

The People-Powered Shift

How compassion, connection and our collective power can take forward the next stage of people-powered public services



About this series

The People-Powered Shift is one in a series of learning products which captures the learning around people-powered public services, what it looks like, and what it could help us achieve. It draws from over ten years of work at Nesta on people-powered public services, but particularly

from practical funds and experimentation from 2014-2020 as part of the Centre for Social Action Innovation Fund, in partnership with the Department for Digital Culture Media and Sport (DCMS). Other learning outputs from this series include:



About Nesta

Nesta is an innovation foundation. For us, innovation means turning bold ideas into reality and changing lives for the better.

We use our expertise, skills and funding in areas where there are big challenges facing society.

Nesta is based in the UK and supported by a financial endowment. We work with partners around the globe to bring bold ideas to life to change the world for good.

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The People-Powered Shift

How compassion, connection and our collective power can take forward the next stage of people-powered public services

Inspired by the learning of seven years of the Centre for Social Action Innovation Funds

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Executive summary

Over the last ten years, Nesta has been working to make the case for a radical shift in the relationship between citizen and state, redistributing power and plugging citizens back into our places, institutions, public services and democracies. Not only will this shift better address some of the complex challenges we currently face, but will also enable citizens to have healthier, happier lives.

Through a series of programmes we have researched, grant-financed and supported people-powered innovations which put compassion, connection and collective power at their heart. Working alongside leading innovations inside and outside of public services, the work has supported the field leaders experimenting with new models and new ways of working.

In this report, drawing particularly from the two phases of the Centre for Social Action Innovation Fund running from 2013-2020, we look at both the learnings from the innovations and what needs to shift to take forward the next stage of people-powered public services. We know these approaches work. Together these 116 innovations have worked with over 100,000 people to help improve the lives of over 665,000 people – alleviating loneliness, enabling young people to thrive and saving lives.

An exciting public service reform agenda is underway. Leading public services, institutions and places have realised that they have been designing out social connection, delivering to us rather than harnessing our compassion and collective power. New approaches and ways of working have been grappling with ways to better harness people power. But we cannot risk leaving these approaches on the margins.

To move this from the margins to the mainstream, based on the learning of hundreds of innovations and their public service partners, we outline eight fundamental people-powered shifts that we think will accelerate the transition to a more people-powered future for our public services:

► **People-powered shift 1**
Unleashing collective power

► **People-powered shift 2**
Fundamentally shifting public service culture, mindset and structure to support people-powered approaches

► **People-powered shift 3**
Changing commissioning from procurement to involvement and design

► **People-powered shift 4**
Starting from social connections and relationships

► **People-powered shift 5**
We the people – the do-it-together society

► **People-powered shift 6**
Shifting how we evidence and value people-powered approaches

► **People-powered shift 7**
Investing in the conditions and capabilities for for people power

► **People-powered shift 8**
Realising the neighbourhood as the unit of change

Now more than ever, we need to make time for one another – and public services and civil society need to help be part of this solution. In light of the learnings from the Centre for Social Action Innovation Funds, we believe three phases of action are needed to help shape the acceleration of the people power shift in light of COVID-19.



People-powered shift: Respond

How we can enable people power to support individuals and communities in the next phase of the COVID-19 response

Recommendation 1

Fund local areas to bolster and further localise the voluntary response.



People-powered shift: Recover

How we can enable a people-powered recovery

Recommendation 2

Citizens' Assembly for COVID-19 recovery.

Recommendation 3

Accelerating a people-powered shift across a local ecosystem to build culture, mindset and ways of working beyond COVID-19.

Recommendation 4

Substantial investment in creating the conditions for connected and thriving communities.



People-powered shift: Renew

How we can renew to enable a bigger people-powered shift for healthier and happier lives

Recommendation 5

Shaping the long term conditions for people-powered shift – a national strategy for civic empowerment and participation.

Many public service reforms and social change movements come and go, but the bubbling energy and movement for a more people-powered future can be accelerated with the right support. Critically, as we outline in the report, we know many of the services and approaches that are needed already exist. We just need to get serious about the investment that's needed to make the shift.

1

Compassion,
connection, and
collective power:
People power for
the new era of
public services



“The group is not built on the idea of a charitable donation of time and effort, but on the principle that at any time, any member could need help or have something to offer.”

London mutual aid group

We all need help from time to time, and our desire to help each other runs deep. We are, after all, social animals: compassion, connection and collective action lies at the heart of what it is to be human. From early civilisation to today, we have survived and thrived because of this instinct.

Amidst the devastation and uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, we saw compassion, a desire to connect and the power of collective action spread incredibly quickly. Neighbours helped neighbours; thousands of people set up and supported each other in mutual aid groups; we clapped for carers and key workers across the country; 750,000 registered to be NHS volunteers; and thousands more got involved in their community. This compassion and desire to connect is clearly catching: as social psychologist Jonathan Haidt has found, even seeing or reading about the generosity and courage of others elevates and inspires us to be better people and to do similar actions of our own.¹

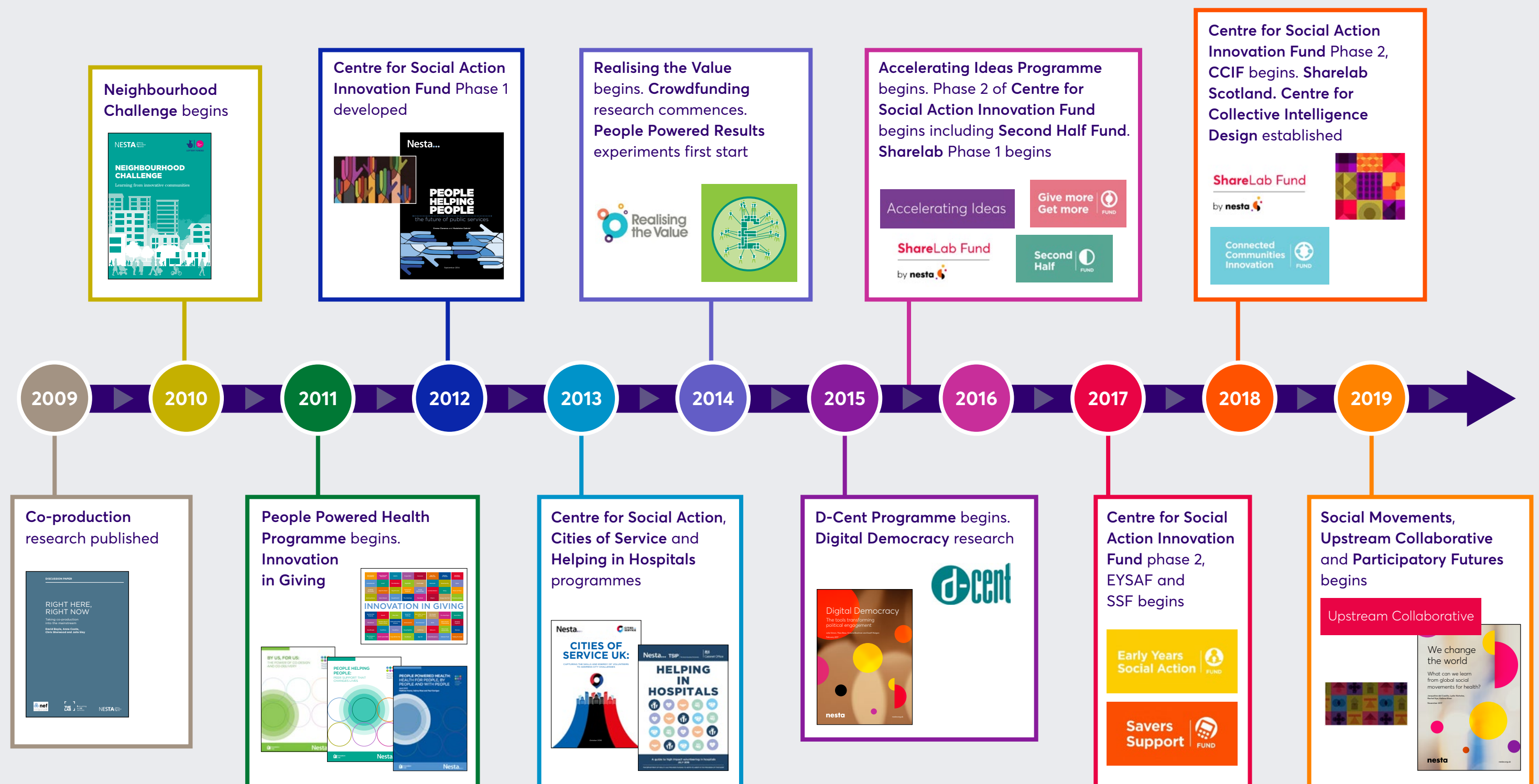
In July 2020, as neighbourhoods, towns and cities opened up after a period of lockdown, people across the country talked about the changes they had made: many had connected with neighbours in new ways and stories of support, compassion and collective action were shared over and over. So how can we take forward the community connections made during this period, and how do we use this energy to shape both the neighbourhoods and society we want?

1.1 Nesta's interest in people-powered public services

Over the last ten years, Nesta has been working to make the case for a radical reimagining of the relationship between citizen and state: one that redistributes power, with public services enabling communities and citizens as partners to better address the complex challenges we face, and enabling healthier, happier lives.

Through a series of programmes we have researched, grant-financed and supported people-powered innovations which put compassion, connection and collective power at their heart. Working alongside leading innovations inside and outside of public services, our work has supported the field leaders to experiment with new models and new ways of working.

Figure 1: A decade of making the case for people-powered public services



The work has created a compelling set of demonstrators and approaches across a number of contexts and policy areas, helping articulate some of the routes forward – be it on [People-Powered Health](#), [Creative Councils](#), [Sharelab](#), [Reimaging Help](#), [Social movements](#) and the [Upstream Collaborative](#). Together they have shown there is no shortage of compelling examples of new models that can help us make this shift – but too often, they remain on the margins.

Over the last seven years, Nesta has been helping catalyse these approaches, experimenting through our work on the Centre for Social Action Innovation Funds in partnership with the Office for Civil Society (formerly at the Cabinet Office and now at the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport).

This work aimed to grow the most promising models of people-powered public services to demonstrate the potential of these approaches and help foster a movement of change. Across two phases of work, from 2013-2020, the funds have backed some of the most exciting innovations in the field: initiatives like [Code Club](#), [Shared Lives Plus](#), [The Cares Family](#), [U Motif](#), and [GoodSam](#). We've also walked with social ventures as they go through the pains of growth and face the challenges of innovating in a system, learning about some of the harsh realities of creating a new normal.

Together, Nesta and the Office for Civil Society have supported 116 leading innovations, providing over £21.8 million in funding, with further substantial non-financial support. Together we have also supported the creation of an evidence base that we hope will help these innovations and others go further faster.

2,271 innovations
submitted ideas
to Nesta



£21.8 million grant funding
awarded, plus substantial
non-financial support

116 grants
awarded to
108 organisations



£34.2 million matched
resources secured by projects
in lifetime of the funds

665,000 helped by 100,000 people
giving their time, skills and support



While some of the innovations have entered the mainstream – [Code Club](#), [VIY](#), [Good Gym](#) or [Shared Lives](#) – others struggled to take hold. The 116 innovations span a broad range of public service priority areas, demonstrating people-powered approaches are not just for health or education, instead offering a whole system public service reform agenda.

Themes

Health and wellbeing

Social care and ageing well

Loneliness and social connections throughout our lives

Community resilience in emergencies

Supporting families

Education and helping young people thrive

Climate crisis

Financial resilience and employment

The learning and insights from these innovations demonstrate the opportunities we have in the coming decades to redesign public service solutions with people power at their heart. Too often we are presented with a false dichotomy – maintain the public services we have, or save money by putting in volunteers to create a 'big society'.

In reality, the reform agenda needed is far more subtle – and the innovations we backed demonstrate that there is another way. They show us that we need to start with individuals' assets and strengths, to build from the compassion and connections in our families and communities, to create platforms for more collective action with civil society and others, and to combine all of those things with the resources, expertise and infrastructure of the state.

1.2 This paper: Practical learning to support the people-powered shift

This paper builds on learnings from hundreds of innovations, drawing together a case for changing the ways our public services are organised. Specifically, it outlines how a wave of leading innovations inside, alongside and outside of mainstream public services have been shaping a better way of combining the very best of evidence, expertise and professional practice of the state with the compassion, connection and collective power of citizens and communities in order to shape healthier and happier lives.

This revolution is already in train. One of the most compelling things about the vanguard of change is that it often started at the frontline, and has been led by practitioners frustrated by the current models of public service, who wanted to create something different and better. To make a change, they knew they needed to work with citizens in different ways.

From East Ayrshire to Wigan, from Barnsley to Barcelona, leading public service innovators globally have been redefining the relationship between citizens and the state, and the very core of what our public services are for. Outside of public services, a wave of exciting civil society organisations from Participatory City to Grapevine have also been shaking up services to create platforms to enhance individual agency and power, and support citizens to shape social change together. The organisations we outline in this paper fit into this rich and compelling ecosystem.

Across the last decade, the field has become even richer with ideas as leading thinkers and organisations have taken the baton of this social revolution further – the work of Hillary Cottam's Radical Help, Alex Fox's New Health and Care system, the Centre for Welfare Reform, New Economics Foundation, New Citizenship Project, Centre for Public Impact, RSA, Compass' work on 45° of change, and NLGN's recent work on Community Power to name but a few.

We have also been fortunate to work with a variety of organisations in this space, from The Health Foundation for our people-powered health work to Collaborate in the Upstream Collaborative, alongside a cadre of democracy innovators in countries across Europe experimenting with the scale of potential to create policy change with and by the people. Together, the work shows that change is not only possible – it's happening. However, as William Gibson wrote: *"the future is already here – it's just not very evenly distributed."*²

We have helped research and frame the opportunities to share learnings and identify and back this vanguard through the highs and lows of change. Our ambition has always been to shine a light on a series of compelling, but isolated, examples to set out the possibilities of moving new ways of working into the mainstream.

By sharing stories and insights from some of the innovators part of the Centre for Social Action Innovation Funds, alongside an outline of practical ways to take the work further, this paper seeks to add further weight to the social reform agenda, shifting people-powered public services from the margins to the mainstream.



Beth Crockatt

Stoke Association, Peer support group

2

Unleashing the potential of people-powered public services



2.1 The innovation imperative: Complex challenges demand people-powered approaches

There are many compelling reasons to redesign public services to more actively engage and unleash our potential as citizens and communities. Our public services are facing a new set of challenges that current ways of organising are no longer able to meet: from rising demand, ageing populations, the rapid rise of new technologies, large-scale shifts in our economies, changes to the way we work and existential threats such as the climate crisis.

