CREATING STRONGER AND MORE INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES WHICH VALUE EVERYONE'S RIGHT TO CONTRIBUTE

Some lessons for positive action in the context of austerity

FOREWORD

Notwithstanding the rhetoric of 'Big Society', both local leaders and national policy makers face major challenges in enabling communities to identify and build upon their strengths, so that people at risk of marginalisation can contribute to their local communities as well as receiving their communities' support. The authors of this pamphlet reflect on the extensive experience of five agencies which have been, in different ways, at the forefront of promoting innovations which unlock communities' strengths and recognising that people with support needs can also be assets to their communities. We see a real danger that, in a prolonged period of austerity, the rhetoric of empowerment and inclusion will remain just that.

In this paper, addressed to all those who share our commitment to advancing equal citizenship, we draw out succinct lessons for inclusive community-building.

In particular we make a case for well thought-through investments in some emerging areas of community development, especially in those services and initiatives which neither patronise nor abandon people and communities, but which instead work alongside them in the design and delivery of solutions to what they define as their challenges.

Our seven principles for empowerment and inclusion in an age of austerity are:

1 Community development needs to start from how people themselves define their situation, the challenges they face and their aspirations and assets.

2 Communities are stronger where people who use services are helped to find good ways of making a valued local contribution, not just seen as in need of care.

3 Most support is delivered by families and social networks: it is critical that services support and work in partnership with people who make unpaid contributions.

4 The personalisation of public services marks a genuine change when it represents a change in culture, aspirations and the availability of a wider choice of support providers, not just a change in funding mechanisms.

5 To live fully, we all need to be able to make informed choices, to take risks and to experience the consequences of our choices.

6 Public sector contributions are more cost-effective when they look across the pattern of local assets and needs, not just at those assessed as 'most needy'.

7 Micro-scale enterprises and interventions can be a powerful vehicle for mobilising new contributions and enabling people to co-design and share ownership in services which are personalised to their needs.

Centre for Inclusive Futures   KeyRing
Community Catalysts   NAAPS UK
CSV   nef
John Gillespie

CREATING STRONGER AND MORE INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES WHICH VALUE EVERYONE'S RIGHT TO CONTRIBUTE

Some lessons for positive action in the context of austerity

CONTENTS:

INTRODUCTION
GOING THE LONG WAY ROUND AND GETTING THERE FIRST

Hazel Stuteley was struggling to achieve public health gains as a Health Visitor on a deprived estate in Cornwall. Stepping outside of their roles, Hazel and her colleague Philip, convened a community group, which began with five residents. Each was confronting significant health issues which took much of their energy or had suffered real disadvantage. Hazel says, "They didn't look like a group that was going to change the world." That group became the Beacon Project which gained £2.2m in funding, won awards and transformed life for hundreds of people on the estates, with outcomes as diverse as postnatal depression rates down by 77%, and crime down by 50%.

Jenny couldn't find work in dance, but with help from her family and a personal assistant, paid for by her personal budget, she set up a dance activities enterprise. Now she leads dance activities with disabled and non-disabled people.

John lived all his life in residential care, until he found family and village life with Shared Lives carers. Now he lives on a farm with a family in an arrangement funded by the local council. He has found a job on a neighbouring farm and is part of his neighbourhood watch scheme and the village's amateur dramatics club.

What do these anecdotes have in common? They are about people who are frequently written off or seen as a drain on society taking charge and making a real contribution. They involve state resources or the contributions of professionals, but those contributions always take a supporting role to the resources and contributions of people with support needs and those around them.

There is a false dichotomy between the paid-for and professional and the voluntary and amateur. Helping people to take charge of the services which affect their lives is not something that is only relevant to low-level support: ordinary people are at the forefront of tackling the most complex issues and meeting the most acute needs, whilst professionals rely upon their ability to form real relationships with people, to succeed in their most challenging work. A family intervention project in Swindon, supported by design agency, Participle, has achieved startling results with families seen as the most challenging, through asking those families to recruit the professionals who will work with them and replacing traditional 'professional boundaries' with love: "trust, respect, non-judgmentalism and a willingness to share who you are".

We wish to deepen the thinking on supporting people to contribute to their communities. There is a danger that the fear and politics around cuts will result in a polarised debate, which sees reform of current models of spending as part of a cuts agenda. Conversely, some untested theories about the ability of communities and the Third Sector to step unsupported into the gaps in care and support provision are nevertheless being implemented in some areas.

