



NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US:

Children, Young People and Co-operative Place-Making in the Pride in Place Programme

A Discussion Paper on Strengths -Based Democracy, Co-operation, Participation and Shared Power

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For

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Foreword

Communities belong not to one generation alone. They are shared inheritances, held in trust between past, present and future.

This discussion paper emerges from conversations, reflections and shared learning undertaken by Yorkshire Young Co-operators and our young co-operator peers in Wales. It represents the culmination of a growing dialogue concerning democracy, belonging, stewardship and the role that children and young people should play in shaping the places they call home. It is written for adults to raise their awareness and make representation for the full inclusion of children and young people in the Pride in Place. programme

At a time when governments and communities are increasingly seeking to renew civic life and strengthen local identity, the Government's Pride in Place programme presents an important opportunity. Its emphasis upon belonging, community leadership, local pride and stewardship reflects concerns shared by many people across the United Kingdom. Yet the question which has repeatedly emerged throughout the discussions underpinning this paper is a simple one:

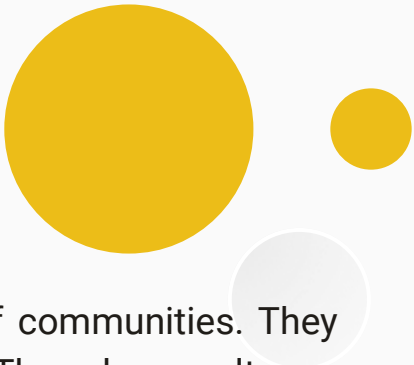
What would Pride in Place look like if it were viewed through the eyes of children and young people, informed by co-operative values and grounded in the principle that democracy, belonging and stewardship begin in the earliest years and continue throughout life?

This paper suggests that answering that question requires more than consultation.

It requires a willingness to reconsider assumptions concerning expertise, leadership and citizenship itself.

Too often, children and young people have been viewed primarily as future citizens rather than citizens now. They have been consulted without being trusted, listened to without necessarily being heard, and invited to participate without always being offered meaningful influence. Regeneration initiatives have frequently been undertaken for younger generations rather than with them.

Yet research, history and lived experience point towards a different understanding.



Children and young people are not simply recipients of communities. They are participants within them. They create relationships. They shape cultures. They contribute to identity and belonging. They possess knowledge, experiences and aspirations which enrich the places in which they live and they are among the people who will live longest with the consequences of decisions made today.

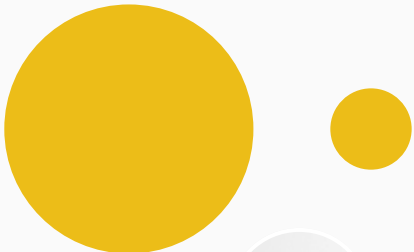
Throughout this paper, Yorkshire Young Co-operators and our young co-operators peers in Wales argue that communities flourish when power is shared, when strengths are recognised and when democracy becomes genuinely intergenerational.

The argument advanced here is ultimately one of hope. Hope rooted in co-operation. Hope rooted in relationships. Hope rooted in trust and hope rooted in the belief that children and young people are not problems to be solved, nor citizens in waiting, but strengths, rights holders and co-creators of the communities they inhabit.

Communities belong not to one generation alone. They are held in trust between past, present and future.

Molly M Hanley
Chair of the Yorkshire Young Co-operators
12 September 2026

Executive Summary



This discussion paper explores the relationship between children and young people, co-operation and the Government's Pride in Place programme.

Drawing upon co-operative theory, systems thinking, Doughnut Economics, human rights, co-operative community wealth building, intergenerational justice and contemporary research concerning childhood and belonging, the paper asks whether Pride in Place might be strengthened through a more explicit commitment to sharing power with children and young people.

The paper is informed by conversations between Yorkshire Young Co-operators and their young co-operator peers in Wales and seeks to contribute constructively to the continuing development of Pride in Place at this early stage in its evolution.

Central to the paper is the proposition that children and young people should not be viewed simply as beneficiaries of communities or as future citizens awaiting adulthood. Rather, they are citizens now, possessing rights, experiences and capacities which enrich the places in which they live.

The paper argues that participation should move beyond consultation towards co-creation and shared stewardship. It proposes that democracy, belonging and citizenship begin in the earliest years and develop throughout life.

Drawing upon the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Hart's Ladder of Participation, the Lundy Model, Doughnut Economics, systems theory and co-operative values and principles, the paper explores how Pride in Place might evolve into a genuinely intergenerational movement.

Whilst recognising the considerable promise of the Government's initiative, the paper also identifies challenges. Early observations suggest that children and young people have frequently been absent from leadership structures and recruitment processes. Participation has often remained limited and opportunities for shared governance underdeveloped.

Nevertheless, because Pride in Place remains at an early stage, there exists an important opportunity to address these challenges.



Ultimately, the paper argues that communities flourish when they are characterised by trust, participation and shared responsibility.

It concludes that:

Children and young people are not problems to be solved, nor citizens in waiting. They are strengths, rights holders and co-creators of the communities they inhabit. If Pride in Place is to fulfil its promise, it must move beyond consulting young people towards sharing power with them. For communities belong not to one generation alone, but are held in trust between past, present and future. Nothing About Us Without Us and Nothing About Some of Us Without All of Us.

Methodology

This discussion paper is not intended to provide a formal evaluation of the Pride in Place programme. Rather, it represents a reflective and exploratory contribution to ongoing debates concerning community renewal, democratic participation and intergenerational stewardship.

The paper draws upon a range of sources.

These include academic literature concerning co-operation, systems theory, childhood studies, community wealth building, human rights and democratic participation. It also draws upon Government publications relating to Pride in Place, reports produced by organisations including UNICEF, the Children's Society, the Children's Commissioner, the Youth Endowment Fund and the Child Poverty Action Group, together with contemporary co-operative research.

The work has additionally been informed by discussions between Yorkshire Young Co-operators and their young co-operator peers in Wales, reflecting experiences, observations and shared learning emerging from communities and educational settings.

The paper adopts a strengths-based and asset-based approach. It seeks to identify opportunities and possibilities rather than merely problems and deficits. Whilst it contains critique, that critique is offered constructively and with the intention of supporting the continued development of Pride in Place. Throughout, the paper adopts a rights-based and co-operative perspective, informed by principles of democracy, equality, solidarity and concern for community.



Introduction

Communities matter.

They shape our identities, influence our opportunities and provide the relationships through which we experience belonging. Communities are places where memories are formed, where cultures are sustained and where people encounter one another across generations.

Yet communities are not static.

They are living systems, continually changing and adapting.

Across the United Kingdom, questions concerning belonging, trust and identity have become increasingly prominent. Rising inequalities, loneliness, child poverty, environmental change and declining confidence in institutions have encouraged renewed interest in the nature of community itself.

Against this backdrop, the Government's Pride in Place programme represents an attempt to strengthen civic life and encourage stewardship and belonging.

These ambitions are welcome.

Yet they also raise important questions.

Who belongs?

Who participates?

Who decides?

Who holds the power?

Whose voices matter?

It asks what communities might look like if children and young people were recognised not simply as recipients of decisions made by adults, but as partners in shaping the places they call home?

This paper explores those questions.

It argues that understanding communities through the eyes of children and young people offers fresh perspectives upon democracy, citizenship and stewardship. It suggests that co-operative traditions, systems thinking, Doughnut Economics and human rights frameworks provide valuable resources for reimagining Pride in Place as an intergenerational endeavour.

The chapters which follow draw together ideas from across disciplines and traditions. They seek not to provide definitive answers but to open conversations.

Pride in Place is still developing, and its story remains open. One of the questions that may shape it most profoundly is whether communities are prepared to trust children and young people not merely to inherit the future, but to help create it.

Chapter 1:

Pride in Place and the Government's Vision



The places in which people live matter.

Communities are not simply collections of buildings, roads and services. They are places of memory, identity and belonging. They shape how people experience childhood, form relationships, participate in civic life and imagine their futures. They influence wellbeing, opportunity and resilience. They are where people encounter neighbours, experience culture and develop a sense of who they are and where they belong.

Over recent decades, concerns about declining trust, social fragmentation, loneliness and democratic disengagement have prompted renewed interest in the importance of place. Questions concerning local identity, civic participation and social cohesion have become increasingly prominent within public policy, reflecting a wider recognition that strong economies alone are insufficient to create flourishing communities. Relationships, belonging and opportunities for participation matter too.

It is within this context that the Government's Pride in Place programme has emerged.

The programme reflects an aspiration to strengthen local identity and restore confidence in communities. Government literature repeatedly speaks of belonging, pride, stewardship, local leadership and the importance of communities having greater influence over the places in which they live. Underpinning these ambitions is an understanding that pride in place is about more than physical regeneration. It concerns the social and civic fabric of communities, their resilience and their capacity to bring people together around shared purposes.

Whilst the language of Pride in Place is contemporary, many of the ideas it contains are far from new. Concepts such as stewardship, mutual responsibility, civic pride and local participation have deep roots within traditions of co-operation, mutual aid and community self-help. They also resonate with contemporary thinking concerning systems theory, community wealth building and Doughnut Economics, all of which emphasise the importance of relationships, interdependence and the long-term stewardship of social and economic resources.

In many respects, therefore, the aspirations of Pride in Place align closely with principles that have informed co-operative thinking for generations.

The co-operative movement has long understood that communities flourish when people are trusted and when institutions are designed to enable participation rather than dependency. The principles of democratic member control, education, concern for community and co-operation among co-operatives reflect an understanding that people are not merely consumers or service users but participants and stewards.

Similarly, systems thinkers have highlighted the importance of relationships and interconnectedness, whilst Doughnut Economics has argued that societies should ensure that nobody falls below a minimum social foundation whilst living within ecological limits. Community wealth building approaches have sought to retain wealth locally and promote forms of democratic ownership which strengthen rather than extract from communities.

These traditions share a common insight.

Communities thrive when people possess a sense of belonging and when they are able to contribute to shaping the places in which they live.

For Yorkshire Young Co-operators and their young co-operator peers in Wales, these themes have generated considerable optimism about the possibilities presented by Pride in Place. The programme's emphasis upon local identity, stewardship and participation resonates strongly with co-operative values and with the aspirations of younger generations seeking communities characterised by trust, inclusion and shared responsibility.

Indeed, throughout discussions between Yorkshire Young Co-operators and their peers in Wales, there has been a recognition that Pride in Place offers an opportunity to think differently about regeneration and democratic renewal. It presents the possibility of moving beyond traditional models in which communities are treated primarily as recipients of programmes designed elsewhere. Instead, it suggests a more participatory vision in which local people become active contributors to shaping their futures.

However, these conversations have also raised important questions.

Who is included within this vision of participation?

Whose voices are heard?

Whose experiences shape priorities?

Who exercises power?

Perhaps most importantly, where do children and young people fit within the Government's and communities' understanding of pride, belonging and stewardship?

These questions are striking because children and young people are largely absent from much of the language surrounding place-making and regeneration. They are often mentioned as beneficiaries of stronger communities, but much less frequently as contributors to their creation. Their role as present citizens rather than future adults is rarely explored.

Yet children and young people experience communities every day.

They walk through neighbourhoods.

They use parks and public spaces.

They attend schools and colleges.

They rely upon transport systems.

They participate in sports clubs, faith groups and online communities.

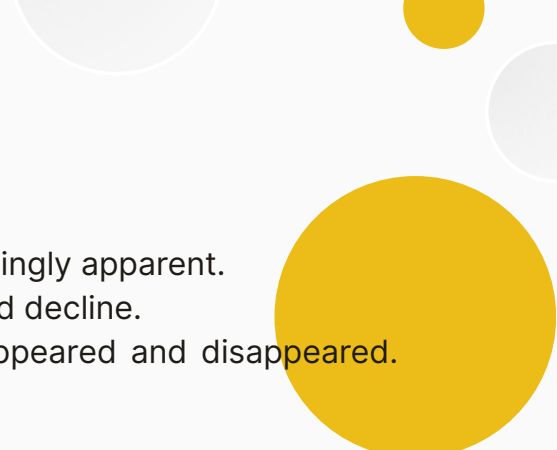
They encounter inclusion and exclusion.

They experience safety and insecurity.

They form relationships and identities and they will live longest with the consequences of decisions made today.

It is therefore surprising that younger generations have so often occupied a peripheral position within discussions concerning place.

Historically, regeneration initiatives have tended to focus upon physical infrastructure, economic development and service provision. Whilst many have sought to engage communities, children and young people have frequently been viewed as recipients rather than partners. Their involvement has often been limited to consultation exercises or isolated youth projects, rather than being embedded within structures of governance and decision-making.



The consequences of this approach have become increasingly apparent. Communities have experienced cycles of regeneration and decline. Projects have come and gone. Funding streams have appeared and disappeared. Institutions have been created and dismantled.

Many initiatives have delivered important benefits, yet relatively few have fundamentally altered relationships of power. Children and young people have often remained on the margins.

For Yorkshire Young Co-operators and their young co-operator peers in Wales, this history presents both a warning and an opportunity.

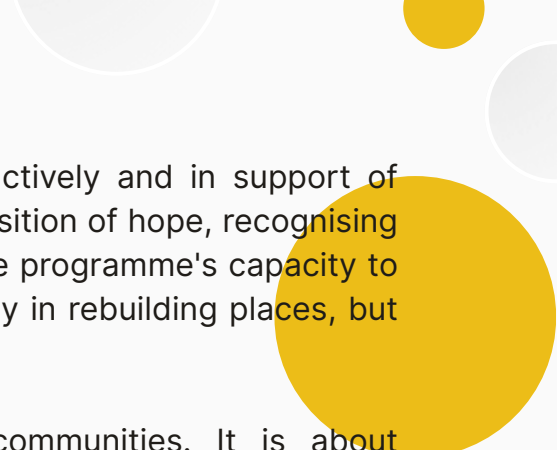
The warning is that Pride in Place could unintentionally repeat patterns familiar from previous regeneration programmes. Participation could become symbolic rather than transformative. Younger generations could be consulted without being trusted. Structures could emerge which reflect existing assumptions about expertise and leadership rather than embracing new forms of democratic participation.

Yet the opportunity is equally significant. Pride in Place remains in its formative stages. Its structures are still evolving. Its relationships are still developing. Its future is not yet fixed.

This creates space for learning, adaptation and innovation. It creates opportunities to move beyond tokenism and towards genuine intergenerational stewardship. It creates possibilities for recognising children and young people not simply as future beneficiaries of communities but as present citizens and co-creators of place.

Such an approach would align closely with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, with co-operative principles and with the growing body of research emphasising the importance of participation, belonging and agency for children's wellbeing and development.

It would also resonate strongly with the experiences and aspirations expressed by Yorkshire Young Co-operators and their young co-operator peers in Wales. Throughout their discussions, they have returned repeatedly to one central question which has increasingly become the foundation for this paper: What would Pride in Place look like if it were viewed through the eyes of children and young people, informed by co-operative values and grounded in the principle that democracy, belonging and stewardship begin in the earliest years and continue throughout life?



The chapters that follow explore that question constructively and in support of Pride in Place's ambitions. The paper proceeds from a position of hope, recognising both the potential within the Government's vision and the programme's capacity to learn and evolve. Its greatest opportunity may lie not only in rebuilding places, but also in renewing democracy itself.

For pride in place is ultimately about more than communities. It is about relationships. It is about belonging. It is about trust and perhaps above all, it is about who is invited to help shape the story of the places we call home.

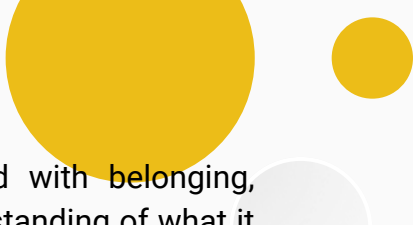
Chapter 2:

Growing Up in Britain: Childhood, Youth and Place



Childhood and adolescence are not simply stages through which people pass on the journey to adulthood. They are experiences lived in the present, shaped by relationships, opportunities, communities and the environments within which children and young people grow, learn and form their identities. The places in which children and young people live matter profoundly. They influence health, wellbeing, aspirations and belonging. They shape how young people understand themselves and others. They determine where friendships are formed, where memories are created and where ideas about community and citizenship begin to emerge.

Yet despite the centrality of place to the lives of children and young people, discussions concerning regeneration and community development have often been framed through adult perspectives. Economic indicators, infrastructure projects and governance arrangements tend to dominate debates, whilst the everyday experiences of childhood and adolescence receive comparatively little attention. Communities are frequently viewed through the eyes of institutions rather than through the eyes of those who are growing up within them.



This chapter argues that if Pride in Place is genuinely concerned with belonging, stewardship and democratic renewal, then it must begin with an understanding of what it means to grow up in Britain today. For children and young people do not experience communities in abstract terms. They experience them through parks and playgrounds, schools and colleges, sports clubs and youth groups, libraries and shopping centres, streets and public transport, digital spaces and social networks. Their sense of place is formed through the ordinary routines of everyday life.

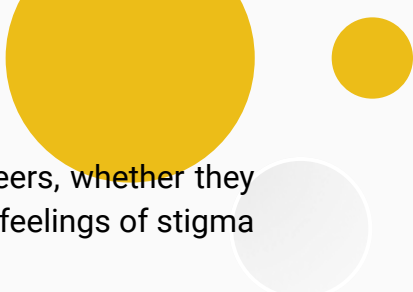
Research undertaken over recent decades has increasingly demonstrated that childhood itself is shaped by wider social, economic and environmental conditions. Poverty, inequality, housing, education, transport, digital access and community relationships all influence children's experiences and opportunities. Childhood is therefore inseparable from place. It is not merely an individual experience but a social one.

The annual Good Childhood Reports produced by the Children's Society provide an important insight into these realities. Drawing upon the voices and experiences of children and young people themselves, these reports consistently demonstrate that wellbeing cannot be reduced to economic indicators alone. Children repeatedly identify friendships, relationships, safety, belonging and opportunities to participate as central to their quality of life. Happiness and flourishing are influenced not simply by material circumstances but by whether young people feel valued, connected and able to influence the world around them.

Similarly, the Children's Commissioners across the UK have repeatedly highlighted concerns relating to loneliness, insecurity and inequalities experienced by children and young people. UNICEF's international comparisons have raised important questions regarding children's wellbeing within the United Kingdom, demonstrating that material prosperity alone does not necessarily translate into high levels of life satisfaction or belonging. Such findings suggest that thriving communities depend upon more than economic growth. They require social relationships, trust and opportunities for participation.

These themes resonate strongly with the aspirations underpinning Pride in Place. If communities are to foster belonging and civic pride, then they must be places in which children and young people themselves experience connection and meaning. Pride in place cannot be imposed from above. It emerges through relationships and shared experiences. It is created when people feel that they matter and that the places in which they live matter to them.

Yet the experience of growing up in Britain is marked by significant inequalities. Research undertaken by the Child Poverty Action Group, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the Institute for Fiscal Studies has consistently highlighted the persistence of child poverty and material hardship. For many children, poverty affects not only household finances but opportunities for participation, educational experiences and social relationships.



It influences whether children can access activities enjoyed by their peers, whether they can participate fully within community life and whether they experience feelings of stigma and exclusion.

