









THE DULVERTON TRUST

An introduction to engaging young people in your community business



This guide was created with funding from Dulverton Trust, as part of the #IWill movement, and was part of a programme aiming to strengthening rural community businesses' engagement with young people delivered by the Plunkett Foundation between 2022-23.

Part of the programme included a webinar, which this resource is based on - it seeks to offer an overview of the principal considerations and issues that a community business might think about if they have an ambition to begin to engage with young people. Alternatively, it can also be used as a reference guide for rural community businesses who are already engaging with young people and are wishing to consider how their current practices might be built on.

# 1 - Why should our community business engage with young people?

There are many reasons given as to why it is beneficial for any organisation to engage young people to take on different roles within it – however, Plunkett members identified the following as being the most pertinent to rural community businesses:

#### **Succession**

Many rural community businesses recognise the difficulty in sometimes recruiting future Committee and Board members to roles in their governance. However, some Plunkett members have found that inviting and enabling young people to take part in specific planning activities now, helps them build their confidence and interest in progressing into other governance roles in the future. They have also found that involving young people in these planning and review activities (whether they be regular events, or discrete) offers fresh perspectives to the current Board and Committee to draw on, that results in greater outcomes and impacts subsequently being created.

Similarly, there can also be a difficulty for some rural community businesses to sustain a flow of volunteers to sustain their activities over time as people become less physically able, or move out of area. Engaging young people can build their interest and support to the enterprise which can be sustained as they grow older, so that they are interested in playing a role within it as a volunteer in the future.

### They have different motivations from other groups of people

Young people can also be easier to attract into roles owing to their being at an earlier stage in their working lives and careers. As such they recognise the need to develop skills and experiences for their CVs and other applications, that other groups of people would likely already have. They can therefore be more motivated to seek opportunities to take on different roles to gain these development opportunities.

### They have different aptitudes and skills from other groups of people

Younger people are generally more likely to be adept and confident with newer technologies, and so could offer rural community businesses valuable support in supporting their adoption (such as EPOS systems or starting to engage with social media to help promote the business or share news of the support offers it has to wider audiences).

## Engaging young people can strengthen links into the wider local economy and with other businesses in the area

Offering opportunities to young people within a community business need not have to rely on that business being able to offer that person a paid job in the future – it simply may not be financially possible, or even practically viable in light of other circumstances.

However, supporting that young person to develop skills, confidence, and employability experience could make them of interest to other businesses who, in turn, may be seeking candidates to recruit.

Offering roles to young people can therefore also build a 'pipeline' of future talent to benefit other local businesses and groups, and so contribute to the strengthening of the overall community and its economy.

# 2 - Considering them as a 'special class' of people

Community businesses already have practices and systems in place for how people are engaged with and supported. Usually, these approaches are 'generalised' in the sense that they will treat all people the same – however, it can be useful to consider whether it may be beneficial to adapt them specifically for young people:

### They will have different motivations and needs from older people

Younger people will be at an earlier stage in their working lives, and so keen to find opportunities to develop skills and experiences to build their CVs for future employability. Many young people will also be looking for paid roles rather than (or in addition to) voluntary positions. In contrast, other groups of people may be more interested in the social aspects that volunteering and jobs can offer them. In order to attract and engage young people, it might be useful to consider designing specific roles that a young person could take on that could help them achieve these aspirations.

### They may be less likely to want to remain in the local area in the future

Young people will also be more likely to expect themselves to be 'socially mobile', and so not be intending to make open-ended or longer-term commitments to roles that your community business can offer them.

As a result, consider designing roles to be timelimited, such as a placement, or to deliver a specific defined project. This might help a young person better feel able to engage with the opportunity owing to not feeling that they would need to be making a longer-term commitment which might otherwise make them feel unable to apply for it.

### 3 - Making it work

If a community businesses hasn't involved young people before, there are a few overarching ideas that it could be useful to consider:

### You don't have to work it all out by yourself

In addition to the Plunkett Facebook group communities where fellow communities often and freely share experiences, guidance, and signposting with each other, there are also several national youth volunteering bodies who publish guidance, templates, and checklists (see later in this resource for signposting links).