Falling trust in politicians and local councils have opened up a deficit of legitimacy,³ with a rising sense of powerlessness over many aspects of our lives. 47 per cent of people report feeling they have no influence over national decision making; 43 per cent of people feel the same locally.⁴ We have become increasingly distant and detached from decisions that affect our lives and the services we all use: yet as citizens we increasingly expect more responsive, more personalised public services that better support our aspirations and needs.

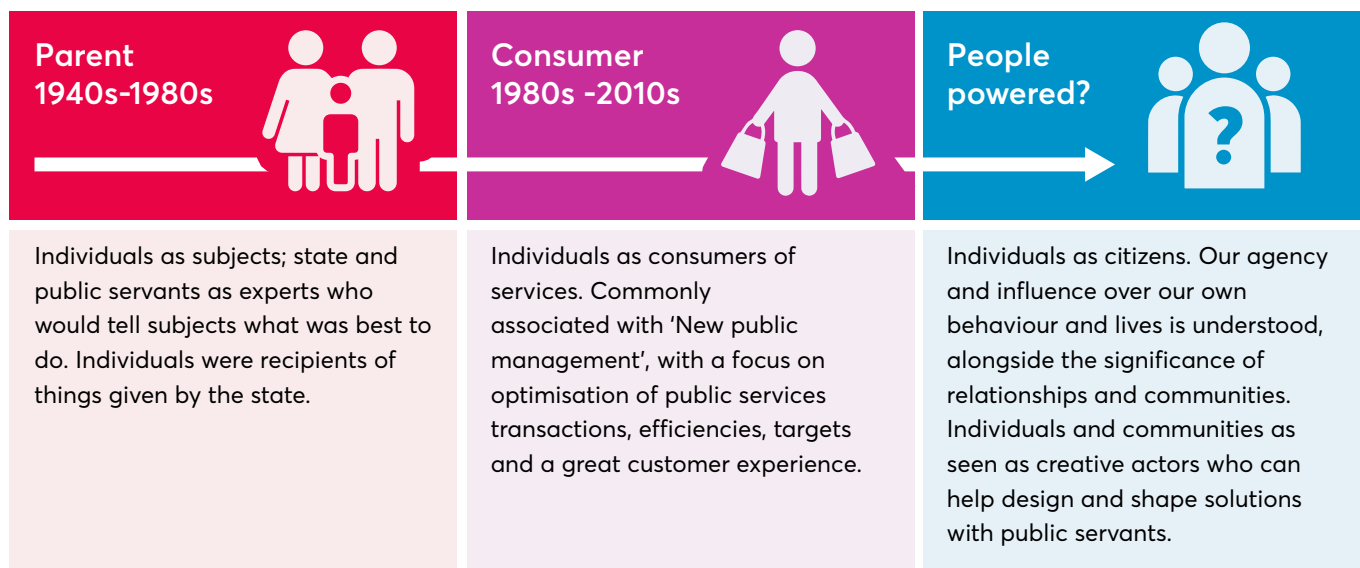
The decade of austerity and tight fiscal arrangements have only served to heighten this dilemma. Whilst the immediate crisis in public services would be mitigated through committing greater funding to support them, the problems facing our public services were entrenched long before austerity began and would not be easily fixed by the same old ways of doing things. Even if money poured in there would be no easy solution.

The social, behavioural and environmental influences on our lives are the strongest determinants of our outcomes, and each weave together – they cannot be addressed in isolation. Our public services, on the other hand, were designed to cure specific problems, so even with the best intentions are not able to solve some of the most entrenched social challenges, which by their nature need more social solutions.

Four out of ten GPs report that they are seeing patients because they are lonely rather than need medical help.⁵ Thousands of young people leave care each year not only needing housing and financial security but also a strong support network to help them out when they have a problem.⁶ These social challenges need social solutions to support us to thrive, not top down services. As we outline in *The Nightingale*,⁷ our report on the social, behavioural and environmental influences on health, we need to reorientate public service approaches around individuals and their support system first.

Whilst our public services are always evolving, a crude depiction of the three eras of post-war public services shows a shift from the state as an all-knowing expert to a more enabling role. As we have seen in pioneering public services up and down the country, there is an ongoing redesign of relationships with citizens. How this shift has been occurring is explored further in our paper, *New Operating Models for Local Government*.⁸

Figure 2: Three paradigms of our post war public services



As public services and civil society organisations experiment and learn to put citizens at their heart, there is an opportunity for a people-powered shift to a new paradigm for public services.

2.2 Public services and the room for citizen action

As our public services were created in the 1940s, William Beveridge, their architect, realised a fundamental flaw in their design: they limited the potential power of citizens and voluntary action.⁹

"The state in organizing security should not stifle incentive, opportunity, responsibility. It should leave room and encouragement for voluntary action."

William Beveridge

That isn't to say that the involvement of citizens alongside and in public services does not have a rich history. Before the development of the post-war welfare state, many key services such as housing, health, and education were provided by benevolent philanthropists, charities and other types of voluntary organisations. Even as services became increasingly professionalised and systematised, voluntary action continued to play a key role.

Whether we call it formal or informal volunteering, giving, social action or simply 'people helping people', spending some of your time helping each other out is a deeply ingrained part of our culture. Around 830,000 people donate blood each year,¹⁰ providing a lifeline

both in emergencies and for people who need long-term treatment. School governors power the governance and leadership of our schools, with 370,000 people¹¹ giving their time regularly to support their local school. 32,000 citizens¹² give their time in a variety of roles in the police, including as special constables, and at least 78,000 people give their time formally and regularly in a variety of roles in England's acute hospitals. An estimated 1.7 million volunteer in health or care around the NHS and community support services.¹³

Public services are not the only place giving makes a difference. First aid training has been with us for over 140 years, with organisations like St John Ambulance putting lifesaving skills in the hands of citizens. For over 200 years RNLI has saved lives at sea, with volunteers supported by expert staff making up 95 per cent of the organisation's workforce. 2.3 million people are members of Neighbourhood Watch groups, helping to forge more connected and trusting communities and working together to prevent crime. Organisations such as National Childbirth Trust support thousands of new parents through volunteer-led groups enabling parents to connect, share knowledge, provide mutual support and build networks that last. Many of these approaches are so woven into the fabric of our lives and communities that they can easily be overlooked.

And many of the biggest transformations to our society have come through the collective action and campaigns of social movements. From the Disability Rights Movement, the service user movement driving the deinstitutionalisation of mental health services or the AIDS movement demanding equal access to healthcare, large-scale shifts in the views of the populations and our provision of public services have been powered by often radical activism.

Yet for too long we restricted the roles that citizens could play. Whilst discussions around co-production and using new methods such as user-centred design and ethnography to understand the experience of services from the individual's perspective have come to prominence over the last ten to twenty years,¹⁴ there has been little to connect the varied roles and actions we can take to genuinely shift the relationship between citizen and state.

At its core, this agenda was built on the idea that public services needed to move away from a paternalistic model in which things are done to people to a more collaborative approach where people are actively involved in the design and delivery of the services that they rely on.

"No society has the money to buy, at market prices, what it takes to raise children, make a neighbourhood safe, care for the elderly, make democracy work or address systemic injustices... The only way the world is going to address social problems is by enlisting the very people who are now classified as 'clients' and 'consumers' and converting them into co-workers, partners and rebuilders."

Edgar Cahn



Coram Beanstalks reading support

Together, people-powered public services create a partnership combining:

- Our individual assets as people and agents of our own personal change
- The compassion and vital support of families and communities
- The power of collective action and civil society
- The resources, expertise and infrastructure of the state.

In practice, the roles citizens can play and the actions they participate in can take many forms. We act as neighbours, friends, peers, sharers, decision-makers, deliberators, mentors, leaders, creators, activists, advocates, volunteers, carers and sources of knowledge and expertise. As can be seen in the typology of people-powered action, models include approaches that enable formal volunteering, those that build connections and reciprocal support, and those that involve people in deliberation, decision-making and designing solutions.

A typology of people powered action

Donating money

Individual giving of money to organisations, projects, or causes that matter to individuals, typically outside the realm of the state and sometimes in opposition to it.

Giving things

Giving your possessions or resources to people, groups, or platforms for the re-use by and/or benefit of others. These could include acts like giving items to a local charity shop or donating blood.

Giving and sharing data

The sharing of data for medical and scientific research, policy-making, and humanitarian purposes to improve private and public life.

Sharing money and resources

Sharing your financial or non-financial resources, either peer to peer or through a community group or a platform, for the use or benefit of others in your community.

Peer support

The mutual and reciprocal exchange of emotional and practical support between peers in and outside of public services. Rarely considered volunteering by those who do it.

Community action

Giving help to support a community event, campaign, or project run by neighbours or a local community group.

Acts of neighbourliness

This informal type of social action can range for doing the shopping for an elderly

neighbour to helping a young person with their homework. This might be regular or one-off, and often involves degrees of reciprocity and mutual benefit.

Caring

The voluntary and informal care for a relative or friend (other than one's own children), who may otherwise require state care.

Regular volunteering in public institution

People freely giving their time, skills and expertise (in person or online) through an established framework to enhance and add capacity to public services delivered by public organisations.

Regular volunteering within civil society

People freely giving their time, skills, and expertise (in person or online), through an established framework

or formal role for a charity or community group. This mode of helping may or may not work alongside public services.

One-off or infrequent volunteering

People freely giving their time (in person or online) through an established framework to enhance and add capacity to public services during one-off events such as an emergency.

Involvement of frontline staff

The recognition and involvement of frontline staff in management and decision-making structures and processes or generation of new ideas.

Citizens providing ideas and expertise

Methods to enable citizens to provide ideas for new, improved or future solutions, and develop proposals individually, collectively or collaboratively; ranging from traditional written consultation to more interactive and deliberative forms.

Citizens making decisions

A range of models of direct, participatory, or

deliberate decision making, where citizens have formal power within an organised context to make decisions on specific issues that matter to them.

Co-production and co-design of services

The involvement of citizens and/or frontline staff, sharing power with professionals or management, to plan and deliver services together, often in a smaller and more intensive setting and recognising the contributions both partners have to make.

Advocacy

People volunteering their time to help another person talk about their needs and wishes or representing their voice on their behalf.

Co-operative models

Services and organisations such as co-ops and community benefit societies that are owned and managed collectively by a range of local stakeholders – workers, service users, and members of the local community.

Community stewardship of assets

The management, but not necessarily ownership, of community assets by community groups and organisations that have responsibility for funding, managing and maintaining their local assets.

Community ownership of assets

The legal transfer of a public or private asset (e.g. a building, park, pub) to a formalised community group or organisation to own and manage for the community benefit.

Social movements

People giving their time to make the case for changes or improvements to public services, society in general and/or to self-advocate. This can be initiated by individuals, communities, unions or civil society organisations.

Community organising

An approach to community empowerment and development that focuses on one-to-one relationship

building, community capacity and mobilising people-power to take action and address social inequality.

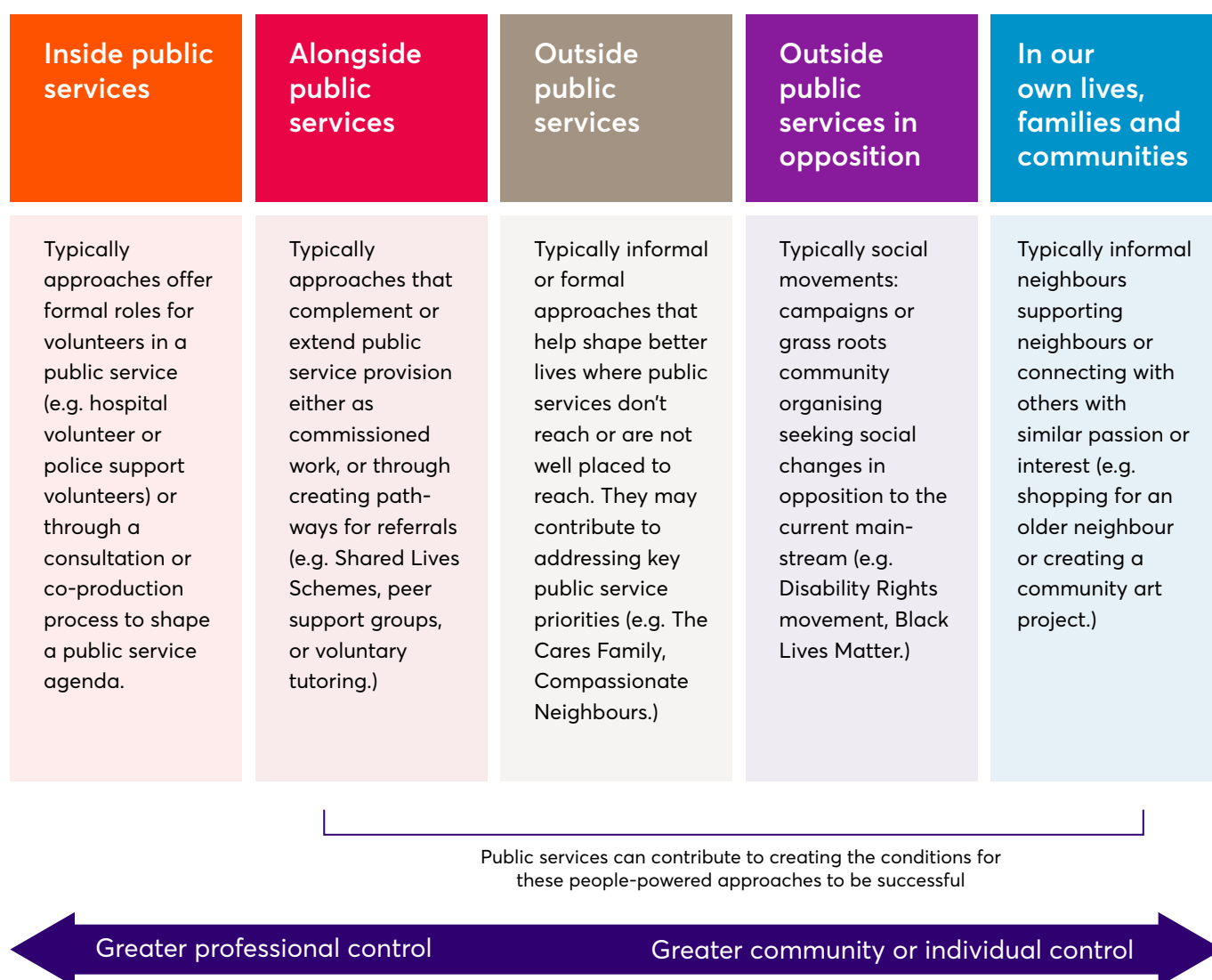
Protest

A form of individual or collective civic participation typically framed in opposition to power and that seeks to change the status quo, often in a more radical or fundamental way.



