

# Illuminating practice: Case Studies in community learning & development



# **Illuminating Practice**

## **Case studies in community learning and development**

**Learning Connections Communities Scotland**

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Prepared by the Scottish Community Development Centre for Communities Scotland to accompany the Scottish Executive Guidance on community learning and development, *Working and Learning Together to Build Stronger Communities*



## Foreword

Earlier this year, the Scottish Executive published 'Working and Learning Together to Build Stronger Communities', guidance setting out a long-term framework for community learning and development. The guidance sets out national priorities and emphasises that the Scottish Executive sees community learning and development as a key tool in delivering on our commitment to social justice.

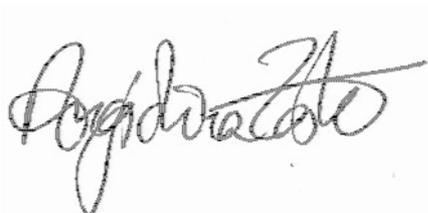
This collection of case studies complements that guidance. For me, it brings alive the exciting way that community learning and development can make a positive impact on people's lives and help to close the opportunity gap.

One of the key messages Communities Scotland and the wider Scottish Executive took from consultation on 'Working and Learning Together to Build Stronger Communities' was that guidance on *what should* happen needed to be backed up by practical examples of *how* it can be done.

This collection of case studies responds to this message. It provides practical examples of work already being done around the country: work that addresses the national priorities, is focused on achieving social justice, and contributes to achieving Scottish Executive priorities. The case studies strikingly illustrate the value of empowering people to influence change and working with communities as active partners. We want to be very clear that our aim is to build on the best of what is already happening.

The Minister for Communities and his cabinet colleagues (in particular, those with responsibility for Education and Young People, Lifelong Learning, and Finance and Public Services) expect to see a significant expansion in community learning and development opportunities, with multi-agency partnerships using this approach across a wide range of public service policies. Learning Connections, on behalf of the Scottish Executive, is working with community learning and development partnerships to ensure they are supported to build their capacity to meet these expectations.

Helping to share practice experience is a key part of Communities Scotland's role in working with partners to support the effective delivery of policy. I trust you will find 'Illuminating Practice' stimulating and useful.



Angiolina Foster  
Chief Executive  
Communities Scotland

## Using this publication

The case studies in this volume show how community learning and development helps people to make real, positive changes in their lives and their communities. They are also intended to show how, by doing this, community learning and development contributes to the Scottish Executive's policies for building a better Scotland.

**It is a practical tool for anyone involved in community learning and development: specialist practitioners in whatever sector they work; professionals and managers who use community learning and development skills and approaches; volunteers or part-time staff; or voluntary and community organisations developing their own activities.**

The Preface provides some information on the relevant policies. In particular, this publication complements the Scottish Executive's guidance for community learning and development, 'Working and Learning Together to Build Stronger Communities' (January 2004) and provides practical examples of the kind of work that the Scottish Executive wants to promote.

Above all, we hope this publication will help you to make use of the experience gained by the wide range of people involved in the successful community learning and development work that the case studies focus on. For this reason, the case studies are not meant to just 'tell a story'. They are intended to help us to think about why a particular approach has worked in a particular situation, and how the lessons from it could be applied elsewhere.

The case studies all have the same structure, which is based on two complementary frameworks specifically designed for the planning, evaluation and quality assurance of community learning and development. These frameworks are already used widely in the field. They are:

- 'How Good is Our Community Learning and Development – Self evaluation using quality indicators', developed by HM Inspectorate of Education, and also used as the framework for their own inspections of community learning and development;
- 'LEAP (Learning Evaluation and Planning)', developed by the Scottish Community Development Centre for the Scottish Executive as a planning and evaluation tool for community learning and development

We hope that using a common format to research, write and present the case studies has helped to identify and highlight the factors that were critical to success. We also hope that it will assist you in applying the lessons to be learnt from these examples of practice in a direct and practical way when learning from, evaluating and planning your own work.

Each case study looks in turn at:

- what was the problem or need that was to be addressed?

- what difference was the initiative intended to make? – outcomes sought from the work;
- how was success to be judged? – measures or indicators of success that were seen as relevant;
- who was involved? – stakeholders with an interest and their working relationship (in particular relevant information about partnership working);
- how did they go about it? – process and methods involved;
- what resources were needed? – inputs made from different sources;
- what were the actions taken? – outputs produced and delivered by whom;
- how was the practice co-ordinated and monitored?
- how successful was it? – effectiveness, efficiency and equity of the practice in relation to the achievement of the intended outcomes;
- what else happened? – other outcomes that arose; and finally
- what are the key lessons? – learning from the experience, and transferability to different settings.

As well as being written in a common format, the case studies highlight particular aspects of good practice by referring to a common set of themes. These themes are the quality indicators set out by 'How Good is Our Community Learning and Development', which are grouped under headings as follows:

### **Personal development**

- engagement and support
- learning opportunities
- delivery of learning opportunities
- learning experience
- assessment
- participant achievement

### **Building community capacity**

- need identification
- development of skills and confidence
- promotion of participation in community affairs
- exercising power and influence
- monitoring and evaluation
- community achievement

### **Ethos and values**

- climate and relationships

- expectations and promoting achievement
- values

### **Management, planning and quality assurance**

- accommodation and facilities
- provision of resources
- staffing
- resource deployment
- staff review and development
- organisation and use of resources
- community learning planning
- self evaluation
- partnership working
- leadership

These themes provide a reference point throughout the case studies. Footnotes highlight where the work described reflects particular good practice themes.

We hope that a wide range of people involved in community learning and development will find this format useful and that this publication will help to stimulate more writing up of examples of community learning and development in action. This can be a very productive aid to personal and shared reflection, and an important way of improving the impact of community learning and development in helping people to make real positive changes in their lives.

Learning Connections aims to assist the sharing of practice experience. Appendix 1 provides a pro-forma using the framework employed for the case studies in this publication. You may find it useful in writing up, reflecting on and sharing your experience of community learning and development. We would be happy to hear from you!

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## **Preface**

### **Origins and purpose**

Communities Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Executive commissioned the Scottish Community Development Centre to research and write up the case studies in this volume to accompany our guidance for community learning and development: 'Working and Learning Together to Build Stronger Communities' (January 2004). Summaries of the case studies are used within the text of the guidance. This publication provides a more detailed account of each piece of work. Together they illustrate the breadth of good practice in the field.

'Working and Learning Together to Build Stronger Communities' was based on extensive consultation. There was widespread support for the principles and objectives set out in the consultation draft. However, one of the strongest messages from those responding was that, however worthwhile the aims and purpose of the guidance, it would be of little value without practical support from the Scottish Executive for implementation, and in particular, practical examples to help make the link from principles to action.

So the publication of these case studies is a direct response to key issues raised through consultation. Equally, this focus on translating policy intentions into practical realities is essential to the role of Learning Connections and of Communities Scotland as a whole as a Scottish Executive Agency.

However, providing practical examples in a way that actually helps those delivering community learning and development is perhaps more difficult than it first appears. The essence of community learning and development is working with particular people to develop their response to issues in their lives and their communities. Because of this, simply giving an account of what has worked in one situation is unlikely in itself to provide much guidance on what should be done in another.

To be useful, community learning and development case studies need to help the reader to understand why the approach taken in the particular situation led to positive outcomes, why community learning and development skills, methods and approaches were relevant and how they were applied, and based on this, what lessons can be transferred from what was done in this particular situation to other, often very different ones.

Helping to transfer lessons from experience in this way is the core purpose of this publication. The section on Using this Publication (page iii) outlines the approach used to research and write the case studies in this volume in order to meet these criteria. We hope that a wide range of people involved in community learning and development will find this approach, as well as the content of the case studies, useful. Appendix 1 offers a format for use in writing up your own case study material.

### **How were the case studies identified?**

The case studies were identified by Communities Scotland Learning Connections and the Scottish Community Development Centre with the assistance of an advisory

group including Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education and representatives of statutory and voluntary agencies involved in community learning and development.

Selecting the case studies was a difficult task. Many examples of exciting practice were highlighted in the discussions, but a final list of ten that reflected diverse kinds of practice had to be distilled. Selection was based on several criteria:

- demonstration of practice across a wide range of types of work encompassed within community learning and development, including work with both young people and adults, and relating to both personal development and community capacity;
- attention to, and connections between, key national policy priorities including: community regeneration, adult literacy, Community Planning, health improvement, social inclusion, equalities and social justice;
- illustration of practice across different kinds of community issues and settings both geographical and thematic;
- reflection of the range of statutory and voluntary agencies and partnerships in which community learning and development are practised;
- evidence from quality improvement procedures and outcome evaluation.

### **The policy and practice context**

The case studies, selected and prepared before publication of the new guidance, reflect the major trends and priorities that emerged following the 1998 Scottish Office review of community education 'Communities Change through Learning', and the subsequent Scottish Office Education Department Circular 4.99, first in 'community learning' and then in 'community learning and development'.

The case studies illustrate the extent to which 'Working and Learning Together to Build Stronger Communities' builds on best practice, which has itself responded to a policy agenda that has increasingly highlighted the need for a strong, coherent community learning and development contribution.

The circular insisted that community learning should be planned and delivered on a partnership basis, and underpinned the development of community learning strategies and plans. Following from 'Communities Change through Learning', there was growing recognition of the role community learning skills, methods and approaches could play in a widening range of settings and disciplines.

'Communities Change through Learning' emphasised the potential contribution of community learning to key policy outcomes. At a wider policy level, engaging communities actively in their own regeneration, broadening access to lifelong learning among traditional non-participants, and supporting positive development and participation by young people were all becoming increasingly urgent policy concerns for the Scottish Executive.

For example, the national priorities for education emphasise the development of active citizenship. 'Life through Learning: Learning through Life' – the lifelong learning strategy for Scotland – identifies community learning and development as a key means of widening access to learning, particularly among the most excluded people and traditional non-participants.

In this context, it has become crucial to ensure dynamic, coherent support for learning and action in and by communities. This underpinned the Community Education Training Review Advisory Committee's proposal to merge the activities of community education and community development and 'redefine the product' as community learning and development. This proposal was endorsed both in 'Community Learning and Development: The Way Forward' (Scottish Executive, 2002) and in the Scottish Executive's response to the Community Education Training Review, 'Empowered to Practice: The Future of Community Learning and Development Training in Scotland' (Scottish Executive, 2003).

The importance of all of these policy developments for community learning and development has been brought into sharp relief by the emergence of Community Planning, in particular the statutory requirements on public agencies to engage with communities in the Local Government (Scotland) Act 2003, and the close association of community learning and development with community regeneration as set out in the Scottish Executive regeneration statement: 'Better Communities in Scotland: Closing the Gap' (2002).

Statutory guidance on the Local Government (Scotland) Act states that: 'Community learning and development can play a central role in supporting the engagement of communities (including young people) in the Community Planning process.'

In placing the building of 'social capital' within communities (their motivation, confidence, knowledge, skills and networks) alongside the provision of quality public services as the key to community regeneration, 'Better Communities in Scotland: Closing the Gap' highlighted the vital role that community learning and development can play in linking personal development with the building of wider community capacity.

In parallel with the influence of regeneration policies on community learning and development as a whole, the emergence of the national literacies strategy ('Adult Literacy and Numeracy in Scotland', Scottish Executive 2001) has given major impetus and focus for adult learning in particular. In adopting a social practices model, the focus of the strategy is on empowering individuals and communities to apply literacies competence in the context of not only personal and family life but also work, education and civic engagement. The social practices model highlights the importance of literacies work being developed as an integral part of wider strategies for community learning and development and of the drive to regenerate communities.

'Working and Learning Together to Build Stronger Communities' seeks to bring together all these developments in policy and practice to create a 'long-term framework for the development of community learning and development'. It:

- confirms community learning and development as a role of a wide range of practitioners operating in both statutory and voluntary sectors;
- emphasises that community learning and development practitioners need highly developed skills and that community learning and development services need to be delivered to a consistently high standard;
- strengthens the existing emphasis on the necessity of partnership working;
- reinforces the focus of community learning and development on promoting personal development and community capacity building for young people and adults;
- establishes the place of community learning and development within the wider processes of Community Planning;
- in that context sets out the role community learning and development is now expected to play in community engagement and participation in governance.

The national priorities for community learning and development focus on achievement through learning for adults, achievement through learning for young people, and achievement through building community capacity. They make clear both the continuity with the community learning agenda set out by Circular 4.99 and the significantly extended expectations (and opportunities) represented by the shift to 'community learning and development'.

### **The case studies**

The ten case studies illustrate the ways in which community learning and development practice has been contributing effectively to the delivery of this developing policy agenda. Significantly, the initiatives described have been led by different sectors and disciplines while at the same time all displaying the following features. They:

- involve interdisciplinary partnerships;
- embody the values and principles set out in 'Working and Learning Together to Build Stronger Communities';
- demonstrate ways of delivering the national priorities;
- illustrate the skills, methods and approaches required to do this effectively.

It is apparent in all cases that personal development and community capacity building goals are indivisible, and that work related to each of the National Priorities frequently and essentially complements progress on the others.

The case studies are:

1. *North West Resource Centre (Dumfries)*: a pilot local Community Planning initiative, developed through a broad-based partnership of statutory and voluntary agencies and the local community. The study of this award-winning project illustrates the potential outcomes of applying community learning and development skills, methods and approaches to local Community Planning through examination of the role of a multi-functional resource centre.
2. *Voluntary Action and Community Planning (East Renfrewshire)*: voluntary sector support for community engagement in Community Planning. This study shows how a local intermediary voluntary body can build community capacity for engagement in local authority-wide Community Planning and assist partners to appreciate the need to relate to different areas and community interests.
3. *Involving Citizens in Community Planning (Aberdeen)*: developing a participatory approach to Community Planning. This case study looks at the process and methods of developing community engagement in Community Planning, city wide, locally and in relation to particular community interests, from the perspective of the local authority as lead agency. This work is underpinned (as in the East Renfrewshire study) by active partnership practice, with city-wide alliance structures operating within a 'Strengthening Local Democracy' strategy.
4. *Raising the Profile of Adult Basic Education (West Lothian)*: exploring the practical application of the community learning partnership's literacies strategy. This study highlights the evidence that the limited literacy skills of a substantial proportion of the population inhibit effective functioning in modern society. The strategy described, led by the local authority Community Education Service, sets out to identify and respond to individuals, but its purposes relate as much to the contribution of enhanced literacy to family, work and community life.
5. *Developing an Effective Community Learning Plan (Easterhouse, Glasgow)*. This example focuses on how community learning has been planned and delivered in the area as an integral part of the overall strategy for regeneration, and led by the local social inclusion partnership. A key role in a broad-based partnership is played by the local further education college. The plan works through 15 local learning centres with key concerns relating to core skills (including information and communication technology (ICT) and literacies), poverty and health.
6. *Angus Glens Project*: from personal development to community capacity. Digital literacy is an aspect of several examples, most centrally in the Angus Glens case study. This initiative in a remote rural community began with computer training but led to capacity building and community action on social and economic issues, ranging from a website managed by the community to a renewable energy project and a community land purchase. As in other examples the outcomes of the project reflect strong commitment to partnerships between several agencies and the local community.
7. *Youth Strategy (North Lanarkshire)*: building a strategic approach to working with young people. This study explores how community education and social work

staff approached the development of empowering participation by young people through youth forums.

8. *The Corner (Dundee)*: a young people's health and information project. This city centre health and information drop-in project for young people was developed jointly by the health board and local authority. As in other examples the necessity of cross-disciplinary community learning and development practice is well illustrated. So too is the importance of active involvement of communities, in this case the young people who use the service.
9. *Quality Action Group (Stirling)*: a capacity building project with learning disabled people. The theme of empowerment, which runs throughout the examples, is graphically illustrated in this case study. The focus is on a group of people who commonly experience exclusion and for whom the prospect of self determination has frequently been denied. The group of learning disabled people set and achieved objectives that explicitly involved changes to the way that services were delivered, and to the way that they were treated both by services and by the wider community. The study vividly illustrates the relationship between community learning and development and equalities practice.
10. *Hallhill Healthy Living Centre (Dunbar, East Lothian)*: developing and sustaining a local resource. With empowerment again a key feature, this case study focuses on supporting healthy lifestyles. There is particular emphasis on sport and recreational activity, but the means of delivering this is through an initiative led and controlled by the community. The community is leading its own responses to its needs, in this case through a community development company made up of representatives from sports clubs, churches, businesses, disability groups, schools, and children and families groups.

All of the case studies illustrate good practice. However, they are at different stages of development. In most there are now clear outcomes from sustained activity, but in the two focused on community engagement in Community Planning (Aberdeen and East Renfrewshire) though there is real evidence of progress, it is too early to be clear what the longer-term outcomes will be. Given community learning and development's role in animating community engagement in Community Planning, these studies provide illustrations of forward-looking practice in a key new area for practice development.

The focus of all the work is on community needs. Though the centrality of the community itself as a formal partner varies, there is a common commitment to responding to the needs of participants. The case studies illustrate the ways in which community learning and development can and must assist people to make real, positive changes in their own lives and in their communities, and contribute to improving public services. They show that focusing support where it is most needed can and must be about releasing potential and never about reinforcing stigma.

### **Developing Good Practice: a Shared Endeavour**

As emphasised earlier, publication of these case studies is a response to clear messages given through the consultation process on 'Working and Learning

Together to Build Stronger Communities'. Learning Connections is committed to continuing to support the sharing of practice experience and to disseminating examples of effective community learning and development practice. We hope that this publication will help to stimulate people involved in community learning and development across sectors and in a wide range of settings to reflect on and share their experience, and we look forward to working with you to use that experience to continually increase the relevance and effectiveness of community learning and development practice.

Finally, we would like to thank all those who contributed to this publication. This includes the Scottish Community Development Centre, who undertook the research and wrote the case studies; the members of the Advisory Committee (listed in Appendix 2) who gave enormous help in the task of identifying the examples of practice to be used; and lastly but most importantly, the people who provided the information on which the case studies are based. They not only undertook the hard work involved in these examples of good practice, they also gave up significant amounts of time to help in getting them written up in the way they are now presented, and we are grateful to all of them.

# The case studies

# Case Studies: North West Resource Centre (Dumfries)

Number one



## Summary

The North West Dumfries Communities in Partnership is one of the first Community Planning pilot projects in Dumfries and Galloway. One of the main outcomes of the pilot is the North West Resource Centre.

