



Cooperative Councils'
Innovation Network



Cooperative Case Studies

2026



Making the most of CCIN Membership

Being a Cooperative Council and getting involved in our funded projects

councils.coop/membership

councils.coop

 **Cooperative Councils'**
Innovation Network

coop People-centred councils
driving social innovation
putting people first

“It is genuinely inspiring to read this year’s examples of cooperative innovation from across our membership. From housing and health to community power and climate action, CCIN councils are demonstrating – day in, day out – that collaboration is at the heart of our approach for a positive contribution for the communities we serve. We are the fastest-growing cross-party network in local government – and the conditions have never been more favourable to put cooperative values at the heart of public service reform.”

The Government’s Missions, the devolution agenda, and the drive to rebuild communities after years of financial pressure all call for exactly what cooperative councils do best: working with people, not just for them. Our collective work – sharing practice, building evidence, and supporting one another – has never mattered more. Together, we are proving that cooperation at a local government level is not only possible, it is already happening”



Councillor Paul Cassidy

Interim Chair of the Cooperative Councils' Innovation Network
Vice Convenor (Environment & Regeneration) - Inverclyde Council

Local government is at a turning point. Councils face real financial pressure — but also a genuine political opening. The Government’s Missions and the devolution agenda create new conditions for cooperative approaches to take hold and scale.

The Cooperative Councils' Innovation Network supports councils to meet that moment — delivering differently, using the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity.

The case studies in this collection show what that looks like in practice: councils working with people, not just for them, to build stronger and more resilient communities. See more at councils.coop/case-studies.



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Cooperative 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

Birmingham City Council ● ● ●
Brent Council ● ● ●
Bury Council ● ●
Camden Council ● ● ●
Canterbury City Council ●
Cardiff Council ● ●
Cheshire West & Chester Council ● ● ●
Chorley Council ●
Glasgow City Council ●
Greater Manchester Combined Authority ● ●
Royal Borough of Greenwich ● ● ● ●
Hackney Council ● ● ● ●
High Peak Borough Council
Hounslow Council ● ● ● ●
Hull City Council
Inverclyde Council ● ● ●
Kirklees Council ● ●
Knowsley Council ●
Lewes District Council ● ●
Lewisham Council ● ●
Liverpool City Council ● ● ●
Manchester City Council ● ● ●
Medway Council ● ●
Middlesbrough Council
Milton Keynes City 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 ●
Stevenage Borough Council ●
Sunderland City Council ● ● ● ●
Swindon Borough Council ● ●
Tameside Borough Council ● ●
Tamworth Borough Council
Telford and Wrekin Council ● ●
Trafford Council ● ● ● ●
Warrington Borough Council ●
Westminster City Council ● ● ● ●
Wigan Council ● ● ●

Biddulph Town Council ●
Billingham Town Council ●
Burntwood Town Council
Central Swindon North Parish Council
Co-operative Party South West Peninsula
Corby Town Council
Cornwall Labour & Cooperative
Glastonbury Town Council
Gloucester Labour Group
Great Dawley Town Council
Halewood Town Council
Haywards Heath Town Council
Hereford City Council
Hillingdon Labour Group
Kidsgrove Labour Group
Kingston Independent Residents Group
Lichfield Labour Group
Llanelli Town Council
Midcounties Gloucester & Swindon Coop Party Council
Newcastle-U-Lyme Labour & Co-op Group
North Warwickshire Labour Group
Seaton Valley Community Council ●
Shrewsbury Town Council
Shropshire Green Group
South Swindon Parish Council ●
Staffordshire Labour & Co-op Group
Stockport Labour Group
Winsford Town Council ●
Witney Town Council
Woughton Community Council ●

3ni
A Fairer Society
Anthony Collins Solicitors ●
All About The Place
Bates Wells ●
Branding.coop
Causeway Creative
CLES ●
Co-operative and Mutual Solutions
Co-operative College

Co-operative Futures ●
Co-operative Heritage Trust ●
Co-operatives UK ● ●
Community Broadband Network Limited
Constellia ●
Cooperatives West Midlands
Crystalisr Co-operative Society Ltd
Cwmpas ●
E3M/SBI
Governance International
Greenwich Cooperative Development Agency ●
Greenwich Leisure Ltd (GLL) ● ●
ICS.AI Ltd
Ideas Alliance
Ikigai Consulting Group ●
Innovation Cooperative
Lambeth GP Food Coop
LocalGov Drupal
Locality ●
Marks Out Of Tenancy
Mutual Ventures
Norman Galloway
Outlandish ●
Oxygen Finance
Peopletoo
Plinth
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Power to Change ●
Public Service Transformation Academy
RedQuadrant
Refernet
Social adVentures
Social Value Engine
South East London Chamber of Commerce (SELCC) ●
Stir to Action
Trueman Change ●
Unlimited Potential ● ● ●

Key:

- Fair Tax Accredited
- Living Wage Employer
- Modern Slavery Charter
- Welsh Govt's Code of Practice: Ethical Employment in Supply Chains
- Care Experience as a Protected Characteristic

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 cooperative 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:
[councils.coop/about-us/
values-and-principles](https://councils.coop/about-us/values-and-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 Cooperative Councils to Cooperative 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 Cooperative Councils to take the intellectual and policy risks required of their strong social ethos.
councils.coop/from-coop-councils-to-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.
councils.coop/community-led-housing-commission

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.
councils.coop/cooperatives-unleashed

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.
councils.coop/beyond-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.
councils.coop/digital-divide

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.
councils.coop/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.
councils.coop/coop-diff-in-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.
councils.coop/comm-economic-dev-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.
councils.coop/cooperation-at-the-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. councils.coop/growing-an-inclusive-economy

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. councils.coop/study-visit-to-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. councils.coop/coop-option-training

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 cooperatively when they are making things happen together. councils.coop/democratising-policy-solutions

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. councils.coop/art-culture-for-social-cohesion

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. councils.coop/study-visit-to-emilia-romagna

Cooperative Approaches to Sustainable Food – Led by Oldham Council, this project focuses on how cooperative models can transform food systems, making them more sustainable, inclusive, and resilient. By prioritising local supply chains, reducing waste, and empowering communities, cooperative approaches tackle key challenges like food insecurity and environmental impact. The findings showcase practical strategies for councils and communities to support cooperative food initiatives, enabling fairer access to fresh, sustainable produce while strengthening local economies and bringing communities together. councils.coop/coop-app-to-sustainable-food

Funded Projects continued

Councils' Cooperative Development Toolkit – *Led by Kirklees Council*, this Toolkit takes users from “We need more coops!” to a clear understanding of what they have, local opportunities and well-defined steps. Divided into four sections: Back to Basics, What can I do?, Doing your homework and Taking action, it is supported by a wealth of resources that will strengthen any council’s strategy for cooperative development whether just starting out or building on years of existing work.

councils.coop/resources/toolkits/coopdevelopment

Cooperative values-driven AI – *Led by Wigan Council* and supported by Mutual Ventures, this project developed a guidance framework based on cooperative principles to help people assess AI’s potential and suitability. It focuses on providing the basic knowledge necessary to ask pertinent questions and ensure the ethical and cooperative exploration and adoption of AI at a time of rapid deployment across public services. The policy lab included the creation of a framework including: the main use cases for AI: the key enablers within an organisation; important risks and mitigations; and how to align the adoption of AI with ethical CCIN Principles. The Policy Lab was formally launched at the 2024 LGA Conference.

councils.coop/coop-values-driven-ai

Tackling the Barriers to Building a Cooperative Economy – *Led by Oldham Council*, this project explores how councils can break down barriers to build a thriving cooperative economy. By fostering collaboration, fairness, and community ownership, cooperatives offer innovative solutions to challenges like inequality and local economic decline. The findings highlight practical steps for councils to create supportive environments, empowering cooperatives to deliver lasting benefits for people, places, and the planet. Together, we can drive a more inclusive and sustainable future.

councils.coop/barriers-to-building-coop-economy

Social Value Toolkit for Councils – *Initially led by Oxford City Council*, this toolkit shows councils how to apply the freedoms and flexibilities of the legal framework, including the Procurement Act 2023, to achieve community wealth-building and cooperative placemaking goals. Drawing on best practice across the network and beyond, it seeks to expand your council’s understanding of what’s possible. It highlights the tools, methods and mindsets that will generate positive, policy-aligned social value. This toolkit has been developed in collaboration with lawyers, academics, social enterprise leaders, consultants, and cooperative councils.

councils.coop/social-value-toolkit

Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls – *Led by Trafford Council*, this project aims to improve Women’s safety from male violence, which remains a critical issue, with 97% of women aged 18–24 experiencing harassment in public. This Policy Lab highlights innovative, collaborative approaches to tackling Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), drawing on best practices from leading local areas. Through shared learning, events, training, and accessible resources – such as case studies, videos, and training – we aim to scale what works. Building on progress since the national TVAWG strategy and working towards national government’s promise to halve VAWG in a decade, this initiative will provide practical guidance to improve outcomes, support local action, and create safer communities across the Cooperative Councils’ Innovation Network.

councils.coop/tackling-vawg

Crowdfunding Toolkit for Councils – *Led by Cheshire West and Chester Council*. This toolkit captures learning from designing through to running a community crowdfunding programme and creates a practical guide for other Councils considering this approach. It goes beyond the concept of raising funds, it shows the benefit of building connections and giving residents a real stake in local decision making and helps to deliver meaningful social impact with limited resources.

councils.coop/empowering-communities-through-crowdfunding

Meet us in 2026

10 - 12 February 2026 – CCIN AGM & Annual Conference
- Online

12 - 13 June 2026 – Coops UK Congress - Birmingham

7-9 July 2026 – LGA Conference & Exhibition -
Bournemouth

16 - 17 September 2026 – Welsh LGA Conference -
Swansea

19 - 22 September 2026 – Liberal Democrat Party
Conference - Brighton

27 - 30 September 2026 – Labour Party Conference -
Liverpool

2 - 4 October 2026 – Green Party Conference - Brighton

19 -20 November 2026 – COSLA Annual Conference -
St Andrews

See all events: councils.coop/events



LGR – Powering Up, Passing Power Down

Local Government Reorganisation asks a great deal of Councillors and officers. New structures, new partnerships, and the weight of expectation from residents who need to feel that this change is worth it.

Getting that right might mean the need to explore different ways of working. Not just across Council Departments, but across party lines – building a shared leadership where new authorities will need to earn public trust from the start.

Cooperative values can be used as practical tools for the work ahead: listening properly, making decisions with communities rather than for them, transferring assets and services to neighbourhoods, and being honest when things get tough.

CCIN's LGR Toolkit was built for this moment – a practical gateway for councillors and officers who want to get reorganisation right, not just get it done. It covers co-operative leadership and proven concepts and resources

what can be used to support a cooperative culture that lasts beyond the transition.

- **Power Up** – Use Reorganisation to build genuine civic capacity and community resilience
- **Pass power down** – Resist the pull towards centralisation, use opportunities to root services and assets in communities.

Access the LGR Toolkit at:

councils.coop/resources/toolkits/unitary-leadership

For further information, contact:

Pete Vallance

Strategy Membership, Event – Lead
e: hello@councils.coop



Young People

Birmingham City Council

Birmingham SEND Co-production Award Scheme



Launched in 2024, the Birmingham SEND Co-production Award Scheme is already recognising nearly 100 organisations for their commitment to meaningful co-production. The initiative raises awareness of collaborative practice and celebrates SEND Services across Birmingham that work in genuine partnership with children, young people and parent carers.

The scheme is open to Birmingham based organisations in education, health, social care and the voluntary sector which can demonstrate co-production in action. Co-production is defined through the "4Cs" model developed by Governance International: co-commissioning, co-design, co-delivery, and co-assessment. Organisations must evidence activity in at least one of these areas to participate.

Awards are achieved progressively across three stages, reflecting how deeply co-production is embedded:

- Bronze – awarded when an organisation signs up to and commits to implementing the SEND Co-production Framework and Charter.
- Silver – granted on submission and assessment of a clear delivery plan, outlining practical action across the 4Cs.
- Gold – achieved through a robust evidence portfolio demonstrating implementation and the measurable impact on the lives of children, young people and families.

Assessment is led by the Birmingham SEND Co-production Champions Group, a diverse panel of young people, parent carers and professionals from across education, health, social care and the voluntary sector. The group provides both support and constructive challenge. Their role includes reviewing commitments and delivery plans,

The 4 stages of the Award Scheme



For organisations to receive the bronze award, they will need to sign up to the SEND Co-production Framework and Charter



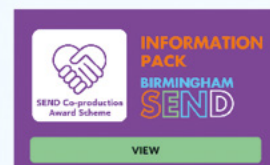
To receive the silver award, they will need to create and submit a delivery plan which sets out what actions they will take across the 4C's of co-production (co-commissioning, co-design, co-delivery, and co-assessment)



To receive the gold award, they will need to produce an evidence portfolio, showing how their delivery plan has been implemented and what impact this has made on the lives of children, young people, and their families.



To receive the platinum award, they will need to evidence their long-term commitment to embed co-production.

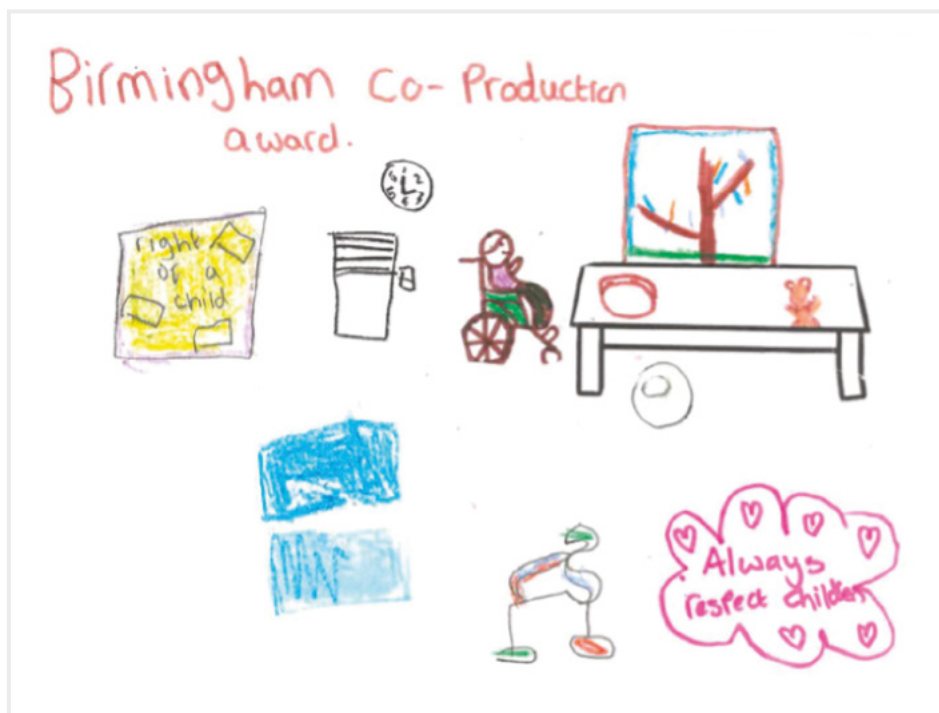


The stages of the Award Scheme

ensuring alignment with strategic priorities, examining evidence of practice, undertaking monitoring visits and interviews, and evaluating the impact for SEND communities.

The award scheme celebrates achievements and raises awareness of co-production in Birmingham. Organisations that sign up to the award scheme will :

- Organisations will receive a certificate at each stage of the award and can use their awarded logos on their letterheads and publicity materials etc.



SEND children's workshop

- Organisations are encouraged to widely publicise their achievements at every stage of this award scheme.
- Organisations can celebrate their award achievements by holding 'award recognition events' for their staff and communities.

Successful organisations receive certification at each stage and can display award logos in communications and publicity. They are encouraged to celebrate progress publicly, including sting recognition events for staff, families, and local communities—helping to build momentum for a culture of shared decision-making across the city.

Following two years of implementation, the Award Scheme Panel is reviewing and refreshing the award criteria to reflect learning and strengthen impact ahead of a planned 2026 update. This continuous improvement approach ensures the scheme remains responsive, credible, and focused on improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

Further information is available via the Local Offer Birmingham website below.

For further information, contact:

Lakhvir Sahota

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e: lakhvir.sahota@birmingham.gov.uk

w: localofferbirmingham.co.uk





Community Wealth Building

London Borough of Camden

Camden Community Wealth Fund

Camden Community Wealth Fund is a £30 million social investment fund with people in Camden helping to decide how we invest the money. Starting in 2025, an initial £4 million will be invested in Camden organisations to reduce inequality and transform the quality of life for people in Camden.

In the past few years, Camden has come together in new and inspiring ways to tackle some of the most pressing issues facing the borough. In 2022, we published [We Make Camden](#) – our vision for the future of Camden. It set out what we want to collectively achieve and lead together and was developed in collaboration with residents, partners and community leaders.

Camden Community Wealth Fund's ambition is to play a pivotal role in bringing businesses, as well as residents and partners, on the We Make Camden journey. We recognise that financial decision-making has historically been confined to 'experts', often overlooking the perspectives of those directly affected by it. With the Camden Community Wealth Fund, we want to shift this dynamic.

In 2025, we launched a pilot phase to test and learn from two distinct participation approaches to investment. The pilot phase focuses on two of the We Make Camden Missions:

- **Young People:** Every young person has access to economic opportunity that enables them to be safe and secure. We set up a £2m Youth Fund to support this mission and learn about deep, regular participation of young people in investment.
- **Diversity:** Those holding positions of power in Camden are as diverse as our community – and the next generation is ready to follow. We set up a £2m Diversity Fund to support this mission and learn about participation at scale.



The Youth Panel co-designed the £2m Youth investment fund

The Youth Fund

In January 2025, we recruited a panel of 15 young people who live, work or study in Camden and have lived experience of some of the barriers to access economic opportunities. The Youth Panel met regularly over the course of 2025 & early 2026, working closely with investment officers, partners and entrepreneurs themselves, to co-design an investment strategy and eventually recommend investments to the Council.

The Diversity Fund

Alongside the Youth Panel, we launched the Diversity Panel in June 2025. The ambition of the Diversity panel was to involve people in Camden at a scale we never had before. We wanted to test a participatory model that could meaningfully combine:

- the benefits of involving people at scale – reaching a wide range of people who interact with Camden and its businesses daily,
- and the benefits of deep deliberation – giving thoughtful consideration to the difficult trade-offs of investment, looking at the impact for Camden, the financial risks, and the money that we expect to get back into the Fund.



