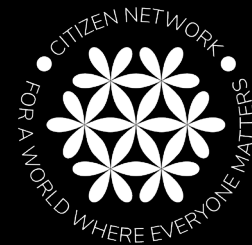


NEIGHBOURHOODS OF CARE

Where we take care of ourselves, each other and the planet



Dr Simon Duffy | Citizen Network | May 2025



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Thanks

The seeds are already in the ground

This strategy has been developed by Citizen Network and People Focused Group after meetings with leaders from across South Yorkshire including the 4 local authorities (Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield), the NHS and the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA).

It is supported and inspired by the work of many different groups and organisations. We would like to give thanks to all of these groups for their support:



We hope this strategy will be adopted and used to shape our future together.

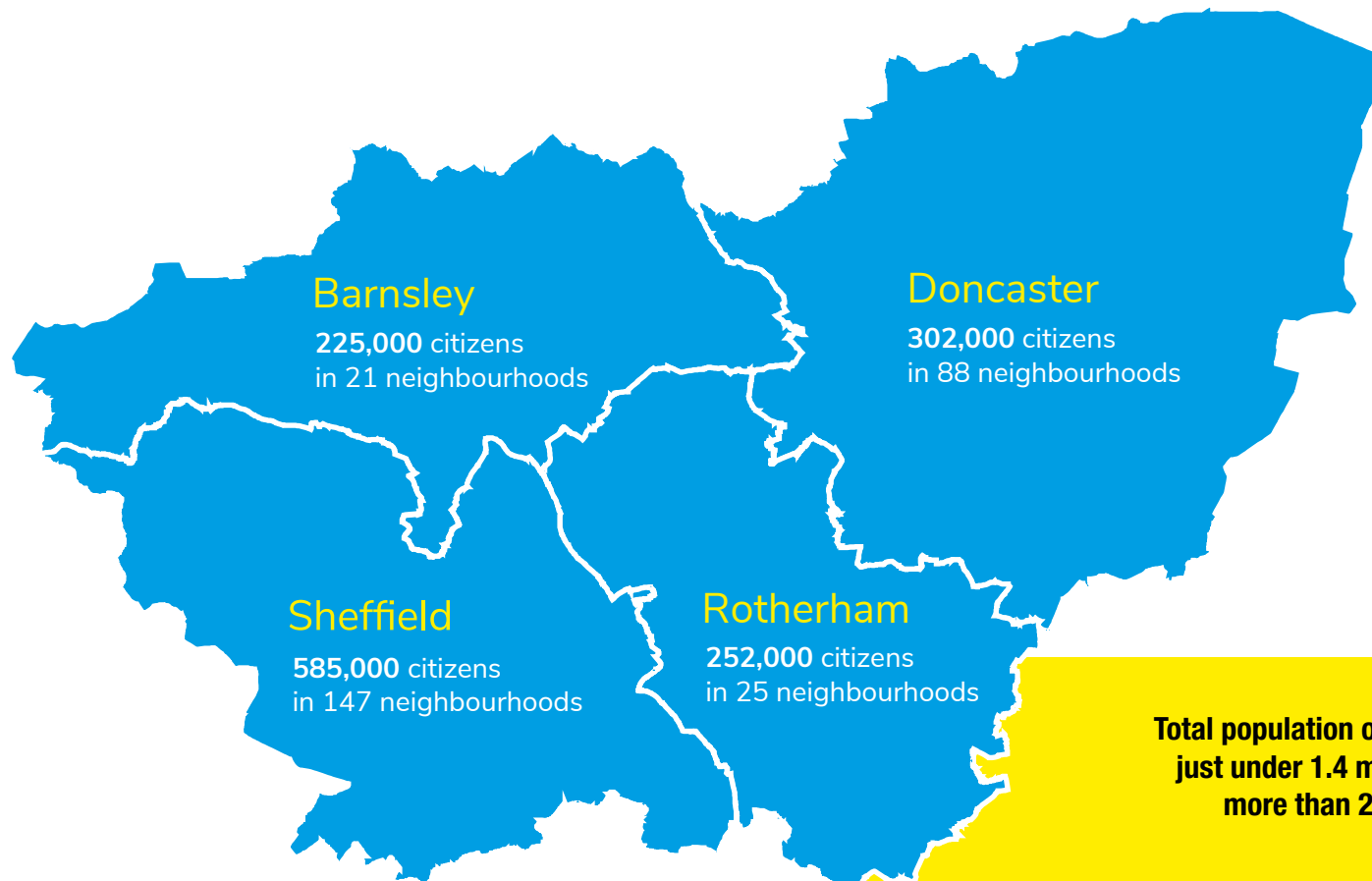
Summary

A strategy for Neighbourhoods of Care in South Yorkshire

- 1** We face urgent and severe challenges that we must address. Human wellbeing and environmental sustainability are under threat and growing inequality and insecurity is undermining the integrity of the current system.
- 2** We rely on each other for mutual care and support, but we do nothing to support citizenship or develop Neighbourhoods of Care. The relationship between people and the public services has become too distant and transactional. We need structures that help people to connect and to have more power.
- 3** We can unlock citizen capacity so people can take better care of themselves, each other and the planet. We can redistribute money and services fairly, prevent crises and improve lives. This is the only sustainable way forward.
- 4** South Yorkshire is in a good place to start this work. The problems created by deindustrialisation, centralisation and growing cynicism mean the need for change is urgent. The values, energy and skills of local people and the resilience of community organisations and businesses give us a good foundation to build upon. We already have enough in our communities and across the care system to start, if we are willing to change. This work also naturally aligns with other reforms in finance, democracy and the environment.
- 5** There is no one actor or system that can achieve all the necessary changes. The strategy outlined below is multilayered and will require many new partnerships; but it can be achieved and South Yorkshire can lead the way.

South Yorkshire

Combined Mayoral Authority | NHS Integrated Care System | Police | Police Commissioner | Fire & Rescue



Total population of South Yorkshire is just under 1.4 million with probably more than 281 neighbourhoods.

Preface

One of the fundamental tasks of the twenty-first century is to put care at the heart of our thinking and our world.

Care includes healthcare and social care, but these services are not the most fundamental parts of care. Care is a fundamental duty for all citizens and it is an essential and beautiful part of being human. Most care is already provided by people outside services, out of love, and the only sustainable way forward is to build on our natural capacity for care. This paper will explain:

- Why we must organise care on a neighbourhood basis.
- What principles should guide our collective work.
- How this change can be achieved in practice.

The concept of Neighbourhoods of Care is not new. In many ways we will need to relearn practices that were common in the past. We also need to remember that care is already an essential part

of life and that most care is provided by families, and predominately by women. Social services and funding systems are only one part of a much richer picture. This is not fantasy; there are examples of neighbourhood-based approaches around the world and in South Yorkshire.

However we do need a fresh approach. Our thinking draws on the wisdom and experience of many people, communities and organisations. We will refer to some of this in this paper. In 2024 leaders across South Yorkshire met to explore what this idea might mean in practice. All 4 local authorities (Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield), the NHS and the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) agreed to work together to develop and deliver a South Yorkshire Neighbourhoods of Care Strategy.

We are only at the start of our journey and all our partners may not share every view expressed in this paper. But this paper uses data and experiences from South Yorkshire because we believe that we're in a good place to make progress together.

This paper is provocative. It is meant to encourage discussion and action. The proposals here cannot be achieved over night. We must reverse 50 years of policy-making that has centralised power and over-regulated care. However conversations with leaders across our communities indicate that the time is right.

We all know the current system is broken, that radical change is necessary and that the future direction is towards citizenship and neighbourhoods.

Simon Duffy & Kelly Hicks



It's Our Community - 2023 Conference in Sheffield where 200 people gathered to explore Neighbourhood Care.

1.

Face up to the challenge

We need to have faith in each other

50 years ago few would have predicted the situation we face today. The immediate postwar years were relatively optimistic about the economy and social progress. It was widely expected that automation would reduce working hours and open up a new era of increased health and leisure. Politicians across the Western world seemed united in a willingness to take social problems seriously. Many countries worked hard to advance global cooperation and to advance democracy.



It's Our Community 2023



Today there is little assurance that things 'can only get better'. The level of trust in politicians (especially politicians from central government) is extremely low. Currently only 37% of UK citizens trust the government and only 17% think the next generation will be better off than this one (ETI, 2025). This is not the place to track all of the problems and difficulties we face, but there are several problems which are severe, growing and will require much greater resilience from our neighbourhoods and other communities.

Perhaps our biggest problem is that we are acting in ways that undermine the possibility of life itself. Despite the rhetoric, carbon emissions continue to increase at the same rate as they did in 1945. Man-made climate change is a fact and the consequences of this change can be seen today, and are set to get far worse. The rate of species extinction continues to increase, causing irreparable harm to the Earth's biodiversity and impoverishing future generations (Johnson, 2021). There is increasing evidence of the long-term harms caused by plastics, toxins and other products of the industrial age. We are clearly not looking after the planet.

