Local Trust
trusting
local
people

March 2021 **BRIEFING 10**

Rapid research COVID-19

Community responses to COVID-19: Striking a balance between communities and local authorities

Mandy Wilson and Angus McCabe (Third Sector Research Centre, University of Birmingham) and Rob Macmillan (Sheffield Hallam University)

SYNOPSIS: This briefing draws on research with five local authorities in England to examine how relationships between communities and local government have played out during the COVID-19 pandemic. It draws attention to a complex and interlinked response to the crisis from communities and local councils, founded upon a consistent and collaborative approach to working closely with communities, experience of earlier crises, and a fine balance struck between leading and enabling community action. The briefing illustrates the effectiveness of a trust-based **relational approach** to community engagement but notes that the push for greater community power can both ebb and flow.

Key points

- Some evidence shows that communities were quick to respond to the initial crisis of COVID-19, while local government was slow in comparison.
- Community and local authority responses often ran in parallel, with little convergence between the two – but a more nuanced picture emerges from focusing on councils with proactive relations with communities.
- The speed and effectiveness of the community response is founded in an outward-focused, collaborative approach, requiring highly developed cooperation and trust between the council and the community.
- Some local authorities worked directly with communities and community-led infrastructure (CLI) to support initiatives on the ground, and some worked through local voluntary-sector intermediary bodies.
- Local council members and officers have helped to create the enabling conditions for successful joint approaches and responses.
- Learning from earlier experience of emergencies has enabled community and local authority responses to COVID-19 – including an appreciation of what communities can achieve during crises.

This briefing is the 10th in a series seeking to understand how communities across England respond to COVID-19 and how they recover.

Briefings were published throughout 2020 and will continue through 2021 to share findings and learn from others exploring similar questions.

#RespondRenew

Introduction

The first phase of the *Community responses to COVID-19* study noted that in the early months of the crisis there were missed opportunities for councils and communities to work together and pool their resources in a fully effective response (McCabe et al, 2020). The more structured delivery models often seen in local authorities do not always sit comfortably alongside the informal and fluid approaches frequently adopted by community groups, and vice versa. In addition, the relationships between community groups and community-led infrastructure (CLI) and statutory and agencies can often be characterised by distrust, a feeling that communities have been ignored by policymakers and resource holders (Community Sector Coalition: undated). Indeed, in some of the 26 study areas involved in the research, there is not much of relationship between communities and local authorities to speak of at all. The resulting misunderstandings appear to limit the potential for meaningful and complementary use of resources.

However, some communities and councils are much more positive about their relationships. Indeed, the impact of the crisis has strengthened and cemented these affiliations. A rather mixed picture emerges, then, of the relationships between local authorities, communities and the voluntary and community sector during COVID-19. Briefing 9 in this series examined the literature on this topic and confirmed a deeper and more longstanding sense of varied experiences at local level (Macmillan, 2021).

To explore these issues further, this study has sought additional evidence and learning from members and officers in five additional local authorities: in Calderdale, Huntingdonshire, Solihull, Thurrock and York. In various ways these are thought to have worked well alongside communities during the pandemic. They were suggested by residents and workers active at community level and selected to include a range of political, structural and governance contexts. This additional research with councils aimed to explore and explain in what ways a collaborative approach emerges in some areas.

The findings provide a discussion of community and council practices over the last year, and explore the conditions for effective relationships between communities and local government – what they look like and how they are created, and how they play out and pay off in times of crisis.

Context matters

The five authorities in this research vary in the way they have approached working with communities during the pandemic. This ranges from, for example, working through recognised organisations, to supporting a pool of new volunteers, to a looser network model, and to building on existing connections on the ground. These variations suggest that context matters in terms of how resources have been mobilised and coordinated during the pandemic, but there are also significant points of convergence.

> All five authorities stressed the significance of building relationships with communities when it came to the pandemic – so much so that one local authority officer interviewed talked about working with communities as being "the only show in town".

All five authorities had an awareness of a deficit in trust between the council and communities and before the pandemic were at varying points along a journey to address this. They all stressed the significance of building relationships with communities when it

came to the pandemic – so much so that one local authority officer interviewed in this research talked about working with communities as being "the only show in town". The five authorities want to see communities having greater participation in, and ownership of, services and activities. There are different ways in which this might happen and how much investment through council resources will be required to achieve it.