Critically, though, it is not just what is in the direct control of public services that matters. To tackle some of the biggest challenges and to prevent crisis, many public services have started to see their role as not purely delivering services but to also enable the conditions for people power. In Nesta's recent paper *Introducing New Operating Models for Local Government*, we outline some of the local authorities making this people power shift a central organising principle of their work – places like City of York Council, Leeds City Council, or the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham.

Figure 3: Creating the conditions for people powered approaches inside, alongside and outside of public services



3

People power
in action:
What can it
enable?



3.1 The people power shift: What's at stake

A review of the evidence from the field, alongside learning and evaluation from the 116 innovations we worked with as part of the Centre for Social Action Innovation Funds, indicates that when designed and delivered well people-powered approaches can create a number of benefits to us as individuals and communities. Eight of these benefits are highlighted in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Eight ways that people-powered approaches can impact individuals and families



Our work has also found that working with individuals, communities and others to develop people-powered approaches can also unlock real value for public services. Seven of the ways we have found public services can benefit are highlighted in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Seven ways that people-powered approaches can create benefits for public services



Economic analysis undertaken as part of the Centre for Social Action Innovation Fund suggests the conservative value of people power is at least £103 billion, and £122 billion a year in measurable economic benefit. As we outline in *The Value of People Power*,¹⁵ this crude calculation fails to capture lots of the value these approaches create, but does demonstrate the enormity of the contributions and what this means for us as a society. The work of the innovations we have backed indicates that we persistently undervalue these approaches and what they offer in shaping the lives and communities we want, as well as better enabling us to tackle the big challenges we face as society.

Whilst it is obviously feasible to deliver many approaches for or to us as individuals and citizens, the people-powered means of creating these outcomes matters – unlocking our compassion and desire to connect, providing us with purpose and belonging, and enabling us to have a greater sense of our individual and collective power.

Yet enabling people to help others through compassion, connection and collective power is not yet a central organising principle for public services: its transformative potential remains underdeveloped, with much more that could be done and much more that could be offered to us as individuals, families, communities and societies.

3.2 Changing lives: How people-powered approaches can reshape public service approaches

Here, we spotlight stories covering the eight policy themes that innovations sought to tackle, from health and wellbeing to education and helping young people thrive. Together they demonstrate some of the ways people-powered approaches can achieve change. Alongside this, we share some short insights of other projects from these fields.

There is no one model: cookie cutter replication is unlikely. But together, they demonstrate how people-powered innovations can achieve impact by harnessing the kindness, connection and collective power of communities. The lessons they offer also show what is required if we are to maintain and grow such approaches beyond the COVID-19 crisis.



Eden project, Deep Roots New Shoots



City of York Council's health champions address health and wellbeing inequalities



The Centre for Social Action Innovation Fund backed City of York Council to grow its Community Champion model as part of the city's People Helping People strategy.

One in four of us is living with a long-term health or diagnosable mental health condition.¹⁶ A complex range of genetic, lifestyle and environmental factors play out in determining our individual health, which are more important

than traditional healthcare in determining a healthy population.¹⁷ To help manage conditions or support loved ones in the best possible way, it is simply not enough to make small changes to the health and care systems.



The story

In York, power is shifting – but while people are increasingly coming together to define what they want and build more connected, caring and compassionate neighbourhoods and communities, some communities have health and wellbeing outcomes that fall far short of those enjoyed by the majority of York's residents.



The council aims to create the conditions needed for all people to enjoy healthy, active, independent lives, and to do this has deliberately aligned multiple initiatives and teams to enable a force for system change: a new normal. It is intentionally trying to shift its efforts away from intervention at a point of crisis in people's lives towards a new culture intervening upstream, enabling collective action. This is a more enabling, facilitative approach, reflecting collaborative leadership and shared purpose.

As part of its Local Area Coordination approach, City of York Council has created Community Health Champions, individuals from the community who are formally trained and supported but who focus largely on their connections and passions. Champions empower and motivate people within their families, communities and workplaces to get involved in healthy social activities, create new activities to meet local needs, and connect people to relevant community activities and support.

Many Champions have gone on to design activities with their friends and neighbours to help people to do the things that they want to and stay healthy and well. From Tai Chi to Nordic walking to walking football people are shaping a healthier and more connected York.

Gav's story

"A few years ago I was finding things very difficult. I was very inactive, overweight and not washing; there were times where I couldn't get out of bed. Ultimately, I was admitted to hospital with severe depression.

Following my discharge from hospital I started making a slow recovery, but medication was not working for me. I came into contact with Jennie, the Local Area Coordinator for my area, at a community café which helped me to connect with others in my local area. With time, exercise and positive social interactions I slowly and surely became mentally and

physically strong. I feel fortunate to have my life back and to have turned things around. Because I know how important it's been to exercise, feel good and be healthy again, I want to inspire other people.

In September 2018, I enrolled as a Community Health Champion. Following Champion training, I met our GoodGym Run Leader and Move the Masses founder and have led on new opportunities to support people who are going through difficult times to help improve their health and connect with others.

I look at my turnaround as a minor miracle. Being part of a programme like Community Health Champions allows me to grow as a person whilst having a positive impact on other people's lives, and I am constantly seeking out other opportunities to get involved! Becoming active in my community has allowed me to grow as a person with the added benefit of having a positive impact on others. This innovation works because it is led by the people for the people and delivered where we live."

Impact

75 health champions

across York support families, neighbours and communities



Over 1,800 people

people so far have connected to new healthy lifestyle activity in York, as well as developing new connections and friendships



New activities have blossomed across the city, representing the interests of local people

Beyond supporting people immediately, City of York Council can now adopt a mainstream public health agenda with a greater preventative focus

Key learnings for creating people-powered health and wellbeing

City-wide collaborative strategy: The work has been founded on a city-wide collaborative strategy developed across public services and civil society organisations. Together, the York People Helping People Strategy has provided a shared agenda for change, bringing together local public services, civil society and citizens.

Strengths-based: Asset-based approaches have enabled the work to focus on 'what's strong, not what's wrong'. This has unleashed a whole community of actors leading the change in the

city that matters to them and their communities. This approach would not be possible if focus was on assessing needs and gatekeeping scarce resources.

Communities and relationships in the lead: City of York Council has worked to recognise the power of the citizen and neighbourhood as the cornerstones of a more connected, compassionate and caring city where relationships and community building are core to future health and wellbeing.



Other examples of people-powered approaches for health and wellbeing

Building on Nesta's wider work for more people-powered health, the Centre for Social Action Innovation Fund backed 23 people-powered

approaches to improve health and wellbeing. Explore four further examples from the portfolio:

Stroke Association Voluntary Groups



Creates and supports a network of Stroke Association Voluntary Groups, volunteer-led peer support groups based in local communities across the UK. Through the support they offer, these groups aim to reduce social isolation, improve mental wellbeing, improve self-management and help stroke survivors and carers have a better quality of life after stroke.

The Stroke Association have mobilised 1,075 volunteers to help lead and run their peer support groups which have supported 6,497 people to date.

British Lung Foundation Breathe Easy Groups



The British Lung Foundation has a network of people-led Breathe Easy groups, run by community-based volunteers. These promote self-management, health and wellbeing via peer support, and education for older people living with long term respiratory illness.

The Breathe Easy groups have supported 8,289 older people living with a lung condition to date.

Helping in Hospitals



Drawing on the work of King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, ten hospital trusts experimented with approaches to build significant volunteering and community involvement to help them achieve greater impact.

Kingston Hospital NHS Trust reduced patient anxiety about discharge by 28 per cent and Sheffield University Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust increased their patient mood score by 2.1 (on a scale of 1-10).

Aesop's Dance to Health



Dance to Health is a falls prevention dance programme for older people. It combines evidence-based exercise with the creativity, energy and sociability of dance, alongside peer support and a community that creates and social connections to help integrate the exercise into life.

Dance to Health grew to 34 groups across seven areas, involving 1,104 participants. There was a 58 per cent reduction in the number of falls.



Shared Lives: A relationship not a service for improved social care

SharedLivesPlus
THE UK NETWORK FOR SHARED LIVES AND HOMESHARE

The Centre for Social Action Innovation Fund backed [Shared Lives Plus](#) to grow the Shared Lives Network. They have subsequently been supported through the Nesta and National Lottery Community Fund Accelerating Ideas Programme.

In 2017 to 2018 £22.7 billion was spent on social care in the UK – 1.1 per cent of GDP. But the help, care and support that adults of all ages may need as a result of disability, illness, or other life circumstances is only available to those with the highest needs and lowest means: we are neither providing the support that people need or want.

As the [#socialcarefutures](#)¹⁸ alliance outlines, *"we all want to live in the place we call home with*

the people and things that we love, in communities where we look out for one another, doing the things that matter to us." And whilst there has been some progress in recognising 'service users' as individuals with unique circumstances, assets and abilities to live their life the way they want to, the perpetual social care crisis and fear of an explosion of costs has drowned out the broader discussion and people-powered shift needed to support us all to live healthier, happier lives.



The story

Shared Lives is a type of provision for young people or adults who need care and support. In a Shared Lives care arrangement, the person who needs care and support moves in with, or regularly visits, an approved Shared Lives carer. People who might want this support include older people, people with learning disabilities or those with mental health issues as an alternative to traditional care services in residential institutions.

Shared Lives care arrangements are facilitated and supervised by a Shared Lives scheme which recruits, trains and approves Shared Lives carers and matches them with someone needing care. Shared Lives Carers receive payment for sharing their homes, but the commitment goes above

and beyond a job as it means sharing a whole life together. Shared Lives Plus is the membership network that matches approved carers with adults in need of support, and provides resources, training, insurance and ongoing support to carers, championing the benefits of the model at national level at the same time.

"Shared Lives gives people a good life, involving the things that most of us take for granted: feeling loved, belonging, developing relationships, and spending time doing things we enjoy."

[Anna McEwan, Shared Lives Plus](#)

Meg's story

Since she was a young teenager, Meg had had mental ill health. At 24, she was admitted into hospital, where she spent the next four and a half years.

As she recovered, Meg wanted something different to help her take a step forward: *"I knew I wanted to feel a part of something and move away from clinical, boundaried care"*. By chance, she

came across Shared Lives, and with the support of her clinical care team went forward with a placement to enable her to leave hospital.

Meg was matched with Hayley, a Shared Lives carer. Meg and Hayley hit it off, and it wasn't just Meg who gained. *"In terms of the support it goes both ways. My Shared Lives carer isn't just sharing her life, she's sharing mine."* As Hayley said: *"It's not a professional*

relationship, it's a real family... that's why it works."

Meg has thrived, reaching her goals and feeling part of a wider community. *"I never thought I would be where I am today - just because I was used to people making decisions for me and*

taking things away... I feel like I would have never have got better without Shared Lives." Meg lived with Hayley for 17 months before moving into her own house: she believes Shared Lives saved her life.

Impact

150 Shared Lives schemes

connect nearly 15,000 people living ordinary lives with over 10,000 carers sharing their home and community across the UK

92% of Shared Lives schemes

receive a Care Quality Commission rating of excellent or good, the CQC's best performing social care model



£230m of local government savings

per year could be made if each area of the UK increased provision in line with those who use Shared Lives the most



Key lessons from people-powered approaches to social care

Humanise: Shared Lives is about actual living: most people wouldn't even know it as a service. People are just part of the family.

Payment: Shared Lives carers are not volunteers: they are paid. However, the time, love and support goes way beyond a job. Like foster care, it recognises the enormous contributions of carers, and enables flexible employment.

Rethinking risk: By delegating decision-making to a human level, Shared Lives enables many firsts for people – making and keeping friends, going on holiday, developing new communications skills, developing new hobbies, and even getting long dreamed for tattoos. Many of these things would have potentially been prevented by a more system-led risk-management approach.



Other examples of people-powered approaches to social care and ageing well

Building on Nesta's wider work for more people-powered health, the Centre for Social Action Innovation Fund backed nine people-powered

approaches to support social care and ageing well. Explore two further examples from the portfolio:

Henpower, Equal Arts



Equal Arts' 'Henpower' is an asset-based relational care model that aims to empower older people to build positive relationships through hen-keeping, with

improved wellbeing, reduced loneliness and reduced depression.

They scaled to reach 20 more care homes to implement Henpower with over 6,000 residents.

British Red Cross, First Call



British Red Cross' First Call offers up to 12 weeks of practical, emotional and signposting support from a volunteer to those recovering from a crisis

such as hospital discharge or bereavement.

Since its launch, the scheme has supported 900 people who are recovering from a crisis.



Compassionate Neighbours: A movement to change loneliness and isolation



St Joseph's
Hospice

The Centre for Social Action Innovation Fund backed St. Joseph's Hospice to spread the Compassionate Neighbours model to ten other hospices.

With ever more efficient ways to communicate and transact, many of us have experienced a rapid increase in the number and reach of our personal and professional connections. And yet despite these growing networks we find ourselves feeling increasingly disconnected and alone. Somewhere between 6 per cent and 18 per cent of the population often feel lonely, 17 per cent of older people are in contact with family, friends and neighbours less than once a week and 11 per cent are in contact less than once a month.¹⁹

This is not just an issue for older adults: recent evidence suggests that over 11.3 per cent of children are 'often' lonely, with those receiving free school meals, living in cities, or with a long-term health condition experiencing higher levels of loneliness.²⁰ Loneliness can have a negative impact on huge parts of our lives including health, wellbeing and self esteem, and has been linked to early deaths, increased risk of heart disease, depression, stroke, cognitive decline and Alzheimer's.²¹

There has been an increased focus on tackling loneliness following the Jo Cox Commission and subsequent government appointment of a Minister for Loneliness and national loneliness

strategy.²² Our need for social connection is at the heart of what it is to be human, yet both services and changes to modern life are too often designing out our connections.

The story

Compassionate Neighbours helps unlock people's compassion and purpose to build strong, connected communities and a more caring society, particularly for those experiencing life-limiting illnesses and loss.



In 2014, St. Joseph's Hospice developed the Compassionate Neighbours model. Built on foundations of community development principles, the Neighbours provide emotional and social support to members of their community, who are connected to the programme through self-referral or referrals from the community, hospice or healthcare professionals. Inspired by a successful model of participation in Kerala, India²³ and the Compassionate Communities Movement, the approach works to promote health and wellbeing through the organised efforts of society, emphasising collective responsibility.

Compassionate Neighbours are local people trained and matched with a community member to build genuine friendships. Training is an

immersive and reflective approach, connecting people with a community of neighbours from a rich diversity of experiences and representing the breadth of their communities. The approach also galvanises Neighbours to be braver and more open talking about grief, loss and end of life, enabling a more systemic change in how we see and experience end of life.

