



# CASCADE

## Launching the CUBE:

Embedding a restorative approach in a  
co-produced community centre

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## CASCADE Infrastructure Partnership



Our expertise brings together an exceptional partnership. CASCADE is the leading centre for evaluative research in children's social care in the UK and sits within the School of Social Sciences (SOCSI), a leading centre of excellence in social sciences and education research with particular expertise in quantitative methods. The Centre for Trials Research (CTR) is an acknowledged national leader for trials and related methods, the School of Psychology was ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> for research quality in the most recent Research Excellence Framework and SAIL provides world-class data linkage. Together we believe we can create a step-change in the quality and use of children's social care research that is unparalleled in the UK. Specifically, we can deliver high quality trials and evaluations; link data to understand long-term outcomes and involve service users (our public) in all elements of our research. Our intention is that these three strands will interact to generate an unrivalled quality of research.

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# Summary

Between 2021 and 2022, CASCADE partnered with CUBE to help facilitate this new co-produced community-based inter-agency centre targeting substance abuse, domestic violence and mental ill-health in families. Although co-producing a restorative community centre is challenging work, CUBE believe that achieving this is central to successful implementation of the centre. To support their planning and implementation, the developers of CUBE approached researchers in CASCADE who have a deep knowledge of these methods so that researchers could monitor CUBE and ascertain whether co-production and a restorative approach are shaping the services and centre as intended. This report outlines CASCADE's findings.

## Core aims

This research explored the development of CUBE's service model with subsequent interest in how the model was then implemented and received. With such aims the research had the following objectives:

- To understand and explicate the initial CUBE service model
- To assess the acceptability of a co-productive restorative framework
- To identify barriers and facilitators to use of the current model
- To revise the service model in line with research findings

## Key findings and recommendations

- A restorative co-productive approach has been used to develop CUBE
- Implementation also employs the approaches, but their use is more apparent in some settings than others
- The community have voiced a desire for extended services and must be included in honest discussions about what can be provided and co-produce how to make it happen
- There can be a more holistic use of restorative tools and ethos
- There is a tension between business/social agency roles
- Further communication and empathy are needed between CUBE and some partner agencies
- Communication with staff at multiple levels in partner agencies would aid collaborative working
- Amongst staff and volunteers, restorative approach training increases understanding of the ethos and tools of the approach

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# Introduction

Community United Barry 4 Everyone (CUBE) is a new community enterprise in Barry, South Wales. CUBE was developed by professionals and local people who wanted to make a difference to their community by providing a community space and sustained support for local needs as they emerge<sup>1</sup>. CUBE is provided from a central hub: 'The Gallery', which serves as an integrated coffee house, a 'one-stop' service centre and events setting. CUBE aims to be a place where locals can learn about or use services or just meet up socially and feel part of the community:

*'A place you could go and... some families will check you out. Individuals will check you out, so that they could be downstairs in the coffee shop having a cup of coffee... what's going on? What's that going on here? Oh, what do you do? Might come along, see the feel of the place, and then... then build up that... that trust and that relationship' (CUBE Staff Member)*

CUBE has been shaped by the underlying tenet that the community should feel empowered by the organisation's activities, support and attitude. To promote this, it is intended that CUBE services and facilities be delivered in ways that recognise the expertise of individuals and families in their own lives. To meet this aim CUBE strives to be a place where everyone is treated with respect, listened to fully and can identify, provide and access support that meets individual and family needs. As part of this it is viewed as important that community members see themselves as an integral part of CUBE's development and implementation and take a strong, active part in the management of the organisation. Over time the intent and hope is that the community will be able to run CUBE independently.

To help CUBE operate in the collaborative way intended the developers have long been committed to use of restorative and co-productive approaches. To facilitate this, the language, values and processes of these concepts should govern all interactions with and within the CUBE community. In practice this consists of the work carried out by:

- The organisational board
- The management team
- The staff team
- Volunteers
- Community members
- Statutory and third sector partners

Although co-producing a restorative community centre is challenging, innovative work, the centre believes that achieving this is central to successful implementation. To aid this ambition, CUBE developers have produced a model of the restorative co-productive approach they aspire to and related this to the development and implementation of CUBE (Figure 1).

Early in the establishment of the CUBE concept and initial moves to implement in practice, the CUBE CEO approached the lead author of this report to garner interest in ongoing external evaluative and feedback activity to ensure that the aims and approach of the centre were

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<sup>1</sup> <https://cubecentre.co.uk/>

developed and delivered in a consistent and effective manner. They also expressed a commitment to external scrutiny as a means of maintaining accountability and transparency. After initial discussion, the lead author sought the involvement of additional researchers to provide additional expertise across the diverse areas of practice that CUBE sought to implement. The design and aims of this evaluation have been co-produced with CUBE and CASCADE involvement, however the research findings and discussion as presented here were produced independently by the research team.

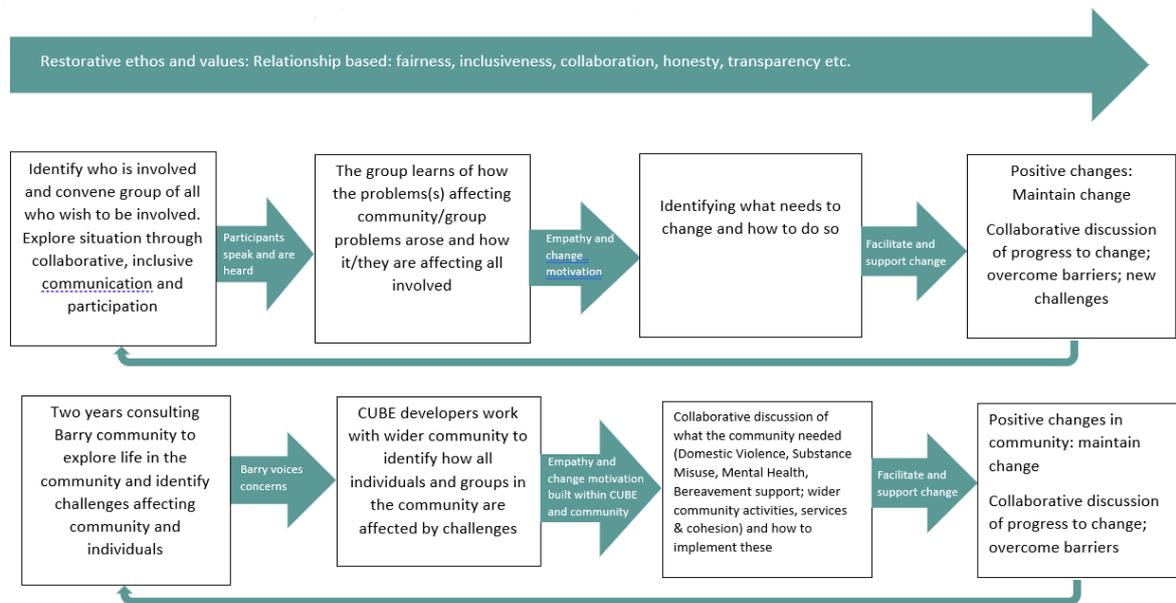


Figure 1: CUBE model of programme development and implementation (provided by CUBE SMT)

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# Restorative and Co-productive Approaches

## A Restorative Approach

A restorative approach (also commonly termed restorative practice) is an ethos, ‘way of being’ and procedure that stems from Restorative Justice. Restorative Justice is a process developed for use in the criminal justice system as a reaction to existing systems in many parts of the developed world where offences and transgressions have historically and currently been dealt with by the state rather than the people most affected<sup>2</sup>. Restorative Justice is a value-based process in which offenders, victims, and others affected by an offence are brought together voluntarily in fair, inclusive, honest, respectful, trusting environments for facilitated discussions of the crime, its effects, how these were experienced and how any associated harm can be repaired<sup>3</sup>.

Restorative Justice is now perceived by some as part of a wider field called restorative approaches or practice<sup>4</sup>, a field described as a way of “repairing and developing social capital, social discipline, emotional wellbeing and civic involvement through participatory learning and decision-making”<sup>5</sup>. Although differences between Restorative Justice and a restorative approach exist, the concepts share core philosophical beliefs and the central processes remain unchanged<sup>6</sup>. Restorative approaches can be used proactively to prevent harm and conflict by consistent use of restorative values and language to create positive everyday environments and/or reactively as a process allied to Restorative Justice that uses facilitated dialogue to generate understanding, empathy and consider ways in which harm can be repaired<sup>7</sup>. A restorative approach can be actioned in number of formats ranging from everyday use of the core values and associated skills such as restorative dialogue to promote affective statements, empathy and participation, to formal restorative circles, mediation and conferences<sup>8</sup>. Within this a series of ‘restorative questions’ have been generated. These are:

- What happened?
- What were you thinking/feeling?

