

# Values in action

Our impact in 2017



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Foundation



## Introduction

2017 was a big year for the Co-op Foundation. With a new Board of Trustees and a new vision, we set out to strengthen communities across the UK in a truly co-operative fashion.

As the Co-op's charity, we worked with the business to tackle loneliness. Our Belong campaign focuses on the one in three young people who feel lonely. Thousands of Co-op Members have already chosen to back this cause with their 1%, and can continue to do so in 2018.

We also collaborated with other funders. Through our £2 million #iwill fund, thousands of young people will take action on loneliness in their communities over the next three years.

2018 will see some exciting new plans take off. We'll strengthen local community groups by investing in their capacity to generate funds, make effective use of technology, and develop the skills they need to survive and thrive.

We can only do this thanks to the expertise and contributions of our many partners and supporters. This includes Co-op colleagues who help our team day-to-day or volunteer in our community projects; the National Members' Council who've guided and championed our work; and every member who has supported our cause or given their views.

**It's this co-operation that makes the Co-op Foundation what it is - a charity that puts Co-op values into action, working together to make things better. I hope this report inspires you to get involved too.**

Finally I'd like to give special thanks for the hard work of our team of colleagues, led by Jim Cooke, to bring our plans to fruition. And of course to my fellow Trustees, for so generously giving their time, talents and insights - as Co-op leaders, elected members or from the voluntary sector - to maximise our impact. It has been a privilege to work with such a superb team, and I'm looking forward to an exciting year ahead.

**Jamie Ward-Smith**  
Chair of Trustees

## Vision, mission and goals

Our vision is of strong communities, where people work co-operatively to make things better

### Our mission

The Co-op Foundation helps disadvantaged communities to overcome their challenges by putting co-operative values into practice.

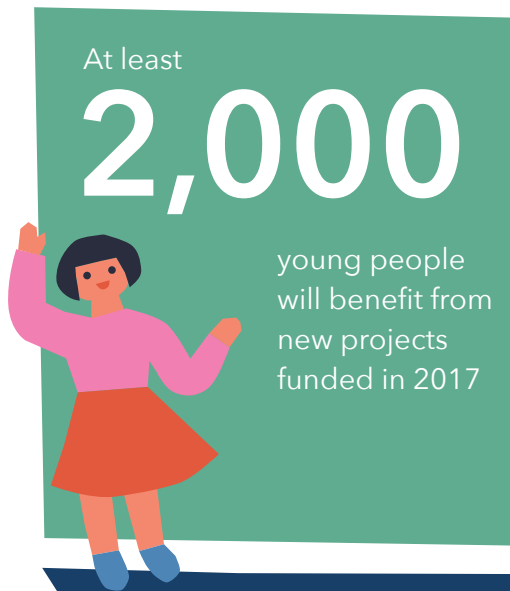
We aim to stimulate and strengthen community action that connects and empowers people so they can work together to make things better.

### Our 2017-19 strategic goals

- To champion young people's ability to contribute positively to their communities and help strengthen their sense of belonging.
- To invest in disadvantaged communities' capacity to overcome social, economic or environmental challenges.
- To build our reputation as a trusted charity with a co-operative difference, uniting with others to make a sustainable impact in communities.



# 2017 Highlights



Built a network of **24** projects tackling youth loneliness in every UK nation and region







# Belong

Young people  
beating loneliness

In 2017 we launched Belong - our UK-wide programme to help young people beat loneliness through co-operative action.

Research by the Co-op found that almost one in three young people regularly feel lonely. Working with our partners and supporters, we aim to:

- Connect and empower 5,000 young people to take action to tackle loneliness
- Strengthen local youth services that provide vital support and opportunities
- Start a national conversation that breaks down the stigma about youth loneliness



## What we've done so far

Youth loneliness is widespread, but not widely understood. As we developed our plans for Belong we set out to look at loneliness through young people's eyes, finding out how it affects them and what could be done to help.

We funded an innovative youth-led research project at Manchester Metropolitan University, which ran throughout 2017 and worked with 133 young people across the UK.

Our first four pilot projects, exploring a range of practical approaches to tackling youth loneliness (including 'Heard not Hidden' - see Hamza's story) were completed in 2017, directly benefiting 161 young people and bringing valuable learning for the next stages of our work.

### OUR IMPACT

## Connecting young people - Hamza's story

18-year-old Hamza has a severe hearing impairment. He had often felt frustrated that because of his disability he struggled with job interviews, leaving him isolated and lacking self-confidence.

Hamza started attending the Royal Exchange Theatre's 'Heard not Hidden' project, working with young deaf people. He took part in creative activities to help him express himself, and a careers event dispelling myths about disability and employment.