The authorities in this study are at the smaller end of the spectrum – the largest covering a population of just over 216,000 people. The relatively small size of the authority is thought to be significant by all five councils, though possibly for different reasons. Solihull and Calderdale, for example, compared their size favourably to larger cities nearby which arguably have more complex needs and stretched public services; York pointed to its concentrated and bounded geography and the fact that people are well networked; Solihull felt that, as a small authority, decisions can be made more quickly. All but one council are unitary authorities (that is, they are responsible for providing all local government services to their district).

In Thurrock, unitary status is seen as helpful as it does not have to negotiate with other authorities over roles, responsibilities and resources. Conversely, as a district council, Huntingdonshire has substantial experience of working in partnership with other authorities and also noted that it was able to work more closely with residents than larger or upper tier authorities.

Balancing roles and relationships

That local government and civil society relations can be a source of tension has been known for a long time. As far back as 1977, for example, Cockburn talked about the contradiction between the embrace of corporate management by local government on the one hand and community participation on the other (1977). Similar debates have continued ever since (Macmillan, 2021).

Throughout the crisis many areas witnessed rapid and creative community responses to need, for example by providing and distributing food, and maintaining opportunities for social interaction despite lockdown restrictions. CLI[1] could hit the ground running because in many cases it knew and was rooted within its community. Our local authority interviews confirm this. One council member "realised how quickly the community mobilised, quicker than the council. [We] could see on Facebook the response from people in communities, neighbours". A council officer noted that:

> "The community response was overwhelming, unbelievable. The best thing that came out of COVID – [we] started without an understanding of what the community really was and then saw it rise up".

Local authorities have also responded – to protect the vulnerable and ensure people had food, but also through more innovative and informal approaches, such as the provision of radios and smart speakers aimed at combatting social isolation. In reality these responses have often run in parallel with community responses, with one side not knowing what the other was doing, reducing the potential for collaboration and effective use of resources.

The *Community responses to COVID-19* study has heard complaints from CLI and community groups about local council approaches across the 26 study areas. It was suggested that local authorities were too slow (a community worker said "we can't wait for

[1] For more information on, and discussion of, the role of community-led infrastructure during the pandemic see Briefing 7 and Briefing 8.

the council, we need to decide and to act now"); or were too distant (particularly at a county council level). Councils were criticised for ignoring resources at community level and not recognising what they can offer. One CLI member commented:

> "[the council officer] was telling us of all the things that they'd been doing. Hadn't approached us, said it was our fault, we should have become more engaged … We have a Facebook page which is trying to engage everybody".

They were thought to be inflexible when interpreting COVID-19 restrictions around the closure of buildings and services. In one area, a resident noted that "kindness is being hampered by safeguarding," and the local authority itself reflected that it had got wrapped up in rules and risk assessment.

In addition, there have been recurring comments about a lack of opportunities for communities to input into strategic decision making about responses and recovery – as one resident commented: "we have to push into those spheres still, I don't think we're invited". Similar comments are also levelled at some voluntary sector infrastructure bodies which have delivered responses on behalf of or in partnership with the council. Yet, criticism is not all one way. In one area, the voluntary sector infrastructure body felt that a community-led organisation was not interested "in the bigger picture" and had a "go-it-alone attitude". In another area there has been some tension between the CLI and the voluntary sector infrastructure organisation around whose role it was to take the lead on COVID-19 responses.

The conditions for effective relationships between communities and local government

Local authorities, and indeed communities of place, are diverse, with lots of potential points of connection. In some cases, there are established relationships between community groups and individual officers, and sometimes with local councillors. In addition, there is evidence from this research that where these connections do exist, they are more likely to be with paid workers in the community rather than with volunteer community activists.

> Networks and research tell us is that in order to be effective, local government needs to shift decision-making powers towards community control – to act as an enabler and facilitator of a system that is inclusive of community voices and grassroots activity, and to build relationships and trust with citizens.