The approach also demands a different role for hospices, enabling and supporting communities to act but not controlling or creating boundaries. Neighbours and community members come together, establishing a wider movement based on sharing fun, friendship and the highs and lows of life.

Recognising the success of the model, St. Joseph's is now supporting ten further hospices to replicate the Compassionate Neighbours model across London and the South East. Each hospice tailored the approach, weaving deep relationships across their communities and enabling Compassionate Neighbours to reach all those that could benefit, no matter their relationship with the hospice.

"It has reaffirmed the importance of the relationships in my life, the ability to make new friends at any stage of your life."

Compassionate Neighbour

Agnes and Lucia's story

Agnes and Lucia were paired as Neighbours after Agnes had an amputation. She had become increasingly isolated, and spent a good deal of time at home with no one to talk to: she had

even got to the point of feeling suicidal before the match, though she now feels she has *"a good person in Lucia. All my thinking has gone, now I don't think these bad thoughts before I go to bed."*

Since the amputation, Agnes had struggled to go and meet friends, and was increasingly housebound. *"Lucia, you have changed my life. Now I can see sunshine and come out for the fresh*

air but before I was inside like a prisoner... Lucia's there for me, she asks me where I want to go."

And Lucia has gained so much from connecting with Agnes too.

"We are more like family, and some of the things she says reminds me of my mum. The match is just right, and we have formed a great friendship; we have the same sense of humour, the same personality..."

We talk about everything: about our children, our families and have been sharing our family photos. I have met Agnes' family and some of her friends. Her family now introduce me as part of their family."

Impact

11 hospices

have adopted the model in the last 3 years, providing an anchor for neighbours to connect with and support each other



1,004 Compassionate Neighbours

have been trained and matched with 617 community members to date and growing



Compassionate Neighbours themselves agreed that they had a better understanding and skills for death, dying and loss. Together, the hospices believe this will create a preventative approach to dealing with bereavement

Together, the Compassionate Neighbours and hospice team are seeking to create a social movement of compassionate places where everyone who needs one can connect with a neighbour

Key lessons for people-powered approaches to tackle loneliness and increase social connections

Reciprocity: Relationships established in a more equal way allow people to express care and support reciprocally, rather than the one-way nature of many relationships in healthcare. The universality of our experiences – in this case dying, grief and loss – opens up our vulnerability and creates a shared frame for interaction.

Power: It is critical for healthcare institutions such as hospices to reflect on how they can engage with communities on a more equal footing. Community development principles recognise the power of neighbours as equals, and seek to support them in their own actions as neighbours.

Social change upstream: Being a Compassionate Neighbour has a ripple effect. Impact was often

as important for the Neighbour themselves, enhancing their understanding of death, life and loss, and enabling them to build a supportive, connected community. The upstream benefits of well-designed approaches for individuals, communities and public services should be considered in the value of the approach, rather than just in the individual match with someone experiencing immediate loneliness or isolation.

Scale or spread: Initially the plan was to replicate the original model quite tightly, but the hospices soon discovered it needed to be looser and more tailored to the local context. Spreading practice and connection was more appropriate than scaling.²⁴



Other examples of people-powered approaches to tackling loneliness and increasing social connection

Centre for Social Action Innovation Fund
backed 14 people-powered innovations to tackle

loneliness and increase social connection.
Explore five further examples from the portfolio:

The Cares Family



The Cares Family helps people find connection and community in a disconnected age. Their work helps individuals, neighbourhoods and organisations to support relationships and empathy across perceived divides in a rapidly changing world.

The Cares Family are now in London, Manchester and Liverpool. An independent evaluation shows that as a result of taking part, 76 per cent of older neighbours feel less isolated and 81 per cent feel less lonely, while 98 per cent of young people said they felt closer to the community.

Barnsley Council and b:friend



b:friend works with Barnsley Council to address loneliness and isolation by connecting neighbours one-to-one to become friends, and through social clubs bring people together to connect and share new experiences.

Over 2000 people have attended group sessions. All older neighbours recorded higher overall wellbeing scores after three months of being paired with a befriender.

Absolutely Cultured



Absolutely Cultured built on the foundations of the city-wide volunteering they established as the 2017 UK City of Culture, with a specific aim to test the mobilisation of communities to address social isolation and loneliness.

Absolutely Cultured has engaged over 4,000 citizens across a series of community engagement programmes to create connections and spark change.

The Reader



The Reader is building a reading revolution, bringing people together and books to life in order to make warmer, healthier, stronger communities.

1,668 people are involved with one of 115 new shared reading groups in the North West. 91 per cent of group members say the reading sessions make them feel better, and 84 per cent say they've made new friends in their group.



GoodGym

GoodGym is a community of runners that combines getting fit with doing good.

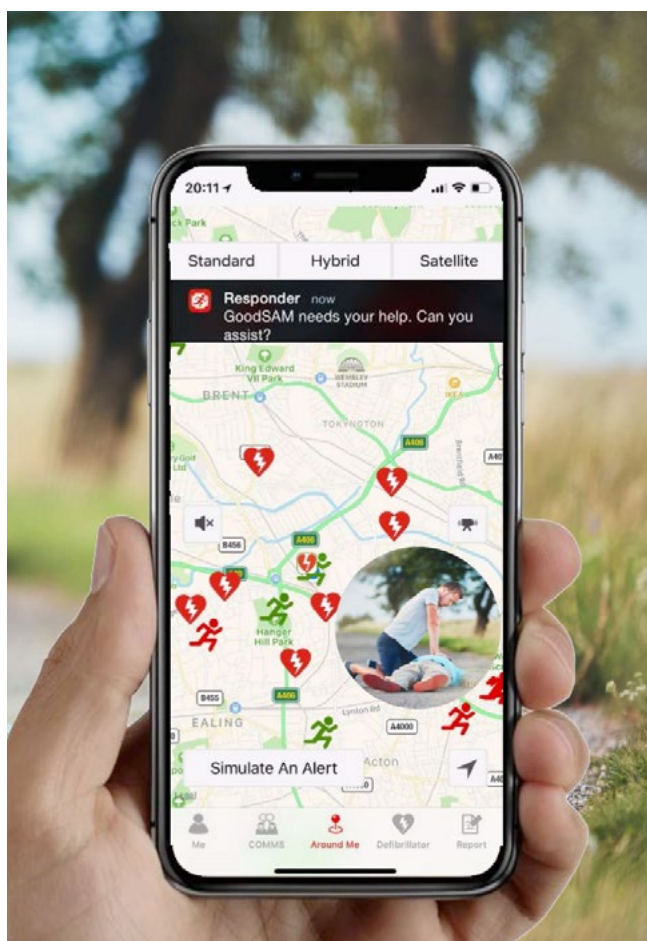
GoodGym has grown from one site to being active in 58 areas across the UK.



GoodSAM: Mobilising life-saving help in seconds



The Centre for Social Action Innovation Fund backed London Ambulance Service, North West Ambulance Service, East Midlands Ambulance Service, East of England Ambulance Service and North East Ambulance Services to adopt GoodSAM.



We are all likely to experience an emergency at some point in our lifetime. Much of the welfare state was originally conceived as a social protection, to buffer us from the consequences of inevitable emergencies and unexpected events.

Take the example of UK floods – when a crisis hits, stories of mass destruction and chaos often dominate the headlines. But in these situations we also see the extraordinary power of communities coming together: when communities organise, they can challenge the status quo and traditional notions of power and expertise.

It also demands new ways of organising and working together, from shared decision-making and allocating resources to better use of assets already within communities, showing that social challenges so often need social solutions. Social scientist Eric Klinberg's research has found that places with good social infrastructure that enabled and facilitated connections and bumping points in communities fared better when large disasters strike.²⁵

The story

GoodSAM is a medical emergency alerting platform, connecting those in medical emergency with nearby, trained first aiders to provide critical help in the minutes before an ambulance arrives: though thousands of people are trained in first aid, people with the right skills are not always in the right place at the right time.

When someone experiences a cardiac arrest, every second counts in increasing their chance of survival. The GoodSAM app allows members of the public to dial the emergency services in the usual way; at the same time an ambulance is dispatched, nearby medically qualified responders are notified and asked to respond to

the scene if they are able. This unlocks the latent skills and kindness of a community of hundreds of thousands of first aid trained professionals –and saves lives.

GoodSAM is now integrated in 11 ambulance services across the country. Whenever a 999 call is received for a cardiac arrest in these areas, the ambulance service immediately deploys both an ambulance and an alert to nearby GoodSAM responders.

Phil's Story

Phil was getting into his car after watching a rugby match when he suffered a cardiac arrest. His partner Rosemary dialled 999, and an ambulance was soon on the way – but they didn't know how quickly it would be able to get there.

Fortunately, volunteers were on the scene almost instantaneously. Within a minute and a half, two people attending a nearby judo event ran into the car park in their bare feet. They had located

a nearby defibrillator and immediately began performing CPR. Paramedics arrived more than 15 minutes later to take over and take him to receive treatment at the hospital.

But it was the attention Phil received in the critical few minutes after his cardiac arrest that helped save his life and that prevented potential brain damage. GoodSAM had dispatched the life-saving help just when it was needed.

"We are really proud to have developed a successful platform where Emergency Services and trained public volunteers work together for the joint purpose in saving lives."

Professor Mark Wilson, GoodSAM co-founder and Medical Director, neurosurgeon and air ambulance doctor

"It's fantastic how all these people have the app on their mobile phone and it's able to quickly identify where an incident has occurred and show a map of the nearest defibrillator. They do say it's that first few minutes which makes the difference, so potentially GoodSAM was the reason I survived."

Phil, GoodSAM beneficiary



**Now integrated
with 11 ambulance
services in the UK**



**100,000 registered
responders in the
UK to date**

700 alerts

triggered worldwide every day: it's estimated that a life is saved every other day through use of the app

**Platform being used to
develop further innovations
to help save lives**

Key lessons for people-powered approaches to community resilience in emergencies

Digital: Using digital technology can help us better orchestrate and coordinate untapped skills and resources in our communities.

Integration and partnership: By integrating the approach alongside ambulance service dispatch, GoodSAM had much greater impact than it would have outside the system. Governance and security is at the heart of GoodSAM, and working extensively with emergency service partners to

develop a system which truly works for them has helped them succeed.

Equipping citizens with skills and knowledge: Civil society and public services need to focus on equipping citizens with the skills and knowledge to help each other out. When they have this, an amazing resource for individuals and communities is created.



Other examples of people-powered approaches to community resilience in emergencies

The Centre for Social Action Innovation Fund backed 12 people-powered innovations to support more resilient communities in

emergencies. Explore four further examples from the portfolio:

Street Doctors



Street Doctors teaches life-saving skills to young people at risk of youth violence to keep themselves and others safe. They use a peer-to-peer teaching approach delivered by a network of young healthcare volunteers (student nurses, paramedics and doctors) who work in partnership with criminal justice services, schools, pupil referral units, sports and community groups. By putting young people at the centre of emergency first-aid provision, they empower young

people to become part of the solution to youth violence, rather than just being seen as 'part of the problem'.

Since 2013, Street Doctors have trained 18,000 young people in emergency first aid skills.

The Centre for Social Action helped them grow to 12 cities, but three years later they are now in 17, where 550 young healthcare professionals deliver training.

St John Ambulance, Community Advocates



St John Ambulance's Community Advocates and Community Champions model puts life-saving skills in the hands of community members by supporting people from communities to get simple skills and information they can then spread into their communities.

1,000 Community Champions were recruited to learn and spread first aid information and skills into their communities.

North Yorkshire Council, Ready for Anything



Ready for Anything supports people to come forward and be trained as volunteers to help communities respond and recover from emergencies in an integrated and coordinated way.

North Yorkshire County Council have signed up 376 local people to be Ready for Anything volunteers to assist in emergency situations. They have already been involved across the area to offer assistance to communities during flooding and in response to COVID-19.

British Red Cross



The British Red Cross have worked across three London local councils (Waltham Forest, Barking and Dagenham, and Redbridge) to develop community-led emergency response strategies through co-production.

They have engaged 23 community groups to date and were able to respond to COVID-19 in the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham by quickly integrating the local authority response with the voluntary sector.



Grandparents Plus: Supporting kinship carers to connect with 'someone in their shoes'



The Centre for Social Action Innovation Fund backed Grandparents Plus to grow their Kinship Connected peer support model to support more kinship carers across the country.



As the proverb goes: 'it takes a village to raise a child'. Parents are our carers, our protectors, and our first teachers, and research has shown that they are the most important influence on early childhood development.²⁶ A wealth of examples and evidence demonstrates that parents and families have assets and experiences that, when combined with great quality professional services, can lead to better outcomes for families.

But not every family has the relationships or help they need, and the helping hand or words of another parent can make all the difference. Despite the UK's rich history of parents supporting each other²⁷ through parent-led playgroups, peer support, looking after each other's children, and more formal charities dating back hundreds of years, many of the services and support created for families – especially those who are experiencing greater challenges – overlooks and undervalues the role families play in supporting themselves and each other.

Our family structures are also changing. Many people live further away from close family, almost 15 per cent of families are lone parents in the UK,²⁸ and grandparents and other family members often have different roles in looking after children as working life has shifted. Where families break down, almost 55,000 foster families help care for children and young people,²⁹ and 200,000 children are supported by kinship carers across the country.³⁰



The story

Grandparents Plus supports and campaigns on behalf of the 200,000 kinship carers – grandparents, siblings, and other relatives or family friends – who are raising children in the UK. There is a long history of children being cared for by relatives and friends when their parents, for whatever reason, are unable to care

for the children themselves. But despite kinship care being the predominant option for children following a crisis, and clear evidence that children living in kinship care have better outcomes than children fostered by non-relatives,³¹ they remain under-supported and under-recognised.

The results of studies show that a large number of children in kinship care are affected by poverty and deprivation:³² more than three quarters of kinship children live in a deprived household,³³ and kinship carers have a higher incidence of physical health concerns, with many experiencing stress, isolation and discrimination.³⁴ Despite children's service involvement, many kinship carers step in quickly in a climate of crisis and fear, with little time or access to independent information, advice, or support to consider their options.

Grandparents Plus seeks to change the system of support for kinship carers nationally, also providing advice and connection. Through their Kinship Connected approach, Grandparents

Plus connect kinship carers with both a national community and local support groups so they don't have to face the fight alone. This peer support offers friendship, guidance and someone who understands their journey and challenges.

A growing number of local councils and regional adoption agencies have commissioned Grandparents Plus to provide support for carers, an approach delivered in partnership with local authorities to build trust with statutory services and increase understanding of kinship care with children's services teams, staff led and Kinship Connected support. Once Grandparents Plus establish local support groups, the aim is that over time local kinship carers become leaders and facilitators of peer support groups.