Gradually, Hamza started to take on responsibilities within the project, co-ordinating activities and welcoming

new young people into the group. His proudest moment was going out into the community to lead a series of workshops raising deaf awareness.

Hamza's new-found confidence helped him secure some work experience while continuing his studies. He's become a role model to other young deaf people, and still volunteers with Heard not Hidden.

The Royal Exchange is now using the learning from this pilot to extend its work across Greater Manchester, bringing disabled and non-disabled peers together through performing arts.



## Targeting transitions

Dealing with life changes and the emotional challenges they bring is a normal part of growing up. But for young people in disadvantaged circumstances, navigating the way to independence can be a hard and lonely journey.

Our second phase of work focused on loneliness at times of transition. Six new projects joined our network, including mentoring schemes for care-leavers, and Whizz Kidz' Young Leaders Programme (see Jessica's story).

### OUR IMPACT

## Empowering young people - Jessica's story

As part of our Belong network, support from the Co-op Foundation is helping Whizz Kidz to expand their Young Leaders Programme for wheelchair users.

Jessica, a 20-year-old graduate of the scheme, explains: "Whizz Kidz worked with me to help improve my confidence as a young wheelchair user, they helped me feel confident within myself and helped me fight the prejudice wheelchair users face every day."

Jessica completed the Young Leaders Programme last year. Together with other young leaders, she recently presented to a group of medical students, talking about individual wheelchair users and their conditions. A few years ago, Jessica was a very shy person and could never have presented to such an audience!



Through Whizz Kidz' support and becoming a Young Leader, Jessica has become in her own words: "a strong young adult who is hungry for knowledge and experience."

"Whizz Kidz helped me adapt and cope, they made me want to fight my illness every day and helped me fall in love with life all over again and I couldn't be more grateful to them for that."

## Co-operative social action

**Belong**  
Young people  
beating loneliness

In May, we announced our three-year partnership with the [#iwill](#) fund, creating thousands of new opportunities for young people to tackle loneliness in their communities.

We awarded our first #iwill grants in December, through a collaborative process which saw young people, Co-op Members, our existing youth partners and other experts working together to shape the final plans. These new projects will tackle loneliness through youth social action - activities that build young people's skills and strengthen their values while having a positive impact on others.

### VALUES IN ACTION

## Our #iwill fund

The [#iwill](#) campaign, which promotes high-quality youth social action, is a perfect match with our co-operative values. Great social action mutually benefits young people - as volunteers, campaigners or fundraisers - and their wider communities.

It challenges participants to think about their impact on the world, and develops the attributes they'll need to get on in life. **Caring for others** and **self-help**, intertwined.

But what about **equality** and **equity**? #iwill campaign research has found that the least affluent youth are much less likely to take part in social action. To help address this, all our grants are targeted at more deprived areas with fewer existing opportunities.

We set out to strengthen **democracy** by making sure young people's views were heard at all levels of our work. Each of our #iwill assessment panels included local youth representatives, who scrutinised how the projects would involve young people in their decision-making.

Proudly supporting  
youth social action



Department  
for Culture  
Media & Sport



BIG  
LOTTERY  
FUND  
NATIONAL  
LOTTERY FUNDED



Foundation



## Learning together

Partnerships with youth charities in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales extended our work further still. By the end of 2017, our Belong network counted 24 projects, working in every nation and region of the UK.

Each of our projects has local impact, reaching young people in some of the most disadvantaged areas. Collectively, they're also making a difference at national level, coming together to pool their insights and take inspiration from each other's work. In 2017 we ran two partner network days to facilitate this shared learning.

“ The opportunity to meet a 'buddy' from a previously successful applicant was very useful. The insights from the speakers across the day also provided invaluable info...

**Belong network partner**

## Our impact: connecting and empowering

All completed pilot projects showed evidence of empowering the young people they worked with, and helping them make meaningful connections. Their achievements gave us confidence in our plans to extend and enhance this work over the next two years. The new projects we funded in 2017 will connect and empower a further 2,000 young people - putting us well on course for our target of 5,000.



### 'Connecting' outcomes achieved

- Improved communication skills
- Improved team-working skills
- Broader support networks
- More involvement in community activities



### 'Empowering' outcomes achieved

- More confidence and resilience
- Better decision-making skills
- Taking up mentoring and volunteering roles
- Gaining qualifications and employment

## Fundraising for youth loneliness

**Belong**  
Young people  
beating loneliness

Tackling loneliness is an issue close to the hearts of Co-op colleagues and members, and lots of them have been helping raise funds to support our work.