There will also be organisations and groups in the local area who have an interest in wanting to support young people in gaining opportunities to develop skills and gain new experiences. These might include schools for student projects and work placements; Duke of Edinburgh awards programmes; and such like. Reaching out to bodies like these can help identify and secure additional support and resource to help you engage young people.

#### **Share offers**

Many community businesses engage their community through share offers – however, as young people can typically have less disposable income than other age groups, the minimum investment amounts may exclude them from being able to engage with the business in this way.

However, this could be resolved through structuring a staged payment for the share, in the same way that the Rochdale Pioneers did in 1844 (for context, their £1 minimum shareholding was equivalent to nearly a month's wages today).

### Co-design approaches: "Nothing about us without us"

Ultimately, the people who know what ways of engaging and supporting them will work the best, are the young people themselves. Involving them in conversations about their interests, needs, circumstances, etc before finalising roles and processes will mean that young people are more likely to engage and sustain them, having had a voice in how they were designed.

# 4 - Trying to not trip up despite best intentions

Sometimes, despite the best of intentions on all sides, and for all sorts of reasons that hindsight teaches, things don't work out as hoped or anticipated. With that in mind, when designing and creating roles and systems around engaging young people in a community business:

#### Time is of the essence

The amount of time available to a young person in light of family commitments, school and education, the need to travel using public routes etc means that they will likely be able to offer less than other groups of people. Being able to recognise this in roles created, and the impacts of other factors in a young person's life which may impinge on their ability to consistently maintain a role, might help to mitigate future frustrations or tensions.

#### We all have to start somewhere

It is likely that for the young person engaging with a community business, this will be their first experience of doing anything like this. As a result, they will likely understandably be more nervous / lacking in confidence than other groups of people. Therefore, it may be useful to think about having more frequent check-ins, and longer induction periods than might be offered for others.

#### The generation game

Finally, when thinking about engaging young people, it can be useful to consider the impact that doing so will have on the culture and experiences of the people currently involved in an existing community business.

For some people, they may have not have had experience of working alongside young people before, and so be nervous or concerned about potential impacts to ways of working that they feel familiar and comfortable with. It may therefore be useful to consider creating opportunities to have conversations about any concerns and hopes people may have, and how these can be acknowledged and acted on.

Similarly, younger people may also have concerns and hopes about working with older generations – give them space to voice this. Encouraging each group to reflect on how each will consider approaching the other in light of this understanding could be beneficial in strengthening working relationships and the culture of a community business.



#### Where next?

As already stated, the purpose of this resource is to act as an introductory guide and overview for community businesses thinking about engaging young people more in their enterprise.

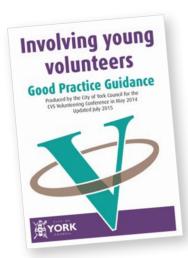
It is based on the experiences of Plunkett's member businesses, as well as reflections from on-line workshops. As such, it is not intended to be definitive, but rather a 'starting point' to help community businesses best begin to involve young people in different ways.

There are several national bodies who specialise in offering guidance, checklists, templates, and advice on involving young people in community organisations, and it may be beneficial to review their resources in building on the knowledge and insight this one has offered:

https://www.volunteernow.co.uk/volunteering/ youth-volunteering/

https://volunteeringmatters.org.uk/pillars/young-people/

In addition, there are several other publications from different agencies around England that offer case studies, insights and planning support. Although they all share a focus on volunteering roles over paid/ employed roles, the themes and considerations they highlight are equally pertinent to both:



https://www.yor-ok.org.uk/downloads/Involvement/ Involving%20Young%20People%20in%20 Volunteering%20Handbook.pdf



https://www.volunteerfirst.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Young-Volunteers-Toolkit-2-1.pdf



https://expertsinvolunteering.org.uk/sites/ expertsinvolunteering.org.uk/files/resources/eytbguide-pdf-version\_0.pdf

This resource was written by Plunkett Adviser Adrian Ashton, in consultation with Plunkett Members

If you would like to access further advice on engaging young people in your community business please call us **01993 630022** or email **info@plunkett.co.uk**