

Section 4 - *Getting People Together*

Introduction

This section covers different aspects of getting people involved and coming together. It starts with a specific technique Open Space to bring people together to decide what's important to them and to make their priorities and create an action plan.

The next six contributions showcase how aspects of a community development approach are contributing to current policy initiatives and organisational aims, including creating a programme to support equality, diversity and cohesion in an area; involving people in wildlife projects; using environmental regeneration as a catalyst to tackle social exclusion; building community projects through creating green spaces; and engaging local communities in neighbourhood policing initiatives. The last two articles provide ideas for getting and retaining new members of community groups.

There are many other ideas within the NOCN resource pack produced by FCDL on Involving People, which has relevant handouts, exercises and guidance notes on:

- Understanding peoples motivation for getting involved
- Peoples engagement with government policies
- Different levels of community activities within neighbourhoods
- Making contact with marginalised groups

In the 2001 skills manual there are several articles around equality that are still relevant when considering how to make contact with different communities of interest and identity within any geographical area. There are contributions in the Getting Started section on developing neighbourhood groupings; making the links between people; setting up an Asian young men's group; techniques for involving people.

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OPEN SPACE TECHNOLOGY

Introduction

Open Space is a way of holding events and meetings where the participants set their own agenda. It gives people the space to talk about what's important to them and not feel restricted by those who usually set the content and timing of agendas.

Open Space can be applied to large events as well as being used in a more 'rough and ready' way as an approach to regular group or team meetings. It can help you to develop strategies make new alliances, create new projects - and bring new energy to work already in progress.

The approach was developed in the United States by Harrison Owen, who was involved in work around organisational transformation. Feedback from conferences showed that the coffee breaks were the most exciting bit, so he thought up a new way of holding events that had a broad theme, but no fixed agenda. In this way participants were able to bring their own issues and ideas and create their own agenda, so a number of different perspectives could be put together around a theme.

In an Open Space event, people are actively encouraged to move from one meeting to another if they have finished making their contribution or learned what they can. Discussions are all recorded, so that everybody who takes part can see all the discussions that have taken place and at the end of the day, recommendations are shared and prioritised.

A follow up meeting, to which all Open Space participants are invited, is used to distill the ideas and information provided, apply it to the chosen outcome, and sets the possibility of continuing involvement of a wide range of stakeholders.

When is it appropriate to use Open Space?

Open Space works best when you want to hear people's views and perspectives about a complex theme such as:

- 'How can we work together to improve services for young people in our area?'
- 'How can we make sure that our new community centre offers good facilities for all our residents?'

The technique is used in a wide range of settings, embodies a community development approach and creates a really equal space - people write only their first name on sticky labels as badges.

The wider the range of people there with an interest, the more creative the outcomes will be. It is most effective when people have real passion and interest in the main theme and isn't suitable where information and decisions already made need to be shared.

A recent Open Space in Derbyshire was used to enable disabled people to participate alongside support organisations, NHS staff and others in the creation of the health trusts' disability equalities schemes. It ensured that disabled people would continue to participate in the development, evaluation and monitoring of the scheme.

Open Space can be used to address issues of any groups in the community.

How it works - Opening the Space

Everybody sits in a circle and the facilitator explains:

1. Who invited us
2. Why they invited us
3. What the theme is
4. What the outcome of the day will be and how people can stay involved
5. That people's contributions will be valued and recorded
6. That people are about to be invited to suggest a discussion topic that they will then convene a meeting on (and other people can choose which meetings they attend).
7. How this needs to be recorded
8. That there is only one rule - the law of mobility which means that once you've had enough of a meeting you move on
9. That the idea is to be open and flexible about whoever comes, whatever they say, when the meeting starts and when it comes to an end

The meeting topics go up on the wall and people organise themselves. Key recommendations are recorded, put up on the wall at the end of the event, and prioritised through a 'dot democracy' process.¹ People are reminded about the follow up event arrangements

Tips and points to consider

Good planning is critical to a successful event. The planning group needs to include key stakeholders who understand the need for a particular piece of work to be undertaken and who are able to:

- Identify/ commit resources
- Ensure that all resources are in place on the day to ensure smooth running
- Involve a wider group of stakeholders as participants at the event
- Strategically influence how the information given by participants is used in the future

The room will need to be checked for suitability and set out in a particular way. For a big event, computers, administrative and IT support will be needed.

Further Information

More information can be found at www.openspaceuk.com; www.openspaceworld.org

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¹ Each participant is given a strip of sticky dots and is asked to place them on the recommendations according to what matters most to them. You could put all your dots on one recommendation or spread them across the board. This activity will give a sense of the key priorities but it is important not to lose site of issues important to a minority of participants as they might be significant outside of the open space event

CHECKLIST FOR ENCOURAGING PEOPLE TO JOIN A GROUP

- ✓ Each member could bring a friend or neighbour to the group. Word of mouth and encouragement are the most effective ways of involving new people.
- ✓ You could act as a mentor for a new member, explaining references to previous activities and uses of jargon.
- ✓ If you see someone new arrive, welcome them, talk to them... don't ignore them or immediately turn paranoid!
- ✓ Share out tasks among members, from planning activities to facilitating meetings. If you are working on something, try and include at least one person who has never done that particular sort of work before.
- ✓ Thank people where it's due. When things are going well, say so.
- ✓ Publicise your achievements.
- ✓ Plan activities that encourage wider involvement sometimes, and make sure that all the usual suspects DO get involved, and talk with new people. What might seem like a simple or boring activity to you is what might really get someone into things.
- ✓ Try meetings at different times, for a talk or video, and on different days to the regular meeting spot.
- ✓ Recognise the value of people's different life experiences.
- ✓ Take account of people's different commitments and abilities to commit time and energy

Practical considerations

- How accessible are your meetings? For example, can a wheelchair user physically get to your meeting space?
- When do you hold your meetings? Ask people when is better for them. Consider young people, parents and carers.
- Empower small working groups to get on with particular work, reporting back to the main meeting for support, questions and the OK to continue with that work. These smaller groups should try and have someone new involved, and not be made up just of regulars or the most experienced.
- Let people add to the agenda which can be passed around before a meeting starts.

