



power to
change

YOUNG PEOPLE IN COMMUNITY BUSINESS: **STORIES OF CHANGE**

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 **COMMUNITY
FUND**

ABOUT THIS REPORT



This report has been shaped and informed through a series of research interviews with representatives of community businesses across England, and a desk review of data concerning younger people's involvement in community business, conventional business, and the wider social sector.

ABOUT COMMON VISION



Common Vision is a think tank specialising in community listening, deliberative dialogue and public imagination. We do a wide variety of work that joins the dots between emerging social and economic trends, shares learning from best practice, and identifies pathways to achieving common goals. We share these insights and stories with civil society leaders, funders, policymakers and other agents of change.

ABOUT POWER TO CHANGE



Power to Change is the independent trust that supports community businesses in England.

Community businesses are locally rooted, community-led, trade for community benefit and make life better for local people. The sector owns assets worth £870m and comprises 11,300 community businesses across England who employ more than 37,000 people. (Source: Community Business Market 2020).

From pubs to libraries; shops to bakeries; swimming pools to solar farms; community businesses are creating great products and services, providing employment and training and transforming lives. Power to Change received an original endowment from the National Lottery Community Fund in 2015 and a further £20million grant in 2021.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Community businesses can transform the progressive social intentions of younger generations into meaningful and sustainable community action. However, currently there are limitations to young people's involvement in community business. [Fifty-seven per cent of community businesses have no leadership or management representation from people aged under 35](#), and only seven per cent of community businesses are led by an 18 to 35 year old. At the same time, there are significant opportunities – 43 per cent of community businesses already have under-35s involved in their leadership or management.

With the right support, young people's entrepreneurial ambitions and their social outlook could be harnessed to strengthen the community business sector and the local communities they operate in. Evidence shows that young people are [more likely to engage with businesses that share values similar to their own](#) and drive positive change in their communities. Yet younger generations are also [the least socially attached](#) to their local neighbourhoods. [Community businesses](#) – businesses run by local people for the benefit of the local community – are helping to address the gap in social capital between generations, working to mitigate high [unemployment](#), [skills gaps](#) and a [loneliness crisis](#) that today's young people are facing.

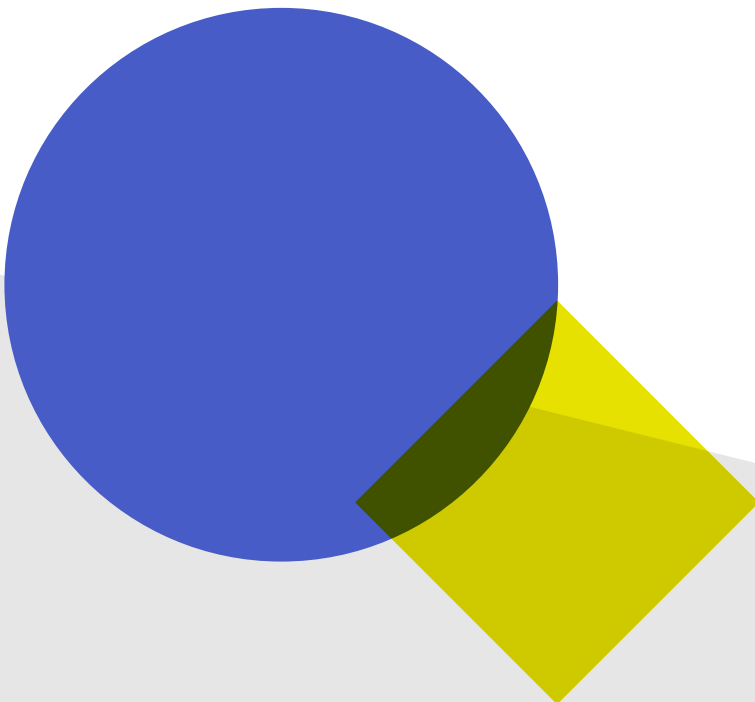
This report showcases the many ways young people came to be and are involved in community businesses. The report was researched by speaking to over 30 community business representatives across England to create 15 case studies, underpinned by quantitative desk research. The case studies show that in existing community businesses, young people are:

- **Senior leaders:** [Seven per cent of community businesses are led by under-35s](#) – meaning that the staff team or the board is headed by a young person. This includes working in a paid leadership role like Ari (age 35), who worked her way up from being an unpaid intern to become Director of [Coexist Community Kitchen](#).
- **Founders or co-founders:** Some of the young people we spoke with had set up the business themselves, like Rebecca (age 37) who co-founded theatre company [Odd Arts](#) with friends when she was 19.
- **Board members:** [Thirty six per cent of community businesses have some youth representation on their boards or senior management](#), like Jamie (age 33) who is setting up a community benefit society governance structure for [October Books](#).

Young people in community business: Stories of change

- Paid employees:** Many young people are involved in community businesses via direct employment, working on everything from frontline services to communications. Sometimes staff work their way up through the organisation, like Maddy (age 21), centre coordinator at food project [Lifeafterhummus](#), who began in a volunteering role. It is common for junior staff to be employed through work placements or training programmes, such as Anthony (age 21) who joined Kitty's Launderette through the government's Kickstart youth employment scheme.
- Volunteers:** Several community businesses run large volunteering programmes with young people as part of their core service offer. Many volunteers go on to take informal or formal leadership roles, like Lotte (age 32) who started at [Bristol Co-operative Gym](#) as a member, then volunteered extra time, until becoming one of the organisation's directors.
- Customers, participants and service users:** Young people also engage as participants in, or beneficiaries of, a community business. [Forty-four per cent of community businesses run by people aged under 35 deliver youth services of one kind or another](#). The lines between participant, volunteer and leader are sometimes blurred. For instance, Josh (age 23) at music organisation BlueJam has been the band leader since he started as a participant aged 13.

Collectively the stories show that, by working with young people, community businesses can become more inclusive and relevant in the present, more representative of and impactful across their whole communities, prepared for change, and primed to leave a legacy to be proud of. These case studies provide valuable lessons for how other community businesses could develop their work with younger generations.



SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION



Through a series of case studies, we have explored the stories of young people (defined as aged 18 to 35) and the contributions they make to community businesses. The aims of this research are to improve the sector's understanding of, and capacity to support, young people's involvement in community businesses. It builds a picture of how younger people become engaged with their organisations, and how their journeys develop, with the aim of helping more community businesses engage young people, support their personal and professional development, and help diversify leadership within the sector. It is intended to enable Power to Change and others to support more young people into the sector.

In **Section 2** we draw on the data to outline the big picture of how young people are currently involved in community businesses, compared to the wider social sector, charities, and private business. We consider younger people's roles as leaders, workers, and aspiring entrepreneurs, as well as looking at the kind of community businesses young people are running.

Section 3 describes the impact of younger people's engagement with community business, synthesising insights from the case studies. We look at the personal stories of the young people involved, focusing on their routes into community business and how their engagement has changed over time. The section then turns to the impact of working with young people on community businesses themselves before reflecting on the wider impact in communities when young people lead and engage with community business.

Section 4 concludes with a set of recommendations for community businesses, funders, infrastructure organisations, and young people themselves on the role they can play in advancing young people's leadership of, and engagement in, the sector.

Overall, this research is intended to help many different stakeholders develop their work and, over time, to support the sector to become more inclusive, dynamic, and futureproofed:

For community businesses: The analysis in Section 3, as well as the practical examples from the case studies in the appendix, will help you develop your own practice, and involve more young people in your work and leadership.

For funders and infrastructure organisations: Sections 2 and 3 are designed to give you strategic insight into the barriers young people are facing, and indications of what successful sector support may involve.

For young people: The case studies provide a bank of inspiration and a sense of community, showing how you can be part of a more diverse, and growing movement of community business leaders actively making places better to live and work.

Definitions

- **Engagement** – An umbrella term we use to describe the broad and intricate picture of how young people are working, leading, and participating in community businesses.
- **Led by** – When we talk about community businesses that are ‘led by’ young people, we mean that young people make strategic decisions about the organisation. This means that someone aged under 35 occupies a role as Chief Executive or Director, or Chair of the Board.
- **Young people** – In this report we define young people as aged between 18 and 35. This age bracket is designed to capture the time in which most younger leaders start transitioning into their roles (usually from 25 to 35 years old), whilst also encompassing the stage at which younger people might first hear about or engage with community business as they transition out of education (usually from 18 to 23) into their first full-time jobs. Therefore, it captures a significant period of personal growth and transition.

Methodology

From January to March 2022, we conducted a series of semi-structured inductive interviews in order to produce 15 case studies of different community businesses and how they engage young people. The organisations featured were found in two ways, first through a call-out to organisations which indicated leadership and representation of under-35s in their responses to the Community Business Market in 2021 survey; and second by soliciting specific organisations found by reviewing a subset of Power to Change grants data.¹

We drew up a longlist of over 50 organisations, and then selected the final shortlist to ensure a diversity of location, size, and type of engagement/leadership by younger people.

We conducted interviews with two individuals from each featured organisation. Our research employed a ‘stories of change’ framework, enquiring about the impact of working with a community business on a personal, organisational, and community-wide basis.

To supplement and contextualise the qualitative research, we have reviewed three key data sources to analyse the role of young people in community business:

1. The 569 responses to Power to Change’s Community Business Market in 2021 survey.
2. Grants data from 247 grants to community businesses via Power to Change’s Renewal Initiative and Powering Up! Programmes between 2021-March 2022. These which collected data on leadership and representation of under-35s as part of the application process.
3. Twelve responses to a diversity survey sent to Power to Change grantees January-March 2022.

For comparative purposes we also analysed the raw data collected by Social Enterprise UK (SEUK) for their [State of Social Enterprise Survey 2021](#).

Together these form an informative snapshot of young people’s involvement in the community business sector in 2021 and 2022.

¹ A review of just under 1000 grants given to community businesses between 2016 and 2021.

SECTION 2: YOUNG PEOPLE AND COMMUNITY BUSINESS IN CONTEXT



Young people around the UK have a huge appetite for both [entrepreneurship](#) and [social change](#), making community business an ideal pathway for many to pursue their ambitions. Yet currently there appear to be barriers preventing people from getting into the sector. The existing data provides an insightful snapshot of young people's involvement in the community business sector in 2021 and 2022.

Young people in leadership, management and governance roles

Young people are currently underrepresented in the leadership of community businesses across England. [Only seven per cent of community businesses](#) in England are 'led' by an individual aged under 35, according to findings of Community Business Market in 2021. This percentage is slightly lower for grantees of two recent Power to Change programmes, with only three per cent of successful grants given to organisations led by someone aged under 35.²

However, a greater number of community businesses have at least one person under 35 on their boards and senior management teams.

Depending on which Power to Change data set we use, **young people are represented in between 36 per cent and 40 per cent³ of community business' leadership and management teams.**

These figures are somewhat comparable with the wider social enterprise sector. [Social Enterprise UK \(SEUK\)'s research](#) shows that, while only one per cent of social enterprises were led by someone aged 16 to 24, 32 per cent were led by a 25 to 44 year old. Eighteen per cent of social enterprises have 16 to 24 year olds on their boards and senior management teams, and 89 per cent have 25 to 44 year olds represented in this way. Social enterprises which identified as community businesses were slightly more likely to be led by younger people than other social enterprise types.

36–40%

**youth representation
in community business'
leadership and
management teams.**

2 247 grant awards were analysed, looking only at successful applications to the three rounds of the Renewal and Powering Up! funds.
3 Based on data from Renewal Fund and Powering Up!

Judging how this compares to private sector trends is difficult to accurately ascertain, as few public or government data sets can be analysed according to leaders' or board members' ages.⁴ However, analysis for Startups suggests that [nine per cent of business employer owners and co-owners are aged under 35](#), implying that setting up a private business is slightly more attractive compared to community business for 18 to 35 year olds. When it comes to charities, [only 1.5 per cent of charity trustees are under 35](#), whilst half of trustees in the UK are retired.

Taken together, the data suggests that young people are better represented in the management of community businesses than on charitable boards, or in the senior management of the wider social enterprise sector. On the other hand, young people hold proportionally more leadership positions in the private sector over community businesses specifically. Yet the fact remains that the majority of community businesses are still exclusively run by people aged 35 and over.

Young people in the workforce

When we zoom out to consider the wider workforce in community business beyond leadership positions, we can see that under- 35s play a significant role in the sector. Although we do not have data on the proportion of young employees and volunteers in the sector as a whole, Plunkett Foundation's 2021 Better Business report notes that [each community shop engages on average three to four young people](#) through employment, work placements or volunteering experience.

Young people's entrepreneurial ambitions

Many young people aspire to run their own business. According to research for The Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), [over half of 18 to 30 year olds dream of setting up their own business](#). In the private sector, young people are already founding businesses at a far greater rate than people of other ages, with research by Ember showing [people between the ages of 25 and 40 have set up 49 per cent of new businesses](#) in the UK since July 2020.

Our analysis of the SEUK [State of Social Enterprise in 2021 survey data](#) suggests that new social enterprises are also consistently more likely to be started by young people. Fifty two per cent of social enterprises operating for up to three years are led by someone aged 25 to 44, compared to the 32 per cent average across all organisations, and 14 per cent of social enterprises operating for 11 years or more.

