WELCOME TO THE BETTER TOGETHER FORUM

Trust and Relationships across a system: how do we create and sustain the environment for collaboration?

Tuesday 6th October 2026

9.30am – 3.30pm

County Durham Partnership

Better for everyone

Welcome & Introductions

Kate Burrows

Executive Director, Durham Community Action

Chair of the Better Together Forum

Setting out the Day

Andrew Laird

Mutual Ventures

Agenda

Time	Session	Purpose and format
0900-0930	Registration, coffee and networking	Arrival and informal networking.
0930-0940	Welcome and context	Kate Burrows, Executive Director, Durham Community Action
0940-0955	Setting up the day	Andrew Laird, Mutual Ventures
0955-1025	Relational practice: what does it take to work differently?	Neil Denton, Co-Lead, Relationship Project
1025-1055	Learning from Greater Manchester	Scott Darraugh, CEO/Founder, Social adVentures -
1055-1115	Coffee, reflection and networking	
1115-1200	Conversation 1: Values and beliefs	Mixed-table discussion followed by plenary feedback.
1200-1245	Lunch and networking	
1245-1330	Conversation 2: Trust and relationships	Mixed-table discussion followed by plenary feedback.
1330-1415	Conversation 3: Mechanisms that enable collaboration	Mixed-table discussion followed by plenary feedback.
1415 -1435	Coffee break	
1435-1515	From conversation to action: what needs to happen next?	Facilitated whole-room synthesis.
1515-1530	Closing reflections and next steps	Kate Burrows

Objectives

- **Build a shared understanding of what good collaboration between the public sector and VCSE in County Durham should look and feel like.**
- **Be honest about what currently helps and hinders that collaboration**, including where behaviours, culture, systems or processes get in the way.
- **Identify the values, behaviours and practical mechanisms that would create stronger trust, greater parity of esteem and more consistent partnership working.**
- **Agree a small number of practical actions that could make a real difference**, rather than simply restating good intentions.
- **Test whether there is a shared appetite for an Accord**, and whether that would be a useful way of capturing commitments and creating greater accountability across the system.

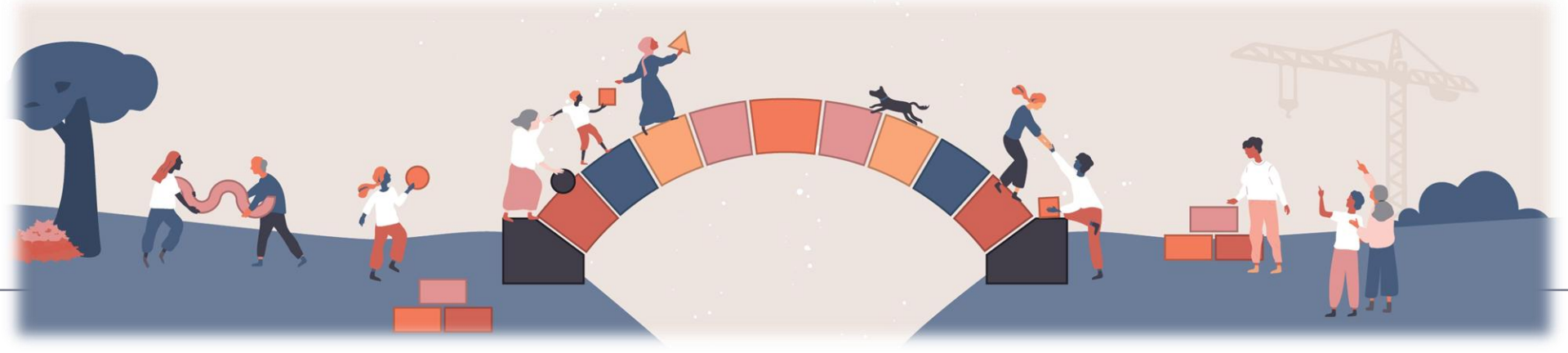
"What would make today genuinely worthwhile for you?"

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www.relationshipsproject.org
neil@relationshipsproject.org

Putting Relationships First

Neil Denton





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Relationships are not a “frilly extra” to the work, they are the work.

- Health
- Healthcare
- Education
- Youth Work

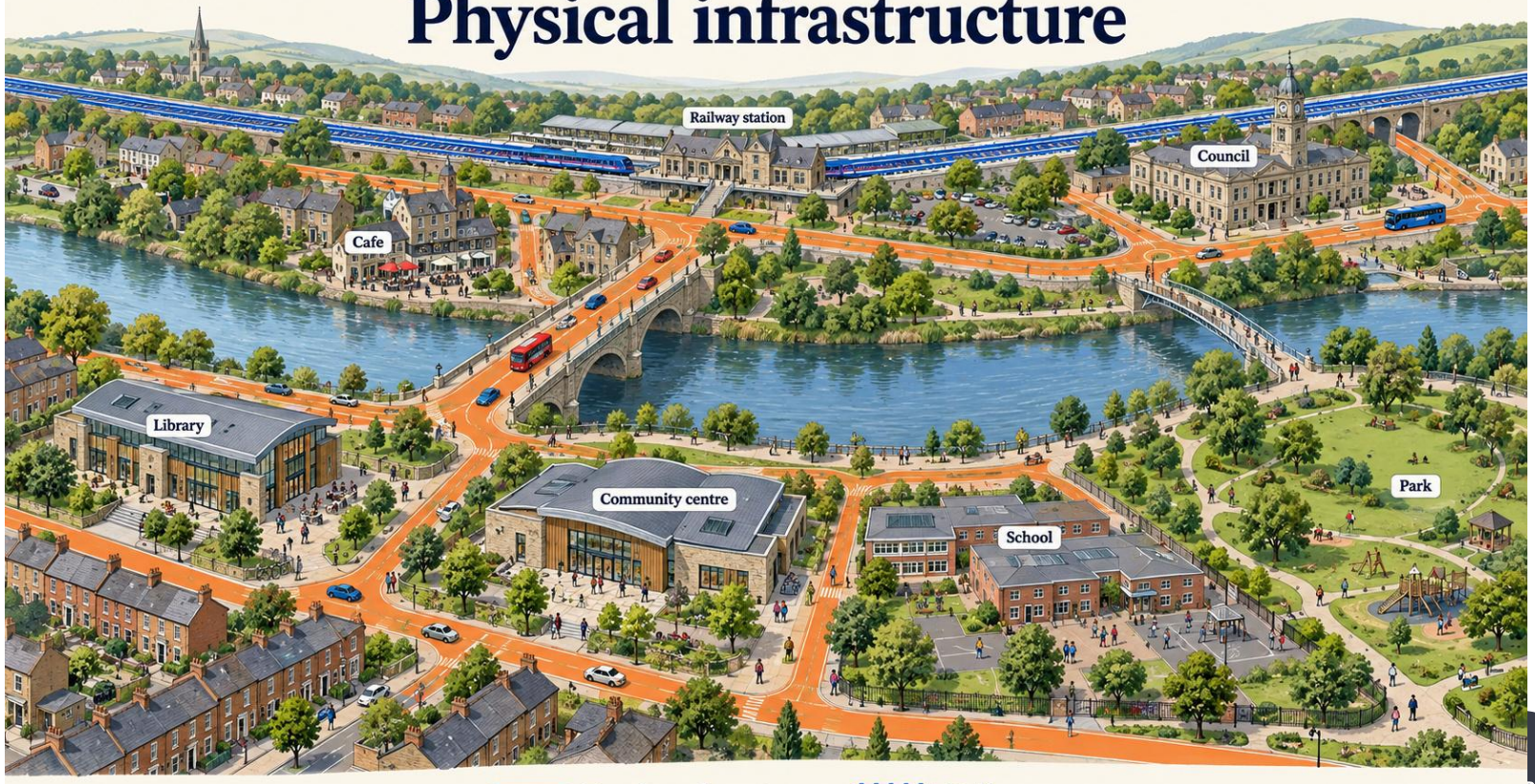
- Homelessness
- Addiction
- Mental Health
- Community Safety