- Where do you publicise your meeting and activities, if at all? If you want to do something about a gender imbalance, or want to work with more black and minority ethnic groups, does your publicity/ word of mouth
 - (a) go to where these people will see or hear about it?
 - (b) welcome them explicitly to your group?
 - (c) encourage them to get involved?
- During meetings, do you challenge put-downs or discriminatory remarks? Do you as a group have an understanding of equality of opportunity and what practically this involves doing? Do you set aside time in any meeting to consider these issues and how they affect your group?

As a group:

- It is very useful and effective to employ techniques such as:
 - Talking about aims (what you're about) and objectives (realistic, practical stepping stones towards achieving your aims) and writing these out against a timeline.
 - For example, an aim is to involve more new people
 - Objectives could be:
 - By advertising meetings publicly (within two weeks)
 - By appointing certain people to welcome newcomers (now)
 - By including someone new on the next action (at first stages of planning)
- Monitor how effective you are:
 - For example, are new people coming? Where did they see the meeting advertised? (but try not to cross-examine new people)
- Evaluate your aims and objectives after an agreed time:
 - Look back and spend time as a group seeing what worked and what didn't, and think about what lessons you can learn from this.

Recognise what new people can bring to your group:

- Contacts and information. Extend your knowledge of who's who and who's up to what
- Social skills. Conflict resolution experiences and knowledge of different cultures
- Practical skills. From minute taking to engineering, who knows what you might learn
- Organising skills. Someone who wants to and can facilitate meetings, or plan activities well
- Ideas and humour. Opens up new perspectives, and is fun

"There might even be a mythical person endowed with all these qualities..."

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RECRUITING NEW GROUP MEMBERS

Introduction

Members of groups, whatever their role in that group is, do move on for various reasons. In order to keep a group going its vital new people get involved not just so you have enough people to enable the group to continue but also so a small number of people don't get 'overloaded' with responsibility. Getting new people involved is an important priority and a constant challenge for most community groups. There is no quick fix or easy answer but:

- Don't give up
- It can take time to see results
- Stay positive (negativity and defeatism will rub off on the new people you try and get involved!)
- If what you do doesn't work try new things

Some ideas to help recruit new members

- Word of mouth
- Contact all your current members
- Use your group's publications
- Newsletters
- Leaflets/ Posters/ Flyers
- Notice Boards
- Door Knocking
- The Press and Radio
- Use your other organisations contacts - ask them to spread the word for you
- School prospectus – put an advert in
- Library – plasma screen advert
- Sign up packs for new tenants
- Use the flip side of a leaflet advertising another local project to promote your group
- Put article in newsletters of other organisations
- Are there any local businesses or organisations that have members of staff living in the area that they can release during work time to become involved in the group?
- CVS volunteer bureau
- Give talk to groups of people in the area
- Web Sites
- Stalls at events

When new members come forward

- Be inclusive – Not everyone wants to or can attend meetings – communities are made up of people with different skills, knowledge and experience
- Consider having one or more existing committee members to take the lead on encouraging new members

- Nurture them, explain what is expected of them
- Develop an introduction pack
- Offer training in any areas they are not confident in or what to know more about
- Make sure you offer to refund any out of pocket expenses and explain how to do this

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NETWORKS AND NETWORKING

Introduction

The word 'network' often means different things to different people. Some so-called 'networks' are actually organisations or committees which liked the sound of 'network' and so included it in their name. While groups can call themselves whatever they like, this does mean we are often not clear about what a network is and how it differs from other sorts of structures.

Alison Gilchrist describes what networks are in relation to community work:

"Networks are based on informal membership. They assume that all members are equal (though this is not usually the case in practice). They do not have a hierarchical structure, and usually have no formal policies. Their main purpose is to share information, ideas and support. Participation is optional."

(The 2001 Community Work Skills Manual, p77).

This is a useful definition because it emphasises that a formal structure is not necessary. Networks do not have to meet regularly, have a Chairperson and Secretary, have a constitution etc. They are primarily about relationships between people who have something in common - for example, being organisations working with young people in a specific area.

Some sort of network often exists informally, as people know of each other through meetings and social events. They may share information – but many of the relationships may be weak or exclusive to a few people.

These articles are taken from Voluntary Youth Organisations Network Start Up Pack – or 'how to grow your own VYON' produced by VYON Yorkshire and the Humber, which is about networks that are actively supported by someone. This person aims to strengthen these relationships, improve communication and help new people to join the network. Some networks are able to attract resources for a dedicated worker, at other times someone takes on this role as part of their job or as a volunteer.

Developing a network

One of the first tasks is to think about how the network might work:

- Who will take on the role of coordinator, will they be employed and if so by which organisation?
- What will be their role – will they maintain a database of contacts, and when they receive information which may or may not be useful to network members, they filter, translate, summarise and distribute it – perhaps through a website, emails, publications or meetings.
- Will they organise briefings, meetings and forums to share and enable network members to feedback and share information?
- How will you decide on who will represent the network if it is invited onto planning or commissioning bodies?

There are some other issues to consider:

1. **Governance** – it's worth working out a clear system for accountability for the coordinator, or for people taking on roles within the network.

2. Objectives – what is the network for? It may be about ‘strengthening relationships’ and ‘sharing information’ but it should be as useful to its members as possible, and if it wants to focus on creating consortiums and other partnerships for funding and contracting, then so be it!

3. Communication – often the coordinator will act as a ‘hub’ for information as described above. However, it may be that there are other ways of getting information out. Is there a Community Empowerment Network in your area, which regularly organises events and distributes information, or a website or publication which is seen as the source of accurate information. There maybe local networks, which have their own meetings, or systems that you could tap into.