This data shows that young people are leading new businesses at a higher rate than other age groups. However, the difference between [the proportion of new social enterprises with leaders aged under 44 \(52 per cent\)](#), and [the proportion of all organisations led by a younger person \(32 per cent\)](#), could mean that businesses led by young people are shorter lived, with proportionately more not lasting past a few of years of trading. This implies a gap between young people's entrepreneurial ambitions, and either the ability they have, or the support they can access, to build a sustainable business. Then again it could be that founders are aging with their community businesses. This is something that needs exploring in more detail.

⁴ Based on Common Vision's desk scan. For instance, the annual Small Business Survey conducted by Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy does not collect age data.

Young people in community business: Stories of change

The kinds of organisations that young people lead

When we look at community businesses led by someone under 35, we see some interesting patterns emerging about the kind of community businesses younger people run. Our analysis of the [The Community Business Market in 2021 dataset](#) shows that while the definition of community business relies on its leaders being from the local area, community businesses led by someone under 35 have even more embedded local roots. They are also more likely to provide a new service to the area, and to be considering expansion in the area they serve.

In terms of their structure and staffing, community businesses led by younger people tend to have a smaller, paid governance body: [32 per cent have paid Directors](#), compared to 12 per cent of all organisations. Some community businesses led by younger people offer community shares. Those who do have an average of 25 shareholders, compared to an average of 104 shareholders in businesses led by all other age groups. In general, the Community Business Market in 2021 data shows that community businesses led by under-35s have fewer members, investors and customers, but more service users. Significantly, community businesses led by under-35s have a lower average income of £198,359 a year, compared to the sector-wide average of £390,486.

Of organisations led by under 35s



42%
have a CEO from the local area, compared to 29% of all community businesses



81%
are providing a new service or product to the local area, compared to 56% overall



29%
are considering expanding the geographic area their organisation serves, compared to 17% overall

Source: [Community Business Market dataset](#)

Young people in community business: Stories of change

Younger leaders are also more likely to run specific types of community businesses, with a distinct set of activities and impacts. Community businesses which were led by someone under the age of 35 were, compared to others, approximately [twice as likely to run shops, youth services, sports and leisure services, and childcare services, or to specialise in craft, industry, and production](#). **Strikingly, community businesses led by under-35s were three times more likely to be involved in waste, re-use and sustainable consumption.**

There do not appear to be significant or clear patterns in terms of where the community businesses led by younger people are based around England. However, our analysis of SEUK's 2021 State of Social Enterprise data shows that [social enterprises led by under-44s are more likely to be based in Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and London](#). Additionally, although working with only a small sample, Power to Change's grantee diversity data shows us that community businesses with younger leadership were slightly more likely to have women on the leadership team but do not appear to have more diverse teams in terms of other characteristics, such as disability or sexual orientation.

Overall, the data suggests that many young leaders have a distinctive set of values and interests compared to older generations involved in community business. They tend to lead organisations based on environmental sustainability, direct community connection, and service delivery. It may be that these same values and interests can be used by established community businesses looking to engage younger people. The wider data indicates that young people already have the entrepreneurial ambition to thrive in community business, and are already connected to the sector as employees, volunteers, and beneficiaries. They now need the tools and pathways to grow their leadership.

3x

community businesses led by under-35s were three times more likely to be involved in waste, re-use and sustainable consumption.

What community businesses led by under-35s do



32%
run a shop as one of their activities, compared to 17% of all community businesses



45%
run a youth service as one of their activities, compared to 22% of all community businesses



29%
run sports and leisure services as one of their activities, compared to 16% of all community businesses



13%
run waste and consumption, repair and reuse services, compared to 4% of all community businesses



23%
run childcare services as their main activity, compared to 4% of all community businesses



16%
do craft, industry and production as one of their activities, compared to 9% of all community businesses

Source: [Power to Change. Community Business Market in 2021 data](#)

We can also see more structural patterns at play. Younger leaders tend to run smaller organisations, with lower incomes, which issue fewer community shares but have a core paid team.

Additionally, that Power to Change has recently funded proportionately fewer community businesses led by someone aged under 35, compared to the sector as a whole (four per cent difference),⁵

and that [under-44s are more likely to run a new rather than established social enterprise](#), suggests younger people may be facing structural barriers to sustaining and growing the organisations they run. Tailoring support for younger people to set up community businesses and take the lead may open more pathways for young people to get involved in the sector.

⁵ Based on data from Renewal Fund and Powering Up!, compared to [Community Business Market in 2021 data](#).

SECTION 3: PATHWAYS OF CHANGE



Young people's engagement with community business doesn't just change the lives of young people; it also has an impact on the organisations and communities they are part of. This section looks at the pathways of change for the individuals, the organisation and the community when young people are involved. It is designed to be read alongside the case studies which are appended to this report. Through more than 30 conversations across 15 organisations, a set of patterns has emerged showing how young people get involved, the change they make, and the impact this creates.

We can categorise young people's involvement in community business in four main ways:

1. as leaders,
2. staff members,
3. volunteers,
4. and participants or customers.

Our research has largely focused on the first three, although it is notable that many of the young people we spoke to had 'routes in' to the community business as customers or service users.

Routes into community business: Personal stories of change

A young person's starting point in community business is important. By charting an individual's motivations and journey through an organisation, it is possible to see the change that community business has made in their lives, outlook, and future ambitions. Based on the case studies we can identify a set of different entry routes under-35 staff and volunteers took on the journey towards their current roles:

Apprenticeships and training schemes:

Many young people find community businesses supportive places in which to develop their skills and start their careers. Kerri Salter (age 31), now [Storeroom2010's](#) general manager, started as an apprentice aged 20, and Anthony Scott (age 21) a Coordinator at [Kitty's Launderette](#) joined the organisation on a government-funded programme for young people far from the labour market.

College and university placements: Other young people start at a community business through being offered a placement as part of their education course. Leah Conway (age 23) started at [Kirklees Local TV](#) through a placement as part of her history degree, before continuing freelance after graduation; and Elena Forrester (age 28) joined [Giroscope](#) through a placement on her business administration course.

Young people in community business: Stories of change

Volunteering: Some young people first hear about community business as part of their volunteering work. For instance, Rhiannon Rees (age 28) first got involved with [Blackfen Community Library](#) during her gap year when she was volunteering for New Generation Church, who run the library as a community hub. She is now a qualified youth worker at the library.

Partner referrals and social support: Under-35s also get involved with community business when they are referred in by charities, local authorities, or support services. Elias Hagos (age 23) started his journey into community business because he was referred by a helpline to a [Groundwork jobs scheme](#), who then referred him to work as a trainee at local community business [The Platform Cafe](#).

Job search: Sometimes young people find community businesses simply by looking for a job or volunteering opportunity. This was the case for Ed Faulkner (age 24) at [Thorold Arms](#), who started the role to earn money and has now significantly expanded the pub's community programme, and Chris Morgan (age 27), now chief editor at [Kirklees Local TV](#), who found out about his starting role through the Jobcentre.

Customer or participant: Others get into a community business because they use its services. Lotte Kammenga (age 32) joined [Bristol Co-operative Gym](#) to do weightlifting; Louis Carroll (age 18) skated at [Projekts MCR](#) as a teenage participant, before volunteering, and then securing a paid role. After joining as a customer and community member, they both got hooked and wanted to do more.

Young founders tend to have a slightly different route into community business. They often have some awareness of what a community business is – or knowledge of specific structures like co-operatives – before they decide to set up the organisation, whether through their friendships, previous volunteering roles or political interests.

Enterprise development programmes: Most young founders had taken part in some specialised training on running a social organisation. Sometimes this was the start of their journey: Farrah Rainfly, co-founder of [Lifeafterhummus](#), took a [course on social enterprise for BME⁶ women](#) when she was in her early 30s; and Charlotte O'Connor, co-founder of [The Platform Cafe](#), took an [enterprise development course](#) for unemployed Lambeth residents in her mid-20s. For both it was a chance to pilot and test their ideas, meet collaborators, and secure start-up funding.

DIY, punk and political organising: Many younger people – young founders and co-operative members in particular – entered community business through DIY organising, arts, and left-wing, radical or anarchist politics. Examples include Ari Cantwell (age 35) at [Coexist Community Kitchen](#), Jamie Cooper (age 33) at [October Books](#), Grace Harrison (age 32) at [Kitty's Launderette](#), and Martin Newman (age 58) at [Giroscope](#), all of whom started their organisations when they were in their 20s and 30s, emerging from different DIY, arts, punk and social justice groups.

Cause-based spark: At times, younger people were drawn to community business as a model to save a community asset they cared about, or to address a particular gap in their community. This was the case for John Haines (age 32), who started [Projekts MCR](#). After skating was banned in the city, he fundraised to take over a patch of unused land for a skate park. A community business model made this sustainable.

6 This was the term used by Farrah and the provider of the course she attended

Touchpoints into community business

A combination of touchpoints might lead to a young person getting a paid role, developing leadership responsibility, or starting their own community business.

Charlotte O'Connor, Co-Founder, The Platform Cafe



The spark

Leaves corporate job and starts volunteering at community farm, feels a sense of community in London for the first time, and sees scope for using the farm's surplus space and produce.



The catalyst

Takes community enterprise development course for unemployed Lambeth residents, meets her co-founder, Jo Gilmour.



The launchpad

Prototypes the cafe on the development course. The farm agrees to host a pop-up guest chef night and the cafe is born, run by volunteers at first.



Development

Cafe grows over time and gets a following. Charlotte secures more grants and expands training programmes, eventually becoming the full-time paid leader.

Anthony Scott, Coordinator, Kitty's Launderette



The spark

Sees [Kitty's Launderette](#)'s initial community engagement before opening but doesn't take part. His mum takes him to a history event there, he loves it, and keeps going to more events in the space.



The catalyst

Goes to university but drops out due to mental health challenges. Gets a job in a restaurant, but the commute is long – he feels underpaid and exploited.



The launchpad

Now unemployed, Anthony sees a vacancy at Kitty's Launderette on the Kickstart scheme, he joins the organisation as a coordinator.



Development

He now plays a significant role in running the launderette, leading their community events programme, and has developed a firm interest in the co-operative movement.

Young people in community business: Stories of change

Guy Lochhead, Founder, Bristol Co-operative Gym



The spark

Lives in the city and works in a conventional gym. Guy feels the need for a more welcoming, inclusive, and accessible gym, where workers have a stable income.



The catalyst

He starts exploring ideas and goes on a Co-operative Assistance Network course, where he meets other people interested in co-operatives and learns more about DIY movements.



The launchpad

After the course, Guy develops his idea and gets community shares advice from Co-operatives UK. Within a few months he recruits the first 50 member-owners of the gym.



Development

The gym moves into its first space in 2016, slowly grows and expands its directors, and is now crowdfunding to move to a new venue tailored to its members' needs.

Building workplaces for growth: Organisational stories of change

Community businesses who successfully work with young people consciously design their cultures, structures, and management to support the growth of younger team members. When young people spoke about the biggest difference between working at a community business compared to a conventional business, culture was often first mentioned. For community business, building a supportive workplace is an extension of their commitment to supporting the development of and delivering greater impact in the wider community.

Building a supportive workplace is not just about HR – but about how community businesses apply their commitment to their values, their relationships, and community development. Engaging with young people creates positive ripple effects beyond employment practices. Several organisations profiled discussed how working with young people had strengthened their values, developed how they apply them in practise, and enabled them to make their services and practices more relevant and inclusive to the whole community.

Community businesses employed a set of generative approaches to supporting growth and development for younger employees, volunteers, leaders, and participants:

Embracing young people's relative inexperience as an asset: For many organisations, the fact that young people come to the business without set expectations of hierarchy and management structures, and are open to trying new things out, is a significant asset. It makes it easier for them to get to grips with alternative and experimental ways of working. For instance, at [Kitty's Launderette](#), everyone works an entry level, generalist job, but also has management power as part of the co-operative format. In this structure, they can train young people to take ownership for their own (and others') development.

Patient employment: The flipside of openness to new ideas is that young people – particularly those who experience structural barriers to employment – might need time to learn new things. Community businesses try to create environments where mistakes are met with patience and support rather than blame, and solutions are found collaboratively. At [The Platform Cafe](#) they call this 'patient employment'. They consciously create the space and time for younger volunteers and staff to learn through trial and error, at their own pace.

Respect and responsibility: Many young employees we interviewed said in previous roles they felt undermined, patronised, overlooked, or exploited because of their age. In comparison they described their work at the community business as being founded in a relationship of equality and respect, where being young didn't mean you were treated like you knew less, and young employees were given real responsibility. For instance, Maddy MacKenzie (age 21) was struck by how she isn't babied at [Lifeafterhummus](#), but is in charge of coordinating the centre and trusted to learn on the job.

Space to own opportunities: As part of their commitment to operating for community benefit, many community businesses empower their younger community members to explore their own ideas and develop new initiatives. Almost all our young interviewees discussed a programme or project they designed and are helping to develop, from bike schemes to film nights. For instance, at [BlueJam](#) music project, workers aged under 35 have led the diversification of the organisation's income streams, launched new projects, and created fresh partnerships.

