

# CO-AGE: Exploring the potential for development of care co-operatives to support older people to age well at home

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Setting the Scene to CO-AGE

# Demand for home care in Ireland

## Current unmet demand

- In Ireland, growth in population aged 80+ has outpaced increase in care workers (OECD, 2020)
- Government approved €666m home care budget in 2021
- >6,000 people approved for home care but waiting on carers

## Future demand

- By 2051:
  - 65+ age-group to double to 1.5m
  - 80+ age-group to almost quadruple to >500,000 (CSO, 2018)
- Most people (78%) would prefer to stay in own home as they age (Age Friendly, Ireland 2015; O'Sullivan *et al.*, 2022)
- ~ 63% of people aged 80+ live alone (Barrett & Kelly, 2016)

# Privatisation of home care

- Outsourcing of care services – primarily to private (for-profit) sector – “race to the bottom” based on factors such as price competition (TASC, 2020)
- Poor pay in private care companies
  - HSE pays ~ €27/hr to care companies
  - Care workers start at ~€11.50/hr
- Ts & Cs generally poor
  - Travel - costs and time
  - Precarious contracts
- Crisis in home care provision now! How will we cope in future as population ages?

# Experience of receiving and giving care

- Not just about access to care – quality of experience
- Public sector - older person as beneficiary
- Private sector - customer
- Are there alternative models that:
  - empower older people and their families?
  - value experience and insights of older people?
  - value work of care workers?

# What is a Co-operative?

- “A cooperative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their **common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations** through a **jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise**” (International Cooperative Alliance, 2018)
- Based on values of **self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity**
- Focused on **people, not profit**
- Examples of co-ops in Ireland: dairy/other agriculture; credit unions

# Care Co-operative Models

**Care co-op** – owned by those receiving care/their families/support networks

**Worker co-op** – owned by care workers who provide service

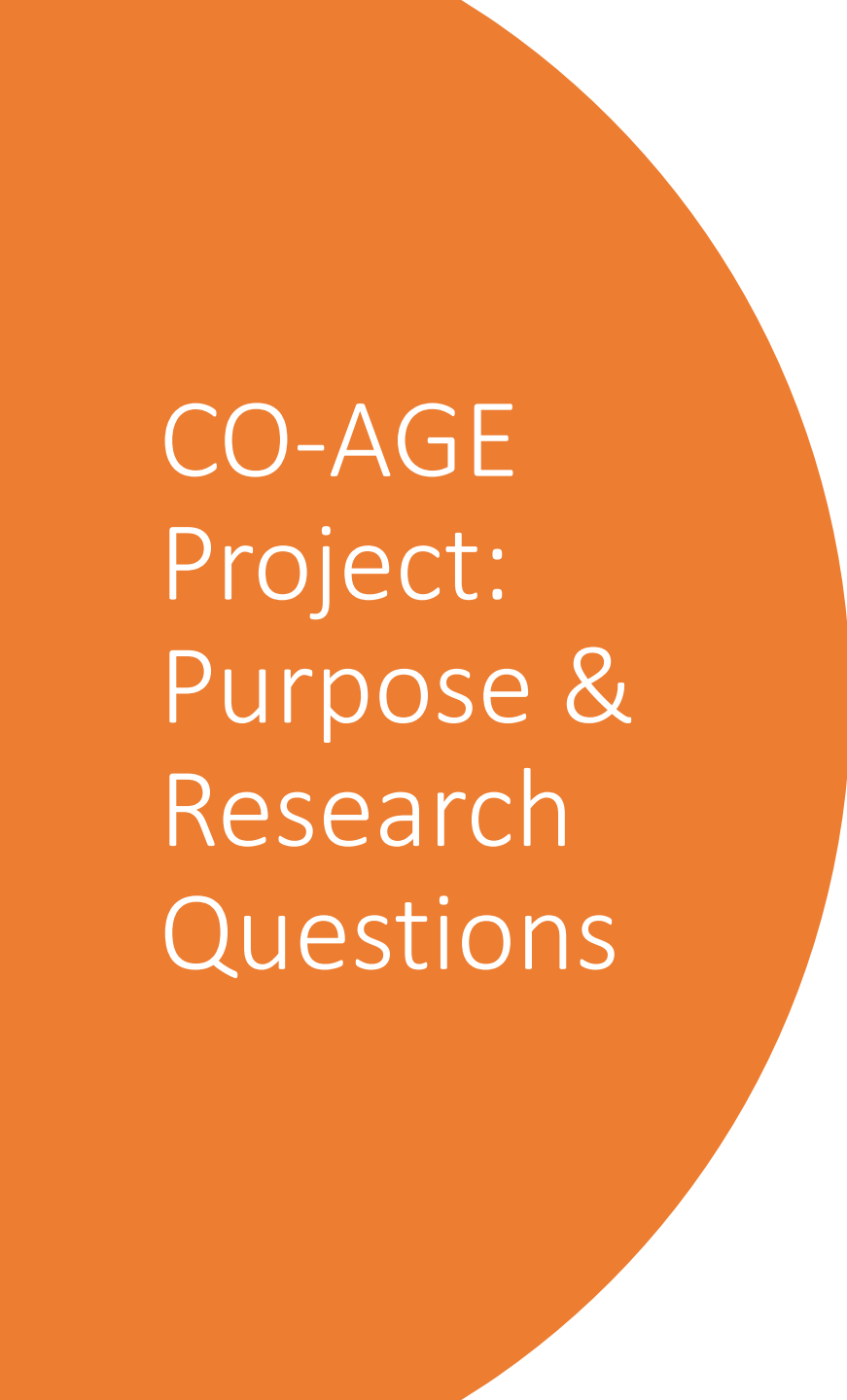
**Multi-stakeholder co-op** – owned by service users, care workers, and other stakeholders

