WHY IS COLLABORATION LIKE A STREET PARTY?

By Cate Newnes-Smith

As our Joining Forces cell has been discussing, most social problems are too complex for any single organisation to solve on their own, and this means that collaboration is essential. Here, Cate Newnes-Smith, our thought leader for this cell, shares ideas on what good collaboration looks like.

I've come up with a theory around collaboration. I would be interested to hear your response: a) do you like this analogy? b) can it be built on in any way?

Collaboration is like holding a party.

At **Level Zero,** there are no parties. You don't bother to organise a party, you're just at home on your own or with your family. This is when no collaboration is going on. Sometimes this is what is needed, but not all the time.

You decide that you need to collaborate. You have decided to throw a party. You organise the party yourself. You decide everything – the date, the catering, the balloons, the decorations and then you invite your friends along. This is often the first step towards collaboration that people will take. You think that you are collaborating now, because people are invited to your event.

This is **Level One** of collaboration – other people are involved, but on your terms.

However, perhaps at the next party you throw, you ask friends for advice on the party. Do you think we should do a buffet or a chilli? Shall we start at 7.30pm or 8.30pm? Shall I invite Amelia and Seth from No 67? At full **Level Two**, you ask a group of friends to help you organise the whole thing. Let's agree a date we can all make. Who do you want to invite? Let's decide the menu together. You know that your parties are valuable when other people are keen to help you organise.

But then you start to realise that other people are having parties. And actually, maybe you could have more fun if you went along to other people's parties, you could meet more new people, you could have a wider variety of conversations. So, you start to reach out to like-minded people to make

friends, in the hope that you will get invited to their parties. Over time, you make good friends and offer to help them organise their parties. This is **Level Three** of party collaboration. This is an important step in the level of maturity in collaboration. It's not about your party, but other people's parties – you spend time learning about other people and other parties that are being organised out there. You start to figure out where you can go and where you can be. Being invited to lots of parties is a good sign, it shows that people value you and what you have to offer.

Level Four of party collaboration is the most sophisticated – true collaboration. This is a street party where the whole road is involved and come together to organise it (not the type where Jessica at No 6 does it all and no one turns up). You genuinely organise parties together in collaboration with other people and organisations. You agree together that you want to organise a party. You explore together why you want to organise a party, who is it for and how you are going to go about it. This is true collaboration. It requires trust and knowledge of each other's priorities. However, I suspect that it doesn't require a vision (yet). True collaboration starts with exploration. The largest piece of collaboration/social movement that I have worked on started with just one meeting… but that's an essay for another day.

Does this resonate with you? Do you like this analogy? Or is it broken? If so, why? Would you like to organise a party with me?

Cate Newnes–Smith is the CEO of Surrey Youth Focus.

DIVING RIGHT INTO THE COMMUNITY, TOGETHER

By Clare Wightman

We've learnt in our Joining Forces cell that it's important for organisations working together to build a common understanding of what good looks like by listening to people at the sharp end. Here Clare Wightman reflects on her experience in Coventry.

Grapevine works on shifting power across services and systems, supporting people and communities to shape their lives and futures.

People like Lynne who, angered when her dog was injured by broken glass, ignited the Lift Me Up campaign to tackle fly tipping. Lynne is now in talks with managers of city rivers, bridges and parks about changes local families want to see.

People like Sam (not his real name) who in 2018 had what he describes as 'a complete mental breakdown' – the result of life incidents including childhood abuse, chronic illness, homelessness, and being involved in a tragic road accident. Sam is now the lynchpin of Healthy Communities Together, which sees local people and groups joining forces with local services and the acute end of the NHS to bring about transformational change.

Healthy Communities Together started out as a funding and support opportunity from The King's Fund and the National Lottery Community Fund to shift health inequalities by building new partnerships between the public and voluntary sectors.

