



Civic Pioneers Case Study Review

December 2008



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Executive Summary

In the spring of 2007, funding was made available through the Community Empowerment Division to Civic Pioneer local authority areas to carry out projects focussing on community empowerment.

This Review presents case studies of each of the twelve funded projects, together with a simple analysis of the lessons learned from these experiences. The report represents valuable learning for practitioners and policy makers.

A wide array of outcomes was achieved including:

- **more, and different**, people getting **actively involved** in finding solutions to local problems
- **more people** were enabled to **have a say**. In some cases, this meant having a voice in what was happening locally, or in others, feeling able to have a say when previously they would have felt powerless to speak out
- helping people to understand '**how the system works**'
- contributing to **personal development** eg growing confidence or acquiring new skills
- **new relationships** being built within and between communities
- providing the **evidence** needed to **persuade others** of the value of the community empowerment approach
- **reduction** of **behavioural issues** with **young people**
- the formation of key **local networks**
- the creation and distribution of **new materials** and **resources**
- local **neighbourhood improvements**.

The common success factors were:

- within local authorities, **high-level commitment** from officers and elected members was often a significant contribution to successful project working
- **joint working** between local authorities and other organisations (statutory, third sector and community-based) was key to the success of all of the projects, and was demonstrated in many ways
- in terms of **sustainability**, several projects will carry on some elements of the work, but without funding eg organisational networking. Others will be seeking further funding, without which the project would not be able to continue. In all cases, there is an element of **legacy**, in that either a way of doing things, **learning** or materials, will remain **for the future**
- **specialist support** to the projects was valued for several reasons: depth and breadth of experience, targeted expertise, extra capacity and added motivation for the people working on the project

- **project monitoring** was not always straightforward, but the benefits were recognised. **Qualitative information** was seen as key in describing the differences that the projects had made in relation to community empowerment
- the **space for this dialogue** must be appropriate eg in a community centre located in the neighbourhood which is the subject of the discussion
- **face-to-face meetings**, often in informal ways, are invaluable in enabling people to build relationships. In particular, it helps local community members and local authority officers to see one another as individuals
- **getting together over food** is often very positive, acting as an ice-breaker and offering opportunities for informal but valuable conversations
- In addition, it is worth noting the following about the projects:
 - projects can facilitate and develop dialogue between individuals, and between individuals and statutory organisations, by providing a process and a structure for engagement
 - overall, people's commitment to making projects happen was consistently noted and appreciated, particularly for providing motivation to get involved and stay involved
 - the funded projects included a great variety of activities towards the same goal of community empowerment. Several projects were targeted towards young people, including film-making, website development and restorative justice work
 - several projects have been able to position their work well for mainstreaming into the wider local authority agenda, based on the outcomes demonstrated by the project's work.

Foreword

Community empowerment and engagement can deliver a thriving democracy, improved quality of services, projects and programmes, greater community cohesion, social inclusion and enhanced community capacity and learning.

In July 2008, Communities and Local Government published the White Paper, *Communities in Control, Real People, Real Power*¹, which set out a range of government policies and practices to generate a vibrant local democracy and give real control over local decisions and services to a wider pool of citizens. This followed on from the *Action Plan for Community Empowerment: Building on success*², issued in October 2007, which set out over 20 actions to promote engagement and empowerment, building on existing good work, including activities such as participatory budgeting and local charters (community contracts).

This *Case Study Review* helps to build the evidence bank of how particular innovative activities can work practically on the ground, what the key to that success is and what the challenges are.

It is crucial to learn from the experience of empowerment and engagement activities. Communities and Local Government is promoting this learning in a number of ways. For example, it has established a National Empowerment Partnership to help develop more and better quality empowerment activities at a local, regional and national level.

1 *Communities in Control: Real people, real power*, Cm paper 7427, Communities and Local Government, 9th July 2008

2 *An Action Plan for Community Empowerment: Building on Success*, issued by Communities and Local Government and the Local Government Association, October 2007.

Introduction to the Civic Pioneers

Civic Pioneer authorities included local authorities which committed to working with communities to enable more people to influence the way local services are designed and carried out, helping more people to become empowered in local decisions. The Civic Pioneers signed up to take part in a network in which they have worked with one another and with Communities and Local Government's Community Empowerment Division to share their experiences and to learn from one another. The network was launched in 2003 and grew to include 24 Authorities across England.

In the spring of 2007, further funding was made available through the Community Empowerment Division to Civic Pioneer authority areas to carry out projects focussing on community empowerment to work with local authorities and to find solutions to local problems. 12 projects were funded in nine authority areas, between March 2007 and April 2008. The progress and achievements of each of these project have been recorded, resulting in this Case Study Review.

The work of the Civic Pioneers is now being used to develop the Government's new Network of Empowering Authorities, which was announced by Hazel Blears in October 2007. The Network's aims are to spotlight and publicise good practice, promote learning amongst councils and officers and provide a networking mechanism to contribute to national thinking.

Purpose of this review

The core ethos of the Civic Pioneers programme has been about sharing learning between the participating authorities will help the Network of Empowering Authorities build their knowledge and learning. However, there is a much wider audience who could benefit from what has been learnt through this funding programme, including people whose everyday work is to deliver services with public sector organisations or voluntary and community sector organisations, as well as those people whose role it is to develop the policies that guide this service delivery.

The learning will be useful to a variety of audiences, in particular practitioners and policy makers, and a variety of schemes being developed from within Communities and Local Government.

The learning from the great breadth and depth of experience from the 12 projects is presented in two ways:

- case studies – the activities of each project are outlined separately, together with their assessments of what they have achieved and what they have learnt as a result of their work
- learning conclusions – across the 12 projects, a variety of common experiences and learning points can be drawn out.

The booklet is intended as a flexible source of information – read it from cover to cover, dip in to case studies that are relevant, or just use the learning conclusions.

The projects

The projects funded were:

- Project for the Renewal of Druids Heath (PRODH), Birmingham
- Young People Speak Out, Kingstanding, Birmingham
- Communities Coming Together, Leeds
- Developing Neighbourhood Charters, Liverpool
- Developing Restorative Justice, Barlow Hall Primary School, Manchester
- Mancunian Agreements, Manchester
- Developing the Management of Community Centres, Middlesbrough
- Get Closer to Communities: Cultural Change, Portsmouth
- Salford Restorative Justice, Salford
- Youth Act in Salford, Salford
- Milford Community Planning for Real®, South Somerset
- Choice and Liveability, Southwark.

Outcomes

What difference has this grants programme made? Each project was able to report on changes that had taken place as a result of the work, although it is too early to gain a full picture of the effects and impact. Some outcomes common to several projects can be drawn out, as well as others which are unique to that project alone.

Common Outcomes

Local people have got actively involved in finding solutions to local problems.

The projects are littered with examples of how people have got actively involved in their communities, including voicing their opinion, joining a group, helping with an activity, starting to talk to the local authority or other service provider organisations, starting to talk to one another.

In some cases, the projects were deliberately reaching out to people who have probably never before got actively involved in their community. In others, the emphasis was on working with those people who were known to be active and to use them as a starting point and catalyst for increasing community activity.

Having a say

In many different ways, these projects enabled people to have a say. In some cases, it was about having a voice in what happened locally eg neighbourhood improvements; in others, it was about creating space for someone to have a voice in a situation where previously they would have felt powerless to speak out.

New relationships have been built within and between communities.

Individuals and groups have got to know one another and begun to work together, formally and informally.

Providing evidence

The outcomes of the funded projects have provided evidence to use to do more of the same or similar work.

Understanding 'how the system works'.

Intentionally and unintentionally, many of the projects helped individuals in the community learn about who was who in the local authority or other service provider organisation, and how it was structured. This knowledge was vital in empowering people to make contact with someone.

Personal development

Perhaps often formally referred to as capacity-building, personal development of participants was frequently an outcome from these projects.

Skills and experience in a wide range of fields were gained. Generic skills developed include team working, communication skills, presentation skills and research.

Growth in confidence of individuals was often observed and reported. Difficult to quantify, this is something that can have a huge impact on a person's behaviour and outlook.

It was not unusual amongst these projects that the learning came from peers, through formal and informal pathways.

Unique Outcomes

A wide variety of outcomes specific to the projects were reported:

Reduction in behavioural issues with young people:

- in schools
- in the community
- more parental support.

More ways to have a say:

- new community fora
- the debate has been opened up
- having a formal framework to use
- through one-off events
- hearing from people who aren't usually heard from.

Key local networks have been formed:

- between organisations (statutory and voluntary)
- between individuals
- between individuals and organisations.

Materials have been made available:

- films/dvds
- websites
- manuals
- guides.

Local neighbourhood improvements are in place:

- Streetworks
- Greenspace
- Community groups
- Community centres.

Lessons learnt

A structure and a space for dialogue

Several of the projects were about providing a structure for people to talk to one another – between individuals, between individuals and local authorities, between individuals, Authorities and other agencies.

Importantly, the structures guided people through a process of getting to know one another and from there, beginning to be able to build relationships.

The structure also helped because it focussed the dialogue on a particular issue or set of issues and provided particular ways of approaching the subject. This gave participants confidence in the process, and therefore a sense of comfort. This was particularly important where people did not know one another or were unsure of one another eg if they came from a different culture, or were perceived to be in a position of authority.

Often, the structure seemed to act as a channel which opened the door for individuals in a community to put forward their ideas.

Where people have come together to discuss a particular issue, a number of projects noted the importance of including both structured and unstructured space for discussion. Often, formal discussions were held first. Following these first facilitated contacts, the participants would then be more able and willing to benefit from informal discussion.

The physical space chosen for the meeting or event is also significant, as the attendees will subconsciously or consciously be affected by it. Where a community issue is the focus, it can be very valuable to hold the meeting in a community venue.

The venue must be fit for purpose eg providing the right equipment.

Meals were often seen as a crucial vehicle for enabling dialogue, providing the kind of informal discussion time that participants can make good use of. Also, the food itself can act as a catalyst to the discussion eg offering foods from different countries as part of a multi-cultural event. People can often feel more welcome if they are offered food; in some cases, it is the serving of it to them that has the greatest impact.

Building Relationships, building confidence

On a number of occasions, the project brought members of the community directly together with officers and/or elected members for the first time. This face-to-face time enabled them to get to know each other and see each other as individuals. This was a key factor in building local people's confidence to discuss an issue with a representative of the local authority.

At the same time, the Authority officers and elected members learnt more about the community and the issues of concern, so that with this greater understanding, they were in a better position to respond effectively.

The various faces and facets of a local authority

Across the projects, it was striking that they had all tried hard to involve elected members as well as officers.

The support of higher level representatives, whether senior management or Lead Members, was much valued.

There was also a common chord of building relationships with and between different departments within a local authority.

For individuals, it made a real difference to know who was who in their local authority and what their responsibilities were, so that then they knew who they could approach for help with which problems.

Partnership working

Joint working between local authorities and other organisations was at the heart of all of the funded projects, demonstrated in a whole range of ways – project planning, joint activities, networking and signposting, drawing on one another's resources.

The relationships between partners were valued by all parties, each appreciating the skills, time, commitment and other resources brought to the work.

Crucially, the most successful partnerships showed strong attachment to the same unified goal.

Commitment and enthusiasm

A number of projects looked back at their work and with the benefit of hindsight noted that they had under-estimated the time that would be needed. However, there was a universal positivity about their projects despite the extra input needed.

At the same time, the time commitment from others to the projects was consistently noted and appreciated. This value of other people's time is likely to have contributed to the many instances of successful co-operative working.

Unsurprisingly, enthusiasm from participants was seen as a key ingredient. Importantly, one person's enthusiasm served to motivate others to get involved.

Sustainability

Only a few of the projects were clearly time-limited in what they were trying to achieve, such as running an event. Most projects have begun work that ideally they would like to continue in some form.

To make this happen, several of them say that they will have to seek further funding, as they cannot maintain the work without this external input.

Some projects will carry on some elements of the work but without funding. These tend to be activities that can be carried out using in-kind resources, such as networking meetings.

There is an element of legacy, in that either a way of doing things, learning or materials, will remain for the benefit of future working.

Several of the project partnerships are likely to continue.

Many of the projects noted that their project was a sound fit with key local or national agendas, such as Every Child Matters, so that it would hopefully be easier to mainstream the work within the existing or planned activities of the local authority or Local Strategic Partnership.

Expert support

In a number of cases, the Civic Pioneers grant provided the funding to bring in specialist support to the project. Particular benefits of this were: depth and breadth of experience, targeted expertise, extra capacity and added motivation for the people working on the project.

Monitoring and evaluation

Internal monitoring of project activities has sometimes been unsystematic, but this does not mean that there is no useful material. Now, towards the end of these projects, there is information available eg numbers of participants, activity reports.

Some project managers report attempts to introduce a system for monitoring, but are struggling to get full responses from other workers or partners.

The nature of the subject under review – community empowerment – means that often the most appropriate way to assess the difference that a project has made is through qualitative information. This can be very detailed and informative, as this Review demonstrates.

The light touch approach of the funder to reviewing the projects was appreciated; project managers noted that although it was not intrusive, they experienced benefits including time to reflect on their work, an opportunity to step away from the day-to-day aspects of the project, and a chance to see the project as a whole rather than a lot of small pieces.

Techniques used for project implementation

In more than one of these projects, films proved an effective vehicle for encouraging community engagement. All had young people in the role of film maker. For one of the films, varied sectors of the community were interviewed and it was this step which started all-important dialogue between the young people and others. All of the films were shown to a wider audience and used as a prompt for discussion. This led to action on the topic, but also other unexpected outcomes eg a Ward councillor actively seeking to meet local young people and inviting one to shadow some of his work. The film production process itself was beneficial, in terms of building participants' skills, knowledge and confidence.