# How prevalent are care co-ops?

- Limited development in Ireland – RHS and The Great Care Co-op
- Care co-ops operate in Canada, US, Japan, UK, France and Italy
- In Italy, 14,000 co-operatives provide care to over 5m people (ILO, 2017; Conaty, 2014)









CO-AGE  
Project:  
Purpose &  
Research  
Questions

Explores the co-operative as an alternative organisational model that can empower older people, their families/supporters, and professional care workers

1. To what extent is there interest among stakeholders?
  2. What practical and policy supports are needed?
  3. How can existing knowledge and expertise be leveraged?
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# Methodology: Mixed methods

- Presentations on care co-ops by practitioners & academic experts
  - Focus groups with family carers + with people aged 55+ who are planning for own care
  - Focus groups with care workers interested in exploring co-op model
  - Focus groups and interviews with other stakeholders with a potential role in supporting care co-ops
  - Thematic analysis
  - Voice of stakeholders represented in recommendations
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# Care Co-operatives

Challenging the status quo in care systems

# Preliminary Snapshots of 2 x Care Co-ops

- CO-AGE's [June 2022 webinar](#) heard from founders of two care co-ops – The Great Care Co-op in Dublin and Equal Care in Yorkshire
- The following four slides summarise their care co-op stories in a visualisation akin to 'before and after' snapshots of the care system
- Employing the Centre for Community Organisations' (COCO) '[Oppression Tree: Facilitation Tool](#)', the two sets of visuals first display the 'broken model' of the current care system in Dublin and Yorkshire
- This is then followed by the 'paradigm shift' that the care co-ops are developing through their work
- These visuals introduce us to the systems thinking being demonstrated and articulated by the care co-ops

# Case Study 1



The Great Care Co-op, Dublin – Presentation by Aoife Smith, Co-founder & Director