This is not an argument for or against the Big Society. We are not defending or attacking cuts in public spending. We are making a case for well thought-through investments in some emerging areas of community development, especially in those services and initiatives which neither patronise nor abandon people and communities, but which instead work alongside them in the design and delivery of solutions to their challenges. These approaches recognise the many gifts and skills within communities used to being written-off. At this time of financial crisis we cannot afford to waste those resources.

FROM PROVIDING CARE, TO MAKING CONNECTIONS

At a time of cuts to public services, there is a temptation for commissioners to retreat into meeting only the most basic needs of people who are the most vulnerable, whilst services and interventions which enhance people's lives and communities and those which are seen as preventative, or for 'low-level' needs risk being sacrificed. This is in line with the view of care and support set out in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, often taught to social care students, which suggests that people's 'higher' needs can only be addressed when their basic needs – shelter, health, food and safety – are met. The Fair Access to Care eligibility criteria which councils use to allocate social care are also hierarchical: increasingly, only people with critical needs – risks to their most basic functions - are deemed eligible.

This approach is flawed in many ways, not least because there is increasingly strong evidence that 'higher' needs, such as a sense of belonging and connections to other people are intimately linked to people's physical as well as mental health. Loneliness is worse for you than smoking. Ordinary people are at the forefront of tackling some of the biggest challenges in their communities. Family carers are often able to support people with needs considered too challenging by professional agencies.

We need to release the potential of communities and of those with support needs in order to redress this over reliance on support which is paid for. KeyRing (www.keyring.org) is a national organisation which aims to help people to be at the heart of their communities, sharing skills and talents for everyone's benefit. KeyRing's support is based on people living in their own homes but sharing their skills and talents with each other and with their communities. People living independently form a local Network, supported by a KeyRing volunteer. The volunteer sees Members regularly and helps the group work together. The volunteer is like a good neighbour who helps out if problems arise. As the volunteer lives in the community, they know what's going on and are able to help Members make links in their neighbourhood.

James is an example of how someone's life can change by making such connections. After the death of his parents, he lived alone and was broken into ten times in three months. When he joined the KeyRing Network, staff did a relationship map with him and discovered that he had no friends: the people in his circle of intimacy were those paid to be with him. Seven years later, he had over thirty people at his birthday party and had won several awards for volunteering. James, who is one of 900 people supported by KeyRing in England and Wales is now clearly valued by many as a friend, and as a valued volunteer by community groups . His increased visibility in the neighbourhood has made him safer - he now feels sufficiently secure in his home to begin the process of purchasing it.

Previously, most people using KeyRing have had relatively low levels of need. Many have accessed Supporting People funding. KeyRing is now exploring how it can work with partners who provide more intensive support in order to bring KeyRing to more people who have more intensive support needs.

The reforms of personalisation have the potential to break down the false hierarchies in care and support systems, by enabling each individual to decide for themselves which of their needs they most want met, and what trade-offs between support and independence, assistance and privacy, they are willing to make. But many councils have been adept at assimilating personalisation's radicalism into their pre-existing world view, creating new ways for the money to move around the system, but not ensuring that people have new choices in how it is spent.

The Stamford Forum has devised a project in which people with personal budgets can come together with other members of the community. They can choose to pool their personal budgets, alongside resources such as volunteering inputted by community groups, to find ways of meeting their support needs which are more empowering and also cheaper than what was previously in place. The savings are then ploughed back into projects which benefit the whole community. By working together, it may be possible to create more inclusive and accessible communities, removing some needs for support which are created by the exclusion of people with support needs from design and planning processes. In this way, the Forum aims to change the status of people from recipients of support to decision-makers, who also bring financial assets.

Despite characterisations of the Big Society as being about replacing expert professionals with volunteers, in reality there is no simple choice between resourcing vital services and resourcing community-based initiatives. We need services which connect, as well as care.

RESOURCING THE CORE ECONOMY

Many of the outcomes that are most important to us – happy, healthy lives, opportunity, fulfilment and security – happen naturally and are a product of the 'core economy', a term originally coined by Neva Goodwin. **nef** describes it as:

All the resources embedded in people's everyday lives – time, energy wisdom, experience, knowledge and skills ... they are essential to society and to the market economy: for raising children, caring for people, feeding families, maintaining households, and building and sustaining intimacies, friendships, social networks and civil society. (www.neweconomics.org/projects/core-economy).