4. Membership – membership of networks is often informal, with people opting in by sharing information with others in the network, and opting out by stopping communicating. Some networks have formalised membership. Whether you have formal membership or not, there are advantages to having some sort of process for registering network members:

- You can count your members and use this number as an indicator of success for funders and others
- You can use the process of registering membership to collect information about members’ organisations size, resources, activities or concerns
- You can obtain Data Protection permission to hold and use their contact details in your database
- You can keep track of how old the information you have is, and take steps to update it

5. Principles and practice - think about the basic principles and values behind developing a network, drawing on the principles and values of community development work:

- Recognise inequality and work to promote social justice
- Encourage self-determined, autonomous groups and organisations
- Promote participation in decision-making and cooperation
- Share and develop knowledge for wider benefit

6. Setting your aims and priorities – this checklist of ideas might help you become clearer about the value of a network:

- Collating, translating and distributing information
- Maintain a database of key organisations and contacts
- Identifying what activities or support is available
- Building trust and relationships between those involved in similar work
- Sending information out to the sector to promote events, training etc
- Organising regular meetings and events
- Providing personal support to individuals, and to organisations
- Helping the community groups and voluntary organisations to raise funds
- Start-up/ development support for new and existing organisations
- Consulting on policies and proposals
- Analysing the sectors capacity, available resources or training needs
- Celebrating achievements and good practice locally and so raising the profile with the public and funders
- Organising others to represent the sector at a strategic planning level
- Representing the sector at a strategic planning level
- Managing and facilitating appropriate training for managers, staff & volunteers of networked organisations

Further Information

Visit www.youthworkunit.com/VYON

SETTING UP A NETWORK

Introduction

The key to a successful start is finding out what is there already – perhaps localised or informal networks – building good relationships with key contacts, and building up trust and credibility in your own work. Then it's all about getting the resources to ensure the work gets done, being inclusive and making it happen. Nothing to it really!

1. Mapping the area

'Mapping' in this context means simply finding out what is there. Someone somewhere usually has some of the information you need - so you shouldn't have to start from scratch. Begin by talking to the Council for Voluntary Service (or similar umbrella organisation for the voluntary sector). Then go to the local authority's library service, democratic support service etc and ask about contacts in the voluntary and community sector working with the particular group of people, community of interests, or in a geographical area. There may be regeneration bodies or local funders who also have contact information. Once you have some contacts, start contacting people and arranging to visit or talk to them. Remember this is not just to collect contacts, it is about beginning to develop relationships – but if you do manage to hit it off, and you ask for them, you will often come away from the meeting with a few more contacts. Set up a database or spreadsheet and put in the details you have gathered. You might want to get a map and begin plotting where organisations are based – so you can easily see if there are some areas you know little about. If you do not feel confident in your I.T. skills your local CVS or Local Authority may be prepared to help you with specific tasks or training.

2. Building credibility and trust

It's a delicate balancing act – you have to build relationships with a wide range of people from voluntary and community sector organisations, and you also need to develop credibility with funders and statutory agencies that the network you are supporting is the one that can provide what they need – a coherent body for them to consult and engage with. You will have more credibility if you are seen to have clear principles. Both voluntary and statutory organisations want to see better outcomes for example for children and young people – and a voluntary sector network can help them achieve this by harnessing the knowledge and skills of the sector. Focusing on this will help the network and statutory partners explore how they can work together, rather than blaming each other for looking after their own.

Here are some other ideas for building credibility and trust with network members and with other partners:

- Listen and respond quickly. Often people in the voluntary sector have not been listened to by someone with an overview of the sector. If you listen, take them seriously, and do something (however small) to help, then you will be seen as an ally. When someone sends out a general request for ideas, comments or feedback, respond if you can. They will be so used to getting little or nothing back that they will be very grateful.
- Keep your promises promptly – whether to get a phone number for someone in a community group or to organise a series of consultation events. If you can't, go back to them and explain why. If you forget or run out of time, contact them to say so. This honesty makes all the difference.
- Write a simple workplan, with clear achievable targets and timescales for some key areas of

work. Give a first draft to one or two key partners, making it clear that you would welcome their comments. Review progress after a few months, pointing out how the network has developed – not just how great you have done!

- Form a one-off 'panel' to look at a consultation document or proposal. Organise a meeting, ask people to read the document before, record all comments and feed it back to the agency concerned. This might involve only half a dozen people, but it shows that you are willing to engage with the wider agenda and that you can take action. Make sure your panel includes people from a range of organisations and groups. Statutory agencies will welcome a clear response to their proposal, even if it comes with conditions stating that it is not the views of the whole sector, just a small selection.

3. Getting money

Local government and many other statutory agencies are required to engage with the voluntary and community sector to develop plans and deliver services. Many find it difficult to do so, and would welcome a proposal to work in partnership with them.

4. Including people

The key to a successful network is successful relationships, but the strength of a network is in its diversity. However, including those who are often excluded can be time consuming (they may need more chasing up and more support). Similarly, if people are not used to working with others and have a long experience of being excluded they may show their anger and resentment by complaining loudly at the first opportunity – which could be the event or meeting you've organised! However, having a diverse network will make it more powerful and useful to members, and increase your credibility with statutory agencies who often find it particularly difficult to engage with some groups or communities. Consider what you can do to make any events or meetings accessible to all, including daytime or evenings, links to public transport, providing food and / or expenses. You should also consider what might enable those with mobility, hearing or sight impairments to participate fully in the activities. Consider how you communicate with people from different cultures and experiences to your own – it may be that some are more comfortable with informal face to face conversations, or small meetings, or single sex meetings.

