitive procurement process...

Growing the Oxford Social Economy through a collaborative commissioning approach:

The council's Economic Development Team have strong working relationships with a number of local partners and has been working collaboratively to address the opportunities, gaps and needs of the social economy support sector as a whole.

The council took a decision to invest £35,100 of its UKSPF allocation to extend and strengthen the work of these local partnerships, which will help deliver a number of outputs and outcomes identified in its UKSPF investment plan. These include:

- Social and local businesses receiving non-financial support

- potential entrepreneurs supported to be business ready
- training sessions for community ambassadors
- socially excluded people accessing support

Rather than follow a competitive procurement approach for contracting these services, the council took a decision to direct award the funding as a grant to a coalition of local partners and co-develop the scope of services through a transparent and open dialogue.

The question of value for money was addressed by fixing the amount of funding available, and working in dialogue with partners to estimate the outputs and outcomes that were achievable, then ensuring that the input costs represented fair compensation, based on local and national market rates.

As asset-locked social enterprises coming together to work for a shared purpose, there was no commercial, 'profit-making' incentive for partners to overstate costs or narrowly target performance at the expense of quality – any surplus generated would be put towards increasing the delivery of outcomes within the available financial envelope. This impact has been further extended by the fact that partners were able to contribute significant match funding/resources to the partnership.

By removing the competitive process and direct awarding the funding, the council was able to co-develop the programme of activity, without undermining the intention of partners to work together to further their shared aims. It was felt that a competitive procurement approach which put partners in competition for a limited amount of funding would be less conducive to the strategic goal of building a thriving and interconnected connected local support system.

The service design approach was heavily influenced

by Power to Change's *lessons on growing the Social Economy*; as well as research by Refugee Resource in Oxford, which found that entrepreneurs from global majority backgrounds are less likely to access mainstream business development support offers, and the findings of the *Owned by Oxford Report*. These sources all emphasise the importance of support that is tailored, local, and delivered through trusted relationships, as well as the (social) value of collaboration across different elements of the system.

The project:

The joint initiative, which is taking place over an initial 6 month period, will be guided by a set of comprehensive aims and objectives designed to bolster Oxford's social economy and foster positive impacts on the local economy, society, and environment.

The key components of the project include:

Direct support for grass-roots community businesses and community entrepreneurs:

The grant will be utilised to provide direct support to grass-roots community businesses and community entrepreneurs. This support aims to strengthen their foundations and enhance their capacity to contribute positively to the local economy, society, and environment.

Development of a peer-led support group for the social trading sector and social economy:

The programme will focus on the establishment of a peer-led support group for the social trading sector and social economy. This initiative aims to create a supportive community where knowledge and experiences can be shared, fostering growth and sustainability.

Feasibility for a local funding model:

The project will explore the development of a local funding model to ensure sustainability and resilience within the social economy. This innovative approach seeks to create a self-sustaining ecosystem that can support the growth of local enterprises.

The collaboration of OSEP, Aspire Oxfordshire, Co-op Futures, and CAG Oxfordshire reflects a strategic alliance that maximises the collective impact of enterprising charities, social enterprises and purposeful businesses in Oxfordshire. In delivering this specialist support, the project will work closely with other, well-established partners, such as the Owned by Oxford partnership, to continue signposting to the wealth of mainstream support services and resources where appropriate, also available locally, demonstrating the power of collaboration in driving positive change and creating a more vibrant and sustainable social economy.

Grant Hayward, Enterprise Manager at OSEP commented; "We're delighted Oxford City Council has grasped this opportunity to reinforce the foresight and leadership they have shown over the past few years supporting and developing the social economy and initiatives that prioritise the well-being and prosperity of the local community."

Alice Hemming, Cooperative Development Worker at Co-operative Futures added; "To grow a more inclusive social economy, we know that tailored business development support for start-up community businesses and social enterprises is vital. Co-operative Futures is pleased to be working in partnership on this project to provide this kind of support. We are planning to train and work alongside local social entrepreneurs and community members, so that they can start new businesses and take control of community assets."

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Community

Plymouth City Council

Mayflower food co-op

Based on the Cooperation Town model, food coops are small neighbourhood buying groups that provide their members with affordable groceries sourced in bulk and from surplus and distributed at a very low price.

Food coops are owned by their members and run according to the needs of that community. Members decide collectively on how to organise and are responsible for the day-to-day running of the coop.

Mayflower food coop started in July 2023, collaborating with the local church and school. Twenty parents/grandparents and parishioners came together to form this food coop. These people did not know each other, and they met once a week and all paid £3. They source fruit and vegetables from Fareshare, the food redistribution charity and go shopping each week, buying in bulk to save money. They then share this food equally.

Every member of this coop has a role in enabling the coop to run from treasure and co-treasure, from buyers to members who work on a rota basis, to accept and sort the delivery; everything is covered. As a collective, they decide everything together, making the coop unique.

What every food coop has in common is the coop principles.

- Open to all – anyone can be in a food coop (open membership)
- Its members run it – everyone has a role in the food coop
- Working in cooperation with others – food sharing / resource sharing / being respectful of our individual and collective voices
- Concern for our community – understanding what is needed and working together to make a difference. Every food coop in Plymouth is different

- Education and training – volunteer training / PEC / Citizens Advice / Livewell / Food is Fun / food hygiene training / adult maths courses
- Member economic participation – we all pay in, and the money raised goes back in towards paying for food (not for profit)
- Autonomy and Independence – Every coop looks different and will be run differently depending on the members' decisions.

Mayflower food coop members over the last eight months have:

- Attending local free cookery courses together, often helping each other with transport, and attending together makes it more manageable
- Four members attended the adult basic maths skills course together held at the local school, stating, "I would not have felt confident enough to go on my own, but I wanted to attend the course. I am so pleased we could do this together."
- Members have attended volunteer days at Fareshare depot, packing food for other charities and gaining valuable experience. "I really enjoyed giving back and seeing how this all works. I will come back."
- Two members have passed the Level 2 Food Hygiene course paid for by the food coop
- The members asked the church if they could use the space for longer on the day they meet and sort the shopping, so they now have a space where the members meet and have tea, coffee, cakes, and biscuits, making this a community coming together, friendships have been made



- Many members have attended the drop-in from Citizens' Advice and have been able to get help around money maximisation
- In the eight months Mayflower has been running, 4,950kg of food has been redistributed from the landfill to these members.

Feedback from the members

"Being on a pension this really helps me as I struggle a bit"
– Chris.

"It has helped me make friends, it has helped me in the Kitchen, and it has helped me massively with my shopping bill. You will never know the difference it's made and the confidence it has given me" – Nina.

"It's a lovely chance to meet new friends amongst all the food, which is the really helpful part" – Rosalie.

The model is proving popular. We started a fruit and veg coop at Plymouth University last year. It is student-led and has been so well received. They have three groups meeting in alternate weeks. This year, thanks to funding from the UK Prosperity Fund, we will open six more food coops throughout Plymouth, the first of which started in Cattedown in Feb 2024.

It is a movement that is making a difference in so many ways.

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Community Wealth Building

Preston City Council

How Community and Anchor Partnerships are Supporting a Low Carbon Economy in Preston

Advancing a Shared Economy in Preston (ASEP) is a programme jointly funded by Preston City Council and Power to Change. It aims to strengthen institutional capacity to support a more democratic and collaborative local economy in Preston. From the outset, the opportunity created by the transition to a low carbon economy for the development of the social economy has been a core theme. The Preston Cooperative Development Network (PCDN), a key ASEP delivery partner, has supported two community groups which are creating cooperative enterprises rooted in Preston's communities and focussed on the green transition.

One of these groups is Spaceplace, a well-respected charity which operates the Soundskills community centre in Brookfield, a large estate of private and social housing in one of the most deprived parts of Preston. Spaceplace identified local concern about youth unemployment and fuel poverty and in response has been working with a group of residents, a local building company and the PCDN to establish a new cooperative enterprise, Retrofit+. The cooperative aims to improve the energy efficiency of homes and other buildings on the estate and to create new employment and training opportunities for young people. The long-term aim is to grow a local 'retrofit workforce' to carry out contract work on Brookfield and across the wider Preston area.

Key to the project is the community centre itself. Soundskills is an informal space where people can develop their employability skills and self-confidence and is an ideal location for community and co-operative enterprise. In phase one of the project, Retrofit + will train three residents as part of a programme to retrofit the community centre itself transforming Soundskills into a hub to increase local awareness of retrofit and of its role in improving energy efficiency and reducing costs. Funding for the first phase of the project has been provided by the ASEP programme



Retrofit works beginning at Soundskills April 2024

and a local crowdfunder as well as smaller grants. Later phases will focus on retrofitting other local community spaces, businesses, and local homes as well as further training and education about the climate emergency and other environmental issues of concern to the local community.

Retrofit + has a clear purpose and mission. It is a cooperative owned by its members who will benefit directly from the opportunities it provides for training and employment, as well as contribute to the wider green transition in Preston. It is rooted in the locality it serves and

therefore understands and forms part of the network of relationships within the estate. It is anticipated that it will make an important contribution to improving the lives of residents in Brookfield.

The second project PCDN is supporting is to develop the community energy sector in Preston. Inspired by the success of other community energy groups across the UK, a working group of local authority officers, the PCDN, community activists and volunteers began meeting in 2021. The group aimed to use the mechanism of a community share offer to finance the roll out of solar energy generating capacity on rooftops across the city. Its members brought together a wide range of skills and experience, as well as the confidence to embark on an ambitious and complex project.

With support and advice from the PCDN, the group registered formally as Community Energy Preston (CEP) Ltd, a Community Benefit Society (CBS), which is a form of cooperative, in 2023. As a CBS, CEP can issue community shares to finance the installation of solar panels. Discussions are well advanced with three anchor organisations in Preston (anchor organisations are those which have an important local presence) which wish to install solar energy on available rooftops but cannot access the capital to do so on their own account. The issue of community shares will allow CEP to finance the installation and share the benefit of the cheaper energy generated with the anchor organisations hosting the panels on their rooftops and with the wider community through the operation of a

community fund. Many community energy projects across the UK have used the community fund to prioritise local projects to address fuel poverty.

Preston's ASEP programme is funding a project coordinator to support CEP's directors and specialist technical advice from the PCDN on cooperative governance and on issuing a community share offer. A 'Powering Our Communities' grant from Electricity Northwest Ltd is funding detailed feasibility studies of the proposed sites for solar installations. Later in 2024 CEP expects to issue a community share offer to raise over £1 million for the installation of the panels at the sites.



CEP Ltd is committed to becoming a self-financing and non-profit distributing cooperative company. The focus of its activity is to engage local people in the development, operation and ownership of renewable energy in Preston and to commit any surplus income to local community projects to address fuel poverty.

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Poverty

Rochdale Borough Council

A Cooperative Approach to Poverty Prevention

Rochdale is ranked the 15th most deprived borough in England based on a rank of the average for LSOAs in the area (defined in the Indices of Deprivation).

Recent statistics from the End Poverty Coalition estimate that child poverty has increased in Rochdale borough from 32.9% in 2014/15 to 40.5% in 2021/22. In the ward with the highest child poverty rate, half of all children are living in poverty. The Greater Manchester Poverty Action's (GMPA) 'Poverty Monitor' shows that 15% of Rochdale residents are in fuel poverty and 12% are struggling with food insecurity.

The Council is finalising its anti-poverty strategy - 'The Future we Deserve'. Its aim is to provide a life raft for families who are struggling to stay afloat. Rochdale is the birthplace of cooperation and a cooperative spirit permeates the borough. In order to make meaningful change for those experiencing poverty, we must galvanise that cooperative spirit.

The Council has worked collaboratively with a broad range of partner organisations, the Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector, through its partnership with Action Together and people with lived experience of poverty to devise and design the strategy. In early 2023 several listening events and anti-poverty summits took place, bringing partners together with those who have a lived experience of poverty. Through a combination of listening, workshops and action planning, a vision to alleviate poverty was formulated.

One of the fundamental objectives of the strategy is to ensure that co-production sits at the heart of any anti-poverty work. In order to enable this, the Council has



Rochdale borough from the Pennine Hills at Blackstone Edge

ceded responsibility to progress the anti-poverty work to the VCFSE sector.

An Anti-Poverty Network is in the process of being established; a group with lived experience and community involvement. This network will be facilitated by Action Together and will be entirely autonomous of the Council. It will be overseen by a Foundation Group, which will drive the work forward. It will function as a critical friend and will hold the system and strategy to account. Once the Foundation Group is established, it will recruit a wider Anti-Poverty Network to create a diverse movement of people working to understand poverty in the borough.

It is envisaged that the Network will also feed in to the Council's own governance system via the Health and Wellbeing board, ensuring that the voice of lived experience of poverty directly shapes and drives the borough's anti-poverty work and further informs and permeates the Council's wider aims.