We're also doing a poor job of looking after ourselves and each other. There are growing inequalities in

life expectancy and the fact that people from many communities are seeing life expectancy rates drop is a shocking reversal of past trends. This is a national problem, but it is particularly severe in the North (Marmot et al. 2020). The gap in life expectancy between the richest and the poorest neighbourhoods is growing and in Sheffield it is now 18 years, and for women it is at least 20 years (Thomas et al. 2016).

These inequalities usually closely align with racial prejudice. People from minority ethnic communities often find themselves living in the poorest and most disadvantaged communities (SCC, 2022). These inequalities were highlighted in the COVID pandemic, which saw much higher death rates for people from ethnic minority communities.

Public services continue to do vital work, despite a political and economic system that often undermines their best efforts. However there is a growing gap between official policies and reality. In theory government policy is positive: support families to stay together; support people to live in their own homes; support disabled people to be active citizens. However the reality is that progress has now halted or gone into reverse in all these areas. There are now nearly 100% more 'looked after children' than there were 30 years ago. About 45% of those children are

placed in care arrangements that are not just outside their own neighbourhood, they are outside the local authority (DfE, 2024). Even worse the prospects of living well after being 'looked after' are very poor—as Clare Hyde puts it they provide a tragic example of “careless care” (Hyde, 2018).

In Adult Social Care there are similar problems; severe financial constraints lead to cuts in more personalised or preventative services, pushing more people into institutional or residential services, where costs also escalate faster (Duffy, 2019). The system seem trapped in a vicious cycle that it is very hard for services to reverse on their own.













Ongoing cuts in disability benefits and other national policies also seem to do nothing to tackle the root socioeconomic conditions of inequality or injustice. People with disabilities, mental health problems or chronic health conditions don't get the chance to share their gifts and make a contribution to society that they should.

These inequalities, alongside increased economic insecurity are driving fear, alienation, violence and encouraging the growth of the racist politics that we witnessed in the 2024 riots. This problem is not restricted to the North, but it is often more

severe in the North. This is because the North has suffered decades of expropriation. In terms of GDP per capita, Yorkshire has now fallen to the level of Estonia, a country that had suffered decades of brutal communist control, while London has now risen to the level of Brunei, an oil rich dictatorship.

Amidst these severe problems there is hope. The fundamental resource of any community is its people, and we are rich in talented people. We have the natural and human resources we need. But we perhaps don't have the faith we need in each other, and we are certainly not organised to make best use of all the resources at our command.

UK Regional Inequality

Regions or countries of UK:	Global ranking:	Equivalent to:
London	5th	Brunei 
South East England	20th	Canada 
Scotland	29th	South Korea 
East of England	30th	Spain 
North West England	32nd	New Zealand 
South West England	32nd	New Zealand 
West Midlands	36th	Israel 
East Midlands	37th	Lithuania 
Yorkshire & Humber	39th	Estonia 
Northern Ireland	40th	Hungary 
North East England	42nd	Portugal 
Wales	42nd	Portugal 

Regional inequality in the UK is extremely high and has been growing for decades. Yorkshire, which helped build the UK's economy has now declined to the level of countries that have suffered decades of totalitarian oppression. Sources: IMF 2020 Data on GDP (PPP) per capita and Harari D (2018) Regional and local economic growth statistics. London: House of Commons

2.

Change our thinking

We already have many of the things we need

There is widespread recognition that our society needs to shift its attention towards citizens and local communities. In particular, global evidence suggests that neighbourhoods create a critical framework for organising mutual aid, care and support and for orientating many professional services.



It's Our Community 2023

During the COVID pandemic we saw many communities step up to meet the challenge with inspiring and creative examples of mutual aid. However, despite the rhetoric of “Build Back Better” we’ve largely gone back to old ways of thinking and acting.

Yet, some of us are starting to change our thinking. There seems to be an emerging movement, an ambition to connect the dots between many of the best things we’ve been learning, scattered around the world. But before we begin to think about solutions its important to take stock of where we are. In this analysis I will largely focus on data and problems in England.

We need to reorientate our approach around five key principles:

1. Care is central to everything
2. Citizenship unlocks creativity
3. Invest in our communities
4. Let local people lead
5. Power up neighbourhoods

There are systemic reasons for these failures, but these can be addressed by careful consideration of the facts and by working to together to build new, fairer and more sustainable structures.



It's Our Community 2023

2.1 Care is central to everything

Care is a natural and vital human responsibility

Perhaps the most important failure in thinking about care is that we forget about all the natural care that human beings provide to each other, motivated by different forms of love.

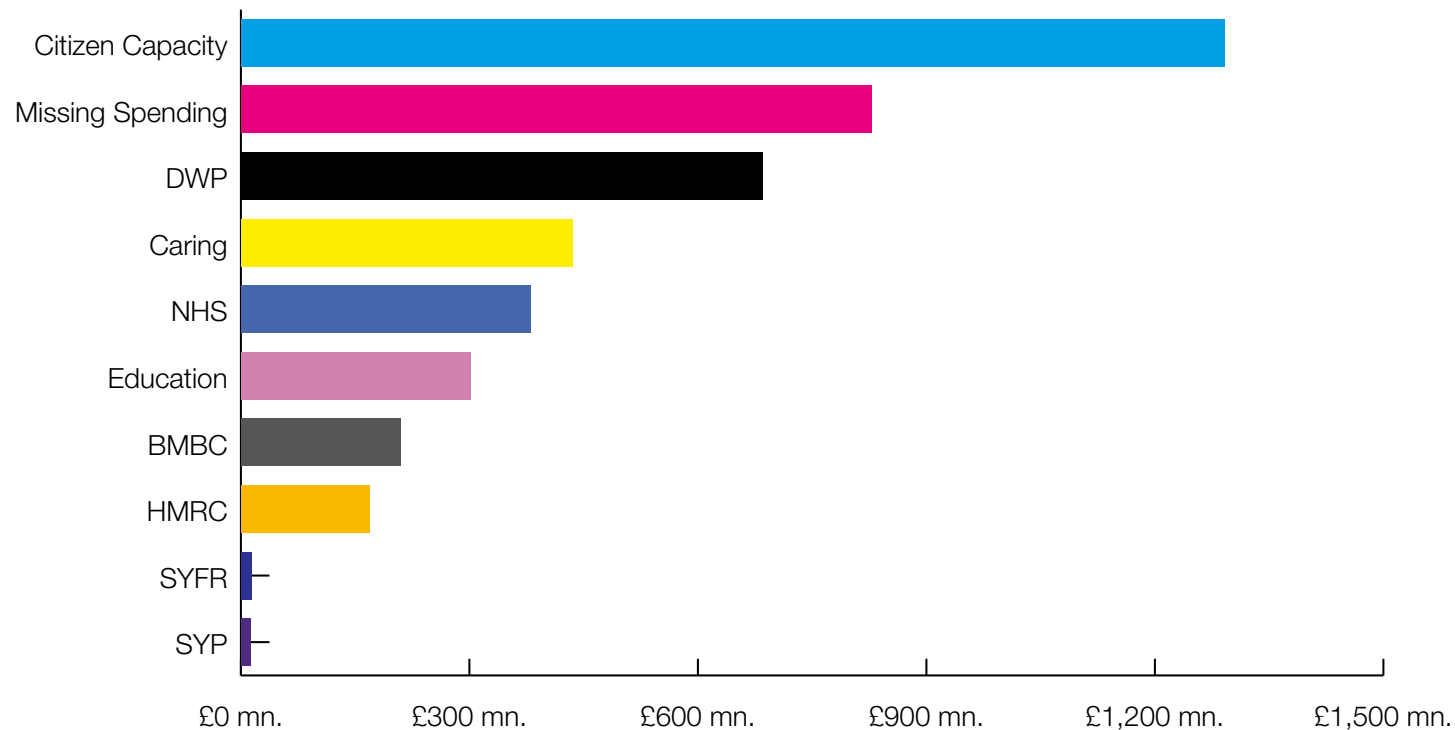
Instead we only focus on care services that are either purchased privately or, more often, organised by the state and funded by taxation. This forgetfulness has many negative consequences:

- We ignore the needs and gifts of carers, causing distress and waste.
- We don't respect the rights of women who provide paid and unpaid care.
- We don't share care more fairly within and outside the family.
- We create pressures that can lead to family and community breakdown.
- Family breakdown causes harm, suicide and more demand for services.
- Crises lead to inappropriate institutional responses.
- Institutional services increase risk, cost and waste.

From the perspective of services a failure to respect families and care has damaging consequences for the care system itself. But the more important failure is that this lack of respect means we miss the many opportunities created by care. Instead of respecting care and thinking about how it can be shared, supported and honoured, we treat it as a necessary evil. This has a dangerously corrupting impact on our understanding of social value and it imposes a distorted hierarchy onto society and policy-making.

