

December 2021

Rotherham Community  
Options Project – End of  
project report

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Catalyst



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# 1. THE PROJECT

The project ran from February 2017 to December 2021 and was a partnership between Community Catalysts and Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC). There were two main strands of work.

## Community micro-enterprise development programme

The programme supported local people and groups to develop small enterprises that offered innovative, community-based daytime support for adults with a learning disability. New, developing and existing enterprise leaders joined the Community Catalysts development programme and were supported to meet the 'Doing it Right Standards' to ensure that they provide safe, reliable and quality support.

Community Catalysts supported enterprise leaders to understand the types of opportunities needed by people in Rotherham. We also signposted leaders to other key organisations to gain business and marketing advice, training, insurance and DBS checks.

As a result, people with a learning disability now have an extensive range of community-based support options to choose from; helping people to have new experiences, form and maintain friendships and networks, contribute to their community and gain volunteering and work opportunities.

## The People Can Project

The People Can Project worked with individuals or small groups of disabled people, helping them to lead their own projects, activities or ventures, with aims and outcomes personal to them.



Across both parts of the project, the focus was always on supporting people's aspirations and passions, providing them with real choice and personalised opportunities.

## 2. SUCCESSES

### Community micro-enterprise development programme

- At the start we conducted a scoping exercise to find local community options for people with a learning disability. This was followed by a taster programme that gave people with a learning disability who used Council day services a chance to try activities offered by community support options. People took part in **30 taster sessions that equated to 153 individual taster opportunities.**
- At the start of the project and during lockdown we created a directory of options to ensure that people knew about the support available and this information is due to be transferred onto the RMBC website at the end of the project. **There were 20 enterprises on this directory** that now provide quality, creative support for people with a learning disability who live in Rotherham.
- By the end of the project there was **1 further new enterprise still developing.**
- At the time of this report, enterprises had **555 opportunities being used by people** across the week and the majority have capacity to grow if needed.
- The **number of people taking a direct payment** significantly increased over the life of the project as new opportunities in the community developed.
- Enterprises provided **137 jobs for local people.**
- The project and the enterprises it supported helped the Council to make the systematic, operational and cultural change required to achieve the aims of their [My Front Door](#) vision.

*We are moving away from traditional building based or institutional forms of support and focusing on support which is personalised, flexible and meets people's individual needs.*

- Supported by Community Catalysts, enterprise leaders formed part of a **vibrant peer network** which engages with Council colleagues and plays a part in local provider forums.

- Later work included **an increase in the options available to young people supported by Preparing for Adulthood (PFA) teams.**
- The Rotherham Catalyst was also involved in a number of other areas of work or networks including the Learning Disability Partnership Board, regional Integrated Care Systems meetings, RMBC employment and Skills forums and **continuously connected with a range of local, regional and national stakeholders.**
- We ran a number of events in the local area to support staff, people and carers to think creatively including: speed networking sessions, interactive activity/taster events and workshops. **Influencing positive local change.**
- We created space for local partners and enterprises to contribute to a range of national events providing opportunities to network, share ideas and **showcase Rotherham on a wider stage.**
- We **created opportunities for collaboration** including enterprise forums, The Buzz, Small Good Stuff meetings, enterprises working together on projects or accessing each other's activities, several enterprises employing Charlie's Beauty Zone for therapies, a community allotment and the 'Employment is for Everyone' project.
- Several enterprises were also part of the partnership work between Disability Rights UK (DR UK) and Community Catalysts as we worked together to **help more grassroots and smaller community enterprises benefit from Sport England's Tackling Inequalities Fund that aimed to reduce the negative impacts of Covid-19.**

**Story:** [Disability Rights UK \(DR UK\) and Community Catalysts have partnered together to help more grassroots, smaller community enterprises](#)

- We **shared and created a host of positive news and success stories at both a local and national level** including a case study and report with the Local Government Association and we had an article shared by Learning Disability England as part of the 'Art and creativity' week.

### Stories:

- [‘ArtWorks Together’ international arts competition – art and creativity week](#)
  - [Rotherham case study - published by the LGA.](#)
  - [Locality – The Community Opportunity – Lessons for adult social care from the Keep it Local campaign](#) (Please read from page 30)
- The success of the project resulted in several other local authorities contacting Community Catalysts wanting to know more about the development of the many excellent community enterprises, **bringing positive national attention to the great work in Rotherham.**

### Achievements of enterprise leaders and their members

- People with a learning disability gained employment, benefitted from volunteering opportunities, achieved qualifications and have helped to run local events. **Disabled people thrive, lead and contribute locally.**
- Enterprises and a People Can participant were on local TV, radio and featured in newspapers – raising awareness of some of the fantastic things that they and their members achieve and **positively influencing culture change.**
- Enterprise leaders and their members created and now run many **successful new activities and sports teams.**
- **Enterprises engaged in and ran many community projects** – developing and running community gardens, allotments, hubs and art and other creative projects, including an international arts competition hosted in Rotherham. They have also set up and run cafes and community coffee mornings.
- Enterprises were successful with grants and funding applications – **bringing funding into the local area.**
- Enterprises offered **training to professionals and providers.**
- **People with a learning disability have much more choice** with support now available to help them overnight and go on holiday. New supported living services are currently being developed.

## Achievements of The People Can Project

The People Can Project supported one person to establish their own business and other projects included 2 people setting up a community allotment (that will be opened to others in 2022) and 1 person completing their own photography project.

