

Local Government Leadership
 Local Government House
 Smith Square
 London SW1P 3HZ
 Telephone 020 7187 7388
 Fax 020 7187 7383
 Email info@localleadership.gov.uk
www.local.gov.uk



Local Government Group

The Local Government Group is made up of six organisations which support, promote and improve local government.

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Great places need ambitious leadership to inspire local communities and create a better future for the people and localities they represent.

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Co-operative Communities

Creating a shared stake in our society for everyone

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L10-621

Foreword

Rt Hon. Tessa Jowell MP

We are faced with a confident Government, bristling with ideological purpose – determined to undo our legacy at all costs, and risk destabilising our economy and dismantling our public services in the process. It is a Government that seeks to steal our language of fairness, solidarity, responsibility and democracy. That lays claim to our founding values and principles, and presents a distorted version of our vision of society. That cloaks its own regressive actions with borrowed progressive words and limited progressive deeds.

There is no better example of this than in the Coalition's 'Big Society' narrative. Based on our founding traditions of collective action and co-operation, and a core part of our mission over the last 13 years, it is a beguiling idea that we should not reject out of principle. However, the Coalition's plans for a 'Big Society' risk undermining the very infrastructure that gives power to local communities, because of its commitment to accelerated cuts in front line services and its ideological dedication to small government. At the very moment that expectations are being raised, Government action is damaging the ability of community organisations to deliver.

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Edited by Karen Day and Councillor Steve Reed

With contributions from Councillor Paul Brant, Councillor Jim McMahon and Rt Hon. Tessa Jowell MP

But it is not enough for us to expose the policy weaknesses of the Coalition on the 'Big Society,' however serious and profound they may be. To be a credible Government in waiting we need to clearly set out our own compelling vision for how we build a good society built on the values of mutuality, solidarity and reciprocity.

Indeed, it was out of the mutual tradition that the modern Labour and Co-operative Movement emerged. Against the backdrop of nineteenth century powerlessness, the new working classes realised the need to take charge of their own affairs and stepped outside the control of the state to organise for themselves. Weary of profiteering and exploitation, they set up a network of organisations dedicated to fair trade, a moral economy and mutual support.

In Manchester, the followers of the early socialist Robert Owen came together to establish a series of co-operative shops – 'labour exchanges' for the direct marketing of goods, and trade unions to advance the cause of Labour. From this culture came the meeting in 1868 of the Manchester and Salford Trades Union Council which set in train the establishment of the Trades Union Congress and, ultimately, the formation of the Labour Party.

This culture was based on a simple premise. That we do better for ourselves if we co-operate with each other rather than just seeing ourselves as isolated individuals. And this resonates with the new clause four in the Labour Party – that we can achieve more together than we can alone. That self interest and altruism are not actually in conflict – but are actually in our own direct interests and those of our families. That economic and social success can come hand in hand, for our collective mutual benefit and the benefit of others.

Local government is the one remaining tier of government in which Labour holds power, and is a source of great strength. Our councillors are community campaigners – they are the backbone of our constituency parties and their local activism tirelessly represents Labour values in our neighbourhoods. Local Labour will play a leading role in our party's fightback – both by taking Labour's message out to the far corners of our communities, and by providing a voice for people's concerns that can inform Labour's renewed approach.

Across the country, Labour councillors are already pioneering a new approach to local government based on the co-operative values of fairness, accountability and responsibility, and a new relationship between the institutions of local government and the people that they serve. Through trusting people to exercise greater control over the services that they use, and in some cases deliver – they are leading the way in providing public services of the community, by the community and for the community.

This new approach to local government should be central to a Labour vision of the good society, as part of a decentralised state – where – as much as possible – services are built around the frontline experience of staff and the needs of service users rather than dictated from the centre. And where Labour councillors form part of a wider political movement built around inherent human values and a sense of community purpose – and give new energy to the traditions of self-help and mutual aid.

The ideas set out in this publication represent the beginning of this vision – and I look forward to working with Labour councillors to bring them into reality.

Introduction: the co-operative moment

Co-operation is about people working together for the common good – benefiting individuals and the wider community they are part of. It is an idea that has been at the heart of the Labour movement's political tradition since the party and the trade unions were founded. It was part of the thinking that drove the early socialist pioneers in the 19th century, who in turn drew upon the ideals of common ownership and mutuality that have been part of the radical tradition in British politics for centuries.

During the last century, and particularly after the Second World War, the objective of common ownership and control became identified with state ownership. Today people's aspirations are higher, consumers of services demand more choice, and the needs of different groups vary markedly. While the statist model delivered many benefits it has also created dependency and can be seen as a brake on innovation that prevented us from finding new ways to improve public services while strengthening civil society and supporting people's aspirations. Changing needs in a changing 21st century society demand a fresh approach.

The time has come to rethink the relationship between the citizen and the state so we can hand more power and control to communities and individuals. This is exciting because it is what progressive politics has always been about, but it's also imperative if we want to win back the trust of the voters lost in May 2010.

The fear of all in the Labour Party is that the new 'Big Society' agenda just means small state. The Tory-Lib Dem Government wants to use the language of co-operation to mask reductions in public provision and leave people and their communities to sink or swim. The vision of the 'Big Society' we are being proffered is based on competition, not mutuality. This approach is dangerous because it will eventually put profit and wealth above need.

While Labour rejects the Government's approach to the 'Big Society', the party cannot simply defend the status quo. Labour needs



to change, and we can use our co-operative traditions to explore alternative models of service delivery that create more responsive services by empowering users and communities to meet their aspirations. Instead of getting stuck in an outmoded argument about big versus small state, Labour can find new ways to create an enabling state.

Labour policies can only empower communities if they have the resources, support and tools they need to take control. There will always be a strong role for central government in making sure that everyone has a voice and the opportunity to participate, and that services aren't taken over by narrow interests that exclude other groups. The co-operative model is not a magic wand that will make the Tory-Lib Dem cuts disappear, but it could offer a way to reduce the damage of the cuts and the potential social fallout, while creating a new foundation on which to rebuild in the future.

The time has come to rethink the relationship between the citizen and the state so we can hand more power and control to communities and individuals.

This publication looks at how the co-operative approach is already working in different services in different parts of the country and asks how and where we can expand it more widely. There are some big questions to answer as we take this agenda forward, but we should see these as challenges to overcome not brick walls that block progress:

- what support do communities need to take control?
- how do we make services more accountable?
- how can we improve the quality and responsiveness of services?
- how do we make sure services remain open to all who need them?
- how do we help communities articulate and meet their aspirations?
- can we deliver better value for money by making services more effective?
- what reserve powers do we need if things go wrong?