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<sup>2</sup> Daly, K. (2001) ‘Restorative justice: the real story’, [https://www.griffith.edu.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0011/50321/kdpaper12.pdf](https://www.griffith.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0011/50321/kdpaper12.pdf) [accessed 10.07.2017].

<sup>3</sup> Zehr, H. (2002) *Little Book of Restorative Justice (Little Books of Justice & Peacebuilding)*. New York: Good Books.

<sup>4</sup> Restorative Justice Council (2013) *Principles of restorative practice* <https://www.restorativejustice.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/files/Principles%20of%20restorative%20practice%20-%20FINAL%2012.11.15.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Watchell as cited by Fives, A., Keenaghan, C., Canavan, J., Moran, L. and Coen, L. (2013) *Evaluation of the Restorative Practice Programme of the Childhood Development Initiative, Dublin: Childhood Development Initiative*.

<sup>6</sup> Lambert, C., Johnstone, G., Green, S. and Shipley, R. (2011) *Building Restorative Relationships for the Workplace: Goodwin Development Trust’s Journey with Restorative approaches*, University of Hull,

<sup>7</sup> Restorative Justice Council (2013) *Principles of restorative practice* <https://www.restorativejustice.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/files/Principles%20of%20restorative%20practice%20-%20FINAL%2012.11.15.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> Costello, B., Wachtel, J. and Wachtel, T. (2010) *Restorative Circles in Schools: Building Community and Enhancing Learning*, Bethlehem, PA: International Institute for Restorative Practices.

- Who has been affected & how?
- What do you need for harm to be repaired?
- What needs to happen now to make changes?

(Adapted from Hopkins, 2009)<sup>9</sup>

These questions are used in various settings to elicit accounts of challenges and problems from multiple perspectives and thereby generate understanding, empathy, motivation to change and consideration of how to do so<sup>10</sup>.

To date, a restorative approach has been used in diverse contexts including schools, care homes, residential homes and housing estates where it has been associated with a reduction in conflict, bullying and aggression<sup>11,12,13</sup>. The positive impact on conflict has also been noted in children's services<sup>14</sup> with further suggestion that the adoption of restorative values and processes leads to better workplace and service environments and increased service acceptability<sup>15,16</sup>. While such findings are encouraging other work has identified challenges in organisational adoption of a restorative approach much of which revolves around holistic adoption of the restorative concept<sup>17,18</sup>.

In sum, CUBE has been developed and implemented with a restorative approach providing a framework for centre interactions and service delivery. Within the constructs of a restorative approach, participation, collaboration and inclusion are central. These principles sit well with Welsh legislation constructed to shape social and community services (Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014)<sup>19</sup>. Amongst core tenets The Act demands that health and social care be delivered co-productively, a term defined as "practitioners and people working together as equal

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<sup>9</sup> Hopkins, B. (2009) *Just Care; Restorative Justice Approaches to Working with Children in Public Care*, London: Jessica Kingsley

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Fives, A., Keenaghan, C., Canavan, J., Moran, L. and Coen, L. (2013) *Evaluation of the Restorative Practice Programme of the Childhood Development Initiative*, Dublin: Childhood Development Initiative

<sup>12</sup> Payne B, Conway V, Bell C, Falk A, Flynn H, McNeil C and Rice F. *Restorative Practices in Northern Ireland: A Mapping Exercise*. Queens University Belfast

<sup>13</sup> Weber, C., Vereenoghe, L (2020) *Reducing conflicts in school environments using restorative practices: A systematic review*, *International Journal of Educational Research Open*, Volume 1,

<sup>14</sup> Mason, P. Ferguson, H. Morris, K. Munton, T. & Sen, R. (2017) *Leeds family valued evaluation report*. July

<sup>15</sup> Williams, A., Reed, H., Rees, G., & Segrott, J. (2018). *Improving relationship-based practice, practitioner confidence and family engagement skills through restorative approach training*. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 93, 170–177.

<sup>16</sup> Williams, A (2019) . *Family support services delivered using a restorative approach: A framework for relationship and strengths-based whole-family practice*. *Child & Family Social Work*. Volume 24, Issue 4 pp 555-564

<sup>17</sup> Tariq, S. (2016) *A Restorative approach at Work*, Presentation at the Halifax conference Nova Scotia, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DYZ5fBtBpi4>

<sup>18</sup> Lambert, C., Johnstone, G., Green, S. and Shipley, R. (2011) *Building Restorative Relationships for the Workplace: Goodwin Development Trust's Journey with Restorative approaches*, University of Hull

<sup>19</sup> Available from <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2014/4/resources>

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partners to plan and deliver care and support”<sup>20</sup>. To work co-productively as well as restoratively is a key aim of CUBE. The next section explores the meaning and values of co-production in more detail.

## Co-production

Co-production is a relatively new concept within public participation that purports to provide a higher ‘enhanced’ layer of participation in organisational decision-making. Described by Bovaird as a ‘revolution’ in public service delivery<sup>21</sup>, its principles provide an opportunity for service user participation to go beyond consultation and extend to taking an active role in delivering public services and producing outcomes<sup>22</sup>. There are now many identifiable agencies, organisations, and localities across the UK who have adopted the language of co-production, including many health and care boards<sup>23</sup> and it has also been incorporated as a principle of national social care policy and practice guidelines to embed the approach throughout the sector in Wales (Welsh Government, 2014<sup>24</sup>).

The dominant definition of co-production refers to the active involvement of people using or benefitting from a service in the design, delivery, and implementation of that service<sup>25,26,27</sup>. It moves beyond the more common participation method of consultation, where users or beneficiaries of services are asked for their views on processes and decision-making to help professionals make decisions regarding those services. It is differentiated from feedback processes where views on services are sought retrospectively to decisions being made. These two latter forms of participation locate those whose views are being sought in a passive role: they hold limited power to instigate change by themselves but are rather afforded the opportunity to alter the views of those who do possess that power (with no guarantee of success). Advocates locate co-production as a ‘higher level’ of participation as it offers those service users agency to direct

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<sup>20</sup> Social Care Wales, Information and learning Hub. <https://socialcare.wales/hub/hub-resource-sub-categories/co-production#:~:text=Co%2Dproduction%20is%20one%20of,the%20best%20it%20can%20be>.

<sup>21</sup> Bovaird, T. (2007). *Beyond engagement and participation: User and community coproduction of public services*. *Public Administration Review*, 67(5), 846–860. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2007.00773.x>

<sup>22</sup> Alford, J. (2009). *Engaging public sector clients: From service-delivery to co-production*. Palgrave Macmillan; Basingstoke, Hampshire.

<sup>23</sup> INVOLVE (2019) *Co-production in Action: Number One*. Southampton, INVOLVE

<sup>24</sup> Welsh Government. (2014). *Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014: Part 2 Code of Practice*.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>26</sup> Brandsen, T., & Pestoff, V. (2006). *Co-production, the third sector and the delivery of public services: An introduction*. *Public management review*, 8(4), 493-501.

<sup>27</sup> Voorberg, W. H., Bekkers, V. J., & Tummers, L. G. (2015). *A systematic review of co-creation and co-production: Embarking on the social innovation journey*. *Public Management Review*, 17(9), 1333-1357.

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and change services, and – crucially – allocates them adequate resources of various forms to support the exertion of that agency<sup>28,29</sup>.

There is broad agreement that a co-produced public service involves the input and labour of those who use the service in its design and delivery. To be recognisable as co-production, rather than participation, these users must have meaningful input, control, and influence over service delivery or design, even where their views differ from those of professionals; they should not be located as ‘supplementary’ in a tokenistic fashion, where their views are sought but freely overridden where desired<sup>30</sup>. This may come in many forms, for example: users sitting on boards, committees, or panels when designing and delivering a service; professionals and users collaborating on the production of materials; influencing recruitment and hiring practices; negotiating and agreeing budgets, timescales, locations, and other logistical details; working within the service in a voluntary capacity; ongoing monitoring and evaluation; determining and evaluating outcomes. CUBE has committed to incorporating many of these elements, most notably local community members sitting on the management board of the centre, negotiating the design and delivery of services, volunteering or working at the centre, and evaluating service delivery (including through this evaluation activity). Nevertheless, it is important to establish that these co-productive activities have a meaningful impact on the delivery of centre services to demonstrated proper co-production, rather than tokenism.

