



An evaluation of a community co-operative for people with learning disabilities in the East End of Newcastle upon Tyne

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

This is an evaluation of a Community Co-op that was established in the East End of Newcastle upon Tyne to support people with learning disabilities. The evaluation was commissioned and funded by Northern Rock Foundation.

The co-op was established by KeyRing, a charity which supports 900 people with learning disabilities and other vulnerable adults to exercise choice and control over their lives and to live independently as part of their local community. It has pioneered the creation of innovative housing and support solutions for people with mild to moderate learning disabilities, reconnecting them to their local communities.

As a way to offer this type of support to people with more severe learning disabilities, KeyRing developed an innovative project: setting up a community living co-operative in the East End of Newcastle upon Tyne, in the wards of Walker, Byker and Heaton, which was intended to provide an alternative model of supported living.

1.2 Proposition

The proposition was that the co-op would provide high-quality housing and support to people with learning disabilities which would enable them to have more choice and control over their lives and would mean that they would be better connected into their local geographic community. The co-op should be a better model of delivering housing and support which gives more money to people with learning disabilities and supports the local community.

1.3 Purpose of the evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation was to address the proposition using a series of key questions, identify the learning and lessons that can be drawn from the co-op and to identify, if the model works, how it can be replicated elsewhere.

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The key questions that were used as a basis for testing the proposition were:

- Does the co-op have a positive impact on the lives of people with moderate and severe learning disabilities?
- Does the co-operative model work?
- Is the co-op using its money in a way that benefits people with learning disabilities and the wider community?

1.4 Content of the evaluation

The evaluation report is structured in the following way:

- An explanation of what the evaluation set out to do.
- What happened in practice, covering the objectives of the co-op and an account and assessment of how the co-op operated in practice.
- The opinions, views and experiences of key stakeholders, funders and some of the people with learning disabilities who were members of the co-op.
- What worked and what did not work specifically in relation to the key research questions.
- Lessons and learning from the co-op.
- A series of annexes containing additional information and context about the co-op.

1.5 Project partners

Northern Rock Foundation (NRF) and the Newcastle Learning Disability Partnership Board (LDPB) provided funding to establish the co-op. Newcastle City Council Adult and Culture Services Directorate Learning Disability Team were involved in supporting the development of the co-op and referring people with learning disabilities to the co-op. KeyRing 'hosted' and managed the co-op.

A 'critical friends' group was established to provide an independent view of the project. The membership was drawn from a wide range of interested parties both in the North East and more widely.

1.6 How KeyRing works

How the arrangements proposed for the co-op in Newcastle differ from normal KeyRing schemes is covered in Chapter 3; however, a brief explanation of the KeyRing model is provided here.

KeyRing has pioneered the use of 'Living Support networks'. Typically, a network consists of nine or 10 disabled members all living in their own accommodation. Properties are relatively close to each other.

KeyRing recruits a Community Living Volunteer who also lives in the locality. The volunteer provides a small amount of support to each individual. However, their fundamental role is to promote the formation of a supportive, social network between all the residents. Each member may also have their own individual care package – the Community Living Volunteer is seldom the sole source of care and support.



The concept of a support network has been replicated and extended, for example, to people with mental health problems and other vulnerable adults.

The community co-op in Newcastle was different to KeyRing's existing model in a number of ways including:

- The larger scale and geographical spread envisaged.
- Employing two co-op workers rather than a single Community Living Volunteer.
- Creating a co-op where disabled people, support workers and people living in the community could be members or associate members of the co-op and thus effectively run and control the organisation.
- An intention to support people with relatively high support needs.

2 What the evaluation set out to do

2.1 Approach and method

The evaluation of the East End Community Co-op was based on a series of questions which were intended to provide:

- An assessment of the extent to which the co-op had achieved its stated aims and objectives.
- Identification of lessons that can be learned from the co-op's experiences.
- If the model works, the extent to which the research can be used as a basis to replicate the model elsewhere.

As well as answering the key research questions, the evaluation was intended to include an analysis of the process of establishing and running the co-op and any barriers that were encountered.

The key questions, including any sub-questions that the evaluation addresses, are set out below:

- Does the co-op have a positive impact on the lives of people with moderate and severe learning disabilities?
 - *Has the co-op provided people with moderate and severe learning disabilities with high-quality accommodation and support that gives them more choice and more independence?*
 - *Is the co-op effective at integrating people with learning disabilities into their local geographic communities?*
 - *Do people with learning disabilities get work, volunteering opportunities and a more enriched social life from the co-op?*
- Does the co-operative model work?
 - *Can the co-op be sustained by income from individual budgets?*
 - *Can the model be replicated elsewhere?*

- Does the co-op use its money in a way that benefits people with learning disabilities and the wider community?
 - *Does the co-op employ local people (from Walker, Byker and Heaton)?*
 - *Are the wages it pays better than other supported living schemes?*
 - *Do people with learning disabilities get more personal disposable income as a result of being involved with the co-op (from their individual budgets)?*
 - *Does the co-op benefit the wider local economy, i.e. does the money the co-op gets from individual budgets stay in the local community?*

To address the key questions quantitative and qualitative data was collected from the staff from the co-op, from the project partners and from a sample of five co-op members with learning disabilities during the period of operation of the co-op and following its closure. This included interviews with the following project partners:

- Co-op staff: Co-op Coordinator, Community Development Worker and Community Support staff.
- KeyRing staff: Operational and Finance managers.
- Northern Rock Foundation managers.
- Newcastle City Council Adult and Culture Services managers (for learning disability services).
- Valuing People Development Worker in Newcastle.
- Members of a 'critical friends' group for the co-op.
- Other local stakeholders, e.g. Wor Hoose Community Project.

2.2 Closure of the co-op

The co-op closed in December 2008 before the planned end of the evaluation period in July 2009. The issues in relation to the closure of the co-op are addressed in Chapter 6 which covers the overall lessons and learning from the co-op. The decision to close the co-op also significantly reduced the scope of the local economic impact of the co-op.

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2.3 Timescales

The evaluation of the co-op was undertaken during the period between September 2007 and July 2009.

Visits to the co-op took place during September 2007, April 2008 and December 2008 to meet with the co-op staff and conduct interviews with project partners to collect data. Qualitative data was collected from five people with learning disabilities supported by the co-op. Structured interviews with these individuals took place during April 2008 and November 2008.

Following the closure of the co-op in December 2008, further data was collected from the project partners and other stakeholders during the period February to May 2009. Final structured interviews were conducted in July 2009 with the five people with learning disabilities who had been interviewed when they were supported by the co-op.

3 What happened – the development and operation of the co-op

3.1 Introduction

This chapter covers the way in which the co-op developed and operated, how the co-op was set up, the work it did, governance and management arrangements, the funding arrangements and the reasons for the closure of the co-op.

The policy context for the development of the co-op in relation to community connecting and people with learning disabilities is summarised in Annex 2.

3.2 Location of the co-op

The co-op was established within a defined geographical community within the city of Newcastle. Three geographical communities in the East End of the city – Byker, Walker and Heaton – were identified as the preferred location for the co-op to operate. They are areas with strong local community associations and groups but also with distinct differences between them.

The East End of Newcastle, including both Byker and Walker, was particularly affected by the economic problems and unemployment that followed the decline of the traditional industries in the area, particularly shipbuilding along the River Tyne, between 1980 and 2000. Byker and Walker have experienced a range of problems associated with this deprivation. Heaton is an area that has a more diverse population both economically and socially, including a significant student population.

3.3 Aims and objectives

The aims and objectives of the co-op that were agreed with the funders and stakeholders were:

- The co-op was intended to promote improvements in community life for its members and the local community.

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- To operate only within the East End of Newcastle accepting referrals and recruiting from the communities of Walker, Byker and Heaton.
- To provide 24-hour, paid live-in support, with local people sharing their lives with people with learning disabilities.
- The organisation to be modelled on co-operative principles and within three to five years to establish itself as an independent co-op.
- To recruit local people as volunteers, sharing interests with people with learning disabilities in their neighbourhood.

The co-op aimed to ground its work within the local communities where it operated. It intended to recruit its key staff locally within five years. It was an aspiration that after three to five years of operating the co-op would become a mature local community organisation that was self-financing with a broad membership made up of people with learning disabilities, workers, community volunteers and family and friends with a wide network of connections and associations within the local communities in the East End.

3.4 Setting up the co-op

The co-op started in September 2006. The post of Co-op Coordinator was recruited in August 2006. The post of Community Development Worker was recruited in May 2007.

Meetings were held with Newcastle City Council Adult and Culture Services Directorate Learning Disability Team about referrals and a potential contract with the city council. The co-op had initial discussions with a range of stakeholders, including with the former Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) and the organisation that manages the city council's former housing stock, Your Homes Newcastle (YHN).

One aim of the co-op was to test the viability of live-in support as a 'model' for people with moderate and severe learning disabilities who would also be in receipt of an individual budget. Following discussion with the city council and CSCI, to enable this to happen, the co-op took the decision to apply to register as an adult placement service; this was not because the co-op was seeking to mirror the role of an adult placement service, rather that this was the form of registration that was closest to what the co-op was trying to operate in terms of live-in support.

The process and requirements of registration are substantial, particularly for a small organisation such as the co-op with only two full-time staff. This process took longer than had been anticipated and, in effect, meant that the co-op was not able to offer support to people with learning disabilities until this process was completed.

3.5 Live-in support

The co-op spent a significant part of the first year of operation trying to establish live-in support. Other types of support services for people with learning disabilities have some elements of a live-in support model which are summarised in the box below.

- An adult or family placement is where a person with a learning disability (or sometimes more than one person) lives with a family in their home. The family typically receive a weekly fee from the Local Authority Adult Services department for the 'placement'. Individuals with learning disabilities may or may not have a tenancy agreement.
- Homeshare is a relatively new model. A householder in need of some help and support, or possibly simply a householder who is lonely or isolated offers good quality accommodation to a 'homesharer' in exchange for some help.
- A support tenant model involves a person living in the home of a person/s with a learning disability, typically rent free or for a reduced rent in return for being available at specified times/days and to provide specific types of support that may be required by the person/s with a learning disability. It is usual for there to be other forms of support in place for the person/s with a learning disability in addition to the support tenant.

A detailed explanation of the live-in supporter role is shown at Annex 3.

The co-op tested a model of live-in support that was different in several ways:

- The nature of the commitment required of a live-in supporter was greater. The co-op was testing the recruitment of live-in supporters for people with high support needs where they would have a 24-hour, one-to-one relationship with the person being supported.

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- The focus of the relationship was specifically about providing opportunities to connect the person with a learning disability into local community life, including making use of the live-in supporter's personal and community links and networks.
- The live-in supporter would be paid an annual salary rather than a weekly/monthly 'fee'.
- Both the live-in supporter and person being supported would become part of a co-operative organisation.

The key requirements set by the co-op to be a live-in supporter were:

- The person would need to live in Walker, Byker or Heaton or be willing to move to these areas.
- To either offer a room in their house or go to live in the home of the person with a learning disability.
- It was open to families, couples and single people, although the co-op would 'register' one main live-in supporter.
- It would involve supporting a person with a learning disability with either 'very high support needs' or 'high support needs', in both cases people who need 24-hour support.
- The ability to enter into a one-to-one relationship with a person with a learning disability to support them to get connected to their community, find friends, as well as provide other practical support and personal care where necessary.

The salaries available to potential live-in supporters were linked to the scale of the individual budgets available to people with either 'very high' or 'high' support needs. The annual salaries advertised were:

- To be a live-in supporter with a person with 'very high' support needs, the annual salary was £24,708, with an annual allowance of £5,000 to fund breaks.
- To be a live-in supporter with a person with 'high' support needs, the annual salary was £16,740, with an annual allowance of £3,394 to fund breaks.

The co-op's recruitment methods for live-in support were extensive. They advertised in the local press and leafleted 16,000 households twice.

They also leafleted local shopping centres, Metro stations, schools and local and citywide fairs and festivals. In addition, the co-op constantly advertised through the East End Alliance and through local community and faith groups in the East End.

The feedback from people who were potentially interested in providing live-in support, some of whom went through the initial screening process with the co-op, varied but the key reasons for not proceeding were:

- It was seen as being too great a commitment on the part of the live-in supporter.
- There was considered to be a lack of breaks.
- Some applicants did not feel that there would be sufficient back-up support.
- Some applicants viewed having to move into the East End as not attractive.