From a systems perspective, child poverty is not simply a matter of individual circumstances. It affects the ecology of communities themselves. Inequalities influence trust, participation and social cohesion. Communities experiencing persistent disadvantage often face multiple and interconnected challenges, demonstrating the extent to which housing, employment, education, health and social relationships are intertwined.

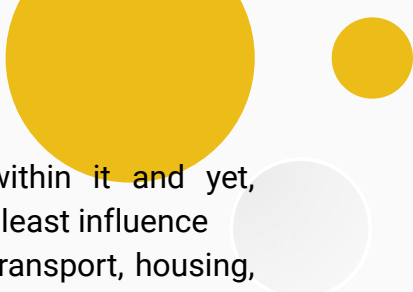
The experience of growing up in Britain is also being shaped by profound social and technological changes. Digital technologies have transformed the nature of childhood and adolescence. Online spaces now form an integral part of many young people's lives, providing opportunities for learning, friendship and creativity whilst simultaneously presenting new risks and inequalities. The Covid-19 pandemic exposed the extent of digital exclusion experienced by many children and families, highlighting that access to devices, connectivity and digital literacy are increasingly important dimensions of equality and participation.

At the same time, concerns regarding mental health and loneliness have become increasingly prominent. Research undertaken by Young Minds, the Centre for Mental Health and others points towards rising levels of anxiety and emotional distress amongst many young people. Whilst the causes are complex, they reflect wider uncertainties concerning education, employment, social media and the future itself. Loneliness, in particular, has emerged as an important issue, reminding us that belonging is not merely a pleasant addition to community life but a fundamental human need.

Climate change has added a further dimension to these experiences. Increasingly, children and young people report concerns regarding environmental degradation and uncertainty about the future. Climate anxiety has become an expression of intergenerational injustice, reflecting the reality that younger generations will live longest with the consequences of decisions made today. Yet these concerns have also inspired activism, innovation and a renewed commitment to sustainability, demonstrating the capacity of young people to contribute positively to social and environmental change.

Despite these challenges, research consistently reveals something remarkable. Children and young people remain hopeful.

They continue to care deeply about their communities. They continue to form relationships, support one another and imagine better futures. They volunteer, campaign, create and innovate. They contribute to their schools, neighbourhoods and wider communities in countless ways.



They are not passive recipients of place but active participants within it and yet, paradoxically, children and young people frequently possess among the least influence over the environments which shape their lives. Decisions concerning transport, housing, regeneration, public spaces and community priorities are often made without their meaningful involvement. They are expected to live with the consequences of decisions in which they have had little say.

This contradiction raises profound questions for Pride in Place.

For if pride, belonging and stewardship are to become realities rather than aspirations, then communities must be understood through the eyes of those growing up within them. Children and young people possess knowledge and expertise which adults do not. They understand where they feel safe and where they do not. They know which spaces foster belonging and which create exclusion. They experience communities in ways that differ from previous generations and therefore offer insights which are essential to understanding contemporary life.

Indeed, one of the central arguments emerging from the conversations between Yorkshire Young Co-operators and their young co-operator peers in Wales has been that childhood and youth should not be viewed simply as preparation for citizenship.

They are citizenship.

Children and young people are not merely future members of communities. They are members now. Their lives are being lived now. Their experiences matter now. Their hopes and fears matter now and if Pride in Place is to succeed in creating communities characterised by belonging and shared stewardship, then it must begin by recognising that children and young people are not standing outside those communities waiting to enter. They are already inside. They always have been.

The challenge therefore is not how to bring children and young people into community life. The challenge is whether communities themselves are prepared to recognise and value the contributions they are already making. For perhaps the true measure of pride in place is not simply how communities speak about their children and young people. It is how children and young people experience those communities in return.

Chapter 3:

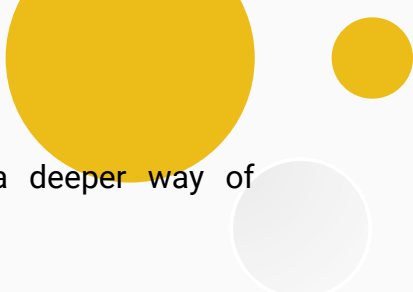
Beyond Deficit Thinking



How societies understand children and young people matters.

. The assumptions that underpin public policy influence not only the design of services and institutions, but also the expectations placed upon younger generations and the opportunities made available to them. The ways in which children and young people are described shape how they are treated. Language matters because language reflects values, and values influence power and inclusion.

For much of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, discussions concerning children and young people have often been framed through the language of problems, risks and deficits. Public debate has frequently focused upon educational underachievement, anti-social behaviour, youth crime, unemployment, obesity, mental ill-health, online harms or social exclusion. Communities themselves have similarly been characterised by deprivation indices, risk factors and needs assessments. Whilst these concerns are often real and important, the cumulative effect of such approaches has been to construct narratives which emphasise what children, young people and communities lack rather than what they possess.



Deficit thinking is not simply a matter of language. It reflects a deeper way of understanding people and communities.

At its heart lies an assumption that individuals and neighbourhoods are primarily defined by their needs and problems. Local Authorities, other public authorities, businesses, services and professionals become experts and communities become recipients. Intervention replaces participation. Solutions are developed for people rather than with them. In this framework, children and young people are often viewed as incomplete adults, problems to be managed or future citizens whose significance lies in what they might eventually become rather than who they are now.

Such approaches have undoubtedly emerged from genuine concerns and good intentions. Many services have sought to address profound inequalities and vulnerabilities. Yet growing bodies of research and practice have increasingly questioned whether deficit-based models are sufficient to create flourishing communities or to nurture belonging and resilience.

Over recent decades, alternative approaches have emerged which seek to place greater emphasis upon strengths, relationships and capabilities. Influenced by positive psychology, social pedagogy, community development and the work of scholars such as Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, strengths-based approaches begin from a different question.

Not "What is wrong?" but "What is strong?"
This shift in perspective is subtle yet profound.

Rather than viewing individuals solely through the lens of need, strengths-based approaches recognise capacities, aspirations and relationships. They acknowledge that whilst people may experience adversity, they also possess resources, talents and resilience. Human beings are not simply collections of problems. They are individuals embedded within families, communities and networks of relationships which themselves represent important sources of support and meaning.

These ideas have found particularly powerful expression through asset-based community development. Associated with the work of John McKnight and Jody Kretzmann, asset-based approaches challenge assumptions that communities are primarily characterised by deprivation and deficiency. Instead, they emphasise the importance of identifying and mobilising the strengths that already exist.

Communities possess assets:
Relationships are assets.
Culture is an asset.
History is an asset.



Trust is an asset.

Voluntary action is an asset.

Creativity is an asset and people themselves are assets.

This perspective has profoundly influenced the discussions between Yorkshire Young Co-operators and their young co-operator peers in Wales concerning Pride in Place.

Throughout these conversations, children and young people have repeatedly questioned whether communities can genuinely flourish when they are continually described in terms of what they lack. They have recognised that whilst inequalities and disadvantages must never be ignored, there is a danger that communities become trapped within narratives of failure. Places acquire reputations which focus exclusively upon deprivation, whilst the gifts, traditions and aspirations that sustain communities remain overlooked.

The same pattern can be observed in relation to children and young people.

Too often, public debate has concentrated upon what children and young people are doing wrong rather than what they are doing right. Young people have been portrayed as disengaged when many volunteer extensively. They have been described as apathetic despite evidence of growing activism around climate change, social justice and equality. They have been characterised as consumers rather than creators, despite their contributions to culture, technology and community life. Perhaps nowhere is this more evident than in discussions concerning youth participation.

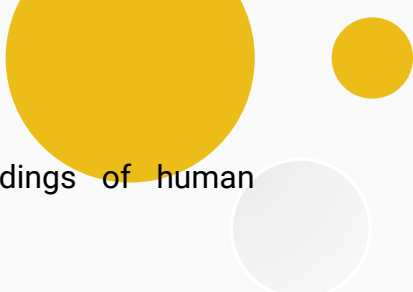
Children and young people are frequently consulted because they are seen as vulnerable. Less frequently are they engaged because they are recognised as capable. Yet these are profoundly different motivations. The first treats participation as protection. The second treats participation as citizenship.

For Yorkshire Young Co-operators and our young co-operator peers in Wales, this distinction matters.

Children and young people should not be involved merely because they are future adults or because participation produces better outcomes. They should be involved because they are members of communities now.

Their rights do not begin at adulthood. Their citizenship does not begin at adulthood. Their value does not begin at adulthood.

Indeed, one of the most striking lessons emerging from the history of co-operation is that communities flourish when they recognise the capacities and contributions of ordinary people. From Robert Owen and the Rochdale Pioneers to contemporary co-operatives throughout the world, the co-operative tradition has consistently challenged assumptions that expertise and authority reside solely within elites. It has instead affirmed the dignity, capabilities and potential of people acting together.



These principles resonate strongly with contemporary understandings of human development.

Amartya Sen's capabilities approach, for example, emphasises that development should be understood not simply in terms of economic growth but in relation to the freedoms and opportunities available to people to live lives they value. Human flourishing depends upon relationships, participation and agency. Similarly, Martha Nussbaum has argued that societies should be judged by their ability to enable people to realise their capabilities and participate fully in community life.

Such perspectives possess profound implications for Pride in Place.

If the programme is to succeed in strengthening belonging and civic life, then it cannot simply focus upon physical infrastructure or economic indicators. It must also recognise and nurture the capacities already present within communities. Pride cannot be manufactured through investment alone. It grows when people feel valued and when their contributions are recognised.

This is particularly important in relation to children and young people.

Children and young people are not simply recipients of community assets.

They are assets.

Their talents are assets.

Their ideas are assets.

Their friendships are assets.

Their creativity is an asset.

Their empathy is an asset.

Their digital fluency is an asset.

Their experiences are assets.

Their hopes are assets.

Their understanding of contemporary life is an asset.

Their aspirations are assets.

Consequently, Yorkshire Young Co-operators and their young co-operator peers in Wales have increasingly advocated for approaches which move beyond traditional needs assessments towards intergenerational asset-based community audits. Such approaches seek not merely to identify problems but to understand the gifts, capabilities and relationships that already exist within communities.

They ask different questions:

What strengths exist?

What traditions sustain belonging?

What talents are present?

What aspirations are emerging?



What relationships matter?
What innovations are already taking place?
How do children and young people support one another?
What would they preserve?
What would they change?

These questions reflect a fundamentally different philosophy.

Communities are not empty vessels waiting to be filled. They are reservoirs of possibility. Children and young people are not passive recipients of support.

They are contributors.
They are neighbours.
They are friends.
They are creators.

They are citizens and perhaps one of the greatest forms of injustice is not simply poverty or exclusion, important though these are.

Perhaps one of the greatest injustices is failing to recognise the strengths and potential that already exist. This understanding carries important implications for Pride in Place.

For if pride is to be cultivated, it cannot emerge solely from external investment or institutional programmes. It must also arise from a recognition that communities possess assets worthy of celebration and that children and young people themselves are among the greatest of those assets.

Ultimately, moving beyond deficit thinking requires more than new policies.

It requires a change in culture. It requires a shift from paternalism towards partnership. From intervention towards participation. From dependency towards stewardship. From seeing communities through the lens of problems to recognising them as places rich in relationships, talents and possibilities.

For perhaps the most powerful act of regeneration is not rebuilding places. It is rediscovering the strengths that have been there all along.

Chapter 4:

Rights, Citizenship, Participation and Co-operation



The question of how children and young people should be understood within communities is, at its heart, a question about rights, citizenship and democracy.

For much of history, childhood was viewed principally through lenses of protection and dependency. Children and young people were frequently regarded as future adults whose significance lay in what they might one day become rather than who they already were. Public life, citizenship and political participation were generally understood as the domain of adults, whilst younger generations occupied positions of relative passivity. Decisions affecting children were often made by others, usually with good intentions, but rarely with any expectation that children and young people themselves might possess expertise, rights or legitimate claims to influence.

Over recent decades, however, understandings of childhood and citizenship have undergone profound transformation. Increasingly, children and young people have come to be recognised not simply as recipients of care and protection, but as rights holders, citizens and participants in their own lives and communities.



This shift has been influenced significantly by the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989. Widely regarded as one of the most important human rights instruments of modern times, the Convention represented a fundamental change in how childhood itself was understood. It affirmed that children are not merely objects of adult concern but subjects possessing rights, dignity and agency.

Perhaps most significantly, Article 12 established the principle that children and young people have the right to express views on matters affecting them and to have those views given due weight according to their age and maturity.

This principle represented something far more profound than a commitment to consultation.

It reflected a new understanding of citizenship itself.

Participation ceased to be regarded as an act of generosity bestowed by adults. Instead, it became recognised as a matter of rights and justice.

General Comment No. 12, produced by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, further developed these ideas. It made clear that participation extends far beyond individual decisions affecting children. Young people should also be involved in administrative, educational, social and political processes. Their voices matter not only in relation to personal matters but also in relation to the wider structures and systems which shape their lives.

Such principles possess profound implications for place-making and community development.

If children and young people have rights concerning matters affecting them, then surely those rights extend to questions concerning housing, transport, public spaces, environmental sustainability and the future direction of the communities in which they live.

Indeed, the significance of participation within human rights frameworks extends beyond the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights all reflect broader principles concerning dignity, freedom and participation. More recently, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has emphasised autonomy, accessibility and the principle that people should not be excluded from decisions affecting their lives.

The Disability rights movement's rallying cry, "Nothing About Us Without Us", has become one of the most powerful expressions of participatory democracy in modern times.



Emerging from struggles against paternalism and exclusion, the phrase reflects a simple but profound truth: decisions concerning people should not be made without their involvement.

Throughout discussions between Yorkshire Young Co-operators and their young co-operator peers in Wales, this principle has acquired an additional dimension:

Nothing About Us Without Us and Nothing About Some of Us Without All of Us.

For participation itself must be inclusive. Rights are universal.

Citizenship cannot belong only to those who are articulate, confident or well connected. It must include those experiencing poverty, racism, homophobia, transphobia, disability discriminations and other forms of inequalities and discriminations too.. Democracy itself must become accessible.

Yet contemporary society presents a series of striking contradictions and anomalies concerning the rights and status of children and young people.

On the one hand, children and young people are expected to take increasing responsibility for their education, mental health, environmental futures and employability. They are encouraged to volunteer, to contribute to communities and to engage with questions of sustainability and citizenship. Young people have led campaigns around climate change, equality, social justice and mental health. They have demonstrated remarkable levels of civic awareness and social responsibility.

On the other hand, their formal democratic rights remain limited. They are frequently expected to live with the consequences of decisions over which they have exercised little influence.

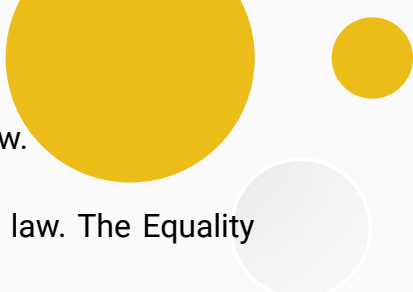
Perhaps nowhere is this tension more visible than in contemporary debates concerning votes at sixteen.

Increasingly, arguments have emerged in favour of extending voting rights to sixteen and seventeen-year-olds. Wales and Scotland have already moved in this direction for certain elections, reflecting an understanding that citizenship and democratic participation should not be artificially postponed until adulthood. Such developments recognise that younger people are already members of communities, taxpayers, carers, workers and participants in civic life.

These debates reveal an important truth.

Citizenship is not something which suddenly begins at eighteen. It develops throughout life.

Indeed, one of the paradoxes of modern democracies is that those who will live longest with the consequences of political decisions often possess the least influence over them.



The same tensions can be observed within equality and human rights law.

The same tensions can be observed within equality and human rights law. The Equality Act 2010 represented an important milestone in anti-discrimination legislation and provides protection against discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, sex, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity and marriage and civil partnership. However, age discrimination protections within the Act apply principally to adults aged eighteen and above in relation to services and public functions. Children and young people do not enjoy equivalent protections in the same way. This creates a curious anomaly.

Society increasingly recognises the importance of combating sexism, racism, ableism and other forms of discrimination. Yet ageism directed towards children and young people often remains normalised and socially acceptable. Assumptions that younger people are inherently incapable, uninformed or insufficiently responsible frequently pass without challenge.

Indeed, many of the attitudes directed towards children and young people would be recognised as discriminatory if applied to other groups.

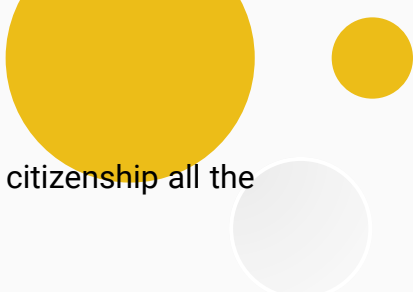
Such attitudes are rarely malicious. They are often rooted in protection and concern. Nevertheless, they may have profound consequences. Children and young people may be listened to without being trusted. Consulted without being empowered. Included without being influential. Visible without being equal.

Moreover, recent years have witnessed increasingly polarised debates around equality and human rights more generally. In some instances, rights themselves have become contested terrain. Political narratives and cultural anxieties have occasionally been accompanied by rhetoric which seeks to portray rights, equality and inclusion as threats rather than achievements.

Such approaches have sometimes relied upon what commentators describe as "dog whistle politics", language and narratives which may appear moderate on the surface whilst subtly legitimising suspicion, division or resentment towards particular groups. These dynamics risk creating climates in which hard-won protections are portrayed as excessive or where the language of equality becomes associated with privilege rather than justice.

Children and young people are not immune from these trends.

Indeed, younger generations frequently find themselves at the centre of wider cultural debates concerning education, identity, social media, participation and social change. There is therefore a risk that their rights and opportunities for participation may become vulnerable to political narratives which prioritise control over empowerment or paternalism over partnership.



Such developments make the principles underpinning participation and citizenship all the more important.

These understandings resonate strongly with the co-operative tradition, which has long connected dignity, equality and participation with mutual responsibility.

The International Co-operative Alliance values and principles provide a practical democratic framework; Chapter 9 considers that framework in detail.

For Yorkshire Young Co-operators and their peers in Wales, these traditions have reinforced the understanding that rights and participation are inseparable.

Rights without opportunities for participation risk becoming abstract.

Participation without rights risks becoming conditional.

Citizenship requires both.

Indeed, one of the striking features of contemporary societies is the extent to which citizenship is often associated primarily with adulthood. Voting, public office and formal authority are frequently viewed as markers of democratic membership. Yet citizenship is broader than electoral participation alone.

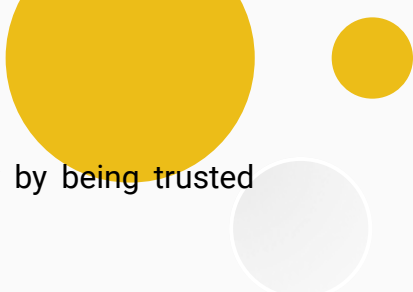
Citizenship is about belonging. It is about relationships. It is about responsibilities. It is about contributing to the common good and it is about recognising the dignity and worth of others.

Children and young people experience these dimensions of citizenship every day. They contribute to their families, schools and communities. They support friends. They volunteer. They campaign. They create. They care. They demonstrate solidarity and compassion. They participate in countless acts which sustain community life.