Websites have been used by several of the projects. The purposes include: capacity-building and ownership through the actual design process; information-sharing and learning amongst local practitioners and others doing similar work further afield; publicity and promotion.

Two projects aimed to develop and try out restorative justice (RJ) approaches with children and young people; each in their own way was ambitious and innovative. One took RJ into the primary school environment, the other aimed to introduce RJ approaches across Children's Services. Even in the short time of this funding programme, the two report observable outcomes and the beginning of the mainstreaming of their work.

Significant learning points from the various projects' work with young people include: the need for ongoing and persistent support from the project workers to encourage the young people to maintain their involvement; the value of adding fun and incentives to the project; the benefit that can be gained from peer learning; the time required, but also the differences that can be made, from going out and working with the most disadvantaged young people.

PROJECT: Project for the Renewal of Druids Heath (PRODH), Birmingham

Birmingham City Council
Improving Communities
Selly Oak Constituency
1459 Pershore Road
Stirchley
B30 2JL

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Main Contact: Revd. David Gould
Organisation: PRODH Chair
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Email: Davidgould1@btinternet.com

Main Contact: Karen Urwin
Organisation: PRODH Community Development Worker
Tel: 0121 430 6005
Email: prodh@btconnect.com

Partner organisations

Parish of Kings Norton (Church of England)

Diocese of Birmingham, Community Regeneration

Selly Oak Constituency, Birmingham City Council

Timescale

Funded project May 2007 to May 2008, as Year One of a three year project.

Funding

£26,700 Civic Pioneers

£21,000 (over 3 years) Church Urban Fund

Simple project description

The Druids Heath area of Birmingham is dominated by residential tower blocks. With around 2000 households, the smallest democratic unit, the ward, is bigger than the Druids Heath estate. Other means of individual and community representation, such as the Selly Oak Constituency (ie one of 10 named Districts in the City Council area) and the Selly Oak Strategic Partnership, also cover larger geographical areas than just the estate. As a result, it was felt that there was a lack of a local representation mechanism and that there was a need to narrow the gap between the individual living in Druids Heath and Birmingham City Council.

The aim was to set up a body which could engage any interested local residents, regardless of alliances with any particular groups or bodies on the estate, and reaching out beyond the 'usual suspects'.

The project planned to hold 1000 conversations with local residents to find out what they liked about the area, what they didn't like and what they would most like to change if they had the chance. Whilst doing this, the Community Development Worker would also try to identify residents interested in becoming more active in the community.

An important aim of the work was to develop community relationships and grow the idea of co-operation between residents, and between residents and service-provider agencies, so that ultimately a new common agenda for Druids Heath is established which focuses on the benefits to the community. One early idea was the formation of a local 'community council', comprising locally elected individuals who could then provide representation on behalf of the estate's community and who could work specifically for the benefit of the Druids Heath estate.

A Community Development Worker was engaged. She carried out the community consultation through visiting over 170 homes and all of the businesses on the estate. Through this, she gathered feedback about what the main issues were for local people. Simple analysis was completed, eg tables and pie charts showing the problems and suggestions for improvements expressed by residents and businesses.

The Community Development Worker held meetings with a wide variety of local service provision organisations and other departments in the City Council, including housing, youth workers, schools and South Birmingham College, the Police, Extended Provision officer and health visitors. She also worked closely with the newly appointed Customer Involvement Officer for the Council's Housing Department, often making community visits jointly.

PRODH has continued to seek ways to consult with the local community eg questionnaires available at a variety of local outlets. Also, PRODH is now developing a Web-based discussion forum/network, which will keep people informed of what is going on at a statutory level and show how they can get engaged. This is being publicised by a simple, widely distributed leaflet.

Outcomes so far

Unique project outcomes

Key outcomes identified by project staff so far include:

- 108 people have completed questionnaires with the Community Development Worker, giving their opinions about the estate
- the Community Development Worker has carried out visits to over 10 per cent of the estate's households
- PRODH has facilitated the establishment of a café in the community, working with several service providers active in the same building.

The results from 108 questionnaires have been used to compile a unique baseline about the estate, which could also act as an information resource for other projects and organisations eg the forthcoming Working Neighbourhoods Fund.

PRODH has both built on the relationships with local service providers and listened to the needs expressed locally, through starting up a concrete project which aims to meet those needs.

Empowering local communities to work with local authorities

The project described their outcomes in relation to empowering residents to work with the local authority as:

- local people are starting to recognise PRODH and the people involved in PRODH, and are actively approaching the Community Development Worker about issues they are facing. She is then able to signpost them to the appropriate officer within the City Council or other service provider
- other parts of the City Council and other organisations are beginning to recognise PRODH's role as an advocate for local democracy
- there is an increasingly positive attitude amongst service provider organisations and the City Council to work together for the benefit of the Druids Heath community
- over 100 local people have completed questionnaires, whose findings have been made available to the local authority
- PRODH has made solid linkages with the local Constituency Partnership and is building relationships with local Councillors.

PRODH is becoming a locally available and recognised conduit to help local people to reach out to the local authority and other service providers.

The local authority and other service providers are seeing the benefit of co-operative working.

Individuals living in the area have had a chance to have their say, in as much detail as they wish. The 'personal touch' of the visits made it possible for individuals to take as much time as they wanted over their discussions and to build a relationship with PRODH.

The active relationship with the Constituency enables information to be fed from the 'grassroots'.

Empowering local communities to have a say in finding solutions to local problems

The project described their outcomes in relation to having a say in finding solutions as follows:

- over 100 people have voiced their opinions and the findings have been made available widely to organisations working in the area
- more people than ever before locally have expressed an interest in taking an active part in their community and some have already got started eg helping with a police-run graffiti clean up
- the process has begun to set up a structure for local involvement in local decision-making.

The expression of people's opinions and the use of this information is a fundamental first step to finding solutions.

The proactive approach through door-knocking has enabled PRODH to reach out beyond the 'usual suspects'.

Local people are beginning to get actively involved in improvements in implementing solutions, as well as defining them.

Key success factors

The key factors identified by the project were:

Appointing a local person as the Community Development Worker, who was well known within the community

The fact that local people *do want* to have a say and will make the effort, if they are given the time and attention to do so

PRODH worked hard at networking with other organisations and to understand their agendas. PRODH's Chair notes that 'humility' in working with other organisations was an advantage, in that PRODH was happy to be part of other organisations' developments and did not always need to be seen to be taking a lead

Being a three year project, and therefore not being seen as a 'flash in the pan'

The fact that the Community Development Worker was already known by many residents meant that people were not so suspicious.

The time invested by PRODH through the home visits paid off in terms of giving people the time to have their say.

PRODH was pro-active and energetic, without being pushy, in developing relationships with organisations already active locally.

PRODH could be seen to be committing to the area for some time, rather than rushing for a quick fix.

Barriers experienced and how they were overcome

The main barriers experienced during the project were:

- fears from local people about answering the door, combined with concerns for health and safety relating to lone person working. This meant that the original plans for 1000 conversations had to be shelved and alternative consultation techniques adopted
- a difficult history of community representation organisations on the estate left many residents suspicious of new developments. PRODH attempted to get past this through taking personal time with individuals, continuously working hard on communication and in particular explaining carefully PRODH's purpose and intentions
- some suspicions about the Church's involvement. Again, talking and taking time to build understanding and trust were paramount to overcoming this issue, focussing on clarifying that PRODH's role was community development and not proselytising.

Sustainability

The project was conceived as a three year project, with the Civic Pioneers funding acting as a catalyst to its inception and enabling a base from which to seek match funding. PRODH intends to continue its community consultation work and so to continue to build its understanding of community needs and aspirations. It will also develop further its organisational relationships. The priorities for the work in Years 2 and 3 include setting up a Web-based network of local residents, and identifying and setting up a local democratic representation eg through a community council.

The Church Urban Fund funding is making a significant contribution for the budget for Years 2 and 3; additional funding is being sought from charitable trusts and foundations to make up the full budget. These monies will enable the continuation of the Community Development Worker post.

One thing other people might find useful to try out

Questionnaire

The use of a questionnaire is designed to enable PRODH to reach out to anyone on the estate and to give them the opportunity to have their say. The questionnaires are available in all the places where people go as part of their daily life eg the corner shop. This means that not only are they visible (because people see them all over the place), but also that they're easy to return, as people don't need to go out of their way to do so.

With hindsight...

There would have been more work to involve local councillors at an earlier stage of the work. Originally, the project was concerned about taking time to win Councillors' support before they even had any funding for the work.

However, once they did have funding and then got up and running, they found it harder work to gain the confidence of the Councillors with the work already underway.

Funding for the full three years would have been sought at the beginning, rather than for Year One and secondly for subsequent years. It was felt that valuable time had been lost in fund-raising which would have been better spent on frontline working.

Also, it would have been useful to have more information about the Civic Pioneers programme in a format that could have been circulated to local service delivery organisations, the LSP and local councillors. It is felt that it would have helped to raise awareness about the project and its context, as a significant step in the relationship-building process.

And, in the words of the project

The most significant thing about this project has been...:

"...the discovery and releasing of people previously having no part in the decision-making about their neighbourhood, which can provide the basis for future enfranchisement via a community forum or council."

And finally, if the project staff were to give one piece of advice to local, regional or national policy makers about their sort of work, it would be to...

"...Ensure that consultation gets beyond the 'usuals' who turn up at any public meeting. It is possible to do this, but the effort is great and existing people who think themselves the tops need to be bypassed."

PROJECT: Young People Speak Out, Kingstanding, Birmingham

Kingstanding Youth Inclusion Project (YIP)
108 Warren Farm Road
Kingstanding
Birmingham
B44 0QN

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Partner organisations

Local residents and businesses

Police

Youth Offending Service

Anti-Social Behaviour Unit

Local primary school

Timescale

Funded project April 2007 – December 2007.

Film project finished September 2007.

Funding

£36,000	Civic Pioneers
£5,000	Neighbourhood Element Fund
£5,000	Youth Justice Board

Simple project description

This project aimed to give the YIP (Youth inclusion project) the opportunity to try out some different ideas which they hoped would improve things for the young people who were already involved with the YIP or who had come to their notice, as well as for the wider Kingstanding community.

There were four main strands to the work:

A **film project**, giving young people a way to express their views about what they felt about the local area and what needed to be done to change and improve things. The YIP held an initial consultation event to introduce the idea and get young people's views. 80 young people attended, 15 young people then got involved with the filming and a further 10 in developing the artwork and music. The young people worked with the film company over a series of meetings to consider who needed to be consulted and the questions that needed to be asked. The group then spent five days interviewing people and filming out in the community, followed by involvement in the 6 week editing process, including deciding on and presenting their conclusions. The film has been shown at two local events – Not in my Neighbourhood and the Kingstanding Consultation Event – and findings have been passed on to the local councillors, the police and the Ward Advisory Group.

The **Peer Mediation Project**, set up in a local primary school. A peer mediation training programme was written and delivered to children and non-teaching staff in the school. It focussed on communication skills and conflict resolution within the school setting and how to use mediation skills to resolve issues. Forty-three young people and six non-teaching staff were trained. The approaches are now in use in the school, with fortnightly support sessions available for the mediators.

Anti-Social Behaviour Order and Anti Social Behaviour Consultation (ASBO and ABC) work, in partnership with the police, the Youth Offending Service, the Anti-Social Behaviour Unit and parents and young people. The aim was to try to use restorative approaches to tackle issues with individual young people in order to try to avoid ASBOs or ABCs being put in place. A new process was trialled, including: a meeting between agency partners to discuss concerns; consultation with the parents and the young person to express the concerns and to try to agree on a way forward so that an ASBO or ABC can be avoided; a follow-up meeting between agency partners to see if the restorative work agreed has worked and what needs to continue to happen; if then an ASBO or ABC has to be agreed on, a parents and multi-agency meeting is held and the young person then becomes involved in a longer-term process. This process starts with an ONSET and restorative justice assessment which leads into a one-to-one and groupwork programme. The one-to-one work focuses on victim impact, consequential behaviour, being a good neighbour and how to make amends. The groupwork focuses on communication skills, conflict resolution, anger management, the effects of anti-social behaviour and victim impact. A total of 36 young people have been involved in this work, including 10 in the longer-term programme.

A **website** to provide information for local young people about youth provision in the area and local events, as well as more general information such as employment and training, drugs and alcohol, sexual health. It also includes more fun elements, including games and a graffiti board. 6 young

people worked on its development and have received training on how to update the site. Information will be updated in the week before each school holiday so that up-to-date information is available.

Outcomes so far

Unique project outcomes

Key outcomes identified by project staff so far include:

A total of 205 young people have got involved in some way in the project overall, including a wider range of young people than in previous work.

Incidents of bullying and conflict in the school taking part in the peer mediation project have been observed to have declined.

There has been an increase in the number of parents getting involved in the Anti-Social Behaviour process including more communication between parents, the YIP and police. As parents have become more involved, they have acquired more of an understanding about ABCs and ASBOs.

Children and their parents have become more aware of the impact of behaviour in the community.

The groupwork has enabled the young people to challenge one another in a facilitated and supportive environment, and has given them the opportunity to begin to resolve the problems themselves.

A film has been created which presents the views of young people from the area about their own area. Already, action is being taken to help tackle some of the issues raised eg funds raised for work to regenerate the play area, put up litter bins and improve lighting on a local greenspace (Conker Island).

The project work has enabled the YIP to move beyond working with the most prolific 'troublemakers' and extend their work to a wider audience.

The project has given the YIP the time for more intensive and direct relationship building between the key players, with observable benefits for mutual understanding.

As well as the benefits of the film-making process (see below), the young people can see a solid output from their work and the message of the film has potential for long-term benefit.