A target for the co-op was to have 18 co-op members with learning disabilities by April 2009 and six of those 18 to be receiving 24-hour or high packages of support. The co-op attempted to recruit live-in support for 18 months ultimately without finding a single suitable candidate who was willing to commit to the role. This meant that the co-op was unable to test out, in practice, one of its key objectives: to create live-in support arrangements in the East End funded through individual budgets.

3.6 Community support

The co-op began operating a community support service in June 2007. The community support involved one-to-one support to people living with their families or in their own tenancies. This was partly in response to demand for this type of service and in part due to the need to generate income due to the lack of recruitment of live-in supporters. The co-op provided this support in a way that was consistent with its objectives in relation to connecting people to community life. Individuals who received community support were members of the co-op in the same way that it had been intended that people with live-in supporters would be members of the co-op. The co-op made the community support staff members of the co-op in the same way that it was intended that live-in supporters would become members of the co-op.

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Community support was based on having a contract with Newcastle City Council Adult and Culture Services Directorate. In practice, this meant that the co-op was entering into the type of commercial relationship with social care commissioners that is used with other organisations providing social care services.

At the time it ceased operating the co-op was providing community support to 12 people with learning disabilities. Two of these individuals had originally been referred for live-in support and were, in effect, receiving community support seven days per week, with one individual initially having 24-hour support. Both of these individuals were receiving individual budgets. The other 10 people received a range of hours of community support, 78 hours per week in total, based on the agreed hourly rate. Providing community support was the only way in which the co-op was able to independently generate income during its two years of operation.

3.7 Building community connections

The co-op made a conscious choice to have a community development approach to its work. It rented an office in an established community project run by a local residents association in Walker known as Wor Hoose. Wor Hoose had been established 10 years previously and was based in two semi-detached houses previously owned by Newcastle City Council. This meant that the co-op had a small local office base, as well as use of shared facilities and meeting spaces within the building used by Wor Hoose. More importantly, it gave the co-op a very localised presence within the East End through an established and locally trusted community project and resource. It meant that the co-op was able to draw directly on the community knowledge and connections that had been established by the Wor Hoose project and other formal and informal community groups that Wor Hoose was connected with.

A very significant level of activity was devoted by the co-op staff to building relationships and networks, principally with local community organisations, groups and associations. In the first year of its operation the co-op invested time and resources in a range of local community groups and 'associations', including for example:

- The East End Alliance, a local umbrella organisation for grassroots community organisations. This provided the co-op with access to a very wide range of community groups and associations within the East End that were linked with and or known to the East End Alliance, which brings together 105 diverse groups ranging from mother and toddler groups to pensioners groups.
- Through a local 'Images for Change' project which is a project in the East End involved in the use of film and photography to capture people's experiences of life and change in the East End and what people like and do not like about the East End community.
- The co-op hosted a 'Small Sparks' event with the East End Alliance and a conference with Varun Vidyarthi showcasing the work of the Indian community organisation in Monavadaya.
- Working with the local TimeBank. The TimeBank is a system whereby people offer their services in return for credits which they can then exchange for other types of activities; it is a money-less exchange of goods and services locally.
- The co-op built connections with a wide range of community groups and organisations, for example a local urban farm, a local walking group, faith groups and local employment facilitators.
- The co-op established contacts and connections with community activists and professional workers.

The East End Alliance was a very valuable local partner for the co-op. Given that a key aim was to help co-op members make connections with the community, working through the Alliance was important. The Alliance was able to introduce the co-op to local community activists and community groups. The co-op was able to establish in its first year positive relationships with a wide range of community groups and organisations.

The co-op used this knowledge and relationships to support its members with learning disabilities to get to know the local community. For example, a participatory approach was taken with the co-op members to draw a local 'East End community map' which identified a range of local community places, e.g. leisure centres, friendly pubs and cafes, shops, parks, churches, public transport. This was used as a way of co-op members building their own map of the local area and as a basis for discussing personal preferences and interests in relation to local community life. A copy of the community map is shown at Annex 4.

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3.8 The volunteer network

Part of the co-op's work involved recruiting volunteers from the local East End community. The co-op was specifically trying to recruit volunteers linked to members' interests and preferences.

The process of recruitment and identifying volunteers was led by the plans and interests of the members of the co-op with learning disabilities. Volunteers were then identified who would assist people with their particular interests, such as going to football matches, going fishing, and playing the guitar.

They used volunteer recruitment fairs, a student volunteering group in the city and a drop-in service at Northumbria University to try to recruit volunteers. The co-op also organised a volunteer recruitment event at the local fire station in Byker. Members who were looking for volunteers advertised their interests through community networks, for example through adverts with the East End Alliance. From the original aim of the co-op to get 15 volunteers, this was revised to nine volunteers by the end of July 2008. By this time the co-op had recruited and retained six volunteers.

3.9 Governance and management arrangements

The governance arrangements for the co-op evolved over its lifespan; initially there was a large local committee then a smaller more conventional project steering group. A dual structure was initiated with KeyRing holding the responsibility for the management of the co-op and local stakeholders helping to develop the project through a steering group.

There were monthly members' meetings, which were primarily social meetings but they also existed to explain what was happening locally and provide opportunities for people to get involved in activities within the community and activities run by the co-op. Two of the members with learning disabilities were voted onto the co-op committee group by the other disabled co-op members.

Although it was an objective that the co-op would formally become constituted as a co-operative and seek registration as a co-operative society, because the co-op closed this, in fact, did not happen. However, it is important

to recognise that the way the co-op was organised, and particularly how it tried to involve on an equal basis the members, workers and volunteers, was based on the principles of a co-operative.

A 'critical friends' group was established in the first year of operation to provide assistance to the project. The membership was drawn from a wide range of interested parties both from the North East and more widely. Some members of the critical friends group did attend co-op steering group meetings during the first year of operation. One annual meeting of the critical friends group did take place during the early part of the second year of operation, in October 2007.

3.10 Funding of the co-op – financial viability and sustainability

The co-op was established with grant funding from Newcastle Learning Disability Partnership Board (LDPB) and Northern Rock Foundation (NRF). The funding from the LDPB was intended to cover the costs of the Coordinator post and 50% of the project infrastructure costs, with the funding from NRF intended to cover the costs of the Community Development Worker post and the other 50% of project infrastructure costs.

This grant funding was for the first two years of the co-op's operation after which it was intended that the co-op would become financially self-sufficient. The grant funding was:

- £105,400 over two years from the LDPB.
- £104,715 over two years from NRF (of which £87,263 was drawn down).

An objective of the co-op was to achieve financial self-sufficiency within three years of commencing operating. This was based on a timescale for setting up the co-op in August 2006 to financial self-sufficiency by April 2009.

The co-op's model of achieving financial self-sufficiency was based on creating live-in support arrangements, specifically:

- Five people having live-in support within two years.
- Between eight and 20 people having live-in support within three years.

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The financial modelling by the co-op was based on using the individual budget 'resource allocation system' (RAS) being developed by Newcastle City Council at the time that the co-op was set up. This had been used by the Council for limited piloting but had not been rolled out across the wider population of adults with social care needs eligible for social care funding. This version of the RAS used 'bands' linked to the person's assessment. The individual budget allocation for a person with high needs was £33,943 per annum; the allocation for a person with very high needs was £50,000 per annum. Other bands ranged from medium, £15,381 per annum, to very low, £5,500 per annum.

The co-op's core costs, including the direct costs of the staff, the Coordinator and Community Development Worker, and the indirect costs of running the co-op, were projected to be £107,000 in year two. The salaries to be paid to the live-in supporters and the associated funding for breaks was expected to come from the individual budget allocations of the people with learning disabilities taking up live-in support

The co-op's business model was to fund its core costs by applying a 20% 'recovery' on the individual budget allocations made to people with learning disabilities who took up live-in support through the co-op. In effect, the co-op was seeking to fund its work and costs through this 20% charge on the individual budget of each person with live-in support. The co-op expected to achieve a modest level of income through community support work, but this was never seen as central to recovering its core costs.

In summary, the co-op's model for achieving financial self-sufficiency and sustainability once the grant funding ended was based on:

- Recruiting 8–20 live-in supporters by April 2009.
- The majority of the people with live-in support receiving individual budget allocations from Newcastle City Council Adult and Culture Services Directorate at either the high or very high bands (the co-op recognised that a minority of these people would need to come from lower support needs bands, otherwise the co-op would not have the capacity to manage and support live-in support arrangements exclusively for people with very high/high support needs).
- Achieving a 20% 'recovery' of its core costs from each individual budget allocation.

The reality of not being able to recruit any live-in supporters during its period of operation meant that the co-op was never in a position to achieve financial sustainability once the set-up grant funding ended. The income generated by the co-op during its second full year operating, 2008/09, was based on two people with learning disabilities having individual budgets which were used to fund intensive community support packages and 10 people with learning disabilities receiving relatively low value community support funded under contract with Newcastle City Council Adult and Culture Services Directorate at £12.97 per hour. The income received by the co-op was:

- Two intensive community support packages, funded through individual budget allocations generating £65,970 per annum.
- 10 packages of community support varying between six and 16 hours per week generating £52,606 per annum.

Although two of these individuals were allocated individual budgets, in effect, they were managed by Newcastle City Council Adult and Culture Services Directorate on the individual's behalf to purchase support from the co-op. Rather than having a network of live-in supporters, the co-op had a small team of community support staff to provide support to the members with learning disabilities.

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3.11 Closure of the co-op

The co-op ceased operating in December 2008. The co-op, in effect, carried out the exit strategy that had been the worst case scenario in the original business plan, i.e. if, despite all the work to achieve the objective of live-in support as well as other options to achieve financial sustainability including further grants and cost reductions, it was not possible to achieve viability then the co-op would do everything possible to secure continuity of support for the existing members at that time by an orderly transfer to mainline KeyRing services or another quality provider.

In practice, this was a transition process which involved identifying a number of other providers of 'supported living' services and managing a handover of the support arrangements of the members of the co-op with learning disabilities to these other organisations. Six of the community support staff from the co-op also transferred to these other organisations and continued to provide support to the former co-op members through different organisations.

In summary, the main reasons the co-op closed were:

- The lack of success in recruiting live-in supporters primarily because the commitment by the live-in supporter was seen as too great by applicants.
- It was not financially sustainable. The community and 24-hour packages which the co-op was delivering to 12 people were costing more in staff and management time than the income they were generating.
- The financial scenarios developed by KeyRing predicted that the co-op was not going to be in a financially self-sustaining position for the foreseeable future and therefore not in a position to meet another of the core objectives of becoming an independent co-operative.

4 Experiences of and views about the co-op

4.1 The experiences of co-op members with learning disabilities

A core element of the evaluation of the co-op involved understanding the experience of the people with learning disabilities who became members of the co-op. This was done by conducting interviews with a sample of five co-op members over a 15-month period during April 2008, November 2008 and July 2009. The interviews were semi-structured in that a standard series of questions were used for each interview but with scope to gather additional information and insights that emerged from the interviews.

The purpose of interviewing each member three times over the period April 2008 to July 2009 was to assess the impact the co-op had made on their lives. The final interviews were conducted after the closure of the co-op so any issues associated with the co-op closure were covered.

The five members who were interviewed were invited to participate and gave their informed consent to participate in the evaluation. Some of the members chose to be accompanied by a supporter during the interviews. The interviews were conducted either at the homes of the members or at the Wor Hoose Community Project in Walker.

Based on the interviews, the experiences of the co-op members are set out below in the form of 'case stories' to illustrate the impact the co-op had for each of them.

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Steve

Steve lives in Heaton, he is in his mid 20s. When he became a member of the co-op in 2007 he had always lived with his parents.

Steve received six hours support per week from the co-op. Steve's individual plan identified that he wanted to get work or training, have a more active social life, and eventually get a flat of his own. Through the co-op Steve tried out a range of interests within the local community.

Examples have included:

- He does activities such as tai chi.
- He is on the management committee of the East End TimeBank.
- He joined the co-op gardening group.
- He joined the co-op steering group.
- He is a volunteer at Benfield Leisure Centre in the East End, a local sports and leisure centre, where he acts as a customer service greeter.
- Steve is taking a number of courses at a local college.

Steve wanted to extend his social life which had previously revolved mainly around his parents.

"I want to do something that I am more interested in. I want some support to help me make a few good friends who I see regularly and go out with."

