



COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING



Enterprise and
social economy



Learning

Preston City Council

Growing the co-operative economy in Preston

As the programme Advancing a Shared Economy in Preston (ASEP) extends into its second year, a culture of collaboration between anchor institutions and community and co-operative initiatives is emerging in Preston. The ASEP programme is jointly funded by Preston City Council and Power to Change and its overarching aim is to strengthen institutional capacity to underpin a more democratic and collaborative economy. The programme has three objectives focussed on decarbonisation, community development and raising awareness of the cooperative model. It is fostering closer working, the sharing of insights and learning and the creation of shared resources.

Two projects are focused on raising awareness and developing the infrastructure to support co-operative development over the long term. The Preston Co-operative Education Centre is reaching out to trade unions to raise awareness and explore opportunities for union backed worker co-ops in the city.

The Preston Co-operative Development Network's (PCDN) project is reaching out to the business and social enterprise sectors, building on the learning from the Ownership Hub in Sheffield, overseen by Co-operatives UK. By targeting business advisors within existing support networks including Boost (the Lancashire Business Growth Hub), SELNET (the Social Enterprise Lancashire Network) and the Preston Community Network, the project has three aims: to increase awareness of the co-operative model across the business advisory community; to develop understanding of when it might be an appropriate model for an advisor to propose to a client; and to ensure that advisors know how to signpost their clients to more support specialist support. To underpin this approach, the project is creating bespoke resources and delivering webinars.

The PCDN project is also targeting specific audiences in Preston. Online and face-to-face events for students at the University of Central Lancashire are creating an awareness of how co-operatives can address challenges they face around housing and employment, particularly where freelancing is common, including within the creative, film and technical sectors. Growing community interest in renewable energy generation and in insulating homes to improve energy efficiency and reduce bills is also creating opportunities to promote practical co-operative models.

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