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Community

Rochdale Borough Council

Blooming Community Spaces in Rochdale

Rochdale In Bloom is part of the Royal Horticultural Society's 'Britain In Bloom' competition. Whilst there is a competitive element, it provides a powerful tool for building communities and tackling local issues together.

Rochdale's In Bloom offer is, unusually, not managed by the local authority. Citizens are equal partners in designing the programme, which is overseen by an enthusiastic group of volunteers. It has flourished from a small team to a large collaborative network of community groups, private businesses, schools, individuals and the local authority.

Whilst it is not a formal cooperative, it remains true to Rochdale's cooperative heritage and is rooted in the values of self-help, self-responsibility, equity, equality and solidarity. There is a strong sense of mutual ownership and support, which is key to the continued growth and development of the project. As the chair of Rochdale In Bloom observed "Co-operation ~ It's in our DNA"

Intrinsic to the success of the offer in Rochdale is an understanding of the borough's demographic and a desire to build an offer which spans communities. Most importantly the offer is diverse and inclusive. Rochdale is justly proud to be the only borough to have a 'Mosques in Bloom' offer. They work hard to build community links and tackle gaps in social infrastructure. This creates the co-benefits of an attractive green environment in which Rochdale residents can take pride and get involved with, while in turn, strengthening community ties. It is aiming to continue to increase the number of community organisations entries to the "In Your Neighbourhood" category which reached an amazing 58 schemes in 2023.



It works hard to transform spaces whilst benefitting communities. Volunteers have developed an outdoor learning Centre from an unused piece of land, while simultaneously learning about the environment and natural habitats. This now functions as a forest school for five primary schools in densely urban areas, where children may have less opportunity to access green space.

There is ongoing work with Petrus, an organisation working with people at risk of homelessness, to create and maintain a therapeutic garden. The 'plot to plate project', helps address the cost of living crisis. It encourages residents to grow their own produce in community growing spaces to reduce their living costs. Any surplus is donated to the town's foodbanks to help address food poverty in Rochdale.

Rochdale in Bloom is viewed as an exemplar and is increasingly called on by other In Bloom groups, providing support outside of Rochdale's boundaries and demonstrating its unique cooperative approach.

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Strategy

South Ribble Borough Council

Place-Based Intelligence: Unifying Partnership Data to Gain Collective Insights

The aspiration for data-driven decision-making at the local level often clashes with the reality of data silos and scarce resources. The Place-Based Intelligence Platform addresses these challenges by consolidating fragmented insights from across the council and local partner organisations into a single, accessible repository of place-based intelligence.

Building Strong Communities Through Collaboration

The South Ribble and Chorley Partnership focuses on building strong communities and positive outcomes for residents through collaborative work across local anchor organisations. The partnership embraces joint working across the local public, private, and third sectors, with members including district and county councils, Citizens Advice, Primary Care Networks, Lancashire & South Cumbria NHS Foundation Trust, Progress Housing, Runshaw College, the Police, the Fire Service and more. By uniting such a broad spectrum of organisations, all sharing a geographical footprint, and agreeing on common goals to address widening inequalities, and enhance service access, the partnership was well-positioned to tackle the critical need for improved knowledge sharing.

Overcoming barriers to data sharing

Following successful data and intelligence sharing on specific issues such as the COVID response, the benefits of data sharing at scale were evident. However, inconsistencies in data formats, geography levels, and privacy and permissions concerns presented barriers. It was agreed that a secure and shared platform was needed to allow each partner to contribute their intelligence at an agreed level and compatible format, realising significant benefits for informed decision-making locally both for individual members and at a system level as a collective whole.

Co-production

To ensure co-production of the shared platform, a survey was completed to gather input from decision-makers and local leaders across partner organisations. This helped identify intended uses and the types of data that would be useful, as well as what each organisation could themselves contribute. Key use cases identified included:

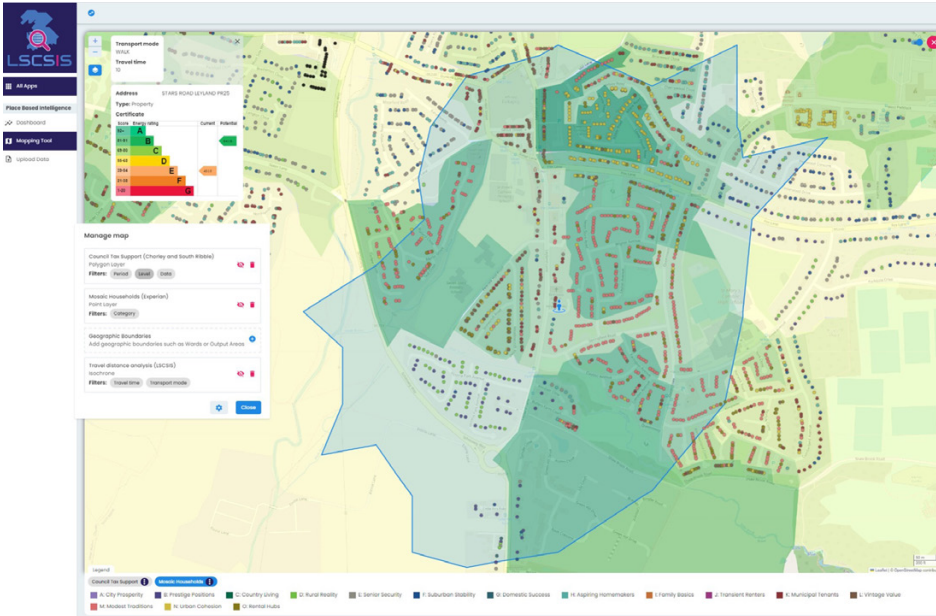
- Strategic Service Design
- Funding Bids
- Commissioning Decisions
- Resource Allocation
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Emerging Thematic Areas of Interest.

From the survey responses, thematic areas of interest emerged, including:

- Economy (Employment and Business)
- Housing, Environment and Crime
- Debt and Personal Finances
- Service Accessibility
- Education and Skills
- Mental Health and Wellbeing
- General Health
- Social Cohesion.

Developing a unified data platform

In collaboration with the council, Nexus Intelligence – a data and intelligence arm of Lancashire and South Cumbria NHS Foundation Trust, built an additional platform on top of their existing infrastructure, facilitating the ability to securely host, interact with and display data. By working with South Ribble and Chorley, a custom dashboard reflecting the goals and values of the partnership was developed along with an uploader tool. Tier Zero data agreements were drawn up and signed by the relevant partners involved, covering sharing of data at



an aggregated level using census output areas, striking a balance between granularity and confidentiality. By working individually with partner organisations relevant data was able to be identified and added to the platform, from rates of Debt Advice, and Universal Credit Claimants informing our economic theme to depression diagnosis and fit-note rates informing our health and wellbeing indicators, data from across the borough was drawn together into a single platform for the first time, bringing insights to the partnership’s shared objectives. Additional functionality was also built in, supporting partner needs such as the ability to define criteria and export cohorts and the ability to drop a location pin on specific assets to aid venue selection based on the travel time for targeted groups. As the platform continues to progress further and more use-cases emerge such functionality will continue to develop further.

Positive early use cases

The platform has already shown positive early use cases. A UKSPF funded energy efficiency scheme defined and targeted its cohort using partner data such as CAB Energy Debt Contacts, DWP Universal Credit claimants, and DLUHC’s EPC performance certificates. By bringing together this previously fragmented data the platform was

able to ensure that the project targeted residents with the financial need for support who also live in properties with the potential for efficiency improvements. Similarly, data from the local PCN on fit notes has informed the council’s understanding of elevated levels of economic inactivity, and a project to understand local elevated suicide rates has used partner data to target community conversations in areas with high debt prevalence and unemployment.

Conclusion

The Place-Based Intelligence Platform has successfully overcome data sharing barriers, enhancing local decision-making and service accessibility. It introduces a new model of meeting priority needs by providing local leaders and decision-makers with actionable insights, allowing for more targeted community initiatives. This tool dismantles traditional obstacles like siloed data, fostering a unified view of local needs. As a result, we’ve seen tangible improvements in the targeting of local interventions. The collaborative effort of partner organisations contributes to an effective way to better define and drive forward on shared goals. Further to this, as the platform evolves and demonstrates its value, more partners will likely join, further improving the platforms reach and impact.

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Poverty

South Tyneside Council

Tackling Poverty in South Tyneside

With a quarter of its residents living in the most deprived ten per cent of England, poverty has been on the radar of councillors in South Tyneside since long before the cost-of-living crisis.

In 2019 the People Select Committee started an in-depth investigation to ensure the Council was doing all it could to help people escape poverty while supporting those in difficult circumstances. The work of the Poverty Commission work led to the creation of the multi-agency South Tyneside Poverty Group which has helped coordinate the cost-of-living response and consider longer term interventions.

A recognition that no one organisation can deal with the magnitude of the issue has meant that partnership working is at the very heart of the approach. Last year a second Anti-Poverty Summit was held, involving 99 attendees from 36 organisations.

A number of key themes emerged from the Summit. Continuing to put local people with lived experience of poverty at the heart of decision-making is key, particularly through the Poverty Truth Commission, while providing simple and easily accessible information to residents is also vital. Other themes included working with employers to reduce in-work poverty and enhanced collaboration on funding bids.

Since the Summit, a clear set of action points have been drawn together to set the direction of the ongoing programme.

Attendees agreed that the network of Welcoming Places should continue to be supported to access funding. Almost 70 spaces in places such as churches, Council buildings and charities were found to be making a real difference to local residents when independently evaluated.

Training and skills provision will be offered in key community settings – including Welcoming Places – to allow people to

access basic skills and a wide range of accredited training opportunities.

A range of actions were launched to protect those most at risk over the winter with 'Winter Readiness Cards' produced to enable front-line workers to signpost those in need of support. A benefits advisor visited key community venues while families entitled to universal benefits related free school meals received food vouchers over the Christmas holiday period.

Work continues with a range of partners on raising awareness of and maximising benefits. The Council Tax Reduction Scheme has been reviewed to make it more proportionate and target it at those that need the most support, as well as continuing to help care experienced young people. The new scheme complements the work of the Welfare Support Team and Local Welfare Provision by benefiting around 10,000 households through Council Tax bill reductions of, on average, 60 per cent.

The Council is also using the South Tyneside Pledge to work with local businesses to reduce in-work poverty. More than 250 businesses have now signed up to the Pledge which aims to boost local economic activity, reduce health inequalities, cut carbon emissions, and enhance civic pride by spending, recruiting from and supporting the local area. A campaign has been launched to boost the awareness of local businesses around health and work, including benefits. Information has also been given to pledgees on the period poverty scheme which encourages employees to support those in dire financial straits by donating sanitary items, while links have also been made with voluntary organisations and pledges to see how they can work together. Officers are also exploring the potential to carry out an audit on in-work poverty, as well as looking at the feasibility of adopting the Real Living Wage and how both could be rolled out to wider partners.



CLlr Paul Dean, Lead Member for the Voluntary Sector, Partnerships and Equalities, is pictured with Laura Liddell

An Anti-Poverty Strategy Co-ordinator is co-ordinating all the anti-poverty work being carried out by the Council, the South Tyneside Poverty Group and associated groups and has led on the development of an Anti-Poverty Strategy which will further shape the direction of work and feed into the new North East Combined Authority. Work is underway to look at how best to share information with partners while a working group has also been formed to explore free school meals auto-enrolment.

While it is clear that a huge amount of work is going on to alleviate poverty in South Tyneside, it must be recognised that most of the levers to action real change are in the control of central government. It is, therefore, vital that there is continued lobbying to highlight the impact of poverty and the resources needed to alleviate it. One example of this is

the combined lobbying with the North East Child Poverty Commission and the Local Government Association for the continuation of the Household Support Fund.

Despite the challenges, a determination and willingness to work in partnership is key to the response in South Tyneside. It is only by working together that so much has already been achieved for those in dire financial circumstances. From improving access to financial support and affordable nutritious food to tackling health inequalities linked to poverty to ensuring high quality careers advice is available to all, there is an unwavering commitment from all involved to tackle the unprecedented level of poverty in the Borough. It is that cooperative approach that sets South Tyneside apart and has enabled so much to be done for those most in need of support.

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South Tyneside Council



Community

Stevenage Borough Council

Blossoming Haven: Transforming an Unused Space into a Community Garden Oasis

Recognising its potential as a vibrant community space, residents have come together with a shared mission: to rejuvenate an area of Coventry Close, a residential street in the heart of Stevenage, into a welcoming gathering area with a flourishing garden, ripe with fruit trees, vegetable plots, and bulbs providing early spring flowers.

The focus has been on creating an inviting community space that encourages social interaction, outdoor activities, and a sense of belonging whilst also being beneficial for local wildlife and pollinators, planted with a changing climate in mind.

Residents were keen to have a garden area where they could grow fresh fruit and vegetables, fostering sustainability and healthy living and; enhance the aesthetic appeal of the space. For the younger generation, it also provides a safe and engaging environment to play whilst learning about gardening and connecting with nature.