Steve has taken part in the speed dating events that the co-op has got involved with through Northumbria University and Friends Action North East. He has been supported to find a local pub that is friendly and welcoming. Steve said he has more things to do and more fun since he started getting support from the co-op.

Steve was keen to be involved in the running of the co-op and in particular he participated in interviewing Community Support Worker applicants with the Co-op Coordinator.

One of Steve's goals was to move out from his parents' house and to live on his own. Shortly before the co-op closed Steve was supported to get a flat where he now lives on his own which is near to his family in Heaton. Although Steve was keen to find paid employment, this did not prove possible during the operation of the co-op. He has developed a relationship with a woman who is also a member of the co-op.

Karen

Karen is in her 30s. She was referred to the co-op by Newcastle City Council Adult and Culture Services Directorate in late 2007. At the time she was living in a 40-bed residential care home for people who have mental health needs as well as learning disabilities. She had been living there for the previous 18 months since her partner died.

Karen was identified as a person who wanted to have a live-in support arrangement as an alternative to living in residential care. The co-op worked with her for a year and it took that long to assist her to get to the point where she was able to take up a flat of her own in the East End. The care home she was living in is in another area of the city.

In the summer of 2008 Karen moved into a flat in Walker, near to the Wor Hoose Community Project where the co-op was based. Your Homes Newcastle made a two-bed flat available for Karen. Although it was not possible to recruit a live-in supporter for Karen, the co-op involved her in selecting the staff to support her.

Karen had an individual budget allocation from the City Council within the 'high needs' banding although Newcastle City Council Adult and Culture Services Directorate Learning Disability Team managed this on her behalf, in effect, using it to purchase a 24/7 support package from the co-op. After a few months the 24-hour (sleepover) element of this support was removed as Karen no longer required it.

In advance of moving into a flat of her own, the co-op had started planning with Karen to help identify her goals and the type of support she needed from the co-op.

Her interests include working with animals and she is assisted to walk a local man's dog in the East End, twice per week. The co-op supported Karen to try a variety of activities, including yoga, swimming, social evenings and literacy, with varying degrees of success.

For Karen the principal positive experience of being a member of the co-op has been to move from a residential home to have a home of her own with support arrangements that she has some control over, including the staff who supported her. In her plan Karen said:

"I want to be supported by the co-op to move home and help me with the practical arrangements, introduce me to the East End before I move so I have things to do, work with animals, do some gardening and go for walks."

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Richard

Richard is in his 50s. He has experienced living in hostel accommodation in Newcastle and before joining the co-op he was living in a residential care home in Walker. This was viewed by Newcastle City Council Adult and Culture Services Directorate Learning Disability Team as a poor quality service and Richard was consequently referred to the co-op for live-in support.

The co-op supported Richard to move into his own flat in Walker through Your Homes, Newcastle. Although the co-op was not able to recruit a live-in supporter, through the co-op Richard recruited his own small staff team of two community support workers. When Richard moved into his flat, initially he had sleepovers for one month. Richard has support seven days a week, six hours per day.

Richard's money had previously been controlled by Newcastle City Council Adult and Culture Services Directorate with them as the appointee. Through the co-op there was more flexibility, which meant that Richard had between £70–£120 per week personal income.

He has an individual budget allocation of £28,000 which is managed by Adult Services on his behalf as an 'individual service fund'. He uses a bank book to manage the money he has available to him to spend on his personal requirements.

Richard has a many interests and he spent time pursuing his interests once he had his own flat. Through the co-op Richard tried out a range of interests within the local community. Examples have included:

- Richard likes football and the co-op supported him to get a disabled person's season ticket for Newcastle Utd.
- He uses the library in Byker, where he uses the internet and takes out books.
- He bought a guitar and started to have lessons although he decided not to continue with this interest.
- He enjoys fishing and the co-op identified a volunteer from the local community who Richard could go fishing with.
- He joined a walking club that operates two days a week from Byker leisure centre.

When he became a member of the co-op, Richard was involved in some activities with other co-op members. He attended the co-op members group and he joined the co-op gardening group. Richard was interested in the social activities offered by the co-op initially and tried out some of the opportunities that the co-op facilitated locally such as going to restaurants and speed dating run by a local university. His interest in these types of activities reduced over time. For Richard, the most significant impact of joining the co-op has been moving out of a residential home and having more freedom to pursue his interests.

"I have more freedom than when I lived at the care home... I can eat and go out any time I want."

Viv and Tom

Viv and Tom are in their 20s. Viv is originally from Shieldfield and Tom is from Walker. Previously, they lived at Viv's mother's house.

Viv and Tom are seen as 'high risk' by Newcastle City Council Adult and Culture Services Directorate and particularly living at Viv's mother's house. Tom was previously living in an adult placement service in North Tyneside and he then moved into a residential care unit.

Adult Services wanted them living separately. The co-op became involved in their support arrangements in early 2007 and suggested an alternative approach would be for Viv and Tom to have a flat together and to become members of the co-op. Viv and Tom's individual plans developed when the co-op identified initially that they wanted to live together and needed support to acquire living skills.

Viv became pregnant. The co-op helped them to ask Viv's mum if she would be the baby's guardian. They were offered a flat by Your Homes Newcastle in Byker. Viv and Tom moved in July 2007 into their flat. The co-op supports them nine hours and 12 hours per week respectively and support initially focused on ensuring that they were settled in their accommodation, that they had it furnished and they were in a position to manage their money.

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Viv and Tom have subsequently become far more independent dealing with basic tasks such as the shopping, managing their tenancy and managing money.

Through the co-op Viv and Tom tried out a range of interests within the local community. Examples have included:

- They have joined a local walking group based in Byker.
- They have started to attend a local church.
- They have volunteered at a local lunch club.

They have shown some interest in getting a job and they have attended 'shop for jobs' training courses. They have pursued their interest in some of the activities that the co-op established, for example they are part of the gardening group, a music group and a cookery group. They participated in social events with other co-op members, e.g. meals out and karaoke evenings. They have formed friendships with several other members of the co-op.

Viv and Tom have achieved many of their goals through membership of the co-op and the support it provided to them. Tom and Viv have been helped to have their own flat in Byker. They planned for and then got married.

"We want to plan and save for our wedding which will be in September 2008 and have our honeymoon at Blackpool."

The co-op supported them to achieve access arrangements to their baby daughter who now lives with Viv's mother; their baby has remained in the community and not ended up being looked after by the local authority. They have been helped to become more independent in relation to how they live their lives. They have pursued a wide range of interests within their local community with the support of the co-op.

The co-op had 12 members when it closed, including the five members who were interviewed as part of the evaluation. Although the other seven co-op members were not interviewed, a review of their individual plans indicated that they were supported to pursue a wide range of interests and goals in terms of participating in local community life. Examples included:

- A woman who has joined a writers group.
- A woman who has become a volunteer at a local riding stable and is attending a local leisure centre to access the gym and swimming.
- A woman who joined a DJ course and a fishing group.
- A man who took up a photography and video course and participated in a local community photography project.
- A man who was supported to take up a voluntary placement on a community farm.

However, some people joined the co-op and decided that it was not the type of support they were looking for. One man who joined the co-op in early 2008 and was initially interviewed for the evaluation, decided for a variety of reasons that he did not want to be supported by the co-op and left after a few months. However, in the time that he was a member of the co-op, he was supported to attend a local writers group, and he became a member of a local working men's club where he played pool. He also started to learn to swim at the local leisure centre at Byker.

When the co-op closed in December 2008 all the co-op members were offered support through other organisations that provided support services in Newcastle and the North East.

4.2 Co-op stakeholder perspectives

This section sets out the perspectives of a range of stakeholders in the co-op. This qualitative data was collected through a series of interviews held during the first and second years of operation of the co-op and after the decision was taken to close the co-op. The perspectives set out below are from:

- The co-op project funders and partners, including Northern Rock Foundation, Newcastle Learning Disability Partnership Board, Newcastle City Council Adult and Culture Services Directorate Learning Disability Team and KeyRing.
- Members of the critical friends group.

4.2.1 Live-in support model

- The testing of the live-in support model was valid but the evidence is that the terms and conditions offered in this case were not sufficiently attractive to potential live-in supporters.

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- The focus on recruiting live-in supporters, either from the East End or from other areas on the basis that they would need to move to the East End, was too restrictive, even though part of the role of the co-op was to test whether this model would work in a relatively small geographical area.
- The demands of being a live-in supporter were not sufficiently or robustly tested before the co-op was established, given that one of the key messages from applicants for live-in support who then withdrew was the level of commitment required was too great.
- The prospect of a live-in support service for some people with learning disabilities with higher support needs remains very attractive because it would eliminate or at least significantly reduce a shift-based system of staffing, which is what the co-op was trying to avoid.
- An alternative would perhaps have been to take a 'social marketing' approach to establishing the co-op and what it would offer; this would have meant greater research of what was required by both people with learning disabilities and what local people were able and willing to offer in terms of support. This would not have necessarily meant that live-in support would not have been pursued and tested, rather it may have provided an earlier opportunity to check whether the 'recipe' for live-in support needed to be modified to enhance its chances of being successful.
- In hindsight, the live-in support model may have needed different 'options' or levels of commitment for potential live-in supporters to achieve the levels of recruitment required.

4.2.2 Funding

- The rates payable by Newcastle City Council Adult and Culture Services Directorate for the community support work were the rates payable for domiciliary care. Like many authorities, Newcastle has agreed standard hourly rates for these types of services. In effect, the co-op was trying to provide a community connecting role within a contract and pricing framework that had been designed for a different type of service model, i.e. domiciliary care.
- It proved too difficult and unrealistic for the co-op to achieve financial viability within two years; three years was possibly a more realistic timeframe.
- The co-op was developed at a very early stage of the introduction of self-directed support within Newcastle and the roll out of individual budgets.

It may have been helpful to the co-op if this infrastructure had been more established and mature.

- It became apparent during the second year of the project that more comprehensive financial modelling should have been undertaken at the outset of the project.

4.2.3 Governance and management arrangements

- The governance arrangements for the co-op evolved over its lifespan. In hindsight, there was a need for clearer governance arrangements to be in place at the outset.
- The co-op project partners worked hard to put in place management and governance structures for the project. KeyRing, as the project 'host', invested substantial management time and resources in managing and supporting the co-op. There was a difficult balance to be struck in terms of providing the management and support required whilst also providing the 'space' the co-op sought in order for it to become an independent organisation.
- The critical friends group was influential on the activity of the co-op. In hindsight, there was a need to be clearer about the relationship between the critical friends and the project partners steering and managing the co-op.

4.2.4 Challenges and barriers faced by the co-op

- The co-op was perhaps trying too much innovation at an early stage of the 'personalisation' of social care services and systems, particularly the lack of a track record of rolling out individualised funding for social care in Newcastle at the time of setting up the co-op.
- The core staff resources within the co-op (the Coordinator was the sole worker for the first eight to nine months) were not sufficient to manage all the demands of establishing the co-op as well as the community development work.
- The demand for the service offered by the co-op was present, both for live-in support and community support, but balancing the ideas behind the co-op and the requirement to have a sustainable and financially viable business are hard, particularly for small innovative projects.
- The scale of work to manage the registration process (with the former CSCI) for a very small organisation was underestimated.

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- There was a need for a procedure to enable 'problems' to be signalled earlier than occurred. Project partners should have collectively addressed the financial viability of the co-op in the context of no live-in supporters being recruited at the beginning of the co-op's second year.
- The co-op would have needed greater time to establish itself as a financially independent organisation. The problem with not being able to recruit live-in supporters as originally envisaged and the consequent threat to future financial viability meant that the co-op had to develop smaller packages of support to try to generate an income stream. Because the co-op staffing had not been set up originally to manage these types of packages and the support staff required to deliver them, it appeared that the core ethos and community development work was overtaken by the need to manage the 'service'.

