



NWTWC Community Empowerment Awards March 2011



Case studies

Empowering older people

Fifty true stories from diverse communities

Community engagement in health

Working with residents to improve neighbourhoods

Reviving enthusiasm through community philosophy

Creating a new community park

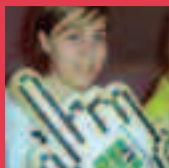
Encouraging young people to unlock their full potential

Improving access to services in rural areas

Spreading the Fairtrade message

Residents changing their community

Making cleaner, safer and stronger communities



NWTWC Community Empowerment Awards an introduction

North West Together We Can (NWTWC) was established in 2007 by The Department of Communities and Local Government to support community empowerment in the region.

We aim to support communities to solve their own problems, to release community energy to improve neighbourhoods and to enable front line staff and managers to work better with residents.

All these are key elements in supporting the development of the Big Society.

We decided to develop a Community Empowerment and Social Cohesion Award as a way of helping local authorities and communities identify and develop community empowerment projects.

The benefit of the Award Scheme is that it offers a way of independently validating and proving the worth of good empowerment and social cohesion

case studies



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activity. The award is not a competition; it is more a quality mark. Applicants are offered technical assistance prior to submitting their applications in order that baselines can be established and appropriate evidence collected to support the application. The project is then independently verified by a panel comprising of an academic, an empowerment expert, and a resident assessor.

Applicants have to demonstrate significant outcomes in engagement, empowerment or cohesion, with evidence, in order to receive the award.

Eleven organisations were successful in achieving the Award last September and a further eleven organisations, featured in these Case Studies, will be presented with their Award at a ceremony in March 2011.

We hope you find these case studies useful – contacts have been provided for each project should you wish to find out more information on a particular project.

NWTWC would like to thank these eleven award winning organisations for their cooperation in the compilation of these cases studies and for the provision of photographs. We would also like to give particular thanks to Liz Richardson, Sue King and Helen Tomlinson for all their help with supporting and assessing the Awards for the last two years and also to our resident assessors for their valuable contributions to the process.

NWTWC is looking at ways of continuing these Awards in 2011. Do get in touch with us if you would like to find out more.

The NWTWC Team



Working with residents to create a new community park

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Making cleaner, safer and stronger communities

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Empowering older people to live independent lives and play a full part in their community

Village Agent Project: Age UK South Lakeland

Research carried out with over 1000 people in South Lakeland identified that many older people living in rurally isolated areas face barriers in accessing services and information. Older people also lack involvement and engagement in decisions affecting their lives. As a result of the research, Age UK South Lakeland decided to launch a Village Agent pilot project with the aim of employing local people to provide information, advice and support and to develop new community initiatives based on the needs of older people. As a result of the Village Agent Project there has been an increase in the number of older people receiving support, improved involvement by older people in community activities and increased engagement in volunteering.

Key outcomes

- ✓ **Recruitment of nine community - based Village Agents with knowledge and understanding of local needs.**
- ✓ **In-depth support provided to over 1250 older people living in isolated rural areas.**
- ✓ **Improved engagement and consultation with local communities.**
- ✓ **New community groups and activities set up.**
- ✓ **Increased numbers of residents involved in volunteering.**
- ✓ **Improved partnership working delivering more targeted services.**

Empowering older people to live independent lives and play a full part in their community

Village Agent Project: Age UK South Lakeland

Location

South Lakeland covers an area of 600 square miles and includes a variety of landscapes including mountains, fells, lakes and coastline and the four main urban areas of Kendal, Ulverston, Windermere and Grange-over-Sands.

The resident population is 103,800 with an above average number of older people (34% aged over 55) which is expected to rise steadily over the next 20 years. South Lakeland is generally regarded as an affluent area but 28% of the population has an income of less than £10,000 per annum.

Age UK South Lakeland (AUSL) formerly Age Concern South Lakeland, have worked with older people in the South Lakeland district for 31 years and their team of staff and volunteers supports over 10,000 older people each year.

Challenges and Opportunities

- Rural services closing down and remaining services centred in larger towns like Kendal.
- Lack of awareness of services, rights and entitlements.
- Families moving away in search of work and affordable housing, resulting in a growing number of very old people with few, if any, local family connections and support.
- Inadequate or non-existent public transport, and for many no access to private transport: 26% of households have no access to a car and 51% of people are unable to access a regular bus service.
- A higher cost of living, resulting in poverty for many older people.
- Lack of engagement by older people in the decisions affecting their lives.

Activity

The Village Agent pilot ran in nine rural areas using a model first introduced in Gloucestershire which

had produced a sound evidence base confirming the delivery model worked. In order to meet the needs identified in South Lakeland, the model was tailored and included the addition of developments to support the social structure in the villages through employment of Village Agents (VAs). The role of VAs includes the provision of information, advice and support, promotion of AUSL and other partner services, establishing village action groups to provide a voice for older people, helping to set up new activities and recruiting volunteers to assist with community activities.

The nine communities chosen to pilot the project were based on district council wards with an average population of 4,500, and with diverse profiles enabling the VA model to be fully tested. VAs were recruited through targeted advertising in local communities and a launch event was held to promote to interested people. A recruitment process followed and by April 2010 nine VAs were in place. AUSL and partner organisations provided training to the new VAs which enabled new links and contacts to be built. VAs also spent time working with Resource Advisers on the AUSL Helpline and with AUSL Community Officers accompanying them on home visits.

The project was initially promoted through posters, press releases and leaflets, district council publications and announcements on local radio. Some of the best awareness-raising activities however were done by the VAs themselves including talking to the postman, the milk lady and the local farm feed salesman. The VAs are employed for ten hours per week and aim to be an accessible bridge between individuals and communities, and the organisations that are able to offer help and support.

A project Focus Group has been set up consisting of representatives from the pilot communities to oversee the overall direction of the programme and has since agreed to become the Village Agent Steering Committee. Between October

2009 and September 2010, VAs attended a total of 337 different events to publicise the project including Health and Happiness Events, starting information tables at local events on a monthly basis, seated exercise classes, starting new lunch clubs, coffee mornings, over 60's clubs, church lunches, book clubs, intergenerational work with the local primary school and starting 'Men in Sheds' skills exchange project in Kendal. VAs also attended partner agency support group meetings, Parish Council Meetings and Neighbourhood Forums. A total audience of 7,432 older people were reached.

Partnership working has also been successful. Examples include a new cancer support group, a monthly general advice session organised by the History Society and IT courses set up using the facilities of the local primary school.

The VAs assist in providing volunteering opportunities in rural locations and aim to recruit both older and young people as volunteers supported by the AUSL Volunteer Support Officer. 21 volunteers aged between 16 and 75 have joined AUSL directly as a result of the project and general interest in volunteering has also increased. Volunteers work in a variety of areas including retail, supporting events, the 'enriched opportunities' and 'bridge building' projects, magazine delivery and generally assisting VA's.

Current statistics indicate that once trained each Village Agent helps at least 250 people per year to receive individual support, advice or information helping them to live healthier, happier and more active lives.

Village Agents have directly assisted over 1250 older people which includes in-depth assistance and referrals to other services and organisations. AUSL have experienced an average growth of 24% in cases which wouldn't have received help without the VA's. The VAs are also having success in reaching members of hard to reach groups such as the Farming Community and single men.

One of the keys to the projects success has been

the recruitment of VAs from the local community. A Lead Officer feels this is important in building the trust needed to develop relationships and understanding of residents and the local community. A representative from the Police commented that **“no one knows the community better than its community.”**

The Village Agent project enhances existing services through increasing volunteering opportunities and through linking existing organisations and groups together. A senior Age UK officer felt that the project had **“been a strong catalyst to get partners working together...within the mix there is always a solution – it’s just finding it.”** VAs share information and contacts and pass on referrals to appropriate agencies. There is now more dialogue between different villages and communities where there wasn’t before.

Engagement and consultation with the community and access to services has improved as a result of the project. The project plans to continue to engage and consult with the community through the Village Action Groups which started in January 2011 and feed directly into the Project Steering Group.

The project had helped AUSL to become more cost effective. The VAs are able to support clients with low to medium level support cases which means AUSL Community Officers are able to concentrate on more complex cases. Extra income gained after VAs have supported residents to claim their full entitlements tend to be spent within the community so supporting the local economy. AUSL have made efficiency savings in travel costs as VAs are local to their area.

In December 2010, the VA Project was successful in its bid to Reaching Communities (National Lottery) for five years funding which ensures the future sustainability of the project and the rolling out of the service into other areas of South Lakeland.

Participants

AUSL officers and Village Agents, residents, volunteers, South Lakeland District Council, Cumbria County Council, Cumbria Adult Social Care, Cumbria Fire and Rescue, Cumbria Police, MIND, Alzheimer’s Society, Sight Aware South Lakes, CAB, South Lakeland Carers, Cumbria Neighbourhood Watch Association and South Lakeland Community Alarms, Parish Councils, local voluntary groups, local churches and GPs.

Outcomes

- Village Agents have reached an audience of 7432 through promotion at local events and through case work.
- Village Agents have supported over 1250 older people providing in-depth assistance and referrals to other agencies
- AUSL have experienced an average growth of 24% in cases as a direct result of engagement work done by Village Agents.
- Village Agents have helped people to claim benefits totalling over £80K per year which is predominately spent in local communities.
- Increase in intergenerational activities.
- Village Agents have helped to organise and set up new groups including exercise classes, craft groups, books clubs, IT classes and lunch clubs.
- New voluntary activity in villages and increase in numbers volunteering – 21 new volunteers aged 16-75 have joined AUSL as a result of the project.
- Improved multi-agency working to consider new services and investigate ways of helping older people engage with existing activities.



Key lessons learned

- Involve the community from the beginning.
- Village Agents need to be local – people are more likely to know and trust them, they have knowledge of the area and understand issues and needs.
- Don’t underestimate the value of the social aspects of projects.
- Each area is different and models need to be tailored to meet local needs.
- Make sure there are district and locality-wide links from all service providers to improve communication and avoid duplication.
- Time is one of the most important things you can give.
- You can’t help everyone and fix everything however much you want to.
- Not everyone may want to join in.
- Utilise the skills in the local community - older people have lots to offer.
- Infrastructure is needed in order to support a project like this.
- It is important to look past the presenting problem – it may not be the main issue for the older person.
- 21 new volunteers aged 16-75 have joined AUSL as a result of the project.
- Improved multi-agency working to consider new services and investigate ways of helping older people engage with existing activities.

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Fifty true stories from diverse grassroots communities in Bolton

Meet the Family...

Bolton Multicultural Arts

Bolton Multicultural Arts wanted to challenge the perceptions and stereotyped representation of people from different cultures and to bring to life the real experiences and forgotten histories of the diverse communities in Bolton. They did this by training and employing 'story gatherers' to obtain stories from people of diverse cultural origins – enabling people to express themselves and feel a valued part of the community. The project helped to raise awareness of different cultures, alleviate ignorance and promote community cohesion.

Key outcomes

- ✓ **24 local residents received Participatory Appraisal training leading to paid employment or voluntary work for many.**
- ✓ **5000 books published and distributed to local people, community groups, schools and organisations.**
- ✓ **Increased awareness of different cultures and personal experiences helping to alleviate ignorance and promote cohesion.**
- ✓ **Participants have increased confidence in their voice being heard in the community.**

Fifty true stories from diverse grassroots communities in Bolton

Meet the Family...

Bolton Multicultural Arts

Location

Bolton Multicultural Arts (BMA) was formed in 1999 as an Unincorporated Association. It was set up to bring people of diverse backgrounds together and to learn from each other through the use of creative and innovative arts projects. The project focused on the Derby ward which had one of the largest number of long term unemployed in Bolton, particularly amongst ethnic minority communities.