Accepting risk: Trusting young people to try new things, in public, with participants and customers entails embracing a certain level of risk and having a safety net in place to make it into a learning experience. Giving younger people power might also challenge the organisation itself, exposing uncomfortable truths, or opening them up to scrutiny. At [Odd Arts](#), embracing risk is a central ethic to the organisation, and they ask younger participants to criticise and advise on their work, taking their contribution seriously.

Opportunities for structured training: Alongside on-the-job development, many community businesses invest in structured training and development for younger employees, which demonstrates that the organisation is investing in their growth. At housing association [Giroscope](#), Elener has been given driving lessons and bookkeeping training over the decade she has been with the organisation, progressing from administration assistant, to cleaner, and now to receptionist and housing officer.

Social and emotional intelligence:

Community businesses are well placed to be caring and sensitive to younger employees' emotional and social context, and how it shapes their work. Many younger employees spoke about how their work with a community business had boosted their confidence, and provided a safe and supportive environment to navigate mental health challenges. For instance, Chris, now chief editor at [Kirklees Local TV](#), started after a period of unemployment and poor mental health, the job helped him build confidence in his abilities and worth. This holistic support is a valuable part of what community businesses offer to younger people.

Making peace with churn: Community businesses often find that they invest significant resources in training younger employees, but can't offer a competitive salary or hours compared to conventional businesses or large charities. Whilst this might make some organisations reluctant to train up younger staff, many of the community businesses we spoke to saw a certain level of churn as a sign of success, that they were fulfilling their commitment to create opportunities in the community.

Ripples of impact: The community story

Working and engaging with young people, in this context, is just one way community businesses test, apply and refine their values and mission. With young people facing higher rates of [unemployment](#), [wealth disparities](#), and mental health challenges, many community businesses see purposeful support for younger employees as a tangible way to target their social impact in their communities. By creating opportunities for young people to develop their confidence, skills, and leadership, they aim to create long-term, positive change within the community.

However, several community businesses we spoke to voiced some level of resistance to talking about young people as a distinct group, or as a demographic they single out for engagement. Instead, they see work with young people as part of building rich, intergenerational, intersectional communities, where everyone is valued as a whole person, not because of their age.

Organisations who worked through this model highlighted the diversity which exists within the 18 to 35 age group, not least in terms of professional development, but also in the way age intersects with disability, race, gender, sexuality, class, and other factors to form a person's experience of the world. To them, age can't be neatly singled out, instead it needs to be considered as one face of a whole picture, and the same principles and values of respect, patience, trust, investment, and responsibility are applied to everyone equally. The case studies below explore the nuances of these approaches to working with young people, and how younger founders understand their leadership within the organisational and wider community.

SECTION 4: CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS



Increasing opportunities for young people to lead and engage in community business, and their wider communities, is a shared responsibility. Community businesses, funders, infrastructure organisations, and young people themselves all have a role to play in building a more inclusive, intergenerational, and vibrant sector. This paper has established that there is already a wealth of examples of how community businesses are transforming the values, energy, talent and social intentions of younger generations into meaningful and sustainable community action.

However, there are opportunities to scale up what works, including with the [57 per cent of community businesses which have no leadership or management representation from people aged under 35](#). Drawing from our findings, we suggest three avenues for change.

1. STRENGTHENING PATHWAYS TO LEADERSHIP FOR YOUNG PEOPLE ALREADY INVOLVED WITH COMMUNITY BUSINESS.

Whilst [36 per cent of community businesses have under-35s in their leadership team](#), [89 per cent of social enterprises have 25 to 44 year olds in their leadership](#). Further, [only seven per cent are led by someone under-35](#). Ensuring more younger people hold power and leadership in the sector and that they are encouraged from a younger age is important. There are many ways to progress this goal:

- **As a community business**, you could consider how you are developing the leadership skills of current employees and volunteers, creating opportunities for under-35s to take ownership, demonstrate responsibility, and develop their own ideas. You could also review how younger staff and community members are included in decision-making and governance. Engaging young people shouldn't be seen in isolation, it's part of building an inclusive and intergenerational community around your organisation and so should be considered as one part of a wider community engagement, power, and development strategy.

- **As a funder or infrastructure organisation**, reflecting on how you are supporting or incentivising the organisations you work with to include young people in leadership is important. Support could be targeted at existing community business, helping them to develop nurturing employment practices or develop inclusive governance. Alternatively, it could be designed for young leaders, developing their skills, agency, and networks. Understand that there is much diversity within the 18 to 35 age group, and support may need to be tailored for different ages and experiences. Investing in younger people's leadership is important for securing the longevity, knowledge, and dynamism of the sector.
- **As a young person** in community business, talk to your team about leadership development opportunities, and work to create a plan for your progression. Consider what opportunities there might be to take on extra responsibility, advocate for your ability, or lead specific projects, as well as hold formal positions of power, like joining the Board. Talk to other young people in your community or organisation and consider how you can support each other to grow your leadership and collective power.

2. SUPPORTING YOUNGER ENTREPRENEURS TO START, SUSTAIN AND GROW THEIR COMMUNITY BUSINESSES.

The types of community businesses young people run are distinctive - they are more likely to be focusing on people and community-facing activities, like running sports or youth services, and environmental activities like reducing and re-using waste. And there are also plenty of young people already founding and heading-up community businesses. However, the data suggests that these talented, driven, and entrepreneurial young people could do with more support for their business' stability and growth. For example: they are likely to be smaller with a lower turnover than the rest of the sector. Younger founders face a distinctive set of hurdles, such as lower disposable income to invest at the early stages, being time-poor so unable to put in the same 'sweat equity' as older people, and having less developed local and sector networks. Everyone has a responsibility to help young community businesses thrive:

- **As community businesses**, you could consider how you nurture new initiatives led by local young people to start. About half of the community businesses founded by under-35s involved in the research are or had at some point been 'hosted' by another organisation, including [Coexist](#), [Community Kitchen](#) and [The Platform Cafe](#). Less formally, think about how you can extend mentorship and practical support.

- **As a funder or infrastructure organisation,** analyse the barriers younger leaders may experience when trying to access your funding or support. Consider how you can target support for younger founders, such as support growing networks, finding mentors, or navigating governance within a hosting relationship.
- **As a young person,** find as many friends, supporters, and allies as you can. Know that there is a lot of support from people and organisations out there if you look in the right places.

3. GROWING THE NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE INVOLVED IN COMMUNITY BUSINESS.

Evidence shows that young people are [more likely to engage with businesses that share values similar to their own](#), but anecdotally we know that awareness of community business as an option for young people is low and may be a barrier to young people getting involved in community business. Based on what has worked so far, we recommend that:

- **As a community business,** you could draw on referral networks, as many young leaders in our case studies started off through placements, apprenticeships and training schemes. Consider running events and expanding your social programmes to create a welcoming and relaxed entry-route for young people to engage with your organisation.

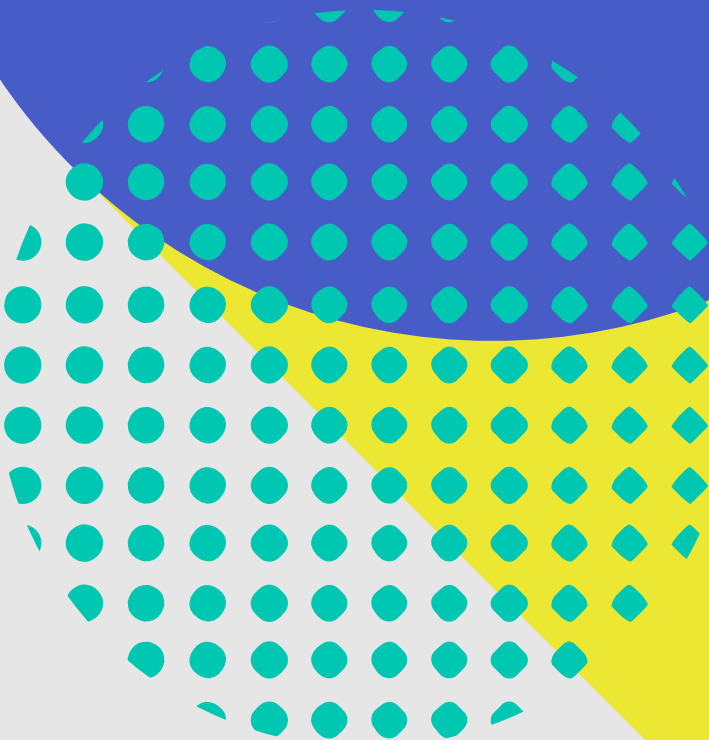
You could tailor your communications to younger audiences by speaking to their values (like social justice, equity, collaboration, sustainability and shared power), and life transitions (such as leaving education, leaving home, starting work, raising a family etc.). Finally, rather than leading with your offer, consider how your community business can act as a platform for younger community members to bring their ideas to life.

- **As a funder or infrastructure organisation,** consider conducting further research with young people who aren't currently engaged in the sector, to understand their drivers and barriers to engagement. The reach and profile of your organisation could be leveraged to lead outreach work for the sector, such as communications campaigns, events, placements or networks for younger people looking to find an outlet for their entrepreneurship and social action.

Successful outreach work would emphasise shared values, environmental impact ([data shows community businesses led by younger people are likely to have stronger environmental objectives](#)), or targeting outreach at young people during a specific life transition, for instance leaving education. You could also consider how you fund and support community businesses themselves to do successful local outreach and engagement work.

- **As a young person** interested in getting involved, there are plenty of avenues for your curiosity and ambition. To get started, try looking up your local community business, using [Power to Change's resources](#), [Co-operatives UK's directory](#), or [Locality's membership directory](#). You might also want to access training and inspiration before you get stuck in. [Stir to Action](#) run courses and festivals designed to introduce people to the sector, [The Ubele Initiative](#) have lots of opportunities for people from the African diaspora, and [My Community](#) has a wealth of resources for people who are passionate about their communities.

APPENDIX: CASE STUDIES





CASE STUDY: BLACKFEN COMMUNITY LIBRARY

BLACKFEN COMMUNITY LIBRARY IS A COMMUNITY HUB IN SIDCUP WHICH OFFERS VALUABLE SERVICES FOR LOCAL CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TO IMPROVE THEIR WELLBEING AND CONFIDENCE.

Blackfen Community Library is a busy and lively community hub, managed by New Generation Community Trust. In 2015 Bexley Council invited community organisations to apply to run Blackfen Library, and the resulting application from New Generation Church was successful. The library reopened in April 2016 after a major refurbishment and the introduction of a new cafe and kids' play area. The profits from the cafe help keep the library sustainable and, alongside funding from the council, they raise money through book sales, printing and events.

The library now welcomes over 80,000 people each year and offers a busy programme of groups and activities for all ages. The library's motto is 'A Big Hello', giving a warm greeting to everyone, including those who may not always feel welcome elsewhere. Young people play an active part in the library, running groups for younger children, helping in the Coffee House, meeting and greeting at the front desk, and participating in specific groups like the podcast club.

Blackfen in Sidcup has a close-knit community and, in general, people and families experience good life chances compared to other parts of London. But there is hidden disadvantage, and when the team surveyed families ahead of their programme development, they found that many young people have acutely poor mental health. For example, Rhiannon Rees, a young staff member, has seen first-hand the negative impact of social media use on local young people's mental health and wellbeing:

“In some ways social media is a good thing, because during lockdown a lot of teenagers had no other way to communicate with each other. But in other ways, if you're bullied, for example, you need a bit of a break but you can't shut off from it. It's never been a harder time to be a teenager, but it has probably never been easier for an adult to look down on young people and say they have an easy life.

Youth Worker Rhiannon's story

Young adults like Rhiannon (age 28), now a qualified youth worker and children and families lead, play a central role in running the library. She moved from Scotland to Bexley in 2012 during her gap year, when she worked with New Generation Church to support young people at risk of youth violence. She was apprehensive about the move, which was a big change in her life, but soon began to thrive:



I was very shy then. I'm from a small town in Scotland so everyone knew each other growing up. When you move down to a place like London it's a bit overwhelming. I think just knowing that there was this space to get to know people in a safe way, make friends, and gain experience of leading - when I didn't think I could do anything like that - was quite special.

Like many other young people who go on to work and volunteer at the library, Rhiannon started as a barista in the coffee shop. The cafe provides a safe and welcoming space for people to meet and talk. When she completed her gap year, she was keen to stay on and continue to support young people. She went to university to train as a youth worker alongside working part-time at the library.

Rhiannon is proud of what she has achieved, and the difference she makes to the young people she works with. She now works full-time at Blackfen Community Library and is responsible for coordinating the library's outreach and activities for young people. One of her proudest achievements is running 'Shine', a seven-week personal development course that helps girls develop a strong sense of personal identity, confidence, and purpose.



It's funny looking back because when I started my gap year, I told myself 'I can't lead, I'm not a leader', but now I do that. Running Shine has been amazing. I learned how to lead a team around me and work

with schools that wanted to partner with us. It's amazing to see the journey that those teenagers go on. Helping teenagers find a safe place and seeing them develop their self-esteem and sense of self-worth is what I'm most passionate about.

Blackfen Community Library has supported Rhiannon's journey, providing a supportive workplace and a welcoming space to grow. The library's positive learning culture has meant she can make mistakes and still feel be valued and accepted by the wider team.