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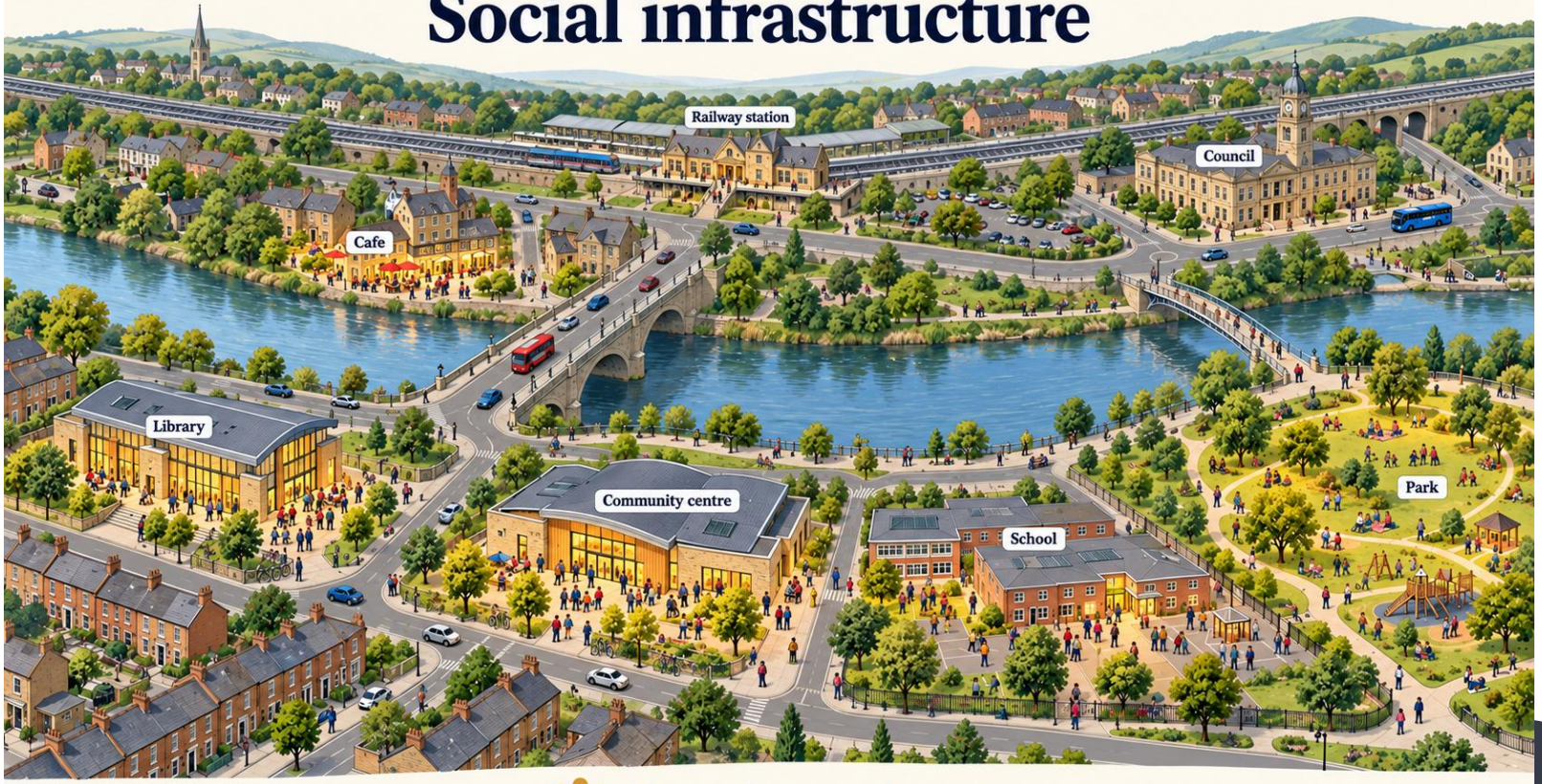
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Physical infrastructure