The transformation of this space was achieved by working collaboratively with residents, ward councillors and local social enterprise Waste Not Want Not. This is a Kings Award winning organisation that uses horticulture as a therapeutic tool to help people with mental health issues or those recovering from a life crisis. Additional funding for the project was provided by Stevenage Borough Council's Climate Change Community Funds.

Volunteers have been recruited from the community to help with garden maintenance, such as planting, watering, weeding, and harvesting. This also includes ongoing

support from Waste Not Want Not and the local Community Pay Back Service.

Through these collaborative efforts, the revitalised space holds the potential of developing into a thriving community hub and garden. It's a space for everyone in Coventry Close to enjoy along with their family and friends. By fostering a sense of ownership, the project will create a lasting legacy that will enrich the lives of residents and strengthen the fabric of the community.



Coventry Close after works (inset: before)

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 **Stevenage**
BOROUGH COUNCIL



Community

Stevenage Borough Council

Arts and Culture for Social Cohesion – Creating Spaces for Art and Culture

We have an online arts and heritage forum to encourage a wide range of communities. Out of the arts and heritage forum came Project Junction 7 Creatives, which allows people to come together and create. Our annual event, Stevenage Day, promotes all the communities in Stevenage and is a macro representation of Stevenage.

Creating Spaces for Art and Culture in Stevenage focused on providing community spaces through events such as Stevenage Day and improving accessibility to facilities such as our museum and the Gordan Craig Theatre. We also looked at the development of creative spaces like Junction 7 Creatives, an organisation based in the heart of our town that helps local people access and explore creativity and culture.

Through our work with Junction 7 Creatives, we have been able to continue engaging with and supporting grassroots organisations that access their gallery space and meeting facility. Junction 7 supports both amateur and professional artists by providing a platform for works to be displayed and community arts groups to meet and develop ideas. They also support students through their internship programme with the local college.

Our involvement in this policy lab and the communication avenues it opened for us have also led us to work more closely with the Stevenage LGBTQ+ group to deliver a larger event within Stevenage Day 2024 to celebrate Pride Month.

As this is the first time the Stevenage group have organised a Pride event in the town, this initial celebration will be held alongside our annual Stevenage Day event. The existing support and organisational structures within Stevenage Borough Council will therefore be available for the Stevenage LGBTQ+ group to lean upon with plans to develop it into a standalone Pride event in the coming years.

We are also working with the Stevenage Equalities Commission for Ethnically Diverse Communities to host a conference in October for Black History Month. To celebrate the Creating Spaces theme, the conference will be held in the Gordan Craig Theatre, which is at the heart of our performance community. It will focus on making spaces like this more accessible to community groups and amateur performers.

Our focus on developing our creative spaces, access opportunities, and community-led events showcased a small sample of the myriad of art and cultural activities in the town that bring together communities and ensure that everyone has space for expression.

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Community

Sunderland City Council

Community Digital Health Hubs

In March 2023, Sunderland City Council published the Digital Inclusion Plan which outlines three pillars relating to developing a Smart Digital City, Smart Digital Workforce and Smart Digital Residents.

The pillars have six shared priorities, building upon the Cooperative Council Values, with over 50 key actions to deliver. To download a copy visit www.sunderland.gov.uk/GoOnlineSunderland

Digital inclusion landscape in Sunderland

In Sunderland it is estimated that 30,000 people have never been online, and a further 77,000 people are limited users (UK Consumer Digital Index 2022). With a population size of 277,846 (Census 2021) this means that potentially 1 in 3 people in Sunderland are at risk or experiencing some form of digital exclusion. Some of the biggest indicators for digital exclusion in the city are unemployment, low income, older people, people with disabilities and low educational attainment. The probability of digital exclusion increases for those who may have addiction issues, experiencing domestic abuse, have English as a 2nd language, suffer from long term health conditions, live in poverty or are socially isolated.

Sunderland community digital health hubs

The UK Government awarded over £580,000 to the Council through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to address digital exclusion by tackling key challenges, such as, limited connectivity, lack of access to digital devices and skills, the increasing costs to go online, with the need to improve trust levels and accessibility. 22 trusted community partners joined a Delivery Partnership between the Council and Boldyn Networks to establish community digital health hubs across the city, with an aim to enhance digital inclusion and tackle health inequalities.

Friendly approved wi-fi

Phase one involved carrying out an audit of each community building to assess the digital infrastructure and connectivity strength. Based on the findings, each community building had their existing Wi-Fi systems replaced with new architecture and coverage extended to all public and staffing areas to deliver optimal performance.

Sensors

In addition, sensors were installed to count footfall and maintain the health and integrity of the buildings. Data is fed into dashboards providing daily information on Wi-Fi usage, people count, humidity, atmospheric pressure, temperature and CO2 concentration.

Digital devices

Each Hub received a budget to purchase digital devices for residents to access. Or if residents have their own devices, they can bring them along to the Hubs and use them to connect to the free Friendly Wi-Fi. This provides people with a choice to use their own device or borrow one from the Hub and go online to book appointments, save money, look for work, or even complete homework.

Tech Mates

Local people can receive support from other local people, who have been upskilled as Tech Mates. Tech Mates will be ready to help out, build confidence and share their digital learning and skills with others, who may have never been online before, for example, by showing people how to navigate around the web safely.

Databanks and online networks

Hubs have registered with Good Things Foundation as Online Centres, offering access to Wi-Fi, devices and basic digital skills support, and encourage progression by signposting people onto learning platforms like Learn My Way, or into local training providers funded by the Council's Learning and Skills Team. Hubs receive regular e-newsletters from Good Things promoting training and funding opportunities. Many of the Hubs act as Databanks, and distribute free SIM cards to eligible people to ensure they can stay connected at home or on the move.

Community eSports hubs

Five of the hubs, have received gaming kits to set up Community eSports hubs, working alongside British eSports Federation. Believed to be the first of its kind, the Project raises awareness about the gaming industry and encourages people of all ages into education and employment pathways.

Operational support

Five-year operational support is offered to each Hub, which includes connectivity to access a guest portal to analyse and manage the data received about Wi-Fi usage and sensors relating to the footfall and the integrity of the building. Costs for the Friendly Wi-Fi safe certification standards to ensure public Wi-Fi meets minimum filtering standards are covered, along with a contribution towards broadband fees, the supply of an on-site engineer fault fixer and a Service Desk in relation to any loss of service and/or performance issues. Furthermore, there is a dedicated council officer aligned to the programme, who acts as the 'go to' person, and can provide access to free training and support.

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Poverty

Swansea Council

Our Truth about Poverty

A new approach has been launched in Swansea to help understand and address the causes and symptoms of poverty.

Swansea has become the first city in Wales to establish a Poverty Truth Commission.

Prior to the pandemic a cross-party group of councillors had been looking at poverty and the effectiveness of services provided by the council and its partners.

One of the overriding findings was the need to give those with a lived experience of poverty a greater voice to influence the changes needed.

The council got the ball rolling in helping to start-up the commission which is an independent body hosted by the third sector organisation Swansea Council for Voluntary Service (SCVS).

Between 2021 and 2022 a substantial amount of work took place to identify a core group of individuals from a wide range of backgrounds who would become the "Community Commissioners".

They gathered regularly and a number of common themes emerged:

- Barriers to seeking support ranging from attitudes of frontline workers to inaccessible and sometimes hostile and complex systems
- The link between mental ill-health and poverty
- Homelessness and insecure housing
- Connections between being a domestic abuse survivor and poverty

- The relationship between being a primary carer and poverty
- The impact of poverty on life aspirations, career and education options
- The intersectionality between poverty, race, gender and disabilities.

When the Poverty Truth Commission launched in October 2022 the 'Community Commissioners' were joined by 18 "Civic and Business Commissioners" drawn from a range of organisations including the council, police, health service, DVLA, third sector and businesses. They have been meeting monthly since then and the wisdom and experience of the community commissioners has had a real impact.

Perhaps the most significant benefit of the commission so far is that the learning from those living with poverty every day is starting to have an impact on service delivery by all partners involved. We have a clearer understanding of what we need to do.

One of the Civic Commissioners said: "I have learned that I probably did not really consider the end user for services I provide, and also how simple things can mean so much to someone living in poverty. I now always think about those living in poverty when making decisions about service delivery. I try to think of how the service offer would impact on the friends I have made through the commission."

A Business Commissioner commented: "I've learned that it's important to take time to build relationships, to listen to understand (not respond) and to appreciate the unique impacts poverty can have on every facet of life. Workwise, it has been affirmed that service provision needs to be designed around those who use the service, not those who provide it - or regulate it, or legislate it.

“It’s really brought home how many of the issues faced are due to inflexible or perhaps inhuman processes – so much is entirely the result of the system not being human focused.”

As well as helping to shape attitudes, locally commissioners have also been helping to influence policy nationally. This year the Welsh Government published its new Child Poverty Strategy and as part of this process invited Community Commissioners to speak at a committee hearing in the Senedd.

Their input is acknowledged in the final report particularly around the importance of people being aware of their benefit entitlements, and the need for automated and simplified processes, to help them receive what they are entitled to. The work of the Swansea Poverty Truth Commission was also picked up in the Audit Wales Report ‘Time for Change – Poverty in Wales’, where it was highlighted as good practice.

At the end of April this year the commission came to a close and a celebration event showcased a number of key recommendations:

- A charter for organisations to follow which commits them to working with a compassionate, sensitive, “human” approach
- Improving access and signposting to valuable services people don’t know about, crucially as universal mental health provision
- A shadowing/mentoring scheme where service users observe and advise service providers, to improve communication, experiences and outcomes, while gaining insight into a variety of employment roles



Swansea’s Poverty Truth Commission has taken evidence for the past two years

- A local Lived Experience Advisory Panel/Forum to inform policy and practice.

It was also announced at the celebration event that the work of the Commission has also led the Wales Centre for Public Policy to select Swansea Council to collaborate on a place-based project to tackle poverty stigma. Tackling stigma is a key priority for people with first-hand experience of poverty. This is because poverty stigma damages people’s mental health and can keep them from getting support or playing a full part in their communities.

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Housing

Swindon Borough Council

Modernisation in the Field of Social Housing Roof Inspections

Modernisation in the field of social housing is often marked by the creation of intangible benefits that go far beyond mere cost savings and operational efficiency. One such example is the introduction of drones for our social housing roofing inspections, an imaginative move with commitment to enhance both how we support our tenants and improve efficiency of operations.

This proof-of-concept project was supported by a dedicated collaborative team of cross-Council services along with, all important, engagement with and support from tenants and residents. The collective wisdom, wide range of perspectives and experiences, along with dedication were crucial to its success.

Our aim; to evaluate and evidence the benefits of using drones for roof inspections on our social housing stock. We ran a trial between October 2022 and April 2023, following the success of it, drones have now moved to business as usual and extended in their use across the organisation.

The roofing team’s major business challenges were:

- Eliminating work at height where possible to improve alignment with HSE guidelines
- Improving the quality and efficiency of our roof inspections; having accurate assessment for ‘right first time’ repairs
- Where possible remove the need for scaffolding to inspect

Time was invested upfront thinking and researching the potential concerns and barriers to acceptability and devising strategies to mitigate them. The focus on governance and openness of this was paramount, laying the foundations for success. Right from day one, we implemented nudge theory and went with an active opt-in approach, setting the stage for a paradigm shift in inspections.

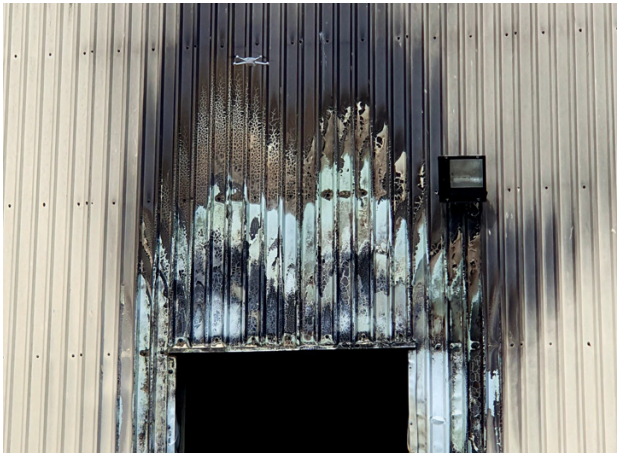


Swindon Town Centre Rooves by Drone

We undertook a variety of engagement and information sharing:

- Openly publishing our governance and FAQ’s and providing a method of contact for any specific queries or concerns (we also have a QR code on our signage when a drone inspection is taking place, which, when scanned takes the individual to our privacy policy, governance information and approach and FAQs)
- We have also shared the results of the trial openly with all through a results report, tenant and members newsletter, blog, and social media. We also interviewed the Chartered Institute of Housing who wanted to support the drive for tech innovation across the housing sector and felt our work was a great initiative to showcase
- Additionally, we have engaged and shared our governance with other Local Authorities who are interested in now undertaking the same initiative

SBC are using a DJI Mini 3 Pro drone: [dji.com/uk/mini-3-pro](https://www.dji.com/uk/mini-3-pro). This falls into the A1 category, C0 class. Our drone has enhanced safety in mind and powerful sensing capabilities.