5. Getting organised

Starting a new network can be hard work, but then it depends what you are good at. Some people are great at getting out and about, listening to people, gathering information, analysing it and working out what is needed. However, it's what you do with all that information that makes the difference. Getting organised, managing information, running events and meetings and keeping it working effectively is the important thing in the long term.

6. Managing contacts

The list of contact details is the most important resource of the network – because without it you cannot easily communicate with everyone. Microsoft Office has the Access database program, which will enable you to keep track of all your contacts and produce mailing lists, sort them and find someone's details quickly, no matter how big your database gets.

You will need to get data protection permission to store and use people's information. Generally, this means not storing, using or sharing information without people's permission. However, don't get too paranoid! If you remove people who say they don't want to be on your list, and you only share with others information when you have written permission, you're probably ok. If you want to find out more, www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk is a good place to start.

7. Emailing

Email is fantastic – it's fast, cheap and easy. Many networks use their up to date database details to target emails to those who really will benefit from the information.

However, email can be too easy to overuse to the point where people stop reading your emails. Also, you can spend your whole working life filing, deleting, writing, forwarding and replying to emails and never do anything else! Here are some tips to avoid this happening:

- Make the 'subject' clear to help people sort through emails. For example: "Agenda for Youth Forum 17/3/06" is better than "Meeting notice".
- Some people don't have broadband or fast computers and downloading large documents or pictures takes ages. Consider cutting the important text out of the document and pasting it into a 'plain text' email instead of sending the attachment. You could send the attachment to those who specifically request it.
- If you have a large email list, put the list in the BCC part of the header. This not only makes the received email smaller (for those without broadband) but also keeps email addresses confidential.
- Email is great for sharing information, but not for communicating! Don't have discussions by email – use the phone or meet in person. Also, never criticise someone by email. The impersonal nature of email can make it sound worse than it is, and it's difficult to put it right by email, too.

Further Information

Visit www.youthworkunit.com/VYON

A PROGRAMME TO SUPPORT EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND COHESION

Introduction

Deep rooted issues like 9/11, the riots in Harehills, the murder of a local youth and 7/7, along with the drive by the BNP to stir up trouble in the local area of South Leeds, have all had an impact on the existing community cohesion work we were involved in. The lack of cross-cultural mixing on a scale that would affect change left initiatives struggling and as such, dealing with the effects and not the causes.

We recognised that the communities we were working within were left struggling with:

- a) Low levels of cross-cultural mixing;
- b) Racism;
- c) Prejudices - held by different parts of the community. For example – after 7/7 many young Asian males suffered in the job market due to their postcode;
- d) Misunderstandings - some young people thought that Islam was to blame for the tragic event of 7/7 and could not separate individuals and the faith (there was lots of trouble at a local high school around the same issues, driven by the likes of the BNP);
- e) Discrimination (by people and service providers) - individuals within organisations did not cater for the new challenges that young people were facing as a whole, and therefore, wittingly or unwittingly, were excluding some young people. Young people felt that they were discriminated against by those that they wished to seek help from (i.e. statutory bodies);
- f) Lack of collaborative inter-agency work between statutory bodies and / or voluntary ones.

These above points were highlighted in two local reports: Murtuja Bano (2006) Muslim Youth Speak, Balckburn: Vis-à-Vis Research Consultancy Ltd. and Dr Max Farrar (2007) Having Their Say, Leeds: Leeds Metropolitan University

Over the years, my aim has been to introduce innovative ways to re-engage the wider community into programmes that foster good community relationships.

Our Approach

1. Preparation

Before embarking upon a project, we have to ask ourselves the question 'why are we initiating this project?' It is important to get a local context of the issue to be able to have an informed response.

Is it a response to:

- A Local Community Plan?
- A national policy?
- The Youth Service Plan?
- A recommendation from a report?
- A need identified through a Local Community Forum?
- Your own personal interest?

Whatever it is, it is very important as it will have a bearing on what you can plan and deliver ultimately. You will need to take into consideration factors such as:

- Funding and other resources, including human ones like staffing
- Venue
- Transport etc.

2. Set the objectives of the programme

These could include:

- To increase levels of cross-cultural mixing
- To overcome misunderstandings
- To help heal wounds
- To reduce racism, prejudices and discrimination
- To Increase collaboration between agencies
- To increase the number of inter-cultural events

3. Examine the barriers to be overcome

Every organisation or project involved should identify the potential barriers that they may encounter. Overcoming barriers is integral to establishing contact with our group in order to engage.

Some examples of barriers and how to overcome them:

Barrier	How to overcome
Territorial borders preventing young people accessing different areas they feel are "no go" for them	Educate Provide transport
Historical issues	Make self and workers aware and put measures into place An example would be the murder of a young person, which has led some young people not to access certain youth provision, as they perceive it to be favouring the 'other' and that certain organisations do not cater for their needs. This must be highlighted to workers as a possible barrier that they may come across. A measure to overcome this would be that activities and the approach to young people, who you want to engage, would reflect their needs.
Access	Make sure the venue is accessible to all Provide transport
No childcare	Make events accessible by providing a Crèche and / or covering expenses for childminding
Not enough female representation	Ensure that groups have a good gender mix; have women workers and volunteers who can undertake outreach work with young women
Project seen as 'another consultative exercise'	Ensure that publicity that goes out clearly states the aims and objectives of the project. Publicity would ensure that all different sectors of the community: young, old, male and female would be encouraged to be part of the solution that is needed for the social cohesion of the community. A workshop or a series of workshops with young people would be a way forward
Representatives from the different local communities feel that they are not consulted	Ensure that self selecting community leaders along with youth leaders, women's groups, community centres and places of worship in the consultation are invited and are involved in the decision making process. All groups should feel that they have ownership over the direction of the project. If there is the potential for conflicts between groups with different ideas and opinions then consider bringing in an external facilitator, who could be seen as 'official' and wanting something genuine for the community, without vested interest, to deal with issues around conflict and how to manage this and enable things to move forward in a constructive manner.