In September, the Co-op donated £75,000 of the proceeds from its annual Pioneer Awards to the Foundation. Another £50,000 was pledged from Christmas sandwich sales. As the festive season continued, advent calendars, a charity Christmas single and a 24-hour

bake-a-thon added to the tally raised for youth loneliness. We're grateful to everyone who played their part.

In a further fundraising boost, [Co-op Members can now choose 'Belong' when allocating their 1% community fund.](#)

Thousands have already supported the Co-op Foundation in this way. Have you chosen your cause yet?

Visit [coop.co.uk/membership](https://coop.co.uk/membership) to find out more.



# Strengthening communities

Alongside our work on youth loneliness, 2017 was spent laying the groundwork for other areas we'll be focusing on in the years ahead.

We explored how we can meet local needs more sustainably, by investing in community-run organisations with viable, enterprising ideas. Co-op Members up and down the country acted as our eyes and ears, telling us what matters most to their communities as we worked up our plans (see p.14 - community enterprise).

Many smaller charities in particular are struggling with challenges from securing funding to using new technology. Through our work with Co-op colleague volunteers (see p.14 - strengthening local groups) and new digital initiatives (see p.13 - stimulating new approaches), we're helping groups to learn the skills to adapt for a healthier future.

Some needs are even more immediate - like the impact of the violent atrocity that struck our home city of Manchester in May 2017. We defined a clear set of principles for our approach to disasters and emergencies, and are proud to have made our own contribution to helping Manchester heal (see p.13 - solidarity).



## OUR IMPACT

### Stimulating new approaches

The UK Business Digital Index 2017 found that more than half of charities lack basic digital skills. For many, this gap is hindering their ability to raise funds, reach people who need their help, or deliver their services efficiently.

We supported a series of workshops run by CAST (the Centre for Acceleration of Social Technology) in Manchester, Cardiff and Newcastle. These events introduced charities and social

enterprises to some of the possibilities, processes and funding opportunities for using digital to re-think and re-design aspects of their services.

Eighty organisations took part, including 12 from other parts of the country who received individual phone consultations - demonstrating the demand for this type of support. In 2018 we will significantly expand our engagement with digital technology and its potential for transformational social impact.

## VALUES IN ACTION

### Solidarity

As a series of tragedies unfolded last summer, from Manchester Arena to Grenfell Tower, we asked ourselves how we could most effectively use our resources in solidarity with those affected.

Through our work with Manchester mental health charity 42nd Street (a key partner in our youth loneliness research) we knew that the extent of trauma following events like these often comes to light weeks and months later. We also wanted to support community cohesion and

make sure that young people of all ethnic and religious backgrounds could access help if needed.

We gave £50,000 to 42nd Street, and helped them raise another £50,000 in lottery funding, to respond to the Arena attack. This provided extra capacity for their therapeutic services to meet the needs of young people. The funds are also being used to train and support local groups in communities across Greater Manchester, increasing their confidence to offer ongoing mental health care closer to home.

## OUR IMPACT

### Strengthening local groups

As the Co-op's charity, we're fortunate to have access to the time and talents of many colleagues who are always willing to show they care. The number of Co-op volunteers we've connected to community projects has grown year-on-year, with 1,576 colleagues giving 10,000 hours in 2017.

We also encouraged a shift in the nature and long-term value of volunteer activities. We developed deeper relationships with organisations such as the Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Manchester. This allowed more targeted matching of skills to help groups develop their

capabilities, from customer service to social media.

For example, the Co-op Internal Audit team worked with a youth club to help them prepare a business plan and improve their financial systems. This has helped the club apply for funding, which will make a big difference to the work it can do with disadvantaged young people.

**"I have managed to submit the three year funding application form tonight with everybody's input from our volunteers and yours, A BIG THANK YOU TO ALL"** Centre Manager

## VALUES IN ACTION

### Community enterprise

We believe that the most effective, lasting solutions to local needs are built on **self-responsibility**. We want to unlock the potential for enterprising responses to community challenges - designed, led and sustained by the people in those communities.

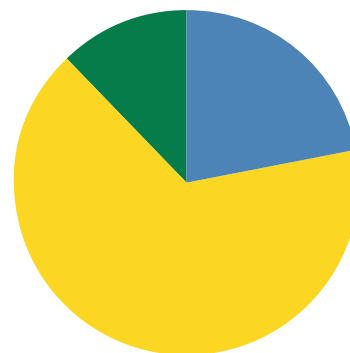
To start out, we identified four areas of local life where we saw potential for communities to become more self-reliant: housing, transport, community centres and green spaces.

But before deciding how to prioritise and progress these ideas, we wanted to hear what Co-op Members had to say.