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<sup>28</sup> <https://copronet.wales/>

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk/>

<sup>30</sup> Pestoff, V. (2013). *New public governance, co-production and third sector social services in Europe: crowding in and crowding out*. In *New Public Governance, the Third Sector, and Co-production* (pp. 379-398). Routledge: New York.

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# Methods

## Aims, Objectives and Questions

This study was concerned with exploring the core values of co-production and a restorative approach that shaped CUBE, specifically how these were interpreted during service development and actioned in the centre and the work of the CUBE community since its inception. To achieve this the research explored the development of the CUBE service model with subsequent interest in how the model was then implemented and received. With such aims the research had the following objectives:

- To understand and explicate the initial CUBE service model
- To assess the acceptability of a co-productive restorative framework
- To identify barriers and facilitators to use of the current model
- To revise the service model in line with research findings

Each objective is linked to a specific research question:

- 1 What was the initial co-productive, restorative model of CUBE?
- 2 How well was CUBE accepted by the community (staff, volunteers, service users)?
- 3 How feasible was it to implement CUBE using the restorative co-productive framework?
- 4 Would the initial service model benefit from refinement?

This study was primarily a qualitative study. The sensitive nature of the project raised ethical issues as it was recognised that some families and individuals using CUBE may be in difficult situations with observations and data collection potentially causing distress. Prior to observations taking place on site, the researchers contacted all staff at CUBE to discuss the most appropriate way of conducting the observation phase of the research. This involved staff both giving researchers a clear overview of the activities taking place in CUBE that week and what to expect, and contacting group participants to check whether they would be comfortable with a researcher's presence. Excepting a particularly new group, all groups consented to researcher presence and suggested that they would prefer researcher involvement in the groups rather than a passive role being taken.

Ethical Approval for the study was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of the School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University.



*Winning entries for the Cube Centre logo competition*

## Data Collection

Qualitative methods were employed during the study. Data was collected via social media inspection, observations, interviews and focus groups over a period of four months shortly after the CUBE centre (The Gallery) became fully operational.

To explore the initial CUBE service model an initial interview was held with the CUBE CEO who was instrumental in the development of CUBE and its service model. The work of CUBE was then explored in focus groups with CUBE staff, interviews with CUBE community members and CUBE partner agencies, and observations of work, interactions, board and director meetings at 'The Gallery' (See Table 1).

Before all interviews and focus groups, participants were given information about the study and its purpose. Consent was obtained in hard copy when possible. Observation in CUBE was arranged with CUBE staff who made all activity participants and community partners aware of the work that was going on. Information sheets and flyers were available in The Gallery and on CUBE's Facebook page so that participants and visitors were aware of the presence of a researcher.

Data Type	Participants	Number
Interviews	CUBE CEO	1
	Representatives of Partner Agencies	7 (one contribution made by written statement)
Focus Groups	CUBE Staff	1
Observation	CUBE Board Meeting	1
	CUBE Directors' Meeting	1
	CUBE: The Gallery daily life	4 (days)
	CUBE Activities	7 (sessions)

Table1: Data collection types

## Data Analysis

Focus group and interview data underwent transcription and were stored in password-protected university computers. Framework analysis was done in NVivo 12 using framework matrices. The first analytic focus was on the development of CUBE and how it was informed by the underlying restorative and co-productive approaches and processes. This allowed the construction of a model of the intended CUBE service delivery models.

In order to test how well the initial model shaped use of co-production and a restorative approach, analysis of later CUBE community and partner agency interviews and focus groups and all observation were focused on the nature of the CUBE service together with its acceptability and receipt. Further analysis explored barriers and facilitators to use of the CUBE model.

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# Findings and Analysis

## CUBE Development

### Community Scoping

The concept, nature and ethos of CUBE stems from the beliefs and work experiences of current senior organisational managers. CUBE's CEO is a social care professional committed to identifying the needs of communities and families collaboratively and promoting ways of meeting such needs from within communities. This led to the CUBE CEO spending two years (2016 -2018) talking to over 900 individuals, 30 community groups and 30 local support services within the community. This scoping process included interviews, events and discussions conducted with the intent of identifying the needs of the community, gaining an understanding of how these issues affected the community and of how the community felt these issues could be addressed. To this extent, a co-productive ethos was embedded in the design of CUBE prior to the project's inception.

*'So rather than me coming in as an expert, by following the true principles of being a restorative practitioner, to actually say, the ethos is, is that they are the expert in their own lives. But how can we work with them to actually find this... whatever they wanted that... needed as a family to be able to support them?'* (CUBE CEO)

The scoping was conducted using a restorative framework which, as described earlier, promotes co-production. The procedure was aided by use of the restorative questions set out earlier. During scoping CUBE developers noted that participants appreciated the restorative language and processes which emphasised collaboration, communication and inclusion. The high levels of acceptability evident from partners towards the CUBE underpinning theory and philosophy supported the continued holistic use of the centre's restorative co-productive approach. Figure 2 shows the process of the community consultation and sets the procedure in co-productive and restorative values and questions.

In the eyes of the CUBE CEO, the co-productive ethos of CUBE was facilitated by positive relationships and shared values demanded by a restorative approach:

*'...And [the project] was co-produced by having conversations with our partners and saying, "What do you need? What do your community need, and how are we going to work together to meet that need?" Then going back to the team and saying, "This is... this is a need that's been identified by a community and by a service provider. Is this a company that we can work with? What is their ethos? Where do they gel? Where the end... edge is, is there a conflict of interest? Because we may be already working that way, or they may be working that way. Can we be able to have those difficult conversations with this organisation if things don't go right or go right? How can you work together with that organisation?" And then coming back to the team and saying, "Okay, this has been identified. How are we going to work together to... to be able to... to fill the need of that community and this service provider, but also, how can we make sure that we still co-produce it with the people who matter?'* (CUBE CEO)

This view produces a clear belief that co-production and a restorative approach are natural bedfellows in terms of a cohesive philosophy of service delivery, a view which was shared by many participants within this study.

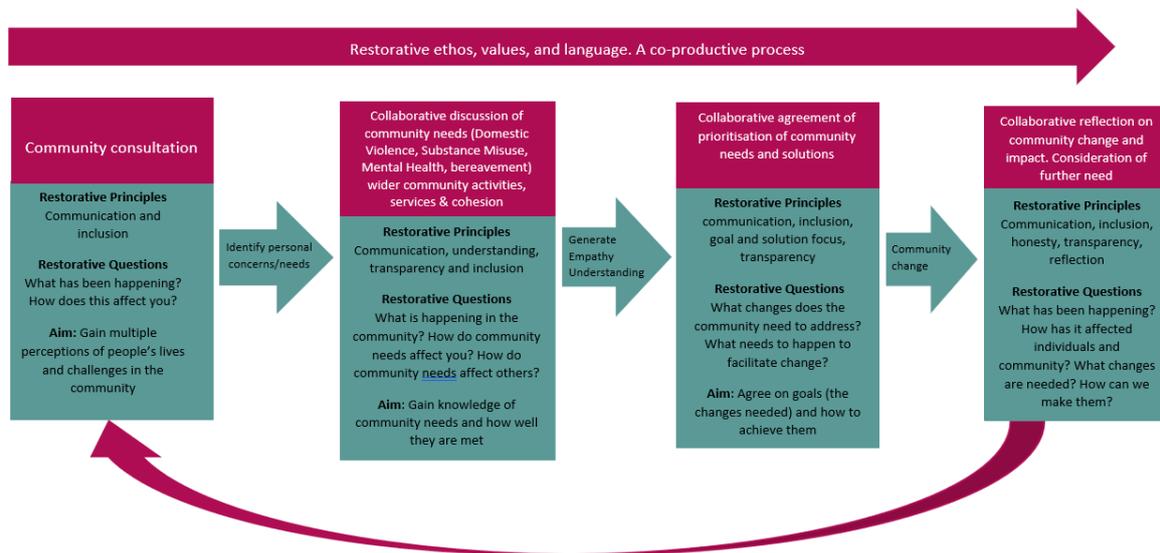


Figure 2: Developing CUBE using a Restorative and Co-productive approach

### The development of CUBE as a community centre and service

Before considering the process of service development further, it is important to recognise that to ensure CUBE's sustainability a primary intent has been that CUBE should exist as a social business with streams of income coming from multiple sources: grants, local agencies and the commercial aspects of The Gallery.