Fire Damage Inspection by Drone

They offer a visual layer of transparency in the inspection process, allowing residents (and interested near bystanders) to witness assessments first-hand. This not only fosters trust in the Council's commitment to their well-being but also initiates conversations about technology adoption and urban improvements. The result? A stronger sense of community involvement and shared vision.

The safety of staff and residents was a top priority. With drones, staff members are provided with a safer work environment, significantly reducing the risk of accidents and injuries. The team also gained the ability to identify hazardous materials upfront, mitigating potential dangers and delays that were previously experienced. Moreover, drones have reduced risk in several other areas; for example, the risk of children climbing scaffolding (it happens), decreased issues associated with property access (especially for older individuals and those with physical disabilities), and reduced risk in property damage.

One of the most significant benefits emerged in the form of workforce happiness, skills acquisition and new opportunities. The staff developed new skillsets and have all qualified as drone operators; this has led to enhanced professional growth, job satisfaction, and motivation - they have a real sense of pride in how they've collaborated and developed with us a modernised approach for their

work. Additionally, there's potential for more inclusive employment opportunities where previously working at height would have been prohibitive for some individuals.

Introducing drones has sparked curiosity and discussions among residents, stimulating interest in technology adoption and urban improvements. In turn, this has fostered a sense of community involvement and collaboration. Residents recognise that drones contribute to more eco-friendly practices by reducing or eliminating the need for scaffolding and additional travel, which aligns with the Council's broader sustainability goals and resonates positively with environmentally conscious residents.

The feedback from tenants has been overwhelmingly positive: 94% positively responded to drones being used for social housing roof inspections

The financial benefits are also substantial: we've seen an annual saving of £80,265.00. And the average inspection time with drones is just 17 minutes, a stark contrast to the previous 64 days. The investment cost was £2,503.27 (for the drone, accessories, signage/PPE, training and certification), meaning our RoI to-date is 3,106.41%.

Drones have now become business as usual for the roofing teams. All teams are fully qualified, with each one having their drone, ensuring the sustainability and continuity of this initiative.

Additionally, we've now extended our use of drones across the Council, bringing wider business benefits (e.g., for tree inspections, urban planning, and our ecologist and communications team use them).

The tangible benefits are evident, and the intangible rewards regarding safety, trust, empowerment, sustainability, and community engagement are equally, if not more, compelling. This work exemplifies how forward-thinking initiatives and collaboration can transform how we work with and support our communities, residents and town, who are at the heart of all we do.

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Social Outcomes

Telford & Wrekin Council

Telford & Wrekin Armed Forces Covenant

The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise that those who Serve, or have Served, in the Armed Forces, along with their families, should be treated fairly and face no disadvantage when accessing public and commercial services.

Telford & Wrekin Council signed the Armed Forces Covenant in 2012 and has developed a strong infrastructure including an outward facing Strategic Armed Forces Covenant Partnership Board, two elected members including a dedicated Armed Forces Champion and a Cabinet member with responsibility for the Armed Forces Covenant and an Armed Forces Covenant Co-ordinator.

In July 2023, the Council approved a proposal to treat Armed Forces Service in the same way as the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics as part of our obligation to reduce, limit and remove disadvantage to our Armed Forces community.

Our ever-expanding Armed Forces Outreach provision is designed to provide help and support to all our Serving Personnel, veterans and their families and we work closely, and in partnership with both Service and non-Service charities. One of most recent, and significant successes, has been the launch of Veterans Cafés (delivered by Telford Mind) which provide an opportunity to offer an early intervention service to those who are experiencing poor emotional wellbeing and mental health. These cafés are positively changing the lives of veterans and family members and attendance numbers continue to grow month on month.

“(The cafés are a) Really good way of meeting new friends, also for those who are lonely. Mind do a really good job and the meetings are helpful to those who need help and can put them in the contact with other associations who can assist. Especially with the Royal British Legion and others within the military community (Veterans). A really friendly team and we always look forward to the meetings” – a testimonial from a local Veteran.

There remains a reluctance from our Armed Forces community to ask for help which means that we are constantly seeking ways to broaden our outreach activities through partnership working. Current activities include: a Veterans’ Football Group and two Tab & Talk sessions each week (delivered by Allsports Coaches Coaching Academy) and a Models for Heroes Group.

In 2020, the Council received the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award as an exemplar employer. Moving forward, we will build further opportunities to reach our Armed Forces community in different ways including recruiting veteran volunteers passionate about supporting other veterans, and family members, who may require company and support especially in our residential homes.

In 2023, we supported Great Dawley Town Council in launching the UK’s first Armed Forces Friendly High Street with all the High Street shops signed up to support their local Armed Forces community. This initiative is now being rolled out across the borough.

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Social Outcomes

Telford & Wrekin Council

10 by 10

Telford & Wrekin Council are the first council to implement the 'Ten by Ten' initiative, that aims to give all children in the Borough the opportunity to take part in ten life-enhancing activities by the time they are ten years old. These activities are:

- Join in competitive team sports
- Play an instrument
- Learn to swim
- Visit the seaside and the countryside
- Take part in drama and performing arts
- Experience museums, galleries and heritage sites
- Use a library
- Learn to ride a bike
- Take part in debating
- Take part in camping trips and overnight residential.

Since adoption by the Cabinet in March 2022, the council has worked in partnership with many schools, external and community providers to promote 10 by 10.

As well as this, the council has increased access to a number of its own activities. For example, there has been increased support for disadvantaged children who are unable to swim to access swimming lessons. The council Music Service has also increased its capacity to provide music lessons, both for individual children and within schools. As part of their work, they introduced a 'Telford Sings' event last year that saw many children from across the borough come together to sing as one choir. The council Library Service worked with schools to promote reading over the summer holiday and many more children signed up and completed the 6-week summer reading challenge, which could be accessed at all libraries in the borough.

To encourage families to participate in 10 by 10, the council has set up a dedicated website, where parents/carers can register child accounts to track progress of various activities and receive updates about activities and offers by email. Currently there are over 2100 children signed up to the website, and the council has used this along with its social media to promote and share offers from both Ironbridge Heritage and National Trust.

Looking ahead, the council is working with its partners to increase participation of the 10 by 10 initiative again this year, especially the offer for SEND children.

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Telford & Wrekin
COUNCIL



Community

Trafford Council

Trafford Poverty Truth Commission

Poverty is an issue that is best described by those who experience it. Creating a platform for those with lived experience to share their story is a powerful tool to destigmatise the experience of poverty and empower those who best understand it to drive change and have their voices heard.

The Trafford Poverty Truth Commission (PTC) is a group of 34 people in Trafford who care about poverty and are committed to making things better. The group was made up of 14 Community Commissioners of different ages and backgrounds who not only have a shared experience but also a unique story to share about how poverty has impacted their lives. The PTC brought these people together with 18 Civic Commissioners from the public, private and voluntary sector who have the ability to make decisions that have an impact on people who experienced poverty in Trafford.

How did it develop?

The Poverty Truth Commission launched in May 2022 after a period of recruitment and followed a programme of work concluding with its final report and recommendations in March 2023.

May 2022: Trafford PTC launch event with all Commissioners

June 2022 – October 2022: Workshops to develop relationships between Commissioners and identify issues in Trafford.

October 2022 – February 2023: Workshops and task groups to focus on key identified issues.

March 2023: Event to present the Commission’s recommendations and outline the impact

April 2023 – September 2023: Commissioners and partners to work on recommendations and pledges.

September 2023: The Commission gathered to review the progress of recommendations from task groups and the pledges from Civic Commissioners



Commissioners coming together as equals

The Trafford Poverty Truth Commission follows the model delivered in several areas around the country. Integral to its work is building trust and relationships between those who have direct experience of poverty and those in positions of power to make decisions that can alleviate or reduce poverty. To strengthen the impact and autonomy of the group, once the Commissioners have been recruited, the Council and members of the VCSE facilitation organisation do not attend the meetings.

This recognises the power that Community and Civic Commissioners have as part of the Poverty and Truth Commission to bring about change. Community Commissioners are given the space to share their experience of poverty – some chose to do this through poetry, others through speeches, and some through writing down how they felt. The powerful candour of this process breaks down barriers between Community and Civic Commissioners, creating an environment of trust for co-creation to blossom.

What did the PTC achieve?

As a result of the sessions and the sharing of stories from Community Commissioners, the PTC developed 4 recommendations to inform strategic decision making within Trafford moving forwards:

1. Improve how Trafford residents access services, including a One Stop Shop with a focus on “in person” advice.
2. Embed the Voice of Lived Experience in the way that key services engage with those in Trafford.
3. Make public transport truly accessible for everyone.
4. Tackle mental health and isolation.



A real impact on the lives of those experiencing poverty

A tangible impact that the Poverty and Truth Commission has had on the lives of those experiencing poverty can be seen through recommendation one and the implementation of a One Stop Shop, now named the Stretford Advice Hub. This in-person service is available to all residents on a weekly basis, with attendance from Welfare Advice, Housing Options, Energyworks, digital support and ESOL classes, with more interested on becoming involved. Work is being conducted to develop a shared database amongst these services to mitigate against the exhaustion and frustration experienced by residents have to repeat their experiences of poverty and their story at each and every service provider they engage with.

Civic commissioner pledges

As a result of the Poverty and Truth Commission, the Civic Commissioners from a range of organisations across Trafford made significant pledges towards tackling poverty within Trafford. As per the timeline of the PTC, these pledges have been followed up in successive meetings with the Community Commissioners from the Poverty and Truth Commission. There is a continued focus on engaging with Civic Commissioners and ensuring that their engagement continues.

Sustaining the voice of lived experience

Now the official Poverty and Truth Commission has concluded, the Community Commissioners are supported by Trafford Council to continue their work, offering consultation and advice to key service leaders in the development of their work, as well as following up on the pledges of the Civic Commissioners from the original Poverty and Truth Commission.



Moving forwards

Moving forward, the Trafford Council is focussed on finding further opportunities to embed the Voice of Lived Experience across everything we do, bettering our understanding of how key decisions impact those who are experiencing the hardship of the cost of living crisis. New members have recently been recruited to the panel and a review has been scheduled to refresh the panel’s priorities based on any new issues identified by the Community Commissioners.

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TRAFFORD
COUNCIL



Strategy

Westminster City Council

Westminster Against Dirty Money Charter

Westminster has long been reported as a focus point for money laundering in the UK, with the rise of American Candy stores on Oxford Street presenting a peak in the discourse around this. While a lot of the policy and enforcement levers to tackle these matters are not directly in the control of the Council, or the vast majority of our businesses, it was imperative for us to do all we could.

Bringing together academics, NGOs, the public sector and business we co-produced a set of commitments that we could deliver working together – along with a Fair Tax commitment from the Council to lead the way. This culminated with the signing of the Westminster Against Dirty Money Charter with the New West End Company, the Fair Tax Foundation and Heart of London Business Alliance – the first agreement of its kind setting out three pillars:

- Supporting Fair Taxation;
- Transparency and Accountability; and
- Constructive Challenge.

This marked us as a willing partner - working with business – to do everything we can to tackle dirty money in the city and encourage partners to come forward, recognising the Council wants change but cannot solve these problems on its own.

This was not just to show a commitment, the Council wanted to lead the way and show what meaningful steps were available to us. The council signed the Fair Tax Declaration having adopted it at Full Council, committing demonstrate alignment with our values and encourage responsible tax practice through:

- leading by example on our own tax conduct;
- demanding to know who owns and profits from businesses the council buys from – UK and overseas – and their full financial reports;
- joining calls for UK public procurement rules to change so that councils can do more to tackle tax avoidance and award points to suppliers that demonstrate responsible tax conduct.

As part of this, using the tools already available to us, we launched a new Responsible Procurement and Commissioning (RPC) Strategy in April 2023. Central to this has been embedding responsible procurement criteria at each and every stage of the procurement process; from standard terms and conditions to pass/fail selection criteria and detailed supplier evaluation. As such, we have sent strong signals to the market about the council's commitment to sustainable development, responsible business and building a Fairer Westminster.

This work, coupled with close working with strategic suppliers on aspects such as modern slavery due diligence, has laid the foundations for relatively complex conversations with suppliers about responsible tax. Using existing Procurement Regulations the council has been:

- Working with counterparts to form a UK-wide 'Communities of Practice' on Fair Tax with other public authorities and the Fair Tax Foundation, in order to share approaches and lessons learned. This group is now comprised of 23 authorities including Norwich, Peterborough, Birmingham, Preston and Dundee, as well as other London boroughs.



