



# Power to Change:

## Leicestershire Cares' Annual Plan 2021-22

### Introduction

Leicestershire Cares is a vibrant, creative; result orientated award-winning charity that has been operating successfully across Leicester city, Leicestershire and Rutland (LLR) since 2003. Throughout the pandemic, lockdown and the transition out of lockdown we have proved we are a creative, agile and resilient organisation that can deliver change through our joined up approach to work.

### Vision, Mission and Goals

#### Our vision

An inclusive and safe Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland where nobody is left behind, and all children and young people are supported to reach their full potential.

#### Our mission

We broker partnerships and create opportunities across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland that enable the business sector to understand community needs, contribute to the growth of inclusive, safe communities and to support and inspire children and young people in their transition to the workplace.

#### Our values

##### **We believe in partnership.**

We broker partnerships between business, local government, schools and community groups so they can share skills and knowledge to deliver lasting positive change for disadvantaged groups and individuals.

##### **We believe in the power of employee volunteering.**

We believe that employee volunteering enables volunteers, community groups and individuals to develop skills and understanding and is a highly effective way of strengthening communities and increasing employee engagement.

##### **We focus on impact.**

We focus on impact and ensuring the work we carry out delivers meaningful and lasting positive change.

##### **We are inspiring.**

We inspire people and organisations to identify their aspirations and to reach their full potential by thinking creatively and testing innovative approaches.

##### **We are Inclusive.**

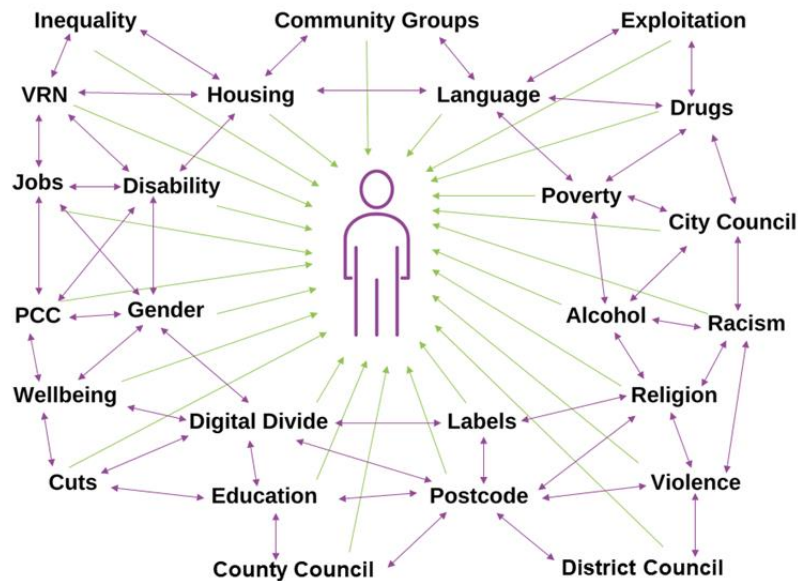
We seek to learn from the rich cultural diversity of Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland and to build cohesion across community groups and to remove barriers to people's participation.

## We are committed to learning and development.

We continually review the community need and are agile enough to adapt and improve the services we offer to work in a mutually beneficial way with relevant organisations.

## Moving on from the Covid19 pandemic

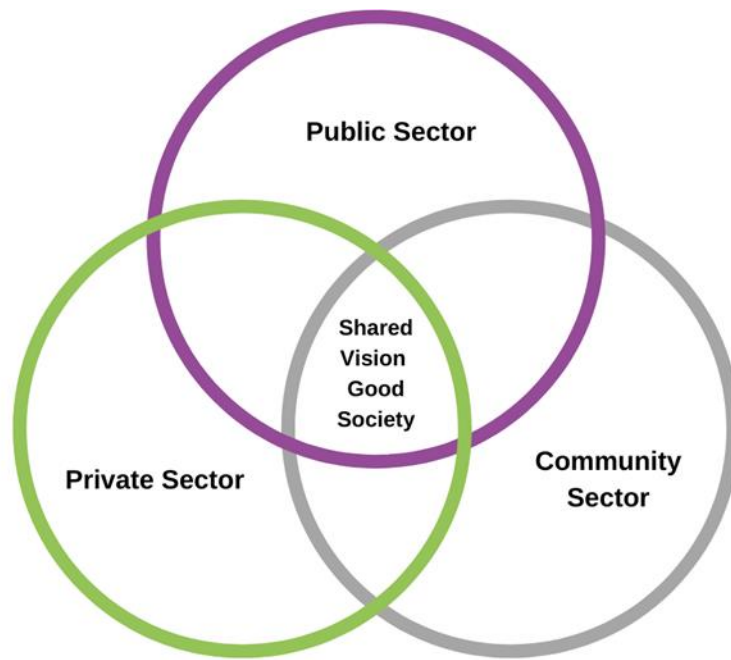
Covid 19 has had a significant impact on all our stakeholders. Our reflections on the impact and how we intend to respond moving forward were captured in our “Power to Change” paper. The paper outlined:



**Impact on young people: Complexity.** The place and context in which young people live has a significant impact on their life chances. They are affected by a range of overlapping and interlinked issues. The key point to highlight here is that there is not one neat, linear solution to a simple cause and effect, rather for most of the young people we work with, there is a complex web of issues that need to be addressed in an agile and creative way.

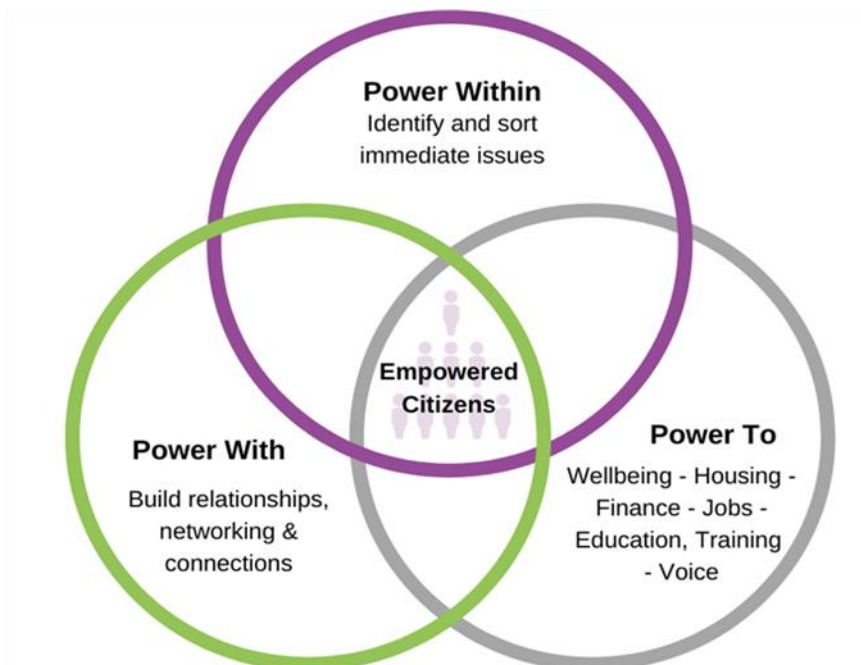
These complex issues often include: having experience of and been emotionally scarred by the care system; physical and mental health issues; insecure or inappropriate housing; addictions; involvement in crime; lack of family support; having children taken into care; domestic abuse; debt and financial management issues; racism; immigration status; living in a deprived area; poor levels of basic education; and being unwilling or unable to get a job. For many of these young people, Covid19 seemed to be just another hurdle and stress in their often chaotic and complex lives.

It is our strong belief based on reflecting on our practice, that to work effectively with these young people, we need to understand the complexity of their life situation and work with them to address these overlapping issues.



### Power to Change approach

At the heart of this approach is the belief that we need to work with young people in a joined up, agile and holistic way that is rooted in partnership working and a solid understanding of the local place and context. It is also based on the belief that young people are often best placed to know what is best for them and, given support and encouragement, they can become “creators” rather than just “consumers” of services and solutions.



## Power within

Many of the young people we work with are having to deal with a wide range of complex issues. There is no point trying to work with them on issues such as getting a job or sharing their lived experience until this 'chaos' is dealt with. Key to our approach is being young person centred and working with the young person to identify the issues they face and to support them to understand why this is and how they might bring about change. Quite often, this is linked to obtaining secure, safe accommodation, getting out of abusive relationships, seeking practical and emotional support, getting on top of finances and developing IT and living skills. It requires our staff to have strong links with the various community and local authority service providers who can provide specialist support.

## Power with

Many of the young people we work with see themselves as worthless and powerless individuals. They are often living isolated lives and feel cut off from society. We believe that if we can bring people with similar experiences together, it can be an empowering experience. When young people are encouraged to think more collectively about the context and environment in which they have been growing up and how that may have shaped them, it can be a transformational experience. Key to this "social action" approach is that anything that has been "socially constructed" can be changed. In many ways, this unfolding process of knowledge and realisation is the bedrock of effective citizenship. It is also based on the belief that to get on in life you need to be able to develop and build relationships, networks and connections. Your group becomes your back up and a source of inspiration and strength. The more you get used to working in groups the easier it becomes to make new connections and, as any manager or would-be employer will tell you, "teamwork" is an essential life skill.

