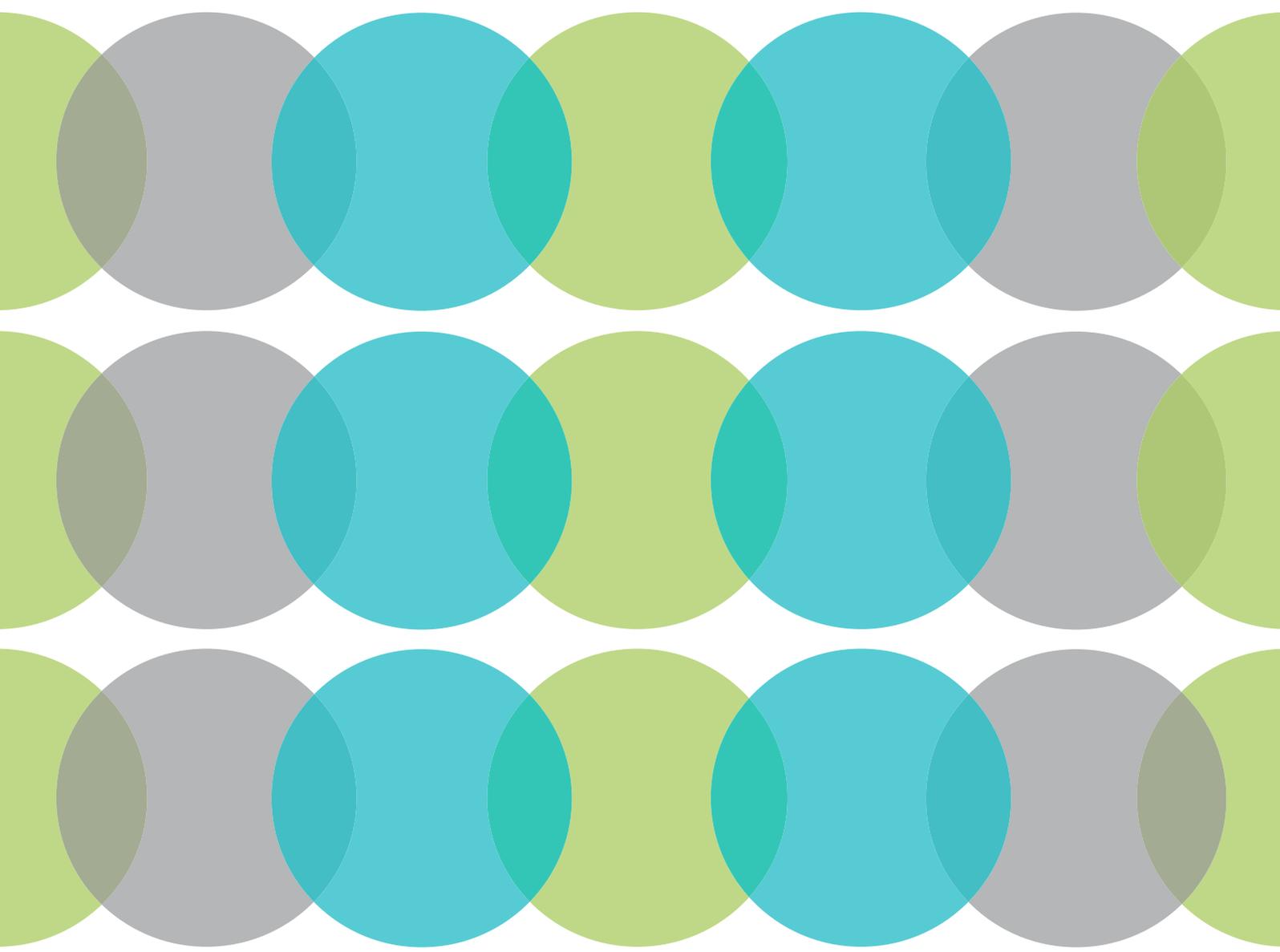


# Community audit – small care providers' learning

Sue Richards, *October 2021*



Our Sharing Care project is generously supported by [Power to Change](#) to allow us to bring together learning we have gained while setting up our care co-op, share it with others and support those who might be interested in setting up a care co-op in their own communities.