Empowering local communities to work with local authorities

The project described their outcomes in relation to working with local authorities as:

- the film production brought young people into direct contact with representatives of the local authority (elected members and officers) and other agencies eg the police, as the young people sought interviews with them about the issues they were focussing on

- the film has been used to take the young people's message out to a wider audience in the council and other service provider agencies
- there is more communication between young people, their families and the agencies in relation to anti-social behaviour
- there has been a change in how young people are perceived, with more positive attitudes eg a councillor has come to a holiday football tournament for the first time and is now helping to raise funds for it
- young people have engaged with the council and other agencies in order to put together information for the website.

The film has provided a reason for and a means by which young people and organisations can communicate.

The ASBO and ABC work has provided a structure for improving communication between agencies and the young people and their families.

The website has given young people and agencies a purpose for sharing information, as well as creating a new platform to publicise the agencies' information.

Empowering local communities to have a say in finding solutions to local problems

The project described their outcomes in relation to having a say in finding solutions as follows:

- the filmwork has brought local residents and businesses into conversation with young people on difficult issues, which has helped all parties to begin to consider what can be done
- young people have been given routes to find ways to solve problems, whether for their local environment and living space, or for themselves as individuals.

Allowing people to get to know one another has broken down perceptions of stereotypes and has personalised the key issues.

Key success factors

The key factors identified by the project were:

- partnership work, in particular the willingness of the participating organisations to engage in the project and to try out new ideas
- willingness of the young people to engage
- using the school to engage with the younger children
- having funding which allowed for fun activities which could be used as incentives for the young people.

Using their experience, the YIP were able to come up with ideas that would attract young people's involvement.

The project was dependent on the co-operation of several different organisations; the positive approach of all was a fundamental base to the joint working.

Barriers experienced and how they were overcome

Compliance of parents and young people in the voluntary ABC and ASBO process. The YIP worked to encourage their engagement through trying to involve the young people in activities outside the process in order to build up a relationship with the family. The YIP also used the Common Assessment Framework to engage with the families ie a process which considers the nature of a concern about a young person and also the risk relating to it.

Reluctance of young people to take part in the film process. The YIP staff took an approach which first introduced the idea using small consultations, before engaging young people in the larger consultation event. There was also an incentive to attend this event – entry in a raffle to win a mobile phone. (The raffle entries were then used to assess how many people took part in the consultation).

Disruption to the website production due to unexpected death of the original web designer. It was important to work sensitively with the young people who had been affected; their decision was to continue with the work by seeking a replacement web designer who would approach the work with a similar attitude. Work resumed, and of course, it took time for relationships to build.

Sustainability

The YIP has used the findings from the project to try to get the approaches embedded into local structures and strategies. The project has been included within the Neighbourhood Action Plan and the Integrated Youth Support Plan. As a result of this, further funding is being sought through the Birmingham City Council Community Safety Partnership.

A Youth Forum is in its infancy, which it is hoped will build on the growing communication between young people and agencies.

One thing other people might find useful to try out

Employment of Anti-Social Behaviour workers

The benefits of this were described as:

- having workers in place who can work with the young people and their families who have been identified as being at risk of receiving ASBOs or ABCs, as work with families prior to receiving these orders can reduce the likelihood of the order being made and reduce anti-social behaviour in the area
- giving the resource to build relationships with young people and their families, so that specific activities and incentives can be used to facilitate the relationship-building process
- enabling joint working with other agencies eg the Youth Service.

With hindsight...

It would have been useful to have more project management time to be able to bring the project elements together.

In relation to the peer mediation project, it would have been good to be able to work with more schools in order to try it out in more than one school, as each situation tends to be different.

And, in the words of the project

The most significant thing about this project has been...:

"...Enabling families and young people to resolve conflicts within the community".

And finally, if the project staff were to give one piece of advice to local, regional or national policy makers about their sort of work, it would be to...

"...Provide resource in order for services to be delivered at a local level that meet the needs of the community they serve".

PROJECT: Communities Coming Together, Leeds

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Partner organisations

Mediation UK

Stop Hate UK (Leeds Racial Harassment Project)

Hi8Us

Leeds Together for Peace

Leeds Community Mediation Service

Timescale

April 2007 – March 2008

Funding

£50,000 Civic Pioneers

Plus funding from EQUAL and the BBC (around £4000) for the film project.

Also, in-kind support in the form of staff time from participating organisations.

Simple project description

The overarching aim of the project was to improve community relations in the city. The team were keen to pilot some different approaches at local level, and to capture the learning and to make it more widely available.

Following considerable discussion, a project emerged which brought several partner organisations together (see above) to work together towards the overall goal. A variety of activities to pilot different approaches to improving

community cohesion were carried out independently in different parts of the city, but under the project's umbrella, and each contributed to a number of common activities. The partners came together to review the outcomes of the activities individually and the project as a whole.

The activities planned and carried out by the overall project were:

- establishment and development of the project partnership
- a 'whole project' Diversity Hub training session, which aimed to kick off the year's project and to raise awareness of the work. Thirty-five participants from people working in and with Leeds' communities got involved, including people from the Council's area management team, the community empowerment network, faith networks, Voluntary Action Leeds and several Council departments
- collection of good practice in interventions for improving community relations, in the form of a set of menu cards. The project has asked participants at the various project events to fill in templates, which are then edited and collated for use
- conflict resolution skills training, intended for people who have met through the project activities during the year. The first set of sessions was attended by 14 people. The programme covered communication skills, networking, listening skills and conflict resolution skills
- development of a website to act as a network hub and source of practical information.

The pilot activities comprised:

Network lunches, led by Together for Peace. The idea was to provide an easily accessible opportunity for community activists and paid workers to come together over an hour and a half or so to spend time talking about community cohesion in a mix of formal and informal ways. A 'template timetable' was used to structure the event, including an introduction to the event, introductions between people using an activity, activities around the topic of community cohesion, a short presentation by an individual or organisation to promote a good practice idea or technique, informal discussion time over a meal. The events were held in community venues (including a Kurdish cafe and a Sikh temple), perhaps where people wouldn't usually visit, as a first step towards breaking down barriers. The food was an important part of the event.

Connecting Meals in south Leeds, led by Together for Peace. Again, the idea was to bring people together to talk to one another within a deliberately informal 'safe space', so that they could begin to explore community issues and discuss creative solutions. Over four evenings, 22 individuals met in a local home (the Together for Peace staff member's), sometimes bringing friends to join the group. No formal structure was used, but the conversation was facilitated to enable different themes to be discussed. Dubbed "parties with a purpose" by one participant, they brought people from diverse backgrounds and communities together.

Diversity Hub training in east Leeds, led by Mediation Leeds. A training workshop using the Diversity Hub model was run, with the aim of allowing communities in the area to hear from one another and to encourage ideas about how they wanted to interact together and work to establish good community relations. Also, it was hoped to draw together a core group of people for further training on community cohesion and conflict resolution. 28 people attended the workshops, from a wide variety of communities including Ethiopians, Pakistanis, East African, Zimbabwean, Persian, Kurdish and white British.

One City youth film work, an all-Leeds project with the work in Chapeltown funded by Civic Pioneers, led by Stop Hate UK and the film company Hi8us. The project aimed to give young people the opportunity to explore their thoughts around identity and community, using film as a medium to collect this information within their own communities, and then sharing the information and discussing the emerging issues and points of interest with young people from other communities through a joint 'dialogue event'. 16 young people from the Chapeltown area were actively involved in planning the film, then making and editing it. Most of the young people were Black British or with African Caribbean backgrounds. The dialogue event brought three participating groups from different parts of the city together. During the two hours, the participants worked in mixed groups to talk about their reactions to the three groups' films.

Additionally, as the overall project developed, a few activities that had not originally been envisaged were carried out. The most significant of these was the project partnership's participation in the Leeds One Community Day, contributing to activities in a marquee sharing different cultures' food, music and other performance.

Outcomes so far

Unique project outcomes

Key outcomes identified by project staff so far include:

- the establishment of a successful organisational partnership, which will continue to work together in future
- the development of relationships between individuals within and between several communities in Leeds
- the opening up of the debate about community conflict.

Partnership working between the participating organisations is now set to stay.

As people took part in the different activities, they have begun to get to know one another – one project worker described this as “nurturing social webs”.

The various debates have given all sorts of different people the chance to understand other people's perspectives, as often the project has enabled them to hear these for the first time.

Empowering local communities to work with local authorities

The outcomes relating to the project as a whole include:

- organisations rooted in the community have joined with Leeds City Council to work together on an issue affecting everyone
- workers from a variety of departments within the council have got involved in the project, which has raised their awareness about the issue, and increased levels of skills and knowledge
- at several of the project's events, council officers and local people have come together, giving the opportunity for direct links between residents active and leading in the community and the local authority
- the learning from the project provides material to be used to take back into the local authority (officers and members).

The project has enabled direct contact between local people and people working for the Council.

Through working with organisations active at a community level, the Council has built up a relationship which enables them to take part in debate at local level.

The growing level of awareness within the Council about work to improve community relations will be helpful in itself, but there is potential for further improvements through the evidence created by the project.

Empowering local communities to have a say in finding solutions to local problems

The project described their outcomes in relation to having a say in finding solutions as follows:

- several of the events and activities organised by the project were about starting the dialogue about an identified problem (community conflict), from which either formal or informal solutions might be taken forward
- the training activities (diversity hub, conflict resolution skills) have given participants knowledge and skills to use in finding solutions in their community
- participants from across the project activities have become enthused and motivated to get involved in further activities to do with improving community relations
- the project has helped to bring people together to create local community networks with the potential to work together in future to find solutions.

The project is in its early days in terms of finding solutions, but rather has been focussing on putting firm foundations in place by building relationships.

Participants are also being prepared to contribute through capacity-building activities.

Key success factors

The key factors identified by the project were:

- the partnership. Although the organisations had known of one another beforehand, they had never worked together. They found that they had complementary skills and areas of experience and were able to learn from others, and that the joint working helped with creativity. Also, the location of the organisations' work gave the project as a whole a city-wide spread. Another benefit was being able to use the other organisations' existing resources, infrastructure and contacts without having to go looking for it
- flexibility. Although the project had overall goals and planned activities, there was also room to move at a speed that all partners felt comfortable with and to take on emerging ideas
- using food and meals as a focus for meetings. Besides being a stimulus to discussion, the occasion of people eating together and sharing food was important in itself
- the use of a film as a core to the work with young people. The film work gave them something tangible to work on, at the same time as helping them gain skills. Also, it worked well as a medium for people to express their views; because the people who had contributed were involved in the editing, they could take out bits if they then decided that they were unhappy about something.

The skills, knowledge and resource sharing made the partnership a very effective way of working. The organisations each brought positive elements to the joint working.

The 'room to manoeuvre' worked because boundaries were set by the overall goals of the project.

Sharing food has a certain symbolism which fits well with the project goals, as well as meeting a common need.

The film work gave the young people a degree of control.

Barriers experienced and how they were overcome

The main barriers experienced during the project were:

Getting people involved in some of the pilot activities. The key thing was to raise people's awareness of the project and motivate them to prioritise the project so that they took part, even though on occasion the intended outcome of an event was relatively intangible eg better social networks as a result of an evening's discussion and meal. The project leaders worked hard with the preparatory networking, pro-actively going out into the communities eg meetings with established community groups, and working through social networks. Also, they tried to plan activities so that they fitted with potential participants' schedules.

Maintaining young people's commitment to the film project. When young people failed to turn up for planned activities, this put pressure on the time schedule. The workers tried to tackle this through more work to explain the aims and benefits of the project, so that with greater understanding the young people would choose to prioritise this within their wider activities.

The funding mechanism of the grant and the financial procedures within the Council meant that money was slow to reach the partner organisations. This was mitigated by the good working relationships between the Council and the organisations, but did require extra management.

Sustainability

The partnership is now a solid entity. They have already explored (but decided against) one option for a new joint project and expect to continue to work both formally and informally together.

The meal-based events are planned to continue. The model developed during the funded project was deliberately low-cost with sustainability in mind eg participants at the network lunches each contributing £2.

The work on menu cards will continue, although limited funding will be needed to co-ordinate the work and of course, people will need to continue to contribute the write-ups of the techniques. This work will be tied in with continued work on the website as a support resource for community cohesion.

Using funding from other sources, training and capacity-building begun during this project will continue eg for the young people engaged in the film work, the conflict resolution skills training.

One thing other people might find useful to try out **Dialogue set around a meal**

The underlying ethos is one where strong webs of relationships within communities are fostered and facilitated, out of which can then come deep, sustainable social change. The meal-based approach means that this process is a small, comfortable and enabling environment. The key things to consider are:

- getting a mix of people to join in – gender, age, cultural and ethnic background
- facilitating people to 'tell their stories'; aim for creative space that allows people to unload their feelings
- giving people formal and informal space to make connections with one another; balance the programmed and unprogrammed time
- taking care to give everyone a chance to take part – don't let the dominant dominate
- make the food a talking point and a central element of the activity.

With hindsight...

The steering group think that the profile of the project would have been greater if they had branded the work as that of a single project. It would then have been clearer about just how much was being done under the umbrella of the project, but also it might have given participants the feeling of being part of something bigger.

All of the participating organisations feel that they under-estimated the work that would be needed and so spent more time on the work. However, they see the benefits of this and will use the learning when planning future activities.

And, in the words of the project**The most significant thing about this project has been...:**

"...The possibilities and opportunities through the relationships... relationships which are far more sustainable than projects."

And finally, if the project staff were to give one piece of advice to local, regional or national policy makers about their sort of work, it would be to...

"...Try to develop funding which develops a relationship between the funder and fundee. Build trust so that a project can work flexibly within boundaries, rather than being required to predetermine the whole programme. It is vital to leave space for creativity, changes and organic development. Think of the funding relationship as a covenant, not a contract."

