



# Building Local Sustainability & Resilience - A New Type of Community Hub?

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Launched March 2022

# THE HUB



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LIBRARY OF THINGS



Mainstream Setting – Heart of The Community

5 days a week - 12,000+ visitors / year

A welcoming and empowering local space for ALL

Started March 2019



# WHO WE ARE

Started in 2019 in response to:

- desire to **grow reach & normalization** of “sustainable living” at grass roots
- gap in **local advice & skills sharing** around sustainable living & related life skills (for homes & in wider community);
- lack of related **community projects** empowering ‘regular people’, Including marginalised.



Team of 70+ **volunteers** and 16 part-time expert & dedicated **staff** run our:

- Pilot **Community Hub** in a popular S.E.London shopping centre **x5 days/week (1k+ visitors/month)** since March 2022;
- **Energy Champions**
- **Community Allotment / Garden**;
- X4 different, regular **Repair Cafes**;
- **Other community events & projects.**

An **empowering community partner**, our growing Team:

- provide free peer to peer **advice, practical skills workshops & events** (sewing, growing, insulation, repair etc);
- Inclusively & collaboratively upskilling a diverse range of local people & org.s to:
- ✓ **reduce cost of living, isolation, energy emissions, waste, carbon footprints,**
- ✓ **boost health, local biodiversity and community resilience.**



- 2019 CIC
- 2021 Registered Charity
- 2022 Community Hub Seed Funding from BEIS via Greater South Eastern Net Zero Hub
- 2022 Launched Community Hub Pilot 2024 CAST impact research
- 2025 Esmee Fairbairn Blueprinting & Next Sites



Building skills, motivation, health & wellbeing for ALL through sharing **information, training, resources, space and inspiration** to make greener living, & working, the enjoyable, logical, norm.



## A Community Sustainability Charity (previously Community Group then CIC)

**Helping build local sustainability & resilience while piloting a new Community Hub model leveraging empty retail units in an inclusivity focused 360 and 'hub & spokes' style which:**

- normalises and increases engagement with more sustainable living
- provides a holistic response to the interconnected crises of our time: climate, cost of living, loneliness, and mental health.
- enables people to create the projects, services and changes they want to see together - building people power and resilience, through the lens of sustainability.
- fosters a sense of community while empowering people with the practical skills needed for championing and building a more sustainable, equitable and resilient community.
- helping to building stronger, healthier communities, one neighbour at a time.



# Accessibility Via A 360° Community Hub

Our Services,  
Events and Other  
Offerings Designed  
and delivered by  
and for local  
people.



## 360° Sustainability

Covering all areas of sustainability individuals may enjoy or worry about, all types of sustainable living and sustainable communities skills, knowledge, projects, equipment and spaces. From energy to nature, from transport to food, from mending to growing and more.

## 360° Community Needs

We do not silo. We support people with their most pressing social, economic and wellbeing needs, through the lens of sustainability. From bills / cost of living, loneliness/isolation, mental health, physical health, employability, language skills,

A young girl with long dark hair tied back in a ponytail, wearing a blue and white horizontally striped t-shirt, is smiling and looking towards the right. An older woman with short grey hair, wearing a light-colored patterned top, is also smiling and looking in the same direction. They appear to be examining a small, colorful object together, possibly a piece of art or a craft. The background is slightly blurred, showing an indoor setting with other people and possibly a display board.

and they are skills for life  
that they can pass on.



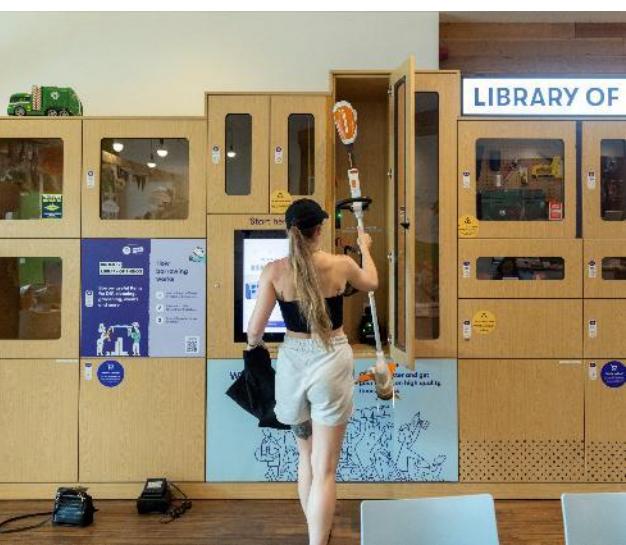
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### **It delivers tangible outcomes:**

- Lower living costs.
- Enhances health, wellbeing and connection.
- Builds employability and sustainable enterprise.
- Creates greener, fairer, more resilient communities.





**Borrow & Lend:** We have free equipment available to the public 5 days a week eg sewing machines, crafting tools and litter pickers. We also host kids party sets and a fabulous Library of Things – reducing the cost and carbon footprints of their DIY, gardening and leisure equipment.

# Sharing Skills

Intergenerational skills swapping:  
upskilling communities,  
overcoming disabilities,  
beating loneliness and  
isolation,  
reducing waste  
and more.