Social infrastructure



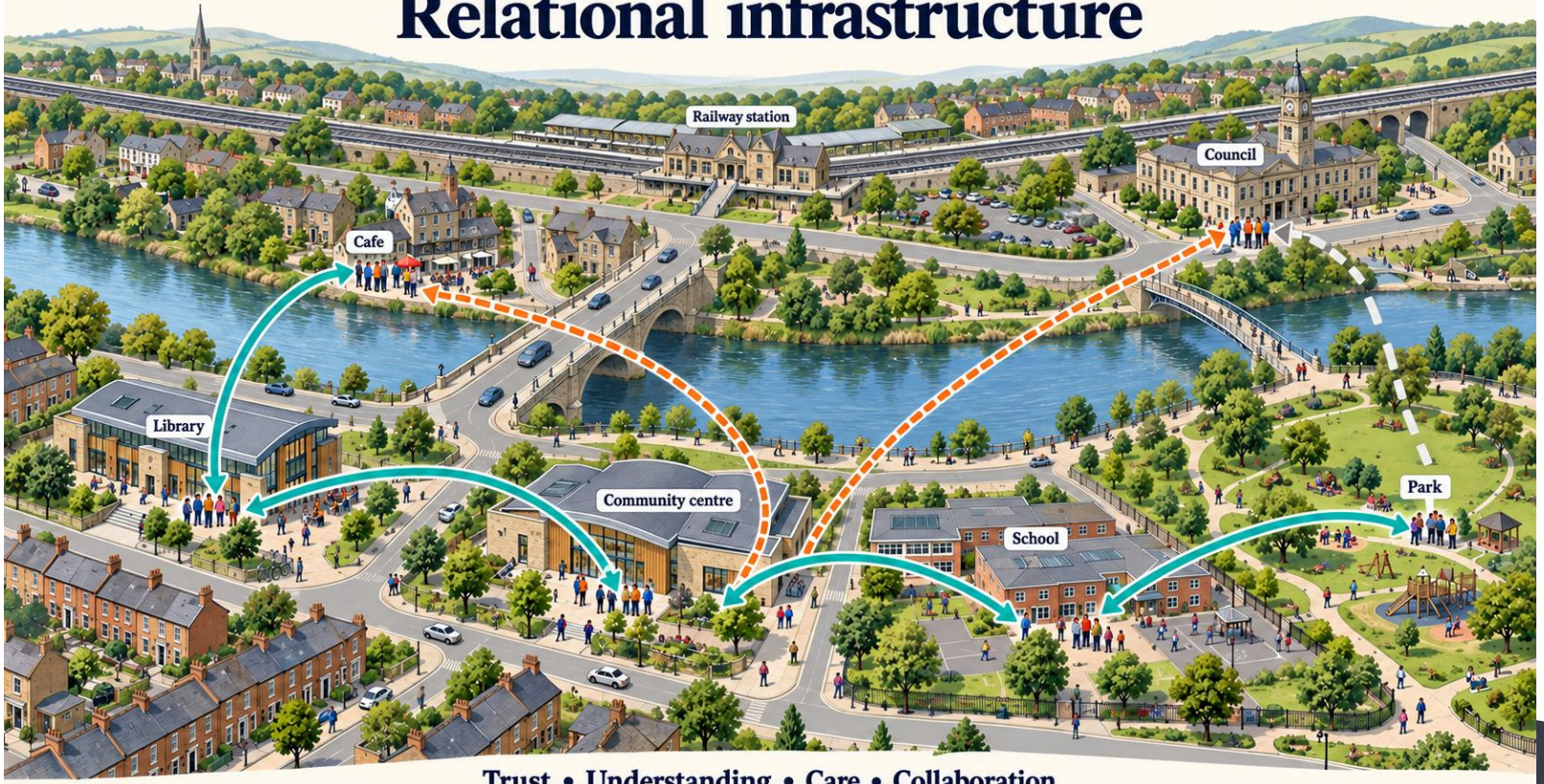
Places where people meet

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Relational infrastructure

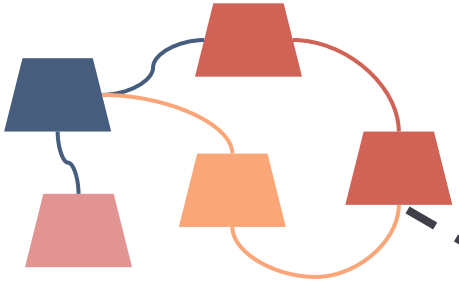


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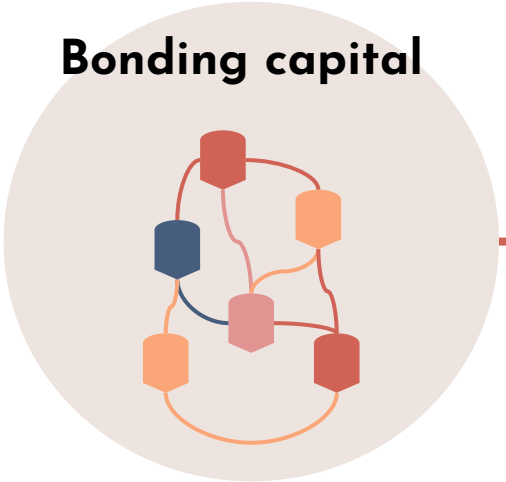
Types of Social Capital



Linking capital

Connections to authorities, organisations and systems that provide access to resources

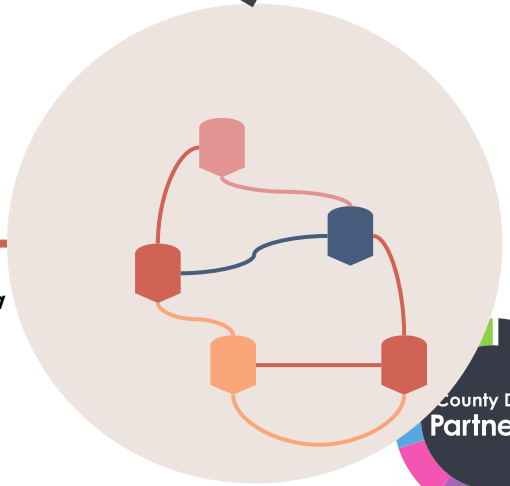
Bonding capital



Connections within a group of people who share a sense of identity or share similar circumstances

Bridging capital

Connections between groups who have a different sense of identity or who find themselves in different circumstances



