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change

business in
community
hands



Empowering Places – Change Framework



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Empowering Places – Change Framework

Introduction

This is a working ‘change framework’ for the Empowering Places programme – a five-year programme designed to empower communities to build community businesses. The framework sets out the desired vision and outcomes of the programme, as well as pointing to the elements of the programme that enable progress towards the vision and outcomes.

The framework was developed by Renaisi three and a half years into the five-year programme, using data collected throughout the evaluation.¹

It illustrates outcomes that have been achieved, and outcomes that are aspirational and assumed. This is currently a working document that has received editing and strengthening by Empowering Places catalysts and programme staff, but may change again as the programme continues to evolve.

The framework is two-part, comprising a high-level change framework visualisation, pictured below, and this narrative document, which sits behind the visualisation providing a detailed explanation of each of the elements used to make up the framework. Where the visual provides a useful communication tool, this narrative document is critical for understanding what the framework means.

Why Empowering Places was created

Power to Change exists to help grow the community business sector, make the case to government and to transform places. Empowering Places was designed to help support the third objective around transforming places.

Empowering Places takes a place-based approach to identifying, understanding, and addressing social and economic issues, in this case, multiple indices of deprivation. It was created as something of an experiment to explore the role that locally rooted organisations could play in drawing in resource, expertise, and experience (from the programme and from the place) to ‘catalyse’ and support the development of local community businesses with a view to providing benefits and opportunities to local people and creating **more resilient places**.

¹ Including interviews with programme delivery staff, community businesses, people in places and Power to Change; observational data, and data provided through monitoring reports. As well as strategic initiatives that have been co-developed by the catalysts, such as the theory of change exercise, and the catalysts’ submission to the Danny Kruger review from July 2020.

The target groups that Empowering Places is aimed at

Empowering Places is designed to operate at several levels, it is also designed to grow organically. Therefore, all its target audiences are not pre-determined. However, broadly speaking it aims to work with the following groups:

- **The catalyst organisations** – not-for-profit organisations that are somehow rooted in or working for their local communities
- **Local community members** – including those who might be seeking to start a community business as well as those who are local residents and have a vested interest in the area and might either use community businesses or volunteer with them
- **Community businesses** – both those that already exist in some form and those that are developed as part of the programme
- **Local stakeholders in the places** – this includes staff at relevant local authority departments, and individuals from other local businesses, community businesses, charities and social enterprises

The vision or the ‘ultimate impact’ that Empowering Places seeks to achieve

The vision or the ultimate impact can be characterised as the sustained effect of Empowering Places, on places, beyond the term of the programme. This is:

‘A thriving social economy with increased opportunities, leading to social benefits for local communities’.

The shorter-term outcomes that will lead to this ultimate impact

Within the scope of the five-year programme, it aspires to achieve shorter-term outcomes at the three levels at which Empowering Places is focused: the community, the community businesses and the wider place. The levels are not hierarchal nor linear, and each level supports other levels to thrive.

It is important to note that because each catalyst is operating within a unique context, and responding to unique challenges using resources and assets locally available to them, the activities, activators and outcomes outlined in the visualisation and below are not designed to be applicable to every place; but rather to act as a catch-all.

What we mean by activities, activators, outcomes and programmatic qualities

- **Activities:** approaches used by catalysts to deliver the programme.
- **Activators:** These are the things that activate change, paving the way for outcomes to be achieved. They refer to what the individuals and groups will be feeling, thinking and doing whilst experiencing the programme activities. We have split these into four key categories: Support; Motivation and Empowerment; Trust; and Connection.
- **Outcomes:** Are the emerging and intended change.
- **Programmatic qualities:** These are the inputs from the programme, that encourage the activators to happen: Expertise, Resource, Empowerment; Relationships and Reputation.

Outcomes with an ‘*’ next to them will be measured by the hyper local community life survey booster commissioned by Power to Change.