## Power to

Once young people start to understand more fully the situation they are in and why so many of their peers are in a similar situation, it can be a powerful catalyst for change. So, for example, we have supported young people to educate decision makers and other young people about their experiences and contribute to structural changes in the way services are developed and delivered. This process also enables young people to develop a wide range of soft and hard skills which many then use to secure a job or enter education or training.

Throughout this stage, we are proactively working with young people to create opportunities for them to build understanding and connections with community, business and local authority staff as well as their peer group. This might vary from attending a community project to completing a work placement with a local business or being mentored by a local business volunteer. Not only do these connections offer practical support, but they also provide young people with experience of meeting people who may well be very different to them. From being isolated and cut off, young people become more confident and sociable.

That is why as well as our youth workers, we have community workers, working to strengthen the community sector and to build links between business, community and local authorities.

## Focus of our work

We will continue to broker partnerships between business, schools, community groups and local government so we are able to:

## Children and Young People

We will seek to support young people we work with to cope and deal with the transition out of lockdown through a range of one to one and group interventions. These will increasingly be delivered “safe distance” face to face as well as remotely.

Develop and deliver targeted work with care experience, NEET, homeless and ex offending young people aged 15 to 24. The emphasis of this work will be framed by our “Power to Change” approach and will:

- Support the young people to deal with the many overlapping issues that hold them back in life such as inadequate housing, physical and mental wellbeing, financial management, dependency issues, dysfunctional and abusive relationships.
- Support young people to understand, explore and enter education, employment and training.
- Support community groups that support these young people.
- Ensure young people’s “lived experience and voice” guides the development, delivery and evaluation of our work and feed into relevant local and national policy and practice debates.

## Community development

Seek to build on our strong relationships with Local Authorities and community groups across LLR so our work is firmly anchored in local agendas. Our work will:

- Proactively seek to build on the partnerships we have developed with African, Afro Caribbean, Asian and East European groups and seek to develop more ways to enable the business community to partner with them to share skills and knowledge.
- Identify and facilitate practical ways the community and business sector can work together to strengthen community responses to poverty and exclusions.
- Reflect on learning arising from our work and promote partnership working between business, community and local councils through a variety of formats.

## Priorities

As we enter 21/22, we have identified the following priorities.

1. **Respond to challenges thrown up by the transition out of lockdown and any setbacks that may arise.** This will be framed by our “Power to Change” approach and we anticipate our ability to be creative and agile will be key.
2. **Programme delivery.** We deliver high quality, high impact, high profile programmes where all our work is planned and evaluated within a Results Based Management framework. We will ensure all internal and external donor targets, milestones, budget and reporting deadlines are met. This is the nuts and bolts of what we do. We will ensure we share our learning to relevant local, regional and national audiences.
3. **Income.** We proactively seek sustainable income streams for our work which add value to our vision, mission and values. This will involve all our programme workers becoming more aware of the “funding ecosystem” for their work and being able to highlight opportunities that we might be able to pursue in order to continue and or develop/expand our work. This may well include developing partnerships and coalitions we can work with to deliver work and seek funding.
4. **Team work.** We continue to work in a creative, agile and joined up manner and all staff are encouraged and supported to proactively participate in the development of our programmes

and projects. Staff will be supported to develop their knowledge of and ability to partner with the diverse communities of our city and county.

5. **Membership.** We will seek to work sensitively with members as they transition out of lockdown, offering a mix of remote and safe distance volunteering opportunities. We will also proactively seek to encourage and support members to work with team to develop new ideas and approaches to supporting the community and young people.
6. **Mainstreaming issues.** Across all areas of our practice, we will seek to mainstream Diversity and Inclusion and working in an environmentally friendly way.

## Conclusion

Covid19 has shone a cruel light on the many issues facing our city and county, but it has also shown that there is spirit and a willingness for people to work together. It might be a cliché, but our strongest asset is our people and we firmly believe that all our communities and young people, given support and opportunities, have much to offer to the recovery and development of our city and county. Rather than seeing them as victims or problems, we must see them as assets and solutions who can create rather than just consume ideas and policies.

We believe our power to change approach can inspire energy, vitality and creativity and, in doing so, turn despair into hope and create a better city and county for all.

#TogetherWeCan

Kieran Breen

May 2021