



Lots
of lovely
reports for
you to enjoy

summarised with style and
panache, obv!

Conservative MP Danny Kruger was asked this summer by the Prime Minister to look into ways to maximise civil society's contribution to the Government's Levelling Up agenda. His [report](#), *Levelling up our communities: proposals for a new social covenant*, has just been published, and has received some close attention, responding, as it does, to the 'imperative and opportunity of the moment'. The report begins with the excitement around citizen-led responses to the pandemic, and the renewed recognition that government, at all levels, does not have all the answers. It notes the emasculation of local public services throughout austerity, and reminds us of David Cameron's Big Society proposition. Kruger notes that the BS as a concept was weakened by its failure to give a 'satisfactory account of the proper role of government in stimulating self-help and mutualism', but that its bigger problem was its association with austerity, and its consequent inability to escape the 'essential services on the cheap' critique.

The sense of Kruger's proposition is a social covenant – a 'deal between government and communities' that sets out their respective responsibilities in furtherance of the common good, based on a series of principles:

1. **Public purpose** – including an imperative for environmental and social purpose in policymaking
2. **Subsidiarity and inclusion** – decision-making at as local a level as possible, ideally by residents themselves.
3. **Strengths-based approaches** – a focus on assets, rather than liabilities, in Kruger's strikingly fiscal terminology.
4. **Social Infrastructure** – increasingly fashionable, this means all the institutions – both physical and social – that bring people together, and that have been progressively weakened by previous policies.

His recommendations centre round three themes:

Power – returning it to local communities, by means of reform of commissioning, and improved collection and use of data, among other things.

People – this takes on board critiques of the Big Society, and looks at ways for citizen participation to complement rather than substitute for statutory provision, in a more 'organic and adaptive' way: the notable suggestion here is for a Volunteer Passport, to allow matching of volunteer skill and capacity, to existing need, and reviving an older principle of public service as a civic responsibility rather than the reserve of paid professionals.

Place – a recognition that ‘levelling up’ requires more than economic development. It recommends strengthened place-based policy, improved protection of community assets, revival of the CVS network, and mechanisms to reduce the prevalence of silos. Plus, warm words for libraries – yay! It also looks at ways to encourage philanthropy and other forms of social investment, and proposes new funding mechanisms to sit alongside policy changes, including endowing the money known as dormant assets into a permanent communities fund, and reform of the National Lottery Communities Fund.

The report has been well-received by many in the sector. (here’s [Lloyd’s Bank Foundation’s response](#)) The main thrust of reaction has been to say ‘great, now crack on and do it’.

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Something that might help put from reflective flesh (if such a thing exists) on the bones of Danny Kruger’s report) is a suite of articles and reports published by the Local Government Information Unit explores varied aspects of councils’ response to the pandemic, with a focus on [Place and Community](#). Much of the content is restricted to members and followers, however it is possible to sign up for free as a follower, if your organisation is not a member.



Spotlight on ... Loneliness

Loneliness is one of the most pressing public health issues of today – it is linked to early death, on the same level as smoking or obesity. It is also linked with increased risk of coronary heart disease and stroke, depression, cognitive decline and an increased risk of Alzheimer's.

Following on from the work of the MP Jo Cox, the government formed the Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness in 2018, which set out the strategy for tackling loneliness in society, and have committed this year to introducing more targeted policies for loneliness in children and young people. We've of course seen the effects of loneliness significantly intensified over the past few months.

When we think of people who were the most lonely during lockdown, we tend to think of those not able to get in contact with loved ones via skype/zoom/facetime, and unable to access resources on the internet. While those over 65 are the most likely to fall into this category, it was actually younger people who were more likely to suffer from 'lockdown loneliness'. According to the Mental Health Foundation, 1 in 10 people experienced feelings of loneliness before lockdown, which increased to 1 in 4 people within a matter of weeks, after the introduction of lockdown. But for those aged 18-24, this rose from 1 in 6 to almost half experiencing loneliness during lockdown. According to a survey by the ONS, other factors associated with lockdown loneliness were being in bad health, being single, widowed, divorced or separated, living alone and living in rented accommodation.

On a local level, Space* have been providing a Virtual Youth Club for young people to hang out. They have been doing online music workshops, art classes, and even a coding group, where young people can learn to programme robotic equipment which has been sent to them!