Putting an economic value on care, is at some level impossible—the care of a mother for her child has no price. But we can create ways to understand the volume of care in society if we look at the hours spent caring. In 2017 Citizen Network demonstrated that the value of care could be estimated at £435 million about the same as all NHS spending in Barnsley (Duffy, 2017a). If we assume an average neighbourhood has 5,000 members this is about £10 million worth of unpaid care per neighbourhood.

Citizen Economics



If we include in our analysis the real work of carers and possible actions of citizens then we can see the transformative potential of neighbourhoods of care.

Source: Duffy S (2017) Heading Upstream: Barnsley's Innovations for Social Justice. Sheffield: Citizen Network Research.

2.2 Citizenship unlocks creativity

People are hungry for responsibility and meaning

Not only do we misunderstand care, we ignore the possible value of citizenship. In the same analysis of Barnsley's economy we were able to identify all the possible time that is available for acts of citizenship: all the things we can choose to do to make our community better. The 2017 value for Barnsley was £1.3 billion. The value of active citizenship - potentially - is equal to all the cost of all public services combined. At a neighbourhood level this is equivalent to £26 million per neighbourhood.

The potential for citizen action is rarely fulfilled. Our society doesn't value citizen action, in fact the design of the current benefit system, the culture of many of our professional and bureaucratic systems and the organisation of democratic systems seems hostile to citizen action. So this figure is an estimate of a missed opportunity, not a realised value.

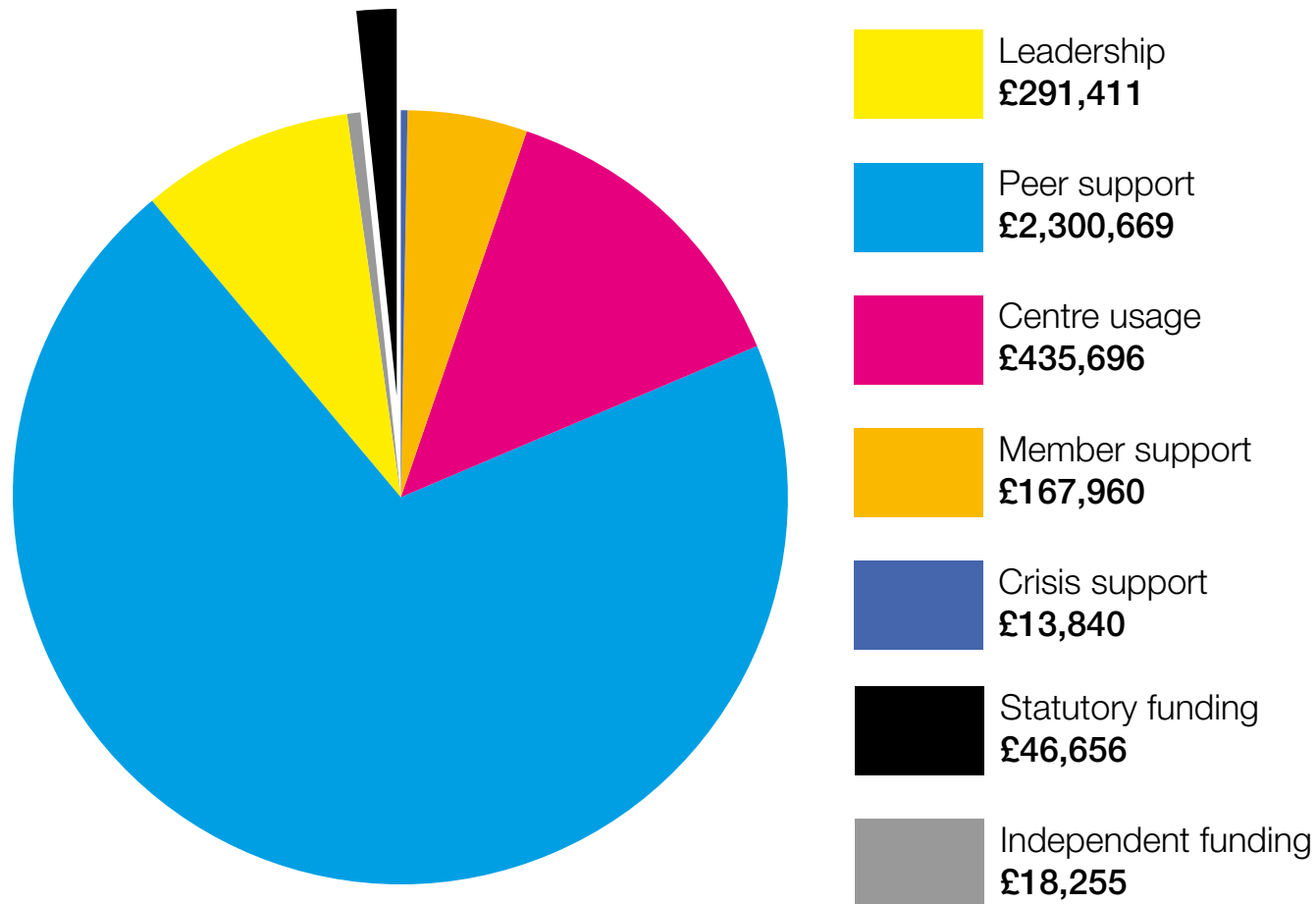
However some places are turning this around. People Focused Group, a peer support group, rooted in the neighbourhood of Intake in Doncaster, has started to show that ordinary people can help each other and help transform their communities. In

2019 the social value that it generated in one year was worth over £3 million (Duffy, 2021).

In some places, like Barnsley, local government has shifted its attention to creating a new partnership with its citizens and making it much easier for people to contribute (Duffy, 2017a). Ordinary people, often led by people who face the greatest disadvantage, possess an enormous power to transform our neighbourhoods, but we need to create the conditions that makes this natural.

Neighbourhoods are a vital structure for enabling us to step into our citizenship. Neighbourhoods create the possibility of three dimensional citizenship where communities based on identity or shared interest can be transformed into diverse and inclusive communities based on place. Neighbourhoods should be places we love, places we can feel proud of and places where we feel like we belong, not because we are all the same, but because each of us can each bring our own unique gifts together for the benefit of everyone.

The Value of Peer Support



**People Focused Group in
Doncaster has demonstrated
the high level of social
value created when people
start by helping each
other. This needs to be a
foundational element of our
neighbourhoods of care.**

**Source: Duffy S (2021)
Growing Peer Support. Peer-
led crisis support in mental
health.
Sheffield: Citizen Network.**

2.3 Invest in our own communities

Money needs to flow through our neighbourhoods

From the perspective of the neighbourhood, social care services (which have been largely contracted out to private and voluntary organisations) are highly wasteful. If we just take Adult Social Care as our starting point, and apply national data on the use of funding, we can see the following pattern.

Over half of the available budget is spent on residential care or other forms of institutional care. This money is spent outside the neighbourhood, and often outside the local authority, and on services that are far from ideal. Effectively this means that when someone is identified as needing Adult Social Care (often at a point of crisis and family breakdown) we extract people from their home, family, neighbourhood and all their existing relationships. Instead of investing in the person and their community we invest in organisations and outside the community (Duffy, 2013a). This money is about £2 million per neighbourhood.

Even the services that are supposed to keep people in their own home (primarily home care and day centres) are designed in such a way that most

of the money is spent taking people out of their neighbourhood or on people (usually women) who are forced to speed around multiple neighbourhoods, not working where they live, offering tiny parcels of rigidly defined support. This is about £1 million of spending per neighbourhood.

The only money that is used functionally, employing people locally, keeping people in their community, doing things people really want to do, is the small but important percentage spent on direct payments. Even this money is often managed with undue constraint and bureaucracy and the opportunity to extend this approach to people with managed personal budgets is largely being wasted (Duffy, 2017b). This is about £600,000 per neighbourhood.

This is of course a simplification, but it is a useful simplification. Fundamentally the current system is extractive. This £3.6 million could all be invested locally, under the direction of citizens, to create local jobs, to be spent in local shops and recirculated back into the local economy.