Empowering Places Change Framework visualisation

External context and potential influencers

Ongoing or increased support from the six local authorities for community business

The rate of new community businesses developing in an area

Willingness within the local communities to support and work with the community businesses

Ongoing strong partnerships between the catalyst organisations, community businesses and other organisations working in similar spaces

Additional funding streams

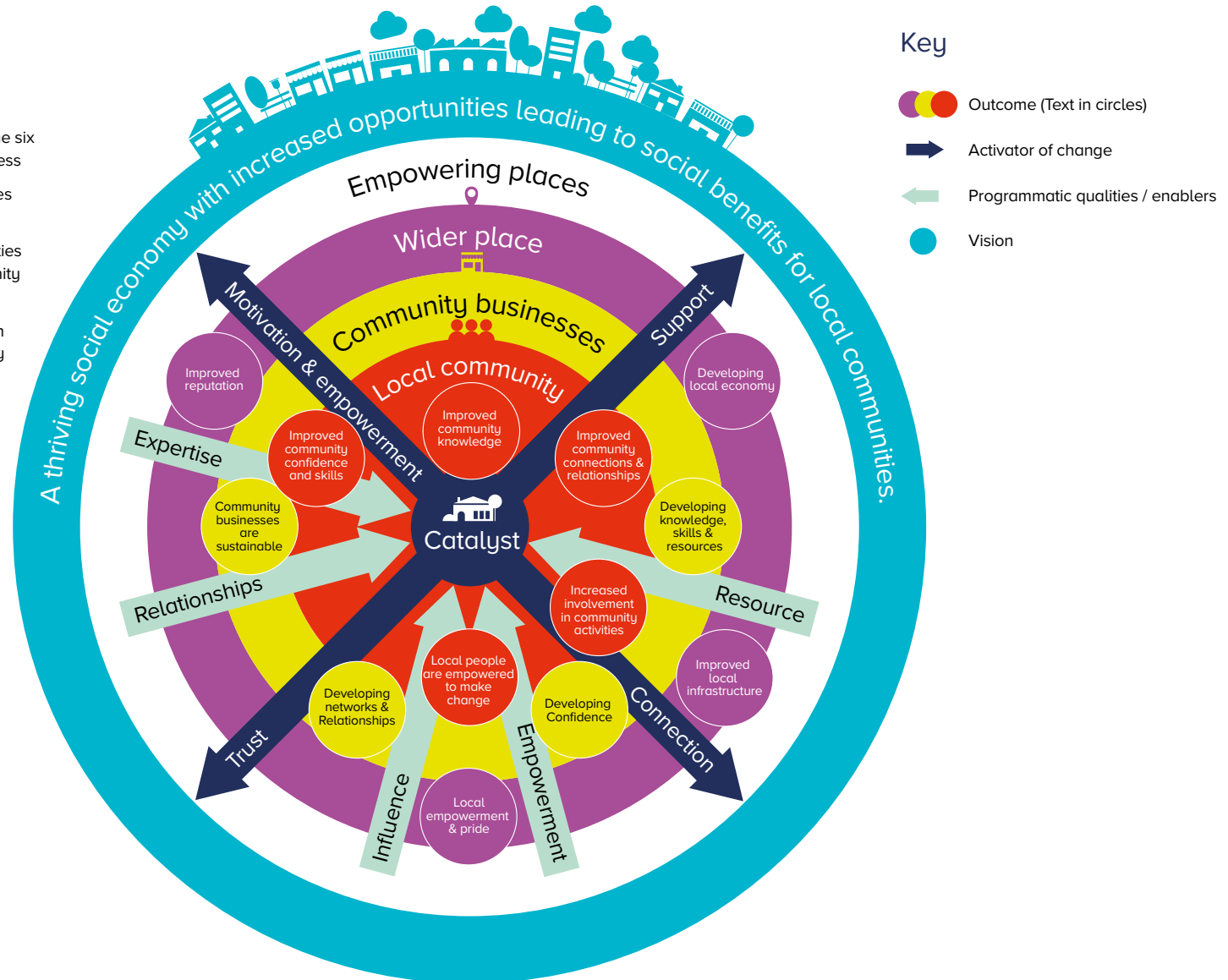
The ongoing Covid crisis prevents businesses from trading