1. Influencing the impact of the Fund at scale

To enable a wide range of people living, working and studying in Camden to influence decisions on the Diversity Fund, we first recruited a large online panel. A total of 1,500+ people came forward to take part. We worked closely with our partner the [Sortition Foundation](#) to randomly select a 1,000-people diverse panel, the largest they had ever selected.

While most digital participation focuses on crowdsourcing or prioritising ideas, we wanted to make sure that online participants had a chance to also discuss the topic at hand with each other.

We used the online participation platform called [PSi \(People Supported Intelligence\)](#) to enable the panel to discuss two critical aspects of the fund:

- one for residents to crowdsource, discuss and prioritise impact goals for the fund,
- one for entrepreneurs to share the type of financing they preferred.

A total of 500+ participants took part in these online conversations that formed the backbone of the investment strategy.

2. Deep deliberation to co-design an investment strategy

Following the online discussions, we recruited a group of 50 people from the online panel to come together in person to develop the Diversity Fund's investment strategy. The in-person panel met over three Saturday sessions to:

- learn about investment,
- meet entrepreneurs and investment experts,
- consider online conversations' insights,
- share their lived experience,
- discuss and consider different options for the fund,
- before agreeing a strategy for the fund.

The in-person Diversity Panel came together to co-design the investment strategy for the £2m Diversity investment fund

The in-person panel was supported in their deliberations by our team of investment & participation officers alongside our partner [Involve](#).

"I really appreciated the diversity I saw and the opportunity to contribute in such an accepting space that worked really hard to foster a creative and informative environment." In-person panel participant

In December 2025, the investment strategy for the fund was signed off by the Council and the fund is launching on February 4th 2026 at our We Make Camden Summit, an annual event which brings together local organisations, institutions, businesses and engaged residents in Camden.

Both the online & in-person panels will continue to help shape investment decisions in 2026, helping to decide which businesses receive investment. Beyond the pilot phase, our ambition is to continue to boldly involve residents in the Camden Community Wealth Fund.

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Health & Social Care

Cardiff Council

Single View Of The Child

Background

Effective data sharing saves lives. Countless high-profile case reviews over the last 20 years, from Baby P to Victorie Climbié, identified information-sharing barriers, whether cultural or technical, as key contributing factors to the tragic outcomes of vulnerable children. Far too often practitioners have missed key information which was needed to make effective safeguarding decisions.

Cardiff Council has delivered an innovative data-sharing solution that ensures social workers and other frontline practitioners have secure access to cross-service and cross-partner information they need to safeguard children. Furthermore, the solution saves practitioners a significant amount of time.

Cardiff's solution employs technology to collate a child's records from various IT systems across schools, Children's Services, Education, Youth Justice, Housing, etc., creating a unified 'Single View' of their engagement with public services. The Single View tool offers two key functions:

1. A Single View of a Child, which links together all relevant data sets:

- an involvement screen, allowing practitioners to see which other professionals are involved with the child, and how to contact them
- a cross-service chronology, showing significant events, such as an episode of care or an offence committed, against a backdrop of school performance

2. An aggregate view of all service users to support strategic analysis:

- an aggregated view of service provision allows the identification of trends over time and demand pressures for certain groups of people or certain parts of the city

The solution uses NHS numbers as unique identifiers, allowing the council to match to an individual's records and bring them together into one place, even if they are held in multiple systems. This has been delivered in-house by a small project team within Cardiff Council, drawing on widely available Microsoft tools.

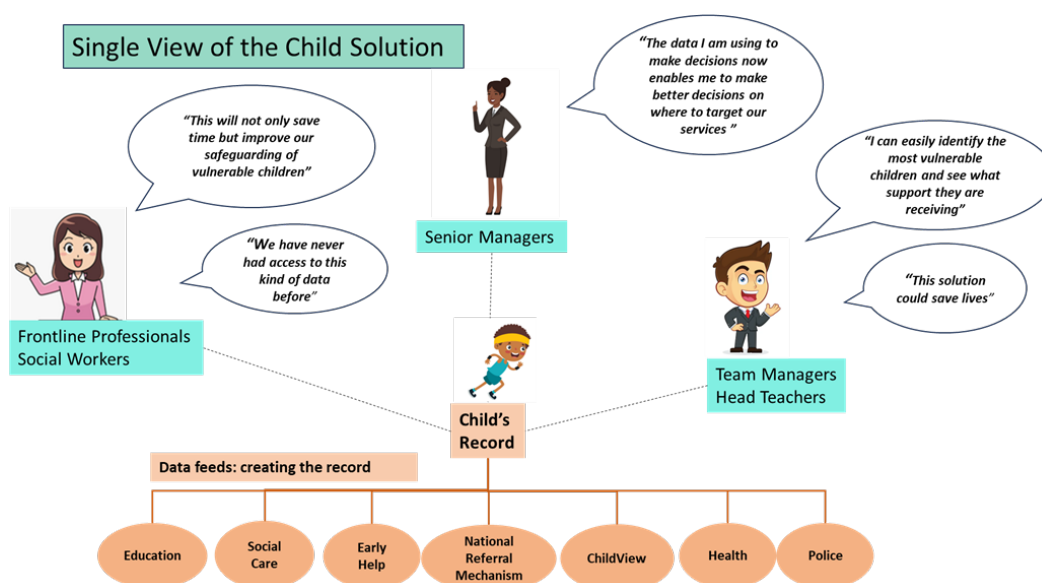
In developing the project, Cardiff Council has worked closely with Cardiff & Vale University Health Board and the Vale of Glamorgan Council on regional data-sharing. The vision is for practitioners across all three organisations to be able to share information related to the safeguarding of individuals (whether children or adults). To this end, the council has aligned its Single View Project with the regional Summary Care Viewer Project. Each project's data platform will shortly be integrated with the others. This will allow, for example, a social worker to see if a child has unexpectedly presented at the hospital, and it could allow the doctor or nurse receiving the child to see that the child is known to Children's Services.

The project team has been involved in many discussions with colleagues across Wales, including the Welsh Local Government Association/Data Cymru and Digital Health & Care Wales, on the potential for further scalability and interoperability of the product. The team has been open with sharing as much as possible, including lessons learned, templates, information governance documents, etc., to support other organisations to deliver similar projects.

Delivery & Benefits

The Single View Project was launched as a limited pilot from April to August 2025, enabling some Children's Services social workers to access Single View and view information from various Council services all in one place. Social workers could see other professional involvements with a child, knowing who to contact and saving time.

Evaluating performance at the end of the pilot, users accessed Single View about 120 times per month.



Workshops with social workers estimated that they saved up to a day per week; this time was previously spent gathering information and calling other services or departments to collect details, which are now all accessible in one place. Additionally, Single View enabled them to provide a more informed and ultimately higher-quality service by allowing them to dedicate this extra time to their work with children and families.

Qualitative benefits have also included:

- the ability to access school information during holiday periods when officers may be unavailable,
- placing the practitioner at the centre of a 'web' of information,
- reducing the risk of missing information leading to serious incidents, and
- improving social worker job satisfaction, recruitment and retention.

Some quotes from practitioners on using Single View:

"We have never had access to this kind of data before"

"This solution could save lives"

A full launch of Single View is now planned for mid-2026, and several additional projects have been initiated off the back of the Single View infrastructure, including:

- improving data-sharing with Public Health Wales on childhood vaccinations,
- automating the entry of police referrals to Children's Services,
- predictive modelling of pupils likely not to be in education, employment or training when they finish school,
- predictive modelling for those requiring early help to support intervention at the 'edge of care',
- linking data on adults at high risk of hospital admission, and
- improving data-sharing for transitions to Adult Services, particularly for those with lifelong disabilities or additional learning needs.

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Young People

Cheshire West and Chester Council

Children's services – Intervention Hub

The Intervention Hub is a child-centred service supporting children and families in crisis across Cheshire West and Chester. Part of the Council's Children's Social Care, it delivers intensive, trauma-informed interventions to families on the edge of care, in care, under child protection planning, or involved in care proceedings. The Hub's core aim is to keep children safe and connected to families, communities, and carers through timely, compassionate, evidence-based support.

Approach: The Hub works with families facing complex challenges such as domestic abuse, substance misuse, mental health difficulties, and poverty. Its approach combines practical help with therapeutic support, including parenting programmes, emotional regulation strategies, and bespoke plans tailored to each family. Collaboration with schools, health professionals, and community organisations creates a robust support network around each child. By addressing underlying issues and building family resilience, the Hub helps prevent escalation into care and promotes long-term stability.

Intensive, innovative support: In response to pressures to reduce children entering care, the Hub offers a bold, intensive solution for families with multiple challenges. Success is rooted in building trust, modelling positive parenting, and empowering families for sustainable change. Innovation is central: workers are trained in a wide-ranging toolkit and deliver evidence-based programmes tailored to family needs and availability. Family intervention workers model effective parenting at home and provide support during challenging times, with availability during evenings, weekends, and stressful periods—reflecting a “whatever it takes” ethos. Where needed, intervention is daily and holistic, involving all family and friends, including non-caring parents, to ensure consistency.

Specialist initiatives: A recent partnership with a local NHS Trust delivers intensive outreach for children and young

people with complex mental health needs, aiming to prevent care and hospital admission. This joint approach provides wraparound care in the community, promoting stability and continuity. The collaboration demonstrates the Hub's commitment to integrated working across health and social care, adapting and innovating when traditional pathways fall short. By bridging service gaps, outcomes for children improve and pressure on inpatient and statutory care services is reduced.

Placement Stability services: The Placement Stability service offers foster and connected carers a unique induction and training programme, recognised by the LGA as good practice. Trauma-informed parenting interventions are delivered before or during a child's care journey, with ongoing support to promote stability, reduce disruptions, and ensure carers feel confident. Children benefit from familiar boundaries and routines, contributing to their sense of security. The Hub ensures children live in nurturing, trauma-informed environments.

Recent expansion enables collaboration with independent fostering agencies and residential providers to co-parent children in care. The council invests in carers through tailored training, peer supervision, and mentoring, equipping them to understand each child's journey and trauma impact. Resources and professional support foster a shared commitment to stability and positive outcomes, building a culture of care where every child feels understood and valued.

Support beyond care: Care-experienced children build independence and wellbeing through holiday clubs and weekend activities. One-to-one support helps children transition to high school or specialist settings. Children who foster join monthly peer events for shared experiences and emotional support. For children with an adoption plan, interactive 3D Life Story Books help them understand their care journey, strengthen attachment with adoptive parents, and foster identity and belonging.

Impact: The Hub's impact is clear: 476 of 626 children remain safely within their family unit two years after support from the edge of care team—a significant achievement given national care entry rates. There have been fewer fragile placements and disruptions, especially with in-house foster carers, with only 44 placement moves (mostly in external placements) for 195 children receiving placement stability support. The aim is to extend this stability to all children in care.

The Family Time Service works with social workers to plan safe, meaningful family time that meets each child's emotional and developmental needs. Welcoming spaces and activities such as arts, crafts, and outdoor games encourage positive interactions. Health visitors, youth workers, and partner agencies support these sessions, offering guidance to parents and carers and promoting children's wellbeing. This multi-agency approach turns family time into an opportunity for growth and healing, helping families rebuild trust and resilience.

Feedback from families

Children and families express deep appreciation for the Hub's support:

- *"We really appreciate everything you have done for us as a family."*
- *"Thank you for all the advice I have received."*
- *"Thank you for being the person I have cried to and ranted to and literally being my rock since day one."*

- *"It's not often I get on with or have taken a liking to those who have been involved previously, but you were different and any family would be lucky to have you."*
- *"Thank you for not giving up, it takes a special person to make you acknowledge, accept and change all whilst feeling valued."*
- *"You helped us a lot and gave us great advice that will help us so much."*
- *"Thank you for the support. I really appreciate it."*

Conclusion: The Intervention Hub exemplifies what innovation, compassion and commitment achieve: transforming lives by keeping children safely with families, supporting carers and promoting wellbeing. Success is rooted in strong relationships, evidence-based practice, and a whole-system approach that places children at the centre.

Our management team fosters excellence and continuous improvement, while highly trained staff engage even the hardest-to-reach families to build lasting change. We listen to children's voices, respect their experiences and ensure they feel seen, heard and valued. Working collaboratively with social workers, health and education partners, we reduce need, ensure safety and secure permanence – a model of good practice showing what's possible when services unite around the child.

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Community

Chorley Council

Chorley Together

Chorley Together is a boroughwide partnership that strengthens how the council and the voluntary sector work side by side to support residents. By investing in advice, training, and funding, the network has supported over 300 local groups in enhancing community resilience and celebrating volunteers who help Chorley.

Chorley Together was originally established in 2019 as a response to Covid-19, helping us identify vulnerable residents and establish a borough-wide support system during a time of greatest need. When the pandemic subsided, the network did not disappear. Instead, it naturally evolved, enabling us to maintain close collaboration with partners and to distribute grants so they could continue providing vital support within their communities.

In 2024, the council reviewed how it supported the third sector, and we decided to strengthen and formalise our relationship with civil society partners so that, together, we could deliver more to residents and directly advance the council's priority of creating healthy, safe, and engaged communities. Through consultations and discussions with our voluntary partners, we identified some of the barriers they faced, particularly around access to advice, practical support, and opportunities to connect with one another. To make a meaningful difference, we invested in both funding and staff, and created a new role, the Voluntary and Community Sector Development Officer, to join our Community Partnerships team. This post sits alongside existing officers who provide training and signposting to support partners in submitting bids for large and medium-sized grants. Together, we agreed the best way to move forward was to reinvigorize Chorley Together and utilise the network as the primary route for providing this support.

A key part of the refresh involved creating a dedicated section of the council website for Chorley Together. In effect, these pages now serve as a one-stop shop for

community groups to access council grants alongside other funding sources and support. It provides information for both existing community groups and those wishing to establish new ones, including how to identify community needs. The site also offers details on volunteering, including support for individuals using it as a stepping stone into employment. In 2025, the webpages were viewed more than 20,500 times, demonstrating the value of this resource.

Chorley Together also brings together representatives from the public sector, such as health and uniformed services, alongside social housing providers, to promote programmes that support residents and make referral pathways easier. It provides a vehicle for these services to consult with the VCFS to improve services and to provide valuable insight to either improve or create new services that address gaps in local provision.

As well as the help available on the webpages, community groups are able to sign up to membership of Chorley Together. Membership is free and opens the door to additional opportunities such as a volunteer recognition programme, networking opportunities, funding opportunities and promotional/marketing support. The Chorley Together members value the opportunity to come together in-person and online so they can network, learn from each other and increase their awareness of the variety of other groups operating locally to support the borough's residents. Through the membership, we have been able to identify topics to provide training on, such as carrying out robust risk assessments, food safety, safeguarding and making better funding bids. This training has now been delivered by council officers.

Recognising the incredible contribution of volunteers was another of our priorities. So, alongside the benefits of gaining practical skills and support, we also launched a new reward and recognition scheme, which includes a discount card for local businesses and events, as well as milestone certificates for volunteers who have given



Chorley Together
volunteers attending
their reward event

one, five or ten years of their time. This helps formalise their experience and can be used as a stepping stone into paid employment. So far, 487 people have signed up. The Chorley Together membership scheme launched in June with a celebration meal, giving members the chance to meet each other to network and connect with the officers supporting the programme.

Since its re-launch, Chorley Together has supported over 316 voluntary, community and faith groups; in turn, these groups have supported over 38,000 residents. 17 free training courses have been delivered by the council, with over 200 volunteers upskilled to support their voluntary

group. This ecosystem of community support also means we have a provision of diverse and accessible services, which provide essential support to our vulnerable residents. Chorley Together also supports residents in accessing information to help them take on roles in the management of voluntary groups and volunteering.

Our approach has laid firm foundations for community groups to grow and thrive. The sustainable legacy of our work is a set of resources for VCFS partners to use, a programme of training provided by council officers and a visible, popular volunteer reward scheme that benefits local organisations as much as it benefits volunteers.

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Social Outcomes

Glasgow City Council

The Social Innovation Challenge Fund

The Social Innovation Challenge Fund is an initiative led by Glasgow City Council to break down long-standing barriers that prevent underrepresented communities from engaging in entrepreneurship. Aimed at fostering innovation, collaboration, and fair access to business support, the Fund has become a vital tool for empowering individuals who often remain excluded from start-up assistance.

In June 2021, Glasgow's City Leadership Team took part in the Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Innovation Track Programme—an intensive, design-based learning model aimed at helping cities tackle challenging problems with new creative approaches. Through this process, the city identified significant systemic barriers affecting underrepresented residents—particularly women, minority ethnic communities, and younger individuals from deprived areas—who face disproportionate difficulties when trying to become entrepreneurs.

In response, Glasgow City Council's Business Growth Team developed the Social Innovation Challenge Fund, a new model of grant support and codesigned engagement aimed at addressing these inequities. Drawing on design-based methodology, the Fund seeks to establish a new way for the council to deliver entrepreneurship support by ensuring services meet the needs of communities that have traditionally been underserved.

The fund's objectives were designed to engage and empower organisations to create and develop new services or expand existing activities to reach new beneficiaries that will:

- drive and support entrepreneurship
- encourage collaboration
- provide expert guidance
- foster greater levels of innovation.

To enable this co-production the fund centred on key themes to collaborate with organisations to:

- Promote and establish new entrepreneurial



Gilded Lily Inspiring CIC – Her Future Enterprises 2025, Pitching Competition

engagement with underrepresented communities in the city.

- Promote Glasgow as a place to start a business, breaking down barriers that prevent people from taking risks and becoming entrepreneurs.
- Promote actual or new networks (business-related or not) that support the development of businesses of minority ethnic communities and/or other underrepresented communities.
- Promote the business support services of Glasgow City Council and our partners, ensuring a coordinated, collaborative approach.

Following a thorough engagement and application process, which included an independent lived-experience decision panel, awards totalling £230,907 were granted to four successful applicants.

Collective Communities CIC – The Collective Communities Circle initiative focuses on building strong, resilient communities by supporting local projects that address social issues. It aims to engage with participants, providing access to a thriving local business community network and a rolling programme of tailored business guidance, start up support, and peer mentorship.

Community Renewal Trust – Roma Entrepreneurship/Start-Ups Programme aims to support community-led initiatives that address social and economic challenges in Glasgow. The project delivers one-to-one mentoring, business training, financial literacy support, and access to funding opportunities, ensuring that culturally tailored, multilingual business support services are provided, with the aim of creating new Roma-led businesses.