PROJECT: Developing Neighbourhood Charters, Liverpool

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Partner organisations

Liverpool City Council Neighbourhood Management Service

Liverpool Council for Voluntary Service (LCVS)

Liverpool Community Network (the collective voice for Liverpool's VCF sector)

Timescale

Funded project May – October 2007.

Funding

£45,000 Civic Pioneers

Simple project description

The work funded by Civic Pioneers was one stage of a longer process. Since 2004, Liverpool City Council has been working on the basis of five Neighbourhood Management Areas covering the whole of the city; the Council's Neighbourhood Management Service incorporates housing management, housing regeneration and jobs, education and training services. It has taken the lead on the production of Community Charters – documents for each Area which set out in a user-friendly way the standards in service delivery that local people can expect and how local people can contribute and monitor performance.

However, the Council were aware that although the Charters had been sent to every household, not everyone was aware of them or what use they could be in terms of giving local people the chance to scrutinise and question services.

The Civic Pioneers funding was used to run an event in each of the five Neighbourhood areas, badged "Your Community Matters". The aim was to raise the profile of the Charters and to get local people's input into the content of the third edition of their local Community Charter eg how the

Charters could be made more user friendly. As a part of this, the events also aimed to bring together the local voluntary, community and faith sector (VCF) groups, local councillors, key public sector partners and local residents.

The events were part of a longer process at neighbourhood level, so the momentum was intended to be carried forward into ward level workshops to consider local issues.

Attendance at each “Your Community Matters” event varied, from 72 to 113 people, including people from the VCF sector, the Police, registered social landlords, the Primary Care Trust, Fire and Safety, councillors, the City Council and the CVS.

A similar pattern was followed at each of the five events:

- welcome, by the city council’s lead member for neighbourhoods and housing
- opening address, jointly by the chief executive of Liverpool CVS and the council’s head of committee services
- a presentation on community charters by the local neighbourhood manager
- workshop exercise on ways of resolving local issues, called “Who You Gonna Call?”
- a presentation about the community benefits of Merseyside’s objective one programme
- an interactive gameshow-type exercise to provide information on small grants available to VCF groups
- a networking lunch.

Attendees were asked to fill in an evaluation form before and after the event, so that it was possible to see if there was an increase in understanding or knowledge about Community Charters as a result of the day.

An enormous amount of preparation went into the organisation of the events. The main steps were:

- a series of planning meetings to decide on what the council and partners wanted to achieve from the events, who should be invited and what the event should look like
- raising awareness and beginning to communicate with key organisations and individuals about the planned events eg neighbourhood chairs
- ensuring linkage of the content of the events with the structures and processes of governance at neighbourhood level
- detailed logistical planning of each event
- promotion of the events eg through the local media, posters in local shop windows, through existing city council reporting mechanisms such as neighbourhood committees.

Outcomes so far

Unique project outcomes

Key outcomes identified by project staff so far include:

- the events attracted people from the audiences targeted by the city council
- the events acted as a launch for the process of people at a ward level beginning to feed into the charters
- more people have become aware of the charters and their role in local level service delivery
- there has been buy-in to the charters politically, with raised understanding amongst councillors
- there has also been buy-in to the charters from partner organisations as a result of the process of working together on the events and of the value they gained from the events themselves.

The pro-active work by the Council has enabled it to reach out to individuals and organisations across the City and to inform them about the Charters.

The level of support offered to the Council for the Charters has visibly increased, from a variety of audiences.

Empowering local communities to work with local authorities

The project described their outcomes in relation to empowering people to work with the local authority as:

- organisations and individuals learned more about what the local authority is doing in their neighbourhood
- the 'Who You Gonna Call' exercise was powerful in that it informed attendees about which parts of the local authority would be able to help in what situations
- the events have acted as a catalyst for people to express their interest in getting involved in their community
- the event included formal and informal meeting time between attendees, local authority staff and councillors.

The events were the hook to bring a wide variety of audiences together, meeting and learning more about each other's organisations as well as the local authority

With more information, the attendees would be better equipped to work with the local authority

Interest raised at this event could be taken forward into Ward level workshop

Empowering local communities to have a say in finding solutions to local problems

The project described their outcomes in relation to having a say in finding solutions as follows:

- feedback from the events suggests that people have started to identify that they have a role to play
- hearing about how many people and organisations are working in a neighbourhood and what they are achieving helped to give reassurance to local people that solutions are being found
- the events began the process of raising people's awareness about the mechanisms in place to have a say in local problem-solving.

As people see a role for themselves in the community, they are also expressing their interest in getting actively involved.

It is already possible for people to get involved in finding solutions to local problems, but in reality, this hasn't happened to the extent the Council would like due to lack of awareness from local people about how to do so.

Key success factors

The most important factors identified by the project were:

- meticulous preparation for the events. Although described as laborious, it paid off in terms of attendance and in particular, achieving buy-in from partner organisations and other key stakeholders. Councillors, for example, were comfortable at the event because they had received detailed briefings at committee
- high level and inter-agency commitment. This was actively demonstrated by the presentations from the relevant Lead Member and partner organisation senior staff.

High level commitment contributed to success.

The groundwork was crucial in terms of making key players aware of the work and gaining their active support, which then led others to become supportive.

Barriers experienced and how they were overcome

The main barriers experienced related to the logistics of the event. Particular points noted include:

- limiting the number of attendees from each organisation to ensure a good cross-section of participants
- setting up for morning events the night before
- where possible, having the key items of equipment supplied by the venue.

Sustainability

The events were planned from the beginning as part of a longer-term process, where they acted as the launch for a series of local level events. As such, they were a time-limited activity, but with long-term implications.

The project manager will be working to reflect strategically on the Charters, using the responses from the events in the work to consider the best way to move forward with Charters in Liverpool. The timing of the work is seen as opportune in terms of the emerging Neighbourhood Area Agreements.

One thing other people might find useful to try out

Councillor involvement and support

The project manager described the considerable benefit gained from the buy-in from City councillors. They were able to achieve this through:

- making the effort to design and deliver briefings to councillors well in advance of the events and ensuring that the briefings were targeted to the particular interests of that committee
- creating pathways for communication with individual councillors
- garnering the support of the lead member, whose enthusiasm then worked to motivate other councillors.

With hindsight...

The changes that might be made if something similar was done again relate to the practical aspect of organising the events, as noted above (see Barriers).

And, in the words of the project

The most significant thing about this project has been...:

"...The significant enthusiasm and buy-in from a range of partners, organisations and communities to come together to discuss their local areas and to find positive solutions to problems."

And finally, if the project staff were to give one piece of advice to local, regional or national policy makers about their sort of work, it would be...

"...Don't underestimate the amount of preparation to make multi-agency and community events happen. To have the integrity, you have to do the groundwork."

PROJECT: Developing Restorative Justice, Barlow Hall Primary School, Manchester

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Partner organisations

Manchester City Council Children's Services department

Timescale

Project began September 2006.

Funded project April 2007 to March 2008, but ongoing work afterwards.

Funding

£6,000

Civic Pioneers

Simple project description

Within the school, the Head had a growing awareness that the punishment or consequence approach was not working, especially with difficult children. At the same time, a parent governor was keen to find a new approach to tackling bullying and suggested restorative justice (RJ) approaches. This fitted within Manchester City Council's (as the Education Authority) drive to promote emotional intelligence.

A steering group for restorative justice was set up in the school, which included school staff, lunchtime workers and governors. Their first task was to come up with a vision for RJ in the school, explaining what they wanted to achieve through using RJ.

They then moved on to organising a whole staff training event, including everyone working in the school, so that everyone had the same understanding about RJ. Training was repeated for staff members who missed the event or who joined the school after it.

An outside organisation with experience in RJ approaches was brought in to lead the training and then to provide ongoing support.

The steering group decided to take a case study approach to trialling RJ approaches, working with one boy at risk of permanent exclusion, a group of children causing disruption at lunchtimes and with two families involved through an incident at the school.

The importance of reaching out into the whole school community was recognised, including the parents. Following the suggestion of one of the parents (at a parent discussion focus group), it was decided to organise a presentation to parents, involving all the children in the school. There was a social element as well, with tea and coffee, giving time for attendees to discuss what they had seen.

Alongside this work, the Head and steering group worked to create a visual representation to help people understand what the RJ approach means. A leaf symbol was created, using the simple LEAF acronym, where L=listen, E=effects, A=amends and F=follow-up. This was then used in many ways, including forming the basis for two formal guides – a parents' Guide to anti-bullying and a guide for schools and leadership teams.

RJ approaches have been used with the case study participants and consistently with the whole school with everyday, 'low level' incidents, such as a child hitting another with a football.

Outcomes so far

Unique project outcomes

Key outcomes identified by project staff so far include:

- the boy previously at risk of permanent exclusion has not had any fixed term exclusions
- behaviour across the school has been observed to have significantly improved
- issues at lunchtimes have decreased
- the school has been able to offer visits from other schools to see RJ working as part of its contribution to the City's Behaviour Improvement Network
- awareness and use of RJ has become widespread throughout the school community.

The RJ approaches have been seen to be making a difference within the school environment.

As hoped, the school has begun to demonstrate its learning to a wider audience.

RJ is becoming a standard part of the everyday world of Barlow Hall school.

Empowering local communities to work with local authorities

In this case, the 'community' is best understood as the schoolchildren and their parents; the local authority includes the school staff and the Council's Children's Services department. The project described their outcomes in this regard as:

- staff have been given the means to deal with conflict better through having a tool which they have received thorough training in and which is used by all staff and children
- children have also been given the means to deal with conflict better, benefiting particularly from focussed discussion following a consistent pattern
- parents of children involved in serious incidents have had the opportunity to discuss the issues with the school, using the RJ structures
- the school has kept the Council's Children's Services department informed of the project's progress.

The clear steps of the RJ approach are understood by all parties and provide a commonly adopted mechanism for discussing the issue.

RJ provides a tool for calm discussion, which means that everyone involved has a chance to have their say.

The local authority's education service has increased its understanding of the use of RJ approaches in the primary sector.

Empowering local communities to have a say in finding solutions to local problems

The project described their outcomes in relation to having a say in finding solutions as follows:

- the structure helps the families and others involved to talk to one another, including the step to make amends
- the victim's parents are empowered to engage directly with the school and the perpetrator, using the RJ as a structure for these relationships
- the children are more able to take responsibility because they have the opportunity to really listen to one another and then to make amends.

Using the language of RJ, making 'amends' equates to finding 'solutions'. In other words, the victim and perpetrator agree on what needs to be done and/or said to make the situation better.

The RJ approach provides the structure for finding a solution which all parties can contribute to.

Key success factors

The key factors identified by the project were:

- building a vision for RJ in the school – this presented clearly what the aims and purpose of RJ were, based on careful consideration by key players in its introduction and implementation

- making time for training of the whole staff – so that everyone understands what RJ is and why it is important, and then takes it on board in their everyday working practices. It was vital to continue to ‘mop up’, to ensure that further training was carried out with new staff or people who’d missed the first training
- support from Conflict Solutions to deliver the training and then provide ongoing support. Also, this helped to give the project more focus, as well as seemingly more importance in the eyes of the parents
- getting the parents on board through the event – this was vital to the widespread acceptance of RJ
- using visual resources – the LEAF simplified the approach and was easy to remember.

The school began by working out what they wanted to achieve through the use of RJ, but then took this message out to their whole community.

A variety of mechanisms were adopted to ensure that RJ was well understood. The presentation event worked because the parents were hearing the message from their children; the LEAF because it was memorable and simple.

The outside support brought experience of the use of RJ into the school.

Barriers experienced and how they were overcome

The main barriers experienced during the project were:

A key person leading the introduction and implementation programme had to withdraw their involvement due to unexpected personal circumstances. The steering group provided an ongoing structure to drive the work, but even with added input from the school Head, there was not as much management time commitment as had originally been planned for.

Some families weren’t ready to engage with RJ approaches. The presentation event was instrumental in ‘winning over’ many parents because it helped to give them a deeper understanding of RJ. In one instance, where the option of a restorative conference was refused, alternative approaches to RJ have been adopted.

Also, there was some reluctance from a few members of staff to adopt RJ. To combat this, the success of quick wins has been celebrated, to try to persuade people of the benefits. Also, the Head, key staff and steering group have worked hard to keep talking about RJ and emphasising its importance.

The debate about where ‘punishment or consequence’ approach fits in continues within the school, although it is recognised that eventually they hope to be at a stage where they feel ready to leave this behind.

Sustainability

The project funding has enabled the step change to be made and to establish the ethos. The intention now is to continue to embed RJ approaches throughout the school, but this is not expected to need further financial input.

More support from the outside agency would be appreciated to keep the focus and energy, but at a reduced level; it is hoped to find internal resources for this.

The school is beginning to be able to pass on their learning, eg through 'go-see' visits from other schools, so the benefits will hopefully begin to spread more widely around Manchester.

One thing other people might find useful to try out

The Presentation Event

The presentation event was fundamental in getting buy-in for RJ across the school community. Key elements were:

- the idea originating from a parent, giving ownership of it right from the beginning
- involving all children in the school, therefore attracting a large number of parents to attend
- passing on the message through the children, so that they not only made the presentation, but also continued to talk to their parents after the event
- including a social element immediately after the presentation, so that there was an immediate opportunity for people to discuss what they had heard, in an informal environment
- holding the event during Anti-Bullying Week, so that the issues were already in the front of people's minds.

With hindsight...

The Head notes that a more comprehensive monitoring system would have been useful, in particular to pick up on the myriad of small, low level incidents which have been resolved using RJ approaches.

Also, it might have been helpful to have made better links with the secondary schools in northern Manchester area working with RJ approaches, as this could have helped with the learning in Barlow Hall school.

And, in the words of the project

The most significant thing about this project has been...:

"...The different and more supportive way in which adults approach children and deal with conflict situations and the way children approach each other and use restorative approaches."