Children and young people experience these dimensions of citizenship every day. They contribute to their families, schools and communities. They support friends. They volunteer. They campaign. They create. They care. They demonstrate solidarity and compassion. They participate in countless acts which sustain community life. They are therefore not simply preparing for citizenship. They are already citizens.

This understanding, challenges assumptions which continue to shape public policy and governance. It questions the tendency to view children and young people primarily through the language of dependency or future potential. It suggests instead that younger generations should be understood as participants in democracy rather than merely beneficiaries of it.

Such an approach aligns closely with contemporary theories of democratic citizenship and with co-operative understandings of education. Democracy is not something which begins suddenly upon reaching adulthood. It develops through experience.



. People learn participation by participating. They learn responsibility by being trusted with responsibility. They learn citizenship through practising citizenship.

This insight was understood by Robert Owen, by the Rochdale Pioneers and later by Jose Mara Arizmendiarieta in the Basque Country. It is reflected within the Wales Co-operative Education Manifesto, in the work of Co-op Academies Trust and in programmes developed by Sheffield Co-operative Development Group. Across these diverse traditions lies a common belief that democracy and belonging begin in the earliest years and continue throughout life.

For Pride in Place, these insights carry important implications.

If communities are genuinely to foster belonging, stewardship and democratic renewal, then children and young people cannot remain peripheral participants. Their involvement should not depend upon goodwill or occasional consultation exercises. Participation should become part of the culture and fabric of place making itself.

Participation is not an optional extra. Nor is it an act of generosity. It is a right. It is an expression of citizenship and perhaps most importantly, it is part of the social foundation necessary for human flourishing.

If Pride in Place seeks to renew communities, strengthen belonging and cultivate stewardship, then it must recognise a truth long understood by both the human rights movement and the co-operative tradition.

Democracy itself becomes stronger when younger generations are recognised not simply as future citizens, but as citizens now.

Chapter 5:

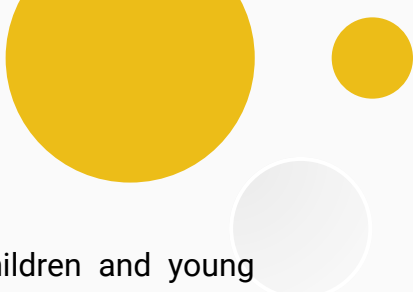
Intersectionality, Equality and Reasonable Adjustments



One of the most important developments in contemporary thinking about equality has been the recognition that human beings do not experience life through a single identity or circumstance. People's lives are complex, and their opportunities, experiences and disadvantages are often shaped by the interaction of multiple identities and wider structures of power.

Children and young people are no exception. Childhood itself intersects with race, disability, neurodivergence, poverty, gender, sexual orientation, faith, class, care experience, refugee status, young caring responsibilities and experiences of trauma. These realities do not exist in isolation. They overlap and interact, shaping how children and young people experience belonging, exclusion and participation.

The work of Kimberlé Crenshaw has helped transform understandings of inequality by demonstrating that disadvantage is often intersectional rather than singular. People's lives are lived at the intersections. Experiences cannot always be neatly categorised, and attempts to understand individuals through one dimension alone often fail to capture the complexity of their lives.



This insight carries profound implications for Pride in Place.

Communities themselves are not homogeneous, and neither are children and young people. There is no single youth voice waiting to be discovered. There are many voices, many identities and many experiences. Consequently, the challenge facing Pride in Place is not simply how to include children and young people, but how to ensure that all children and young people are able to experience belonging and influence.

This matters because belonging itself cannot be separated from equality. People rarely experience pride in places where they encounter exclusion, invisibility or barriers. Nor can stewardship flourish where participation remains inaccessible. Equality and inclusion are therefore not peripheral considerations. They lie at the very heart of what Pride in Place seeks to achieve. Indeed, the programme's language of belonging, participation, community and stewardship implicitly depends upon the creation of places in which people feel recognised and valued.

Yet discussions concerning children and young people often reveal some interesting and revealing assumptions about rights and citizenship.

Amongst adults, rights are generally understood as inherent. Human rights, equality rights and democratic rights are seldom introduced by immediately emphasising responsibilities. Few discussions concerning freedom of expression, voting rights or equality before the law begin with lengthy reminders that adults also have obligations and duties. Such responsibilities undoubtedly exist, but they are rarely presented as conditions that must first be satisfied before rights themselves are acknowledged.

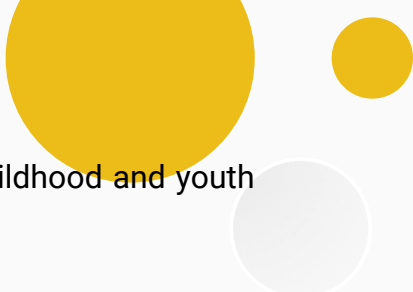
The same is not always true when discussions turn to children and young people.

Almost instinctively, adults frequently respond to conversations about children's rights by asserting that rights must be accompanied by responsibilities. Young people have rights, but they must behave responsibly. Children have rights, but they must show respect. Young people have rights, but they also have responsibilities.

These observations are not wrong. Communities depend upon mutual obligations and the co-operative tradition itself has always recognised the importance of self-responsibility and concern for others. Rights and responsibilities are not opposing concepts. They belong together.

Yet the asymmetry remains striking.

Rarely are adults reminded with equal force that their rights are accompanied by responsibilities. Few conversations about adult rights begin by insisting that adults must first demonstrate good behaviour before those rights are acknowledged. Human rights are generally understood to belong to people because they are human. They are not rewards for good conduct.



This contrast reveals something important about the ways in which childhood and youth are understood.

It suggests that rights are often viewed as conditional when applied to children and young people, whereas they are regarded as inherent when applied to adults. Participation becomes something to be granted rather than exercised. Citizenship becomes something postponed rather than lived. Rights become things to be earned rather than things that belong.

Underlying these assumptions are often entirely understandable instincts of care and protection. Yet they may also reinforce forms of paternalism in which adults retain authority whilst younger generations remain dependent upon adult goodwill.

The consequences are subtle, but significant.

If rights are continually qualified, participation itself risks becoming conditional and if participation is conditional, equality remains incomplete.

Perhaps equally important, the discussion concerning responsibilities rarely turns in the opposite direction.

What responsibilities do adults have towards children and young people?

What responsibilities do institutions have to listen?

What responsibilities do communities have to remove barriers?

What responsibilities do governments have to future generations?

What responsibilities do professionals have to share power?

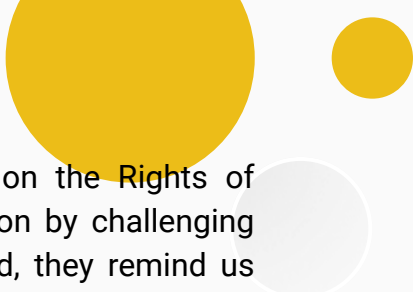
What responsibilities do adults have to create relationships characterised by trust and respect?

These questions are no less important.

Indeed, one of the insights repeatedly emerging from conversations between Yorkshire Young Co-operators and their young co-operator peers in Wales has been that responsibilities flow in both directions. Communities flourish when responsibilities are shared. Children and young people have responsibilities. Adults have responsibilities. Institutions have responsibilities. Governments have responsibilities. Future generations themselves place responsibilities upon those making decisions today.

This understanding resonates strongly with co-operative values and principles. Democracy, equality, equity and solidarity all rest upon relationships of reciprocity and mutual responsibility. The ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others remind us that communities flourish when trust is shared rather than concentrated.

Equality itself also requires us to think differently about barriers.



The social model of disability and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities have transformed understandings of inclusion by challenging assumptions that disadvantage arises solely from individuals. Instead, they remind us that many barriers are created by environments, systems and attitudes.

This insight extends far beyond disability.

Children experiencing poverty encounter barriers. Neurodivergent children encounter barriers. Young carers encounter barriers. Children seeking sanctuary encounter barriers. LGBTQ+ young people encounter barriers. Care-experienced children encounter barriers. Those experiencing racism, sexism, bullying and discrimination encounter barriers. Participation therefore cannot simply mean inviting people into systems that were never designed with them in mind. Participation itself must become accessible.

For Pride in Place, this has profound significance.

If communities are genuinely to foster belonging and stewardship, then inclusion cannot be left to chance. Reasonable adjustments should not be viewed as acts of generosity or special treatment. They are expressions of justice and investments in democracy itself. Accessible information, advocates, sensory adjustments, digital participation, hybrid engagement, trauma-informed practice and psychological safety are not optional extras. They are the means through which equality becomes real.

The Disability rights movement's enduring principle, "Nothing About Us Without Us", captures this understanding powerfully. Yet Yorkshire Young Co-operators and their young co-operator peers in Wales have increasingly argued that equality requires an even broader commitment:

Nothing About Us Without Us And Nothing About Some of Us Without All of Us.

This means ensuring that those children and young people who are easiest to reach do not become proxies for everyone else. It means recognising intersectionality. It means resisting tokenism. It means designing systems around diversity rather than expecting diversity to adapt to systems.

Such aspirations resonate deeply with the language and ambitions of Pride in Place itself. Belonging, participation, stewardship and trust cannot flourish if some children and young people remain invisible.

Ultimately, equality is not about treating everybody identically. It is about ensuring that everybody is able to participate with dignity. It is about recognising that fairness sometimes requires difference and perhaps most importantly, it is about understanding that democracy itself should be accessible. For communities are strengthened not by sameness, but by diversity and Pride in Place will only truly fulfil its promise when every child and young person, whatever their identities, experiences or circumstances, can genuinely say:

"This place belongs to me, and I belong to it."

Chapter 6:

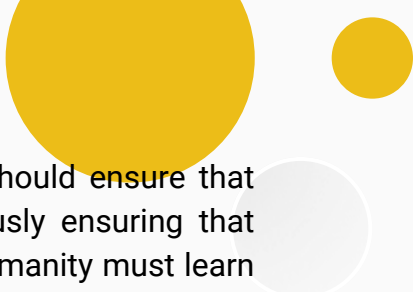
Doughnut Economics, Climate Justice and the Social Foundation



Perhaps one of the most significant developments in contemporary economic thinking has been the growing recognition that the purpose of economies is not simply to produce wealth, but to enable people and communities to flourish. Increasingly, scholars, policymakers and communities have begun to question assumptions which have dominated economic thinking for much of the modern era. Economic growth alone, whilst important, does not necessarily guarantee wellbeing, belonging or justice. Nor does prosperity measured solely through gross domestic product necessarily translate into thriving communities or flourishing lives.

These concerns have become particularly relevant to children and young people. For younger generations are inheriting a world characterised by extraordinary possibilities but also profound uncertainties. Climate change, ecological degradation, inequality, housing insecurity and economic instability have increasingly raised questions concerning what kind of future is being created and, perhaps more importantly, for whom.

It is within this context that the work of Kate Raworth and the concept of Doughnut Economics have attracted growing international attention.



Raworth's central argument is deceptively simple. Human societies should ensure that nobody falls below a minimum social foundation whilst simultaneously ensuring that economic activity remains within the ecological limits of the planet. Humanity must learn to live within what she describes as the "safe and just space" between social deprivation and ecological overshoot. The image of the doughnut itself reflects this balance. Within the inner ring lie the essentials of human flourishing; beyond the outer ring lie the environmental boundaries which sustain life.

What is particularly striking about this framework is that it places people, relationships and wellbeing at the centre of economic thinking. The social foundation identified within Doughnut Economics includes such things as food, health, housing, education, gender equality, peace and justice, political voice, social equity, energy, water and social connections. These are not luxuries to be enjoyed once economic growth has been achieved. They are the very foundations upon which flourishing societies are built.

For children and young people, these ideas possess profound significance:

Belonging is part of the social foundation.

Education is part of the social foundation.

Participation is part of the social foundation.

Safety is part of the social foundation.

Voice is part of the social foundation.

Community itself is part of the social foundation.

Indeed, one of Raworth's most important contributions has been to challenge assumptions that people can flourish in isolation. Human beings are relational creatures. Our wellbeing depends not simply upon individual consumption or economic outputs, but upon relationships, trust and opportunities to participate meaningfully within communities.

These insights resonate strongly with the aspirations underpinning Pride in Place.

Although Pride in Place is often associated with regeneration and local identity, many of its themes, belonging, stewardship, participation and civic renewal, can be understood through the lens of Doughnut Economics. Pride itself is not merely about physical infrastructure. It is about ensuring that people feel connected to the places in which they live and possess opportunities to contribute to their future.

From this perspective, pride in place becomes inseparable from the social foundation necessary for human flourishing. Communities cannot flourish if people feel disconnected. They cannot flourish if some groups are excluded from participation. They cannot flourish if children and young people experience loneliness, poverty or insecurity. Nor can they flourish if future generations inherit ecological decline and social fragmentation.

Doughnut Economics challenges societies to ask different questions.



Not simply:

"How much growth have we achieved?"

But:

"Who is flourishing?"

"Who is being left behind?"

"Whose voices are missing?"

"What kind of future are we creating?"

These questions are particularly relevant to children and young people because they expose the intergenerational dimensions of justice. For younger generations will live longest with the consequences of today's decisions. This reality has contributed to the emergence of the concept of climate justice and, more broadly, the principle of a Just Transition.

Originally developed through labour movements and later embraced by environmental and social justice campaigns, the idea of a Just Transition recognises that the shift towards sustainable societies must itself be fair. Communities should not bear disproportionate burdens. Workers and families should not be abandoned. Nor should future generations inherit the consequences of ecological collapse created by previous generations.

Climate justice therefore involves more than reducing carbon emissions. It raises moral questions. Questions about fairness. Questions about responsibility. Questions about solidarity. Questions about intergenerational relationships and questions about power.

Children and young people have become some of the most visible advocates of these issues. Around the world, younger generations have demonstrated remarkable leadership concerning climate change and sustainability. Their activism has reminded societies that environmental questions are also questions about democracy and justice.

For Yorkshire Young Co-operators and their young co-operator peers in Wales, these concerns are not abstract. They are part of everyday life.

Many young people experience what researchers increasingly describe as climate anxiety. They are growing up with an awareness that environmental change, biodiversity loss and global instability will shape their futures. Yet alongside these concerns sits hope, creativity and innovation. Young people have repeatedly demonstrated their willingness to imagine different ways of organising economies and communities.

This is where Doughnut Economics intersects with the traditions of co-operation.

Long before contemporary debates concerning sustainability emerged, the co-operative movement had already developed understandings of economic life which placed human wellbeing, democratic participation and concern for community at their centre.



The Rochdale Pioneers understood that economies should serve people rather than the other way around.

Robert Owen believed that human flourishing depended upon environments characterised by education, security and mutual support.

José María Arizmendiarieta's vision for Mondragon rested upon the conviction that economic systems should promote dignity, solidarity and participation.

Contemporary co-operative principles similarly emphasise democracy, education, concern for community and co-operation among co-operatives.

These traditions share much with Doughnut Economics.

Both reject narrow understandings of economic success.

Both recognise that relationships matter.

Both emphasise stewardship rather than extraction.

Both recognise responsibilities extending beyond individual interests towards the common good and both insist that economies should serve life rather than sacrifice life in pursuit of economic indicators.

In many respects, co-operatives themselves can be understood as practical expressions of the principles underpinning Doughnut Economics:

Community benefit societies.

Worker co-operatives.

Housing co-operatives.

Energy co-operatives.

Care co-operatives.

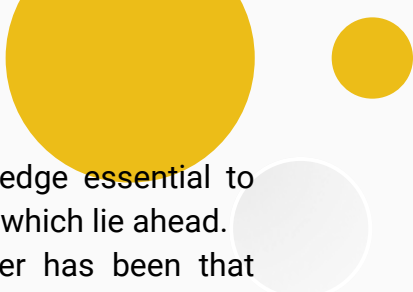
Platform co-operatives.

Community land trusts.

These models embody forms of democratic ownership which seek to balance economic activity with social purpose and long-term stewardship. They demonstrate that alternative forms of organisation are not theoretical aspirations but practical realities. This understanding possesses important implications for Pride in Place.

If Pride in Place is to succeed, it cannot simply become another regeneration programme concerned primarily with infrastructure or economic outputs. It must also attend to the social foundation upon which thriving communities depend. Pride in Place should not merely seek to renew buildings and public spaces. It should help renew relationships, trust and opportunities for participation.

From the perspective of Yorkshire Young Co-operators and their peers in Wales, this means recognising children and young people not simply as beneficiaries of regeneration but as contributors to the creation of sustainable communities.



Younger generations possess ideas, aspirations and forms of knowledge essential to navigating the profound social, technological and ecological transitions which lie ahead. Indeed, one of the recurring themes emerging throughout this paper has been that democracy, belonging and stewardship begin in the earliest years and continue throughout life.

This principle aligns closely with the concept of a Just Transition. For a just transition is not simply about technology. Nor is it simply about economics. It is about relationships between generations. It is about ensuring that change is fair. It is about recognising that communities are held in trust between past, present and future and it is about understanding that those who will inherit the future should not be excluded from helping to shape it.

Ultimately, the significance of Doughnut Economics for Pride in Place lies not in any particular model or framework. Rather, it lies in the questions it encourages communities to ask:

What enables people to flourish?

What kind of places do children and young people need in order to thrive?

How can communities remain within ecological limits whilst ensuring that nobody falls below the social foundation necessary for dignity and belonging?

And perhaps most fundamentally:

What would Pride in Place look like if communities were designed not simply for economic growth, but for human flourishing?

For communities are about more than markets.

They are about relationships. They are about belonging. They are about stewardship and if Pride in Place is to realise its promise, perhaps its greatest achievement will not be measured by buildings restored or investments secured, important though these are.

Perhaps it will be measured by whether every child and young person is able to grow up within communities where they are safe, valued, included and trusted, and where they possess genuine opportunities to help shape a future which is both just and sustainable. For that, ultimately, is what it means to ensure that nobody falls below the social foundation and perhaps that is what pride in place should mean too.

Chapter 7:

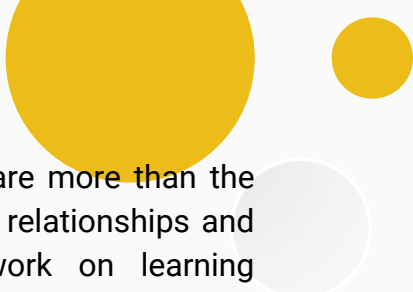
Systems Thinking, Child Poverty and the Ecology of Place



Perhaps one of the most important insights emerging from contemporary thinking about communities is the recognition that places are not simply collections of institutions, services and individuals. Communities are living systems. They are shaped by relationships and interactions which develop over time and which cannot easily be separated into neat categories or addressed through isolated interventions.

Housing influences health. Health affects educational attainment. Education shapes employment opportunities. Employment affects income and security. Economic circumstances influence relationships, participation and wellbeing. These, in turn, influence belonging, trust and the wider resilience of communities themselves. Such interconnections mean that experiences which are often treated as separate policy issues are, in reality, deeply intertwined.

This understanding lies at the heart of systems thinking.



The work of Donella Meadows helped to demonstrate that systems are more than the sum of their individual components. What matters most are often the relationships and patterns between those components. Similarly, Peter Senge's work on learning organisations highlighted the importance of adaptation, feedback and continuous learning. More recently, Robin Asby and Simon Grove-White have emphasised the ecological and relational dimensions of contemporary challenges, arguing that uncertainty and complexity require more collaborative and participatory forms of governance.