Wider ecosystem

Increased focus at national government level on the benefits of community business



A locally rooted organisation that has strong relationships with both their community and strategic local organisations



Local Community

Activities carried out by the catalyst

- **Community engagement:** carrying out engagement activities to connect with, and understand the community's aspirations and needs. As well as developing a network of local volunteers.
- **Community organising:** building the capacity of local people and inspiring them to make change for themselves, through outreach, one to one conversations and skills development.
- **Provision of services:** directly providing and delivering services to the local community, including things like letting out office space to run foodbank services.
- **Educating people:** around the benefits of community businesses through schools and training activities.

Activators of change

At a community level, community members:



Support

- Feel supported by the catalyst organisation
- Feel that the catalyst organisation understands the local context and what is needed
- Are encouraged to support one another



Trust

- Trust the catalyst staff
- Feel that the catalyst organisation believes in the community and has their best interests at heart
- Trust the information and support available
- Trust that the outcomes of the programme will benefit them



Connection

- Feel a connection to other members of the community
- Feel inspired by the actions of others
- Feel a sense of belonging and pride in their place



Motivation and Empowerment

- Feel excited by the potential change in their community and believe this can happen
- Feel motivated, and able to take action
- Feel there are opportunities for them to make a difference in their community

Outcomes for the local community

Improved community knowledge

- People learn more about what is available in their community
- Communities have improved access to support and resources
- People know where to go for support
- People have increased knowledge about community businesses
- People (particularly young people), see community business as a viable career option

Improved community connections and relationships

- People make more trusted and better connections and relationships with each other*
- People chat to their neighbours at least once a month*
- People borrow things and exchange favours with their neighbours*
- People feel that if they needed help there are people who would be there to help them*
- People feel that there is one person or more they can really count on to listen them when they need to talk*
- People feel there are others they could call on for company or to socialise with*
- People feel more connected to large stakeholders in the local area
- People forge new connections and relationships across sectors and services
- People feel there are greater numbers of opportunities for connection, mutual support and participation

Improved community confidence and skills of those working with the catalyst/ community businesses

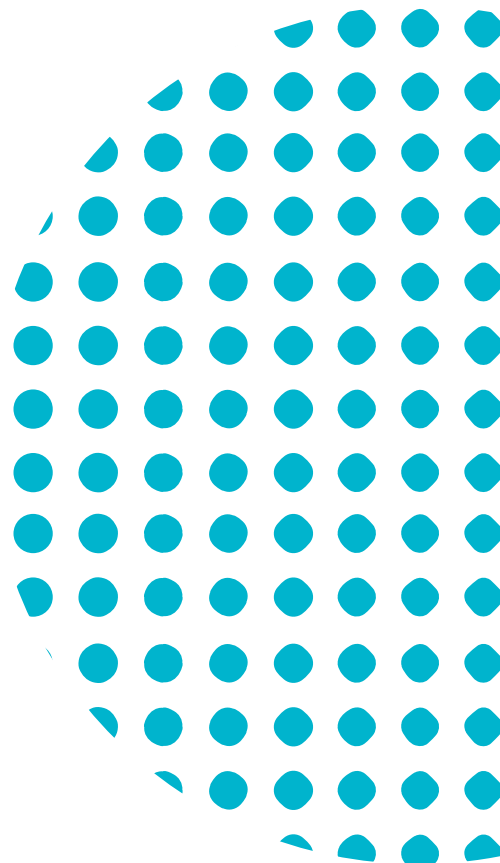
- People have improved self-confidence
- People have an increased sense of purpose
- People have an increased sense of being able to make a difference locally
- People learn skills that support them to pursue and develop new ideas
- People understand shared language around community business allowing them to grasp opportunities
- People are inspired to do something and motivated to pursue ideas
- Individuals within the community experience have increased levels of resilience

