



The Rayne
Trust

WHERE PEOPLE MEET LAUNCH

Why is physical space critical to thriving communities?

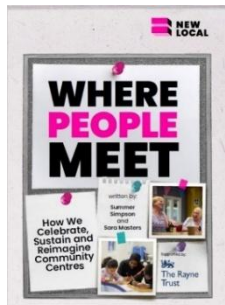


Where People Meet Launch Event Report and next steps

September 2025

Background

The Rayne Trust hosted an event in September that was attended by 70 colleagues across the community, funding and public sectors to discuss why physical spaces are critical to thriving communities



Ahead of the event we shared the New Local report *[“Where People Meet: How We Celebrate, Sustain and Reimagine Community Centres”](#)*. The report recommendations were discussed by the panel during the event.

This document summarises the key insights shared during the event, and further opportunities for collaboration. The event was deliberately not recorded to allow for more open discussion. We encourage anyone interested in this area to get in touch with us at wpmprogramme@raynefoundation.org.uk.

Speakers and Panellists:



Crispin Truman, CEO
Rayne Foundation

Elly De Decker, CEO
Bromley By Bow Centre



Geethika Jayatilaka, CEO
London Plus

Hannah Sloggett, Co-Director
Nudge Community Builders



Jo Choukier, Director
of Design & Innovation
RSA



Nicola Steur, Deputy CEO
Power to Change



Matt Leach, Independent
Commission on Neighbourhoods

Key takeaways from the event

- **Now is the time to shape and shift policy to enable community spaces to thrive** with the national government's neighbourhoods and devolution agendas.
- **The 'how' is as important as the 'what'** – by local people leading the development of community spaces at a local level, communities and individuals are empowered.
- **Funding for the long-term that puts communities in control of their spaces is vital** – ways of doing this includes community share offers and establishing community endowments.
- **Funders should explore ways of pooling funds and making funding as flexible as possible** - the often fragmented and delineated funding for community spaces is a barrier to thriving community spaces.
- **The value of community centres needs to be better evidenced to be able to tap into other pots of funding** – NHS, private sector, philanthropic and other statutory funding.
- **Investment into peer learning and capacity building must come alongside funding to specific community spaces** in order to build the capabilities of the sector and develop innovative solutions collectively.

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When power holders look at managing risk, the question needs to shift to ask *what is the risk of the proposed work not happening?* There will be a much greater risk to community members and social outcomes by not bringing derelict buildings back into use than the risk associated with taking on these buildings.

Hannah Sloggett, Nudge Community Builders



The conversation was rich with examples of inspiring, practical work, including:

- **Nudge Community builders** – local people in Plymouth have set up a Community Benefit Society to take ownership of multiple derelict buildings, bringing them back into community use.
- **Bromley-by-Bow Centre** – providing space without an agenda. The relationships that reside in the centre provide easy access to a broad range of services housed within a community setting.
- **Hastings Commons** - a community-led organisation dedicated to rescuing neglected buildings and transforming them into affordable homes, capped-rent workspaces, and inclusive community spaces.
- **The Mycelial Network** of Community Asset Developers provides vital peer-led support and networking opportunities.
- **The RSA report on the East Midlands Inclusive Growth Commission** - sets out a framework for achieving inclusive economic growth.
- **London Plus** connects, supports, and advocates for charities and community groups. They see public spaces as an antidote to divisive narratives amplified in social media.
- **Private Space, Public Good** – research from the Bennett School of Public Policy examining the private sector’s role in social infrastructure.
- **Evaluation of the Local Trust’s ‘Big Local’** – showing improvements in employment, economic development and reductions in crime.

What next?



We want to influence policy, philanthropy, and public understanding to **secure long-term investment in community spaces**. Through a high-level influencing group, rigorous research alongside the [New Local report](#) and a pilot grants programme, we aim to catalyse a shift in how these spaces are funded and prioritized.

As part of this work, we will be developing an advisory group to explore how we increase investment into community spaces. If you're interested in joining, please reach out to wpmprogramme@raynefoundation.org.uk.

If you would like to keep up to date with our progress and join our mailing list, please email the above address.