A range of organisations, networks and movements are currently making a powerful case for more meaningful and collaborative relationships between public services and communities.[2] It is argued that the design and delivery of public services should be more firmly in the hands of communities (Lent and Studdert, 2019) or at least co-designed and co-delivered with communities. In the wake of learning from the pandemic, New Local has asserted a community power approach (Kaye and Morgan, 2021; Pollard et al, 2021), NESTA

[2] Examples include: A Better Way, Carnegie UK Trust, Centre for Welfare Reform, Deeper Democracy, Movement for Neighbourhood Democracy, NESTA.

has outlined new and more collaborative operating models for local authorities (NESTA, 2020), and the Better Way network has set out its *Time for a Change* framework (Better Way, 2021).

What these networks and research papers tell us is that to be effective, local government needs to shift decision-making powers towards community control, to act as an enabler and facilitator of a system that is inclusive of community voices and grassroots activity, and to build relationships and trust with citizens. So, to what extent has this happened? How extensive, deep and productive are relationships between communities and local government? And what structures, mechanisms and work underpin a community-enabling approach?

Building the foundations

Prior to COVID-19 the five councils in this research had expressed intentions and developed strategies to work more closely and in a different way with communities, and to varying degrees had put in place structures to make this happen. There are **three main elements** to this foundation-building work: strategic relationships, community-led approaches, and leadership and collaboration.

1. Strategic relationships

All five authorities value the role of the voluntary and community sector. Three have been developing stronger strategic relationships with established voluntary sector organisations, and sometimes directly with communities and CLI over many years. In one area, for example, a partnership-based contract brought together an alliance of several infrastructure bodies with the local authority and the clinical commissioning group, alongside support for a network of local community anchor organisations. It was suggested that a long-term strategic vision from the top of the council continues "to set a culture, framework and expectation" about working in partnership with communities, a tone that endures beyond changes in political leadership or control of the council.

> A partnership in one of the areas was formed in the mid-2010s as an informal alliance to enable new ways of working between the council, the voluntary and community sector and communities, but effectively came into its own as a result of COVID-19.

In another area there is a strong local infrastructure body, and, in a collaboration between the voluntary and community sector and the council, a multi-sector partnership takes forward a community-focused agenda. The partnership was formed in the mid-2010s as an informal alliance to enable new ways of working between the council, the voluntary and community sector and communities, but effectively came into its own as a result of COVID-19.

In a third authority, recent developments have aimed to move beyond a transactional relationship with the voluntary and community sector to create a better understanding of, and engagement with, communities.

2. Community-led approaches

An explicit commitment to community development is present in four of the five authorities. In one, it has been embedded for at least three decades and is enshrined in its strategic social action approach. Here, there is a whole suite of initiatives at community level, including the creation of community hubs where many activities take place within one

space, which may or may not be service related. Two authorities have embraced the Local Area Coordination scheme "…to have community-led services rather than put everything in the centre and have centrally-led services," as one council member said. They continued: "I am absolutely convinced that if we take services to people, rather than expecting them to go to services, we will get a much better response".

In both of these areas, coordinators have been working for several years to build lasting asset-based relationships that connect residents to each other and to local community and statutory services.

3. Leadership and collaboration

The five authorities all highlighted several examples of moves to shape and change council culture from a system of departments to a more interconnected whole, with people thinking differently about how they carry out their roles. One authority, recognising that there was a trust deficit in council-community relations, is using a data-driven evidenced approach to focus on its wider obligations and duties rather than just its statutory functions – to be more outcomes-oriented and less service-delivery focused.

The five authorities all highlighted several examples of moves to shape and change council culture from a system of departments to a more interconnected whole.

For another authority, leadership is strongly tied to ownership and responsibility – a culture of dealing with issues internally, not passing the buck to another council department or expecting communities to navigate its systems and bureaucracy. As a council officer put it: "The key is about being honest, building a relationship, not swerving the issues". In a third area, engaged leadership amongst members and officers was seen to be significant in creating longstanding positive relationships between the council and communities.

One authority perceived system leadership through collaboration as the golden thread that links all its community-based initiatives together A council officer said:

"…building on those assets that were already there and ensured genuine collaboration across the system and with people and communities so that their energy, power, skills and expertise could focus more directly on pressing challenges".