These insights are highly relevant to Pride in Place. Communities cannot be reduced to projects. Nor can belonging, trust or pride be created through isolated initiatives or short-term interventions. Communities are shaped gradually through relationships, institutions, memories and shared experiences. They evolve over time and are influenced by countless interactions which extend across generations.

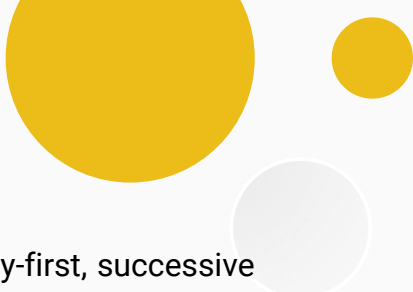
Children and young people are woven throughout this ecology. Their lives intersect daily with education, housing, transport, digital technologies, family relationships and community life. In many respects, childhood itself illustrates the interconnected nature of systems more vividly than any abstract model could. The experiences of children and young people reveal how profoundly relationships, opportunities and environments influence one another.

This interconnectedness becomes particularly apparent when considering child poverty. For generations, governments of different political traditions have sought to reduce child poverty. Targets have been established. Strategies have been launched. Programmes have been introduced. At various points, important progress has undoubtedly been achieved. Yet despite these efforts, poverty and inequality remain persistent features of British society.

Research undertaken by the Child Poverty Action Group, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and many others continues to demonstrate that millions of children experience material insecurity. Such realities affect far more than household income. They shape educational opportunities, physical and mental health, social participation and feelings of belonging. Poverty influences relationships, aspirations and confidence. It affects the texture of everyday life.

Systems thinking reminds us that child poverty cannot be understood simply as an economic problem.

It is also a question of housing, transport, childcare, digital access, health and community infrastructure. It reflects the interaction of multiple systems rather than the failure of individuals. Attempts to address poverty through isolated measures alone are therefore unlikely to produce lasting change. Systems require systemic responses.



The history of regeneration policy in Britain illustrates this point vividly.

Throughout the second half of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, successive governments sought to address inequalities through a succession of programmes and initiatives. The Urban Programme, European Regional Development Fund investments and a variety of neighbourhood renewal initiatives all sought to improve opportunities and strengthen communities. Sure Start represented one of the most ambitious attempts to support young children and families through integrated and preventative approaches. More recently, youth participation initiatives and community-based programmes have attempted to strengthen civic life and social inclusion.

These initiatives often achieved considerable good. Lives were improved. Opportunities were created. Relationships were formed. Communities benefited.

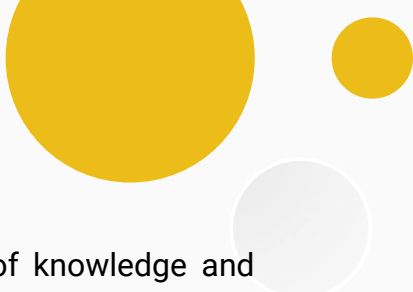
Yet systems thinking encourages us to ask why progress has often proved difficult to sustain.

Part of the answer lies in the nature of systems themselves. Communities are not static. Political priorities change. Funding streams begin and end. Institutions are reorganised. Economic pressures emerge. Austerity policies reshape local landscapes. Relationships and networks built over many years can be weakened surprisingly quickly.

Sure Start perhaps illustrates this dilemma most poignantly. Widely praised for its emphasis upon early intervention and holistic support, many centres experienced reductions or closure during periods of austerity. In numerous communities, what disappeared was not simply a building or a service. Relationships disappeared. Informal support networks weakened. Social infrastructure eroded. Systems which had taken years to develop proved vulnerable to decisions taken elsewhere and as a warning, Sure Start also was not itself immune from relacing and displacing through Local Authority planning and agendas long established community provisions, whom after Sure Start closed have continued delivering to their communities, even after the money ran out.

Such experiences remind us that resilience depends upon continuity. Trust develops slowly but can be lost quickly. Relationships matter. Institutions matter. Investing in decent community long established provisions matter. Communities require long-term stewardship rather than repeated cycles of creation and dismantling. Another lesson arising from systems thinking concerns participation itself.

Historically, regeneration programmes have often sought to involve communities, but comparatively few have fundamentally redistributed power. Children and young people have frequently been consulted, yet much more rarely have they participated in shaping systems themselves. Too often, younger generations have experienced programmes designed for them rather than with them.



From a systems perspective, this represents a significant weakness.

Healthy systems learn. They adapt. They draw upon diverse forms of knowledge and experience. They remain open to feedback and innovation. Excluding children and young people from these processes deprives communities of important insights. Younger generations understand contemporary childhood in ways unavailable to adults. They experience early years settings, schools, transport systems, digital spaces and communities differently from previous generations. Their perspectives represent forms of knowledge essential to the ecology of place.

Systems thinking also highlights the importance of imagination and innovation.

Communities cannot become trapped by inherited assumptions or nostalgic attachments to structures which no longer meet contemporary realities. Healthy systems evolve. New forms of participation, new approaches to learning and new models of ownership are essential to resilience.

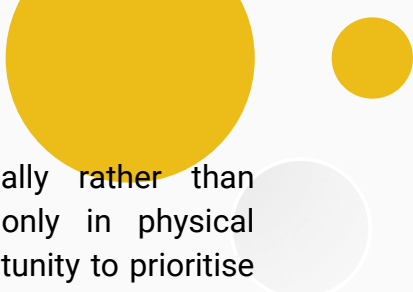
The history of co-operation itself reflects this principle. Robert Owen challenged prevailing assumptions concerning education, work and social responsibility. The Rochdale Pioneers created new forms of economic organisation. Mondragon emerged from innovative thinking concerning education, enterprise and democracy. Housing co-operatives, community land trusts, energy co-operatives and platform co-operatives all demonstrate that communities are capable of creating institutions appropriate to changing circumstances.

This spirit of innovation has strongly influenced the thinking of Yorkshire Young Co-operators and their young co-operator peers in Wales. Throughout their discussions concerning Pride in Place, they have increasingly embraced what might be described as an ecological understanding of communities.

Communities are not collections of problems waiting to be fixed.

They are living ecosystems characterised by relationships, memories, traditions, capabilities and hopes. They contain histories and aspirations. They possess assets and possibilities. Children and young people themselves are part of this ecology. They are not external observers, nor merely future participants waiting for adulthood to arrive. Their friendships shape social capital. Their creativity generates innovation. Their aspirations influence the future direction of communities. Their experiences provide essential feedback concerning whether places are safe, inclusive and nurturing.

These insights are particularly significant because Pride in Place remains at an early stage of development. Its structures are still evolving. Its relationships are still being formed. Its culture has not yet been fixed.



Consequently, there remains an opportunity to think systemically rather than programmatically. There remains an opportunity to invest not only in physical infrastructure but also in social infrastructure. There remains an opportunity to prioritise trust, relationships and continuity rather than merely outputs and projects.

Ultimately, systems thinking teaches a lesson which the co-operative movement has long understood.

Nothing exists in isolation. People flourish through relationships. Communities flourish through trust and perhaps the most resilient places are those which recognise that they are not collections of separate individuals or institutions, but living ecologies held together by mutual dependence, shared responsibilities and hope.

For communities, like nature itself, are strongest not when they are controlled, but when they are connected and protected.

Chapter 8:

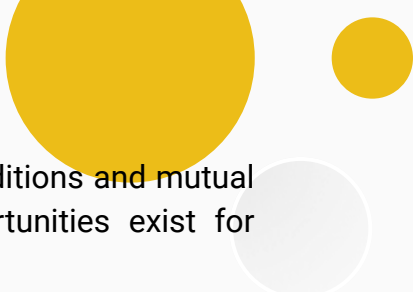
Social Capital, Belonging and Community Wealth Building



Communities are built upon far more than physical infrastructure and economic activity. Roads, buildings and investment undoubtedly matter, but thriving places are sustained by less tangible assets which are often overlooked precisely because they are difficult to measure. Trust, relationships, friendship, reciprocity and a sense of belonging constitute forms of wealth every bit as important as financial resources. Indeed, some of the most resilient communities are not necessarily those possessing the greatest material wealth, but those characterised by strong social connections and a shared sense of identity and purpose.

It is these less visible dimensions of community life which social scientists have increasingly sought to understand through the concept of social capital.

Although different scholars have approached the concept in different ways, the work of Robert Putnam has perhaps been particularly influential in highlighting the importance of relationships, networks and trust. Social capital refers to the resources embedded within human relationships and communities themselves.



It is found in friendships, neighbourliness, voluntary activity, shared traditions and mutual support. It grows when people trust one another and when opportunities exist for participation and reciprocity.

Social capital cannot easily be manufactured through policy interventions alone. It develops over time through everyday interactions and shared experiences. It emerges when people encounter one another repeatedly and when institutions nurture rather than weaken relationships. Schools, libraries, youth clubs, sports organisations, faith communities, co-operatives and voluntary groups all contribute to the social infrastructure through which trust and belonging are cultivated.

The significance of these relationships became particularly apparent during the Covid-19 pandemic, when communities throughout the United Kingdom demonstrated remarkable capacities for mutual aid and collective action. Informal support networks emerged, neighbours assisted one another and communities rediscovered forms of solidarity which had sometimes appeared weakened. Such experiences served as powerful reminders that communities possess resources which extend far beyond formal institutions and economic indicators.

For children and young people, these relationships are especially important. Childhood and adolescence are periods during which identities are formed, friendships established and ideas concerning belonging and citizenship begin to develop. Social capital is not something children and young people simply inherit from adults. They actively create it themselves.

Friendships represent social capital. Trust is social capital. Shared experiences are social capital. Acts of kindness are social capital. Digital networks can become forms of social capital. Creativity, humour and empathy are social capital.

Children and young people contribute to the cultures and identities of their communities in countless ways. Through early years provisions, schools, sports clubs, youth organisations, online communities and informal relationships, they create networks of support and meaning which sustain both themselves and others. Their contributions often remain invisible precisely because they are regarded as ordinary features of everyday life. Yet without these relationships, communities themselves would become poorer.

This understanding has significant implications for Pride in Place. Belonging cannot be imposed from above. Nor can pride be generated simply through physical regeneration. People experience pride when they feel connected to one another and when they believe they have a stake in the places in which they live. Communities flourish when people feel seen, valued and trusted. Belonging, therefore, is not merely an emotional experience. It represents a form of social infrastructure upon which resilient communities depend.



Increasingly, researchers and policymakers have begun to recognise that social infrastructure is every bit as important as physical infrastructure. Parks, libraries, community centres, schools, youth provision and local organisations provide spaces in which relationships are formed and maintained. Their value lies not simply in the services they provide but in the opportunities they create for connection and participation.

The erosion of such spaces has profound consequences. The closure of youth clubs, reductions in community provision and the weakening of local institutions affect more than service delivery. They diminish opportunities for belonging and weaken the networks upon which trust depends. Systems thinking reminds us that relationships themselves are assets. Communities cannot flourish without places and institutions which enable those relationships to develop.

These relational resources are also forms of community wealth. Chapter 14 develops the economic and ownership dimensions of community wealth building; here, the central point is that trust, belonging and participation are assets in their own right, and that children and young people help create them.

Ultimately, social capital reminds us that communities are sustained not simply by markets or institutions, but by relationships. They flourish when trust is nurtured, people feel they belong and shared assets are stewarded collectively.

Perhaps this is one of the most important lessons for Pride in Place.

For pride itself is not a commodity. It cannot be bought. Nor can it be imposed. It grows slowly, through relationships, participation and shared experiences and perhaps the greatest wealth possessed by any community lies not in what it owns, but in the strength of the bonds which hold its people together and in the hope they possess for the generations which will follow.

Chapter 9:

Co-operative Thinking, Democratic Citizenship and the Co-operative Education of Hope



Throughout the conversations which have informed this discussion paper, Yorkshire Young Co-operators and their young co-operator peers in Wales have frequently returned to a deceptively simple idea: communities flourish when people are trusted.

Whilst contemporary debates concerning participation, belonging and democratic renewal may appear new, many of the principles which underpin them possess deep historical roots. Long before the language of social capital, systems theory and community wealth building entered academic and political discourse, generations of co-operators had already begun to explore how people might organise their economic and social lives in ways which promoted dignity, mutual responsibility and democratic participation.

In many respects, the co-operative movement has always been concerned with hope. Not hope understood as passive optimism, but hope understood as the collective capacity of ordinary people to shape their own destinies and improve the communities in which they live.



It is this understanding which has profoundly influenced the thinking of Yorkshire Young Co-operators and their peers in Wales as they have reflected upon the opportunities and challenges presented by Pride in Place.

The roots of this tradition stretch back to the remarkable social experiments of Robert Owen. Often regarded as one of the founding figures of the co-operative movement, Owen's work represented far more than an attempt to improve industrial conditions. At its heart lay a profound belief in human potential and in the importance of environment, education and community.

For Owen, character was not fixed. Human beings were shaped by the conditions in which they lived and by the opportunities available to them. This conviction led him to place extraordinary emphasis upon education and the wellbeing of children. His work at New Lanark sought to demonstrate that communities could be organised around principles of care, learning and mutual support rather than exploitation and competition.

Underlying Owen's philosophy was a profound optimism. He famously observed that: "Any general character, from the best to the worst, from the most ignorant to the most enlightened, may be given to any community."

Whilst modern readers may challenge some aspects of Owen's paternalism, his belief in the transformative power of environment and education continues to resonate strongly with contemporary understandings of childhood, systems theory and the ecology of place.

These ideas found practical expression within the achievements of the Rochdale Pioneers. Their success is often described in economic terms, yet George Jacob Holyoake's reflections remind us that their significance extended far beyond retail co-operation. As he observed:

"The Rochdale store was not merely a shop. It was a school."

This observation captured something fundamental about the co-operative tradition.

Co-operation has always been educational.

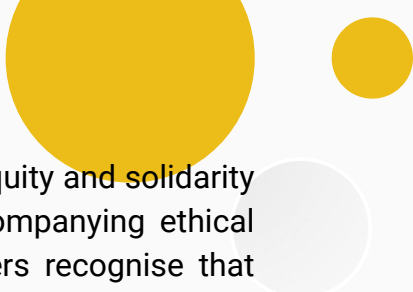
Democracy is learned.

Participation is learned.

Citizenship is learned.

Hope itself is learned.

The Rochdale Pioneers understood that ordinary people were capable not only of improving their material circumstances but of educating themselves and one another. Through democratic participation they cultivated confidence, solidarity and civic responsibility. Their legacy continues to influence co-operatives throughout the world and remains reflected in the principles adopted by the International Co-operative Alliance.



The ICA's values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity express a distinctive understanding of human relationships. The accompanying ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others recognise that communities flourish when trust and responsibility are shared.

These principles are not simply abstract ideals. They represent a philosophy of citizenship.

Democratic member control reflects the belief that people should participate in decisions affecting their lives. Education, training and information acknowledge that democracy requires continual learning. Concern for community recognises responsibilities extending beyond individual interests towards the common good. Co-operation among co-operatives embodies the principle that communities themselves become stronger when they collaborate rather than compete.

For Yorkshire Young Co-operators and their young co-operator peers in Wales, these ideas have provided a powerful framework through which to interpret Pride in Place.

Indeed, one of the recurring themes emerging from discussions has been that democratic renewal cannot be separated from democratic education.

Citizenship is not acquired automatically at the age of eighteen. Nor does it begin with the first opportunity to vote.

Citizenship develops gradually through relationships, experiences and opportunities for participation. Democracy is something people learn by practising.

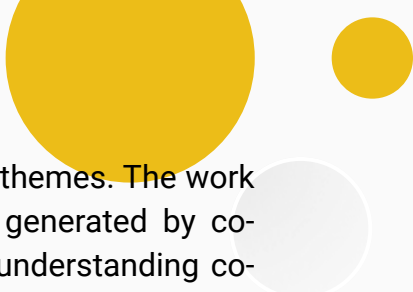
This insight found particularly powerful expression in the work of José María Arizmendiarieta, the priest whose ideas laid the foundations for the Mondragon co-operative movement in the Basque Country. Emerging from the devastation and divisions of post-war Spain, Arizmendiarieta understood that social transformation required education before economics.

His belief that knowledge should be shared and that people should be empowered to shape their own futures remains central to the philosophy of Mondragon. He insisted that:

"The ideal of solidarity is not an act of charity but a demand of justice." and elsewhere observed:

"Knowledge has to be socialised so that everybody can benefit from it."

These principles have enabled Mondragon to become one of the most significant examples of co-operative development in the world. Yet perhaps its greatest lesson lies not in its scale or economic success, but in its recognition that communities are strengthened when people are educated, trusted and enabled to participate.



Contemporary co-operative scholarship has continued to explore these themes. The work of Johnston Birchall has highlighted the resilience and social value generated by co-operatives, whilst Sonia Novkovic has emphasised the importance of understanding co-operatives as human systems rooted in relationships, participation and democratic values. Virginia Perotin's research has demonstrated that co-operatives often generate wider social benefits extending beyond economic outcomes, contributing to wellbeing, equality and resilience.

Institutions such as the International Co-operative Alliance, the World Co-operative Monitor, the Centre for Co-operative and Community-Based Economy and the Journal of Co-operative Studies have collectively contributed to a growing body of research demonstrating that co-operatives are not historical curiosities but contemporary responses to many of the challenges confronting communities today.

For Yorkshire Young Co-operators and their peers in Wales, however, co-operation is not simply a subject for academic study. It is something lived.

Our thinking has also been shaped by contemporary approaches associated with strengths-based practice and asset-based community development. Drawing upon the work of John McKnight and Jody Kretzmann, they have increasingly embraced the belief that communities should not be defined primarily by deficits but by the capacities and relationships already present within them.

From this perspective, communities are rich in gifts. Relationships are gifts. Traditions are gifts. Skills are gifts. Culture is a gift. Children and young people themselves are gifts.

Consequently, Yorkshire Young Co-operators and their peers in Wales have increasingly explored the idea of intergenerational asset-based community audits which seek not simply to identify needs but to map hopes, talents, aspirations and capabilities. Such approaches reflect a fundamentally different understanding of place and citizenship.

Communities are not collections of problems to be solved. They are reservoirs of possibility. This understanding resonates strongly with wider traditions of hope and social justice.

Margaret Mead's famous observation has become something of a touchstone for many young co-operators:

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

Martin Luther King Jr. similarly reminded us that:

"We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny."



Whilst Archbishop Desmond Tutu observed:

"My humanity is bound up in yours, for we can only be human together."

Martin Luther King Jr. similarly reminded us that:

"It always seems impossible until it is done"

continues to inspire movements seeking social transformation.

These quotations resonate not because they offer easy optimism, but because they recognise the power of relationships, solidarity and collective action.

Perhaps this explains why the co-operative tradition might best be understood as an education of hope. Not hope as wishful thinking but hope grounded in participation. Hope grounded in trust. Hope grounded in the belief that ordinary people possess extraordinary capacities when they are enabled to work together.