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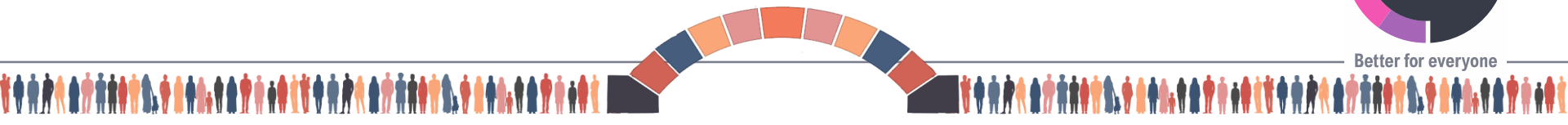
UK'S SENSE OF DIVISION REACHES NEW HIGH AS CULTURE WAR TENSIONS GROW, STUDY FINDS

POLITICS

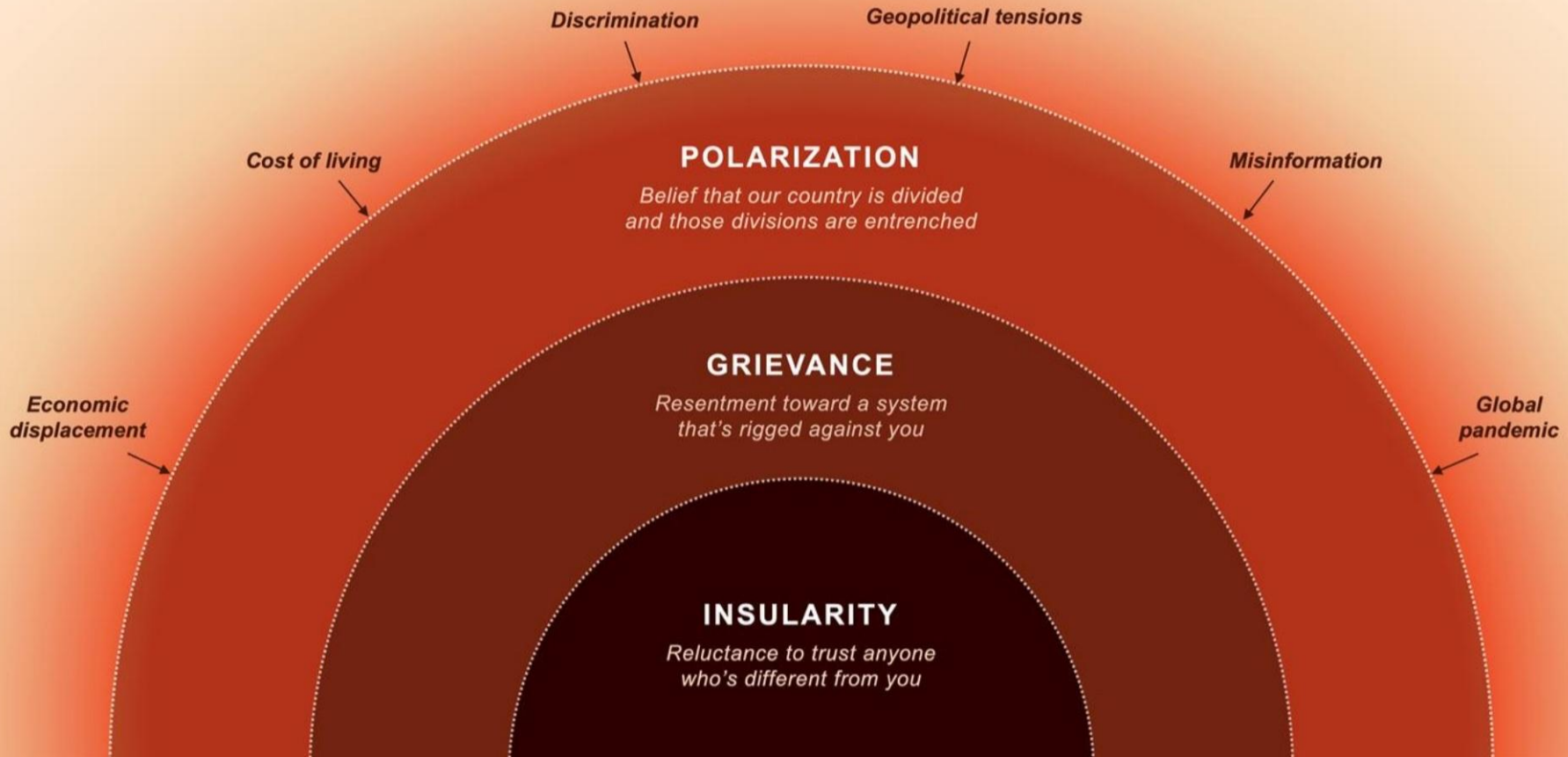
UK's sense of division reaches new high as culture war tensions grow, study finds

King's College London and Ipsos study finds problems caused by culture wars, a deepening rejection of the term "woke", and notable shifts in attitudes on transgender rights.

06.11.25



The Retreat Into Insularity



WIDEN

Are our bridges too narrow? Then let's make them wider by opening up to see each other more fully – beyond and behind the labels.

STRENGTHEN

Are our bridges too weak? Then let's make them stronger by deepening our understanding of each other and turning connection into collaboration.

REPAIR

Have some of our bridges been damaged by disagreement or neglected by avoidance? Then let's repair them and make good.

CREATE

And are some of our bridges actually missing? Then let's create new connections by reaching out to new people.

Community Bridgebuilders

1 

Create
Connection

2 

Explore
Relationship

3 

Take
Ownership

4 

Stay Open,
Meet Needs

5 

Challenge and
Be Challenged

6 

Bridge, Build, Brave

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Putting Relationships First

- Relationships are not a “frilly extra” to the work, they are the work.