And finally, if the project staff were to give one piece of advice to local, regional or national policy makers about their sort of work, it would be to...

"...Make sure that people have enough practical and accessible evidence to show that restorative practices really work with the majority of people."

PROJECT: Mancunian Agreements

Manchester Partnership Team
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Partner organisations

Manchester City residents

Manchester Partnership

Infrastructure support organisations including Scarman Trust, Community Network for Manchester.

Timescale

Funded project November 2006 – June 2007, but ongoing work in the communities after that.

Funding

£50,000

Home Office Civic Pioneers

Also, Manchester City Council mainstream funding as required and identified at a local level.

Simple project description

The project grew out of actions resulting from a review of the Community Strategy by the local Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), the Manchester Partnership. This review identified the need to increase the accountability of LSP partners for the Community Strategy's delivery, including what local residents could do to be empowered to take responsibility and to engage in delivery.

The concept of 'Mancunian Agreements' was launched in March 2006. The idea was to have very local agreements, by which residents would choose an issue that was important to them to tackle, and then work with the City Council and other key service delivery organisations to come up with a formal agreement on action that all players could sign up to and deliver

on. In this way, local people could play an active part in improving life in their own neighbourhood. A distinct Agreement development process was developed, so that when local people had an idea about something that they could do to improve their area, they could get others (local people and relevant organisations) involved, together agree on useful actions, and then work these up into a formal agreement.

The Civic Pioneers funding was used to support the pilot phase, which included seven separate Agreements. The development of the Mancunian Agreements approach was accompanied by the formation of a common brand and a 'how to' guide aimed at residents and neighbourhood based organisation staff.

The seven pilots were:

- Harpurhey Communities Together – breaking down barriers between longer-term and new residents
- Pasturefields – community hanging baskets project, bringing neighbours together
- North Manchester High School – young people and adults relationship – building through a litter picking and environmental campaign
- Friends of Blackley Forest – greenspace improvements
- Responsible Licensing – tackling local under-age drinking
- Crumpsall – local neighbourhood improvements
- Brooklands – tackling anti-social behaviour.

In each area, a broker was identified to act as someone to push the project forwards, to be the link between the residents and the Council and other relevant partners, to help formulate ideas, give advice and to provide other back-up, eg booking meeting space. Typically, the brokers were a Council officer, eg a Ward Support Officer. Another important role for the broker was to report back to Manchester Partnership Team on issues emerging for the pilot project as a whole.

The pilot project was supported by a Project Board, from which an Elected Members Steering Group and a Strategy Steering Group were formed. The Project Board (comprising senior staff) provided the overall steer, while the Strategy Group (comprising more frontline staff) was a forum for ideas generation and knowledge-sharing. The Elected Members group met on an ad hoc basis, with the aim of being kept up to date on progress and to gain support in their role as local community leaders whose role it is to support the delivery of the Community Strategy.

The project's lead officer carried out briefings about the aim of the project to key audiences in order to garner active support. These audiences included support agencies, Ward Support Officers and Ward co-ordinators.

Outcomes so far

Unique project outcomes

Seven Mancunian Agreements were completed; each has progressed at its own pace and so some were more developed than others by the end of the pilot phase. Each Agreement had particular outcomes unique to its own area. For example:

- Blakely Forest – the Police have begun to use the greenspace as a regular exercise and training location for police dogs; local schools are building birdboxes and using the area for bird-watching; the Council's Leisure Services Department has taken on upkeep and cleaning
- Communities Together Harpurhey – a new residents' Welcome Pack has been produced and is in use. Also, a Polish resident has joined the Residents' Association, as well as other new members becoming involved. The Residents' Association started new activities, in particular food taster sessions and household postcard distribution
- Responsible licensing – the work has raised the priority of the issue of alcohol-related young people's behaviour, previously no-one wanted to talk about it.

Blakely Forest has become a well-used local amenity, as more people feel comfortable in spending time there (particularly as there is often a police presence!) and it is better cared for because of the increased use and the Council's maintenance work.

In Harpurhey, the process of developing the Agreement has been as important as the Agreement itself, as it is this working together on activities which has broken down barriers between in-coming new people and existing residents.

Empowering local communities to work with local authorities

The Mancunian Agreements team describe the concept of empowering local communities to work with local authorities as the fundamental starting point for their project.

The project described their outcomes in relation to working with local authorities as:

- first and foremost, enabling resident-led issues to become the focus of work involving the local authority and other key service providers. The Agreements have provided the mechanism by which residents can come into contact with the local authority and other agencies, and then build up a relationship
- through working together, the local authority, individuals, groups and businesses have gained more of an understanding about one another's concerns and feel less nervous about engaging with one another.

Being pro-active about going out to residents involved in other activities eg Homewatch meetings, has got people involved with agencies who had not done so previously.

The embedding of the resident-led approach into the Community Strategy means that it is taken seriously by all parties.

The Agreements are just one of a number of avenues by which residents can work with the local authority eg Ward Co-ordination Groups.

Empowering local communities to have a say in finding solutions to local problems

The project described their outcomes in relation to having a say in finding solutions as follows:

- the process of developing an agreement enables the local authority to pick up on residents' ideas and give them support, but avoids taking control away from them
- a broad array of different ideas have been harnessed to match the variety of problems faced, each one being appropriate to the particular local situation
- for some of the Agreements, it has been the first time that local people and particular agencies have worked together.

Allowing people to get to know one another has broken down perceptions of stereotypes and myths between residents and agencies, leading to greater co-operation in tackling a problem.

The use of a 'broker' provides the extra support needed to support the process and bring the right people/organisations together.

Key success factors

The key factors identified by the project were:

- having support from the LSP
- having residents' involvement recognised in the Community Strategy
- residents' involvement
- support from elected Members, which added weight to a group's work
- local level support from the broker.

The LSP support showed that there was top-level commitment to the concept and development of Agreements.

The broker could act as the 'glue' between participants at the early stages, as well as providing welcome practical support eg arranging meetings.

Barriers experienced and how they were overcome

There was an issue around residents' involvement that the project team needed to tackle, which originated from the very earliest days of the Mancunian Agreements idea. The concept was first mooted at the Manchester Partnership conference and was followed up by some consultation by the Council. It is thought that some people interpreted the idea as the Council wanting to impose agreements about how they should behave. To tackle this, the team

realised that there was a need for a lot of communication with residents to explain that the idea really was intended as a bottom-up approach. The work and outcomes of the pilot Agreements have helped through providing concrete examples of how they can work.

The other barrier noted by the project was commitment from partners, in terms of seeing the benefit of working at a very local level. Again, the solution focussed on communication – in this case, through briefing sessions eg to the LSP, Local Action Partnership and other local neighbourhood meetings.

Sustainability

The project team is hoping to develop a Partner Agreement at strategic level for each area. Also, they are hoping to build in a quality assurance mechanism for residents to measure how well partners are working at the local area level.

The 'how to' guide (Local Ideas, Local Actions: Building a Mancunian Agreement) is now freely available in booklet and DVD format as a support for other neighbourhoods to use.

One thing other people might find useful to try out

The project picked out the Communities Together Harpurhey Agreement process as a valuable approach to pass on to others.

The problem related to suspicion and mistrust between established residents and newly arrived residents. A key factor in success of the work was actually raising the issue of racism, discrimination and prejudice. Council staff started by talking about the problem at various local meetings, such as Residents' Association meetings. They suggested the idea of drawing up an Agreement about the issue. One Residents' Association picked up the baton and began to put considerable effort into the work. They piggy-backed on a consultation about physical improvements, in order to get feedback about ideas for improvements in neighbourliness. They also conducted their own door-to-door survey over several months, visiting around two-thirds of the 3000 households in the area. The ideas from the consultation returns enabled the Residents' Association to put together a draft Agreement, which was fed back to local residents at a drop-in event. They then regularly informed residents about activities and progress through flyers put through people's doors. The flyers also explained how people could have their say.

The activities chosen by the Residents' Association were seen to be very successful. The consultation showed that there was a need to show a welcome to new people to the area, so a Welcome Card was developed and then distributed by the local Registered Social Landlord. The Card invited new people to contact the Residents' Association if they had any problems or just to get involved. At Christmas, season's greetings cards from the Residents' Association were distributed, again encouraging people to get involved. The local Refugee Action Group was asked to help out in order to reassure some refugees, who were unsure about the contact from the Residents' Association; this process was felt to work very well.

With hindsight...

The people who acted as the brokers for the Agreements also had their 'day jobs' eg as a Ward Support Officer, and some found the extra work onerous. To tackle this, the project is hoping to set up some form of central advice team including a dedicated officer for local Agreements. They would be able to take some of the pressure off the local brokers, for example by supporting the monitoring and reporting back.

Also, the project hasn't tried out networking or linking with other similar neighbourhood-based projects, but feel that this could be beneficial in future.

**In the words of the project,
the most significant thing about this project has been...:**

"...resident and partner involvement".

And finally, if you were to give one piece of advice to local, regional or national policy makers about the sort of work you've been doing, what would it be?

"Let the projects take shape organically, giving residents the opportunity to determine the priorities for themselves".

PROJECT: Developing the Management of Community Centres, Middlesbrough

Community Regeneration
Middlesbrough Council
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Partner organisations

Community centres

Timescale

March 2007 – March 2008

Funding

£49,000

Civic Pioneers

No other funding, but links with Middlesbrough Council operational budget for capital spend on community buildings.

Simple project description

For nearly 30 years, the Council has maintained 12 community centres in various parts of the town. The Council provides the building and has a small maintenance budget. The day-to-day management rests with voluntary management committees. Historically, the buildings tended to be treated as separate entities, but the Council identified potential to amalgamate resources, to treat the centres as a network and to enable the centres to work more as a collective to support one another's activities and to build capacity of the volunteers. Also, it was recognised that the community centres had potential to contribute to the wider aims of Middlesbrough Council (as expressed by the LSP's six themes).

As a result, there was some internal restructuring within Middlesbrough Council which created an eight person staff team with dedicated responsibility to support development and management of the community centres.

The aim of this project has been to facilitate the development of a network between the community centres, in order to share best practice, learn from one another's experiences and offer support to one another. Middlesbrough Council was also interested to explore how best to work with the voluntary management committees to optimise the management of the community centres as an asset to the Council and the community.

The main activities of the project have been:

A conference to bring the community centre volunteers together. With more than 80 volunteers, there was a good mix of attendees, including management committee members and people running activities in the centres (but not on the management committee). There was also a good age, gender and ethnicity mix, which was felt to have very much enriched the conference. The first part of the conference looked at how community centres currently contributed to each of the six Community Strategy themes' outcomes so far (health and wellbeing, tackling crime, positive things to do, jobs and training, participation and involvement, neighbourliness, community cohesion) and where there was seen to be potential to contribute. This exercise got people to start to think about the role of community centres, together with a review of the wider context, such as the Quirk Review of community asset management. The second part of the conference focussed on key issues that the Council knew from experience were needed in order to improve community centre management: volunteering, developing programmes, capacity building, business and development planning, funding and sustainability, constitutions and governance.

A post-conference report summarising the outputs of the day's work, which was then used to plan a follow-up set of workshops.

Follow-up workshops to bring community centre representatives together again to study in detail each of the key issues for development.

Development of a small project for each community centre, picking up on one of the issues and using the project as a 'tester' for good practice. The Civic Pioneers funding is being used to fund each project for up to £1000.

Provision of a training and events programme to support the projects work, with content chosen to be directly relevant to the volunteers' particular training needs.

Development of branding and a unique profile for community centres within the Middlesbrough Council website, so that it is clear what and where the community centres are, how people can use them and how they can get involved.

A review by the Council's regeneration team staff of how community centres are contributing to community cohesion, eg the representativeness of management committees, the relevance of the centre's programme of activities to its local community.

A review by the Council's regeneration team staff of community centre constitutions, including suggestions for changes to enable the centres to act more independently of Middlesbrough Council.

Unique project outcomes

Key outcomes identified by project staff so far include:

- lots of practical ideas have been put forward by volunteers and shared with volunteers from other community centres eg how to get discretionary rates for community centres
- more formal business planning is becoming embedded into community centre management practice
- a semi-formal network of community centres has been established. The Centres are sharing information on best practice eg on lettings. Management Committee Chairs have begun regular meetings
- individual community centres have begun to look for examples of good practice elsewhere and to make visits to help with the learning
- training has been identified as a common need and the centres are working together to build a common funding 'pot' for future activities.

As hoped, the opportunities to meet one another have enabled active volunteers to learn from one another and put these lessons into practice.

The network is perceived as beginning to give community centre management volunteers an identity in that role, which has potential for enabling them to have more of a voice in town-wide debates and decision-making.

The project has created momentum for learning from others, whether they are within or external to the project.

The project has begun to create a joined-up way of thinking amongst the community centres.

Empowering local communities to work with local authorities

The project described their outcomes in relation to empowering people to work with the local authority as:

- the involvement of two of the Council's Executive Members in the Conference, as well as several officers, gave participants a direct link into the Council
- the outcomes of the conference, workshop and reviews will be submitted to the Council's Corporate Management Team and political executive, which brings community centres onto the core agenda of the Council's activities
- the local authority workers for the Centres are meeting on a regular basis, usually every month.

The conference gave volunteer participants the opportunity to begin to form informal, face-to-face relationships with officers, which was described by project staff as “significant development of social capital”.

There is now a mechanism in place within the local authority for sharing information about the Community Centres.

Empowering local communities to have a say in finding solutions to local problems

The project described their outcomes in relation to having a say in finding solutions as follows:

- the conference built people’s confidence, as they saw other people facing the same problems and working to overcome them
- the conference and subsequent networking has given interested new volunteers the opportunity to express their ideas
- as community centres carry out particular projects, the good practice that is developed can be shared throughout the city.

