Solace Innovation and Commissioning Network
Case study: Co-operative Councils Innovation Network

Summary
The Co-operative Councils’ Innovation Network is a non-party-political active hub for co-operative policy development, innovation and advocacy. It comprises 21 councils, 5 Associate Members and 12 Affiliate Members from across the UK who are committed to finding better ways of working with, and for, local people for the benefit of their communities.

Full Members
- Bassetlaw District Council
- Cardiff Council
- London Borough of Croydon
- Glasgow City Council
- Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
- Lambeth Council
- Liverpool City Council
- Milton Keynes Council
- Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council
- Newcastle City Council
- Norwich City Council
- Oldham Council
- Preston City Council
- Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council
- Royal Borough of Greenwich
- Salford City Council
- Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
- Southampton City Council
- South Tyneside Council
- Stevenage Borough Council
- Sunderland City Council

Scope
In the wake of austerity, the CCIN is looking closely at innovative commissioning practices at a local level and their impact on communities. The network is currently developing its new 2018-20 plan which will determine its future focus. The areas to be explored from a co-operative policy perspective are:
- Knowledge and skills
- Funding
- Growing the local economy
- Libraries
- Tackling food poverty
- Tackling inequality
- Social care
- The public realm
- Housing
- Prevention models
What's unique?
Few councils take the brave decision to tackle increasing austerity and challenges on their own front door step by investing to save – investing in communities and the power of people. Co-operative Councils do just that and demonstrate this in their innovative approaches to service delivery. The co-operative business model allows people and communities to meet their needs and aspirations, offering a unique answer to contemporary problems. The Member Councils represent 6m citizens and hold an annual directly managed budget of £8.25bn. The CCIN hosts over 100 case studies across a range of service areas on their website - councils.coop - outlining the benefits that co-operative working offers local authorities and communities alike.

Results
In their work, CCIN members showcase a range of positive co-operative working outcomes. Examples include:

Preston City Council's 'Preston Model' and community wealth building learns lessons from the impact of the death of the manufacturing industry in Cleveland, USA that decimated the local economy. Preston adopted these ideas, and those of Ted Howard and The Democracy Collaborative, to facilitate an improvement in the market environment for local products. In February 2018, the council will host an event that celebrates the benefits of local procurement and a regional bank, There has been a 13% increase in local spending across Lancashire since introducing this approach. Read more: http://www.councils.coop/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Community-Wealth-Building-Preston-City-Council.pdf

Plymouth City Council's CATERed is a co-operative offering school meals within Plymouth. It is owned by the 63 schools and the Council (who own 51%). Using pooled schools food budgets, CATERed provides quality, healthy food to children and when families can't afford to provide food, using local park facilities to provide them with hot meals. Close relationships have been built with local parents, who work closely with CATERed to share ideas and access help when needed. Read more: http://www.councils.coop/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Education-CATERed-Plymouth-City-Council.pdf

In January 2018, the CCIN's Housing Commission on community-led housing (CLH) published its report, 'Community-Led Housing: a key role for local authorities' led by Croydon Council. The Commission’s practical approach is aimed at promoting good practice and innovation to enable councils to work with communities to generate more affordable housing and make best use of government funding for CLH. 12 detailed local authority case studies spread across England, Scotland and Wales set out how and why a council is supporting CLH, who it is working with, and gives examples of homes created in their area. Read more: www.ccinhousing.co.uk

Key learning point
Councillor Sharon Taylor, Chair of the CCIN and Leader of Stevenage Council says: “As the challenges presented by austerity continue to present themselves to councils and the communities we serve, some councils are taking the bold decision to tackle this on their own front doorstep by using their own investments and purchasing power to benefit their local economy. Our co-op councils are investing in communities and the power of people in just this way and demonstrate this in their innovative approaches to service delivery. We
are a cross-political party body and would love to hear from new local authorities who are also working hard to promote innovation at a local level and may like to join us.

For further information
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