Project partners range from Careers Scotland to the local rural partnership to local churches, all of whom have a stake in the community resource centre. The building was previously a residential care centre owned by Dumfries and Galloway Council: now it is a vibrant, multi-purpose resource centre offering a range of services and activities.

The total value of partners' contributions is £1,806,166 drawn from European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Objective 2, Dumfries and Galloway Council, Scottish Enterprise Dumfries and Galloway, New Opportunities Fund (NOF), Dumfries and Galloway Childcare Partnership and the local management committee.

Following closure of the building as a residential unit, it was identified by community groups as a potential base for expanding much-needed childcare, support and advice to small businesses, and job creation, as well as providing meeting space for a wide range of local organisations.

The Community Planning pilot was a catalyst for bringing community groups and voluntary childcare providers to the table with public sector partners. Together they planned how best to use the building to improve services locally, meet the needs and aspirations of a range of community organisations and maximise resources identified through the pilot.

The project aims to work with community organisations, the wider business community and local residents to provide services and activities from the resource centre. These include:

- *local service delivery* – improving the access to services, information and advice for the communities of North West Dumfries. 'Wraparound' childcare for babies from six weeks of age to after-school provision, benefits and money advice, and a learning centre are some of the services available;
- *jobs and employment* – assisting and enabling the creation of employment and training opportunities;
- *Community Planning* – ensuring a co-ordinated approach to service development and delivery, and obtaining best value for the funding and resources available;
- *assistance to business* – boosting the local economy by assisting and enabling the development of new businesses in the area;
- *lifelong learning* – providing high quality, accessible learning and training opportunities;

- *physical environment* – creating a physical asset and ensuring regeneration activities improve the local environment;
- *social inclusion and equal opportunities* – addressing poverty, removing barriers and improving the communities’ opportunities to access services, facilities and employment.
- *quality of life* – providing locally-based health-related services and encouraging positive health choices.

### **What was the need that was to be addressed?**

North West Dumfries is an area formerly supported by urban programme funded initiatives but which has not benefited from additional resources, such as social inclusion funding, since the end of that programme. This was acknowledged as both a loss and a gap felt by the communities in the area.

Voluntary organisations in the area, brought together by Maxwelltown Umbrella Group had highlighted the need for additional childcare places to allow local people to take up work and training opportunities.<sup>1</sup> This had been the main message from a survey of the needs of local people they had carried out. Maxwelltown Umbrella Group was aware of Lincluden House, a derelict former residential care centre in the area that had been closed as surplus to requirements by Dumfries and Galloway Council two years previously. The gradually deteriorating building was identified by community groups working within Lochside, Lincluden, Stakeford and Summerhill as an ideal space to expand and attract additional services to their communities.

At about the same time, Community Planning partners launched their first Community Plan for Dumfries and Galloway (December 2000). This was seen as a catalyst for bringing about essential social and economic recovery of the area, which had suffered severely as a result of the foot and mouth epidemic. The Community Plan created a sound working partnership between the Dumfries and Galloway NHS Trust, Scottish Enterprise Dumfries and Galloway, Dumfries and Galloway Council and others. They opted for the model of Community Planning pilots as a method of demonstrating the value of Community Planning to local regeneration and service co-ordination.<sup>2</sup>

Evidence of local need for additional services was identified through a series of consultation exercises including:

- *Lincluden House Management Committee* – a committee made up of local voluntary organisations with the aim of developing this building as a community resource based on their organisations’ and user groups’ needs;
- *North West Dumfries Community Survey* – a survey carried out by Maxwelltown Umbrella Group. It pinpointed the local communities’ feelings of

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<sup>1</sup> How Good is Our Community Learning and Development (HGIOCLD): 2.1 Work with communities to identify their needs

<sup>2</sup> HGIOCLD: 5.4 Partnership working

exclusion from services and facilities, and identified training, access to employment and childcare as the key issues;

- *Family Services Survey* – a survey aimed at identifying the needs of parents and families, carried out by local childcare providers;
- *Community Planning Consultation Exercise* – a series of community workshops, co-ordinated by Community Planning partners, focusing on the needs and aspirations of all age and interest groups in the area;
- *North West Dumfries Area Regeneration Strategy* – the result of consultation by Community Planning partners with statutory and voluntary organisations to develop regeneration priorities for the area.<sup>3</sup>

### **What difference was the initiative intended to make?**

In developing and resourcing the North West Dumfries Community Resource Centre, the main intention was for the Community Planning partners to work with community organisations, the business community and local residents to provide services and activities within North West Dumfries.<sup>4</sup> New services and new ways of delivering services would fill existing gaps and add value to current services while meeting identified community and economic regeneration needs.

As a Community Planning pilot, North West Dumfries was viewed as a testing ground for the rigour of the Community Plan, in particular for partners' capacity to deliver a well-resourced capital and revenue project in partnership with local people. The project's objectives are to:<sup>5</sup>

- improve the access to *services, information and advice* for local communities;
- assist and enable the creation of locally based *employment and training* opportunities;
- ensure a co-ordinated approach to service development and delivery and obtain best value for funding and resources available through *effective Community Planning*;
- boost the local economy by *assisting and enabling the development of new businesses* in the area;
- provide high quality, accessible *learning and training* opportunities;
- create a *physical asset* and ensure all regeneration activities of the project respect, maintain and improve the environment of North West Dumfries;

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<sup>3</sup> North West Resource Centre Project Statement

<sup>4</sup> HGIOCLD: 2.4 Assisting communities to exercise power and influence

<sup>5</sup> North West Resource Centre Project Statement

- develop and undertake activities which *address poverty, remove barriers* and improve local communities' opportunities to access services, facilities and employment;
- assist in *improving the quality of life* for people in the area by providing locally based health-related services and to encourage the promotion of positive health choices.<sup>6</sup>

### **How was success to be judged?**

Objectives and targets for the project were set jointly by partners through the planning stages of the Community Planning pilot and are reflected in the North West Dumfries Area Regeneration Strategy. They include:

- *physical output indicators*, such as premises provided, learning and training facilities created;
- *intermediate output indicators*, such as the numbers of jobs created for target population groups including minority ethnic communities
- *additional benefits created by the project*, such as enrolments in informal learning programmes, adult basic education take-up, number of individuals accessing the Small Business Gateway or the Community Police, additional childcare places developed;
- *other outcomes*, described as 'immeasurable', including positive environmental impact, community empowerment, active citizenship and capacity building.

Forecasts were set at the start of the project and reviewed through the Centre's management and decision-making processes in February 2003.

### **Who was involved?**

North West Dumfries Community Resource Centre is a partnership of 46 widely varying organisations. They include NHS Dumfries and Galloway, Scottish Enterprise Dumfries and Galloway, Dumfries and Galloway Council, Dumfries and Galloway Housing Partnership, Dumfries and Galloway College, Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary, Dumfries and Galloway Fire Brigade, Small Business Gateway, Careers Scotland, Volunteer Action Dumfries and Galloway, Job Centre Plus, local churches and numerous community organisations.

Local people not involved in organisations gave their views through the North West Dumfries community survey carried out between 2000 and 2001.

This project is quite remarkable in the number of organisations that have come together to make it a reality. It is a tremendous example of community partnership in action and will provide a valuable resource for the people

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<sup>6</sup> HGIOCLD: 4.2 Provision of resources

of North West Dumfries. It will be the cornerstone in the regeneration of this area of the town.’  
*Elaine Murray, MSP for Dumfries*

### **How did they go about it?**

In the summer of 1999 a local childcare group approached the council identifying the need for additional childcare places in North West Dumfries. In November 1999 Irvine Housing Association approached the Council to discuss the potential redevelopment of the Lincluden House site. Shortly afterwards, in December, North West Dumfries was chosen by Community Planning partners as the pilot area for the region. This was titled the North West Dumfries Community Impact Project.

The area was identified as one of Dumfries and Galloway’s priority areas through the North West Dumfries area regeneration strategy. Research completed for the strategy had highlighted the area, its people and the problems it faced.<sup>7</sup>

The impact project set out to engage all stakeholders involved in the area, including local people, to operate and develop services using a joined-up approach. This vision supported, encouraged and enabled all partners to make the most of their involvement in the area, raising the profile, increasing the impact and maximising the potential at an early stage of the North West Dumfries Communities in Partnership Project.<sup>8</sup>

Once capital monies had been approved by the Council to redevelop Lincluden House, the partnership began to meet on a regular basis and plan for the centre’s development. The profile of their work was raised through networks, forums and partnerships, all of which served to bring more partners and resources on board. The snowball effect of partners signing up became increasingly evident as additional funding leverage was confirmed.

The resource centre became the focus for service planning and delivery in the area and presented an opportunity for agencies to demonstrate their commitment to the Community Planning process as the vehicle through which social and economic regeneration would be delivered. It provided a tangible and visible focus for local residents and community organisations to see the value and impact of Community Planning.

### **What resources were needed?**

Finding resources to deliver on partners’ agreed objectives became an early priority for the partnership. Dumfries and Galloway was designated as being eligible for ERDF Objective 2 funding from 2000 to 2006. An application to Objective 2 to redevelop Lincluden House resulted in funding of £677,916, which was then matched by Dumfries and Galloway Council, the local childcare partnership, Scottish Enterprise Dumfries and Galloway and the New Opportunities Fund. The local management committee, made up of community groups, raised £5,000 as a

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<sup>7</sup> HGIOCLD: 5.1 Community learning planning

<sup>8</sup> HGIOCLD: 2.2 Developing skills and confidence

contribution to the total. In-kind contributions have been provided by a wide range of organisations, including Dumfries and Galloway College.<sup>9</sup>

The agreed objectives enabled funders to clearly identify their funding 'fit' and, as it was a Community Planning pilot area, the wider context within which the resource centre would sit was clear.

Twelve project posts were established, some full-time, others part-time. While job descriptions detail duties and responsibilities according to job titles, a 'one team' approach was viewed as essential in delivering a flexible and changing service in response to need and demand. Staff work on a multi-task basis, with all staff expected to take a support and development role for individual users and for the centre itself.<sup>10</sup>

Community development agent posts have been created to encourage local people to make the move from community activist to local worker. Their role is to ensure local residents are aware of the range of services and opportunities available to them, both in the centre and outwith, and to offer additional support to people to access opportunities where needed. In turn, the issues they see emerging in the community are fed into the centre's planning mechanisms.

These 'James and Josephine Bond' posts have created local employment, act as a model for capacity building and offer unrivalled personal development opportunities for the successful candidates.

'I would never have opened my mouth before I got this job, but the people here have made me feel really comfortable. I'm much more confident.'<sup>11</sup>

*Community development agent*

### **What were the actions taken?**

Funding secured, Lincluden House was redeveloped and transformed into North West Dumfries Resource Centre. It took shape as three wings:

- a childcare wing, with wraparound childcare delivered by two voluntary organisations;
- a learning centre, managed by the Council, with learning opportunities delivered by Dumfries and Galloway College, Scottish Enterprise Dumfries and Galloway and Barony (agricultural) College;
- a joint resource base, housing welfare rights advice, Job Centre Plus, various services delivered on a surgery basis, the Healthy Living Centre and economic regeneration activity.

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<sup>9</sup> HGIOCLD: 2.3 Promoting participation in community affairs

<sup>10</sup> HGIOCLD: 4.4 Effectiveness and deployment of staff

<sup>11</sup> HGIOCLD: 3.1 Climate and relationships

Learning opportunities include health and well-being, employment-related skill development, parenting, and setting up a business.<sup>12</sup>

Outreach surgeries are delivered by staff from the Citizens Advice Bureau, the Fire Service, Careers Scotland, Job Centre Plus and Community Police.<sup>13</sup>

A community development agent identified a gap in support to isolated older people. This gap has recently been filled through the development of a lunch club managed and delivered by volunteers. Centre staff are supporting opportunities for sustaining its work.

The Healthy Living Centre is based in the resource centre, stimulating health-promoting activity both within the resource centre and other venues. Its base within the centre places it at the heart of the local area where its profile and use by local people are almost guaranteed.

Numerous community meetings and events take place, and community activity has increased since the development of the centre.

### **How was the practice co-ordinated and monitored?**

The centre is managed in an 'integrated matrix style', with four structures responsible for different aspects of implementation and strategic development:

- *the Strategic Partnership* ensures the resource centre remains sustainable and enjoys continued success. The Strategic Partnership oversees the project, considers new developments and engages the continued support of partners;
- *the Implementation Team*, including local service managers, engages in the operational delivery of the project's objectives. It ensures the project is running efficiently and effectively to meet its specified outputs;
- *the Service Impact Team*, made up of frontline staff and user group representatives, delivers services and manages the resource centre;
- *the North West Resource Centre Management Committee*, made up of a wide range of local organisations, is seen as crucial to continuing the involvement of local people in the development of the project. The Committee ensures that agencies are supporting and delivering appropriate services.

Targets established as part of funding bids are monitored through user feedback, numbers attending events, course evaluations, qualitative surveys and informal contact and comments from local people.

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<sup>12</sup> HGIOCLD: 1.4 Learning experience

<sup>13</sup> HGIOCLD: 4.3 Staffing

## **How successful was it?**

This initiative won a COSLA award in 2003 and is a live and dynamic example of Community Planning in practice. Community Planning can appear remote from local people who expect tangible results in their communities. But this is not the experience of people in North West Dumfries. Community Planning has provided the catalyst for agencies to jointly plan, allocate resources and deliver services in partnership with local people and voluntary organisations.

The resource centre has exceeded its targets in relation to:

- new jobs created;
- new jobs created for women;
- enrolments in employment-related training programmes;
- enrolments in informal learning programmes;
- access to advice from the Citizens Advice Bureau.

The development of a purpose-built childcare facility, creating a total of 102 childcare places, has had a major impact on the opportunities available to parents and carers living in the area. Available, affordable childcare has immediately reduced an identified barrier in the uptake of volunteering, training and employment opportunities.

The creation of the Learning Centre, part financed by Scottish Enterprise Dumfries and Galloway, has provided the capacity for Dumfries and Galloway College and the Council's Community Learning Service to offer a wide range of formal and informal learning opportunities. ICT-related training has proved most successful, with over 20 courses ranging from basic to advanced levels completed in the first 18 months of operation.

The use of community development agents has increased awareness of the opportunities available through the project within the communities of North West Dumfries. Their appointments have also served to demonstrate partners' commitment to placing local people at the heart of regeneration, creating both jobs and opportunities for local people to act as important catalysts for change.<sup>14</sup>

The resource centre demonstrates good practice in community empowerment, capacity building and community development and has continued to reflect the needs and wishes of local people. Local people remain at the heart of the project. Community groups identified the need, participated as partners throughout the negotiation and redevelopment phase and now play a key role through the Centre's management committee, which is active as both a development and scrutiny tool.

## **What else happened?**

Success breeds success. The number of people using the resource centre was never intended as an outcome indicator. Rather, the value of the centre for those accessing services and opportunities housed within it was viewed as a priority. However, the number of local people accessing services has exceeded any expectations.

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<sup>14</sup> HGIOCLD: 2.6 Community achievement

While services are available to all local residents, opportunities geared specifically towards young people were not built into the original development proposals. There is an emerging awareness among the management committee, staff and partners that this remains the outstanding gap in service use. Young people have begun to make demands for programmes or activities geared to their needs and priorities. The centre is currently negotiating with young people, partly through the outreach work of the community development agents, how this might best be addressed and accommodated.<sup>15</sup>

With a range of services, such as the Community Police and local CAB, delivering 'surgeries' at regular times in the centre, other services are now requesting access.

Although a number of community groups have operated in the area for some years, there was previously no effective vehicle through which they could share information, make best use of available local resources or work together to identify opportunities to address local needs.

<b>(Previously) 'Immeasurable' Outcomes</b>	<b>Indicators</b>
positive environmental impact	improved the image of the area to residents, investors and visitors. The building has been upgraded to become a positive feature in the local area
community empowerment	improved levels of confidence and active participation in local decision-making processes
capacity building	improved attitudinal behaviour linked to health, wealth and active citizenship
active participation	participation of adults and young people in personal development training
community learning	increase in adult literacy levels
	encouraged individuals previously excluded to participate
	improved levels of health, healthy eating and active lifestyles

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<sup>15</sup> HGIOCLD: 3.3 Values

The Community Planning pilot, demonstrated through the resource centre, has acted as a catalyst for a diverse range of organisations to come together, share skills, experience and resources, and participate jointly in regeneration activities. This included local churches that had previously had little contact with each other.

The outcomes identified at the start of the project as being 'immeasurable' have been developed further to include identifiable and measurable indicators, as the table above shows.

### **What are the key lessons?**

The development of the North West Community Resource Centre is a tangible and highly visible example of community activity and partnership strategy (the Community Plan) working together to address identified community needs. The resource centre offers us an illustration of the application of community learning and development skills by a range of professions who have embraced the approach.

It is a positive example of Community Planning in action: shared priorities of all partners, including the community; well planned, effective use of available resources; flexibly meeting local needs and responding to changing demands as they are raised.

The strong sense of community ownership of the centre is evident and the links made between community demands for the redevelopment of a derelict building and the establishment of the area as a Community Planning pilot area show a high degree of vision for positive, achievable, change.

## Case Studies: Voluntary Action and Community Planning (East Renfrewshire)

Number two



## **Summary**

Voluntary Action is the Council for Voluntary Service that supports voluntary organisations in East Renfrewshire. Unusually, it also acts as a Volunteer Centre. East Renfrewshire Council made an early start on Community Planning and produced a draft plan in 1999. However, public consultation on the draft was limited, and so was the recognition it gave to the role of the voluntary sector in achieving objectives.

Voluntary Action drew attention to these omissions, and was invited to serve on the Community Planning partnership. It believes that other partners initially saw it, wrongly, as representing the whole community and voluntary sector. But it is now recognised as an agent for information, networking, monitoring and research. It enables and supports communities to organise and to influence Community Planning.

Voluntary Action's role has developed in two main ways. One is a dialogue about how community involvement should be organised in future. A joint Voluntary Action/Council paper on the issues was presented to the partnership. The future roles of channels such as area committees, community councils, Voluntary Action itself and others, are still under discussion. Voluntary Action has also promoted discussion on community involvement in monitoring and evaluation of the Community Plan.

