



Care to Co-operate Case Study

June 2016

Community Lives Consortium

The principles and values of co-operation flow throughout a large social enterprise that exists to support disabled people to live the lives they choose, in Swansea and Neath Port Talbot.



Background information

Community Lives Consortium (the Consortium) is a registered domiciliary care agency providing support and personal care for people with disabilities. It is regulated by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales.

The Consortium offers support to people who live in the counties of Swansea and Neath Port Talbot. It receives funding from both local authorities to provide people with personal support, as well as support to manage their own homes. People also purchase support from the Consortium either with their own money or by using a Direct Payment.

Community Lives Consortium is a Company Ltd by Guarantee with full charitable status. It supports approximately 300 people and employs 770 staff. As a charity it has over 200 members including the people who are directly supported by the Consortium or have family or friends who are.

The members elect a Board of Management that works with staff to ensure the Consortium achieves the things that matter to them and the range of people who use its services. It is a social enterprise business that uses co-operative principles in

its decision-making and management structures. This means that the people who access the support of Community Lives Consortium decide what happens in their own lives.

As a social enterprise Community Lives Consortium supports people to:

- Live as tenants in ordinary houses in their communities
- Be active in working together and with other people in their community, to organise the things that matter to them
- Enjoy their rights and responsibilities as citizens
- Decide how to live their own lives.

Community Lives Consortium approach extends to working co-operatively with a wide range of stakeholders including people and their families, statutory agencies, public bodies and housing associations. This is illustrated in the diagram below. Working this way ensures that services delivered are good quality and focused on co-operation to resolve any issues and find ways to improve services wherever possible.



Relevance to the Care to Co-operate project

Care to Co-operate brings people together who want to plan and provide better assistance and support for their family, friends and community. We help them connect with other people who want the same thing. We help them set up co-operatives. A co-operative is owned and managed by the people it provides services for – as well as their family, friends, neighbours and professional carers.

Community Lives Consortium is an example of an organisation that works co-operatively. Co-operation takes place between its staff and managers, the people it supports and their friends and family, as well as a wide range of organisations with an interest in the Consortium's work.

The Consortium is democratically governed and its Management Board is led by members who receive support, along with their family members. People who are supported have their say in the Consortium through its Tenants Lives Group. This is a group of disabled people who actively find out what is working and not working for the people who receive services and support.

Other groups exist in the Consortium to engage family members and staff across the organisation. The people who receive support have established their own group, 'Time 2 Meet'. Its members use their skills, time and commitment to organise events and activities to improve their lives. The people the Consortium supports actively engage in a wide range of activities including advertising for staff through local radio and sharing their stories through newsletters, which they produce.

Opportunities for co-operative services

Development of grass roots co-operative decision making

Community Lives Consortium has a number of shared housing arrangements in place. These enable people living together to decide upon their own living arrangements, their support options, and the management of their own lives. The Consortium is planning to work with people to explore how the shared housing arrangements could be formalised co-operative structures.

Local networks of people living close to each other will develop their own co-operative agreements, between themselves and their supporters. The agreements define how its members would control their own support through co-operative decisions making. Working this way assists individuals to have control over their homes, their lives, and their futures. The more frequent use of Direct Payments could aid the development of co-operative agreements.

It is hoped that over the next few years the Consortium can evolve into a collection of 'people led' organisations, supported by a corporate hub, providing business and support services.

The journey to achieve this will require co-production and co-operation between social services, health, housing, advocacy support, as well as the people who use the services and their families. Care to Co-operate will provide support to groups of tenants by delivering workshops on co-operation, helping to write co-operative agreements and assisting with the planning to underpin their success.

Co-operative working expanding beyond Community Lives Consortium

The overarching aim of Community Lives Consortium is to support people to live the life they choose. It is actively expanding its services to become a driving force in the development of social care co-operatives within Swansea and Neath Port Talbot.

As an experienced domiciliary care agency its objectives include development of its human resources, finance and business activities, in order to provide services to emerging co-operatives in its local area.

Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act and Care to Co-operate

Meeting the principles of the new Act will require co-operation between all the people involved in providing and receiving support and personal care services. People need to work together and to express their voices and opinions in order to achieve the best outcomes for their lives and well-being.

Structuring support services and personal care around a co-operative model is a clear way to meet the principles and outcomes required by the Act. This is the direction taken by Community Lives Consortium acting both as a social enterprise and a co-operative of people working together for their mutual interests.

For more information on Care to Co-operate service and how it could help you contact the team via <http://wales.coop/care> or telephone 0300 111 5050.