“Since restrictions have lifted I have become a much more stay-in-doors type of person, going to youth club isn't appealing to me at the moment, although I used to really enjoy it. This does mean that I can at times feel a bit lonely. This has acted as a really good way for me to be able to connect with my friends and feel connected to something. All the while still being in the safety of my own home.” – **Charlie, Space* Virtual Youth Club user**

At the start of the pandemic they managed to raise money to send out laptops and other devices to young people to allow them to engage in their activities and reduce digital isolation. They have found it hard to replicate some of the aspects of a youth centre online, as they are missing the natural footfall of young people walking past a centre or going along with their mates, and have found that many young people won't naturally think to access a youth worker when they need help. Despite this both their Virtual Youth Club and Speak to a Youth Worker offer has been successful and, looking forward, they are hoping to improve their marketing to engage more people.

Young people have a particularly tough time ahead, as they deal with rising infection rates among their peers, and increased demonisation from the government and media because of it. Let's hope this doesn't cause a second wave of lockdown loneliness for them.

What has lockdown loneliness looked like at DCF?

Things we have missed the most:

Friends, family and colleagues
Travelling abroad
Socialising outside the home in venues and restaurants
Spontaneously going out for a meal!
Routine
Seeing and hugging my children
Days out

Things that have made us feel better:

Spending time in the garden
Going to the beach and exploring the countryside
The blackbirds successfully raising 4 broods in our garage
Keeping fit and doing exercise
Remote catch-ups
Spending quality time with the people I live with!
The nice weather
Fish and chips from the local chippy van each week

The people we have most cherished being able to keep in contact with:

Family (especially older and more isolated members), friends (especially schoolfriends) and work colleagues
Spending a greater amount of time with my partner

Ways we have kept in contact:

A daily photography competition with wider family
Weekly zoom quizzes and fun with friends
Online HIIT workout sessions and a cocktail hour with family
Sending postcards

Things we have been involved in:

Producing a monthly newsletter for our village
shopping for elderly neighbours and clapped for the NHS!
Our street launched a WhatsApp group to support residents and we got involved in fun socially-distanced tasks and also supported neighbours needing help

DCF Funding Update



Coronavirus
Click for our help & support



Click to donate to the
Devon Coronavirus Response & Recovery Fund



Click to donate to the national appeal



#shouldertoshoulder #GiveLoveDevon

The **Devon Coronavirus Response and Recovery Fund** was launched in March and to date has distributed more than £725,000 to 180 different projects. We will now be pausing applications with immediate effect to allow us to take stock as we move into the next phase of funding. We have also had a good response to calls for the **Support and Advice Programme**. The current round is closed for applications but we are in discussions for future funding going forward.

We will be phasing back in our usual grant funding gradually from October, starting with individual applications for the Devonian Fund to individuals, and some of the more geographically specific funds. Following an extensive review, the application process will be a simpler one and decision making will be quicker. We are also working towards launching our simpler one stage 'community grant' fund, which will be for core and project costs and will also have a quicker decision turnaround.

Response and Recovery Fund

Age Concern Crediton - £294

Crediton & District

PPE for home foot care service

Community Life Hub Group - amount pending

Cullompton and surrounding villages

Craft bags for vulnerable people; chairs to enable access to community garden

Plymouth and Devon Racial Equality Council - £1080

Plymouth

Equipment and expenses to resume face to face support and advice for black, asian and minority ethnic people

Devon Link Up - £4700

Devon

Delivery of weekly 'Freedom' sessions to enable people with learning difficulties to integrate into the community

Imagine (Torbay Multicultural Group) - £1760

Torbay

Youth support text and listening service

Clarity - North Devon Service Users Forum - £1020

Northern Devon

PPE and office sanitization between clients

Co-Lab Exeter - £15000

Exeter

Resilient Women 3 STAR project peer support for women facing mental health issues

Be Buckfastleigh - £3200

Buckfastleigh

Staff member to build on community response initiatives

Core Cost Support Fund

Battling On CIC - £4,000

Horticultural Therapy Trust - £2,500

Animate Theatre Company - £500

The Pioneers Project CIC - £3,000

Write to Freedom - £1,695

Sound Communities CIC - £3,250

Open Door Exmouth - £5,000

Project Food - £4,000

Refugee Support Devon - £5,000

Tarka Child Contact Centre - £2,000

Families In Grief - £3,376

Family Compass - £2,500

Torbay Ladies Lounge - £2,000

Mutley Greenbank Trust - £1,850

Community Regeneration Outreach Projects - £2,000

All Nations Ministries - £3,000

Co-ordin8 - £4,000

Sunningmead Community Association - £3,000

Barnstaple Youth Abilities Football Club - £500