Continuing the journey

The team are working with schools and partners to support more young people through the library's youth and family programmes. The library is also developing a steering group of young people to help grow new projects and initiatives for younger generations in the space, like the new film club, set up by younger readers. The team are always looking for young people with ideas that they can help make happen. At the heart of this for Rhiannon is making sure there are young leaders like her who care about what is going on in young people's lives and are there to offer support.

What has been achieved?

In the last year April 2021 to March 2022, the library had:

6,085

members, 18% of whom were aged 16 to 35 years old.

9,264

attendances from people aged 0 to 35 at events in the library.

67

volunteers, 31% of whom were aged 16 to 25 years old.



CASE STUDY: BRISTOL CO-OPERATIVE GYM

**ACCESSIBLE, AFFORDABLE,
AND INCLUSIVE, BRISTOL
CO-OPERATIVE GYM IS FOUNDED
BY MILLENNIALS, RUN BY ITS
MEMBERS, AND DESIGNED TO
STRENGTHEN EVERYONE IN THE
COMMUNITY.**

Bristol Co-operative Gym is the first co-operatively run gym in the UK. The gym's core membership is made up of people in their 20s and 30s. The members believe that exercise should be made accessible, affordable and adaptive for anybody, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, identity, ability, or body shape. Being member-run means the gym can provide social health and fitness activities that suit members' needs in an environment where everyone can feel comfortable and supported. The gym aims to build an inclusive culture free from assumptions about identity and appearance while making participation as affordable as possible.

Co-Founder Guy's story

Co-founder Guy Lochhead (age 32) wanted to offer an inclusive, welcoming space for exercise, social health and fitness activities. He became interested in weightlifting in his 20s and was part of a close-knit group of friends who worked out together. He

knew others like him who were interested in fitness but felt uncomfortable about going to a traditional gym, so he started to explore alternative models.



The usual gym environment is quite an exclusionary environment and that's reflected in the data around who uses gyms. We thought it might be interesting to offer something different. We also wanted to look critically at the conventional gym model which depends on overselling memberships, and imagine what an alternative model might look like. I started getting in touch with coaches and people who might want to attend classes, and it grew from there.

Guy knew that a co-operative model made sense so that the gym could be run by the community it served, but he had no prior experience of running this type of venture. He turned to support from The Co-operative Assistance Network and received mentoring from a co-operative and community shares advisor who provided a lifeline of support in the early stages. He was able to draw on a supportive peer community of other co-operatives and do-it-yourself independent initiatives in the Bristol area.

Since 2016 the gym has welcomed more than 1,000 people to classes in the Easton and Lawrence Hill wards of East Bristol. Everybody signs up to the collective aims of the gym and takes responsibility for creating a welcoming, approachable, and supportive environment for regular and new members. As a co-operative, the team uses a collaborative and transparent decision-making process to agree matters like pricing. The inclusive ethos of the gym has resulted in a better service for all.

Volunteer Director Lotte's story

Lotte Kammenga (age 31) is one of three volunteer directors of the gym. She moved to Bristol from the Netherlands in 2013 and started going to Bristol Co-operative Gym in 2018 to do weightlifting. She then got more involved in the management of the gym and became a director during the pandemic, helping the team with fundraising and data analysis. She looks at member feedback and data collected by the gym to help the team make more informed strategic decisions. This fits in well with her role in data analysis at a national charity.



It's fun and a nice community. Because it's a co-operative, everyone makes it work together and it's just a really nice vibe... Being a member is an opportunity to be as involved as much as you want, and dip your toe in to see what it's like before taking on increased responsibility.

Continuing the journey

In 2020/21 the gym moved to a new studio at a community centre in the east of the city. This marked the start of a long-term vision to create a permanent exercise and fitness base for the local community. The team is working with an architect and launching a crowdfunding campaign to raise funds for a refit of the studio space. Guy, Lotte and the team are excited about having their own home and making gym and fitness accessible to more people in Bristol.

What has been achieved?

1,000+
people trained in Bristol who have limited access to health and fitness facilities since 2016.



Provided affordable and inclusive gym membership, in an accessible space.

10

Run 10 free weightlifting classes to young people who are not in education or employment.



CASE STUDY: BLUEJAM ARTS

.....◆

BLUEJAM ARTS IS A DYNAMIC HUB FOR INTERGENERATIONAL MUSIC AND ARTS IN RURAL CUMBRIA WHICH PUTS YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE LEAD OF ITS PROGRAMMES AND OPERATIONS, AND THEIR OWN CREATIVE POTENTIAL.

BlueJam Arts is an innovative community music and arts organisation based in Penrith, Cumbria. They run a full programme of inclusive and intergenerational creative workshops, training, events and gigs. Improvisation sits at the heart of all their programmes, from youth music ensembles to whole-school singing projects, and they aim to enrich lives through the experience of collective music making. Over the past 20 years, BlueJam has moved towards a more sustainable community business model, with income from grants and funders supplemented with fees earned from community workshops, private events and hire of their building, BlueJam Arts Space, for other creative activities.

Jilly Jarman, a composer, jazz improviser and teacher, founded BlueJam in 2002. Frustrated by the lack of opportunities for young musicians in the Cumbria region, she wanted to create an inclusive place where the local community could make music together. However, Jilly did not want this to look like a conventional music group or orchestra, whose formal nature can exclude people who are neurodivergent, from disadvantaged backgrounds or who want to play non-traditional instruments. Accordingly, BlueJam was initially designed to help children who were disengaged from music at school or who wanted musical experiences that schools couldn't offer.

There is a strong can-do ethos at BlueJam, where everyone is seen as a leader. As a participant-centred organisation, young people are given opportunities to initiate projects that interest them and get involved in the running of the organisation. Some join the board of directors; others lead workshops, mentor their peers, or take part in musical demonstrations at events. All the board of directors have taken part in BlueJam activities as participants before becoming board members. Of the seven core freelance staff that run the community business, most are aged under 35.

Staff member Jessica's story

Jessica Boatright (age 33) helps to manage BlueJam's fundraising, operations, and strategy. Like many younger people who move into leadership roles within the business, Jessica started out as a participant. She attended an improv choir session and was asked if she would like to take her interest further by co-facilitating a workshop, which then developed into her role today.



As you walk into the BlueJam Arts Space, it's really clear that they take the opportunity to invest in people in the local community. If you've got an ability or an interest, they will start with that and give you the opportunity to see where it goes. There's room for a lot of progression and, when they see your potential, they put you out of your comfort zone in order for you to grow, with your best interests at heart. You walk into a room full of kids and it's very much about jumping in and just doing it. Improvisation is about thinking on your feet, not only in music but as a leader as well. BlueJam will take a chance with you and that's how we've developed the strong team of leaders that we have.

Young people benefit from peer-to-peer support at BlueJam. Jessica had previously set up her own arts charity and other young people tend to work on their own creative projects outside of the organisation. This cross-pollination of skills, talent and expertise is helping BlueJam to grow and thrive.

Young leaders' stories: Josh and Asha

Josh Jackson (age 23) has been running BlueJam's samba band for over ten years. He first discovered the organisation after taking part in one of Jilly's music sessions at his school when he was 12. After attending sessions at BlueJam and running segments within workshops, a role to run the samba band became vacant and he jumped at the opportunity. In 10 years, the group has grown from a small band of eight to over 30 people who now meet weekly. At times he felt out of place leading and directing others older than him. But with support from peers and team members, Josh has seen his confidence grow, and has learnt to adapt the way he leads to different learning styles and needs.



Even though I've got ten years of experience, I still feel it's hard being in a position of power as a young person over others that are older than me. But the people I work with remind me that I have that wealth of experience behind me and that I'm capable. It's helped to reframe the situation and show me I'm sharing my knowledge with people, and it really doesn't matter what age they are.

Asha Nicholson (age 25) also runs workshops as a singer, songwriter and pianist. After returning to Carlisle from university, she came to BlueJam to rediscover her love of music. Having access to a space where there is the freedom to experiment has been particularly important for her.

“

It's been really beautiful to be in this organisation and watch people gain their confidence in terms of improvisation, and just letting their voice go. There's a really relaxed attitude to try things out. I would never have been able to do what I do if it wasn't for the way people support each other here.

Continuing the journey

Josh and Asha are excited about a new Youth Music-funded project called 'Music From The Wild', in which they and other young leaders will mentor local young people aged 18 to 25 to produce their first EP alongside developing their business and marketing skills, especially centred around the music industry. They look forward to providing more creative opportunities for young people in Cumbria and to creating a space where people feel like they can grow.

What has been achieved?



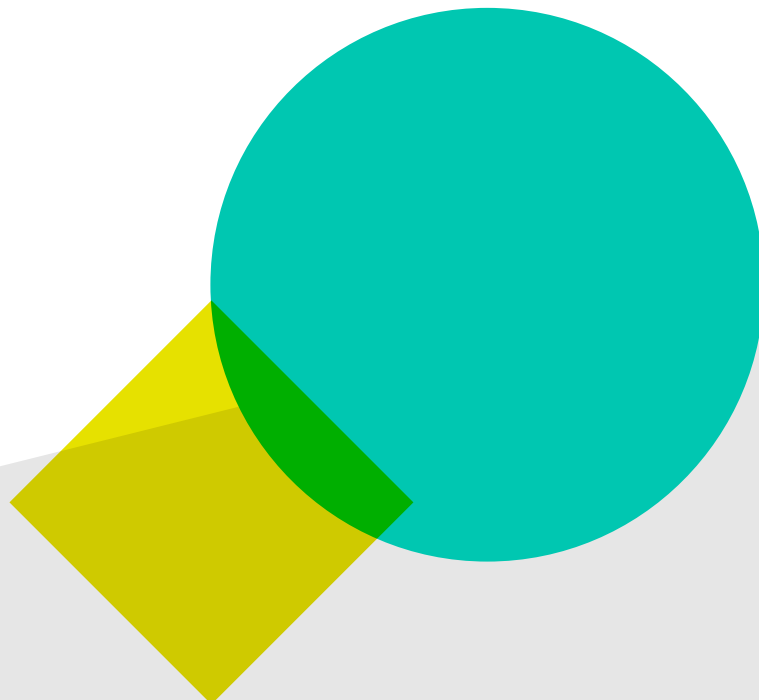
Generated innovative creative opportunities and work for local people.



Enabled greater community and intergenerational cohesion in Penrith and wider Cumbria.



Levelled the playing field in music for rurally-based young people.





CASE STUDY: COEXIST COMMUNITY KITCHEN

COEXIST COMMUNITY KITCHEN OFFERS A VIBRANT, WELCOMING SPACE IN CENTRAL BRISTOL FOR PEOPLE OF ALL AGES TO FIND DIGNITY AND CONFIDENCE THROUGH COOKING.

Coexist Community Kitchen is founded upon the belief that food is our simplest and easiest tool to support each other and build a stronger, healthier, and more joyful society. Since 2012, the Coexist team has been using food as a vehicle to work with people who experience social marginalisation in Bristol.

Coexist started as a small pop-up food project and is now home to a busy cookery school which works with thousands of people across Bristol in partnership with a network of drug and alcohol services, mental health organisations, and refugee and asylum seeker groups. Through the pandemic they also ran a meals on wheels service, which has transitioned into a weekly, in-person community meal event since restrictions eased. They raise revenue to resource this work through public classes, commercial catering, and space hire.

For its first seven years, Coexist was hosted by a DIY arts space called Hamilton House. In 2018, Coexist and the rest of the tenants were evicted so that the building could be developed. They fought the eviction hard, but ultimately lost, and in 2019 they relocated to a new space and incorporated as an independent social enterprise.

Coexist has a five person staff team, four of whom are under 35, along with a large, intergenerational roster of volunteers. The organisation generally works with young people who are experiencing specific social issues, like young carers, and is currently working with The Prince's Trust on a programme for young people struggling in school. Its focus on intersectionality and inclusion guides its engagement with young people, explains director Ari Cantwell (age 35):

“**25 year olds who come here are completely different to each other. I'm much more interested in their lives, worlds, and experiences than their age – it's this intersectionality which is important. There is such a wide range of power and privilege within an age group. We try and treat all people with humanity.**”

Director Ari's story

Ari grew up in Wales and moved to Bristol aged 21. After living in the city for a couple of years, she started volunteering at Coexist when it was part of Hamilton House, a multi-purpose, community hub which was home to multiple community groups, a cafe, low cost wellbeing services, music and dance lessons and much more. Alongside working in kitchens elsewhere, she took on and gradually grew her paid hours with Coexist, until she went full-time as the director in 2020.

Ari's passion and commitment for the organisation was motivated through fighting the eviction which built up a committed group of supporters. She reflects on the eviction and the move to new premises as the catalyst to rebuild a better, bigger community business:



Until the eviction, I felt like I could step away, but the threat galvanised us as a community, and made me want to stay. Ultimately, community is about longevity. It's when you connect with people, learn through people, and feel like you have a shared home over time. The kitchen is now central to my identity, and my community is more diverse and broad because of the kitchen.

Continuing the journey

For Ari, food is the ideal vehicle for building a sustainable community because it is so immediate – cooking leads to sharing, eating and socialising, whatever the age of the people around the table. Moving forward, Ari wants to find better ways to bring people together from Coexist's different programmes and groups. Although the pandemic meant some of the casual interactions were limited between Coexist's community, they are now working on rebuilding intergenerational social connections and experiences.