4.2.5 Achievements of the co-op

- The opportunities created for members of the co-op with learning disabilities have been significant in terms of access to housing options in the East End, individually designed support, and in particular the core focus on connecting individuals to activity, groups and relationships within their local communities.
- It was right that the co-op focused on finding ways to support people with high support needs and applied the same community connecting ethos and methods as for people with lower support needs.
- The co-op was a radical approach to supporting individuals with complex support needs based on an approach to building sustainable connections into local community life. Although some of the key objectives of the co-op were not achieved, the approach to community development and building bridges into community life for people with experience of being excluded from local community life was effective.
- The co-op has provided significant and valuable lessons and learning for the local organisations involved in funding and overseeing it.
- The work that the co-op did within the East End to secure support from and relationships with a wide range of local community groups and organisations could provide a model for other organisations that are providing support to people with learning disabilities.
- The co-op's approach was different qualitatively from most other support providers commissioned by Newcastle City Council Adult and Culture Services Directorate:

“One woman benefited from all the connections because in the beginning she was isolated, with mental health problems as well as a learning disability. She started to think about employment options, she got involved in activities that she had never done in the past. Her previous provider never enabled this.”

- The co-op purposefully tried to recruit local people from the East End, even when they recruited community support workers. Having some staff from the local area helped with supporting co-op members to access welcoming places in the local community, for example accessing a local community photography group.
- The idea of establishing a ‘co-op’ was a fantastic proposition and worth testing. Some of the key learning that has come from the co-op has been the importance of starting with a defined locality and then working with a group of local people, including local people with learning disabilities, to find opportunities and resources within that locality that will help individuals to find places and people with whom they share common interests.
- The model of a ‘co-op’ was centrally important as it was based on principles of equality and equal membership of the organisation. This approach was fundamentally different to a model based on people with learning disabilities being service users or recipients.
- The focus on the localities of Walker, Byker and Heaton was a strength for the co-op. It was a strength in that the co-op demonstrated how to build networks and relationships within a local community and the need to have a local base and focus in order to achieve this. It was seen as successful in bringing together people with learning disabilities and local people in ways that were related to individuals’ interests rather than in a contrived way.
- The co-op demonstrated to the local authority and to other social care providers that detailed person-centred planning with individuals and community development work are an effective approach to supporting individuals to achieve their goals and aspirations.

5 What worked and what did not work – the evidence

This chapter brings together the evidence to specifically address the key questions that form the basis of the evaluation. This is set out below.

The evidence is drawn from:

- How the co-op developed and operated in practice.
- The perspectives from the key co-op stakeholders including the funders, stakeholders and critical friends.
- The data from interviews with five members of the co-op with learning disabilities.

5.1 Does the co-op have a positive impact on the lives of people with moderate and severe learning disabilities?

5.1.1 Has the co-op provided people with moderate and severe learning disabilities with high-quality accommodation and support that gives them more choice and more independence?

Housing

The co-op supported members with learning disabilities to access good quality housing that was suitable for their requirements in the East End. As part of the process of setting up and establishing the co-op, the largest local provider of social housing in Newcastle, Your Homes Newcastle (YHN), was involved through the local office in Walker. Local YHN staff were interviewed as part of the evaluation. YHN committed to assist the co-op to find suitable housing for co-op members who needed re-housing within the East End, who were moving to the East End from other areas of the city, and in circumstances where a co-op member required housing that would also accommodate a live-in supporter.

In practice, the need to find housing that would also accommodate a live-in supporter did not materialise as it was not possible to recruit live-in supporters. However, through YHN the co-op was able to assist other co-op members to find alternative housing. The five members of the co-op with learning

disabilities who were interviewed as part of the evaluation were all helped to find suitable housing by the co-op:

- One member was assisted to move from a residential care home that had closed down in Walker to a self-contained property in Byker. He had lived in the care home for more than seven years previously.
- One member was assisted to move from a residential care home in the north west of Newcastle to a self-contained flat in Walker. She had lived in the care home for several years.
- Two members were supported to get a flat together as a couple in Byker. Each had previously lived with their parents locally and within other types of services including adult placements.
- One member has been supported to achieve one of his goals to move from his parents' house in Heaton to having a self-contained flat of his own.

The direct evidence from interviews with these members of the co-op indicated that the support provided by the co-op to find and secure suitable housing was seen as highly important. Having the 'right housing' in the East End was seen as a necessary requirement for making use of membership of the co-op in other ways, particularly building connections within the local community.

Support

The co-op aimed to provide support to its members with learning disabilities based around:

- Individualised person-centred planning using a planning tool, 'My Plan'.
- A focus on using the community development work to support individuals to meet their goals.
- Using the collective nature of the co-op to provide a basis for building relationships and friendships both within and outside of the co-op.

The method used to plan support with individual co-op members was highly personalised. The planning tool was developed with a highly regarded self-advocacy organisation based in Newcastle, Skills for People. The "My Plan" tool covered a very wide range of topics, interests and goals and was constructed in the first person, representing, in effect, a series of statements

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about how each co-op member wanted to live their life and what support they needed from the co-op to achieve their goals and ambitions. It included people describing themselves in terms of their skills, abilities and interests as well as the support they needed. The evidence from the interviews with individual co-op members is that this process of individualised planning was different to what people had experienced previously, and the process in itself was both enjoyable and had motivated individuals to achieve some of their goals, e.g. one person had become a voluntary worker at his local gym/leisure centre.

This type of 'person-centred planning' is becoming more common and is viewed as a necessary starting point for a person taking control and exercising choice over their life and the support they want. In this regard, the co-op could not be judged to be different from other support services that are based on genuine person-centred approaches. The nature of support that was different was the way in which individuals were being supported as members of a co-op (even though it was never technically a fully constituted co-operative). One of the former members, during an interview following the closure of the co-op, stated what was important to him about the co-op:

"I was a member of the co-op. Now I'm called a 'service user'."

The co-op was not, in practice, able to fully support individuals to be in control of an individual budget. In part, this was a matter of fact; only two members of the co-op had an individual budget from Newcastle City Council Adult and Culture Services Directorate. Co-op members were in control of the level of involvement they had in the co-op and the goals and objectives they set individually.

5.1.2 Is the co-op better at integrating people with learning disabilities into their local geographic communities?

The evidence from the interviews with co-op members and from the plans of other members is that the co-op was effective in supporting people with learning disabilities to make connections into community life that would help them achieve their personal goals. Some examples of this include:

- The Community Development Worker supported co-op members to participate in local community projects, e.g. some members were supported to be part of a local 'Voices for Change' project, recording their music, poems and views on local radio.
- The Community Development Worker helped some members to establish a gardening group based at the local community centre, Wor Hoose, in Walker, which also includes some local people and students. It has grown vegetables and cultivated the community garden at Wor Hoose.
- One member was introduced to a local writers group which she decided to join.
- One member was supported to become a member of the TimeBank in the East End.
- One member was supported to pursue his interest in the arts, attending a locally run photography course and he has subsequently taken photographs for a local organisation, the Ouseburn Trust. He has also been supported to reconnect to his local parish church.

The evidence is that the co-op was effective in supporting its members to try out and build connections into a wide range of community associations, groups and organisations, both formal and informal. The co-op was able to achieve this because:

- The core rationale of the co-op involved being locally based in a community and proactively building a wide range of networks, relationships and contacts that could support its members and their interests, e.g. through connections made with the East End Alliance.
- A significant part of the Coordinator's time in the start-up phase of the co-op was devoted to undertaking this community development work and then employing a full-time role, a Community Development Worker, to both undertake community development work but also to link that to the personal goals of the co-op members.

The fact that the co-op created the role of the Community Development Worker was central to its success in fostering a network of links with the local community and good relationships with a range of other community organisations and projects. It is clear that the co-op deliberately and purposefully worked to build connections and alliances with other community groups, organisations and informal associations within the East End in order

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to assist co-op members to use those networks and connections to pursue their own interests and goals.

The interviews with former co-op members following the closure of the co-op were illuminating in this regard. Not all of these initial connections facilitated by co-op members were sustained. The interviews with co-op members illustrated that sometimes members tried out different options for a short time only. However, all the co-op members interviewed had been able to maintain their involvement in local groups, activities and organisations in their local community following the closure of the co-op. The comments from former co-op members indicated that this was primarily because they had built up sufficiently strong links within the local community, e.g. through a gardening club that was based at the Wor Hoose Community Project. They universally indicated that the nature of the support they received from the organisations they had 'transferred' to following the closure of the co-op was based primarily on the 'volume' of support hours they received rather than support to become part of local community life.

5.1.3 Do people with learning disabilities get work, volunteering opportunities and a more enriched social life from the co-op?

The evidence from the interviews with co-op members and from the plans of other members is that the co-op supported people with learning disabilities to find work and volunteering opportunities and to promote opportunities for an active social life for those members who wanted to take up these opportunities. Some illustrations of this include:

- One member became a volunteer dog walker with a local person who provides a dog walking service.
- One member pursued her interest in horses by becoming a volunteer at a local riding stable.
- One member was supported to take up a voluntary placement on a community farm.
- One member was supported to take up a voluntary work role as a 'greeter' at a local gym.

Several members were supported with their aim of finding employment including attending 'shop for jobs' training courses and other access to work programmes run by local development agencies such as Futures North East. One member was supported to take up a work placement at a jewellery making workshop although this was not sustained.

One of the original intentions for the co-op was to include an employment brokering/finding service for members. This was not pursued partly because there were existing organisations that undertook that type of work in the East End and also because the co-op's other objectives were seen as already ambitious without adding a further major activity. Several members had an aspiration to have paid work. Although several members achieved voluntary roles none of them achieved access to paid work.

The co-op organised social events for members at least once a month. The members' social events were, to some extent, an opportunity for members to socialise with each other and with staff. However, the co-op predominately supported its members to participate in the social life of the local community and more widely in Newcastle. For example, co-op members regularly participated in karaoke nights at local pubs, pool competitions at local clubs, speed dating events organised by Northumbria University and trying out local cafes and restaurants.

The co-op supported its members to build friendships and personal relationships. There were two relationships that developed between co-op members. One couple was supported to achieve their dream of getting married. They were supported to plan and budget for their wedding, organise their wedding with the registry office in Newcastle and plan their life together, including getting a flat in Byker.

The evidence from interviews with co-op members revealed the degree to which the co-op persevered in supporting individuals to find connections within the local community that worked for them. This was particularly evident for those co-op members who had previously lived in residential care services for many years. For example, the co-op identified and found a wide range of resources for one member, including a local walking group, volunteering on a farm, volunteering at a local charity shop, a fishing club, carpet bowls, an archery club and guitar lessons. After trying out all of these opportunities,

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this co-op member decided not to pursue any of them. This illustrated the degree of effort and persistence that was required to build connections into community life for some individuals who have extensive experience of living in institutionalised services for long periods of time.

5.2 Does the co-operative model work?

5.2.1 Can the co-op be sustained by income from individual budgets?

The co-op was ultimately not financially sustainable because it could not generate sufficient income to cover its costs once the grant funding ended in March 2009. This was primarily because it had not proved possible to recruit live-in supporters. As set out in Chapter 3, the financial sustainability model for the co-op was based on recruiting eight to 20 live-in supporters within three years. As live-in supporters were not recruited, individuals with individual budgets were not referred to the co-op as members. Based on this evidence, it is clear that the co-op could not be sustained by income solely from individual budgets.

Two individuals with individual budget allocations, in the medium/high bandings used by Newcastle City Council Adult and Culture Services Directorate, did become members of the co-op. However, the support they received was not based on the live-in support model; rather it was based on the more traditional support worker team model, albeit with a strong focus on community connecting. With insufficient members with individual budgets based on high support bandings, the co-op was not in a position to achieve financial sustainability.

The financial modelling undertaken at the outset of establishing the co-op showed that the co-op could have been financially sustainable providing:

- At least eight individuals with individual budgets based on high support RAS bandings became members.
- They were willing to join the co-op and pay 20% of their individual budgets, in effect, for membership of the co-op and the work it provided to manage, coordinate and support their individual live-in support arrangements.

Providing a range of community support packages to a relatively small number of co-op members with learning disabilities did not generate sufficient income to meet the core costs of the co-op, as well as fund the salaries of the co-op workers who were providing the community support. Financial modelling showed that the co-op would run at a deficit in 2009/10 and 2010/11, even allowing for an increase in the number of members with learning disabilities being supported.

It proved in hindsight to be a high-risk plan to base the future financial sustainability of the co-op exclusively on sufficient individuals having live-in support arrangements and being willing to pay the co-op 20% of their individual budget to sustain this arrangement. However, that does not detract from what was an intention to test, in practice, an innovative approach to support and community connecting for people with learning disabilities who were intended to be in receipt of individual budgets.

5.2.2 Can the model be replicated elsewhere?

The extent to which the co-op can be replicated as a 'model' is primarily informed by the lessons and learning from the experiences of developing and running the co-op which are set out in Chapter 6.

