



Crediton Community Bookshop



Location
Crediton, Mid-Devon



Founded
2012



Legal structure
Independent
Provident Society



Description of services
Set up to provide an independent self-sustaining bookshop for Crediton and the surrounding area, focusing also on outreach to local schools, a bespoke volunteer programme and the promotion of arts and literature

Overview of Crediton Community Bookshop

Crediton Community Bookshop (CCB) was registered as an independent provident society in 2012 following a series of community meetings in response to the loss of Crediton's independent bookshop. It aims to serve the local community as self-sustaining bookshop as well as promoting literacy and reading, raising the profile of local authors, and providing an up-to-date selection of children's books. From its premises on Crediton's High Street, CCB runs an outreach project to local schools, author signings and workshops.

The social enterprise exists not only as a place to buy books but as a hub for all things literary. Through investing in local projects and working with partners, from schools and libraries to famous authors, the bookshop aims to be a strong and vibrant community resource. Local community members volunteer at the shop in a range of roles, including providing tourist and local information for visitors and residents.

CCB employs a manager and part-time worker in the shop, supported by a team of over 20 volunteers. An initial community share offer enabled the bookshop to get off the ground, raising £30,000. There are over 325 shareholders. With Power to Change funding in 2016, CCB were able to take on their current property on Crediton High Street, developing the bookshop as a community hub with a wide range of services.

Why is community accountability important?

Being accountable enables CCB to be a responsive business and adds to the sustainability of the business – increasing trade, levels of interest, community and volunteer support. Community accountability underpins CCB's work as it balances the need for financial and social value in the shop's day-to-day running.



CCB's values also drive its accountability with the local community: building a dialogue and relationships with its customers, and encouraging local people to 'live their values' by buying locally and ethically.

Shareholders retain a direct involvement in the organisation through its monthly committee meetings.

What does accountability look like locally?

Here we use three categories to provide a snapshot of some of the mechanisms and methods that the business uses in community accountability. These categories are not hard and fast; there is some overlap between the areas outlined.

Structures

- CCB holds public AGMs that are an opportunity both for the bookshop to articulate how it is working with the community and for shareholders to scrutinise the bookshop projects and its accounts. This is also when the following year's committee members are elected.
- Formal accountability exists between the Manager and the Board of Trustees, with the organisation currently reviewing how Trustees can feed into the strategy and growth of the organisation and what skills and support are needed for this.

Relationships

- CCB's relationships with local schools, partnerships, groups and businesses are integral to its accountability.
- CCB is actively engaged with the cultural life of Crediton, through staff and volunteer involvement in local festivals (Credfest – credfest.co.uk): the bookshop acted as a box office

for the festival and contributed two events which sold out.

- Participation in Town Team meetings (which tackle local problems and build a network with other local traders) supports accountability as well as regular interaction with the town council and Crediton Arts Centre.

Communications

- CCB makes the most of its High Street position to reach local people
 - through author signings, events, and participation in local festivals.
- As an organisation with a public-facing hub in the centre of town, staff and volunteers often receive feedback directly from customers and members of the community.
- Social media, an e-mail newsletter and the organisation's website are channels for interaction and engagement with CCB's diverse range of audiences. Facebook and Twitter are used actively for current events and interaction.
- A new area for CCB is in thinking about how they interact with and influence the book trade sector from their perspective as a community business.