While developing and sustaining these income sources is vital to the longevity of CUBE, running a social business presents challenges when the primary focus is on meeting the needs of the community rather than generating funding. To promote knowledge of how to run a social enterprise CUBE engaged a business advisor from an organisation with a long history of working with agencies driven by a social or community ethos but operating as businesses.

When reflecting on the challenges likely to be faced by CUBE the business advisor talked of the competing interests of business viability and running an agency that meets its wider charitable aims:

*'There always can be tensions because there's that balance, isn't it... if you're getting opportunities to hire those spaces out at commercial rates. Uh, then you know, would you give preference to that over the some of the sort of you know, more community focused sort of workshops, classes that you're delivering?'* (CUBE Business Advisor)

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Despite this, the knowledge of CUBE gained by the advisor during development combined with an understanding of co-production and a restorative approach generated a strong sense of optimism in relation to the sustainability of CUBE, the community work conducted during CUBE development, CUBE knowledge of grant sources and their commitment to developing The Gallery as a business as well as a community centre:

*'They're quite savvy in what they're doing. I think they'll get that balance right. Hopefully you know in that they'll be aware of, you know when they if they're getting grant funding or they're you know, or you know what is it they need to achieve. And, and you know... I think so far early days, but I think they've exceeded funders' expectations... But it'll be interesting to see how that happens, and you know, and it's, it's a bit of a leap into the unknown, obviously, because you can't guarantee how many people are going to book the venue. Hopefully it will be well used 'cause it's, it's, quite central. It's in a good location and it's a really nice venue, you know' (CUBE Business Advisor)*

### **CUBE Scoping Outcomes**

The scoping exercise identified bereavement, domestic violence (DV), substance misuse (SM) and mental health (MH) needs as important problem areas for people in the CUBE community. When describing how associated support should be delivered, respondents called for a community centre where:

- All necessary support was provided under one roof
- The support offered met the needs of all community members of all ages and could be tailored to the different stages in change processes held by individuals
- Help and support was available outside of standard working hours of 9.00 – 5.00 pm
- You could also just get a coffee and socialise
- Community members were helped to feel an integral part of the centre and community rather than solely being located as service users.
- Tools, support and techniques that would help people to manage afterwards were available.

(Adapted from CUBE website)<sup>31</sup>

The community also called for the activities and programmes offered by CUBE to be fun and informative. Moreover, the CEO reported how participants had asked for use of an approach that met the needs of each individual, especially those of all family members when a family was working with CUBE:

*'...A whole family support structure. I wish I was able to talk to one person throughout about everything that's affected... so somebody affected by mental health and addiction, having that same person that's able to talk to them about it, rather than just saying, "Oh no, we don't... we don't work with addiction here," or, "Oh no, that's a dual diagnosis. We can't work with that person. You need a referral*

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<sup>31</sup> <http://www.cubecentre.co.uk/>

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*elsewhere.” Or the family, the family structure. It may be that Mum, Dad, children, have been impacted by domestic abuse or mental health or addiction through the whole family, and they may be in a different change cycle.’ (CUBE CEO)*

Overall, these views suggested that a whole family approach, in which each family member is included and perceived as an individual with personal important opinions, issues and needs<sup>32</sup>, was desired by the community. This also supports a co-productive approach which values individual inputs and needs from those contributing to a community.

When developing CUBE, the aim was to place the community and local individuals “at the heart of everything that we do” (CUBE CEO), with further intent that while the professionals involved in CUBE are recognised as experts in their field the community and individuals are equally perceived and valued as “experts in their own lives” (CUBE CEO). Integral to this and aligned to opinion that a restorative approach promotes working with people collaboratively and co-productively<sup>33</sup>, CUBE asked locals to get involved in project development and implementation once community needs had been identified and prioritised:

*‘The overarching ethos is... is about working with, so we work with communities, individuals and the person, rather than doing to or for... Where predominantly many support services, when you come and access support, everything will be done for you. So it's about encouraging the person to work with you to find the solution that works for them’ (CUBE CEO)*

This objective led to 28 people, the majority with lived experience of the challenges affecting the community, becoming board members. With training - an important step in properly delivered co-production - the initial task of board members has been to ensure that CUBE delivers the activities, programmes and services identified by the community. Subsequent work will also focus on identifying and developing local needs as they develop and change. As CUBE develops and becomes embedded in the community the intent is for the centre to become increasingly run by the community itself:

*‘Those 28 board members are now training to be directors, and [we] will step away. So obviously we'll still be involved in CUBE, but they will become their own directorship. So when we leave, and when CUBE is ready for us to leave after we've supported them, we'll have directors... there'd be at least five core, and it will... ever-changing, and then the board then will... will change, and they will shift and drive and change as well, but the core will be, you know, the individual people that we have worked with.’ (CUBE CEO)*

This approach has an important additional benefit. The members of the community are being trained and given experience in managing and implementing a third sector agency and a business. As recognised by the business advisor this raises the levels of such skills in the local community, thus increasing the likelihood of CUBE becoming a sustainable agency run by the local community in the longer term. This also fulfils a key criteria of full co-production: that stakeholders receive

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<sup>32</sup> Hughes, N. (2010) ‘Models and approaches in family-focused policy and practice, *Social Policy and Society*, 9,4, 545-55.

<sup>33</sup> Costello, B., Wachtel, J. and Wachtel, T. (2010) *Restorative Circles in Schools: Building Community and Enhancing Learning*, Bethlehem, PA: International Institute for Restorative Practices.

sufficient training and support to become fully informed and involved regarding co-productive activities.

*'We will be involved in training people who perhaps and not, never been, never sat on a board or don't know what it means to be a, the responsibilities of being a board director. Uh, I, obviously that plays into that whole approach that they had, about, you know it being owned by the people who used it rather than a sort of top-down approach'* (CUBE business advisor)

Turning to paid staff, volunteers, and partner agencies working at and with CUBE, the intent has always been for the principles and values that shape CUBE to operate equally in these interactions and relationships. Exploration of this is covered later in the report but knowing that this was the intent when CUBE was formed, Figure 3 represents the structure of CUBE and intrinsic important relationships within this, whilst Figure 3a shows the key constructs of restorative approaches and co-production that tie CUBE's model together.