Given that the co-op was not able to achieve some of its key objectives, the evidence from the evaluation is that the following elements of the co-op were effective and successful and could be part of replicating this approach elsewhere:

- The importance of having a very localised operation and focus within a defined geographic community.
- Actively pursuing community development work as a basis for providing opportunities to build connections into local community life for people with learning disabilities.
- A type or model of organisation that is based on people having a sense of 'membership', such as being based on co-operative principles without needing necessarily to be formalised as a co-operative.
- Detailed person-centred planning alongside community development work.

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- Employing a specific role to undertake community development work that will identify, develop and create community links and networks.
- Building alliances and strong relationships with other locally based community organisations that are rooted within local community life.

Being willing to be focused on supporting individuals to build and maintain personal relationships; recognising that support to form meaningful informal relationships, friendships and personal relationships is likely to be the most sustainable form of support.

A key lesson in relation to replicating what the co-op tried to achieve is avoiding being focused on the 'service' and instead being willing to be flexible and adapt the model in relation to what people want and need; what one of the critical friends referred to as 'social marketing'. The learning within the co-op from the first annual critical friends' event in the face of not being able to recruit live-in supporters was expressed:

"The reflection from the discussion of the critical friends was that our core principles were co-operation and community, instead we had become preoccupied with providing one 'service' element, live-in support."
(Donkin, M, 2008).

5.3 Does the co-op use its money in a way that benefits people with learning disabilities and the wider community?

The evidence available in relation to this element of the evaluation of the co-op was more limited because the number of people supported by the co-op with an individual budget was only two people.

5.3.1 Does the co-op employ local people (from Walker, Byker and Heaton)?

The co-op employed staff from the East End and from other areas of Newcastle. Approximately 30% of the staff were from the East End. The co-op did attempt repeatedly to recruit live-in supporters from within the East End. It did try to recruit community support workers from the locality with some success. Even where the co-op had to recruit staff from outside of

the East End, the approach to community development work, the approach to planning with co-op members with learning disabilities and the fact that its base was in the East End helped staff from outside the area to become familiar with the locality.

5.3.2 Are the wages it pays better than other supported living schemes?

As the co-op was not successful in establishing a live-in support model it was not possible to assess the extent to which this model provided better wages for people who were providing support. The feedback from applicants who expressed an interest in becoming live-in supporters was predominately that the commitment required to be a live-in supporter was too great, not specifically that the wages were not sufficiently attractive, although this was identified as an issue by the co-op's stakeholders.

The wages paid by the co-op for community support staff were between £7-£8 per hour (2008/09). These wage rates are based on the contracted hourly rate paid by Newcastle City Council Adult and Culture Services Directorate for domiciliary care, so are linked to the wider social care economy in Newcastle and are likely to be comparable to rates of other social care and support provider organisations.

5.3.3 Do people with learning disabilities get more personal disposable income as a result of being involved with the co-op (from their individual budgets)?

Of the 12 people with learning disabilities who were members of the co-op when it closed, two had individual budget allocations. These budget allocations were managed on their behalf by Newcastle City Council Adult and Culture Services Directorate as 'individual service funds' where the council was using the funds on behalf of these two individuals based on their plans agreed with the co-op.

Each individual had agreed a limited proportion of their individual budget allocations that was used on a more 'ad hoc' personal basis to meet individual needs and requirements, e.g. to pay for specific activities that were not necessarily part of an agreed support plan. This amounted to less than 10% of the individual budget allocations for these two individuals which were both approximately £30,000 per annum.

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The co-op members who did have individual budget allocations had both previously lived in residential care services prior to getting their own flats in the East End and being supported by the co-op. When living in residential care services, their personal disposable income had been approximately £20 per week. Becoming a member of the co-op and having an individual budget allocation did mean that these two individuals had more personal disposable income as a consequence.

The other 10 co-op members who received smaller packages of community support did not receive individual budget allocations. As none of these individuals had paid employment, their individual personal income was determined by their individual eligibility for income and disability benefits. Membership of the co-op made no difference to their personal disposable income. As all these were reliant on benefits for their income, this would have been the same regardless of the type of organisation that provided their support (outside of residential care services).

5.3.4 Does the co-op benefit the wider local economy, i.e. does the money the co-op gets from individual budgets stay in the local community?

There was an expectation, based on establishing a live-in support model in the East End, that the funding brought into the area by the co-op, predominately from the funding to pay for live-in support but also in a more limited way through community support work, would benefit the local economy through both creating employment, mainly of live-in supporters, and generating spending within the local community.

The evidence for the actual effects of the co-op benefiting the local economy is limited principally because the live-in support model was not successful. The alternative that was developed in place of live-in support, a couple of substantial packages of community support and a larger number of smaller packages of community support, meant that the majority of the funding was used to pay for the costs of employing community support work staff.

The co-op ultimately had a staffing model that was similar to other organisations providing social care and support services, i.e. a team of support staff with a management infrastructure. The budget for the co-op for 2008/09 showed that direct and indirect support staff and management

costs amounted to approximately 88% of the projected expenditure. The majority of staff lived outside of the East End so the expected wider economic benefits from the live-in support model where the supporters would have all lived and worked in the East End were not realised.

However, there is some evidence that the co-op, through its objective of being locally based and connected to local groups and organisations within the East End, has provided some limited economic benefit to the local community; renting office and communal space at the Wor Hoose Community Project for more than two years was funded at £2,500 per annum.

Other evidence of economic benefit to the local community is less quantifiable. The co-op supported some members to move into the East End from other parts of Newcastle or from living in residential care services. Other members were supported to get their own place to live in the East End after living with families. The evidence from the interviews with co-op members with learning disabilities is that they predominately spent their income in the East End using local shops and leisure facilities.

6 Lessons and learning from the co-op

6.1 Introduction

This chapter identifies the key learning and lessons that have come from the East End community co-op. This is intended to identify the considerable benefit that can be derived from the co-op in understanding what it did, what worked; and importantly, what did not work and caused it to close.

The key components and 'ingredients' are identified that are relevant to other interested parties who may wish to draw on the co-op's work for both improving existing services for people with learning disabilities and other people who need support to reconnect to community life, but also when considering establishing new approaches to supporting individuals, particularly in the context of self-directed support and individual budgets.

The evidence of learning from the co-op is drawn from the evaluation generally, but in particular from:

- The data from interviews with five members of the co-op with learning disabilities.
- The perspectives from the key co-op stakeholders including the funders, partners and critical friends.
- The assessment of the evidence in Chapter 5.

The key lessons and learning from the co-op are set out below under a series of themes that have emerged from the evaluation.

6.2 Live-in support

The co-op had an ambitious aim to test a model of live-in support for people with learning disabilities with moderate and high support requirements. The key learning from this experience has been:

- The need for a better understanding of how to make live-in support attractive to potential live-in supporters is required. Other types of services that have similarities with live-in support as a model work in other formats, such as adult/family placements and other variants such as support tenants. The co-op was trying to introduce a different version of this model. That it was not successful indicates that not enough testing of the desirability of this model had taken place.
- The need for a better understanding of what people with learning disabilities are seeking from a live-in support model. There was demand for live-in support amongst people with learning disabilities and their supporters that the co-op was not able to meet with its model of live-in support.
- The need to ‘pre-test’ a new or innovative model of support. There is a requirement to undertake ‘social marketing’ to test an idea or innovation before launching it: to test whether the proposed model is, in practice, attractive to those people it is aimed at, and whether people could be recruited to fill posts it would create. The co-op was testing live-in support but there would also have been value in undertaking a social marketing exercise before testing the model in practice.
- The need to be willing to modify a model or idea in practice. A more extensive social marketing exercise may have led to elements of the proposed model being modified. In particular, this may have tested the levels of commitment required by potential live-in supporters and the realistic likelihood of recruiting from the targeted communities in the East End.
- Any model of live-in support needs to be assessed in terms of the most applicable form of registration. The co-op registered with the former CSCI which created a very significant burden of work for a small organisation. Any future similar organisation would need to examine if registration was necessary, and if it was, if there were other, more efficient ways of securing registration.

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6.3 Community development and building community connections

The work undertaken by the co-op was based on the belief that individuals can build better lives through being well connected to local community life. This was one of the principal successes of the co-op. It took a series of ideas about approaches to community development and implemented them to support a small group of people with learning disabilities to become better connected to the rich and varied networks, organisations and 'associational life' in their communities.

The co-op, for most of its existence, was very focused on this approach and achieved a wide mix of community connections for its members with learning disabilities. The key learning from the co-op has been:

- The importance of having clear and coherent ideas both about community development and building connections. The co-op invested time in understanding approaches to community development work and the ingredients to building links and alliances within a defined geographic community. It was mostly successful in implementing this work in practice.
- Investing in a dedicated community development role. Having a dedicated role within the co-op, which was principally focused on making connections with a plethora of informal and formal local groups, organisations and loose associations, created a strong and extensive network of potential opportunities for co-op members.
- Having a commitment to very localised operations. Being based very locally within the defined area of operation, in this case the East End of Newcastle, proved very important in undertaking the initial work to both establish local community networks, gaining knowledge of the potential opportunities that existed for co-op members, and becoming accepted within the local community.
- Finding significant allies in the setting up and development process of the co-op. For the co-op this was particularly evident in the support received from the East End Alliance and through having an office base in an established community project and resource base, Wor Hoose, in Walker.

- Recognising that it takes time to both build and sustain an extensive network of community connections. The co-op invested considerable worker time to build its networks as an organisation and to support its members to make and sustain their interests within the community over its two-year lifespan.
- The importance of both employing staff who live locally, or who are knowledgeable about a local area, and building alliances with other organisations that employ local people. This made it easier to find connections into local community life that met members' goals, e.g. one co-op staff member was established and known within the local arts and music community in the area.
- Resolving the issue of funding work to recruit a network of volunteers. The importance of finding volunteers for the co-op was based on seeing volunteers as being non-paid community members who would potentially build relationships with co-op members based on shared mutual interests. The co-op had limited success in recruiting volunteers with interests that were compatible and valued by its members with learning disabilities. It also had to limit the work to recruit volunteers because there would have been some people with learning disabilities who solely had a connection to the co-op through having a volunteer supporter and there was no identifiable funding for this.
- The difficulty of securing paid employment for people with learning disabilities. It was a major goal of some members of the co-op, but not all, to gain paid work. Some of these members gained voluntary work. Although the East End of Newcastle has relatively higher rates of unemployment, this does not provide the explanation for why it was not possible to find paid employment for members of the co-op. Both the community connections created by the co-op, as well as other local job funding agencies needed to be used in a more sustained way to find paid employment for co-op members. However, given the substantial work undertaken by the co-op in establishing community connections for its members, if the co-op had not closed it is reasonable to expect that it would have achieved some success in helping members to find paid jobs.

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6.4 Funding and the personalisation of social care

The key learning from the co-op has been:

- The importance of testing the viability of the proposed support model with the use of individual budgets. The concept of self-directed support (SDS) and the allocation of individualised funding fundamentally challenges more traditional approaches to financial planning and modelling of ‘services’. In the past a provider or potential provider of a service would have typically tested the viability of a new service model in terms of its ability to attract funding from the commissioners or budget holders for social care services. The nature of individualised funding means that in future it will be individuals and their supporters who take decisions about where to ‘invest’ their allocated budget. Any proposed model of support needs to be sufficiently attractive to secure spending on social care and support by individuals.
- The willingness of people with individual budgets to pay for non-direct costs of support. For the co-op this related to the way it intended to pay for the costs of running the infrastructure of the co-op, i.e. the selection, management and support of live-in supporters. Whether this is described as a management cost or a ‘brokerage’ cost, it is likely to be seen by individuals with a funding allocation as an additional cost to the direct cost of the support they are receiving; in the case of the co-op, from the live-in supporter. Understanding the willingness of people with individual budget allocations to use a part of their allocation to pay for these indirect costs needed to be researched more fully.
- The need to assess the financial viability of a proposed model of support in the context of the specific local approach to implementing SDS and individual budgets. The co-op was established in 2007 when the extent of change towards a model of SDS and roll out of individual budgets was less extensive. Although progress is being made nationally, the extent and nature of change varies widely between local authority areas. The planning for the co-op needed to provide greater assurance that the roll out of individual budgets was likely to match the planned pace of development of the co-op in terms of the number of people it planned to support who would be receiving individual budgets.