Collaboration with communities: Playing out and paying off in times of crisis

The five authorities are similar in the way that foundations have been built for strong collaborative relationships with communities. However, the way that each responded to the crisis was different, reflecting their histories, previous experience of emergency responses and the extent to which key relationships were already in place. How, then, do these foundations and relationships play out and pay off in a crisis like COVID-19? We point to **four key themes**.

1. Mapping community resources

The COVID-19 crisis saw the emergence across the country of a plethora of new informal groups. Council interviewees have commented how they were amazed and humbled by

this development and sought to work in tandem with it. Maps of community activity were a starting point. Where they already existed, such as the Live Well York community website, they could be enhanced. In other places they were quickly set up. One authority described how officers began to plot onto a large wall-map everything they knew about different communities in the borough – parish councils, mutual aid groups, community groups and faith groups. This allowed them to identify gaps and to seek out potential crisis responders on the ground. In another, the council pulled information together from groups that were advertising on Facebook or websites and found about 500 different groups offering services which later became the basis for a public facing website.

2. Supporting community responses

The five authorities vary in the way they have sought to work with and support community-level responses to the pandemic. In one area, newly formed mutual aid support groups and existing community groups were effectively left alone to provide very local practical and emotional support for vulnerable residents. The local authority took the view that these groups knew what was needed in their neighbourhoods and so the council did not need to intervene, other than to offer background guidance on topics such as safeguarding, cash handling and supporting volunteers.

In another authority, the community sector response was seen by the council to reflect the power, flexibility and adaptability of people in communities. As a result, the authority sought to welcome a whole new set of people who were active within their communities. It was able to capitalise on what was already in place, such as the local area coordinators (LACs) with their connections and a network of community hubs and to mobilise community initiatives such as GoodGym (a community of runners that combines getting fit with volunteering) and Community Health Champions. The council saw its role as knitting it all together.

Previous experiences of crisis situations helped create the structures and approaches through which an effective early response to COVID-19 could be mobilised.

Another authority worked with its voluntary sector infrastructure body to create a network of recognised organisations which were seen to be reliable on the basis that they existed prior to COVID-19 and thus already had structures, volunteers and policies and procedures in place, and had trusted relationships with their local communities. The recognised organisations "were in effect an extension of the council and part of that response," according to a council officer.

Previous experiences of crisis situations helped create the structures and approaches through which an effective early response to COVID-19 could be mobilised. For example, two areas have recent histories of flooding. In one, the council set up five virtual hubs across the area to coordinate local responses and established a call centre to handle requests for help and to register volunteers.

The virtual hubs were a socially distanced adaptation of the physical flood response model, a single point of contact covering each locality to organise practical emergency support. Some more affluent parts of the borough were able to self-organise a community response, drawing on the experience of floods. Elsewhere, larger and more formal community anchor organisations took the lead in some of the most deprived areas of the authority.

Where gaps in response and support were identified, councils sometimes deployed their own staff, or asked voluntary sector partners to step in. For example, LACs helped distribute food and supported food banks, which were struggling to respond to increased demand with fewer volunteers. Similarly, a voluntary sector infrastructure network rallied and

organised furloughed workers from its member organisations to assist as volunteers in struggling food banks.

3. Volunteers or neighbours?

A call to action in one place saw 4,000 volunteers come forward. This kind of rapid response raised important questions about how to coordinate and deploy volunteers. It brought into focus whether councils should put regulatory measures in place for neighbourly action. As one council officer commented:

> "We've been able to work with them in a really flexible kind of community connection way … when all these volunteers first came forward, there was a tendency to funnel them through a formal volunteering pathway … [but] do they really need to be signed up as formal volunteers? Could we look at this more informal neighbourliness, and just connect them with people that they might form long-term friendships with? And once you start calling somebody a volunteer, all sorts of responsibilities come with that, don't they, which can be off-putting for people. And also you start to worry that they need a certain level of support and supervision and management".