We must be clear what co-operative communities can be and what they are not. Co-operatives and mutual models are not a way of getting something for nothing, or getting people to do things on the cheap that the state or professionals should be providing. They are models built on enduring values of fairness, accountability and responsibility that offer huge potential for innovation. They deserve further exploration so we can understand their full potential.

The left must set out its own vision of a rebalanced relationship between the citizen and the state that puts more power in the hands of ordinary people. The challenge of the cuts and our need to rebuild trust with the voters we have lost is an opportunity to rethink what government is for and what kind of society we want to build.

Labour can reconnect with citizens by showing that we have the ideas to make a difference, values that show we care, and the confidence to give our communities the power they need to solve their own problems. The idea of co-operation is not new. What's new is the desire to explore just how far this approach can be used to let our communities meet their aspirations. Instead of letting the Tory-Lib Dems steal our language to shroud their cuts Labour must reclaim it to articulate a future based on values that are radical, progressive and profoundly Labour.



Co-operative housing: Britain's best kept secret

1

Housing influences the pattern of people's lives from their educational attainment to social mobility, health and even life expectancy. Providing affordable, decent homes is intrinsic to the Labour movement's values of fairness and equal opportunity.

In the last 13 years we've made some progress in tackling decades of Tory underinvestment in social housing and creating new supply.

But many on the left wanted Labour to do more to improve substandard accommodation, provide more affordable housing, and give tenants more control over the management of their homes. These aspirations have become more remote under the new Tory-Lib Dem Government. They have already slashed housing investment, scrapped growth targets and abandoned a new council house building programme. Unchallenged, these actions will stagnate social housing supply and make it even more difficult for people to get their foot on the housing ladder, further polarising society and limiting people's life chances.

The benefits of co-operative housing

Labour can play a strong role locally supporting the development of alternative and more sustainable forms of affordable housing.

Co-operative and mutual housing models give people the opportunity to have ownership of, and influence over their homes, helping them to meet their social and economic aspirations.

They stimulate active community participation and help tackle social disadvantage while providing high quality housing services. For the housing challenges we face, co-operatives and mutual models provide viable alternatives to cuts, privatisation and poor investment.

Co-operative and mutual housing models give people the opportunity to have ownership of, and influence over their homes, helping them to meet their social and economic aspirations.

¹ Tenants Services Authority survey: Commission on Co-operative and Mutual Housing report, Bringing Democracy Home.

Among their many advantages, co-operative housing can help build mixed-income communities where people from different walks of life live together, preventing the development of ghetto estates with low levels of aspiration. They offer a chance for people on lower incomes to meet their aspiration to own without being sucked into sub-prime lending saddled with mortgages they can't afford to repay. They also offer new routes to bringing in significant levels of funding for regeneration without hitting leaseholders with unaffordable debt. Housing management services under residents' control can be more responsive and co-operative housing offers a chance for people to get a first foot on the housing ladder at a time when the average age of first-time buyers in Britain is, astonishingly, 38. In addition, co-operative housing is a form of publicly owned housing that the Tories can't sell off like they did in the 1980s when their Right to Buy model saw the best quality public housing sold off from the sector leading to the dire shortages experienced across the country today.

Housing co-operatives are "Britain's best kept secret" according to the Commission on Co-operative and Mutual Housing¹. The UK's 836 co-operative and tenant run groups manage just 0.6 per cent of all UK housing and have a low profile in public policy as a result. Yet housing co-operatives have a consistent record of high tenant satisfaction, an average of 88 per cent compared to



77 per cent of other tenants. Evidence from the Commission's year-long inquiry found that housing co-operatives inspire people to make their communities better places to live and work. They also tackle social disadvantage and encourage more sustainable living with environmental and ethical policies. In a market where fewer people are able to buy their own homes, co-operatives provide 'a tenure of status', satisfying tenants' social mobility aspirations by effectively giving them an ownership stake and control.

Figures show that once people are given democratic rights over their homes significant numbers participate, ranging from 28 to 80 per cent². Housing co-operatives present an opportunity to systematically empower communities. Over time they help to build communities' decision-making skills and confidence, stimulating people to become community participants but with continued and positive links to local authorities.

As the Commission states in its report: 'Bringing Democracy Home', "Empowerment requires an ongoing approach over a period of time. In co-operatives members have the democratic right to vote on all issues; they receive proper training to exercise that right; they are enabled and confident to speak out and the whole process brings people together."

² Commission on Co-operative and Mutual Housing report, Bringing Democracy Home.

Models of co-operative and mutual housing

A variety of housing co-operative and mutual models have sprung up since the 1980s, providing a wide base upon which to build. Housing co-operatives make up the majority of the sector. Under traditional co-operative principles tenants collectively own and democratically manage their own homes. Redditch Co-operative Homes was one of the last co-operatives established by a local authority in the late 1990s. The then Labour run Redditch Borough Council and Accord Housing Association set up the co-operative through a partnership.

Labour authorities also have a strong record of establishing tenant management organisations. Here, tenants take control over housing management on their estate using co-operative style governance arrangements, but local authorities retain ownership of the homes. More recently community gateway models have been established. These provide authorities unhappy with housing association transfers with an alternative option for tenants to take control. Preston City Council created the first community gateway organisation in 2005. In Wales Torfaen County Borough Council established a community mutual model by transferring

its stock to Bron Afon Community Housing in 2008. Communities Scotland actively encourages new transfer housing associations to operate along mutual lines with membership for tenants.

Next steps for housing co-operatives

Committing to enabling co-operative forms of housing would require a significant policy and cultural change. Housing strategies, for example, could include options for co-operative models and reflect the change in decision-making but also the capacity building that communities might need to take up the model.

Labour councillors, both in control and in opposition, can work with communities to raise awareness of co-operative and mutual models as potential housing options. In Lambeth, for example, the council is conducting an exhaustive consultation exercise using engagement events, focus groups, surveys and social networking around their co-operative council proposals. They want to develop their communities' understanding of co-operative models so they can take a more active role and opt for these across a range of services if they choose.

Consultation helps to create opportunities and more choice for tenants to opt for co-operative models. But councils can also enable by changing internal policies such as in housing allocation systems. If tenants see co-operative or mutual options alongside other forms of tenure, it will not only normalise this as an option, but also create a level playing field in choice for tenants. Councils will also be able to identify tenants who express an interest in these models and tailor housing more effectively

to their desires. They can also open up land or buildings by lowering market rates or offering partnerships or capacity building for potential co-operatives or mutuals. Councils can use existing partnerships to influence local service providers, such as housing associations, to offer tenants membership and allow them more say over the running of their homes.