4. Possible components of a strategy to promote Equality, Diversity and Cohesion

- a) **A mechanism** – using initiatives that brings young people & the general community together using activities such as:
- Radio interviews of the area/ issues
 - A video diary of the area
 - An arts based projects that could lead to the production of a play/ DVD highlighting some of the concerns and possible solutions
 - An historical journal of how the demographics have changed in the area in recent times (or perhaps post W W 2)
 - Inter-generational work
 - Area newsletter that would share useful information to other residents
- b) **Discussions** (not a consultative exercise) – A ‘safe space’ would need to be given to young people to explore and discuss issues that are of a concern to them, this can be carried out through activities such as:
- ‘Speakers Corner’ (see section 6)
 - Topics identified by facilitators that need addressing, should be mandatory to discuss.
 - Providing community members with a platform where they can discuss the things that have and are affecting them on a daily basis
- c) **Socio-economic problems** – get groups to work within their own ‘communities’, using ‘social circles’ at first, then bring them together at a time that would be appropriate, having considered and resolved some of the issues that affect their wider engagement. Some of the points raised under ‘mechanisms’ above, would give a sense of ‘commonality’, ‘shared values’ and ‘sense of belonging’ etc. It is important that the root causes of some of the issues are dealt with sensitively, rather than the effects that they have and are having on the different communities; local residents have to see the worth of the process that they are undertaking – the vision of people living side by side in harmony, acceptance, being able to agree to differ.

5. Deciding on the possible stakeholders and target group

These could include:

- Local schools
- Local Projects (voluntary and statutory)
- Local media organisations
- Local community groups and centres
- Community Involvement Team
- Police
- Councillors
- Local places of worship
- Local residents
- Families
- Young people from different backgrounds

Although this outline provided here does not seem very different in some aspects to initiatives that already exist, the main difference is that it looks at the root causes of why some of the tensions that we see around us exist.

This can make it quite challenging, as potentially there could be lots of emotion in the air when we start to address some of the very sensitive issues that are often brushed under the carpet.

If we are truly sincere in looking at the problems that do exist and if we truly want to produce a community that not only wants to get together, but wants to show others how this can be done, then we need to take the risk, get some support to put into motion that vehicle that we know can produce results.

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Case Study

ENVIRONMENTAL REGENERATION AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Introduction

Groundwork NI focuses on delivering environmental improvements in areas of need throughout Northern Ireland and Border Counties of the Republic of Ireland. We work with local communities, statutory bodies and businesses to bring about economic and social regeneration by improving local neighbourhoods. We have established a distinctive approach to working within a highly segregated society. Through engaging with communities via environmental regeneration, we seek to address key aspects of social exclusion in areas of high social and economic need.

'Changing Places, Transforming Communities' cross border programme

This two year cross border initiative funded by the EU INTERREG IIIA programme has brought together a network of over 70 communities from both sides of the border through a series of networking and training events, residentials and a twinning programme. The programme was a partnership between Groundwork NI and Co Leitrim Partnership.

The programme worked on two different levels:

1. Twelve of the network members each benefited from £20,000 towards the implementation of local environmental regeneration projects. The groups also benefited from additional project development assistance and landscape design support from Groundwork NI for the design and implementation of their local regeneration schemes.
2. A series of training and networking events, residentials and twinning opportunities were organised to provide an opportunity for members of the wider network to meet, share ideas and experiences and develop new or improve existing skills.

Below we give a couple of examples of our work under this programme.

Revitalising a derelict site. Mindszenty Park, Castleblayney, Co. Monaghan, Pat Merrick

Castleblayney Tidy Towns Group received funding under the Changing Places Transforming Communities programme. A public meeting was held in the community to give a background to the project and to hold an open discussion on how to form a committee. A committee was formed with members from the local area and Council. An Environmental questionnaire was developed with a range of options for the sites potential development. They were delivered and collected by local residents, analysed and an audit report was developed and circulated around the local community for their information. A detailed sketch design was then drafted by Groundwork and presented to the committee for feedback and comments. Regular committee meetings were held to update and progress the plans for the project thereafter. The project has brought the local community together and the community has grasped the project with a sense of ownership, developing skills in project development and management, lobbying, negotiation, collaboration and decision-making. The project attracted over €58,000 additional funding which meant that the community park was much bigger than anticipated and included more facilities that will benefit the local community including an accessible fishing stand for disabled people, a boat jetty and boat slipway, an informal play area and a decorative entrance feature.

Toddlers Garden in Coshown, Derry, Co. Londonderry, Martha McClelland

All residents in the community were invited to become involved in this project through leafleting the whole estate and knocking on doors. Young people and parents were invited to workshops to design the overall toddler's garden as well as an individual art piece. Through workshops young people designed the 'Lough Foyle Monster' and mushroom seating. They planted daffodil and crocus bulbs in the shapes of animals and the planting and weaving of a willow dome. The young people have a greater respect for the facility and the local environment and the project has brought different generations of the estate together and as a consequence the community has become much tighter knit. Young people no longer feel alienated and now feel that they can express themselves and more importantly that they will be listened to.

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HANDLING CONFLICTS BETWEEN COMMUNITIES

Introduction

This article is based on work with Refugee Community Organisations, but the approach can be adapted to working with conflicts between different types of communities.

Refugee Community Organisations are set up to meet the needs of a particular community (for example, Kurdish, Somali, Zimbabwean) and they can also be organised to bring people together on a particular issue (for example, health, French-speaking refugees and asylum seekers, women's groups).

Other communities of interest and location

Within RCOs there can also be communities whose voices may not always be heard – older people, people with learning or physical disabilities, people with mental health problems, people experiencing alcohol or drug problems.

RCOs also exist within wider geographic communities, which can be a particular area where asylum seekers and refugees have been housed, or it could be a whole city, like Manchester.