Being **honest** and **open** at this early stage in our thinking paid off, as members were only too willing to share their insights. More than 1,000 people contributed to our series of surveys and blogs, building up to a rich understanding of the needs and opportunities in each of our target sectors.

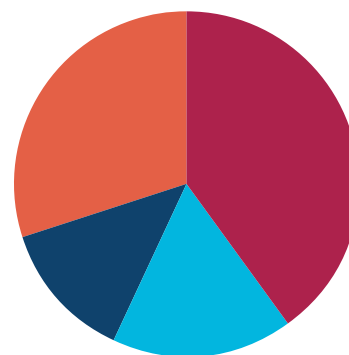
## Finances

In 2017 the Foundation's income was £1.7 million



Where it came from...

- Investments 22%
- Donations 66%
- Big Lottery Fund #iwill grant 12%



...and how we used it

- Youth loneliness projects 40%
- Volunteering projects 17%
- Support and development costs 13%
- Ring-fenced for future projects 30%

These figures are unaudited and may therefore be subject to adjustments. Our full audited accounts for 2017 will be available on the Charity Commission website when finalised.



## VALUES IN ACTION

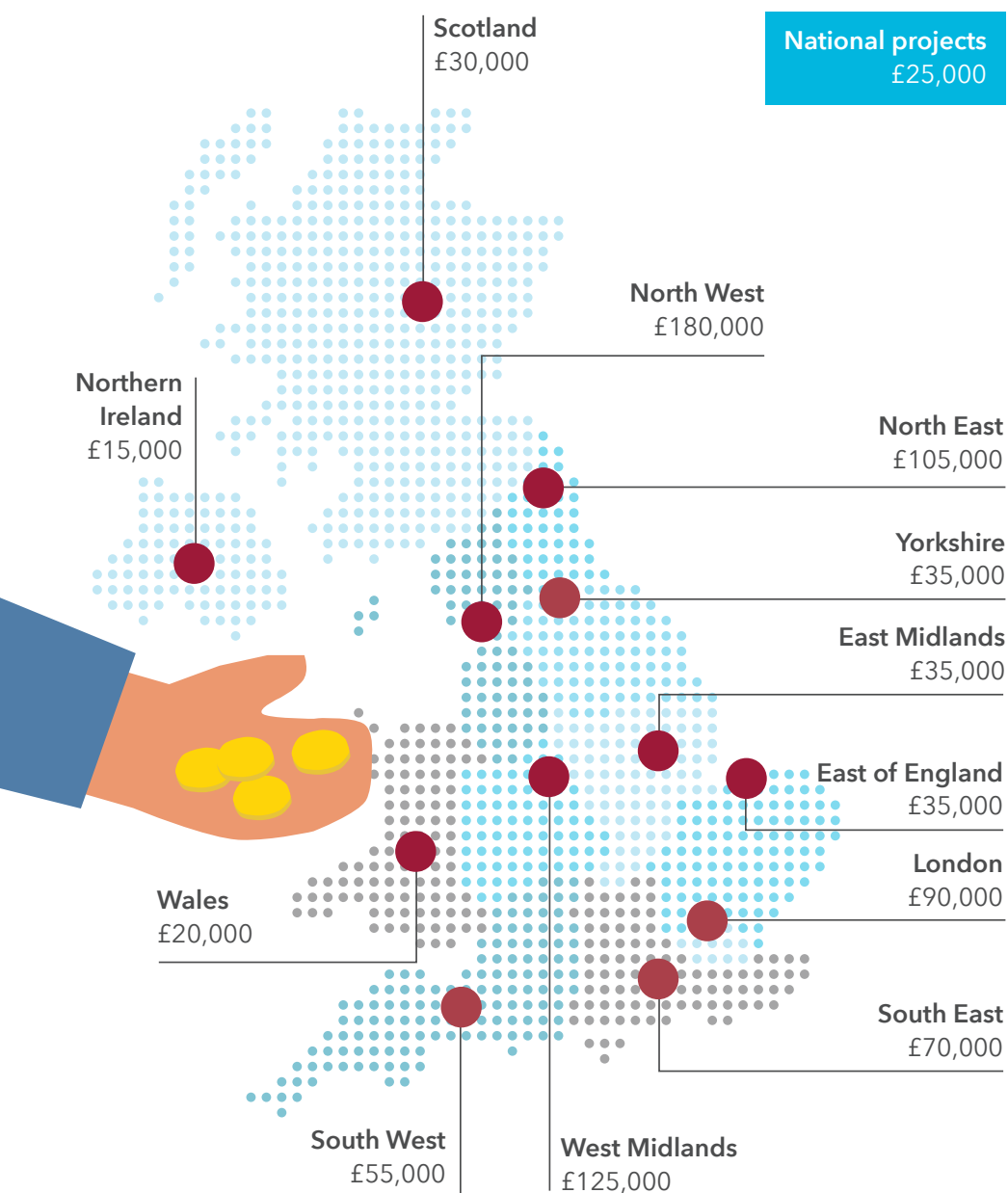
### Social responsibility

The Foundation was set up with an endowment fund - long-term investments that provide a financial bedrock, covering all our day-to-day running costs.