## Intergenerational & Intercultural Skills Sharing: Boosting Mindfulness, Creativity and Community





# People value reliability and regularity, as well as variety.

Each person comes on a journey with their community at the Hub & Beyond, towards the higher impact sustainability conversations and changes.

## Community Hub

### **Community Hub (since 06/2022):**

Every Week  
5 Days a week (Thurs-Mon)  
10am-6pm

### **Daily:**

Advice From Hub Staff/Volunteers  
Sofas & Craft Space to Relax / Craft / Socialise  
Book Corner  
Simple craft / colouring available daily  
Public Sewing Machine  
Library of Things

## Community Hub

### **Weekly:**

Energy Clinic  
Mending clinic,  
Baby and toddler group,  
Knit, stitch & crochet socials,  
Young People's Programme  
Family Crafting

### **Monthly:**

Community Tech Reuse Project  
Repair Café  
SME Support Day  
Film Night / Board Game Afternoon

**Annual:** Christmas Fair; seed swap;  
Easter/Halloween

## In Community

### **Weekly:**

Community Allotment/Garden Day

### **Monthly:**

Repair Cafes  
G&C Newsletter

### **Every Other Month:**

Bromley Environment Newsletter

### **Annual:**

Comedy Night  
Santa's Sleigh Ride (Rotary collab)  
Wrap Up London

# Building Community - Sharing Key Skills





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# “A Hub & Spokes Model”

## The Spokes of The Community Hub:

### Community Allotment/Garden

A weekly safe space to connect with nature and community

Access to space to grow and pick fruit / vegetables

Intergenerational and intercultural skills, knowledge and equipment sharing

Locals teaching/learning:

- Nature friendly food growing;
- Biodiversity boosting planting;
- Habitat creation;
- How to feedback to local councillors, schools and residents associations on boosting biodiversity and food growing spaces in the borough

Educational settings and general public using. Social Prescribers / Charities refer users.

### Projects/Events/Collaborations out in the Community

Events and projects with and in:

- schools
- local food banks
- Charities for Climate Vulnerable
- Residents' associations, faith groups and community groups
- parks

Plus:

- Energy Advice & Hub Info Pop Up Stalls
- Energy Champion Home Visits
- Local council collaboration: panels etc
- Bromley Environment Network (BEN)
- Big Annual Comedy Night (740 seats)

### Multiple Repair Cafes

This grew from:  
our weekly Mending Clinic at the Community Hub,  
to a regular Repair Café at the Community Hub,  
to adding a regular:

- A Repair Café in Beckenham;
- A Repair Café in St Mary's Cray; and
- A Repair Café/Mending Clinic in West Wickham



## “Co-Designed & Co-Delivered Service”

Local people help us design and deliver the events and services they want to see, just ask many of our current volunteers!

### Research Collaborations

To improve our impact and reach, and to support other related research, we have collaborated on research at our Hub with celebrated academics, researchers and masters students including those from:

- Imperial College London
- NESTA & UCL
- Queen Marys
- Glasgow University
- CAST & Bath University
- British Academy

### Community Co-Design

Feedback & event/service suggestions and design input from:  
- leaders AND beneficiaries of local charities, community groups and community stakeholders representing local communities, especially vulnerable and marginalised groups, via:

- Requests from individuals turned into reality though their co-delivery
- One to one meetings and catch ups
- Co-design work around specific events, themes or needs
- Requesting input into specific events (eg SEND provision for Christmas Fair)
- Community Co-Design Days
- Online surveys sent over

### Community Hub Feedback

Feedback & event/service suggestions collected from:

- Hub visitors
- LOT users
- Workshop/Event attendees
- Volunteers
- Staff

Via:

- Conversation
- Surveys (online and hard copy)
- Debriefs
- Monthly Team Meetings
- Volunteer / Line Manager Catch Ups

## Volunteering

Friendly, diverse and knowledgeable locals volunteer here.

Lending an ear and sharing skills, knowledge and a cup of tea, to help with:

- any aspect of living more sustainably;
- cost of living;
- loneliness;
- mental health pressures;
- employability issues;
- and more;

All through the lens of sustainability.





# Helping Our Community With Their Biggest Emissions

## Impact & Key Human Need: Energy

“People come in for all areas of social, economic, wellbeing & environmental need, & come on a sustainability journey with us.”

### Energy Champions

#### Delivering:

- Weekly Hub **Energy Advice Clinic**
- 'Getting Cozy' **Craft/Info Sessions**
- Energy Champion **Home Visits**
- Energy Advice **Pop Up Stalls**
- **Energy Efficiency & Renewables Talks** for Community Groups, Residents Associations, Faith Groups & Charities

### What

#### Providing:

- advice on **energy efficiency** measures & funding.
- advice on **energy tariffs, bills & additional help available for vulnerable.**
- advice on **renewables** & funding.
- Information around scams & misinformation
- Signposting of local **Community Energy Projects; Fuel Poverty Vouchers; Case Studies & Tours**

### Collaborations

#### With Whom:

- BEIS/DESNZ
- Net Zero Review (C.Skidmore)
- South East London Community Energy (SELCE)
- South Eastern Community Energy & UKPN
- Community: Local Residents Associations, PTAs, Faith Groups, Community Groups, Charities, & the General Public



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EVENTS



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## Low Trust in Sustainability Messaging (esp Government)

- **Low public trust:** Lack of public trust in government, particularly around environmental initiatives.
- **Ineffective Engagement:** Lack of trusted messengers and failure to link environmental benefits with improvements in cost of living, health and employment – **though changing.**
- **Social media:** Problematic nature of unaccountable and misleading content.



