

Making our strategy happen: Building community-centred public services

Community businesses across England are showing what's possible. They are turning empty buildings into thriving hubs, creating local wealth and delivering services built on what people need.

They offer hope to the many communities who still face hollowed-out high streets, a sense of powerlessness and disillusionment, and public services under strain, where traditional approaches have not always delivered lasting change. What is missing isn't energy or innovation, it is the conditions that enable community business to thrive.

Our 2026 – 2030 strategy focuses on closing that gap.

Strategic priority 3: We'll build community-centred public services

Many public services – from homelessness to mental health and employment support – continue to be delivered without the involvement of those they are there to support. Real prevention and resilience start when communities are involved and have the power to lead. Community businesses are run by, and directly accountable to, local communities.

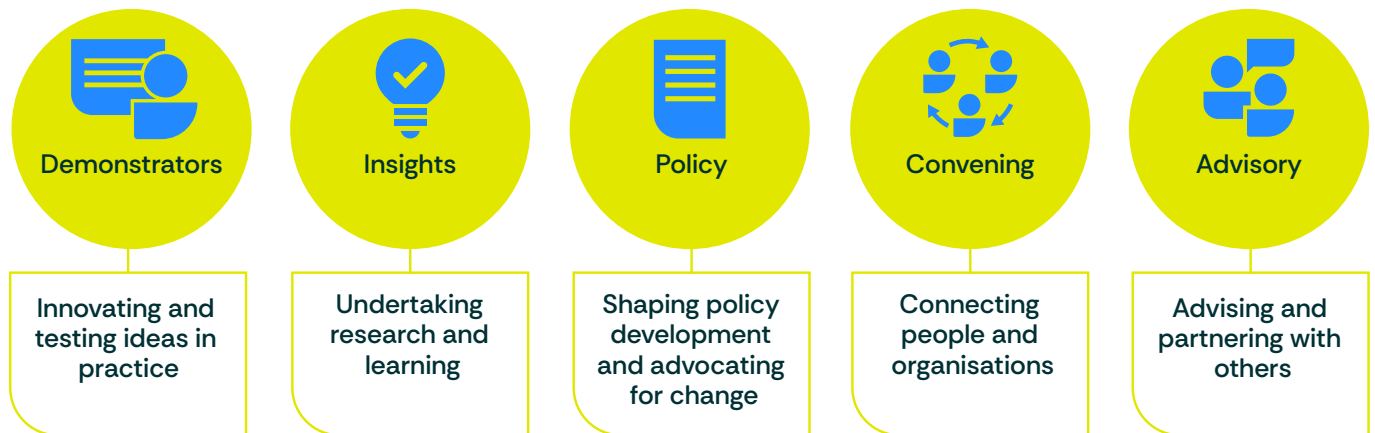
How we will build community-centred public services:

- **Making the case:** We will make the case for community business to be recognised as meaningful partners in public service reform through research, evidence and practical demonstrators.
- **Testing models of governance and community-powered services:** We will continue to test and learn from community covenant partnerships, enabling the conditions for neighbourhood governance to thrive, and influence local spend and public services. We will explore community-powered impact labs to test and demonstrate how community business can help tackle major public service challenges, and build the evidence needed to expand what works.
- **Growing a movement for change:** We will work alongside public sector reform advocates and partners, and with community businesses who are already delivering neighbourhood-level services. Through this work, we will strengthen trust, local relationships, and innovation to improve outcomes for everyone.

Our aim is for all communities to play a bigger role in designing and delivering the services they use, with local services more responsive to their needs.

How we'll achieve our aims

As a think-do tank, we work alongside community businesses and other partners to test new approaches to some of our biggest societal challenges. We use what we learn to influence policy, shift mindsets and behaviours, unlock finance and collaborate across sectors.



A decade of experience has shown what community business can achieve. This is a moment of opportunity. If we want local economies that work differently, communities that are strong and connected, and services designed around people's lives, community business must be part of the solution.