L-R Mary Patel –
Movement Building and
Outreach manager the
Fair Tax Foundation, Cllr
Adam Hug – Leader of
Westminster City Council,
Sara Hall, Head of
Movement at Tax Justice
UK at a Dirty Money
Round Table event

- Working with suppliers. The Fair Tax Foundation was represented at our RPC Strategy launch, with a stall to raise awareness amongst suppliers about responsible tax conduct. Fair tax has been included within the agenda of a series of 'deep dives' that are being undertaken by Procurement with the council's strategic suppliers, alongside other responsible procurement themes including carbon reporting and social value delivery. Our approach is to introduce the concept of responsible tax conduct, let suppliers know about the Fair Tax Pledge they can make with the Fair Tax Foundation.

The council has also been using its approach to Fair Tax to tackle concerns about illegitimate businesses in the city – aggressively pursuing Candy Stores for unpaid business rates and the sale of illegal and unsafe goods. As a result of our work with landowners and through trading standards, at the time of writing the number of candy

stores and souvenir stores is now down to 21 from a peak of 30, we have received £250k from companies to avoid winding up, and we are pursuing a further £1m of at risk business rates.

We have since been working with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Community (DLUHC) to help shape national policy, to the benefit of the UK as a whole, to tackle the issues of business rates non-payment and to clamp down on the loopholes in Companies House that have allowed candy stores to register fake directors and false chains that hide where their revenue ends up – and consequently limiting our ability to recover their unpaid business rates. These discussions are ongoing as government draw up the relevant regulations, and DLUHC are due to respond to a consultation on business rates liability shortly which we hope will see measures adopted to ensure taxpayers do not continue to lose out on millions of pounds for public services, as a result of tax-avoidance.

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City of Westminster





Strategy

Wigan Council

Building a New Era for Public Services Focused on Tackling Inequalities

Cooperative values and principles are at the heart of Wigan Council's thinking as it collaboratively develops its response to a 'new era' for public services.

Nationally known for its ground-breaking response to austerity through the 'Wigan Deal', Wigan Council has been working over the past year on a new movement for change that can meet the challenges and opportunities faced by local government now and in the future.

Like many councils, Wigan is experiencing increasing and complex demand on its services, particularly in adults and children's social care, combined with on-going funding restraints and inflation.

Wigan Borough is a metropolitan borough in Greater Manchester with a population of 325,000.

As an urban northern borough, it has long-standing economic, social and health inequalities – with many of these worsening during austerity.

Over the past year under the working title of 'new era', the council, with support from Collaborate CIC and IPPR North, has listened carefully to citizens, businesses and community



Members of the Wigan Borough Community Connection Group meeting with Wigan Borough Council

partners on what their priorities are and what life is like.

As a result of this, the council and its partners have started to develop missions focused on inequalities and on delivering the best possible high-quality public services.

The new era will also build and evolve further the core DNA of what it means to work in Wigan.

This includes its working culture, behaviours and principles, the focus on asset-based working and permission to innovate.

The council is ambitious about harnessing the power of data, digital technology and artificial intelligence as a major opportunity to make the best use of human resources and scale-up more targeted, personalised and preventative approaches through the use of digital.

The new era work has deepened co-production with the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector with the establishment of a community connection group to lead engagement and the creation of a new shared leadership model.

All of this points to an exciting future for Wigan Council with the cooperative principles of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity threaded throughout this strategic work.

This strategic thinking has not got in the way of the council delivering on the ground with community wealth building-inspired policies and projects which are really making a difference to people's lives.

These include:

- Wigan's anchor partnership procurement network supporting locally rooted SMEs and VCFSE organisations to access public sector supply chains. This has seen more than 300 businesses attend its first 'meet the



Members of the Wigan Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise Sector at an Engagement Event



Councillor Chris Ready from Wigan Council speaking at the VCFSE gathering in December 2023

buyer' event and 61 local businesses attend free procurement training. The number of Wigan businesses commissioned continues to increase year-on-year with £91m spent on Wigan-based suppliers last year including £29m spent with 165 VCFSE suppliers.

- £10m invested by the council in 2023/24 to support local care providers and to implement the 'Real Living Wage' for carers working in adult social care. This means 100% of providers commissioned by the council are now paying staff a minimum of the real living wage. There are also 80% of our care homes in the borough paying the Real Living Wage. This has had an impact on staff turnover in the sector with latest figures showing a 5.7% turnover locally, compared to 18.5% nationally.
- A landmark civic university agreement signed with anchor institutions and Edge Hill University to boost education and skills opportunities. The agreement is between the council, hospital trust, local college and the university. Career pathways have been identified within the agreement, which will improve life chances for Wigan residents and address the workforce needs of the borough. They focus on four areas: education, health and social care, digital industries and business engagement. The partnership has already seen the opening of the new Centre for Advanced Technical Studies which is developing future health professionals, civil engineers and digital and cyber specialists.
- The adoption of looked after children and care leavers as a local protected characteristic. This means future council policies and changes in services will have to show consideration for the needs of looked after children and care leavers. This follows on from several actions taken to support looked after children and care leavers including free health prescriptions, employment and training support, an annual gym pass, a laptop and free internet and a range of different accommodation options including semi-independent accommodation, supported living and independent living.
- Using the power of data and behavioural insights the council has this year helped residents receive more than £1m in additional welfare support, which they were entitled to, but had previously not claimed. A single view of residents was created from a number of datasets to identify people who were most likely to be affected by the cost-of-living crisis and identify where it was likely eligibility for further support existed but had not been claimed. This included household support, pension credit, council tax reduction, housing benefit and attendance allowance. The council is now scaling up its work on using the power of data and AI to deliver real-life benefits and shift inequalities.

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Art and Culture for social cohesion

Supporting the role of culture is vital to building social cohesion. Culture is essential for avoiding and resolving conflicts.

Find out more: bit.ly/CCIN-arts-culture

councils.coop

 Co-operative Councils
Innovation Network

 People-centred councils
driving social innovation
putting people first



Social Outcomes

Burntwood Town Council

Warmer Welcome Across Burntwood Town

As fears of energy price rises grew over the summer of 2022, Burntwood Town Council was aware that, given our local demography, a significant number of our residents would find themselves in fuel poverty and unable to heat their homes adequately. Seeing numerous warm spaces initiatives taking shape across the country, including by Councils within our Network, we felt that we as a parish council should do what we could with limited resources to support our residents.

We have a strong voluntary and community sector locally and we reached out to partners to ask if they would provide a Warmer Welcome to their neighbours in need. We engaged a key partner to develop a database of the Warmer Welcome spaces offering exactly that, along with free refreshments and other offers they might make such as sharing newspapers, board games, jigsaws etc. The information was widely advertised on social media and posters around the town. We were also able to give some financial support to groups who needed it to help pay for accommodation and resources. The total cost to the Council was £2000.

Over the winter of 2022/23, we had 16 Warmer Welcome spaces across our town, run by a magnificent band of volunteers each hosting between 10 and 30 residents per session. These included churches, community centres, the library, leisure centre, football club and a primary school. The initiative confirmed the value of local community leadership with a number of Councillors using their time and networks to make sure this initiative was supported



Councillors Darren Ennis (left) and Sue Woodward (right) visiting Chasetown Football Club's Warmer Welcome session

and known about by our voluntary groups, our other local authority partners and, of course, our residents.

What became clear very quickly was that those attending Warmer Welcome venues were doing so for social interaction rather than heating, addressing the endemic problem of loneliness. During the summer of 2023, with Warmer Welcome continuing, we met with providers to reshape the offer which has been renamed Welcome Spaces, and continues to thrive and combat loneliness in our town.

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BONEY HAY
BURNTWOOD
CHASE TERRACE
CHASETOWN



Education & Training

Llanelli Town Council

Citizenship and Democracy project 'Meet the Mayor'

Annually, Llanelli Town Council carries out a Citizenship and Democracy project called 'Meet the Mayor'.

The project involves inviting all Town Council area primary schools (8) to visit the Council Chamber to 'Meet the Mayor' and have a session based on the school curriculum, democracy, voting history, citizenship, the importance of partnership working within the Community along with the young person's place in the democratic process. The project is carried out in partnership with Llanelli Community Partnership Volunteers who support the school sessions.

The sessions are targeted at Years 5 and 6 in order to meet the curriculum provision on citizenship and to try to ensure that all primary school pupils have an opportunity to visit during their time in Primary School prior to progressing to Secondary School.

The sessions provide an opportunity for the young people to visit the Council Chamber, to meet the Mayoral Team, ask questions about the work of the Mayor and Councillors and to understand the role of the Council and the services provided across Llanelli.

The sessions are offered to all primary schools and are available via the Welsh and English Languages.

In the 2023-24 Civic Year, during April, 6 primary schools visited the Chamber, with over 150 young people attending over 3 days. In addition, the project was extended this year to carry out an extra session, held on a Saturday for the Polish Language weekend school. This session brought together the Town Council, Community Partnership and the



Meet the Mayor

Llanelli Multicultural Network and provided an opportunity for an underrepresented group to attend the Chamber. This was very well received by this Community.

During 2023-24, following meetings with Secondary Schools and the local college, a need was noted for additional sessions for the GCSE Politics Students and the College Public Service Students. Therefore, in October, 120 Students studying Politics GCSE from 2 Secondary Schools and 2 Sessions for Students studying Public Service at Coleg Sir Gar attended. Following these sessions Officers were invited to address the Public Service and Politics classes at Coleg Sir Gar, providing a further briefing on the Well-being of Future Generations Act to over 90 students.

Small-scale funding has been obtained from the Welsh Government, and plans are already developing for the April 2024 sessions, additional secondary school sessions, and the creation of a dedicated democracy page on the Council website.

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Young People

Seaton Valley Community Council Youth Services

In June 2023, Seaton Valley Community Council (SVCC) was advised by a representative of Northumberland County Council (NCC) that sessional youth workers had been served with their notice of redundancy and advised that their services would no longer be required from September 2023.

As a result of NCC's decision, the youth clubs and outreach provision in each of the five villages in Seaton Valley, which were part-funded by SVCC, would end abruptly in September 2023 unless either the parish council or local community groups could find ways to deliver the service independently.

In response to the county council withdrawing its service, a Seaton Valley Youth Provision Working Group was formed in August 2023 to bring together local community groups invested in sustaining the youth service across Seaton Valley. The group has been chaired by Cllr. Susan Dungworth, Chair of Seaton Valley Council, and membership consists of representatives from the village community associations, Blyth Valley CVA, the Scouts, and councillors and staff from Seaton Valley Council.

At a meeting on the 7 August 2023, the working group met with Mandy Brown, the Operational Lead for Children NE to explore options for sustaining youth provision in the area.

As a result of the initial discussions, Children NE proposed to deliver a weekly youth club in Seaton Delaval, and youth outreach activities in New Hartley, Seaton Sluice and Seghill by working in partnership with local community associations to provide suitable venues.

The working group accepted the proposal from Children

NE and agreed to work collaboratively to apply for external funding with support from Blyth Valley CVA.

Alongside working in partnership to provide local venues and suitably qualified staff, the working group also wanted to engage with young people to help define the type of youth service they would value. To get their feedback, Children NE developed an online young person's survey. The survey asked young people what activities they would value most and what they would like a local youth club to look and feel like. Thanks to support from the Seaton Valley Federation of schools and the local Scout group in distributing the survey, the response rate was very good, and the results have been used to inform improvements to the venues and applications for capital funding to help buy equipment and resources that young people will value.

In December 2023, on behalf of the newly formed Seaton Valley Youth Provision Working Group, Children NE applied to the Community Foundation for a grant of £14,000 with match-funding of £10,000 confirmed from Seaton Valley Council. If successful, the grant will help to fund sessional youth workers and activities for young people across the Seaton Valley area. The group is optimistic about the outcome which should be notified in early Feb 2024. There is also a contribution of £10,000 from the now dissolved Seaton Valley Community Partnership, that was ringfenced to be used for youth activities.

Going forward, the Working Group will become a Governance Group and we are looking to have young people represented on the group. With support from Blyth Valley CVA, the group are now working to identify more sources of funding, and it is hoped this will allow continuation of new and improved youth provision across the Seaton Valley area.

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Seaton Valley Council
A Community Council



Community

Witney Town Council

How Witney's Community Came Together to Plant a Tiny Forest to Boost Biodiversity

Having declared a climate emergency in 2019, the opportunity to pioneer an exciting joint project, a first in the UK, was one that we, as a forward-looking council and energetic community, absolutely could not turn down.

A Tiny Forest is a densely planted, fast-growing native woodland usually sited in built-up areas. It's around the size of a tennis court and 3000 of them exist worldwide. The chance to have the very first one in the UK came from Earthwatch, an international charity who offer nature-based solutions to boost biodiversity.

Our Tiny Forest directly supports key elements of the Town Council's climate and biodiversity strategies, and its secondary aim to maintain the town as a green and pleasant place to live.

After the decision taken, everything happened very quickly. A suitable site was identified, and surveys and soil tests carried out. Our grounds maintenance contractors were fully supportive and ready to swing into action, offering equipment, soil preparation and help on planting day all at no cost. Local volunteer group, Witney Land Army recruited a team of community planters, with Earthwatch providing selected native trees which were appropriate for the soil and site.