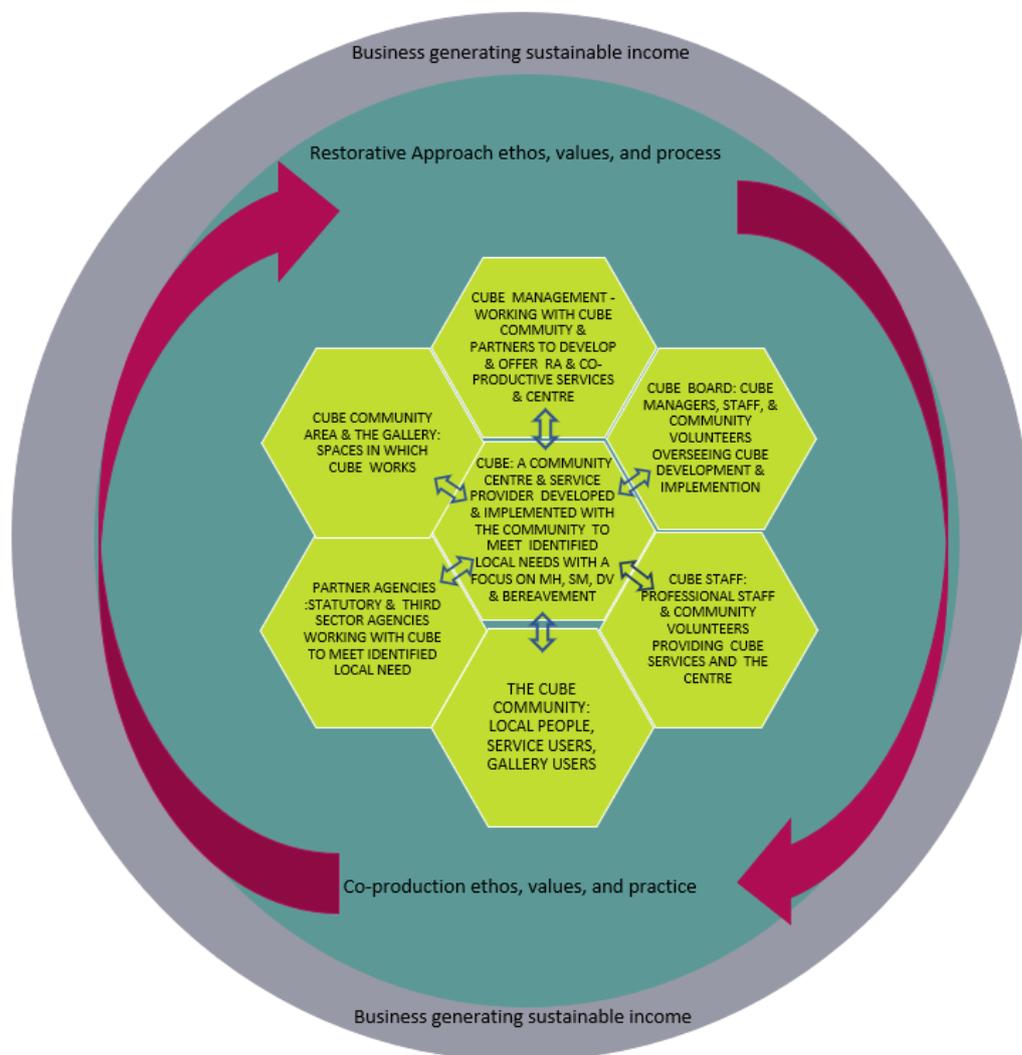


Figure3: CUBE - A model

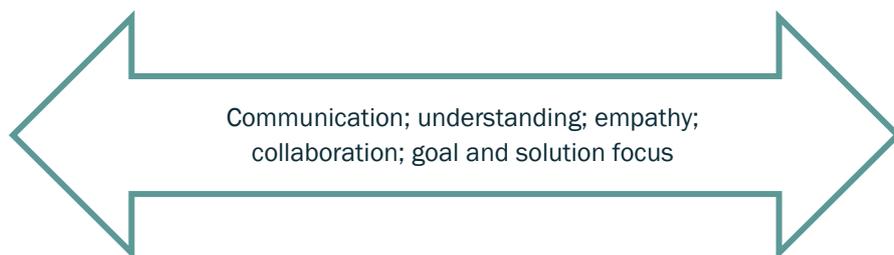


Figure 3a: CUBE Service Constructs

The following section is concerned with whether and to what extent CUBE is using restorative and co-productive approaches. This directs attention not only to the values and ethos of CUBE but also to underlying restorative and co-productive constructs, namely communication, understanding, empathy, collaboration, goal setting and solution finding. The first part considers how well these elements feature in interactions of CUBE staff with the CUBE community and service users. Attention then turns to explore these factors amongst exchanges between CUBE staff, volunteers and with a range of agencies providing allied voluntary and statutory services for the CUBE community.

## CUBE and the Community

A restorative approach effects change by drawing on an innate human need to connect with and understand one another<sup>34,35</sup>. Since becoming operational CUBE has used social media, their own website and direct personal communication to connect with the local community.

CUBE has a Facebook page<sup>36</sup>. Inspection suggests that this is an important resource used for increasing awareness of CUBE events and groups, providing information about CUBE and The Gallery, and introducing topical issues or activities. The site also invites community collaboration via feedback surveys or enquiries about changing community needs. Others invite comment on subjects or photographs posted. The social media site is followed by over 1500 individuals or organisations (February 2022), with evidence of consistent comments on or the sharing of posts.

CUBE also has a website<sup>37</sup>, promoted via the Facebook page, which uses positive, inclusive language and images that invite participation with repeated use of the word 'Welcome', use of statements such as 'Join your community' accompanied by the requisite link, and statements that inform people that no referral is necessary and they can book themselves and/or their children into courses. The website also invites feedback about services and opinion about community

<sup>34</sup> Hopkins, B. (2016) *Restorative Theory in Practice: Insights into What Works and Why*, London: Jessica Kingsley.

<sup>35</sup> Williams, A., & Segrott, J. (2018). *Development of a Conceptual Model for Restorative approach in Family Service Provision*. *Social Policy and Society*, 17(4), 563-578. doi:10.1017/S147474641700

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/HeroesRights/>

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.cubecentre.co.uk/>

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needs and wishes. Contact details are given with assurances of quick replies. The site also offers help such as links to referral forms for professionals, information about CUBE and The Gallery, ongoing and upcoming courses and activities, training courses, volunteer opportunities, fundraising events. Throughout, the site stresses that CUBE is a community enterprise run for the community by the community.

To gain insight into CUBE interactions with service users and patrons in The Gallery observations of day-to-day CUBE practice took place over four days. The week chosen was one when a variety of CUBE groups was provided by staff and attended by local individuals and families. As noted previously, staff and group participants had been informed in advance of researcher presence, and it was agreed that it would be most appropriate for the researcher to take part in groups as much as possible. As such, the observations across the four days incorporated:

- General observations of The Gallery's café space and its use
- Attendance at one online meeting
- Attendance at the following groups:
  - Three 'pattern changing' groups (workshops for women affected by domestic violence)
  - One art therapy group (for adults experiencing a range of difficulties)
  - One 'food, mood and movement' group (part of a six-week 'Wholebeing' wellness course)
  - Two children's groups (for children to develop greater understanding of their emotions)

The discussion below outlines the findings from these observations, and what these can tell us about CUBE's adoption of a restorative and co-productive ethos.

Careful attention has been paid to the physical space at The Gallery, particularly in the garden area which incorporates water features alongside plants and trees chosen for their scents and textures. This along with the comfortable, relaxed design of The Gallery's interior indicates a commitment to a welcoming, peaceful community space rather than one more clinical or work-like. Across the four days spent in the space, the researcher observed visitors to the space seeming to be comfortable and at ease, suggesting that the physical space is suitable for CUBE's aims.

Researcher attendance at group sessions allowed further understanding of CUBE's adoption of a restorative approach. Staff leading the observed groups tended to use inclusive, participatory approaches which appeared to foster an open, communicative response in service users. There was evidence of services being used across families (for example a parent and a child attending different groups, or a woman and partner attending separate activities), as well as service users attending multiple groups over time according to their needs.

## **Adults' Groups**

Across the various adult groups and activities witnessed there was evidence of restorative approaches being used by staff and volunteers. Notably, most groups started with a restorative check-in initiated by CUBE staff leading the sessions. This way of starting group sessions mirrors that used in restorative circles elsewhere and appeared to put groups at ease with group participants and service users engaging well with sessions, showing openness with fellow participants and trust in facilitators. This practice was not universal and extending this so that all groups start in this way may be beneficial. Regardless of some exceptions, all groups appeared to centre around the importance of dialogue and a lack of traditional hierarchy.

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Whilst group facilitation necessitates a certain level of leadership, sessions were primarily guided by participants' contributions, with most groups featuring a mix of more structured activity and the space for participants to choose activities and affect the direction of the group. For example, participants at the art therapy group moved between writing, drawing and making exercises according to their own comfort levels, and participants in the children's sessions picked which games to play. Facilitators ensured participants were aware of their own roles and responsibilities within groups – either by clarifying expectations or through agreement on informal 'contracts' – which appears to build this level of trust between the facilitators and their participants. Such 'contracts' may contain statements for participants to agree to, such as "I agree to explore that I am... Fully accepting things as they are". Where one of these informal 'contracts' was used, a newer group showed some hesitation and questioned the use of such a method, particularly in relation to accepting responsibility for the things that have happened to them – an issue that persists in the use of restorative approaches in the context of domestic violence<sup>38</sup>. However, groups who had been meeting for longer were more at ease. Trust was particularly evident in the groups who have been attending for a longer period (months as opposed to weeks), exemplified by group members sharing personal stories, vulnerabilities and creative work, as well as offering non-judgmental support and encouragement to one another.

Through conversations with both facilitators and participants, it became apparent that for many of the groups, participants can book for up to six weeks. Whilst there does appear to be scope for people to continue attending for longer in some instances, some participants expressed disappointment at not being able to continue sessions for longer. There is a dichotomy of sustainability here: these projects are only really sustainable for participants if they are ongoing or at least last for a longer period of time, but for CUBE to be able to meet local need they have to manage group numbers in order to reach those with a level of need in the community. This practical limitation also imposes limits on the co-productive power of the project, echoing a tension that emerges often as a concern in co-productive work: how to reach a mutually comfortable resolution regarding the delivery of services when the desires or needs of participants exceed practical constraints relating to budgets or resources. This tension can be managed well via full and open restorative communication to with community members. This action would promote mutual understanding of CUBE capacity and community wishes, followed by discussion of what could meet needs and whether or how this can be achieved within agency resources.