Meeting other people also needing to find solutions to similar problems acted as a motivator and helped with inspiration to tackle difficulties.

The development of the co-operative working has provided a forum where ideas, whoever they come from, can be taken seriously.

Key success factors

The key factors identified by the project were:

- executive commitment, which was created through briefings to the Corporate Management Team, elected Members and the Mayor
- the linkage between the community centres and the town-wide priorities as expressed in the Community Strategy, which helped the centre volunteers to understand the role of community centres
- at the conference, making sure that the early part of the day was devoted to setting the context, before asking people to consider any detail
- again at the conference, having a keynote speaker with a background of volunteering and community centres, and an introductory speaker who was a well known local personality
- use of one of the community centres as the venue for the conference.

The active involvement of high level Council officers and members demonstrated the Council’s commitment to the community centres to all conference participants.

More understanding about the role of their community centres meant that the volunteers could see the value of their work.

The directly relevant experience of the conference keynote speaker meant that he could relate to the volunteers and the topic under discussion. The use of a local personality was an attractive 'hook' to potential attendees, but with the added value of being seen to have local relevance and resonance.

Use of one of the community centres showed commitment to the centres themselves, as well as creating the right atmosphere for the conference's work.

Barriers experienced and how they were overcome

The main barriers experienced during the project were:

The timescale, in that the project had been ambitious in what it planned to achieve within the year. This includes not only all of the different activities, but also the need to embed a different way of working. The flexibility from the funder to extend the working period of the project was welcomed.

The extra work created by the project, which led to a requirement for additional administrative support. The project funding enabled the Council to cover the cost of this.

Sustainability

The funding from Civic Pioneers has enabled a step-change in the Council's work with community centres and in the capacity of the volunteers. The work will continue using existing Council resources and without further additional funding, as much of the key work has been completed. It is hoped that the newly developed capacity of the management committees will enable them to achieve more. Also, the review of constitutions may lead to changes which give management committees more freedom.

One thing other people might find useful to try out A Social Event, incorporating an Awards Ceremony

The volunteers involved in the project came together for a quiz night, which was intended to help with the relationship-building process. Also, the Council wanted to be able to show recognition of people's voluntary work with community centres, so created a set of volunteering awards, eg the longest-serving volunteer, which were presented at the get-together.

With hindsight...

The project manager notes that he would have taken a more structured overall approach to the project, eg by incorporating clearer milestones. This would have helped his own leadership of the project and would have benefited participants, who would have been clearer about the project's overall direction.

And, in the words of the project

The most significant thing about this project has been...:

"...The fact that we've created a network, a family, an association of people doing the same things."

And finally, if the project staff were to give one piece of advice to local, regional or national policy makers about their sort of work, it would be to...

"...Recognise that volunteers of community centres provide a key role as 'voluntary activists' with the support of their Council. Even though community centres may be owned by the Council, their volunteers shouldn't be excluded from the voluntary sector".

"...Also, recognise that where the relationship between volunteers, community activists and community centres becomes a partnership, the community centres can become really important for delivery of services and towards tackling priority themes".

PROJECT: Get Closer to Communities: Cultural Change, Portsmouth

Community Involvement, Empowerment and Development (CIED)
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Partner organisations

Portsmouth Community Involvement Partnership Board – including Portsmouth City Council, Portsmouth University, the voluntary and community sector, Police and Health services.

Timescale

Funded project April 2007 to March 2008.

Funding

£49,000

Civic Pioneers

Also, in-kind resource of the core team of the Community Involvement, Empowerment and Development (CIED) staff. (The Civic Pioneers funding gave them an 'operating budget').

Simple project description

The aim of the project was to carry out a cultural change programme to embed community involvement across the City Council, and to work with partner agencies and the voluntary and community sector to promote effective engagement and partnership between local government and local people, so that more people could influence the decisions which affect their lives and make a meaningful contribution to the design and delivery of public services. The project sat clearly within the context of Together We Can and the Strong and Prosperous Communities White Paper.

Within the project, a number of activities were arranged in order to celebrate and encourage best practice, encourage innovation and test out new techniques, promote Together We Can and Civic Pioneers, and support individual and organisational awareness and competence around community involvement. The main activities were:

Production of a Directory describing the different ways in which people in Portsmouth had been involved in key projects and activities, alongside contact details of individuals and organisations.

Production of a DVD giving a visual presentation of community involvement in Portsmouth, including contributions from local residents, the Leader of the Council and other elected members, Heads of Services of the City Council and a government minister.

A conference for City Council staff, local agencies' staff and local residents, with Fiona McTaggart as keynote speaker.

A high profile communications strategy, including clear branding.

Testing out new text voting technology to encourage participation in local decision-making about the City's Brownfield Project, and a new online forum around parking issues.

Developing a core competency for City Council staff on 'customer and community involvement' and delivery of training to staff on community involvement.

Developing a Learning and Development programme for elected members, focussing on community engagement.

Outcomes so far

Unique project outcomes

Key outcomes identified by project staff so far include:

- production and widespread use of the DVD, which has succeeded in bringing community engagement to life for a broad range of audiences (including local people, City Council and other agencies' staff, conference attendees, staff from organisations and local authorities from further afield)
- the first steps towards mainstreaming community engagement in the Council's activities have begun, in particular through the development of the staff's core competency and the elected member training programme
- the project has helped to inform the national community engagement agenda and has been recognised for its work eg achieving Beacon Status for tackling anti-social behaviour, where the community engagement was noted as outstanding.

The DVD has been a powerful tool to show what community engagement is to 'the person on the street' and to explain what difference it makes. This message was strengthened by the use of a variety of stakeholders each explaining the difference they had seen, eg housing estate residents showing an area of flower planting which had formerly been derelict, a senior police officer giving statistics showing reduction in crime rates.

The City Council have shown real commitment by beginning to incorporate community engagement into its key operating procedures.

The Council has made an effort to feed back its learning from the work, upwards into national policy making and sideways into giving information and advice to other organisations seeking help.

Empowering local communities to work with local authorities

The project described their outcomes in relation to empowering residents to work with the local authority as:

- within the Council itself, as well as the other agencies and organisations involved, the communications strategy has increased people's awareness of community engagement, so that there is more understanding of what it is and why it is important. It is expected that this will result in more staff making more effort to engage with people in the local community
- the Council is working to embed this cultural change through structural re-organisation, with the merging of the community engagement team (CIED) with Democratic Services, so that community engagement acts in synergy with the elected members' work
- the Directory and DVD have demonstrated the broad array of ways in which local communities have the opportunity to engage with the City Council's decision making and service delivery. (About 2500 people are estimated to have seen the DVD so far, and 1000 directories have been distributed).

The City Council has made its commitment to community engagement very visible through the different activities of this project, then followed through by putting the mechanisms in place to extend its practices to involve local people across its officers and elected members.

Empowering local communities to have a say in finding solutions to local problems

The project described their outcomes in relation to having a say in finding solutions as follows:

- the project has raised the profile of the City Council's approach to community engagement so that more people have had a chance to find out *how* to get involved

- new, possibly more attractive methods of involvement have been tried out in an attempt to target people who might not otherwise take part, eg busy people who just want to express a quick opinion, young people who don't want to attend a meeting
- results from a city-wide survey suggest that there is increasing satisfaction amongst residents about the extent to which they can have a say and influence the Council's decisions. A MORI survey of residents shows that satisfaction with the opportunity to have a say increased from 45% in 2005 to 54% in 2007, and that residents who felt they were able to influence decision making increased from 19% to 28%.

Feedback from local residents suggests that the cultural change within the Council is already visible in the community.

The pilots of new consultation and participation approaches have helped the Council to understand more about other ways of giving people a say.

Key success factors

The key factors identified by the project were:

- senior level buy-in. Their demonstration of support for the work was clear throughout the project activities, most obviously through the DVD
- the CIED team's enthusiasm, passion and commitment and the support of Involve – the network of City Council staff working in and with communities
- the high profile communications strategy. An important part of this was the branding, which was deliberately chosen to be contemporary, with interesting imagery and consistent across the media in which it was used
- the existence of a dedicated team to run the project, who could devote their entire time to it rather than trying to do it as additional work
- through Civic Pioneers, being part of a national programme. This meant that the Council were more committed to the project, but it also gave more opportunities for meeting and exchanging learning with other Councils putting engagement at the forefront of their agenda.

The visible leadership from senior Council staff and the Council Leader was instrumental in adding weight to the message.

The communications strategy was deliberately high profile, so that it was very visible to the target audiences. The branding was intended to ensure recognition of the message over time.

The need for serious time and effort to make culture change work was met through the presence of dedicated staff.

Barriers experienced and how they were overcome

The main barriers experienced during the project were:

The downside of the high profile communication strategy, which caused some initial negative perceptions from some Council staff. With a lack of understanding that the project was externally funded, some service delivery officers were concerned that Council money was being spent on marketing and promotion which they felt would have been better spent on service delivery. To tackle this, the CIED team tried to improve their communication about the project and to explain its funding and its overall purpose. This was backed up by the project's activities around staff training.

The amount that the project was trying to achieve within the time and money available. The CIED team recognised that they had maybe been too ambitious and down-sized their intentions, eg by deciding against doing a full action learning evaluation.

Sustainability

As intended, the funded project has enabled the groundwork to be done. With the profile of community involvement now raised within the City Council, this work does not need repeating. Rather, the focus is now on embedding and mainstreaming it. As noted earlier, this process has begun through the organisational restructuring and the development of a staff core competency around customer and community involvement. However, the CIED team will continue to work on promoting and supporting community engagement within the Council.

The branding will continue to be used. Now convinced of the merits of using a DVD for promotion, a second DVD is being planned, which will focus on how local democracy works and what local Councillors do, so that this aspect of community engagement is better understood.

The design of the Development and Learning training package is now in development, incorporating representative and participatory democracy (in response to the Local Government Act and the Councillors' Commission, and also reflecting the City Council's approach to democratic and community engagement).

One thing other people might find useful to try out **DVD production**

The DVD was seen as a very powerful tool for raising awareness and understanding. However, its production involved a huge amount of work. Key factors were:

Lots of involvement from CIED staff at the planning stage, including :drafting the script and the questions; identifying people to interview, getting their agreement and making the arrangements for them to be filmed; agreeing guidance on colours and images; making all of the logistical arrangements for the filming.

Good negotiation skills to bring senior people on board with the project and secure their participation, also to ensure that film rights for key images/scenes were agreed.

Getting senior level buy-in, so that all senior staff were seen 'on screen' to commit themselves to community engagement.

Sound advice from staff in the Council's communications department throughout the work.

Engaging a committed and experienced local production company. Being local meant that they felt more of a stake in the project. Their experience meant that they gave strong support to the CIED team to consider what they really wanted to achieve with the DVD and how they could best do that. Also, they were able to help to bring everyone's different ideas together and show how these ideas could be articulated. The fact that the company were not familiar with the subject helped the Council to be clear about what the message they wanted to get across.

With hindsight...

The launch of the communication strategy would have been more carefully managed, with more preparation work amongst staff to explain the project, its purposes and its funding sources.

Also, the project manager would have been a bit more realistic about what could be achieved in the timescale.

And, in the words of the project

The most significant thing about this project has been...:

"...the opportunity to raise the profile of community involvement, to embed good practice, to influence the national agenda and to see outcomes for communities who now feel they have a voice."

And finally, if the project staff were to give one piece of advice to local, regional or national policy makers about their sort of work, it would be to...

"...Provide funding to be used not for projects, but to support and enable people to embed a community engagement approach, to research the difference that the community engagement approach makes and to enable learning and training."

PROJECT: Salford Restorative Justice, Salford

Salford City Council
Youth Offending Service
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Partner organisations

Other departments within Salford City Council:

Children's Service (including Education)

Education

Community Safety Unit

Victim Support and Witness Service

Children's homes

Timescale

Funded project April 2007 to March 2008, as part of an ongoing project.

Funding

£65,000

Civic Pioneers

No other funding.

Simple project description

The overall aim of the project is to use restorative justice approaches as a means to repair harm and build relationships, with a view to decreasing the number of young people becoming involved in the criminal justice system eg through conflict in the community, school exclusions or becoming at risk of going into care. It was felt that a holistic approach was needed, if this was to work, which would mean involving a large number of different departments/agencies.

The project included a number of different activities:

Delivery of restorative justice (RJ) training to 90 people from different disciplines, so that they became trained RJ facilitators. These included individuals from the Police, children's homes, education staff and locality team staff.

Consultancy support from the trainers to relevant staff in the participating organisations, so that they continued to receive support and advice on how to implement RJ, how to get the appropriate procedures in place and how to get young people on board with the idea.

Development of a team of peer mentors ie 17 young people in one secondary school, who helped with the introduction and use of RJ in the school.

Training three more trainers from different agencies, so that they can move on to run more training courses and deliver on-going consultancy support.

The creation of a support and information website ([www.salford.gov.uk/restorative justice](http://www.salford.gov.uk/restorative-justice)), including targeting parents, professionals, young people and the community.

Production of a generic leaflet, aimed at parents and staff, explaining what RJ is and including case studies of how RJ can be used, as well as signposting to the local authority's locality teams and community safety unit.

Development of a 'toolkit' DVD for schools to explain what RJ is and how it can be used.

Outcomes so far

Unique project outcomes

Key outcomes identified by project staff so far include:

- one school has become a flagship for restorative justice and is using restorative justice for dealing with most behavioural issues arising there
- at that school, relationships between school staff and pupils have been seen to have improved
- through the training, more people have become equipped to use RJ
- problems arising with young people have been dealt with in a non-punitive way, using both formal and informal RJ approaches
- the Community Safety Unit has come on board with the project, which has been significant in terms of moving away from an enforcement-led approach.

Restorative justice has been put into use in a way that it is becoming the norm for dealing with inter-personal problems.