Challenges and Opportunities

- Cultural perceptions and stereotyped representation of people from different cultures.
- Tensions between people of different cultural origins as a result of the situation in the Middle East.
- Lack of awareness and understanding of different cultures leading to some isolated racial incidents.
- High unemployment in the Deane and Derby areas of Bolton, particularly in ethnic minority communities with a growing number of long-term unemployed.
- Opportunities identified for people to express themselves and feel a valued part of the community.
- Explore the life experiences of the diverse communities in Bolton in order to promote harmonious relationships and community cohesion.
- Provide short term employment to unemployed people from Deane and Derby to elicit personal stories from local communities using Participatory Appraisal methods.

Activity

The idea for the project evolved from a Parks and Open Spaces project where members of the local community were trained in Participatory Appraisal

(PA) techniques in order to find out people's views on the use of parks and leisure spaces. The PA model allows people to express themselves through the use of visual images, symbols and drawings as opposed to words meaning the method is more accessible to people with communication problems or whose first language is not English. Interesting stories began to emerge from residents participating in the project and the idea for a multicultural story book project was born.

BMA carried out consultation predominantly in the Deane and Derby neighbourhoods of Bolton to obtain interest in producing a story book. The story book project targeted unemployed people, providing them with short term employment to elicit personal stories from local communities using PA methods. This was done with the aim of giving them the confidence and experience to enter the mainstream labour market. Consultation was done with a diverse range of residents including people who described themselves as Russian, Armenian, Iranian, Pakistani, Hindu, Muslim and White British. After gaining interest from a number of residents from diverse cultural backgrounds, BMA applied for funding and were successful in their bids to provide training to develop their skills in the use of PA tools and provide them with short term employment.

Twenty four residents participated in a full week's training followed by two hour weekly sessions over six weeks. The training programme focused on consultation and participation including definitions, good practice and methods. Participants practised PA techniques on each other and during placements at local community venues.

On completion of the course, twenty two participants were interviewed to undertake six hours paid work a week to obtain the stories. Participants were split into small groups of 2-3 which enabled the more confident to support the less confident. The group prepared lists of people including neighbours, community groups and



venues they could contact. They then set about making appointments and collating stories using the PA tools they had learned. Participants would come back to weekly drop-ins where they would look together at the stories collated, discuss if follow-up visits were needed, and share skills and offer encouragement to each other. Many participants collecting the stories were multi/bilingual which helped them to engage with the diverse communities and 'story tellers' they met. As story collectors were recruited from the local community, residents felt comfortable telling their stories. One of the participants said, **"At the time we were mums with pushchairs so people opened up to us – they were comfortable with us."**

After many months of editing, the project received funding from the Bolton Vision Partnership (LSP) to publish the book. The Meet the Family... story book containing 50 true stories from diverse grassroots communities was published in 2006 and a launch event followed. 5000 copies were distributed to participants, local people, community groups, schools and organisations. After the project ended, reading and discussion groups were set up where participants continued to meet to read out some of the stories. This helped to develop confidence in public speaking and expressing words and voice tone. This later formed the basis for two monologues which were re-enacted by participants.

The story collectors spoke about the increased confidence they had gained through being involved in the project and the skills they developed through the PA training. **“I was not confident at the beginning, but the project made a big impact on my life. I was scared of writing something wrong but the tools gave us confidence.”** The project enabled participants to meet people from different cultures, make new friends and learn from each other. One of the story tellers explained of his difficulty engaging with the project initially and his determination to overcome language barriers: **“I had just a few words but if I wanted to communicate, I needed to be involved with people.”**

The diversity of all participants was highlighted as a key factor in the project's success. The project trainer spoke about how prejudices were broken down through enabling different cultures and communities to meet and learn about personal experiences. One of the key benefits of the project has been the impact on the individual careers of those involved. Many participants progressed into other volunteering roles, some setting up their own community groups, **“It gave me a flavour for volunteering.”** Some participants became involved in projects at the local college by becoming Community Learning Ambassadors encouraging local people to get back into learning, one receiving an Adult Learners Award, **“We are good role models for the rest of the community – we encourage others.”** A number of participants have moved into paid employment, some becoming Community Engagement Workers with Bolton Community Network.

The representative from the Vision Partnership (LSP) felt there was a strong link between the project and the Councils Cohesion Strategy ‘A Strong and Confident Bolton.’ The project complemented other cohesion work being carried

out in Bolton at the time, particularly amongst the faith groups. One of the objectives for the Council was to encourage residents to become more active in their communities through capacity building and providing opportunities for people to have a voice. The Partnership felt the PA model was the right model to enable this to happen and supported the project by providing funding for the book to be published.

The book continues to be used – Churches Together have used it as a training tool with their congregations. The Equality and Participation Co-ordinator from Bolton CVS felt it had strengthened partnerships between organisations and community groups. Both officers involved with the Vision Partnership felt the project had created opportunities for dialogue in tackling cohesion issues and stressed that **‘problems arise where there’s no talking – talking gets rid of the mystery’**. It was felt that the project has been influential in the development of other community cohesion initiatives in Bolton

Participants

Bolton Multicultural Arts, local residents, Bolton Community College, Bolton Vision Partnership and sub groups: Community Cohesion and Stronger Communities Group, Bolton CVS.

Outcomes

- Increased awareness of different cultures and personal experiences helping to alleviate ignorance and promote cohesion.
- PA training provided to 24 participants from Neighbourhood Renewal areas. A number have since moved into paid employment or voluntary work.
- Material from the book was explored to create the foundations of monologues that could be used in conjunction with a devised workshop on diversity to take out to schools.
- Increased participant confidence in having a voice in the community.
- Organisations are using the book as a learning resource with different groups and communities to explore issues and raise awareness of different cultures.

Key lessons learned

- Flexibility is needed to accommodate different needs of participants and any extensions to projects.
- Working together in groups is a good way of drawing on strengths and sharing skills and ideas.
- By getting involved in local activities, you can become a role model for your community.
- Informal methods are a good way to make participants feel comfortable – not all training needs to be formal.
- The terms ‘cultural and multicultural’ **“have vast meanings”** and encompass human experience and identity.
- Ensure all contact details are kept so that stories are not lost.
- The project would have benefited from a half/full-time co-ordinator during the life of the project as lots of voluntary time was spent completing the project.
- Communities have lots of skills and experience to offer and everyone’s voice is valid.

‘It changed my life – I’d done nothing before in the community field, I loved it, I’ve got a passion for working with the community.’

Contact

The book can be purchased from Sweetens Book Shop, Bolton Tel: 01204 528457.

If you are interested in finding out more about the project please contact:
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Working in partnership to narrow the gap in health inequalities

Community Engagement in Health: Bolton CVS and NHS Bolton

NHS Bolton identified a lack of successful community engagement in neighbourhood renewal areas and was keen to find ways of getting important health messages into hard to reach communities. Bolton CVS already had established relationships with many minority groups through engagement with its projects. A partnership between NHS Bolton and Bolton CVS through its Community Network project was formed to tackle the health issues struggling to be addressed. Community Engagement Workers were trained to take important health messages out into the community and used innovative and interactive methods to engage with people. As a result of the programme, the local community are more informed about health issues and the services available to them and more likely to attend screening appointments.

Key outcomes

- ✓ Increase in women from BME communities attending cervical screening appointments.
- ✓ Upsy Downsy game delivered to over 1150 people who have all pledged to take on a new habit to improve mental health and wellbeing.
- ✓ Over 1000 people taught to self check for testicular and breast cancer.
- ✓ Improved knowledge of local health services available.

Working in partnership to narrow the gap in health inequalities

Community Engagement in Health: Bolton CVS and NHS Bolton

Location

Bolton Community Network is managed by Bolton CVS, a third sector organisation offering support, training and guidance to the voluntary and community sector of Bolton. Bolton Community Network aims to empower local people to have their voices heard and works across the borough offering support and networking opportunities to local people, especially those living in the eleven identified areas of multiple deprivation. Statistics reveal stark health inequalities with a 15 year gap in life expectancy between the most deprived and most affluent areas of Bolton.

Challenges and Opportunities

- High levels of health inequality between the most affluent and most deprived areas of Bolton.
- NHS Bolton wanted to improve equity in uptake of health promotion programmes and services, e.g., prevention, screening and treatment services.
- Lack of successful grassroots community engagement by health professionals – tried and tested methods were not working.
- Low capacity for health professionals to provide outreach services.
- NHS Bolton had lack of established links into local communities that went beyond local GP surgeries.
- Language barriers make spreading health messages difficult.

Activity

Before the Health Engagement Programme, NHS Bolton struggled to engage with hard to reach communities, particularly those from BME communities. Traditional methods like leaflets and posters inviting people to awareness-raising sessions had been tried by health professionals but



take-up had been low. NHS Bolton recognised they needed to develop a better understanding of these communities through community engagement so that services could be better designed to meet their needs. Bolton Community Network had already built up strong networks with local people, particularly in the Neighbourhood Renewal areas and had previously used creative and participatory approaches in order to engage and involve people in decision-making. It seemed a good opportunity to combine the intelligence gathered by NHS Bolton on health inequalities and priorities with the community engagement skills and knowledge of Bolton Community Network. A formal service level agreement was developed between the two organisations for a 3 year plan of action to narrow the gap around health inequalities in Bolton.

The main aim of the project was to educate people about specific health conditions and so improve their chances of identifying signs and symptoms early. Whilst working across a broad range of health issues, priority was placed on a number of key areas: uptake of cervical and bowel cancer screening; self-checking for testicular, prostate, breast and skin cancer; improved mental health and wellbeing and educating on the risks of shisha smoking amongst the BME community. Community Engagement Workers were employed by Bolton

Community Network to take health messages out into the community using interactive projects developed with expert advice and training of project leads from NHS Bolton. Many of the engagement workers were from BME communities themselves so had language skills and a cultural understanding of the diverse communities they worked in.

Mapping exercises were carried out using existing data to identify relevant groups who fit the criteria for each project. The engagement workers then contacted the groups to introduce the projects and offer visits alongside delivering workshops at events and existing network meetings and forums.

Projects used interactive games and the use of 'bio-like' models with hidden lumps - games like 'Bowel Bingo', 'Road to Cervical Screening' and 'Open Wide' were developed to highlight health issues in a fun, participative way. 'Upsy Downsy' a workshop to promote positive mental health was developed using a board game based on Snakes and Ladders. It explores how to make good choices over bad choices and 'think happy habits'. Statement cards are used to demonstrate 'upsy' habits like having alcohol free nights each week, moving players up the ladder on the board. 'Downsy' habits like ignoring problems and closing the door to new opportunities takes the player down the snakes on the board. After participating in the game, participants make

pledges to take on a new good habit and are contacted a few weeks later with a gentle reminder and support information about local classes and organisations they may find useful.

All projects were developed with specific audiences in mind and focus groups from the local community were used to pilot ideas to ensure workshops were accessible and relevant. If problems were identified, NHS leads were consulted and information changed or developed to overcome the specific barrier identified. Bolton Community Network evaluated the impact of workshops by collecting before and after learning from individual participants who were then encouraged to spread their learning to families, friends and the wider community.