This spirit can be seen in the Wales Co-operative Education Manifesto, which emphasises that democracy and co-operation should begin in the earliest years and continue throughout life. It is reflected in the work of Co-op Academies Trust, the little Pioneers, the Sheffield Childcare, Play and Family Support CBS and in the Co-operative Education programmes developed by Sheffield Co-operative Development Group across early years, schools and post-16 settings. Such initiatives recognise that children and young people are not simply future citizens. They are citizens now, and democratic capabilities develop through experience rather than instruction alone.

These influences have profoundly shaped the thinking of Yorkshire Young Co-operators and their young co-operator peers in Wales as they have reflected upon Pride in Place.

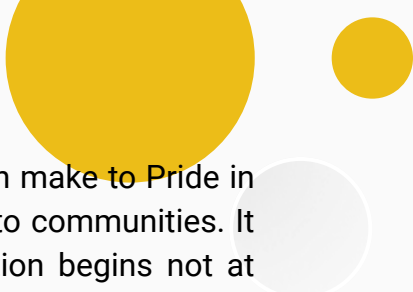
For them, the programme represents more than an opportunity for regeneration. It represents an opportunity for democratic renewal. An opportunity to cultivate belonging. An opportunity to strengthen stewardship and perhaps most importantly, an opportunity to nurture hope.

For communities are sustained not merely by resources and institutions, but by the belief that change is possible.

Hope itself is an asset. Trust is an asset. Accountability is an asset. Transparency is an asset. Shared values are assets and perhaps the greatest asset possessed by any community is the confidence that its people, young and old alike, can shape their future together.

In many respects, this is the enduring lesson of the co-operative tradition.

People flourish when they are trusted. Communities flourish when they co-operate and democracy itself becomes stronger when hope is shared rather than monopolised.



Perhaps, then, the greatest contribution which co-operative thinking can make to Pride in Place is to remind us that the future is not something which happens to communities. It is something communities create together and that process of creation begins not at adulthood, but in the earliest years and continues throughout life.

Chapter 10:

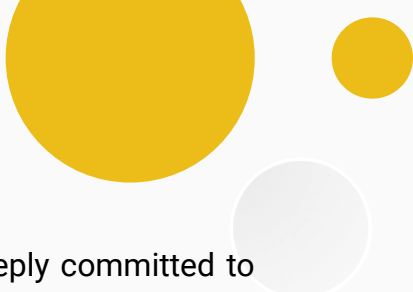
Young People's Experiences of Safety, Belonging and Inclusion



If communities are ultimately experienced through relationships, then perhaps no group experiences the quality of those relationships more intensely than children and young people. Childhood and adolescence are periods in which identities are formed, friendships established and understandings of belonging begin to take shape. They are also periods in which experiences of exclusion, insecurity and loneliness can leave deep and lasting impressions.

For this reason, understanding the realities of growing up in Britain today is essential to understanding the future of communities themselves.

Over the last two decades, a growing body of research has sought to move beyond assumptions about childhood and to listen directly to children and young people themselves. Organisations such as the Children's Society, the Children's Commissioner for England, UNICEF, YoungMinds, the Youth Endowment Fund and the Child Poverty Action Group have collectively provided one of the most comprehensive pictures yet of the hopes, fears and lived experiences of younger generations.



What emerges from this work is both encouraging and concerning.

It reveals a generation which remains hopeful, compassionate and deeply committed to relationships and community. Yet it also reveals significant challenges affecting the experience of childhood and adolescence in modern Britain.

Perhaps one of the most striking findings emerging from successive Good Childhood Reports is that children and young people consistently place relationships and belonging at the centre of their understanding of wellbeing. Contrary to assumptions that young people are primarily concerned with material possessions or individual success, many speak instead about friendships, family relationships, feeling safe and having opportunities to participate in activities and communities which matter to them.

In many respects, children and young people understand intuitively what social scientists have spent decades attempting to explain:

Belonging matters.

Feeling accepted matters.

Being known matters.

Being trusted matters.

These themes resonate strongly with the ambitions of Pride in Place. Communities characterised by trust and belonging are communities in which people experience pride. Conversely, pride becomes difficult to cultivate where loneliness, insecurity and exclusion are widespread.

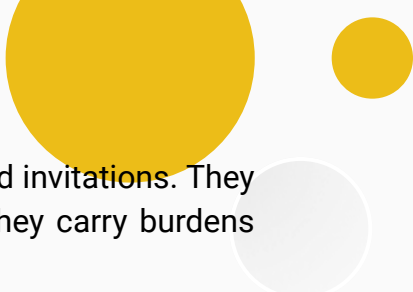
Research undertaken by UNICEF has similarly highlighted the importance of relationships and emotional wellbeing. International comparisons have repeatedly shown that economic prosperity alone does not guarantee flourishing childhoods. Material wealth, whilst important, is insufficient by itself to create happy and secure communities. Children and young people consistently emphasise the importance of connection, participation and supportive relationships.

Yet the realities of contemporary childhood are marked by growing inequalities.

For many children and young people, experiences of poverty remain a defining feature of daily life. Reports produced by the Child Poverty Action Group and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation continue to demonstrate that millions of children live in households experiencing financial insecurity. Such experiences shape opportunities for participation and belonging. Poverty affects far more than income. It influences access to activities, educational experiences, social relationships and self-esteem. It affects whether children can participate fully in the ordinary experiences of childhood enjoyed by their peers.

These inequalities are often invisible.





Children and young people become experts at hiding poverty. They avoid invitations. They withdraw from activities. They learn to manage embarrassment and they carry burdens which are frequently unseen by adults.

Such realities raise profound questions for Pride in Place. For communities cannot genuinely claim to foster belonging whilst significant numbers of children and young people remain excluded from opportunities to participate in community life.

Alongside economic inequalities, concerns regarding mental health have become increasingly prominent. Organisations such as YoungMinds and the Centre for Mental Health have documented rising levels of anxiety and emotional distress amongst many young people. Whilst the reasons are complex and cannot be reduced to simple explanations, the pressures associated with education, social media, uncertainty about the future and wider social changes have all contributed to growing concerns.

Perhaps equally significant is the issue of loneliness. Loneliness is often imagined as a problem affecting older people, yet research consistently demonstrates that children and young people also experience profound feelings of isolation. In a society characterised by unprecedented digital connectivity, many young people nevertheless report feeling disconnected and alone. Such findings serve as an important reminder that belonging cannot be taken for granted.

Communities matter because relationships matter and relationships matter because human beings flourish through connection.

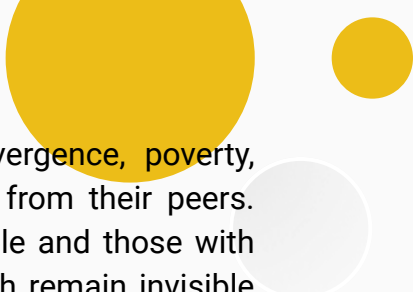
Safety represents another crucial dimension of children's experiences of place.

Research undertaken by the Youth Endowment Fund has highlighted the importance of safe neighbourhoods, trusted adults and opportunities for positive participation. Young people repeatedly identify safety as fundamental to their sense of belonging. Feeling safe influences whether they use parks and public spaces, whether they travel independently and whether they experience their communities as places of opportunity or places of anxiety.

Importantly, safety itself extends beyond questions of crime and violence.

Emotional safety matters. Psychological safety matters. Being free from bullying and discrimination matters. Being accepted matters. Being able to express identity matters. Knowing that difference will be respected matters.

For many children and young people, safety is experienced not simply through policing or security measures but through relationships characterised by trust and acceptance. These experiences are not distributed equally.



Children and young people experiencing racism, disability, neurodivergence, poverty, discrimination or prejudice often experience communities differently from their peers. LGBTQ+ young people, refugee children, care-experienced young people and those with caring responsibilities frequently encounter barriers to belonging which remain invisible within mainstream narratives.

Consequently, inclusion itself cannot be assumed. It must be created. It must be nurtured and it must be sustained.

The digital world has added further complexity to contemporary childhood. For today's children and young people, digital spaces are not separate from real life. They are part of real life. Friendships, identities and communities increasingly extend across both physical and virtual environments. Digital technologies provide opportunities for creativity, learning and connection, but they also expose inequalities and vulnerabilities.

The Covid-19 pandemic revealed the extent of digital exclusion affecting many families. Access to devices, connectivity and digital skills emerged as essential dimensions of participation. Communities increasingly require digital infrastructure not simply for economic purposes but for democratic and social inclusion.

At the same time, many children and young people are growing up with an awareness of global challenges unprecedented in previous generations. Climate change, war, political instability and social inequalities have become part of everyday consciousness. Researchers have increasingly drawn attention to the phenomenon of climate anxiety, reflecting concerns about the future and the responsibilities being inherited by younger generations.

Yet despite these challenges, one of the most remarkable findings emerging from contemporary research is the persistence of hope.

Children and young people continue to care. They continue to volunteer. They continue to support one another. They continue to create, innovate and imagine better futures. They remain deeply committed to fairness, inclusion and social justice. Far from being apathetic or disengaged, many young people demonstrate extraordinary levels of empathy and social awareness.

Perhaps the greatest tragedy, therefore, is not that children and young people lack interest in their communities. It is that communities have too often underestimated their interest.

Throughout conversations between Yorkshire Young Co-operators and their young co-operator peers in Wales, this theme has emerged repeatedly. Young people have spoken passionately about the places in which they live. They have described what they love and what they fear losing. They have reflected upon safety, belonging and identity. They have expressed hopes for greener communities, stronger relationships and more inclusive opportunities.



What they have rarely expressed is indifference.

Indeed, one of the recurring themes throughout these discussions has been a sense of disappointment that children and young people are so often spoken about rather than spoken with. They are frequently viewed through the lens of problems and risks rather than hopes and possibilities.

Yet the evidence suggests something rather different. Children and young people care deeply about their communities. They want to belong. They want to contribute. They want to be trusted and perhaps above all, they want to know that their voices matter.

For Pride in Place, these findings carry profound implications. Belonging cannot be manufactured. It grows through relationships. Safety cannot be reduced to crime statistics. It grows through trust and inclusion cannot be assumed. It must be intentionally created.

Ultimately, the quality of communities should perhaps be judged not simply by economic indicators or physical regeneration, important though these are, but by how children and young people experience them.

For if children and young people feel safe, valued and included, then communities themselves are likely to be flourishing and if they do not, then perhaps the absence of pride is telling us something important.

For communities are experienced first and foremost through the eyes of those growing up within them and perhaps the true measure of pride in place is not how adults describe their communities but how children and young people experience them.

Chapter 11:

Listening to Childhood and Asking Difficult Questions

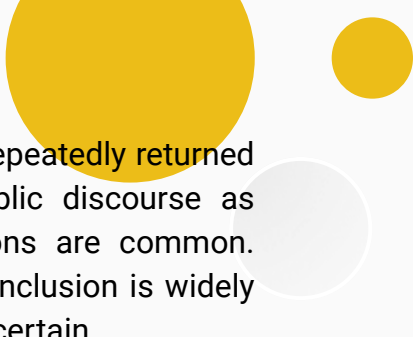


Perhaps one of the greatest paradoxes of contemporary public life is that whilst children and young people are among those who will live longest with the consequences of decisions made today, they often exercise the least influence over shaping those decisions.

This observation has become a recurring theme throughout conversations between Yorkshire Young Co-operators and their young co-operator peers in Wales. It has emerged not from cynicism or hostility towards the ambitions of Pride in Place, but from a genuine belief in the importance of the programme and a desire to see it succeed.

Indeed, one of the strengths of Pride in Place lies precisely in the fact that it remains in its formative stages. Unlike many long-established institutions, its culture and structures are still evolving. There remains time to learn, adapt and respond. This presents opportunities which should not be underestimated.

Yet learning requires honesty and honesty sometimes requires difficult questions.



Throughout the discussions informing this paper, young co-operators repeatedly returned to a concern that children and young people often appear in public discourse as aspirations rather than participants. References to future generations are common. Commitments to listening are frequently expressed. The language of inclusion is widely embraced. Yet the experience of meaningful influence remains far less certain.

Motivated by curiosity rather than criticism, Yorkshire Young Co-operators and their young co-operator peers in Wales undertook a series of informal conversations and "mystery shopping" exercises across relevant Pride in Place designated areas. These activities were neither formal evaluations nor scientific studies. Rather, they represented attempts to understand what awareness and opportunities for involvement looked like from the perspective of young people themselves.

The findings were, in many respects, disappointing.

Awareness of Pride in Place amongst many children and young people was limited. Opportunities for participation were often unclear. In numerous instances, young people struggled to identify where decisions were being made, who was making them or how they might become involved. In some places, children and young people appeared almost entirely absent from emerging governance arrangements. In others, their participation seemed to depend largely upon the goodwill of individual adults rather than being embedded within systems and structures.

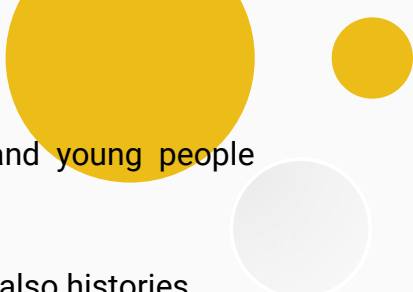
Perhaps most strikingly, there appeared to be relatively little evidence that children and young people had been actively involved in recruitment processes themselves. In many instances, they had neither been recruited nor involved as recruiters. Those who would inherit the future appeared largely absent from discussions concerning who should help shape it.

These observations raise important questions concerning democratic legitimacy.

They also raise questions concerning ageism and what some scholars have described as adultism, the assumption that adulthood confers superior authority and legitimacy whilst younger people occupy subordinate positions. Adultism is often invisible precisely because it is deeply embedded within social norms. Most adults do not consciously seek to exclude children and young people. Exclusion frequently arises not through hostility but through habit.

Historically, regeneration initiatives have exhibited similar patterns.

Children and young people have often been consulted through surveys, focus groups and short-term projects. Murals have been painted. Youth forums have been convened. Art competitions have been organised. Whilst such activities have undoubtedly possessed value, they have rarely altered relationships of power. Young people have frequently been invited to contribute ideas, but much more rarely have they exercised authority.



Participation has often remained something done around children and young people rather than with them.

In this respect, Pride in Place has inherited not simply opportunities but also histories.

The Urban Programme, neighbourhood renewal initiatives, European funding programmes and various youth engagement strategies frequently contained genuine commitments to participation. Yet much of the evidence suggests that power itself remained largely unchanged. Young people were listened to, but not always heard. They were visible, but not necessarily influential.

Consequently, one of the recurring questions emerging from discussions amongst Yorkshire Young Co-operators and their peers in Wales has been whether Pride in Place risks repeating familiar patterns.

Will younger generations once again be consulted but not trusted?
Will they be visible but not influential?
Will participation remain symbolic rather than substantive?
Or will Pride in Place become something different?

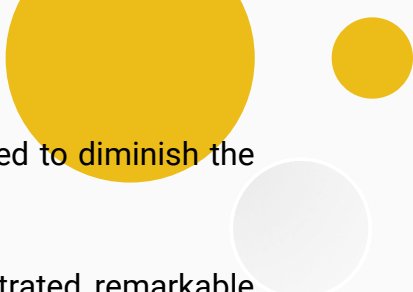
These questions matter because they are ultimately questions about democracy itself. Listening, after all, is not the same as hearing. Consultation is not the same as influence.

Presence is not the same as participation and participation itself is not the same as power.

These distinctions are sometimes uncomfortable because they require adults and institutions to examine their own assumptions. They require communities to ask not only whether young people have been invited to contribute, but whether they have been trusted with genuine responsibility.

Such questions can be challenging.

What does it say about a society when those who will inherit the future are consistently denied meaningful influence over shaping it?
Why do communities often find it easier to speak about young people than to share authority with them?
Why are children and young people frequently expected to adapt to adult structures rather than adults adapting structures to include younger generations?
Why do institutions so readily speak the language of participation whilst remaining cautious about power? and perhaps most importantly;
What are communities afraid might happen if children and young people were genuinely trusted?



These questions are not intended to provoke guilt. Nor are they intended to diminish the commitment and dedication of those involved in Pride in Place.

Indeed, many of the adults engaged in the programme have demonstrated remarkable enthusiasm and goodwill. The issue is not one of individual intentions. It is one of systems and cultures.

Systems often reproduce assumptions which nobody consciously designed. Cultures evolve over time. Habits become normal and exclusions become invisible.

This is why difficult questions matter. Healthy systems learn. Healthy democracies are capable of self-reflection and healthy communities are willing to listen to voices which challenge established assumptions.

For Yorkshire Young Co-operators and their young co-operator peers in Wales, listening itself should be understood as an act of respect rather than an act of charity. It reflects a recognition that expertise is distributed throughout communities and that lived experience constitutes a form of knowledge.

Children and young people possess insights unavailable to adults.

They know where they feel safe. They know where they feel excluded. They understand contemporary childhood in ways previous generations cannot. They experience communities differently and because they experience communities differently, they see possibilities which others may overlook.

Listening to childhood therefore requires more than consultation exercises. It requires humility. It requires curiosity and perhaps above all, it requires trust.

Trust that children and young people are capable of contributing. Trust that they possess knowledge worth hearing. Trust that they care about their communities and trust that democracy itself becomes stronger when more people are invited to participate in shaping the common good.

Ultimately, the challenge facing Pride in Place is not whether children and young people have something to say.

Research and experience suggest overwhelmingly that they do.

The challenge is whether adults and institutions are prepared to hear what they are saying.

For perhaps the most important question facing Pride in Place is not whether children and young people are ready for democracy. Perhaps the more uncomfortable question is whether democracy itself is ready for children and young people and the answer to that question may determine whether Pride in Place becomes simply another chapter in the history of regeneration, or the beginning of a new chapter in the history of shared stewardship and intergenerational democracy.

Chapter 12:

Participation, Power and Shared Governance



Throughout the preceding chapters, this paper has argued that participation is a right, that communities are living systems and that children and young people are citizens, strengths and co-creators of the places they inhabit. Yet if these arguments are to possess practical meaning, they inevitably lead to a more difficult question.

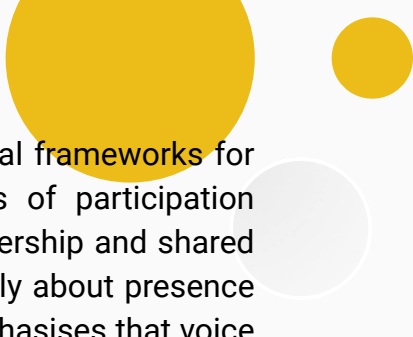
Who holds power?

For whilst the language of participation has become increasingly familiar within public life, the language of power remains considerably less comfortable.

Participation and power are not the same thing.

People may be consulted without influencing decisions. They may be present without possessing authority. They may be listened to without being heard. They may be invited into conversations without being invited into governance.

This distinction lies at the heart of contemporary debates concerning democracy and citizenship.



Roger Hart's Ladder of Participation remains one of the most influential frameworks for understanding these differences. Hart distinguished between forms of participation which are essentially tokenistic and those which involve genuine partnership and shared decision-making. His work demonstrated that participation is not simply about presence but about influence. Similarly, Laura Lundy's model of participation emphasises that voice alone is insufficient. Children and young people require space, voice, audience and influence. Without influence, participation risks becoming an exercise in appearance rather than an expression of democracy.

These insights are particularly relevant to Pride in Place.