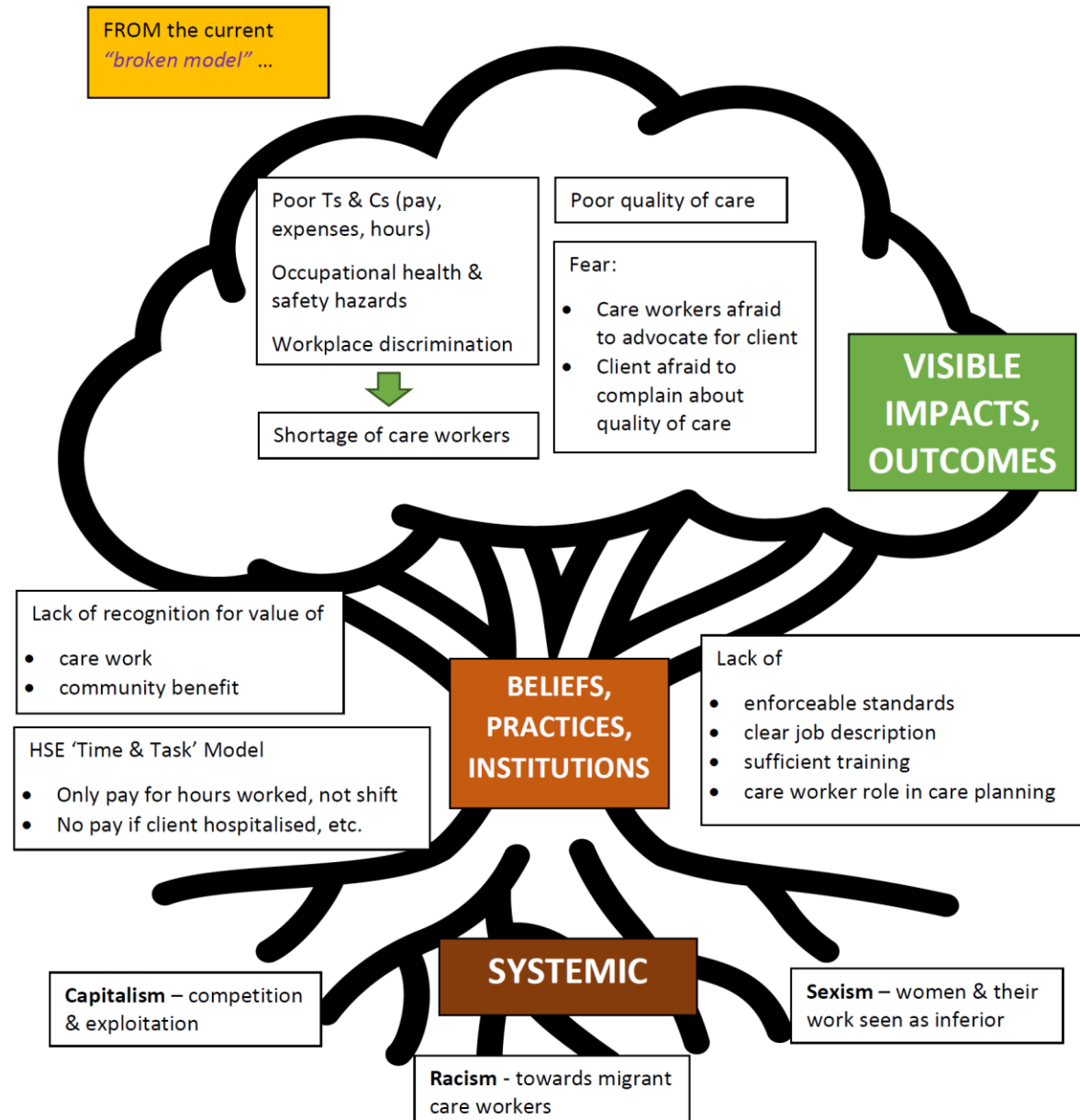


The  
**Great Care Co-op**  
Trusted care in your neighbourhood

Time for Change: Home Care From  
Human Rights & Equality Framework

# The Great Care Co-op

CO AGE webinar presentation on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2022 by Aoife Smith, Co-Founder & Director of TGCC.