These are new models for the majority of councils and understanding them will represent a steep learning curve. Just as we need to build capacity within our communities, we may also need partners to help guide and advise our councils. The Commission on Co-operative and Mutual Housing suggests working with the wider co-operative and mutual movement including existing housing co-operatives. They are also developing a new scheme to raise finance and build new forms of mutual housing in partnership with local authorities.



Image courtesy of Lambeth Council

Case study

Bron Afon Community Housing

Torfaen County Borough Council struggled with the same problem as countless authorities in the UK: housing stock in need of investment but few available funds. However, the authority took the unusual decision of transferring 8,000 of its homes to a mutual community based housing organisation. Set up two years ago Bron Afon Community Housing is a community mutual wholly owned by its tenants, who join as members and effectively become shareholders. Already over 80 per cent are members and take an active role in the organisation's decision-making and management. Its board is made up of members, elected by residents in a single transferable voting system, councillors from the county borough and independent people selected by the board. They all have equal status.

It manages 8,000 affordable rented homes, 910 leasehold and 80 shared ownership flats.

The organisation has a number of performance objectives as conditions of the transfer, including getting homes up to the Welsh Quality Standard by 2012, keeping rents at local authority levels, developing sheltered housing, tackling anti-social behaviour and the wider aim of developing the local community. It has already pledged to create an additional 100 jobs and has established a construction business, which trains and employs local people and provides 45 apprenticeships. It also provides learning and development programmes for members.

Case study

Redditch Co-operative Homes (RCH)

In 1998 the then Labour-led Redditch Borough Council transferred 200 homes to a new co-operative as part of a joint venture with the housing association Accord. The council set a series of performance criteria as part of the transfer, including keeping rents within 10 per cent of the council's, maintaining homes to a high quality environmental standards and housing any tenant that had expressed an interest in living in co-operative housing. It has since established six independent

housing co-operatives across the borough, which buy services from Redditch Co-operative Homes.

Councillor Bill Harnett told the Commission on Co-operative and Mutual Housing. "Initially councillors were sceptical about co-operative housing, myself included... We had to be convinced that it was going to work. But now I am one of its greatest advocates."

Case study

The Community Gateway Association (CGA), Preston

In 2003 the Confederation of Co-operative Housing (CCH) came up with the community gateway model as an alternative to stock transfers to housing associations. The model works along the lines of a mutual with tenants opting to become members with voting rights, giving them full control over the management of their homes. The CCH hoped the model would be more palatable to tenants objecting to transfers by giving them more say over their homes. It was given the full support of the then housing Minister, Keith Hill.

Preston City Council was the first authority to opt for the model and transferred around 6,000 homes in 2005. The CGA estimates that the transfer will enable it to invest an additional £80m in its homes. The association has a 30 strong membership committee, elected by its members only, to scrutinise its management board. Its 15-person board consists of seven tenants, three council nominees and five independent members. And like Bron Afon is also encourages tenants to develop their own mini-co-operatives managing, or even taking full ownership of their homes under the gateway's umbrella.

Image courtesy of CGA



Education: co-operation, co-operation, co-operation

2

Education is crucial to the economic and social success of the country. The Labour Government put schools at the top of the political agenda, declaring that our priority was “Education, education, education”. Labour reforms and investment have raised standards, improved the teaching profession, achieved record exam results, significantly narrowed the attainment gaps for pupils in disadvantaged areas and created Sure Start children centres in every community.

The Tory-Lib Dem Government has embarked on a programme to push through new academies and free schools, in which funding will be diverted away from the mainstream pot and has the potential to make schools vulnerable to takeover by sectional interests. This runs counter to our belief that fairness and equality are enshrined in the state school system, which seeks to offer high quality education for all children. But Labour’s response to the Government’s proposals will be inadequate if we do not ourselves explore alternative ways of offering parents, pupils and communities more voice in their schools, but with a stronger collective and egalitarian focus.

Co-operative trust schools provide a model to pursue this – driving forward stakeholder engagement and educational improvements, based on a strong community ethos where pupils, parents and partners work collectively for the good of the school. Unlike academies and the proposed free schools, trusts

maintain the support and involvement of local authorities but offer collective autonomy and parental choice. As Sean Rogers, the Co-operative College’s lead on trust schools says: “Trust schools are inclusive, they are about mutualisation, not privatisation”.

The trust schools model has already proved popular across the country. Since the first, Reddish Vale Technology College, opened in Stockport in 2008 over 100 schools have converted to a co-operative trust model. The Co-operative College, which works with and advises schools, expects 200 to have gained trust status by the end of this year including a number of clusters and federations. Leeds, Leicester, Derby and Newham all now have trust schools in their boroughs.

Ed Balls, former Education Secretary and also a Co-operative Party MP, was instrumental in introducing trust schools and worked closely with the Co-operative Group and Co-operative College to devise the model. “Moving to a

Image courtesy of Luton Culture



co-operative model puts power in the hands of those who know best what is needed in their area. It can give everybody with a stake in the school's success the opportunity to be involved in running their school," he says.

The aim of co-operative trusts is to transform education by bringing all the stakeholders of a school or group of schools together. The model is based on leisure trusts, pioneered by Labour councils in the 1990s. It is a multi-stakeholder model allowing groups and individuals to become members. The members create a forum, which holds the trust to account and elects a proportion of trustees. The active engagement of all stakeholder trusts put the community at the centre of educational provision. Trust schools can also benefit from the expertise of partners, either other schools or universities, to help drive up standards.

The model and the schools have so far been particularly successful in increasing parental involvement, with many responding positively to mutuality. According to the Co-operative College the engagement of parents is "the single most important lever to improved expectations and attainment". Trust schools, it says, can be a vital bridge in areas blighted by poverty and deprivation where parental involvement has been hard to achieve in the past. The principles and values of the co-operative movement have also proved attractive to parents, accounting for some of the recent surge in interest. Many of the trusts instill self-improvement and self-responsibility as core values as well as equality and inclusion. They also take an interest in fair trade, ethical investment and sustainability.

It seems some schools are opting for the trust models because of political uncertainty over the Government's education policy. One worker at the centre of the programme says schools now want 'maximum security'. "The feeling is it will be very difficult to push around a huge school with a co-operative dimension. People remember Tory education policies in the 1990s."