Gilded Lily Inspiring CIC – Her Future Enterprises is an initiative that seeks to inspire and support females from underrepresented groups to start their own businesses. It provides training, mentorship, and access to resources to help aspiring entrepreneurs turn their ideas into viable enterprises.

West of Scotland Regional Equality Council (WSREC) – Bridge to Business – Minority Ethnic Pathway to Progress. This initiative aims to promote equality and diversity in the business sector. It provides support to minority ethnic communities and other underrepresented groups to help them overcome barriers to entrepreneurship and achieve their business goals.

These four organisations are now delivering collaboratively designed programmes through the Fund to remove barriers to entrepreneurship, supporting nearly 100 individuals with the skills, contacts, and confidence to start and succeed in business.

Councillor Susan Aitken, Leader of Glasgow City Council, said: "The City Council has changed the way we deliver business support to undeserved communities, particularly those from black and minority ethnic communities and



Gilded Lily Inspiring CIC – Her Future Enterprises 2025, Graduating Participants

women entrepreneurs. The Social Innovation Challenge Fund is about supporting that business talent that has operated under the radar of public sector support for too long. It's about providing the skills, the contacts, and the confidence so Glasgow's underrepresented entrepreneurs are empowered to thrive. Our message is clear. Wherever you are, and whatever your background, we want to work with you to ensure you get the support you need to start, scale, and grow your business."

The successful Social Innovation Challenge Fund programme is underway again in 2026/27, funding and co-designing programmes of support for people from underrepresented groups to connect and empower early-stage entrepreneurs and start-ups in Glasgow.

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**Glasgow
Futures**



Social Outcomes

Greater Manchester Combined Authority #IsThisOK?

The #IsThisOK? campaign by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority is a public engagement initiative aimed at tackling gender-based violence, particularly sexual harassment against women and girls in public spaces.

The initial launch of the #IsThisOK? campaign in 2021 featured a powerful video depicting a young woman experiencing harassment in everyday situations, aiming to highlight how normalised behaviours can make women feel unsafe.

The second phase, running from December 2022 to March 2024, expanded the campaign with follow-up films and a podcast series. This phase focused on calling out common behaviours such as unwanted comments and jokes, encouraging men to reflect on their actions and become active allies.

An impact evaluation conducted in March 2024 surveyed 400 men and boys in Greater Manchester. Key findings revealed that the second phase garnered 4.1 million views, with 53% of respondents stating the campaign made them think or want to act differently, 17% reflecting on their behaviour, and 12% learning how to help reduce gender-based violence.

Campaign Overview

Launched: December 2021 by Mayor Andy Burnham.

Target Audience: Primarily men and boys, especially those aged 18 – 35.

Goal: To challenge everyday behaviours that contribute to gender-based violence and encourage men to be part of the solution.



Gender Based Violence Campaign: It's not a game, boy #IsThisOk

GMCA Greater Manchester Combined Authority 1.07K subscribers

It's not a game, boy: [youtube.com/watch?v=5UmZEUgtlis](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5UmZEUgtlis)



Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester, launches the next phase of the campaign to raise awareness of coercive and controlling behaviour, and encourages people who use harmful behaviour, victims, and those who care about them to seek support.

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GMCA GREATER
MANCHESTER
COMBINED
AUTHORITY



Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Toolkit

Practical learning, case studies and ideas for councillors and officers working to make places safer for women and girls

councils.coop/tackling-vawg



Education & Training

Royal Borough of Greenwich

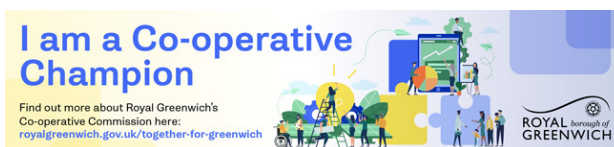
Embedding cooperation in practice: The Royal Greenwich Cooperative Champions initiative

The Royal Borough of Greenwich Co-operative Champions initiative originated from a recommendation in the Co-operative Commission Report: *Together for Greenwich*. This recommendation recognised the need for the council to embed a co-operative mindset across the entire authority, one in which services are co-designed with residents, communities, and partners rather than simply delivered to them.

To ensure this shift is sustainable, the report recommended setting up a network of officers with specialised knowledge of co-operative business models. These officers would serve as facilitators, assisting services in identifying where co-operative approaches could add value, boost community involvement, and improve outcomes for residents.

Building on this recommendation, a Co-operative Champions scheme has been introduced to develop internal expertise and foster a culture of shared ownership and collaborative problem-solving. Champions will be encouraged to support teams in identifying opportunities for co-operative solutions—whether through partnerships, community-led models, or enhanced resident participation. Their role is both practical and cultural: they help translate co-operative principles into everyday working practices.

The scheme was officially launched in November 2025, introduced through a series of taster sessions open to all officers across the organisation. These interactive sessions included co-operative quizzes and a summary of Royal Greenwich's extensive co-operative history, which generated strong engagement from a wide range of directorates, demonstrating enthusiasm for exploring new forms of collaboration and organisational change.



Royal Borough of Greenwich Co-op Champion email banner

To build momentum, the council's Economic Development Team hosted a follow-up session with the Greenwich and Bexley Credit Union in January 2026. This session offered officers a real-world example of a successful local co-operative organisation. It allowed prospective Champions to deepen their understanding of how co-operative values translate into financial inclusion, community wealth building, and member-led governance. The session also helped spark practical ideas for how similar models could support other service areas.

Alongside staff development activity, as part of the communications and awareness, Champions can utilise a distinctive email banner to promote the scheme across the organisation. Added to Champions' signatures, it serves as a visual cue that invites curiosity, prompts discussion, and gently encourages more officers to join the network.

The Cooperative Champions initiative is now laying the groundwork for a more collaborative, people-centred council. By equipping officers with the knowledge and confidence to identify and pursue cooperative solutions, Greenwich is encouraging a culture where services are developed in partnership with communities, resulting in stronger, more resilient outcomes for the borough.

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Social Care

Royal Borough of Greenwich Social care reimagined - A co-operative hackathon

In November 2025, the Royal Borough of Greenwich partnered with the University of Greenwich (UoG) to deliver the 'Social Care Reimagined Hackathon', a two-day innovation event designed to explore co-operative solutions for adult social care. The initiative emerged directly from the Royal Borough of Greenwich Co-operative Commission, *Together for Greenwich: Co-operation for the Future*. The idea of holding a co-operative hackathon is in the first recommendation under the strategy.

The hackathon united UoG students who embraced cooperative principles to create practical, community-focused solutions for one of the borough's most urgent issues: delivering sustainable, ethical adult social care. Thousands of residents in Royal Greenwich depend on adult social care, yet current provision is mainly delivered by profit-driven private providers.

Central to the event's purpose was responding to the Commission's call for alternatives that empower communities, enhance public capacity, and move away from traditional profit-driven systems. The hackathon strongly aligned with the borough's vision to embed co-operative values within local services, ensuring decisions are made with and by the people they impact. This approach reflects a broader political and strategic commitment to expanding democratic ownership and fostering resident-led innovation.

Students participated in masterclasses delivered by Co-operative Commission members, including Emma Back of Equal Care and Ed Mayo of the Rural Urban Synthesis

Society, who provided insights on relationship-centred care, local autonomy, and ethical business models. Guided by mentors, teams developed concepts such as collaborative digital platforms for co-operative working, and public education campaigns to increase awareness and recruitment for care co-operatives.

The hackathon offered students valuable real-world experience, with the University noting the event's role in shaping future practitioners equipped to drive systemic change in their communities.

Ultimately, the hackathon demonstrated how the borough is translating Commission recommendations into action – integrating cooperative practice into social care, encouraging innovation beyond traditional service models, and creating a more inclusive, resilient, and community-owned approach to care.

Looking ahead, the Royal Borough of Greenwich is dedicated to building on the success of this hackathon by seeking opportunities to host future collaborative innovation events in partnership with higher education institutions. As the borough continues to implement the Co-operative Commission's recommendations and develop its long-term vision for integrating cooperative principles across services, it regards ongoing collaboration with universities as a vital driver of community-focused problem-solving and sector transformation.



Royal Borough of Greenwich join forces with University of Greenwich students for the Care Re-imagined Hackathon

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Poverty

Inverclyde Council

The Inverclyde Approach – tackling child poverty

The Inverclyde Approach delivers a place-based and whole family approach to support those living in poverty or facing inequalities, based on the premise that alleviating poverty requires a network of interconnected partners and collaborations to address families' increasingly complex needs.

This brings together four distinct projects, delivered by a range of partners:

- Routes into Supported Employment (supporting men aged 20-40 with a range of complex issues, including recovery from addiction)
- Early Adopter Communities (a locality-based approach to delivering affordable childcare)
- Home Start (supporting families with an emphasis on parents with mental health concerns and children under five)
- Thrive Under 5 (providing families with children under five with resources and knowledge to make healthier choices around food)

The Inverclyde Approach evolved from a theory of change developed by the Inverclyde Child Poverty Action Group to respond to a pressing local priority: tackling child poverty in a community where around 22% of children are living in poverty after housing costs, with many families experiencing increasingly complex challenges exacerbated by the lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing cost of living crisis.

This case study focuses on the early adopter communities project. This involved piloting a locality-based approach to delivering affordable childcare to families who are low income or who are one of the child poverty priority families. Family wellbeing support is provided to families who require additional support including advocacy. Transportation to the childcare, healthy snacks and activities are provided



B'Hive at Boglestone Community Centre Official Opening

to children participating. This integrated system of support aims to strengthen financial wellbeing, access to childcare, employability, and whole-family support. It reflects a values-based belief that families are experts in their own lives and, when supported through co-ordinated, trauma-informed services, they can move toward improved, sustainable outcomes.

A multi-agency partnership coordinated this work, with the shared approach ensuring that childcare is not viewed in isolation, but as a gateway to broader social and economic opportunities. This was supported by Early Adopter Community funding from the Scottish Government.

The overarching methodology of the initiative is to:

- reduce child poverty through better collaboration.
- create a person-centred service with users at the heart of service design and delivery; and
- use data to identify needs and start to track progress to provide support that leads to lasting improvement in people's lives while providing them with opportunities and choice.

The Early Adopter Community prioritised a co-design approach to ensure that services effectively meet the needs of the community at the earliest intervention. Before the service started, an online survey was distributed asking families about their thoughts on childcare, how they currently use it, and their needs, with 169 families responding. Through co-production workshops, the partners gained valuable insights into the challenges and aspirations of parents and families, as well as data on service needs and preferences. Various engagement strategies have been put in place to maximise participation, e.g. hosting events in accessible locations and offering child-friendly activities.

Early results indicate significant benefits to families engaged in the initiatives. For example, families report improved household income, many due to childcare access that enabled additional work hours or promotional opportunities. Access to financial well-being advice has also helped families understand the impact of job changes before taking action.

To date, the Inverclyde Approach has collectively reached 375 families in Inverclyde. Progress has been made across all four child poverty drivers, with positive impacts on families, children, and parents, including:

- Development of robust relationships between families and services. Strong relationships with families served as a foundation to providing effective support.
- Opportunities for activities as a family with many opportunities on offer, including eating healthy, cooking, playing, exploring, and socialising together.

- Supporting the health and well-being of the whole family. An end-of-year childcare questionnaire (2023/24) captured the impacts of after-school care on families: 93% of parents reported feeling less stressed and more supported, and 100% reported feeling reassured.
- Supporting the adults in families to progress their employability and parenting journey. A Wellbeing Survey showed that 100% of respondents reported improvements to some extent in their emotional health and wellbeing. 89% of respondents reported feeling less isolated and having made more connections with other parents.

An independent evaluation found that applying the Inverclyde Approach to developing and delivering local projects and initiatives has successfully addressed the many factors that contribute to child poverty by delivering a collaborative and co-ordinated framework of support that is adaptive and co-designed by the communities it aims to serve, leading to better outcomes for families. The document is available to view on Inverclyde Council's website: Inverclyde Alliance Board Meeting 16 June 2025 – Inverclyde Council (agenda item 9). This report recommends that the Council and its partners consider wider integration of the Inverclyde Approach by embedding the approach across the authority to support whole-family working, prioritise relationship-based practice, and empower communities; and creating an environment for sustainable change through adapting internal processes, align funding opportunities, and adopt transformative monitoring and evaluation methods to support changemaking efforts. The evaluation report provides a blueprint for building successful service and family partnerships to address child poverty.

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Inverclyde
council



Community Wealth Building

Kirklees Council

Dewsbury Arcade: A community-led model for high street renewal

Dewsbury Arcade is fast becoming a reference for how councils and communities can transform a declining high street through shared ownership, creativity and determination. By combining bold Council leadership with genuine community enterprise, the project is bringing a long-empty Grade II listed building back to life. It is the UK's first community-run shopping centre—drawing investment, building local pride and putting the future of the town centre firmly in the hands of local people.

Dewsbury, the second-largest town in Kirklees, has faced declining high-street footfall, the loss of national retailers, and competition from nearby Leeds and multiple out-of-town shopping destinations. As in many towns, this culminated in the closure of well-known retailers like Marks & Spencer in 2008. The Grade II listed Dewsbury Arcade, first opened in 1899, and housed 20 diverse businesses, including coffee houses, florists, tobacconists and record shops, was one affected asset. The last tenant closed in 2016.

In 2020, Kirklees Council purchased the Arcade as part of its strategic action to deliver the Dewsbury Blueprint, its long-term town centre regeneration plan. The Arcade's refurbishment became a flagship project within an £80m regeneration programme that includes investment in Dewsbury Market, public realm improvements, a Building Revival scheme, and cultural activity.

Cooperative Partnership and New Civic Models

Shortly after the Council's acquisition, a group of local residents and business people—including an experienced cooperative development consultant—approached the Council with a proposal: rather than the Council managing the Arcade after refurbishment, a community-owned organisation could take on responsibility for its long-term stewardship. The Council supported the proposal and commissioned the cooperative consultant part-time to help establish what would become The Arcade Group, ensuring



Artist's impression of the refurbished Dewsbury Arcade

the organisation had the necessary capacity, governance, and business planning.

The Arcade Group is formally constituted as a Community Benefit Society (CBS), a type of cooperative in which individuals become members to deliver wider community benefits. Grants from the Architectural Heritage Fund supported the group's development and secured preferred bidder status for the lease. The CBS then enabled a community share offer, giving local people the chance to become co-owners and provide vital early-stage working capital. The share offer raised £125,000, including match funding from Co-op's Community Shares Booster Programme and a contribution from the Council itself.

The partnership between the Council and the Arcade Group also strengthened the bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund, resulting in a £4.5m grant for refurbishment works. Additional funding was secured from the Towns Fund and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority's Getting Building Fund—collectively forming a significant capital package underpinning restoration.

Historic Restoration and Local Economic Opportunity

Refurbishment work began in April 2024 under William Birch & Sons, a Yorkshire-based heritage construction firm. Their involvement has created nationally rare opportunities for local people to undertake specialist work placements with heritage stonemasons. Restoration of the Arcade's distinctive glazed roof has been a highlight of the project. Uniquely, this work was carried out by Dewsbury-based Standard Patent Glazing that installed the original glazing in the 1890s, continuing to build local history through craftsmanship.

The renewed Arcade will offer 16 small shop units, four larger end units, and eight studios on the upper floor, creating space for independent retailers, makers, and small enterprises.

Community Ownership in Action

The Arcade Group regards its role not just as a landlord but as a curator of a unique, people-focused town centre experience. Through community engagement, the Group co-created a set of principles to guide tenant selection, signalling a commitment to avoiding homogenised or low-value high street uses ("no takeaways, vape shops or nail bars") in favour of more distinctive, independent propositions that attract footfall and strengthen local identity.

To build early momentum, the Group initiated creative outreach activities while the building remained closed for refurbishment. Events and pop-ups have included a clothes swap, weekly wall-art sessions, active coffee mornings, and a Valentine's Wellness Day. These activities highlight

the future potential of the Arcade as a community venue, support wellbeing and social bonds, and help foster a pipeline of future tenants. They have also backed events hosted by other local venues, promoting them to their followers.

The Arcade Group has adopted a similarly inventive approach to attracting future tenants. In 2025, it launched a "Win a Shop" competition, offering a year's free occupancy to an outstanding independent business. This initiative attracted regional attention and emphasised that the Arcade will prioritise creativity, diversity and community value over purely commercial concerns.

A Model for Cooperative Placemaking

The Dewsbury Arcade project demonstrates how councils can reshape local economies by sharing power and responsibility with community organisations. Kirklees Council's leadership—in acquiring the asset, facilitating the formation of a CBS, contributing match funding, and acting as co-bidder for a major capital investment—has provided a foundation on which genuine community ownership can flourish.

Meanwhile, the Arcade Group has shown how local residents and businesses can step into a stewardship role, raise investment, generate new energy around a struggling town centre, and develop a credible long-term operating model for a heritage asset of this scale.

For towns seeking fresh approaches to regeneration, Dewsbury Arcade offers a powerful example of how cooperative principles—shared ownership, mutual investment, and community-led enterprise—can help rebuild local economies from the ground up.

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Community

Knowsley Council

Delivering effective, high-quality services and support to residents

Knowsley Council's ongoing delivery of its Knowsley Council Plan 2025-2030 demonstrates how the Council is supporting local residents to thrive and overcome inequality through the practical delivery of effective, high-quality services and support which continue to make a real impact in communities across the Borough.

In shaping the plan, the Council builds on some of its recent successes (including reversing decades of population decline through the delivery of over 4,000 new homes and 10,000 new jobs in five years) to set out its clear and continued focus on:-

- Delivering effective, high-quality services and support for residents
- Encouraging growth that benefits everyone
- Delivering targeted support to encourage fairness and opportunity for all

This approach and the resulting achievements have been praised by the Local Government Association following the Council's participation in a Corporate Peer Challenge in November 2025 – highlighting the Council's positive organisational culture underpinned by high levels of trust and collaboration with stakeholders, its forensic approach to financial monitoring and service delivery which supports its successes and work to support local communities.

In the first 9 months since the Knowsley Council Plan was launched, the practical, action-focussed delivery plans which underpin it have enabled the Council to build further on its successes – delivering a wide range of tangible achievements which meet priority needs of local people and maximise social value across the Borough.