The funds are held in a trust managed by Royal London Asset Management that takes an active approach to responsible investing. As well as avoiding sectors like arms and tobacco, it seeks out companies showing leadership on corporate governance, and whose products help solve social and environmental problems.

Investing in this way is the right thing to do, but also brings financial rewards as the value of our endowment grew by 11% in 2017.





## Grants we awarded in 2017

Organisation	Amount	Region
CAST	£5,000	National
Whizz Kidz	£20,000	National
Young Scot	£30,000	Scotland
Co-operative College*	£25,000	North West
42nd Street	£50,000	North West
Royal Exchange Theatre	£70,000 (over 2 years)	North West
Proud Trust*	£35,000	North West
Youth Focus: North East (1)	£70,000 (over 2 years)	North East
Youth Focus: North East (2)*	£35,000	North East
Youth Action Northern Ireland	£15,000	Northern Ireland
Bradford Youth Development Partnership*	£35,000	Yorkshire
Changing Our Lives	£20,000	West Midlands
Make Some Noise*	£35,000	West Midlands
Envision	£70,000 (over 2 years)	West Midlands
Youth Cymru	£20,000	Wales
TwentyTwenty*	£35,000	East Midlands
Youthscape*	£35,000	East of England
Ovalhouse	£15,000	London
Become	£20,000	London
Clean Break	£20,000	London
Young Minds*	£35,000	London
Off The Record*	£35,000	South West
Carefree Cornwall	£20,000	South West
The Prince's Trust	£70,000 (over 2 years)	South East

Grants marked \* were awarded through the Co-op Foundation #iwill fund. Big Lottery Fund and Department of Culture, Media & Sport are each investing £20 million seed funding over four years to create the #iwill fund. Co-op Foundation are acting as match funders and are awarding grants on behalf of the #iwill fund. £1 million from the #iwill fund will be matched by £1 million from the Co-op Foundation over 3 years.

# The year ahead

In 2018 we will expand our work tackling youth loneliness, reaching thousands more young people and using what we learn to shape a national campaign. We've also got lots of other exciting plans in the pipeline.



**Goal:** Champion young people's ability to contribute positively to their communities and help strengthen their sense of belonging



**Goal:** Invest in disadvantaged communities' capacity to overcome social, economic or environmental challenges



**Goal:** Build our reputation as a trusted charity with a co-operative difference, uniting with others to make a sustainable impact in communities

## 2018 priorities:

- Open our second round of #iwill funding, bringing 10 new partners into our Belong network
- Publish new research on young people's perceptions of loneliness
- Develop our plans to strengthen local youth services

## 2018 priorities:

- Launch our community enterprise investment programme UK-wide
- Build the capacity of community-led green spaces and environmental projects
- Significantly expand our work to promote the use of digital technology for social good

## 2018 priorities:

- Work even more closely with the Co-op's businesses to raise funds, and maximise our combined impact in the communities we serve
- Launch our new values-based policy and planning framework
- Regularly share our progress and outcomes with Co-op Members - we are your charity!

# Get involved

Contact us if you'd like to find out about opportunities to get involved with our work, whether by volunteering, fundraising, or taking part in one of our community consultations.

Email: [foundation@coop.co.uk](mailto:foundation@coop.co.uk)

Website: [coopfoundation.org.uk](http://coopfoundation.org.uk)

Twitter: [@Coop\\_Foundation](https://twitter.com/Coop_Foundation)



“ I think loneliness is still an unspoken issue, and it can be hard for young people to deal with. It's important we make young people aware of the opportunities that are out there to get involved in their community. By helping the Co-op Foundation, I found out about some amazing things happening locally for young people like me - and it was great to be part of something that will make a real difference”

**Jess, young #iwill panel volunteer**



“ Volunteering with the Foundation's 'Massive Maths' project is a really rewarding experience. Spending the day at one of our Co-op Academies, teaching children maths through playing games, is really enjoyable. The children have fun learning and I think I enjoyed it even more than they did!”

**Kasim, Business Auditor**



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Foundation

Co-op Foundation is a working name of Co-operative Community Investment Foundation,  
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