Secondly, Voluntary Action has directly built capacity and raised awareness for Community Planning among community and voluntary groups, largely from within its own resources. It has organised or contributed to several events, some aimed at all groups in East Renfrewshire, some at those involved in the social inclusion partnership. Representatives from events have reported back directly to the Community Planning partnership.

Local community councils invited Voluntary Action to survey their interest in and preparedness for Community Planning, and later to help them create a network.

The Scottish Executive's Empowering Communities funds for SIPs are administered locally by community representatives. They have commissioned Voluntary Action to provide needs assessment and training on the transition to Community Planning, for area groups of the social inclusion partnership (SIP) and then for the whole sector.

## **What was the need that was to be addressed?**

East Renfrewshire Council was determined to make an early start on Community Planning. It produced a draft plan in 1999. At that point there was no community or voluntary representation on the steering group. The partners organised one community consultation event.

Voluntary Action, the recently formed East Renfrewshire Council of Voluntary Service, attended. They felt the scope of the consultation was too narrow. It focused on themes prioritised by the steering group, not the potential overall role of Community Planning. Questions were posed and people were invited to answer. The

draft also had little to say about the role of the voluntary sector in achieving the objectives.

Voluntary Action commented on these omissions, and was invited to serve on the interim steering and working groups that were working towards a Community Planning partnership. Since then it has tried to address the needs:

- for a dialogue with other partners about how voluntary and community groups can be involved and represented;
- to raise awareness within the sector of the potential role of Community Planning and build the capacity to become effectively involved.

### **What difference was the initiative intended to make?**

Voluntary Action's Business Plan for 2001–04 includes the following objectives:

- develop mechanisms to ensure local voluntary sector views are heard;
- develop partnerships with key local agencies and organisations;
- represent the local voluntary sector on relevant partnerships;
- support community involvement in decision-making;
- facilitate the formation of, and participation in, community forums;
- support volunteers to participate in decision-making;
- network with agencies to encourage community involvement;
- locate volunteering and community action at the heart of policy;

together with several objectives concerned with promoting social inclusion.

Voluntary Action's work on Community Planning has served these objectives. Its role has evolved rather than been planned, and may change again. But it has combined a concern to represent and advance the role of the voluntary sector as a whole with a desire to facilitate community involvement.

### **How was success to be judged?**

Voluntary Action wanted future Community Planning policy and practice to give greater recognition to the voluntary sector's ability to help implementation. It also wanted agreement on effective methods for community involvement.

Probably nobody is entirely sure yet about what can ultimately be achieved through such community involvement. But local community groups see the possibility of positive outcomes.

A community councils' representative says that previously they always felt that they were just reacting to things. 'Community Planning seemed to be an opportunity to be represented and recognised'.

The active group of community and voluntary organisations involved in the Lever Valley Partnership wants to preserve and build upon the experience of involvement and partnership working that they have already gained. Their view is that 'the

community should be in first in Community Planning, and the aim should be to work out how to achieve that'.

### **Who was involved?**

Voluntary Action was founded in 1996, but it was not until July 2000 that sufficient funding was obtained to appoint staff and open premises. Uniquely in urban Scotland, it combines in one organisation the functions of the Council for Voluntary Service that supports voluntary organisations in East Renfrewshire and of a Volunteer Centre.

As well as the work described here, it provides various services to local voluntary organisations and recruits and supports volunteers. Some of this laid important foundations for the work on Community Planning. For example, it has had considerable success in promoting take-up of National Lottery funding, and is credited with showing community councils that they can get funding from new sources to enable them to take on a wider role.

The East Renfrewshire Community Planning partnership is led by the Council and includes NHS Argyll and Clyde, NHS Greater Glasgow, Scottish Enterprise Renfrewshire, Communities Scotland, Strathclyde Police and Fire Brigade and West of Scotland Water, as well as Voluntary Action.

Support for community involvement is provided by the Council, especially its Community and Leisure Department, often in partnership. For example, Turn Talk into Action is a working group set up to provide training accessible to all local voluntary and community organisations in response to their requests and needs. It involves all the Council's community workers, Housing, Voluntary Action and the Workers Educational Association.

There are community councils covering all areas of East Renfrewshire, but they have had no common network, except for an annual conference facilitated by the Council.

The Lavern Valley Partnership (LVP) is the one social inclusion partnership in the area. It has always had an unusually high proportion of community representatives, both on the main partnership and on thematic working groups, and they have developed considerable experience of partnership working.

The Lavern Valley name refers to Barrhead and surrounding areas, a major and geographically distinct part of East Renfrewshire. Although SIP funding is focused on a number of smaller areas, many of the community organisations involved have a Barrhead or wider remit. They have formed the Empowering Communities Group (ECG). Since the SIP was originally one of the shorter-term regeneration programmes, it has already been under notice for two years that it must develop an exit strategy that will show how it will link with the Community Plan.

Voluntary Action has had a long relationship with the LVP. It led the development of the Lavern Valley Compact, defining the respective roles of community and voluntary

groups and other partners, and adopted by all of them. Later it became a full member of the partnership.

### **How did they go about it?**

Voluntary Action is a small organisation with limited resources. The activities described here are not a major planned initiative. But it has carved out a role in communicating, both to partners and to its own sector, the potential for greater community involvement in Community Planning. Voluntary Action believes that when it joined the Community Planning group, the others initially misunderstood its role.

But it is now recognised that:

Voluntary Action does not, and would not claim to represent the whole voluntary sector. It does however provide a starting point which, if appropriately supported, could provide a vehicle for the dissemination of information, networking, monitoring and research.

*Community Planning partnership paper*

Voluntary Action's role has developed in two main ways:

1. It has continued a dialogue with partners about how community involvement should be organised in future. It has continued to criticise any proposals that 'do not appear to offer a clear route for the diverse range of organisations and representative bodies to easily contribute to the Community Planning process'. The future structure of the Community Planning partnership and the system for community representation were still under review at the time of writing.
2. It has supported communities to organise, and to understand and influence the Community Planning process. It has publicised the issues and organised or contributed to several events, some aimed at all groups in East Renfrewshire, some at those involved in the SIP.

### **What resources were needed?**

Voluntary Action is funded principally through grants from the Scottish Executive and East Renfrewshire Council. Although it now has ten (full-time and part-time) staff, the work described here is effectively a small part of one person's responsibilities. East Renfrewshire Council has recently approved in principle extra funding for Voluntary Action and the need for a three-year service level agreement. It recognises that this will define Voluntary Action's role as a strategic partner, not just an individual voluntary group.

The events described have received small amounts of additional financial support, including £700 from the Councils of Voluntary Service Scotland capacity building fund and some from the LVP. However partnership approaches underlie everything and the role of other Turn Talk into Action members is difficult to disentangle.

The Scottish Executive's Empowering Communities fund allocation to the LVP was given to the Empowering Communities Group to administer. £10,000 of this has been used to commission Voluntary Action to co-ordinate the current programme of work described below.

### **What were the actions taken?**

Voluntary Action responded to the 1999 draft Community Plan and raised several issues about the lack of recognition of the voluntary sector's ability to implement parts of the plan and the lack of involvement of any voluntary organisations in producing it. It was invited to participate in the Community Planning steering and working groups. This came too late for the plan to be amended, except to list Voluntary Action as a partner. That plan gave some recognition to the existing active voluntary role in community safety, but very limited recognition to voluntary groups' role in any other issues.

There has since been a continuing debate about the future of community involvement. In September 2001 the steering group asked for a paper to stimulate discussion on the issue. The report, largely written by Voluntary Action, was presented jointly by Voluntary Action and the Council. It drew heavily on 'The New Community Strategies: How to Involve Local People' by the Community Development Foundation<sup>16</sup> and it:

- argued that community involvement is a process which must be seen as long term and an investment;
- recognised the existence of various 'communities';
- recognised the need for investment in a wide range of voluntary and community activity to enable involvement at strategic level.

Voluntary Action has also raised the question of how the community itself could monitor the process. There was eventual agreement that such involvement must include a role in defining what the outcomes will be. Voluntary Action would have a major role in defining them for the voluntary sector. Progress on the local framework has currently been overtaken by the national requirement to prepare a regeneration outcome agreement as part of the process of merging the SIP and Community Planning partnership.

A Council-led review for the Community Planning partnership is still looking at community involvement structures and the process of engagement in Community Planning, including: the future roles of channels such as area committees, community councils, Voluntary Action itself and others; the membership and remit of such groups; the possible need for an overall forum; the resources required.

Voluntary Action has responded to earlier proposals, continuing to argue 'The paper should take cognisance of the many stages of community involvement (information; participation; implementation; and community control). It must be extremely clear

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<sup>16</sup> Now available in a Scottish version as 'Involving Local People in Community Planning in Scotland'. Available at: [www.communityplanning.org.uk/pubs.html](http://www.communityplanning.org.uk/pubs.html)

about what is meant by 'community' and the many diverse communities that exist in East Renfrewshire, and any new structures must reflect this diversity'. It would appear that these arguments are being taken seriously.

Voluntary Action has also tried to build capacity and raise awareness of Community Planning directly among community and voluntary groups. In the earlier stages of its involvement this activity included:

- highlighting the issue in its newsletter;
- carrying out a survey to map the voluntary sector, which included questions on desire to be involved in Community Planning and similar forums, and showed extremely low proportions to be interested at that stage;
- presentations by senior partner representatives on 'The Community in Community Planning' at Voluntary Action's AGM.

They also began to assist participants in the Levern Valley Partnership to think about a longer-term strategy for community involvement in the new context. Voluntary Action led a January 2002 workshop at an away-day for community representatives, looking at:

- the unique role of the voluntary sector in partnership working;
- the mechanisms needed to continue working in the LVP;
- the mechanisms needed for the voluntary sector to develop and implement the wider Community Plan.

At this stage representatives appeared to have real difficulty in working out whether they could or should have a voice within Community Planning.

Next, Voluntary Action proposed the organisation of a major public event, with the intention of raising general awareness of the Community Plan and starting a dialogue with the local voluntary sector regarding it and their role within it. This would be mounted with the support of the Turn Talk into Action group. There was general agreement from other partners for Voluntary Action to lead the event with their support.

The Council suggested that Voluntary Action should, in collaboration with its Community Support Section, organise an additional workshop for Levern Valley organisations, in order to prepare them to participate without getting bogged down in issues specific to the area.

This event, 'Regeneration – Raising the Voluntary Voice', in October 2002, was able to respond to the Scottish Executive's regeneration statement 'Better Communities: Closing the Gap'. It explored:

- how the statement would affect the voluntary sector;

- how Levern Valley organisations and issues could be heard within the Community Plan.

After presentations from Communities Scotland and the Council, workshops produced visions of the voluntary sector now and in ten years' time. Feedback showed that participants were mostly very satisfied, and wanted follow-up events.

The second event, 'Turning Rhetoric into Reality – Community Involvement in the Community Plan', took place in November 2002. It was for voluntary organisations in the whole council area. Voluntary Action argued successfully that other partners should not take part in group discussions, in order to give people space to explore issues without immediate responses from other agencies. Presentations were given by the Council, Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, Scottish Community Development Centre (on measuring progress in Community Planning) and Voluntary Action. Groups discussed each of the Community Planning theme areas, identifying their aspirations, barriers they expected to meet, outcomes they sought and indicators of success. Later they discussed past experience of voluntary and community sector participation and the implications for achieving effective participation in Community Planning partnerships.

Again evaluations were very positive, with comments such as 'follow up – keep momentum going'. One leading participant recalls:

It was a good day. There were people from both parts of the area and a really good discussion. We could see where everyone was coming from and the potential to get involved.

After each event, representatives attended the Community Planning partnership to discuss what they had got from it, and what their future role might be in Community Planning, though this led to no immediate results.

Earlier, community councils had asked for Voluntary Action to facilitate a workshop on networking at their 2002 Annual Conference. The conference agreed to work towards the establishment of a community council network. Voluntary Action was asked to conduct a survey, which included both 'ground-up' issues and a focus on community councils' interest in and preparedness for Community Planning.

Voluntary Action fed the results of the survey back to the 2003 Conference. It yielded an overwhelming response in favour of networking on the Community Planning themes. All responding agreed that community councils needed to network on 'consultation: local policy', and most agreed on a range of other tasks such as developing joint projects, campaigning on common issues, joint funding, and information and training events. Comments were offered such as: 'a mechanism is needed to manage and develop participation in bigger issues' and 'community councils struggling alone are achieving little'.

A steering group has now been set up to look at networking and decide the best way to get involved in the Community Planning process. Voluntary Action will provide specific support on request, for example with constitutional and legal issues, and will

involve community councils in relevant events. However the community councils also feel that: 'As well as technical support they offer some political push, because Voluntary Action understands community thinking and where we are coming from.'

Meantime, as discussions of an exit strategy for the Levern Valley Partnership have continued, the partnership has been spending some of its 'transitional' funds on capacity building. The Empowering Communities Group is keen to continue beyond the end of SIP funding. It needs to establish its role, legal structure and funding, and explore ways it can fit into the Community Planning structure.

As part of this process it has commissioned Voluntary Action to organise a programme of needs assessment and training on the transition to Community Planning, initially for organisations in the Levern Valley area and then for the whole sector across East Renfrewshire. The Empowering Communities Group sees the programme as an aid to tackling the uncertainty that it and others feel about both the means and objectives of becoming involved. They want 'to bring everyone up to date with Community Planning' because 'no-one understands anything about it'.

The programme has started with a questionnaire, looking at personal knowledge and training needs on Community Planning and community learning and at individuals' confidence about their representative role. Next, a training session is planned for the Empowering Communities Group on 'leadership in a community context', offering a chance to define more closely the content of future sessions.

The main part of the programme is currently proposed to include:

- a session for all Levern Valley organisations on 'From Social Inclusion Partnerships to Community Planning';
- another needs assessment aimed at all East Renfrewshire groups;
- establishing a working group from interested respondents to plan the next event and potentially to feed ideas about involvement to the Community Planning partnership;
- an awareness-raising event aimed at all East Renfrewshire groups.

Voluntary Action continues to pursue opportunities to raise awareness of Community Planning. There is a workshop on the subject at its forthcoming AGM, intended to get feedback from members on progress to date.

### **How was the practice co-ordinated and monitored?**

The practice described here was not planned as a separate initiative with its own performance criteria. Voluntary Action's business plan has been externally evaluated as providing an effective framework for recording and understanding its activities. Voluntary Action has achieved the reputation among outside observers of being a well-run organisation. Other Community Planning partners reported that it is 'a competent and credible organisation' and that they had 'confidence that it has consulted the broader voluntary sector'. Community groups described it as open and

accountable to its members. It has an active committee who have very good relations with the professional team. Evaluation forms are used for all training events.

### **How successful was it?**

It is difficult to attribute a specific impact to the particular activities described here, because of their limited scale and resourcing, the essential element of partnership work involved in them all, and the complex and still imperfectly understood nature of the Community Planning process. But, although Voluntary Action feels that it came into the local Community Planning process too late and progress sometimes seems slow, this was an early attempt to start Community Planning, and the subsequent period of debate and preparation has undoubtedly helped to raise interest and awareness.

Voluntary Action itself feels that 'very small steps have been made, but the long-term impacts are not yet there'. However, 'people are now more aware of how Community Planning can have a driving role in policy'. Compared to the very low initial level of interest in Community Planning, the response to subsequent events and surveys seems to demonstrate that many in the sector have come to view it as a real opportunity.

Even the most involved community activists still find Community Planning difficult and confusing: 'It is difficult to remember what is happening from one meeting to the next, or know what the meetings are for.' But it is a real achievement that, probably as a result of all the opportunities for contact and discussion, they realise that other partners can find it equally difficult.

The slowness of the process of implementing arrangements for community involvement is in part due to Voluntary Action's continued insistence on the complexity of the issues involved in community representation and the need to build capacity. More simplistic solutions could have been imposed earlier.

The work has also contributed to practical progress in partnership working in the Levern Valley area, where a real willingness to take part in partnership meetings and hold agencies accountable has developed. The Community Planning partners have also become more aware of the potential role of voluntary organisations in delivering plan objectives.

Clear elements of good practice are therefore demonstrated. Community organisations have been supported and encouraged to engage positively with other groups and agencies concerned with community learning and development.<sup>17</sup> Training and development have been provided for community leaders, and support for active community members.<sup>18</sup>

Both in general and through its work on Community Planning, Voluntary Action has been working towards a situation where:

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<sup>17</sup> HGIOCLD: 2.4 Assisting communities to exercise power and influence

<sup>18</sup> HGIOCLD: 2.2 Developing skills and confidence

Community organisations are active and vibrant and exert considerable influence on public policy and the delivery of services. They are creative and imaginative in securing resources that benefit their community. They work well in collaboration with other organisations and public agencies to ensure that priority needs are being met.<sup>19</sup>

*How Good is Our Community Learning and Development*

### **What else happened?**

Growth in the confidence and awareness of local organisations, and other partners' understanding of the potential of the voluntary sector, are supported by the general work of Voluntary Action in improving fundraising performance, supporting participation, encouraging volunteering, supporting excluded groups, and documenting the sector through surveys and building a database.

Examples of such growing confidence can be found among community councils. 'We are becoming not just statutory consultees but more of a community group,' one claims. The experience of discovering a role in bringing together local groups and helping to give them a voice had shown the potential for the same approach across the whole council area on wider issues.

### **What are the key lessons?**

Community Planning will work best when the voluntary sector is recognised as a full partner and not a recipient of Community Planning. East Renfrewshire is taking small steps towards turning that into a reality. There have been contentious issues for all involved, but also a fundamental desire to co-operate.

There are no easy solutions to representing the variety of different organisations and interests that make up the community and voluntary sector, nor to turning the abstract concept of Community Planning into something with which they can engage confidently. But voluntary and community groups appreciate support that comes from within their own sector, and the time and space to think how they would like to be involved. It may be difficult to represent all parts of the sector within one single forum, but that does not mean that they cannot effectively talk and give support to each other.

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<sup>19</sup> HGIOCLD: 2.6 Community achievement

# Case Studies: Involving Citizens in Community Planning (Aberdeen)

Number three



## Summary

Preparations for an Aberdeen Community Plan began with an exercise in which the public was invited to 'Imagine Aberdeen' in the year 2010, through attending open days and workshops and completing questionnaires. Fourteen themes were developed by a core group, whose members included community representatives. The first Community Plan, '*aberdeen futures*', proposed the establishment of a new decision-making Alliance involving the public, voluntary, business and community sectors, together with the development of a Civic Forum.