- Relational infrastructure is critical infrastructure

- Building Bridges

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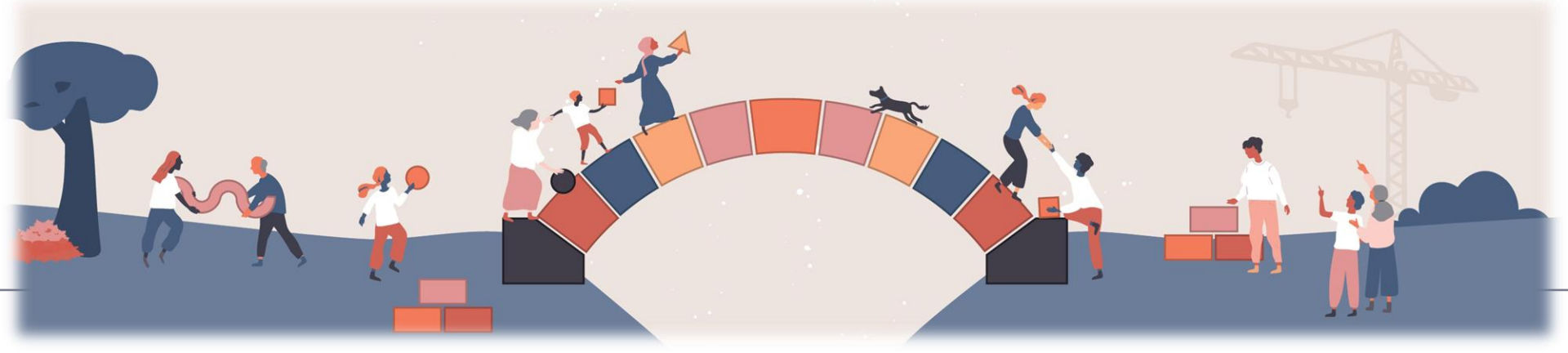
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Thank you for your time.

Fancy a chat and a cuppa?



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the power of paRTNERships



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So who is this Scott Darraugh MBE bloke ??



- Local
- Regional
- National
- International

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NHS
Greater Manchester

GMCA GREATER MANCHESTER COMBINED AUTHORITY

Bevan
Inclusive Health and Wellbeing

LeadingLives
Your life / Our support

PossAbilities
Live the life you choose

HM Government

In³clusive Economy Partnership
There's power in partnership

Proper Good
No-nonsense support to start or grow your social business

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Radical Reform of People Services



LIVE WELL
DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY WITH GREATER MANCHESTER'S COMMUNITIES

Wellbeing Matters

Adult Health & Social Care

KIDS ADVENTURES
CHILDCARE INSPIRING HAPPY CHILDREN

Early Years & Alternative Education

HOME

Childrens Residential & Foster Care



the Story so far.....

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the rochdale pioneers

The richest 10% own around three-quarters of global wealth, while the poorest half own just 2%



- In-work poverty
- Cost-of-living pressures
- Job insecurity create uncertainty about employment.
- Unequal fair deals due to monopolies.
- Limited community influence .
- Wealth leaving local communities
- Housing insecurity homes and shortages of suitable housing.
- Debt and financial exclusion
- Unequal access to opportunity
- A need for stronger community ownership

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Talking Points

- Why did we build an accord with the VCFSE Sector in Greater Manchester?
- What is the accord?
- Share some examples of good partnerships between the public and social sector.
- How is building more resilient local authorities and the NHS achieved?
- Why do partnerships fail and what are the barriers to creating them?



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The GM Accord

- A renewed commitment for 2026–2035

The Accord is designed to:

- Strengthen relationships between sectors.
- Embed shared values into everyday practice.
- Ensure community voices help shape decisions.
- Recognise and value the contribution of the VCFSE sector.
- Improve outcomes for residents, communities, places and the environment.
- It also supports the wider ambitions set out in the Greater Manchester Strategy; to tackle inequalities, strengthen communities and ensure people and places can thrive.



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VCFSE
and build a more inclusive economy.

The GM Accord

The Accord provides a strong foundation for Greater Manchester's next phase of partnership working, putting communities at the centre to delivering meaningful, lasting change and helping ensure that everyone, in every community, has the chance to thrive.

- The Accord is jointly owned by:

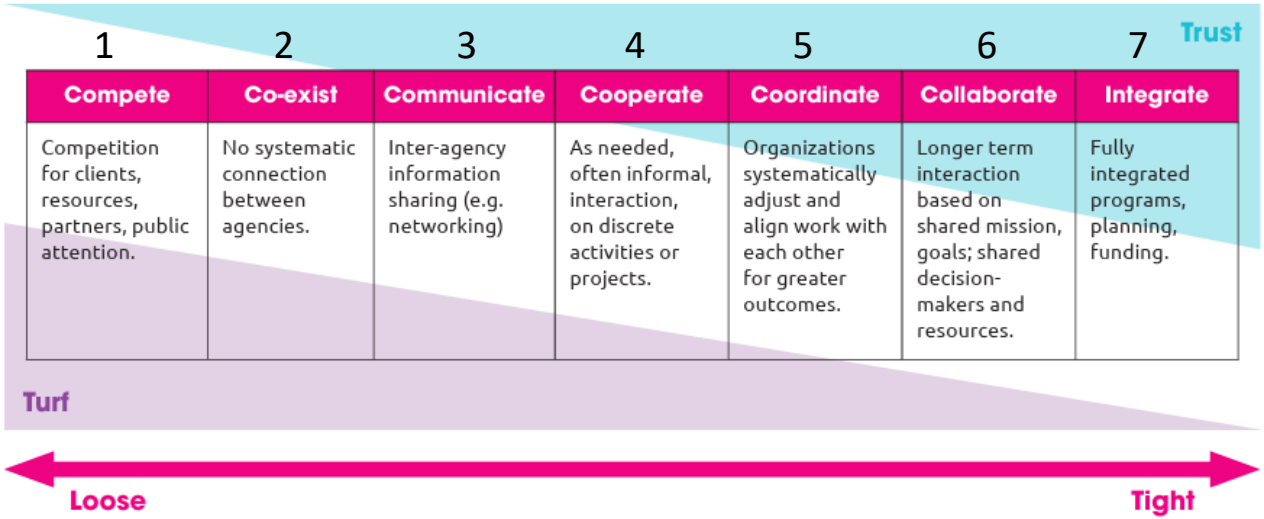
- Greater Manchester VCFSE Leadership Group
- Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA)
- NHS Greater Manchester
- Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS)
- Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM)
- Greater Manchester's ten local authorities
- National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) Applied Research Collaboration Greater Manchester (ARC-GM).



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Continuum of Collaboration: Where im i and where is my organisation?



(Tamarack Institute)

Key Stages:

Compete: Organizations fight for the same clients, resources, and public attention.

Co-exist: There is no systematic connection or interaction between agencies.

Communicate: Informal information sharing and networking occur between agencies.