Grapevine, Coventry City Council Public Health Department and Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Partnership Trust came together to consider this opportunity, and our combined take was we didn't want to just re-arrange the existing voluntary sector partnership deck chairs that reflect old grant-making and commissioning decisions, most, if not all of which, let's be honest, are quite invested in things not changing very much. I mean that as observation not criticism. It is understandable in the face of uncertainty and all of us do it some time or another.

Through Healthy Communities Together we wanted to refocus everyone's attention on person, place, and first-hand experience. We wanted to re-orientate the 'service system' towards the grain of people's lives and communities, their ambitions, and strengths. We also wanted to refocus attention on the reality that we are all the 'system' that keeps people well and thriving (or not): the person, family, neighbours, friends, community, businesses, local services, acute services.

So last year for nine months we took a vertical slice of the whole thing by focusing on the story of the system as told by Sam, someone actually experiencing it. And we did so as equals, prepared to come together to make change.

We are seeking to benefit the most marginalised and excluded Coventry people with mental health issues. Because of the system's failings, there are 10,000 of these people who experience jagged inequalities in income, employment, education and life expectancy. Covid-19 has sharpened these inequalities, particularly for the 1,248 people referred to statutory mental health services in Coventry's more deprived neighbourhoods. For example, 'Sam' lives in a neighbourhood where life expectancy is ten years below the national average.

Sam's story typifies the inequalities, outcomes and disempowerment we are seeking to improve. His *service journey* typifies common experiences and system challenges we want to change. And we always remember that behind 'Sam' stand 9,999 others. Their needs, strengths, priorities and experience will lead each conversation. And round another 8,000 are only a few steps away from the same trajectory if nothing changes.

So what did we discover? In dealing with his experiences Sam has coped alone, but he's also sometimes got support from local groups as well as support from statutory services. While he speaks positively of the people he has met, he also talks about the gaps between services and the impact of their failure to connect with each other. He also talks eloquently about the simple community acts that helped him get well: the daily chat with the postman, the daily cup of tea with a friendly face at the community centre.

In order to stay well Sam says he needs more two-way companionship, flexible services and practical help. This means people nearby who value him, to be able to give back, counselling services that don't put him to the back of the queue when he needs to change appointment times, help to get to the shops (he has difficulties carrying heavy loads) and someone to help look after his dog when he is struggling.

Here's what we have done so far.

Before diving in we spent some time 'poolside' working on our own relationships and our understanding of each other – what's on our plates professionally and personally? Why do we do what we do? How will we hold ourselves and each other to account? How will we behave when we disagree or when other priorities creep in? What's our felt purpose not just our stated one? Are we having side conversations when we shouldn't? We need a deep well of good will and mutual understanding to draw on because this work is tough going. Of course this isn't something we did or do just once. We are always returning to this place.

We then dived in and immersed ourselves in Sam's neighbourhood. We've been useful – fixing curtain poles and TV aerials, helping out at the charity shop, going to the Social Club and calling the raffles – in other words we've woven ourselves into the grain of neighbourhood life for a while.

And then we organised three humanising encounters or three big conversations in a local church, for the first time bringing together the Head of IAPT (Improving Access to Psychological Therapies), the Head of Acute Mental Health Services, the Head of Transformation and Partnerships, the clinical lead psychologist, public health consultants, the council's community resilience team, the GP, and just as many people and groups from the community. At the centre of it stood Sam and the story he wanted to tell.

We tried hard to make it a humanising, equalising encounter. This meant getting everyone to drop their professional masks, and share our own tough times and what has kept us strong. Pretty soon Steve, the Head of IAPT, and the Men's Shed leader bonded over a King Crimson T-shirt and we discovered that Steve had been in a punk band. You know something authentic and real is going to happen once you are out of the land of governance and deliverables into the land of trust, promise, bonds, keeping your word, being yourself, even, dare I say, it love.

Our second Big Conversation was partly about making sense of what we'd heard – using the 'systems thinking iceberg' to expose the layers at which change needs to happen. If we are really going to shift what

happens at the observable surface level then we have to shift the mindsets at the base of the iceberg too. The result was an ambitious vision for a better story.