Jane's Story

Jane became a kinship carer for her grandchildren when her daughter died unexpectedly. It was a terrible shock. Jane found it very difficult to know how best to support the children, especially in the early days; she was doing everything she could to help the children thrive but still felt like a failure. Jane lives in a two bedroom flat, so for the last four years has slept on the sofa to enable her two grandchildren to have their own rooms. Financially, Jane and the children were put in very precarious situations and were offered no financial support.

Jane said: "it really felt like I was being badly let down. I was a

pensioner on my own... I couldn't claim any benefits at all so I had to go to foodbanks. It was very difficult." She felt isolated and didn't know where to turn – but was eventually introduced to Grandparents Plus.

"I don't know how I would have coped without support from Grandparents Plus," Jane says. "I spoke to someone on the phone who was really helpful – not only sympathetic and reassuring, but she also gave me the information I needed and put me in touch with other kinship carers. I honestly think I would have gone under if I hadn't had the support at that stage".

Getting guidance and support, and being able to talk to people in a similar situation, has made all the difference to Jane and the children, who are now making their way forward. "I can't believe how far we have come," she says. "We are suddenly starting to look forward... We will never be what their mother was to them, but we have got new friends. A new life here. They have schools and colleges sorted out. They are moving forward with their plans for the future. I love those children all the way to the moon and back as their mum would say."

Impact

An estimated 600 kinship carers

were supported through one-to-one relationships and Kinship Connected peer support groups in 17 locations in London, the North East, West Yorkshire and Milton Keynes

Kinship Connect helps de-escalate kinship carers' concerns regarding their children's behaviour, health and wellbeing, educational transitions, children's friendships and children's diet

Nearly two-fifths

of kinship carers reported an increase in their confidence in their parenting role

2
5

There was a 26% increase

in the number of kinship carers reporting that they 'never' felt isolated



There was a statistically significant increase in kinship carers' mental wellbeing



A crude costs-benefit analysis is 1.20: for every £1 invested in the programme, £1.20 of benefits is estimated to be generated. This equates to a 20 per cent rate of return on investment

Key lessons for people-powered approaches to supporting families

The value of families and carers: People-powered approaches must start with understanding and supporting the primary relationships with the greatest impact on our lives. There is too little support designed to bolster and enable kinship care families, in spite of evidence that the value and power of these forms of care is critical.

The power of peers and social networks of support: Connecting and sharing with someone who's walked in your shoes can be extremely powerful. Sharing experiences can help us better

orchestrate and coordinate untapped skills and resources in our communities.

Integration with local public services: Families, especially those experiencing challenges, may find it difficult to trust public services for fear they will be judged or have children removed. The power dynamics leave families vulnerable without places to turn. Support that is holistic and independent can reconnect people to public services and enable a shift in the power balance.



Other examples of people-powered approaches to support families

The Centre for Social Action Innovation Fund backed ten people-powered innovations

supporting families to thrive. Explore four of the innovations:

EPEC, South London and Maudsley NHS Trust



Empowering Parents, Empowering Communities (EPEC) is a national, parent-led programme that combines the skills and power of parents who lead and run sessions ('Parent Group Leaders') with the expertise and guidance of professionals who train, support and coach them.

A randomised control trial showed that EPEC significantly improved parent-child relationships and interactions, reduced children's behavioural problems, and increased participants' confidence in their parenting abilities.

EPEC were supported to replicate the model and now have 25 local partnerships.

PACT, Citizens UK



Parents and Communities Together (PACT) is a community-led social support project, set up by Citizens UK, to empower parents and improve the health and development outcomes for young children.

846 parents and children were supported through their peer support model. Their evaluation showed improved maternal mental health for those experiencing depression or anxiety, improved social support networks, and improved child language acquisition.

Deep Roots New Shoots, Eden Project



Deep Roots New Shoots is a programme of support for grandparents and their grandchildren to explore and learn together to improve school readiness.

138 grandparents help deliver the Deep Roots New Shoots programme, supporting thousands of other grandparents and grandchildren connect, learn and have fun.

They also replicated the model to another visitor attraction and into the community, demonstrating the potential for this approach to spread.

Parents 1st



Parents 1st is a national charity dedicated to early prevention through asset based peer support during the key life transition of pregnancy, birth and post-birth with mothers and fathers. Their regional peer support programmes recruit and train volunteer parents and grandparents to be partnered one-to-one with expectant and new parents from less advantaged communities.

Parents 1st licensed their model to three new areas, partnering with local community organisations. They have now created a website to support the growth of perinatal peer support, sharing their evidence-based practice and models to help spread learning and best practice.



Action Tutoring: closing the attainment gap for disadvantaged young people



The Centre for Social Action Innovation Fund backed Action Tutoring to scale its model to new cities and develop a new approach to support primary school children.



Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds aren't less able – but they do have less access to the tools that support them to progress in school,

meaning they are not able to reach their full academic potential. Nationally, 71 per cent of pupils leave school achieving a grade 4 or above in their English and Maths GCSEs, but only 44 per cent of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds achieve this benchmark and only 48 per cent of pupils from low income backgrounds meet expected grades in reading, writing and maths on leaving primary school.³⁵ This means that the circumstances we are born into predict our chances of success in life.

While there are many factors that contribute to these statistics, enabling young people to access new experiences and additional support can make a huge difference.



The story

Action Tutoring supports disadvantaged young people to achieve through volunteer tutors, helping them achieve a meaningful level of academic attainment and high quality progress to further education, employment or training. Volunteer tutors bridge the gap in resource and ensure tuition can be accessed by every pupil who needs it, not just those who can afford it.

Partnering with local schools, high quality tutors are matched with young people, who receive additional support for at least 12 weeks. Using structured resources and connection to volunteers in the community around schools, they help pupils gain confidence, work through problems, and ensure that pupils can excel at critical English and Maths skills.

Farzana's story

Farzan began her Action Tutoring journey in September 2018 as a Year 11 pupil at an academy school in Liverpool, enrolling in maths tuition. "I absolutely hated maths at the beginning, I despised it," she said. "I used to dread maths lessons."

"Now, I feel more confident and that is all down to my tutor, Tamara. I love my sessions with Tamara because I know she's there to help and we have loads of fun whilst learning. I think the fun element of it is what has made me learn... I used to worry when I would see a

question, and if I didn't understand it straight away I would just turn the page and not attempt it, but now I realise that if I look at it, read it again and break it down, it's much simpler than it looks. I feel I can approach questions that I never used to want to try."

"Tamara is honestly amazing. She is so patient, kind and caring. She always makes sure to ask me how my day is rather than just starting work. You can tell she cares about us as people and wants us to do well. If I don't understand a question, Tamara will explain it 100

times in loads of different ways until I understand it. I want to be a doctor in the future. I'm choosing chemistry, biology and sociology as A Levels, but my maths will play a key role in my future learning and I'm so thankful for the help."

Across the year, Farzana attended eighteen maths sessions and took her GCSEs in summer 2019. She achieved a grade 4, climbing three grades in her time with Action Tutoring.

Impact

29,900 hours of tutoring delivered in the 2018/2019 academic year

1,160 high quality volunteer tutors



1,146 secondary school pupils

received tutoring to help them with their English or Maths GCSE

1,080 primary school pupils received tutoring to help them with their reading or Maths SATs



An independent evaluation analysed the impact of Action Tutoring and found a positive association between the number of Action Tutoring sessions attended and achievement, suggesting that pupils who attended at least seven sessions could make half a grade extra progress compared to their peers

Key Lessons for people-powered approaches to supporting education and enabling young people to thrive

Surrounding young people and schools with support: Public service institutions such as schools can achieve better outcomes where they are able to draw from a community of support for children and young people. How might we create more people-powered schools? One-to-one tutoring is one proven way to unlock this potential, but schools need resources to do this.

Attainment gaps can be closed: Evidence shows that with intense support it is possible to close the attainment gap for even the most disadvantaged

students. But for this to work at scale it will require clear investment in approaches like one-to-one tutoring.

Scaling models beyond our largest cities:

Support tends to be concentrated in large cities that can call upon the skills of large company staff. Action Tutoring has broken beyond this, showing it is feasible to create successful programmes in smaller towns and cities. They are building on this further by introducing models of online tuition.



Other examples of people-powered approaches for education and helping young people to thrive

The Centre for Social Action backed 19 people-powered approaches focused on education and

helping young people thrive. Explore five further models:

TLG Early Intervention



TLG Early Intervention supports trained volunteers to become coaches and work on a one-to-one basis with children at risk of exclusion to help reduce the child's felt anxieties and increase their confidence and aspirations.

84 per cent of children reported feeling more confident in themselves and 97 per cent of children said they are more hopeful about their future after starting one-to-one coaching.

The model grew to 130 church centres across the country, linking with at least one local primary school.

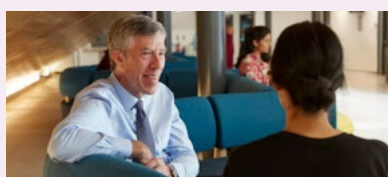
Grandmentors, Volunteering Matters



Volunteers aged 50-plus – 'Grandmentors' – are paired with care leavers to help them en route to independence.

Grandmentors grew from working with three to nine local authority children's services teams, and support 582 care leavers.

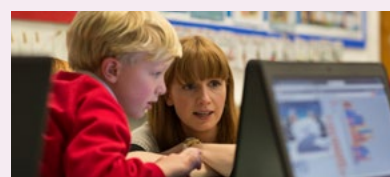
One Million Mentors, Uprising



One Million Mentors works to ensure that every young person in the country has access to a trained mentor as they transition into adulthood.

One Million Mentors grew to develop partnerships in London, the West Midlands and Manchester. 1870 mentors were mobilized, supporting 1989 young people.

Code Club



Code Club is a voluntary community that provides opportunities for children aged 9 to 13 to develop coding skills through free after-school clubs.

The Centre for Social Action Innovation Fund supported Code Club to reach 127,000 young people. They have now grown 8000 clubs around the world, with 150,000 young people learning coding skills each week.

The Access Project



The Access Project works with bright students from disadvantaged backgrounds, providing in-school support and personalised volunteer tuition to help them gain access to top universities.

The Centre for Social Action Innovation Fund supported The Access Project to grow for the first time outside of London,

as well as test online volunteer tutoring through [Click Connect Learn](#).

Students with The Access Project are four times more likely as similarly disadvantaged students to attend a top university, and Year 13 students performed better across their best three subjects at A-level by a quarter of a grade per subject.



Restart: Combating electronic waste through a fixing movement



The Centre for Social Action Innovation Fund backed [Restart](#) to grow a community of repairers reaching many people and building wikis to help spread the movement.



The climate crisis is an existential threat. Around 230 councils have declared a climate emergency, and many public services have begun work to reduce their own carbon emissions and tackle the impact of climate change.

Citizens are, of course, also looking to play their part in reducing waste and demanding change, and people-powered approaches in this field not only seek to create short-term impacts in

reduction of waste and negative environmental impacts but to create momentum for bigger systemic changes addressing the underlying causes. As collective actions, they create opportunities for people to connect on issues that really matter to them, and enable people to feel and express their power to make change on issues that may feel overwhelming and intractable.

Globally, 44.7 million tonnes of e-waste were produced in 2016, 80 per cent of which was sent to landfill, incinerated, illegally traded or treated in a sub-standard way.⁶ The UK produces 24.9kg of e-waste per person, nearly 10kg more than the European Union average, and while previous governments have implemented EU directives on Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) into British law, the UK is consistently missing its recycling targets.

The story

"We are going to help fix, show how to fix and expel the myth that things can't be fixed. Throwing away electronics as soon as they don't work anymore is a mindset that needs to be changed. And I can see from my involvement in Restart that there are lots of community-minded people starting to change their opinions on how they view tech."

Mike, Restart Volunteer

Restart aims to prevent electronic waste and change the way people consume electronics by buying less and repairing electronics. At 'Restart Parties', volunteers repair broken or slow electronic devices and at the same time train others how, from tablets to toasters, iPhones to headphones. They promote community repair and advocate for wider change in electronics consumption through their events, including the internationally recognised FixFest, and high profile communications and campaigns work

to challenge built-in obsolescence in electronic goods.

Restart was born in 2013 out of frustration with the throwaway, consumerist model of electronics and the growing mountain of e-waste that it's leaving behind. By bringing people together to share skills and gain the confidence to open up their gadgets, Restart provides a hands-on way of making a difference and a way to talk about the wider issues of what kind of products we want to see in the world.

To help more people set up and run Restart parties, Restart have been supporting a decentralised network of community repair groups growing events across the country. They also provide a core infrastructure of fixing wikis and support information, alongside a 'fixometer' to help all groups understand the impact of the work. This has fostered a community of hundreds of fixers sharing skills, and helped grow a 'repair social movement'. Together, communities can see the impact when they work together towards the same goal.

Monique's story

Monique is a software engineer who shares her skills as a Restarter - a community repair volunteer. "I'm old enough to remember when you had to wire electricals up yourself and people (usually men) would come round when things broke and repair it right in front of you - I'd watch and learn" she explained. "So the first thing I fixed was fuses on things about 35 years ago. Then I lived in

a squat in the eighties so we did all our own wiring.

I came to my first Repair Party because it was just round the corner and seemed like a good idea. I don't think I had anything to fix, I thought I'd just observe, but the next thing I knew I was repairing people's laptops!

My favourite kind of repair? The easy ones! Where it turns out it's

something simple and stupid, like a bit of fluff or dirt on the contacts. My favourite was a 1970s coffee grinder the owner thought was dead, but it just had 40 years worth of oils built up which needed cleaning off. Or the lady who brought in a laptop that just needed to be rebooted. I love it when people think they need to get rid of something and it can be fixed really easily."

Impact*

5,642 hours
volunteered



4,076 people
attending
repair events



55 individual
groups holding
events

1,822 items
fixed at
events



4,941
weight (kgs)
of items



54,013 kgs of
CO₂ saved



Key lessons for people-powered reduction of waste and climate action

Make involvement fun and easy: Being part of a Restart Party is fun - it's a social occasion. Making it easy to get involvement really helps: people want to get involved and share their skills.

Behaviour change: Having things repaired by people from local communities helps create a bigger change in behaviour and our relationship with electronics.

Growing as a movement: Restart haven't grown the work through controlling everything. Instead, they create opportunities to connect, and value

collaborating, sharing and learning together. By creating a repair infrastructure of wikis, repair directories and impact tools such as the Fixometer, people can see that collectively they can make a bigger difference.

