

'Levelling-up and Building Back Better' - Feb 2021

WHERE

It's a positive, unintended consequence of the pandemic, - there is a mutual view that we should be there (socially distanced) for each other. I wonder if this will continue post-Covid? I hope so, because whilst we've all been impacted, it is poorer, disadvantaged communities/neighbourhoods that have disproportionately struggled and will do so for many years to come. This pandemic has a unique way of finding the raw nerve in those who are unemployed, emotionally fragile, already traumatised, exposed to violence, and broadly excluded. These groups, communities, neighbourhoods should be at the fore-front of the Government's intention to 'level-up'. It is simple public health logic ('follow the science' again) that the whole of society benefits when we lift-up those who need it most. A bit like the vaccine roll-out. So that's where we should focus – on to how.

HOW

Again let's lean on a public health approach, - it is far better to act through early intervention, prevention and offer personalised help that creates hope, change and growth from within communities – it is better to provide the resources needed in local communities, so they can help themselves. The UK has a great voluntary/charitable sector (yes, it's struggling right now just like all businesses), but with some well-placed Government support it is this sector that will take the pressure off our over-worked public services and foodbanks. The Government has the machinery roughly in place - 'The Civil Society Strategy'. The well-placed support should be the Government's promotion/backing of more local social impact projects. Let's explain why.

WHY

Social Impact projects focus on specific groups with clear outcomes defined from the beginning. Social Impact projects use alternate financing (so the Government does not have to find start-up funds) and are only paid for based on the outcomes of change they deliver. In other words, they can be about getting specific groups into work, preventing young people ending up in prison, or reducing inpatient mental health numbers. They can be tailored to regional/local need and governed through accountable consortia. The 100+ social impact projects currently in place across the UK show good delivery (**and they save more than they cost**), have better engagement and better outcomes than traditional commissioning of services and they have local partners to reach those most in need.

WHEN

Now. Most social impact schemes take 3-6 months to set up. Investors will need Government backing for outcome payments. We need a simpler process to follow and strategic support. Central Government support means one of the other main benefits is achieved, that is the integration of outcomes which suit people with a complexity of need – i.e. who may need work, personal support and housing which for example calls upon a range of Government departments that default to silo working but need to think integration. The Prime Minister called for analysis, it indicated the non-profit sector should lead the post-Covid recovery, the current Civil Society strategy review needs to follow suit to promote more 'levelling-up', replicable social impact schemes to come forward.



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