Our third concerns the plan itself and that's where we are now.

Next up is to do this again and again across six more neighbourhoods in Coventry, iterating and learning as we go.

We're ambitious fish swimming in a big ocean of change – the abolition of Clinical Commissioning Groups, new NHS plans, the emergence of Integrated Care Systems and a pandemic. We know impact and influence won't come easily. We're optimistic people but if all we did was grow more horizontal power in the form of local Healthy Communities Together partnerships which can hold those in positions of authority and leadership to account, and at the same time bring a little more understanding and humanity into the system, we will have achieved no small thing.

Clare Wightman is CEO of Grapevine Coventry and Warwickshire, which works with individuals and communities using a strengths-based approach to help them bring about change that will improve their lives and futures. They strongly believe that relationships solve problems and open up opportunities – for people, for organisations and for systems. You can contact Clare on Twitter @grapevineceo

JOINING FORCES, INCLUDING WITH RIVALS, AROUND A COMMON CAUSE

By Nick Gardham

One insight from our Joining Forces cell is that, in order to find common cause, you must surface and resolve any conflicts or power imbalances. Nick Gardham here shares his experiences of doing this in the world of community organising.

In 2011, David Cameron set out his blueprint for a Big Society. At the heart of this was Cameron's ambition 'to transfer power from the state to individuals, neighbourhoods or the lowest possible tier of Government, in that priority'. Perhaps what is most interesting for those involved in community organising was his statement that what remains of state power should be used for 'galvanising, catalysing, prompting, encouraging and agitating for community engagement and social renewal'.

To achieve this vision Cameron called for a 'new generation of community organisers', and in 2011 the Coalition Government delivered on this promise by awarding Locality a contract to train 500 community organisers across England. This ambitious project, operating at significant scale, was both welcomed and treated with disdain, in equal measure. Whether it was intentional in its timing or not, it couldn't help but be interwoven with cuts to the public sector, austerity and a desire for communities to step up and do more as public services retreated.

The Government investment in community organising in 2011 shone a spotlight on practice that had already been developing in England and across the UK by organisations such as Citizens UK in London, Church Action on Poverty in Teeside and Manchester, and Together Creating Communities in Wales, as well as Nurture Development's promotion of Asset–Based Community Development which bridged the gap between community organising and community development.

All this created a flurry of activity from organisations and funders seeking to understand what community organising was, and how it applied to their existing practice. It paved the way for new community organising initiatives, such as ACORN UK, and for many individuals and organisations to explore how community organising could help them meet their goals, including trades unions, political parties, charities and protest groups. Inevitably this led to both growth and competition.

As new models and approaches developed, a few funders began to invest in organising, whilst think tanks such as the Young Foundation started to look at the 'market' for community organising and the potential for scaling up. The language of creating a market and competition over funding was perhaps a contributing factor to the divisions which quickly developed between organisations and practitioners of various types of community development, community organising, Asset Based Community Development, and also the many protest groups that use organising methods to build their power and effectiveness.

Causes of competition can also be the debates over 'purity' and what 'real' community organising is or isn't, questions as to whether it is right to take Government investment, and the need of each organisation to build a brand and identity in order to recruit members and practitioners and to attract funding.

Not many would disagree that the growth of new practitioners of citizen-centred and grassroots community work was anything other than positive. However, the divisions that have emerged could be considered damaging to the people we aim to serve. The organisation I work for, Community Organisers, is no less culpable than any other community organising movement or organisation out there.

However, over the last two years nationally and internationally we have felt the impacts of global crises that are putting unprecedented pressure on those who are already on the margins. As organisers working alongside people to build their collective power to bring about change, we need to challenge ourselves to look at how we can start to create the longer term systemic changes that counter the deep structural inequalities that people are facing, rather than only mitigating the immediate impacts.