Eyes on the bigger change: A critical mass of people repairing across the country creates a voice and pressure for a more systemic shift. Together, Restart communities are trying to address some of the causes of waste such as built in obsolescence – but also asking for the right to repair things.

* England only



Other examples of people-powered approaches to the climate crisis

The Centre for Social Action backed six people-powered approaches to reducing waste and

tackling the climate crisis. Explore three further models:

Library of Things



The Library of Things has reinvented libraries by making useful objects like power tools, gardening items and cleaning equipment easy and affordable to borrow and by delivering a range of volunteer-led skill-sharing events.

Library of Things supported 3,183 beneficiaries to date through either borrowing of 'things' or attendance at a variety of repair parties, mending meetups and DIY classes.

Southampton Collective



The Southampton Collective's Breathings Spaces project tested out combining citizen science and citizen action to raise awareness and change behaviours around air quality in Southampton.

Breathing Spaces mobilised 150 volunteers to collect data, raise awareness and educate the community about the challenges of air pollution in the city.

Fareshare



FareShare is the UK's national network of charitable food redistributors, made up of 17 independent organisations. Together, they take good quality surplus food from right across the food industry and get it to almost 11,000 frontline charities and community groups.

Fareshare provide enough food for one million meals each week.



Purple Shoots: Growing self-reliant groups for financial resilience and employment



The Centre for Social Action Innovation Fund backed Purple Shoots to Grow Self Reliant Groups in South West England.



10.7 million adults rarely or never save – 21 per cent of the population. As a consequence, 11.5 million (22 per cent) have less than £100 in savings,³⁷ a challenge when we know that many people experience unexpected bills and financial

demands every year. An estimated nine million adults (17 per cent of the adult population) borrow money to buy food or pay their bills.³⁸

Not all people experiencing financial challenges are unemployed, but the evidence is clear that unemployment has damaging effects not only through the loss of income but also to the wellbeing of the individual and household.³⁹ Poverty restricts people's options, leaving them in impossible situations like choosing to heat their home or pay their rent. With rising living costs and unstable work, many people do not feel able to choose their own path. Every one of us has aspirations, but it can be hard to hold onto these dreams when life gets tough and there's no helping hand.



The story

Purple Shoots is a charity founded to tackle poverty and unemployment. They do this in two main ways: providing microfinance – small loans to individuals and through self-reliant groups. The inspiration came from models of self-reliant groups in India, where more than 67.1 million households⁴⁰ are creating enterprises together in small self-led groups to work their way out of poverty.

Each self-reliant group (SRG) has four to ten members from a similar background, who make the decisions, meet regularly, save weekly small amounts together to pool for collective purchases (like a sewing machine) and try out ideas for generating income. They don't rely on funding. Members of each SRG choose their own focus,

which ranges from pop-up cafes, craft, art, gardening and cleaning.

Some groups have more of a social focus, others prioritise income generation, but they all support each other to build their wellbeing, confidence and skills. Members build a strong social network and learn new skills that can equip them for work or help generate group income. Purple Shoots trust SRG members to know what they and their community needs: once they have helped set up the group, Purple Shoots steps back. The model is the embodiment of people power – community-led, agency building, and working upstream to avoid the need for expensive public sector services.

Christine and Liz's stories

Christine: "We spend our time sewing, card-making, knitting, crochet... When we have made our stuff we do summer fetes, street sales and church fetes. Once we've made money, we try to put it away for things the group needs.

We also have a lending system – anyone in the group in serious financial trouble can ask the group if it's possible to have a private loan, and then we work out terms with them to pay that loan back. We don't charge interest – we're not

here to just make money, we are a self help group. We like to support each other financially if we can, but more importantly with a kind word, a smile and a cuppa."

Liz: "I've always been a very confident person since I was child. But over the last few years I have had an illness, and lost all my sense of worth and self-confidence. You feel a burden to people."

"Coming to a group like this you find out you are not the only one

– when you are ill you feel like the only one. Being together and seeing there are more of us who need this has built my confidence back up.

We pay subs every week of £2. £1 goes into savings, and £1 goes into the group so we have a bit of money if we want to buy any supplies for the crafts or pay to learn a new skill. We don't get money from anyone else, which is nice. We feel more important and satisfied as we are the ones doing this."

Impact

242 members are part of 29 Self-Reliant Groups in England and 13 in Wales improving quality of life and confidence, supporting social solidarity and financial support in a crisis, and working together to generate income. Many groups establish microenterprises



Key lessons

Mutuality and self help: Self-Reliant Groups work to put the power in the hands of members. People connect in social solidarity and support each other as equals.

Trust and power: Purple Shoots facilitate the development of the groups, but it is for the groups themselves to decide what they do and how they do it. Groups sustain themselves.

A network of local Self-Reliant Group facilitators: Purple Shoots are part of a network, supported by [WEvolution](#),⁴¹ which brings a range of organisations together to learn and support self-reliant groups. It recognises that supporting the groups needs local roots and connections.

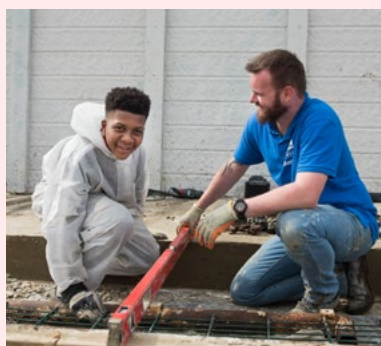


Other examples of people-powered approaches to support financial resilience and employment

The Centre for Social Action backed 11 people-powered approaches for supporting financial

resilience and employment. Explore six further models:

Volunteer it Yourself



VIY challenges young people aged 14-24 to learn trade and employability skills through fixing local community facilities in need of repair. Young people 'learn on the job' with support from adult mentors. These mentors are professional tradespeople, who also volunteer their time.

4,640 young people took part in a VIY programme with 85 per cent not having volunteered before and 77 per cent feeling more confident after taking part. They were supported by over 1000 volunteer tradespeople.

Life Skills, Christians Against Poverty



Life Skills is an eight week course delivered alongside support from coaches and the community. It aims to equip people with tools such as how to eat well on a budget and how to make money go further. Christians Against Poverty partner with churches in each location to deliver the courses.

Life Skills is now available in 140 locations across the country, supporting 1,000 people to date in 2,014 courses.

Money Mentors, Toynbee Hall



Community Money Mentor is a 12 week accredited course that teaches volunteers key money management skills and supports them to share this information within their communities. A selection of volunteers then go on to an accredited 'Teach It' course and deliver the training themselves.

Over 5,000 people have been supported to improve their financial resilience to date. 46 community members are trained as Community Money Mentor teachers and can spread the knowledge further into communities.

Communities that Care, Neighbourhood Watch



Neighbourhood Watch have developed a community-led approach that helps older people protect themselves from fraud.

The Communities that Care project has engaged and trained 115 new volunteers and supported 682 beneficiaries, and was even successful in preventing a doorstep fraud incident due to the quick help of volunteers.

Smart Works



Smart Works is a UK charity that helps unemployed women back into the workplace by providing high quality interview clothes, styling advice and interview training. Smart Works aims to give women the confidence and the tools they need to succeed at interview and achieve their employment goals.

SmartWorks grew their model from London and Edinburgh, establishing centres in Birmingham, Manchester, Reading and Newcastle. By 2019 they had worked with 13,000 women. 65 per cent of women supported go on to get a job within a month.

In2ScienceUK



In2ScienceUK empowers young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to achieve their potential through life-changing opportunities that give them insights into STEM careers and research and boosts their skills and confidence.

In 2019, 384 young people got a STEM placement with one of the 197 volunteers. 86 per cent of In2ScienceUK students have no family history of higher education.

4

Now is the
moment:
A manifesto
for the
people-
powered
shift



4.1 What next to support the people-powered shift?

Learning from the Centre for Social Action Innovation Funds

The examples and approaches shared in this paper show what could be possible with more people-powered public services enabling our collective compassion, desire to connect and supporting us to take action collectively. As we have highlighted, a great deal of work is already being done and the shift is underway. But it cannot and shouldn't be confined to the margins.

The simple truth is, as we have seen through the COVID-19 crisis, we can't afford to keep these approaches in the periphery. Our need for social connection and a helping hand when we need it is at the heart of what it is to be human. It is as essential to our health and wellbeing as it is to the vitality of our communities and places of work. The consequences of failing in making this people power shift are too stark – whilst public service professionals are a vital part of our social solutions they cannot fix us, our families or our communities.

There is no one single solution or blueprint to accelerate the change or overcome the challenges that the innovations we backed have experienced. However, from the experiences of working with the 116 innovations and hundreds of other partners and projects, we think eight people-powered shifts could have a catalytic effect, pushing forward to a more people-powered future:

► People-powered shift 1
Unleashing collective power

► People-powered shift 2
Fundamentally shifting public service culture, mindset and structure to support people-powered approaches

► People-powered shift 3
Changing commissioning from procurement to involvement and design

► People-powered shift 4
Starting from social connections and relationships

► People-powered shift 5
We the people – the do-it-together society

► People-powered shift 6
Shifting how we evidence and value people-powered approaches

► People-powered shift 7
Investing in the conditions and capabilities for for people power

► People-powered shift 8
Realising the neighbourhood as the unit of change



People-powered shift 1

Unleashing collective power

One of the greatest barriers to change is the narrow nature of how we conceive of power in public services. This isn't a conceptual debate, as the way in which we understand and exercise power is fundamental. This conception of power affects us all – whether public services leaders, civil society leaders, frontline staff, community groups or citizens. Too often calls for greater citizen power are met with resistance – power is seen as a zero-sum game, meaning that if citizens and communities gain power, public service professionals lose.

But, as we have outlined, the experiences of the Centre for Social Action Innovation Fund grantees and the hundreds of other innovators we have worked with indicate that we need different models of power that will help us move away from those centred purely around professional expertise. Instead, this needs to shift towards an understanding of unleashing collective power. The exciting models emerging are more participatory, deliberative, and made by many. Power is not lost by professionals, but transformed by combining all of our assets.

There are a number of examples of methods which begin to scratch the surface of this collective power, from the recent proliferation of Citizens' Assemblies in local government providing greater voice and decision-making responsibility to citizens to personal budgets combining the devolution of money and decision-making to the individual. Alternative organisational structures that distribute power in new ways, like the Buurtzorg models that start from an individual perspective and work outwards, have also gained prominence.

However, these types of approaches – including core co-production – continue to operate at a relatively small scale, and none alone will be the answer. To make this happen our structures and

incentives need to help foster new power models that:

- Start with individuals assets and strengths
- Build from the compassion and connections in our families and communities
- Use platforms for more collective action with civil society and others
- Combine all of these things with the resources, expertise and infrastructure of the state.

To do this, roles must be changed, leadership distributed, decision-making more adaptive and deliberative, structures more porous, outcomes negotiated and co-produced. Place-based experimentation can provide the conditions for local areas, public services, civil society and citizens to:

- Learn when different power models will work best, and discover what the boundaries are that enable the combining of power.
- Grow an infrastructure of network weavers – leaders across the system with the skills, capabilities and mandate to grow connections and bring the collective power of citizens, communities, civil society and public services together.
- Build on learning by reshaping structures to enable this work to grow and flourish, embedded in leaders from across the system who enable power to be shared.
- Systematically target and dismantle inequalities and shift power to those who are marginalised by the current approaches.

This power shift needs to be supported by mindset, values, principles, structure and money to actually make this significant.



People-powered shift 2

Fundamentally shifting public service culture, mindset and structure to support people-powered approaches

Without a fundamental shift in how public servants see the role of citizens and communities, with their assets, power and potential as the starting point, then people-powered public services will remain doomed to the periphery: peer support mentioned in a tender that otherwise is exactly as it has always been; ‘user’ consultation as part of the design of a service, but no discussion about alternative approaches. There needs to be a real shift in a right to participate and deeply build with people, not simply a gesture towards involvement.

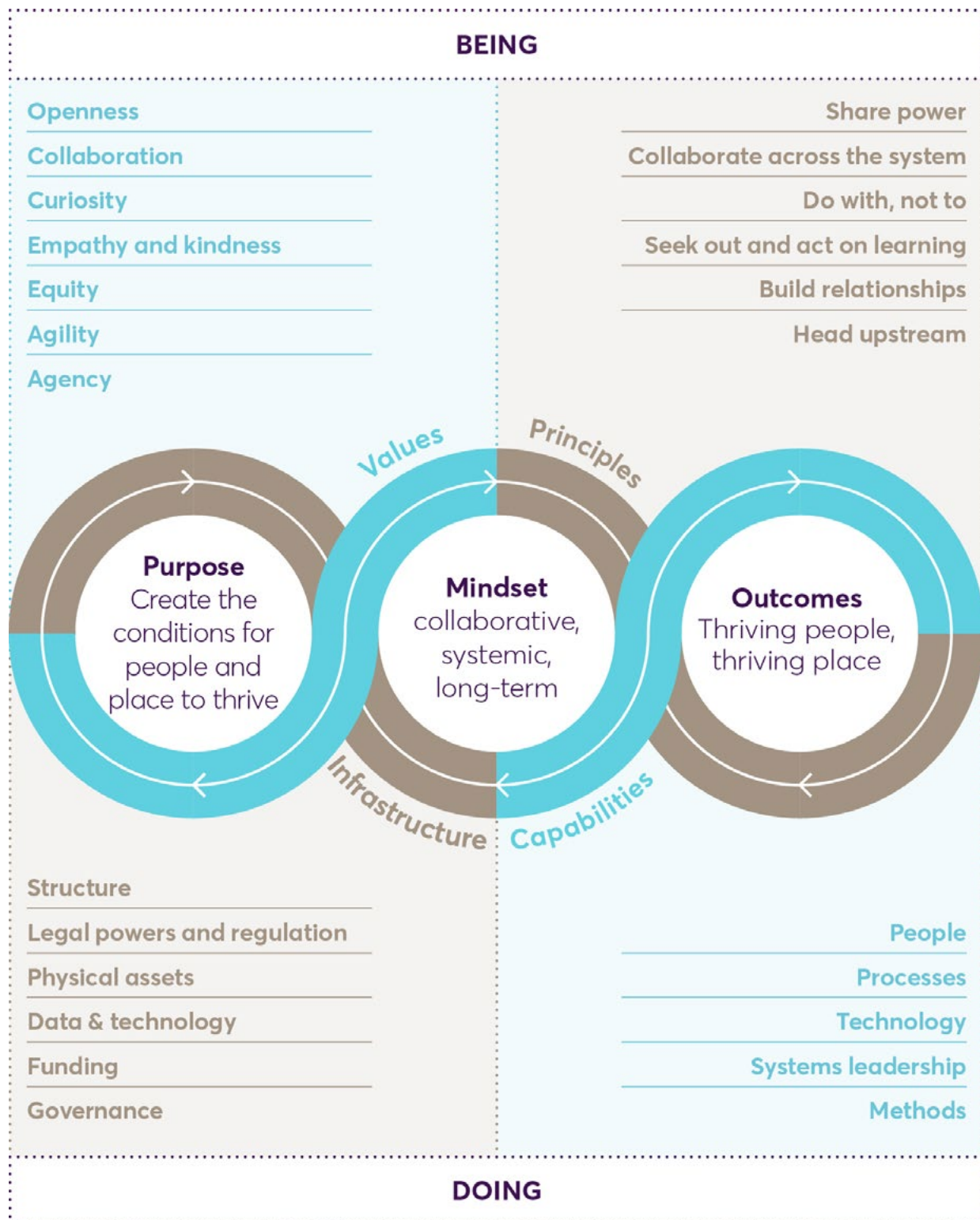
Progressive change has and is occurring. There are already leaders inside and outside of public services making this happen – radical GPs, council leaders, CEOs, commissioners and frontline staff who are leading the way in this work. They see government not as a delivery system, but instead a key player in a local system creating the conditions for people and place to flourish. This new mindset embraces complexity and decentralisation of power to maximise long-term impact, and reorients focus away from processes and outputs and towards people and outcomes.