A steering group made up of Council members and community representatives drew up proposals for the Civic Forum. Support to the Forum was, and continues to be, given primarily by staff in the Community Development section of Aberdeen City Council's Chief Executive Office, assisted by staff in the Learning and Leisure Service.

An inaugural meeting was held, the Forum was constituted, and membership was agreed: three or four representatives from each area of the city, depending on population; seven from established communities of interest (e.g. Senior Citizens' Forum, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered Forum); and two seats for gypsy travellers, at their request. Subsequently, four forum members were elected as representatives on the city Alliance. The Forum is also represented on each alliance subgroup. Around 100 of 129 places on the Forum have been filled so far, and representation from 'harder to reach' sections is strong, though work continues to improve representation from these groups.

A survey of forum members was used to establish training and support needs and initial topics for discussion. Training courses on 'Speaking Up in Meetings' and the use of computers were early responses to the needs of forum members.

The City Alliance now has responsibility for developing the existing Strengthening Local Democracy strategy. This works through three main structures: the Forum, neighbourhood community action plans, and plans for communities of interest. Participation guidelines are being developed to set standards for good practice. The strategy promises support to communities particularly via community learning and development staff, but also Community Police, tenant participation officers, neighbourhood Community Planning officers, public health co-ordinators and staff from other agencies.

## What was the need that was to be addressed?

Aberdeen's initial Community Plan, *aberdeen futures*, contains a commitment to 'give a focus for all community organisations in the City by establishing a Civic Forum, which will bring the voice of the community to the decision making table'.

The Forum itself, as now established, aims to:

- enable communities in the city to participate fully and formally in the Community Planning process;

- bring communities together to promote discussion and dialogue ... in order to present a balanced view to the Aberdeen City Alliance and its member organisations; and
- help build links between communities.

### **What difference was the initiative intended to make?**

Groups had never before been brought together across the city in such an organised way. At the Forum's inaugural meeting, Lord Provost Margaret Smith said that the aim was to bring together people from across the city to enable them to talk together and gain an understanding of issues in various parts of Aberdeen. They then have the opportunity to form a unified voice as part of the Community Plan.

This is not going to be a talking shop; we hope that action will come from the decisions taken by the Forum and that these will then become part of the wider decision-making process.

*Lord Provost Margaret Smith*

### **How was success to be judged?**

The establishment of the Civic Forum is seen as a direct response to two of the fourteen 'challenges' in the Community Plan, as well as allowing communities to influence the rest.

To meet the Leading the City challenge, the plan proposed to establish, by the end of 2002, a new vehicle for Community Planning: a City Alliance involving key organisations from the public, voluntary, business and community sectors. This would 'give a central focus for all strategies, plans and actions in the City'. In preparation for this a Civic Forum would be established by May 2002.

The Getting Involved challenge requires the partners to actively promote community development. The key aims here are:

- to encourage and support communities to be more involved in identifying their needs and sustaining their communities;
- for city partners to work together with citizens and communities to improve community well-being.

The Civic Forum is seen as having a major role in fulfilling these aims. Some specific targets were set, but in general it was proposed that the results of a community capacity building audit would determine future programmes.

### **Who was involved?**

The partners in the Aberdeen City Alliance are:

- Aberdeen City Council
- NHS Grampian
- Grampian Police
- Grampian Fire Brigade
- Scottish Enterprise Grampian
- Communities Scotland
- Three local universities and colleges
- Chamber of Commerce
- Federation of Small Businesses
- Harbour Board
- Regional Ecumenical Team
- Aberdeen Council of Voluntary Organisations (ACVO)
- Aberdeen Trades Council
- The Civic Forum.

As well as plenary sessions, the Alliance works through fifteen challenge forums, each responsible for action plans to achieve a set of Community Plan objectives. Each forum has a lead officer. There is a resources sub-group and a lead officers group that looks at cross-cutting issues. The Civic Forum is represented on all of these bodies. It is also represented on some forums covering North East Scotland as a whole (though not on six networks dealing with technical co-ordination).

Some voluntary organisations also get involved in challenge forums directly: for example, arts groups are represented on the Arts and Heritage Forum.

The Civic Forum, as constituted, is made up of 129 community representatives:

- area representatives: Three representatives from each of the 31 community council areas plus one extra representative from each of the 10 largest areas
- three or four representatives from each of these established communities of interest:
  - Disability Advisory Group
  - Ethnic Minorities Forum
  - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Forum
  - Senior Citizens' Forum
  - Women's Alliance
  - Youth Action Committee
  - Great Northern Partnership (the local social inclusion partnership)
- two seats representatives of the gypsy traveller community.

If unable to attend a meeting, a forum member may nominate a substitute.

### **How did they go about it?**

Preparations for an Aberdeen Community Plan began with an exercise in which the public was invited to 'Imagine Aberdeen' in the year 2010, through taking part in open days and workshops and completing questionnaires. It is estimated that around 2,000 people participated in the responses to this consultation. Based on these, 14

'city challenges' were identified. In the second phase of the consultation, 'You Said It', leaflets were produced explaining the work underway and asking what else should be done. The themes were developed by a core group, which included community representatives, into 'aberdeen*utures*'.

Proposals for the Civic Forum were then drawn up by a steering group of council members and community representatives. Next, a full range of representatives was recruited: in around 21 areas a Community Council exists and chose the representatives; in other areas they were sought from other community groups. The inaugural meeting was held on schedule in May 2002 and the Forum later adopted its constitution. Representatives will initially serve until October 2006, and thereafter for terms of three years.

The remit of the Forum is to discuss issues arising from communities or the Alliance, to influence and monitor its work and to act as a consultative forum for the Alliance or any of its constituent partners on proposals for their services.

The Forum meets quarterly, dovetailing with scheduled meetings of the Alliance. A lead group of 20 meets eight times a year to plan forum meetings and deal with urgent business between meetings. They are elected every two years from the Forum, to represent three main divisions of the City and the communities of interest; the four representatives on the City Alliance each come from one of these four subsections. Around 30 members are currently on one or more of the Alliance's challenge forums.

### **What resources were needed?**

Support for the development and continuing operation of the Civic Forum is given primarily by the Community Development section of the Office of the Chief Executive of Aberdeen City Council, by a principal development officer and two part-time development officer posts. The latter posts are funded for three years from March 2002 by a grant from Shell Expro. They meet key members before meetings of the Alliance, Forum and lead group, to go through the agenda. They also offer support to individual members about how to research and present issues and raise their profile in the community.

Assistance is provided by staff in the Learning and Leisure Service. Their role is principally to support and assist people to get involved at local level, to get prepared for wider involvement, and to create a two-way information flow. This role is to be developed further and may change with the advent of neighbourhood planning.

A group of staff who volunteered for this role from both Community Development and Learning and Leisure attend the Civic Forum in rotation. The main agenda items at these meetings are discussed in small groups, which these staff facilitate.

The Forum is clerked by the Council's Department of Legal and Democratic Services. It is anticipated that support will also be drawn from other services in the Council and from other partner organisations. The only cash contributions so far have been made by the Council, Police and the local college to a £1,000 kitty for members' expenses. Assistance with transport and childcare is offered from this kitty.

Training for members has included presentations to full Forum meetings on Community Planning structures and processes, and the potential role and influence of the Forum. A course on 'Speaking up in Meetings' was contributed by Aberdeen University, which plans to offer it again. There is considerable demand for computer training, ranging from absolute basics to help with searching the internet. It is proposed to help interested members to find courses that suit them (probably with the college or Community Learning), and to meet their costs.

A post was established at ACVO in September 2003 to provide training in voluntary and community involvement, which will include training for staff of agencies.

Forum members freely discuss the fact that the experience of those involved in the SIP, who control a £60,000 Empowering Communities budget and have structures in place to give support and feedback to the community, is very different from that of many others. The future of such support is not resolved.

### **What were the actions taken?**

The community representatives on the original core group were an ad hoc selection of people from the existing Community Councils' Forum, a tenants' group, and some communities of interest. They believe they made some impact, pushing for the plan to be practical and deliverable.

After the publication of *aberdeen futures*, some of the same people took part in the steering group to plan the Civic Forum. They agreed the balance between area and interest communities. Though a few area representatives may still doubt the justification for the additional presence, Forum members say the two types of representative cannot be told apart at meetings. They also insisted that no city Councillors could be forum members.

The development workers came into post before the Forum was constituted, and their first task was to identify representatives from localities and communities of interest for an inaugural meeting. They wrote to and met groups, explained the expressed commitment of the partners and the Community Planning process and linked it to the previous consultations. The first approach received a good response. In the areas without Community Councils – generally the more disadvantaged ones – they contacted other organisations, for example, tenants associations, community learning management committees, neighbourhood watch, and sometimes churches, and called them all to a meeting.

The new Forum broadly accepted the proposed structure. The issue of including places for gypsy travellers was controversial for a while, but was accepted. Some tenants' groups also wanted direct representation, but after debate it was decided not to define them as a separate community of interest.

About 100 of 129 places on the Forum have been filled so far. Turnout has been about 60 at its highest, but is usually about 40. It appears that many area representatives operate on the basis of ensuring that one person from their area

always attends. The development workers recently contacted non-attenders and encouraged them either to attend or to formally withdraw.

The quarterly Forum meetings are, following consultation, scheduled alternately for Saturday mornings and weekday evenings, to give all a chance to attend. Officials attend to answer questions on specific issues. The Civic Forum has had detailed discussions on community safety issues, on roads and transportation, on waste management and on strengthening local democracy. It has prepared a response to the city's draft local housing strategy and considered the pedestrianisation of Union Street. It expects to move on to look at other issues from the Community Plan.

Much of the discussion takes place in facilitated sub-groups. Feedback suggests that members appreciate the opportunities these give to say what they feel. While members could do the facilitating themselves, they feel that they need to concentrate on thinking about the message that they will take away. Facilitators have two roles: to keep focus and prevent parochialism, and to produce a summary. These are submitted to the Alliance for information and to the appropriate challenge forum for a response. Some have given itemised responses, but not all. Some representatives would prefer a response to their comments to be given by the Alliance.

The lead group:

- prepares for Civic Forum meetings – for example, preparing agendas and dealing with practical arrangements;
- prepares for Alliance meetings, looking at the implications of the agenda and the likely views of communities;
- has an advisory role in relation to the development officers;
- undertakes other tasks, such as giving views in response to consultation exercises.

The four Forum representatives on the Alliance also meet before Alliance meetings. Though they are from very different areas, they find that they can reach agreement.

The ability to get reports back from three representatives on each of fifteen challenge forums is limited by time and the fact that not all are members of the lead group. The Civic Forum intends to discuss how they can get feedback in a more innovative or structured form in future.

A survey of Forum members was used to establish both training and support needs and initial broad topics as priorities for discussion. The most commonly identified training needs were:

- speaking in public and making presentations;
- help with understanding official documents;
- information and communications technology (ICT);
- understanding the structure and operation of the Civic Forum and City Alliance.

Some members are now getting their information by e-mail, but a significant minority do not have access to a computer, or feel unable to use one. Training has been offered, as already described.

It is believed that most representatives who have local organisations to report back to do so, though reports are sometimes brief, and the role of the Forum is not always well understood yet.

However, support by community learning staff to people involved in local management committees is beginning to have spin-off effects, with people whom they initially supported to take part locally now becoming Civic Forum representatives. Here is one example.

### **Mastrick Young People's Project**

This project is run by young people to provide informal education for young people (15–25) in three areas. It places special emphasis on youth participation in decision-making, supporting campaigns that have reached the Scottish Parliament. Its management committee is also the local Youth Forum. From this they get involved in the city-wide Youth Action Committee. Two have gone from there to the Civic Forum. Community learning and development staff from the Learning and Leisure Service support young people involved at any level for example by talking through agendas, providing training on participation in meetings, and giving personal support about speaking up.

### **How was the practice co-ordinated and monitored?**

The role of the lead group, assisted by the development workers, in co-ordinating the Forum has been described above. The workers circulate evaluation sheets at each Forum meeting, asking about which aspects were more and less helpful, and for suggestions on practical arrangements. They feed results back to the lead group. They have also undertaken two annual surveys of Forum members to establish members' training and support needs, and preferred topics for discussion.

Minutes of forum meetings are submitted to the Policy and Strategy Committee of the Council and to the City Alliance, then published in the Council minutes available in public libraries.

The Alliance's Getting Involved challenge forum has targets, reported upon annually, which include the establishment and progress of the Civic Forum.

The Chief Executive's Office has set its own internal targets concerning the Forum: to establish it, maintain and improve levels of attendance, fill vacancies, and hold awareness-raising sessions.

## How successful was it?

Aberdeen has succeeded in agreeing and establishing a comprehensive structure for community involvement in Community Planning, which has already displayed some staying power and obtained the enthusiasm and commitment of many community members. Participation from the 'harder to reach' sections of the community is said to be good, as a result of the involvement of representatives from communities of interest, and some effort by staff to get representatives from 'harder' localities and support them.

Survey responses by Forum members illustrate their range of perceptions:

Civic Forum is a worthwhile attempt to improve democracy.

Beginning to get stronger – appears to be meaningful debate and a continuity of attendance.

Meeting with people from different areas and discussing is worthwhile.

Civic Forum is another talking shop.

Meetings have been helpful, at least informative, and will strengthen as the years go by.

These evaluations are elaborated both by staff in contact with the Forum and by leading Forum members, as we see below.<sup>20</sup>

Staff suggest that 'representatives' performance is very good – they get stuck in', and 'there has been a very healthy interchange between different areas ... some people are becoming more city-conscious'. 'You get representatives challenging officers or decisions at the Alliance meeting – there is an "air of scrutiny", the constant question and reminder "where are local people in this?"' This is also true in at least some challenge forums. Some are more open to community representatives than others, e.g. more prepared to vary the times of their meetings. Some forums perhaps expect too much from representatives – that they should be the 'voice of the community', lead consultations etc. Staff also feel that there should be more chance for representatives to have prior discussions to bolster their representative role.

However, 'they generally feel listened to at the Alliance, but are not sure yet what action results'. Though staff do believe representatives are influencing outcomes, it is hard to identify specific examples.

Leading Forum members also offer criticism, but from a position of engagement. They report that when the Chair asked, 'Are we being reduced to a talking shop?' the reply was 'Not if we can help it!' But they stress that Community Planning has to deal with achievable things, and achieve them. 'We are currently at the crux – partners

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<sup>20</sup> Source: interviews for case study

have all signed up for a wonderful idea, and have now got to put their money where their mouths are.’ ‘We have had good meetings on waste, transport etc., but so what?’ ‘We need a quick win. We also need culture change.’

They also acknowledge that ‘the Civic Forum has not yet clearly formulated what it wants its representatives to raise and do’; and ‘there is a missing link to people in the street – we have not reached out widely enough’.

So far, therefore, it seems that through the Forum:

Community organisations are informed very effectively about local and wider policy issues. They are very well supported to engage positively with public agencies on issues of local concern and on wider policy issues. They see themselves and are seen by public agencies as important partners in policy and practice development.

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In addition, ‘Active community members are consistently well supported by staff to carry out their roles within groups and in the wider community.’<sup>22</sup>

But the jury is perhaps still out on whether as a result ‘community organisations are active and vibrant and exert considerable influence on public policy and the delivery of services.’<sup>23</sup>

### **What else happened?**

One interesting possible spin-off effect is that at the May 2003 local elections around six former Civic Forum members were elected as Council members. This is seen as a legitimate progression in levels of civic involvement.

The City Alliance as a whole now has responsibility for developing the Council’s existing Strengthening Local Democracy strategy.

The agreed outcomes for this strategy are that:

- all citizens are valued and respected;
- the community contributes to the well-being of its members;
- people are organised to address local issues collectively;
- representative community organisations influence decision-making;
- Aberdeen has strong, secure, self-reliant, self-confident communities free from unlawful discrimination.

It supports three main approaches to developing structures that enable public authorities to engage with communities:

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<sup>21</sup> HGIOCLD: 2.4 Assisting communities to exercise power and influence

<sup>22</sup> HGIOCLD: 2.2 Developing skills and confidence

<sup>23</sup> HGIOCLD: 2.6 Community achievement

- community involvement in the Community Plan through the Civic Forum;
- neighbourhood community action plans (see below);
- plans for communities of interest, through creating or strengthening existing consultative forums.

The strategy promises support to communities to tackle local issues from staff in the public sector and voluntary organisations. The largest group are community learning and development staff, who have a responsibility to develop local community learning plans that deliver local programmes for social inclusion, lifelong learning and active citizenship. In addition the contributions of community beat police officers, tenant participation officers, neighbourhood Community Planning officers, public health co-ordinators and others are recognised.

The Getting Involved challenge forum has recently widened its membership to include NHS and police representatives and oversees actions including:

- publication and distribution of agreed 'Guidelines for Community Engagement';
- undertaking an audit of partners' contributions to the Getting Involved action programme;
- a pilot year of a Citizens Panel, and seeking funding to follow on.

Another challenge forum, on Neighbourhood Action – Locality Planning, is pursuing a move by public authorities to more area based service delivery, with the target that neighbourhood community action plans should be complete by 2006 in 40 neighbourhoods. Neighbourhood managers are talking to partners about partnership structures. These neighbourhoods will have new boundaries, not the current Civic Forum boundaries based on community councils. The implications for the Forum are not yet clear.

Ultimately, the action plan for every challenge forum is expected to include proposals for consultation and participation, but this is still to be achieved.

### **What are the key lessons?**

Getting and retaining community involvement in Community Planning is a long and complex process. Getting the right structures is hard work and requires extensive support and open debate, but is only the first stage. As one community representative said: 'The egg is not fully hatched.'

The Council has summarised issues that will require further consideration by the Community Planning partners. The validity of these issues is supported by the views expressed by staff and community representatives. They include:

- a budget to meet the running costs of the Civic Forum;
- long-term funding for professional support;

- effective participation of community representatives in the work of each of the challenge forums;
- a clearer, more consistent level of support from staff in the local areas for Civic Forum members to represent their community.

The Council stresses the importance of being able to demonstrate in the months to come that the Forum's contribution to the Community Planning process is valued by the partner agencies and if possible that it has actually made a tangible difference to outcomes.

