

## ASSET TRANSFER

Newcastle City Council

# Asset transfer of community buildings

Newcastle City Council's approach:

- ✓ Transfers offered on long leases (25 years+) with peppercorn rent
- ✓ Tenants responsible for Repairs & Maintenance
- ✓ Transfers to existing tenants (but bids invited for vacant buildings)
- ✓ Information about costs and building condition shared at the start
- ✓ Independent expert support, including legal advice, made available
- ✓ Organisations asked for business cases to assess sustainability and viability
- ✓ Capital pot available to facilitate and incentivise transfer
- ✓ Support for process from Communities Team, Property and Legal

### Case Study – Blakelaw and Simonside Community Centres

Blakelaw Centre has been successfully transferred to the 'Newcastle Communities Asset Trust' (NCAT). They have also taken a lease on the Simonside Centre, which was in danger of closing, keeping the centre open for the local community.

Both centres are now thriving community hubs with viable commercial operations running to generate income. At Blakelaw a Community Post Office helps generate income as well as providing a valuable local service which otherwise would have closed. At Simonside NCAT run a bar and café in an area of the City which has few other facilities of this sort.

### What went well with the transfer

- Blakelaw – Financial support from City Council and YHN to help with the post office set up costs
- Simonside – Good support from elected members who provided some ward funds to make the transfer possible
- Good relationship with the council officers and knowing who to contact.
- Enthusiasm to progress the transfers on both sides

## Challenges

Blakelaw – The building was owned by City Council and managed by YHN (your Homes Newcastle) complicating the negotiations for the capital funding. It would be difficult for an organisation without knowledge of community buildings and asset transfers to successfully negotiate the lease without support. The length of time taken to transfer an asset can make things difficult for the organisation applying. In the case of Blakelaw the charity was in a vulnerable position as the City Council finances weren't in line with the Post Office. The difficulties were overcome because the Partnership has the knowledge and capacity to deal with the issues and there was a genuine commitment on both sides to see the process through. Staff time is a major pressure for the council in trying to deal with the issues around transfer in a timely fashion, but we have also had lengthy delays elsewhere due to lack of capacity in the organisations taking transfers.

## Recommendation for future transfers

- A shared timeline between both partners would be useful and would help both sides to plan to meet project objectives.
- A shared set of values and principles between both parties

---

### For further information contact:

Phil Hunter

Senior Specialist Policy, Comms & Performance – Newcastle City Council

[philip.hunter@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:philip.hunter@newcastle.gov.uk) | Tel: 0191 277 7802



People-centred councils  
driving social innovation  
putting people first

E: [comms@councils.coop](mailto:comms@councils.coop) | T: [@CoopInnovation](https://twitter.com/CoopInnovation) | W: [councils.coop](https://councils.coop)