There can be many tensions and conflicts within and between any of these communities. For example:

- Between different generations, such as concerns over perceived or actual loss of cultures
- Between different political viewpoints, sometimes reflections of the politics in a country of origin
- Between now-established former immigrant communities and newly arrived communities
- Tensions can arise from the misinformation in the media about the benefits asylum seekers and refugees receive, especially when asylum seekers are housed in areas that themselves receive poor attention from the authorities

There are no 'easy fix' solutions to any of these problems. If you want to work to bring people together you will have to be realistic and recognise that communities can not be created with a magic wand. Bringing people together can sometimes take years of effort. One approach is to look for a way of getting people talking and working together – look for common ground. Some good common ground approaches include:

- Food – bringing and sharing food, as part of an event or as an event in itself
- Environmental projects – starting with the basics of clearing up a patch of local land and deciding on ways to improve it

If a conflict is really bad and the situation is not showing signs of changing you should consider asking an impartial third party to mediate between the different sides and help you find common ground.

You may find it useful to ask:

- What are the problems faced by your group and its members, internal or external?
- How do these problems show themselves?
- What is your long term solution, in an ideal world (that is, with all the skills and resources you need being there)
- What practical steps could you take to begin to resolve these problems?
 - a) Tomorrow
 - b) Within the next few months

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Case Study

INVOLVING PEOPLE IN PROJECTS TO PROTECT WILDLIFE

Introduction

The Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and Black Country has been working with communities in urban areas for over 25 years. We realise the value and importance of involving local people in protecting, understanding and preservation of the diverse species of flora and fauna found in the Birmingham and Black Country conurbation.

Our Wildlife Trust acts as a wildlife champion providing services and information to Local Authorities, businesses and members of the public.

The range of work we undertake is very varied, and includes:

- Responding to general enquires about wildlife
- Keeping an EcoRecord which is the ecological database for the Black Country and Birmingham; we collect information through surveys about flora and fauna. The EcoRecord connects to natural history groups and anybody can get involved; the level of involvement will depend on skills and the time individuals have available (for more info; www.bbcwildlife.org.uk)
- Advising on planning issues
- Managing biodiversity action plans
- Running educational activities at the EcoPark in Small Heath Birmingham and the Centre of the Earth in Winson Green Birmingham
- Offering training and volunteering opportunities
- Working with schools
- Developing management plans for sites

Usually Wildlife Trusts, especially those based in more rural areas, tend to be seen as managing nature reserves and working with conservation volunteers hacking back scrub. As we are working in an urban environment we have built up a way of working successfully with communities through a wide variety of environmental activity. Our project encourages people to participate through providing a wide range of environmental activity based around the aims of the project.

Neighbourhood Nature is a Wildlife Trust Project funded by Walsall's New Deal for Communities to work for the people in the New Deal areas of Blakenall, Leamore and Bloxwich in Walsall. The Project supports local people to appreciate, improve and promote local green spaces and engages people in environmental activity for the benefit of both people and wildlife. With the support and involvement of community groups, businesses, residents, schools and young people we can improve and make use of green, and maybe not so green, areas.

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Case Study

CASE STUDIES OF PROJECTS TO INVOLVE PEOPLE IN WILDLIFE PROJECTS

1. Working With Young People

Young people are often regarded as difficult to engage within environmental activity, but we have found local young people from ages 13 to 21 have been successfully involved in projects supported by us. As more young people have become involved so they have started to come up with new ideas about things they want to do. A particularly popular project was creating hedgehog homes. From the evaluations they really enjoyed the practical side of building the hedgehog homes and the sense of giving something back, as all the homes created were given to people in the community who had regular hedgehog visitors. They also created a board game for children that was showcased at the local library, designed survey cards and wrote an article for the local community magazine informing people of how to help hedgehogs.



Photo 1: Hedgehog Project, a resident with his completed hedgehog home.

2. Offering practical opportunities to get involved

The opportunities for people to make practical contributions to their local environment have been coordinated in partnership with local community groups, who wish to improve their garden or a certain area. For an example, Rivers House is a project that provides accommodation and support services for people who find themselves homeless. The creation of a quality outdoor area to encourage socialising, provide a relaxing atmosphere and allow them to dry their washing has been very successful. Through working with Business in the Community, many opportunities have arisen for companies to work with local schools and community groups to help achieve any number of tasks; improve gardens, paint murals, etc. This creates a win:win situation as every body is happy and satisfied as it builds community capacity and in some circumstances makes a bigger impact.



Photo2: Tarmac graduates helping improve a school wildlife garden.

3. Raising people's aspirations for a better environment

Neighbourhood Nature entered the area of Blakenall into the Heart of England in Bloom competition for a Neighbourhood Award entry. The Neighbourhood Awards are all about the local community being actively involved in cleaning up and greening an area. The improvements are judged on the community

involvement and the impact of their work. The awards are co-ordinated by the project officer with local businesses, community groups, nurseries, and faith groups all getting involved in improving the area and are all committed to continue the improvements for years to come.

Blakenall in Bloom received an Award of Merit rated from 50% to 84% with good all round performance, showing potential for outstanding achievement in the future. The judges commented "A superb first time entry into the neighbourhood awards that centred at the heart of what was once a deprived neighbourhood"

4. Providing environmental education to schoolchildren

Schools are usually receptive to assistance from outside organisations, but before approaching them do consider the constraints of time and resources they may be under. Ensure what you offer is targeted and flexible to their needs.

Neighbourhood Nature works with schools:

- To help them develop their eco-school status
- Provides wildlife after school clubs that look at wildlife, the school grounds and the impact of litter
- To assist teachers with the delivery of the National Curriculum with particular emphasis on habitats, adaptations etc.
- To support staff, school councils and pupils to improve the school grounds to benefit the learning experience for pupils and provide spaces for wildlife.



Photo 3: 4th Bloxwich Scouts, community wardens and local young people helped to improve a local community garden for Blakenall in Bloom.