What has been achieved?



Built the self-esteem, resilience and confidence of people experiencing marginalisation



Challenged social isolation by creating space for the community to cook and eat together



Served healthy and affordable food in the local community



CASE STUDY: GIROSCOPE



FOUNDED BY A GROUP OF YOUNG RADICALS IN HULL IN THE 1980S, GIROSCOPE'S SELF-HELP HOUSING IS REGENERATING THE NEIGHBOURHOOD WITH A NEW GENERATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE.

Founded in 1987 by a group of students and unemployed young people in Hull, Giroscope has provided affordable housing, sustainable regeneration, and secure work and training opportunities to the neighbourhood for more than a generation. Giroscope's core business is 'self-help housing' – buying empty properties, renovating them to a high standard, and letting them to people. They have 400 to 500 tenants who, along with a stable home, can access all-round social support, such as help to get benefits, food parcels, training, and employment opportunities.

What makes Giroscope different to other housing schemes is the way it involves the community in the renovations and wider neighbourhood regeneration. The organisation runs a volunteering programme for people who face challenges finding work through conventional routes, many of whom are young, and trains them up in construction as well as admin and community-based skills.

Giroscope has also recently started buying key community assets, and is running different projects like a community kitchen and garden, bike project, furniture recycling, and computer repair service.

The housing which Giroscope provides to young people is complemented by social and professional support. One example is the 'Secure Futures' programme, run in partnership with a local boxing club, targeting under-25s at risk of homelessness through a joint housing support, skills training, and fitness programme. Another project uses Giroscope's professional kitchen to train local young people in catering and hospitality skills. Beyond specific grant-funded programmes, the organisation provides regular volunteering and work opportunities to under-35s, along with older people in the community. For instance, the head builder of their current self-build scheme works with an 18 year old apprentice.

Co-Founder Martin's story

Martin Newman co-founded Giroscope with a group of friends when he was in his early 20s. He had moved to Hull to study; some of his co-founders were also students, whilst others lived locally. In the early 80s, after a long period of industrial decline following the loss of the deep-sea trawling industry in Hull, there were a lot of empty homes. When they saw how cheap these empty houses were, Martin and his friends decided it would be smarter to pool their money and buy a house, rather than rent.

They bought their first house, then secured private mortgages to purchase a further four houses. Martin dropped out of university and, with help from Hull's Co-operative Development Agency, they then registered Giroscope as a workers' co-operative, constituting it as a company limited by guarantee with charitable objectives. They then obtained a mortgage from the Co-operative Bank to buy those four houses back in the company's name. The drive behind this had radical roots – Giroscope wanted to provide better rental properties for working people than the traditional property system.

“**We wanted to do something positive and creative. It was the idea that you were twisting things around, playing the game against itself. There are some old videos of us all in dreadlocks and Mohicans; I say to a reporter that we're playing Thatcher at her own game. We go out and buy houses and rent them out, but we're doing it in a nice way.**

Giroscope's fortunes waxed and waned over the years. As time went on some of the co-founders drifted off to do other things, and they weathered a tough time with a skeletal staff team. In 2007 they decided to register as a charity, and in 2012-2015 they benefited from the government's Empty Homes grants scheme. Before 2011 they had 35 houses, now they have 133.

Martin is proud of this growth and how it has offered more opportunities for the community. He still lives in a Giroscope house.

Staff member Elener's story

Growing up in the neighbourhood, Giroscope and the community around the organisation have always been a big part of Elener Forrester's life. Elener (age 28) has lived in a Giroscope house since she moved out of her mum's, originally sharing with friends. Elener has also worked at Giroscope since she was 17; she started on a placement from her business administration course at college, and 10 years later is still there. Over that time, she has had a variety of roles in the organisation, from cleaning to administration, and has taken breaks to raise her two children. Currently she works as a Receptionist and Housing Officer. She explains her motivation for taking up these roles:

“**I've got a broad relationship with almost all of the tenants. I know everyone because we're all from around here, it's the community I was brought up in. I like engaging with people, trying to help the tenants, the community care. Anyone can come in off the street and say they need a house – we don't turn anyone away, it's an open door.**

Giroscope has been a supportive employer, for instance putting Elener forward to do an accounting course at college, funding her driving lessons, and providing a number of opportunities for on-the-job training. This flexible and supportive working environment has been crucial for her.

“

The team that we've got here is absolutely amazing. I couldn't dream of working with anyone else. It's that 'Don't worry about it' feeling. We'll help each other. I know we've got a boss, but it doesn't feel like a hierarchy here, it just feels like we're all on the same playing field. I feel quite privileged really to be working with such a great team, and to be able to benefit from the housing too.

Continuing the journey

Elener aspires to co-run Giroscope after Martin has retired, and has plans to expand her skillset and responsibilities to get there. She also has ideas about how to develop Giroscope's role in the community, working with more community organisations to support the whole neighbourhood beyond its tenants and volunteers, for instance by regenerating some of the empty green space.

“

Being part of Giroscope, the only way is up. I have a lot to learn. But I want to get to the point where I'm the one calling the shots.

What has been achieved?

50

active volunteers and people taking part in training courses, from first aid to maths and English lessons. 58% of them are aged under 35.

26

members of staff; 27% are under 35 years old.

31

supported tenants living in 23 properties; 65% are under 35 years old.





CASE STUDY: KITTY'S LAUNDRETTE



FOUNDED ON AN ETHOS OF RADICAL INCLUSIVITY AND RESPONSIBILITY, KITTY'S LAUNDRETTE ENABLES ITS YOUNG CO-OPERATIVE MEMBERS TO TAKE CONTROL OF BOTH THEIR AND THE ORGANISATION'S WORK.

Kitty's Launderette is a hub of community life in North Liverpool. Alongside providing affordable and environmental wash and dry services for local people and local partners like football clubs and bed and breakfasts, Kitty's Launderette uses its cosy interior as a social space. The organisation hosts tea and coffee mornings, film nights, language clubs, gigs, and quizzes.

Kitty's Launderette was founded by Grace Harrison when she was in her mid-20s, and now runs as a worker-community co-operative which is also accountable to the wider community. Employees have an opportunity to get to know all parts of the business, from serving customers to doing accounts. Many people who have been otherwise excluded from employment benefit from the flexible hours, real living wage pay and collective responsibility at Kitty's.

Younger workers are actively encouraged to take on as much responsibility as they want, such as young worker Bryn (age 23), who is now leading on finance.

Founder Grace's story

Grace Harrison (age 32) had previously been involved in the DIY arts scene around Liverpool, running a DIY political film festival alongside other self-organised work and cleaning jobs. She was tired by the exclusivity and lack of structure of the spaces she was working in. Grace started exploring more stable, autonomous models for community-building, and – inspired by the Homebaked Community Land Trust – got interested in the co-operative model.



I became interested in things like co-operatives as models for structured ways of working together to achieve goals and make decisions. I spent my 20s under austerity, and saw many organisations fall apart because they were reliant on a shrinking pool of grant funding. It made people competitive, rather than collaborative. I wanted to create a structure for autonomy and meaningful collaboration.

Reflecting on what made Kitty's possible, Grace recognises that she had to do a lot of work for free in the early days. She acknowledges that this sort of 'sweat equity' is something many young people cannot afford. She kept up a cleaning job through the years she was developing the launderette, and lived as cheaply as possible.

Grace explains her approach to cultivating inclusive leadership:

“If you have desire and energy to build new skills, you'll excel here. Several of our young workers are on the board, along with local people and customers. At Kitty's, no area of the business is out of bounds for anyone: everyone can see the accounts, anyone can shape the direction of the organisation.

Staff member Anthony's story

Anthony Scott (age 21) first heard about Kitty's Launderette when he was studying at the local college. He went to Kitty's opening event and, from then on, kept dropping into the venue, where he learnt more about the history of the washhouse movement and the launderette.

“Me and my mum never had a washer, so I had a lot of childhood memories of the launderette. Then I saw this new, clean, radical space. It was inspiring to see that happening in my area, where there wasn't much else for people. Ever since, it was something I wanted to get involved with.

Anthony started university but left because of mental health challenges. He moved home, worked in a restaurant kitchen for a while, and then applied for a job at Kitty's through the government's Kickstart scheme. He now coordinates the events at the launderette, reaching out to other community organisations and members to consult on what they think the area needs, and what to offer in the social space. This ethos of openness and collaboration has built his confidence.

“We all have a say. In previous organisations it's just been 'you do what I say'. You feel like a kid trapped in a cage. At Kitty's the cage doesn't exist. We all manage each other and have a responsibility to each other and ourselves to make our work the best we can... At Kitty's everyone supports your ideas and gives you the push to actually go and make them happen. Saying 'yes' to each other is something I will take forward into any future role.

Overall, what is most important to Anthony is the launderette's ethos and structure:

“Kitty's isn't a charity. It's about self-help, self-organising, self-respect. We should be investing in the local economy. We should re-occupy the high streets really. There is as much ambition here in Liverpool as there is in Wall Street. For young people it is harder – school entrenches individualism and competition, tells us that the world isn't ours to build. Self-help offers an alternative to this through collectivism.

Continuing the journey

Now that pandemic restrictions have eased, Anthony plans to expand Kitty's events programme and test ways to get more young people using the Laundrette as a social space. He has piloted a new film night as one engagement approach, running each screening partnership with a local community group, and has already had some early success. From Grace's perspective, Kitty's is now at a stage of greater stability where she can focus on developing the organisational structure governance to make the co-operative truly inclusive and community-led. She is working to hand over more control, leadership, and visibility to the team members and the wider community.

What has been achieved?



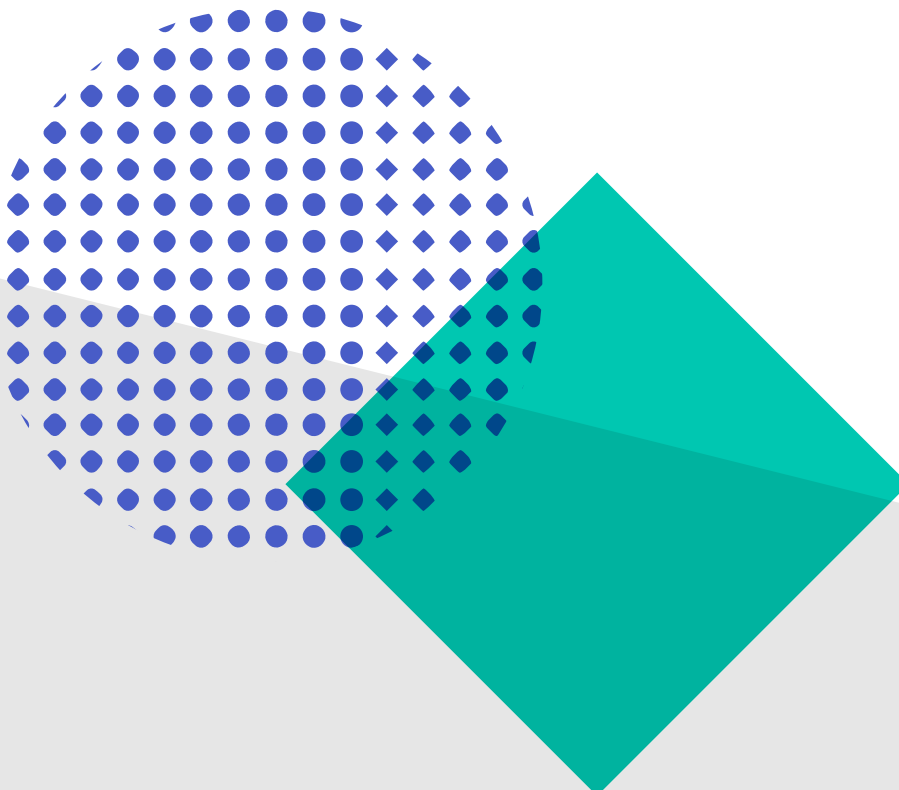
Provides affordable, ecological laundry services.



Hosts a space for people to gather, talk, and learn.



Reinvests revenue for commercial services in local jobs and free community activities.





CASE STUDY: KIRKLEES LOCAL TV

HARNESSING THE POWER OF FILM TO TELL HIDDEN STORIES, KIRKLEES LOCAL TV IS AN INTERNET-BASED TV STATION THAT PROVIDES A PLATFORM FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO GROW THEIR CONFIDENCE AND AGENCY.

Kirklees Local TV (KLTV) is an online TV station and film production company that provides quality local news and promotes civic activism, research and discussion on social and cultural matters that affect Huddersfield and West Yorkshire. A social enterprise, KLTV's primary objective is to give marginalised groups a voice, amplify minoritised ethnicities' heritage and culture, and give young people a platform and the support to tell those stories. KLTV generates income by providing video production, training, and coaching services to other organisations, and invests it back into the local communities and people it serves.

Milton Brown, CEO, drew on decades of experience in community enterprise to found the production company in 2011. After a military career in the RAF and success as an athlete at county level, he became the driving force behind several education and training initiatives that empowered young people in the region.