This involves significant investment and rapid improvements as part of the Council's Children's Services improvement journey, ensuring Knowsley children receive the best



Knowsley Council Plan 2025-2030

possible start in life by providing the right support at the right time. As part of this, Knowsley's "Start for Life and Beyond" Family Hubs model enhances local support services across the Council and its partners, making it easier for families to access advice and assistance to nurture children. It focuses on improving long-term health and educational outcomes through early intervention. This co-produced approach has been developed alongside local communities, ensuring it aligns with their specific needs and circumstances in accordance with Knowsley's well-established "Better Together" principles.

Further targeted interventions delivered alongside local partners is helping to support Knowsley's most vulnerable children and their families, including:-

- Shield – protecting children against exploitation through a coordinated and proactive approach to reduce exploitation and children going missing. This work was recently recognised as best practice by Ofsted, and over a 12-month period, nearly 75 at-risk children received support, thereby reducing the risk of child sexual exploitation by 100%, with 97% of children remaining at home, helping to decrease the number of missing episodes.

- STEP – identifying and supporting children at the earliest opportunity to divert them away from criminality, anti-social behaviour, and criminal exploitation. Over 12 months, 1,600 young people have engaged with the team, with 98% of positive outcomes;
- Additional domestic abuse support includes the Council investing an extra £1m in ongoing assistance, alongside the innovative 'Be the Change' programme designed to steer people away from serious and organised crime, which has helped over 6,000 young people through intervention efforts.
- Dedicated support for young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities – through the creation of additional school places and an Autism Advisory Service operating across the Borough to identify issues early and offer suitable support.

In providing effective, high-quality Adult Social Care services and support for residents, the Council has been rated as Good by the Care Quality Commission across all areas, with the inspectors highlighting the Council's positive approach to assessing individuals' needs and supporting them to lead healthier lives through integrated and consistent care. Knowsley's preventative services, including innovative technology and extra care housing, were described by the CQC as transformative—enhancing residents' independence and overall quality of life.

This approach is complemented by the Council's Rapid Response service, which helps residents stay independent by reducing hospital admissions and enabling safe, effective discharge from hospital to home, with over 95% of Knowsley residents being supported to return home after a hospital stay.

The health and well-being of residents is a key priority and through partnership working to maximise social value:-

- The majority of the Borough's schools have signed up to the Healthy Schools Programme – adopting healthier school meals menus and promoting active lifestyles; and,
- An additional 61 wraparound childcare places for primary school-aged children in Knowsley have been created, providing essential support to parents and carers who are working or in education or training.
- 250 local businesses have benefited from Working Well funding to promote health and wellbeing at work; and
- An engaging and accessible youth offer ensures that high-quality youth activities for all ages and interests are available in all areas of the Borough.

Through the ongoing delivery of the Knowsley Council Plan, the Council continues to support the most vulnerable residents through:-

- The Knowsley Better Together and Hardship Fund programme – with more than 9,000 families receiving a variety of essential support;
- The Knowsley Community Fund – enabling around 120 community groups to deliver projects that provide essential support, including helping residents stay warm, safe and well over the winter months;
- The Council's well-established Knowsley Works service – providing employment, recruitment and training support to residents of all ages ; and,
- The Access to Affordable Housing Fund – delivering additional affordable homes across Knowsley, alongside social housing providers.

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Knowsley Council



Young People

Lewisham Council

Lewisham Multi-Agency Child Protection Team (MACPT) – skilled, relationship-based practice and partnership working

Lewisham was selected in 2024 to join wave 2 of the national Families First for Children programme as a Pathfinder local authority. This has put Lewisham at the forefront of innovation and the implementation of the reforms in children's social care to improve outcomes for children. One key area of the reforms is the establishment of Multi-Agency Child Protection teams and this case study illustrates how these teams are having a positive impact on child protection practice with children and families in Lewisham.

Background

Two girls aged 3 and 10 live with their mother, Ms B. They have different fathers, both of whom have reportedly been violent to Ms B. The father of the 3 year old is in prison and father of the 10 year old sees her regularly.

These two children were referred to the Families First Contact Point due to concerns about the home conditions where the children lived with Ms B. Pictures and videos were sent in by the father of the 10 year old, showing extreme levels of hoarding and all the rooms in the home were uninhabitable. The kitchen and bathroom were very unsanitary and unhygienic. There was no safe or clean space for the children to sleep, eat or bathe. The conditions were so poor that it was clear that the children could not stay a further night in the home. It was recognised that if Ms B. was not open to working with support to address the concerns, then the police may be required to take action to protect the children.

Partnership Working

The referral came in late in the day and the multi-agency child protection team (MACPT) lead child protection practitioner (LCPP) made the decision with the team manager to head straight to the property. The LCPP

contacted the police before leaving for the home visit but due to the timing of the referral, a strategy discussion could not be arranged that day. However, because of the good relationships the MACPT have formed with police colleagues, the team was able to access police support to obtain assistance from patrol officers if needed on arrival at the family home.

Skilled, Relationship-based Practice

Using skilled and relational practice the LCPP was able to work with Ms B. to identify someone the family could stay with that night. The LCPP focussed on the presenting risks and explored the network with Ms B. to find a solution to ensure the immediate safety of the children. It became evident during the work with Ms B. that she was distressed and embarrassed because of the children living in these conditions and this had made it harder for her to reach out for or accept support. The relational, kind and non-judgemental approach of the LCPP enabled a solution to be found within the family network. Without this, the police would probably have had to take the children into police protection in view of the home conditions.

Using the Network

The lead child protection practitioner and subsequently the family help lead practitioner both sought to work with kindness and understanding with Ms B. to help her to come up with options and solutions within her network to start to make changes and address the worries and concerns. This co-working approach between Family Help and MACPT allowed the lead child protection practitioner to focus on risk management and safety planning and the family help lead practitioner to develop the family help plan with Ms B.

Although the children were later presented to initial child protection conference, and made subject to child



Families First for Children



protection plans, Ms B. reported that she felt supported by the LCPP in the MACPT and that she had formed a positive working relationship with the FHLP. Ms B. has made significant progress in addressing the home conditions as well as issues in respect of her own mental health. While the situation is complex, it is ultimately moving in the right direction and Ms B. continues to engage positively with the professional network.

Impact

The skilled practice of the LCPP in assessing risk and being family-led in her approach avoided an incident of police protection which would have been highly distressing for

the children. Furthermore, there is evidence that MACPT relationships with the police and other professional agencies such as the school and nursery promoted strong and timely information sharing and good coordination between key partners.

The co-working between the lead child protection practitioner and the family help lead practitioner has enabled a focus on the child protection enquiries and safety plan as well as the development of a strong family help plan to effect change. This example illustrates how skilled relational practice and partnership working improves outcomes for children focusing on the best interests of the children to create safety.

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Community Wealth Building

Manchester City Council

Building Manchester's Social Economy

As part of Manchester City Council's (MCC) commitment to creating a fairer and more inclusive economy, the Council has made the development of the city's social enterprise sector a core priority within its Work and Skills Strategy. Social enterprises play a vital role in improving local employment, strengthening communities, and reinvesting profits back into Manchester. Around three years ago, it became clear that despite the sector's strength, there was no dedicated system in place to support, coordinate, and champion Manchester's growing social economy.

Recognising this gap, MCC collaborated with Manchester Community Central (Macc), an organisation with longstanding connections within the social economy, to strengthen the foundation for social enterprises. This partnership resulted in the creation of the Manchester Social Economy Alliance (MSEA), a sector-led alliance jointly founded by MCC and Macc to give social enterprises across the city a voice, support, and visibility.

Since its inception, the MSEA has received funding from MCC along with additional external investment. This combined funding has enabled the Alliance to offer voluntary sector-led support that the city previously lacked.

Over the past three years, the MSEA has provided substantial benefits to Manchester's social economy. Its activities have included a programme of thematic workshops, specialist sessions delivered in partnership with The Generator workspace, and a comprehensive one-to-one support service. These opportunities focus on key areas such as scaling social enterprises, supporting the



development of emerging organisations, and enhancing organisational capacity, governance, and financial planning, as well as broader areas of enterprise support.

Through these activities, MCC has both encouraged and benefited from the sector's growth while helping to create the conditions for a thriving social enterprise ecosystem. The model has been successful because it empowers the sector to shape its own development. Rather than imposing a top-down structure, MCC has enabled the Alliance to evolve in response to the needs, priorities, and lived experiences of social enterprises themselves.

Today, the Manchester Social Economy Alliance is a dynamic, inclusive network open to all social enterprises in the city. By investing in and collaborating with MSEA, MCC has taken meaningful steps toward its ambition to grow, strengthen, and champion Manchester's social economy for the long term.

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Strategy

Manchester City Council

Developing a Quality of Life Index for Manchester

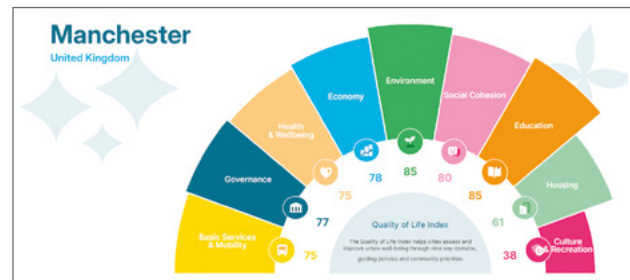
Manchester has experienced significant economic growth over the past 20 years; however, many residents are disproportionately affected by poverty and poor health. Recognising this, Manchester City Council (MCC) aims to measure residents' quality of life to develop more effective policies.

The University of Manchester (UoM) worked with residents in North Manchester to explore what they valued most for their well-being. As a consequence of this work, MCC joined the UN-Habitat Quality of Life Initiative (QoLI). UN-Habitat, the United Nations agency responsible for promoting sustainable urban development, developed the initiative with input from a broad group of academic advisers. The framework is designed to measure well-being in urban areas. Manchester is the first UK city to participate in the programme.

The QoLI requires the collection of a set of "global indicators" across nine thematic areas, closely aligned with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The framework combines both quantitative indicators and qualitative measures to present a more comprehensive view of well-being.

Each city was also able to develop a set of local indicators relevant to its own priorities and local context. This followed a facilitated workshop that identified local priorities and how to translate them into meaningful measures. These form the city's QoLI, which is presented visually to highlight areas of strength.

We treated this as an action-learning project to understand what worked and what was more challenging. Early on, we found that identifying meaningful city-level data was not always straightforward. We formed a small project team



of data analysts, policy officers, and colleagues from UoM and Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), and consulted colleagues in transport, housing, and public health.

One challenge was gathering qualitative data; we knew an online survey would under-represent certain communities. However, access to the GM Residents Survey enabled us to populate the index. Priorities such as social cohesion, economic inclusion, and community facilities were more difficult to quantify, but we decided to include them.

We successfully presented our experience at the UN Statistical Commission, and the index was also showcased at the World Economic Forum in Davos.

Key lessons learnt are:

- A project like this requires dedicated resources – rather than being fitted around existing work.
- The QoLI methodology was helpful but needed to be adapted to the UK context.
- Though the QoLI is useful at the city level, we also want to visualise quality of life at a more localised level.
- The short length of the project meant that we weren't able to engage many community groups or residents and would want to do that in any future work.

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Community

Medway Council

Medway's community-led approach to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund

When Medway Council received its allocation of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), it chose to hand power to communities through an open, community-led grant model. Medway faces challenges seen across many local authority areas, including pockets of deprivation and uneven access to cultural/economic opportunity. To strengthen civic pride alongside physical regeneration, Medway took the view that Place-based interventions cannot be delivered solely through capital investment or council-designed programmes. Instead, interventions required residents and local organisations to have influence over the activities that shape where they live, work, learn and visit.

The Approach

Since 2022, Medway has invested £2.4 million through the UKSPF across nearly 150 projects, supporting eligible groups across the area. Rather than designing projects from the topdown, the council opened an application process to any legally constituted entity across Medway.

The council's UKSPF programme offered three funding streams:

1. Pride in Place Fund – supporting cultural / community projects (building capacity of local groups, infrastructure and encouraging people to explore the local area).
2. Feasibility Fund – providing seed funding for longer-term project development.
3. Summer Events Fund – encouraging large-scale community events to foster pride and attract visitors to Medway.

In Year 3 (2024 to 2025), £1,179,438 was funded into 55 projects. The council held a launch event and delivered direct support sessions to organisations that sought them. This was important for smaller organisations and those



Luton Lights – Ideas Test

without prior experience of applying for public funding. A help booklet was developed, providing guidance for each application question, and was designed as a lasting resource for organisations to use in future applications.

Impact

The funded initiatives showcased the diversity and creativity of Medway's communities, while also generating both social and economic value. Over Years 1 – 3, the programme directly engaged 246,727 people, representing all individuals that could be reached by the organisations delivering the projects. It enabled 741 organisations to access non-financial support, organised 270 events, rehabilitated 8 premises, and created or improved 108 facilities.

In Year 3, the Chinese New Year Festival attracted thousands of visitors to Chatham High Street, highlighting Medway as an inclusive and lively area. The LV21 RiverSwell project moved a historic lightship to Chatham Dockyard, reconnecting communities with Medway's river heritage. Ideas Test's Luton Light Trail organised a festive light display from Diwali to Christmas across the Luton part of Chatham. Community workshops produced 24 artworks, alongside pieces by local artists and collaborations, bringing together 220 residents at a final showcase event. The Trail demonstrated how even small amounts of funding can

unite previously divided communities; such hyper-local initiatives can empower areas often seen negatively.

Year 3 also featured a People and Skills strand. Medway Plus organised inclusive trips for children and young people with special educational needs (SEND) to historic and cultural sites across Medway. Volunteer It Yourself carried out improvements at Strood Amateur Boxing Club and the Anchorian's Club. The project also involved engaging young people who were unemployed or disconnected from education, resulting in 29 Entry Level 3 City and Guilds qualifications achieved. The Twydall and District Community Association used capital funding to restore and safeguard the future of the Twydall District Community Hub, a vital part of social infrastructure, which became self-sustaining and operated at nearly full capacity every week.

By adopting a community-centred approach to distributing UKSPF funds, residents and local organisations could design and deliver projects themselves, giving them a genuine stake in the outcome. The council's UKSPF programme also aligned with the wider regeneration strategy, Medway 2041, which prioritises placemaking and growth for all.

Learning and Reflections

Medway's experience provides a model for councils seeking to use discretionary funding to truly strengthen local resilience. Several additional lessons arose from Medway's experience:

- **Maintaining transparency** – Demand originally exceeded available funding, so clear scoring criteria and feedback were essential to maintain trust.
- **The Council's role in capacity-building** – Not all community groups are equipped to navigate the funding process. Engagement sessions and accessible guidance can help empower the applicant pool.



Frindsbury Cricket Club Upgrade

- **Smaller grants could generate social value** – More modest awards are still valuable; they could unlock volunteer time and develop wider community engagement beyond the initial investment.
- **Aligning programmes with Council strategies** – Medway's Shared Prosperity Fund action complemented Medway's 2041 placemaking ambitions, as outlined in the new Local Plan, which linked community-led activity with longer-term regeneration.

Moving Forward

Following the extension of UKSPF into Year 4, Medway is focusing on sustaining the relationships and delivery capacity that have been developed. The administration has committed to self-funding a successor scheme, rebranded specifically for Medway, ensuring community-led investment in civic pride continues for the next two years and beyond the lifetime of the national fund. The experience has reinforced the value of community-led commissioning models and informed thinking about how future regeneration and discretionary funding can continue to embed local decision-making.

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Social Outcomes

Oldham Council

One year on – delivering on our commitment to the armed forces community

In 2025, Oldham Council shared its journey towards achieving the Armed Forces Covenant Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) Gold Award, demonstrating a strong and growing commitment to supporting those who serve or have served. One year on, that ambition has been realised. In 2026, Oldham Council proudly holds the ERS Gold Award, an achievement that reflects not only the dedication of the organisation but also the strength of the cooperative partnerships that define Oldham's approach to public service.

The Council's success is rooted in the principles of the Co-operative Councils' Innovation Network (CCIN): working collaboratively, empowering communities, and building long-term, mutually supportive relationships. Over the past year, Oldham has intensified its cooperative efforts across public, private, and voluntary sectors to create a more inclusive and responsive offer for veterans, serving personnel, reservists, and their families.

A major milestone in 2025 was the Veterans Wellbeing and Employment Event, delivered as part of a series of Armed Forces Week activities. Co-designed with local partners and hosted in Oldham, the event brought together employers, training providers, health services, housing teams, and community organisations. Its purpose was simple: a one-stop shop for veterans to find support and opportunities that matched their current needs, skills, ambitions, and lived experience. The event highlighted the often-untapped potential of the borough's veteran community and demonstrated how coordinated action can remove barriers and unlock pathways into meaningful work. Several attendees secured direct referrals into employment support and health and wellbeing programmes, illustrating the tangible impact of cooperative delivery.

Central to sustaining this momentum has been the continued development of the Oldham Armed Forces Network. Meeting regularly throughout the year, the Network has become a trusted and proactive forum bringing together statutory services, charities, uniformed organisations, local businesses, and community groups. It provides a space where partners share resources, raise issues of importance, identify gaps, and act quickly to coordinate support. Topics have ranged from mental health provision and housing pathways to employment initiatives, Armed Forces Week planning, and relationship-building with local employers committed to becoming Veteran Friendly organisations. This approach ensures that Oldham's support offer is informed by a wide and diverse set of voices, including those with lived experience of service life.

As part of both Armed Forces Week and Remembrance Sunday, Oldham Council funded a free breakfast offer for veterans across all cafés in Tommyfield Market. This gesture provided a warm, welcoming space for veterans to come together, share experiences, and feel recognised by their local community. The initiative was delivered in partnership with market traders, reflecting Oldham's cooperative approach and the borough's commitment to honouring those who have served. Dozens of veterans attended across both events, highlighting the value of simple, community-centred acts of appreciation that strengthen local relationships and reinforce Oldham's ongoing support for the Armed Forces community.

Achieving the Gold Award has strengthened Oldham Council's internal culture as well. The organisation has expanded its support for reservists, cadets, and adult cadet-force volunteers, with our newly improved HR policies aligned with Defence Employer Recognition Scheme standards and promoted veteran recruitment across the workforce. This ensures that reservists within our organisation are supported with 10 additional paid days of leave per year to undertake their annual training activities.