Our design deviated from the usual rectangle, opting instead for a polygon mirroring the shape of the local church tower – a tangible link to a historic feature of the area.



Tychwood: Witney's Tiny Forest



On the day, wellies were an absolute must as heavy machinery had been on site preparing the soil after weeks of wet weather. 600 saplings were planted by around 70 volunteers over the course of a day. There was a relaxed atmosphere and a feeling of satisfaction at being instrumental in creating this important new outdoor space.

Cllr Luci Ashbourne, Leader of the Council said: "Working with Earthwatch has been an incredible way for Witney Town Council to lead the way on creative, proactive and local solutions to the climate emergency. The residents that helped with planting expressed their delight at being able to be part of something so progressive, and to have the ongoing benefits of a beautiful, health promoting space that we can all feel invested in and help nurture as it grows."

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Co-op Option Training

In 2023, we funded over 80 training places for members interested in offering the cooperative option as an alternative business model, with a deep dive into legal structures and finance.

Find out more: bit.ly/CCIN-coop-option





Community

The Active Wellbeing Society, working in partnership with Councils and the NHS

Free Bikes in Birmingham, Essex & Southall

Join the Free Bikes Movement to increase inclusive and accessible cycling and ensure that affordability is not a barrier to active travel. Work with local communities to make new connections and boost health and well-being. Giving free bikes for people to keep is not only a carefully targeted intervention, but a powerful enabler of wider system change, which can lead to better support for individuals while boosting community resilience.

Who we are

The Active Wellbeing Society (TAWS) is a community benefit society and cooperative working to tackle inequality and promote community wellbeing. TAWS works with communities and councils across the country, in areas of high deprivation, to provoke positive system change and address barriers.

How we can support local authorities

TAWS is collaborating with local authorities to provide support, advice and services and has developed a national free bikes programme. We can support you to develop the capability required to get schemes up and running as quickly as possible. Our aim is to build a broad alliance so that we can share knowledge and expertise.

Big Birmingham Bikes, Essex Pedal Power & Let's Ride Southall

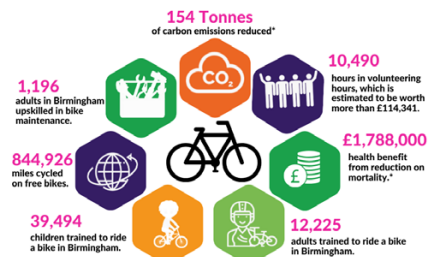
TAWS was instrumental in setting up Big Birmingham Bikes, which provides free bikes for people to keep, in

11,977

Total number of attendances at cycling sessions and events between 2022-2023

9,500+

Free bikes distributed in the community nationally, since the project launched



* Based on The World Health Organisation's (WHO) Health Economic Assessment Tool (HEAT) estimating the reduction in all-cause mortality

communities in most need to break down barriers, improve access to opportunities and encourage physical activity. Big Birmingham Bikes, Essex Pedal Power, and Let's Ride Southall are supported by Sport England and work in partnership with the Department for Transport and the NHS to unlock co-benefits across the system.

Impacts on individuals and communities

- The impact to date of providing free bikes has been significant. Many say **the bike has changed their life** and improved their health and wellbeing – **they can now travel independently for free.**
- The bikes are used for getting to work, school, the shops, and seeing friends.
- Across the three areas **schemes are reporting significant increases in community cohesion** as the bike recipient's bond. The schemes provide wraparound support for cyclists through weekly learn to ride, cycle confidence and bike maintenance sessions, led bike rides and e-newsletters.
- **Volunteering has taken off** in each area as have community cycling clubs.

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Young People

Anthony Collins working with Children's Commissioners in Wales **Children's Services in Wales - A Cooperative Concept**

We provided legal advice to support cooperative approaches to a sustainable way of looking after young people in Wales.

We supported the Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru (4Cs) in its bid to provide a new approach to how the public sector collectively addresses sufficiency duties, balances the functions of a statutory service, enabling service providers and commissioners, while mitigating risk and maximising outcomes for children looked after.

This was all within the context of the current national policy agenda to transform children's service delivery in Wales and specifically to eliminate private profit from children's looked after services.

The work involved an overview of the legal vehicles that could meet the Welsh Government's aspiration for "not for profit" (or "social purpose" as we would prefer to label it) and a response to the Welsh Government's consultation.

We advocated that there was the opportunity to create a cooperative in which councils and operators could be members and to create within it how councils and providers could work together to provide the most effective means by which commissioner and provider services could be delivered.

Although it seems that the Welsh Government may not include a cooperative in the list of legal entities that can provide children services in Wales. It is an approach that offers councils and providers the opportunity to work together for a common purpose, and within the governance of democratic decision-making that allows cooperation to be a driver for a different dynamic in service provision. The outcome of the review focuses on entities that will be entitled to provide children services. It does not address the possibility that a cooperative is the means by which services can be provided between commissioners and providers within a governance model rather than principally through contracts. We covered this opportunity in our advice to 4Cs.

We were able to support 4Cs response to the consultation and offer a sustainable way forward for maintaining high quality children services whilst also harnessing the skills of the many committed organisations and individuals that currently play their part in looking after children in Wales.

This approach we believe could truly transform this key statutory service and meet the priority needs of young people in need of care.

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50 **Anthony Collins**





Education & Training

Branding.coop working with the CCIN

Principle Five in Action

Before joining the Cooperative Councils' Innovation Network (CCIN) as Operations Lead, Nicola Huckerby worked at the International Cooperative Alliance, where she saw first-hand how cooperative enterprises build a better world.

Principle 5 of the cooperative movement is Education and Training. In March 2024, with the support of colleagues from Confcooperative, Legacoop and the Italian Cooperative Alliance Nicola organised a Study visit for members of the Network to Emilia-Romagna.

The region is world renowned because of its dense network of cooperatives, which create 30% of the region's GDP and involve 2/3rds of the population as members. Cooperatives in the region span most sectors of the economy, especially retail, agribusiness, and social services, but they also have a significant presence in financial services, insurance, transportation, and more.

During the three-day visit, delegates met the Presidents of several Italian cooperatives. They travelled around the region using the services of a transport cooperative. The delegation visited several agri-businesses, including producers of Parmigiano Reggiano and traditional Balsamic Vinegar in Modena, and Granarolo a leading producer of milk and dairy products, where delegates toured a large milk bottling facility (see picture). There was also a visit to Cantine Riunite a leader in Italian wine production.

The tour also included several social cooperatives, including Locanda Smeraldi, a social cooperative where delegates sampled a fabulous cooperative restaurant and another social cooperative for people with learning and physical disabilities, which grew and packed basil. A



Delegates at the Granarolo milk bottling facility

meeting was arranged with a representative of Emil Banca Credito Cooperativo, the regional cooperative bank, who had spearheaded the development of MUG space, an innovative and technologically advanced smart working area, for hosting business events, meetings, conventions, workshops and training courses.

On the final day, delegates met with Prof. Flavio Delbono from Bologna University, who lectured on the Economics of Cooperation and gave valuable insights into the regional economy. We also met with the president and board members of UniSalute Spa, the biggest player in cooperative healthcare. One of the highlights for many of those attending was the visit on the final afternoon to Kilowatt, a cooperative that had been formed in a derelict urban parkland which had become a community hub for consulting, communication and education, creating jobs for local people and a wonderful oasis and place to socialise.

Learning from other network members is an important benefit of Network membership, and this visit gave elected members and officers the opportunity to see first-hand how a cooperative region operates.

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Housing

Co-operatives UK working with West Granton Housing Co-op

West Granton Housing Co-op: Social Housing Done Differently

Housing remains one of the key issues facing communities who have little control over their homes. The cost of average rent is now £1,220 a month¹ and 2023 saw a 39% rise in number of no-fault evictions². This is where housing cooperatives like West Granton (WGHC) comes in.

WGHC has a social housing stock of 372 'general needs' properties. It is a not-for-profit organisation, with all surpluses used to benefit its member tenants. One of these member tenants is David Quinn, who has an acute medical condition and requires care and attention on a weekly – and often daily – basis. As a member he is a co-owner of the cooperative with a say in how the business runs. He said: "They've done nothing but help me. Everybody is really helpful... It's a community working together."

WGHC's CEO Larke Adger said: "The tenants – the members – pay our wage; it's all about them. Our members are paramount in everything we do. We're here for them... It's not only a house; it's a holistic service."

That holistic service has included providing air fryers, fuel top-ups, food vouchers and warm spaces over the last year. Larke added: "Let's do things which work for our tenants. Let's give people a bit of dignity. Sometimes it's those little things that make a big difference."

Member tenants have given WGHC the stamp of approval. In an independent survey, 99.5% were satisfied with the overall service provided. This compares with less than 90% tenant satisfaction nationally.

WGHC also offers superior value for money. Average weekly rent for a one-bed property is almost 20% below the Scottish national average (£73.31 versus £87.80). Two and three-bed properties cost less as well.

It is perhaps no surprise when the board is made up of member tenants. Larke said: "Tenants tell us how they want to be governed. They come to the table with a business hat on, but they're also a member. They live here. Our board members see the immediate impact of decisions."

The biggest surprise is that Scotland does not have more cooperative housing stock. There are just 54 housing co-ops at the start of this year, an increase of only seven since 2019. And that list is not limited to social housing, for which the picture is even bleaker.

Larke said: "I'd love for co-operatives to have a much bigger impact in the social housing sector. We demonstrate that tenant-led solutions work. I think we need to find a way to increase the amount of cooperatively owned social housing stock."

This is why we urgently need Scottish Government to require the social housing regulator north of the border to consider cooperative models of social housing delivery.

1. <https://www.zoopla.co.uk/discover/property-news/average-rent-uk/>
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2024/feb/08/renters-in-england-face-rising-no-fault-evictions-as-reform-bill-delayed-again>

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CO-OPERATIVES UK



Education & Training

E3M working with Suara Care Cooperative, Spain

E3M's Catalan Cooperative Learning Exchange

In 2023, E3M ran a learning exchange programme with Suara (suara.coop/en), Spain's largest care cooperative. Based in Barcelona, Suara employs over 4000 people and operates services across the whole of Catalonia. The programme had the goal of sharing learning about innovative practice in key service areas and to learn about business practice in the wider social economy in the UK and Catalonia.

In October, 25 Catalan delegates visited E3M members' social enterprises (e3m.org.uk/leaders) in 13 locations around the UK, to experience services from nurseries to elderly care, homelessness support to offenders' / addiction rehabilitation and career development. Their visit ended with a workshop with E3M's members and partners (e3m.org.uk/partners) to consolidate learning from the visits and to explore common areas of interest for education and innovation.

Then, in November, 28 UK delegates went to Barcelona to learn from Suara. Catalonia has a long and strong history of cooperation, and this leg of the exchange started with an informative afternoon of presentations from Suara personnel, the Catalan Workers' Cooperative Federation and the Catalan Government's Director General of the Social Economy. This level of support for a cooperative model for public service delivery immediately impressed the UK delegation!

Day 2 saw the UK delegation split into groups to visit Suara's services for elderly care and homeless people in Barcelona, nurseries and young people's services in and around Girona, and youth services in Tarragona. Across all these services and locations, as well as at HQ, a common



E3M members and partners with members of the Suara team at the Barcelona HQ

thread noticed by many of the UK participants is that, as a cooperative, Suara has sophisticated built-in systems for employee participation, shaping the culture of the enterprise. This is evident in its decision-making processes and day-to-day management. It is visible in the design of services, which focus on and include the individual and their holistic needs, while encouraging the sharing of ideas leads naturally to ongoing innovation. Implementation of bigger projects is achieved through collaborative partnerships with other organisations including regional and local government, universities, businesses and other social economy organisations, the focus being on transparency and sharing to get the best results for the service user.

Many of these observations came to light during the closing workshop on day 3, others in participants' feedback. A full report on the trip is available at e3m.org.uk and E3M is continuing and deepening the learning exchange with Suara during 2024.

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Innovation

ICS.AI working with Derby City Council

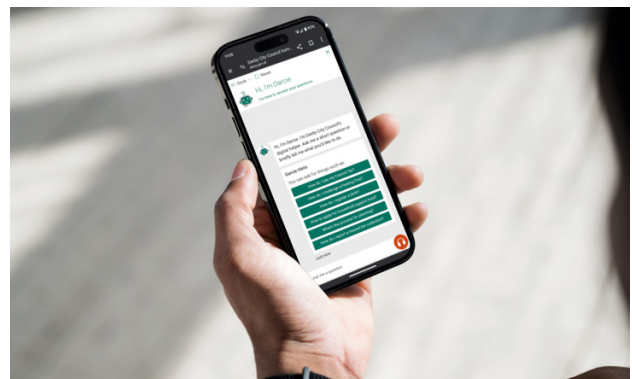
Derby City Council's AI Transformation Project planned to provide £12.25m annual financial savings

Derby City Council, in collaboration with ICS.AI, a leader in public sector AI transformation, has introduced an innovative approach to enhancing resident engagement through the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI).