- The issue of how to fund community development work and activity. The co-op was committed to being locally based and undertaking community work to support its members to have greater opportunities to be connected to community life. The financial model used by the co-op envisaged that the costs of this work would be 'recovered' through the individual budgets of the co-op members. In practice, this work was funded through the set-up grant funding. The evidence is that the community development work was necessary and valuable in helping co-op members get connected to community life. There needs to be consideration of other options for funding community development work on a sustainable basis.
- Effectively managing financial risks. The financial plan for the co-op did include a limited contingency plan and an exit plan, which is what eventually happened when the co-op proved to be financially unviable. There was a need to have a wider range of funding options available to the co-op to help achieve financial sustainability. For example, the development of small packages of community support could have been part of the model and funding 'mix' from the beginning to help manage the financial risk of a plan based on developing live-in support.
- The time required to establish financial viability. The original expectation that financial viability would be achieved within two to three years of operation proved to be inaccurate. The feedback from the co-op's stakeholders included the recognition that the likely timescale for achieving financial sustainability for a small innovative organisation such as the co-op needs to be more comprehensively assessed and the likelihood of allowing for a longer time period to achieve financial viability.

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6.5 Planning with individuals

The co-op was committed to, and effective in, adopting a person-centred approach to planning with individuals with learning disabilities who became co-op members. The key learning from the co-op has been:

- The value of investment in high-quality planning methods and tools. The co-op made use of an established and local organisation, Skills for People, to develop its individual planning method and ‘tools’, which was known within the co-op as ‘My Plan’. These were described very positively by co-op members who were interviewed.
- Being focused on and recognising the abilities, talents and goals of individuals rather than descriptions of ‘needs’. The style and approach to planning with individuals placed strong emphasis on individuals describing themselves in positive terms, i.e. their skills, talents and abilities, and their goals and dreams.
- Using the process of planning with individuals to create enthusiasm for change. The interviews with co-op members, but also other project partners provided evidence that this style and process of planning was important in generating enthusiasm amongst co-op members. Members wanted to achieve their goals and make use of the work the co-op had done to build networks of potential community connections.
- Ensuring planning genuinely reflects what individuals want to achieve. The planning was meaningful to individual co-op members because it reflected individuals’ ambitions, which the co-op could help realise, e.g. one couple got married, another member moved to a flat near to his family, members tried out numerous and varied social and community opportunities, even if they chose not to take up or continue with them.
- Recognising that people with learning disabilities need a network of relationships just like other people. Although planning was highly individual, it was also based on being a *member* of the co-op. This is likely to be a key difference with other ‘person-centred’ support services; the co-op offered the opportunity to pursue individual goals and ambitions, but also to be part of a small organisation that was committed to participating actively in local community life and providing a focal point for some of that activity, e.g. the co-op established and hosted a range of groups – a gardening club and music club, that members could join and that local members of the community were invited to join.

6.6 Housing

The model of live-in support that was tested by the co-op meant that individuals with learning disabilities who wanted a live-in support arrangement may need alternative housing in the East End. In addition, the process of planning with individuals identified that some members who received community support had goals that included finding different types of housing. The key learning from the co-op has been:

- The importance of establishing good relationships with local housing providers. In the co-op's case, this was principally Your Home Newcastle (YHN) as the rates of social housing renting in Walker and Byker are high (over 60% of households). For other areas, there will be a need to work with a wider range of housing providers in both the private and social sector.
- The interviews with co-op members indicated that, not surprisingly, having a choice of where to live and with whom, was important in its own right, but also as a basis for pursuing other personal goals and getting connected to local community life. Many more traditional services for people with learning disabilities continue to struggle to offer individuals meaningful choices about the type of housing, who to live with, or if they can live alone.
- Offer access to different housing choices. The co-op did have a relatively limited approach to the type of housing available to members. This was partly because of the predominant supply of social rented housing in the East End. However, other housing models could have been identified and promoted to co-op members, e.g. shared equity home ownership, where there is an established track record in some parts of the country of people with learning disabilities becoming home owners as well as tenants.

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6.7 Co-op model and structure

The co-op was purposefully established on co-operative principles of social justice, equality and fairness between the staff, people with learning disabilities, volunteers and family members/carers. It was intended that the co-op would eventually, after three-five years operating, become a properly constituted co-operative, independent of KeyRing as the 'host' organisation. This, in fact, did not happen as the co-op closed before this could be achieved. The key learning from the co-op has been:

- The role of promoting social justice and equality. It was an integral part of the co-op's approach that it was set up on the principles of a co-op (even though it was not formally a co-operative). This was in part to address issues of inequality experienced by disabled people, but also to try to create a type of organisation where people with learning disabilities could be genuine stakeholders rather than recipients of a service.
- The importance of people with learning disabilities having a stake in the organisations that seek to support them. The sense of being a member of the co-op was referred to by most of the co-op members who were interviewed. The feeling of being part of the co-op was an important part of the style and type of support offered to its members.
- Matching the 'model' of organisation with the aim of promoting citizenship of people with learning disabilities. The co-op utilised a model of organisation, a co-operative that has a long tradition and used it in a way that was sympathetic and 'fitted' with the other core goals of the co-op, in particular to be effective in connecting members to local community life and to test the viability of live-in support.

6.8 Supporting innovation and social enterprise

The co-op was set up following a detailed proposal which included a business plan and financial appraisal of the proposed model. It was an example of innovation and social enterprise; an analysis of current limitations and weaknesses in both community development and social care in relationship to people with learning disabilities. It offered a concrete set of proposals to address these issues in the form of the community co-op and then implemented these proposals in practice. The key learning has been:

- The importance of the role of ‘innovator’. The role of the Co-op Coordinator was undertaken by the person who had been the original innovator in identifying the need for the co-op and designing its role, purpose and activities. To undertake this type of work it is necessary to identify, support and sustain innovators.
- The need for robust planning and sufficient management resources. There is a potential and arguably necessary tension between the desire to innovate and the requirement for realistic business planning. Although the co-op did have a business plan, the scale and volume of the work involved in setting up and establishing the co-op was greater than the limited management capacity available to the co-op, i.e. one full-time coordinator post. A more effective approach, particularly in the first year of the co-op, may have been to use part of the grant funding to employ an additional role to manage more of the business, financial and administrative roles, particularly in relation to the registration procedure with the former CSCI, allowing the coordinator role to focus on the core business of setting up the co-op, i.e. establishing live-in support and community development work.
- Finding a suitable organisation/s to support and nurture a new social enterprise or innovation, particularly in the early stages. The co-op was hosted by KeyRing, a national organisation with a strong track record of connecting people with learning disabilities and other excluded groups to their local communities through an innovative model that has been tested and implemented successfully across England, although the co-op was a new model for KeyRing.

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- The need for continuity and consistency of support for an organisation like the co-op. KeyRing being the 'host' organisation for the co-op until it could become financially independent was a good match for the new co-op.
- The need for strong and supportive oversight from key stakeholders. The co-op tried different approaches to involving its funders and key partners, i.e. Northern Rock Foundation, Newcastle Learning Disability Partnership Board, KeyRing and Newcastle City Council, who did engage with the co-op. However, establishing a strong and supportive, but also challenging, steering group that met on a regular basis would have been an effective framework for the co-op to operate within, without compromising the internal governance of the co-op and its efforts to equally involve staff, members and volunteers.
- Having a network of 'critical friends'. Establishing a critical friends group drawn from people with a range of relevant backgrounds was valuable to the co-op. Members of the critical friends group provided informal and formal feedback to the co-op staff. Having a more formalised link with the key project partners and funders would have strengthened this role further.

6.9 The experience of co-op members with learning disabilities

From the co-op members who were interviewed, the following key themes emerged about why the co-op was important to them:

- **Planning for the future.** The planning process used by the co-op was viewed very positively by the co-op members. It provided a way of individuals describing in their own terms what they wanted to do and achieve. A co-op member said that it felt like it was about her and what she wanted *"I have worked on this plan because I want my life to change. I am sitting on a lot of talent which could be used... I have taken a few steps back. I want to get back my drive... I would like more friends"*.
- **Getting a place to live.** For all of the co-op members interviewed, getting a place to live of their own choosing was an important experience of being supported by the co-op. All had identified the type of housing they wanted and whether they wanted to live alone or with somebody else and they had been supported to achieve this.
- **Pursuing interests in the local community.** The co-op put into practice an approach to community development and connecting people with learning disabilities into local community life that meant that members had the opportunity to try out a wide array of individual interests. Many of these connections were maintained after the co-op closed.
- **Having a social life.** Co-op members were supported to take up opportunities to have more active social lives, which for some members had been very limited previously. This included making friendships and personal relationships with other co-op members, staff and other local people. One member said *"I made new friends and carried on seeing them"* (after the co-op closed).
- **Being a part of the co-op.** The co-op aimed to be more than an organisation that provided support. The interviews with co-op members identified that being part of the co-op, being a 'member', was important and had significance. Having a visible local base, at Wor Hoose, was also important. When being interviewed after the closure of the co-op, one (former) member said, *"With the co-op I was a member; now I am a 'service user'; it's not as good"*. Another said, *"I was devastated when the co-op closed – I would love it to re-open"*.

7 Conclusions

The East End community co-op was a highly innovative model; the co-op was testing, in effect simultaneously, a series of innovations: the use of individual budgets in Newcastle where only limited piloting work had occurred; a model of live-in support for people with high support needs using their individual budgets to fund the support; a concentrated approach to community development work to connect people with learning disabilities to local community life; and a model of organisation based on co-operative principles and equal membership for people with learning disabilities, staff and volunteers.

The evidence from the evaluation is that:

- The co-op did have a positive impact on the lives of people with moderate and severe learning disabilities. It was able to do this principally through the comprehensive and sustained approach to connecting people to community life and a genuine approach to person-centred planning with individuals.
- The co-operative model worked partially. The model of live-in support, funded through individual budgets, was not successful; however, the other work undertaken by the co-op, particularly the approaches to community development, has provided valuable learning that can be used and replicated in other areas.
- There was some evidence that the co-op used its money and its activities to benefit people with learning disabilities and the wider community. However, the lack of success with live-in support and the limited number of people receiving individual budgets restricted these benefits.

The evaluation of the co-op has raised a number of key issues that require further consideration and action including:

- How to develop and structure new models of live-in support so that this can become a viable option for providing high-quality support for people with learning disabilities.
- In the context of self-directed support and the increasing roll out of individual budgets, the need to adopt a 'social marketing' approach to developing ways of offering support to individuals to ensure they are relevant and attractive.
- Bringing into the mainstream of social care thinking and practice the approach to community development and connecting work employed by the co-op. This is likely to become particularly relevant in the context of anticipated reductions in public spending over the next few years.
- The need for more effective approaches to support people with learning disabilities to gain access to paid employment.

The co-op and the evaluation of it has provided considerable lessons and learning that can be used by other funders, commissioners of social care services, Community Development Workers; and organisations delivering social care services, support services and community development work. The co-op has provided lessons that are applicable in the context of both supporting people with learning disabilities to be connected to community life and other people who are excluded or marginalised from access to community life.

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Annex 1

The Approach and Method of the Evaluation

The approach used to address the key questions is set out below.

Does the co-op have a positive impact on the lives of people with moderate and severe learning disabilities?

This was examined in relation to a series of sub-questions:

Has the co-op provided people with moderate and severe learning disabilities with high-quality accommodation and support that gives them more choice and more independence?

This was evaluated in terms of the extent to which the co-op was able to offer:

- Choice of:
 - Where a person lives
 - The type of housing
 - Who provides support, e.g. choice over the live-in worker
- Control against a range of dimensions, including:
 - The type of support provided
 - How the individual budget allocation is used

Is the co-op effective at integrating people with learning disabilities into their local geographic communities?

This was evaluated in terms of the extent to which the co-op:

- Planned with individuals in a way that was focused on their personal goals and how they would make connections within their local communities.
- Offered support and opportunities to individuals to access local community groups, facilities and amenities.
- Achieved integration into local community life for people that was subsequently sustained.

Do people with learning disabilities get work, volunteering opportunities and a more enriched social life from the co-op?