It could be added that innovative and streamlined arrangements for reporting back and for supporting forum members' representative role within communities will also be important.

In the longer run the Alliance itself has identified a need for culture change in agencies, to be achieved partly through staff training.

The future role of neighbourhood action plans will be vital. Civic Forum members have already recognised that: 'People will want to get involved at this level, where they can influence something,' and therefore that 'tying them in to Community Planning will be crucial' to getting community involvement in the wider process.

# Case Studies: Raising the profile of adult basic education (West Lothian)

Number four



## Summary

The Adult Basic Education (ABE) team is part of the West Lothian Literacies Partnership, which co-ordinates literacy and numeracy provision. The Partnership includes other Council services, local further education colleges and voluntary organisations.

The ABE team provides tuition to adults wanting to improve their literacy and/or numeracy skills. It provides for some 400 adults each year, of whom about 160 are new learners. Provision is made within the well-resourced adult learning centre in Bathgate and in 15 community-based venues. Tuition is delivered in 30 groups by paid tutors, supported by volunteers, to ensure that each learner receives some individual attention. Over the last three years the team's capacity has expanded to meet national adult literacy strategy targets.

A multi-strand marketing strategy ensures that the take-up of learning places matches the team's delivery capacity. This includes promotional articles in local papers, an awareness-raising video, CD-ROM and targeted advertising. Five hundred staff from West Lothian Council and other agencies have been trained to identify and support prospective learners in referring themselves for help.

Great care is taken to ensure a high quality learning experience for learners through systematic dialogue with tutors. Standards achieved by the team are consistent with the latest national advice on teaching and learning and tutor training. A 'Learning to Learn' philosophy underpins all aspects of the learning experience: this maximises the involvement of learners. Learning programmes and teaching strategies are designed to empower learners to manage their own learning.

Selection of volunteer tutor assistants and paid tutors is rigorous and conditional on their attendance at a specified minimum number of hours' training each year. A coherent, extensive training framework supports progressive skill development.

Eighty-seven per cent of all learners reached their goals in 2002–03. These goals included coping with literacy requirements in work; helping their children with homework; being more effective in community organisations and progressing to further education.

## What was the need that was to be addressed?

The Scottish Executive launched its national adult literacy and numeracy strategy in 2001 to assist adults with limited or low literacy skills to become more effective in their use of literacy and so enhance the quality of their lives. The Executive defined literacy as:

The ability to read, write and use numeracy, to handle information, to express ideas and opinions, to make decisions and solve problems, as family members, workers, citizens and lifelong learners.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> 'Adult Literacy and Numeracy in Scotland'. Scottish Executive, 2001

Research commissioned by the Scottish Executive<sup>25</sup>, based on Scottish data in the 1997 International Adult Literacy Survey, indicates that the limited literacy capabilities of 23 per cent of the adult population seriously inhibit their effective functioning in modern society. The research found that these limited capabilities were most common among people who had left school at 16 or earlier; who had a low income; who were in a low-skill occupation; who were living in an economically disadvantaged area; who had a health problem, or a disability affecting speech or hearing; were over 55 years of age; or whose first language was not English.

However, the research showed that the attitude of those with limited literacy capabilities to their situation makes it complex to assess and meet need. Only one in four of those who performed at the lowest level were dissatisfied with their performance. The challenge facing literacy providers is twofold therefore: firstly, to attract into tuition adults who are dissatisfied with their performance and secondly, to motivate those who do not perceive their limited capabilities as a problem to come forward for help.

### **What difference was the initiative intended to make?**

The West Lothian Community Learning Partnership, in its adult literacy action plan,<sup>26</sup> acknowledged the good practice of the Community Education Service's Adult Basic Education (ABE) team in teaching and learning and in the organisation and support of literacy tuition. The Partnership agreed that it would build on this good practice and that the ABE team should contribute to its effectiveness by;

- raising the awareness of literacy issues of members of the Partnership and other agencies and organisations;
- disseminating good practice to other providers through training and staff development;
- increasing the number of learners in tuition, particularly through collaboration with adult learning providers and other agencies in integrating literacies teaching with other community learning and development activities.

### **How was success to be judged?**

The success of the ABE team's contribution to the adult literacy action plan was judged against progress towards output/outcome targets. These were:

- participation by a substantial number of staff from a range of agencies in awareness-raising training;
- a significant increase in the number of learner referrals from these sources;
- an increase in the range of literacy learning opportunities involving collaboration with partners.

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<sup>25</sup> 'Adult Literacy and Numeracy in Scotland: Analysis of Data from the 1996 International Adult Literacy Survey'. Scottish Executive, 2001

<sup>26</sup> West Lothian Adult Literacies Action Plan January 2002

The ABE team set itself targets for improving the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning and its organisation. Success criteria included:

- increased effectiveness in supporting learners to achieve their intended learning outcomes;
- extension of democracy within the service through involvement of learners, volunteers, group tutors and permanent staff in decision-making.

### **Who was involved?**

Membership of the Adult Literacies Partnership consists of the current providers of literacy tuition and support (West Lothian Council's Community Education Service ABE team, West Lothian and Oatridge Colleges of Further Education and the Workers Educational Association) as well as the Community Education Service (CES), the Council's Social Work and Economic Development Departments, West Lothian Voluntary Action, West Lothian Social Inclusion Partnership (SIP), West Lothian Health Trust, Friends of ABE (FABE), the Scottish Trades Union Congress, Job Centre Plus and West Lothian Adult Guidance Network. The ABE team collaborates with the Adult Literacies Partnership co-ordinator who oversees partnership development, including the development of good practice across all the providers.

Partners with whom the ABE team collaborated in learning programmes and community learning and development activities were; the CES, Fallahill Primary School, West Lothian SIP, Job Centre Plus, Eliburn Day Centre, the Chill Out Zone youth project, Bridgend Community Education Centre, Blackburn Homeless Unit, the Parent Support Team, New Community School Integration Teams, Barnardos and Bloom House (West Lothian Epilepsy Centre).

The Friends of ABE, an association of learners, tutors and other supporters of ABE, has worked with the team to make its marketing more effective, to campaign for ABE and to raise funds to purchase resources.

### **How did they go about it?**

#### *The team's core practice*

Lothian Regional Council responded to the BBC's 1974 literacy initiative 'On the Move' by establishing a regional adult literacy team. Staff members based in West Lothian worked as a sub-team. When West Lothian Council was established in 1996, it formed the ABE team from the literacy staff deployed in the area.

The ABE team provides tuition to some 400 learners each year in 30 groups in its learning centre in Bathgate and in 15 venues in local communities. One hundred and sixty new learners enrolled in the year ending March 2003. Six of the groups are for people with a learning disability and there are four groups for people learning to lip read. The team's professional practice is consistent with the quality standards

contained in the 'Literacies in the Community' (LiC) Pack.<sup>27</sup> These underpin work with partners and are demonstrated by the following characteristics:

- all tuition is provided in groups tutored by very experienced group tutors who are supported by volunteer tutor assistants. Having a relatively small number of group tutors makes it possible for the team to provide them with systematic and regular support. Deploying volunteers as tutor assistants has the double benefit of providing individual support to learners, while the volunteers are supported closely by the group tutors;<sup>28</sup>
- access to tuition is straightforward, prompt and easy. The current literacy practices of each prospective learner are systematically assessed by a team member at an initial interview. Here, the literacy learning necessary to achieve the prospective learner's desired outcomes is identified. The team member and prospective learner jointly formulate an individual learning plan, with an agreed timescale, and this is the basis for tuition. Only prospective learners who can indicate what they want to achieve with reasonable clarity and who can contribute to the individual learning plan are accepted for tuition;<sup>29</sup>
- the initial interview includes a section on Learning to Learn, which encourages prospective learners to reflect on the learning they do in roles such as parent or worker, thus demonstrating that they are effective learners in other areas of life. The 'Learning to Learn' ethos underpins tuition, encouraging learners to reflect on their literacy learning and also helping them acquire effective learning strategies;<sup>30</sup>
- group tutors systematically monitor learners' progress against outcome targets. Group tutors complete a log book detailing progress against each learner's intended learning outcomes on a weekly basis. Learners' progress is recorded in a personal progress file, which is updated regularly and given to the learner in June each year. Information recorded includes progress towards outcomes, attendance at short courses, contributions to the ABE newsletter, participation in meetings and involvement in FABE. This guidance process also supports learners who are not making progress in moving to development options outwith the ABE team's provision;<sup>31</sup>
- prospective volunteer tutor assistants are selected through a rigorous process involving the ABE training team, learners, volunteers and group tutors. Prior to a selection interview, prospective volunteers complete a self-selection pack, which enables them to learn of the team's expectations of volunteer tutor assistants and also explore their own suitability. Interviewees are subsequently matched against suitability criteria that have been developed by the team;<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> 'Literacies in the Community: Resources for Practitioners and Managers' (LIC). City of Edinburgh Council, 2000

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.* Organisation: Staffing

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.* Learning Programme: Entry Pathways

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.* Learning Programme: Teaching and Learning

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.* Learning Programme: Guidance and Support

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.* Organisation: Staff Development

- volunteers selected for training attend the 40-hour Stage 1 training course, which includes a practical placement. The course developed by the team has been adapted to be consistent with the Introductory Training in Adult Literacies Learning (ITALL) course.<sup>33</sup> Trainees are placed in groups early in their training to observe the practice of a group tutor and experienced volunteer tutor assistants. Training also includes sessions dedicated to tutoring adults with a learning disability and sessions on deaf and epilepsy awareness.<sup>34</sup>
- Trainee tutors who have successfully completed Stage 1 progress to Stage 2 on the submission of a satisfactory portfolio of evidence demonstrating their developing skills and understanding of adult literacies tutoring. On completion of this stage trainees may undertake the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) Tutoring Adults module. Experienced volunteers, who meet the course selection criteria, may progress to Stage 3 training, which focuses on the skills necessary to tutor a group and support volunteer tutors. The SQA module Working in Groups is embedded in the training at this stage. Volunteers and group tutors must attend a minimum of 12 hours' in-service training and planning and review meetings each year in order to continue to develop their theory and practice and keep it up to date,<sup>35</sup>
- each group tutor and volunteer is supported systematically through scheduled review meetings. Reviews are structured assessments of performance against good practice criteria. An individual tutor progress file is updated annually;<sup>36</sup>
- the team uses a range of methods to market its provision. This includes publicity in local newspapers, targeted leaflets and posters. The level of marketing activity is matched with ups and downs in learner recruitment. Job Centre Plus is one of a number of agencies that collaborates with the team by circulating publicity leaflets to clients. A media group, which includes tutors, volunteers and learners, is developing a new marketing strategy. The group will involve a marketing specialist. Although the work of the media group is at an early stage, the team is becoming increasingly aware of the need for more sophisticated strategies to recruit a wider range of learners. The team has developed a video and CD-ROM, 'Searching for Heroes', as awareness-raising aids and to support volunteer tutor recruitment.<sup>37</sup>

### *Contributing to the Partnership's goals*

In January 2002 the ABE team assumed responsibility within the Adult Literacies Partnership for raising the literacy awareness of Partnership members, and the staff of Council service departments, colleges and other agencies.

The team has collaborated closely with West Lothian College to raise the skills of selected staff in supporting students who do not meet the literacy requirements of

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<sup>33</sup> SQA Professional Development Award: Introduction to Adult Literacies Learning

<sup>34</sup> LIC. Organisation: Staff Development

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.* Learning Programme: Entry Pathways

their course. The team's tutor training programme has been opened up to College staff.

The ABE team has developed a fast-track progression route from Stage 1 to Stage 3 tutor training in order to staff an increased number of groups.

Important Literacies Partnership priorities have been the recruitment of learners from new sources and delivering literacies tuition in non-traditional ways. The ABE team has been contributing to this goal through collaborative work with a range of organisations.<sup>38</sup>

- the social inclusion partnership identified that almost all of the young people from disadvantaged backgrounds who undertook aptitude tests as part of the recruitment process for the uniformed services were unsuccessful. This was partly due to the literacy requirements of the test. The ABE team collaborated with the social inclusion partnership and the Community Education Service in developing a learning programme with a literacy element to help the young people prepare for the test. In addition, the programme involved a number of other agencies who contributed by offering opportunities to engage in new activities and experiences;
- work took place in collaboration with Deans Community High School on the workings of the Scottish Parliament. Literacy and numeracy elements were developed and embedded in the course. These elements were designed to make the language of the devolution legislation more accessible and to support an understanding of the proportional representation voting system for allocating parliamentary seats;
- a project was developed with Fallahill Primary School to pilot a system for teaching numeracy. There was also interest in heightening parents' awareness of literacy issues and encouraging the formation of a parents' learning group;
- an initiative designed to encourage literacy learners to view moving on to a college course as a real option was developed with West Lothian College;
- a number of users of the Bridgend Community Education Centre were brought together to develop ideas for redressing the under-use of the centre. The ABE team responded to a request for help with literacy and ICT skills so that the group could publicise the Centre;
- collaboration with Oatridge College of Further Education to develop an approach to integrating literacy into one of its courses is at an early stage. Curriculum and staff development are in the initial stages of consideration. Students on this course have traditionally had difficulty in meeting its literacy requirements;

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<sup>38</sup> HGIOCLD: 5.4 Partnership working.

- Eliburn Day Centre for adults with learning disabilities is collaborating in the development of in-house support for clients. Inputs from the team will be complemented by ongoing support from centre staff. In-service training will also be offered;
- literacy provision has been developed for Blackburn Homeless Unit clients, using a positive and sensitive approach for engaging the clients.

### **What resources were needed?**

West Lothian Council funds the ABE team's core permanent and sessional staff and organisation costs. This is supplemented by an input from the European Social Fund (ESF), which meets the cost of development workers and additional administrative support.

The Community Learning Partnership allocates funding received from the Scottish Executive to the team to fund one full-time development post. It also funds new collaborative projects such as the SIP's Aptitude Testing course.

West Lothian College of Further Education funded a member of the ABE team to develop the skills of its staff in relation to literacies learning.

Job Centre Plus funds the team to assess the literacy needs of both the Gateway to Work and New Deal clients referred to the team and funds the delivery of two literacy sessions per week for clients through the 'New Deal 25 plus' initiative.

West Lothian Education Service funded the materials developed by Fallahill Primary School for use in the parent education activities.

The Community Education Service and all other agencies and organisations with whom the team collaborates on projects meet their own costs.

### **What were the actions taken?**

Literacy awareness-raising training has been delivered to over 500 staff from about 30 organisations, including Council services, voluntary organisations, colleges of further education and other agencies. The training is based on the awareness-raising course developed by Communities Scotland. A more intensive course has also been developed to help staff identify people with low literacy skills. Through this course, strategies can be developed for engaging with prospective learners and supporting them as literacy learners. These courses are followed up by discussions with organisations about how they can refer clients for help with literacies.

Intensive work has been carried out with the staff of West Lothian College to develop their literacy support skills and to establish procedures and systems necessary for the provision of systematic literacy support. Training has been delivered through tutorials and teaching practice demonstration. Staff have also been trained in assessing learners' literacy capabilities and in negotiating individual learning plans. Part-time learning assistants were trained to provide individual support to students in literacy groups. Six members of the College staff are undertaking the tutor training programme in their own time.

Week-long courses in aptitude testing aimed at young people joining the uniformed services have been delivered in collaboration with the SIP. The courses are aimed at young people who are homeless or in temporary accommodation, have few or no educational qualifications, or have behavioural problems or learning difficulties.

Over 50 courses on the Scottish Parliament and the electoral system have been run, involving over 200 participants. Ten community education workers have contributed to delivering the courses. Training in spotting, referring and supporting prospective literacy learners has been delivered to staff.

The language used in all of Fallahill Primary School's literature to parents of primary one children has been made more accessible as a result of the collaborative project described above. Sessions on how to provide effective support in number and language work at home were delivered to parents and pupils.

An ABE group now meets in West Lothian College. The learners are undertaking an SQA Communications module as part of an initiative aimed at bridging the gap between learning in the community and college tuition.

An input on literacy was made to the group meeting in Bridgend Community Education Centre. Subsequently all eight members of the group completed five SQA core skills modules including communications, numeracy and word processing. The group won a Scottish Adult Learning Partnership learning award.

Learners at Blackburn Homeless Unit developed and published an information leaflet to help new clients of the unit. The learners devised and produced a publicity board for the unit, which was used at the launch of West Lothian Council's health and homeless initiative. Clients of the unit have since requested further courses, which will be delivered later in the year.

Five fun days were run in community venues as part of West Lothian Council's summer programme. All activities provided by the ABE team had a literacy and numeracy content. Community education colleagues have requested more fun days and one village has requested a regular numeracy session.

### **How was practice co-ordinated and monitored?**

The Community Learning Partnership co-ordinates and monitors progress against the targets set out in its literacy action plan. The Partnership's literacy co-ordinator takes the lead role in these activities.

The team leader co-ordinates the work of the team. Progress is monitored and evaluated against the targets contained in its development plan.

The teaching practice of group and volunteer tutor assistants is monitored and assessed against good practice criteria developed by the team. Team members meet with tutors regularly to review progress.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> LIC. Organisation: Monitoring and Evaluation

The effectiveness of the learning experience is evaluated against the number of learners achieving their learning outcomes, learners' feedback on the quality of the learning experience, and anecdotal reports of the successful application of their literacy learning in real life.<sup>40</sup>

The extension of democracy is evaluated against the opportunities created for learners, volunteers, group tutors and permanent staff to participate in decision-making processes.

### **How successful was it?**

Providing training to Council and other staff in spotting, referring and supporting prospective literacies learners has had a major effect on the relationship between these staff and the ABE team, as well as on their perception of adults with low literacy skills. The result is an increased flow of learner referrals from new sources and a willingness on the part of staff from these agencies to collaborate in new literacy developments. In particular, community education colleagues are participating in training and getting more involved in collaborative projects.

Other collaborative ventures, such as the project in Bridgend Community Education Centre, the Aptitude Test training course, and the Fallahill Primary School parent education session, are extending the range of delivery methods for literacy support. The Aptitude Test course led to young people from difficult backgrounds progressing to literacy groups in the Chill Out Zone youth project.

The capacity of West Lothian College to support students with literacy learning needs has developed greatly. Learning support staff report a major increase in the number of literacy referrals from lecturers as a direct result of the staff development training delivered by the ABE team.