Photo 4: Pupils of Leamore Primary school at Leamore Park's education garden opening.

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Case Study

BUILDING A SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY PROJECT

Introduction

Groundwork Manchester Salford and Trafford's 'Building a Successful Community Project' technique is a two-part approach.

The first being an all-encompassing practical guide to developing and delivering a community physical landscaping project.

The guide covers topics such as health and safety, planning your project, involving people, designing your space to name just a few. The guide is structured in an easy reference format and contains worksheets, which groups can photocopy and use. The guide is not designed to be read from cover to cover but instead to be used as a reference manual for communities to pick and choose sections which are relevant to their individual projects.

Alongside this manual there is complementary package of training. The training is informal in nature and is designed to take the community through the process of the different stages of developing and delivering a project. Groundwork Manchester Salford and Trafford deliver these sessions as stand alone modules or as a package of training normally along side a community group who are working on a physical landscape project. In this instance we stagger the training so it is delivered at a complimentary timescale to the actual physical project, in this way the group work through the worksheets and associated resources in the manual and are supported by the training to make informed decisions in relation to their project.

Change your space is a community grant scheme which was run by Groundwork Manchester Salford & Trafford through their Community Environment Programme funded by New Deal for Communities Charlestown and Lower Kersal.

Change your Space enabled residents to come together and develop local projects in green spaces. The green spaces included within this project were any open space which was used for or could potentially be used for community use, for example recently gated alleyways, school grounds and community centre gardens. Groups from the NDC area applied for a grant to Groundwork Manchester Salford and Trafford to support their project. The money for the grants was provided via Groundwork's Community Environment Programme funded by the New Deal for Communities Charlestown and Lower Kersal. The Building a Successful Community Project model was then used to support these groups to deliver the project.

The Blandford and Ventnor Alleyway Group were awarded just under £3000. They received the project training from Groundwork which helped them plan their project, including budgeting and monitoring of their grant. Their money was spent on benches, trellis, plants and pots for the alleyway. They then came together as a community to plant the containers and maintain the greening project.

"Getting involved in the change your space project was a very positive experience. The toolshop training sessions provided us with new skills such as managing projects, designs and budgeting. These were necessary for completing the paperwork and to achieve a successful project. We have achieved a lot not just a nice place to sit out but it's brought back community spirit with everybody coming together with different skills to help each other"

Mary Goodwin, Ventnor/ Blandford Group

Learning from the delivery of 'building a successful community project' model

It was important to give residents the freedom to deliver projects which they had designed and developed. 'The Building a successful community project' model guided them to think about issues that otherwise they might have neglected but would have an impact on the long term viability of the scheme. The tools within the Manual helped them to think about these issues in detail and helped them to build their skills in project management, thus helping with the long term sustainability of the individual projects.

The toolkit "Building a Successful Community Project" has been recognised as amongst the best in its field in the national 'Tools of the Trade' awards run by the British Urban Regeneration Association (BURA) and the South East of England Development Agency (SEEDA).

Further Information

If you would like to enquire further about purchasing a copy of the toolkit or the training package that Groundwork has developed please contact: The Community Skills Development Officer, Salford team, Groundwork Manchester Salford & Trafford at manchester@groundwork.org.uk or on 0161 2201000.

Contact:

For more general information on Groundwork Manchester Salford & Trafford please go to our website at: manchester.groundworknw.org.uk

Case Study

ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY IN NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING

Background

In 2005 the Broxtowe Local Area Command of Nottinghamshire Police became a pilot for Neighbourhood Policing, a key element in the Government's Police Reform Programme for policing that is accessible and responsive to the needs of all residents. In Nottingham this meant the police, partners and the community working together to identify and tackle issues of most concern to make local communities safer.

To begin engaging with the local community and to be able to deliver neighbourhood policing, Nottinghamshire Police approached Nottingham City Council's Community Services Department to work in partnership. The police recognised that the Community development Workers would have the necessary skills and abilities to plan, co-ordinate and deliver Neighbourhood Policing in partnership with the Police Beat Managers.

This case study shows that by using a wide range of community engagement methods, the local community were given opportunities to participate in Neighbourhood Policing.

Engaging the local community

Our starting point was that the agencies involved needed to understand the issues that matter to residents whether that it is crime related or not. This meant that local people needed to know about the pilot project and to decide if they wanted to contribute. The pilot chose to engage with residents by using three broad approaches:

- Informing
- Consulting
- Involving

We wanted to engage a wide cross section of people who might not already be involved in community representation so we spent considerable time planning appropriate methods of engagement to achieve this. We agreed that it would be necessary to take into account the following:

- People who work may only be able to attend events at evenings and weekends
- People who were afraid to come out at night
- People who have limited reading and writing skills
- Sensory impaired people
- People whose first language is not English
- People unable to get out easily e.g. carers, Disabled people, People with child and dependent care responsibilities
- People with previous convictions
- People who have a fear of authority or who do not trust authority
- Young people

- Older people
- People who are afraid of reprisals
- Business and Service providers

We knew that no one method of community engagement would engage with such a variety of people, so we chose a mixture of methods; below is list of our methods:

Informing	Consulting	Involving
Leaflet drops Posters Newsletters Press releases Public meetings Radio broadcasts inc: specialist media, e.g. talking newspaper	Meetings with individuals & groups Public meetings Stalls at Community Events Stalls at the local market/ supermarket Questionnaires & Surveys Suggestion boxes left in public buildings, shops etc Door knocking Organising Community Safety Events / Fun Days	Existing Community groups sending reps to meetings and helping to publicise the project Contribution of Local Action Groups (see below) Residents getting involved with actions after meetings e.g. environmental clean up days Residents getting involved in community initiatives Involved in the survey and ways to improve the LAG's

By using these methods Community Development Workers were able to develop Local Action Groups (LAG's) which meet regularly and are open to anyone living or working within the Police Beat areas of the pilot. At the meetings local people voice the issues they are most concerned about in their area and vote on the top priority for action, and they are encouraged to assist in finding possible solutions. At the next meeting, the Police, Nottingham City Council and other relevant agencies feedback on action taken on the prioritised issues.