The Government's vision speaks positively of belonging, stewardship, civic pride and community leadership. These aspirations are welcome and resonate strongly with co-operative principles and traditions. Yet they inevitably raise questions concerning who is exercising leadership and whose voices are shaping priorities.

At the time of writing, many Pride in Place leadership bodies and boards established across cities, towns and communities appear overwhelmingly adult in composition. They are frequently characterised by the presence of representatives from local authorities, large employers, anchor institutions, business organisations, public services, health bodies and other established stakeholders. Such individuals and organisations often bring considerable expertise, experience and commitment. Their contributions should not be underestimated.

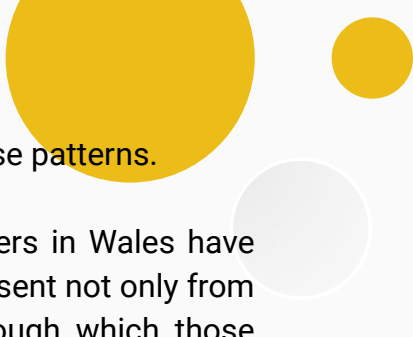
However, the composition of these bodies also reveals something important.

In many cases, communities themselves are only lightly represented and within that limited community representation, children and young people are often almost entirely absent.

This is not intended as a criticism of individuals. Nor is it to suggest that exclusion has been deliberate. Rather, it reflects the tendency of institutions to reproduce familiar patterns of leadership. Power gravitates towards those already accustomed to exercising it. Governance structures are frequently assembled around existing networks and established relationships. Expertise becomes associated with professional roles and organisational positions rather than with lived experience and citizenship.

The result, however, is that many Pride in Place leadership arrangements risk reflecting precisely the forms of governance which contemporary democratic renewal seeks to challenge.

In some instances, community representation itself appears relatively tokenistic, with boards and leadership groups dominated by professional and institutional voices. Such arrangements risk creating a perception that communities are being invited to support decisions rather than to shape them.



Children and young people have been particularly disadvantaged by these patterns.

Indeed, Yorkshire Young Co-operators and their young co-operator peers in Wales have repeatedly observed that children and young people have often been absent not only from governance structures themselves, but also from the processes through which those structures have been created. In many instances, younger generations have neither been recruited to leadership bodies nor involved in the recruitment of others.

This absence represents more than a missed opportunity. It raises questions concerning democratic legitimacy. It raises questions concerning representation and it raises questions concerning whether Pride in Place is modelling the very values it seeks to promote.

For leadership itself communicates values:

Who sits around the table matters.

Who is visible matters.

Who is trusted matters.

Who is absent matters.

Children and young people learn about democracy not only through citizenship lessons or participation exercises, but through observing how institutions behave. Leadership structures communicate messages about who belongs, who possesses expertise and whose voices matter.

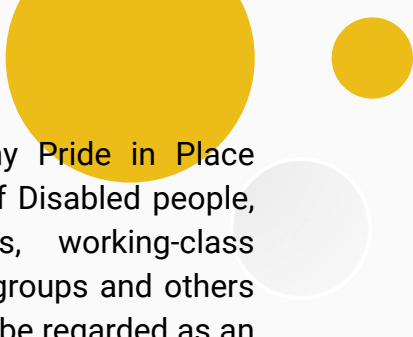
When younger generations are absent, communities inadvertently communicate that leadership is something which belongs to adults and that participation begins only after authority has already been distributed.

This represents a lost opportunity. For Pride in Place possesses the potential to model something different. It possesses the opportunity to demonstrate that intergenerational governance is possible. It possesses the opportunity to show that leadership can be shared and it possesses the opportunity to embody the principles of inclusion, participation and stewardship which it seeks to cultivate.

Such an approach would benefit not only children and young people. It would strengthen governance itself.

Research consistently demonstrates that diversity improves decision-making. Diverse groups possess access to wider forms of knowledge and experience. They are often more innovative and better able to challenge assumptions. This principle applies not only to diversity of gender, ethnicity and disability, but also to age and lived experience.

Communities themselves are diverse. Their leadership should reflect that diversity.



This observation extends beyond children and young people. Many Pride in Place leadership arrangements would benefit from broader representation of Disabled people, neurodivergent people, carers, racialised minority communities, working-class communities, lived experienced older people, LGBTQIA+ people, faith groups and others whose voices have historically been marginalised. Inclusion should not be regarded as an optional addition to governance. It should be recognised as a source of legitimacy, wisdom and resilience.

From a co-operative perspective, these questions are fundamentally questions of democratic member control and shared stewardship. Co-operative traditions have long recognised that those affected by decisions should participate in making them. Democracy is strengthened when authority is distributed rather than concentrated. Participation becomes meaningful when communities are recognised not merely as stakeholders but as partners.

This principle acquires particular significance in relation to children and young people. Too often, younger generations have been invited to participate only after structures have already been established and priorities determined. Participation then becomes reactive rather than formative.

Yet if Pride in Place genuinely seeks to nurture stewardship, then children and young people should be considered from the outset. Not as an afterthought. Not as symbolic representatives. Not as occasional consultees but as participants in governance itself.

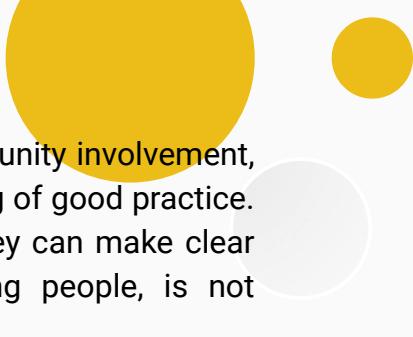
This does not imply that every leadership body should simply allocate one or two youth seats and regard the matter as resolved. Token representation risks reproducing the very inequalities it seeks to address. Rather, it suggests the need for intergenerational approaches in which children and young people are viewed as one of the communities whose experiences and perspectives should help shape decisions.

Such approaches require support, reasonable adjustments and creativity. They require adults willing to share power. They require institutions willing to learn and they require cultures characterised by trust.

Importantly, leadership and culture are influenced from the top as well as the bottom.

National programmes communicate expectations. Ministers and government departments exercise influence not simply through funding but through the priorities they articulate and the standards they establish. If participation and inclusion are genuinely regarded as central to Pride in Place, then these values require visible encouragement and oversight from those responsible for the programme nationally.

Government departments and ministers exercising stewardship of Pride in Place therefore possess important responsibilities.



They are uniquely placed to encourage expectations concerning community involvement, representation and democratic legitimacy. They can support the sharing of good practice. They can encourage diversity within leadership arrangements. And they can make clear that the involvement of communities, including children and young people, is not peripheral to Pride in Place but intrinsic to its success.

Leadership from the top matters because culture flows through systems.

Communities observe what is valued. Local bodies respond to signals and programmes inevitably reflect the priorities communicated by those exercising national stewardship.

Consequently, there may be merit in greater national oversight and reflection concerning the composition and inclusivity of Pride in Place leadership arrangements. Such oversight should not be understood as centralisation or control. Rather, it should be understood as stewardship, ensuring that the programme remains faithful to its own aspirations concerning belonging, participation and civic renewal.

Ultimately, the challenge confronting Pride in Place is not whether communities should participate. The programme itself already answers that question affirmatively. The more difficult question concerns what kind of participation is being envisaged:

Is participation primarily about consultation?

Or is it about shared governance?

Is it about voice?

Or is it about influence?

Is it about symbolic inclusion?

Or is it about democratic legitimacy?

These are not easy questions but they are important ones.

For perhaps the greatest measure of success for Pride in Place will not be found in the number of projects completed or buildings restored, valuable though these may be.

Perhaps its greatest legacy will lie in whether it succeeds in demonstrating that communities can govern differently. That leadership can be shared. That democracy can become intergenerational and that children and young people are not merely future leaders waiting patiently on the margins, but citizens and stewards whose contributions are needed now.

For communities belong not to one generation alone.

They are held in trust between past, present and future and perhaps the most powerful expression of pride in place is not simply to celebrate communities as they are, but to ensure that all those who will inherit them have the opportunity to help shape what they might become.

Chapter 13:

Intergenerational Justice, Commons Theory and Stewardship



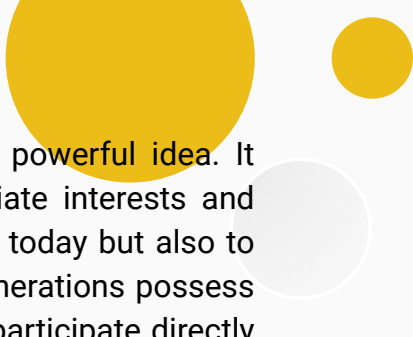
One of the most profound questions confronting contemporary societies concerns the relationship between generations.

What obligations do those living today owe to those who will come after them?

What responsibilities accompany the inheritance of places, institutions and resources built by previous generations? and how should communities balance the needs of the present with the rights and aspirations of the future?

These are not merely philosophical questions. They are practical questions which increasingly shape debates concerning climate change, public finances, housing, economic development and democratic legitimacy. They are also questions which lie at the heart of Pride in Place, even if they are not always expressed in such terms.

For communities are never owned entirely by one generation. Rather, they are held in trust between past, present and future.



The principle of intergenerational justice rests upon this simple but powerful idea. It challenges assumptions that societies exist solely to satisfy immediate interests and instead asks whether current decisions are fair not only to those alive today but also to those who will inherit their consequences. It reminds us that future generations possess moral significance even though they cannot yet vote, sit on boards or participate directly within many of the institutions shaping their lives.

In this respect, children and young people occupy a unique position. They are both present citizens and future inheritors. They experience the consequences of today's decisions more immediately than adults often recognise, whilst also being among those who will live longest with their long-term effects. Questions concerning climate change, biodiversity loss, housing affordability, public debt and social cohesion are therefore not abstract concerns for younger generations. They are questions about the quality of the world they will inhabit throughout their lives.

This reality has increasingly encouraged scholars and policymakers to revisit ideas of stewardship.

Stewardship differs fundamentally from ownership. Ownership implies control and possession. Stewardship implies responsibility and care. It suggests that individuals and communities act not simply for themselves, but on behalf of others, including those who are not yet born.

These themes resonate deeply with traditions of co-operation and mutual aid. The co-operative movement has long understood that institutions and assets should be managed in ways which promote the common good rather than narrow self-interest. Community benefit societies, housing co-operatives, credit unions and other forms of democratic ownership all reflect understandings of stewardship rather than extraction. Their purpose extends beyond immediate gain towards the long-term wellbeing of communities.

Contemporary discussions concerning stewardship have also been enriched by the work of the political economist Elinor Ostrom. Awarded the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences in 2009, Ostrom challenged assumptions that resources could only be managed effectively through either markets or centralised state control. Through extensive research into communities throughout the world, she demonstrated that people are capable of developing systems of collective governance which enable shared resources or commons, to be stewarded sustainably and equitably.

Her work represented a profound challenge to conventional thinking. Rather than viewing individuals as isolated and self-interested actors, Ostrom's research highlighted the importance of trust, reciprocity and shared responsibility. Communities, she demonstrated, possess capacities for self-organisation and collective stewardship which are frequently underestimated.



Although much of Ostrom's work focused upon forests, fisheries and environmental resources, the principles she identified possess wider significance. Communities themselves may be understood as commons.

- Public spaces are commons.
- Culture is a commons.
- Social relationships are commons.
- Knowledge is a commons.
- Democracy itself can be understood as a commons requiring care and stewardship.
- Perhaps too, childhood itself may be regarded as a common good whose protection and nurturing represent collective responsibilities.

These ideas have strongly influenced discussions amongst Yorkshire Young Co-operators and their young co-operator peers in Wales. Throughout their reflections upon Pride in Place, there has been a growing recognition that communities are not simply collections of services or administrative boundaries. They represent shared inheritances created by previous generations and entrusted to those living today.

Such a perspective transforms how communities are understood.

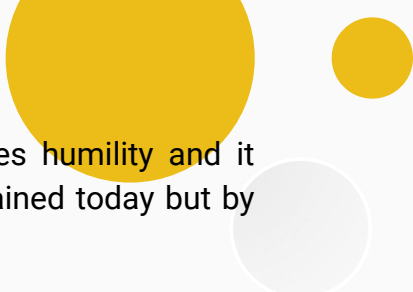
Places are not commodities. They are relationships. They are stories. They are memories. They are identities. They are ecosystems of belonging and like all ecosystems, they require care.

This understanding becomes particularly important at a time when many children and young people express concerns regarding the future. Research increasingly highlights anxieties relating to climate change, biodiversity loss and wider social uncertainties. Such concerns are often interpreted primarily as emotional or psychological issues. Yet they may equally be understood as expressions of intergenerational justice.

Young people are asking fundamental questions:
Will future generations inherit thriving communities?
Will natural environments be protected?
Will inequalities continue to deepen?
Will democracy remain strong?
Will opportunities exist?
Will adults act as responsible stewards?

These questions challenge assumptions which have often characterised public policy. Political systems frequently prioritise short-term outcomes. Electoral cycles encourage immediate priorities. Economic models reward extraction and consumption. Yet the issues confronting contemporary societies increasingly require longer horizons and deeper forms of responsibility.

This is why intergenerational justice matters.



It invites societies to think beyond immediate interests. It encourages humility and it reminds us that progress should not be measured solely by what is gained today but by what is preserved and strengthened for tomorrow.

These themes are particularly evident within Wales through the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Widely regarded as one of the most innovative pieces of legislation in the world, the Act requires public bodies to consider the long-term consequences of decisions and to act in ways which promote sustainable development and the wellbeing of future generations. It reflects an understanding that policy should not merely respond to present needs but should also safeguard the interests of those who will inherit the consequences of today's actions.

Importantly, the Act emphasises collaboration, prevention, involvement and long-term thinking. These principles align closely with systems theory, Doughnut Economics and co-operative traditions. They also resonate strongly with the aspirations of Pride in Place.

Indeed, Yorkshire Young Co-operators and their peers in Wales have frequently pointed to the Well-being of Future Generations approach as offering valuable lessons for Pride in Place. Not because models should simply be copied, but because they demonstrate that long-term stewardship and intergenerational thinking can be embedded within governance itself.

Perhaps nowhere is this more important than in relation to children and young people.

For younger generations are too often spoken about as future citizens rather than recognised as present partners in stewardship. Yet intergenerational justice requires more than acting on behalf of future generations. It requires acting with those generations already amongst us. Children and young people are not merely beneficiaries of stewardship. They are stewards. They care about communities. They care about nature. They care about fairness. They care about relationships and they possess perspectives essential to understanding what sustainable communities might look like.

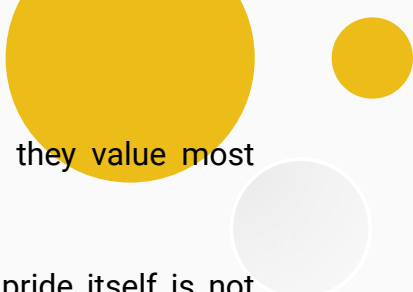
This insight has profound implications for Pride in Place.

If communities are truly held in trust between generations, then stewardship itself cannot remain the preserve of adults. Children and young people should not simply inherit communities shaped entirely by others. They should participate in shaping those communities now.

Such participation is not merely a matter of rights. It is a matter of justice.

It reflects a recognition that future generations have legitimate interests which deserve representation in the present.

Indeed, one of the recurring themes emerging from discussions amongst Yorkshire Young Co-operators and their young co-operator peers in Wales has been the belief that stewardship is perhaps the deepest expression of belonging.



People protect what they love. People care for what they value and they value most deeply those things in which they possess a stake.

For Pride in Place, this insight may prove particularly important. For pride itself is not simply about celebrating communities as they are. Nor is it simply about preserving the past. Rather, pride in place is ultimately about stewardship.

It is about recognising that communities are gifts received from previous generations and responsibilities owed to those who will follow and perhaps the measure of whether communities truly possess pride in themselves will not be found in monuments, branding or slogans. Perhaps it will be found in whether they are willing to act as good ancestors. For communities belong not to one generation alone. They are held in trust between past, present and future and the task of stewardship is not to own that inheritance. It is to leave it stronger, fairer and more hopeful than we found it.

Chapter 14:

Community Wealth Building, Community Development and Economic Democracy



Questions about wealth are rarely simply about money. Beneath discussions concerning investment, regeneration and economic growth lie deeper questions concerning power, ownership and belonging. Who controls assets? Who benefits from prosperity? Who decides how resources are used? And perhaps most fundamentally, who possesses the opportunity to shape the future of the communities in which they live?

Such questions have assumed increasing significance in recent years as communities across the United Kingdom have grappled with widening inequalities, declining trust and the consequences of economic systems which have often concentrated wealth and decision-making power far away from the places where people actually live. Increasingly, scholars, policymakers and communities themselves have begun to recognise that economic growth alone does not necessarily produce flourishing places. Equally important are questions concerning ownership, participation and democratic control.

It is within this context that the concept of community wealth building has emerged. Although associated in recent years with the work of the Centre for Local Economic Strategies and the development of the Preston Model, the principles underpinning community wealth building possess much deeper roots.



At its heart lies a simple but profound proposition: wealth should work for communities rather than communities working solely for wealth.

Yet community wealth building cannot be separated from community development. Indeed, perhaps one of the great lessons emerging from generations of community development practice is that communities are not simply places in which programmes are delivered. They are places in which people organise, build relationships, develop confidence and exercise agency. Community development at its best is not something done to communities. It is something undertaken with communities.

This distinction is of profound importance.

History contains numerous examples of well-intentioned interventions which have failed because agendas were imposed rather than developed collaboratively. Communities have often found themselves subject to priorities determined elsewhere, constrained by funding cycles and shaped by institutional requirements which bear little resemblance to local aspirations. The language may have been one of empowerment, but the experience has sometimes been one of dependency.

These dangers remain highly relevant to Pride in Place.

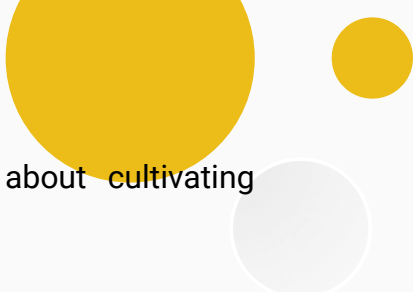
One of the recurring observations emerging from discussions amongst Yorkshire Young Co-operators and their young co-operator peers in Wales has been the importance of ensuring that Pride in Place does not become another example of communities being acted upon rather than enabled to act for themselves. The challenge is not simply one of investment. It is one of trust.

This insight has been central to the work of John McKnight and Jody Kretzmann and their development of Asset-Based Community Development. Rejecting approaches which defined communities primarily through deficits and needs, McKnight and Kretzmann argued that every community possesses gifts, capacities and relationships which constitute its greatest strengths. As they observed:

"Every single person has capacities, abilities and gifts."

This deceptively simple statement challenges deeply embedded assumptions within public policy. It invites us to ask different questions. Rather than beginning with what communities lack, it encourages us to begin with what they possess. Communities possess memories, traditions, culture and relationships. They possess skills, compassion and creativity. They possess hopes and aspirations. Most importantly, they possess people.

For McKnight and Kretzmann, the role of institutions is not to replace community action but to strengthen and support it.



Development becomes less about delivering solutions and more about cultivating relationships and connecting assets. As McKnight later observed:

"The basic challenge is to redefine the relationship between institutions and communities."

Perhaps this challenge lies at the very heart of Pride in Place.