Haven Community Hub

Community public services transforming lives

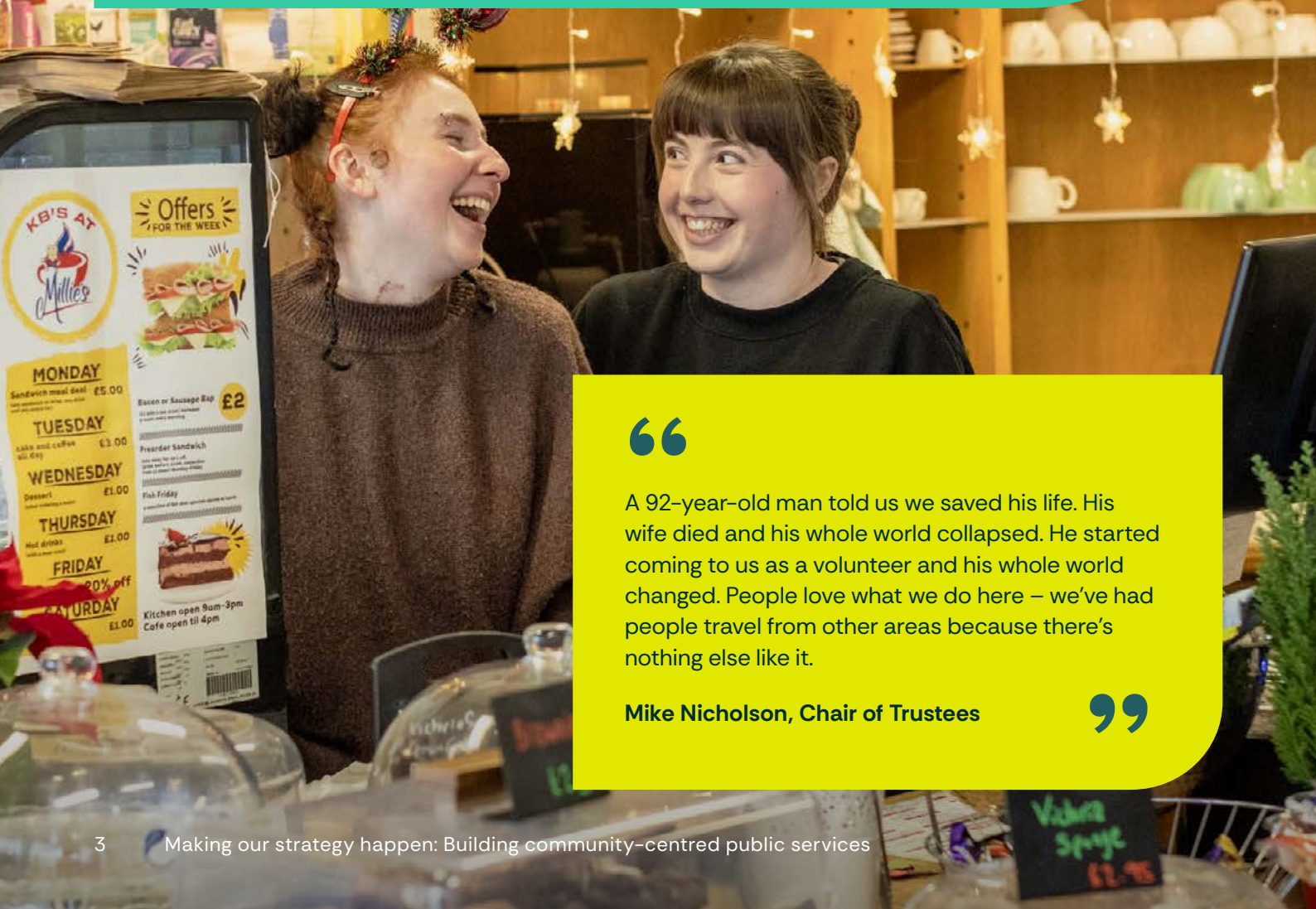
In Westcliff-on-Sea, Haven Community Hub shows how community business can strengthen public services. After the closure of Havens, a historic department store, local community leaders reimagined the building as a community-centred hub designed around local need.

Opened in 2019, the Hub brings together wellbeing activities, community groups, and key services delivered with the local council and NHS. This includes counselling and monthly drop-ins from the council's Dementia Navigator team and the NHS Carers Intensive Support Team. The Hub also hosts diabetic and pre-diabetic clinics run by NHS-commissioned organisations, providing accessible health support in a community setting.

Rather than separating support into different systems, the Hub creates a single, welcoming space grounded in relationships and trust. Thousands of people visit each month. Residents report reduced isolation, renewed confidence and easier access to practical support. The café, run by a local business, adds to both social connection in the hub and vitality on the high street.

Haven demonstrates that when community businesses are trusted partners in design and delivery, public services are more responsive and effective.

Our strategy is about enabling more community businesses to shape and lead the public services they need.



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A 92-year-old man told us we saved his life. His wife died and his whole world collapsed. He started coming to us as a volunteer and his whole world changed. People love what we do here – we've had people travel from other areas because there's nothing else like it.

Mike Nicholson, Chair of Trustees

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