# What we wanted to learn

---

## What we wanted to learn from the community audit

- **What are the benefits of small local providers?**
- **About small providers:**
  - What works, what learning can we collate and share?
  - Who else is out there trying to do things differently?
  - What shared values do we have?
- **What different models exist that:**
  - promote empowerment of people using services?
  - promote empowerment and inclusion in decision making of staff?
  - improve the quality of support (and life experiences) for people needing support?
- **What changes in policy or legislation would support the growth of small values-led care organisations?**
- **Ways forward for Co-operative Care Colne Valley (CCCV)**

## Thanks

We would like to thank everyone who has supported this piece of work. While there have been many meetings, conversations and discussions that have influenced our thinking, these people and organisations in particular have supported us in producing this summary.

*Many thanks to:*

Amanda Evans, Helen Severns, Richard Parry ([Kirklees Council](#))

Adrian Roper ([Cartrefi Cymru](#))

John Roberts ([North West Care Co-operative](#))

Sian Lockwood ([Community Catalysts](#))

Mike Cracknell ([Preston Arts](#))

Philip Webb and Jo Thackery ([Investors in Community](#))

Sarah Shephard ([Shepshed Carers](#))

# What small care providers say

---

**North West Care Co-operative** has 4 years experience of working with disabled people (mainly learning disability) in the North West England to change the focus from a life well cared for to a life well lived. They focus on the mutually respectful relationship between staff and user members. It's apparent that this is less complex and challenging in support for people with a learning disability. The visits are longer for socialising and times can be more flexible.

Reflection from Co-operative Care Colne Valley's point of view: The funding for people who have learning disabilities is more generous and we may want to consider registering to be able to offer this support in the future.

**Preston Arts** is a self help organisation with a focus on the arts. The group has benefited from working in partnership with the Preston Model at the heart. Initially focused on a small estate and what the Preston model means in a smaller community. Preston Arts are not keen to go down the 'commissioned' route as they feel this would restrict their creativity but are interested in delivering wider support as part of their strategic development. The organisation has been particularly creative in how developing the partnerships in a small community and had started to recruit local carers with no experience in care and limited prospects for employment. They had found this to be a more sustainable model that was mutually beneficial. Additionally, they had also developed a good training package for people joining the organisation.

**Shephed Carers** talked to us about exploring creative models of recruitment - for example visiting local club and cafes. They are a very democratic organisation where staff members vote on any changes including the management team roles and also receive a bonus from any profit. They have a variety of mechanisms of working with and supporting carers: 1) direct employment; 2) facilitating; 3) organising; 4) providing payroll.

The main point to share from the Welsh based **Cartrefi Cymru** is about their focus on 'doing things with rather than for' people and they are passionate about transforming care. Key elements of their model have been the enthusiasm for the co-operative model coupled with the experience of making it happen.

Nationally operating **Community Catalysts** have vast experience of working with a wide range of partners supporting to live the life that they want with focus on what everyone can bring and not just what people might need.

## Another perspective

---

We also spoke to **Investors in Community** who create social value strategies to deliver on business performance, reputation and sustainability. They explained that the vast majority of funding goes to the largest charities. They believe that in the near future commissioners will become much more interested in the social and environmental supply chains and (not just smaller) organisations should be better prepared in presenting their social and environmental credentials and selling 'their story'. Small organisations should be ready to benefit from this approach and reach out to larger businesses wanting to be part of this change. And this will apply not just in terms of funding but more creatively in business planning, mentoring, marketing. The smaller entities need to be clear about what they want and need.

Phillip and Jo said there are three key questions the community businesses need to be asking:

- Does my business know its purpose?
- Are my employees fully engaged in that?
- Do other stakeholders understand it?