This was evaluated in terms of the extent to which the co-op:

- Supported people to find and take up work opportunities locally.
- Supported people to find and take up training and education opportunities locally.
- Supported people to identify and take up opportunities for volunteering, for example with local community/neighbourhood groups, local religious/faith groups.
- Supported people to make friendships, particularly with people who are not paid supporters.
- Supported people to develop an active social life and make use of their leisure time, e.g. making use of local leisure facilities such as sports facilities, restaurants, and cinemas.

Does the co-operative model work?

This was examined in relation to a series of sub-questions:

Can the co-op be sustained by income from individual budgets?

This was evaluated in relation to:

- The funding model used by the co-op based on developing live-in support.
- How effective the co-op was in securing funding through individual budgets allocated to the people it supported.
- An assessment of the financial viability of the co-op beyond its initial period of grant funding.

Can the model be replicated elsewhere?

This was evaluated in relation to:

- Identifying and assessing the learning overall that has come from the co-op.
- Assessing in particular the core components of the co-op's model, for example the operation of live-in support, the structure and organisation of the co-op.
- Identifying the key elements of the co-op that were successful or unsuccessful and the significance of these factors for replicating the model elsewhere.

Does the co-op use its money in a way that benefits people with learning disabilities and the wider community?

This was examined in relation to a series of sub-questions:

Does the co-op employ local people (from Walker, Byker and Heaton)?

This was evaluated in relation to the extent to which the co-op was successful in recruiting local employees to work for the co-op.

Are the wages it pays better than other supported living schemes?

This was evaluated in relation to what the co-op paid through the model of live-in support.

Do people with learning disabilities get more personal disposable income as a result of being involved with the co-op (from their individual budgets)?

This was evaluated in relation to the extent to which individuals supported by the co-op who received individual budgets had greater personal income through being members of the co-op.

Does the co-op benefit the wider local economy, i.e. does the money the co-op gets from individual budgets stay in the local community?

This was evaluated in relation to the extent that the income that the co-op generated from the live-in support model funded through the individual budgets benefited the wider local economy.

To address the key questions quantitative and qualitative data was collected from the staff from the co-op, from the project partners and from a sample of five co-op members with learning disabilities during the period of operation of the co-op and following its closure.

This included interviews with the following project partners:

- Co-op staff: Co-op Coordinator and Community Development Worker.
- KeyRing staff: Operational and Finance Managers.
- Northern Rock Foundation managers.
- Newcastle City Council Adult Services managers (for learning disability services).
- Valuing People Development Worker in Newcastle.
- Members of a 'critical friends' group for the co-op.
- Other local stakeholders, e.g. Wor Hoose Community Project.

Annex 2

The community co-op in context

The community co-op in context – policy and thinking about community connecting and people with learning disabilities

This annex summarises policy and thinking in relation to connecting people with learning disabilities, and other 'labelled' people, to the communities in which they live. It is not the intention of this evaluation to provide an exhaustive literature review. It is intended to provide a policy and conceptual context for the development of the co-op and its aims and objectives.

Community connecting and social capital

The concept of community guides or community bridges for people at risk of exclusion was originally proposed by Schwartz (1992), although the idea also has its roots in the work of John McKnight (1995) and in the earlier concept of citizen advocacy.

Men and women with learning disabilities are not generally connected to rich social networks, it therefore requires that a project based on a system of support called 'live-in support' also plugs people into community life based on the principles of community 'bridge building' or similar concepts. This requires tapping into the social capital that exists within a community and that has an interest in sharing this capital with members of its community who have learning disabilities.

"The premise behind the notion of social capital is rather simple and straightforward: investment in social relations with expected returns"
Lin (2001, p. 6). People are not going to expend their social capital if there is no indication of what return they could expect. Here, the issue is that work needs to be done to demonstrate that the person with learning disabilities is an active contributor (or has the potential to be) to his/her community's social capital. We can think of social capital as the social and relational engagement and outcomes for people at risk or exclusion and the community guide is the conduit for enabling the person with learning disabilities to access community resources. The idea of citizens who provide 'live-in support' to members of the co-op assumes that the social capital exists for the co-op to tap into and to contribute to.

Community development and social care

The connection between the role of both developing and making effective use of capacity within communities to support individuals to become full citizens alongside more traditional social care responses has started to be explored through the current shift towards self-directed support. More specifically, In Control has recently produced a discussion paper, 'Community and Social Care', Gillespie and Duffy, 2008, that sets out the basis for developing a model of 'community capacity' to *"test and promote a range of possible strategies for building stronger communities and stronger citizenship"*.

In essence part of the rationale behind this approach is that, traditionally, social care-focused organisations have tended to view the understanding and development of community capacity as an attractive objective but marginal to the core activities of the social care system of essentially rationing spending and resources. In practice, social care organisations have tended to pay little or no attention to the possibilities of harnessing local communities as a valid response to the 'needs' of people directed towards the social care system.

The In Control paper advocates the necessity of finding strategies and approaches that minimise need, i.e. for paid professionalised responses, with a shift towards supporting and increasing capacity within communities to help find other ways of supporting individuals and families. This is seen as one of the wider objectives of promoting genuine citizenship for people who have been excluded in some way from having full rights as citizens. In the context of people with learning disabilities, this can typically be experienced in terms of limited choice and control over a wide range of issues most citizens take for granted, where to live, what type of housing to live in, who to live with, control over money, in essence an absence of self-determination.

Community capacity building, i.e. creating networks of family and peer support as well as professional support, is seen as part of the overall change required to bring about self-directed support in addition to the need to make systemic change to the social care system.

The community co-op is a model that is consistent with this thinking about a community-focused response to the 'needs' of people who lack genuine citizenship. A key part of the co-op's work was based around gaining a deep understanding about, and relationships with, the networks and resources that exist within a local community, and to support individuals with learning disabilities to build connections with the informal and formal groups, organisations and 'associations' within the community of the East End of Newcastle, i.e. the *capacity* within that community.

Having a home

One role of the co-op was that it would support individuals to have their own home in the East End of Newcastle. This was expected to mean that an individual had a self-contained flat or house that they lived in on their own or with a partner or friend, or with a 'live-in' supporter. Recent policy in relation to people with learning disabilities has stressed the significance of individuals having access to a home of their own. One of the objectives of *Valuing People* (2001) is:

"To enable people with learning disabilities and their families to have greater choice and control over where and how they live" (Dept of Health, 2001, p. 70).

Valuing People Now (2009) places even stronger emphasis on people with learning disabilities having access to a wide range of ordinary housing choices.

The policy of deinstitutionalisation has generally been a success with the consequence that more men and women with learning disabilities live in a variety of community-based services. These include 'group' or shared homes, various types of supported living, adult placements, and, for a relatively small number of people, home ownership (Simons and Watson, 1999). However, people with learning disabilities continue to face many socially constructed adversities and housing remains one of the aspects of their lives where their voices are often not sought and remain unheard (McGlaughlin, Gorfin & Saul, 2004). The co-op represented a serious attempt to enable men and women with learning disabilities to become connected within their local community from a basis of having their own home within that community.

A community co-operative

The co-op drew on a range of ideas and perspectives in the way that it was originally proposed and subsequently implemented. These were set out by Donkin (2008) in a document intended for publication in a future book about different community-based projects and are summarised below.

The development of the co-op was grounded in the idea that it is the relationships and 'connections' within a community, both a geographical community and 'communities of interest', that are likely to make the most significant and sustained improvements to the lives of people who have experienced exclusion from mainstream community life, for example through living in residential care services or receiving support that has been primarily focused on meeting an individual's care needs.

Thinking that was relevant to the co-op specifically included social justice, segregation and exclusion, lack of self-determination and the nature of relationships between professionals/workers and people with learning disabilities.

The work of the co-op was influenced by the issues of social class and social justice. There was a belief that the most effective 'change agents' in community work are vulnerable people themselves and those who work closest to them, support workers and volunteers. The co-op aimed to proactively facilitate the relationship between supported and supporter on an equal basis.

Despite often excellent intentions, many local authorities and other organisations struggle to promote inclusion of people with learning disabilities in mainstream community life. Many local authorities have funding locked into running, or funding traditional services, such as day services and residential services in which people tend to be segregated from their communities. The co-op was aiming to address this gap between the intention to support people to realise their personal goals and the often lack of success in facilitating community life.

The thinking behind the co-op was in part a critique of social care practice. Social care is perceived to be about meeting need rather than helping people to live fulfilling lives. It is a system that relegates making connections with

local community life to meeting identified 'social care' needs. This is not to say that individuals should not have their key needs met, rather that the social care system has a tendency to be a barrier to community life. The co-op was intended to be a response to solving this problem.

Social care services typically expect that workers who are paid to provide support will not enter into other types of relationships with people with learning disabilities they are paid to support – this is typically expressed as maintaining 'professional' boundaries. Many paid support workers are not from the local communities where the people they support live and often they do not know the community of the person they support and have little knowledge about local community networks and resources that would be useful to the person supported. Many social care organisations do not seek to understand the consequences and impact of these policies for the individuals supported. The co-op recognised that its core components needed to include the supported and supporters as equal members and where possible to recruit workers from within the local community who would bring their knowledge and community associations to the relationships they would have with people with learning disabilities.

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Annex 3

Live-in support information produced by the co-op

Newcastle East End Co-op

Fact sheet number 1

Live-in support workers: your questions answered

1) Who can become a live-in support worker?

Anyone who is committed to including everyone in their community can become a live-in support worker. We welcome people with an open mind, who are willing to learn and share and who really care about disabled people. You will need to live in Walker, Byker or Heaton or be willing to move to the area.

The co-op wants to reflect the whole community in its paid workers. You will be welcome whatever your culture or religious belief, whatever your race, gender or sexuality. Families, couples and single people offer live-in support.

We register one main live-in support worker who is paid. We also register friends and family who will be involved in someone's life on a day-to-day basis. Sometimes people job share. The co-op will approve this arrangement if this suits the person with learning disabilities.

The co-op will ask for an enhanced police disclosure. If you have criminal convictions this may not rule you out. We are interested in the type of conviction that may suggest a risk in the future to vulnerable people.

2) What is a live-in support worker?

A live-in supporter is a local person who shares a home with and supports a person with a learning disability. A live-in supporter is a paid member of the East End community co-op.

The work is demanding and rewarding. The work is supporting a person with learning disabilities to find employment, get connected to their community and find friends. The live-in support worker can offer a room in their house or go and live in the person with learning disabilities home. It is usually a one-to-one relationship. Occasionally, a live-in worker may support a couple or a very close friendship. The co-op does not provide services to any group homes. The work is about supporting people to find their ambitions and live the life they want.

3) What kind of support do people need?

The co-op supports people who need 24-hour support or want to share their home. Everybody wants something different. The job is to help the disabled person achieve the life they want. This means helping people become independent through getting involved in their neighbourhood and finding friends and work. People with learning disabilities are at the centre of the co-op and the live-in support worker enables people to rediscover all of their strengths, gifts and skills and connect up to where their skills are most needed. The people who are involved with the co-op need one-to-one support. The co-op does not usually provide two-to-one support for one person with learning disabilities.

Some people who want support from the co-op have **very high support needs**. This means that they may have communication difficulties, need a lot of personal care or need help to behave differently. Some people who have very high support needs have mental health issues. Some people may have specific medical conditions like epilepsy. People with very high support needs require 24-hour support.

Some people who want support from the co-op need 24-hour support and have **high support needs**. This may mean that they have constant difficulty with remembering how to perform important life skills and need to be reminded constantly. They may need lots of practical help with simple tasks. They may need a lot of personal care. People with high support needs usually, but not always, require 24-hour support.

Some people who want support from the co-op have **medium support needs**. This may mean that they have a need to learn skills to live independently like: budgeting; making good neighbours; looking after a house; staying safe; and planning their community life. The work may involve preparing people for living on their own. Some people may always want to live with other people but need help to organise their lives. People with medium support needs do not require 24-hour support.

Some people who want support from the co-op have **low support needs**. This may mean the person wants a live-in supporter to be a supportive housemate. This may mean that person is very independent but just needs some advice sometimes about more complicated tasks, like how to find work and how to stay safe in the neighbourhood. People with low support needs usually require only occasional support.

4) What are the pay and conditions like?

Pay and conditions are very good. The co-op is supported by a very experienced national charity called KeyRing. The co-op is a very caring and supportive employer.

The co-op welcomes trade union membership. Training is provided before an applicant is assessed as a live-in support worker, and during the assessment. The co-op will work with the live-in support worker to look at what other training will be needed. The co-op trains people following the nationally recommended Learning Disability Awards Framework.