## Children's Groups

Children's groups provided a key opportunity to see how service users engage as families. Children's sessions used restorative check-ins followed by a range of activities led in part by the children themselves. Activities included reading, talking, yoga, crafts, music and massage; children seemed comfortable in sharing emotions, exploring what these mean and where they feel them. The multi-sensory nature of these sessions appeared to facilitate participation and allow children to identify the areas they most wanted to work within, meaning that despite being a mixture of ages, genders and abilities, all participants were engaged.

On speaking to the parents and guardians of the children, whilst different issues had led them to CUBE, all spoke of various benefits. Adults commented that the children seem more confident and enjoyed coming to the sessions. They felt it was good for the children to mix with different age groups, noting that this isn't offered elsewhere. Parents also observed that the children preferred to come to CUBE rather than take part in sessions in more formal settings (e.g. with social services). Families had discovered CUBE through different routes: hearing about the service through

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<sup>38</sup> Sen, R.; Morris, K.; Burford, G.; Featherstone, B. and Webb, C. (2018) 'When you're sitting in the room with two people one of whom... has bashed the hell out of the other': Possibilities and challenges in the use of FGCs and restorative approaches following domestic violence. *Children and Youth Services Review*: 88 pp441-449

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Facebook; Families First; from attending other groups; through the schools. Service users commented that they would like the children's sessions to continue over a longer period of time.

## Gallery Patrons

Observation of The Gallery itself gives evidence that the café and associated activities and services are starting to become embedded in the community and used by a wide range of people including those who have no connection to the services CUBE offers. Café customers across the week included those signed up to a 'remote working' package that is offered, parents using the café whilst their children have one to one sessions upstairs, locals who used to come to the restaurant that occupied the space previously and wanted to know more about what was happening there now. Comings and goings also included volunteers and regulars, including regulars seeking a space to have a quiet talk with staff and some having one-to-one sessions in the café (although such sessions may have only been possible due to the café being quiet on that particular day).

Café patrons were well engaged by staff, and sometimes it would become apparent that they had some kind of connection with experiences or services relevant to CUBE's goals (for example working with veterans or homelessness). Connections also seem to be forming with group participants, linking their own groups to work at CUBE and with other organisations such as mental health and social change charity Platform<sup>39</sup>.

The openness of staff was evident throughout, and where café customers took an interest in the space there was always a member of staff with the time to give them more details. This ethos of openness and approachability should stand the team in good stead when it comes to further developing relationships within the community. The Gallery café would benefit from a clearer service offer moving forward if it is to build more of a general clientele (the lack of a clear food offering is currently a hindrance to this). There is opportunity here for future offerings to be discussed and co-produced with the community to best fulfil local need.

At this stage it appears that in its interactions with both service users and the public, CUBE is primarily working in a restorative and co-productive manner. Whilst there are minor suggestions above regarding the groups and how restorative approaches can be further embedded, the current groups seem to be received well, with participants seeming to be engaged. Throughout the time researchers spent at The Gallery, visitors and service users were happy to chat and seemed open and relaxed. The café space isn't necessarily being used to its full potential yet, but there was evidence of the general public using the space as well as staff and service users.

## CUBE Staff and Volunteers

Conversations held with a range of CUBE staff and volunteers across the observation period illustrated how CUBE collaboratively sets goals and addresses challenges that may compromise achieving them. Many discussions taking place centred around the complexity of CUBE being a not-for-profit business that needs to become self-sustaining as well as a community and service centre. For example, services provided by CUBE include support for individuals and groups negatively affected by substance misuse. In recognition of this, how to manage events that would want to serve alcohol is a key question. After discussion, CUBE decided to use an external mobile licensed bar for specific private events. This means alcohol will not be routinely present or available on-site and will hopefully address this concern. With CUBE and The Gallery currently going through an events licensing process to be able to host weddings, there have necessarily been many

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<sup>39</sup> <https://platform.org/>

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conversations about how to prioritise the needs of the community and private interests of the organisation. With CUBE needing to turn over £350k p.a. to be self-sufficient (currently facilitated in great part by Big Lottery funding), this will be an ongoing discussion. The willingness of staff and volunteers to offer information and opinions on this and entering into dialogue with a range of individuals and stakeholders, demonstrates ongoing use of co-production and will hopefully have positive impact.

Another opportunity to observe staff, volunteers and the community working together was found in CUBE board meetings, during which everyone present contributed and each participant was invited to offer feedback individually. As noted earlier, the CUBE board is comprised of CUBE staff, directors and community members. The meeting observed was attended by two community members, CUBE staff and directors. This level of attendance was atypical (there are ordinarily more community members present but a popular local event was taking place the same evening). The meeting started with a restorative circle in which everyone said who they were and what they did. Topics discussed included CUBE events and meetings, and reflection on CUBE progress.

There was evidence of CUBE achieving an important objective: to promote the CUBE community centre being eventually largely run by the community. Since the last board meeting, one community member who first came to CUBE to attend a group is now working in the café. In addition, the centre is looking for two more board members. One member of staff observed that some of the parents of children attending groups are very interested in the centre and may be interested in such a role. Further discussion of The Gallery's kitchen reveals that the present staff are volunteer members of the community.

A directors' meeting was also attended by CUBE directors, the finance manager (former volunteer) and a CUBE Volunteer. The meeting began with a restorative circle. As at the board meeting, communication was open and free, and all attendees were invited and expected to take part. Progress on a new CUBE initiative was shared and collaborative discussion of how to progress further took place. In this, decisions to consult the community about elements of the new service were agreed. Further subjects included consideration of how best to run the CUBE kitchen. Possibilities for future plans were identified jointly as were possible barriers to progress. Collectively it was decided to progress slowly, reflect, and fully discuss progress with volunteers.

The final route taken to understand use of restorative and co-productive approaches in CUBE was a focus group with CUBE staff. During the group participants were asked how they understood what working with a restorative and co-productive approach entails. In responses staff commented on the lack of a sense of hierarchy amongst CUBE staff:

*'In... in terms of an organisation, someone has to steer the ship... Someone has to put us on a course, and I know I'm using euphemisms, however each one of us are able to drive that ship as well. So, in terms of a hierarchy, there isn't one as we're a cooperative'*

(CUBE focus group staff participant)

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With further observation, this sense of collective responsibility extended to the care provided for the CUBE community including work colleagues, and that the communication involved in working restoratively involved careful listening as much as talking:

**Participant 1:** *'It's that whilst we're looking after other people, who's looking after us, attitude. And we all look out for each other and... and... you know, and I'm... I'm... I notice that a lot, because everybody, you know, ...there's not a day goes by that they seriously want to know how you are.'* (CUBE staff focus group)

**Participant 2:** *'and it's... it's not a superfluous or an off the cuff remark, they... you know, everybody purposely stops what they're doing and wants to know, you know, and wants to know what you're doing – not in... not in a quizzical obligation way, but out of the pure interest'* (CUBE staff focus group)

The sense of community extends to views and opinion on the progress and challenges found in CUBE's day to day running, with agreement that everyone's views are perceived as valid:

**Participant 3:** *'we are a team – we all have input every single day. We are consulted on so many different things, if there's any changes'* (CUBE staff focus group)

**Participant 2:** *'We are kept regularly updated, all of the team, it's not just we are taken to one side, as a team we are invited and our opinion matters, everything counts, you know? How we feel development should take place, services, what we're doing'* (CUBE staff focus group)

Collectively it was agreed that working this way had built a positive family like atmosphere in CUBE, with honesty, transparency and a feeling of care being instrumental. There was further opinion that this approach became embedded in CUBE staff and volunteers to the extent that it transferred to work with clients, whose opinion about the services and the Gallery was valued and influenced CUBE progression. When reflecting on their work with clients, staff applauded and agreed with the idea that clients using CUBE must be perceived as experts in their own lives. Those who had been trained in a restorative approach were more explicit about how the approach shaped collaborative interactions focused on doing things with clients:

*'And we have to remember, you know, the people that are accessing our services are experts in their own lives, and it's respecting that and it's remembering that when people are coming for support, we have to be there to support them but not overshadow them and say like, "This is what you need". And, you know... you know, not looking at that referral and saying, "I know exactly what that person...", no, no, you're involving them in the process every step of the way, because then we're moving them forward... Because I'm... you know, I'm... I'm familiar with it, with the restorative approach, sometimes I feel that there can be places that still want to do everything for people...'* (CUBE staff focus group)

This comment suggests that regular restorative training for new staff may be necessary in order to maintain a restorative way of working within CUBE, something that will need to be considered as the centre continues to operate and grow.

