

PASSIONATE PEOPLE MAKING A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE

Lessons to inform community-led approaches to care and wellbeing

ABOUT US

Community Catalysts

Community Catalysts is a social enterprise working in partnerships across the UK to try to make sure that people who need support to live their lives can be part of strong, inclusive, communities with real opportunities to connect, create and contribute.

We work to ensure people can get the help and care they need in ways, times and places that suit them, with real choice of attractive local options.

We help passionate local people use their energies and talents to establish enterprises and ventures that deliver sustainable care and health services for other local people, creating jobs and volunteering opportunities.

We use our expertise to help communities, organisations, authorities and policy makers to deliver the transformational change in services or systems needed to make this a reality.

What we know

We know that creating sustainable systems able to nurture connected communities, where citizens care for each other and value the contribution of everyone is challenging.

We know that:



Inclusive, connected communities that focus on people's strengths are better places to live



They foster reciprocity and mutual help and naturally stop people using expensive and often unwanted public services



People in every local community are willing and able to help themselves and their fellow citizens



These activities keep local money local and create local jobs



With the right help some people will emerge as leaders – taking steps to make their community a better place for themselves and their peers.



Some will create community enterprises or businesses that provide real choice of personalised, high-quality supports and services



Helping public sector partners develop responsive systems and the right culture helps these community initiatives to thrive.

community
catalysts®

unlocking potential
effecting change

BACKGROUND

Enterprising Communities is an exciting Community Catalysts project, delivered in two phases from April 2017 to December 2019.

Phase one had a focus on **community business** offering supports and services around health, care and wellbeing. It was funded by **Power to Change**. After an open call for place-based partners, Community Catalysts worked with local authorities and communities in Warwickshire and Telford and Wrekin. **Phase two** had a focus on smaller **community enterprises** that connect people to address issues of loneliness and increase community wellbeing. It was funded by the **Esmée Fairbairn Foundation** and was delivered with local authority partners in York and Herefordshire.

Phase two enabled us to work with the University of Birmingham to evaluate the impact of the project. The results of this evaluation have informed this key lessons paper which we hope will enable other areas to invest in passionate people who want to make a positive difference.

We wanted to increase the number of people that take a direct payment and so at the same time, what you need to make sure is, those people have actually got something different to buy

WHAT HAPPENED

We employed four Catalysts to work in four very different areas, north and midlands, urban and rural, affluent and more deprived, dense and sparse populations. In all areas the work was a partnership with the local councils who contributed financially and took responsibility for the systems and culture changes required to ensure real transformation. Two areas had a focus on care and supported passionate people linked to larger community businesses. Two areas had a focus on loneliness and connecting people and supported smaller (micro) community enterprises.

In total 356 existing or emergent enterprises and businesses, using a wide range of business models, were engaged. Catalysts offered whatever help and support leaders needed and this included advice on care regulation, support to overcome barriers, help to thinking about financial issues and potential customers, advice to develop policies and procedures and signposting to more specialist help.

Community enterprises and businesses created huge opportunities and choice for people who needed help to connect and/or care and support to live their lives, including opportunities to volunteer or find work. The types of services and activities offered by the enterprises and businesses was very diverse and included many opportunities including socialising, meals delivery, inclusive yoga, a dating agency, help at home with gardening and cleaning, personal care, activity groups such as crafting.

People engaging in activities and/or using services reported a positive impact on their lives including increased social connections, opportunities to contribute and/or volunteer, a chance to engage in new experiences, something to look forward to, improved health and wellbeing and learning new things.

**PASSIONATE
PEOPLE**

At the start of the project **1,051 people** per week were supported by or accessed the services of community enterprises and by the end this had increased by **230%** to **3,567 people** per week. At the start of the project community businesses offered **828 sessions** or activities and by the end this had increased by **302%** to **2,507**.