Since the start of the projects, NHS Bolton has seen an increase in the numbers of women from the target BME community area attending cervical screening appointments. This was a sensitive issue to tackle with particular concerns expressed by women around confidentiality. The engagement workers supported women to talk about the journey from getting the letter inviting them to attend for a screening appointment, options for where the screening could be done, how they would get there and where results could be sent to. Sarah Lever the Project Co-ordinator said **“Many women were unaware that they didn’t have to go to their GP, they didn’t have to have the results sent home – we were giving people solutions to barriers.”** The project allowed NHS Bolton to look at some of the reasons why women fail to make appointments or keep them, to take cultural issues into account when offering screening appointments and improve their service.

Over 1000 people have been taught to self check for testicular and breast cancer and over 1150 people have pledged to take on a new habit to improve mental health and wellbeing. Members of the BME community are also reporting that they have either cut down or stopped using shisha as a result of their learning from the project.

Engagement workers believed the use of interactive games had been effective in promoting serious health messages at grassroots level in a way that could not be achieved by leaflets or letters. **“It’s not about someone saying ‘do this!’”** Engagement workers also felt that the workshops were a good way of getting to know groups and gaining a better understanding of their other needs. Workers were then able to signpost to other sources of support.

The response to projects from consultants and other health professionals has been positive,

particularly Bowel Bingo which is due to be rolled out across Greater Manchester. An NHS Bolton officer spoke of how she now delivers the game herself at events outside of Bolton. A community group member felt that members of her group had benefited from participating in Upsy Downsy. One woman had lost 48lbs since doing the game and three had given up smoking as a result of their pledges. The Project Co-ordinator spoke about the trust that had developed between the engagement workers and local community groups and the different way they are viewed to health professionals. The engagement workers **“are not seen as an authority on health – people may have been more reserved if we’d had NHS badges on.”**

A senior NHS Bolton officer spoke about how invaluable the evidence provided by Bolton Community Network had been in supporting the development and design of health awareness projects and in the training of health professionals. Engagement workers have a mix of language skills and understand how to engage with different groups in a creative way.

She valued the community engagement approach and recognised that there was **“nobody in the PCT who could do that as part of their role.”**

Participants

Bolton Community Network staff, NHS Bolton officers, residents, local community groups.

Outcomes

- NHS Bolton has seen an increase in women from BME communities attending cervical screening appointments.
- Upsy Downsy game delivered to over 1150 people who have all pledged to take on a new habit to improve mental health and wellbeing.
- Over 1000 people taught to self check for testicular and breast cancer using ‘biolike’ models with hidden lumps.
- Members of BME communities are reporting that they have either cut down or stopped using shisha.
- Improved knowledge of local health services available.
- Increased partnership working to deliver NHS Bolton health priorities.

Key lessons learned

- Involve people in the process of developing new projects – identify the barriers and don’t assume you know what will work.
- Participative approaches work – you remember 10% of what you see, 20% of what you hear and 90% of what you are involved in.
- Ensure there are good systems for tracking and evaluating projects.
- There needs to be equality, respect and open communication between partners in order to be truly collaborative.
- There needs to be a clear understanding of where the project fits into the wider picture.

‘It made me think... self-awareness came through playing games and sharing experiences.’

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Working with residents to improve neighbourhoods

Charlestown and Lower Kersal Neighbourhood Working: Charlestown and Lower Kersal NDC

Residents in the Charlestown and Lower Kersal (CHALK) areas of Salford were unhappy about the levels of crime in their areas, the quality of the local environment and lack of maintenance of private landlord properties. CHALK New Deal for Communities (NDC) regeneration programme, identified that there was a strong community spirit and residents wanted to see change for the better. Intensive Neighbourhood Management Planning (INMP) was a tool used to enable local communities and service providers to work together to improve service delivery in the area and improve the quality of life for local residents. Consultation with local residents took place and community workers engaged with local community groups and supported new ones to set up. A resident friendly toolkit was developed in order to signpost people to appropriate support agencies and two resident-led Forums were set up to raise local issues with agencies. The household survey 2002 found that 49% of people surveyed were satisfied with their area as a place to live, whereas in 2010, this rose to 71%.

Key outcomes

- ✓ **Satisfaction with the area as a place to live has increased by 25% (the highest of all 39 NDC areas).**
- ✓ **Engagement with residents improved and increase in community-led initiatives and new community groups.**
- ✓ **Improvements in the local environment and cleaner, greener open spaces.**
- ✓ **Residents more aware of how and who to report problems to through use of the resident-friendly Toolkit.**

Working with residents to improve neighbourhoods

Charlestown and Lower Kersal Neighbourhood Working: Charlestown and Lower Kersal NDC

Location

NDC was a key regeneration programme in the previous Government's strategy to tackle multiple deprivation in the most deprived neighbourhoods in the country. It aimed to bridge the gap between these neighbourhoods and the rest of England. As part of the bid for NDC funding, the communities of Charlestown and Lower Kersal worked alongside Salford City Council to develop a ten year vision for the area: **"To make Lower Kersal and Charlestown a place where people want to live, by building a community and future that engages everyone."**

In 2001 the bid succeeded in attracting £53m in funding and work began on a 10 year plan based on key priorities for the area.

Challenges and Opportunities

- Concerns from residents about the level of crime in Charlestown and Lower Kersal – more than half of residents (57%) rated the area as unsafe.
- Increase in anti social behaviour due in part to the behaviour of students alongside that of younger people in the area who felt there was nothing else for them to do.
- Concerns from residents about the quality of the overall environment, particularly problems with litter, fly tipping, graffiti and general untidiness.
- NDC wanted to improve engagement with the increasing numbers of refugees and asylum seekers moving into the area who had difficulties in understanding systems due to language barriers.
- Older residents feeling increasingly isolated due to demolition of homes as part of the regeneration programme.
- Residents concerned about the level of maintenance of growing number of private landlord properties.

Activity

Intensive Neighbourhood Management Planning (INMP) has been a tool used by the NDC programme to engage with local residents and agencies so that issues of concern are addressed through the services provided. Seven areas within Charlestown and Lower Kersal were identified and consultation began with local residents through door-knocking exercises and attendance at events and residents meetings. Issues of concern were different in each area but commonly included: litter, vandalism, recycling bins, lack of grounds maintenance, noisy neighbours and youth nuisance. Once issues and priorities were agreed, an action plan for each area was compiled along with agreement by the project steering group on how issues would be tackled and by whom. Additional funding was identified from a variety of sources including East Salford Devolved Budget, Salix Homes, NDC and small grants raised by local residents.

A resident-friendly toolkit was developed to promote local services and signpost people to relevant organisations. Agencies including housing providers, Salford University, the Police and the council's Environmental Services and Anti Social Behaviour Teams were encouraged to support delivery of the action plans. East Salford Neighbourhood Management team also gradually became more involved, working alongside the NDC Team.

Each area has seen different interventions used including setting up of new community groups, alley gating, skip days, improved street lighting, improvements to green spaces and alleyways, landlord licensing and installation of road crossings.

A Community Development Worker worked closely with existing community groups and supported in the development of new groups. The Gemini Group, a resident-led group providing a

voice for older people was set up as a result of a door-knocking exercise which identified many isolated older people who lacked access to up to date information and were at risk of social and financial exclusion. NDC staff supported the group to develop and encouraged group members to attend NDC task group meetings in order to have their say in shaping future services.

Women of the World (WOW) began as a support group for refugee and asylum seeker women. NDC provided a range of development support to the group including access to interpreters, transport to and from events, and promoting and supporting activities. As the group developed in confidence, members wanted to take on more responsibility and NDC supported them to become a constituted group. Since then the group now has over fifty members from across Salford.

Two resident-led Community Forums have been set up enabling local residents, service providers and decision-makers to work together to discuss key local issues and improve service delivery. The Forums were developed to increase efficiency – agencies were being invited to a number of meetings and didn't have the capacity to attend them all. The Forums are run bi-monthly and are well supported by agencies. One officer said that they felt the Forums were a key part of the succession strategy enabling agencies to maintain contact with residents and **"find out what's happening on the ground."**

The area already had many active residents groups which raised their own funds and organised trips and activities. Members of these groups have become active in the East Salford Community Committee as well as attending East Salford Task Groups. Residents from one group have produced a short film about issues in their area and regularly distribute information leaflets on behalf of partner agencies.

Several residents and partner agencies spoke about the significant improvements to the area as a

result of the neighbourhood working. There has been an increase in the number of community groups undertaking a range of activities from sewing classes to gardening. Residents are more informed about where to go and who to speak to if they have concerns or problems. Before, there were often long periods of time between residents raising an issue and problems being dealt with. This led to frustration and disappointment and was highlighted as a reason why people didn't attend local meetings. Residents felt there was now more openness and agencies were more up front if there were difficulties in addressing problems. Agencies felt that community groups delivered strong benefits to residents particularly in tackling social isolation and mental health issues. They have brought people together to feel **"comfortable in the neighbourhood"** and had developed the skills and capacity of local people.

Participants

NDC Team, residents, local voluntary and community groups, Salix Homes, Irwell Valley Housing Association, Salford University, GM Police, Salford City Council officers, East Salford Neighbourhood Management Team.

Outcomes

- Improved satisfaction with the area as a place to live – overall increase of 25%, the highest of all 39 NDC areas.
- Improved environment and cleaner, greener open spaces.
- Reduction in vandalism, graffiti and damage to property.
- Reduction in abandoned vehicles and car crime.
- Residents more aware of how to report problems through use of the Toolkit.
- Residents have found shared issues and come together to form new community groups.
- Increased engagement with and activities for young people
- Bi-monthly Forums set up where residents and agencies come together to raise issues.
- Improved relationships and partnership working between partner agencies – partners are now more accountable.
- Increased numbers of residents influencing decisions.
- Residents have taken more ownership and are more prepared to lead in community initiatives.

Key lessons learned

- Involve all key stakeholders from the beginning – residents, agencies, elected members, politicians and Third Sector.
- Agencies need to help communities to believe in themselves.
- Work with mainstream services and focus on sustainability.
- Residents' points of view are important to ensure the right services are put in place.
- Agencies need to work together and communication is vital in order for partnerships to work.
- Don't give up, keep trying, be positive minded and let no barrier stop you – **"keep vocal until you get someone to listen to you."**
- Residents coming together with common interests have a bigger voice – go to meetings and find out what can be done.
- Tackle the negative points first – if tackled early, you can get residents on board.
- Reflecting on the journey travelled helps people to look back and see how far they have come, what they have achieved and celebrates success.



'Using a phased approach has been a positive way of making sure people are supported but letting go of apron strings as well.'

'Residents have embraced their neighbourhood again – they've taken ownership.'

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Reviving enthusiasm in a community house

Handforth Residents & Contour Housing: The Big Chin Rub Community Philosophy Project

Residents had been running the community house on their small estate in Handforth for several years, but had become burnt out. They were also concerned about a lack of things for young people to do in the neighbourhood, a lack of transport and social activities for the whole community. In July 2010, residents and a facilitator from Contour Housing organised a Big Chin Rub evening, where 15 people discussed what a good community could mean. The idea of community philosophy is to bring people together, use an approach where everyone can participate as equals to explore common ground, listen to each other, and see where this might lead. As a result, there has been revived interest from the estate in the community house. New groups have been set up, and there have been new community activities. This has helped to ensure the future of the community house. In total, just under 50 different groups across Contour Housing took part in the Big Chin Rub week, including residents' groups and groups of staff members.

Key outcomes

- ✓ Resident organisers running the community house feel their energy has been rejuvenated, after having been burnt out.
- ✓ New groups have been set up by volunteers who had not been involved before, including a children's club run by two parents.
- ✓ There have been new activities eg. a neighbours' lunch.
- ✓ Contour Housing have agreed to retain the community house for communal use.