Yet the core economy is un-commodified, in that it has no value or price attached to it. As such, often ignored. But if nurtured, it has the potential to be grown and supported to deliver positive social and economic outcomes. This requires a very specific role for the state: above all, as an enabler. To maximise its effect, the strategic state must support and actively nurture the **activities** that sustain the core economy. For example, it can recognise and support the work done by family carers, or by people who look out for older neighbours.

In order to maximise its impact, the state also needs to work with the **assets** that are abundant within the core economy: the time, knowledge, experience, skills, empathy and caring that are embedded in everyday lives and relationships. In this context, the state does not 'deliver' outcomes to people. But it does have access to finance and resources which can best be deployed through existing support networks, to make more and better use of uncommodified human resources, in order to achieve more effective outcomes. There are three main reasons for this.

First, the state needs to create the conditions for people to participate. Time, finance, knowledge and power are all unequally distributed, and all these factors affect our ability to support ourselves and each other. This is a vitally important issue in the context of the high ideals of the Big Society: if the only people to use 'localism' to take over community assets are those who are already better placed to turn increased local control to their own advantage, can we really consider the policy a success? Furthermore, processes put in place by the state to safeguard against risk can have the perverse effect of deterring participation: we are a long way from unravelling this knotty problem. Secondly, the state has a role to play in providing and sustaining the institutions and facilities where local activities can take place. Social networks are developed in libraries, post offices, pubs and school playgrounds. After-school clubs are run in youth centres, peer support groups are held in town halls and community centres. These places for people to gather and interact are critical to supporting our capacity to work with the state and support each other. Despite their pivotal role, they rarely spring up and thrive on their own.

Thirdly, people may need the state to broker relationships and help them identify where they can contribute their time, skills and expertise to the wider community. Models such as time banks, which are often sponsored by public agencies, enable people to 'give' an hour of time and 'receive' a credit in return. These hours of time can be used to connect people to each other (for example, for babysitting, or dog walking), or to other activities such as peer support networks, community events, dropping off a neighbour to the doctors', or maintaining a community allotment. Once connections are made between people, more organic activities will begin to take root.

Take John, aged 63. He has experienced bullying and abuse and has schizophrenia. He lives in a care home. Initially, he found drop-in sessions at the Holy Cross Community Trust in Camden difficult, mainly sitting outside smoking. He felt professionals saw him through a diagnosis and focused on what he couldn't do rather than what he could or wanted to do. At the drop-in, ideas are discussed, planned and actioned by service users as well as volunteers and staff. John was inspired by the freedom of this. His first idea was a weekly quiz night. He did all the organising, making posters and finding questions and he has run the night every week for 18 months. His next idea was a weekly men's support group, which he has facilitated now for a year. John says his auditory hallucinations have decreased as his self-belief and social skills have increased. His care home keyworker was concerned that John no longer attended the care home art group; John explained that he preferred to attend a day centre which treated him as somebody capable of achievement and valued his aspirations. In return for John's contributions to the service, he receives time credits through time banking, which he exchanges for one-to-one computer lessons and tickets for art exhibitions.

Another example is the CSV Supported Volunteering Projects, which enable adults with learning disabilities to volunteer and access social activities in their local communities through support from local, trained volunteers. CSV Vocal in West Norfolk supports 80 adults with learning disabilities a year to volunteer, with the help of 40 local volunteers. People with learning disabilities may initially receive mentoring to build confidence and skills, for example in using public transport, then move on to volunteering with a group, for example doing gardening or conservation work, then progress through supported volunteering into independent volunteering.

Some eventually leave the project, having built up a network of support in their community or through their own volunteering activity. Some participants pay for their support through a personal budget.

Of those involved, 88 per cent reported increased confidence and independence, with 70 per cent now accessing community facilities. One man who previously spent five days a week at local day service, now volunteers independently at his local primary school. When his elderly mother died, the community rallied round to support him. Another had not been ready for employment, but after a year with CSV, was then able to find a job.

It has always been tricky to get the state's role right. An enabling approach means that power is distributed and accountability is shared. There are nevertheless plenty of ideas about how to develop an enabling state – many of which are documented elsewhere in this paper. Part of the difficulty is that these activities – where they do exist, are seen as 'nice to haves' and therefore the first to be cut. This sets up a conflict of interest, creating awkward and unnecessary tensions between the resources of the core economy and the resources of the state. The challenge that lies ahead is to recognise the vital role played by the core economy and then to give careful consideration to what outcomes we want from an enabling state and *how* these can best be achieved.