Local people are empowered to make change

- People feel empowered to create change in their neighbourhoods
- People feel that they have a voice and can influence decisions affecting local area*
- Individual people feel resilient and able to play an active role in their community
- People are confident to come forward with new ideas for community businesses
- People take control of their local economy and local assets, creating decent jobs and volunteering opportunities
- Community members agree that people in their neighbourhood pull together to improve the neighbourhood*
- Improved collective resilience

Increased involvement in community activities

- People support community businesses
- People get involved in volunteering
- People get involved with catalyst activities
- People have a sense of responsibility and accountability for their place
- People independently take action to support their community



Community Businesses

Activities carried out by the catalyst

- **Skills and training:** providing existing and developing community businesses with skills and training to help them start or strengthen their business. This includes training in governance, marketing, funding and finance through a range of providers including those in the programme provider pool.
- **Coaching and intensive support:** providing developing community businesses with ongoing intensive support and coaching either from catalyst staff or delivery partners to help them navigate the various elements of running a community business.
- **Incubating:** bringing in and supporting fledgling community businesses to grow within the catalyst organisation or physical premises to give them a fully supported start.
- **Providing seed grants:** small amounts of funding for emerging community businesses to help get them set up.²
- **Positioning and networking:** advocating for local authorities and other stakeholders to support and value community business, as well as using local networks to help the community businesses form strong connections and position themselves in their communities. This has included making introductions, involving the community businesses in local events or linking them with other organisations that can support their work.

² This was initially capped at £5k but there are plans to allocate larger seed grants of around £10k - £15k.

Activators of change

At a community business level, community business staff:



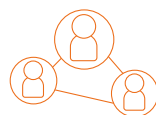
Support

- Feel supported to pursue and develop ideas and take risks
- Feel that the catalyst organisation understands the business and the local context in which it is operating



Trust

- Trust the catalyst staff now and in the long-term
- Trust the information and support available
- Believe in the Empowering Places programme



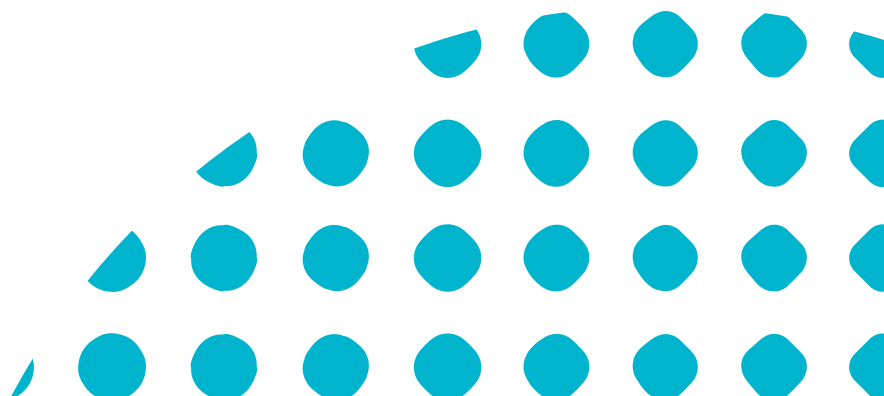
Connection

- Seek new connections in the local area
- Understand shared language around community business



Motivation and Empowerment

- Have ideas for new community businesses that are relevant for the area / address community need
- Are eager to develop their skills and knowledge
- Feel passionate about their community
- Feel invested in the community
- Understand the potential opportunities the programme can provide them
- Feel like they are part of a movement



Outcomes for community businesses

Developing confidence

- Emerging community businesses feel supported
- Emerging community businesses have confidence in their ideas and plan
- Individuals are willing and able to take risks to drive forward new/emerging community businesses

