

## COMMUNITY BUSINESS TO IMPROVE SERVICES IN RURAL AREAS PROMOTED BY THE PLUNKETT FOUNDATION IN UNITED KINGDOM

Founded in 1919 by the great co-operative pioneer, Sir Horace Plunkett, the [Plunkett Foundation](#) is an extraordinary organization that supports rural communities across the United Kingdom to tackle the issues they face through community business. *Community businesses* are enterprises that are owned and run democratically by members of the community, on behalf of the community. The Foundation's team and network of advisers across the UK provide support to the community groups from their first steps until the business develops and grows.



[www.plunkett.co.uk](http://www.plunkett.co.uk)

To date, Plunkett Foundation has supported more than 600 community businesses to reach trading stage across the UK and further 400 that are just starting or are in the process of setting up. These community businesses operate in a wide range of fields, managing grocery and household shops, bookstores, pubs, farms or woodlands.

The [case studies published in the Plunkett website](#) show the variety of community business associated with the network and supported by the Foundation. These case studies also describe main characteristics of the community businesses and the methods followed for their implementation and management. In many cases, the legal structure of these enterprises is the *Community Business Society (CBS)* a type of organization adopted in United Kingdom and registered with the specific intention that it must benefit the community. For the start of the activities and for their financial management, after having formulated the project with the collaboration of local actors and institutions, forms of community stake holding are adopted, launching a local share offer to raise funds and engaging with community stakeholders that can benefit the business. In other projects, the management is made adopting the model of the social enterprises or co-operatives. [Plunkett works in collaboration with Co-operatives UK](#), the organization supporting the movement and members in the country.

In all cases, Plunkett defines *Community business* as locally rooted, trading for the benefit of the local area, accountable to the community and having broad local impact. In addition to developing and safeguarding valuable and needed assets and services, these enterprises address a range of issues including isolation, loneliness, wellbeing, work and training. [The Foundation provides practical advice, support and training](#) to help communities establish and run successful community businesses with long-term survival rates. On the website, a wide range of methodological tools for starting projects, for their sustainable management or for raise funds are available giving an idea of the great capital of knowledge built and offered by the Foundation.

Plunkett Foundation also operates promoting National Campaigns to



reach communities potentially interested to implement community business and at the same time to create a supportive policy, funding and advisory landscape in which the community business sector will thrive. It works collaboratively and strategically at a national level with a range of stakeholders, including government and public bodies, corporates, funding institutions and other third sector organizations.

The following thematic campaigns are ongoing, generating a wide range of local projects across the UK.

- [Save Community Pubs](#). With thousands of pubs across the UK closing or under threat, the Foundation takes action to help them survive through community ownership. The network of 150 community owned pubs already operating, as well as ensuring all the necessary work for their long-term viability, offers a real life-line to the communities who want to save their local pub. Plunkett is also calling on governments to offer the support needed to help these businesses and the [2021 Report Community Pubs a better form of business](#) offers an overview of the impact results achieved giving benefits to local communities.
- [Businesses in places of worship](#). These projects, owned and run by local residents, use places of worship to implement services needed by the communities. They include shops, cafes or farmers markets other points of sale of local products and services which create jobs and training. They play an important role in reducing isolation and improving social inclusion, offering local people services and new opportunities to be involved in the life of the community. These projects can also help to keep open some historic places of worship by generating income through rent and attracting more people. Plunkett Foundation established a collaboration with the Allchurches Trust, to provide the resources and grants to help new community businesses to thrive in places of worship.
- [Making Local Woods Work](#). Plunkett supported 50 groups looking to undertake new activity to provide benefits for local people bringing woodlands into active management and generating trading income. The [social enterprise](#) way of doing business was adopted to increase income, employment, volunteering opportunities and creating new connections between communities and their local woods. The social wood enterprises, in fact, make money from selling goods and services in the open market, but they reinvest their profits back into the business or the local community, generating a positive impact for people and the environment. The project is funded by the National Lottery through the Big Lottery Fund and led by the Foundation involving a wide [range of partners](#).

Through the campaign [Rural vision](#) the Foundation pursues its objectives for a stronger, more resilient future for rural communities in the country, promoting the *Community business* as a way to unleashing their potential to boost employment and training, for example in the re-localization of supply chains, including supply of local food. In the visioning statement [For a Covid 19 rural recovery](#) elaborated in 2020, the Foundation highlights that throughout the pandemic crisis, rural communities have demonstrated incredible strength and resourcefulness to provide vital services and support to people living there, especially to the most vulnerable. Community businesses have been at the forefront of this response, and the enterprises have stood the test of time. The Foundation emphasizes that there is now an ideal opportunity to build the resilience of rural community, addressing the vulnerabilities in the system which were highlighted during the crisis, going beyond a 'recovery' and looking towards a broader 'rural renaissance'.



In other countries where the development of rural areas is considered a priority for local and national actors, the practices carried out by the Plunkett Foundation can be of great inspiration, not only for the community business approach that represents an innovative modality for the management of local services and resources, but also for the role played at national level by the Foundation for the structural, expert and permanent support to local practices.

### To know more

[Plunkett Foundation website](#)

[Plunkett Foundation in Facebook](#)

[Blog - Plunkett Foundation](#)

[Case studies - Plunkett Foundation](#)

[Campaigns - Plunkett Foundation](#)

[Community Shops 2020 Report](#)

[Plunketts-Rural-Vision.pdf](#)

[Plunkett 2020 Impact Report](#)

[Community Shares in Co-operatives UK website](#)

[Community Business in powertochange.org.uk](#)

[State of Social Enterprise Survey 2021](#)

[Article in theguardian.com](#)

[Article in civilsociety.co.uk](#)

[Article in supportingcommunities.org](#)