“PARADIGM SHIFT” to hybrid worker co-operative & social enterprise model of *“holistic, socially focused care”*

Better Ts & Cs (pay, conditions, benefits)  
*“invested, happy carers”*

*“intrinsically linked”*

Better care

Care workers empowered by sharing control over conditions

Client

- At centre with circles of support
- Empowered to *“live the way they want”*
- Positive family feedback re: added value

Responsive

- Client feedback elicits immediate response
- Care worker advocacy achieves faster results

**VISIBLE IMPACTS, OUTCOMES**

Community-development approach

- collective action
- participation
- empowerment

**BELIEFS, PRACTICES, INSTITUTIONS**

Outcomes-focused approach

- Direct client-carer / co-op communication
- Investment in workers & migrants (free training)
- All profit re-invested *“into social mission”* to improve care & training

Care worker ownership & migrant leadership

- Self-managed teams
- Control over scheduling
- Control decision to take on new clients
- Minimise unpaid travel

SLA with HSE in CHO6  
*But need policy for social procurement measurements to value community benefit*

**SYSTEMIC**

**Partnerism** – co-operation & solidarity

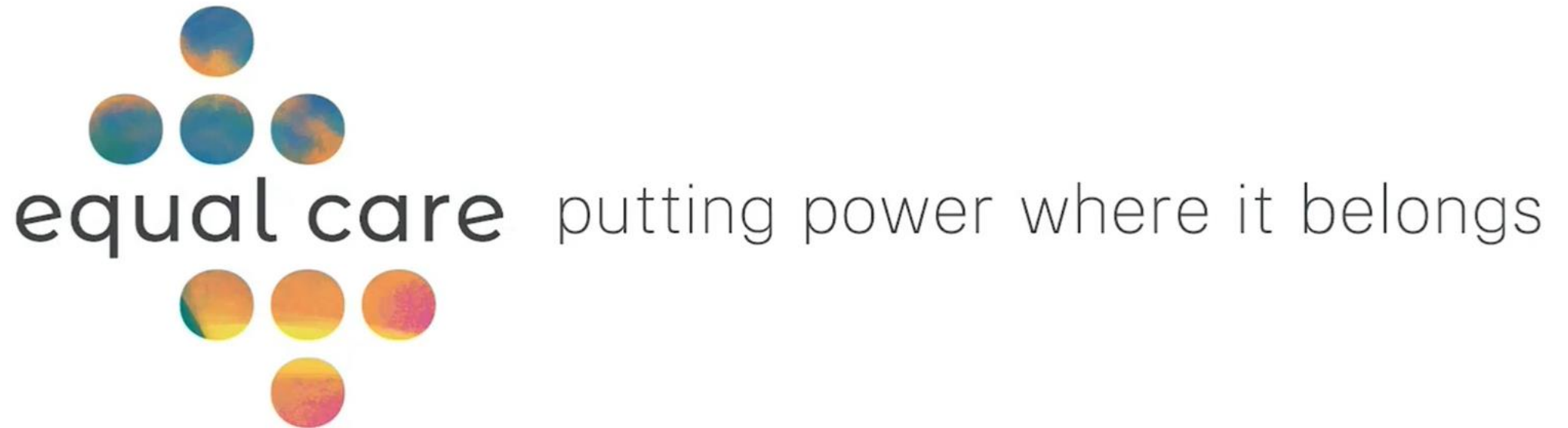
**Equality** – women’s rights

**Human Rights** – migrant rights

# Case Study 2



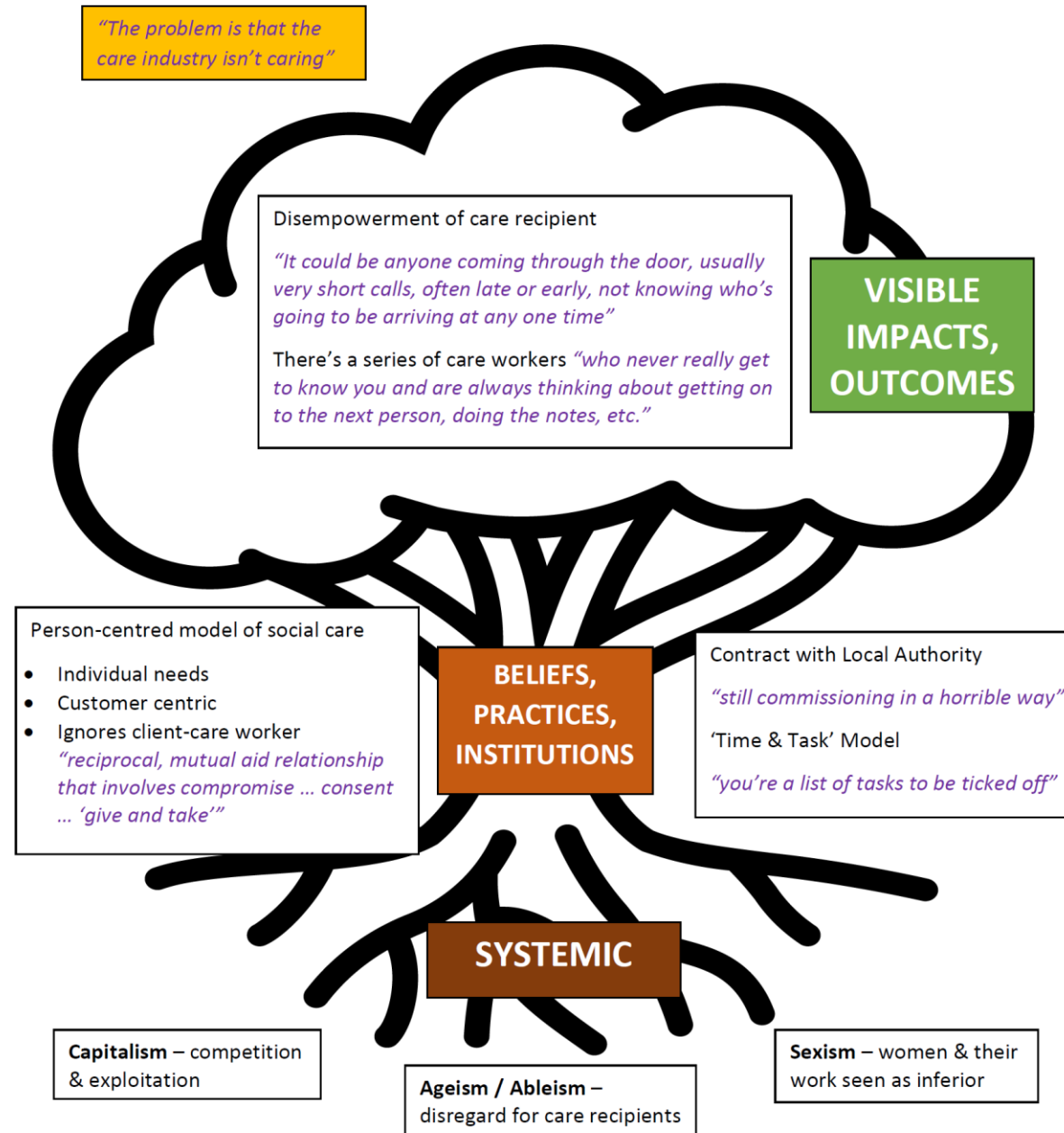
Equal Care, Yorkshire – Presentation by Emma Back, Founder