For there is always a danger that externally imposed agendas, however well intentioned, may inadvertently weaken the very capacities they seek to strengthen. Public authorities operating under immense financial pressure may understandably view new funding streams as opportunities to fill service gaps created by years of austerity and constrained budgets. Existing provision may be displaced rather than strengthened. Resources intended to build community capacity may become absorbed into maintaining institutional systems. Investment designed to support renewal may become a substitute for mainstream funding responsibilities.

Such outcomes are rarely the result of bad intentions. They often arise because institutions themselves are under strain. Nevertheless, community development traditions caution against these tendencies. Resources intended for regeneration should not simply become mechanisms for substitution. Investment intended to empower communities should not merely sustain bureaucratic arrangements. And funding intended to strengthen places should not inadvertently facilitate the extraction of wealth from those very communities.

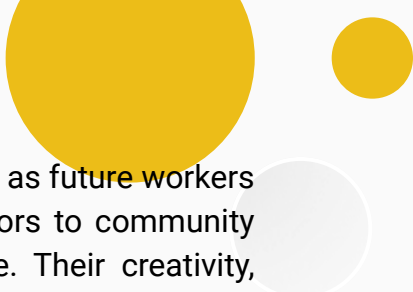
For many communities throughout Britain have experienced precisely such patterns. Economic activity has often generated value which has subsequently flowed elsewhere. Assets have been controlled remotely. Profits have left communities. Decision-making has become increasingly distant. Places have become locations from which wealth is extracted rather than places in which wealth is created and retained.

Pride in Place itself must guard against these tendencies.

For if communities are to flourish, they must possess not only resources but agency. They must possess not only investment but influence. They must possess not only opportunities but ownership.

These ideas resonate with the co-operative traditions discussed earlier. Co-operative enterprises show how participation, mutuality and democratic ownership can keep wealth rooted within communities and steward it for the common good.

These insights possess particular relevance to children and young people.



Too often, younger generations appear within economic debates merely as future workers or future consumers. Rarely are they recognised as present contributors to community wealth. Yet children and young people are already creators of value. Their creativity, friendships, compassion and understanding of contemporary life represent assets essential to the future resilience of communities. Their aspirations shape the economies which will emerge. Their hopes influence the directions communities take.

As McKnight memorably observed:

"People can only be citizens when they are producers and creators, not just consumers and clients."

Perhaps no observation better captures the spirit of this paper.

Children and young people are not simply recipients of services. They are creators of community. They are builders of relationships. They are innovators and problem-solvers. They are stewards of the future.

For Yorkshire Young Co-operators and their peers in Wales, this understanding has increasingly led to a broader conception of economic democracy. Economic democracy is not merely about procurement policies or anchor institutions. It is about relationships. It is about participation. It is about ensuring that communities possess the confidence and authority to shape their own futures.

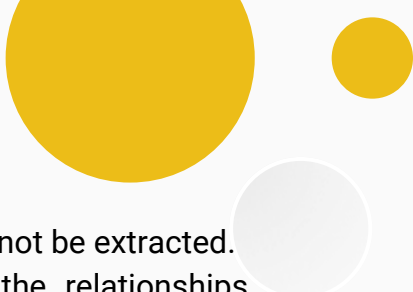
Indeed, perhaps the greatest challenge confronting Pride in Place is not simply how to regenerate places. It is how to cultivate communities capable of regenerating themselves.

Communities are not empty spaces awaiting rescue.
They are reservoirs of possibility.

And perhaps the deepest lesson offered by community development, community wealth building and the co-operative tradition is that people do not require others to save them. They require opportunities to organise, participate and flourish together.

This principle applies equally to children and young people: their talents, relationships, aspirations and lived experience are present community assets, not merely promises of future value.

Ultimately, community wealth building and economic democracy remind us that communities are about far more than prosperity. They are about belonging. They are about dignity. They are about stewardship and they are about ensuring that people possess genuine opportunities to influence the conditions of their own lives.



For pride in place cannot be imposed. It cannot be purchased and it cannot be extracted. It must be cultivated. It must be rooted and it must grow from the relationships, capacities and aspirations already present within communities.

Perhaps that is the greatest lesson which community development offers to Pride in Place.

Not that communities should be saved but that they should be trusted and perhaps the greatest expression of trust is to recognise that communities themselves, including their children and young people, already possess many of the gifts required to shape their own futures.

Chapter 15:

Co-operative Education Across the Life Course: Building Communities of Hope from the Earliest Years Onwards

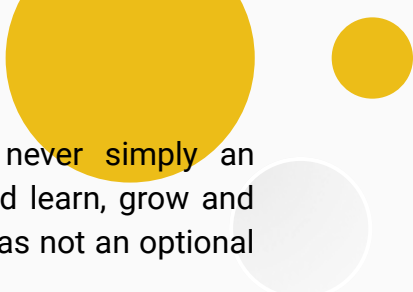


Throughout the history of the co-operative movement, education has occupied a unique position. Whilst co-operatives have often been recognised for their economic achievements, their founders understood that economic democracy alone would never be sufficient. Communities flourish not simply because they possess resources, but because they possess people equipped with the knowledge, confidence and values necessary to participate in shaping their own futures.

Indeed, from Robert Owen and the Rochdale Pioneers through to Mondragon and contemporary co-operative schools, education has always been understood as one of the most powerful tools for social transformation. It is no accident that the fifth co-operative principle, adopted by the International Co-operative Alliance, places education, training and information alongside democratic member control and concern for community. Co-operators have long understood that democracy itself must be learned and renewed across generations.

George Jacob Holyoake famously observed that:

"The Rochdale store was not merely a shop. It was a school."



His observation captured something profound. Co-operation was never simply an economic model. It was a means through which ordinary people could learn, grow and participate fully in the life of their communities. Education, therefore, was not an optional extra. It was central to the co-operative vision itself.

This understanding had earlier been reflected in the work of Robert Owen. Although some aspects of Owen's thinking were undoubtedly shaped by the assumptions of his time, his belief in the transformative power of education and environment remains strikingly contemporary. At New Lanark, he recognised that children and young people required opportunities to learn within settings characterised by respect, creativity and care. He believed that flourishing communities depended upon investing in human development from the earliest years onwards.

His conviction that:

"Any general character, from the best to the worst, from the most ignorant to the most enlightened, may be given to any community"

expressed a profound faith in human potential and in the importance of nurturing environments.

More than a century later, José María Arizmendiarieta would place similar ideas at the heart of the Mondragon movement. Emerging from the devastation of post-war Spain, he recognised that social and economic renewal required education before enterprise. Schools, technical colleges and opportunities for lifelong learning became foundational to Mondragon's development.

For Arizmendiarieta, knowledge represented a common good. As he observed:

"Knowledge has to be socialised so that everybody can benefit from it."

His belief that solidarity was "a demand of justice" rather than an act of charity reflected a conviction that education should enable people not merely to adapt to the world, but to participate in changing it.

These traditions have profound implications for Pride in Place.

For if Pride in Place is concerned with belonging, stewardship and civic renewal, then education cannot be viewed simply as preparation for employment. Education is equally about citizenship. It is about relationships. It is about identity. It is about cultivating the capacities necessary for people to participate in the life of their communities.

Democracy itself is learned. Trust is learned. Solidarity is learned. Stewardship is learned. Belonging is learned and these forms of learning begin long before adulthood.



Contemporary research concerning child development increasingly reinforces these insights. Experiences in the early years shape not only cognitive development but also social and emotional capacities, relationships and understandings of identity and belonging. Children learn about fairness, cooperation and mutual responsibility not primarily through abstract instruction but through lived experience.

This reality suggests that citizenship does not begin at eighteen. Nor does it begin with the right to vote. Citizenship begins in the earliest years and continues throughout life. It develops through participation, relationships and opportunities to contribute.

For this reason, Yorkshire Young Co-operators and their young co-operator peers in Wales have consistently argued that co-operative education should be understood as a life-course approach rather than a discrete stage of learning.

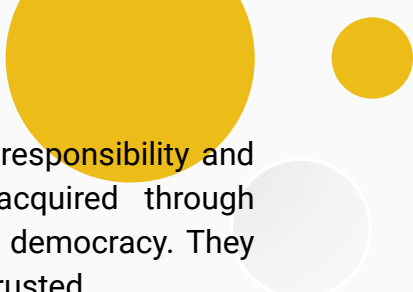
From early years settings onwards, children should experience environments characterised by participation, co-operation, voice and belonging. Play itself teaches cooperation. Friendships teach reciprocity. Shared problem-solving teaches responsibility. Storytelling nurtures empathy. Communities are learned through communities.

The Wales Co-operative Education Manifesto has articulated these principles particularly clearly. It argues that co-operative values and approaches should be embedded throughout educational experiences and should contribute to the development of active citizens capable of participating in democratic life. This vision reflects broader commitments contained within the Curriculum for Wales and the Well-being of Future Generations approach, both of which recognise that education should prepare young people not merely for employment but for life within communities.

Similarly, the work of Co-op Academies Trust demonstrates how co-operative values can be embedded within schools and communities. Through an emphasis upon self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity, pupils are encouraged to understand themselves as participants within communities rather than isolated individuals. Such approaches cultivate not only academic achievement but also social responsibility and civic identity.

These ideas have also informed programmes developed by Sheffield Co-operative Development Group across early years, schools and post-16 settings. Working alongside partners and communities, these programmes have sought to demonstrate that children and young people are not citizens in waiting, but active contributors to community life. Through enterprise, social action, peer learning and democratic participation, young people are encouraged to experience co-operation not simply as something to study, but as something to practise.

The co-operative early years and school methods developed within the co-operative movement possess particular significance in this regard.



Their emphasis upon participation, shared problem-solving, collective responsibility and learning by doing recognises that democratic capabilities are acquired through experience. Children and young people learn democracy by practising democracy. They learn stewardship by exercising stewardship. They learn trust by being trusted.

Importantly, co-operative education should not be confined to early years settings or schools alone.

Communities themselves are places of learning. Families are places of learning. Youth organisations are places of learning. Sports clubs are places of learning. Faith communities are places of learning. Digital communities are places of learning. Neighbourhoods themselves are places of learning and learning continues throughout life. This life-course perspective is increasingly important within societies characterised by rapid technological, social and environmental change. Communities require citizens capable of adaptation, collaboration and innovation. They require people able to work across differences and navigate complexity. Such capacities cannot be taken for granted. They require continual nurturing.

This is why co-operative education is ultimately an education of hope.

Not hope understood as passive optimism, but hope grounded in relationships, participation and shared responsibility. Hope rooted in the belief that people possess the capacity to shape the conditions of their own lives and to contribute to the common good.

Such a vision resonates strongly with the work of Paulo Freire, whose understanding of education emphasised dialogue, reflection and human agency. Education, he argued, should enable people to become subjects rather than objects of history. Communities flourish when people are able to act upon the world rather than simply adapt to it.

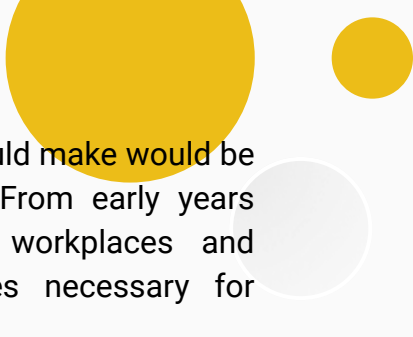
Similarly, John Dewey recognised that democracy is not merely a political system but a way of life. Communities require educational experiences which enable people to participate actively in shared problem-solving and collective decision-making. Democracy, he argued, must be continually recreated by each generation.

Perhaps nowhere is this challenge more important than within Pride in Place.

For Pride in Place is concerned not simply with regeneration, but with renewal.

- Renewal of relationships.
- Renewal of trust.
- Renewal of participation.
- Renewal of stewardship.

Such renewal depends ultimately upon learning.



Indeed, one of the most powerful contributions which Pride in Place could make would be to foster cultures of co-operative learning across the life course. From early years settings to schools, colleges, universities, youth organisations, workplaces and community groups, opportunities exist to cultivate the capacities necessary for democratic citizenship and shared stewardship.

For communities do not simply inherit democracy. They educate for it. They nurture it and they renew it.

Ultimately, the significance of co-operative education lies in its belief that ordinary people possess extraordinary capacities when they are trusted, supported and connected to one another.

Children and young people are not empty vessels waiting to be filled. Nor are adults finished products who no longer require learning. Communities themselves are places of continual growth and renewal and perhaps the deepest lesson offered by the co-operative tradition is that education is not merely preparation for life.

Education is life itself.

For if Pride in Place is truly to become a movement characterised by belonging, participation and stewardship, then it must also become a movement committed to learning. Learning from the past. Learning from one another. Learning across generations and learning how to live together well.

For communities flourish when people are educated not simply to compete, but to co-operate and perhaps that is one of the greatest gifts which co-operative education offers to Pride in Place and to the generations who will inherit its legacy.

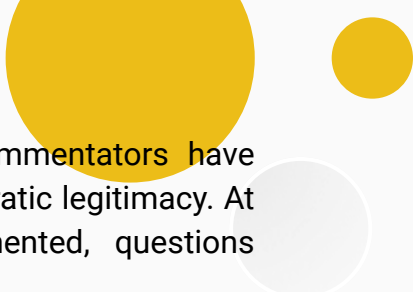
Chapter 16:

Leadership, Representation and Democratic Legitimacy



Questions concerning leadership have become increasingly important in contemporary society. Across many countries, levels of trust in institutions have declined, participation in traditional forms of civic life has weakened and many people have become increasingly disconnected from political and democratic processes. Public confidence in institutions has been challenged, communities have become more fragmented and feelings of disenfranchisement have grown. In many places, people express a sense that decisions affecting their lives are made elsewhere and by others, often without their meaningful involvement.

These developments are not confined to any one generation. Older people may feel that rapid change has left them behind. Younger generations often express frustration that they are listened to but not heard. Working-class communities have sometimes experienced the loss of institutions and identities which once provided a sense of belonging and purpose. Minority communities continue to encounter discrimination and barriers to representation and influence. Increasingly, societies appear characterised not only by inequalities of wealth, but by inequalities of voice and power.



It is perhaps unsurprising, therefore, that social scientists and commentators have spoken of crises of trust, crises of representation and crises of democratic legitimacy. At a time when societies appear increasingly polarised and fragmented, questions concerning leadership have assumed renewed importance:

- What constitutes legitimate leadership?
- Who is represented?
- Who decides?
- Whose voices matter?
- What gives institutions the moral authority to exercise influence?

These questions are highly relevant to Pride in Place.

For Pride in Place is concerned not merely with projects and investments but with civic renewal. It seeks to cultivate belonging, stewardship and confidence in communities. Yet such ambitions inevitably depend upon the quality and legitimacy of leadership itself.

Leadership, however, cannot be understood simply in terms of authority or position. Nor can democratic legitimacy be reduced to formal structures alone. Legitimacy derives from relationships, trust and participation. People are more likely to support institutions when they believe that those institutions understand their experiences, reflect their communities and are accountable to those whom they serve.

These ideas lie at the heart of the co-operative tradition.

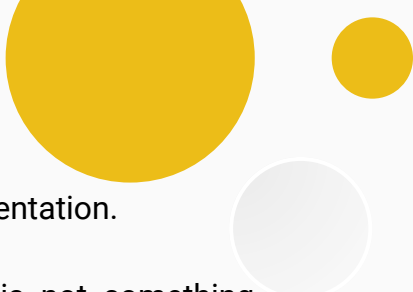
As discussed in Chapters 4 and 9, democratic member control, education and concern for community connect legitimate leadership with participation, continual learning and responsibility for the common good. The full values and principles are reproduced in Appendix A.

Indeed, contemporary research increasingly suggests that trust itself is a form of social capital and that communities characterised by trust and participation are more resilient and better equipped to navigate uncertainty and change. Leadership founded upon transparency and accountability strengthens relationships between institutions and communities. Conversely, leadership which becomes detached from the experiences of ordinary people risks losing legitimacy, regardless of how formally constituted such authority may be.

This reality has profound implications for public authorities and anchor institutions.

At times, leadership within public life has become associated with managerialism and professional expertise, sometimes at the expense of participation and lived experience.

Expertise undoubtedly matters. Public services require skilled professionals and effective institutions. Yet expertise alone does not confer legitimacy.



Legitimacy requires relationships. It requires trust and it requires representation.

For co-operative traditions have always understood that leadership is not something exercised over people, but something exercised with people:

- Leadership is stewardship.
- Leadership is service.
- Leadership is accountability.
- Leadership is responsibility.

These understandings are particularly relevant to Pride in Place.

Across many areas, emerging leadership bodies have brought together representatives from local authorities, health systems, businesses, universities and other anchor institutions. Such organisations possess considerable experience and resources and have much to contribute. Yet questions remain concerning whether existing arrangements sufficiently reflect the diversity and lived experiences of the communities they seek to serve.

Democratic legitimacy requires more than organisational representation. It requires community representation. It requires lived experience and it requires intergenerational perspectives. For communities themselves are diverse. They comprise people of different ages, backgrounds, identities and experiences. Leadership structures which fail to reflect this diversity risk appearing distant from the communities whose confidence they seek to cultivate.

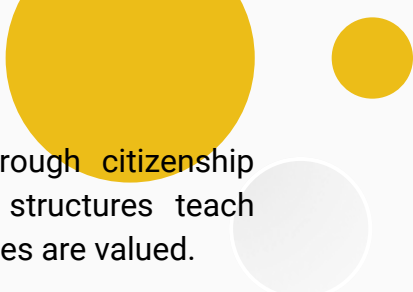
Perhaps nowhere is this more apparent than in relation to children and young people.

Throughout history, younger generations have often been viewed as future citizens rather than present participants in democracy. Yet such assumptions sit uneasily with contemporary understandings of rights, participation and intergenerational justice. Children and young people experience communities now. They possess insights and forms of knowledge unavailable to adults. They understand contemporary childhood and adolescence in ways previous generations cannot.

Consequently, their exclusion from leadership and governance structures represents more than a missed opportunity.

It raises questions concerning legitimacy itself. For leadership communicates values:

- Who sits around the table matters.
 - Who is trusted matters.
 - Who is visible matters.
 - Who is absent matters.
- 



Children and young people learn about democracy not simply through citizenship education, but by observing how institutions behave. Leadership structures teach powerful lessons concerning whose voices count and whose perspectives are valued.

The absence of younger generations therefore communicates messages which may unintentionally reinforce age-based assumptions concerning authority and participation. Yet intergenerational leadership offers possibilities which extend far beyond symbolic representation. It strengthens decision-making. It broadens perspectives. It encourages innovation and it enables communities to draw upon the wisdom and experiences of different generations.

This understanding has increasingly influenced Yorkshire Young Co-operators and their young co-operator peers in Wales. Their discussions have consistently emphasised that leadership should not be viewed as the preserve of a particular age group or profession. Communities require opportunities for shared stewardship in which children, young people and adults contribute together.

Communities require opportunities for shared stewardship in which children, young people and adults contribute together. Such approaches are also essential to succession planning.