Labour councillors, both in control and in opposition, can help maintain this momentum. The grant scheme to help build capacity and move schools over to trust status has already been abolished by the Tory-Lib Dem Government. Councils can't mandate their schools to adopt co-operative trust status, the impetus must come directly from the school and its stakeholders, but Labour groups and Labour councillors can lead debate in the community, provide support and encourage interested schools. Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council has its first school cluster going through co-operative trust status. Leader Councillor Darren Cooper has established a separate trust policy to ensure that all school land is managed separately by a board of trustees to maintain it and keep it for wider community use.

In opposition, several groups are already campaigning in favour of co-operative schools. In Brighton & Hove, Labour councillors have called for the council to work with local communities to establish co-operative primary schools and Sure Start Centres. In Croydon, Labour councillors have battled hard to prevent the Tory-run administration from closing down Addington High School and has made a clear commitment that an incoming Labour council would support making it the borough's first co-operative trust school.

Councils can also begin to look at co-operative models at the younger end of the education system. Children's trusts and Sure Start

Centres already have strong parental and community involvement practices and ethos, and giving them more control over the services they need would strengthen early years provision. The last Labour government was already looking at options for establishing mutual federations for Sure Start Children's Centres and was planning a pilot scheme with five local authorities. Labour councils can now begin to work with parents and communities on the future composition of children's centres. Encouraging co-operatives for early years provision would help join up primary and secondary schools and help build the capacity for mutualisation across the community.

Case study New College Leicester

New College in Leicester was granted trust status in June 2010. It is part of a partnership between the City Council, education consultancy CfBT, the Co-operative College and Queen Elizabeth I College. The college had been identified as a National Challenge school under the Labour Government, which meant it had a target for 30 per cent of pupils to achieve five good GCSEs. The management team, after examining the targets for Challenge schools, opted

for a trust model deciding it was the best option to help them improve quickly and sustainably. The partners will work with teachers, parents and pupils on a drive to raise standards. The college plans to introduce personalised learning pathways for all pupils and contribute to local lifelong learning by offering courses to the wider community. An interim board is currently overseeing the college as it moves to a more co-operative governance structure.

Case study

The Co-operative Academy of Manchester

Trust schools are not the only option for local authorities that want to improve education by giving communities and partners more control. Manchester City Council has sponsored seven academies across the city, including one in Blackley in partnership with the Co-operative Group. The City Council approached the Co-operative Group as a partner for its expertise in business and finance, which

the city wants to develop, and its values. Rod Bulmer, Chair of the academy, says the values and principles that underpin all of the Co-operative Group's business will "provide an excellent foundation on to which we can build our academy."

The academy, which opened in September 2010, is based on a new £22m site and will specialise in business and finance. Its ethos will be underpinned by traditional co-operative principles of fairness, ambition and respect. While it follows the academy governance model it will have an active community engagement programme with stakeholders and other schools in the areas and will encourage pupils to establish mini co-operative businesses to get practical experience of co-operative values.



Image courtesy of Lambeth Council

Social care co-operatives: collective power in action

3

Supporting Britain's ageing and vulnerable population is creating enormous social, economic and political challenges. Our current care system is not sustainable and will fail to meet our country's future needs, with the number of over-85s set to more than double in the next 25 years.

The Tory-Lib Dem Government is embracing a cuts agenda, not an investment, innovation or progressive care plan. But Labour councils can tackle some of the needs of the ageing and the vulnerable at a local level more effectively by enabling them to democratically choose and control their own services. By providing opportunities to create co-operative and mutual care models for service users, their families and staff, our councils can promote a long-term shift in the care system, ensuring it improves the quality of life within communities for generations to come.

A number of factors have blocked the reform of the care sector for decades. The tensions around cost versus service levels are difficult to resolve as demand for more personalised care grows and funding dwindles. In addition, communities want professionally run, high quality services but fear privatisation as a means of achieving this. Moving to a more mutual or co-operative form of care could help deliver a better outcome. Research by Co-operatives UK and the Department of Health suggests that the business-like approach of co-operatives, combined with their ability to encourage the democratic participation of users, could provide innovative and practical solutions to our care problems³.

The development of social care co-operatives

The care co-operative movement has grown organically around the public sector for a number of years with several social worker and care co-operatives in different parts of the country. The Labour Government took significant steps toward giving users more say over their services through the launch of the personalisation agenda and individual budgets for care services. This model hands the value of the care package to the user so they can decide, with professional advisers, what to spend it on in order to achieve personal outcomes that the user defines. This approach has delivered dramatic improvements in care and quality of life for many users. There are examples of users grouping together, based either on having a shared outcome, shared disability or shared cultural background, and purchasing services together in effect as micro-mutuals. In response, micro-mutuals of providers, often community-based, are appearing to meet these new needs. This is starting to show us how a mutualised care market might look although it is not yet clear how far the model might develop.

³ Collaborative Self-Managed Care, Department of Health, Co-operatives UK & Mutual Advantage

The Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations (ACEVO) sees benefits in the development of mutuals of purchasers, pointing out that without a more collective model budget holders will not receive the full benefits of the scheme. “On their own individual budget holders have a relatively small amount of money and don’t have the support to use it,” says Ralph Michell, Head of Policy at ACEVO. “We’d be worried that budget holders wouldn’t be able to get the same service standards as a group of budget holders that could come together and use their purchasing power and social capital.”

ACEVO believes that limiting people’s capacity to use the full power of their budgets risks locking out different forms of delivery that could help to create more diverse and innovative markets. They are pressing for the shift toward individual budgets to be accompanied by support for mutualisation. They point to small groups of budget holders already collectively purchasing support services for mental health needs and say councils should work in partnership with third sector providers to help support and enable more collectives of this kind. This represents a challenge not only to councils but also to existing third-sector providers who will need to adapt to a market where the care user has more power and choice than in the past when care packages were issued on a take-it-or-leave-it basis.

Next steps for care co-operatives

Care co-operatives are already being explored by Labour councils. A three-year pilot project launched by the last Labour Government has already explored how these models can be created and maintained. The scheme run by Co-operatives UK ran four pilots across the country to develop a workable mutual model that could meet regulatory standards. In their final report, ‘Collaborative Self-Managed Care’, they concluded that these models were “commercially viable” and could deliver high quality specialist services.

The model developed, which was broadly the same across the four pilots, was based on the underlying principle that carers, families, communities and paid staff all worked together to deliver daily care. Most opted for a cluster-based model where groups of service users work with matched personal care workers. These were based around a locality or around types of service users, developing specialist care services. The users selected their own care workers and controlled visits and times. The clusters, which include families and volunteers, formed the co-operative, becoming its members and electing a board of directors.