But when the 2008 global recession hit the public sector funding streams they relied on, Milton and his team pivoted to digital TV production. This shift responded to young people's interests and the growth of YouTube at that time, and enabled him to build a more sustainable business model. He explains:



A lot of young people have ambitions in digital, but don't understand digital business and taking your product and content to market. So KLTV does all of that. We're building the infrastructure around young people. We have links with the University of Huddersfield and local colleges. As young people come to us, we develop their multimedia skills, create links, and make connections for them. They move the organisation further forward, then someone else comes in to take it to the next level. Young people are the energy and we're the experience. If they're happy, the organisation is flourishing.

Young people in community business: Stories of change

KLTV now receives over 180,000 website visits a month and has a growing roster of community customers who come to the team for high quality video and content production to share their local stories and events. Creating opportunities for young people to develop their skills and build their networks, with support and mentoring, has created a solid foundation for the organisation.

Young staff members' stories: Chris and Leah

Chris Morgan (age 27) is the chief editor at KLTV, having first joined the organisation for a work placement. He graduated from Nottingham Trent University with a degree in print journalism and was signposted to KLTV by the Jobcentre.



I came from job searching for a year, and being in between jobs can take its toll on you. The placement was a massive boost to my confidence and my mental health, and I decided I wanted to stay on after. I went on to do more hours and take on more responsibility and that has taken me to where I am today as Chief Editor. The biggest challenge was my confidence and recognising for myself that I've earned my seat at the table.

Leah Conway (23) also started in a placement during her second year of university, and returned to KLTV in a freelance capacity after graduating. She has had a similar confidence boost as a result of her involvement:



It's been really good career-wise to be in an environment where I'm encouraged to try lots of things. The initial transition from being a volunteer to a freelancer was a bit scary. To begin with I had to find my footing, confidence, and belief that, yes - actually - I do have the skills to do this. My self-doubt was the main barrier, but I knew I had lots of support from others. Now I feel a lot more assured in my ability.

Both Chris and Leah are passionate about supporting young volunteers and staff members to grow and develop in their careers, drawing on their own experience, and have taken an active role in the development of KLTV. Recently they have worked together to create a new digital and social media strategy for the production company, and are both proud of their involvement in 'Windrush: The Years After', KLTV's award-winning documentary on the history and legacy of Huddersfield's own Windrush Generation, which generated interest nationally and internationally.

Continuing the journey

Harnessing the power of digital archiving and documentation to centre the voices of marginalised people is a shared passion and motivation for everyone at KLTV. The team's plans for the future include building a satellite model of services and broadcasters to empower a broader network of freelance creatives in the region. They are also planning to add podcasts to the content mix, develop the training offer, and serve a wider range of community groups and businesses with their video production services.

What has been achieved?

450

Since 2011 KLTV has worked with over 450 volunteers, including 200 young people who have gone through placements or work experience.

70%

of the current team of staff, freelancers, and volunteers is under 35.

50+

KLTV has supported over 50 young people to make 25 short films, news pieces and documentaries.



CASE STUDY: LIFEAFTERHUMMUS COMMUNITY BENEFIT SOCIETY



INTERGENERATIONAL AND INTERSECTIONAL VALUES ARE THE DRIVING ETHOS BEHIND LIFEAFTERHUMMUS, A COMMUNITY BENEFIT SOCIETY COMBATING FOOD POVERTY AND FOOD WASTE IN CENTRAL LONDON.

Organisational summary and background to generational dynamics

Founded in the summer of 2016, Lifeafterhummus Community Benefit Society is located in Somers Town, near Kings Cross in London. It runs a food bank providing 325 people across 80 households and 11 hostels with culturally appropriate weekly food parcels, alongside debt and social welfare advice, employment support, and other services. Powering Lifeafterhummus' work is a vibrant intergenerational community of 50 local volunteers, aged between 13 and 67. The volunteers collect food surplus from 45 local stores every week, and help to sort and redistribute the surplus stock via a food cart accessible by the wider public.

Co-founder Farrah's story

Lifeafterhummus has a distinctly youthful identity; intergenerational and intersectional values are the lifeblood of the organisation. A large part of this ethos can be attributed to the co-founder, Farrah Rainfly, who started Lifeafterhummus in her mid-30s. She had been working in the corporate and hospitality world since she left school at 16. After taking a course on social enterprise for BME women⁷, Farrah knew she wanted to run cookery classes, saw that they were needed and wanted in the community around her, but did not know how to finance the classes for people who could not afford to pay.

After taking the Olmec course in 2016, when the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act had recently been passed, Farrah's interest was captured by the idea of community benefit societies as a model for community business. With a £3,000 seed grant from the School for Social Entrepreneurs, she balanced Lifeafterhummus alongside full-time work for a couple of years.

7

This is the term that Farrah and Olmec use.

Young people in community business: Stories of change

When it comes to including young people, for Farrah it is all about building an intergenerational space. This ethos sits side-by-side with a commitment to being an organisation led by minoritised communities.

“

Being intergenerational is the best part of the centre. I have 50 volunteers, from 13 year olds who come after school to retired people. It is what connects people to each other, it binds you together.

These intersectional values are not only part of Lifeafterhummus' identity and legal constitution, but also inform how the organisation works with young volunteers and employees, and commits to trusting everyone and giving them a chance, no matter what their background. They currently have 50 local volunteers aged between 13 and 67 years old, and over half of the people they engage with are from minoritised ethnicities.

Centre Co-ordinator Maddy's story

Maddy MacKenzie (age 21) started volunteering with Lifeafterhummus in 2020 during the first lockdown. She returned to university after lockdown but came back to continue volunteering after graduating, until being offered a paid role as the centre's coordinator in August 2021. For her there were two main motivators for getting involved: the environmental need to combat food waste, and the opportunities to engage with people in the community.

The community business ethos which underpins the organisation has helped Maddy's development. She did not have any other work experience in the field when she joined, and the trust that Farrah has placed in her has been significant.

“

So many young people can't get positions of responsibility because of their age. They are babied for years and years, or are treated without respect, like they are stupid. But in community work it's about values and heart, not having a degree. We are only as strong as our team, so you have to be able to delegate. Farrah gives me a lot of responsibility and freedom. Most of the time this works out, and then if it doesn't, we can talk about it. By doing that, it's made me develop into someone who can take charge, who can lead. I feel like a lot of young people don't always get that chance.

Farrah has also taken care to include Maddy, like the other workers and volunteers at Lifeafterhummus, in decision-making processes. Again, being a community business is foundational to this ethos.

“

We exist for the community, one member one vote, so everything is co-designed, and we practice listening and learning. There are organisations that listen but don't know how to implement. We do both. For instance, the pivot to food parcels is because we listened and heard what people needed. Same with our employability work - that arose from hearing about problems, and asking what we can do to help.

Continuing the journey

One of the changes which Maddy has helped to bring in since she started is cutting down on packaging, by using gravity bins and refill containers for rice, rather than bagged portions. More recently, she has been exploring a bike scheme with other young women at the centre to enable more girls to have the sense of freedom a bike brings. And she has been helping Farrah prepare to restart the centre's cookery classes following the pandemic. She is also training up new young volunteers, following Farrah's example of investing in young people's abilities and potential.

What has been achieved in 2021?

3,038

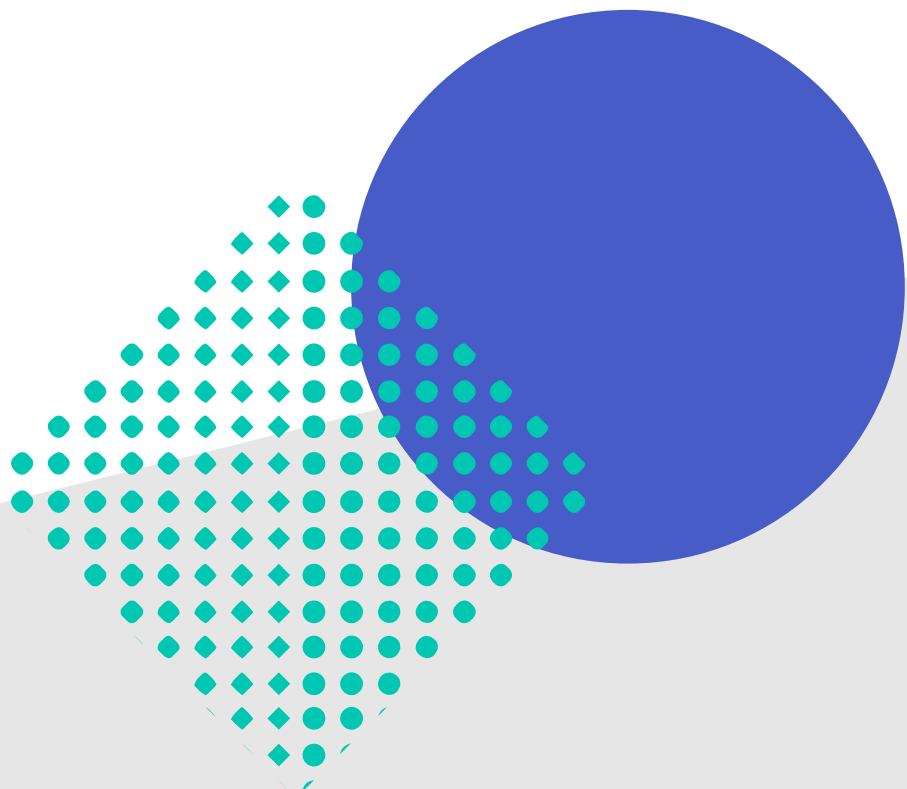
Supported 3,038 adults and 3,523 children with surplus food parcels.

160

Made 160 social prescriptions, supporting 236 children behind the referrals.

37%

of collections and 67% of deliveries are zero-carbon.





CASE STUDY: OCTOBER BOOKS

FOUNDED IN THE 1970S, RADICAL CO-OPERATIVE BOOKSHOP OCTOBER BOOKS IN SOUTHAMPTON HAS EXPANDED ITS REACH TO A NEW GENERATION OF YOUNG MEMBERS AND LEADERS.

October Books is a radical neighbourhood bookshop and co-operative community hub in Southampton. Founded in 1977, the bookshop hit national headlines in 2018 when volunteers formed a human chain to move its books to a new permanent home in the city after a successful community fundraising campaign. October Books specialises in social issues, feminism, gender studies, humanities, and political issues, alongside general popular fiction, non-fiction, and children's books. The bookshop benefits from young team members, volunteers, and students, alongside older and more experienced members, who contribute to running a safe, diverse space in the heart of a vibrant port city with two universities.

Member Jamie's story

Jamie Cooper (aged 33) joined October Books as a worker member in 2019 and now helps run the business. He spent most of his 20s running pubs in London and returned to Southampton to take a break from this line of work. The opportunity to work at October Books attracted him because of its values and ethics.



October Books was created to be a safe space for people to express views that might not be at the forefront of everyone's thinking. It's a space where LGBTQ+ communities and other marginalised communities have equal rights, and it is a place where everyone feels safe and supported. That concept is still very much the driving force behind what we do.

October Books has over 100 members like Jamie – around a third are young people – and several young adults sit on the bookshop's Committee. Despite facing a steep learning curve, he felt supported from the start. The bookshop is in the process of transitioning from a workers' co-operative to a community benefit society, and he is taking a lead on this because he wants to learn more about governance.



Running a pub and working for a bigger company is a different business style so coming in and learning about co-operatives and community businesses was a big change. But I couldn't wait to get stuck into it... There's a lot more emphasis on the really important things here: wellbeing, making sure you've got everything you need, and advice about the Committee process and making decisions. I've had endless support throughout... It just feels like there's a lot more opportunity to get help when you need it. Everything seems a lot more transparent in a community business.

Jamie has seen younger members bring innovative ideas and a fresh perspective to decision making. He is particularly proud of the bookshop's new environmental policy, which was developed by younger members in collaboration with the University of Southampton as part of an innovation project.



We try to get young people involved in as many ways as we can. Young people are the ones who will run businesses in the future. They are the people who will impact our environmental footprint for years to come. If you help them understand how businesses run, everyone will reap the benefits. The community here can be quite transient though - the challenge is keeping those great ideas and communities that emerge together.

Continuing the journey

This year Jamie will chair the bookshop's Committee, a small group from the wider membership. He is excited about the team's plans to put sustainability and wellbeing at the heart of the bookshop and involve more young people in Southampton. Following the pilot of an in-store grocery home delivery service to local residents, Jamie is looking at ways to source more locally-produced food and reduce food waste in the community by stocking fresh out-of-date food that would otherwise be thrown away, building on an initiative led by local students.

What has been achieved in 2021?

100

active co-operative members.

40

**employees and volunteers,
60% under 35 years old.**

6

**committee members,
40% under 35 years old.**



CASE STUDY: ODD ARTS



BEING LED BY LOCAL YOUNG PEOPLE'S IDEAS AND EXPERIENCES IS FOUNDATIONAL TO HOW ODD ARTS USES THEATRE TO TRANSFORM LIVES IN MOSS SIDE, MANCHESTER, AND BEYOND.

Odd Arts is an award-winning theatre production and training organisation in Moss Side, Manchester, which uses restorative and therapeutic theatre-based programmes to transform lives, challenge inequalities and increase opportunities for people facing disadvantage and discrimination. Odd Arts works with young people, schools and teachers, people in the criminal justice system, and health services to create theatre and social action projects from people's own experiences on topics that range from radicalisation and criminal exploitation to healthy relationships and mental health. They also train teachers and professionals in using theatre-based approaches.