Armed Forces Covenant
Mayoral Business
Reception on Armed Forces
Week 2025

Oldham Council's Armed Forces work in 2026 stands as a testament to what is possible when an entire system—council, partners, businesses, and community groups—commits to cooperative values. Through shared purpose, practical collaboration, and continuous dialogue with the people it aims to serve, Oldham continues to build a borough where veterans and their families can thrive.

Looking ahead, Oldham Council is continuing to deepen its commitment to honouring the history, diversity, and cultural heritage of the Armed Forces community. In 2026, the borough will host an exhibition for The Forgotten Army Project, shining a light on the contributions of South Asian servicemen and women during the First and Second World Wars. This work is especially meaningful in Oldham, where many local families have direct ancestral links to those who served across the Commonwealth. By amplifying these often-overlooked stories and collaborating with local community groups, schools, and veterans' organisations, the exhibition aims to enhance community pride, intergenerational connection, and greater understanding across Oldham's diverse communities. It reflects the Council's belief that commemoration must be inclusive, representative, and rooted in the people it serves.

Oldham is also actively shaping the future of support for veterans across Greater Manchester. The Council is contributing to the GM-wide implementation of the Live Well programme, which includes dedicated support elements and funding streams for the Armed Forces community. This programme will strengthen access to holistic wellbeing services, ensure clearer referral pathways, and help partners coordinate more efficiently across health, housing, employment, and community support. In addition, Oldham is a key participant in the GM trial of the Valour programme, a pioneering new model designed to deliver integrated, wrap-around support for veterans and their families. By testing and informing these innovative approaches, Oldham is ensuring that lived experience, local insight, and cooperative principles directly shape future provision, regionally and nationally.

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Community

Plymouth City Council

Making the invisible visible

Mobilising community assets to address the social determinants of health and shape the city we want together, through Plymouth's Community Builder Programme

Plymouth's Community Builder Programme (CBP) is a partnership between the Local Authority, NHS and the VCSE. Set up in 2022, as part of the City Council's Community Empowerment Programme (CEP), which aims to 'work collectively with communities to deliver the city we want', the CBP is part of Plymouth City's innovative approach to improving wellbeing and tackling health inequalities through addressing the wider social determinants of health and improving our relationships with communities in the city. It is funded by the NHS, through Devon's Integrated Care Board, a body that aims to join up health and care services and make sure that everyone has the same access to services and gets the same outcomes from treatment.

The CBP Theory of Change was designed with the support of University of Plymouth through stakeholder workshops and a UK wide review of community building models. Targeting historically under-invested populations (defined by demographic or geographic characteristics), CBs are based across 8 neighbourhoods and – unique to Plymouth – 7 communities of interest/identity. Identified through analysis of citywide surveys, these 15 communities were chosen due to their higher levels of social disadvantage, lower levels of belonging and cohesion and fewer people participating in community life. Taking an Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) approach, which recognises the value of assets within communities and that everyone has gifts to share, the CBP aims to build resilient, thriving and connected communities to achieve the best health and wellbeing outcomes.

Community Spirit: Each CB embeds themselves within communities and city-wide networks and are consistently present in community spaces, e.g. cafés, social clubs, GP surgeries, to build good quality relationships and help to create an environment of trust. They build community spirit by discovering individuals and/or groups with common purpose, provide a listening space and use passions as

CONTRIBUTION TO COUNCIL'S WIDER OBJECTIVES:

LISTENING, INFLUENCING AND SHAPING

Thriving Communities Framework 2026-2030 – Informing the values and approach to community engagement
Equalities framework – listening campaigns focusing on hate and community cohesion
Armed Forces Covenant – support for veteran communities and female veterans
Safer Plymouth Safer Communities – listening campaigns focused on community safety and knife crime
Adult Safeguarding Partnership – support for engagement to reach out, understand barriers and promote awareness
Ageing Well Plan – listening campaign focusing on what ageing well means
Inclusive Growth – providing insight into the barriers faced by women furthest from the labour market
Plymouth Pride in Place – listening week and 'Love your Community' film production
Net Zero plan – listening to and mobilising communities to focus on climate initiatives incl. new food waste programme.

a starting point to identify, map and mobilise community assets (these include people, places, networks, associations and institutions).

To date, over 3,700 listening conversations have taken place, activating 1,800 residents to set up over 500 new community-based activities which improve individual and community resilience, support friendships and networks of support. Activities range from photography, to planting, drama, cooking and 'getting ready for winter' campaigns.

"Now I get involved; it's impacted on my mental health fantastically... it's the first time in 2 years I have felt valued as a human being" Community member

Asset Mapping: Based on feedback from partners and communities about the lack of awareness of community resources, this year the CBs created online asset maps with simple, accessible information about hyperlocal initiatives. These maps have been viewed almost 22,000 times over a 4-month period indicating that they are a popular and useful tool for partners and communities to share information about the rich and vibrant network of community assets available to support individual and community wellbeing.

CBs also serve as a bridge between the community, statutory and VCSE sectors, improving relationships with institutions and enabling residents to connect with and support the development of services:

Community Research: Through forming strong relationships on the ground, CBs gather community stories through appreciative inquiry, working with partners to share and reflect on the themes that emerge and use these insights to help shape policy, plans and programmes of work. To date, this type of community research has informed citywide plans such as Safer Communities and Welcoming City, Thrive (Health Inequalities), Anti-Poverty, Cost of Living and HROD as well as other commissioned services including One Plymouth (health improvement) and Advice Plymouth (income maximisation). More recently they are helping to inform local development of Integrated Neighbourhood Health teams and a prevention-focused City Help and Support strategy.

"I want to acknowledge the CBs for their incredible support to Plymouth's Safer Communities Partnership across several key projects. Their contribution has been invaluable—whether through community engagement in response to ASB concerns, appreciative enquiry and listening campaigns to understand how safe people feel in their communities, or their forthcoming role in insight gathering for the Knife Angel project. Their efforts have strengthened our ability to respond effectively, build trust, and ensure that community voices shape the solutions we deliver. Working with CBs exemplifies what collaborative working should look like". Plymouth Safer Communities Technical Lead

"The CB has added so much value to our work... connected us with 23 service providers to reach people to offer support with housing, benefits, energy, work etc. and leading to our best event this year reaching 750 in one day. Weekly, he helps reach us 50 people." Citizens Advice

Collective Action: With support from the Council Community Empowerment team, the CBs convene 'collectives' of organisations/groups to build relationships, share community resources and address common challenges. Local Councillors and statutory agencies sit alongside members of local associations to asset map, to listen and learn from communities and to codesign collective action around issues affecting communities. CBs



are currently supporting this in work with a local secondary school and their young people to affect community safety issues through a 'fearless.org' TikTok campaign as a response to insight gathered from within the local community. The CBs facilitate other Collectives in the city including an Ageing Well Collective that takes this approach to collaboration with institutions and associations who work with older people across the city.

"I really appreciated the networking and the strength-based approach to sharing existing resources and assets – as there are many and lots of opportunities to collaborate and share experiences/practices in the city" – Ageing Well Collective member.

The CBP uses the RSPH's Community Spirit level framework to evaluate impact using 4 characteristics representing the wider determinants of health: Relationships, Collective Action, Sense of Belonging and Cohesion – measured using quantitative and qualitative data. Using a 'realist' methodology an independent evaluation in 2024 showed that the programme is achieving reduced isolation, increased friendships, improved sense of belonging and sense of control. It showed that CBs are empowering communities through building trust, creating connections with individuals and organisations, partnership working and bringing about sustainable change.

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Community Wealth Building

Preston City Council

A cooperative model to support self-employed and freelance workers

Preston City Council is exploring how cooperative approaches could support the growing number of self-employed and freelance workers in the UK economy. Across many sectors – including professional services, creative industries, digital work and training – increasing numbers of people now work independently. While self-employment offers flexibility and autonomy, it can also bring challenges such as unstable income, difficulty accessing larger contracts, limited administrative support and lack of protection during gaps in work or illness.

To explore these issues, Preston City Council has commissioned a feasibility study into establishing a cooperative structure that could support freelance and self-employed workers. The study is being led by Community Broadband Network (CBN), an associate member of CCIN, working with specialist cooperative advisers.

The project is exploring models from other countries where cooperative approaches already support independent workers. The most well-known example is the SMART cooperative in Belgium, which offers administrative services and elements of mutual protection for tens of thousands of freelance members. Other European and US initiatives have created similar platforms to help freelancers share infrastructure, access work, and manage risks associated with independent employment. There are also smaller-

scale examples in the UK. Freelancer cooperatives have formed in sectors such as the creative industries and music, showing how independent workers can collaborate through shared structures while maintaining their autonomy. The Preston study is examining how a cooperative platform could work alongside trade unions, combining collective representation with practical services and mutual support for freelancers.

The feasibility study has identified three principal service models that could form part of a cooperative offering to self-employed workers. One is a collective “bid bigger” approach, enabling freelancers to come together through a cooperative structure to access larger contracts and opportunities that might be difficult for individuals to secure alone. A second is shared “back-office” support – such as invoicing systems and other shared IT, insurance arrangements, compliance support, and shared web presence and branding – all of which could reduce administrative burdens and costs for members. A third service model could provide a mutual support framework to help address income volatility and gaps in work, potentially working in cooperation with a partner trade union.

Through this feasibility study, Preston is examining whether cooperative approaches could help boost local economies while supporting new forms of independent work.

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Community Wealth Building

Preston City Council

Growing the reach of cooperative enterprise in Preston

Over the past year, PCDN has worked to expand the reach of cooperative enterprise in Preston, aiming to serve as a centre for democratic entrepreneurship and community wealth. Using the expertise and community connections of two Barefoot Practitioners, PCDN has introduced PCDN in the Community (PITC), a weekly advice and coaching service for Prestonians seeking to establish and grow their business or cooperative.

Businesses emerging from this scheme have become part of a network of co-operatively managed enterprises in Preston, receiving ongoing support from PCDN. Until now, the main users of PITC have been individuals and groups traditionally excluded from business ventures and advisory schemes due to socio-economic, cultural, or linguistic barriers.

At the same time, PCDN continues its efforts to develop an eco-system conducive to community wealth building. Links to anchors are being revitalised, with new connections established with accountants, unions, and the long-anticipated North West Mutual, which is set to open its first branch in Preston by the end of the year. With these various components in place, the operating infrastructure of a co-operative economy will be strengthened and better positioned to serve the needs of communities.

Meanwhile, the flagship **Lady Boss catering enterprise programme**, which led to the establishment of a new catering co-operative – Lady Boss Catering (LBC) – continues to grow stronger. LBC has provided catering for several events organised by Preston City Council and is expanding its catering services for the Holiday Activity and Food programmes in the city. The council is actively



Angela, Eddie, and Kelvin who are setting up 852 Cleaning after participating in Preston's enterprise training programme, the Clean Collective. 852 is the country code for Hong Kong.

promoting LBC to other key partners.

Learning from the Lady Boss series influenced the design and delivery of PCDN's latest structured enterprise training programme, **The Clean Collective**, which provides targeted business support to cleaners alongside tools for democratic business ownership and operation. Almost 90% of cleaners participating in The Clean Collective programme were non-native English speakers born outside the UK, necessitating course content to include essential information on navigating the British entrepreneurial landscape and complying with legal and taxation rules. In line with the concept of community wealth, the group was introduced to local community organisations and businesses, which were encouraged to procure cleaning services from The Clean Collective.

The Clean Collective was delivered in partnership with Kind Communities CIC and funded by Preston City Council through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Workshops were led by a multilingual PCDN Consultant, with mentors sharing the group's background.

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Community

South Ribble Borough Council

Leyland Community Greengrocers

Leyland Community Greengrocers is a community-led food cooperative in South Ribble, Lancashire. It was created to improve access to affordable, healthy local produce whilst supporting the borough's goal of building a more sustainable and thriving local economy through a range of community wealth building approaches.

The cooperative has become a practical example of community-powered change, demonstrating how residents can come together and collaborate with partners to build a fairer, more resilient, local food system.

Feedback collected during the delivery of a series of community cooking classes highlighted several challenges that our communities faced, such as:

- rising food costs and increasing pressure on household budgets,
- limited access to fresh and affordable local produce in some neighbourhoods,
- demand for more sustainable, localised food options,
- a need to build both community and economic resilience.

South Ribble Borough Council recognised that traditional retail models were not fully meeting community needs and designed a programme to bring like-minded people together to explore the potential for a food co-operative. Working with our key partners, the Larder (a social enterprise which promotes food that is healthy, local and seasonal) and the Cooperative Mutual Solutions (a worker cooperative which provides specialist business advice and training to cooperatives and social enterprises) we hosted a workshop, 'Farm to Fork' in September 2025.

The session brought together different stakeholders involved in the food industry, including community groups from the VCSE sector, local producers, and residents from across the borough with an interest in the cooperative movement. It highlighted best practices and explored existing models for providing affordable food options through cooperative efforts and community engagement. Attendees heard from other cooperatives from across the UK and Northern Ireland on their journey to set up community greengrocers, enabling them to learn about how a similar cooperative could work in South Ribble, the benefits it would bring and solutions for addressing potential challenges. The leading outcome of the workshop was the identification of a local cohort of 13 people who wanted to form and become part of a food cooperative for South Ribble. The basis for this cooperative was to promote healthy, affordable and locally grown food across communities in Leyland and the surrounding areas.

Supported by Cooperative Mutual Solutions, twice monthly meetings were established for the volunteers who started to bring this vision to life. Governance structures and principles were established based on democratic decision-making and a focus on social value. Roles were assigned to members based not only on their previous experience but also to give people the opportunity to develop new skills and experience while forming the cooperative.

To help establish the Leyland Community Greengrocers, the group were given the opportunity to host a pop-up market stall at Leyland Market on a busy weekend leading up to Christmas and agreed to use this event as a soft launch for the greengrocers. They secured £200 funding from a local business, Progress Housing, which supported community initiatives that benefited the local area through a competitive grant scheme. This provided start-up funding for the initiative and enabled the group to begin building relationships with local growers and suppliers to establish a hybrid model for sourcing produce.



Leyland Community
Greengrocers Market Stall

Promotional activity has been essential in raising the profile of the cooperative and has concentrated on affordable solutions such as social media. The first weekend market was successful, with volunteers assisting at the stall and visitors showing strong interest in reintroducing a fresh fruit and vegetable offer featuring locally sourced produce. Since the soft launch, the cooperative has been planning and taking steps towards establishing a permanent presence at the market.

The cooperative has benefited from additional funding support secured through the local authority's Start-up Business Grant Scheme. This provided the capital to source equipment that can help the cooperative operate more efficiently. They also continue to receive support from Cooperative Mutual Solutions, which advise

on administration and legal issues, including regulatory requirements and financial accounts, and assist in identifying further potential sources of grant funding. The cooperatives aim to secure more funding to enable them to expand and establish a full-time market presence. There are also plans to increase membership and community engagement with the goal of boosting both the number of volunteers and paid workers to support the stall and enhance its capacity in the longer term.

Within six months, a group of volunteers with limited experience in cooperative business models has developed a model that can genuinely benefit the community. There is still a long journey ahead, but this appears to be a sustainable cooperative with the potential to make a lasting impact on South Ribble.

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Cooperative Place Making

Stevenage Borough Council

Shaping the future of the Social Inclusion Partnership

Background

The Social Inclusion Partnership (SIP) has been established for over 30 years and was one of the first inter-agency groups in Stevenage. It brings together organisations from across the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector, alongside the local authority, to address social exclusion and support residents facing economic inequality.

The partnership has always emphasised practical collaboration, information sharing, needs identification, awareness-raising, and the development of joint responses to local issues. This includes joint projects, shared research, and providing a space for partners to coordinate activities and learn from one another. SIP meets monthly and agrees its priority areas each year through consultation with members, ensuring its work remains relevant and locally driven.

Why formalisation is being explored

Prior to Covid, there were early discussions about formalising SIP's structure. The intention was to strengthen partnership working, improve access to funding and create a more sustainable model for collaboration.

Following Covid, this became a clearer priority. With support from Stevenage Borough Council, an officer was assigned to work with SIP and explore different incorporation options.

This work included:

- consulting members on their views and ambitions
- researching different models, including CICs, social enterprises and co-operatives
- sharing findings and gathering feedback through the partnership.

Through this process, there was a clear preference for a multi-stakeholder co-operative model, particularly as it would:

- support shared responsibility and accountability
- allow organisations to remain independent and continue their own fundraising
- strengthen access to funding and collective support.

At the same time, members recognised potential challenges such as the level of commitment needed, legal considerations, and the role of organisations linked to national governance structures.

A phased approach

Rather than moving directly to full incorporation, SIP has agreed to take a staged approach.

- The initial phase is to formalise the partnership through a federation-style model supported by a constitution. This is a structured way of working in which organisations collaborate more closely, share priorities, and coordinate activities, while remaining fully independent and without forming a single legal entity.
- This provides an opportunity to test how partners work together in practice, understand strengths and challenges, and build confidence.
- Over a period of 18–24 months, the intention is to transition towards a Community Consortium Co-operative. This would be a more formal model, with shared governance, joint decision-making and collective responsibility, enabling partners to work together more strategically while still delivering their own services.

This approach allows the partnership to develop in a practical and manageable way.

Using the Mondragon model as an influence

As part of this development, SIP has used the Mondragon Co-operative as an ideal reference point. Mondragon is a large network of co-operatives in Spain where independent organisations operate under shared governance, values and support structures, while remaining locally run. This model is relevant to SIP as it demonstrates how organisations can collaborate in a structured way without losing their independence. It provides a useful example of how shared governance and collective working can strengthen the wider system.

What this looks like in practice

SIP is beginning to apply these principles through its current way of working.

- Partners are organised into themed focus groups aligned to the agreed annual priorities, such as cost of living support, older people and young people.
- These groups focus on strategic coordination and support, including mapping provision, identifying gaps and improving collaboration between organisations.
- The SIP Steering Group is leading on formalisation, providing oversight of governance, structure and future development.

This ensures that delivery remains with individual organisations, while the partnership focuses on coordination, alignment and shared planning.

Support through the policy lab approach

This ongoing work is now supported by a broader policy lab project focused on Sustaining Local Leadership and Place-Based Innovation.

- The programme supports SIP to strengthen leadership and succession planning across community organisations.
- It will provide workshops on cooperative governance, community resilience and place-based service design, directly supporting the move towards a co-operative model.
- A mentorship framework and community of practice will enable shared learning and peer support across partners.
- Toolkits and practical resources will help partners test and embed new ways of working before formal incorporation.