RISK – HOW WE CAN HELP PEOPLE TO MANAGE RISKS WITHOUT INADVERTENTLY CREATING NEW ONES

There are certainly such things as unsafe services, but there is no such thing as a safe service. Risk is not just inevitable, it is essential to living a full life as an independent adult. Whenever a system is put in place to assess and manage risk, there is an inevitable trade-off with an individual's ability to make their own choice, live a private life and learn from the consequences of their actions. Trying to identify and manage all possible risks is not practical and gives an individual no room to live, let alone grow. So how do we help people who need support to find a balance between being able to take risks and keeping themselves safe?

The proposed vetting and barring system, now abandoned, would have made checks mandatory for a very wide group of people who come into contact with vulnerable adults living in social care settings. Arguably, an unintended consequence of this would be that for a group of adults, having non-disabled friends, as opposed to CRB-checked volunteers, would have been very difficult. This would have increased people's isolation from their communities: in so doing, some might have become more vulnerable to abuse through being less visible in and connected to their communities.

Neither the current nor the proposed safeguarding system has yet achieved the sliding scale of trade-offs between safety and choice which will be required to protect the safety of very vulnerable people who are isolated, lack confidence or have limited capacity to make complex choices, whilst also protecting the liberty of people whose support needs do not make them vulnerable, but whose rights are at risk of being undermined by an overly intrusive support system. Currently, safeguarding requirements vary widely, not according to vulnerability, but according to the support setting, or whether a person's resource allocation is managed by a council or as a personal budget. Scandals such as the abuse perpetrated at Winterbourne View illustrate the risks inherent in what are supposedly the most highly controlled and regulated settings.

The opportunity to contribute, and further the responsibility to contribute, to society and community is a crucial part of achieving rights, particularly for those with lifelong support needs. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation's *Older People's Vision for Long Term Care (2009)*, highlighted being able to make a contribution as one of older people's most passionately felt desires. Not everyone will take up this opportunity, but everyone should have it.

The more we support people to make their own choices and take their own risks, the more they are able to take responsibility for their actions when they go wrong. In the summer of 2010, there was a debate in the press following revelations that some personal budget holders had used their budgets to purchase the services of sex workers in Amsterdam.

There was debate about this apparent trade-off between the rights of disabled men (in most instances) to a sex life and the rights of women, involved in an industry rife with exploitation, people trafficking and coercion. One positive aspect of the coverage was that, rather than a general call for the freedoms of personalisation to be rescinded, there was recognition that if people access their right to self-determination, some will make choices which others regard as wrong.

WHO SHOULD OWN SOCIAL CARE
AND DOES IT MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE?

'Co-production' – the idea that people should be a part of designing and delivering the services which they use – has become embedded in the reform agenda for care and support, at least as a concept, if less often in practice. Too often, the co-production box is seen as being ticked when people are consulted by commissioners or providers of services. This is not ambitious enough. If we are to see genuine, disruptive innovation, people need to be involved in service design from the outset. It is very difficult for an existing service to start with an entirely blank sheet piece of paper. Genuine co-design of services is easier when the service is small and brand new.

There are thousands of micro-enterprises in the UK: very small scale ventures set up by people with support needs, family carers, front line workers and other local people. These enterprises are tailored to the needs of a small group, or even an individual, and resourced through voluntary contributions, personal budgets and people's own money. Jenny's dance enterprise, outlined in the introduction is one of these. Another is an independent living organisation whose board has five members: two people who use the service, two family carers and one professional.

Not all micro-enterprises involve mutual ownership. Barbara has set up a micro-scale domiciliary care agency, which she keeps small enough so that she can personally provide the first two weeks of support to any older person who wishes to receive her service. This allows her to understand that individual's needs and match them with one of her small staff team. A number of micro-enterprises have been set up and are owned by ex front line workers, who retain ownership, but sit down with the people they support on a weekly or daily basis to plan activities. Equally, an organisation being 'user-led' is not in itself a guarantee that everyone who uses it participates in design and planning, particularly in large organisations with many users. So both a provider's ownership and its scale are determinants of how in control a person is likely to be. But there is undoubtedly a difference in status between being an active participant in an organisation and owning it.

It could be argued that the increasingly popular model of an individual employing a Personal Assistant with their Direct Payment, is the best guarantee of individual tailoring and control. This is not always the case. In private arrangements of that kind, both the individual purchasing care and the individual providing it are vulnerable to exploitation. In European countries where this approach is longer-established, there is evidence of a grey economy of care, sometimes involving vulnerable or illegal migrant workers. There is little back-up when things go wrong and no opportunity to pool resources.