Creating spaces to listen to young people's experiences when planning projects, and being genuinely led by young staff and participants, helps Odd Arts to be responsive to the communities it serves. This is important in an area like Moss Side, a stigmatised part of Manchester with higher levels of deprivation. The team engages local young people in early-stage development of new performance concepts and creations, and in many cases young people are trained to be paid actors. Often this work covers sensitive issues such as sexual assault, consent, hateful extremism, and self-harm.

A team of local youth ambassadors and young people are integral to Odd Art's anti-racism practices, holding the organisation to account and providing constructive challenge based on what matters to them. The ambassadors are encouraged to apply to join committees and become trustees. Odd Arts also has an important open-door policy to always accept people who ask for work experience - a principle that comes from CEO Rebecca Friel's own experiences of being welcomed to work with Theatre of the Oppressed in Brazil. For Rebecca (age 37), the key factor to success is embracing risk, particularly when it comes to empowering young people.

Young people in community business: Stories of change

“There are risks when we say to a young person, ‘Train us and challenge us’, or ‘You can take the lead on social media’. But the risk of not doing that is far greater because you become irrelevant, you become inauthentic, and people lose interest.

Odd Arts now works with over 150 schools, colleges and higher education settings every year reaching over 35,000 young people, while the core staff team – the majority of whom are under 35 – has grown to 17. Despite this broad reach, Odd Arts reinvests in its central Manchester roots, offering free projects and performances, holiday clubs, weekly drop-in sessions, and one to one support to young Moss Side community members, often in partnership with youth clubs.

Co-Founder and CEO Rebecca’s story

Rebecca founded Odd Arts when she was 19, teaming up with friends while she was studying drama and theatre at the University of Manchester. As part of a Theatre in Prisons and Probation unit within their degree, the group led a drama project in a local prison, and started volunteering with community groups to gain experience of running theatre-based programmes while juggling part-time work. These methods continue to guide the work of Odd Arts today.

“The early experience was really exciting for me. I was very passionate and interested in criminal justice, but there was no job in that area that was creative enough for that side of me. It definitely started as a passion project, something we really cared about and loved doing. But to even do some of the work voluntarily we needed a name and a bank account. We never set out with a business plan at all. We just wanted to do the work, and in order to do the work we had to do some of the business bits. Then the rest is history.

Staff members’ stories: Jess and Leila

Jess Duerden (age 33) is the education and project manager. She studied acting at UCLAN and facilitated drama in community settings and schools, before joining Odd Arts and moving into project and leadership roles. She now manages the organisation’s partnerships with local schools, and values the authentic conversations she has with teachers and school leads about what is needed.

“Our productions are bespoke and tailor made, there’s not a one-size-fits-all model. We ask the schools how we can help rather than just going in, doing our job and walking away. That’s what I love most about Odd Arts. It’s so authentic and you can be your true self.

Jess is also grateful for support with her career development. For instance, her manager supported her to use her working hours for a leadership development course for arts education professionals. This has helped her prepare for her new management role within the organisation.

Leila Herandi (age 28) is the lead practitioner and volunteer coordinator. She studied and trained as an actor in London before moving to Manchester where she joined Odd Arts as a freelance actor. She now looks after the organisation’s team of volunteer coordinators and is particularly proud of the organisation’s work in prisons and seeing people develop their confidence.

Young people in community business: Stories of change



I fell in love with the organisation. Facilitating at Odd Arts has completely shaped my whole career. I wouldn't have thought about getting into facilitation before this.

Both Leila and Jess value Odd Arts' open, collaborative culture where team members can discuss ideas or simply share issues and topics that have caught their interest and imagination. For example, a recent play about racism in sport was developed following a conversation young worker Curtis Cole started about the racism that occurred during the Euros 2020. All the team members had a shared anger about what was happening, and together they developed a play in response.

Continuing the journey

The team's plans for the future include involving young people at Board level with support and mentorship; engaging with young people about what a free, accessible and sustainable community space might look like; and continuing to offer theatre projects to empower disadvantaged and marginalised groups.

What has been achieved in 2020/21?

72%

of artists commissioned or employed are under 35.

35,000+

young people engaged.

4

placement students, four young volunteers and four young ambassadors.



CASE STUDY: THE PLATFORM CAFE

AS A SPACE FOR COMMUNITY CONNECTION, THE PLATFORM CAFE IN LONDON PROVIDES A PATIENT AND UNDERSTANDING PLACE FOR ITS YOUNG STAFF TO GROW.

Founded in 2015, The Platform Cafe is a food project and community kitchen based near Loughborough Junction in Lambeth, London. Located at a busy intersection of roads and railway tracks, The Platform provides a valuable service in a community where many residents have limited access to affordable, nutritious food. The cafe is known in the area as an inclusive space with good, affordable, and healthy food, a beautiful neighbouring community garden, and useful signposting to volunteering opportunities, wellbeing support, and employability training.

The Platform Cafe was started by Charlotte O'Connor when she was in her 20s, with colleague Jo Gilmour. They were later joined by head chef Sophie Lawrence, and today they support other local young people's opportunities. The team runs formal training, for instance they were part of Groundwork's 'Our Bright Future' programme of vocational training for unemployed young people interested in environmental work. They offer regular shifts to volunteers who other organisations

might find difficult to accommodate. More recently, they have employed young people facing barriers to employment through the Kickstart scheme. They practice what Charlotte calls 'patient employment':



You can keep burning the toast until you get it right, and no one is going to tell you off.

Exchanging knowledge, cultures, and lived experience is the lifeblood of the cafe. While this ethos does translate into enabling young people to develop new skills, ultimately it is about creating stronger communities, social connection, and confidence.



It's not always even about skills and employment. It's often about connection, for people who are feeling a bit displaced. The cafe training and volunteer programmes can act like a holding space for people whilst they are working things out. And when they are feeling a bit more confident, they move on. It's about giving people the tools to live their own lives independently.

Founder and Cafe Manager Charlotte's story

Co-founder and manager Charlotte set up the organisation as a pop-up project in her mid-20s. She quit her corporate job in communications and marketing, and started volunteering at her local community farm. When volunteering at the farm, she became interested in how she could use the surplus food and disused public toilet across the road to create a cafe or food hub.

“**I wasn't really conscious of it at the time, but I definitely felt a bit alone and atomised at times in London. The thing that was special about the farm was the intergenerational nature of it. It felt quite special and unusual, to have a space to hang out with people with very different lives and experiences, but where you still felt connected. You could always go at specific times, and you would have tea and cake together at the end of the session. It was about coming together. I think those are the values we really wanted to bring over to the cafe. People could just come and have a sense of connection.**

To explore the idea, Charlotte signed up for a 'Start your own enterprise' course for unemployed people in Lambeth. The cafe, originally conceived as a pop-up initiative featuring guest chefs, was the prototype she developed through the course. At the training, she met Jo, who also wanted to explore a business combining creativity and social connection, and they joined forces. Together, they created the vision for the cafe to be a way to connect with people through food. The prototyping went well, and Loughborough Junction Action Group agreed to be the cafe's 'nurture organisation', hosting it as a residency in the building.

“**If I'm honest, we didn't set out specifically to open a cafe. We always wanted to start a food project or somewhere people could come together and eat together. It was all about tackling loneliness and social isolation. But actually, what we found was that there were very few other cafes around selling healthy food and so it met an unexpected need for people just wanting to buy lunch.**

Staff member Elias' story

Elias Hagos (age 23) joined The Platform Cafe in 2020 after reaching out to a helpline when he needed support. The helpline referred him to the charity Groundwork, which then helped him find a job with The Platform Cafe. Elias reflects that it all happened very quickly and that, at the time, he could never have imagined it would lead to a job or have such a positive impact on his life. His autism, as well as his life experiences, had previously acted as a barrier to employment and he had not worked for two years. However, the cafe has provided an emotionally supportive place to grow and recover.

“**At the beginning it was a bit awkward. I am not a very social character; I tend to keep to myself. But the more I worked here, the more I grew more confident and assertive, and felt comfortable enough to be myself... There was a lot of support, patience and understanding. Before, I was really hyper-sensitive to failure. If I was doing one thing the wrong way, I would be really apologetic and uncomfortable. But Charlotte, Jo and Sophie are really understanding. They don't shout at me if I make the same mistakes.**

Young people in community business: Stories of change

Feeling part of a wider support community has also been important for Elias, and he respects the commitment and values that the cafe is built upon. His role at The Platform Cafe has been a stepping stone for him into other opportunities. For instance, he met his other current employer, a local brewery, whilst working at the cafe. His long-term ambition is to become an artist, and the cafe team is helping him work towards this, for instance by connecting him with a local author – a customer of the cafe – to be his mentor. In addition, he has recently started studying to retake his English GCSE and is learning how to code.

Continuing the journey

Moving forward, The Platform Cafe is looking to offer more local young people like Elias opportunities to build their skills and wellbeing, and become rooted in the community. They're now looking to buy a coffee machine as many young residents want to find work in coffee shops, and to expand their social prescribing referrals. They have also recently started a new work placement programme with Michael Tippett College in South London for young people with special educational needs. Charlotte is working with the cafe's host organisation, Loughborough Junction Action Group, to ensure that their governance is reflective of the local community, and represents young people accurately in decision-making.

What has been achieved?

14–84

Their oldest volunteer was 84 and their youngest volunteer was 14 (at time of participation).

80%

of current employed staff are under 35.

50+

young people have gone through work experience or volunteer programmes at the cafe.



CASE STUDY: PROJEKTS MCR

PROJEKTS MCR IS A COMMUNITY SPACE IN MANCHESTER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR FAMILIES TO SKATE, LEARN NEW SKILLS AND SOCIALISE.

Projekts MCR is a skatepark and community development organisation in Manchester that provides a space for young people and their families to enjoy skateboarding, meet and connect with others, and access wider social support.

Young people and young adults play a central role in the running of Projekts MCR and most of the team members are aged 35 or under. The skatepark employs two operational Managers alongside a pool of coaches, a staff team for the cafe, and several volunteers. Some of these employees are part of the community development team, a group of full-time coaches who work with schools and community partners to promote access to skateboarding.

Founder John's story

John Haines, CEO and managing director, co-founded Projekts MCR when he was 23 years old. When skateboarding was banned in public spaces of the city in 2001, John and a group of friends fundraised and worked with Manchester City Council to take over the underused land under the Mancunian Way, the motorway that circles Manchester, in the southeast of the city, and transform it into a thriving skatepark and community hub that now is used by over 6,000 people a year. For John, Projekts MCR is all about people and community:

“Community and skateboarding go hand in hand. Skateboarding shouldn't be something that's only accessed by people with the means. We turned a piece of land that would have been synonymous with crime into a lively community space, a safe place for people to bring their children, a place where people learn new skills and express themselves creatively. And that's for the parents as well - we want them to feel as though they are looked after and cared for as much as the children and young people. Generating community in those different ways is really rewarding.

Initially John and the team focused on making the skatepark operational and welcoming, securing funding for ramps, floodlights, electricity and heating, and opening the cafe. They also developed new programmes and sessions for women and girls. As the organisation grew, the team needed a more formal relationship with the council. Making use of Manchester City Council's Community Asset Transfer policy, Projekts MCR successfully obtained a long-term lease on the site. This took more than three years to negotiate but unlocked the team's ability to apply for capital funding.

Within three months of obtaining the lease they had raised over £660,000 and a further £1 million in the 12 months that followed. Over the following years, further funding was secured from a wider range of funders and external sources, including a community share issue which raised over £130,000 from the local community after match-funding. This has helped them to expand further and deliver new social inclusion activities and projects, including a homework club and a support group for parents who home educate their children.

With more space and activities to meet interest, the team has seen attendance increase three-fold, while the proportion of female skaters has grown from one per cent to over 24 per cent. At the same time, turnover increased by over 70 per cent and the core team grew from 20 to 26 staff.

Young worker Louis' story

Louis Carroll (age 18) is a skateboarding coach at Projekts MCR. He first skated in the park as a teenager, and then got involved as a volunteer after his mum heard about the opportunity. He started off volunteering during Projekts MCR's Saturday sessions and his role evolved from there.



A lot of volunteers try and get away with doing the bare minimum. But I didn't really know what was expected of me. I kind of just presumed that I was doing the same thing as I saw John and the team doing - coaching. Looking back now, I guess most people just presumed I was one of the coaches too. In late May last year, a couple of parents started requesting private lessons for their children with me specifically. So, John was like, 'we're going to have to start paying you for that now!'

Based on the impact he made as a volunteer, Louis then started doing paid private lessons, and after a couple of months was offered a permanent role on the Projekts MCR team. He now coaches four open sessions a week, as well as covering shifts in the cafe. After he leaves college this summer, he hopes to pick up more hours. For Louis being part of the organisation has made a significant difference to his direction in life:



The job has changed everything for me, more than I ever expected, by giving me a job I love. Coaching doesn't feel like work, even though it can be difficult and stressful, I still have fun doing it. I'm constantly tired because I try so hard. The feeling of boosting other people's confidence through coaching, and seeing them overcome their fears, is so rewarding for me. If I wasn't coaching, I don't know what else I would do doing, I can't imagine anything else I'd enjoy as much.