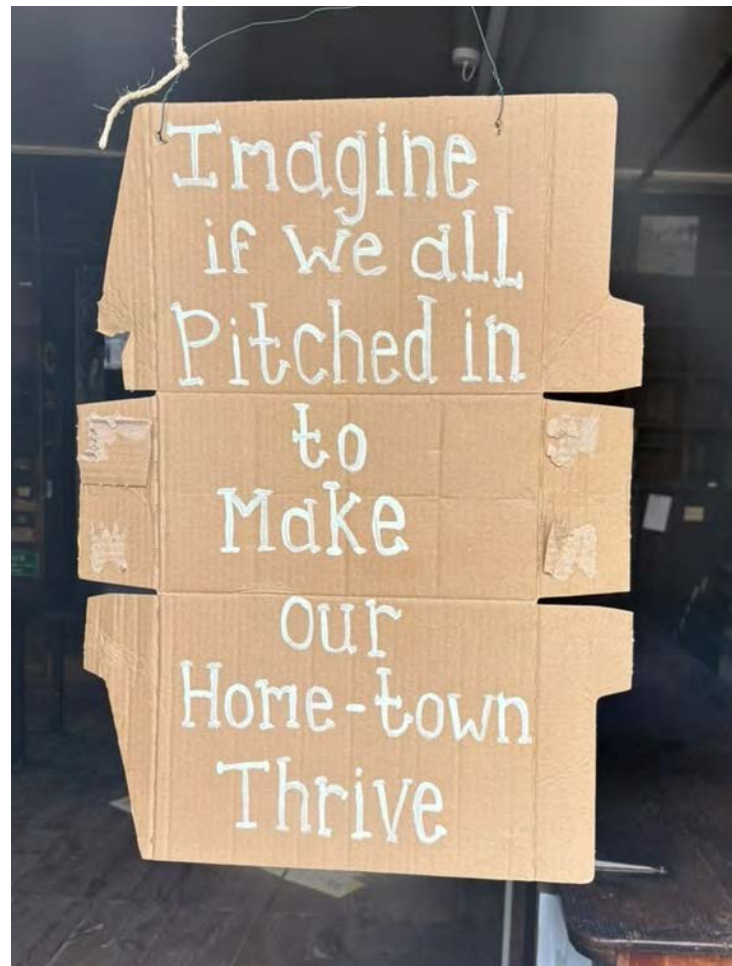
To be clear, the people working in Social Care are

not to blame for this extractive system. The current model for public services is still rooted in nineteenth century thinking about how to manage ordinary people through industrial systems. All these systems (schools, hospitals, employment programmes) assume that bigger, automated and regulated systems are better. This is a systemic failure driven by centralised policy-making and by procurement practices imposed on local government by central government.

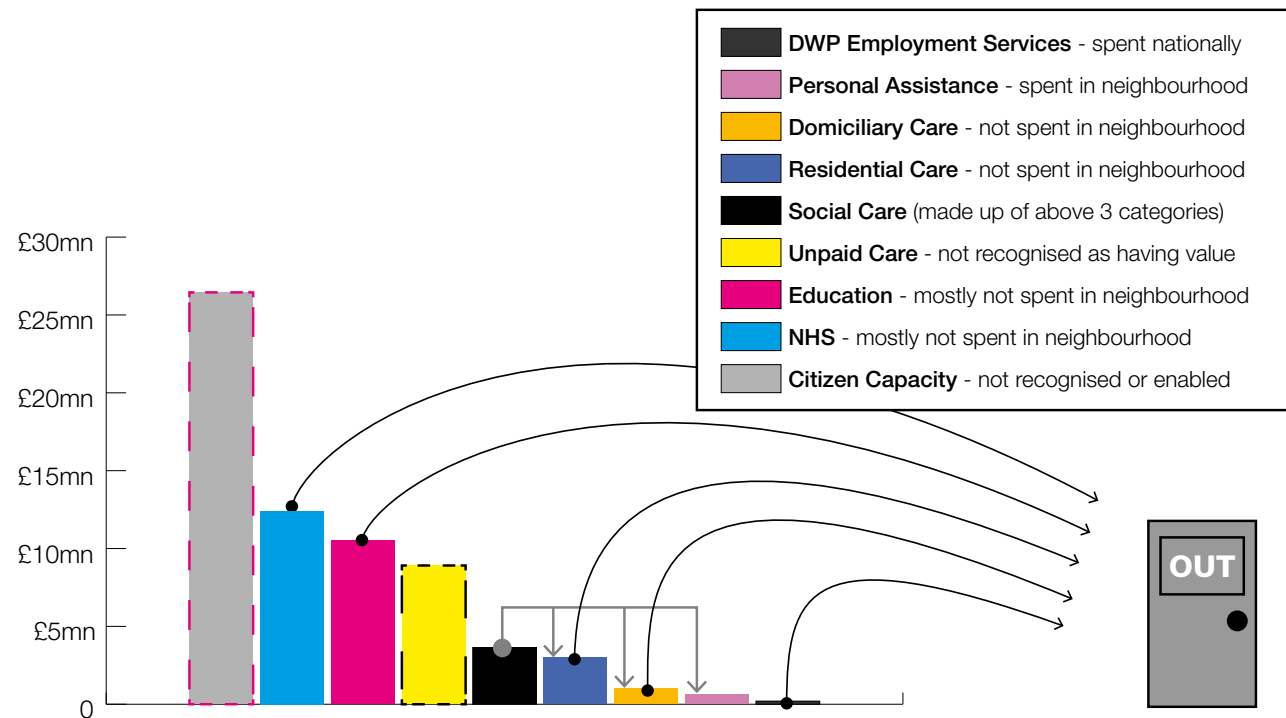
No meaningful effort has been made in the last 50 years to truly invest in citizens or to root public services within neighbourhoods. The only partial exceptions to this pattern are General Practice, parts of primary care and Primary Schools; however these relatively local public services are still subject to policies that have weakened their relationship to community and citizens (Zigmond, 2019).

This problem in the organisation of care services is paralleled by a similar problem for local businesses. The growth of large supermarkets and out of town shopping centres has drawn spending away from our neighbourhoods, reduced local social interaction and reduced the space available for local farmers, growers, craftspeople and businesses to develop. Industrialised approaches reduce diversity and reduce the ability of people to use their talents effectively.

For neighbourhoods to flourish we need to change our economic ecology by designing public services differently and by supporting local businesses, farmers and shops.



Extracting Resources from Neighbourhoods



The value of carer and citizen action is rarely recognised or support. At the same time public services are generally organised in ways that do not create local jobs or spending. The vast majority of spending occurs outside the neighbourhood.

Sources: Data is an estimate drawn from various publicly available resources.

2.4 Let local people lead

Community groups have trust and knowledge

The critical ingredient for bringing neighbourhoods to life and ensuring government and public services are operating with integrity is civil society, that is, the plurality of groups, organisations and associations created by citizens to pursue social objective. Social progress is impossible without a lively civil society.

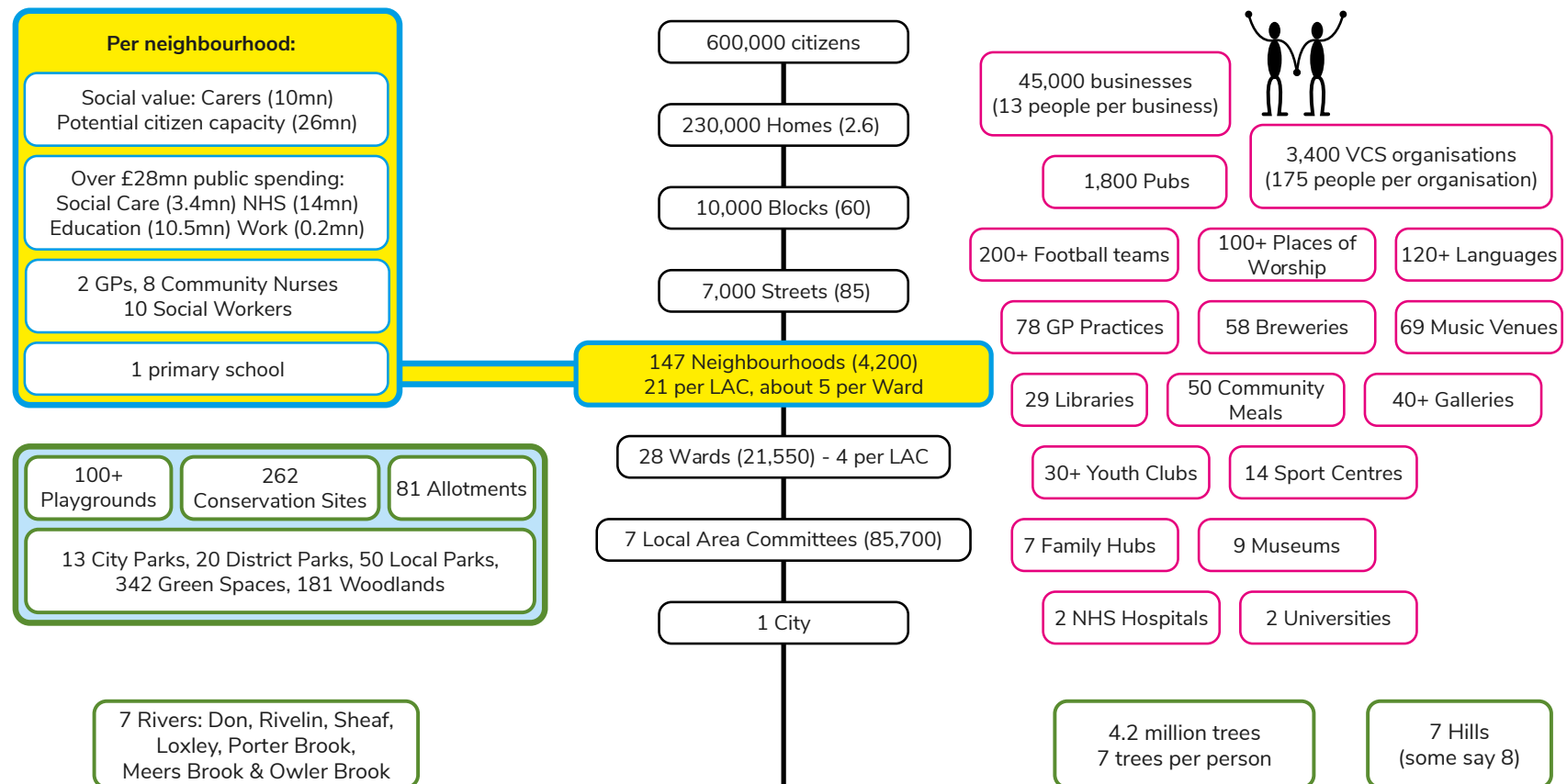
In general one of the strengths of the United Kingdom has been this independently minded network of groups who have been able to represent diverse interests, engage with powerful interests and organise creative responses to needs and problems. This is still in existence today. For example, in Sheffield there are 3,400 voluntary and community organisations and there are many more informal associations. These groups include anchor organisations that are deeply rooted in their neighbourhoods.