Case study

Caring Support

Caring Support in Croydon was among the four Co-operatives UK pilots and has been adopted as a future model for service provision as part of Croydon Labour Group's co-operative manifesto. Caring Support provides homecare support for adult disabled and older people in south London. It was set up as a multi-stakeholder co-operative and includes users, care support workers, families and volunteers. Service users are the largest group on its board and it has around 30 members. It uses a cluster-based care model – where small groups of up to

15 service users are matched with personal care assistants. It serves both self-funders and individual budget holders, who pre-dated the pilot. Through funding and support it is now registered with the Care Quality Commission and is trading. Croydon Labour Group's manifesto describes the co-operative as groundbreaking and that by ensuring staff work with a regular group of clients who direct their own care, this helps to build mutually beneficial relationships in the community.



Images courtesy of Caring Support. Source: Mike Couchman

Any significant structural or culture change needs the right conditions to flourish and here Labour councils could play a significant role in helping to establish co-operatives or creating a supportive environment. Lessons from the pilot scheme show that pooling individual budgets will not cover the full costs of setting up a co-operative, further help and support are needed.

Labour groups can enable this market by spreading awareness across communities. The Office for Public Management suggests in their report 'New Models of Public Service Ownership' that politicians, service partners, local businesses and even banks should be aware of the options available and gain an understanding of co-operative models. Councils should communicate with service users, outlining their options and thereby creating the space for new models to grow from within the care system. They could encourage social workers to act as conduits, bringing together potential 'co-operative clusters'. Councils could also encourage their staff to set up a mutual for care and social workers and their users. This model would deliver community services in partnership with users but it would also give staff a say in those services, in their pay, conditions and training. Labour councils can help stimulate these new models by adapting commissioning processes to buy services from a wider range of providers and creating a level procurement playing field. Sunderland City Council, for example, is a major client of Sunderland Home Care Associates, an independent co-operative owned by care workers. It employs over 220 local people, contributing to employment and growth in the city.

Labour councils can also lead by example. As part of their consultation on becoming a co-operative council, Lambeth are considering developing co-operative pilots for a day care centre for people with physical disabilities and one for people with learning disabilities. The co-operative pilots would allow users, care workers and families to manage care and design services around needs.

There is huge potential to improve our care services through new co-operative models.

As Ed Mayo, Secretary General of Co-operatives UK says:

“Co-operatives are excellent vehicles to build community cohesion, be business-like in the way they work, encourage active citizenship and democratic participation. They are driven by the aspirations and values of their members.”

Councils and councillors have a crucial role to play as community leaders, enablers and communicators to create new innovative models of service delivery to improve the quality of life for our vulnerable communities.

Co-operative places: leisure, culture and the environment

4

Councils, at the heart of every community, have a strong place-shaping role, which provides opportunities to involve people and create a stake in the design and functioning of their local area for mutual benefit. Establishing community ownership of parks, libraries, leisure centres, even energy consumption and generation could increase personal social responsibility and allow neighbourhoods to tackle global and national problems at a local level, while also improving the delivery and effectiveness of public services.

Environment, leisure and cultural services are ideal areas in which to develop co-operatives. Residents often have a sense of ownership over their green or other public spaces, libraries or sports facilities, giving their time freely to participate, so the connection between community and service is already well established. These services also play a more visible part in residents' lives with the value of clean streets, regular recycling or vibrant community centres an essential part of good community life. For local authorities this existing sense of ownership means the foundations for creating co-operative models are already partially laid. All that some library users or keen gardeners may need to spur them into community activism, is a council with the capacity and the political will to create and encourage co-operation.

Despite the community value of these services they are more prone to cuts as many are discretionary and are often seen – understandably – as of lower importance than services that directly support people with severe vulnerabilities. It's interesting that the first leisure trust was established in the face of rate capping and budget reductions under the last Tory government in the 1990s. Co-operative models for a range of leisure and environment services are a viable alternative to privatisation or wholesale cuts, and offer the community social enterprise models to lever in different sources of funding and make locally-based decisions.

Labour councils have led the co-operative agenda in these services for the last 20 years.

There are many successful leisure and cultural trusts across the UK, community centres and sports facilities have been devolved to community-run groups, neighbourhoods have been encouraged to reclaim land for sustainable gardens and Labour councils are also leading the debate on energy and fuel co-operatives.

These existing co-operatives show that communities can be engaged and their lives improved while providing greater value for money and more effective public services.

Leisure and culture

Labour local authorities have a strong track record in creating mutual and co-operative leisure trusts across the country. Several of the trusts have developed into highly successful social enterprises with Greenwich and Stevenage, both established in the 1990s, now running the leisure facilities of their neighbouring authorities, including sports schemes and crèches. Between them they manage over 80 leisure centres in the South East and London. With strong connections to local authorities the trusts also work as partners and take a key role in community development. Salford Community Leisure (SCL), for example, a co-operative-based trust, includes improving health, creating safer and stronger communities and improving education and skills among its employees work programmes.

SCL has enshrined the governing principles of treating members and employees with fairness, dignity and respect. It values its 'family' culture and runs extensive training and development programmes. Members can join the leisure co-operative for a nominal £1 and have annual voting rights over policy and management.

Stevenage Borough Council has transferred the management of all its community centres to its communities. It has also granted former school land and sports facilities to a local junior football club to allow them to provide

outdoor football coaching. The Leader, Councillor Sharon Taylor, is looking at options to transfer full ownership of the assets as part of her bid to create one of the country's first co-operative borough councils.

In opposition, Labour councillors in Croydon have committed to introducing a co-operative trust model for leisure services in their manifesto. They have also signed a declaration with Lambeth Council to support a local library service run by a committee of residents from both boroughs.

Case study

Greenwich Leisure Trust

Greenwich Leisure Ltd (GLL) shows how, in the face of budget cuts, co-operative models can develop into highly successful businesses. In 1993 the council was facing a 30 per cent cut in its leisure centres and a 28 per cent cut in staff. To protect the service the council transferred it into a co-operative and instead of job cuts it has gone on to create new jobs and build three new centres. It now manages

65 leisure facilities across the south east for neighbouring authorities and for each one delivers cross cutting health, crime prevention and children and young people development programmes. As it manages sports facilities across five of the 2012 Olympic boroughs, GLL is running training schemes for volunteers and is an advisor to the Olympic Development Agency.