However, as we also outline in our work on new operating models, public services are not yet at the stage where this is a part of business as usual. Whilst a great deal of change is happening, local leaders often have to go against the grain to achieve it, operating within legacy systems that mean that people-powered approaches do not

reach their full potential. This shift in culture and mindset needs to spread further, and must be underpinned by a core set of values and principles that we have outlined in our paper *Introducing New Operating Models for Local Government* (see Figure 6), including:

- **Openness:** Working openly benefits everyone in the system and encourages learning.
- **Collaboration:** Working together achieves more than any single person or organisation could achieve alone.
- **Curiosity:** Continuously learning from our own and others’ experiences benefits everyone, as does a willingness to experiment.
- **Empathy and kindness:** Understanding the perspective of others drives more inclusive social change; kindness is at the heart of public services and communities.
- **Equity:** Actively including a diverse range of voices and experiences creates the collective intelligence needed for better understanding and better decision-making, and takes action towards addressing structural inequalities.
- **Agility:** Being adaptive and acknowledging that approaches will differ from one case to another and over time.
- **Agency:** Increasing the capacity of staff, citizens and communities to make their own choices.

Figure 6: New Operating Models for Local Government



People-powered shift 3

Changing commissioning from procurement to involvement and design

The need to change commissioning has long been discussed and recognised by commissioners themselves. Many people-powered innovations we have supported or think are high potential have been stumped by procurement and commissioning processes that over-bias process and cost reduction over increasing power, connection and local value.

And even where good practice exists, it is rarely authority wide. Public services who have been leading the way have been taking steps towards not just the commissioning of new kinds of services but entirely new models of commissioning that:

- Ensure the commissioning process includes meaningful participation from citizens.
- Reframe the commissioner as the leader of partnerships and collaboratives.
- Moves away from commissioning as procurement to commissioning as design and field building.

- Aims to move upstream, building the capacity and conditions for individuals and communities to thrive, not just the shorter-term value of cost effective delivery.
- Recognise the wider value of people-powered approaches, as we outline in *The Value of People Power* discussion note.

Decommissioning remains challenging, with many public services open to new models and innovations but at the same time hampered by an inability to stop the old. Many of the people-powered approaches we have worked with cannot be fully embedded or reach their potential because of incumbents or legacy approaches.

Eight years ago we wrote in the *The Art of the Exit*⁴² about the role of creative decommissioning to enable innovation in public service, and whilst much has been learned in the passing period, challenges remain similar. New models of commissioning must also unpick the legacy system, mindset and culture for these approaches to flourish.

People-powered shift 4

Starting from social connections and relationships

If the COVID-19 pandemic has made one thing clear, it's that human connection matters. It's only when the majority of us have been deprived of our relationships and connections that we realise how much we depend on our family, friends, neighbours and wider communities.

Often this social support is so deeply embedded it goes unseen. But not everyone has the relationships, connections, or help they need. People-powered approaches have connections at their heart – and recognise the value in designing for our social and relational health. Pioneering

people-powered approaches seek to:

- Design models that centre on connection, with equal and reciprocal relationships.
- Understand the value of small everyday connections, a quick chat with a neighbour, or a regular smiling face in a local shop, as well as deeper connections of the people you call on in a crisis.
- Create social means for social goals – often about relationships not services. They understand that fun, love and laughter are often key ingredients to address the challenges we face.
- Create ways to pool our resources, be that time, money, or knowledge – to use our connections to tackle challenges.

The appointment of a Minister for Loneliness and DCMS' National Loneliness Strategy have made substantial cross-government commitments to improving our social health and recognising the power of connections. However, in light of COVID-19, a nationwide effort to help us renew our social and relational health is essential to make this an organising principle of all our public services.

To do this, place-based collaboration should help develop integrated services and identify

clear service touchpoints and pathways that help us connect. Leading practice in civil society organisations, nurseries, schools, employment services and GP surgeries have been creating platforms to connect people back into their community. Yet, whilst the government recently announced large-scale planning reforms of development of new infrastructure, learning from the Centre for Social Action Innovation Fund innovations suggests that policy areas such as regeneration and housing still pay too little attention to our social health and connections.

In this instance, a people-powered approach would create a principle that all new developments would be tested to see return on investment for our social health, with plans in place to support connections and contact across differences.

To support and fuel our social health, it has been suggested that a penny charge on every transaction carried out using self-service machines could be created to counteract potential damage caused by a lack of everyday contact between people. The APPG on Social Integration⁴³ and organisations such as The Cares Family have been calling for this change, and estimate that it could generate at least £30 million to fund work to connect and build relationships.



People-powered shift 5

We the people – the do-it-together society

The pandemic has revealed that many of us want to experience greater compassion, connection with others, and have ways to come together to take action on things we care about. It has shown us that the caring society is a do-it-together, not a do-it-yourself, life. Our interconnectedness and interdependence is fragile, and if we are to be resilient in the years to come, we need to create ways for us to organise, and take action collectively. The way we will do this is unlikely to

be a 750,000 strong NHS volunteer force, which is difficult to coordinate supply and demand, but instead millions of small actions everyday. We need to better enable the do-it-together endeavour to be in lots of different ways – all of them equally valuable.

Most of us participate in some way across our lifetimes. Yet, often policymaking gets lost in discussion about formal volunteering only. We need to recognise, celebrate and make it easier to

create a participative culture, helping us shape our own lives, services, and communities. To this we need to:

- Lower the barriers to participation, particular for those marginalised by the current dominant system.
- Recognise and encourage all forms of participation, from good neighbourliness to participating in decision-making processes to high commitment but paid sharing roles such as Shared Lives Plus or foster care, as important and valuable contributions.
- Rekindle the structures for participation that help re-energise our citizenry meaningfully. Innovations like Participatory City's 'Everyone, Everyday' in partnership with Barking and Dagenham Council provide a beacon of how this can be created at an impressive scale with

long-term, systemic ambitions.

- Enable people to not just participate through action but in the governance and agenda-setting in our neighbourhoods, communities and services.

This will not be an overnight endeavour. We need to work to build trust and action, but it is critical that part of the people power shift is to enable civic imagination and a say over the decisions that affect our lives. We have recently seen this to powerful effect with the recent UK Climate Assembly, and Nesta has previously outlined the case for more participatory futures in Our Futures: By the People, For the People. Experiments in digital democracy also speak to ways that we could enable more people to engage at a city-wide scale, for a high-energy, everyday democracy.



People-powered shift 6

Shifting how we evidence and value people-powered approaches

We know that people-powered approaches create value and impact for the individual, community and wider society. The Centre for Social Action Innovation Fund invested in supporting innovations to better understand the evidence in their fields, and the carry out evaluation for their innovation. We have shared the insights and learning from this in Evaluating Social Innovation to Create Lasting Change. We have also supported the innovations to publish their evaluations. Our experience of working with hundreds of people-powered innovations shows that even getting tools and approaches that help understand the impact of their work can be difficult for a number of reasons: skills and capacity to implement approaches; lack of measurement frameworks that capture outcomes effectively (particularly

asset based approaches); or size and nature of delivery, to name just a few. Additionally, lots of benefits people identify as valuable to themselves personally – like love, dignity, trust, friendship, agency – often resist or feel unsuitable and inappropriate to qualify and measure.

In spite of the growth in attempts to better measure, articulate and embed the significance of social value, from What Works Centres to the Social Value Act, there remains a consistent and systematic undervaluing of non-economic activities such as people power participation. The lack of well-established metrics for public value in all its forms makes it harder to compare alternatives and continues to bias public spending against prevention rather than cure;⁴⁴ against

indirect benefits relative to direct ones; and against intangibles relative to physical objects. To paraphrase Andy Haldane, the Chief Economist at the Bank of England, if the value of people power remains out of sight, it is likely also to remain out of mind.⁴⁵

We need a systemic shift in what we measure, how we understand the impact and how we value people-powered approaches. Without this, they will remain under-recognised, undervalued and under-supported. As we outline in the *Value of People Power*, learning from these innovations indicates that there remains too little evidence and learning that can help raise confidence in the approaches, understand what works for which types of challenges.

There needs to be substantial shifts to:

- Change what gets measured to encourage prevention rather than cure, focusing on wellbeing, connection and purpose. This should also enable individuals to set goals around

what individuals aspire to change, drawing from their assets, not starting with deficits.

- Invest in the development of evidence that helps us understand how to make improvements in communities and for individuals. For example, we recently proposed a new centre for innovation and research excellence to equip us with the knowledge we need to improve the social, behavioural and environmental determinants of health, in *The Nightingale*. We need evidence of this ambitions to back up this people-powered shift.
- DCMS building an evidence base for the field to use rather than asking individual innovations to individually invest in justifying each piece of work. To do this they should build a network of researchers and practitioners supported by leading academic institutions to develop knowledge and information and foster new ways of learning and translate learning into practical support for the field.



People-powered shift 7

Investing in the conditions and capabilities for for people power

Communities and places work well when they have a thriving social infrastructure that helps people to connect, create and feel part of a bigger 'us'. As sociologist Eric Klinenberg outlines in *Palaces for People*⁴⁶ too often we take for granted and neglect our libraries, parks, markets, schools, playgrounds, gardens and communal spaces. But decades of research now shows that these places can have an extraordinary effect on our personal and collective wellbeing. They enable us to cross paths, gather informally, get to know each other, create together. And where communities are strong, places are safer and healthier, crime lower, there is greater social integration and the local economy thrives.

Yet, as the Government's 2018 *Civil Society Strategy* acknowledges, "*many communities are without high-quality facilities and the ability to manage them.*" Without creating the conditions and capabilities in communities, the opportunities to move upstream of problems, enable prevention, and change the determinants of the issues that create the challenges for us as a society will be limited. Clearly, the things that can be directly influenced and controlled by public services are insufficient to unlock the compassion, connections and collective action needed to enable us to drive people-powered public services. A combination of approaches inside, alongside, and outside of public services is required. As we explore in our

work on *Health as a Social Movement*,⁴⁷ it is also important to enable the conditions for new ideas to test approaches and push the boundaries of what is required.

In response to COVID-19, many public services reported that where they had already been investing in new ways of working with citizens, communities and civil society organisations they were better able to respond to the crisis working with their communities.

To enable the conditions and capabilities in communities to make the people power shift inside, alongside and outside of public services that contribute to healthier, happier lives and better ways to tackle the key challenges we face we need to:

- Reimagine the social infrastructure we need for the future based on the evidence and a clear involvement of communities. This should include looking at how our demographics may shift in the coming years, and how we address inequalities and fairness in access.
- Substantially invest in the social infrastructure we need, particularly in communities which have been underinvested in.

- Consider our digital social infrastructure. There has been a huge shift over the COVID-19 period, but this has by necessity rarely been planned or strategic.
- Support public services and civil society organisations to build an upstream approach – supporting individuals and communities to develop the tools, processes and capabilities to shape and grow the social infrastructure and what it could be used for. This is about creating an ‘enabling’ role for public services. Organisations like *Power to Change*, *Locality*, and *Local Trust* have great experience to support this innovation.

Local authorities also do not need to wait for permission from the central government to start this process. Many have been recognising these conditions for some time, from *Kirklees* to *Plymouth*. However, in light of COVID-19, one first step, would be to conduct a stocktake to thoroughly review the successes and failures of their pandemic response, and explore how to enhance the resilience of communities going forward.



People-powered shift 8

Realising the neighbourhood as the unit of change

The Centre for Social Action Innovation Fund endeavoured to find and scale the best people-powered approaches inside and alongside public services to tackle some of the biggest social challenges we face. This was rarely about invention – good work exists, but is too often confined to the margins at small scale. There are exceptions, of course – Code Club, Shared Lives Plus, or the Access Project have gone on to work with hundreds of thousands of people each year. But we need more solutions operating at scale.

In many respects, the unit of change that could be most important for the next phase of people-powered public services is the neighbourhood. Thinking in neighbourhoods means that you have to change power structures and create more holistic approaches for what citizens want and how this may be delivered. Thinking in neighbourhoods, forces change to happen differently – forcing shifts from done to, to done with.

Encouragingly, even where organisations were national, many of the innovations supported by the Centre for Social Action Innovation Fund adopted place-based approaches to enable them to scale, working with people locally and designing approaches with people, rather than imposing them from the outside.

Many public services are already structuring to enable this, with local authorities like Barnsley and Redbridge developing delivery to reach into communities through neighbourhood hubs. Future approaches will need to:

- See citizens' interactions with the state through the prism of neighborhoods.
- Grow fields (like preventing loneliness), not specific innovation solutions.
- Understand the complexities of people's lives, moving away from 'services' and designing across silos, instead understanding the underlying drivers of issues.

4.2 What next: Seizing the COVID-19 community spirit to accelerate people-powered public services

"A revolutionary moment in the world's history is a time for revolutions, not for patching."

William Beveridge, 1942

London and Paris owe their sewer systems and changes to civic infrastructure to outbreaks of cholera. The Spanish Flu resulted in the first public housing in the USA, and many countries embraced concepts of socialised medicine during the same period – healthcare for all. Just as crises have led to innovations in our civic infrastructure in the past, so we have a moment to rethink and rebuild a future that is people powered.

In our research *A catalyst for change: What COVID-19 has taught us about the future of local government*,⁴⁸ we found that the crisis had enabled a clearer shared purpose, greater agile working, cross-sector collaboration, and people-powered approaches to enable staff and communities to work with local government response in new ways. Now a step change in ambition, leadership and commitment is needed to embrace these approaches. It also requires us to forge a different relationship between state and citizen as some of the local areas we have highlighted have sought to do. Whilst COVID-19 has put extreme pressure on resources and communities, it has also shown the absolute necessity of these approaches, and in many areas of the country triggered renewed interest in harnessing them.