However, decades of centralised policy-making has undermined the integrity and the community connectedness of civil society. Since the early 1990s many community organisations have been forced to transform themselves into service providers, funded by the government and subject to increasing levels of

bureaucratic control and increasingly unable to speak out about injustice. The regulations of the Charity Commission, gagging clauses, informal pressures and financial pressures have combined to make it very hard for more mature organisations to act with freedom. It is no accident that resistance to the 2010 Austerity programme was far weaker than the resistance to cuts and 'reforms' in the 1980s (Duffy, 2013b).

In addition the processes used to fund or purchase services have also weakened the relationship between civil society organisations and the communities that they serve. Organisations have been encouraged to become larger, to tender for services from multiple places and work to regulatory structures that are insensitive to local needs. Organisations that were once community organisations have now become businesses with no accountability to the communities they serve. Even worse, private sector organisations, often fuelled by foreign capital, have established themselves at the heart of the welfare state. Some of the most institutional services in the country are now owned by US companies to maximise profit and there has been no concerted effort to close these services down.

The Scale of Sheffield



2.5 Power up neighbourhoods

Small is truly beautiful

A further problem, which is particularly acute in the North of England and South Yorkshire, is the centralisation of power. Several problems combine to weaken the voice and power of local communities, at many levels:

The UK has no constitution and there are no protections for local government. Central government can easily rewrite the rules to remove power and control from local government; it can reshape local boundaries and local people have no recourse to challenge its decisions.

England is hyper-centralised. Whitehall and Westminster hold an extreme level of power centrally, far more than in any other developed country. Over 85% of all funding is controlled by Whitehall and even locally generated funding is subject to tight centralised regulation.

Local government is not only extremely weak, it is also very large and therefore distant from neighbourhoods. The average size of a local council in England is 100 times greater than the European average and Sheffield is 200 times larger than the European average (Barnett, 2021).

There are many places where there are no structures for democratic decision-making at a local level. For example, across South Yorkshire most neighbourhoods lack any formal structure by which they can make democratic decisions, although there are a small number of parish and town councils which do provide this function to a limited degree. Since the 1980s central government has actively pursued policies which put the interests of financial services, located in London above those of manufacturing businesses that developed in the North of England.

Today there are new proposals to reform local government; however, if imposed, these will make local government larger and concentrate power in fewer hands (DHCLG, 2024). While devolution has been the official policy of central government for at least fifty years, the real policy over that period has been to concentrate more power in London (Duffy, 2012). There is nothing inevitable about this. In other countries social care is organised at a municipality level and those municipalities can be very small (e.g. Slovakia, with an average size of 2,000 or Iceland with an average size of 4,500).

The Extreme Size of English Local Government

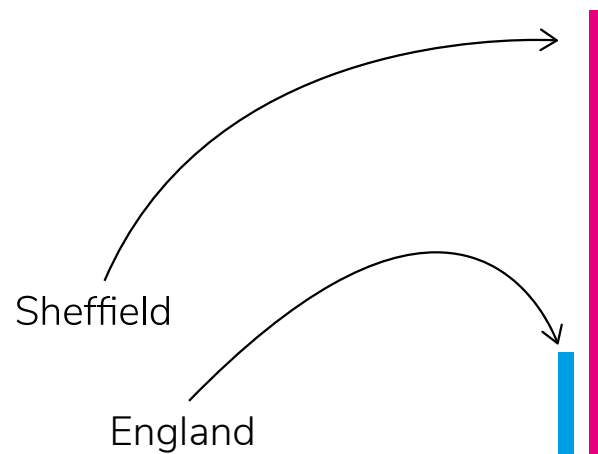
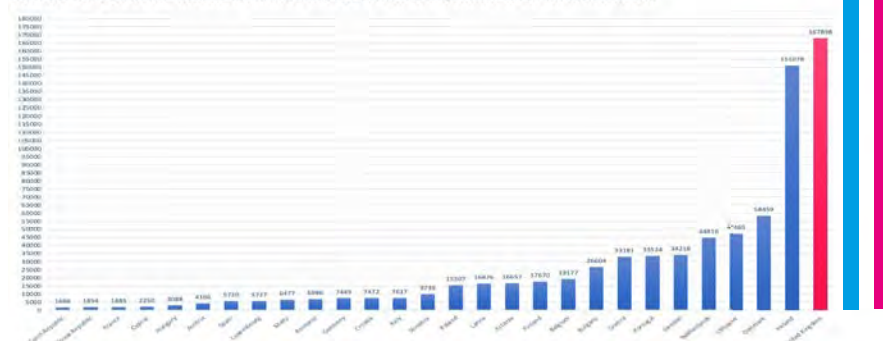


FIGURE 4.1. AVERAGE MUNICIPAL SIZE ACROSS EUROPE (NUMBER OF INHABITANTS)



The average size of a local council in England is 100 times greater than the European average and Sheffield is 200 times larger than the European average (Barnett, 2021).

3.

Focus on neighbourhoods

Changing our scale opens up opportunity

The problems that have brought us to this place are significant and they cannot be solved by one action or by one actor. We will all need to be involved and changes will be required at multiple levels. The good news is that the changes required are possible.



**Community action from Greener Greenhill.
Mural by Emma Barnsley**



New money, while it would be very welcome, is not essential in order to begin the change. What is essential is that we spend the existing money differently, shifting control to citizens and encouraging resources to be invested locally.

This means putting million of pounds back into our neighbourhoods. This does not just help improve economic security it also locks skills, leadership and capacity into the neighbourhood and it grows a more intense network of relationships between local citizens.

We also need to unlock the capacity of citizens, families and young people by supporting and redistributing unpaid care, peer support and mutual aid. In this way we can generate new resources so that care—for ourselves, each other and the planet—is at the heart of community life.

There are many ways to support this shift, but the critical change is to recognise the pivotal role of our neighbourhoods. Neighbourhoods are one of the most important platforms for citizen action. Neighbourhoods bring diverse people together at a human scale and encourage face-to-face connections that go beyond shared interests or identities.

So we must recognise that neighbourhoods are real and important and that they need their own patterns of disciplines, practices and habits in order to become Neighbourhoods of Care. We must learn from those neighbourhoods that have gone furthest

and encourage innovation to accelerate the pace of change.

If the neighbourhood is the topsoil of citizenship and care then it is still reliant on underlying layers of support. We will need to help neighbourhoods become more visible but we also need to pay attention to the ecosystem that supports and nurtures them. This will require significant changes in civil society, public services and in the wider democratic systems around neighbourhoods..



Over the past few years we've been working on a framework to help us develop Neighbourhoods of Care. The underlying assumption is that every neighbourhood is different but that there are principles that can help every neighbourhood to flourish.

Citizenship: Everyone is a citizen and we must make our own unique contribution to the life of the community.

Connection: We need all need other people and everyone can be a good neighbour, help others and make friends.

Belonging: We must make sure everybody is invited and supported to be a full member of the community.

Gifts: We all have gifts and we need to help each other find our sense of purpose.

Spaces: We need to create the spaces we need to grow and develop.

Roles: We need to create roles and teams that can do the work the community needs done.

Sharing: We need to share out what we need so that everyone in the community can flourish.

Learning: We need to share what we are learning and learning from other places and communities.