# Learning from community audit

---

**Some key points that have come up in our discussions, meetings and conversations that groups and organisations wanting to set of on the journey of innovative care provision want to think about:**

- Know your why?
- Be ambitious – ask what could be and why not.
- Where do we want to be – ask not if but how.
- Invest in plenty of good quality legal advice.
- Evidence and research suggests that staff retention is more about feeling valued than purely pay.
- Have a creative approach to recruitment – go to your local pubs, clubs and cafes.
- To bring the community together find issue/topics that people have in common – campaigning on a local issue, e.g. traffic/transport, this generates a sense of community.
- There are great benefits to be gained in looking at what people we support can contribute in addition to support that they need.
- We need to be better in demonstrating our impact. Let's build up an evidence bank to demonstrate to local authorities the benefits that small values led organisations bring. Small providers need to come together to form a stronger voice.

**We have also discussed the benefits of small values led organisations for the local communities:**

- Local employment
- Making use of local connections
- Building sustainable relationships with local partners, people using services and staff
- Having an ear to the ground about local need and local opportunities
- Contributing to local economic regeneration
- More likely to be trusted by local people
- Investing in transformational approaches saves money
- Being fleet of foot in terms of being responsive to local changes

**Further we have considered opportunities going forward such as:**

- Focus on economic and environmental impact as a selling point
- Developing links to and learning with/from co-housing
- Making use of the mutual benefits of partnerships with organisations that are not based in the care sector (e.g. arts organisations who can access different funding streams to enhance life experiences)

**There are different approaches that the smaller providers have in terms of**

1. Working with carers
  - Recruitment and contracting
  - Facilitating
  - Supporting personal assistants

2. Ways of charging
  - By the block of time at a one off level
  - By a wider block of time (number of hours per day / week month)
  - By the minute
3. Approaches to management / employment
  - Democratic – staff vote for changes
  - Bonus for any profit

## Policy / legislative changes

---

**We have considered what policy and/or legislative changes can benefit small values led care organisations and would like to share the following points:**

- Procurement changes that focus on a broader set of procurement targets such as local regeneration, co-operation and environmental impact. It is apparent that local authorities are often aspirational in these areas but it doesn't always translate into practice in terms of procurement frameworks.
- Funding is often in the form of short term grants that are focused on what local authorities determine community needs are. This means small organisations spend a significant amount of time trying to fit into a defined objective and reporting on progress. This doesn't enable working in partnerships with the local authorities, it's a power imbalanced procurement model.
- There would be huge benefits in working in partnerships with other/more small providers and local authorities could support development of models that effectively measure both the social value and the impact of preventative measures to support smaller providers.