The council implemented two AI digital assistants, Darcie and Ali, aimed at streamlining customer service operations efficiently. Darcie assists with general council services, while Ali focuses on housing queries for Derby Homes customers. These AI assistants leverage a sophisticated local government language model, which is pre-trained with over 1,000 intents covering a broad spectrum of council and housing services. They provide round-the-clock service and handle enquiries in a human-like manner, becoming the primary contact point on the council's telephone switchboards as well as via the website channel.

The implementation of these digital assistants is part of a broader AI-driven transformation aimed at addressing a significant funding gap and increasing demand for services. By automating routine enquiries, Darcie and Ali aim to enhance operational efficiency, freeing up council staff to address more complex issues that require human interaction. To date, they have managed over 750,000 queries, effectively doubling the initial target deflection rate from 21% to 43% and generating over £200,000 in savings.

Building on this success, the Council is now expanding its use of AI with the introduction of Generative AI technology – set to further enhance council services by automating



complex tasks and expanding AI capabilities into new areas such as Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Debt Management. The Council's proactive approach includes a comprehensive plan to deploy AI across various departments, with the potential to achieve an estimated £12.25 million in annual savings.

This transformation is supported by rigorous business cases and an AI ethics and compliance framework to ensure responsible implementation. As AI technology continues to evolve, Derby City Council remains committed to balancing innovation with the need to maintain personal interaction, ensuring that all residents have access to traditional communication methods if preferred. This strategic integration of AI not only positions Derby City Council as a leader in digital transformation but also demonstrates the significant potential of AI to enhance public service delivery in the face of financial constraints and rising demands.

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Strategy

LocalGov Drupal working with Waltham Forest Council

Why Waltham Forest Council Chose the LocalGov Drupal CMS

LocalGov Drupal is built by councils for councils. Together we've created a shared CMS and publishing platform that would otherwise be costly, resource-intensive and time-consuming for most councils.

As councils, we fundamentally have the same responsibilities and deliver the same core services. LGD stops us from reinventing the wheel and spending thousands on proprietary software.

Before we rebuilt in LGD our website hadn't been looked at for over 5 years and was rapidly approaching the end of life.

Our former Head of Digital, Melanie Read, had seen a presentation by the LGD team and decided to install it and have a play.

Initially, we built an example section with dummy content to see how the CMS worked as a proof of concept. Our delivery team were happy with the result and we never looked back from that point forward.

Site and service improvements

LGD has been an absolute godsend for Waltham Forest.

LGD saved us in the region of 3 to 6 months of development time and £90k in development costs.

It also helped us to focus on richer features to meet our user needs, such as search and events (these are now available for all councils to use for free).

Waltham Forest service teams, members, and call centre staff are pleased with the website. User satisfaction from residents has improved by 25% and calls to the resolution centre are 10-15% lower since launch.

Our accessibility score is 96/100 on SiteImprove, which is way above the local government benchmark of 87, and the Cabinet Office has confirmed that it meets statutory accessibility requirements.

Plus our page load performance is 40% quicker than on our previous site.

The LGD community

The LGD Product Group and broader community of participating councils and suppliers is an invaluable source of insights and expertise to tap into whenever any problems arise. And being an active member of working groups introduced us to new ways of working that we could put into practice in our digital team.

Waltham Forest has been welcomed warmly into the fold. We have been given opportunities to raise agenda items and workshop our progress. Where we encounter problems or lack data or research, we've put them into the Slack channel. And within a few hours, get valuable insights and the experiences of others.

We've also been able to put our user needs, stories, and requirements into the product. Something that every council has the opportunity to do too.

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LocalGov
Drupal



Health & Social Care

Mutual Ventures working with Regional Fostering Recruitment Hubs **Collaboration Between Local Authorities to Provide More Loving Homes for Children**

Mutual Ventures has supported groups of councils work together to develop new and innovative approaches to foster carer recruitment on a regional footprint.

Councils are collaborating to create focused services that champion foster carers and support them through the application and approval process. Their success relies on building a service that promotes cooperation between councils, and values and respects all prospective foster carers.

Funding for the programme is distributed to local authorities from the Department for Education.

Our support to councils

The purpose of fostering is to provide children with a safe, loving home when they can't live with their birth parents. Having enough foster carers is a constant challenge for councils.

Mutual Ventures support focuses on working with groups of local authorities to design and implement 'Fostering Recruitment Hubs' - with the aim of increasing the availability of foster carers in each area and improving the lives of vulnerable children.

We work with lead local authorities for 10 groups of councils, including Sunderland City Council, Blackburn with Darwen and Greater Manchester Combined Authority. Each group of councils has a dedicated MV lead. Our support includes:

- Coaching to provide critical friend challenge and change management support
- Tailored support based on your individual support needs including on data, digital skills and foster care recruitment and practice
- Facilitated workshops on developing vision, governance, finances, communications, and operations
- Templates and tools to help support implementation

Towards better outcomes

The purpose of Fostering Recruitment Hubs is to provide more foster carers and more loving homes for children. Working with us, local authorities have set a clear direction for their future and will 'go live' as new services from April 2024.

As hubs get up-and-running, anticipated outcomes include an increase in foster carer enquiries, an increase in the number of foster carers who are successfully recruited by councils, a reduction in the number of foster carers who de-register, and cost savings for local authorities from being able to provide more placements. Ultimately this should result in an improved experience for children in care.

The ambition of Fostering Recruitment Hubs is clear and draws on an urgent need to ensure we are doing the best we can for children in care. Working with local clusters, we will put foster carers and children at the centre of the services, recognising that they are remarkable and the greatest asset the care system has.

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Finance

Oxygen Finance working with Rochdale Borough Council

Accelerating Payments to Suppliers and Boosting the Local Economy

The Priority Account Service is an early payment scheme for businesses who supply goods and services to Rochdale Borough Council. The programme helps businesses get paid quicker, improving their cash flow, and generating additional income for the Council.

David Bottomley, Director of Bottomley's Print Services – a supplier to Rochdale Borough Council – explains how early payment has benefited his business.

What services do you supply to Rochdale Borough Council?

"The team have been working with the Council for many years. We produce print work for their elections department."

How did you find out about the Priority Account Service?

"A year ago, we were asked to tender for the services we provide. The tender process contained information about early payment and the Priority Account Service. It was very easy to join the scheme. We create our invoices in the same manner we always have done. It's a very efficient system."

What does early payment mean to a business like yours?

"Early payment through the Priority Account Service is a massive help to a small company such as ours. It gives us the cash flow we need. It allows us to pay our local suppliers quicker, which keeps money moving through the local economy."



David Bottomley, Director, Bottomley's Print Services

"Typically, we're paid 20 to 28 days quicker, which means that we haven't had to run credit lines; it's kept our company going and allowed us to move forward."

Would you recommend the scheme to others?

"Definitely. It was very easy to set up. There's no factoring involved. The only thing it costs you is a small percentage of the total invoice value at the end. And for 20 days quicker – it's worth every penny!"

How do you feel about the rebate that Rochdale Borough Council receives in return for early payment?

"Obviously, the money that we give back as a rebate is reinvested in the local economy. That's an important part of our social value. Social value is vital to any business these days. We need to get young people into jobs, we need to care for the environment, and we need to support our local community because that's where we live."

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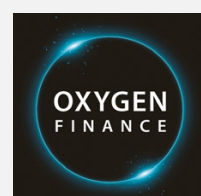
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Community

Power to Change working with Camden Council Piloting a 'Community Improvement District' in Kilburn

How piloting a 'community improvement district' in Kilburn is driving community-led regeneration

Camden Council led the pilot of the 'One Kilburn' Community Improvement District with funding and support from Power to Change and funding from the Greater London Authority.

A Community Improvement District (CID) is a new community-led approach to high street renewal, inspired by the Business Improvement District (BID) form to create a local regeneration partnership in which, the community is a crucial player.

Prior to the CID, the local view was that there was a need to step up and better coordinate work to improve Kilburn which is the meeting point of the Camden, Brent and Westminster boroughs. A major town centre, the mile-long Kilburn High Road has excellent public transport connections, independent businesses and a strong VCS, but also and poor-quality public realm and challenges around congestion and pollution. Kilburn also has disproportionately high levels of long-term unemployment and health inequalities. There was no existing BID, and the local community and other high street stakeholders had faced challenges in articulating and galvanising action with a single voice.

One Kilburn has created a new way for the councils to work in partnership with residents to address community needs. For example, it has unlocked access to meanwhile spaces for community organisations, enabled the delivery of a number of arts projects and is providing a platform for sharing project ideas and supporting their design and delivery.

Learning from One Kilburn and six other pilots demonstrates three main benefits from the CID approach:

- **Convening new groups of partners and initiating new conversations and activities:** Camden & Brent facilitated conversations with people who live, work and shop on Kilburn High Road, walkabouts of the area, an 'imagination' event at a local theatre, developed a planning group and a range of sub-groups, and the One Kilburn online platform
- **Amplifying resident and less-heard voices:** One Kilburn employed and trained local people as 'community activators' as a new way of working with residents, building connections and generating ideas on issues such as greening the area, and activating vacant space; it also connected residents' ideas to funding through the One Kilburn Community Fund
- **Galvanising action and making 'quick wins':** One Kilburn ran a 'toilet hackathon' to address the lack of public WCs, which was preventing people from using the high street, responding to the small things that matter; it enabled Camden Black Creatives' use of meanwhile space, and introduced a Library of Things in Camden Library

Community-led regeneration takes time, and work is ongoing to nurture One Kilburn and to further clarify its purpose and build local capacity to lead this work. However, One Kilburn has demonstrated that local residents value direct collaboration with the council and that seeing physical change motivates people to get involved.

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Health & Social Care

RedQuadrant working with Gateshead Council Review of Social Care Commissioning

RedQuadrant were commissioned to review social care commissioning activity for children and adults' social care services. We used a self-assessment tool, developed with the LGA, to assess the effectiveness of strategic commissioning arrangements and identify improvements.

Gateshead wanted a review of social care commissioning activity for children and adults to ensure that it was effective, efficient, and supported the council to achieve its strategic outcomes and taking account of innovative practice and positive impact, commissioning practice, procurement practice, governance, partnerships and strategic approach.

There was a concern that, although there were pockets of good practice, the approach to commissioning was largely reactive, procurement-driven, and neither strategic nor whole system-focused in approach.

RedQuadrant assessed local practice in relation to strategic commissioning. The approach was based on our view of strategic commissioning as being 'deciding on how to use the total resource available to achieve desired outcomes in the most efficient, effective and sustainable way'. RedQuadrant used an innovative self-assessment tool, developed by their sister organisation, The Public Service Transformation Academy, for the Local Government Association's (LGA) Partners in Care and Health Programme, which assesses council performance against eight aspects of this broader definition in a face-

to-face workshop setting. Using a workshop setting also enabled staff to develop a greater understanding of their role within the wider commissioning context.

From discovery and analysis, RedQuadrant worked with Gateshead to develop a set of recommendations, focused on embedding strategic commissioning within the two directorates. These were accepted both by the directorates and the broader council leadership team and formed the basis for a new commissioning strategy. RedQuadrant have since been invited back by the council to assess progress against the recommendations and to help embed a similar approach across the remainder of the council.

Quote from client

"Adults and Children's Social Care Departments of Gateshead Council jointly commissioned RedQuadrant to undertake a review of our commissioning practice to identify any strengths and weaknesses in the existing approach. The outcome was the development of an action plan and a presentation to our Corporate Management Team which instigated a corporate review of commissioning across the Council. The approach RedQuadrant undertook was inclusive and supportive and the team worked alongside council officers to formulate an improved approach to commissioning with a focus on outcomes." – Dale Owens, Strategic director Adult Social Care

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Community

Refernet working with Kent County Council

ReferKent - Online referral System to Mitigate the Action of Signposting

ReferKent launched in September 2022. The initiative was driven by a working group made up of different agencies from the public and voluntary sector across Kent. The group identified a need to mitigate the action of signposting.

Often people are signposted from one organisation to another, and the person being signposted can feel as if no one is helping. If the person is not confident in reaching out, they may not get the help and support they need to remain resilient and end up falling further into hardship.

Services in Kent were also seeing an increase in people presenting to them with complex issues for which their specialist organisation could not provide support and they were therefore regularly signposting to other organisations. There was a growing need to implement a secure online referral system that allowed referrals to be made rather than a signpost.

ReferKent offers an online referral platform (Refernet) that mitigates the action of signposting. It offers a simple referral form, where only a person's name, contact number and a brief reason as to why the person has been referred are gathered. This information is then sent to the receiving organisation who pick up the referral and contact the person who has been referred within three working days.

The ReferKent platform is set up so that organisations who join allocate a primary user and users, with Kent County Council acting as the system administrator.