Case study

Luton Cultural Services Trust

In March 2008 Luton Borough Council transferred its arts, library and museums to a new charitable trust. The borough was keen to protect these services from future cuts and find a means of developing Luton's cultural profile. The trust is overseen by a board of 11 trustees and includes the Leader Councillor Hazel Simmons, local businessmen, a professor, library professionals and a local mum. It operates 14 sites across the borough, including Stockwood Discovery Centre and Luton Central Library, and employs 300 people. The trust also has a trading arm, generating additional income and has levered in funding from Luton Airport, the Arts Council and the Big Lottery Fund. Over the next 10 years it plans to move to a more sustainable business model, securing at least half of its finance from different sources so it relies less on council funds.

In its first year the trust spent £6m refurbishing the Stockwood Park Museum, relaunching it as Stockwood Discovery Centre. The make-over was completed using sustainable and environmentally friendly principles. The trust has also refurbished Luton Central Library with a £1.2m grant from the Big Lottery Fund. In just two years the trust has developed a strong independent identity and is seen as one of the council's principal third sector partners. It also linked to other community development programmes in the borough and works with Luton's Health and Wellbeing Management Group, Children's Trust and its Safer and Stronger Communities Board. "The strong working relationships created by the trust has encouraged involvement by all sectors of the community," says Councillor Hazel Simmons. "You just have to look at the increase in the number of people using the services to see how successful it has been."



Image courtesy of Luton Culture



Image courtesy of Luton Culture

Environment

Our communities face a range of increasingly complex environmental challenges from climate change to fuel poverty and poor health resulting from environmental degradation. With the cuts at the forefront of the Tory-Lib Dem Government's agenda, the options for tackling these are increasingly limited. There will also be pressure to reduce spending on highly visible services like street cleaning, recycling and waste collection. More co-operative approaches to waste minimisation, community recycling schemes, even resident involvement in some environmental clean-up projects are already delivering results in different parts of the country.

To reduce global warming, individuals and communities have to address the way they live, consume goods and use fuel. With one in five families in the UK living in fuel poverty⁴ collective action could have a significant impact for communities. According to a report by the Co-operative Party, 'Collective Power: changing the way we consume energy'⁵, the average household could save up to 20 per cent on fuel bills through energy co-operatives. Endorsed by the former Energy Secretary Ed Milliband MP, it urges councils to enable co-operatives and use their planning powers to encourage more renewable forms of energy such as wind turbines.

Croydon Council's Labour councillors have committed to introducing a discount energy scheme for residents in their manifesto. The scheme would use the collective buying power of the council and their residents to reduce bills and usage. North Tyneside's Labour councillors are pressing to establish an energy company with its residents. In Lambeth, the Hyde Farm Climate Action Network, a network

of residents, works together to reduce carbon emissions from their homes and grow their own food, establishing a model that the council is now expanding across the borough.

Labour councils have also established co-operative models to enable residents to manage their parks and green spaces and take a more active role in improving their environment. Again in Lambeth the Community Freshview scheme enables residents, using resources and tools provided by the council, to carry out environmental improvements. As part of this local people formed the Friends of Unigate Wood and worked to clear six tonnes of rubbish from an ancient but neglected woodland in Streatham that had become an illegal dumping ground. The wood is maintained by the friends group and used by the community and local schools for walks and recreation.

Lewisham actively encourages residents to take over disused land, owned either by the council or landlords to establish community run gardens for residents to grow their own food. It advises on time banks to get volunteers to help work the garden and on finding finance to buy land or establish the gardens. One of its success stories is Frensbury Gardens. Once a patch of derelict land owned by Crown Estates, the council used its legal team to help buy it for the local community. It was funded by the council, a housing association and health authority. Volunteers now run the gardens, although council officers provide assistance in recruiting members and consulting local residents. Lewisham also runs 18 park user groups for residents which work with parks contractors through litter clearance days, reporting defects and helping to develop conservation areas.

⁴ Collective Power: Changing the way we consume energy, The Co-operative Party

⁵ ibid

A co-operative future

5

The challenge facing our communities and public services is both real and significant. Under cover of the cuts, the Tory-Lib Dem Government are engaged in an attempt to roll back the state and leave people to sink or swim. The political right believes passionately in a small state, and they see the Big Society as a way to achieve that by co-opting the progressive language of the left.



Image courtesy of Lambeth Council

Labour will not protect either our communities or the future of public services if we look backwards to defend the status quo. The economic situation won't allow that, and neither will the changed expectations of our citizens and the more complex society we now live in. Labour needs to find new ways to provide public services that deliver more effectively with fairer outcomes while handing more power and choice to communities and the people who use those services.

The co-operative model is not a panacea: the examples set out in this publication are designed to offer suggestions of good practice and ideas, not a universal cure-all. There are a number of barriers which Labour councils will need to overcome when considering these models. Firstly, the perception of co-operatives. For many of our councils changing the way we deliver services in such a fundamental way will lead to significant upheaval and change for staff. Giving communities more control over their services might be interpreted as outsourcing or even back door privatisation, particularly in light of significant job losses and budget reductions caused not by a move to co-operative models but by Tory-Lib Dem cuts. Engaging staff is just as important in mutual forms of service delivery as engaging communities. The fears of staff and unions

over changes to working practices, terms and conditions and employers will have to be addressed as thoroughly as raising awareness and consulting local residents. Staff need to be engaged in a debate about what benefits they can expect from a move to co-operative models of service delivery.

There are also legal issues to consider. Mutuals as enterprises are legal entities and services can't be transferred without a full tendering and procurement process. TUPE will apply and unions will be anxious that terms and conditions are upheld: again the principles and proven practices of co-operation should be communicated. With engagement across the piece these barriers are not insurmountable as the case studies throughout this publication show. Staff should even find that a co-operative approach offers them personal and career benefits that existing models do not.

These important considerations aside, co-operative and mutual models do offer a way forward for public services and they have already delivered major successes. In housing they've brought in investment, provided high quality homes and given residents a real stake in where they live. In schools they've stimulated parental involvement, a key factor in driving up children's achievement. In social

care they've given care users back control of their lives. Co-operative models have strengthened people's sense of ownership over local green spaces and leisure facilities, and have created opportunities to collectively reduce communities' carbon footprint.

At heart this agenda is about something very radical and very democratic – it is about transferring power to the people. This is an agenda of change and empowerment. We already know it can work in certain areas, but we don't yet know how far we can expand and develop it. To pursue this will take huge cultural and political shifts. To reiterate: our councils need to make fundamental decisions on their role in communities, as service providers or service enablers, and look again at whether existing structures meet this changing demand.