WHAT WE LEARNED

There are local people in every area who are willing to help other local people

There are large numbers of people in all areas who are interested in offering care or support to other people in their community. Many people are driven by personal experience

The majority of people leading enterprises and businesses with a care or wellbeing focus were women. Some women face particular issues in juggling other responsibilities such as child or elder care

Making this happen takes vision, commitment and investment from public sector bodies

Positive, collaborative relationships at a strategic level are key to any transformational change – one doesn't happen without the other

For community enterprises, 46% used a business model that would be considered 'private sector' e.g. working as a sole trader, small company or partnership. 42% used a business model that would be considered VCSE e.g. charity, voluntary organisation, community group or social enterprise

The community vision of councils does not always extend to social care and health or to business models that are not part of the VCSE sector

I spoke to [local woman] in the village, and she said, 'Oh, I've just met [name] who's a community catalyst [...] and if you want to start a project like this, you should meet [local catalyst]

So the three of us met together [...] [The local catalyst was] just really enthusiastic and said, "Yeah, I'd love to help you develop this project and get it going

When you are a mum and a carer and a worker, it has been really challenging to kind of really find the time to go and do the research

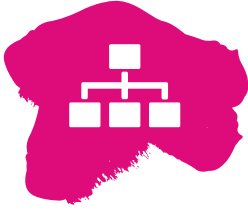
WHAT WE LEARNED: PEOPLE NEED TAILORED HELP TO TURN THEIR IDEA INTO SOMETHING SPLENDID



It takes time for new enterprises and businesses to become established and successful



The 'tailored mentoring' style used by Catalysts worked well for people, it helped to build their confidence and develop a belief that their ideas were possible. It also enabled leaders to feel that they weren't alone



Community businesses are often larger and building based. Community enterprises are often smaller and community based. Whilst they share common issues and achieve similar outcomes their needs in terms of advice and support can be very different



People leading enterprises or businesses really valued the opportunities offered by connecting with others in the same situation – peer networks and support structures were important. This was particularly true for community businesses who often shared more common experiences

...you can't see the wood for the trees and you can be quickly overwhelmed and discouraged [...] we're in a long tunnel at the back, and [the local catalyst is] the one with the torch [...] and [the local catalyst] has also got some batteries. (Laughter). So there is a light at the end of the tunnel

WHAT WE LEARNED: TO BE SUSTAINABLE PEOPLE NEED TO BE PAID FOR WHAT THEY OFFER



Most people leading community enterprises made their enterprise sustainable through trading e.g. offering services or supports for payment rather than grants. Community businesses also relied on trading income but used grants and contract funding in addition, as part of their financial model



Direct Payments were seen as a way for services to be purchased in theory but this rarely happened in practice

They've got to be able to make their own money as well and not just to provide a service because it's a good idea

I feel a bit more validated, I know it's just me and my perception. I think that's a bit with me becoming a mum to too many children, you do lose sight of yourself. I had to drop out of the social world for a while. You need a starting point again, I think that gives you a starting point here and back to building that confidence to go out

WHAT WE LEARNED: COMMUNITY-ROOTED ACTIVITIES AND SUPPORTS ARE HIGHLY VALUED AND HAVE HUGE IMPACT



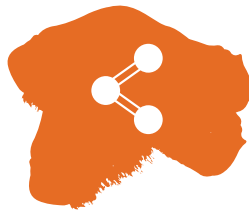
Successful community enterprises and businesses have a big impact on people and the wider community



They create or sustain local jobs and volunteering opportunities



They create opportunities for people to connect, contribute, have fun and gain support which is highly valued by people and has a huge impact on their health and wellbeing



People who connect with and are supported by a community enterprise or business are motivated by their positive experience to set up one of their own

TOP TIPS FOR INVESTORS IN COMMUNITIES THAT CARE

- 1 Take time to really understand the value of community enterprises and businesses – and the impact of not having them around
- 2 Understand the range of business models used by community enterprises and businesses – value sole traders and other 'private sector' models as well as those seen as VCSE
- 3 Invest time in building and sustaining positive, collaborative relationships with clear expectations at a strategic level
- 4 Invest in the short to medium term tailored mentoring and support people to turn their idea into a sustainable enterprise or business
- 5 Focus on long term sustainability from the outset. Understand that many enterprises and businesses need to get paid for the services and activities they offer. Take time to think how public sector money can be used
- 6 Be prepared to make the systems and culture change

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