Additional group tutors can now be deployed due to the new fast-track training arrangements. However, the ABE team and the Literacies Partnership as a whole will continue to be challenged by the need to increase learner numbers in community based provision without diluting the quality of teaching and learning.

Learners in ABE groups report a high level of satisfaction with their learning experience and their success in applying new literacy skills to everyday life. Eighty-seven per cent of learners achieved their learning goals in 2002–03. Goals included helping their children with homework, being more effective in community organisations and progressing to further education courses.

Arrangements for increasing participation by learners, volunteers, group tutors and permanent staff are working well. Learners' perceptions of all aspects of the service are surveyed regularly. All staff contribute to reviews of progress against targets in the team's action plan and to future planning.

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<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*

### **What other outcomes have arisen?**

The heightened visibility of the literacy team and literacy issues has resulted in a number of unexpected outcomes including:

- ABE has been invited onto a number of working groups where there were no previous opportunities to join, for example, one on new community schools;
- the Libraries Service has produced a bookmark publicising its service and also the ABE team's provision;
- staff engaged with homeless young people are receiving training in literacies spotting, referring and support, and a number of partner organisations have requested that the training be extended to their front-line staff.

Additional outcomes include:

Bloom House Centre for people with epilepsy now makes a specialist contribution to the team's tutor training programme as a consequence of the team providing literacy tuition in the centre.

The group from Bridgend Community Education Centre produced and disseminated publicity materials to encourage people to use the centre. As a result of these efforts, centre usage has risen from four to 33 hours per week.

### **What are the key lessons?**

Running literacies awareness training with Council services, colleges, voluntary organisations and other agencies has changed the perception of literacy provision. This in turn has resulted in several collaborative initiatives to provide literacy support.

There is a tension between the development of quality literacy provision firmly grounded in the quality standards contained in 'Literacies in the Community' and the level of expansion needed to make a substantial impact on the literacy levels of the adult population. Group-based tuition achieves economies of scale and high quality teaching and learning. Deployment of additional group tutors through fast-track training will contribute to the expansion of provision. Likewise, collaborative initiatives with partners are increasing the number of learners involved.

However, collaborative initiatives require a considerable investment of time in developmental tasks including raising staff awareness, designing the initiative and of course curriculum development.

## Case Studies: Developing an Effective Community Learning Plan (Glasgow) Number five



## Summary

Greater Easterhouse Community Learning Plan (CLP) was one of Glasgow's pilot plans. Unusually, it was led by the local social inclusion partnership, through its Education and Lifelong Learning sub-group, which itself is led by John Wheatley College. A recent report from Her Majesty's Inspectorate judged community learning planning in Easterhouse, and many aspects of delivery, as 'very good'.

A process of consultation events involving 42 local organisations led to the adoption of the 2001-04 plan, in which the priorities were core skills (including ICT), health and poverty. Targets were set for establishing learning centres; access to guidance on learning; planning a core skills package; providing childcare to support learning; and support for people becoming active in their community.

The plan focused on developing the Greater Easterhouse Learning Network (GELN) as its key mechanism for delivery. Fifteen local centres have become involved in GELN – including a wide range of Council and College centres and voluntary groups working on employment, family and other issues. These organisations provide a whole range of other services, but have given a commitment to support learning.

The eventual target is 21 centres. A complex mixture of funding allowed them all to be offered PCs with fast net connections, and tutor support from the college. Volunteers are trained to offer additional support where possible. Refurbishment and disabled access were funded.

All residents can get free internet access and support through the centres. A website brings together support to learners with information and advice on everyday problems and local news.

Increasingly, mainstream funding and other strategies have been influenced to support GELN: childcare developments are planned in or close to centres; the new Adult Literacy and Numeracy (ALN) service will work through them.

The plan is due for revision soon, following a new city-wide community learning strategy. This will allow work with young people to be better integrated with the rest.

### **What was the problem or need that was to be addressed?**

Greater Easterhouse Community Learning Plan 2001–04 was one of Glasgow's three pilot CLPs. It aims to contribute to lifelong learning, promote social inclusion and support the development of individuals and communities.

There were three priorities for action:

- health: factors such as low self-esteem;
- poverty: financial barriers to involvement in learning, and the contribution of learning to economic improvement;

- core skills: literacy, numeracy and use of computers and information technology.

A particular priority was to involve men and boys in community learning and activity.

The Greater Easterhouse CLP covers the same boundaries as the social inclusion partnership (SIP), which covers 15 neighbourhoods and five wards, all of which are among the 50 most multiply deprived wards in Scotland.

Widening and simplifying access to learning was already on the local agenda. John Wheatley College has a campus in the middle of Easterhouse and most students are local. But, as one community project says, 'we knew that some of our people would no more have set foot there than flown to the moon'. The College was beginning to think about using existing community facilities, and promoting 'digital inclusion', since local access to computers was known to be very low.

### **What difference was the initiative intended to make?**

The plan was intended to:

- improve the co-ordinated planning and delivery of learning activities;
- improve their responsiveness to those most socially excluded and disengaged from learning.

The aims were to:

- achieve improvement in areas such as adult literacies;
- support growth in access to, and use of, information technology;
- support the involvement of people in the development of their communities.

But much of the detail of what needed to happen was left for a strengthened network of organisations to develop. The actual plan document is a relatively short one, which some see as a strength.

### **How was success to be judged?**

The plan stated that improvement would be broadly measured against two key questions:

- have the numbers involved in community learning increased?
- are the benefits being realised in their lives and/or in the lives of their communities?

Targets were set for:

- establishing learning centres;
- access to guidance on learning;
- publicising community learning opportunities;
- planning a core skills package;
- identifying gaps in childcare, especially to support learning;

- support for people becoming active in their community.

Timescales were set for each, and a wide range of agencies and organisations were identified in co-ordinating or supporting roles. The first annual review of the plan was produced in September 2002. Community learning and development in Greater Easterhouse has since been the subject of a report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate. At present the plan is being revised to respond to that report and to new national and city guidance.

### **Who was involved?**

After the initial approach from Glasgow City Council, the Greater Easterhouse Community Learning Plan has been led by the SIP, through its Education and Lifelong Learning sub-group. That is chaired by an assistant principal of John Wheatley College, who is the only non-Council lead officer for a Glasgow CLP.

Its membership includes staff from the College, SIP team, and City Council (Cultural and Leisure, Education and Social Work Services); the local community school; business and economic development agencies; Careers; and local community projects.

The Council established a central Community Learning Support Team. Its role 'was highly valued by partners for its contribution to developing and implementing the CLP' (Her Majesty's Inspectorate).

Consultation on the 2001-04 plan was aimed at all known local organisations with a community learning remit. Forty-two organisations were involved in consultation events, and a questionnaire was circulated.

### **How did they go about it?**

The key mechanism for delivery of the plan has been the development of the Greater Easterhouse Learning Network (GELN). Fifteen local organisations have been invited to join GELN and each has provided space for a learning centre. They include two existing college outreach centres and two Council-run centres, but the majority are run by voluntary groups. These organisations provide a wide range of other services, but have given a commitment to support learning. Some centres were already actively involved in adult learning; all recognised that their work had a learning element. The eventual target is that there should be 21 learning centres.

Learning centres contain from two to thirty computers, linked to the College on a high-speed network. All residents can get free access to the internet and IT skills support and, if required, literacy skills support there. In addition the network will eventually provide access to college e-mail services and learning materials for 3,500 learners in Greater Easterhouse.

GELN has taken over and developed an existing community web portal,<sup>41</sup> offering local information provided by local people and support to learners.

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<sup>41</sup> <http://www.greatereasterhouse-pathfinder.com/>

The plan also sets objectives for adult literacy and numeracy and childcare services. One of the key aspects of its implementation is that work in these fields has been closely tied to the development of GELN.

The partnership and College obtained funding to develop the Positive About Literacies project (PAL). This uses GELN as the main vehicle for an enhanced approach to developing skills, because it offers:

- access to target groups;
- referral of users with difficulties;
- ICT-based resources for learners.

The main gaps in the supply of childcare have been identified. Plans have been commissioned for new facilities. These were required to take into account the location of learning centres and gaps in childcare within them. Two projects are now proceeding, and possibly four more over the next two to three years.

Arrangements for community capacity building in Easterhouse, led by a new Community Support Service, were being re-launched at the time of the community learning plan. The plan is said to have added priority to what was under development and stimulated thinking about how to support people, not just structures.

The plan also proposed a local Adult Guidance Network. This work is acknowledged to be less developed. A network was established to provide information and guidance on learning opportunities and progression routes. It has been a regular but small forum, not perhaps involving the voluntary sector as much as other initiatives, but has supported inter-agency promotional events and looked at the progression from school.

### **What resources were needed?**

The implementation of the plan has required resources at many levels, and has not been easy. GELN became operational in January 2003. It took two years to get funding and fully develop it. The initial refusal of a major lottery grant was a particular blow.

Staff of the social inclusion partnership, College and Community Learning Support Team played a major role in developing the plan and GELN.

The SIP's adoption of the plan as the strategy for its Education and Lifelong Learning sub-group should encourage the partners already involved in providing community learning and development services to target their resources on plan objectives. However, the integration of the work of the Council's community learning and development staff is hindered by the fact that team boundaries are much wider than those of the SIP and the plan.

The development of GELN itself required a complex mixture of funding, totalling around £1 million:

- Scottish Further Education Funding Council, Strategic Development Fund;
- Social Inclusion Partnership;
- Glasgow City Council Social Inclusion budget;
- New Opportunities Fund;
- European Regional Development Fund;
- John Wheatley College (teaching and administration).

The project has three staff: a network manager, web editor and support officer.

The host organisations for learning centres contribute a lot of staff and volunteer time to support the work. In many cases they access other local funds and projects to provide additional tuition or activities. Some produce additional publicity, as does the SIP through a regular magazine for residents. Two of the voluntary sector centres previously obtained their computer suites through other grants. The College's Queenslie centre was partly funded by the Scottish University for Industry.

The PAL project, supplementing work by existing adult literacy and numeracy staff, is supported by a fund established as part of the Glasgow Community Learning Partnership's Adult Literacy and Numeracy Action Plan. It is understood that Easterhouse was awarded a substantial grant because it could prove that the work was linked to other community learning developments.

The childcare strategy is being developed by Childcare Greater Easterhouse, a SIP-funded body involving a variety of partners.

### **What were the actions taken?**

The social inclusion partnership did the initial 'selling' of the idea to potential centres. It consulted them on their expectations before funding was finalised. It was recognised that each would have different management arrangements.

Eleven learning centres are newly established in premises refurbished to College standards, including decor and disabled access. The impression deliberately created is that the network partners value learners. All have been supplied with new PCs and hardware. This has helped the centres to meet the national quality standard for adult literacy and numeracy. The centres with existing computer suites benefited from new high-speed connections and refurbishment. The centres run by the College have been brought into GELN. These are staffed to support learners on a full-time basis.

For at least one session a week in each centre, initially, a College tutor provides a flexible learning session, building computer skills. Learners negotiate their course with the tutor, from a wide range of starting points, and get time in the centres for practice. A range of options with Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) recognition is offered, from Access 3 level to the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL).

Most centres offer sessions for support with literacies. Some host other College activities. At other times, centres are kept open by local staff and volunteers. In some there are no staff and all support comes from volunteers.

The centres vary greatly in approach and client group. Four voluntary sector examples are described below. By contrast, Queenslie serves an industrial estate, and has a focus on the ECDL, with around a third of users supported directly by employers. Two centres are devoted respectively to substance abuse rehabilitation, and family support. They provide similar access programmes for those client groups but offer more limited public access.

At the request of the centres themselves, the College has introduced a photographic membership card. All users go through a simplified version of the College's registration process. Membership gives them access throughout GELN. So far over 300 have registered, but this is only a beginning. Soon an initial 1,000 local college students will join them, once they have been through an induction programme.

The centres also requested common internet filtering and security arrangements. Access to public chat rooms is barred, but the network provides access to both general and private local chat facilities.

The College has provided training in running a learning centre and basic computer skills for 30 staff and/or volunteers, covering each centre. Further training to be offered includes the ECDL.

Centre users are offered the use of a core skills assessment tool. Follow-up support can be provided directly by tutors, by existing literacies services, or through the PAL project. This provides support to people over 16 years old who want to improve reading skills – at any level – or basic writing, numeracy or computing skills.

Nine centres currently offer PAL group sessions, but support will be offered to any class where needs are identified, and outreach classes are held in other venues. It is hoped that the groups will provide a progress route for people receiving one-to-one support from existing services. Training has been provided to non-specialist staff to raise awareness of adult literacy issues and provision.

Additional grant assistance (ESF Objective 3) has been obtained to develop multi-media teaching and learning materials to address literacy and numeracy issues. These materials are now available for use over the network.

As GELN develops, so do its links to local community capacity building programmes. The SIP's Empowering Communities budget was used to offer community representatives home computers, Internet connections, and training.

It is intended that a wider group of around 140 community representatives, including those at local 'suburb' level, will be able to use the network's software and communications system – effectively the College intranet – offering stable, secure, and free communications at home or in any centre. Online conferences would be available, matching individuals to their committee membership.

### **Family Action in Rogerfield and Easterhouse (FARE)**

FARE is a local voluntary organisation, established in 1989. It provides services to families, children and young people, ranging from a café to befriending services and youth clubs, in a tenement block. They already hosted some classes, but realised that these did not allow people's learning to progress.

GELN provided six computers. One weekly session of tutor support is provided. This runs from 5–8 pm, in order to attract a wide range of drop-in users, often for relatively short sessions. Six further sessions are 'open access'. In fact much use takes place outwith these times, by youth clubs and others, provided at least two staff are on duty. Everyone in the centre can help people with computer basics, although they would like to be able to do more.

Ninety per cent of learning centre users are new to FARE. They are also typically new to computers. The majority are over 40, and around 60 per cent are male. The project has always offered support for literacy programmes and has a dedicated room for one-to-one support. The centre has created new opportunities for their youth programme, such as the alcohol project (see later).

### **Garthamlock Community Enterprise Centre**

The Garthamlock Community Enterprise Centre has a long history of providing employment, training and advice services in converted shops in the middle of the community. It already had ICT facilities including eight computers. These have become part of GELN, which funded additional work to improve access etc. There is one weekly session of tutor support. But the learning centre is open for at least three other morning and five afternoon sessions a week, supported by Garthamlock staff. Additional ICT training is provided as part of the general programme. One PC is located in a separate room to allow public access during classes, or for confidential support.

The centre encourages literacy and numeracy services to use its facilities for one to one or group sessions, and the learning centre offers access to additional diagnostic and learning tools. The centre had an existing crèche room. It is hoped that the current short-life premises will be replaced by a multi-purpose centre. The childcare element is part of the Greater Easterhouse forward programme. It believes strongly in the need to work through local networks and tries to keep the local community planning group aware of GELN.

### **The Pavilion Youth Centre**

The Pavilion Youth Centre has been open for three years. Joining GELN served two main purposes. Its primary interest is for young people, taking part in activities six nights a week, to have access to the 11 PCs. Though they resist anything resembling a classroom setting, they are all registered network members and get half-hour access sessions, in between other activities. These are mainly for (filtered) leisure use, but the centre also incorporates internet use into projects, quizzes etc. The centre charges 10p per session and puts the proceeds back into youth activities.

But a condition of the provision of learning centre facilities was that they were open to the wider community. This is still developing, but in addition to the weekly tutored session, several groups now have regular structured sessions – an after-school group, a women's group and groups undertaking personal programmes in preparation for work, with College tutor support under other local programmes. Staff admit to initial doubts about daytime access, but feel that, although still developing, it is now getting a lot of very appropriate users. Fast internet access has also helped them enormously, for instance with funding applications.

### **Easterhouse Women's Centre**

The Easterhouse Women's Centre has just four GELN computers, with one tutored session, five advertised open access sessions and one PAL literacy drop-in weekly. But their approach has been to incorporate use of the facility into their ongoing activities as far as possible. It shares space with counselling services. Staff say that because women use the facilities and have support to do 'real things that matter in real lives', they are learning without seeing it as learning. Although women start with an informal approach, dipping in and out of computer use, some are now doing the European Computer Driving Licence.

Several women with no previous ICT experience have learned to keep in regular touch by e-mail with offspring working elsewhere in the world, including a photographer in Iraq. Some have made contact with old friends, and the centre runs a family history club. Others have been able to do additional study related to a course or work.

### **How was the practice co-ordinated and monitored?**

The network manager reports to funders and the partnership on progress. Currently GELN is the subject of an external evaluation, which should lead to a forward plan. This will probably include more specific usage targets, negotiated with each centre.

Representatives of the centres meet every month to six weeks to discuss common issues, and meetings are well attended. Staff and volunteers were also trained to use an e-mail-based community to manage GELN. This provides a more continuous input and has influenced decisions on membership, filtering etc.

The overall plan is overseen by the SIP sub-group, and forms not just one item on its agenda, but virtually the whole business. The targets and activities in the plan form an integral part of the SIP's monitoring framework.

In 2002 the partnership consulted its people's panel about lifelong learning, training and childcare. A development day for board members then looked solely at these issues.

The plan is due for revision soon. This will take into account:

- Glasgow's new Community Learning And Development Strategy 2004–2007;
- the Board's new priorities, which include more specific impact and outcome indicators;
- new consultations, which will use the SIP's consultative structures more fully.

### **How successful was it?**

The HM Inspectorate report looked at the whole range of community learning and development service provision in Easterhouse.

Community learning planning was 'very good'.<sup>42</sup> The plan's key achievements were the development of GELN, the development of provision for adult literacy, numeracy and guidance, and the initiation of improvements in childcare.