This support allows SIP to take a structured but flexible approach, building confidence and capability alongside delivery.

Why this approach works for SIP

This approach builds on SIP's existing strengths as a partnership while introducing more structure over time.

- It allows organisations to remain independent while strengthening collaboration.
- It supports the development of shared systems and ways of working before formal incorporation.
- It creates a clear pathway from an informal partnership to a Community Consortium Co-operative.

Using the Mondragon model as an influence, alongside the support of the policy lab approach, provides both a clear direction and the practical support needed to make this transition work.

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Housing

Swindon Borough Council

Salzgitter Court – council housing providing homes for those in need'

Salzgitter Court in Toothill, Swindon, shows what can be achieved when an underused council asset is turned into a place of stability, safety, and new beginnings. Originally a low-demand sheltered housing scheme, the building was identified as an opportunity to bring empty homes back into use and reduce pressure on temporary accommodation. Through the Housing, Care and Homelessness Transformation Board, the building was fully refurbished and repurposed using internal Council teams. It reopened in July 2025 as 25 modern, self-contained homes for people experiencing homelessness or at serious risk of it.

The aim was simple but ambitious – provide people with their own front door, a sense of dignity, and the tailored support needed to rebuild their lives. The project directly supports the council's wider priorities of reducing homelessness, improving housing quality, strengthening communities, and using resources responsibly.

A model built around people

What makes Salzgitter Court stand out is the way it combines on-site, trauma-informed support with a fully self-contained housing offer. Two in-house support workers provide day-to-day stability and work alongside floating support from the Rough Sleeper Team.

Everyone moving in receives a personalised support and move-on plan that recognises the challenges they have faced. By bringing the right staff together on site, the service offers genuinely wrap-around care.

This combination of independence and intensive support is uncommon in local authority services and has proven to be highly effective in preventing repeat homelessness. Residents enjoy the security and dignity of their own home, with specialist support available whenever needed.

Support includes help with housing benefits and income, so residents can sustain their tenancy.

- All 25 residents have received help to ensure their housing cost claims are correct and are being paid, enabling them to maximise their income and manage their bills.
- Support has also been given for Council Tax.
- Five residents have received detailed debt advice, supported by partners including Swindon CAB and StepChange, enabling them to take control of longstanding financial pressures.

Health and well-being are treated with equal priority.

- 17 residents have been supported to register with a GP or re-engage with health services.
- Three residents are receiving counselling
- Two Occupational Therapy referrals and two safeguarding referrals have been made, following the early identification of risks.

Building independence and community

Salzgitter Court is more than a roof over people's heads. It has quickly become a genuine community. The refurbished lounge, with its pool table and comfortable seating, has become a natural gathering place. Residents have taken part in pool competitions, life-skills sessions, and creative projects. Fourteen residents have used the donations room for essential household items. Six people are now in employment, and five are volunteering, demonstrating growing independence, confidence, and motivation.

A six-week slow-cooking programme, funded through the Household Support Fund, made a massive difference. Residents learned to prepare healthy, affordable meals using slow cookers they could keep afterwards. The sessions reduced isolation, strengthened relationships, and gave residents practical skills to support longer-term tenancies.

One recent creative project – turning unused toy cars into miniature council vans for children in nearby supported accommodation (pictured right) – brought great pride to the residents involved. Ten colourful vans are now ready to be given to local children, a small act that builds a much bigger connection with the wider community.

The local neighbourhood has also played an important part. Residents nearby have shown real warmth and generosity, donating items, offering encouragement and helping to reduce stigma. Their support has made new tenants feel welcome and part of the area from day one.

Evidence of impact

In less than a year, Salzgitter Court has delivered significant outcomes:

- Two residents are ready to move on into longer-term accommodation
- No one has been asked to leave, and only one resident has left voluntarily.

Early signs show this is a stable, safe and supportive environment that helps people progress at a pace that works for them.

The scheme is also contributing to easing wider system pressures.

- Since April, rough sleeping figures have fallen from 38 to 22.
- B&B placements have reduced from 59 in April to 51 in November, despite wider seasonal pressures.
- The project is assisting the council in reducing its reliance on costly temporary accommodation, resulting in savings of £161,000 so far, with £178,000 forecast. These savings enable more of the Housing Revenue Account to be reinvested in frontline support and housing improvements.



Turning toy cars into miniature council vans creative project

The service has collaborated proactively with community police, public health, voluntary organisations, and the council's community safety teams to ensure residents can access specialist help swiftly. These relationships are essential for keeping people safe and preventing issues from escalating. Planning and building control teams supported compliance sign-off, ensuring the building met all safety and regulatory standards.

Lasting value

Transforming a low-demand sheltered housing scheme into high-quality supported accommodation has brought immediate benefits and created a sustainable asset for the future. The project demonstrates what can be achieved when a council uses its buildings creatively, delivers improvements through skilled internal teams, and designs support around the needs of the residents. Its outcomes are already evident: safer housing, better health and financial stability, less pressure from homelessness, and a community where people truly feel supported.

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Community

Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council

Cabinet in the Community – Putting our communities at the heart of our decisions

Tameside is a varied and diverse borough, not just as the link between Greater Manchester and the Peak District, but because it's made up of nine unique and culturally independent towns. There is no single Tameside town centre, and although our civic centre is situated in our largest town, each of the borough's communities has important voices and significant roles to play as we work towards our shared future.

Following recent challenges, the Council started to rebuild, with changes to senior leadership and the appointment of a new Executive Leader and Cabinet bringing an opportunity to fundamentally reset our relationship with residents, rethink our neighbourhood working arrangements, and set a strategic direction for growth across Tameside.

A new way of working and a new way forward

Tameside Council is an ambitious organisation, and as we emerge from austerity, we are committed to using our resources to promote inclusive economic growth, regenerate town centres, and empower communities to contribute meaningfully to decision-making that impacts them. These ambitions have resulted in three clear objectives:

- Rebuild our relationship with residents to foster trust and enable meaningful collaboration.
- Redesign our Neighbourhood Forums into effective and empowered committees that encourage residents to participate.
- Establish a long-term vision for Tameside's future through a partnership-led Borough Strategy.

It was clear to all of us that we couldn't achieve any one of these objectives without achieving all three, presenting a unique opportunity to do things differently and co-operate with our residents in their communities to help them shape the future of their towns.

To this end, and driven by the Council's new political leadership, we created Cabinet in the Community, a series of open and honest Member-led conversations in each of the borough's nine towns, where the whole Cabinet made themselves available to discuss issues and answer questions.

Setting out the stall

Cabinet in the Community meetings took place in all nine of Tameside's civic townships over a five-week period in September and October 2025. The agendas focused on open discussions led by executive members and supported by officers. Each meeting was customised for the specific town, with time set aside at the start to update residents on the Council's work and upcoming developments.

The main feature of the meetings was making ourselves available to residents and having honest conversations about important issues in our communities. The meetings were attended by the Council's Executive Cabinet, each town's ward Members, and senior officers, all of whom participated in workshop discussions about the future of the borough, ending with an open floor question and answer session where residents were encouraged to speak to the Council's leadership about their concerns.

The key points on each agenda were:

- Introductions from the Leader and Executive Cabinet.
- Update on the Council's plans for the town.
- Borough strategy: asking residents about their town and what they'd like to see in the future.
- Neighbourhood working: talking about our Neighbourhood Forums and how we can work with residents better.
- Questions and answers.



Town events with public and members

The meetings took place in public buildings within each of our towns, including town halls and community venues such as libraries, leisure centres, and housing association hubs. They were intended to be welcoming, informal, and inclusive environments where residents felt comfortable. This approach aimed to build strong new relationships with local residents and recognise that to improve conditions, we first needed to understand their true opinions and identify where we might be going wrong.

Moving forwards together

The meetings served as an important first step in rebuilding our relationship with the communities we exist to serve, but we recognise that the first step cannot also be the last.

All the feedback we received from our towns was included in a wider consultation on our emerging Borough Strategy and has also shaped all our work in the towns, such as our ambitions for growth, regeneration, and the allocation of

funding from grants like Pride in Place. When one town explained the impact of closing their community centre, we responded by working to transfer the building to local groups through a community asset transfer. Themes from each town's feedback were published on our website so our partners can benefit from this insight too.

Work is ongoing to redefine local engagement: a tailored approach to collaborating with each of our nine towns, involving residents as partners to address a broader range of issues, and empowering them to make their own decisions and invest in the things that matter to them.

Alongside our new Tameside Strategic Partnership of stakeholders from across our community, we've learned from this experience to develop our draft Borough Strategy to guide our work until 2030. This enables us to collaborate with our partners to deliver on the priorities of the people who live and work in Tameside, and to address the issues they trusted us enough to share.

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Community

Tamworth Borough Council

We Are Tamworth – a cooperative approach to building better communities

Tamworth Borough Council created *We Are Tamworth* in response to increasing community tensions after unrest in 2024 and a recognised need to rebuild trust, belonging, and connection.

Instead of relying on traditional topdown methods, the council decided to adopt a different approach – listening first and working in equal partnership with local people.

Listening first

The work started with Honest Conversations, organised through the Belong Network and held in community venues, schools, and faith settings. Residents were encouraged to speak openly about their experiences of living in Tamworth, what mattered to them, and what needed to change. These conversations directly influenced the priorities and delivery approach of the We Are Tamworth Building Better Communities strategy.

Community-led action

We Are Tamworth is a living way of working, not just a strategy document. Communities are supported to lead projects, with the council acting as an enabler rather than the owner.

Kaleidoscope of Dreams was a festival celebrating inclusion, co-designed by schools, young people and community partners. Hosted at Tamworth Castle Grounds, it united thousands of residents through music, dance, and art, many of whom had not previously participated in borough-wide events. Kaleidoscope of Dreams II – Better Together will take place in July 2026, once again led by our schools and communities.

'The best event Tamworth has ever seen – it brought everyone together.' – Festival attendee

The Unity Shield project brought together residents from diverse backgrounds through blacksmithing workshops to



(Left) Kaleidoscope of Dreams Festival. (Right) The Unity Shield Project

create a permanent public artwork, which was unveiled on 21 March 2026.

Participants included young people, faith groups, asylum seekers, and individuals living with dementia.

'It gives us a visible place in the town's story.' – workshop participant

The council also introduced a community-led '**We Are Tamworth**' crowdfunding model through Spacehive, supporting local organisations to develop and fund their own ideas and helping to stretch public investment further.

7 out of 8 projects have reached their targets, and for every £1 the council invests, the community deliver a further £2.

Alongside these headline initiatives, the programme is supporting a wider pipeline of resident-led projects that build everyday connection: small grants and crowdfunding have enabled local groups to test ideas quickly, learn what works, and scale successful activity. Each project is asked

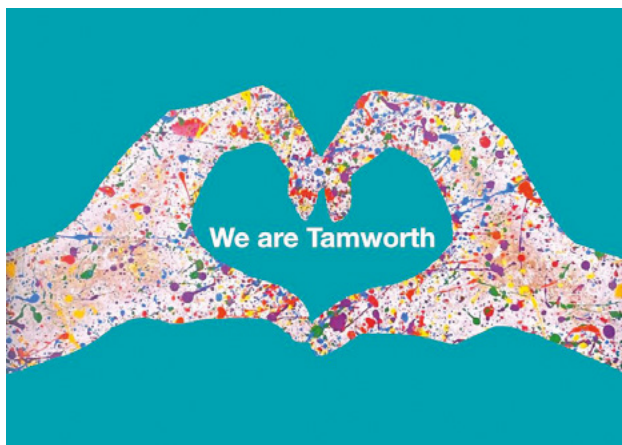


Image created by Paige Jones whilst studying at Landau Forte academy QEMS

to show how it strengthens relationships between different communities, creates shared spaces or shared experiences, and leaves a practical legacy (skills, partnerships, or assets) that lasts beyond the initial funding.

The council's role

Across all activities, the council has focused on sharing power, building relationships and trusting communities to lead.

'We Are Tamworth shows what's possible when we listen and work as one community.' – Stephen Gabriel, Chief Executive

Impact and learning

This collaborative approach has helped rebuild trust, strengthen relationships across communities and partners, and boost confidence among residents to lead change. It shows how collaborative principles can be put into practice and provides a model that other councils can adapt.

Alignment with CCIN values

We Are Tamworth aligns strongly with the Co-operative Councils' Innovation Network values and principles:

- Equal partnership with local people – residents shaped priorities from the outset.
- Co-production – communities co-designed and delivered projects.
- Sharing power – the council acted as an enabler, not a controller.
- Social partnership – schools, VCSE organisations and communities worked together.
- Democratic influence over resources – community-led crowdfunding supported local ideas.
- Inclusion and equality – deliberate engagement with under-represented groups.
- Long-term change – a sustainable way of working, not a short-term programme

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Community

Telford & Wrekin Council

An Armed Forces Community

Telford & Wrekin Council has a clear and sustained commitment to supporting the Borough's Armed Forces community, which is embedded strategically, operationally and culturally across the organisation and is delivered with a wide range of local, regional and national partners.

In 2012, the Council was one of the first local authorities in the United Kingdom to sign the Armed Forces Community Covenant. Since that time, significant and sustained progress has been made in delivering on Covenant commitments, supported by the development of a strong, evolving infrastructure.

A key element of this infrastructure is the Armed Forces Covenant Partnership. Through the work undertaken by the Partnership, 163 organisations and businesses within the Borough have now signed the Armed Forces Covenant – one of the highest numbers of signatories in the West Midlands region. The Covenant is a pledge recognising that those who serve, or who have served, in the Armed Forces, and their families, should be treated with fairness and respect in the communities, economy and society they serve.

Since 2019, the Council has delivered an annual Armed Forces Day celebration event for Armed Forces families and residents. The 2025 event marked the culmination of a week of celebrations during which the public was encouraged to show their support and appreciation. The event is delivered in partnership with local and national Armed Forces charities, Covenant signatories, and Defence Industry partners. Attendance at the most recent event was approximately 5,000, demonstrating strong, consistent support from partners and residents.

The Council holds the prestigious Ministry of Defence's Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) Gold Award, first achieved in 2020 and recently reaccredited for a further five years. This award reflects the Council's advocacy and leadership in supporting defence people issues across its workforce, partner organisations and service users.



Armed Forces Community Hub soft opening

In 2021, the Council made a significant investment by appointing an Armed Forces Partnership Officer. This role operates at both strategic and operational levels, advising Council subject leads on all matters relating to the Covenant, handling referrals, and providing direct support to members of the Armed Forces community.

The Armed Forces Act 2021 established a legal obligation for local authorities to consider the principles of the Covenant when carrying out functions related to education, housing, and healthcare. Telford & Wrekin Council has gone further by committing to support the Armed Forces community in the broadest sense. This includes serving personnel, veterans, reservists, cadet forces, and family members of all these groups.

In 2023, the Council approved a proposal to recognise Armed Forces service in the same manner as protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, as part of its commitment to reduce and eliminate disadvantage. This followed the establishment of the country's first Armed Forces High Street in Dawley, where all shops in the town centre signed the Armed Forces Covenant.

There remains a reluctance among some members of the Armed Forces community to ask for help. To address this, the Council continues to broaden outreach through partnership working.



The Christopher Turley
Armed Forces Community
Hub Opening

Over the past twelve months, outreach has expanded through closer multi-agency working. The Armed Forces Outreach programme now exceeds 55 hours per month. Provision includes three Armed Forces Community Cafés commissioned by the Council and delivered by Telford Mind, supported by Town and Parish Councils. Models for Heroes is supported through room hire funded by the Councillors' Pride Fund or Parish Councils, and promotes model-making as a therapeutic activity. Additional activities include Veterans' and Spouses' Craft and Sewing Groups, Armed Forces Community Art Lessons, monthly Armed Forces Drop-In sessions and targeted support for Armed Forces and ex-Emergency Services personnel.

In addition, following extensive community consultation in early 2025, including fifteen face-to-face events and an online survey, the Christopher Turley Armed Forces Community Hub was launched in July 2025. Developed and funded with Great Dawley Town Council and Telford Mind, the Hub offers a welcoming space with tailored support and a robust engagement programme through

events such as a Festive Breakfast, Quiz of the Year, Flippin', Fantastic Pancake morning and an Easter Eggtravaganza.

All of this is having a positive impact in the community, with regular attendees to these sessions commenting:

"Modelling can be a very isolating hobby. It was for me as I did it in isolation and although I love what it does, for me I was lonely. Sometimes we get involved outside of our modelling activities such as Smallwoods and we had a group day at Cosford which was excellent, we are already planning our next trip out as a group. This of course builds friendship and camaraderie, and I would count all who I have met in these endeavours friends for life. I have met some amazing people from within the Council without whose ongoing support in these difficult times, starting these groups would have been impossible. To sum up I would say that Models for Heroes saved my life at a time when I felt quite vulnerable and that it is an honour for me to give something back to the charity"

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Telford & Wrekin
Co-operative Council





Social Outcomes

Trafford Council

Trafford Elephants Trail

Trafford Council have collaborated with Unlimited Potential and Trafford Community Collective to deliver the Trafford Elephants Trail between September 2025 and March 2027. The project uses the evolving Elephants Trail approach, originally developed in Rochdale, to tackle inequality by influencing and creating systems change through developing community power and community-led innovation.

The Elephants Trail involves Trafford residents who have experienced multiple disadvantage including homelessness, substance misuse, domestic violence, economic inactivity, mental ill health, and experience of the justice system. The Elephants Trail draws on their valuable expertise developed through their lived experience. The aim is to use the participants' experience to create systemic change to tackle inequality in Trafford; they will influence and change the places they live, the services they use and the decisions that affect their lives.

Thirteen Trafford residents have joined the Elephants Trail as participants. They meet weekly and receive payment for their time, ensuring their lived experience is valued. The group focuses on a challenging problem, creating their own agenda and deciding which local decision-makers they feel could support them in implementing solutions to system change, service delivery, and policy development. This approach shifts power from decision makers to those who are most affected by inequality.

Trafford Council, Trafford's Health and Wellbeing Board and the Live Well in Trafford Programme have committed



Trafford Elephants Trail



to working in partnership with the Elephants Trail and embedding solutions into the system.

A total of £158,000 was secured by the Council from three funding streams, including £80,000 from The National Lottery Community Fund. The Trafford Elephants Trail is hosted by Unlimited Potential, and the project is part of Trafford Council's wider commitment to participation and coproduction, embedding lived experience in our service delivery and policy development.