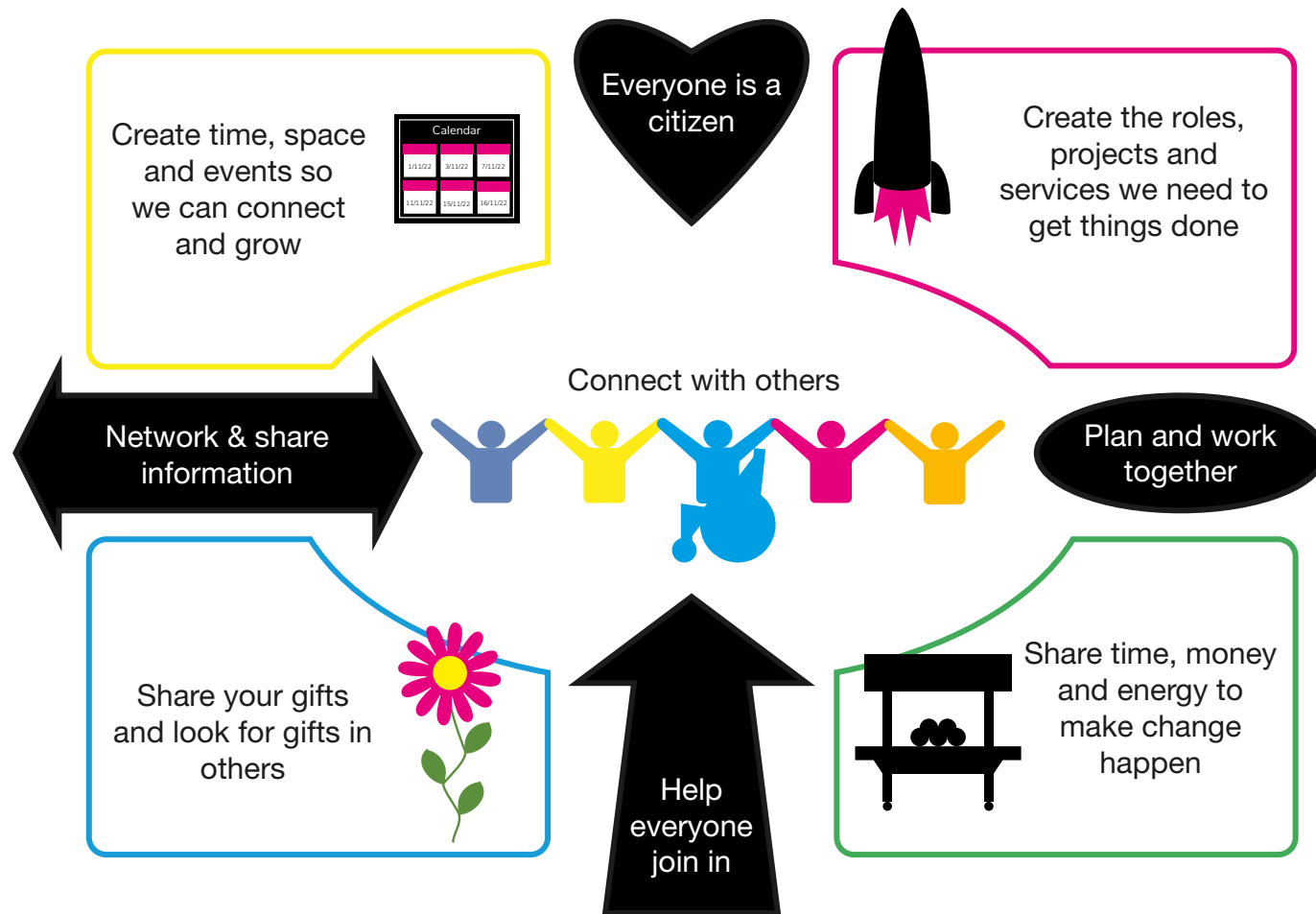
Shaping: We must share the work of shaping the neighbourhood so that it includes the things we need.

Professional services and entitlements, funded by taxation, are a critical part of a Neighbourhood of Care. But it is important to understand that these services are only one part of the function of care. Care is primarily the work of citizen, families, friends and neighbours. Often the most important thing we can do is to make sure that people have the connections and resources that they need to find their own solutions. Professionals should offer expertise and training to share important specialist knowledge.

A sustainable approach to care will maximise our shared capacity to care—for ourselves, each other and the planet.

This is all perfectly realistic. Organisations like People Focused Group Doncaster, rooted in Intake, and many other community anchor organisations have already demonstrated how to put these ideas into practice. The primary challenge is that these community-based organisations often find that the value of their work is not recognised and they are not effectively supported by the dominant systems. The challenge we face is to reorganise the basic ecological structure of our communities so that we foster approaches that uncover and release citizen capacity.

A Neighbourhood of Care



This model was coproduced by community activists at the Fearless Cities Summit South Yorkshire and builds on the experiences of local leaders in communities and services from across South Yorkshire.

If we want to foster Neighbourhoods of Care we need to recognise that neighbourhoods are the topsoil of community life and citizenship. They can bind people together along the critical dimension of local place where very different people are united by their immediate geography and its history. Of course neighbourhoods can be enriched by layers of support from beneath:

1. **Neighbourhood democracy** - Neighbourhoods are clearly defined and local people can meet and decide things for themselves.
2. **Vibrant civil society** - There are local shops, groups, associations, networks for cooperation, creativity and support.
3. **Community services** - Services and supports are organised to facilitate local citizen action and strengthen community life.
4. **Universal public services** - Human rights are respected and supported by strong and democratically accountable public services.
5. **Local government** - Regions, counties, cities, towns and villages have clear, inclusive and democratic constitutions.
6. **Social and economic justice** - Resources are shared fairly to ensure no individual, family or community lacks what they need to thrive.
7. **Constitutional protections** - Society is built on foundations of human rights and democratic principles.

Alongside these principles there are many practical innovations and practices that can help change lives, save money and empower everyone. There are great examples of good practice across South Yorkshire.

But real change demands—not some new and final model - but an ongoing effort to apply what has already been learned and to keep pushing to make things better.

Learning together and challenging ourselves to go further is the critical next step.



The Ecology of Neighbourhoods of Care

Layers	Principles	Practices
Neighbourhood democracy	Neighbourhoods are clearly defined and local people can meet and decide things for themselves.	Neighbourhood Plans Trusts Budgets Bye Laws Deliberative Processes Democratic Decisions Sortition Common Ownership
Vibrant civil society	There are local shops, groups, associations, networks for cooperation, creativity and support.	Peer Support WomenCentres Cooperatives Neighbourhood Networks Recycling Local Food Caring Activism Independent Media, Trade & Arts
Community services	Services and support are organised to facilitate local citizen action and strengthen community life.	Local Area Coordination Community Budgets Citizen Assemblies Buurtzorg Community Social Work Anchor Institutions
Universal public services	Human rights are respected and supported by strong and democratically accountable public services.	Basic Income Universal Social Care Local Health Services Self-Directed Support Inclusive Education Secure Housing for All
Local government	Regions, counties, cities, town and villages have clear, inclusive and democratic constitutions.	Governance Reform Community Sourcing Local Economic Development Civil Society Partnerships Networking for Neighbourhoods
Social and economic justice	Resources are shared fairly to ensure no individual, family or community lacks what they need to thrive.	New Regional Settlement End of Austerity Local Energy Progressive & Green Taxation 4 Day Week Modern Monetary Theory
Constitutional protections	Society is built on foundations of human rights and democratic principles.	Electoral Reform Reformed Second Chamber Written Constitution Bill of Rights Federalism Regional Parliaments

4.

How we begin

We need a multilayered strategy for change

There is a willingness for people at many different levels to develop a strategy based on these kinds of principles. This will also mean improving learning across South Yorkshire, increasing the pace of innovation and tackling some of the deep systemic issues which are holding us back.



Some changes are within the power of local actors, some changes may require important policy changes, but since the 2024 General Election there has never been a better time to seek progressive and helpful reforms from Whitehall and Westminster.

What follows is an outline of some of the key elements of the strategy. It is an attempt to define some of the key practical work that will be required. The assumption is that we can build from solid progress already made across South Yorkshire.

There is no need for one model to be applied in every place, however there is a strong case for:

- Clear intentional policy-making by South Yorkshire.
- Tracking progress and learning together.
- Investing in innovation and cross-fertilising between places.
- Crafting a long-term vision to shifting resources towards upstream solutions and into neighbourhoods.

What follows is the framework for this strategy, made up of 10 elements.

1 Commit to Neighbourhood Care

2 Spread the word

3 Experiment and be ambitious

4 Share knowledge and learning

5 Celebrate people doing good work

6 Foster neighbourhood decision-making

7 Support local people to take the lead

8 Transform public services

9 Invest in our communities

10 Be a world leader

4.1 Commit to Neighbourhood Care

Bold leadership gives people the confidence to start

Agreeing the strategy as an essential element of the Integrated Care Board may be a good place to start given its role in bringing together the SY Mayor, the 4 cities of South Yorkshire and the NHS. A clear commitment will then help us:

- Bring in additional resources from supportive foundations and government.
- Support the SY Mayor to negotiate a better deal for South Yorkshire with Whitehall.
- Create the conditions for agreeing changes with civil society partners locally.
- Orientate and encourage neighbourhood and city-level innovations.

There may be other ways to establish this agreement and ensure ongoing governance; however there will certainly need to be a steering group to keep things moving.