Monitoring and Evaluation

This pilot has constantly been monitored to check the effectiveness of our chosen methods of engagement. We hold regular meetings with the police to discuss the developing LAG's. Two evaluations of the Local Action Groups have been carried out through surveys sent out to residents. These evaluations have led to changes in how LAG's operate e.g. changing meeting time or venue, and they revealed the impact of the Local Action Groups on some local residents

"We are actually being listened to".. "A sense that finally things are improving for the community" ... "I feel safer"

It has been a challenging process, we are still learning and developing but we are now in regular contact with over 600 residents who have become actively involved.

Contact:

For further information contact Marie Cann-Livingstone Partnership Development Officer on 0115 915 3249, Celia Knight: Area Community Officer on 0115 915 3953 or Susan Ward-Rice: Area Community Officer on 0115 915 3958

Case Study

“COMMUNITY ACTION IS A MANY SPLENORED THING” CASE STUDY OF A COMMUNITY HUB AT A CHINESE RESTAURANT

Introduction

This case study describes the Connecting Tracts Programme at the Norton China Chinese restaurant which started in September 2007 as a place to provide services to action groups which spring-up in response to a crisis in their neighbourhood.

The Norton China Chinese Restaurant is in Norton, a suburb of Stoke-on-Trent which is a city in industrial decline, although it was once a world famous centre of the ceramic industry. As a commercial venture the restaurant is not constrained by local government boundaries and we were able to define the area we intend to serve, which we call as our orbit. This orbit covers seven neighbourhoods in Stoke-On-Trent; and three villages in the Staffordshire Moorlands District Council area as that is where customers tend to come from.

The initial idea

I had the idea of having a Chinese restaurant as a community hub. I knew Cindy Chen from when she and her husband ran a city centre Chinese restaurant in Stoke-On-Trent, and before they moved to Norton. As she encouraged me to develop my ideas for working with the community so I wrote a “*Foundation Report*” in which I set-out what I wanted to do and how. This report sets out the typical activities of a business, and what activities we could undertake, and set these within the guiding principles we are working out as we manage ourselves.

Following Chinese tradition our first task was to give the idea a title and we chose the name “Connecting Tracts” - Jiegui, in Chinese. This Connecting Tracts Programme is not aimed at the Chinese community but is open to all communities in our orbit. My ideas for this programme have been derived from:

- Saul Alinsky - a radical writer and activist in the USA in the 1960's (Reference to Rules for Radicals and Reveille for Radicals) who advocated a particular style of community organising, based on conflict or concede
- Election campaigning employed President Kennedy in the USA, where his team divided the whole campaign into distinct major phases, and created what is called a 'divided phase timetable', in which people are allocated a role at each phase.
- The Game of Go [Wei Chi, in Chinese] which is based on the ideas of working out particular campaigns, and devising a strategy to achieve the campaigns goals.
- The Chinese culture; only moving when there is movement in them, and then acting decisively

The Programmes Aims

These are to develop and use a new form of community action organising in the UK, based on community hubs which helps action groups promote and defend their neighbourhoods. These hubs provide advice and support without taking over community action campaigns.

We set ourselves objectives, and after each event we evaluate ourselves. For example as soon as the churches agreed to carol singing, quiz night and the poverty meal, we wrote our own objectives. We

encouraged the churches to set their own objectives. After each event we evaluate ourselves, reflect and ponder on where we succeeded and where we failed.

The three aspects of the programme

- Community Action Advice Service Project
- Community Social Action Project
- Community Hub Project

The Community Action Advice Service

This aims to help action groups win campaigns. Maybe to understand the Community Action Service is to say it is like the Planning Aid Service [www.planningaid.rtpi.org.uk]. The Planning Aid Service will allocate an independent planning officer to give your project guidance on dealing with planning applications.

When we work with a community action group, we will urge them to adopt a divided phase timetable. So at their first public meeting they do not elect a Chairperson - Treasurer - Secretary, but instead elect a person to lead each phase of their campaign:

1. Research phase
2. Strategy creation phase
3. Action phase
4. Negotiating phase
5. Evaluation phase.

Community Social Action Projects

The next part of the Connecting Tracts Programme is called The Community Social Action Projects. The community social action project topics were chosen at random based on my experience. This part of the programme deals with the following topics:

- Education
- Environment
- Faith
- Health
- Police
- Shops

The Connecting Tracts programme has already started working alongside three Primary schools in the orbit area with a project based on the Chinese New Year. Under the faith heading we arranged for church members to come and sing Christmas carols inside the restaurant. We have held our first successful quiz night, which was attended by members of two churches in the orbit area. In March 2008 the three churches will come together in the restaurant for a poverty meal, which is called "*Hungry to Stop Hunger*". We become active in these kinds of projects so that when a community action campaign starts we can feed into them our contacts because of the work we have already done in the Community Social Action Project.

The Community Hub

The Community Hub is the third part of the Connecting Tracts Programme. These are activities that we can be involved in while waiting for new action groups to start in our orbit area. "*The Foundation Report*" lists seventeen such community hub activities including:

- Re-enacting the school nativity play / Eid play at the restaurant,
- Using the restaurant having a window as a “Village” notice board.

Support from others

The City Council came to us offering us money for a cultural project with primary school children, so that school children could visit the restaurant and learn about Chinese New Year: the grant was for the food. Three churches responded to our invites, three others (The Baptist Church Regional Office, The Salvation Army and the Assembly of God Church) have not responded to our attempts to contact them. The community hub is developing slowly and steadily over the four months we have been open.

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