## Learning for CCCV

---

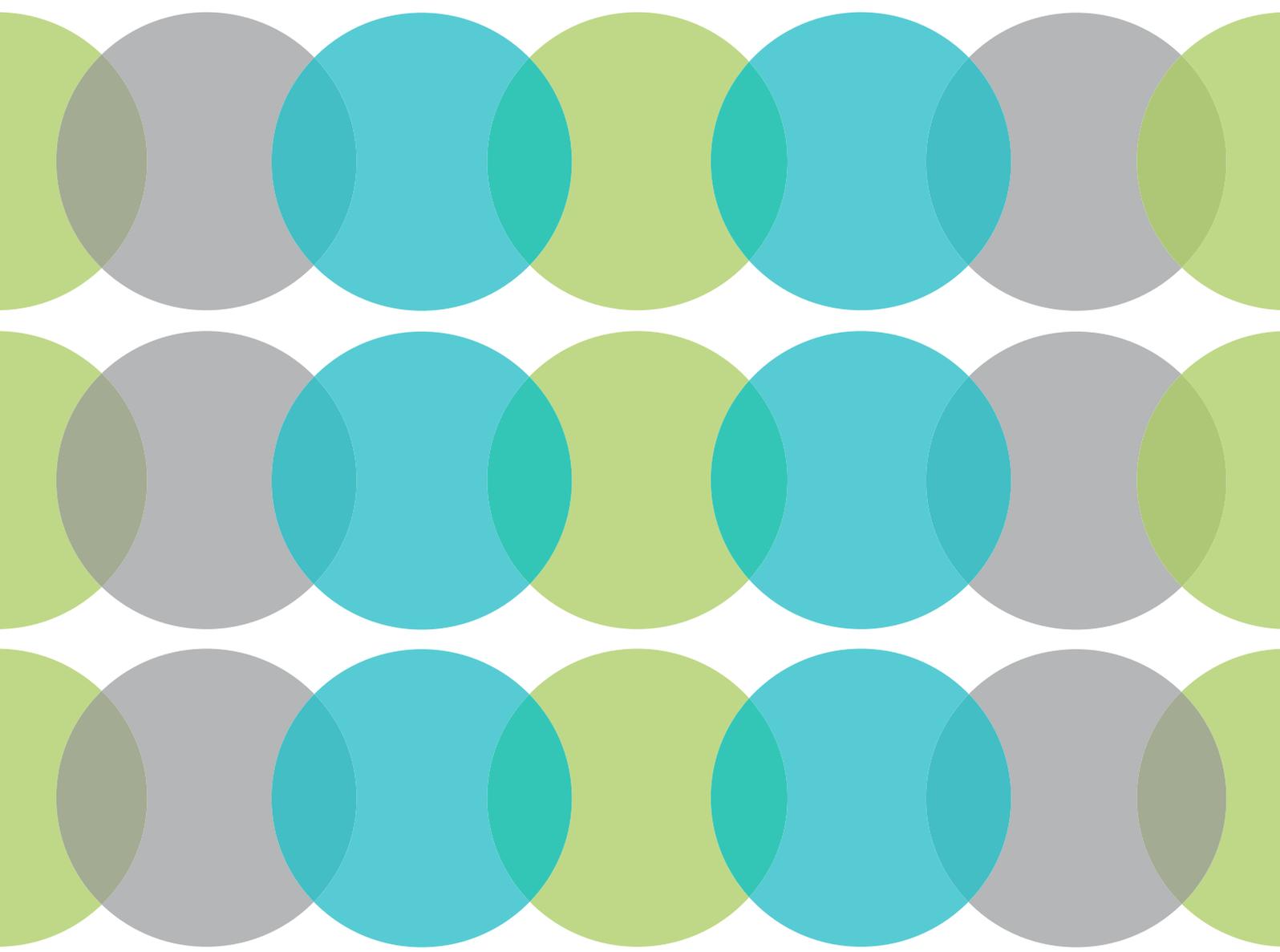
**While meeting, discussing and considering the current ways of working in social care and thinking about the possible future ways forward a few learning points for Co-operative Care Colne Valley are to:**

- Invest more time in developing partnerships with Kirklees Council. They have given a clear indication that they want what we have to offer and we have not fully made use of this opportunity. We need to develop a clear ask from and offer to them.
- Do more work about our social value, environmental and preventative impact.
- Consider if we could develop an ask for local businesses that will support their development. And at the same time engage in skills exchange and get support with marketing, business planning and other related processes.
- Really understand and know our PURPOSE and connection to the local community beyond regulated care delivery. We want develop our community element of our business but have not been able to bottom this strand of work. We want to consider investing in good quality business advice on an ongoing basis.

### **Useful resource**

New Economics Foundation (NEF) have done an evaluation of the impact of Community Catalysts work: <https://neweconomics.org/2020/05/community-micro-enterprise>

---



 [@valleycarecoop](https://www.facebook.com/valleycarecoop)

 [@valleycarecoop](https://twitter.com/valleycarecoop)

 [@cooperativecarecolnevalley](https://www.instagram.com/cooperativecarecolnevalley)



[www.valleycare.coop](http://www.valleycare.coop)