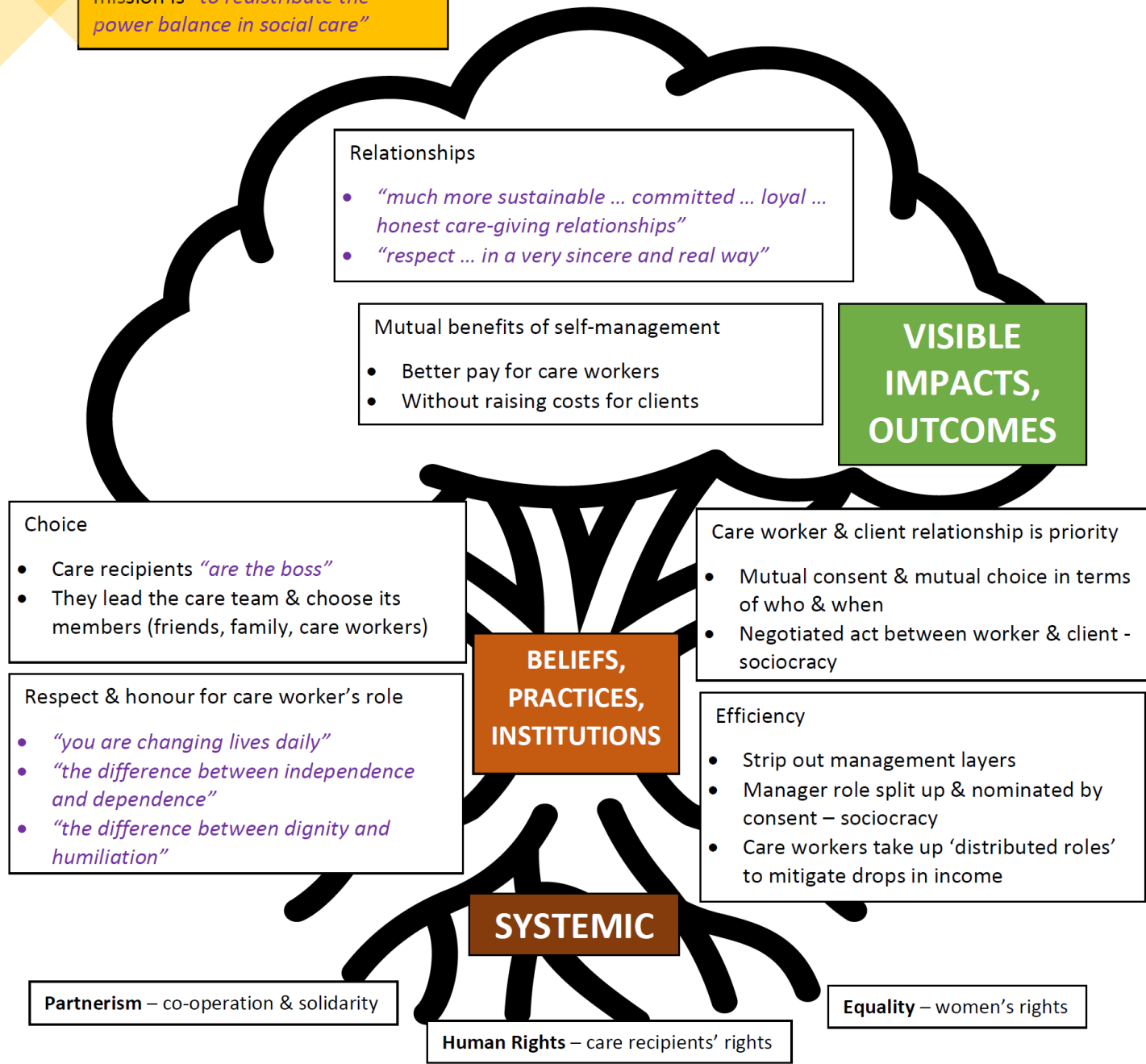


# Equal Care Co-op

CO AGE webinar presentation on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2022 by Emma Back, Founder of Equal Care in West Yorkshire.



A multi-stakeholder co-op whose mission is *“to redistribute the power balance in social care”*



- Co-operatives, whether owned by service users or workers, can facilitate more meaningful participation in co-production of services ... (Pestoff, 2009).
- “Particularly in the multistakeholder model, users of care services become *partners* in care ... working directly with care providers and staff to better target care plans” (ILO, 2017).

Thank you

- IRC New Foundations
- Age Action and other advocacy groups for carers and older people
- Great Care Co-op, RHS, Equal Care Co-op
- ISS21, especially Dr Margaret Scanlon
- Research Advisory Group:
  - Dr Siobhan O'Sullivan, Dr Carol Kelleher, Dr Eleanor Bantry White (UCC)
  - Representatives of Age Action, Irish Co-operative Organisation Society, HSE



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