Developing knowledge, skills and resources

Community businesses:

- Have the skills to build their businesses
- Have improved enterprise knowledge and understanding
- Have the knowledge to understand the wider landscape and how they fit into it
- Develop a plan based on local needs
- Have access to increased resources including grants and funds
- Have been able to unlock space/assets to trade from
- Have improved organisational capacity
- Can identify ongoing needs and resources

Developing networks and relationships

Community businesses:

- Can communicate using shared language around community businesses
- Have a strong local presence and reputation which allows them to support other businesses
- Have an equal seat at the table in local discussions
- Experience improved partnerships, networks and profiles
- Forge new connections and relationships across sectors and services

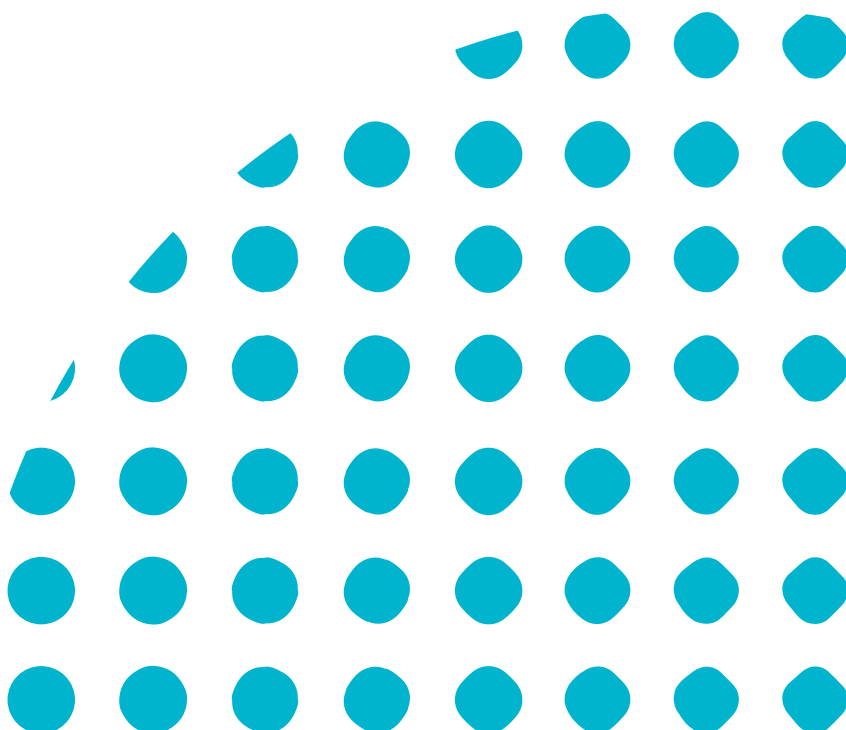
Community businesses are sustainable

- New community businesses are developed beyond the programme
- Community businesses no longer need intensive support from catalyst organisation
- Community businesses experience new opportunities for funding, or relationships that could lead to funding

Wider Place

Activities carried out by the catalyst

- **Asset transfers and asset acquisition:** taking over assets from local authorities or acquiring assets, to provide new space for the community, for specific community businesses and to help with community wealth building, and improving local visibility.
- **Engaging with local stakeholders and partners:** using connections (both local and those provided by the programme) to engage and connect with local stakeholders, seeking opportunities to promote their work, share data and resources, become involved in area-level initiatives and influence change. Stakeholders include other businesses, infrastructure organisations, schools, community groups and their local authorities.
- **Engaging at a national level:** raising the profile of their areas and of community business by reaching out to and engaging with national stakeholders including other organisations in the social economy sector, attending workshops and conferences, feeding into advisory and steering groups, taking part in press and media and contributing to national consultations.