Cooperate: Interaction happens on an "as needed" basis for specific activities or projects.

Coordinate: Organizations systematically align their work to achieve greater common outcomes.

Collaborate: Long-term interaction characterized by shared missions, goals, decision-making, and resources.

Integrate: Programs, planning, and funding are fully unified into a single approach.

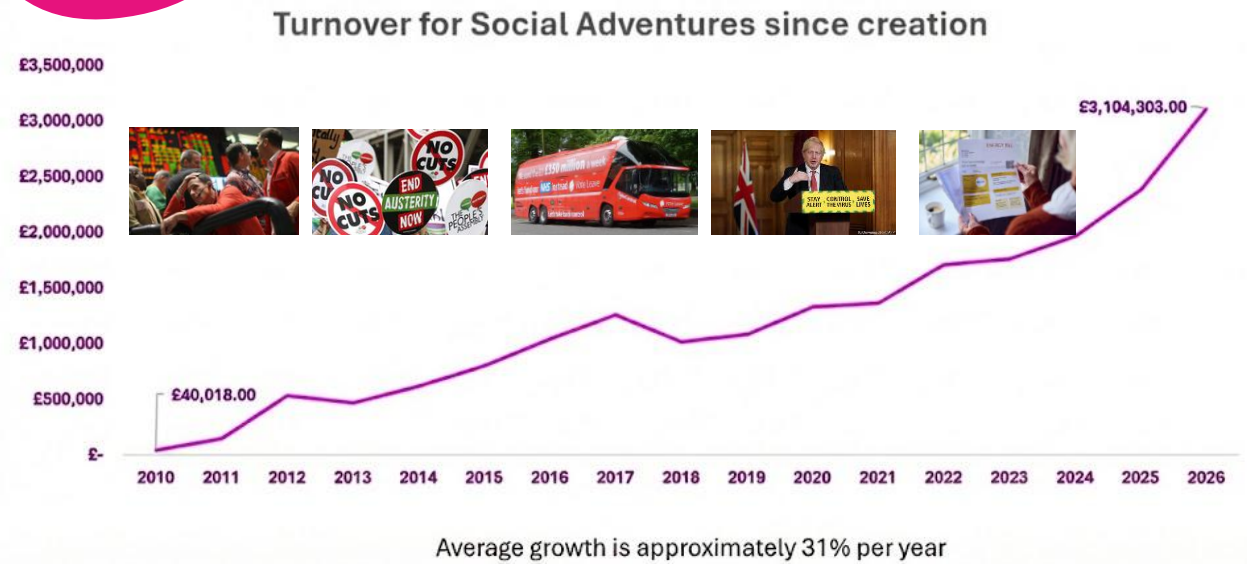
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growth

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Turnover



Average growth is approximately 31% per year

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Good Growth : rethinking residential !



'Exploitative' children's home profits to be curbed

GETTY IMAGES

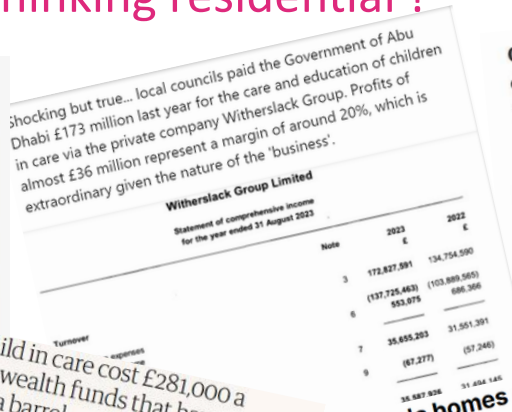
Sanchia Berg, Alison Holt and Aleks Phillips
BBC News

18 November 2024

Plans aimed at preventing companies that run children's homes in E from making excessive profits will be set out by the government on

It says it will bring forward new measures that will require large pro disclose their finances. If they do not limit their profits voluntarily, face a legal limit on how much they can make.

The government also intends to strengthen the powers regulator to investigate and fine "exploitative" children's home providers th stretched care system.



Shocking but true... local councils paid the Government of Abu Dhabi £173 million last year for the care and education of children in care via the private company Witherslack Group. Profits of almost £36 million represent a margin of around 20%, which is extraordinary given the nature of the 'business'.

Witherslack Group Limited

Statement of comprehensive income
for the year ended 31 August 2023

	Note	2023 £	2022 £
Turnover	3	172,827,591	134,754,590
Cost of sales		(137,725,463)	(103,889,585)
Gross profit		35,102,128	30,864,805
Administrative expenses	6	(553,075)	(686,366)
Operating profit		34,549,053	30,178,439
Interest receivable and similar income	7	106,200	1,372,952
Profit before taxation		34,655,253	31,551,391
Tax on profit	9	(67,277)	(57,246)
Profit for the financial year		34,587,976	31,494,145



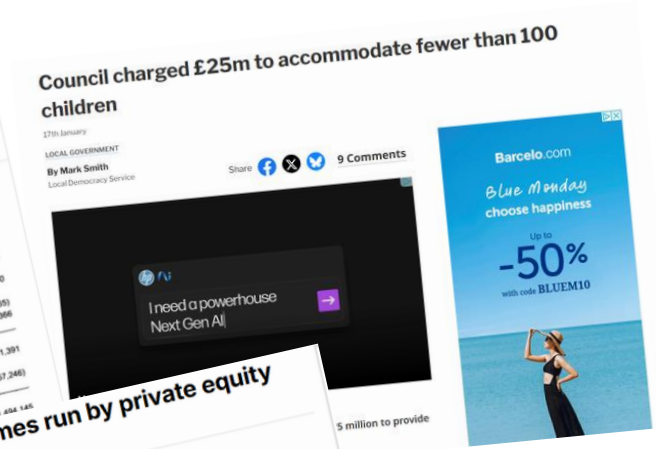
How can a child in care cost £281,000 a year? Ask the wealth funds that have councils over a barrel

George Monbiot



Children crying out for stability are paying the highest price for Britain's chaotic and exploitative residential care

'How could we have reached this point, in which the exchange of children for profit has been normalised and generalised?' Photograph: Cultura RM/Alamy