It is in these times of crises that we need to break free from the traditional shackles of organising that leads to siloed approaches in separate organisations and issue-based areas and look to build the bigger we.

To exemplify this, in March 2020, Community Organisers called for the largest free-to-use wireless network for low-income communities. As the country was placed into lockdown, conversations across our community organiser network highlighted that many people would be locked out of society due to the unaffordability of internet access. Across our network local people and organisations started to develop organising approaches that were short term and immediate, taking the necessary action to ensure that local people could gain access to the internet. To support this, Community Organisers worked with grassroots organisers to build a wider national alliance of organisations to create a new power structure built on relationships and a commitment to a common cause that could advocate for a longer term strategic approach.

This strategy to organise simultaneously, locally and nationally, meant that powerful stories of action from the ground could complement the calls from a powerful nationwide alliance for a bigger change. The campaign led to the formation of the UK's first ever national databank by O2.

As we shift from the crisis of a global pandemic to the impacts of inflation and unprecedented economic pressures on those with the lowest incomes, again we need to continue to organise in communities in the short term to mitigate the impacts, but also, at the same time, build national alliances of organisations committed to working with a common purpose to tackle the root causes of injustice. To explore how collectively an alliance of organisations can address the cost of living crisis, Community Organisers is convening the Cost of Living Alliance alongside 35 other organisations to create a common purpose.

It is, I believe, in this understanding of organising that we can start to rethink civil society. A civil society that is built on the principles of solidarity and local control with a commitment to join forces with others to work for longer-term systemic change.

Nick Gardham is the CEO of Community Organisers. Over the last 13 years Nick has worked across the UK and internationally, training and supporting thousands of people in the practice and principles of community organising.

PUTTING COMMUNITIES IN THE LEAD ON HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

By Samira Ben Omar

In our Joining Forces cell, a key insight is that we should stop trying to control from the centre. Instead we should be creating a culture in which people at every level have the power to be leaders for system change. Here Samira Ben Omar explains why this is so important in the field of health and social care.

Until recently I led on system change as well as partnerships and engagement for the North West London Integrated Care System. In this role I came to truly understand that communities and grassroots organisations were far more central to the task of producing better health and care outcomes than had been generally accepted. And also that we needed to fundamentally rethink our relationships, and do much more to create the conditions for those in the communities we serve to play a central part in bringing about sustainable transformation in addressing inequalities in health and care.

Here are some things that I learned:

•   The public sector is always limited in what it can achieve alone. A lot of the time those of us in the public sector health and social care system assume that it is primarily our own efforts that will produce the big changes that are needed. The reality is that maybe 80 per cent or even 90 per cent of what impacts on health happens outside healthcare settings. The quality of housing, job security, the sense of community to name just a few examples.

•   Local communities are more resourceful than we think. A lot of the solutions to the challenges that the system struggles with and that are needed to make a difference already exist – a huge amount is going on all the time. But we don't always see it because it is out there in the community, not easily visible to us when our policies and strategies are developed in our offices, while the day-to-day reality of access and experience and quality of care for our residents and communities – especially those most excluded – happens on the ground, on the estates and in neighbourhoods.

- There is often a disconnect between the mainstream policy narrative and the reality of community life. A prime example of this was in the early days of lockdown when everyone was told that if they needed to self-isolate they should avoid sharing a bedroom, bathroom or a kitchen, and that older people and those clinically extremely vulnerable should self-isolate. This type of narrative – while it applied to many – simply did not resonate with very large numbers of people, especially those living in overcrowded conditions, those in multi-generational and multi-occupancy households across the country.

- Communities do most when they can decide for themselves. Communities work best when people decide to take action together, when they exercise their own agency, and when they are motivated by a shared and clear purpose rather than prescribed targets defined by someone else. Some years ago, I set up a Community Champions scheme. As part of a lung cancer awareness initiative, the champions were asked to make contact with 600 people, and the fact that the campaign resonated with them meant that they reached 3,000. The target they had been set had no relevance for them, and when they decided to ignore it and follow their own motivations, they achieved a lot more.

