

Community Wealth Building in Practice

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**STIRto
ACTION**



Preston
City Council

Community Anchors: A Co-operative Recovery



Preston: Theory of change

- Community Wealth Building in the UK has focused on policy-level change (e.g. procurement), and local authorities have only offered limited investment in democratic business development
- There's a misperception that policy changes will stimulate democratic business development
- Downplays historical underfunding, low cultural awareness, lack of recruitment into the sector, and limited ambition
- 'Community readiness' is overestimated and fails to recognise the levels of investment needed in what we describe as 'democratic business skills, culture, and infrastructure'
- Current approaches are currently passive and not targeted to the needs of 'minoritised' communities



Preston: Theory of Change

- The current technocratic focus on policy change – a large part of most funder's portfolios in our sector – does not respond to the immediate deficit in democratic business culture and skills in our communities.
- Democratic business development is almost exclusively focused on 'technical' support, which excludes those with low or no exposure
- There is an urgent need to invest in the 'pipeline' for democratic business, and 'pre-technical' development activities can stimulate cultural awareness and interest
- A 'community anchor' model can support existing social service ('frontline') organisations to develop a co-operative development function



Preston: Theory of Change

- 'Community anchors' can effectively use 'in-reach' engagement strategies unlike external bodies
- Embedded anchors can also share knowledge and practices through culturally and locally appropriate approaches
- For co-operative development to be effective in 'minoritised' communities, it should account for personal and group development, not only business support
- Even if we lack relevant and practical examples of UK co-operatives in BAME, ex-offenders, young adults, and disability, there is access to viable models in the international movement



Baseline Surveys

Co-production

To understand the starting positions and progress of our Community Anchors before and during the programme, we created simple baseline surveys.

46% None at all – but I am eager to learn
54% Limited - basic grasp of co-operatives

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Baseline Surveys

End-of-programme

My understanding of co-operatives is sufficient for me to advance into project work in 2021? **91%** Yes **9%** No

I'm interested in being part of a pilot project next year if there's funding to support my participation **100%** Yes **0%** No

I have an idea for a co-operative project that I'd like advice on? **90%** Yes **10%** No



Outcomes

Monthly Meetups. Established partnership with UClan. This meetup will support their further development, creating a peer network, project updates, funding opportunities, and contact with the wider co-operative sector in Preston.

Resource Translation. Working with community anchors, we've translated a written and visual resource on co-operatives into Urdu and Gujarati to reach South Asian communities in Preston and Lancashire.

Pilots. After a successful funding bid to the Co-op Group, there is now funding to launch six food buying co-ops, with consultancy support from Cooperation Town, and funding for coordination by three Community Anchors from the programme.

Translators & Interpreters Co-operative. First meeting with cohort this afternoon.

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Pipeline Development Tool

Even with ambitions to support democratic business development, it's difficult to know where to start.

Stir to Action's development tool shows the different stages, offering suggestions for the 'primary activities' that can support meaningful economic and social outcomes.

The following example is designed for the 'community anchors' in Preston.

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Community Anchors Co-op Development Pipeline

A practical tool for community organisations building a democratic economy

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Low

Commitment

High

Baseline Survey

Email Marketing

Resource Translation

AWARENESS

Taster Sessions

Primer Resources

Community Outreach

audience size

Case Studies

Start-up Guides

Public Events

INTEREST

Regular Meetups

Workshops

Study Visits

Business Support

Feasibility Grants

DECISION

Study Circles

Further Training

Business Registration

Seed Investment

ACTION

Pilots

Accelerators

Contact Support

Workspace

AFTERCARE

Peer Networks

Mentoring

Pre-technical

Technical

Reflections

- Policy changes are passive and will be not exploited if not supported by democratic business development programmes
- Democratic Business development is successful when local authorities recognise the importance of investing in partnerships that support awareness and interest activities, not just technical support or asset transfer
- Finally, while local authorities should continue to change procurement strategies and public sector behaviour, it's vital they work in partnership with organisations that can offer democratic business experience