Council charged £25m to accommodate fewer than 100 children

17th January

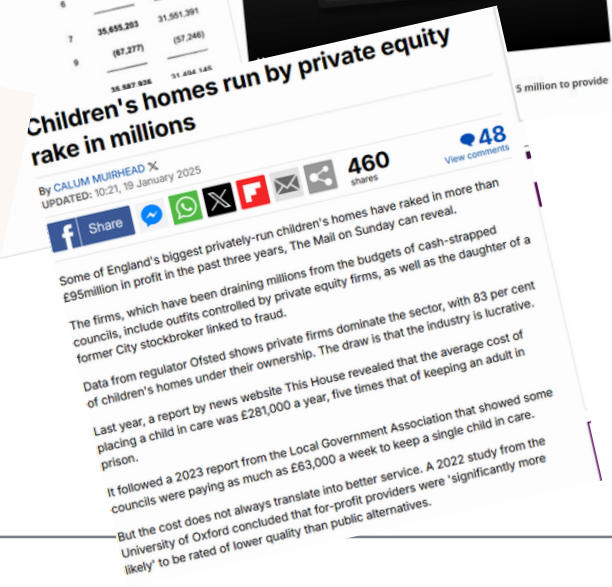
LOCAL GOVERNMENT

By Mark Smith
Local Democracy Service

Share 9 Comments

I need a powerhouse Next Gen AI

5 million to provide



Children's homes run by private equity rake in millions

By CALUM MUIRHEAD
UPDATED: 10:21, 19 January 2025

Share 460 shares 48 View comments

Some of England's biggest privately-run children's homes have raked in more than £95million in profit in the past three years, The Mail on Sunday can reveal.

The firms, which have been draining millions from the budgets of cash-strapped councils, include outfits controlled by private equity firms, as well as the daughter of a former City stockbroker linked to fraud.

Data from regulator Ofsted shows private firms dominate the sector, with 83 per cent of children's homes under their ownership. The draw is that the industry is lucrative.

Last year, a report by news website This House revealed that the average cost of placing a child in care was £281,000 a year, five times that of keeping an adult in prison.

It followed a 2023 report from the Local Government Association that showed some councils were paying as much as £63,000 a week to keep a single child in care.

But the cost does not always translate into better service. A 2022 study from the University of Oxford concluded that for-profit providers were 'significantly more likely' to be rated of lower quality than public alternatives.

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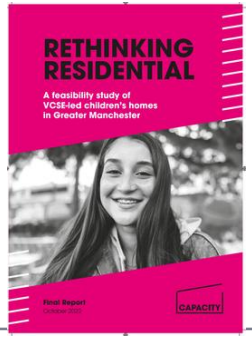
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The story so far....

June 2022



Oct 2022



Mar 2023



Mar 2024

STAR PROCUREMENT

Jul 2024

FAIR CARE ALLIANCE

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Inclusive Economy

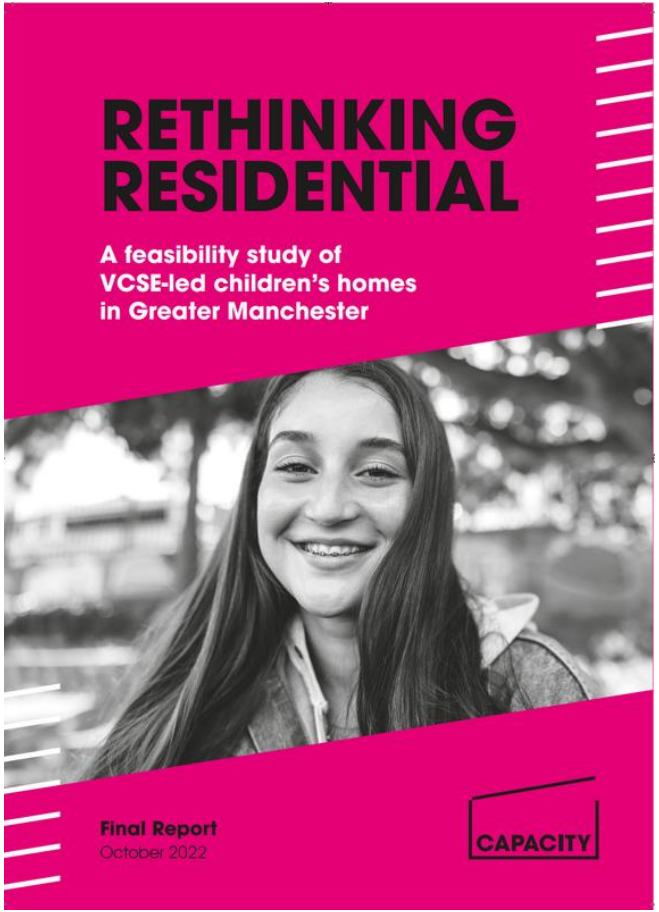
An inclusive economy in Greater Manchester is a fair economic model designed to share wealth, opportunity, and power evenly across all local communities and boroughs rather than focusing purely on overall growth.

The region aims to counter deep-rooted inequalities by ensuring economic development directly benefits local residents' health, standard of living, and access to good jobs