Continuing the journey

Enabling young people to be leaders is an important part of the decision-making process at Projekts MCR. The team has regular vision days which give board members and staff members an opportunity to come together to plan and shape the direction of the park. This initiative provides a vehicle for feedback, and for young people to influence the direction of the organisation. For example, one of the team's goals is to reach more young people in the city, particularly those in disadvantaged areas and those who are disengaged from formal education. John is passionate about supporting the team to be leaders in their lives as well as through their work at Projekts MCR.



We want to make everyone a leader in their own life, not just at work. We want them to be good leaders and take their responsibilities seriously. So we want to equip them with everything they need to do that.

The community development team are now also creating a formal Youth Committee to provide a voice for young people and a steer for the board of directors. This initiative will encourage young people to give the team insights into how to improve the skatepark.

What has been achieved in 2021?

26

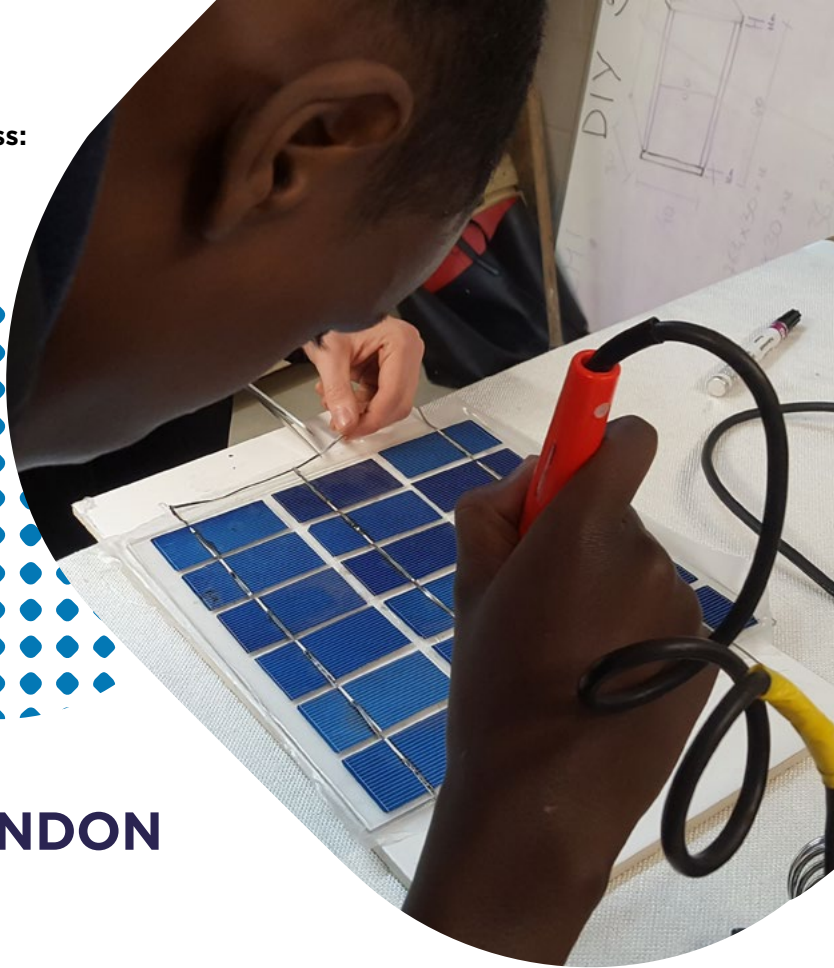
members of staff and 21 volunteers (370 volunteer hours per month), 85% under 35.

6,336

participants in last 12 months, 51% of who are 16 to 35 years old.

22%

of visits from 16 to 35 year olds are made from people living within the 20% most deprived areas in England.



CASE STUDY: REPOWERING LONDON

EMPOWERING YOUNG LONDONERS THROUGH RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS, REPOWERING LONDON PUTS ALL GENERATIONS AND COMMUNITIES AT THE HEART OF OUR ENERGY SYSTEM.

Born out of Transition Town Brixton and the experience of launching Brixton Solar Energy in 2011, Repowering London was started by a group of volunteers who wanted to produce renewable energy locally. They have now helped many other housing estates, schools, and community centres across London to fund, install, and manage their own clean, local energy.

From the organisation's second project, Brixton Energy Solar 2, developing young people's training and opportunities was key. When local mums on the housing estate vocalised the lack of youth opportunities, the Repowering Youth Training Programme was put together, taking young people on a skills development journey. Since then, over 120 young people have been trained, all being paid 40 hours at London Living Wage.

Whilst this makes it expensive to run, valuing work is important. Programme manager Dave Fuller explains:

“From our perspective, young people in areas of deprivation don't get respect, and are quite skint, so we show young people that we respect their time and work through paying them. It creates a different relationship than they have with tutors at college, and it enables more people to take part in the programme properly. The training on its own won't change anyone's life. We want to be one in a series of small positive actions in people's lives.”

Based on requests from teachers they talked to as part of their community engagement, Repowering London has also developed solar education and training for primary schools. They have a Key Stage 3 science lesson, a programme which teaches climate change through drama in Key Stage 2, and an assembly session.

Young people's stories

The training has had a significant impact on some young people's lives. Victoria Omobuwajo (age 29) took part in the Banister House youth training programme. After the training she volunteered with Repowering London, before becoming secretary of Hackney Energy and then CEO of her own healthy snack company. Victoria was featured in UK Forbes '30 under 30' as a young entrepreneur.

Another young man, Daniel* (age 18) was trained as part of the Banister House project. He was already qualified in electrical engineering before starting but could still only get a job shelf stacking. However through his work at Banister house he went on to get work experience with Repowering London, build up his CV, and now has a job in construction. Dave reflects on Repowering's role in young people's lives:



It's not about us. We're just a positive part of the journey. Ultimately, we want to develop a programme for young people to access green industries. The climate movement is overwhelmingly white and well-educated, there isn't enough breadth of experience. We are working in areas where there is an incredible variety of everything. We can support young people to get into the sector and diversify it. We have a plan, but if you go into a young person's life, you need to do it and resource it properly.

Continuing the journey

Moving forward, Repowering London want to start working with more young people, and on a longer-term basis, providing a path into meaningful employment and a platform for young people to create their own opportunities in the transition to an environmentally sustainable society.

Repowering's long-term strategy is to run its Youth Training Programme through a network of engaged energy co-operatives. However, the organisation often finds that young people aren't keen to get involved with long meetings and topics which at times seem dry. Instead, Repowering is keen to foster the values of mutualism and solidarity already being displayed by younger people in wider society, and channel them into work they are interested in.

What has been achieved?

58

young interns trained in 2019.

74%

of young trainees report an increased sense of belong to a community.

50%

of respondents said they had gained new aspirations for their future such as working with renewables, environmental advocacy, community development, electrical engineering, or solar installation.

*Not his real name



CASE STUDY: STOREROOM2010

FURNITURE REUSE ORGANISATION STOREROOM2010 OFFERS MUCH-NEEDED TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR LOCAL YOUNG PEOPLE ON THE ISLE OF WIGHT.

Storeroom2010 is an award-winning independent furniture reuse organisation situated on the Isle of Wight. It helps local disadvantaged families furnish their homes and improve their quality of life, and offers local young people volunteering opportunities, training, and work placements. It upcycles and recycles furniture donated by island residents and resells items at an affordable price, diverting over 119,000kgs of household goods from landfill according to their figures for 2020.

Wendy Miller and her husband Nick have been involved in running the storeroom for over 20 years. Young people have always played a vital role in the day-to-day activities of the organisation. Generational poverty and disadvantage are high on the island, and many young people feel there are no opportunities in what is predominantly an older, retired community.

Seasonal work leaves many young people without jobs for long periods, and housing prices are increasing. Storeroom2010 offers pathways for disadvantaged young people to build their skills and experience through volunteering, work experience and paid employment. They work with around 50 statutory and voluntary agencies across the Isle of Wight who refer young people and families in need to them. Three of the current full-time staff members started as young apprentices.

Manager Kerri's story

General manager Kerri Salter (age 31) began working at Storeroom2010 as an apprentice when she was just 20. At the time she was living in a hostel and her support worker suggested trying to get an apprenticeship as a route into work. Together they got in touch with a local college who arranged for Kerri's interview with Storeroom2010. Ten years later, she oversees the day-to-day operations at the warehouse after building up her experience through administration and management roles, working with the volunteers, and shadowing co-founders Nick and Wendy. Like the rest of the team, she is passionate about helping people improve their quality of life.



When I joined, I didn't really have my life together... and I was a bit all over the place. I was a bit of a rebel, but my manager saw something in me which I'm really grateful for, otherwise I wouldn't be here today. I've really grown into my position, and I've also grown in my personal life. It's helped me settle down here.

Having young people like Kerri at the heart of the organisation has helped Storeroom evolve and become more responsive to the community it serves. Kerri is now responsible for some of the younger team members and values the fresh perspective they bring. Some are vulnerable and can present with challenging behaviour at times. She has learnt to set clear expectations and boundaries, and work with other professionals and key workers to organise effective support for them in their roles.

Continuing the journey

Following the pandemic, Kerri is now looking at ways to overhaul and upgrade the IT systems at Storeroom2010, and train younger team members in administration so she can be more free to work directly with volunteers and partners.

Not all young people at Storeroom stay as long as Kerri. Because of the investment that the team puts into the training and development of younger team members and volunteers, many go on to find new jobs and opportunities. As Wendy approaches retirement, she is planning for the future and creating a succession plan to train more younger team members to take on the running of Storeroom2010.

What has been achieved in 2020?

10

Employed staff, aged between 22 and 63.

186

Assisted 186 disadvantaged people who were referred by one of around 50 support agencies across the Isle of Wight.

40

Supported 40 volunteers and work experience placements, of whom 40% were under 35.



CASE STUDY: THE THOROLD

COMMUNITY-OWNED PUB THE THOROLD IN RURAL LINCOLNSHIRE IS ACTING AS AN ENTRY POINT INTO WORK FOR A NEW GENERATION OF YOUNG RESIDENTS.

The Thorold is an award-winning, community-owned pub, restaurant, shop, B&B, and cafe situated in the small rural village of Marston, Lincolnshire. The pub is owned and managed by Thorold Arms Community Benefit Society on behalf of the community, which raised £210,000 through community shares to buy and renovate the pub in 2019 after a three-year campaign to reopen the pub as a community hub after it had closed in 2015.

In an area where the resident population is predominantly older – with double the national average number of people over 50 – the pub offers a range of social inclusion activities, including an IT support group, a book club, and a venue space for other local support groups. They also serve drinks and refreshments, and have a small shop selling everyday essentials and locally sourced produce. In addition, an outreach Post Office opens in the pub every Wednesday morning, alongside a popular coffee morning.

The Thorold offers vital opportunities for local young people to volunteer, gain paid experience, and explore careers in the hospitality sector. Sandra Allen, secretary of Thorold Arms CBS, explains their approach to working with young people:



It's quite a stable local community. Most of our young people live in the villages. Children who came to the pub when they were tiny are now coming back again as workers. What's great about working with local young people is their sense of freshness and enthusiasm – they are always keen to try things out, and find ways of working better. They aren't looking to do this work long-term, but it's giving them important professional skills, and part of our service to our community is giving young locals these opportunities.

Manager Ed's story

Ed Faulkner (age 24) was appointed as the general manager in 2020. He grew up seeing his parents work in the hospitality sector and, after finishing his education, he worked in management roles at a local hotel and golf club before picking up the reins at the Thorold. Ed was instrumental to the Thorold's transformation from a standard pub into a broader community space. He overhauled the menu, ensuring that food was locally sourced, installed a new pizza oven, and spearheaded a lively social and events programme.



My first job at The Thorold was as Barman, before I was approached to apply for the Food & Beverage Manager post. Although local, I didn't realise the impact of working as the General Manager would have on my life, and how much it would grow my professional skills. I'm proud of my team's hard work, and how the pub is becoming an increasingly important part of the community.

Ed is responsible for a staff team of 13 – the deputy manager, four kitchen staff and nine front of house staff – and between 10 to 15 volunteers at any one time. He has a young staff team, and just over 50 per cent are under the age of 35. As someone who has worked through the ranks in the hospitality sector himself, Ed is passionate about creating opportunities for young people to influence the running of the pub, learn and develop their skills, and better understand the wider industry.



It means new ideas are flowing all the time. It's really good for their development because they get to see what a career in hospitality is like, they gain insights into buying and selling in the industry, and get to see that there's loads more to it than just pulling a pint. It gives them confidence and really helps them later on in life. We're building them up as people.

Continuing the journey

Ed and the team are excited to be running at full capacity again following the worst of the pandemic, and are focused on developing the pub's growing roster of social activities and events for the community, including live entertainment, themed nights, coffee mornings and support groups. Thanks to their efforts, the pub has a growing reputation for quality food and drink – it received a Restaurant Guru award in both 2020 and 2021, as well as a TripAdvisor Travellers' Choice award in 2021.

What has been achieved:



Reduced social isolation, particularly for older members of the community, and improved community cohesion and pride.



Opened seven days a week to provide vital local services in a rural community.



Created high-quality training and development opportunities for local young people.




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