

Strengths based approaches to social care: evaluation of Community Led Support (CLS)



Public Summary

Community-led support (CLS) is a method of social care that helps people focus on their strengths. It involves working with people and their communities to achieve what they care about, building on the skills and connections they already have. The National Development Team for inclusion (NDTi) created CLS to help social care and health systems work better together. It has been used in over thirty places in the UK. The first stage of the project looked at what overall difference CLS had made to how social care services support people and what helped and hindered the change process.

The final report emphasises the importance of working together, having the right culture and leadership, and using data effectively. The study took guidance from people with real-life experiences and professionals in the field.

We found that areas involved in CLS showed positive improvements in how they handled social care compared to areas not involved in CLS. More care plans were thoughtfully reviewed two years after the program started.

We also learned that working closely with other community services helps build partnerships and increases local knowledge. However, CLS management often stays with local government. The NDTi network offers support to peers and senior leaders to encourage staff to have more freedom and flexibility. Having enough resources and time is crucial for local authorities and NDTi to involve people in decision-making processes.

In the second stage of the project we are focusing on community hubs, a common part of local CLS programmes. These provide a physical space to build relationships with the community and partners and undertake strength-based social care in the community.



Public and Community Involvement

The study was guided by a group of people who have experience with CLS. This group had five members who had used local services and some of whom who had also worked in health and social care. We met with them five times during the research. We discussed our research questions, methods, findings, and how to share those findings. They helped us understand what was important to them and CLS and were very open about sharing their experiences. The group also co-presented our research at different conferences. Their insights enhance our work, and they continue to be involved in phase two.

Dissemination

We shared our findings at NDTi's two annual in-person events which are attended by representatives from across their network and their on-line Spring conferences., The findings were presented at an international practice and academic conference on integrated care in 2024 under the title of "Harnessing community assets in integrated care: Implementation lessons from two areas in England. Insights from the work have also been shared as part of a number of professional CPD session.

The evaluation has been promoted as a good practice example by the European Social Network

We have made four short videos Beacon Films available here; ['Changing systems'](#), ['Leading Collaboratively'](#), ['Coproducting with people and communities'](#) and ['Understanding Impact'](#).

Impact and Implementation

The research was nominated for and won the European Social Services Award for Research and Evaluation - [Research and Evaluation - European Social Services Awards](#)

Publications

[Miller et al \(2025\). Leading by example? Culture, change, and strength-based social work, *The British Journal of Social Work*, 2025; bcaf070, <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcaf070>](#)

[Miller et al. \(2024\). Changing culture not just process: Community led support in action. University of Birmingham.](#)

[Prunty et al. \(2024\). Effect of strengths-based care: Community Led Support, No 5jmbk, SocArXiv, Center for Open Science.](#)

Next steps

We are planning a good practice guide on community hubs and are working with NDTI on embedding culture and co-production better in the CLS programme. We are currently researching community hubs informed by human geography methodologies, aiming to understand how community hubs operate within their local areas and how the physical location and participating organisations influence diverse community engagement with such social care supports. We will also create a toolkit based on findings from the research phases on best practices within the CLS program.