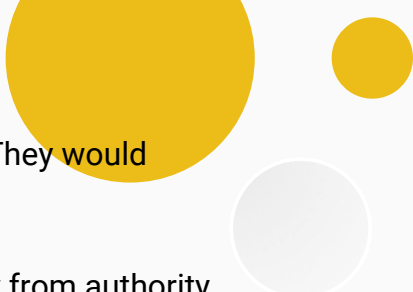
One of the challenges confronting many institutions today is how knowledge, experience and leadership are renewed across generations. Too often succession planning is understood narrowly as identifying replacements for existing leaders. Yet co-operative traditions suggest a broader understanding.

Succession is about cultivating future capacities. It is about creating opportunities. It is about nurturing confidence. It is about education and it is about ensuring that leadership itself remains rooted in communities rather than concentrated amongst a small number of individuals.

Robert Owen understood this. The Rochdale Pioneers understood this. José María Arizmendiarieta understood this and contemporary co-operative movements continue to understand this.

Democracy must continually recreate itself. Leadership must continually renew itself and institutions which fail to cultivate new generations of leaders ultimately weaken themselves.

This challenge is particularly significant within Pride in Place. For the programme remains in its formative stages. Its structures are still evolving. Its culture is still emerging. Consequently, there remains an opportunity to embed approaches characterised by participation, inclusion and intergenerational stewardship.



Such approaches would not merely benefit children and young people. They would strengthen democratic legitimacy itself.

For legitimacy derives not simply from power, but from trust. Not simply from authority, but from relationships. Not simply from structures, but from participation. Ultimately, leadership is not about possessing influence. It is about enabling others to exercise theirs. It is not about control. It is about stewardship and perhaps the deepest lesson offered by the co-operative tradition is that leadership becomes most legitimate when it is shared.

At a time when societies appear increasingly fragmented and many people feel disconnected from institutions and one another, this lesson has never been more important.

Perhaps that is why co-operative values and principles matter so profoundly today. Not because they offer easy solutions to complex problems but because they remind us that legitimacy ultimately rests upon relationships and that communities are strongest when power is shared rather than concentrated.

For Pride in Place, the challenge is not simply to build projects or restore places.

It is to cultivate forms of leadership capable of renewing trust and sustaining democracy across generations and that renewal must begin with the recognition that children and young people are not leaders of tomorrow waiting patiently on the margins. They are leaders of today and the future legitimacy of communities may depend upon whether they are trusted to help shape them.

Chapter 17:

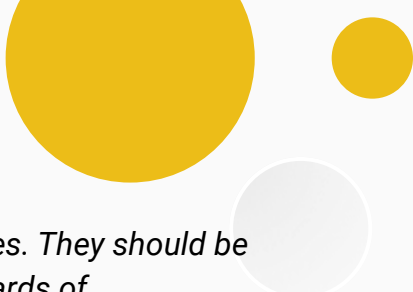
From Consultation to Co-Creation: A Practical Guide for Including Children and Young People in Pride in Place : Co-operative and Intergenerational Approaches to Shared Stewardship



Throughout this discussion paper, Yorkshire Young Co-operators and their young co-operator peers in Wales have argued that the future success of Pride in Place will depend not simply upon investment, governance arrangements or physical regeneration, but upon whether the programme succeeds in creating genuinely intergenerational forms of democracy and stewardship.

This chapter therefore moves from theory towards practice.

Drawing upon the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 12, Hart's Ladder of Participation, Lundy's Model of Participation, Doughnut Economics, systems theory, the Well-being of Future Generations approach in Wales, co-operative principles and values, research undertaken by UNICEF, the Children's Society, the Children's Commissioners and the Youth Endowment Fund, together with practical experience emerging from Sheffield Co-operative Development Group programmes, Co-op Academies Trust, The Your Co-op Little Pioneers, The Sheffield Childcare, Play, Family Support and Childminding CBS and discussions between Yorkshire Young Co-operators and our young co-operator peers in Wales, this chapter proposes a framework for embedding children and young people within Pride in Place from the earliest years onwards.



The central proposition is simple.

Children and young people should not be viewed as occasional consultees. They should be recognised as citizens, partners, co-creators and future stewards of place. Participation should therefore be developmental, age-appropriate and continuous across the life course.

Beginning in the Earliest Years

Co-operative traditions stretching from Robert Owen to contemporary co-operative education approaches have long recognised that democracy begins in the earliest years. Even very young children possess opinions, preferences and insights concerning their surroundings.

Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child makes no lower age limit for participation.

Consequently, Pride in Place should embrace the principle that participation begins not at adolescence but in early childhood.

For children aged from birth to approximately five years, participation will necessarily look different from adult forms of engagement.

- Observation.
- Play.
- Storytelling.
- Photography.
- Art.
- Music.
- Role play.
- Sensory activities.

These represent legitimate forms of democratic expression.

Early years settings should be recognised as important civic institutions and natural partners within Pride in Place.

Nurseries, family hubs and early years providers could undertake:

- "My Favourite Place" projects;
- children's maps of neighbourhoods;
- intergenerational gardening projects;
- storytelling around community history;
- community treasure hunts;
- sensory audits of parks and public spaces;
- friendship and belonging projects.

Such approaches recognise that children are experts in childhood.

Infant and Primary Years: Learning Democracy Through Experience:

Research consistently demonstrates that participation is developmental. Children learn democracy by experiencing it.

Primary-aged children can therefore become active contributors to Pride in Place through approaches rooted in co-operative education and active citizenship.

Examples might include:

- community walks and sports and leisure trail : asset mapping;
- children's neighbourhood audits;
- community history projects;
- mini participatory budgets;
- environmental initiatives;
- school - community partnerships;
- co-operative clubs;
- community enterprises;
- recruitment Panels;
- intergenerational projects with older residents.

Importantly, these activities should not simply be educational exercises.

Children should be able to see how their contributions influence decisions.

- Feedback loops matter.
- Influence matters.

Children need to know that participation has consequences.

Secondary School and Adolescence/Young People

Adolescence represents a period of increasing identity formation and civic awareness.

Young people in secondary education should be recognised not simply as consultees but as partners.

- Places on the Partnership and Leadership Board
- Recruitment Panels.
- Youth Co-operative Forums.
- Young Place Assemblies.
- Youth Community Wealth Building Groups.
- Climate and Sustainability Panels.
- Young Historians Programmes.
- Intergenerational Dialogue Forums.
- Digital Participation Networks.
- Youth Participatory Budgeting.
- Community Journalism Projects.
- Youth Community Researchers.
- Youth Social Enterprises and Co-operatives.
- Community Asset Stewardship Projects.

Importantly, these structures should not operate separately from mainstream governance.

Young Adult Aged 16-18

Older adolescents possess the capacity to undertake substantial leadership roles.

Research and practice increasingly demonstrate the effectiveness of:

- Youth trustees;
- Board apprenticeships;
- Paid internships;
- Fellowships;
- Community organising roles;
- Research and evaluation positions;
- Youth ambassadors;
- Co-operative enterprise development;
- Participatory budgeting panels;
- Recruitment panels.

Indeed, Yorkshire Young Co-operators and their peers in Wales have repeatedly argued that children and young people should not only participate in governance, they should participate in the recruitment of those who govern.

This could include involvement in:

- selection and interview panels;
- person specifications;
- community engagement roles;
- board recruitment;
- evaluation and accountability processes.

Participation should begin before structures are created - Not after.

Intergenerational Governance

Pride in Place presents an opportunity to pioneer genuinely intergenerational governance.

This might include:

- Youth Representatives with Voting Rights.
- Intergenerational Advisory Councils.
- Young Co-operator Networks.
- Community Stewardship Panels.
- Youth Assemblies linked to Boards.
- Community Wealth Building Forums.
- Climate Justice Groups.
- Children's Commissioners or Advocates attached to Pride in Place.
- Intergenerational Citizens' Assemblies.
- Young Trustees.
- Youth Observers progressing into full membership.

Importantly, young people should never be isolated as symbolic representatives.

No individual should carry the burden of representing an entire generation.

Meaningful participation requires numbers, support and relationships.

Co-operative Structures

Co-operation offers practical structures through which participation can be embedded:

- Youth Co-operatives.
- Early Years and School Co-operatives.
- Community Benefit Societies.
- Participatory Budgeting.
- Multi-stakeholder Co-operatives.
- Community Land Trusts.
- Community Energy Co-operatives.
- Housing Co-operatives.
- Intergenerational Community Enterprises.
- Care Co-operatives
- Health, Sports and Leisure Co-operatives
- Digital Platform Co-operatives.

Such structures embody democratic member control and shared responsibility. They provide opportunities for children and young people not merely to discuss communities but to own and shape them.

Reasonable Adjustments and Inclusive Participation

Participation without accessibility is exclusion. Consequently, Pride in Place should adopt a principle of universal inclusion.

Children and young people experiencing disability, neurodivergence, poverty, trauma, caring responsibilities and other forms of inequality should not be expected to adapt themselves to systems.

Systems should adapt to them.

- Inclusive practices should include:
- Easy Read materials;
- visual communication;
- alternative communication methods;
- hybrid participation;
- online engagement;
- quiet spaces;
- sensory adjustments;
- advocates and supporters;
- peer support;
- translation services;
- travel expenses;
- flexible timings;
- food and refreshments;
- accessible venues;
- trauma-informed approaches;
- psychological safety;
- creative methods of participation.

Children and young people should be able to choose how they participate. There should be multiple pathways into involvement.

Recruitment and Shared Accountability

Participation should extend into accountability and recruitment.

Children and young people should help:

- recruit staff;
- appoint leaders;
- evaluate services;
- undertake mystery shopping exercises;
- conduct community audits;
- participate in inspections;
- review priorities;
- shape annual reports.

Such arrangements are increasingly common across education, health and social care and reflect principles of co-production and shared power.

Asset-Based Community Audits

Traditional needs assessments often focus upon problems. Yorkshire Young Co-operators and their peers in Wales have argued for intergenerational asset-based community audits.

These should identify:

- skills;
- talents;
- friendships;
- voluntary activity;
- cultural heritage;
- community spaces;
- digital networks;
- creativity;
- hopes and aspirations.

Children and young people should be recognised as assets themselves.

Not simply beneficiaries.

Measuring Success

Success should not be measured solely through outputs.

It should be measured through:

- belonging;
- relationships;
- trust;
- influence;
- confidence;
- wellbeing;
- hope;
- intergenerational connections;
- community ownership;
- democratic participation.

The question should not be:
"How many young people attended?"
But:
"How much influence did they have?"

Closing Reflections: Towards a Truly Intergenerational Pride in Place

Throughout this discussion paper, Yorkshire Young Co-operators and their young co-operator peers in Wales have sought to contribute constructively to the continuing development of the Government's Pride in Place programme.

This paper has proceeded from a position of hope.

It recognises the considerable ambition underpinning the programme. It welcomes the emphasis placed upon belonging, stewardship, local identity, civic renewal and community participation. It acknowledges that Pride in Place remains at a relatively early stage of development and therefore possesses both the opportunity and the capacity to learn, adapt and evolve.

Precisely because of this potential, however, the paper concludes with a gentle challenge. For all the language of belonging and community, there remains a risk that children and young people may be unintentionally overlooked or included only symbolically within emerging arrangements. Consultation without influence, representation without power and visibility without voice are not the same as participation.

The danger is rarely one of deliberate exclusion.

More often, it arises from inherited assumptions about expertise, leadership and citizenship. Structures are established by adults, for adults and around adult expectations. Children and young people may subsequently be invited in, but not always enabled to shape the conversation itself.

Yorkshire Young Co-operators and their peers in Wales therefore respectfully call upon the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and those responsible for the Pride in Place programme to remain vigilant against the risk of tokenism and to continue to encourage approaches which recognise children and young people as citizens, assets and co-creators of place.

In particular, the paper invites those responsible for Pride in Place Partnerships, Leadership Boards and associated governance arrangements to reflect upon an important question:

Do our structures genuinely reflect the communities they seek to serve?

Representation matters. Communities are intergenerational. They are characterised by diversity of age, experience and identity. And other protected equalities characteristics

If Pride in Place seeks to strengthen belonging and civic pride, then its leadership arrangements should aspire to reflect the richness and diversity of those communities themselves.



Local authorities, public bodies, anchor institutions, businesses, voluntary organisations and community leaders are therefore invited to consider: whether children and young people are present within conversations concerning the future of place;

- whether opportunities for participation are meaningful rather than symbolic;
- whether barriers to involvement have been removed;
- whether governance structures reflect the diversity of local communities;
- whether future generations are visible within decision-making; and
- whether the voices that are easiest to hear have inadvertently become substitutes for the voices that are harder to reach.

For democracy is strongest when everybody has the opportunity to contribute and inclusion is not achieved merely by ensuring that some children and young people are represented.

As Yorkshire Young Co-operators and their peers in Wales have repeatedly observed:

**Nothing About Us Without Us.
And
Nothing About Some of Us Without All of Us.**

The challenge facing Pride in Place is therefore not simply one of regeneration.

It is one of democratic renewal. For communities are not inherited from the past alone. They are held in trust between past, present and future. The decisions made today will shape the experiences of generations yet to come.

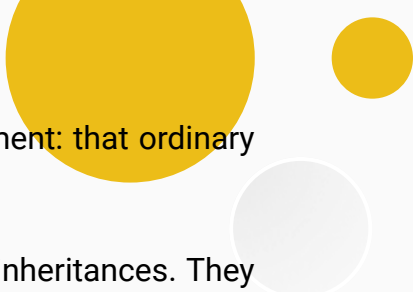
Those who will live longest with those decisions should not stand outside them. They should help shape them.

Fortunately, the future of Pride in Place is not fixed. Its story is still being written. This creates an extraordinary opportunity. An opportunity to move beyond consultation towards co-production. An opportunity to move beyond programmes towards relationships. An opportunity to move beyond viewing children and young people as future citizens and to recognise them as citizens now and perhaps, if Pride in Place succeeds in doing so, it may come to represent something even greater than community regeneration.

It may become an example of intergenerational stewardship.

It may become a demonstration of democratic renewal.

It may show that communities flourish when people are trusted and when power is shared.



It may remind us of a truth long understood by the co-operative movement: that ordinary people, working together, are capable of extraordinary things.

For communities belong not to one generation alone. They are shared inheritances. They are acts of hope. They are promises made across time and perhaps the greatest measure of pride in place will not be found in buildings restored, investments secured or strategies written. Perhaps it will be found in whether every child and young person, looking around the place they call home, is able to say with confidence:

"This place belongs to me. I belong to it and I helped shape its future."

For that is not merely pride in place. That is democracy and that is hope.

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Appendices

The following appendices are provided to support the discussion contained within this paper. They bring together key international conventions, co-operative principles, participation frameworks and practical tools intended to support the development of genuinely inclusive and intergenerational approaches to Pride in Place.

The appendices are intended to be used by children and young people, communities, Pride in Place Partnerships, local authorities, anchor institutions, businesses, schools, voluntary organisations and others committed to strengthening democracy, participation and stewardship.

Appendix A

International Co-operative Alliance Values and Principles

Co-operative Values

Co-operatives are based upon the values of:

- Self-help;
- Self-responsibility;
- Democracy;
- Equality;
- Equity; and
- Solidarity.

In the tradition of their founders, co-operative members believe in the ethical values of:

- Honesty;
- Openness;
- Social responsibility; and
- Caring for others.

The Seven Co-operative Principles

- **Voluntary and Open Membership**
 - Co-operatives are open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership without discrimination.
- **Democratic Member Control**
 - Co-operatives are democratic organisations controlled by their members.
- **Member Economic Participation**
 - Members contribute equitably to and democratically control the capital of their co-operative.
- **Autonomy and Independence**
 - Co-operatives are autonomous organisations controlled by their members.
- **Education, Training and Information**
 - Co-operatives provide education and training for members, elected representatives, managers and employees.
- **Co-operation Among Co-operatives**
 - Co-operatives strengthen the movement by working together.
- **Concern for Community**
 - Co-operatives work for the sustainable development of their communities.

Appendix B

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

The Convention recognises that children are rights holders.

Key principles include:

- **Article 2**

Non-discrimination.

- **Article 3**

The best interests of the child.

- **Article 6**

The right to life, survival and development.

- **Article 12**

The right to express views and have those views given due weight.

- **Article 13**

Freedom of expression.

- **Article 15**

Freedom of association.

- **Article 23**

Rights of disabled children.

- **Article 24**

Health.

- **Article 28**

Education.

- **Article 29**

Aims of education.

- **Article 31**

Rest, play and culture.

The Convention establishes children and young people as citizens and rights holders rather than passive recipients of services.

Appendix C

General Comment No. 12: The Right of the Child to be Heard

General Comment No. 12 explains Article 12 of the UNCRC.

It confirms that children and young people should:

- express views freely;
- receive information;
- influence decisions affecting them;
- participate in schools and communities;
- participate in political and administrative processes;
- experience accessible and inclusive participation.

Participation should be:

- transparent;
- voluntary;
- respectful;
- relevant;
- child-friendly;
- inclusive;
- safe;
- accountable.

Appendix D

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Guiding Principles

- Respect for dignity;
- Non-discrimination;
- Full participation;
- Equality of opportunity;
- Accessibility;
- Equality between women and men;
- Respect for children with disabilities.

Key Articles

Article 3 – General Principles

Article 7 – Children with disabilities

Article 9 – Accessibility

Article 19 – Independent living

Article 21 – Accessible information

Article 24 – Inclusive education

Article 29 – Participation in political and public life

Core Principle

Nothing About Us Without Us

Appendix E

Co-operative Education and Democratic Citizenship

Co-operative education is founded upon the belief that:

Democracy is learned.

People learn citizenship by participating.

Education should develop:

- confidence;
- responsibility;
- critical thinking;
- solidarity;
- participation;
- stewardship.

Influences include:

- Robert Owen;
- The Rochdale Pioneers;
- José María Arizmendiarieta;
- Co-op Academies Trust;
- Co-operative Wales;
- Sheffield Co-operative Development Group.

Democracy begins in the earliest years and continues throughout life.

Appendix F

Intergenerational Asset-Based Community Audit Framework

Communities should ask:

Strengths

- What are we proud of?
- What traditions matter?
- What assets already exist?

Relationships

- Who brings people together?
- Where do people meet?
- How do generations connect?

Children and Young People

- What do children value?
- What would they preserve?
- What would they change?

Belonging

- Who feels included?
- Who feels excluded?
- Are barriers being removed?

Future Generations

- Are decisions sustainable?
- What legacy are we leaving?

Appendix G

Questions for Pride in Place Partnerships and Leadership Bodies

Representation

- Does our leadership reflect the age profile of the community?
- Are children and young people present?
- Are seldom-heard voices represented?

Participation

- Are young people influencing decisions?
- Are they involved in recruitment and governance?
- Is participation meaningful rather than tokenistic?

Accessibility

- Are reasonable adjustments available?
- Are meetings accessible?
- Are digital and hybrid options available?

Equality

- Are all communities represented?
- Have we considered intersectionality?
- Are barriers being removed?

Stewardship

- Are future generations considered?
- Are we building relationships as well as projects?
- Are we strengthening belonging?

Reflection

- **Who is missing from the room?**
- **Whose voices are we hearing?**
- **Whose voices are we not hearing?**
- **Are we doing things for children and young people, or with them?**

Closing Question

What would Pride in Place look like if democracy, belonging and stewardship genuinely began in the earliest years and continued throughout life?

Equally importantly:

What might our communities become if we trusted children and young people not merely to inherit the future, but to help create it?



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