Achievements

To date, 186 organisations and teams across Kent have joined ReferKent offering a wide range of support services. All the CABs across Kent are onboard, as well as a local credit union, fuel advice and support, gambling support and advice, mental health support and advice and many more, with a further 186 pending.

There are 916 users onboard, who have made over 1300 referrals for people who need more help than their organisation can give.

The focus of ReferKent is to prevent people falling further into hardship, so they are less likely to need services in the future. The initiative works in partnership with organisations joining the ReferKent platform on goodwill, addressing social and economic issues and working together to ensure people have access to the right support and advice quickly.

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Health & Social Care

Two Generations CIC

Homeshare: Reducing Loneliness Among Older People Through Community-Based Care

Social enterprise Two Generations partners with Hillingdon-based charity Age UK to provide a Homeshare service to older communities across the London Borough.

Aimed at reducing loneliness among older people, Homeshare matches a Householder who lives alone and has a spare room (typically an older person or someone with a disability) with a carefully-vetted and friendly Sharer who provides overnight presence, companionship and help with household chores (typically a younger person, mature student, care worker or refugee struggling to afford quality housing).

This innovative approach to community-based care is a social enterprise partnership in action, similar to the Homeshare schemes Two Generations has provided in partnership with other London Boroughs, Harrow and Waltham Forest.

As a community-based service, Homeshare innovates to support older people enjoy continued independent living without the need for extra resources or budget from the council, increasing wellbeing while reducing the strain on local health services and adult social care resources.

Age UK Hillingdon supports hundreds of older people across the Borough every month and, where Homeshare could be an option for an older person, refers them or their family to Two Generations, which undertakes a bespoke vetting, selection and matching process with both Householder and Sharer. This an application process, interviews, matching meetings, a trial period, references and DBS checks – all very

similar to the process gone through to bring a carer into the home. Once established, Two Generations manages the Homeshare through the life of the relationship, often lasting 2-3 years.

Age UK Hillingdon's CEO Julian Lloyd confirms "We're pleased to be partnering with Two Generations to make Homeshare widely available for the benefit of everyone across the borough, as one of a number of tools to help combat loneliness and provide key support at home".

The wider adoption of community-based care models for shared living arrangements can offer greater flexibility to meet people's needs and act as an alternative to residential care or traditional in-home care services. Homeshare supports older people to live independently in their local area while providing additional support to do so. Homeshare can be provided on a short or long-term basis and the service is personalised to each person to meet their needs. This includes people being discharged from hospital, people living with dementia and young people transitioning from children's social care.

Regular surveys of Two Generations' Homesharers report a 97% reduction in loneliness, and feedback from Homeowners is uniformly positive. As a national Homeshare provider, Two Generations is now working with several councils nationwide and is keen to support CCIN members in offering Homeshare in their communities.

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Poverty

Unlimited Potential working with Greater Manchester Combined Authority **Elephants Trail**

People with the hardest lives experience multiple problems. These are often rooted in long-term experiences of poverty, deprivation, trauma, abuse and neglect. These inequalities can lead to a combination of experiences, including homelessness, substance misuse, domestic violence, contact with the criminal justice system and mental ill-health.

People have often been failed by systems that focus on single issues. These make it hard for them to address their problems and to lead fulfilling lives. This is made worse when no one wants to talk about the 'elephants in the room'.

The Elephants Trail has been developed over many years by people with personal experience of multiple disadvantages. It is about local people and professionals **working equally together to solve challenges** that people think are most important.

Together, they create relaxed and informal 'Elephants spaces'. These spaces help people from very different backgrounds to explore difficult issues, such as power, wealth, and different knowledges. Teams lean into these issues, learn

and make decisions together. They test practical solutions to key issues faced by communities and by agencies.

The Elephants Trail works to **change systems** that create injustice and perpetuate disadvantage. This changes how decisions are made and who makes them and creates space to imagine better systems.

We want to spread and share the Elephants approach with communities and agencies, so that people can live meaningful lives with dignity and opportunity in supportive communities.

Elephants Trail at the Dream Weavers Festival (June 2022)



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Strategy

Your Coop Business working with Heart Academy Trust **Ensuring Connectivity: HEART Academy Trust's Dedicated Internet Access and Failover Framework**

Your Coop Business Solutions approached Heart Academy Trust via a tendering process to deliver a combined refresh/upgrade of their connectivity and wi-fi access points via a single supplier.

HEART consists of 5 sites which are 3 Primary Schools, 1 Secondary School, and 1 Head Office. The requirement encompassed improved Speeds for their sites, a failover line, and required less Supplier intervention and more Customer authorisation enabling them to make changes to their web filtering. In addition, and part of the project the trust required a complete refresh of their Access Points as the current ones were becoming end of life.

We are proud to announce that the successful collaboration between HEART Academies Trust and Your Coop Business Solutions has resulted in a pioneering Sustainability and Procurement Shared Services initiative. This new joint venture reflects a commitment to reshape the landscape of sustainability and procurement practices, across education and the entire UK public sector.

We have joined Heart's Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) framework to deliver ethical and sustainable services based on connectivity, with the extension to lead to Voice and other telephony services. We are committed to supporting Hearts with a timely delivery and installation of connectivity, ensuring all students, staff, and visitors can access key information and programs.

In addition to the DPS Framework, the career team at Heart Academy Trust are working with the wider Midcounties Career team to implement training programs and apprenticeships to assist school leavers from within the Academy, to gain real world skills, reach their potential and feel inspired to combine workplace training with study. The learners can choose their route to their career, across all our trading groups and departments, from Early Years Educators in Childcare, managers in our food stores, property maintenance, technical sales, and finance assistants in our support functions teams.

The benefits of this new partnership include.

- Driving positive environmental, social, and economic impact
- Delivering sustainable procurement – helping the public sector make responsible choices today, so the planet remains habitable, diverse, and prosperous for generations to come
- Ensuring an ethical supply chain, where only suppliers that meet obligations and best practices in relation to social value, climate and human rights, service our customers.

The partnership is expected to run for three years, with a further two-year extension being obtained.

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Meet us in 2024

10 – 11 February – Labour Local Government Conference – Warwick University

11 – 15 March – Emilia-Romagna Study Visit

14 – 15 June – Co-operatives UK Congress – Birmingham

18 June – Webinar with Leonora Grcheva – Cities and Regions Lead – Doughnut Economics Action Lab

2 – 4 July – Local Government Association National Conference & Exhibition – Harrogate

16 July – Webinar – introduction to the CCIN for new councillors and officers

21 – 24 September – Labour Party Annual Conference – Liverpool

TBC – CCIN AGM & Annual Conference

See all events: bit.ly/CCIN-events



Growing the Coop Economy

Local councils are preparing detailed plans to emerge from the impact of COVID-19 and the cost-of-living crisis which now engulfs us. One of the critical areas that they are considering is how to restart the local economy and minimise the impact of the recession on their local communities.

Being a Cooperative Council is something to be proud of. It demonstrates a genuine commitment to cooperative innovation, best practices, and the communities we serve. Collaboration is at the heart of our approach.

Alongside the various WhatsApp Groups, regular newsletters and mailings, the Officer Network meets monthly to discuss cooperative approaches to common issues. We have also established a Leaders/Cooperative Leads Group to help drive forward initiatives to grow the co-op economy. This Group has identified some of the key themes and activities that Councils can follow. Although not exhaustive, these are a good framework for the type of activities occurring across the country.

There are two key themes:

- Community Wealth Building, and
- Cooperative Placemaking

To support these key themes, we have developed a training programme with the Co-operative College for councillors and officers to help explain the concepts. Find out more:

bit.ly/CCIN-grow.

We look forward to meeting you in person this year.

For further information, contact:

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Member Benefits

Join the CCIN to be part of a growing and influential network of councils committed to developing a new relationship with citizens. There is a growing interest, across the political spectrum, in how to share power and responsibility with citizens, support the development of community and civic life and find more cost-effective ways to create successful and resilient communities.

By becoming part of the Network, you will:

- Access the **latest ideas** and thinking about putting Cooperative principles into practice
- Position your council as an **innovator**
- Help to **influence** policy thinking at national level
- Share examples of projects and initiatives and **learn from others** about what works
- Co-produce **tools and techniques** to support the development of cooperative approaches

- Be invited to **Cooperative Conferences** around the country where you can meet and work with peers
- Join an **officer network** who are leading the development of new approaches
- Have access to a cadre of ambitious **political leaders** who are trying to bring change to their communities
- Access a growing body of **resources** on the new CCIN website
- Be part of **regional and national networks** in England, Scotland and Wales
- Join the **debate** on our active social media platforms
- Access our multi-supplier **Consultancy Framework** of specialist organisations to help you develop policy, implement prototypes and build capacity when you need to move quickly and flexibly
- Profile your council's **achievements** nationally

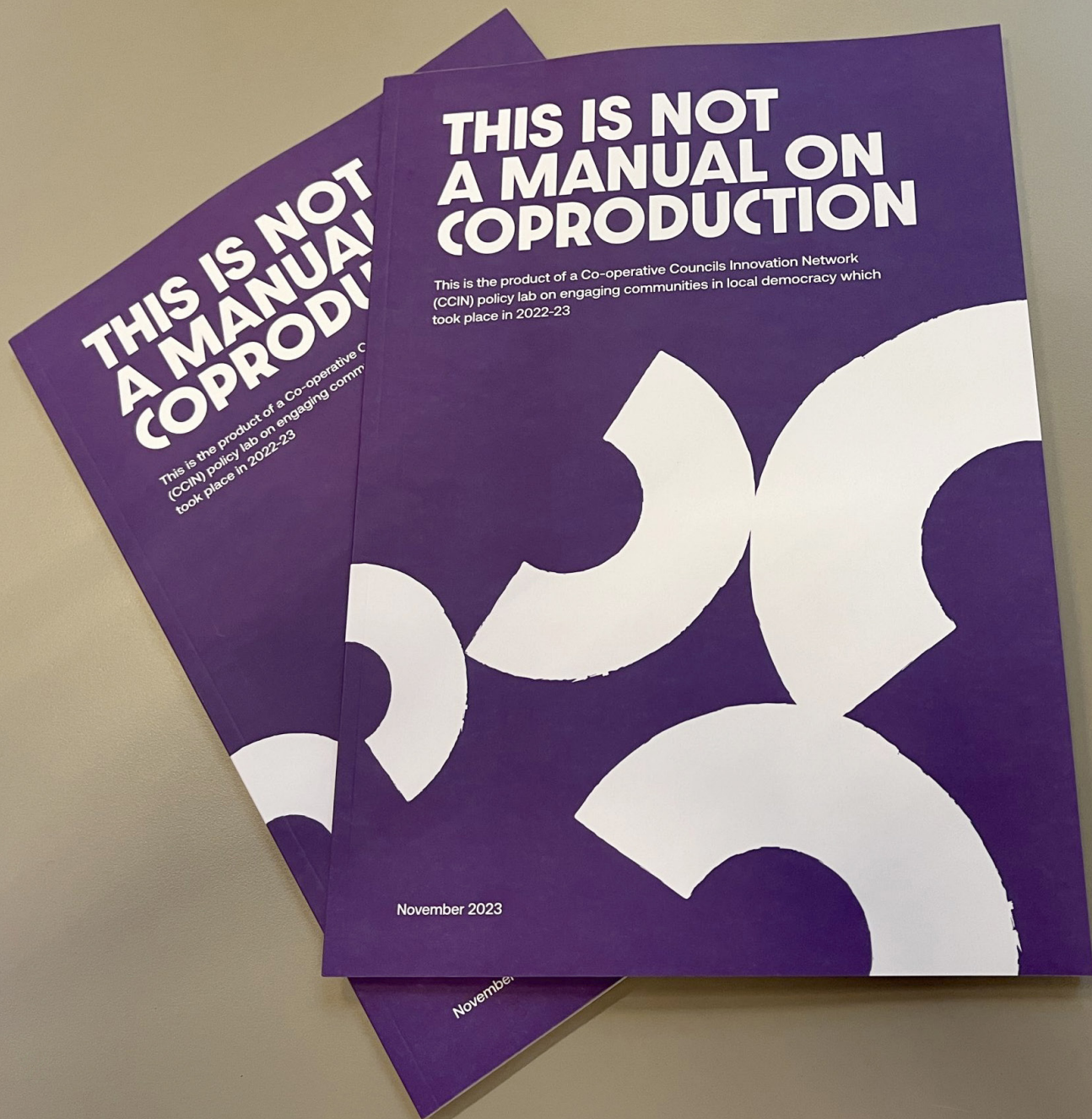
In addition, we have several additional benefits that are specific to each membership category.

Ask us for further details.



For further information, contact:

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This is not a manual on coproduction

An encyclopaedia of ideas about how local government
is and can engage communities in local democracy

Download: bit.ly/CCIN-Democratising-Policy



Find out more about the UK Councils that are using cooperative values and principles to build resilient places through community wealth-building and co-produced services.

Join us today at

councils.coop

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People-centred councils
driving social innovation
putting people first

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