Already there have already been productive meetings and an informal agreement to adopt this strategy. Clearly there is close alignment to emerging themes in central government policy-making.



4.2 Spread the word

Community grows around shared ideas

Finding the right language to describe the strategy so that its intention is understood locally will be critical. But it is also useful to have a name or brand identity which helps in articulating the local vision to the media, central government, public policy actors and potential allies from outside England. In many ways our model could be compared to the 'Preston Model' —but it is potentially far more far-reaching. It could be useful to:

- Work with communications organisations on sharing stories.
- Build in regular structures to celebrate achievements and share learning.
- Ensure presence of ideas and opportunities in all neighbourhoods.
- Engage with policy-makers, social movements and think-tanks.

Already there have been positive discussions at every level across region and growing interest nationally and globally. At the 2024 Fearless Cities Summit, hosted in Sheffield, many people came together to develop this thinking around the idea that our goal is to create “Neighbourhoods of Care—where we take care of ourselves, each other and the planet.” Perhaps this language is even more helpful because it puts more stress on the idea that citizens and neighbourhoods have responsibility to care and that the purpose of this care is broad and inclusive.



4.3 Experiment and be ambitious

There are 281 neighbourhoods ready to innovate

We can track progress on the development of Neighbourhoods of Care, changing patterns of investment, emergence of citizen-led initiatives and how these kinds of factors are reflected in health, well-being, economic and other key outcomes. Elements of this framework might include neighbourhood mapping of boundaries, outcomes, resources, innovations. Possible actions include:

- Create a digital map of neighbourhoods across South Yorkshire.
- Create a civic data trust for South Yorkshire to steward digital resources.
- Build in support from academic partners.
- Publish findings regularly, locally and internationally.
- Develop partnerships with public policy bodies.
- Link to other innovation networks in South Yorkshire.

Already Sheffield has already developed a digital map of neighbourhoods and is using this to support innovation and track emergent leadership and this has now been opened up to the whole of South Yorkshire.



4.4 Share knowledge and learning

Innovation grows faster when with good networks

We could create a rolling curriculum for sharing expertise, ideas and innovation across South Yorkshire, combining digital and real-world learning, building on local expertise, but also bring in the best of national and international advice and support to ensure South Yorkshire was at the cutting edge of good practice. It will be important to:

- Open up training and learning to all local citizens.
- Work in partnership with current educational partners.
- Create more open source and freely available resources for learning.
- Develop a shared events programme and identify sources of expertise.
- Use technologies to improve communication and learning and reduce bureaucracy.

Already there are regular meet ups for commissioners on the topic of Neighbourhood Care. There also many important research initiatives across the region that could be aligned with the strategy.



4.5 Celebrate people doing good work

Change has begun

There are many local organisations showing how people with lived experience of disability or disadvantage can become pioneers in leading practical community change. These groups reveal the huge untapped resource available in our communities when people start to recognise their own agency and feel free and supported to act. Celebrating and encouraging this work to spread should be a priority.

- Celebrate citizenship, community actions and volunteering.
- Encourage communities to learn from successful models.
- Support mutual aid and peer support organisations to recruit members.
- Foster cross-fertilisation between citizen action and the voluntary sector.

Already community leaders in Doncaster are working together with senior public service offices to explore how to build on what they have been doing and to start defining a better relationship to public services should be. Key issues included:

- The need for physical space where people can come together
- The need for local governance and leadership
- The need to position public services behind or within a neighbourhood led function



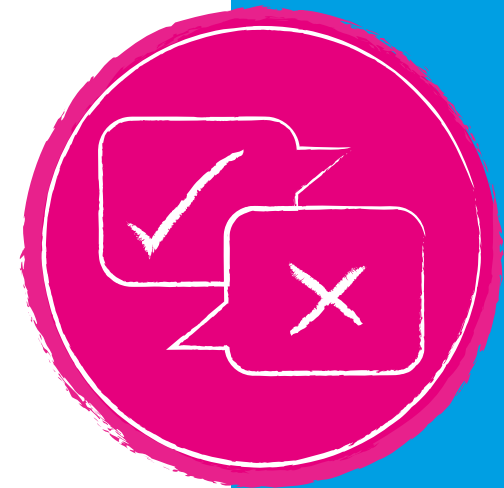
4.6 Foster neighbourhood decision-making work

Power at the local level creates more opportunities for innovation

There are already multiple models of neighbourhood development within South Yorkshire. There are community anchor organisations, health and education bodies and civil associations. However in some neighbourhoods there is very little leadership and even where leadership exists participation levels are often very low. Learning from where progress is best and testing new models will be critical for meeting our objectives. Examples of possible actions include:

- Create neighbourhood wealth funds or participatory budgeting systems.
- Create structure for managing personal budgets at a neighbourhood level.
- Encourage development of sociocratic decision-making.
- Build on the Barnsley model of devolved civic governance.
- Support neighbourhoods to learn from each other and elsewhere.

For several years Barnsley and Rotherham have been building community capacity at the neighbourhood level. Recently leaders in Sheffield agreed to develop new model of civic governance that creates a real and significant role for the 147 neighbourhoods of Sheffield. This work is part of the project to advance the City Goals of Sheffield and also includes plans to developing new financing systems for transition, a commitment to the next generation and new forms of data collection.



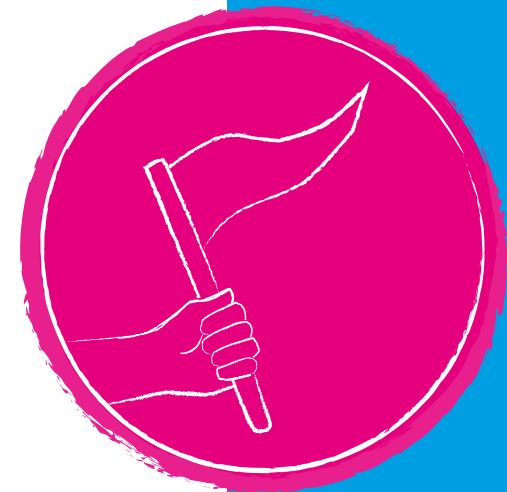
4.7 Support local people to take the lead

South Yorkshire is built on cooperation and innovation

The best approach will be one where civil society partners, particularly but not only the voluntary sector, can identify how to innovate and change flexibly within an agreed framework. This is a shift away from contract management and a move into a new settlement which clarifies rules, but allows freedom and creativity. The focus should be on growing local talent instead of importing services from outside South Yorkshire. The new structure should encourage organisations promoting specific horizontal goals (e.g. sports, disability access etc.) to network across all the neighbourhoods and to support citizen initiatives.

- Ensure funding is distributed fairly and linked to place.
- Ensure there are public places where people can meet and take action.
- Make funding transparent and encourage more equal pay.
- Shift decisions about local spending into local hands.
- Support advocacy and rights organisations to work across the whole community.

For example, there are already great examples of cooperative networks developing across South Yorkshire to support disabled people into work.



4.8 Transform public services

Professionals want to work differently

The key to improving morale and performance in the public sector will be to reduce bureaucracy, increase trust and cooperative working and to ensure greater proximity and accountability to local communities. Decisions about public service management should also be understood as having a direct impact on the local economy, ideally creating jobs in every neighbourhood, reducing travel times and pollution and build strong local relationships. Possible actions include:

- Co-locate professionals into neighbourhoods teams (e.g. Buurtzorg).
- Pull in resources from centralised schemes, as proposed by Pathways to Work.
- Develop education, youth and work programmes at a neighbourhood level.
- Reset the operating system for social work to promote self-direction and connection.
- Explore models such as Local Area Coordination and community development work.
- Establish care blocks so that carers are local and connected (e.g. Barcelona, Bogota).

There are already inspiring examples of neighbourhood team working emerging across South Yorkshire. For example, the Future Jobs Fund, pioneered in Barnsley showed that local government was far more effective than central government at helping people find work. Radical plans to transform mental health services towards a neighbourhood model are underway in Rotherham and Doncaster, led by the Rotherham, Doncaster and South Humber NHS Foundation Trust (RDaSH). Pathways to Work and other new initiatives in the region are increasingly focusing on neighbourhoods.



4.9 Invest in our communities

We need to invest in our own communities

We need to reverse the long-term trends towards centralisation, privatisation and the effective extraction of people, knowledge and resources from local communities. This will require an intentional policies to change how resources are used and changes to how decisions about resources are made. Current procurement practice is often at odds with the desired goal, and while it is explicitly about promoting value for money it often seems to have the opposite impact: reducing local community resilience, taking money out of the local economy and increasing the risk of crises - only adding further cost pressures into the system. We need a new policy:

- Phased and clear commitment to shift resources into neighbourhoods.
- Decision-making structures that enable local people to make local decisions.
- Procurement rules that grow local resilience.
- Positive incentives for neighbourhoods to support people locally.
- Disincentives for institutionalisation, placements or family breakdown.
- Commitment to use capital to open up public resources for the public good.
- New models of cooperation and stewardship between the state and citizens.