Among the aspects highlighted were:

- engagement with and support for adults were very good.<sup>43</sup> The centres in local communities offered significant potential to reach excluded individuals and groups, and improve the take-up of learning;
- learning opportunities were very good:<sup>44</sup> a large and diverse range of high quality opportunities, well matched to local priorities. There were a range of opportunities for learners to progress to more advanced learning;
- the delivery of learning opportunities was very good.<sup>45</sup> The variety of methods used was appropriate to the needs of participants. Staff were flexible and adapted materials to meet individual needs;

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<sup>42</sup> HGIOCLD: 5.1 Community learning planning

<sup>43</sup> HGIOCLD: Quality Indicator 1.1

<sup>44</sup> HGIOCLD: 1.2 Learning opportunities

<sup>45</sup> HGIOCLD: 1.3 Delivery of learning opportunities

- participant achievement was good.<sup>46</sup> A majority of learners reported that they had achieved their goals. They had increased confidence and developed skills in communication, numeracy and ICT. Achievement in the core skills of problem solving and working with others was more limited;
- community achievement was very good.<sup>47</sup> Community representatives were more influential in decision-making than they had been over many years. They reported a strong sense of community ownership of major initiatives such as GELN. Community capacity building was supported by an appropriate mix of voluntary organisations and local authority services;
- leadership was good overall.<sup>48</sup> The partnership and College provided very effective leadership;
- the achievements of partners in securing external funding, and the very effective partnership work,<sup>49</sup> were praised.

Overall, only a few aspects of youth work were 'fair', and everything else was either 'good' or 'very good'.

The common core approach has been flexible enough to allow specific client groups to be served, for example:

- The learning centre located in Greater Easterhouse sports centre supports the E-male project, aiming to re-engage unemployed and unskilled men in learning;
- one centre is located close to the largest local concentration of refugees and asylum seekers, which has enabled a range of education, including English as a second language, to be planned;
- two centres, as we have seen, target specific groups only, and the Women's Centre works with women generally.

### **What else happened?**

Not everything has gone as expected – for example, higher standards of childcare registration have reduced the ability to provide childcare in some cases.

In general, the experience has increased the partnership's confidence in inviting a wider range of partners to take the lead in projects. For example the new multi-agency 'Wellhouse Hub' development, which will incorporate a learning centre, is led by a local housing association.

GELN is stimulating a new understanding of how informal learning can be built in to other work. It is attracting new users for centres. These include many people with

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<sup>46</sup> HGIOCLD: 1.6 Participant achievement

<sup>47</sup> HGIOCLD: 2.6 Community achievement

<sup>48</sup> HGIOCLD: 5.5 Leadership

<sup>49</sup> HGIOCLD: 5.4 Partnership working

skills levels below those required for the most basic college provision. The College says that this is no surprise in theory, but has brought it home to them in a practical way.

Although GELN is aimed mainly at adults, it has provided new opportunities for youth work in several centres. For example, at FARE an NHS Glasgow pilot project is looking at alcohol issues with young people, some of them school non-attenders. They have surveyed their schoolmates, researched how media are marketed and targeted and developed their own poster campaign and website,<sup>50</sup> all using learning centre computers.

### **What are the key lessons?**

The central lesson is that the success of the community learning plan came not just from identifying all the right issues, setting the right targets, or even involving the right partners, but from adopting a strategy with a real integrated vision and a practical project to put this into effect.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate calls for the approach to be developed in order to improve partnership working between youth work providers, links to local schools, integration of the work of community capacity building agencies, and of the Council's mainstream community learning and development services. All of these have been identified as priorities locally and are likely to be emphasised in the revised plan.

Other lessons that participants have drawn include:

- the fact that initial suspicion of the community learning plan process was unjustified. People felt that it was not clear what was in it for Easterhouse, nor whether resources would follow. But because they have come up with a successful strategy, resources have followed;
- the need to keep looking for progression routes for informal learning students e.g. by attracting them into college to use more sophisticated multi-media facilities, or by making links to the active local community arts scene;
- the need to get the existing networks for community involvement actively engaged to ensure future success.

The Easterhouse plan has been used as a model for other areas of Glasgow. Partners have tried to replicate the breadth of its partnership elsewhere.

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<sup>50</sup> <http://www.carryoot.org.uk/>



## Case Studies: Angus Glens Project Number six



## Summary

Angus Council Community Education Service established a community education worker post – funded by the European Social Fund – within the Glens in 1999. The purpose of the post was to address problems resulting from the lack of services and resources, economic difficulties and changing social structures. The community education worker's objectives were to:

- identify training needs;
- support the community in enhancing its social and economic capacity;
- enhance the viability and range of uses made of community meeting places.

After consulting local people, computer skills were identified as the immediate training need. Farmers needed to be able to e-mail stock movement information and to computerise their accounts. People seeking full-time employment perceived these skills as essential and local families recognised their value in maintaining links with members who had left the Glens. Initially training was delivered in local farmhouses and now takes place in a range of community-managed venues. To date 600 learners have participated in information and technology (ICT) training out of an adult population of 1,500.

From the outset, the community education worker engaged with local people to develop computer training and community access to new technology, primarily as a means to empower individuals and the community as a whole. Local management groups co-ordinate all aspects of the project, supported by the community education worker. Community-led partnerships with outside bodies such as Angus Council Training Service, Scottish Enterprise Tayside and Dundee University have been effective in securing additional resources for the project and bringing support services into the area. Community action successfully secured funds to refurbish village halls, and in the hamlet of Memus, completely rebuild the hall.

The project now encompasses a wide range of community activity, much of which interacts with economic development. The range of activity reflects the capacity of the community to use new technology as a development tool, and a re-awakening of community consciousness and cross-Glens activity, previously at a low level. Achievements include the community-managed *angusglens* website, a renewable energy project and a community land purchase.

### **What was the need that was to be addressed?**

The main Angus Glens – Isla, Prosen, Clova, Lethnot and Esk – descend in parallel from the Grampian Mountains to the lowland farming country west of Arbroath. The Glens lie within large agricultural and private estates, which along with farming have historically been the principal sources of employment. Households are scattered throughout townships and small hamlets.

Angus Council Community Education Service identified the following problems within the Glens in 1998, which, in their assessment, inhibited social and economic development:

- *isolation from commercial and public services.* Shopping and all other commercial services were located in Brechin, Kirriemuir, Arbroath, Dundee and further afield. Some local primary schools had closed, as had sub post offices. There was no public transport. Adult education and training were provided in the local towns and were difficult to access, particularly in winter. Village halls, the sole community meeting places, were generally in poor condition and unattractive. Community education service involvement in the Glens was limited and reactive: staff based in the local towns did not have sufficient time to be proactive due to their wider responsibilities;
- *a lack of substantial sources of employment to compensate for the reduction of farming and estate work.* The potential for developing alternatives was particularly restricted because of a weak economic infrastructure and skill base. The wives of workers on the estates and in farming lacked the ICT skills necessary to secure full-time employment to supplement the income of their farms. Part-time work was in short supply. Newcomers to the Glens who established businesses tended to be self-contained or worked elsewhere therefore not opening up other employment opportunities to local people;
- *movement of families and young people away from the Glens, and the influx of new families, was changing the structure of the community.* The traditional relationships between estates and their tenants were changing. Also, the relationships between members of farming families were changing as economic necessity forced them to seek other sources of income, away from the farm. There was little community activity focusing on social or economic development and there were few community groups. Opportunities were lacking for people new to the Glens to contribute to the community.

### **What difference was the initiative intended to make?**

Angus Council Community Education Service secured funding from the European Social Fund in 1998 for a one-year Building Blocks programme to address the issues outlined above. The service envisaged four building blocks leading to the achievement of the project outcomes: refurbished village halls, effective community groups, sustainable community projects and activities, and economic development. The overall intended outcomes were that people active in their community would develop and manage projects that contribute to community sustainability. This would result in a real improvement in the quality of life of the area and establish skills that were transferable to other projects. It was anticipated that the confidence and experience gained through participation in the project would lead to the development of further projects. Specific intended outcomes of the project were:

- communities confident in their ability to establish and manage aspects of projects and promoting activities necessary for community sustainability;
- effective community groups dedicated to the regeneration of the area;
- effective networking by groups and individuals within the Glens;

- upgraded or rebuilt village halls acting as a base for community projects;
- effective community links with economic development agencies;
- economic development.

### **How was success to be judged?**

Three targets were used to judge the success of the Building Blocks, based on the ESF funding criteria:

1. targets would be achieved for both individual and group participation, and progress in training courses in community organisation;
2. four community projects would be identified and training provided to participants which would enable them to submit four proposals for funding and four community projects with steering groups would be established;
3. participants would report increases in community networking and self-reliance.

As the project developed, success was also judged against the targets set for each stage of development: for example, village hall refurbishment. The success of projects such as Making Connections, funded by European Social Fund (ESF), and Getting Started, funded by the New Opportunities Fund (NOF), was gauged against participant targets agreed with the funders. The most recent project, Getting Started, is designed to provide stability and expansion of the provision in the Glens. There is no conflict or tension with community aims, in fact the reverse. Community members were delighted that there was now sufficient capacity and stability of staff and resources. However, in order to achieve the numbers – 200 new learners per annum – the project encompasses a wider geographical area than the Glens. It is pretty well a straight provision of community-based adult learning (CBAL) in these areas. There has not been, and there is unlikely to be, a community development process such as went on in the Glens.

### **Who was involved?**

At the outset the community education worker was involved with individual members of the community and the few existing community groups. However, as new aspects of the project developed the range of groups extended beyond the outcomes stated in the Building Blocks application. This was primarily as a result of ICT training being identified by local people as their immediate need and the consequent involvement of specialist ICT organisations.

The principal groups that developed in the Glens were: computer management groups in each glen in which computers were based, the Cross-Glens Computer Management Group, the *angusglens* website management group, the Glens Millennium Group, the Glenesk Trust, and the Cortachy and Glens Out-of-School Learning Club.

The main external agencies and specialist ICT organisations working in partnership with the community were, Angus Council Community Education Service, the Council's Training Services, Scottish Enterprise Tayside, the Angus Rural Partnership, Dundee University Department of Applied Computing, and the Scottish Agricultural College.

### **How did they go about it?**

Over the first two months the community education worker consulted extensively with individuals, teachers, children and existing community groups. Three local people came forward to assist as a result of the initial consultation exercise. Issues that had emerged through this were built into further consultation, using structured conversations that focused on the perceived needs that had led to the project being set up. The conversations were designed to elicit views on these needs, including their validity and how they might be met. The intended project focus was on training of community groups and activists. However, ICT training emerged as the immediate and primary need and served as a vehicle for community skills training and development in the following ways:

- farmers needed to be able to e-mail stock movement information and learn to computerise their accounts;
- people seeking full-time employment also perceived ICT skills as essential;
- families recognised the value of ICT in maintaining links with family members outwith the Glens.

The Scottish Agricultural College collaborated with the community education worker in identifying the specific computer training needs of the farmers and developed stock management and farm accounts skills.<sup>51</sup>

At this point there was no public access to ICT equipment. Also, the minimum student numbers required by mainstream training providers prohibited local provision, as these numbers could not be achieved in the Glens. A rough survey undertaken by the worker suggested that while three in ten households had a computer, only one in ten used it.

The community education worker then made the crucial decision which was to underpin the work of the project and lead to its continuing success. Rather than simply provide ICT training to individuals and set up public access for individuals, ICT was used as the means through which the aims of the project would be achieved. The community were involved in deciding on the training they wanted, securing and managing the use of ICT equipment and managing the direction of further developments as they emerged.<sup>52</sup> A second key element in the development of ICT provision was that all training and computer development would be accompanied by learning and technical support.

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<sup>51</sup> HGIOCLD: 2.1 Work with communities to identify their needs

<sup>52</sup> HGIOCLD: 2.1 Working with communities to identify their needs

The original Building Blocks aim of training members of community groups in organisational skills was addressed in parallel to the ICT developments. A lecturer from Dundee University and the Angus rural partnership officer collaborated with the project worker in delivering this training.

A farmhouse was the venue for the first computer training, using four laptop computers, one for each learner. A local person tutored the courses and the content was responsive to the learners' needs. The learners paid the tutor's costs. Within two months there were 14 such courses and the venues expanded to include village halls, pubs and church halls. However, the project was unable to cope with the demand for courses, with an ever-increasing waiting list.

Over the course of the next six months, the community education worker supported the development of six local computer management groups: Glenesk, Lethnot, Menmuir, Tannadice, Memus and Glenisla. Each group assumed responsibility for programming courses in their own glen. However, there was not sufficient ICT technical knowledge or hardware to develop and expand the project's course programme. This gap was filled by the formation of Angus Glens On-line Resource Action (AGORA), a partnership of representatives from Angus Council Training Service, Scottish Enterprise Tayside's Information Service Initiative (ISI), Dundee University Department of Applied Computing, the Angus rural partnership officer and the Community Education Service.

The partnership's aims were to support the further development of the project on a number of fronts, including the development of internet technology as a business and community tool and the development of electronic commerce as a tool for local businesses. Angus Council Training Service then installed two computers – complete with printers, software and internet access – in each of five village halls, leaving the resources under community control. In addition, the ISI allocated the same level of equipment to the Glenesk Retreat Folk Museum which, although primarily a commercial facility, was used as a community resource.<sup>53</sup>

The six management groups formed a cross-Glens computer management group which co-ordinated the development of ICT in the Glens. At the same time support was given to village hall management committees to develop funding applications for the refurbishment and upgrading of a number of village halls and supported the development of a completely new hall at Memus.<sup>54</sup> AGORA disbanded after two years as the management effectiveness, technological knowledge and confidence of the community representatives grew.

By this time the community education worker had supported the community in establishing the Angus Glens Website Management Group, which co-ordinated the development and management of a community website. This provided opportunities for enhanced community contact and included economic elements such as tourism and a business directory. The community management groups were now successfully applying for resources from a range of sources, supported by the worker and the input of expertise from the specialist organisations which had been members

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<sup>53</sup> HGIOCLD: 5.4 Partnership working

<sup>54</sup> HGIOCLD: 2.3 Promoting participation in community affairs

of AGORA. Additional specialist support was identified and brought in as the need arose.<sup>55</sup>

The effective use of ICT as a tool for community and economic development was in place by this time. The core elements were:

- raising the ICT skills and awareness of individuals and community groups;
- fostering the development of effective community management groups to co-ordinate each aspect of the ICT it developed, including identifying emerging training needs;
- linking community management groups to specialist ICT support which further developed understanding of the technology's potential;
- supporting the community groups in accessing financial and other resources.

The management skills and confidence of the ICT management groups was now a platform for the development of projects not directly related to new technology. The ICT classes and management meetings provided new opportunities for people to meet. The community education worker was sensitive to ideas and issues raised by participants that had the potential for further development of community capacity and resources, and supported the formation of groups to pursue development possibilities. These included:

- the *Glens Millennium Group*, which successfully developed projects including an oral and photographic history project and placement of memorial seats throughout the Glens. Income from the folk history project is being used to install a multi-media facility in Memus village hall;
- the *Cortachy and the Glens Out-of-School Learning Club*, which addressed the shortage of local after-school provision. The group secured funding from the New Opportunities Fund, administered by Angus Council, to deliver a three-year project, for which it has a service level agreement with the Council;
- the *Glenesk Retreat Funding Research Group*, whose preparatory work has led to a successful community land purchase by the Glenesk Trust. The Trust purchased a major community facility, housing a folk museum and restaurant, with potential for further community and economic development.<sup>56</sup>

### **What resources were needed?**

The Community Education Service sponsored the ESF initial Building Blocks project that funded the community education worker and a small operational budget. When the ESF funding terminated in 2000, the Council assumed responsibility for the project and established a permanent community education worker post dedicated to the Glens. The Council also sponsored a further ESF project, Making Connections, which has been training small business people from the Glens in ICT skills. It has

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<sup>55</sup> HGIOCLD: 2.4 Assisting communities to exercise power and influence

<sup>56</sup> HGIOCLD: 2.6 Community achievement

subsequently secured a grant from the Community Access for Lifelong Learning (CALL) fund for the *Getting Started* project. The project employs a team of two ICT specialists to provide the technical and clerical support necessary for continuing development of the Glens ICT project, to extend the range and scope of the skills training programme and to make tuition free to participants.

The community website management group meets the full costs of the website, i.e. hosting fees and the domain name, in addition to development costs. Hall rental costs are met by participants in ICT training and are subsidised currently by the Getting Started project and the Cross-Glens Computer Management Group.

- Angus Council Training Service provided and maintained two computers, complete with printers and scanners, in each of five locations. The service has subsequently arranged for the village halls to be validated as examination centres for the European Computer Driving Licence qualification. It also supports candidates and monitors the completion of course modules by learners;
- Angus Council Education Department is funding a three-year out-of-school education project through the New Opportunities Fund. The project is managed by the community and staffed by local people;
- Scottish Enterprise Tayside (SET) contributed expertise on ICT in general and more specifically in relation to the internet and website design. The enterprise company also funded C2, a website management company, to support the transfer of content from the pilot website to the new community website. The website management group will be responsible for the technical management costs. Most recently it has provided satellite connection to broadband technology in two locations and a total of eight laptop computers into two village halls;
- Dundee University Department of Applied Computing provides advice on the use of ICT in rural areas and specifically on its uses for older people;
- The Lotteries Commission, with other funders, has supported the refurbishment of nine village halls. It has also met the cost of a complete rebuild at Memus;
- The Glenesk Trust secured a funding package of over £500,000 from the Community Land Fund, the Regional Development Fund, the Landfill Tax Fund, Angus Council and others. This will meet the cost of comprehensively refurbishing the Glenesk Retreat, now renamed the Glenesk Heritage and Development Centre;
- The Scottish Communities Renewable Energy Initiative is part-funding the development of renewable energy technology in all of the village halls in which computers are based where this is feasible;
- The Scottish Agricultural College used ESF funding to deliver seven ICT training courses to farmers.

### **What were the actions taken?**

The Community Education Service, through the community education worker, has been the principal professional agency involved since the inception of the project. The key outputs have been:

- a range of ICT training opportunities responsive to the needs of local people including introductory courses, training on specific software packages and the European Computer Driving Licence. The programmes have the capacity to meet expanding and changing demand. About 155 participants have been involved in 48 courses between April and October 2003;<sup>57</sup>
- seven courses for farmers on ICT for stock management and accounting;
- a training course for members of community organisations, Training for Community Participation, delivered in partnership with Dundee University Community Education Department and the Angus rural partnership officer. Other training courses have been developed on issues such as local exchange trading, consultation, and funding;
- effective links between the community and specialist agencies in ICT, rural development and training;
- development of community groups co-ordinating the ICT training programme, the website development and other projects;
- training and ICT applications advice for small businesses.

