

Grants awarded from £1.6m partnership between government and Co-op Foundation

A £1.6 million partnership between the Government and Co-op's charity, the [Co-op Foundation](#), will help communities across the country tackle loneliness by improving and protecting local spaces that bring people together.

[Space to Connect](#) has today awarded an initial round of almost £900,000 to 57 community organisations across England. The grants of up to £50,000 will support projects that use spaces to address local challenges or expand activities.

The partnership follows commitments made in the Government's [Civil Society](#) and [Loneliness Strategies](#), published in 2018, to help create sustainable community hubs and spaces where they are most needed.

Funding also builds on the Co-op Foundation's work to strengthen community spaces where people can connect and co-operate.

The following organisations are amongst those to have received grants through Space to Connect:

- [Charles Burrell Centre, Norfolk](#) (£42,456): A community hub based in a former school building will increase activities and use of its community cafe to bring more people together.
- [Cheshire, Halton and Warrington Race and Equality Centre](#) (£35,623): Funding will improve facilities at the centre, create a booking system, and fund staff at a multicultural hub. This will help to expand on existing work, address gaps in service provision and make the space more welcoming.
- [Exeter Community Centre Trust Ltd](#) (£40,000): The grant will help refurbish and revamp the top floor of their community centre improving opportunities for the local community to take part in activities.
- [FISCUS North Limited, Sunderland](#) (£33,987): This will enable a mapping exercise of local needs and priorities, support staff costs, and explore plans for a health and well-being space in a shipping container to support the needs of the local community.
- [Hurst Farm Social Club, Matlock](#) (£38,767): The funding will support community engagement and youth activities, as well as developing an

older people's café to reduce isolation and increase income at their social club on a deprived estate.

- [Liverpool and Merseyside Theatres Trust](#) (£40,343): The grant will support increased opening hours, so the community has greater access to the theatre. The grant will also fund work to develop a partnership with a health provider that offers social prescribing.
- [St Werburghs City Farm, Bristol](#) (£46,808): This funding will create an online horticultural training programme that can be sold to generate income, and will enable intensive engagement activities to increase inclusion and diversity at the farm.
- [Sussex Community Development Association](#) (£49,728): The funding will support the refurbishment of a new community centre, completing the transformation from an older people's day-centre to a multi-purpose community asset.
- [The Bromley by Bow Centre](#) (£47,949): The grant will support planning and infrastructure support, training for volunteer leaders and the creation of a toolkit to develop financial sustainability across the community spaces they run.
- [The Garage Trust Ltd, Norwich](#) (£49,755): The funding will support weekly art classes in a community building dedicated to improving people's lives through art.
- [Trowbridge Town Hall Trust, Wiltshire](#) (£49,984): Will be invested in increasing the use of the building, improving facilities and business sustainability planning to ensure a positive future for a historic building now run by the community.

Minister for Civil Society, Baroness Barran, said:

Strong communities play a crucial role in tackling loneliness and social isolation. This £1.6 million worth of funding will create and enhance local spaces that bring people together, encouraging them to make new and lasting friendships.

It is part of our ongoing commitment to work hand in hand with local communities to build a shared, integrated and socially responsible society.

Jim Cooke, Head of the Co-op Foundation, said:

Our Space to Connect partnership with Government builds on our commitment to strengthen communities and tackle loneliness through co-operation.

Grants awarded today will empower people to work together to make better use of spaces to address local challenges, improving the well-being and skills of their whole community.

[Space to Connect](#) was launched in June 2019, at the same time as Co-op's [Endangered Spaces](#) campaign to protect, support and improve 2,000 community spaces by 2022.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

[Space to Connect](#) is a joint partnership between DCMS and the Co-op Foundation, with both parties investing £800,000.

Support is split into two strands: organisations receiving 'Enhance' grants of up to £50,000 will use the investment to expand activities in spaces to make them more sustainable. 'Explore' partners will use up to £10,000 to identify ways to make better use of spaces so they can address challenges, like loneliness and access to community activities.

Applications to this fund are now closed. 'Explore' projects will have the opportunity to apply for further [Space to Connect](#) funding in March 2020 to continue their work.

Co-op's Endangered Spaces campaign is part of Co-operate 2022 – Co-op's wider community vision for the next three years that will see it work on key areas that make communities stronger – community spaces, wellbeing, and education and skills.

About Co-op Foundation

- Co-op Foundation is the Co-op's charity, helping communities UK-wide work together to make things better.
- Co-op Foundation is the leading charity tackling youth loneliness in the UK. By 2021, its Belong programme will:
- Connect and empower at least 7,500 young people to take action to tackle loneliness
- Strengthen local youth services that provide vital support and opportunities
- Engage at least 25,000 young people in a national conversation that breaks down the stigma of youth loneliness.

[Co-op Foundation](#) provides interest-free loans and grants to help eligible organisations improve local spaces that strengthen communities, and grow their incomes so they can sustain these spaces longer-term.