- Community spaces are the lifeblood of local action. In the immediate aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire it was the local community, the churches, temples, synagogues and mosques for example, that stepped in to offer help, not only to residents but also to every public sector organisation, so that they could deliver support to those directly affected by the fire. And we saw the same thing more recently in the pandemic where for example the local Gurdwara – among others – delivered over 500 food packages to NHS Health and Care staff, as well as thousands of meals to homeless people – on a daily basis.

So, what are the preconditions to create a culture in which people at every level – including in the community – are able to be drivers of the big system transformation needed to achieve better health outcomes, not least in this new world of 'Integrated Care Systems'?

Firstly, we need to undo and unlearn some of our own embedded behaviours. In the public sector it seems we are conditioned to do ever more: organise, design and deliver more programmes. Yes, these things are often critical and very much needed, but they cannot be the starting point for achieving change and transformation. The nature of the relationship that we establish with our communities – and indeed our frontline staff – is the sustainable element and that relationship can only be built on the basis of honest, transparent and non-gendered conversations where the starting point is about the person and the conversation starts with 'How are you?'

We need to acknowledge that as health and care organisations, we sometimes create and frame things in our own image and then we wonder why we find it difficult to engage with wider communities or why our lay membership is not representative of our communities.

The answer to this is simple: we set up committees in our image and we only attract people who are familiar with our ways of thinking and doing (a very substantial number of our lay representatives tend to be retired civil servants, teachers, health care professionals, NHS managers etc). I believe that to address this we need to separate the function of committees as formal routes to engagement – which are necessary for governance and assurance purposes – from the role of creating and nurturing a kind of collaborative space, where power-sharing is explicit, where no one person owns the agenda, and where those who participate, including local people, can bring forward proposals and make things happen – on their own terms.

We also need to become explicitly committed to talking about racism and discrimination and their impact on health and care outcomes. We didn't need the pandemic to tell us that racism exists in the NHS and other public sector institutions, but it was a stark national and global reminder – the pandemic highlighted the disproportionate impact on people in areas of high health inequality, as well as among people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups. We cannot forget this, and we have a duty to keep this agenda at the forefront of every conversation on the impact of policies and strategies on our communities.

We have to commit to valuing the stories that people share with us as a valid and robust form of research equal to the quantitative data that we acquire. We also must commit to measuring what people value. People value trust and trusted relationships, and we don't have to go that far back to truly understand this. If we have learnt nothing else from the national COVID vaccine roll-out, we have absolutely learnt the power of trust and trusted relationships to deliver the outcomes required and improve vaccine uptake, especially among those most affected by COVID.

Finally, this essay represents only my humble reflections and I have to admit that I have been intentional in some of the provocations here and to that end I invite you to challenge me – I invite you to a different type of conversation.

Samira Ben Omar has over 25 years' experience working in the public sector and the NHS. Her work has particularly focused on policy development, transformation, equality, participatory research and initiating grassroots community-led programmes and social movements for change. She is currently working as an independent consultant and sits on the King's Fund General Advisory Council.

MAKE FRONT LINE TEAMS THE DRIVERS OF SYSTEM CHANGE

By John Mortimer

Managers must stop trying to control from the centre, as those working at the front line are often best placed to bring about the changes that people need to improve their lives – this message has emerged clearly from our Joining Forces cell. John Mortimer gives his insights here.

Back in 2010, Great Yarmouth had a council housing waiting list of 6,000 and even the people who were re-housed were waiting up to 30 months to find a home. I was invited in to take a fresh look at this, and see if it was possible to come up with a better approach.

I worked with the housing team, and we decided to abandon the conventional choice-based lettings scheme, and all the standardised form-filling that went with that. Instead I encouraged the team to have conversations with people. The team soon discovered that council housing wasn't always what was really needed – many people needed help to access private rented accommodation or to resolve a dispute with their landlord, for example.