## Working with Partner Agencies using Restorative and Co-productive Approaches

During development, CUBE was eager to build good relationships with statutory and third sector agencies already providing services for the CUBE community. To do so, CUBE staff contacted a myriad of organisations concerned with bereavement, housing, mental health, well-being, group support, domestic abuse, health, disability, addiction, education, and sport. This led to the formation of many partnerships and subsequent co-work once CUBE began providing services.

### Partner Agencies

Forming positive relationships is an important element of CUBE. From the outset it was intended that all inter-agency interactions would be framed by restorative and co-productive constructs in the belief this would build positive, more effective relationships and services. To explore whether this is being achieved the research team contacted a range of partner agencies who worked with CUBE during its development and early implementation. The following section begins by describing the backgrounds of the partner agencies in terms of their role and their knowledge of and attitude to co-production and a restorative approach. Attention then turns to interactions with CUBE and the extent to which these evidence co-production and a restorative approach. The latter section also identifies facilitators and barriers to use of the intended approaches in interagency settings.

As illustrated in Table 2, study participants worked for diverse statutory and third sector agencies. The figure also indicates the general role of the participants within their organisation.

Organisation	Organisation Role	Participant
Welsh Development Agency	Supporting social and community enterprises with charity and business roles	Business Advisor
Mental Health Agency Hub	Linking Welsh mental health development services	Officer
Local Authority	Youth Services	Manager
NHS	Children and Young People's health care	Health Professional
Local Authority	Children and Family Services	Social Services Officer
Housing Association	Socially rented properties	Manager
Probation	Justice	Officer (via email)

Table 2: Participant partner agencies

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## Partner Agency knowledge of Co-production and a Restorative Approach

First, interest lay in partner agency knowledge of and experience of restorative and co-productive approaches. While little evidence of formal training in a restorative approach emerged, all participants were aware of the concept and two were familiar with the associated ethos, skills, and processes. Of these, one was in an organisation working with co-production principles and another in an agency engaged in facilitating restorative training across the staff body. Although the latter participant was not yet trained they had always worked co-productively and saw many similarities with a restorative approach:

*'I'm from a co-production background, so it's... I see [co-production and a restorative approach] them as one and the same, but I know they're not, but I that's always way that I've worked in terms of adult to adult, not paternalistic. Making sure that everyone is heard, making sure to check in and, and, how are those conversations about how people are and co-producing the solutions with whoever is receiving that service, because the living experience for me is the thing that's going to tell you whether or not it's working that and that's it.'*  
(Housing Association Manager)

Elsewhere, one agency representative had experience of using a restorative approach process in specific situations as a tool rather than an ethos or way of being. Of the remainder of the partners, the social services officer was familiar with a restorative approach but felt there were challenges using it in domestic violence contexts, an issue which was also apparent in some of the group sessions discussed earlier. The mental health officer was not familiar with a restorative approach but related restorative values to the recovery ethos used in their organisation:

**Researcher:** *'A restorative approach is informed by a set of values as such as being, non- judgemental, collaborative, being inclusive, being transparent, respectful, honest. A set of very democratic values.'* **Interviewee:** *'Which is really the same as recovery. The recovery source'* (Mental Health Hub Officer)

### Working with CUBE

Two participants had been in contact with CUBE developers before it existed, with links made through a Welsh restorative agency. This history implies a longstanding interest in a restorative approach:

*'I met [CUBE CEO] many moons ago when they were working with [restorative agency], uh because we were looking at restorative approaches training across the organization in the front, front facing teams... [CEO] mentioned to me ...that they were looking to set up a new organization in CUBE'* (Housing Association Manager)

*'the link came about because we had a link with [restorative agency]'* (Business Advisor)

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Both of these participants described how they became involved in CUBE because of these links and how the plans, vision and nature of the proposed agency mapped well onto the ethos and aims of their own organisations. This led to involvement in the development of CUBE from both a business aspect and in writing letters of recommendation.

The mental health hub became involved later when the CUBE developers were developing a large funding bid and contacted a range of statutory and third sector agencies to gain support. This participant talked positively of CUBE's commitment to collaborative working and how this was evidenced by their wish to contact the mental health agencies working with the hub. The inclusion of CUBE was seen as a useful extension of the hub whose role was to promote local co-production and collaboration

*'So they linked with us in terms of voluntary sector and linking with groups and people with lived experience and networks and so that yeah, coming together and their ideas and, uh yeah, it just came through us a partner really, to to support them with that and to provide that link into engage that way'* (Mental Health Hub Officer)

Dissemination of knowledge of CUBE, its aims and intent during development and early implementation were instrumental in the relationships built with the remaining participants. Knowledge that CUBE was providing support for the mental health of children and young people together with an insufficiency of appropriate services in the locality promoted links with local authority and health services:

*'During COVID... part of [Welsh Government] funding was to provide additional well-being, and mentoring support or, or additional well-being activities almost.....So as you can imagine, it was. 'Well, we can't do this alone. We need the third sector. We need partners, and we need to kind of see what else is out there'* (Local Authority Manager)

The participant from social services also felt that earlier professional links and shared experiences of working with individuals and families affected by domestic violence were important:

*'You know the domestic violence arena, just it's quite small and you tend to know people who work in that arena'* (Social Services Officer)

All these agencies became involved once CUBE became operational. The Local Authority manager commissioned CUBE services. The health worker and social services professional referred service users to established CUBE programmes.

Overall, the pathways which led to partner agency involvement with CUBE appeared instrumental in the relationships held at the time of data collection. Those who shared CUBE's restorative and co-productive principles and/or could see commonalities with their own ethos and values understood and shared belief in CUBE's model of service. For another partner agency, knowledge of the professional background of CUBE developers formed a positive foundation for service referrals and working together. Awareness of CUBE and their ongoing service was the trigger for contact with the rest. Participants who began to use CUBE later appeared to have less established relationships with the agency.

Attention now turns to the nature of partner agency interactions with CUBE.

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## Restorative and Co-productive relationships with Partner Agencies

Drawing on the process and values of a restorative co-productive approach, the study explored how well interactions between CUBE and participant partner agencies illustrated use of core elements of CUBE i.e., collaboration, communication, empathy building, collaboration, goal setting, solution planning and service planning. When assessing this it became apparent that a long history of working with CUBE and/or a shared interest in restorative and co-productive ways of working promoted use of these factors.

These core elements are discussed in turn below.

### Communication

A restorative approach is centred on building, sustaining and maintaining relationships and communication is a key element in achieving this. When asked about the amount and level of their communication with CUBE there was evidence of good communication with the three agencies with similar philosophies, even when conversations extended to difficult issues:

*'I think we, we communicate within those values I, I suppose because they, they, are reflected completely in the recovery ethos values I'd say so, and co-production ethos'*  
(Mental Health Hub Officer)

Elsewhere, two agencies largely used emails to communicate with CUBE, with one participant offering the rationale that they needed hard evidence of any communication with CUBE. Comments from both suggested this form of communication limited collaborative work and possibly reduced overall service efficacy for the families/children concerned:

*'don't find out what's happened to the children once they start. But then again, I don't think that's my place to necessarily'* (Health Professional)

*'So sometimes I have contacted [CUBE staff] working there and asked, you know, is so and so engaged with you and find, to find out. And it can be a bit, the response can be a bit delayed, so it's definitely room for improvement.'* (Social Services Worker)

Ongoing feedback on the results of collaborative working is a core component of effective co-production, though also one that routinely faces challenges in practice, perhaps due to its iterative nature leading to uncertainty around when and how such communications should be made. The preference for hard evidence of discussions with CUBE considered above gives some insight into the complexities of working with CUBE when you are part of a large organisation.

A further factor that demonstrated the need for (and impact of) good communication was mutual awareness of local need for services and how CUBE could help supply these. A local authority manager reflected on how mutual knowledge of these could meet local need and provide support for CUBE:

*'And it's how then, you know as things as things improve, that we actually identify well, who is then going to fill that gap there. Well if everybody else is already doing everything else, it's only the CUBE that could step in, isn't it?'* (Local Authority Manager)

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The final factor brings attention to the importance of empathy when engaged in collaborative interagency work.