Reviving enthusiasm in a community house

Handforth Residents and Contour Housing: The Big Chin Rub Community Philosophy Project

Location

Knowle Park is a small housing association estate of around 100 homes in a wealthy area of Cheshire called Handforth. It was originally a Manchester overspill estate that was taken over by Contour Housing, a social landlord. It is a quiet neighbourhood of semi-detached houses in cul-de-sacs, bounded by several areas of privately owned homes. Many of the homes had been purchased through Right to Buy, and the area is home to older residents, and some younger families. It was not a focus for any intensive work by the housing association who had previously had relatively little contact with groups on the estate.

Challenges and Opportunities

- The estate was clean, well managed, in an attractive location. However, there were few things for young people to do, including children of families living there, and grandchildren of older residents. There was a lack of social activities for the community.
- A long-established tenants and residents association had been running on the estate.
- One of the houses on the estate had been given over to community use by the housing association.
- Some resident volunteers had been running the community house for a few years and had run low on energy. When they took a step back, the house was still open, but had lots of scope to be used more often and for a wider range of activities.
- Contour Housing had a focus for intensive community development on its more disadvantaged priority neighbourhoods, but had initiated the community philosophy project as something that anyone could access.

Activity

The Community Investment team at Contour Housing initiated The Big Chin Rub across the whole of the housing association's properties, and its staff. A week of activities was planned to take place in July 2010. The Big Chin Rub is a community philosophy project. The idea is that a group of people get together for a couple of hours for one evening. They start with an open question, in this case, what does it mean to have a 'good' community? A trained facilitator then creates a discussion: **"It's just a really good way of getting people together and listening to each other. People come up with their own questions. There is a facilitator but no-one has all the answers. Everyone participates. A change of mind is seen as a strength not a weakness in a community of inquiry."** There were no targets from the association for the project, or prescribed outcomes, except for quality control over the process, but the approach does help people to: **"focus, and action plan."**

The facilitator asks: 'does it always have to be like that everywhere for everyone?' At the end, they ask 'what can we take from this to change things?' The facilitator said: **"people listen a bit more in these sessions than in other sorts of meetings."**

Before the project, Contour Housing had not had much contact with the residents' group on Knowle Park, who had **"got on and done their own thing."** When the housing was transferred to the housing association from Manchester City Council, there was some physical refurbishment. After that, things **"went quiet."** As the housing association also explained, larger estates also have a **"louder voice, so a place like this gets left out."**

When the invitation came from Contour, the Chair of the Knowle Park community house was keen to run the event. Residents felt that they needed to energise the group, and the wider



community as the community house had **"gone stale."** Over the last couple of years, some of the original organisers had taken a break after being burnt out. The house had not been used as much as it could have been, and had mostly been used for committee meetings rather than social events or activities for the wider community. Residents also wanted more activities for younger people. Parents were frustrated that there was nowhere for children to play football.

The residents organised the Big Chin Rub evening in July 2010. Groups who were organising the events were given an information pack by Contour Housing on the 10 stages to a philosophical Inquiry. This explained things like putting chairs in a circle, there was no need to take minutes like in a formal meeting, and the question would focus on what makes a good community.

The community house put on food and refreshments in the community house. 15 people turned up. People who had attended said they went to find out what it was all about. In Knowle Park the inquiry was focused on provision for

young people. Residents were not clear what they could legally do with young people, if they needed CRB checks, and if they could get access to a piece of waste land nearby for youth activities. They had previously tried to get advice on CRB checks but had received confused information.

There were lots of unexpected outcomes from the project. The residents' group is now working with the housing association to get funding to create a wildlife area on the waste land. They found out that they did not need CRB checks for some activities and were then able to set up new groups without volunteers being worried about the legal rules. There is revived interest from the estate in the community house, and the committee. Since the project, there has been a curry night, quiz evenings, and a neighbours' lunch with eight adults and nine children under a gazebo in the back garden of the community house. Two mothers who had not been involved in community activities before have now set up a children's after school/homework club which attracts children from the estate and also friends from the private housing. They have had computers donated for the homework club. Some men have set up a men's club. This has allowed the Chairperson of the group to **"step back"**, and let new people take over some of the organising, with her support. The community house **"brings people together, it's a core to work out from, a vital vein in the community."** People made new friends and got to know more people on the estate. They liked the company and chatting.

The project has strengthened links with a residents group called Mermaid Youth Drop-in, based on Spath Lane estate as their children go to the same schools as Knowle Park. Mermaid Youth feels the community facilities on their estate also have scope for increased usage, and have been **"well impressed by what they do here, and we want to get more involved with Knowle Park."** The two groups are now setting up a residents' group for the whole of Handforth. The Knowle Park group now has plans to take the gazebo out onto small pieces of land in the area on Sundays to attract other residents.

Another outcome is that the future of the community house has been guaranteed. Before the project, the association was considering taking the house back to rent out, as there is a new facility being built nearby, and the house on Knowle Park was not being fully used. Now they will keep the house for community use. The association said that

they were **"impressed by the commitment of the people here."** They were pleased that residents were continuing to lead the activities: **"we can't focus as much as we'd like on a small estate, so we're very pleased with the results."**

The Chair of the residents' group said that **"without the project: we might have decided to give up the community house because of the pressure to put it back into stock."** Residents said: **"I feel part of a community and with friends."**

Knowle Park was just one group out of a total of 48 who participated in The Big Chin Rub, including residents' groups, community groups, schools, and two groups of Contour staff members. Since the 2010 events, the community team has been approached by the manager of the Contour Contact centre for team building and has used the technique in some partnership working in Hattersley. Other groups have developed community projects, e.g. Wii fit for older people in a sheltered block. Contour are repeating the project in 2011, and would like to link it to other community events e.g. the Big Lunch. The costs are mostly staff and facilitator time. Residents are now being trained to be facilitators for next time.

Participants

Contour Housing, residents and their families from Knowle Park and surrounding areas, the residents group running the community house, the Mermaids group from Spath Lane.

Outcomes

- Resident organisers running the community house feel their energy has been rejuvenated, after having been burnt out.
- The group are developing new projects e.g. wildlife area on a piece of waste land.
- Volunteers felt more confident to do activities and understand the legislation better e.g. CRB checks.
- New groups have been set up by volunteers who had not been involved before, including a children's after school/homework club run by two parents and a men's club.
- There have been new activities e.g. a curry night, quiz evenings, and a neighbours' lunch.
- There are stronger links to other residents' and youth groups.
- Contour Housing have agreed to retain the community house for communal use.

Key lessons learned

- Contour Housing and the Knowle Park residents have successfully used a creative and unusual approach to engagement.
- Community philosophy was under-estimated at the beginning, but it turned out to be a very powerful tool for community development.
- The tool is not appropriate for every situation, e.g. consultation on roof repairs might need a more conventional approach.
- People matter and people care.
- Meeting and talking to people from other parts of the estate is important.
- Next time a more comprehensive evaluation could be done.

"There was a positive feeling on the night – we can do more and we can push – why can't we tell people to turn their music down, why can't we find out about CRB checks ourselves."

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Working with residents to create a community park

Hawthorne Park: Wyre Borough Council and the Hawthorne Park Trust

Wyre Borough Council worked in partnership with Hawthorne Park Trust to develop an under-used playing field into a vibrant community park. What began as a small idea fuelled by the knowledge there was a real lack of recreational and play facilities, grew into a proposal to transform the open space into a park that residents of all ages could enjoy.

Key outcomes

- ✓ Hawthorne Park now jointly managed by Hawthorne Park Trust and Wyre Borough Council with land transferred to the Trust on a 50 year lease.
- ✓ Increased participation by local residents in managing community assets.
- ✓ Improved access to play provision and the natural environment.
- ✓ Increased numbers of residents volunteering and improved volunteer opportunities.
- ✓ The creation of a new open space where sports and recreational activities can happen.

Working with residents to create a community park

Hawthorne Park: Wyre Borough Council and Hawthorne Park Trust

Location

Wyre Borough Council is a local authority based in Poulton Le Fylde, Lancashire. The authority covers an area of 283.8sq km and has an estimated population of 110,000. The majority of Wyre's population is concentrated in the urban towns of Fleetwood, Thornton-Cleveleys and Poulton-le-Fylde, accounting for 72.2% of Wyre's total population. The Borough is made up of diverse communities, who pride themselves on their independence and distinctiveness.

In 2004 Wyre Borough Council entered into a ground breaking venture with concerned residents from the Thornton Community to redevelop Hawthorne Park – a 'disused and run down open space,' into a much needed play and exercise space with equipment for the young people of Thornton. The project is guided by the principles adopted by the local strategic partnership **"we are stronger together."**

Challenges and opportunities

- Lack of open space for children to play or for people to walk their dogs.
- Poor existing recreational areas not suitable for regular use by children.
- An increasing problem with anti social behaviour due to lack of activities to occupy young people.
- Growth in new housing developments and more young families moving into the area resulting in a growing pressure to ensure that open spaces were used more effectively for the benefit of the whole community
- Thornton Action Group, a residents group formed in 2001, identified there was a lack of amenities and wanted to do something about play space.

Activity

In 2004, at an away day planned with residents to invite ideas for the development of open spaces, Hawthorne Park was identified as a 'quick win' – an 'open space' suitable for development and was adopted by Wyre Strategic Partnership as a 6 month project. At this stage, Hawthorne Park was described by participants as an **"ill drained field... poor playing equipment... glass and dog poo everywhere... a marshland... quiet in the daytime but some trouble in the evenings because kids had nothing to do..."** One volunteer described it as having an **"air of not being valued by anybody."**

Initially, the focus was primarily on the development of the play area. But it soon became apparent that the rest of the park and field could not be ignored and needed to be incorporated into development plans.

Members of the Thornton Action Group worked with Council officers and the LSP engaging residents in having their say about the future of the park. Consultation events were held to gain views of residents and young people on how best to improve Hawthorne Park in order to address concerns and increase activities for young people. The evidence from consultations was drawn up into a master plan.

After the consultations, the Action Group were left with a challenge: the land belonged to the council but the Council had no money to develop the proposals – a potential way forward was for the Action Group to set up as a Trust and apply for its own funds to develop the project. The Hawthorne Park Trust was formed in 2007 and the park ownership was transferred to the Trust on a 50 year lease from the Council. The Council assisted the Trust throughout the process by providing legal advice, accounting support, health and safety, planning and funding guidance.

Over a three year period, the Trust successfully applied for funding for the three phases of the

project. Funding came from a range of sources including Wyre Borough Council, Lancashire Environmental Fund, Wyre Strategic Partnership, Wyre Housing, Community Safety Partnership, Big Lottery and other smaller funders using the master plan as the basis for applications. By 2010 all three phases were complete. The park now has lawns and paths, a wild life area, play equipment for younger and older children and park lighting. Tree and shrub planting was undertaken by the Council and volunteers from the Council's Coast and Countryside Rangers and volunteer groups. The main objective for 2011 is to achieve the Green Flag Award for the park.

Council officers and trustees described the strong relationship that had built between the Council and the Hawthorne Park Trust. Prior to the project, the park was a low priority for the Council who also had very little involvement with the third sector. There was a strong feeling that the project could not have happened without the partnership that developed. A Trustee said **"Developing a relationship with the LSP was the catalyst in making the project happen and a window into who does what was the most important part of the process."** By working in partnership, the Trust has been able to inform the Council about community aspirations and were instrumental in getting local support for the project. Council officers saw their role as enablers in the process – supporting the Trust to develop the capacity to deliver the project by providing knowledge and skills including legal, planning, accounting and environmental support along with assistance with funding bids.