The team of people equipped to use RJ is continually expanding, and is reaching across a variety of departments working with young people.

Empowering local communities to work with local authorities

The project described their outcomes in relation to empowering people to work with the local authority as:

- the RJ approach has provided a means for all parties – the young people, their parents, representatives from the local authority – to communicate with one another in a way which doesn't seek to place blame and which enables them to look forward
- the structured approach of RJ gives young people the opportunity to express anxieties about others, including school or care home staff. This is a clear change from previous local authority school or care home policies which did not give young people a chance to voice concerns
- several schools in Salford are beginning to write the RJ approach into their behaviour policies.

Restorative Justice has provided a new way for individuals to interact with people from the local authority. Listening to what each party has to say is a fundamental part of this framework, so the individual immediately has the ear of the local authority officer.

The adoption of RJ in a number of schools within the local authority area is opening up this new pathway for communication to many more people.

Empowering local communities to have a say in finding solutions to local problems

The project described their outcomes in relation to having a say in finding solutions as follows:

- the opportunity that RJ provides for all parties to work together to think about how to tackle a problem is very important in finding a mutually acceptable solution
- the acceptance of RJ approaches has raised people's awareness that there is 'another way' to tackling young people's bad behaviour and has helped to avoid criminalisation.

All parties have a say in finding an acceptable solution to the problem.

Key success factors

The key factors identified by the project were:

- having the senior managers from all agencies on board had a very positive effect, as they carried the authority to enable the RJ approach to be implemented within their own field of work eg within a school's behaviour policy. Also, they were able to support their staff in implementing RJ

- having a multi-agency steering group helped to drive the adoption of RJ in all of the organisations. Also, there were benefits in terms of project management, such as working together to come up with a sustainability plan for the project's future
- enthusiasm from staff involved in the project.

High level commitment contributed to success both practically and emotionally.

The sign-up from the spectrum of participating organisations worked to the advantage of each organisation, as well as the overall project.

Enthusiasm from participants gave impetus to the work.

Barriers experienced and how they were overcome

The main barriers experienced during the project were:

Getting a working monitoring system up and running. Efforts from the project manager to set up a standard system of recording yielded poor returns, as schools tended to record information in different ways. Work within the Steering Group has helped people to understand the importance of standardisation and it is hoped that improvements will be seen.

The time commitment required to run a full restorative conference, which can take up to two hours, depending on the nature of the issue and the number of people involved. To help with this, the Youth Offending Service trained staff have taken up referrals and acted as conference facilitators.

In some organisations, more learning support staff have been trained than managers, so that there is a lack of support from above for RJ implementation on a day-to-day basis. This is being tackled through plans to target training at senior performance managers and head teachers.

Sustainability

The Steering Group has developed an action plan which summarises progress to date and sets out intended achievements for the future. This action plan is currently being presented to the Council's Deputy Director for Children's Services in order to seek continued funding.

The Youth Offending Service will continue to offer support as part of their operational budget.

The RJ approach will move towards mainstreaming through its inclusion in the Salford City Council Anti-Bullying Policy and Safer Schools Partnership.

One thing other people might find useful to try out

Steering Group

The project manager described the considerable support gained from the multi-agency steering group. The key elements to consider are:

- making sure that the Steering Group is in place right at the beginning of the project
- find the key people in each participating organisation who believe that RJ can work and get them involved in the Steering Group
- work hard to build the relationships between these people
- be an enthused and committed leader yourself!

With hindsight...

The Steering Group should have been put in place at the very beginning of the project, thus giving the project manager support as early on as possible.

It probably would have helped to have talked to the Heads of Services prior to starting the training and to get them signed up, so that there was visible commitment.

A standardised recording system for monitoring the use of RJ in place from the beginning of the project would have enabled the project manager to be better informed about progress and impact.

And, in the words of the project

The most significant thing about this project has been...:

"...Repairing harm and building relationships – providing people with the opportunity to talk about thoughts and feelings, and how they can make a fresh start for the future."

And finally, if the project staff were to give one piece of advice to local, regional or national policy makers about their sort of work, it would be to...

"...Make sure that there is someone there from the funding body for the project manager to talk to, at all stages of the project. Then, if there are any concerns about how the money is being spent, they can be discussed."

PROJECT: Youth Act in Salford, Salford

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Partner organisations

Salford City Council Children's Services department

Salford City Council community development workers

Spurgeons – a children's rights organisation

Irwell Valley Housing Association

The Duchy Project – a local community and voluntary sector organisation

New Deal for Communities

Broughton Action Group

Timescale

Introduction day held in January 2007.

Funded project March 2007 to March 2008.

Funding

£10,000	Civic Pioneers
£2,800	Contributions from Youth Service, New Deal for Communities, Broughton Action Group
£5,000	Grant from the Youth Bank submitted by two of the participating groups.

Simple project description

The Youth Act approach is about equipping young people with the skills they need to enable them to develop a campaign for social or political change about a particular issue which concerns them. In Salford, the aim of this project was to reach out to disadvantaged young people and to try out the approach with them to see what benefit it could bring for them and their communities.

With overall guidance and project management from Salford City Council's Children's Champion, the project enabled several groups to be formed, of which four groups became fully active. These are: Meet our Needs; Say It, Do It; the Duchy Project and New Deal for Communities. Two other groups began the process but one has decided not to complete it and the other is considering its future.

The overall process followed with the project comprised:

An Information Day – which aimed to introduce the idea of working with Youth Act in Salford to anyone working with young people who might be interested in supporting young people to take part in bringing about social and political changes. Invitations were sent to citizenship teachers, the Youth Service, community police officers, neighbourhood managers and youth groups. About 40 people came, of whom 17 went on to the training.

A two day training session – this included people from a wide range of backgrounds, such as the youth service, the community and voluntary sector, a school-based police officer, community development workers, a worker from a school for children with learning difficulties and disabilities and a worker from a children's rights project. The event was delivered by national Youth Act trainers (funded by the Civic Pioneers grant). Participants learnt about the Youth Act approach and how to develop a campaign with young people. The Youth Act manual was given to each participant.

Follow-up work from the training event to begin to establish groups, based on the interest and commitment shown from the trainees.

Establishment and ongoing work to develop a Youth Act campaign with the groups. (See below for more details about each group). Each group began to work through the Youth Act process, including key steps of learning about what Youth Act is and what a campaign is, finding out what skills there were within the group, agreeing what they wanted to get out from the process, deciding on an issue on which to build a campaign, and then beginning to work on that campaign. Each group met as regularly as possible, aiming for fortnightly meetings.

A weekend residential for the 5 groups' participants – the aim was to bring everyone together to learn from one another, share skills and information and focus on their issues of concern within a challenging yet supportive

environment. 27 young people took part, with the support of 10 adults. A DVD was produced by the Youth Act facilitators which presented a three minute film of each group's campaign issues and ideas.

The **Duchy Project** campaign was focussed on how a local park could be developed for children and young people in a housing estate currently with very limited facilities in poor condition. The group's activities have included: creating a petition to seek support for the park from local residents; researching their rights to greenspace using the internet; actively consulting people through 'piggybacking' onto another local consultation (called Top or Pants); making a presentation to the Community Committee.

The **Say It, Do It** campaign aimed to raise awareness about the effects of the stereotyping of children in residential care by the people who care for them. The group has drafted a poster about their campaign, as well as one of its members spending a day shadowing Salford Council's Lead Member for Children and Young People. They have also been working to produce a short film highlighting key messages and including calls for action; this will be presented to local decision-makers in order to stimulate discussions.

The **Meet Our Needs** group began with a campaign for the continuation of a youth worker post specifically to work with young people with disabilities, but is now developing to consider wider issues relating to other resource needs of young people with disabilities, such as housing for independent living. Actions undertaken by the six person group include: sending letters to all the Youth Services in the Greater Manchester area to find out whether neighbouring Councils have youth workers specific to disabled people; sending a letter to all of Salford Council's elected members to ask for their support in the campaign to improve facilities; a meeting with the Head of Salford Council's Head of Services for Young People to discuss targeted youth support; attendance at the residential weekend.

The **New Deal for Communities** group has focussed on local road safety. Group members have spoken to Salford Council's road safety officer to get information and statistics about the local road they are concerned about, and to understand more about the Council's plans for road safety. They have also created a petition to seek support for the construction of speed bumps, as well as taking their DVD from the residential to show at the Council's participatory budgeting event, in an attempt to get funding for road safety improvements.

Outcomes so far

Unique project outcomes

Key outcomes identified by project staff so far include:

- adults with a whole variety of interests and professional roles have been trained in the use of Youth Act
- the support workers have built up trust with disadvantaged young people across Salford and engaged them in seeking changes to their lives

- four project groups have successfully worked through the Youth Act process and are continuing with their campaigns. Other groups benefited from working through elements of the process eg attending the residential weekend
- participating young people have developed new life skills that are transferable to many other situations, including planning, setting goals, understanding oneself, research, communication (written and oral) and working with other people
- each action group has met targets that they had set themselves in their campaign, completing many of the steps that they had identified as significant in bringing the changes they want their campaign to achieve
- young people have become more aware of the needs of others and have made positive efforts to give help and support to their peers.

The pro-active support of support workers (paid and voluntary), together with the targeted approach towards disadvantaged young people, has given an opportunity to young people who have never before been engaged in this sort of activity to do so.

Even where groups haven't completed the process, the staged process of Youth Act has still enabled individuals to develop at a personal level.

The Youth Act process has been tried out as a tool for engaging disadvantaged young people, and although there have been problems, there have also been many successes.

Empowering local communities to work with local authorities

The outcomes relating to the project as a whole include:

- Young people have learnt about who does what in the local authority and so have found out about who they need to be in touch with
- Young people have been gaining the confidence to seek meaningful communication with representatives of the local authority
- A whole variety of types of contacts between young people and local authority officers and members have been made, relating to a number of different topics – residential care, road safety, disability, local amenities
- The profile of young people's needs has been raised across the Council.

Young people gaining knowledge about the local authority workings has been a first, crucial step in the process.

For the first time, young people who have probably never previously had a positive relationship with anyone in the local authority have made pro-active steps to make contact with officers and members. At the same time, local authority representatives have spent face-to-face time with young people, benefiting from that direct contact.

The raised profile of young people is setting an increasingly positive context for support to young people and for meeting their needs.

Empowering local communities to have a say in finding solutions to local problems

The project described their outcomes in relation to having a say in finding solutions as follows:

- the Youth Act manual has given the groups the tools, the skills development and a structured process use in order to start to tackle the issue that they are concerned about
- each group has discussed local problems and come to consensus about the one problem that is of greatest concern, for which they have then targeted their campaign
- part of the groups' work to find a solution to their chosen problem has been to learn more about the problem and become 'experts' in it.

The structure of the Youth Act process is targeted to give participants the pathways to look for solutions, as well as equipping them with the skills to take actions forward.

A group working together on a problem has more strength than an individual.

With increased knowledge about the problem, the young people have become better equipped to argue their case with professionals.

Key success factors

The key factors identified by the project were:

- the Youth Act Training manual, which provided a structured process for the support workers to use to guide the young people's work
- high level support to the project from within Salford Council, which gave visible encouragement as well as practical benefits, such as contacts made directly between the young people and people in decision-making positions. The Youth Act project aims were a clear fit with the remit of the Children's Champion, in terms of giving young people a say, so it was possible to use this role to support the participants in the project
- the experience and facilitation provided by the Citizenship Foundation facilitators, particularly at the residential. This helped give momentum and purpose to the event
- the residential event itself, which boosted the young people's confidence and motivation. Critically for the benefit of all participants, it was an accessible venue
- people with enthusiasm and commitment. Both the young people and their support facilitators have made great efforts to get involved and stay involved.

The steps in the manual generally worked well to move the groups forward towards their aims, in a way which they could cope with.

High level support gave tangible and intangible benefits. Put simply, it opened doors.

The groups moved forward and got things done because the people involved stuck with it.

Barriers experienced and how they were overcome

The main barriers experienced during the project were:

Time to commit. For people who undertook the training and were keen to get involved, in some cases the practicalities of their everyday work commitments meant that they couldn't see the process through as they had hoped. The Children's Champion offered support to individuals to help them find solutions and to encourage them. However, in some cases, it has been appropriate simply to let a group finish, but to try to learn from the experience. For the young people who got involved, time commitment has also sometimes been a problem. The groups have tried to meet fortnightly in order to maintain momentum, but in reality, this has varied according to the group's preferences and demands on their time.

People understanding the concept of Youth Act. This has been tackled through continued work to publicise its aims and the work ongoing in Salford eg through the Children's Champions regular column in the local weekly newspaper.

Sustainability

The Youth Act process is seen as just one of the possible pathways to get young people's voices heard in Salford. Youth Act is not seen as stand-alone, but rather as fitting in with several other initiatives across the Council to achieve the Local Area Agreement outcome of a voice for young people.

The training of facilitators has left a legacy of skills that can continue to be used.

The Manual will also continue to be used, including in the training programme for the young people becoming involved in the emerging Youth Forums in Salford. In this way, the young people will be equipped with skills to enable them to be pro-active in their communities and to influence what happens there, as well as to play a constructive role in consultations.

Also, there are hopes to introduce the process and the manual to a wider audience eg citizenship teachers in Salford schools.

The young people are currently continuing with their campaigns. The Children's Champion is continuing to provide support to the groups which didn't progress with the Youth Act process, to enable other activities to move forward.

With hindsight...

It might have been useful to have a more structured system for ongoing support from the national organisation promoting Youth Act eg scheduled update meetings, monthly phone calls.

Also, it would have been helpful to put the participating young people in contact with other Youth Act groups. The success of other groups further into the process would probably have helped to motivate the young people in Salford, as well as give creative input to their ideas for campaigns.