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TRAFFORD
COUNCIL



Social Outcomes

Trafford Council

Disrupting sexual exploitation through closure orders

Between 2023 and 2024, Trafford Council's Community Safety Team, in close partnership with Greater Manchester Police led a series of targeted enforcement operations to dismantle premises being used for the sexual exploitation of women under coercive and often criminal conditions.

The team used Closure Notices and Orders under the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, supported by safeguarding procedures and modern slavery referrals, to act swiftly without requiring a criminal conviction or victim testimony.

Project Overview

Three key premises were closed as part of a focused strategy targeting brothels and massage parlours operating across Trafford:

The Railway Inn (Altrincham) – A licensed pub operating as a brothel, where officers discovered a woman trafficked and coerced into sex work in exchange for crack cocaine. The premises were found in filthy, degrading condition, including used condoms, drug paraphernalia, and dog faeces throughout the upper accommodation. A Closure Notice was issued on-site by the Council, and a three-month Closure Order was granted. The Council's Licensing Sub-Committee later revoked the premises licence in full.

Stamford New Road massage parlour (Altrincham) – Closed following public reports and operational intelligence under Operation Avro. A 51-year-old woman was arrested on suspicion of modern slavery offences. After the initial three-month closure expired and the premises reopened,

the Council acted again, obtaining a further Closure Order, with preparations in place for a third if needed. Two women, one of whom believed that she was actually in London were safeguarded having been found on the premises. These women disclosed that they had been trafficked from China, with asylum applications and tourist visas used to facilitate entry to the UK.

Barton Road massage parlour (Stretford) – A second massage parlour, operated by the same group as Stamford New Road, was shut down using a full Closure Order. Police intelligence linked those involved to Chinese organised crime groups operating brothels and trafficking networks across the UK. This site followed the same pattern: vulnerable women, suspected trafficking, high footfall, burner phones, and commercial sex work occurring under the guise of legitimate services.

Impact and Key Learning

- Three known brothels shut down, all connected to serious and organised exploitation.
- Victims safeguarded, with modern slavery protocols triggered.
- Organised crime networks were disrupted, including links to national Chinese trafficking operations.
- Premises licenses revoked, repeat closures pursued, and perpetrators arrested or placed under strict bail.

Councils from the South West, Midlands, and North East, along with two other Greater Manchester authorities, have sought Trafford's support in replicating the model.

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TRAFFORD
COUNCIL





Health & Social Care

Wigan Council

Wigan Ethical Homecare Provider Framework – Setting the conditions for collaboration over competition

Despite having a home care budget similar to most councils, Wigan Council runs a system that achieves some of the best home care outcomes in the country, along with numerous other positive social and economic effects, including secure, well-paid local jobs and strong social connections.

This is not accidental, nor is it due to demanding higher percentages of social value in contracts. It stems from careful and deliberate system leadership aimed at a shared vision of how a thriving care system should operate.

Identifying Problems, Aims and Opportunities

The process began with Wigan Council Commissioners recognising issues within the local care market and current block commissioning methods, such as zero-hour contracts, poor care outcomes, adversarial relationships between providers and commissioners, and increasing unit costs. There were worries that many of the block contract providers were mainly driven by the chance to make a profit and showed little interest in improving outcomes for service users.

Commissioners started exploring what a better system might look like. The approach was based on the Council's commitment to genuine partnership and collaboration, valuing each other's knowledge, expertise, and insights to co-design a strong shared vision and model of home care where everyone contributes.

The council looked beyond the view of social care as just a financial burden to recognise its role in supporting a prosperous economy. Care is a vital local employment sector, and the council acknowledged the importance of a well-functioning care system in providing good jobs within the borough.

Bringing together interested parties

During a period of pre-market engagement, the council engaged extensively with anyone who might care about the issues with the current state of affairs. This was carried out in a spirit of open enquiry and aimed to understand, among other things:

- Fair and sustainable unit costs for care – exploring what would constitute a reasonable level of profit to ensure providers could remain financially stable
- The needs of service users – identifying what mattered most to the recipients of care
- Strengths and needs in local communities
- The logistical challenges of delivering care appointments across the borough

This exploratory process revealed several non-negotiable 'imperatives' for the council that would underpin the partner selection process, the contract with the local authority, and the ongoing quality assurance procedures.

Potential providers would need to prove that they were:

- willing to work on an open book basis
- Committed to paying real living wage
- Capable of delivering quality care outcomes
- Committed authentically to knowing, caring and contributing to the borough and local people beyond the contract.

Establishing Relationships

The procurement process involved establishing an Ethical Provider Framework that outlined the values and behaviours, care standards, and available resources. The council area was divided into fourteen geographically defined lots, and providers were invited to apply.

The unit cost was fixed, removing price from the assessment, which was value-based and not driven by output. Instead, the council committed to regularly reviewing costs with providers through open book accounting. This approach ensures that costs stay affordable for the council and remain sustainable for providers.

Providers were selected through testing the imperatives identified during the pre-market engagement stage. In-person interviews assessed their commitment to the place, their capabilities, and the assets and strengths they believed they could contribute to the system. A multi-agency panel, which included the recipients of homecare, made a rigorous judgement on the most suitable suppliers. Emphasis was placed on trusting intuition and evaluating whether suppliers genuinely had the community's interests at heart or were primarily motivated by profit opportunities. Potential suppliers were encouraged to reflect on any assets and expertise they could bring to the partnership and had to agree to an open book accounting process, with a commitment from commissioners to engage annually on a sustainable and affordable fee arrangement.

Eight providers were selected for the 14 neighbourhood areas.

Delivering and tracking value in partnership

After 10 years, the partnership has surpassed expectations, achieving a broad spectrum of positive social and economic outcomes, both anticipated and unforeseen, including:

- No waiting lists for home care
- The highest proportion of CQC-rated Good and Outstanding care services in the North West
- Reduced travel times and carbon footprint for care workers
- Greatly improved recruitment and retention of staff
- Diversified workforce – 50% under 30 years old
- 86% of the workforce live in the place where they are delivering care.

Instead of specifying these outcomes and attempting to lock them into contracts, the procurement process focused on creating the right conditions and constraints for future collaboration. As well as greatly increasing social value outputs, the process has considerably improved working relationships across the system—by reducing geographical overlap, providers no longer compete for referrals and have become partners rather than rivals.

The system is now cooperating towards common goals under the stewardship of the local authority.

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Cooperative Place Making

Biddulph Town Council

Public realm enhancements

Public realm enhancements are often perceived to be the responsibility of Regeneration teams within larger local authorities. In February 2025, Biddulph Town Council set about achieving an innovative vision, which was new territory for our partners and us.

Biddulph Town Council and stakeholders worked together to create a Neighbourhood Plan and a Neighbourhood Development Order, both adopted in January 2024. As part of this work, the Town Council commissioned a Town Centre Masterplan, which said, 'Provision of a public square fronting Biddulph Town Hall would provide a place for interaction and community involvement. A pedestrian-friendly environment would further enhance the Town Centre experience.' Biddulph is a linear town experiencing difficulties other towns face, including declining footfall and struggling independent traders. We felt there was a need to re-imagine the town centre, before the remaining sense of community pride was lost.

Following a planning and procurement process, work began to transform the space in front of Biddulph Town Hall into a more accessible, welcoming, and versatile community area. Partly funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, the project created a hard-landscaped plaza designed to host events and gatherings, celebrating both the town's future and its proud industrial past.

This space is a celebration of the town's mining heritage with restored balance wheel, engraved bricks, interpretation and tourism boards, low voltage lighting and sustainable planting- including the introduction of trees.

When the frontage was opened, the Town Mayor said: 'This new frontage is not just a facelift – it's a statement. It says:



Town Hall frontage Spring 2026

"We remember where we've come from – and we're proud of where we're going". The frontage will now allow us to come together for events and activities that keep our town centre alive, a challenge at this time.

This project enabled the Town Council to both create and deliver a vision; it was a new area of work for Town Councillors, encouraging the development of a long-term vision for the town. We consulted with the community and implemented their recommendations. We worked with local providers to deliver the project- keeping money in the town, and enhancing the sense of pride in the initiative.

This project has created a town square; it's a space for markets, gatherings, and connections. It enhances the Town Hall itself, making sure residents see this as the heart of their town. A new sense of ownership has emerged, and those involved in the mining industry feel recognised and celebrated.

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Finance

Winsford Town Council

Winsford decides

The Winsford Decides participatory budgeting programme marked a significant step forward in community-led decision-making for the town. The initiative was driven by a desire to give residents a direct voice in how local funding is allocated. The concept of participatory budgeting, where communities decide how to spend part of a public budget, had proven successful elsewhere, but bringing it to Winsford required careful planning, expertise, and collaboration.

To turn this ambition into reality, Winsford Town Council partnered with PB Partners, specialists in designing and delivering participatory budgeting processes. Their role was crucial in translating what can often feel like a complex democratic model into something practical, accessible, and engaging for local people. Working closely with council staff and elected members, PB Partners provided tailored guidance, ensuring the process was transparent, inclusive, and well-structured from the outset.

The programme was designed to empower community groups and organisations to pitch their ideas for funding directly to residents. This created not only an opportunity for local initiatives to secure financial support but also a platform for residents to engage more deeply with their community. From application development to event delivery, PB Partners supported each stage, helping to build confidence and ensure the process ran smoothly.

The first Winsford Decides event was held in 2021. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, it took place online via Microsoft Teams. Despite the challenges, this did not hinder its success, in fact, it demonstrated the resilience and



Winsford Winners

adaptability of both organisers and participants. The virtual format enabled the programme to launch successfully and laid the foundations for future in-person events.

Since then, five Winsford Decides events have taken place, collectively awarding over £125,000 to local community projects. By 2026, the programme had grown significantly, with its highest attendance yet, over 200 residents taking part and voting on 27 local project proposals. This growth highlights the increasing appetite within the community to be directly involved in shaping local priorities.

Winsford Decides has now become a vital part of Winsford's community infrastructure. It continues to empower residents, support grassroots initiatives, and strengthen connections across the town. As it evolves, the programme remains a strong example of how participatory budgeting can successfully bring decision-making closer to the people it impacts most.

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Community

The National Network for Neighbourhood Improvement – 3ni working with Wigan Council

Using hyper-local data to strengthen community co-operation in Wigan

Across England's most deprived neighbourhoods, poorer life outcomes often occur where social infrastructure and social capital are weakest. However, data on these factors is frequently only available at borough or ward level, concealing significant differences between nearby communities and complicating efforts to target support effectively.

For councils, understanding community conditions at a very local level is vital. 3ni collaborated with Wigan Council to provide this insight by mapping the key areas of social capital and community need at neighbourhood level across the borough.

Using its *Discovery* platform, 3ni analysed data at the level of Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs), small statistical regions with about 1,500 residents. This allowed it to help the council map and profile social capital levels across neighbourhoods, creating a clearer evidence base for targeted, place-based decision making. Social capital is essential for fostering the bridging and linking social ties that underpin community cooperation and resilience.

One key application was the integration of *Discovery* in supporting Wigan's Pride in Place programme. 3ni has produced tailored insight packs for Pride in Place Neighbourhood Board members to help them better understand the context of their neighbourhoods and

to support discussions about community priorities. The analysis also informed decisions about the allocation of the Pride in Place Impact Fund. By highlighting those doubly disadvantaged neighbourhoods where high levels of need coincide with weaker social infrastructure, but which were outwith the Pride in Place programme, the council was able to prioritise investment in areas where additional support could improve outcomes in an equitable way that responded to local needs.

The data also helped identify "social capital coldspots" across the borough, areas where local networks, community participation or infrastructure might be limited. This has enabled the council to consider where targeted support could help foster stronger connections between residents and encourage greater involvement in neighbourhood initiatives, as part of its Progress with Unity strategy to deepen and establish new relationships between the council and its communities.

This work shows how hyper-local data can support more collaborative approaches to local governance. By combining solid evidence with local knowledge and resident input, councils can allocate resources more efficiently while empowering communities to develop solutions that reflect their priorities. For Wigan, the approach aligns with its broader goal to enhance neighbourhood resilience and participation and to foster community leadership.

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**national network
for neighbourhood
improvement**



Strategy

Branding.coop working with the CCIN

A cooperative journey

After nearly a decade as CEO of the Cooperative Councils' Innovation Network (CCIN), I stepped down at the end of December 2025. My break was brief, however, as I was soon invited to take on the role of Honorary President — an honour and a privilege.

The earliest events in my CCIN journey were the Cooperative Congress in Birmingham, swiftly followed by the LGA Conference and Exhibition in Bournemouth. Over the years, I have taken the CCIN roadshow from Dundee to Plymouth, and organised Annual Conferences in Cardiff, Oldham, Croydon, Rochdale, Telford, Sunderland and Greenwich, working officer teams in each place. Around 100 events have been delivered, spanning thousands of miles. Highlights have included study visits to Mondragon and Emilia-Romagna, where members have had the opportunity to visit cooperative places in action and speak with international cooperators. I am immensely proud of that achievement and of the breadth of local government talent nurtured within individual councils to take advantage of the opportunities that the CCIN has given.

My cooperative journey began in 2012 at the International Cooperative Alliance in Geneva, first as Coordinator of the International Year of Co-operatives and later as Director of Communications. 2012 also saw the launch of CCIN. At the ICA, I witnessed the transformative power of cooperative enterprises — values that continue to underpin my work with the Network. I was thrilled to end my tenure as CEO during the second UN International Year of Cooperatives in 2025, as it gave me the opportunity to meet so many of my international friends at the Cooperative Congress in Birmingham

Since 2016 the Network has grown from 19 councils to more than 140 councils, opposition groups, and organisations. Today, CCIN stands as the fastest-growing cross-party network in local government. This stands as one of the Network's most significant achievements.

Over the years, I've had the privilege of working with three inspiring Chairs: Baroness Taylor, Councillor Louise Gittins (Chair of the Local Government Association), and Councillor Jim Robbins. The Network's exponential growth has been fuelled by a deep, shared commitment to cooperative principles and a collective desire to connect like-minded leaders and innovators across the country.

As Honorary President, I am proud to play a small part in the next chapter of the CCIN journey.

(left) Cllr Jim Robbins – Chair of the CCIN and Leader of Swindon Borough Council with Nicola Huckerby at the LGA Conference in Liverpool in July 2025.

(right) Dr Ariel Guarco – President of the International Cooperative Alliance and Nicola Huckerby at Cooperative Congress in Rochdale, July 2025.



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Community Wealth Building

Crystalisr Co-operative Society Limited working with the South London Partnership Councils

Building community wealth via the sub-regional 'BIG Integrate' programme

With an initial budget of £100,000, the BIG Integrate programme was launched by the South London Partnership (SLP) sub-regional grouping in late 2021 and was delivered in 2022/3 by London South Bank University (LSBU) and Crystalisr Co-operative Society Limited.

The sub-region includes five councils: Croydon, Kingston upon Thames, Merton, Richmond upon Thames, and Sutton. Croydon was a leading member of CCIN at the time. Crystalisr operates exclusively within the SLP area. The funding was part of a larger £6 million grant from the City of London Business Rates Retention Strategic Investment Pot (SIP).

Along with offering student consultancies and providing training on supplier readiness, BIG Integrate was devised to establish a network of SMEs and anchor institutions centred around the principles of community wealth building.

As of March 2026, 5 co-operative projects/enterprises have emerged from the network:

- Care Concierge – a cooperative platform providing management of care pathways within the community.
- Sunray 100 – a green economy collaboration focusing on retrofit in similar housing archetypes on the 850-home Sunray Estate in Tolworth, Kingston upon Thames, now entering the phase of creating an Energy Local Club (a co-operative).



- Hack the System – a platform dedicated to enhancing the earning potential of local creatives through game technology.
- Vision House – utilising the 200,000 acres of land allocated for development under the CofE Housing Project to establish small housing co-operatives.
- South London Ventures – incorporating community wealth fund management into 'traditional' forms of public and private venture capital.

As a dedicated programme authorised by the South London Partnership, BIG Integrate demonstrated that part of the CCIN Cooperative Development Toolkit promotes systematisation and funding of initiatives with the potential for new co-operative enterprises and community wealth building.

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Finance

E3M working with the Royal Borough of Greenwich

People focused services in Greenwich – moving from procurement to partnership

Building upon insights from the E3M Bold Commissioners Club and from leading challenge groups at the E3M Imagine events in 2024 and 2025, Greenwich Commissioners are putting residents, workers and human-centred partnership models at the heart of their commissioning practice.

Greenwich is working to grow a more co-operative local economy. In keeping with the commitments outlined in Together for Greenwich (2025), commissioners are working to re-imagine social care in the context of employee ownership, neighbourhoods and community partnerships. Recognising that commissioning complex People Focused Services requires a very different approach to the market purchasing of standardised commercial goods and services, in September 2025, the Royal Borough of Greenwich and the Healthier Greenwich Partnership formally engaged E3M Partner Stone King as a transformation advisory partner to accelerate the design and delivery of a number of collaborative commissioning demonstration projects.

This has started with a demonstration project on supported accommodation. In Greenwich, accessible properties for people with disabilities are challenging to secure. Preventing public assets from being permanently lost to the private sector is important to the council. In 2024, the Royal Borough of Greenwich concluded negotiations to purchase several NHS properties that had previously been used as residential homes. To refurbish the buildings to a standard required to deliver high-quality supported accommodation and care, significant investment is needed. As part of the purchase, the council has committed s106 investments secured from developments to fund a near term set of required works to the buildings.



Developing and testing ideas at E3M Imagine

With current support contracts ending, the council is working with Stone King's advice and procurement colleagues to explore ways to maximise the flexibilities and collaborative ways of working permitted for commissioning People Focused Services.

Greenwich is at the point of considering the options for its future commissioning of this service, including further inward investment and a Community Partnership with a values-aligned care and support partner. This approach will enable some of the most vulnerable residents to move from surviving to thriving, in places they can call home and with community connections and relationships that matter most to them. Commissioners are also working to secure supported employment opportunities and more ethical practices for the care-workers who spend their lives in the service of our most vulnerable residents. Greenwich continues to do this by placing cooperative values and principles of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity at the centre of its work together locally.

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E3M



Social Outcomes

GLL working with the Royal Borough of Greenwich

How a co-operative model has transformed Greenwich's libraries

When Greenwich Council needed a more effective and sustainable way to run its library services in 2012, it extended an already successful partnership with workers co-operative GLL – a staff-owned charitable social enterprise that had been managing the borough's leisure centres since 1993.