Similarly, another authority that advertised for 'community champions' to come forward as volunteers emphasised informality – anyone could register and no training was required. People have been encouraged to make neighbourly connections without the need for regulation. Support is provided through a community champions network, and community development workers have reached out to individuals, helping them to organise more formally if this was what they wanted.

4. Partnerships and networking

All the authorities have worked in partnership with the voluntary and community sector through different types of structure. In one area a coordination group for recognised organisations was quickly established, which enabled the council to identify volunteer levels and community needs and to jointly plan ahead with community-based groups.

This supported a scaled-up and speedy response based on the sharing of council data about the pandemic and its likely effect in different places with experiential local knowledge. It created an opportunity to discuss with community-based organisations how they might see themselves fitting into recovery strategies. As a council member remarked:

> "The district council realised that … we aren't going to be able to do all this ourselves, we need people to be able to help, … 'cos if you try and do it from the top, you'll never achieve anything because you're just too far away from it … it's the people on the frontline, so to speak, that will deliver what you need…"

In another area, an existing partnership became a virtual meeting space – a community of practice – for key strategic leads from the council and public health, along with LACs, community forums, faith groups and CLI. It has met frequently to share information, concerns, contacts, solutions and good news; a council officer said: "It was a joint

approach that looked to mobilise communities, recruit them as volunteers, support them appropriately… we've got a very strong partnership … we know who does what best so we could fall into those roles very easily".

The council also pulled together pre-existing partnerships into a joint response initiative. As one council officer observed:

> "I wouldn't say as a council we've done anything outside of the partnerships that we have…Because they work best. I think as a council we committed very early to work with [the local infrastructure body and partnership] … that was our joint approach to mobilising communities and responding to the pandemic".

One authority with fewer close relationships with the voluntary and community sector instead worked through layers of networks, with a single point of contact in the council for each. The networks have grown over the last year, through people's connections, enabling informal groups to play a more significant role. The council estimates that they reached out to 40,000 individuals in the first six months of the pandemic through the voluntary and community sector. The networks have proved to be a powerful approach.

> One council estimates that they reached out to 40,000 individuals in the first six months of the pandemic through the voluntary and community sector.

The council has a changed perception of community; there is more collaboration between the council, voluntary organisations and community groups; a better understanding of the roles that different types of organisations can play; a more united and cohesive whole. The networks have also taken on a scrutiny role whereby the council can test out its thinking – and there is a willingness from all parties to continue this beyond COVID-19.

Learning

Although the pandemic continues, and many involved in community responses have had little chance to pause for breath, the research in the five authorities suggests a number of key learning points from the experience so far.

Changing relationships: Several people interviewed talked about relationships with community groups being the strongest they have ever been – this is "built on pure trust and kind of works both ways", according to a council officer. One council member commented that there is:

> "…lots to learn from communities. They can teach us things, and have been, during the pandemic. [We've] seen what communities are capable of when faced with a crisis…. Nice to see the change in the relationship, so much more positive".

Similarly, an officer from a different authority was inspired by the changing relationship between the council and the community, and how neighbours had looked out for one another. In two authorities officers recognised that they needed to build closer relationships with Black and minority ethnic groups to extend the council's reach into communities.

Longstanding investment: One councillor though pointed to success being based on years of investment in social and community action prior to the pandemic. They felt that the closer working relationship with communities resulted from building on what people were already doing, rather than starting from scratch and treading on toes. Certainly, LACs in two of the authorities formed a central part of mobilising community responses to COVID-19, given their extensive networks and practical approach to problem solving. When this was combined with other existing community-based initiatives, such as a network of community hubs and a community mapping project, there was a flying start to an effective response. However, an officer who described the council as having been on a learning curve also pointed to "…some degree of satisfaction out of COVID," in that "a lot of the work that we did when we didn't have to do it really showed its benefit when we absolutely needed it to be there".

A variety of offers: A collective and collaborative response brings a variety of different support offers. One council officer noted how this provided wide-ranging reach into different communities:

> "…because it doesn't matter where you are … you can never be all things to all people, and there needs to be different approaches … doesn't matter whether you're a local authority, whether you're a community group; there are some that will respond to you rather than [others]".