A youth leader felt that young people's participation in the consultation process had been central to the projects success. In the past, where young people's ideas were not used or not listened to, there was little ownership and equipment and facilities were often vandalised. Having a voice has been important as young people can see their

influence having an effect. One of the Councillors also saw the link between the park development and young people as being one of the keys to its success. The area has seen a decrease in anti social behaviour and young people are more involved in community activity.

Officers, Trustees and residents all reported an increased use of the park by all ages within the community. The park is now also used to host events and two recent Fun Days were attended by more than 800 people. One resident described how the park **“has brought people’s passion for the area back together.”** A senior officer felt there was an increased sense of pride in having better facilities and a new ‘venue’ has been created where positive activities and sport can be held.

The development of the park has led to an increase in volunteering and there are now a number of opportunities available including tree and shrub planting, litter picking and making bat and bird boxes. Environmental benefits were reported – the development has seen an increase in wildlife and biodiversity providing the opportunity for the community to enjoy the natural environment. Residents and volunteers felt that getting the community involved in the park activities and maintenance increased the feeling of ownership and as a result, the community tended to look after it.

Evidence shows that problems are reported more quickly and vandalism has been reduced. This has meant a reduction in the time needed on site to carry out repairs and has freed up Council workers time to be spent on other things.

Council officers felt that the creation of the Trust and the partnership with the Council had been one of the biggest achievements in the process. One officer commented : **“Hats off to the Trust for taking on that level of responsibility. They are now a very positive force willing to do things themselves, willing to take on responsibility and work with the Council.”**

Another officer explained: **“The model has been a shining example of how things can be done. The Trust has jumped through every single hurdle and overcome everything they’ve had to.”**

At a strategic level, it was felt that the project met all the Council objectives particularly in relation to increased community involvement, volunteering and improved community safety. One officer commented: **“The community have had aspirations that they have sold to the Council – the Trust has the vision and we have guided and**

offered support – we both understand the common goals.”

The Development Manager of the LSP said **“trustees were instrumental in ensuring the project went ahead and should be credited with getting all the statutory partners on board so quickly. Through partnership working, the Council has seen there are people with knowledge and skills in the local community and this is key to encouraging community involvement. The aim is to showcase the work of the park and the group of people who, through huge endeavour, have achieved what they wanted.”** He described it as an **“inspirational journey.”**

Participants

Wyre Borough Council officers and elected members, Hawthorne Park Trust, Wyre Strategic Partnership, Wyre Youth Service, residents, young people, volunteers, Friends of Hawthorne Park, Police Service.

Outcomes

- Hawthorne Park now jointly managed by Hawthorne Park Trust and Wyre Borough Council with land transferred to the Trust on a 50 year lease.
- Improved access to play provision for age ranges up to 16 years (totalling 1762 young people from the two wards).
- Increased awareness of and access to the natural environment.
- Increased numbers of people of all ages visiting the park.
- Reduction in anti-social behaviour and vandalism.
- Increase in biodiversity habitats.
- Improved opportunities for volunteering and increase in volunteers.
- The creation of a new open space where sporting and recreational activities can happen.
- Awarded the Lancashire Environmental Fund ‘Best Practice Open Spaces Project 2009’ in recognition of **“the project’s improvements to the local environment and the community benefits of the improved green space.”**
- The park is managed following the principles of the green flag award, the national standard for parks and open spaces and will be entered for judging against the award criteria in 2011.

Key lessons learned

- Involve the community right from the beginning - you can’t impose decisions.
- The need for partnership work and importance of building relationships with the community.
- The need for on-going partnership working even when the project is complete.
- Involvement of young people in a meaningful way – not just about meeting targets.
- Utilise the skills and knowledge in the community.
- Trust is needed to ensure effective partnership working.
- The need for shared goals and objectives from the beginning.
- Don’t assume any community group can form a trust – it depends on the dynamics and experience within the group.
- Be aware of legal implications of becoming a Trust/Trustee
- The need to think strategically about the skills of trustees in order to manage the diverse range of tasks associated with managing an open space.

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Encouraging young people to explore new activities and unlock their full potential

Dreamscheme South: Reassurance Plus Blackpool Council

Reassurance Plus recognised a need for structured and diversionary activities for young people living in the Bloomfield ward in central Blackpool, particularly those at risk of becoming involved in crime and anti social behaviour. Reassurance Plus worked with community members and key partners to develop a programme called Dreamscheme. This enabled young people to carry out community-based projects in return for points that could be exchanged for vouchers or trips of their choice. The volunteer-led Dreamscheme meets weekly offering a wide range of activities to its members. Young people have been involved in a range of exciting community projects and have built strong relationships with other agencies. Since the launch of the project, youth issues are no longer the main cause of concern for residents and opportunities for volunteers to get involved in their community have increased.

Key outcomes

- ✓ **Increased involvement by young people in community activities.**
- ✓ **Improved relationships between young people, residents and agencies**
- ✓ **New skills have been gained by volunteers to manage community groups and work with young people.**
- ✓ **Volunteers have widened their participation in other local community initiatives.**

Encouraging young people to explore new activities and unlock their full potential

Dreamscheme South: Reassurance Plus Blackpool Council

Location

Bloomfield ward in central Blackpool is an area of high deprivation suffering high levels of unemployment and poor levels of educational attainment. The area has very little green space or free activity provision for young people. A number of young people were identified by Reassurance Plus partners, particularly the Police and Fire Service as being on the verge of becoming involved in crime and disorder and anti social behaviour, and Reassurance Plus were keen to target those who were most vulnerable. Public meetings of Reassurance Plus also identified concerns about youth nuisance in the area and the community consistently prioritised youth as one of their top three concerns.

Challenges and Opportunities

- Residents concerns about youth nuisance, crime and anti social behaviour.
- Lack of safe recreational space resulting in young people playing in the street.
- Poor levels of educational attainment.
- Lack of confidence in service providers, such as Council and Police.
- There were few opportunities for residents and young people to engage with service providers and influence decision-making in the area.
- The poor environment and lack of opportunities had resulted in a community with **“negative self image.”**

Activity

In Summer 2006 the quality of life of residents on one particular street within Bloomfield ward, was adversely affected by the behaviour of the occupants of one specific property. The anti-social behaviour of the children living at the property and their friends gathering in this small residential



street resulted in numerous reports of graffiti, noise nuisance, verbal abuse, criminal damage and threatening behaviour. Following on from successfully challenging this behaviour and helping to secure the eviction of the tenants, committed residents felt empowered to take matters a step further.

Recognising there was a need for structured and diversionary activities for young people in the area, the Reassurance Plus Team (consisting of Council, Police and Fire officers) worked with community members and key partners to develop a structured activities programme to provide diversionary activities for young people whilst, at the same time, giving something back to the community in which they live. Residents were keen to explore the idea of setting up a Dreamscheme after researching the success of the model in areas similar to theirs. Dreamscheme is based on a simple concept of work, points, and trips. Young people are enabled to carry out community-based projects, for which they earn points. These points can be exchanged for vouchers, trips or activities of their choice.

After agreeing the project at Reassurance Plus public meetings, the Dreamscheme South pilot was officially set up in March 2007 with funding of £5000 from Wyre Housing Association (part of the

Regenda Group). Wyre Housing had used Dreamscheme on their estates before and it was seen as a successful tried and tested model for engaging with young people. The funding was used for set-up costs, training of volunteers, purchasing equipment and securing a venue. The Reassurance Plus Team recruited six volunteers through theme groups and public meetings and training was delivered by Blackpool Youth Service. Volunteers received training on a number of key topics including Child Protection, First Aid and Health and Safety. Dreamscheme was aimed at 8-14 year olds as there was very little provision in the area for this age group at the time. It was also hoped that by targeting the younger age group, it would prevent them being influenced by older young people.

Dreamscheme was advertised locally through newsletters and flyers and a number of organisations came on board to support the project with the majority of referrals coming from local schools. Other agencies and partners including the Family Information Service were also proactive in identifying and referring vulnerable families and young people to the Dreamscheme.

An initial group of young people identified as at risk of causing anti social behaviour participated in the pilot. Young people were supported to create

codes of conduct and set their own rules to encourage responsibility for behaviour at sessions. Volunteers and young people also worked together to design the Dreamscheme logo which was subsequently used on T-shirts and gave the group its own identity.

Dreamscheme meets weekly for two hours and young people enjoy a range of activities including sports, games, arts and crafts and cooking. Members also receive a healthy light meal cooked by volunteers as part of the session. In order to support volunteers to develop their skills further, additional funding was secured from Reassurance Plus to employ a part-time worker from Barnardos to help in the delivery of sessions and take overall responsibility for safeguarding and health and safety.

Members of Dreamscheme have been involved in a number of events and activities. The 'Four Wards Lighting project' was part of a two year regeneration art project supported by Blackpool Illuminations Department and resulted in a grand finale community dance performance entitled 'Glow with the Flow'. Young people were delighted to be involved in this exciting project which featured five community dance groups performing routines in giant illuminated pods. The project proved an effective way of bringing different generations together, giving the young people the chance to mix with older people from a local dance group.

Dreamscheme members were involved in 'Bloomfield Talks', a year long oral history project commissioned by Blackpool Arts Service. The project focused on the experiences of people with connections to 4 different areas of Blackpool. Dreamscheme members and volunteers were involved in interviewing members of the community, documenting conversations with writing, pictures and audio recordings and helping to create an archive about ordinary people's lives. The archive is available online and has been published as a book which was given to 5000 households in the area.

Dreamscheme has developed and grown and now operates independently of the local authority as a formally constituted community group with its own management committee. Volunteers from Dreamscheme believed **"we wouldn't have got where we are without Reassurance Plus,"** and that the links with the Fire Service and Police had been essential in ensuring the success of the project. The group has experienced some difficulties in retaining volunteers, mainly due to personal

commitments. However, the remaining volunteers who have been involved from the start are actively engaged in encouraging new volunteers. They are also working closely with Blackpool CVS to promote opportunities within the group. They feel they are in a good position to support new volunteers and have skills and learning they are able to pass on to others because **"we've been there from day one."** In 2008, Dreamscheme successfully bid for £30,000 from Big Lottery's Fair Share Fund which ensures sustainability of the project until 2012.

Volunteers felt the Dreamscheme was a good model and that young people were more willing to participate when a points system was used to reward good behaviour. They had seen a change in attitudes **"young people know there are boundaries, they respect other people."** The Police have reported a reduction in anti social behaviour in the area and have been proactive in developing relationships with the young people involved in Dreamscheme. **"There were some bad relationships with police, but now young people speak to the police, play football with them. The PCSO's know the young people by name."** One of the councillors for the area felt involving the community in problem solving was essential to the success of local projects, helping the community **"feel part of the solution, not the problem."**

Participants

Reassurance Plus officers, Dreamscheme volunteers, residents and young people, Police, Fire Service, Environmental Team, Blackpool Youth Service, Revoe School, elected members, Barnardos, Wyre Housing, Revoe First Steps Centre, Blackpool Council.

Outcomes

- Dreamscheme provides weekly volunteer-led sessions to over thirty 8-14 year olds.
- Complaints about youth nuisance have decreased.
- Increased involvement by young people in community activities.
- Improved relationships between young people, residents and agencies.
- Increased skills of volunteers to manage community groups.
- Volunteers have widened their participation in other community activities.

Key lessons learned

- Volunteers need support to develop the necessary skills to manage community projects, e.g. legal and financial procedures.
- A project like this needs a dedicated worker or key person from the community that people can go to if they have a problem.
- Volunteers from the community can often achieve more than paid officers – they are more likely to have the trust of residents, are not as bound to targets and can offer more flexibility.
- Involve young people – they can become leaders and role models to others.
- Working in partnership achieves results.