In contrast, the micro-enterprise model takes the provision of care out of the realm of the entirely private, often bringing users and providers of support together into very small groups. There is some opportunity for resource pooling and a Plan B when an individual is unable to work. There is also some requirement for compromise between the needs of a small group of individuals, but then compromise between equals is the hallmark of community. More prosaically, many activities are just no fun on your own! There is a huge difference between taking part in a group controlled by someone else and helping to shape a group as an equal. Whilst personal budgets have had some success in raising people's expectations of the quality of services, pioneers like Jenny are attempting a deeper change, from an increased expectation of better support, to a new expectation of making a real contribution to society.

The aspect of co-production which is most often overlooked is the idea that recipients of support are not only involved in designing a service, but also in its delivery. CHANGE (www.changepeople.co.uk) is one of the very few organisations which employs people with learning disabilities on the same terms and conditions alongside non-disabled staff. CHANGE surveyed 226 learning disability organisations about employment. The initial results were encouraging: 17% of people with learning disabilities were in employment. CHANGE then went back to those organisations to ask what kinds of work people were in. Only 2% of people with learning disabilities were in genuine, substantial jobs of at least 16 hours per week. Many who employed people with learning disabilities placed people in roles where it is difficult for people with learning disabilities to shine. Shaun says, "when I worked in a warehouse, I sorted boxes, but I often got it wrong because I found reading labels hard. After that all I did was sweep up, and clear empty boxes away". Shaun is now CHANGE's European Project Coordinator.

Payment is by no means the only way in which people can feel valued, but it is telling that whilst some user-led organisations in CHANGE's survey had people with learning disabilities in unpaid board member positions even those whose remit was to support people with learning disabilities into work, typically did not employ anyone on a living wage themselves.

The focus for many was on jobs below the "therapeutic earnings" threshold at which benefits become affected. Further reform of benefits rules is clearly needed to ensure that people with support needs can access real work without undue risk to their income security.

CAN WE SCALE UP AND KEEP IT 'GRASSROOTS'?
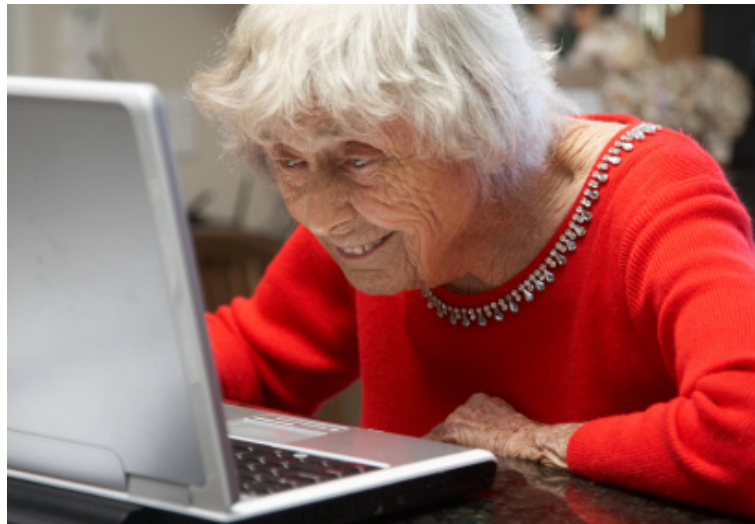
When an intervention works well it is natural to want to see it spread to other places. However the conditions that motivate people to contribute are often the first casualty of inept attempts to transplant something from place to place.

This is a particular danger for interventions that seek to promote contribution. Here it is not unusual for the real intervention to be misidentified, and the 'end result' of a process taken for the intervention.

For instance when Hazel Stuteley ran a neighbourhood development workshop in Cambourne it turned out that local people wanted to dance. There was a dance instructor in Cambourne who volunteered his skills. It was the process that the community went through that defined this as the 'right' solution for Cambourne. The same process would result in different outcomes in other places - if attempts were made to set up a dance programme it is unlikely that the community would take this up.

NAAPs has observed that commissioners sometimes behave in this way. They see a particular micro-enterprise as providing the solution to a need in their area. They decide that this is what they want, as opposed to focussing on the conditions that might bring forwards people's contributions AND enable the right solution to needs in their area to be identified. The conditions that motivate people to contribute are often lost at this stage of replication or scaling.