Once we started to reappraise the task from the perspective of the person involved, it became obvious that a standardised solution couldn't possibly work – after all, people are individuals, and an individualised response was what was needed. The frontline staff started to think more creatively about solutions to people's needs, and in turn that required their managers to think differently as well. This meant moving away from command and control and allowing the team much greater flexibility. Which was scary at first, but the results soon started to look impressive. As reported in the national press, by 2015 the waiting list was cut to 309, and the number of appeals had fallen from 27 per month to one per year.

I've found that a similar approach is required to bring about positive improvements in many other service settings. And often the people who work at the front-line know very well what good looks like, and would like nothing better than to change the way they are expected to work, knowing that better outcomes will follow.

This is what I was told when working with a community health team recently: 'At the start of engaging with a resident, we make assessments. First, someone else makes an assessment on the phone. Then weeks later, by the time I get the referral, I need to make another assessment. Typically there are 89 pages of forms and assessments to complete.'

I worked with this team to help them carry out an exercise to map out the end–to–end flow of work that it took to deal with someone who needed some help. It was really, really long, with 95 steps. And out of that really long flow, only five steps were actually ones that provided the value to the resident.

The team decided to put those assessments aside, and create their own approach to working with a person. And that was the difficult bit – they had to go back to basics and start by focusing on the needs of the person. Yes, a bit like an assessment, but this time they decided to do something different, they listened. They talked to the people they visited about whether they had relatives, what made them happy, what mattered to them, and so on.

The team then spent some time gathering evidence of what they had done and the impact it had. They asked the question; what are the main causes of the issues that citizens face, that cause the problems that we help them with?

There was one particular theme that kept coming out, and that was the fact that so many people had just no ambition, no interests, no reason for looking forward in their life. All they saw was that their health was getting worse. The team's new way of working was to help them reconnect with a sense of purpose in their lives, and reconnect them with those things that made then get up in the morning. Once they did this, the medical and life issues began to find ways to be resolved.

As one team member said:

'I had just finished writing up the difference that we made to Len, one of the people that we had helped. The core role that I played in this was simply to help Len to get over the death of his wife, look forward to things he likes to do, and take charge of his life.

'As I wrote that up on the board, someone asked where in the health system can people go to get this help? Perhaps it does not exist? I suddenly realised that I knew how to do this; I was trained to do this when I was studying to become an Occupational Therapist. I stopped, and thought, after I joined the health service, I never did that anymore. I had forgotten about that … What had become of the hopes I had to make a difference?

'While it was still fresh in my mind, I wrote this down:

How I work now	What I was trained to do
This is what I do every day: • Pick up allocated work. • Split my activities into timed slots. • Do assessments (one hour). • Delegate to others. • Fill out paperwork (three hours). • No breaks. • Do tasks from assessments.	Understand people's lives and their context. Take a holistic view. Promote independence. Take time to do things well.
This is the purpose of my job: • Put in equipment.	Help people live a purposeful life.
This is what it does to people: • The person is seen as the problem. • They become an assessment/referral. • They become non-compliant.	I help someone turn their life around. They are on a journey.
This is what it does to me: • I feel not important, a cog in a machine. • Occasionally I feel I make a difference. • I am stressed at work and at home.	Best job in the world. Motivated. Happy. Empowered.

The right hand side demonstrates the potential of letting go of the centralised constricting standard procedures, and allowing those at the service front-line to do the job they are trained and want to do. In this way they won't just be doing the right thing for an individual – they will also be playing a leading role in a broader system change.

John Mortimer has been working with systems thinking and complexity methods, helping public services to redesign their service design around the citizen. He has been leading research on integrated working, and has numerous case studies published in books, articles and blogs.

TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE, WE NEED TO BRING BUSINESS ON BOARD

By Tom Levitt

We must seek out powerful allies elsewhere, including in the business world to build the bigger we, we've learnt in our Joining Forces cell. Tom Levitt writes here about the opportunity to link up in new ways with businesses.