And, in the words of the project**The most significant thing about this project has been...:**

"...The increasing skills and confidence of young people...The way the process has challenged the workers to work in a different way with young people...The increased awareness of young people's voices amongst the elected members and officers who've been contacted by young people."

And finally, if the project staff were to give one piece of advice to local, regional or national policy makers about their sort of work, it would be to...

"...Recognise that the groups of young people aren't homogenous and that the barriers haven't been about their motivations, but their lack of belief that they can have a voice. Also remember that it needs a huge amount of development work to build up trust and to move away from labels of disaffection."

PROJECT: Milford Community Planning for Real[®], South Somerset

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Partner organisations

Milford Activities Support Group

Timescale

Project development began – September 2006

Funded project April – October 2007.

Funding

£10,000	Civic Pioneers
£6,000	Neighbourhood Renewal Fund
£1,500	South Somerset and Mendip Community Safety Action Panel
£1,000	Yeovil Town Council

Simple project description

The Milford estate in Yeovil comprises about 1400 households, with a high proportion of social housing. Historically, there has been low engagement from the community in consultations and it has proved difficult for the Council to build relationships with the community.

Having successfully used Planning for Real[®] in another estate in the town, the Council was keen to see if it would work in Milford as a way to engage the local community in planning for improvements in the area.

The Council engaged a facilitator from Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation (NIF), the charity which created the Planning for Real methodology. Initial planning meetings were held with the Milford Activities Support Group;

volunteers from this group of residents and agency representatives then got involved with the Planning for Real process. Training was held for interested volunteers, after which a 3D model of the Milford estate was constructed by pupils from Milford Junior School. Nine separate consultation sessions were held at locations identified by the residents on the project's working group. These included the Christmas fete at the school, schools at going home time, local shops, the sheltered housing, the playgroup and a young people's '60s night. At these consultations, people were invited to stick flags on the model to show particular problems and ideas. Over 340 residents took part, coming up with 869 suggestions and issues.

The consultations were followed by a prioritisation session for residents, which was when the ideas were considered and allocated either as now, soon or later. The results from this session fed into an action planning session for residents and representatives from the Local Authority and other service delivery agencies. The Community Development Officer identified potential agencies and staff to invite, sent invitations and also a list of the suggestions which had come forward relating to their area of interest, so that they had some warning of the kinds of issues and discussion that was likely eg improved lighting in Milford Park, vandalism of cars, things for children and young people to do. At this event, a variety of ideas were agreed on. The NIF consultant then wrote up the Action Plan and accompanying report.

The Community Development Officer has continued to work with local residents to support implementation of actions identified through the Planning for Real exercise and look at developing the organisational structures needed.

Outcomes so far

Unique project outcomes

Key outcomes identified by project staff so far include:

- more residents than ever before have got involved in the consultation about how the estate could be improved
- planning for Real has been seen to be an effective tool for hearing from local residents.

The Planning for Real approach did what the Authority hoped in terms of attracting widespread interest and participation.

Empowering local communities to work with local authorities

The project described their outcomes in relation to working with local authorities as:

- the Planning for Real process, in particular the Action Planning event, brought Council officers and staff from other organisations (statutory and voluntary sector) together, perhaps for the first time, in a forum which encouraged open discussion

- the event strengthened the relationship between councillors and residents because of the constructive discussions
- the actions that were identified are likely to lead to further discussions and joint working between residents and the local authority.

The structure of the Action Planning event is designed to bring agencies and residents together, in an atmosphere that everyone feels comfortable to contribute.

Empowering local communities to have a say in finding solutions to local problems

The project notes that the Planning for Real process is fundamentally about enabling local communities to have a say in finding solutions to local problems. In more detail, this has included:

- giving people a mechanism that they were happy to take part in – as shown by the 340 people getting involved
- taking people through a process where possible ideas for tackling problems were thoroughly discussed with officers from the organisations that might be able to help residents to implement solutions
- enabling creative approaches to problems, in part through bringing together people who wouldn't usually work together eg Highways and Arts – the level of funding to make physical road safety improvements was unlikely to be available in the short or medium term, but the Arts officer suggested a short-term solution of working with residents to design road safety awareness posters.

Planning for Real created the structures and the space to consider problems and possible solutions.

The right people were in the room, in terms of contributing to the debate and thinking about a solution's feasibility.

Key success factors

The key factors identified by the project were:

- input from volunteers. The local knowledge was very important for deciding where to site the consultations. Again for the consultation events, it made a real difference to having enough people to help with the model during busy periods
- expert support. The facilitation from NIF brought in experience and expertise which was vital. Also, the capacity provided by the facilitator made it possible for all parties to deal with the workload created by the project
- input from a wide variety of organisations and departments in the Council. The mix of voluntary and statutory sector was particularly important at the stage of considering options for improvements.

The workload of the project was spread across the working group.

The project was strengthened by the active involvement and co-operation of several different organisations.

Barriers experienced and how they were overcome

Getting over the community's reluctance to become engaged was the main barrier. With a perception that their views wouldn't be listened to, there was a big hill to climb. The working group tried to overcome this by using extensive advertising and promotion of the consultation eg putting flyers through every door, publicity in the local paper and on local radio. They also understood that it was vital to take the consultation out to people, so they made sure that the model was taken to as many key sites in the area as possible, where people would be going anyway.

Sustainability

The Planning for Real process has left the legacy of an action plan for the community, which can be used as evidence to show what the priorities are for the area. Also, it can be used to support applications for funding.

The Council's Community Development Officer is working with the residents to explore the option of a community association, with the aim of setting up a local body which could enable the community to take forward some of the actions identified which don't need agency input.

Some 'quick win' projects have been identified eg dog litter bins, so that there is a clear demonstration that the consultation has led to something happening on the estate.

One thing other people might find useful to try out

Use of a 3D model for consultation

The benefits of this were described as:

- attracting people to the consultation because it was noticeable and different
- it didn't need people to write anything down or explain their thoughts in detail, so it was non-threatening to people
- people didn't have to make their thoughts public, so it worked for people who were shy
- the informal nature of the consultation event meant that people already having a go got chatting to other residents and explained what to do.

With hindsight...

The Community Development Officer would have tried to get more local residents involved on the working group right from the beginning, as this would have given the community more of a sense of ownership from the very beginning.

And, in the words of the project

The most significant thing about this project has been...:

"...That we have been able to engage with a community that has in the past been hard to consult and we now have a community plan for the area".

And finally, if the project staff were to give one piece of advice to local, regional or national policy makers about their sort of work, it would be to...

"...Think creatively about the ways in which we consult with residents in order to get views from a diverse range of ages, literacy levels etc"

PROJECT: Choice and Liveability, Southwark

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Partner organisations

Living Streets – a non-governmental organisation commissioned to work on the project.

Timescale

Project idea – summer 2006.

Funded project April 2007 to March 2008, but ongoing work in the five streets after that.

Funding

£40,000 Civic Pioneers

Also, Innovation Forum funding for a full evaluation in September 2008 and follow-on work to keep residents involved, until end 2008.

Simple project description

Southwark Council's Highways Department have an improvement budget for up to 15 streets within the Borough each year, of around £200,000 for each street. The Council has a design guide, including information about suitable types of improvements eg road humps, street furniture.

The staff of the Community Involvement and Development Unit (CIDU) were interested to find out what community engagement principles could add to what the engineers were aiming to achieve in each of these streets. The project enabled the Council to pilot engagement with four streets initially, and then to find out how to sustain engagement for all streets in future years. There was considerable groundwork between the CIDU and the engineers, making sure that there was plenty of discussion to explain the idea and that the proposals from CIDU were interesting to the engineers.

There were two main aspects to this – choice, and liveability. In terms of choice, the engineers wanted to know what residents of the streets wanted to choose from the different options in the design guide. Liveability was about stakeholders coming together and deciding what could be done to tackle important issues in the street, not just the physical works but also broader issues that caused concern in their daily lives, such as noise or rubbish.

The organisation Living Streets was commissioned to lead on the community engagement work, building on the relationships already begun between residents and the Council's Neighbourhood Management teams. Following a detailed planning meeting between Living Streets and Council officers from the CIDU and Highways department, a series of activities were agreed, including: interviews with stakeholders to bring up issues and ideas; a survey of all residents in each street to identify choices and liveability issues; walkabouts led by Living Streets staff to get residents and Council staff out and about together on the street; three rounds of stakeholder workshops for the 5 streets. The first of these aims to have conversations about the money, what it's for, the limits of choice, consensus about the best improvements and ideas for what could be done to tackle key liveability issues. The second workshop is used to validate the findings from the first workshop, and the third is to agree the details. The Council's engineers were actively involved in the walkabouts, explaining options for streetscape improvements and answering any questions arising.

The Civic Pioneers funding has enabled this process of community engagement and dialogue to take place; beginning in April 2008, the Southwark Council will start to spend its budget for each street on the improvements identified by their residents.

Outcomes so far

Unique project outcomes

Key outcomes identified by project staff so far include:

- the engineers feel that they can do each individual street's design better, as they can adapt the design guide on the basis of a better understanding about that street which they have gained directly from local people
- as hoped, the money for the 2008/09 will be spent according to the communities' priorities. Different local priorities have come to the fore in different places eg lights in trees, traffic speeds and different street furniture choices
- different departments within the Council have come together to work on the project.

The engineers are now open to the idea of residents' participation in the decision-making about improvements, as they have had the opportunity to test out the approach, with plenty of support.

There has been a feeling of excitement amongst Council staff that they have been able to work between departments in a way that makes the best of different people doing different things, but working to meet their own department's aims.

The improved internal working relationships are founded on increased communication between the staff – making the opportunities to talk to one another.

Empowering local communities to work with local authorities

The project described their outcomes in relation to empowering residents to work with the local authority as:

- many more opportunities than before have been created for people to meet officers from the local authority and to work directly with them eg the engineers
- the Neighbourhood Management teams have learnt more about their areas, and so have been able to offer more targeted help
- the local authority has been able to demonstrate that it is listening to residents and that their views are acted on.

Local people have been offered and have taken the opportunity to work with their local authority, a process which has been facilitated by the Authority working hard to provide relevant information to residents in a way they can use.

The basis already created by the local authority's Neighbourhood Management teams gave a headstart in relation to building relationships.

The project manager notes "If individuals feel they can have a say in a public arena about issues that matter, which in itself is empowering".

Empowering local communities to have a say in finding solutions to local problems

The project described their outcomes in relation to having a say in finding solutions as follows:

- the project has provided the mechanisms and pathways for people to agree what the biggest problems in their street are, as well as to discuss different options for solving the issues that they have defined as significant
- the informality of many of the opportunities for dialogue about the problems eg walkabouts, has encouraged people to talk
- the walkabouts have enabled people to study the opportunities for improvements and the issues 'in situ', which has stimulated discussion
- discussions have started with residents about improving 'liveability'.

The support from the Community Engagement staff gave people confidence to take part and the project activities, such as the workshops, gave people the structures to begin to ask for things.

The mechanisms chosen to engage people have attracted involvement, and have offered a gradual route towards finding solutions.

Key success factors

The key factors identified by the project were:

- engagement of Living Streets – the aims of this project were closely aligned with their own aims. Although the commissioning process took two months, it was felt that this time investment paid off, as the right people were then in place
- time input from the Community Involvement and Development Unit and the Streetscape team – with funding for staff time, it was possible for the team to commit fully to the project and to promote it amongst other Council departments
- real interest from the Council's Head of Street Works in exploring a new approach
- buy-in from the Steering Group, which was very helpful in supporting the project manager with the worries and risk of a new approach.

The commitment, energy and experience of Living Streets acted to enthuse the Council staff and other stakeholders, as well as to give the local authority confidence in the approach.

Support from a senior level staff member in trying something new gave valuable encouragement to the engineers.

Barriers experienced and how they were overcome

The main barriers experienced during the project were:

Matching the streets that could be apportioned budget (ideally, they would have been ranking high in the local authority's survey of 100 streets needing improvement) with those in Neighbourhood Management Areas. This led the Council officers to develop a more sophisticated method of assessment, including the most need for improvements in physical condition and the opportunity to create meaningful community engagement and to support local community choice and control.

The project manager finding time to run the projects. This required careful time management in relation to other commitments, and relied on support from the Steering Group members.

Matching the different expectations of the two funders. Again, this was resolved through continued talking between the project manager and the funders.

Getting everything done in time and so meeting funder and internal timescales. This was tackled through intensive project management input.

Sustainability

The actual improvement works will be implemented in each street from April 2008. The Neighbourhood Area teams will continue to work in the five streets.

The liveability discussions begun with residents will continue through ongoing conversations between the council and residents, and between residents.

The formal evaluation of the project will support the CIDU staff to attempt to mainstream the approach within the Council. The enthusiasm of the engineers is very encouraging.

One thing other people might find useful to try out

The Project Planning Workshop

The project planning workshop facilitated by Living Streets was fundamental in getting common agreement from all parties within the Council about what the project was trying to achieve and how it would work. Key elements were:

- getting the right people there ie all the different people within the Council who would be important in the running of the project. These included the CIDU staff, Neighbourhood managers and engineers
- holding the workshop in a good space with good food
- time to discuss what methodologies were available and which ones were most likely to work
- experience and knowledge of the facilitators feeding into the discussions.

With hindsight...

The project manager notes that it would have been useful to have sat down with the two funders immediately after receiving the money, in order to ensure that his aims were a good fit with theirs. Whilst not actually a problem with this project, the project manager had felt that having two different funders had been a risk, which in future he would like to be able to minimise.

And, in the words of the project

The most significant thing about this project has been...:

"...the way in which different departments in Southwark Council can coalesce around shared community development aims and objectives."

And finally, if the project staff were to give one piece of advice to local, regional or national policy makers about their sort of work, it would be to...

"...Fund Neighbourhood Management. Without resources, nothing can be done to build relationships and gather the knowledge at local street level."



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