The scope of this publication has only allowed us to scratch the surface of where the co-operative agenda can potentially make a difference. It has not touched on the role of co-operative models in stimulating the local economy through initiatives such as credit unions that make affordable loans available, social enterprises that get local people into work, Business Improvement Districts that bring local businesses and employers together to support local economic growth, or even local currency initiatives like the Brixton Pound. We could explore further the impact co-operative models could have on sustainability, youth services, fostering, street cleaning, waste minimisation, recycling, and the impact of strengthening community

cohesion on wellbeing and the engagement of excluded groups. This is an approach that operates in different ways across the full range of public services.

With their principles of fairness and equity co-operatives have an exemplary record as employers, often providing extensive learning and development programmes to their employees, members and wider communities. But they've also managed to tap into and engage groups that councils can find hard to reach.

The co-operative agenda in public services is about handing power and control to citizens as a means of securing better outcomes. This becomes worthwhile when people begin to explore the potential benefits of having real control, and when the offer gives them genuine choice. In Torfaen, over 88 per cent voted in favour of the transfer to Bron Afon and not one tenant management organisation in the UK has ever voted to return back to state control. In other housing associations membership numbers are up to 80 per cent, proving that people are not content to be passive consumers when they're being offered genuine power and real control over services that are important to them.

Co-production of services between public agencies and communities is a key element of co-operative public services. The New Economics Foundation and NESTA⁶ propose the following working definition of co-production:

01 Building on people's existing capabilities

Altering the delivery model of public services from a deficit approach to one that provides opportunities to recognise and grow people's capabilities and actively support them to put them to use at an individual and community level.

02 Reciprocity and mutuality

Offering people a range of incentives to engage which enables them to work in reciprocal relationships with professionals and with each other, where there are mutual responsibilities and expectations.

03 Peer support networks

Engaging peer and personal networks alongside professionals as the best way of transferring knowledge.

The purpose of making such radical change is not to save money, although it is likely the model will promote higher levels of efficiency. At its core, this is about transferring power to communities so they can deliver more effective and responsive services while strengthening society as a whole at the same time. This is not the starry-eyed but rather thin vision of charitable volunteering that characterises the

04 Blurring distinctions

Removing the distinction between professionals and recipients, and between producers and consumers of services, by reconfiguring the way services are developed and delivered.

05 Facilitating rather than delivering

Enabling public service agencies to become catalysts and facilitators rather than central providers themselves.

06 Assets

Transforming the perception of people from passive recipients of services and burdens on the system into one where they are equal partners in designing and delivering services.

Tories' Big Society, it is something far more radical rooted in the progressive values of fairness and empowerment.

The following section considers the examples of three Labour groups, in control of a council and in opposition, and how they are incorporating co-operative principles into their political and public service agendas.

⁶ <http://www.coproductionnetwork.com/page/about-coproduction>

Lambeth – a co-operative council

Lambeth Council, in South London, has begun a journey to create a new relationship with its citizens. They aim to become the country's first truly co-operative council. As part of this they have launched a major consultation exercise, the largest they have ever held, to begin engaging residents and raise their awareness about the potential of a co-operative council. Without the interest or support of citizens a genuine move to co-operative models of service delivery won't progress.

Lambeth's consultation uses a wide variety of methods designed to engage the full cross section of residents. They have used surveys, (including at busy intersections such as bus and tube stations to catch borough commuters), focus groups and is consulting with Lambeth's wide network of community and voluntary groups. It has run a road show across 15 locations in the borough during the summer to raise awareness and answer

residents' questions and has been highly visible at the borough's public events, including the country show, which attracts 180,000 people. The youth mayor and youth council will hold a consultation event and report back to the council and towards the end of the year Lambeth plans to hold two mini-conferences with up to 100 residents at each to be representative of the borough's residents.

To draw all of this work together Lambeth has established a commission of experts and commentators chaired by Leader Councillor Steve Reed to hold hearings and make final recommendations. The council expects to launch a series of new pilots across a wide range of services to see how the model works in practice and to fuel an incremental expansion of co-operative approaches to service delivery.

But the offer to communities has to be genuine power, real forms of mutuality with the political will to drive the agenda forward.

Labour councils must also be clear that co-operative models are not quick fixes, they take resources and time to establish and while they can deliver more effective public services they are not immediate cash-saving schemes. "The thing people mistake about co-operatives is that they are business enterprises," says David Rodgers, Executive Director of CDS Co-operatives. "Some of the rhetoric is nonsense. They are not a way of running things on the cheap. If you want a better more informed society you have to pay for it. But if it comes to public versus private sector then co-operative enterprises might be the better way of doing it." He adds that genuine co-operatives have internationally recognised values and principles and while they fit into traditional Labour values, to adopt a more co-operative approach will need significant structural and cultural change.

Lambeth has already begun to explore this with the biggest move towards co-operative services ever seen in the country. Because their new model will work better if it encompasses the full range of public services in the borough, not just those currently provided by the council, it would need a new 'contract for place' setting out the commissioning, delivering and engagement relationship in the borough. This would demand from Government help to remove the legislative barriers that stand in the way. Internally, it means enormous reform. Lambeth is already considering how its management processes, procurement and workforce would need to change, examining competencies, training, mentoring, and schemes for staff sharing with other organisations including community groups. If the council eventually moves to become a service enabler, rather than primarily a service deliverer, then it would need to look at turning some employers into

community facilitators, and provide some of the support functions that would allow communities to take control of services, such as back office, administration, shared contact centres or IT platforms.

Implementing the co-operative approach in Liverpool

Liverpool are keen to use co-operative principals and models to protect their communities and to enhance public services. As a newly elected Labour council they are working to expand their thinking around this agenda. Below are some of the ideas being developed and implemented

Liverpool has a long history of housing co-operatives, and as the strategic housing authority the council has continued to support them where possible, and ensure they get fair access to public funding available (Homes and Communities Agency). Their stock transfer organisation, Liverpool Mutual Homes, is run by tenants who have a majority on the board and is leading a major investment program. Tenant run Estate Management Boards have also led the way on engagement in the city and remain very popular. Loan sharks and high interest rates of 100 per cent or more are not uncommon from sub-prime lenders operating in deprived estates. The council therefore also supports and promotes credit unions in the city, and several councillors work for a large credit union in Liverpool. Labour Government (DWP) funding has enhanced credit unions in the area, and the council continues to provide support (including by its own credit union for employees). In times of increased unemployment and with the Government threatening to reduce benefits for the poorest, the council are striving to ensure communities have access to affordable



Image courtesy of Lambeth Council

credit, and the strength and dignity that comes from mutual reliance.