'The biggest achievement is being able to provide something for young people who wouldn't normally get those opportunities, delivered by people in the neighbourhood.'

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Improving access to services in rural parts of Ribble Valley

The Healthy Valley Project: Ribble Valley Strategic Partnership

Ribble Valley Strategic Partnership identified inequalities in access to services in isolated areas of the borough. The need was confirmed by a profile undertaken by the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Team and through a needs survey with residents. The Healthy Valley project began with the aim of bringing key organisations together to deliver their services in partnership and encourage the development of community projects in the village centres. As a result of the Healthy Valley project there has been an increase in outreach services to villages, better use of existing facilities and an increase in the number of community-run initiatives.

Key outcomes

- ✓ **Increased numbers of residents engaged with community activities.**
- ✓ **Partner agencies working more closely together to identify gaps and reduce duplication of services.**
- ✓ **Improved access to local agency support through the provision of outreach services in the villages.**
- ✓ **Increased use of facilities by the community.**

Improving access to services in rural parts of Ribble Valley

The Healthy Valley Project: Ribble Valley Strategic Partnership

Location

Ribble Valley is a predominantly rural area in Lancashire with a dispersed population and a higher proportion of people aged 50+ than the national average. The population is around 58,300 spread over 585 square kilometres with 65% of Ribble Valley residents living in a rural location. Although often viewed as an affluent area, the Ribble Valley is faced with a number of key issues, particularly an ageing population, rural isolation, poor access to services and unmeasured pockets of deprivation.

Challenges and opportunities

- An ageing indigenous population many of whom are **“asset rich, cash poor.”**
- Higher than average percentage of carers providing unpaid care to family members or neighbours due to a long-term physical or mental disability.
- Many residents experience isolation due to lack of support networks.
- A gap in provision for young people leading to low levels of anti social behaviour.
- Loss of basic amenities for all but a few villages and under-use of existing village halls.
- Poor transport links connecting isolated villages to main shopping centres and community facilities.
- Limited capacity to provide outreach support and community development at grassroots level.

Activity

In order to tackle some of the problems of rural isolation and access to services, the ‘Healthy Valley’ project was initiated by Ribble Valley Borough Council (RVBC) using the Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) model. The aims were to build on the assets existing within the villages, to



bring people together with all their gifts and combine resources to enable the community to help itself; to encourage agencies to work together and outreach their services in isolated areas by utilising community buildings like the village halls; and support community ventures and social enterprises working in the village halls.

To ensure that appropriate services were planned, an assessment of needs was done with support from the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) team (a combination of County and Primary Care Trust research resources). A profile of the demographics and future projections for the area was produced which confirmed the issues in the area relating to a growing older population that was **“asset rich, cash poor.”** As a result of the JSNA, target communities were identified and on-going consultation by the council and partner agencies began to ask residents in those communities what they needed to keep healthy and happy.

Partner agencies mapped their activities and co-ordinated their work in order to pool resources and improve access to services and help fund community activities. In each village, key members of the community were asked to help identify and support the groups and individuals in each village and become ‘village enablers.’ Meetings which were attended by up to 30 residents were held to promote the Healthy Valley project and emphasise the importance of village

assets, in particular the village halls. Each village was at a different level of maturity, nearly all had Parish Councils, some had village hall committees, some had organisers already volunteering and in some cases workers had to go and find people who were willing to take on the enabler role.

Funding was negotiated from East Lancs PCT, Ribble Valley Strategic Partnership and an allocation made from the Performance Reward Grant. In total, a budget of £300,000 was made available to support the project in the form of a grants scheme for the village halls and community activity.

Agencies came together to discuss how best they could outreach their services. After receiving funding from the council, the ‘Open House’ Roadshow was developed and now visits one village location per month. The Roadshows are open to the public and are attended by partner agencies – the focus being on consultation particularly in relation to health issues, to **“listen to the community to shape future services.”**

In addition to the Roadshows, the council and its partners also began to look at how it could bring information and services dealing with wider issues out to the villages. RVBC joined with Rossendale and Pendle Councils to support a bid made by Help Direct for £160,000 to the North West Improvement and Efficiency Partnership for the purchase and equipping of a mobile advice unit. After a successful bid was made, the Mobile Resource Unit, known locally as Stan the Van, came into operation staffed by Help Direct outreach workers and a council worker. The annual running costs for the resource are met by the district partner authorities and apportioned by level of usage.

The aim of the mobile resource unit is to provide more tailored advice and information on a range of issues including welfare advice and benefits and enables information from a number of agencies to be distributed.

A number of capital projects have also been funded including the refurbishment of village halls

to enable increased usage, improved accessibility to buildings, new play areas and safety lighting. Funding has also been made available for new community projects like a mother and toddler club, luncheon clubs and guided walks.

One resident said: **“There’s now more dialogue between villagers and the council. There is more emphasis on villagers deciding what they want. There is raised enthusiasm – we’ve got people coming we haven’t seen before – it’s provided opportunities to see what’s going on in the village.”**

There is now a group of five residents who work together to organise community activity. The group are trying to encourage more young people from the village to get involved by giving them responsibility for deciding on play equipment for the village play area and accompanying them on visits to other sites to gain ideas. The resident commented: **“We’ve got more youngsters coming that weren’t there before... we’re trying to get people in the villages involved in village activities.”**

A local councillor feels the village halls are being utilised more effectively and that the initial investment in the village halls has contributed to efficiencies through match funding. The halls are now to a better standard and attract more revenue through increased use. The councillor feels: **“The villages have moved on – there are now dance classes and mother and baby classes... people are re-energised and interested.”**

The Healthy Valley project has increased capacity of the community to deliver their own services and self help activities. The council has struggled in the past because economies of scale in the Ribble Valley have meant services have been expensive to deliver. A better way is for the council to respond to needs identified by the community. A council officer commented: **“this is better than parachuting people in... it’s about working towards building capacity – the more self-reliance you can build, the community get stronger.”**

A senior officer feels there have been significant changes in a number of the villages commenting: **“Ten years ago, the capacity for self help was poor. Since then one or two communities have gone a long way”**

There is increased partnership working and networking opportunities between agencies which have led to a reduction in the duplication of services and provided opportunities to identify gaps.

As a result of the Healthy Valley project, there are now 30-40 walk leaders, co-ordinated by a member of council staff. The network is

now growing and demand is now so high that capacity building is needed with volunteers in order for it to continue.

A senior officer feels that the Healthy Valley project has been good value for money. There could have been alternative ways to spend the money but he felt that: **“this would have resulted in one very happy community and lots of unhappy ones.”** The council needed to look at equity of services across the area and by doing small projects in each village; the project has achieved a lot.

Participants

Ribble Valley Borough Council officers and elected members, residents, Lancashire County Council, Pension Service, Jobcentre Plus, local credit unions, Community Fire Safety Teams, East Lancashire PCT, Crime Reduction Officers, PCSO’s, Warm Front, CAB, Ribble Valley CVS, Carers Link, Crossroads, Help Direct, Age Concern and local voluntary community organisations.

Outcomes

- Stan the Van mobile resource unit began in November 2010.
- A number of village halls, community buildings and play areas have been refurbished leading to an increased use by residents, community groups and local enterprises.
- Improved multi-agency working at drop-ins, Open House and Stan the Van providing more opportunities to support and consult with residents on health and social care issues.
- Increased collaboration between villages – villages are working together – learning from each other and sharing ideas.
- Over 100 community meetings held during the last 2 years with an estimated 250 people recruited into Healthy Valley project initiatives.
- A Community Nurse Practitioner has been funded to outreach visits in homes and will be mainstreamed by PCT.
- Parish Council Liaison Meetings held every month.
- Young people consulted on play equipment.

Key lessons learned

- Need to be present in the villages, to be known by the people and seen as the facilitator – you can’t do the job from a desk.
- Need to understand the community – do the audit beforehand and don’t leave anyone out.
- Connect the agencies, council workers and funding streams. You need to include anybody and everybody.
- Commitment and knowledge of your village is important.
- The importance of pooling resources and avoiding duplication.
- The importance of partnership working – workers delivering each other’s services.
- Building relationships with workers from other agencies.
- Publicity and better communication with villages to say what services are coming.

‘Rural communities can be as big a stimulus to economy as urban ones – you’ve got to have the bottle to allow change.’

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Spreading the Fairtrade message

Fairtrade – St Bede’s Catholic Infant School

Interest in promoting Fairtrade at St Bede’s School was sparked when a member of teaching staff who also volunteered for Fairtrade, highlighted the needs of producers in the developing world. Her enthusiasm created an interest amongst staff and a project to raise awareness within the school and local community began. The school adopted a Fairtrade policy, established a Fairtrade steering group and integrated the Fairtrade message into the curriculum. The project has increased knowledge and understanding of communities in other parts of the world. The school has seen a change in purchasing habits with parents and teachers now choosing Fairtrade where they didn’t before.

Key outcomes

- ✓ **Children, families, staff and local community have increased awareness of the importance of Fairtrade to communities in the developing world.**
- ✓ **Families and staff have changed their purchasing habits and are now choosing more Fairtrade options.**
- ✓ **Increased links with local community groups and volunteers.**
- ✓ **Children have better understanding of communities in other parts of the world.**

Spreading the Fairtrade message

Fairtrade – St.Bede’s Catholic Infant School

Location

St Bede’s Catholic Infant School is a voluntary aided school located in Widnes in Halton, a small borough with approximately 119 500 people. St Bede’s has 191 children aged 4 to 7, with seven classes. The school has strong links with the Junior School, the Church and local community groups. St Bede’s has also established relationships with a number of agencies and welcomes many visitors to the school including sports providers, dancers, theatre groups, school health team, fire brigade, police liaison officers and community support officers and representatives from other cultures and faiths. The school has a number of global partnerships with schools in America, Nepal and Poland.

Challenges and Opportunities

- Lack of awareness of Fairtrade in school and local community.
- Questionnaires with staff and families demonstrated the majority didn’t actively choose Fairtrade options when shopping.
- Although the school had some links with Fairtrade through CAFOD, it did not have a Fairtrade policy or Fairtrade Status.
- Neighbouring Warrington was a Fairtrade town, however Halton was not. Could the school play a small role in moving Halton to become a Fairtrade town?
- The school wanted to highlight the importance of Fairtrade to producers across the developing world.

Activity

Before the activity began there was little evidence to show that the school and local community had a great awareness of Fairtrade. One of the teaching staff who was a very active volunteer with the Fair-4-All stall in Warrington highlighted the need

and importance of Fairtrade to producers in the developing world and sparked an interest amongst staff within school. Staff discussed ways in which the school could play a role in promoting Fairtrade to increase awareness amongst children and families. There was also a desire to spread the Fairtrade message into the junior school and local community and perhaps begin to influence Halton to become a Fairtrade town.

A number of strategies and actions were put in place to meet the project aims. Class and whole school assemblies were held to explain the meaning of Fairtrade and why it was important to people around the world. Posters and the Fairtrade logo were displayed around the school to raise awareness. The school adopted a Fairtrade Policy and developed an action plan detailing targets, actions and how success would be evaluated. The action plan was included in the School Development Plan to ensure a high focus on Fairtrade was maintained. A Fairtrade steering group meeting once every half term was established made up of children, staff, parents and governors.