Activators of change

At a place level, wider stakeholders:



Support

- Understand the importance of community business to the local area
- Feel that the support provided by the catalyst to local people and community businesses could make a difference to the local area
- Can see how the work of the catalyst and community businesses helps to meet wider area strategies and fits into existing and future areas of work.



Trust

- Respect the catalyst organisation
- Recognise the value that social businesses bring to the economy, including the wellbeing economy



Connection

- Recognise the importance of cross-sector local connections for themselves and others



Motivation and Empowerment

- Want to get involved in what the catalyst and community business is delivering
- Support the idea of the Empowering Places programme
- Recognise the importance of Community Wealth Building, Community Economic Development, Community Organising and the Wellbeing Economy

Outcomes for the places more broadly

Developing local economy

- Money stays within the community, creating a more lucrative local economy
- Places have more opportunities for local people – jobs, skills and connections
- Community businesses are better supported by wider local stakeholders
- The place has access to wider pools of funding
- Places have networks of integrated mutual support
- Systems are adapted to better meet community business needs

Improved local infrastructure

- Local stakeholders understand the local context and what is needed
- Local stakeholders are connected and use each other to create a more effective local ecosystem
- Local stakeholders share resources, such as data and assets to develop more effective services for local people
- Improved services in the local area
- Opening up of assets and land to wider community ownership
- An equal seat at the table for community organisations as key economic actors in their local area

Local empowerment and pride

- Local people feel supported and enabled by the place they live in
- People think that their local area has got better in recent years*
- People feel they very or fairly strongly belong to their immediate neighbourhood*
- People feel satisfied with where they live*
- People feel that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together*
- People feel proud of where they live and want to stay local
- Higher levels of community organising
- New forms of citizen democracy through devolution and greater community ownership models

Improved reputation

- The place becomes better known about more widely
- Increased positive focus on the place
- Catalysts are influencing change locally and nationally

Programmatic qualities that are needed to encourage the activators to happen

For the identified activators to take place, the planned activities will need to be delivered with qualities and approaches that encourage these activators.

The evaluation data so far has indicated that the following programme qualities enable it to be delivered more successfully:

Features of the programme structure

Resource

- The resources available to catalysts and community businesses through the programme including investment in catalysts, money for development and time

Empowerment

- Flexibility within the programme
- Having a catalyst-centric approach that allows catalysts to forge their own path and act autonomously

Expertise

- The support available to catalysts and community businesses to upskill individuals and develop strategies
- The support available to catalysts and community businesses to build social capital, assets and connections

Relationships

- A strong focus on relationships within the programme cohort
- High levels of trust between all programme participants including between the catalysts and between catalysts, tech leads and programme staff
- A strong peer network between the catalysts

Influence

- The reputability of national organisations supporting with Empowering Places and their ability to communicate in wider circles elevates the position of catalysts and Empowering Places delivery locally and nationally

Features of the catalysts

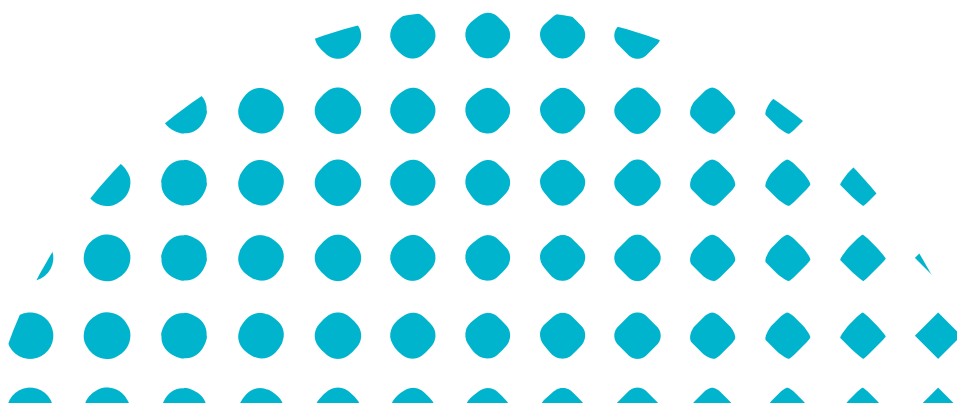
The evaluation data indicates that the catalyst organisation needs to be:

- A locally rooted anchor organisation
- That has or works with a dynamic team of individuals with a shared vision, who bring diverse knowledge and experience at different levels including board, senior management, project leads and project deliverers
- That has strong existing relationships with the local community
- That has strong existing relationships with others that understand new economy thinking

Characteristics of catalyst staff

The evaluation data also indicate that the catalyst staff need to:

- Be highly collaborative
- Be passionate
- Be resourceful
- Be resilient
- Be good communicators
- Be willing to learn
- Be supportive
- Be optimistic
- Be energising and motivating
- Be fully committed
- Have a good understanding of the local community and context



Wider conditions

Assumptions

This change framework is based on a number of assumptions. If these assumptions do not play out this may influence all or part of the change that Empowering Places seeks to create. The assumptions that are being made include:

- That there are community members in the six places who are willing to take on the running of community businesses
- That the communities in the six places will want to support the community businesses
- That the initial support and resource that the programme provides to the community businesses will be enough to get them to the point where they can develop a sustainable trading model.

Unintended negative consequences

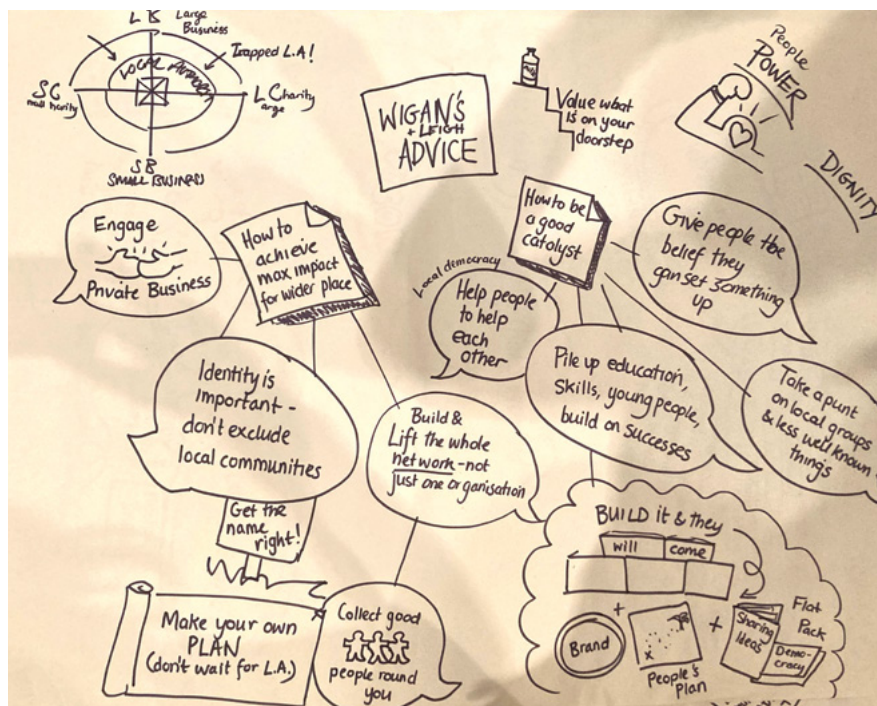
Empowering Places aims to create positive social change for the six areas it operates in and beyond, however there is a risk with any social programme that there could be unexpected outcomes or elements that could go wrong in some way. This section identifies some of these risks (some of which were surfaced by the ongoing evaluation activity) so that they can be kept in mind throughout the programme's remaining term and mitigated as far as possible.