I was speaking at a global conference on corporate volunteering in Australia, a few years ago. The audience was 500 community organisers and volunteer managers, from business and the social sector around the world. The speaker following me got the biggest cheer when she said 'We at [name of bank redacted] are scrapping team volunteering days!'

Why the ecstasy? Because too often such days, involving paintbrushes, litter pickers, tee-shirts bearing the corporate logo, exist to serve the needs of the company and not society. If you want to do team building – and only team building – go paint balling.

'Corporate Social Responsibility', without qualification or explanation, really has become meaningless. For too many people it means ticking boxes or opting in to temporary activities separate from the normal course of events. 'CSR' has come to mean 'Charitable Superficial Response'. Let's leave it behind, stuff it behind the fax machine and move on.

The focus I believe should be on 'purpose', a reason for being which goes beyond, or even comes in front of, making money for a company's owners. The very term company derives from the Latin meaning to 'break bread with' – a social not just economic purpose. Over a century ago the Lever brothers, W.H. Smith, Jessie Boot, and others founded companies which had a real social purpose.

And the good news is that more and more companies are rediscovering their social purpose, and taking action accordingly. From the pharmaceutical company that asks the children's charity to help it prioritise future product development, to the business that extends its paternalism from its own employees to those in its distant supply chain, because they're equally important in delivering its mission. From the SME that decides to pay the Real Living Wage and not just the legal minimum 'because that's who we are', to the corporate that deliberately buys products from a social enterprise, recognising that it's a sustainable way of doing good by proxy.

These are all relatively small decisions; but together they make a big difference. Part of their impact is to make the host companies both better places to work and even – the evidence shows – more profitable in the long term.

The company that tries, succeeds. 'TRIES' stands for 'Transparent, Responsible, Inclusive, Ethical, Sustainable':

- **Transparent:** light is a great disinfectant and a company that acts in a transparent fashion is inviting its stakeholders to trust it. 'We have nothing to hide' is a great claim, especially if it's true.
- **Responsible:** taking responsibility for your company's full impact on the world and not just the nice bits that suit you.
- **Inclusive:** every governance expert will tell you that diverse boards and diverse workforces work better than monolithic ones.
- **Ethical:** treat your employees like partners; invest in them, get them on board with your company purpose. Walk the talk on ethics.
- **Sustainable:** thinking and acting long term: you don't want to be here today and gone tomorrow.

My preferred term is 'Company Citizen'. A company is a legal form which includes corporates, SMEs, social enterprises and even charities. A company is also a social organisation. Being a citizen, after a moment's thought, describes a balance of rights and responsibilities; exercising those freedoms allowed under the law, tempered by duties to others and a sense of self-discipline. A decent citizen thinks of the future, not just the present, and is motivated by factors other than, or in addition to, money.

'Company Citizen' tells you all you need to know about an organisation. It is an active, a doing role; it matures and progresses. It plans, maps out its future in a proactive way in order to achieve its mission. It has values and a sense of purpose.

The potential for businesses to make a difference is huge. The turnover of Oxfam is about £1 million a day. This is equivalent to a single large Tesco store. If just one per cent of the business sector's revenue were to be applied to doing good that would dwarf what charities can achieve.

In recent years the funding provided to charities from private businesses has reduced. But in some cases this is because the businesses are taking on social projects themselves. For example, the Wates company is training prisoners so that on release they can take up jobs in the construction industry. This is good for the business too, helping to create a skilled and potentially loyal workforce.

The social sector has its own unique role. But in partnering with business, and acting as advocate, in raising the gaze of business from the short term to the long term, and in raising the moral and practical issues, it is possible to establish a win-win situation for business, the planet and society. And that I believe is the way to go.

Tom Levitt is a former MP, and author of the 'The Company Citizen: Good for Business, Planet, Nation and Community'. He is also an Advisory Board Member, Centre for Responsible Business at Birmingham University, and co-founder of Fair for You.