The school joined the Fairtrade Fortnight activities and regularly host a stall at the school. Links were made with a number of organisations including Fair-4-All Warrington who provide the necessary products to hold the Fairtrade stall, UNICEF Rights of the Child, local primary schools, the Jubilee over 50’s group (attended by many grandparents), Traidcraft who provide many of the goods sold and the small Eswatini cooperative who make jams and sauces. A link has also been made with the local high school, pupils from which will work with children to design and make Fairtrade keyrings. The school then aim to sell the keyrings and send money to the Fairtrade Foundation.

Curriculum activities have been developed to incorporate the Fairtrade message. The children play simple games to encourage them to think about money and fairness. Games like ‘It’s Not Fair’ and the Banana Jigsaw game which highlights how the banana grower gets little compared to the



supermarket. The children are asked to apportion £1 to the process of growing bananas through to the final selling point at the supermarket. This opens up discussion in the class about fairness and the fact that people in developing countries are often paid less than workers in wealthier countries. The children have accessed a variety of games on the Internet linked to the Fairtrade Foundation and CAFOD (Catholic Aid for Overseas Development). The school have devised Fairtrade poster competitions in which children are always very eager to take part. Children have been invited to bring in wrappers of any Fairtrade product that their families buy and enthusiastically bring in examples to school. Families and the wider community are kept informed and encouraged to engage in Fairtrade activities and fundraising through flyers, leaflets, letters and termly newsletters.

The school did some research into people’s understanding of Fairtrade at a Big Art Day event. Participants were invited to comment on the

Fairtrade Project and asked to complete questionnaires about their knowledge of Fairtrade and purchasing habits – over 40 questionnaires were completed. Many commented that their shopping habits had changed since the project started – a large number showing a move from their original brand to a Fairtrade option. Comments were positive with regard to the schools influence on children in encouraging the purchase of Fairtrade items. The school now buys Fairtrade products regularly for hospitality and staffroom use.

One of the teachers felt it was essential to spread the Fairtrade message at a young age as this then continues to be carried as children move through junior school. The new links with the local high school would ensure it continues beyond this. She believed the project increased the children's understanding of the wider community **“there is a world outside of the local community – we've established links with Nepal, we've had an email from a Head in Bangladesh who saw our website and wants to make links.”**

The teacher who volunteers for Fairtrade spoke of how the project brought communities together and increased awareness of the world. **“It teaches children about the importance of others, it's not just about what you have – not all about having possessions, it's about what you need.”**

Another teacher explained that although they were aware of Fairtrade before the project started, as a teacher she needed to be able to understand the wider issues in order to explain to the children.

The Head teacher spoke about the importance of involving parents and the best way of doing this **“is through their children – when children are enthused, parents are too.”** She felt one of the biggest impacts had been in changing purchasing habits of staff and families. This wasn't just in everyday items like tea, coffee and biscuits - children had also received Fairtrade toys for Christmas.

School governors believed the Fairtrade project had grown within the school because it had been incorporated into the Development Plan and was now **“embedded”** into the curriculum. Fairtrade is used as a tool for discussion in many subjects including maths, music, art and ICT. Governors were very optimistic about how the school could work in partnership with Halton to become a Fairtrade borough and felt it was **“just a matter of time.”** Many governors, staff and families are involved in lobbying stores to stock Fairtrade options. One parent explained that they were already aware of Fairtrade through the logo but

that the project had increased their understanding of poverty in developing countries and the importance of developing sustainability. She described how the family now **“searches out Fairtrade items in shops... they pick their own treats and always pick Fairtrade.”**

Children were very enthusiastic about their involvement in activities. All children in school now recognise the Fairtrade logo and five are involved in the steering group. One of the children on the steering group explained their understanding **“If you buy Fairtrade, it helps people that have no money to go to school... to get their medicine and clean water.”** Another said **“Farmers get lots of pennies when they've planted things.”**

The main aim for the school now is to become a Fairtrade School and share learning and good practice to influence other schools and organisations to take on the Fairtrade message.

Participants

Children, families, teaching staff, school governors, local residents, Jubilee Club, community groups, local schools, Fair-4-All stall in Warrington.

Outcomes

- Increased awareness of the importance of Fairtrade to communities in the developing world.
- The school now has a Fairtrade Policy in place, an active steering group that meets once every half term and Fairtrade is incorporated into the Development Plan.
- Families and staff have changed their purchasing habits and are now choosing more Fairtrade options.
- Increased links with partners in the community including community groups and schools.
- International links have been made with schools in Nepal and Ghana.
- Fairtrade stalls held at school at least once a term – more than most schools in the area.
- Children's learning and understanding will be carried with them through their continued education and through influencing parents, families and networks.

Key lessons learned

- Involve the children from the beginning to encourage ownership of the project.
- Starting with focused events like Fairtrade stalls enables a gentle introduction to projects.
- Use existing mechanisms to promote ideas and get people on board, e.g. staff meetings and school assemblies.
- If the project is a priority, put it in the Development Plan – this gives it kudos and makes it integral to what you are doing.
- The processes are very straightforward – don't be afraid to try different things.
- You need a lead person to direct and co-ordinate the project.
- Make projects fun for the children – games, stories and holding stalls increase understanding.
- Make the learning real for children and celebrate differences – it's good to broaden horizons out of the local community.
- You need energy, enthusiasm and capacity to deliver a project like this – allocate time, money and resources.

‘It teaches children about the importance of others, it's not just about what you have – not all about having possessions, it's about what you need.’

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Residents changing their community

Improving life for residents in Reeds Road, North Huyton: Knowsley Council and partners

Residents in Reeds Road have experienced problems with drug dealing, gun crime and intimidation by criminals operating in their area. Agencies found it hard to engage with residents, and it became an area people no longer wanted to visit. After a series of successful enforcement actions in 2008, the Council and its partners began working with residents to rebuild the community.

Traditional approaches of having public meetings and trying to set up residents' groups were unsuccessful. The agencies knew they needed a different approach. Initially they started to win trust by reclaiming disused green space, and organising fun days, social events, youth activities and creative arts projects, as well as a participatory budgeting event. There have been significant improvements in engagement and trust as a result of the project and activities that have taken place.

Key outcomes

- ✓ **Severe crime problems have been reduced, and residents feel safer.**
- ✓ **The estate has been improved physically.**
- ✓ **Children and families now use green spaces on the estate.**
- ✓ **There is more trust and respect between residents and agencies.**
- ✓ **Residents now attend community events and fun days, and have taken part in decision making.**
- ✓ **Community Champions are starting to emerge.**
- ✓ **The project has been a transferable learning experience for the Council and its partners.**

Residents changing their community

Improving life for residents in Reeds Road, North Huyton: Knowsley Council and partners

Location

Reeds Road is a small neighbourhood within the larger area of Bakers Green. Part of Knowsley Council's North Huyton area, it is managed by an area office. The priorities for the North Huyton area, over a five year period are: community cohesion; regeneration; and supporting families. These priorities were set by its area partnership board led by local elected members. The neighbourhood management team then delivers the priorities through partnership working.

Challenges and Opportunities

- The neighbourhood experienced problems with drug dealing, gun crime and intimidation of residents by criminals operating in the area. These problems escalated in 2008.
- It was known as a crime hot spot that had under-reporting of crime due to intimidation.
- Residents had witnessed 'drive-by' shootings from scrambler bikes. There was graffiti and burnt out cars on green spaces. Parents felt unsafe letting their children play out.
- Residents also experienced problems with the poor reputation of Reeds Road, for example feeling ashamed to invite guests to their homes and taxis and deliveries refusing to come onto the estate.
- Agencies were concerned about the safety of officers going into the area. Officers and residents described the estate as a 'closed shop', with a 'force field' around it.
- There had been previous unsuccessful attempts to hold residents' meetings and set up a residents' group.

Activity

Reeds Road came to the attention of agencies in 2008 after a spate of incidents involving guns. CCTV cameras were installed and this enabled agencies to collect enough evidence to take enforcement action. The enforcement activity involved a series of repeated intensive interventions, e.g. evictions and arrests. However, the aftermath of the successful action was that **"the whole area had taken a battering."** Officers said it was **"heartbreaking because residents felt they'd been left with a shell – 'we've put up with all this, is this what we're left with?'"**

At first, agencies tried to set up a residents' meeting, this did not work. They then knew they needed to take an entirely different approach. Residents' said **"prove yourselves, let's see what you can do for us."** Agencies responded by investing in physical improvements. They cleared up burnt out green spaces, put in new fencing and railings and established a maintenance contract.

They realised however that more was needed to rebuild the community, its social networks, resident's quality of life and trust. The Council and partners then decided to organise a series of social events. This included a participatory budgeting exercise so that residents could decide further physical improvements and future community projects for the area. The first fun day was held in March 2010, with agencies providing information alongside fun activities including air hockey, children's games, and a local ice-cream van, who had previously refused to come onto the estate. In a 'Who wants to be a Millionaire' exercise residents used handsets to vote on how to spend their participatory budget, deciding how the money should be split and what it should be spent on.

Over 200 people attended the first fun day. Around half were children. **"People came out to see what's going on. The dads came out and played with the hula hoops!"** One parent who is a resident

on the estate said: **"We had the climbing wall, toys for the kids. The police were there. It seemed to bring the estate up a bit – as we were treated with respect. On the Fun Day, the children were being polite and helping clean up... It's like a fantasy for the kids to have a play scheme coming in where we've never had one before, where we had so much misery before."**

A local social enterprise ran art sessions with children which resulted in decorated hoardings for the new fencing. Partners felt that it was important to value residents through creative arts. Local children remain proud of their art work and bring their parents and grandparents to see it. A fireworks display and funfair was organised by PSCOs on a nearby field with families from Reeds Road attending.

Children now say hello to the PSCOs and have been on trips with them to the Lake District. A number of young people also attend the local youth club run by PSCOs – MAD (Making a Difference) – and parents often pop in: **"that was unheard of before."**

Some of the residents are now called Community Champions, and provide agencies with a vital link with the community.

Residents and ward councillors agree that people now feel they are being listened to, and things are moving forward. There is now a level of trust where there wasn't before: **"it's been a long haul but people know we're not going away."** One Councillor said: **"the event's brought a lot of people together from Reeds Road and the surrounding areas. It's what it should be like all the time. Before they wouldn't go into the road, let alone to get their face painted and talk to the police."**

One of the ward councillors said: **"We used to get lots of requests for transfers [off the estate]. I don't know how people stayed there. But I haven't had one recently, and we're getting new people in."**

There have been major improvements in Reeds

Road. Street sweepers are no longer finding bullet casings, children now play out on the green space and residents feel able to attend community events and participate in decisions over funding for community projects. There are also plans for study visits to other community projects e.g. a community garden in Stockbridge Village. There is still a long way to go to achieve a fully empowered and active community, but the relationships are now in place for this to continue happening: **“it’s not instant, it’s a journey.” “This is a refreshing innovative approach. There has not been a huge investment in physical works but the impacts are big.”**

The work on Reeds Road has a wider significance for community engagement strategies in Knowsley. It is a new way of working, based on understanding the people who live in a place. Knowsley Council is working with the Campaign Company on ‘value modes segmentation’ i.e. understanding what matters to people, and enabling the council to form a different relationship with citizens. **“Just because you have ACORN and MOSAIC data doesn’t mean you’re understanding your community.”** Officers said; **“We did value modes in Reeds Road without really knowing it, so understanding that has changed how we do business. We don’t treat everyone the same.”** This understanding is now being used to inform the Community Engagement Strategy for the authority, and for work in other neighbourhoods.

Participants

Residents of Reeds Road, local ward councillors, Knowsley MBC, Knowsley Housing Trust, the police and PCSOs, Safer Knowsley Partnership, and other departments of the council, including the Anti-Social Behaviour Unit (ASBU).