The impact on libraries was immediate and sustained. At the start of the partnership, Greenwich ranked 28th in London for items issued. Today, the borough sits 5th in London, with nearly two million library visits recorded each year, over one million items issued and more than 427,000 digital loans. Community engagement is high, with public PC usage among the highest in the capital, and an impressive 97% of users rating the service as good or excellent.

GLL's co-operative model has widened the Greenwich Libraries offer beyond the professionally delivered core library offer to include physical activity referral programmes, wellbeing initiatives, and community health provision – alongside books, reading and information services.

Greenwich Libraries have also become engines of local economic growth. Through Start Up Greenwich, delivered as part of the British Library's Business & IP Centre network, library spaces now provide mentoring, workshops, and networking opportunities for entrepreneurs. To date, nearly 600 members have been supported – demonstrating that a well-run library can be a genuine driver of economic opportunity, not simply a place to borrow books. The Start Up offer from GLL libraries is also now being run in other councils.



Coffee morning at the co-located Thamesmere Library and Leisure Centre

GLL as an organisation has also grown over this time into the UK's largest provider of public leisure and library services – operating more than 250 leisure centres and 124 public and prison libraries across the country. Although a national operator, GLL is still a genuinely local organisation, with deep roots in the community it serves and is proud to be staff owned. GLL has proved, through our people actively shaping the business and organisation, that social purpose, customer focus, and enterprise can be achieved and create a scalable and sustainable business. GLL reinvests surpluses locally into facilities, programmes, and service improvements supporting literacy, wellbeing, and community engagement. It widens and deepens its social and economic impact through its Sport and Literary Foundations, supporting aspiring athletes and emerging authors across the UK.

Greenwich's journey offers a compelling case study for any council wrestling with how to protect library services under financial pressure. A co-operative model – one that aligns commercial discipline with genuine community purpose – can deliver more than most expect. If your authority is exploring sustainable library provision, GLL would welcome an initial conversation. Visit gll.org/contact-us to get in touch.

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GLL



Community

ICS.AI working with Derby City Council

Leading the UK's first AI-native local authority

Like many local authorities, Derby City Council faced severe financial pressures alongside rising demand for services. After years of digital investment, the Council recognised that incremental change would not be enough.

Derby made a strategic decision to become the UK's first AI-native local authority, embedding AI across the organisation to fundamentally reshape how services are delivered. Partnering with ICS.AI, the Council implemented a Unified AI Target Operating Model, bringing together resident access, staff productivity, and back-office operations within a single governed platform.

From Channels to an AI-Powered Front Door

With over 60% of resident contact historically via telephone, Derby prioritised transforming access. In April 2023, it launched *Darcie* for customer services and *Ali* for housing, creating a 24/7 AI-enabled front door. This shifted services from channel-driven to needs-led access, reducing pressure on contact centres while improving speed and accessibility.

In May 2025, *Darcie* was enhanced with generative AI, enabling more natural and empathetic conversations in English and nine additional languages. It can also identify potential vulnerability and direct residents to appropriate support. The impact has been significant: a 56% deflection rate, waiting times halved, and misdirected calls reduced by 85%.

AI for All: Empowering the Workforce

Derby adopted an "AI for All" approach, making AI available across the organisation. Staff are supported by *Perrie*, a secure AI copilot that assists with drafting, analysis, and simplifying complex policies. This reduces administrative

burden and frees up time for higher-value, resident-focused work.

Transforming Back-Office Operations

Building on its AI-enabled front door and workforce, Derby continues to further embed AI across operational services to drive efficiency and improve outcomes.

In income and debt management, AI-enabled dashboards provide a unified, real-time view of debt, enabling more ethical, proactive, and strategic approaches to collection.

A Unified, Governed AI Platform

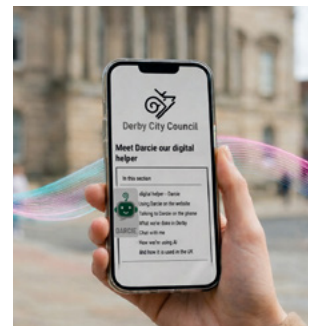
Rather than deploying isolated tools, Derby has implemented a single AI platform with governance built in. Guardrails, human oversight, and auditability are core features, supported by an independently chaired AI Ethics Board. AI supports decisions, but people remain accountable for outcomes.

Delivering Measurable Value at Scale

To date, Derby has identified £12 million in savings while maintaining service quality, demonstrating that AI can deliver practical, scalable impact today.

A Blueprint for Local Government

Derby's journey shows how councils can move beyond pilots to organisation-wide transformation, providing a replicable blueprint for the sector.



Chatting with Derby Council's Darcie front door on mobile phone

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Health & Social Care

Mutual Ventures working with Brent Council

Brent's bold move towards Radical Place Leadership

Mutual Ventures has supported Brent Council and its partners in adopting a 'Radical Place Leadership' approach. This approach emphasises partners working more closely together and thinking more radically about how to support residents better.

Brent is a vibrant borough in north-west London, known for its young and diverse communities, but it faces significant challenges stemming from poverty and inequality, including homelessness and health disparities.

During a series of strategic partnership meetings facilitated by Mutual Ventures, partners from across the borough, including the council, police, health services, and VCSE organisations, agreed that collaboration is essential to tackle these interconnected challenges.

Partners emphasised the need for a more joined-up experience for residents, shifting the focus from crisis response to prevention, and empowering frontline staff to make decisions. There was strong enthusiasm for embracing a radical and courageous leadership approach, and agreement that working collaboratively is the only path to financially sustainable public services.

Our support

Mutual Ventures approach has been shaped learning from successful place-based working in other places, including the Greater Manchester Model and The Liberated Method. Professor Donna Hall, the former Chief Executive of Wigan, was part of our team and brought invaluable expertise from the "Wigan Deal".

Our approach appreciates that there are sustainable savings to be found in the spaces between organisations and siloed services, such as the repeated assessments, the passing of people from service to service, and unnecessary support duplication.

Our support included:

- Conducting a baselining exercise to understand Brent's starting position as a place, including the challenges faced and existing strengths
- Support to establish a shared vision for public service collaboration in Brent, and to identify a clear set of priorities
- Co-design of a neighbourhood delivery model for place-based working in Brent
- Development of a prioritisation framework that sets out practical steps for proactively identifying people for place-based teams to support
- Support to implement these new approaches

"We have found Mutual Ventures' support invaluable and have appreciated how they have flexed their approach as the work developed...I have also greatly appreciated the learning they have brought from other places, both to enhance our thinking and help bring to life new, very different ways of working. We are now moving to implement this model and I would be very happy to recommend Mutual Ventures to other areas looking to explore similar place-based approaches." – Rachel Crossley, Corporate Director Community Health and Wellbeing, Brent Council

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Social Health

Peopletoo working with Trafford Council

Co-designing a new adult social care practice framework with Trafford Council

Following a detailed review of demand management within Adult Social Care (ASC), Trafford Council commissioned Peopletoo to design a new ASC practice framework that would bring clarity, consistency and purpose to frontline practice.

The review highlighted variations in approach, a limited preventive focus, and the absence of a shared model of practice. With rising complexity and demand across ASC, the Council recognised the need for a coherent, practitioner-owned framework to drive independence, strengthen preventive work, and enhance outcomes for residents.

From the outset, the project was conceived as a social partnership based on co-production, ensuring Trafford's practitioners played an active and equal role in shaping the future of their service. Peopletoo worked collaboratively with staff, leaders, and practice experts to ensure the framework reflected the realities of day-to-day work, the needs of Trafford residents, and the ambitions of the Council's *Improving Lives Every Day* vision.

Working through a practitioner-led model, Peopletoo facilitated a series of task-and-finish focus groups, bringing together ASC practitioners, the Principal Social Worker, and the Head of Learning and Development. These sessions created safe, energised spaces where staff could share what works, identify gaps, and co-design solutions that felt meaningful and achievable. This collaborative approach ensured the new practice framework clearly articulated what practitioners do and why, and aligned directly with Trafford Council's wider values and strategic priorities.

To embed the framework effectively, Peopletoo undertook a full review of the supervision policy, recommending changes to strengthen reflective practice, reinforce accountability and ensure supervisors are equipped to support the desired practice improvements. A comprehensive Learning and Development Plan was also developed, informed by a skills-gap analysis and designed to build the capability needed for sustainable change.

Recognising the importance of cultural adoption, Peopletoo co-designed a communications and engagement plan, working with staff champions to build momentum, encourage buy-in and create ownership across the workforce. A mobilisation and launch plan, along with detailed guidance and induction materials, provided the structure needed for confident rollout and long-term consistency.

The new practice framework is designed to deliver tangible outcomes for residents and staff, including:

- Increased preventative approaches
- More creative and strengths-based practice
- Greater consistency in decision-making
- Improved staff satisfaction
- Stronger performance and expectations management

Alongside improved outcomes for residents, the framework provides Trafford Council with the practice infrastructure required to deliver its financial savings—ensuring high-quality, sustainable ASC services for the future.

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Peopletoo
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Education & Training

Public Service Transformation Academy (PSTA) working with Police and Crime Commissioners

Contract Management Development Programme

The Contract Management Development Programme was designed to enhance the practical skills, confidence, and strategic insight of professionals responsible for managing contracts within public services.

The programme has brought together participants from a variety of organisations, including Offices of Police and Crime Commissioners (OPCCs), local authorities, charities, and service providers. A diverse range of perspectives is a real strength, enabling participants to examine challenges from both the commissioner and supplier viewpoints and to develop a shared understanding of what effective contracting entails.

A Practical Approach to Contract Management

Through interactive sessions covering the full contract lifecycle, the programme provides practical tools and frameworks for participants to:

- Understand the end-to-end contract management lifecycle
- Strengthen their ability to design, mobilise, and manage contracts effectively
- Improve performance and risk management approaches
- Navigate the complexities of public sector procurement and governance
- Build confidence to challenge and improve current practice

Adapting to a Changing Environment

As the programme has developed through successive cohorts, the content has been refined based on participant feedback and the evolving operating environment of public services. The latest version of the programme has been streamlined and updated to emphasise “contracting through uncertainty,” reflecting the realities faced by many organisations, including financial pressures, shifting policy priorities, workforce constraints, and complex service delivery environments.

The updated programme explores issues such as:

- Changing operating environments
- Designing agreements to adapt to uncertainty
- Navigating political pressures and resource constraints
- Addressing incomplete contract lifecycles and legacy arrangements
- Strengthening relationships between commissioners and providers

Building a Community of Practice

The programme has built an informal community of practice, linking professionals across OPCCs, local authorities, and provider organisations.

Participants gain opportunities to share experiences, discuss common challenges, and learn from peers across the sector. A follow-up bonus session enables participants to reflect on how they have applied their learning and to collaboratively work through emerging issues.

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Strategy

RedQuadrant Ltd working with Peterborough City Council

Peterborough City Council, communications service review

This project focused on understanding the current service delivery model and underpinning team structures, and asking what was required of a Peterborough communications service to develop a service model that was efficient, effective, and sustainable, reflecting the principles and objectives of Peterborough City Council.

The challenges:

The previous model was reactive, and the team faced capacity challenges. The team was expected to respond swiftly and resolve issues immediately but often missed opportunities to adopt a proactive approach, especially regarding project work. There was limited capacity to analyse the impact of communications on our community, meaning there was no way to identify wasted effort or failures to reach and engage residents. The budget had already been finalised, so financial constraints could not be altered. We needed to leverage internal expertise to consider alternative service delivery methods, conduct an assessment to accurately determine capacity, develop an effective service model that maintained a balanced budget, and explore recommendations for innovation and growth.

What we did differently:

Using an Agile approach, we facilitated workshops that enabled the team to reflect on the core elements of a communications service. This process developed into a high-level operating model, from which they identified the services they believed they should be delivering and whether these aligned with customer expectations. We collaborated with the team to consider what demand looked like and how it could be 'triaged' through a single channel, balancing proactive and reactive activities. Taking time to think about where accountability and responsibility should sit within a model with the necessary skills, knowledge, and experience to deliver services led to the development of a new model different from initial ideas. A time and activity analysis provided an assessment of the team's capacity and the evidence needed to justify requests for additional resources.

Outcomes:

The outcome of this project was the design of a communication service delivery that could be implemented within budget. Service areas and functions were aligned with the core elements of an effective communication service, and roles were considered that not only improved resilience within the team but also defined career pathways for staff.

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Community

Unlimited Potential working with Greater Manchester Combined Authority

A Greater Manchester Participation Playbook

Public trust is falling and participation in traditional democratic processes – like voting – has reached historic lows. For too long, decisions have been made *about* people, not *with* them. Power can feel distant, disconnected and out of reach.

That is why Greater Manchester is 'pressing play' on a new way of doing things: one where decisions are made by the people, for the people – where community power and participatory democracy thrive.

GM Live Well is Greater Manchester's commitment to ensuring great everyday support is available in every neighbourhood. It represents a shift in how public services work with people and communities.

Critical to the Live Well approach is being 'community-led, system-enabled'. This means residents and public services working side by side to make Greater Manchester a healthy and happy place for everyone.

Hosted by Unlimited Potential, the Elephants Trail project works to change systems that create injustice and perpetuate disadvantage. It consists of people who have had the hardest lives – with lived experience of multiple disadvantage.

The Elephants Trail team has developed its skills and knowledge of community reporting over the past five years, working with both The Guardian and Live Well in Greater Manchester. It wants to grow the capacity for community reporting across Greater Manchester.



So, the Elephants Trail was pleased to contribute a section about community reporting to the new Greater Manchester Participation Playbook.

The Playbook is for anyone asking: how do we face today's biggest challenges, and how do we do it together? It was commissioned by GM Live Well at Greater Manchester Combined Authority, and created by a team of participatory democracy experts, practitioners and community members, all based in Greater Manchester.

The Playbook is for those who want to rebuild trust, shift power closer to communities, and find practical ways to involve residents in shaping the decisions that affect their lives.

The Playbook features the core values of participation. Co-production with local people is at its heart. It describes different approaches: participatory budgeting; participatory grant making; citizens' assemblies and juries; legislative theatre; digital democracy; participatory design; and community reporting.

The Playbook celebrates the power of working together to design and deliver solutions that matter. Real change happens when we shift how we work-building a culture where participation is at the heart of everything we do.

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Cooperative Development Toolkit

A practical guide for councils from “We need more coops!”
to action with steps, resources, and strategy

councils.coop/resources/toolkits/coopdevelopment

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.

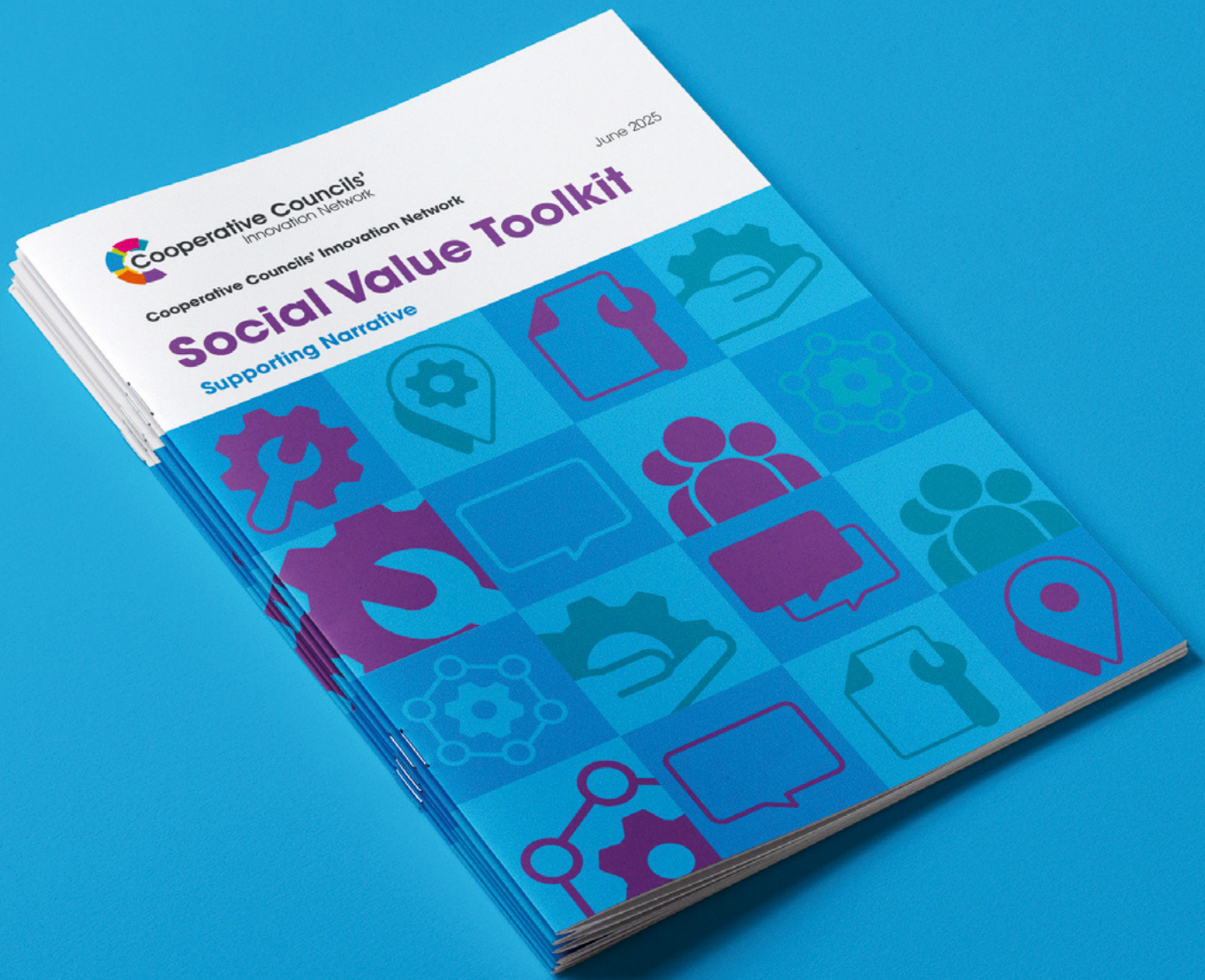
Ask us for further details.



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Social Value Toolkit

How to apply the freedoms and flexibilities of the legal framework to achieve community wealth-building and cooperative placemaking goals

councils.coop/social-value-toolkit



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.

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