It was also observed that during the crisis people have been seen as assets; as "valuable not vulnerable". An example given was a changed perception of older people – they organised themselves and generated innovative new ideas, rebuffing tired suggestions that they might only want to play bingo!

Joining up: A key learning point and change of direction for one of the authorities centred on the work of mutual aid support groups. A concern that they had effectively been left to fend for themselves led to new funding being earmarked for a short-term COVID-19 community response coordinator post. Hosted within the voluntary sector, the role involves joining up the network and offering support to the mutual aid groups where needed, to overcome the sense that they had been abandoned.

> In one area it was noted that previous experience of crisis – in this case flooding – had opened eyes across the council to what communities were capable of.

Trust: There were always going to be some tensions in delivering a joint response, especially in the fast-paced environment of March 2020. The passion that underpins community activism can give rise to conflict, and there is some evidence that some council colleagues have found the informality of community activity difficult. In four of the five case studies, there is evidence that different parts of the council have pulled in different directions – partly to do with whether their roles are people-focused or not, but also with the amount of risk they are able to take. This can lead to frustration at the bureaucracy of some parts of the council. One council officer commented:

> "[I] got questioned about what volunteers were doing and community groups, which I did have to sort of push back and say, 'I have no power and control over those community groups' … different parts of the council have been moving at different speeds in terms of innovation and developing strength-based, person-centred approaches".

The relationship between council members and officers appears to be significant. The research has drawn learning from councillors, all of whom were unequivocal about the value they placed on officers: "we trust our officers, I think that's the key," said one council member. In fact, trust emerges as a core condition for effective community responses. In one area, for example, it was noted that previous experience of crisis (in this case flooding) had opened eyes across the council to what communities were capable of. That they had demonstrated an ability to step in when it was needed helped prevent the council from defaulting to what might otherwise have been a paternalistic approach.

Conclusions: Relationships, trust and power

Together the five authorities in this study illustrate the effectiveness of a high-trust **relational approach** to council-community engagement, as opposed to a low-trust and low-engagement transactional one. Collaborative activity is both built upon and has generated greater trust and more honest relationships. Although their experience and starting points in working alongside communities varied, they have all highlighted the relevance of key principles recently outlined by the Better Way network in its 'Time for a Change' framework (Better Way, 2021). These are:

- **Putting relationships first:** Make relationship-building a key priority; being human and learning from stories, with councils acting as enablers working with citizens rather than treating them as consumers or beneficiaries.
- **Sharing and building power:** Building new frameworks of accountability, creating networks to allow for new and diverse voices.
- **Listening to each other:** Being honest and open; learning from each other to bring about change.
- **Joining forces:** Collaborative cross-sector leadership and encouraging participation by all.

Members and officers interviewed in this research hope that the interdependent and interactive community and council responses to COVID-19 will irreversibly shift relationships. There are commitments to continue working more closely – for example, reimagining how a council's scrutiny function might work through greater community involvement, and a network approach to strategic discussions over long term recovery around the idea of an 'inclusive economy' (Inclusive Growth Commission, 2017). These could help put some shape around the assertion that:

> "We are at a critical crossroads where there is a real opportunity to rebalance power and recalibrate the relationship between communities and public services" (Pollard et al, 2021, p. 112).

Embracing this opportunity will require deeper understandings of power and its different sources and manifestations, as well as widespread commitment to these good intentions.

For many local authorities and communities, trust-building and cooperative working have not yet really started – or efforts to build new relationships are only just getting under way. Even in the most progressive councils, the dynamics of the system can see-saw: "first towards panic and chaos, then towards an increase in collaboration, innovative ideas and compassion, which was unfortunately followed by an inevitable shift back towards more familiar negative system processes and behaviours" (Cox, 2020).

> The ebb and flow of collaborative working between communities and councils can pass rapidly through repeated cycles of retreat and advance. In this specific context, it has swung back to more of a positive and collaborative relationship.

It is worth noting that the ebb and flow of collaborative working with communities can pass rapidly through repeated cycles of retreat and advance, and in this specific context it has swung back to more of a positive and collaborative relationship at the current point of the pandemic. This dynamic also applies within communities. It focuses attention on how more positive attitudes to working with others across organisational silos can be fostered, and how power and resources can be more equitably shared within and between them. Briefings 11 and 12 will explore the nuances of community power.