Outcomes

- Severe crime problems have been reduced, and residents feel safer.
- The estate is no longer a ‘no-go’ area for agencies and others, e.g. pizza deliveries have now resumed on the estate.
- The estate has been improved physically, e.g. burnt out land reclaimed and now maintained.
- Children and families now use green spaces on the estate, whereas previously had been too scared to come out, and spaces were unusable.
- More trust and respect between residents and agencies.

- Residents have now attended community events and fun days.
- Residents have taken part in decision making e.g. over funding for community projects.
- Improvements, such as the artwork, have not been vandalised.
- Community Champions are starting to emerge.
- For some agencies they saw the impacts of multi-agency working for the first time.
- The project has been a learning experience for the Council and partners in how to work differently, and learning is being transferred to other areas.

Key lessons learned

- Enforcement work needs to be followed up with community engagement and development. Enforcement alone is not enough.
- It took the agencies a long time to realise they needed to progress at residents’ own speed, and to move from ‘doing for’ to a more supportive role.
- It doesn’t happen overnight. It’s got to be personal and based on relationships. You need a long term plan; there are no quick fixes. Be determined not to give up. Be patient.
- Get to know people and what’s important to them. Really understand what’s happening in an area and people’s day-to-day experiences.
- Understand the community. Use their values and behaviour as part of your data gathering, not just the hard data.
- Work alongside community champions. Trust people to make decisions.
- Agencies can’t treat everyone the same, they need to work with the needs and preferences of residents in each neighbourhood. People might not want to join a tenants’ or residents’ association, but they may want more youth activities to be organised by residents.
- Don’t be afraid to try ‘different’ approaches.
- Communication is a two-way process.
- The value of multi-agency working – knocking on residents’ doors once not five times.
- The importance of delivering on promises and building trust with residents.
- Small wins can also be big wins.

‘Surveys don’t tell you how people feel.’

‘We’re in this together. [The council/agencies] has always used these words but we didn’t understand what it meant. We’re learning from Reeds Road.’

‘[The council] has moved from ‘we can fix them’, to ‘people can fix themselves, if they decide they want fixing!’

‘The Fun Day – there were children smiling, and I thought – this is the start of something good.’

‘To see agencies in there, families out, kids playing. It’s not just cohesion in the community but relationships with agencies.’

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Neighbourhood management making cleaner, safer and stronger communities

Your Community Matters Events: SSCF Neighbourhood Management Project, West Lancashire

The SSCF Neighbourhood Management Project in West Lancashire was introduced to reduce crime and fear of crime, make public spaces cleaner, safer, and greener, help communities engage in decision making, and generally improve service delivery, and quality of life in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Residents in the three wards had experienced a number of severe socio-economic problems over a number of years. Your Community Matters events brought together volunteers and a range of services in different neighbourhoods in the area to clean up, tackle problems, engage residents, and bring people together in the community. There were a total of 11 YCM events over four years from 2007-11. There have been improvements on nearly all the issues that residents were originally concerned about, as shown by the data.

Key outcomes

- ✓ **Neighbourhood improvements which directly relate to both community priorities, and statistical data on neighbourhood problems.**
- ✓ **11 Your Community Matters events over four years involving a wide range of services, volunteers, and which reached a wider group of people in the community.**
- ✓ **An average of 68 tons of rubbish removed per year.**
- ✓ **Steady growth in volunteers over the four years.**
- ✓ **Falls in crime and fire incidents, which have led to costed efficiency savings.**

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Location

The SSCF Neighbourhood Management Team is made up of three deprived wards in West Lancashire Borough Council: Digmaor, Moorside and Tanhouse. The area has around 5,150 homes and 12,400 people. Neighbourhood Management was introduced to reduce crime and fear of crime, make public spaces cleaner, safer, and greener, help communities engage in decision making, and generally improve service delivery, and quality of life in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods. West Lancashire Borough Council set up a Neighbourhood Management Team with a Neighbourhood Manager and a Neighbourhood Support Officer, which then worked with residents, and partner agencies to create a 'virtual team' of neighbourhood workers from a number of different organisations. Neighbourhood Management is overseen by a Neighbourhood Board of 12 people, including seven elected community members, and five elected members (councillors).

Challenges and Opportunities

- Residents in the three wards have experienced a number of severe socio-economic problems over a number of years, including high levels of unemployment, poor health, a feeling of being 'cut off' and isolated as a neighbourhood, problems with crime, fear of crime, feeling unsafe, and ASB including arson and fires. The area was in the worst 5 – 10% in the country by deprivation with one area falling within the worst 3%.
- Initial consultation with residents showed that people wanted more activities for children and young people, environmental improvements e.g. communal green spaces, improvements to cleaning and rubbish removal services, and to feel safer when moving around the neighbourhood. They felt that a uniformed presence on the estates would contribute to these priorities.

- The areas received Safer and Stronger Communities Fund (SSCF) monies in 2005, which created the Neighbourhood Management Team, gave funding for projects, and allowed them to begin intensive work.
- Prior to this, the area had not received central government funding under neighbourhood renewal, although it had been the focus of work by services since at least the early 1980s, and had received previous interventions and attempts to tackle problems.

Activity

The focus of the application for the Award was Your Community Matters (YCM) events. There were a total of 11 YCM events over four years from 2007-11. The events evolved over the time, but essentially were a focused burst of activity in a neighbourhood over a week or two weeks. There were community skips provided, a number of different services came together to do visual audits of streets then sort out any problems. Before the project, each service worked in isolation, for example with fire incidents: **"the council would say it's not our problem. The fire service said we're busy fighting fires. The police said we deal with ASB. Now we all work together, there's no blame."** There were community activities e.g. a mobile ice rink, which attracted lots of young people and parents, and gave a way for volunteers and services to connect with the wider community. In 2010 there was the 'Duck Fest' with stalls, 5-a-side football, and local bands playing music, which gave an opportunity to consult as well as have fun and bring people together.

Residents put on educational and awareness raising activities e.g. Digmaor Community Centre launched one event with an Information Events Buffet giving residents the chance to find out how they could get involved in activities over the two weeks. PSCOs ran sport sessions for 10-16 year olds, and there were Open days in schools.

Elected members have been very supportive of the project. They have been convinced after initially being sceptical, because of the benefits to the community. One elected member said: **"before we didn't have the opportunity to get round the table as a body. Now we're able to do that. Fly tipping is not the sole responsibility of street scene, so we need to engage the police and youth service. Before services weren't talking to each other. Now it's completely different. If they say they're going to come, they do come. They know who you are. The money is running out but they're still here."**

One of the ways that YCM events evolved was that they were originally called Beatsweeps. The name was changed after residents and agencies both fed back that this made the events feel like a service-led and service-focused activity. The name did not capture the spirit of the events, which was aimed to include volunteers, and help residents feel like action was happening to make neighbourhoods cleaner and safer.

The evidence provided by the Neighbourhood Management Team and partners shows significant improvements on a range of outcomes. Residents said: **"We got involved and met the partners and started to build relationships. The relationships grew and we felt we could approach people."** There was a lot more involvement by residents (as a result of YCMs). Parents did bulb planting. Residents described the start of the YCM events as a **"time that people started to know what was happening."** They had enjoyed the activity and information days linked to the events, e.g. with bird box making. **"The ice rink has been a big success. It got a lot of residents involved."**

As a result of the YCM events: **"there's more going on together like the rounders night. Before we didn't have enough people, then the PSCOs came and the barriers were broken down. It wouldn't have happened otherwise without the relationships being built. People are more aware of what's going on in the area; they're more**

willing to go to meetings and to speak to PCSOs.”

Partners said: **“there has been a vast improvement in partner engagement and working together between partners, and between partners and residents.”**

Partners felt that neighbourhood Management provided a **“focal point for people [partners] to speak to.”**

Funding for the intensive Neighbourhood Management Team comes to an end in March 2011. Services were concerned that there was a risk that agencies would go back into their **“silos”** if there wasn't a Neighbourhood Management structure to pull people together and co-ordinate. The Team and Neighbourhood Board have worked hard to put arrangements in place so that work can continue. This includes passing over Chair for the thematic groups to mainstream services or other partners, e.g. West Lancs. CVS. Residents have participated in capacity building to enable them to run governance structures, set priorities and action plan. There has been a skills audit of the Board to see who is best placed to carry on fundraising, and influencing services, as well as identifying local needs to set priorities.

Participants

West Lancashire Borough Council's Neighbourhood Management Team, the SSCF Neighbourhood Management project's Neighbourhood Board (now TMD neighbourhood Board), and thematic focus groups, residents and community volunteers from the wards, Elected members, other departments within West Lancs. Borough Council (including Sports Development, Street Scene, Dog Control, Housing, and Property Services Caretakers), Community Resource Centre Management Committees, ASK, Oakes Church, Standing Together and Rising Strong (STARS), the Faith and Voluntary sector and local groups, West Lancashire Council for Voluntary Service (CVS), Groundwork, Working Wonders, HomeStart, Skelmersdale Community Food Initiative, LSP, Lancashire Constabulary, Lancashire Fire and Rescue, Lancashire County Council (including Young Peoples Services, Trading Standards, and Help Direct), and PCT and Dental Services.

Outcomes

- Neighbourhood improvements which directly relate to both community priorities and statistical data on neighbourhood problems.
- 11 Your Community Matters events over four years, where workers gave an average of five hours each, each event attracted an average of 111 volunteers, and each event managed to catch the attention of an average of 495 community members that do not normally connect with the community.
- An average of 68 tons of rubbish removed per year, the majority from the Community Skips and Street Scene. This was not only diverted from being fly tipped and set on fire but also helped to enhance the areas visually across the estates.
- An evidenced steady growth in volunteers over the four years.
- Incidents of anti-social behavior were also reduced by 28.8% from 2007 until 2010
- Falls in overall crime between 2007-09 of 13.5% of crime levels in 2005-06, as well as reductions in specific crimes including violent crime (a drop of 23% of the 2005-06 levels between 2007-09), and vehicle crime.
- Efficiency savings due to reductions in crime, e.g. the cost of vehicle crime between 2005-06 and 2008-09 fell by £184,815 in the SSCF area, and cost of criminal damage between 2005-06 and 2008-9 fell by £260,100.
- A drop in the number of deliberate secondary fires in the area from 308 in 2006-07 to 190 in 2009-10.
- Conservative estimates of cost savings of £236,000 from the drop in secondary deliberate fires (based on the 06-07 levels if incidents).

Key lessons learned

- Residents should have a say in what happens in their neighbourhoods.
- People are prepared to do things for themselves with a bit of encouragement.
- You need to do engagement in the right way, e.g. don't ask elderly people which adult social care services should be cut.
- Community involvement needs to be widespread.
- It is easier for services to get involved if they can link their work to tangible outcomes against their own targets.
- You need to build capacity at an early stage.
- Partnership working is crucial and

provides benefits.

- By involving the community and engaging with partners, you can nurture an ethos of joint working that energises people.
- Success can be achieved without significant funding but leadership is important.
- A central person or body is needed to drive things forward.

‘People are more aware of what’s going on in the area; they’re more willing to go to meetings and to speak to PCSOs.’

‘I feel safer in the evenings and happy for my children to go out.’

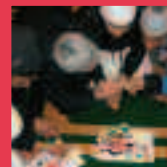
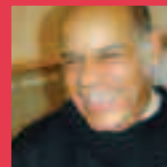
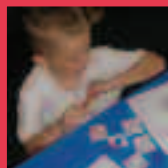
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NWTWC Community Empowerment Awards March 2011



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