The solution is to create the conditions that bring forward contribution rather than attempt to replicate the grassroots. There is much that Government can be doing to help create these conditions.

Much of NAAPs work is about removing regulatory barriers. People wanting to set up micro-enterprise (employing less than 5 people) are often prevented by regulations designed for the commercial economy. The problem is that micro-enterprise is judged according to the norms of the 'transactional economy' rather than the 'gift economy' where financial motivations aren't paramount. Government can make sure it doesn't stifle contribution by not regulating against it.

For the HELP project, what makes the difference between projects that succeed in bringing forth contribution and those that don't is creating a 'receptive context' for this to happen. Agencies get in the way by seeking to 'build' community capacity. When agencies let go of their agendas and listen to what is important to residents, contribution is unlocked.

The key is to focus on the local conditions and to ask what a new approach might add. Appropriate support and vision are often missing. Community Catalysts' employ a local fixer whose role includes helping people with ideas to get support (from existing agencies where possible) and helping people to match their skills to the needs of the local market. One of the key ways that the HELP method mobilizes people to take action in response to self-identified needs is through exchange visits to places that are already doing it.

THE AUTHORS AND MAKING CONNECTIONS

The organisations and individuals involved in this paper hope to hear from you about your work. We are keen to expand our partnership and to be inclusive of as many different perspectives as possible, building on the rich experiences of the many little-known pioneers in this field. Individually and collectively, we can help organisations to develop your thinking in this area and to put these ideas into practice. Look out for future publications and events on this theme. We are:

The Centre for Inclusive Futures is the way David Towell labels his continuing work as part of an extensive network of community leaders and agencies seeking to develop sustainable communities which include everyone as equal citizens. The Centre works with individuals, organisations, public authorities and social movements both to offer an inclusive space for reflection on contemporary challenges and to support action designed to make a positive difference. The main focus of current activities, both locally and further afield, is on successful implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

As well as being one of the co-authors, David facilitated us coming together to learn from our different organisational experiences of building stronger and more inclusive communities. David.Towell@inclusion.demon.co.uk

Community Catalysts is a Community Interest Company launched in January 2010 by NAAPS UK. NAAPS knows from long experience that people in communities have great gifts and skills - but need help to be able to use these to provide services and support to other local people. Community Catalysts was set up to work practically and through local partners to provide that help. It aims to help individuals and communities use their gifts and skills to provide real choice of small scale, local, personalised and high quality social care and health services (in the broadest sense) for local people who need some help to live their lives. www.communitycatalysts.co.uk

CSV (Community Service Volunteers) is a national charity working across the generations to help create and support volunteering and learning opportunities. CSV is a values driven organisation, with a vision of a society where everyone can contribute to the building of sustainable, healthy and inclusive communities. CSV's work with people of all ages includes: part and full time volunteering for younger people; supported volunteering for people with social care and/or health needs; mentoring and befriending and school leadership; community involvement and outreach through our partnership with BBC local radio; environmental projects; employee volunteering; older volunteering; and training for those who do not thrive in traditional learning environments.

John Gillespie is a public and voluntary sector consultant. From 2008 - 2010 he ran In Control's community development programme to help local authorities develop strategies for supporting disabled people to link with their communities. He worked until recently with the Health Empowerment Leverage Project (H.E.L.P.), a DH funded initiative to encourage more community development within the health service.

NAAPS UK is the UK network for family-based and small-scale ways of supporting adults. Our members are Shared Lives carers and workers, Homeshare programmes and micro-enterprises. They use a range of approaches to enable people to achieve these goals:
- being in control of their services and their lives.
- pursuing ordinary lives within their chosen families and relationships.
- being valued by their communities and feeling like they belong.
We help our members to work together to survive, thrive and influence decision makers, providing support, training, events, resources, research and campaigning. www.naaps.org.uk and http://alexfoxblog.wordpress.com

The new economics foundation (nef) is a think and do tank that inspires and demonstrates real economic well-being. nef has been at the forefront of developing the concepts of co-production, the core economy and time banking. We work on a range of projects, from facilitating a network of co-production practitioners to time bank evaluations, position papers and policy recommendations. julia.slay@neweconomics.org

KeyRing is a national organisation which supports vulnerable people to live independently in the community. Volunteering, community connections and mutual support are at the heart of everything KeyRing does. KeyRing's distinctive Network model has been refined, developed, and proven over 20 years. KeyRing has approximately 100 Networks across England and Wales and supports people with varying needs in a wide range of communities. www.keyring.org