The depth of relationships and the will to make them work effectively will be tested as we emerge from the intensity of the pandemic. Will local authorities have the courage, and importantly, the money to continue community-based approaches and develop a more equitable union – and will communities have the trust to join them in this journey?

References

Better Way (2021) *Time for A Change: A rallying call for a better way.* London, Civil Exchange. Available at: betterway.network/time-for-a-change, accessed 26-2-21.

Community Sector Coalition (undated); *Unseen, unequal, untapped, unleashed; The potential for community action at the grassroots*. London, CSC

Cockburn, C. (1977) *The Local State: Management of Cities and People.* London, Pluto Press.

Cox, J. (2020) *Systems change in local government: learning from COVID-19*, 21st September 2020. London, NESTA. Available at: nesta.org.uk/project-updates/change-in-local-government-learning-from-covid-19/, accessed 26-2-21.

Davidson, S., Wallace, J. and Ormiston, H. (2020) *Revisiting the Route Map to an Enabling State: Guiding Principles for Recovery*. Dunfermline, Carnegie UK Trust.

Inclusive Growth Commission (2017) *Inclusive Growth Commission: Making our economy work for everyone*. London, RSA.

Kaye, S. and Morgan, C. (2021) *Shifting the Balance: Local adaptation, innovation and collaboration during the pandemic and beyond.* London, NLGN/New Local.

Lent, A. and Studdert, J. (2019) *The Community Paradigm: Why Public Services Need Radical Change And How It Can Be Achieved.* London, NLGN/New Local.

Macmillan, R. (2020) *Community responses to COVID-19: towards community-led infrastructure* London, Local Trust. Available at: https://www.learningfrombiglocal.org.uk/resources/briefing-7-community-led-infrastructure

Macmillan, R. (2021) *Community responses to Covid-19: communities and local authorities.* London, Local Trust. Available at: https://www.learningfrombiglocal.org.uk/resources/briefing-9-communities-and-local-authorities

McCabe, A., Wilson, M. and Macmillan, R. (2020) *Stronger than anyone thought: Communities responding to COVID-19* Report from the first research phase, September 2020. London, Local Trust. Available at: https://www.learningfrombiglocal.org.uk/resources/stronger-than-anyone-thought

NESTA (2020) *A Catalyst for Change: What COVID-19 has taught us about the future of local government.* London, NESTA.

Pollard, G., Studdert, J. and Tiratelli, L. (2021) *Community Power: The Evidence*. London, New Local.

Wilson, M., McCabe, A., Macmillan, M. and Ellis Payne, A. (2020) *Community responses to Covid-19: the role and contribution of community-led infrastructure.* London, Local Trust. Available at: https://www.learningfrombiglocal.org.uk/resources/briefing-8-role-and-contribution-of-cli

About this research

Local Trust commissioned in-depth research in communities across England into how they respond to COVID-19 and how they recover.

These are places where:

- residents have been supported over the long term to build civic capacity, and make decisions about resource allocation through the Big Local programme
- residents have received other funding and support through the Creative Civic Change programme
- areas categorised as "left behind" because communities have fewer places to meet, lack digital and physical connectivity and there is a less active and engaged community.

The research, which also includes extensive desk research and interviews across England, is undertaken by a coalition of organisations led by the Third Sector Research Centre.

The findings will provide insight into the impact of unexpected demands or crisis on local communities, and the factors that shape their resilience, response and recovery.

About Local Trust

Local Trust is a place-based funder supporting communities to transform and improve their lives and the places in which they live. We believe there is a need to put more power, resources and decision-making into the hands of communities.

We do this by trusting local people. Our aims are to demonstrate the value of long term, unconditional, resident-led funding, and to draw on the learning from our work delivering the Big Local programme to promote a wider transformation in the way policy makers, funders and others engage with communities and place.

Local Trust

CAN Mezzanine | 7-14 Great Dover Street | London SE1 4YR
Registered in England and Wales Charity number 1147511
Company number 07833396

10.6084/m9.figshare.29666177