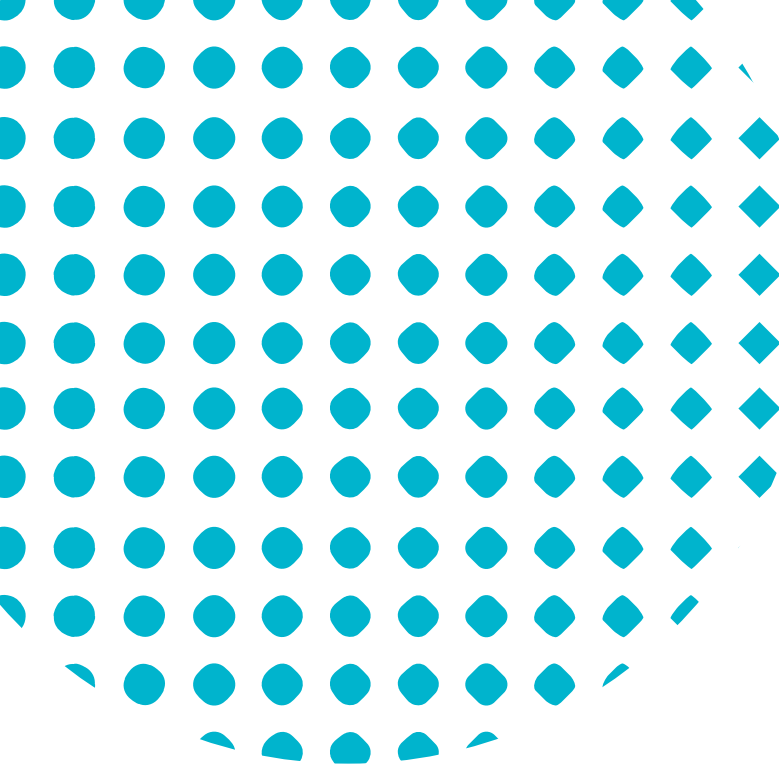
- **Catalysts become over reliant on the programme:** Empowering Places has greatly increased catalysts' capacity and innovation. Some have hired new staff with programme funds, or developed new workstreams. There is therefore a risk that catalyst organisations will not be able to sustain these activities or keep these staff employed beyond the term of the programme.
- **Individuals lose out financially:** Some community business staff have taken a big risk by leaving other income sources to work on their community business. If the business fails, that could put their livelihood in jeopardy.
- **Individuals and community groups lose confidence:** If plans don't work out, individuals and groups involved in the community businesses could lose rather than gain confidence and potentially be in a worse position than they were before engaging with the programme.
- **Communities become more divided:** In setting up a community business that is designed to address a local need, there is always a risk that the business ends up providing a service that parts of the community do not agree with or indeed divides the community in some way.
- **Normalising the gaps left by austerity:** While the programme is helping to provide some valuable local services in the six places, many of them have also been set up to fill the gaps left by years of budget cuts and other austerity measures. There is therefore danger that by stepping in to fill the gaps left by austerity, these community businesses risk normalising the damage done to local communities by reduced public sector spending.

External context and potential influencers

There are a range of external factors that can affect the aims and progress of Empowering Places. This section outlines what the programme will need others to do to support it and identifies the factors beyond the project’s control that will either enable or restrict its success.

- The availability of **additional funding streams** to support the catalysts and community businesses into the future
- An **ongoing willingness within the local communities to support and work with the community businesses**
- **Other community businesses and social enterprises developing in the local area** to help strengthen the local social economies
- **Ongoing strong partnerships between the catalyst organisations, community businesses and other organisations working in similar spaces**
- **Wider ecosystem** – (such as businesses and statutory organisations), is inclusive of community businesses for services and trading
- An **increased focus at national government level on the benefits of community business**, social enterprise and social economy more broadly
- Ongoing or **increased support from the six local authorities for community business**
- The nature of the **ongoing Covid crisis doesn’t prevent businesses from trading successfully** and the UK economy is able to grow





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