Pay and breaks away from the job vary because of the person's support needs. The government pays out an individual budget to disabled people. The individual budget is different for each level of support; Very high, High, Medium and Low. The wages of the live-in support worker and the amount of money available to spend on breaks is different, depending on the level of support.

Overleaf are the approximate salaries and amount of money available for the live-in support worker to take a break from their support duties. The co-op encourages workers to take regular breaks and not save up all their time for one big break.

Support needs	Live-in support worker annual salary	Annual money to buy other support so that the worker can take a break
Very high	£24,708	£5,000
High	£16,740	£3,394
Medium	£7,690	£1,538
Low	£5,214	£1,042

The co-op provides regular supervision and support through the Co-op Co-ordinator and the Community Development Worker. The co-op organises the live-in support workers to support each other.

5) What does the job exactly involve?

A live in support worker needs to be able to deliver the following:

- ✓ Provide support to a person with learning disabilities by sharing time and living with them.
- ✓ Deliver all support in a person-centred way, working with the person you support to realise their goals and ambition.
- ✓ Support a person with learning disabilities to participate in their community.
- ✓ Respect and uphold a person with learning disabilities housing rights and responsibilities.
- ✓ Support the financial independence and welfare needs of the person you support including benefit maximisation, employment and other day-time opportunities.
- ✓ Support a person with learning disabilities with welfare benefits issues affecting their access to work.
- ✓ Support a person with learning disabilities to develop a network of friends.
- ✓ Support a person with learning disabilities to meet their cultural and spiritual needs.
- ✓ Support a person with learning disabilities with relationships with families, friends, neighbours and partners.

All live-in support workers need to have the following skills:

- ✓ Ability to find out about any specific physical, social, emotional or cultural needs of the person you support and ability to meet them.
- ✓ Enable the person you support to make choices and decisions with support from advocates if necessary.

- ✓ Understand and challenge prejudice, discrimination and oppression.
- ✓ Understand and balance the needs of all people in the household.
- ✓ Ability to support people to communicate effectively.
- ✓ Ability to communicate effectively.
- ✓ Ability to provide a healthy and safe environment.
- ✓ Ability to support people to participate in community life.
- ✓ Understand and respect confidentiality.
- ✓ Enable people to make and or maintain friendships.
- ✓ Ability to build positive relationships with other people.
- ✓ Ability to keep clear and accurate records.
- ✓ Ability to protect people from abuse and neglect.
- ✓ Ability to support people to achieve their potential.
- ✓ Ability to support people to access education, employment and leisure facilities.
- ✓ Ability to develop own skills and understanding through training and other opportunities.
- ✓ Ability to understand the East End community co-op and its roles and responsibilities.
- ✓ Ability to understand the East End community co-op's policies, procedures, legal requirements, and work positively to put these into practice.
- ✓ Ability to get involved in person-centred planning assessment and review where necessary.

6) How is the housing worked out?

Everyone's housing situation is different and therefore housing situations in the co-op are all different. In every situation the co-op helps its members, workers and people with learning disabilities; enter fair arrangements with each other. Sometimes a live-in supporter may be a sitting tenant or an owner-occupier and invite a person with learning disabilities into their home signing an agreement which sets out what is expected of each person. Sometimes a live-in supporter lives in a person with learning disabilities home and is a guest with their stay tied to their employment. Sometimes a live-in supporter may be a joint tenant. The live-in supporter is not the person with learning disabilities landlord and does not charge rent. Housing running costs, like utility bills, are shared. Costs of food are worked out on an individual basis.

Sometimes a live-in support worker wants to move to have space to do the work. The co-op works with Housing Associations and Your Homes Newcastle to see how we can all help resolve any housing problems. What is important is that the arrangements are fair to both parties and reflect their stake in the property.

7) How do you apply to become a live-in support worker and what happens next?

Application forms and job descriptions are available from the Co-op Co-ordinator.

When an application is received an initial visit is made to the applicant's home and a criminal records bureau check completed. The applicant is offered the earliest possible date on a pre-assessment training course. The course looks at the key personal values applicants will need to hold and the main challenges of the job.

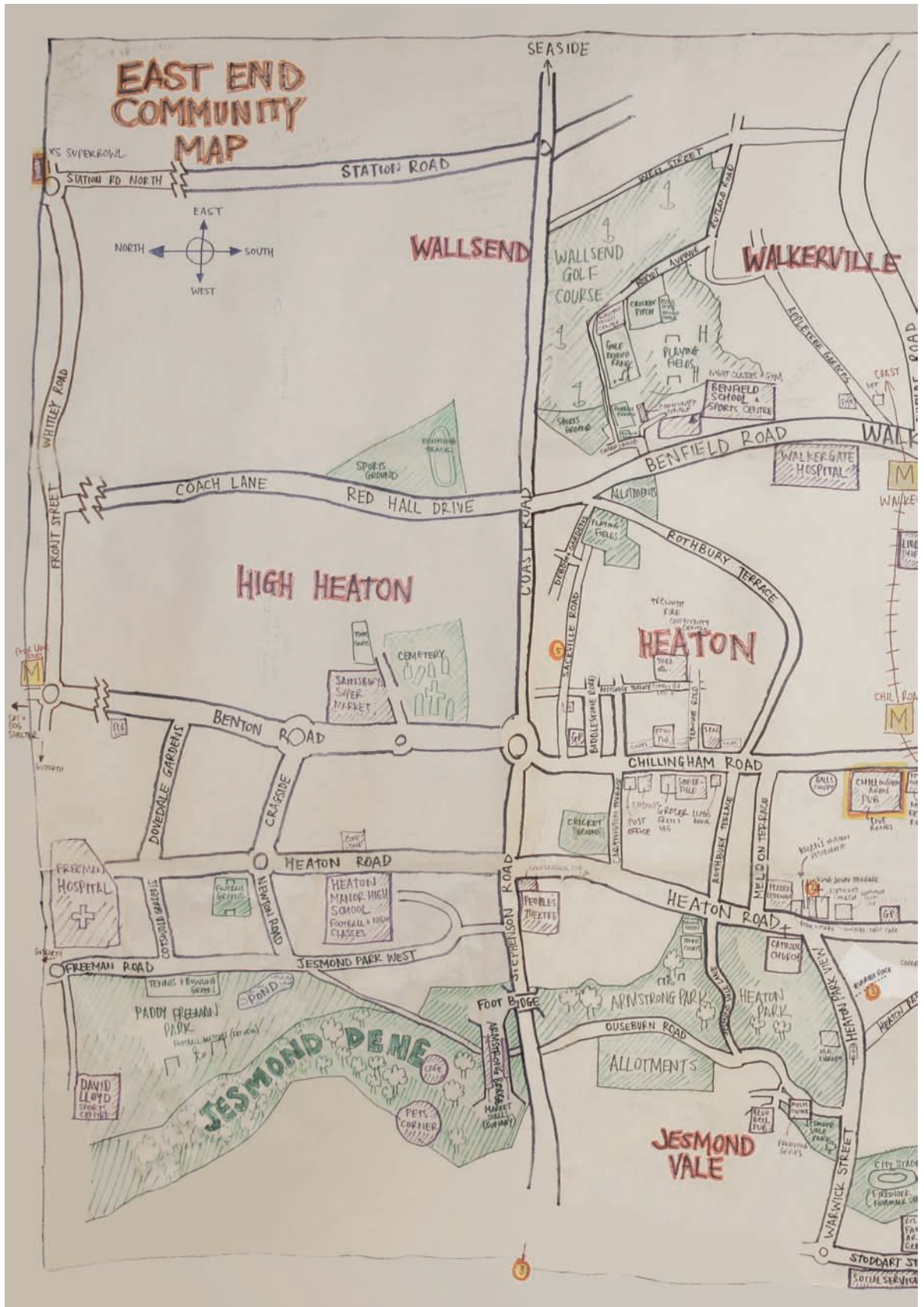
The applicant may then decide whether or not to continue with an assessment and the co-op may decide after the training course whether or not to proceed with any individual application.

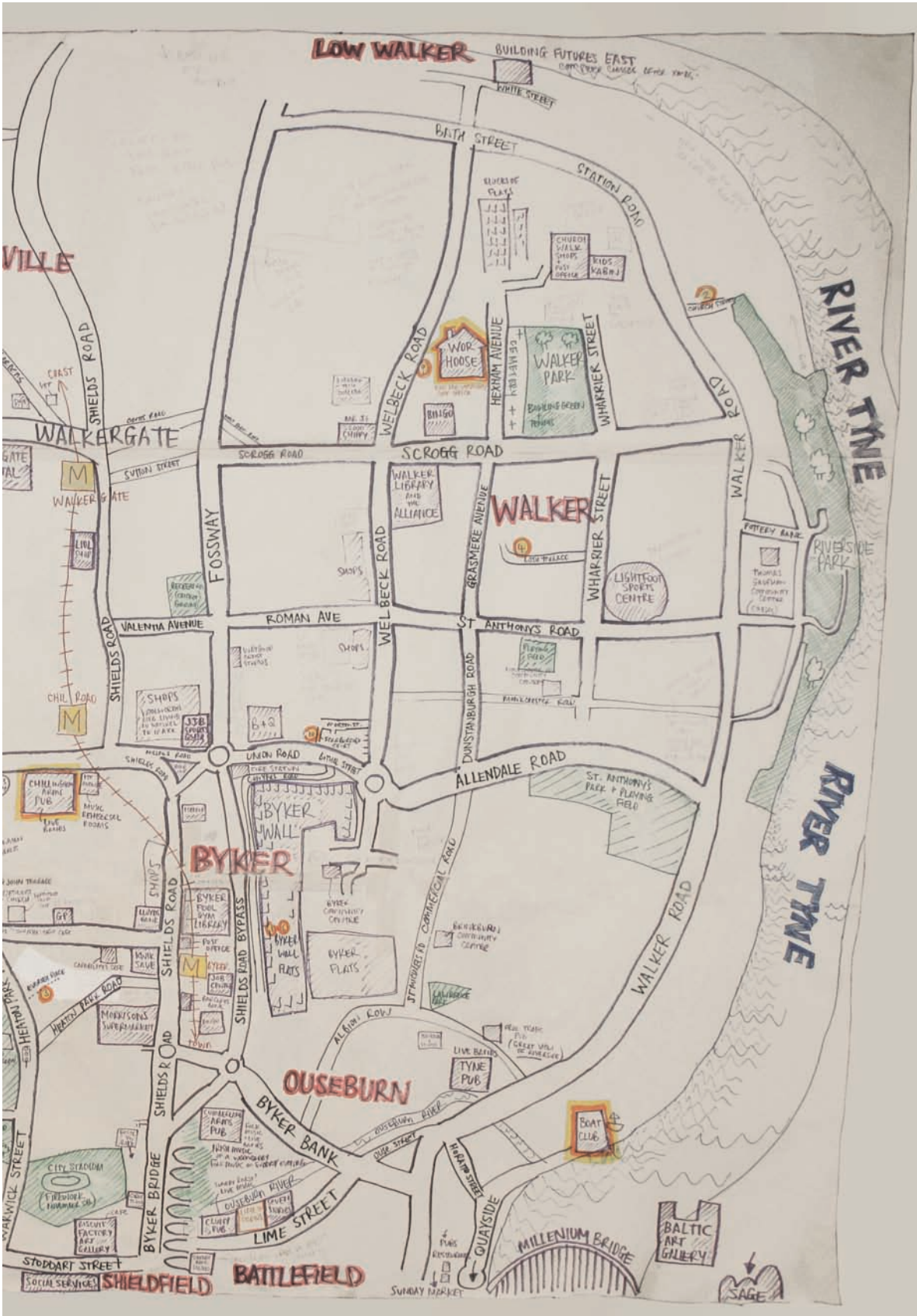
An assessment takes place for around two months, involving several discussions between the Co-op Co-ordinator and the applicant. The Co-op Co-ordinator writes a report and an independent panel decides whether to accept the person as a live-in support worker.

After the approval the live-in support worker is placed on the co-op's register of live-in Support Workers and people with learning disabilities can look at the register and decide if they want to be introduced to the worker with a view to living with them. The Co-op Co-ordinator will help introduce people, making sure it is right for both parties.

This whole process can take six months before starting work. It is important that the live-in support worker has time to think about the commitment they are making and time to be introduced properly to the person looking for support.

Annex 4 East End community map





Annex 5

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