Liverpool has above average educational attainment at 16, but many people find getting into work difficult. As a Labour council they have pledged to increase the number of apprenticeships in the city, and are developing a 'Liverpool Apprentice' model which will create over 100 apprenticeships. The council are inviting interest from partners such as co-operatives to help deliver this scheme. A revolving six month period of employment with various sections of the public sector (for example the council, Passenger Authority, Health Service) will deliver a breadth of experience and equip young people with a CV boost. The council will provide funding for many of the new apprenticeships, but are also hoping to work with the private sector to put many of their positions through the scheme as well.

Liverpool Council is also working with a community group in one part of the city to better provide community assets such as leisure centres through the local co-operative and to ensure a high quality service is maintained, but owned by the community. This model however may be put under strain unless guaranteed revenue streams are available to ensure the viability of the enterprise. Where significant income can be obtained from charging or other sources, then self sufficiency may be possible, otherwise council's will need to try and locate other funding streams to support the co-operatives.

As a major employer there is the potential that the bonus culture for senior staff in the council alone can be deeply divisive and fails to value the importance of work done by non-managers. "We have worked with the senior officer team who have risen to

the challenge and agreed to voluntarily surrender their contractual rights to bonuses. This gesture is much appreciated by the councillors, and the rest of the staff alike," says Deputy Leader of Liverpool and co-operative Councillor Paul Brant. The Group are continuing to work to try and ensure that rewards for staff are not on a divisive basis but reflect the value added by all levels of staff, especially by those who deal directly with the public.

Councillor Paul Brant also believes elected members must take a real leadership role both within the council and in the wider community; "These uncertain times mean that many groups will be vulnerable and will look to Labour and co-operative values and policies for inspiration and support. I believe that by explaining clearly the values and principles for which we stand, that naturally sceptical people who are looking for a new philosophy will be won over. If the Big Society means co-operation and mutual support, then we have been doing it for years. This is a Labour and co-operative set of values and we should not be scared to shout out our support. If some sections of the Tory Party are late converts, then a repentant sinner is a wonderful thing in my view. However a natural scepticism suggests that many in the Tory Party really mean 'No Society' when they say 'Big Society', or for some they really mean nothing more than individual self reliance. We have a different vision, one which has not only stood the test of time, but resonates with human instincts of mutual support. In these difficult times this vision of hope has never been more needed. I believe, it will resonate like never before up and down the country as long as councillors, MP's and community groups show that practical co-operation delivers for our communities."



A co-operative future for Oldham?

In Oldham the Labour Group in opposition has begun to explore how giving more power to communities also means giving more power to councillors. Oldham Labour Group is launching their formal manifesto for a co-operative council in October 2010. This will set out the new democratic and co-operative relationship between communities, councillors, officers and partners and try to establish a likely framework for what the council, the community and providers will deliver in future.

The group hopes to take control of the authority in May 2011. Like any new administration they would be faced with severely reduced budgets but increasing demands and Labour councillors have been working on policy proposals to ensure they have a full agenda in place. In opposition they have already supported the move of two local schools to co-operative trusts and presented an alternative budget recommending a community facilities fund. This would have supported grassroots groups in return for opening their facilities to more people. The manifesto will build on that support and it enshrines the co-operative principles of fairness and equity. A key part of this will be

ensuring mutual benefit for staff by introducing a living wage to reduce the gap between the highest and the poorest paid.

Oldham Labour councillors also intend to act as significant enablers for mutuals by reviewing the council's assets to see what would benefit from community transfer, including sports and leisure services. Procurement would be more geared toward not-for-profit and third sector providers by including a community benefit clause in all its contracts, and suppliers on larger contracts would also have to provide apprenticeships to local youngsters. The group is also exploring promoting community engagement and behaviour change through a community dividend scheme. Here the community would take a role in service delivery such recycling, litter reduction or youth activities and play a part in reducing costs.

Significantly, the group plans to strengthen the democratic role of its councillors in order to have a greater link with communities as it shifts towards more co-operative models. "The problem with devolution is there is always a desire to get to the people and it is often the democratically elected councillors who are bypassed," says Leader Councillor Jim McMahon. It envisages the creation of mini-town halls with ward councillors given budgets to spend in partnership with their communities.

Conclusion: co-operation at the heart of our communities

Politically, a move to more co-operative service delivery means reforming systems that have been in place for a hundred years. As David Rodgers says, “You can’t shift responsibility onto society without shifting power”.

Councils could, radically, look at decommissioning their own services to allow communities to identify their own needs and then commission new services themselves. They might choose to deliver some of those new services directly through the local community. Such an approach applied, for instance, to youth services would transform services but would also promote social regeneration by helping keep money within the community, so critical at a time of recession. It will require councils prepared to operate pilots to really see what the opportunities and pitfalls are in such a radically different model. To explore the full potential of the approach we have to create the space to innovate and, importantly, allow ourselves to take a more entrepreneurial view of risk.

Co-operative models are not a quick win. As Lambeth, Liverpool and Oldham as well as other examples across the country are showing, the fundamental shift in relationship that they can bring takes commitment, consultation, resources and time. Councils and the public services they deliver are at a crossroads. The co-operative model is based on values that have been at the heart of Labour politics for as long as our party has existed, and part of the radical tradition in British politics for even longer than that. It is a model that can re-energise and re-engage our communities, provide more responsive quality public services, and act as a mechanism for transferring real power to communities. Co-operation is a key part of Labour’s past, rooted in Labour values, and today we are reclaiming that heritage to forge a new and more democratic future where communities are strong enough to deliver the better public services they need.



Image courtesy of Lambeth Council

Acknowledgements

With thanks to:

Bron Afor Community Housing

Caring Support

Darren Cooper, Sandwell

David Godfrey, Manchester

David Rogers, Co-operative Development Society

Ed Balls MP and Francine Bates

Greenwich Leisure

James Allen, North Tyneside

John Goodman, Co-operatives UK

John Merry , Salford

Leicester City Council

Luton Culture

Mary Rayner, Co-operatives UK

Mick Taylor, Mutual Advantage

Nic Bliss, Confederation of Co-operative Housing

Ralph Mitchell, ACEVO

Ross Willmott , Leicester

Sean Rogers, The Co-operative College

Sharon Taylor, Stevenage

Sophia Looney, Lambeth

Sophie Ellis, Lambeth

Stephen Haynes, Lewisham

Stuart Collins, Croydon

The Community Gateway Association

The Co-operative Academy of Manchester

Tim Godfrey, Croydon

Walsall Labour Group