To make this change, we all need to exercise our civic muscle, even in small ways. People power begins with all of us, as members of our communities, becoming active citizens. We need intentional neighbourliness, acts of everyday democracy, more civic imagination and modern activism. These acts might be small or big, impromptu or coordinated, mainstream or anti-establishment. But it starts with each of us taking a personal step to engage.

We already do a huge amount every year – helping our neighbours, volunteering at the local school or with a local charity, or organising to take collective action and advocate for change. Our initial collective response to COVID-19 really underscored this, and we are set to need even more of this in the difficult times still to come.

We need to make sure that we keep this spirit alive, unleashing our civic imagination to make everyday participation a normal part of life and collectively make a bigger us. COVID-19 has also underlined the need to create more transparent and participatory decision making, enable more informed and deliberative discussions by and with citizens.

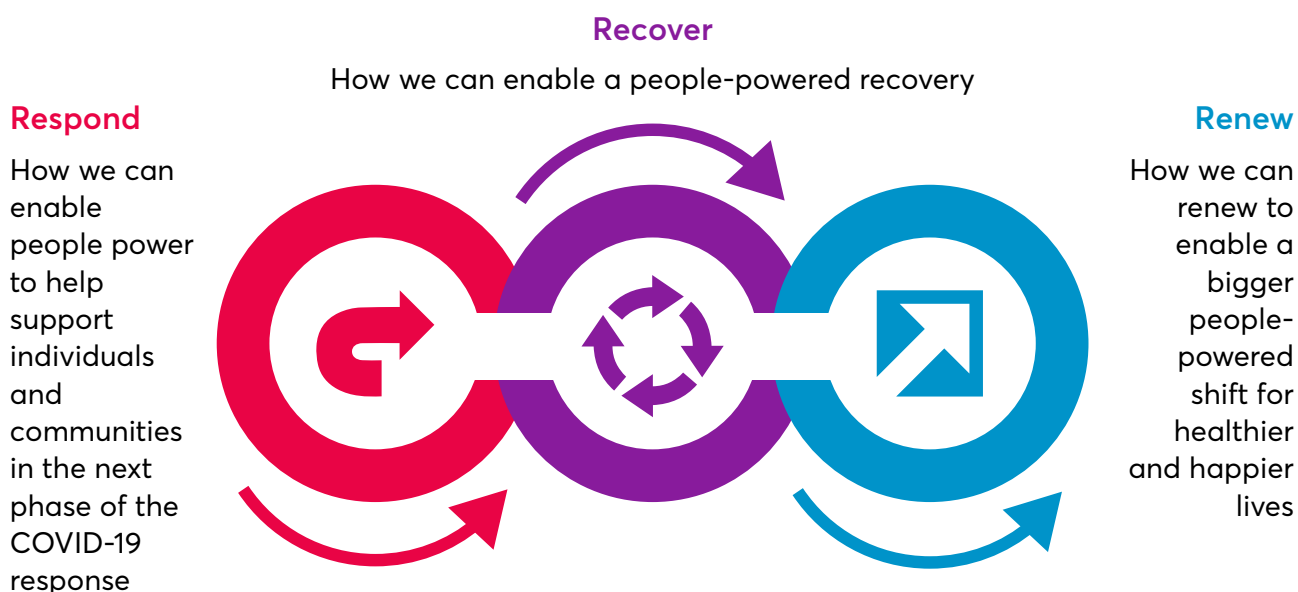


Dance to Health

Now more than ever we need to make time for one another – and public services and civil society need to help be part of this solution. Below, we outline a number of specific actions that the government, local public services, and civil society can take that will help unleash our collective power. Whilst the full economic consequences of the crisis are yet to fully unfold, and we recognise that there are a many number of urgent demands on our public finances, investment in the people powered shift underway is both critical and we hope a wise investment in both the short and longer term. These investments are needed to bolster responses to a winter of crisis in which people with need immediate help, as well as creating a legitimate recovery that will enhance our ability to move upstream and create greater individual and community resilience in the longer term.

To accelerate the changes, and in light of our learnings from the Centre for Social Action Innovation Fund, we believe three phases of action are needed to help shape the acceleration of the people power shift.

These recommendations are by no means exhaustive, and we hope may help to spark the next wave of change needed.





People-powered shift: Respond

Recommendation 1: Fund local areas to bolster and further localise the voluntary response

It is a testament to our compassion and collective power that over a million people signed up to help out the NHS during the early stages of the pandemic, and that many more got involved in mutual aid groups locally. But many of the people who signed up to help were never called upon and so their energy went untapped. Yet at a local level there was still a very large unmet need. It was clear from the initial response, local neighbourhood, community, civil society and public service response, when well coordinated and resourced were able to make a difference.

As we ready ourselves again to support people affected by COVID-19, we need to be able to better translate the outpouring of support at a national level to more support and action on the ground locally. Coordinating a local voluntary response takes additional resources to do well. But we've heard reports from people within local government and civil society of a shortage of resources, which risks losing the energy, compassion, and reciprocal support that has defined much of the initial response.

To support the vital response in the coming month government should:

- **Invest in a further wave of support for local public services and wider civil society, to manage and enable the people-powered response in the coming months.** This should enable every local area to increase their capacity to work with civil society and local public services to identify opportunities where voluntary support is most needed, support local people who want to help out, and connect them to those opportunities – for example to pay for additional staff within a local civil society organisation, local authority team, or local NHS trust. We are facing a collapse in social enterprise and civil society organisations, with many facing stark declines in funding or business as a result of the pandemic (the Institute of Fundraisers and Charities Finance Group estimated an income shortfall of £12.4 billion this year for charities alone), just as our communities may need them most. Many local authorities across the country are also now facing budget pressures or shortfalls, which will impede their ability to enable and support their citizens and communities. To face the second wave, supporting a people powered response including enabling the breadth of approaches from good neighbourliness to life saving support that will stave off loneliness, isolation, and harness the assets, creativity and expertise of our communities will require at least a further £1 billion in emergency funding.
- **Alongside this create a £50 million response 'booster fund.'** DCMS in partnership with the Department for Health and MHCLG should create a £50 million fund to help boost civic imagination and action. The funding should be used to help develop and implement new approaches to enable us to help each other and support our communities. Whilst the first wave of responses saw huge outpouring, there were often insufficient ways to put people's interest and efforts to good use. New ideas, or the growth of good existing ideas, are needed. This could also enable groups of local citizens (e.g. community groups, mutual aid groups etc) to take collective action on what would make a big difference in their neighbourhood or local area, and should be supported with stories that share these new approaches.



People-powered shift: Recover

Recommendation 2: Citizens' Assembly for COVID-19 recovery

In recent years there has been a rise in interest in citizens' assemblies – both nationally with the recent [Climate Assembly](#) and locally through programmes such as [Innovation in Democracy](#) – to learn, deliberate and make recommendations in relation to a specific issue. To harness the compassion, desire to connect and collective power of citizens, we think it is important to have

a participatory approach to setting the agenda for recovery.

[Bristol City Council](#), for example, have already taken the decision to hold a citizens' assembly to do this, with many other regional and local governments starting to look at ways to engage citizens in their recovery plans.

COVID-19 Recovery citizens' assemblies

Coming out of this crisis we cannot use crisis thinking. This is the time to build up and harness our collective power. The government should support a people-powered recovery by:

- Setting up a national citizens' assembly to shape COVID-19 recovery.

- Following up the successful DCMS and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Innovation in Democracy Programme with a support programme to enable all local authorities to run a locally-led citizens' assembly to shape post COVID-19 recovery.

Recommendation 3: Accelerating a people-powered shift across a local ecosystem to build culture, mindset and ways of working beyond COVID-19

Many of the public services and civil society organisations we have worked with have seen the rapid shift in the acceleration of local government as an enabler in the COVID-19 crisis. This shift was already underway, with commissioners and

leaders in public services seeing their role moving from service delivery to one of system leadership, convening, coordinating and creating the right conditions.

Local Government convene whole place experimentation on building people power beyond the crisis to unleash civic imagination and participation

Local government should support the development of capabilities and experimentation across the system with the focus on shifting and unlocking power. To do this, we need:

- A DCMS and MHCLG fund to support an initial five people-powered pioneer areas to experiment with accelerating this shift.

This would enable leaders in local government to bring together a cross sectoral partnership, alongside citizens, to identify the leverage

points to accelerate the people power transition; this may mean establishing a shared purpose for change alongside priority areas for experimentation. It should aim to not only agree practical changes, such as investment in partnerships, but how to support the development of capabilities and a shift in mindset and culture that will support this in the longer term.

Recommendation 4: Substantial investment in creating the conditions for connected and thriving communities

It is critical, if we want to recover and come out of the crisis stronger as communities, to invest in the conditions to enable people-powered approaches to be successful. This must include a proper financial settlement that enables local

government, public services and civil society to play a dynamic role. Further waves of austerity, will not enable the people- power shifts required. Further to this, DCMS and MHCLG should invest in the conditions for the people-powered shift- by:

a. Establishing a national social infrastructure commission with at least £2 billion investment in the social infrastructure fit for the future.

The government should establish a social infrastructure commission with similar powers and scope to the National Infrastructure Commission, as this does not currently cover the social infrastructure.. To fund this, the departments should dedicate the next wave of dormant assets coming on stream, estimated as valuing £2 billion, to a social infrastructure fund. The Community Wealth Fund Alliance has been calling for this investment over the last couple of years. We know strong, connected and resilient communities are built on the foundations of strong social infrastructure, and COVID-19 makes this case even more compelling. Underpinning this must be a reimagination of the social infrastructure

we need, both digital and in our places. This may include modernising our volunteer centre infrastructure, learning from community led approaches such as Big Local, but also looking at emerging approaches like the Civic Square who are visioning, building and investing in civic infrastructure for neighbourhoods of the future in Birmingham. Like the National Infrastructure Commission, we would see it would be the job of the commission to establish the parameters for the work, and how to distribute the resources. However, it will be important to involve citizens and imagine how this could work in an open and participatory way .We also recommend that MHCLG's Future High Street Fund and the current Towns Funds supporting 138 left-behind towns are reorientated to put social infrastructure at their heart. Our high streets and social infrastructure needs are changing.

b. Support people-powered recovery for those most impacted by COVID-19 and structural disadvantage.

COVID-19 has exposed deep inequalities and stark differences in life outcomes yet again. For people and communities to flourish, there must be substantial investment in addressing these structural inequalities, and barriers that prevent individuals and communities. Working with people, and enabling their power to affect the change that they want will be critical in addressing these inequalities. MHCLG and DCMS should dedicate resources to specifically support people-powered public service approaches that support this

recovery and change. This should include an **initial dedicated £250 million Fund** to invest in communities most affected by COVID-19 including, marginalised communities, black and minority ethnic communities, people with disabilities and those in communities that have 'been left behind'. Support should be dedicated to support innovations led by these communities that work to provide greater equity and inclusion in participation that shapes our communities and the agenda setting, decision making, implementation and accountability needed for more people-powered public services. The learning from this initial investment must be used to inform wider work and investment, but cannot afford to wait.



People-powered shift: Renew

Recommendation 5: Shaping the long term conditions for people-powered shift – a national strategy for civic empowerment and participation

At a national level, there needs to be both strategic leadership to better enable a more powerful role for citizens and communities, and a substantial investment to help capitalise on the compassion, renewed interest in connection and collective action that we have seen emerge during the COVID-19 pandemic to date. Based on the Citizens' Assembly recommendations and the insights from the experimentation that we have outlined in local areas, a longer-term commitment to deepening and enabling civic

renewal across the country is clearly required. The government already has already indicated its interest in the Civil Society Strategy, and we hope will set out further ambitious plans following the Kruger review.⁴⁹ Success is predicated on partnerships with local government, civil society and the business community to develop these ideas into a clear plan for ambitious renewal that better enables our compassion, connection and collective ability to act.

To make this people power shift a national strategy for civic empowerment and participation should be developed. This should not be seen as a short term fix: these learnings should shape a renewed cross-government agenda. The Cabinet Office and DCMS, should work with all departments, local government, civil society and citizens to develop a national strategy for civic empowerment and participation, focusing on:

- The scaling and wider implementation of the findings and insights from national COVID-19 and local citizens' assemblies.
- Creating the conditions and programmes to enable everyone, everyday to participate in shaping the decisions that affect our lives and the neighbourhoods and communities we all need.
- Giving citizens the knowledge to support civic engagement. In the UK, there are lots of amazing organisations seeking to support this, but a national, independently endowed organisation that focuses on the health of our civic engagement and education is an obvious missing part of the jigsaw. An organisation like the BBC should also have a bigger role to play in helping all of us understand the civic and civil society systems and how we can play a part in shaping the decisions that affect our lives, the services we need and the communities we want to be part of.
- Reducing structural and barriers across our lifetimes. This may include experiments to enable participation, such as four day weeks; schemes to enable participation in addressing key challenges such as the climate crisis and ecological restoration could also be trialled to support recovery and give people the gift of time to participate.
- Support for a thriving civil society, including revisiting the Civil Society Futures Enquiry and how to support a strong civil society recovery and renewal. This should obviously include a review of the crippling damage COVID-19 has done to the funding for civil society, and how greater independent funding sources that can support an ambitious civil society to help people and communities thrive. .
- A strategy to engage those left behind by systemic inequalities, and new involvement strategies to enable focus on regional and community-targeted support. Strategies should be developed with and by communities with legitimate accountability. There should also be a long-term plan for how these communities will be resourced and supported to create greater equity, led by the communities themselves.
- Localism and the role of enabling local participation, including how the central government may need to shift to support local public services more effectively to enable the people-powered shift.

4.3 Concluding thoughts: What next to support people-powered approaches?

Radical change can be expensive to attain. But this is a critical juncture at which to invest in the upstream solutions that can help us respond to the big challenges we face. In recent years we have seen big, bold investments in genomics, climate resilience and capital infrastructure such as HS2. If only a tenth of the investments predicted to go into HS2 went into consciously supporting the value of compassion, connections and our collective action, imagine the possibilities.

We have seen such possibilities over the last seven years through the Centre for Social Action Innovations Funds, but we also know it will take long-term vision and sizable investment to seize the opportunities that people-powered approaches present.

Many public service reforms and social change movements come and go, but the bubbling energy and movement for a more people-powered future can be accelerated with the right support. Critically, we know many of the services and approaches that are needed already exist. We just need to get serious about the investment that's needed to make the shift.



Grandmentors

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