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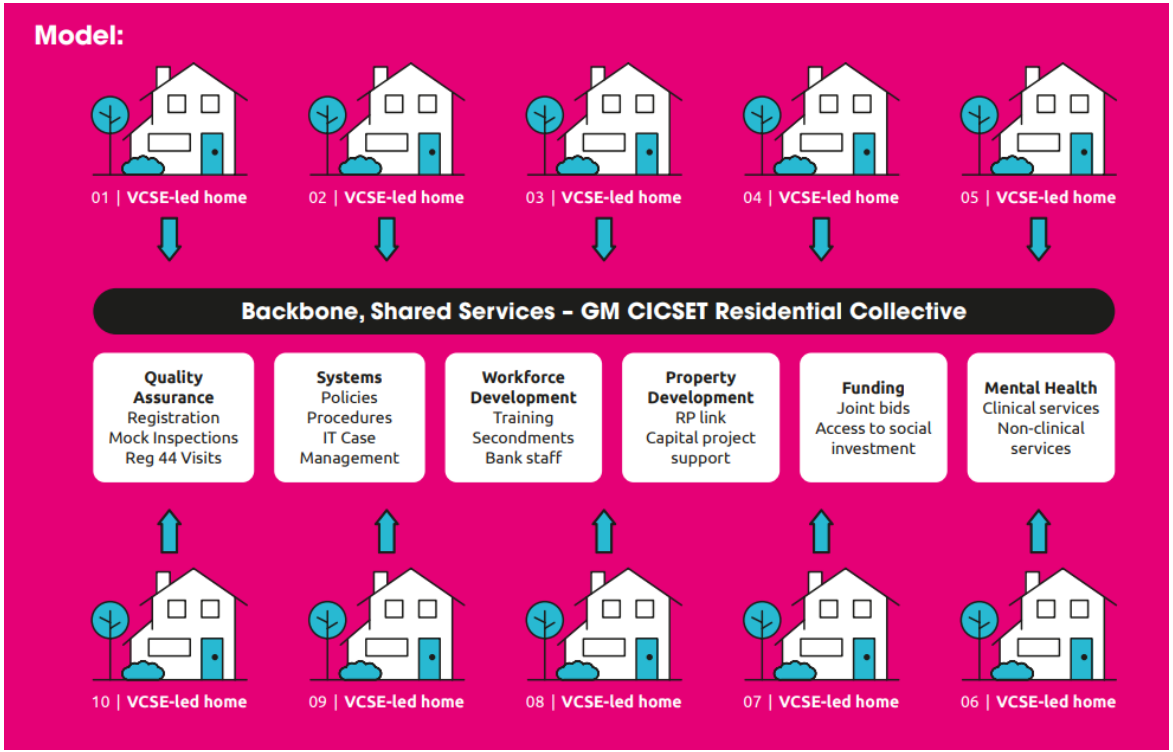
example two



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Rethinking Residential



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Oakview: childrens home

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Innovation in Foster Care

100K applications a year for new foster cares but only 2% ever become carers !

The 'problems' we want to fix.

For the public sector:

The huge national shortage of foster carers

25% Enquiries screened out almost immediately due to unsuitable property

For young people:

Moves 'out of area' and sibling separation.

Nearly 50% of all sibling groups of 3 or more are separated in care

For 'would be' Foster Carers:

Social and/or economic exclusion (younger carers) causing lack of suitable/sizeable property.

15% of carers in GM live in privately rented accommodation



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The fair care alliance LLP

















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So what are the magic ingredients



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1. Trust
2. Alignment
3. Accountabilty



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- Being collaborative rather than competitive
- Being solution-focussed and innovative
- open soucing ideas and haring best practice and innovation for the good of all
- Showing a commitment to partnering with and supporting development of local VCSE organisations
- Removing barriers between agencies to improve services
  Being open, inclusive and transparent
- Putting people more in control of the design and development of children's care placement services created through this partnership

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example two



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ALTERNATIVE PROVIDER COLLABORATIVE



....The APC now has nearly 75 member organisations and represents social business providers of NHS services in the Integrated Care System. Currently, the organisations show a collective turnover of around **£400m**, employ in excess 2000 people and engage around 2000 volunteers. These organisations operate across all 10 boroughs of Greater Manchester and provide services to over **2,000,000 people.**

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example three



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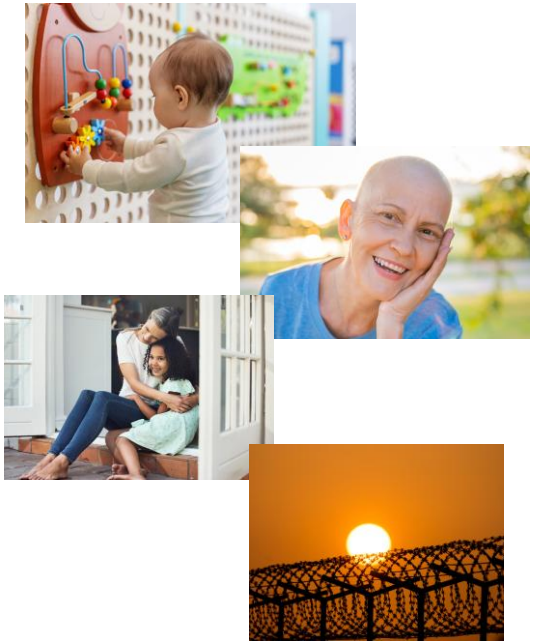
how it works



- Identifies major social challenges
- Convenes cross-sector working groups
- Launches “Policy Lab” projects
- Supports and scales proven social innovators (grants + corporate partnerships)
- Uses partnership infrastructure to unlock private sector resource

Impact to Date

- 170+ organisations engaged
- 18 social innovators scaled
- £1.2m in savings and in-kind support
- 100+ new partnerships formed
- Cross-sector projects launched



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Together California



the CHURCHILL fellowship

THANK YOU



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SOCIAL ADVENTURES

TRADING FOR CHANGE

WWW.SOCIALADVENTURES.ORG.UK

SCOTT@SOCIALADVENTURES.ORG.UK

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Coffee, Reflection and Networking

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Conversation 1: Values and Beliefs

1. Do we genuinely see one another as equal strategic partners, or do our behaviours still reveal a relationship between commissioner and provider, funder and recipient?

2. What would "parity of esteem" actually look like in practice when decisions are being made about priorities, money, evidence and services?

3. If we want a different relationship, what does each sector need to change about its own culture and behaviour, rather than asking the other side to change?

Lunch and Networking

Conversation 2:
Trust and Relationships

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1. Where does trust between the public sector and VCSE currently break down and what behaviours on either side cause that to happen?

2. If the people with the strongest relationships left tomorrow, how much of the partnership would survive? What would it take to move from personal relationships to institutional trust?

3. What are we each prepared to do differently, or give up, in order to create a more trusting relationship?

Conversation 3: Mechanisms that enable Collaboration

1. Which of our current systems, processes or structures actively make collaboration harder, even when the people involved want to collaborate?

2. What practical mechanisms would make collaborative working the normal way of working rather than something dependent on exceptional people and goodwill?

3. Would an Accord actually help, and what would it have to contain or change to avoid becoming another document that everyone agrees with but nobody uses?

Coffee Break

From Conversation to Action – what needs to happen next?

1. What feels most important
2. What can we act on now?
3. What needs further work?
4. Who needs to be involved?
5. Do we need a written accord?

Closing Reflections and Next Steps

Kate Burrows

Executive Director, Durham Community Action