“  
*Marginalized communities disproportionately bear the brunt, experiencing exacerbated issues with food, housing, energy, and health.*



# We are Normalising Environmental Engagement and Building Trust by:

- **Reframing sustainability:** Emphasising relatable concepts and language, addressing community needs and mainstreaming conversations.
- **Community-led empowerment:** Peer-to-peer skills sharing and case study sharing, events and services by the community for the community





# How The Community Hub Builds Trust



- Addressing **people's actual concerns** - we listen and fundamentally care about what our community needs.
- Our **staff and volunteers are from the local community** and reflect our visitors/service users.



# How The Community Hub Builds Trust



- We can **answer questions** and clarify new policy, funding, infrastructure and technology in a way that government can't on its own.
- Visitors can have **1-1 conversations**, ask questions, raise concerns, and express net zero-skeptic views without feeling attacked.
- Become clearer on some of the **day-to-day benefits of changes** that feel challenging.



# Our Impact

- **Strong and growing engagement**
- Increased environmental awareness
- Driving **low carbon behaviours**
- Strengthening social **connections** and reducing social isolation
- **Thriving spaces** - providing a community space for people to come together
- Increased **civil engagement**
- **Reducing pressures of poly-crisis on public services** (NHS, employment centres, Adult Services, schools etc)
- **All of which contribute to key government missions**





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## Driving Low-Carbon Behaviours

- 46% have reduced **energy use**.
- 66% of Hub users reduced how much stuff they buy, 64% repaired more items, 62% bought more second-hand and 44% reduced their food **waste**.
- 42% increased use of **public transport** and 36% increased **active travel**.





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# Impacting Green Behaviours

Our Community Hub drives sustainable behaviours, with participants integrating greener practices:



At home  
(89.8%)



When shopping  
(61%)



In the local  
community (52.5%)



In the workplace  
(47.5%)



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# Thriving Places

- Provides a practical space for community activity and collaborations.
- Enables local people to design and deliver the events and services they want and need
- Empowers residents to tackle local challenges, including local environmental, social and economic needs and issues.
- Brings people back into the town centre.
- Provides a reliable safe space and a warm space.





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## Over the last 3 years, we've seen:



Increased diversity  
in service users



Strengthened  
academic research  
collaborations



Diversified funding  
streams



Key funding to  
blueprint our model



# Scaling the Impact: Towards a Sustainable Future

## Blueprinting & Collaboration



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# Opportunities

- Inclusive and accessible community level conversations, project and services are more important than ever.
- So we are working hard to facilitate sharing of learnings, templates and case studies across the country, through:
  - the **G&C Community Hub Blueprinting Package** being created to support grass roots charities, community groups and councils to set up their own Community Hub **franchise-style OR to use it cherry-picking style** to strengthen elements of their existing work/model.
  - **“One to One Exploration / Support Sessions”** for organisations hoping to set up a Community Hub or similar.
  - the **Community Sustainability Support Network for England (CSSN)** - an inclusive peer to peer support network for founders, CEOs and Project Leads running these projects and spaces in England.



# National Sharing of Learnings & Resources

## AIM:

To cross-pollinate and share learnings and resources to boost the **inclusivity, impact and resilience** of the wide range of community sustainability projects across England

## **Community Sustainability Support Network England: CSSN**

(Launching Jan/Feb 2026)

### **1) Delivery Focused Monthly Community Of Practice Session:**

- Network online with other founders, CEOs, Project Leads;
- Member Success Story Learnings;
- Member Challenge Presentation;
- Relevant Funding, Training, Research;
- Opportunities to Collaborate eg Funding Bids, Delivery, Campaigns, Research, Policy Input etc

### **2) Key Online Resource:** Peer to Peer Template, Case Study & Research Sharing Hub

### **3) Network-wide Research:** Challenges and Opportunities

### **4) Annual In Person Event:** Connecting, Celebrating Successes and Discussing Common Challenges

**Research & Event** - aiming to culminate in an anonymized **Policy Makers Feedback Report** for government and funders re key impacts /benefits, needs/challenges and opportunities





#### EOI Form For:

- 1-2-1 support re scoping potential or setting up Community Hub (or similar);
- Community Hub Blueprinting Package;
- Community Sustainability Support Network
- Feedback to Policy Makers / Funders.

# Get In Touch:

Whether you're interested in:

- **Advice on Community (Sustainability) Hubs or elements (incl free 1 to 1s), UK;**
- **UK Community Hubs Blueprinting Package;**
- **Community Sustainability Support Network for England;**
- **Feedback to Policy Makers / Funders;**

**Contact:**

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Thank You