

Community-led care and health enterprises working together to tackle homecare challenges

The homecare market is widely reported as in collapse with people and their families feeling the impact. The Red Cross has called it a humanitarian crisis while the Chief Nursing Officer has said that the main health priority in 2017 is to ensure a thriving homecare market.

The problems of low paid carer workers and variable quality are well known, but underlying these are more fundamental issues. Large scale homecare provision can create logistical challenges, resulting in rushed visits and stressed workers.

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Homecare can only be successful when it attracts and retains compassionate, skilled staff, but current industry models can struggle to build in the time or consistency for dignity, warmth and companionship. This results in large but often ignored costs to the industry in managing staff performance, sickness and turnover. Older and disabled people may get the physical care they need but inconsistency and lack of time makes it impossible for staff to address any wider issue impacting on the person's health and independence, such as loneliness. There is another way

Community Catalysts' approach has been implemented in 49 areas of the UK over 7 years and is based not on technology or elusive economies of scale, but on releasing local people's capacity to care. This model scales through a single coordinator or Catalyst supporting up to 200 small, self-organising enterprises. It results in low-cost, flexible and personal care for older or disabled people and their families, and appropriately paid, highly satisfying self-employment for people who set up and run micro-enterprises.

Sharon Walker has a lot of experience working in traditional care services. She took a career break to look after her mother in law and was profoundly affected by the experience of delivering person centred care. Spurred on by this and with support from Community Catalysts, she decided to set up Care4U in December 2015. Care4U provides highly personalised, flexible and consistent support to older people in and around Sharon's Somerset village. After 14 months running Care4U she explains the difference it has made to the people she supports *I can organise my time so that people can get what they want at a time that suits them, it gives me the freedom to work around their family...*

Community enterprise working together to support people in their homes

Rural Somerset is one of the most challenging areas in which to organise flexible, responsive and economic care to help older people to stay in their own home. Over 2 years our locally-

embedded Catalyst has supported the development of 133 brand new 'start-up' enterprises and advised a further 38. The result is a directory of 171 care providers that people, their families and social workers can contact. Between them these enterprises are supporting 600 older people and creating 180 local jobs. Collectively they provide 2200 hours of care or support a week.

The work of the local Catalyst has a positive impact on a range of different stakeholders:

- Older and disabled people living in rural parts of Somerset are supported at home by local people who can provide a flexible, responsive, consistent and high quality care services
- People are able to work locally, earn an income and make a positive difference to the lives of people in their neighbourhood.
- Commissioners know that older people, including those in the most rural areas, can be supported well at home. Because of this people come home earlier from hospital, stay connected to their community, relieving isolation and loneliness.

32 community micro-enterprises in rural West Somerset are delivering £134,712 in annual savings. Projected across the 171 micro-enterprises supported by Community Catalysts in Somerset, the project delivers £719,867 in annual savings. The one-off cost of the Catalyst is £135,000 over 2 years. 56% of people supported use direct payments, showing a direct and ongoing annual saving to the council of £403,126.

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The cost of care delivered by community enterprises is cheaper than the cost of traditional care. The project has helped to drive a 43.6% increase in uptake of direct payments. This makes personalisation meaningful for older people and their families, who have historically had a much lower uptake of personal budgets.

Replicating and scaling the Community Catalysts model

The Community Catalysts approach is replicable in all kinds of areas. The factors for success are:

- a skilled and knowledgeable Catalyst employed to support local people to explore their ideas, understand local needs, provide patient coaching and expert support and help link to local sources of advice and form self-sustaining networks
- a locally-rooted Catalyst working at a neighbourhood level through community structures and networks, helping to strengthen what is already working well
- the back-up of a national organisation and UK wide network sharing learning and helping to address barriers
- buy-in from the whole system from senior leaders to front line staff: Community Catalysts supports areas to understand and value these new approaches and make the systems change necessary to enable community enterprise to thrive
- a comprehensive approach to risk and quality management

Ideally, a large rural county like Somerset needs 3 Catalysts who over 2 years would support the development of over 500 community enterprises collectively able to offer care and support to 1800 older people and generate direct savings of £1.2m per year.

Our experience shows that this approach will work in any area and demography. If it was implemented in every area of England it could result in a staggering 52,000 community enterprises providing care and support to 182,500 people, delivering 608,000 care hours a week and creating 55,000 jobs. This in addition to the positive financial and personal impacts created from better health and wellbeing outcomes and increased employment.

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Next steps

Community care enterprises have the potential to deliver homecare solutions at scale. These enterprises deliver excellent outcomes for people and at scale could produce direct savings of more than £120m a year. They can help to address the problems and distress of delayed hospital discharge as well as tackling issues of isolation and loneliness.

We believe that there is a strong argument for making a funding stream available to councils to enable them to buy in expert support for community homecare enterprise. Government could consider funding an evaluated proof-of-concept programme, which if successful can be rapidly mainstreamed.

Background Note

Community Catalysts

Community Catalysts is a social enterprise and Community Interest Company, launched in 2010 that works through local partners such as councils and CCGs to help local people establish small enterprises that focus on care and wellbeing.

These community enterprises provide real choice of personalised and high-quality services for people in their neighbourhood who need care. Their impact goes well beyond the direct support and help that they offer other people, for example creating jobs and volunteering opportunities and providing access to skills and qualifications.

Over the last 7 years Community Catalysts has worked in 49 areas, supporting the development of more than 1800 community enterprises, which between them care for nearly 12,500 people. Collectively these community entrepreneurs create nearly 2500 jobs and over 1500 volunteering opportunities.

Typically we work in an area for 2 years, helping to build the capacity of both local partners and local people, strengthening community structures and bringing established and new community entrepreneurs into self-sustaining networks. We have expert knowledge in the regulation and legislation that govern wellbeing, care and health enterprises and in the bureaucracies with which they have to work. We use our knowledge to help enterprises negotiate the many regulatory, legislative and bureaucratic barriers they face, with the aim of enabling them to be legally compliant, sustainable and able to offer care services that are safe and high quality.

We are proud of our success in supporting sustainable enterprises: 96% of the community enterprises supported by our Catalysts are still thriving after 2 years

Our approach is replicable in any demography and is highly effective in helping people who have good ideas but who lack confidence and experience to establish a sustainable and legally compliant enterprise or venture. Our community entrepreneurs do not fit easily into standard social enterprise support programmes, typically aiming for a small source of income and role satisfaction rather than a rapidly-growing business.

See www.communitycatalysts.co.uk for more information or email sian.lockwood@communitycatalysts.co.uk