Sheffield is currently reviewing its procurement practices. There is a great deal of evidence of the harm of the current system and that a better way is possible. The new procurement guidance from the UK Treasury makes clear that choice-based services sit outside competitive tendering rules; this means that an effective use of personal budgets and Individual Service Funds (ISFs) can ensure resources are spent locally in ways that best meet the needs of the individual. Sheffield has recently begun piloting ISFs.



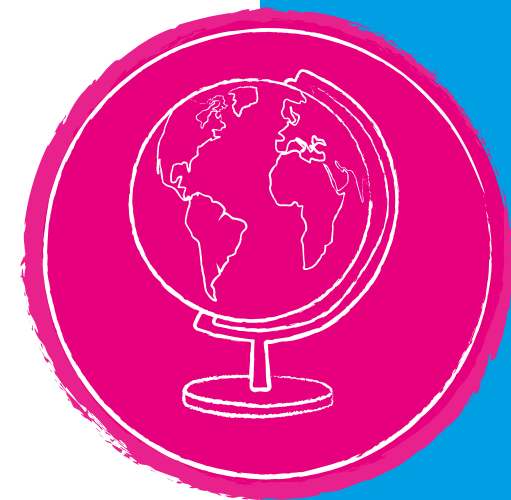
4.10 Be a world leader

We are not alone

The shift to thinking more locally about health, care and public services is global. There are interesting developments in India, South and Central America, in many parts of Europe (e.g. Inclusion Labs in the Netherlands, Care Blocks in Barcelona, Spain, Municipal services in Finland and Iceland, the Trieste model for mental health services in Italy) and many more interesting initiatives elsewhere (e.g. the Alaskan model of Nuka, Avivo in Perth, Australia). South Yorkshire could help convene and lead the global conversation and put itself on the global map.

- Create events celebrating the work and fostering local connections.
- Work with existing festivals in the region (e.g. Festival of Debate, Migration Matters).
- Create opportunities for visitors from overseas for local study tours.
- Organise trips to visit other countries.
- Create regular learning events to share experiences with leaders nationally and globally.

With sponsorship from SYCMA, NHS Sheffield and NHS Doncaster Citizen Network, with its partner Opus, hosted the global Fearless Cities Summit South Yorkshire in November 2024. Over 400 people attended across the weekend and we used the opportunity to share multiple good practices in Neighbourhood Care and to develop our framework model.



5.

We are ready

We can join with others to lead the way

The time is right to begin the change
and South Yorkshire is particularly well
placed to lead the way.



Fearless Cities South Yorkshire 2024



These are just some of the factors that make South Yorkshire a great place to start:

There is no likely prospect of significant financial resources being injected to sustain the current system—quite the reverse. Multiple crises in health, social care and social order will demand a radical change that is built on a new partnership with citizens.

Despite decades of deindustrialisation and centralisation of power in London there is still a culture of solidarity and pride - locally and regionally - across South Yorkshire. We love our region, our cities, villages and neighbourhoods.

There is good leadership in public and community services, at every level, across the region with a commitment to neighbourhoods. There is an awareness of the powerful impact of social and economic factors on wellbeing and the need for power and agency to shift to neighbourhoods.

The local and national political context also creates multiple positive opportunities for South Yorkshire to carve out space for innovation and to influence the wider national story. The mayoral structure provides an ideal learning environment and the chance to challenge and renegotiate constraints set in London.

There are multiple local reforms and neighbourhood initiatives upon which to build, including thousands of active citizens and peer supporters eager for change. 500 citizens have volunteered to be Citizen Mappers. There is appetite to support this work from major Foundations who want to make a significant investment in areas committed to transformative change.

We have an extensive network of expertise available, in the region and beyond, good communication structures, new forms of media and the ability to reach people locally and globally. We just need to make full use of our many capacities.

5.1 Regional synergy

There is local alignment

All these priorities and outcomes are reflected in all of the strategic plans of the 6 statutory bodies in South Yorkshire. For example:

Barnsley 2030 Vision:

“In Barnsley we want everyone to have a good life. This means everything from a quality place to call home, to good physical and mental wellbeing and a sense of self-worth through diverse and secure employment opportunities. It’s also about having access to the best possible local facilities in a community that values our people and our place. In Barnsley we want to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to learn, develop new skills and, most importantly, to achieve their personal potential.”

The Mayor of Doncaster’s 5 priorities includes:

“Thirdly, I want to see safer and stronger Neighbourhoods, tailored public services around local communities and again working with South Yorkshire Police to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour. Edlington is a good example of progress made through partnership working, with more priority areas to come.”

Rotherham’s first developmental priority:

“Our vision for Rotherham is for every neighbourhood to be a thriving neighbourhood, where people are able to work together to achieve a good quality of life. We want to work with local people to find solutions to local issues and to build on our heritage and assets. We will help create vibrant communities in which people feel happy, safe and proud. To do this, we will make it easier to get involved in the local community, work closely with our partners and local voluntary and community groups, enhance our town and village centres, green spaces and libraries, and effectively tackle community issues.”

Sheffield City Goals (8 & 9):

“We all have a say over what happens in our neighbourhoods, and shape our city around fairness, equity, wellbeing and combating poverty. We’re able to embed strong and caring relationships that bring people together and bridge divides across generations, neighbourhoods and communities.”

South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority:

“Addressing health inequalities is not just about improving the delivery of health services. Around

80% of whether we have good or poor health is due to factors outside of healthcare. People need the right building blocks in place for good health, such as education and skills, a good job, an adequate income, a safe and warm home, and being connected to friends, family, services and opportunities through an accessible transport system.”

South Yorkshire Integrated Partnership Board's bold ambition:

“Act differently together to strengthen & accelerate our focus on prevention and early identification.”

South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board:

“It is well understood that health outcomes and inequalities in those outcomes are shaped by a wide range of social, environmental, commercial and economic factors. Our chances of experiencing good health and wellbeing, and maximising the length and quality of our lives, depend on the circumstances and environment within which we are born, live, and work. Many of the levers for improving population health, such as quality education, good employment, comfortable quality housing, connectivity, healthy local neighbourhoods, creativity and arts and commercial environment reside with our local authorities and SYMCA.”

It is clear that none of the changes we want to achieve can be achieved without flourishing neighbourhoods where people are connected, supported and caring. The opportunity is to put this at the centre of our strategies.



In 2024 Fearless Cities South Yorkshire brought 400 people together to explore new forms of neighbourhood care and governance.

5.2 Achieve critical outcomes

Facing up to a systemic and growing crisis

An effective strategy will have many benefits and these will reach far beyond health and social care:

1. Substantial improvements in people's physical and mental **health**.
2. Greater respect for human rights standards and **gender** justice.
3. Fewer **family** breakdowns, reduced demand for institutional services.
4. Increased **economic** activity in neighbourhoods, with more local spending.
5. More **entrepreneurial** activity, local jobs and activity in each neighbourhood.
6. Flourishing neighbourhoods where people feel **safe**, connected and can develop.
7. Development and inclusive **education** for all people with no exclusions.
8. Environmental improvements with **greener** spaces, cleaner air and water, better food, more wildlife diversity.
9. Greater **sustainability** with more food grown and energy generated in each neighbourhood.
10. Increased **equality** and reduced poverty.
11. Flourishing and welcoming neighbourhoods with greater **diversity** and inclusion.
12. Local citizens meeting regularly and creating new citizen **actions**.

The opportunity for positive change is enormous. In many places the change has already begun. If we can get together behind local citizens we can move mountains.

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Who we are

Citizen Network

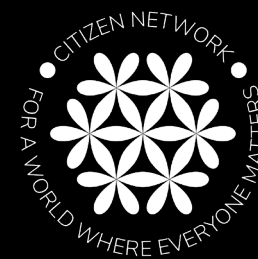


Citizen Network was established as a think tank in Sheffield in 2009 to promote the values of inclusion and citizenship for all. It has grown into a global movement with over 6,000 individual members, 340 group members and 150 Fellows. It has published 1700 free resources to help create a world where everyone matters and it has helped establish a range of new initiatives and organisations, including: Self-Directed Support Network, the UBI Lab Network and Learning Disability England. The Founder of Citizen Network is Dr Simon Duffy who was awarded the RSA's Prince Albert Medal for his work on self-directed support and personal budgets in 2008.

People Focused Group



People Focused Group (PFG) was created in 2010 as a peer support organisation in Doncaster. It has had a transformative impact on the lives of 1,000s of people and on the organisation of public services. It has 3,500 members across Doncaster and is established in the neighbourhood of Intake. PFG's model of peer support has generated millions of pounds in social value, prevented harm and reduced demands for public services. Its innovations include: Safe Space, the first peer-led crisis service; Better You, peer support for young people, and groups for veterans, muslim ladies and the LGBTQ+ community. PFG were awarded the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service 2022. The Founder of PFG, Kelly Hicks was named Adult Social Worker of the Year in 2011.



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