Charlie's Beauty Zone went on to provide beauty therapy to a number of local organisations and enterprises and was a guest speaker at Community Catalysts events, in the local paper and radio and was part of the Community Catalysts national project - 'People Doing it for themselves'

**Stories:** [Charlie's Beauty Zone](#) and [People doing it for themselves - final report](#)

# 3. FURTHER PROJECT DEVELOPMENTS AND STORIES

## Responding to COVID-19

Enterprise leaders showed their ingenuity, acted fast and regularly changed their plans in response to national lockdowns and other Covid restrictions. They implemented new and creative ways to support members and their families including offering virtual support and activities, phone calls, activity packs and help with tasks such as shopping.

**Story:** [Rotherham's bright lights respond to the Coronavirus pandemic](#)

## The Buzz

In response to lockdown and COVID-19 restrictions Community Catalysts created an online platform called The Buzz. The Buzz helped enterprises to create and share accessible activity videos so that people could have a great range of things to do whilst at home. Many local Rotherham enterprises were involved in creating videos which were featured on The Buzz.



We also launched The Buzz grant programme which helped enterprises to create and share videos for our online platform of inclusive, exciting and accessible activities. We awarded £11,530 across 23 enterprises who produced 41 exciting activity videos during April and May 2021.

The Buzz shared well over 150 activities, to over 540 members on the Facebook group and we had many more people accessing it via our [Small Good Stuff webpage](#)

**Stories:** [The Buzz video](#), [The Buzz 6-month story](#) and [The Buzz grant winners](#)

## Employment is for Everyone

Following an Integrated Care Systems (ICS) event on employment, a collaboration was formed between the Rotherham Catalyst, a colleague at Rotherham Council and four local enterprises to help improve the opportunities to employment for autistic people and people with learning disabilities.



Employment is for Everyone aims to create a movement across South Yorkshire to improve and promote the benefits of employing autistic people and people with learning disabilities.

Together, we created a film and website that promotes how the organisations involved employ and support people to gain qualifications and skills to get into work. The

website will also promote how the collaboration can support organisations to build their knowledge and skills of autism and learning disability and employ people.

The partnership began to link with local employers and employment networks with a number of promising partnerships being developed.

The project and website will be launched at the start of 2022 - [www.employmentisforeveryone.co.uk](http://www.employmentisforeveryone.co.uk)

## 4. WHAT PEOPLE SAY

Community Catalysts has helped us to think outside the box and deliver on our strategy of My Front Door to build local infrastructure and provide better, greater choices for people with a learning disability. They have worked creatively and in partnership at all levels to support the necessary system and culture change required for our transformational vision. **Garry Parvin – Joint Head of Learning Disability, Autism and Transitions Commissioning**

The enterprise leaders in Rotherham and staff here within adult social care are very lucky to have someone like you at the helm. I have and continue to appreciate what you have achieved. I've seen you take new services and help them to develop to a point where my trust in them has grown. This was as a direct result of your intervention and guidance. Your efforts have helped to change the culture and concept of care in Rotherham and it's made our role as reviewer so much easier as a result. **Phillip Layfield – Reviewing Officer**

Community Catalysts has been a great support in helping us get established in Rotherham. They have supported us to network with other great organisations and involve us in a variety of projects which has helped our service grow from strength-to-strength.

**Liz Carrington – ArtWorks**

In Rotherham we have been working with Community Catalysts for a number of years, it has been a great experience and we have delivered together a number of exciting initiatives, providing exciting opportunities for people. Harry from Community Catalysts is seen as part of the wider team in our transformation agenda and we could not have got as far as we have without that challenge, innovation and support. **Anne-Marie Lubanski, Strategic Director of Adult Care, Housing and Public Health**

The choice and range of community-based support and opportunities for people in Rotherham at the end of this 5 year period is fantastic. The outcomes have been achieved due to a shared vision, and ongoing positive partnership between Community Catalysts and the Council; creating the right conditions for community enterprises to set up and thrive. A long-term commitment to the approach, successful system and culture change have been key to ensuring that frontline workers, people with a learning disability or autism and carers are aware of the new opportunities available to them locally, trust them and can use their direct payments to pay for them. The enterprises offer flexible, creative support to people using local assets and also recognise the assets of the people they support. It's been an incredible journey and we look forward to the next stage as Harry now continues his role directly with the Council. **Helen Allen Director of Community Enterprise Community Catalysts**

## Some of the responses from community micro-enterprises to our end of project survey

- [Harry] signposted us to new avenues, helped and supported us to build our new venture, [was] very helpful and gave us much advice. He completed Zoom meetings to accommodate and answered all our questions/doubts.
- Harry has been the link to RMBC and other organisations, providing us with contacts, information and support on various projects.
- Harry has been fantastic support. He has continued to support our service, helped us make new relationships, offered support and guidance and promoted the work we do.
- Harry has been the constant support and glue between our service and RMBC. He works effectively and contributes by communicating important and essential information.
- Giving us information and contacts that we wouldn't have had without his input. Even if he didn't know the answer, he would signpost us to someone who did. Harry was very supportive and boosted morale throughout the team. He always got back to us when we had questions or issues.
- From day one Harry has supported and professionally advised on any query I have raised. He provided me with confidence, improved my knowledge and understanding in certain areas and has been a valued 'go to' on so many times. Thank you Harry. [We] are stronger, wiser and developing further with your help and support.
- We have had help from many different people while setting up our enterprise. But the support we have received from Harry is arguably the most useful and influential. I think it's fair to say that we wouldn't be where we are today without Harry's support.

## 5. FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information please see - [Community Catalysts Rotherham page](#) including some of the great success stories under the 'related stories' section towards the bottom.

### Contact Community Catalysts –

**Website:** [www.communitycatalysts.co.uk/](http://www.communitycatalysts.co.uk/)

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