## Empathy

As noted, some partner agencies shared organisational values and ways of working with CUBE. These commonalities produced high levels of empathy and a firm foundation for positive interaction that extended to acceptance of when and why the agency could not work with CUBE:

*'We decided not to go in for the last round of bidding because it was just too tight and I just wasn't comfortable with, with, how tight those timescales will, and I wasn't assured that I would be able to deliver on my, my, commitments. To which both [CUBE] CEO and Director said it absolutely. Yeah, we completely understand. Let's move it into the next cycle of bidding. So yeah, I've I personally feel that I've got a great relationship with [the CEO]. I've, I've, got that kind of relationship with [them], which is really lovely'. (Housing Association Manager)*

In contrast, other experiences indicated a need for increased understanding of organisational policy. The difficulties described included different practices around client engagement:

*'Quite often I've referred somebody and [CUBE] say, oh, we left a message but they didn't respond, so they're not in the right place to engage us up to them. .... We would prefer a more uhm, more intensive in, process for engagement. But it's their remit so you know I haven't. You know I haven't discussed. I have at times said to [CUBE staff member] can you try him again and the response was well, they've got my number. If they want to...' (Social Services Professional)*

Another area where empathy is key arose from the business aspect of CUBE. This saw one agency deterred from using The Gallery coffee shop, by the suggestion that they pay for time spent in the coffee shop and the attending CUBE staff. While the benefits of using CUBE rather than other coffee shops was recognised, this financial element of CUBE was perceived as unacceptable:

*'And in the week if they're feeling low, instead of going to Costa Coffee where they sit there on their own and everybody is on their laptop, they go to there and then the well-being workers are there and they may have a conversation. It may start up or something. I mean that's the whole collaborative approach to me not a, yeah, come here, but then we're going to charge you over the earth to do. It it's it seems not. It seems to too business focused, not collaborative' (Local Authority Manager)*

Whilst CUBE staff recall this situation differently and it appears there may have been some misunderstanding here, such comments suggest that further communication between CUBE and partner agencies when planning collaboration is needed to deepen levels of understanding of the differing practice and policies of CUBE and the agencies they work with, which would be beneficial for all.

Despite this, it was encouraging to hear that these agencies still held a positive attitude to CUBE, a desire to work together and a need to achieve higher levels of communication to learn more about one another.

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## Collaborative goal setting and solution finding

The sections above give examples of CUBE working collaboratively to identify goals and discuss possible solutions with some statutory and voluntary agencies, especially when conceiving CUBE and planning its implementation. In addition, other agencies spoke of how they had worked with CUBE to define and achieve goals. This is illustrated by the Mental Health Hub officer, where the goal was to link CUBE to pertinent agencies and services:

*'I think some of those are coming to fruition and certainly links with the health board and you know, so they're aware and they know, and links with the psychology all those sorts of things and the planning. Yeah, it's. um... I think it's created some links'* (Mental Health Hub Officer)

It was also observed in ongoing work with the Housing Association to jointly apply for project funding to meet the needs of a cohort of service users:

*'I think so, so we've been working on a joint bid for work with the prisoners. Uh, for this this funding scheme and I just think it what's so beautiful about the relationship is the fact that everything I don't have CUBE has and everything CUBE doesn't have, I do, so it's really important for this particular bid.'* (Housing Association Manager)

Furthermore, there was a consistent development of goals and aspiration for the services CUBE could offer to meet local need in the Local Authority:

*'So I've been back in touch with [CUBE], now um, in the last three weeks we've had an additional 100 grand from Welsh government It has to be spent before the 31st of March, so we've had that conversation.'* (Local Authority Manager)

The need for reflection on organisational relationships, especially after a period of working together, has been touched on, with a further need to extend these to include consideration of goals and outcomes articulated by one participant:

*'Because of my remit being those brief interventions. .... it's meant to be a quick turnover. I haven't got the luxury of time to follow it up, so 6-8 weeks down the line and it is something we've highlighted with the pilot project come about that longer term monitoring, but we haven't come up with a solution yet'* (Social Services Professional)

A need to involve senior managers and partner agencies in such discussions and decisions was also voiced when asked about further work with CUBE as while some agency representatives were keen to develop and deepen their work with CUBE, such decisions lay with senior colleagues.

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## Summary and Recommendations

CUBE seeks to provide a community space and support for local needs in ways that recognise the expertise of individuals and families in their own lives. To facilitate this CUBE is demonstrably committed to the use of restorative and co-productive approaches in all relationships, including the CUBE community, service users, volunteers, staff and other agencies that work in the local area.

This report is concerned with whether and to what extent the key concepts in restorative and co-productive approaches (communication; participation; understanding; empathy; collaboration; solution focused goal setting) are being used by CUBE. Exploration of these issues through observation, interviews, focus groups and document inspection strongly suggests that restorative and co-productive approaches shaped the process of understanding the community, identifying and prioritising local needs and designing the CUBE centre and the services it provides.

Further, evidence indicates that restorative and co-productive approaches are well-embedded in current CUBE implementation, with the positive value of use seen in use of diverse multi-media sources to communicate and increase understanding of CUBE in the community and partner agencies, in the relationships between CUBE staff, volunteers, community and managers, the commitment to training and development of those involved, including the community members, and in the organisational structure of CUBE which places community members and volunteers as central drivers of the progress of CUBE and the nature of the agency and the services it provides.

These approaches continue to be used in further developments which were in progress by the end of the study period. Based on further funding from Cardiff University, CUBE have been partnering with TACSI (The Australian Centre for Social Innovation) and a hybrid model of CUBE and TACSI's approaches is being used to create a new peer mentoring service for families. Whilst not considered in detail here, the development of this service has been based on the co-productive and restorative approaches that both CUBE and TACSI work with.

***Evidence indicates that restorative and co-productive approaches are well-embedded in current CUBE implementation***

Despite this, the study identified some areas where a restorative, co-productive approach is less apparent, and which may benefit from further consideration. Both a restorative and co-productive approach call for high levels of communication in an atmosphere of honesty, trust, transparency and inclusion. While most CUBE meetings and services used a restorative circle to begin meetings with signs that this created trust between participants noted, not all groups observed were

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currently using this element of a restorative approach and it is possible that this is altering the ethos in such groups. This, together with varied levels of understanding of the ethos and process of a restorative approach found amongst staff and partner agencies suggests that regular training, for new as well as established staff, would have positive effect as would efforts to ensure a restorative approach is used holistically. It is also possible that additional restorative training for CUBE community volunteers and partner agencies less familiar with the practice would increase understanding of the approach. It is also likely that this knowledge would help build a firm base on which later discussions and service changes can be considered, as already seen in the relationships with some partner agencies.

Study findings also identified a need for better communication and empathy between CUBE and some partner agencies. Where tensions existed, they tended to be found in relationships with agencies who had less experience of working with CUBE and did not share the commitment to and knowledge of a restorative approach and co-production. The barriers appeared to revolve around the differing policies and practice held. While the time demands and capacities of all agencies involved are recognised, restorative discussions focused on generating understanding of partner agency and CUBE attitudes, aims and resources are likely to be beneficial, as would a consideration of how they could best work together. It would be of great value if senior managers of partner agencies could participate in these, as while practitioners appear to value the service offered by CUBE, most did not have the power to significantly change the nature or design of ongoing working relationships.

This need for reflection and further consultation about necessary or useful changes to CUBE services extends to CUBE volunteers and members of the community. During the study some service users voiced a need for longer services or contact with CUBE. Both a restorative approach and co-production call for active roles of all involved in service design and delivery, and while CUBE capacity and resources may prevent developing services in the way desired, the community should be included in honest discussions about what can be provided and how to make this happen.

***The key challenges of consistency in practice and communication are areas for improvement, however this does not compromise this core achievement provided that they are prioritised in future work***

In summary, CUBE has provided a robust demonstration for Welsh social care of how restorative and co-productive approaches can be applied in a complementary manner. The key challenges of

consistency in practice and communication are areas for improvement, however this does not compromise this core achievement provided that they are prioritised in future work. The CUBE model and its success in implementation and acceptability to stakeholders and the community supports its further exploration as a basis for future service development in Wales. A core aspect of this exploration should be how the model may be adapted for use in different geographic and demographic locations, given the diversity of these across Wales; an inattention to which has often compromised the roll-out of prior successful services. For example, the local community embedding of CUBE in a prime central retail location would be a markedly different matter in more rural and dispersed communities. Despite this challenge, the evidence we have gathered and examined within this evaluation demands further attention for CUBE as an innovative model of social care and health service delivery, particularly in a post-pandemic landscape where traditional models of service delivery are struggling with outreach and the treatment of complex and layered needs in the community.





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