The outputs of community effort in the project have been:

- effective co-ordination of the ICT initiative, including course programming and management of the resources;
- funding packages for projects such as refurbishing village halls and purchasing Glensk Retreat;
- locally led projects such as the Glens Folk local history project, the out-of-school education project and the renewable energy project<sup>58</sup>

### **How was the practice co-ordinated and monitored?**

The community education worker was managed through Angus Council's community education officer. Annual workplans were produced and monitored at three-monthly intervals. Progress was evaluated against agreed outcomes and output targets. Latterly the LEAP framework (the planning and evaluation tool designed specifically for community learning and development work) has been used in this process. The intended outcomes established for the project at the outset have provided the

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<sup>57</sup> HGIOCLD: 1.2 Learning opportunities

<sup>58</sup> HGIOCLD: 2.6 Community achievement

backdrop for all planning and evaluation. In addition, progress towards the output targets agreed with the funders of the Building Blocks, Making Connections and Getting Started projects have also been monitored by the Community Education Service and the ESF.

Community groups with which the community education worker has been engaged have worked to specific targets such as securing funding for a particular purpose, or the achievement of a goal, such as the purchase of the Glensesk Retreat. A range of methods were used from formal planning exercises to community consultation and public meetings. Workshops have been used to identify possible development and to evaluate success. At regular points in the development of all aspects of the project, the worker has supported groups in reflecting on what they have achieved and how they should pursue their goals in the light of evaluation.<sup>59</sup>

The Community Education Service (CES) evaluated the quality of tuition of Building Blocks courses by using the scheme of quality indicators then in use by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (now HM Inspectorate of Education). The co-ordinator of the Making Connections and Getting Started projects systematically evaluates the quality of the learning experience of participants. Learners participate in the process through systematic feedback, which focuses on their perception of their progress.

### **How successful was it?**

The use of ICT as a tool for building the capacity of the Glens communities to develop and manage projects designed to enhance their quality of life has been very successful.

The interest of a range of people across the Glens in developing their individual skills proved to be a platform from which to foster effective community action. The skills and confidence acquired by community groups through their involvement in the ICT project has been transferable to projects not directly related to ICT.

Funding the initial Building Blocks project and subsequent ICT training through grants from the ESF and other bodies has been beneficial in that otherwise finance would not have been available. Latterly, the resources provided through Getting Started have made provision more equitable through the provision of free training. However, using such funding sources has obliged the CES to meet participation targets not perfectly suited to the development. The targets for Getting Started require the project to recruit 200 additional learners each year for three years. This is being addressed by extending training opportunities to areas outwith the Glens. This expansion will prove a challenge to the CES if it is to underpin provision of tuition with a community development process.

The ICT training programme has attracted 30 per cent male participants, an unusually high proportion of total enrolment. It has also led to a dramatic increase in home computer use from one family in three using their equipment to all computer-owning families using them. Although it is not possible to attribute a direct causal

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<sup>59</sup> HGIOCLD: 2.5 Monitoring and evaluation as a part of building community capacity

relationship between the project and the level of computer ownership in the Glens, it has risen from 30 per cent to 70 per cent since the project began.

Members of community groups involved in all the projects and developments that have come on the back of the original Building Blocks project, as well as participants in the ICT training courses, have no doubts on their impact on the sense of community in the Glens. They volunteer comments such as 'this project has re-invented the community in the Glens'. There is a palpable sense of community cohesion and the confidence that community action has the potential to achieve more for the Glens in areas previously unthought-of.<sup>60</sup>

### **What else happened?**

The integrated ICT and community development processes are stimulating unforeseen developments including:

- a group of older people, who have developed a cyber café in one of the village halls, is pursuing the installation of webcams in the homes of older people at risk. Dundee University Department of Applied Computer Studies is supporting this pilot to explore the application of new technology in the care of older people;
- the community in Glenesk is exploring the development of a virtual consultancy based on ICT, to make it easier for patients to access the doctor;
- a local primary school is working with the co-ordinator of the Getting Started project to set up an internet link with a school in Tanzania.<sup>61</sup>

### **What are the key lessons?**

The importance of the initial period of consultation and community investigation was demonstrated by the identification of ICT as the vehicle which underpinned the project's development.

The original intention of the Community Education Service was to facilitate the community development process by training community groups in organisational skills. However, the worker's perception that the individual ICT training needs of the community could be met and integrated into a community development process was crucial to the success of the project. The ability to be responsive and non-directive, while holding to the longer-term agenda, was key.

The involvement of specialist agencies in ICT, funding and planning was crucial to all aspects of the project. The developing confidence and effectiveness of the community groups enabled the establishment of an interaction with these agencies which reinforced community control and nurtured the community development process.

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<sup>60</sup> HGIOCLD: 3.1 Climate and relationships

<sup>61</sup> HGIOCLD: 2.6 Community achievement

## Case Studies: Youth Strategy (North Lanarkshire) Number seven



## Summary

Early in 1998, North Lanarkshire Council set up a member/officer group (MOG) representing all main departments to develop a Young People's Strategy. 'Open space' and 'future search' events were held, first with front-line youth workers, then with young people, senior staff and other agencies together. Their priorities were: participation and involvement; transport; health; community facilities; housing; employment and training; community safety. Young people later joined the member/officer group itself.

Meantime community education teams and social work staff were helping to build local youth forums, and young people from North Lanarkshire were active at national level, especially as members of the new Scottish Youth Parliament (MSYPs).

After a further consultation, the Council approved the Strategy in August 2000. Under the heading Participation, its targets included setting up six local youth forums, and an area-wide Youth Forum and Youth Partnership. This was expected to lead to proposals by young people to tackle the other key priorities.

Subsequent projects have included:

- annual youth conference;
- formation of Youth Council and Partnership (incorporating the member/officer group);
- booklet on services;
- young people in Coatbridge trained to survey youth views;
- peer led training pack, developed by the MSYPs to involve people normally excluded;
- International Youth Conference in Motherwell; national and international exchanges;
- business plan for Investing in Young People scheme, to recognise businesses and services that make a commitment to better treatment of young people;
- Music Project studio opened;
- CD showcasing musical talent;
- local consultations and activities, e.g. Bellshill Youth Voice.

These have mostly been led by young people and have all been strongly supported by them. Consultations on a new Strategy were to take place October 2003–March 2004. A new impetus to involvement in schools and colleges, as well as in the community, was expected.

### **What was the need that was to be addressed?**

The strategy was North Lanarkshire Council's 'commitment to work with young people to ensure that the services that our partners and we provide are the best possible and respond to the needs of all young people regardless of circumstances'.

It had two elements:

- *policy development*: at levels including local, departmental, inter-agency and national;
- *community development*: participation, involvement and actively creating opportunities for young people.

The most successful aspect has been the development of active youth involvement, and that is the main focus of this case study.

### **What difference was the initiative intended to make?**

The partners felt that 'much positive and innovative work has taken place with young people over a number of years (but) ... often goes unrecognised'.<sup>62</sup> The Strategy 'gave a framework to the wide range of work undertaken with and for young people'.

It was 'a long term plan ... laying solid foundations for long and successful partnerships between elected members, council staff, partners in other sectors and young people'.

It aimed to both:

- promote integration of services and effective use of available resources between Council departments and external agencies; and
- promote the development of self-esteem and confidence in young people to play an active role in their communities.

In the course of preparing it, the focus shifted from developing specific policies to a commitment to youth participation and involvement. From this would come proposals by young people to tackle the other key priorities.

### **How was success to be judged?**

The Strategy contained commitments related to seven main priorities, which had been established through consultation:

- getting involved;
- transport;
- health
- community facilities;
- housing;

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<sup>62</sup> First Annual Report on Strategy for Young People

- employment and training;
- community safety.

The commitments on Getting Involved were the most specific:

- invite young people to take part at all levels of the Council, asking them what they think about services and involving them in planning and management;
- set up youth forums in all six main sub-areas;
- establish a North Lanarkshire Youth Council.

There were also promises to:

- establish a North Lanarkshire Youth Partnership, involving a wide range of agencies and organisations and young people themselves;
- support young people to participate at the Scottish Youth Parliament.

### **Who was involved?**

The Strategy was intended to be a corporate initiative that:

- required each Council department to consider the effects of service and policy priorities on young people;
- highlighted partnerships between departments, external agencies and voluntary organisations.

A council member/officer group developed the Strategy and supported its implementation. Young people attended to present projects; later some joined the member/officer group itself. A Youth Partnership involving other agencies and voluntary organisations was established.

Youth involvement was built up mainly through existing or new youth forums or youth action groups, supported by council community learning and development staff. One was established in each of North Lanarkshire's six main communities. The oldest and most active re-launched itself as Bellshill Youth Voice.

Social Work gave support to make sure that vulnerable young people were involved. They got young people from children's homes involved in all consultation events. Work with young people with disabilities went particularly well. Two went to the first event and, though very anxious, they gained confidence and experience of speaking and founded an advocacy group, which they called the Funky Blue Smurfs.

The main vehicle for young people from all these groups to be involved in wider issues has been the Youth Council. Membership has been drawn from all areas and has been variable at around 15.

From the beginning there has been a strong overlap between members of the Youth Council and Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament (MSYPs). The SYP was established in 2000 as an autonomous voluntary organisation acting as a collective voice for Scotland's young people, with close links to the Scottish Parliament itself. Members must be between 14 and 25 years of age and are elected both from constituencies and from individual nominations.

It is supported by local authorities, which nominate youth workers as local co-ordinators. Through early efforts in North Lanarkshire, 11 MSYPs were already active and helped to found the Youth Council. Now almost all of its members are current or former MSYPs. Their links to local groups vary, but several are leading active members of local youth groups, and some hold 'surgeries' and produce local reports.

### **How did they go about it?**

North Lanarkshire Council set up a member/officer group representing all main departments to develop a Young People's Strategy. It met between January 1998 and April 2000 (with delays following the 1999 elections) and ran a programme of consultative events involving young people, external agencies, elected members, chief officers of the Council and staff working with and for young people.

These included:

- a one-day 'open space' event for youth work staff;
- another for young people;
- a two-and-a-half-day 'future search' conference.

These methods involve bringing stakeholders together to highlight issues and develop actions for dealing with them. Around 400 people attended these events. A group of young people recruited through Open Space got together at residential weekends.

The seven priorities were adopted as the themes of the Strategy. A final event for around 80 young people was held in March 2000, to identify the key actions required to progress the themes. There was a workshop and drama presentation on each. The Council approved the Youth Strategy in September 2000.

Meantime, community education teams and social work staff, working with existing projects and the MSYPs, helped to build local youth forums and the new Youth Council. The activities that the Youth Council has initiated or influenced are central achievements of the Strategy and will be described in following sections.

The Youth Council was able to use the member/officer group as a sounding board and source of support and ideas. It also established good informal relations with heads of departments. The Chief Executive established, and still has, an open door policy for MSYPs and Youth Council members.

The Youth Partnership also had a founding conference and developed a mission statement and action points. It was not the key vehicle for supporting the Youth Council. In 2002 the member/officer group and the partnership agreed to merge and

develop initiatives relevant to the Youth Strategy. Unfortunately the resulting broader partnership appears to have become unwieldy, with a mailing list of up to 120, did not meet regularly and is now in abeyance.

The loss of key staff, followed by another local government election and changes in political responsibilities, meant that progress was slow for much of 2003. At the time of writing, a core group of active members of the Youth Council remained, and several major projects were coming to fruition after delays. The Council was planning to update and relaunch the Strategy as a Children and Young People's Strategy, reporting to its Children's Services Strategy Group. It had reorganised the support it offered, and the Youth Council was meeting regularly with its new support staff.

A new consultative process was underway with a target for completion by March 2004. The aim was to rebuild a new representative, bottom-up structure, including a broader involvement in the election of MSYPs, as required by the SYP itself.

The Council had reorganised its community learning and development (formerly community education) staff into 13 new teams and each was setting up representative structures for young people at local level, to feed into three area forums. New efforts were also being made to involve groups supported by Social Work and the pupil councils that had been established in all secondary schools.

The Council believed that the principles and achievements of the existing strategy would be carried forward, with a new, broader involvement. But it must be reported that several of the young people most actively involved had yet to be convinced of this.

### **What resources were needed?**

Support was provided throughout to individual Youth Council members and MSYPs by community learning and development staff in the Council's Community Services Department. Some played a key motivational role. Each local forum had a designated support worker. Staff of several voluntary organisations also supported individual Youth Council members with whom they had links.

The three staff of the central Children and Young People Team in Community Services became responsible for the development of the Strategy and shared part time responsibility for direct support to the Youth Council. These roles had previously been the responsibility of one staff member in another department. They also took over from a colleague the role of link officer for the MSYPs. The department had a continuing commitment to support youth empowerment, enshrined in its service and action plans.

The Council established a Youth Strategy budget as part of its three-year forward expenditure plan. This included an annual £5,000 grant to the Youth Council for events, expenses and some small projects, and support for other Youth Council projects and youth events. It also provided grants of £2,000 to each MSYP to set up offices, surgeries etc, and some subsequent help.

Community learning and development staff provided personal and practical help to Youth Council projects on request. They offered accredited training programmes to all members of the Youth Forum and Youth Council. All members had received support – for example, with time and money management – though not necessarily formal training.

Meetings are accessible to Youth Council members with disabilities. But the lack of direct transport links around North Lanarkshire is a major problem for all members.

Specific projects have received additional funding or support in kind from the Council, the local social inclusion partnerships (SIPs) and external funders. Examples are given below.

By late 2003, the Council had a full-time youth worker, called a home school partnership officer, in every secondary school. They were funded from a variety of sources (mainline budgets, Changing Children's Services Fund, New Community Schools) and do a range of work, for example supporting active citizenship and school councils.

### **What were the actions taken?**

The launch of the Youth Strategy in February 2001 was entirely co-ordinated and presented by young people. A summary document, approved by the Plain English Campaign, was distributed to all schools, council facilities and voluntary organisations.

A booklet on services for young people had been produced earlier for the member/officer group. That was very much a Council initiative, but a group of young people helped to decide the contents and presentation of a new version, which was launched along with the Strategy.

A Youth Conference was planned as an annual event. The first was held in January 2002. Over 200 young people and elected members, MSPs, council officers and staff from other agencies all took part in activities, including an intensive aerobics session; an exploration of issues of power, decision-making and the role of young people in society on the Planet Zog; and discussion sessions on Youth Strategy themes.

Local youth conferences were held in some areas – Bellshill Youth Voice alone attracted over 140 young people to its 2003 Annual Conference.

The 11 MSYPs first elected have been followed by more. They have provided three successive chairs of the organisation as well as several Executive members, and have hosted its AGM. Their active role has helped to get people involved early in national developments such as Dialogue Youth. Several have been very concerned to communicate with and involve local young people. A group of 30 young people who wanted a new skateboard park grew out of surgeries held by one MSYP, and at the time of writing they were working together on funding applications.

The Funky Blue Smurfs continued to represent young people with disabilities. One became Vice Chair of the Youth Council, and one an MSYP. They met councillors

and MSPs, attended conferences and spoke to a Scottish Parliament hearing on the proposed Children's Commissioner. They were commissioned to consult younger people on services, and eventually got funding for an advocacy worker.

There are many examples of Youth Council members playing a representational role: for example, making presentations to visiting politicians, to overseas visitors and at the launch of the community learning and development strategy. They have also helped locally: advising on setting up new local youth forums, or forums for young carers and young people with disabilities, and getting involved in at least one local community learning plan. Some have received youth work training, and several are now paid for sessional work.

Care has been taken to involve a wide range of young people in leading consultation events, not just the most active. For example, someone with experience of homelessness and 20+ care placements spoke at the Homelessness workshop at a youth conference.

But perhaps the greatest energy has been devoted to, and pride felt in, a series of projects, mostly led by young people and all strongly supported by them. The main examples are described here.

### **Peer Led Training Pack**

MSYPs wanted to find ways to involve people who are normally excluded, and proposed this pack. The aim was to train young people in youth empowerment. For example, Social Work was keen to use it in children's homes. Working with staff, the MSYPs completed a draft and tested it on several groups. Some funding was provided by a social inclusion partnership. The pack is in two sections: 'Training the Trainers' and 'Peer Led Sessions with Young People'. An interactive version on CD-ROM was being planned at the time of writing.

### **Reeltime Music Project**

A group in Newarthill had been pursuing a music project for around two years with limited success, until they made links to the Youth Strategy and the member/officer group. They gained support that helped the young people themselves to apply for and get multiple funding: Scottish Arts Council, Key Fund, the Council and others. Their new music studio opened in August 2003.

### **'ask no questions' CD**

The Youth Council came up with the idea of an album to showcase the musical talents of local young people in the area, which could also promote the Strategy. A sub-group of young people was established to develop the idea, promote it, organise auditions, decide on the 12 best entrants and assist in production and graphics. Twelve acts, in a diversity of musical styles, were chosen from around 200 possibles. Funding came from the Youth Strategy budget and the Council provided recording time in a community studio. At the time of writing, it was planned to distribute 10,000 copies free to North Lanarkshire young people. The Youth Council organised a launch event in November 2003.

### **Investors in Young People (IIYP)**

Inspired by a magazine article, the member/officer group arranged a visit to Sandwell in the Midlands for Youth Council members, officers and a councillor to look at their Youth Strategy and especially their Charter Award scheme. The young people came back full of enthusiasm for the scheme and pushed for something similar. This was partly because they detected a lack of commitment by certain agencies to the existing strategy and wanted to be able to say to them, 'if you are friendly to us, we will promote you'.

With assistance from a social inclusion partnership, there were further visits in both directions and a feasibility study, which indicated strong support from departments and agencies. Scottish Enterprise Lanarkshire was enthusiastic about promoting the programme to businesses. A business plan was prepared for IIYP – 'An award scheme for public and private sector providers that recognises those that make a real commitment to improving services for young people' – involving awards at four levels:

1. the service provider makes a public commitment to the needs and rights of young people;
2. consultation with young people and development of an appropriate Young People's Strategy for the organisation;
3. action to implement this;
4. the organisation is evaluated using the key action points agreed in the Strategy.

Following a presentation involving young people to the Council's Chief Executive, £180,000 funding over three years was obtained from the Council and the Changing Children's Services Fund. Staff will be employed in the Council's Youth Strategy team, with a management group involving young people.

## **International Exchanges**

Links were established with youth groups in St Denis, France, initially through music projects. After a series of exchanges, young people from both countries applied successfully for European Union funding for a Youth Conference in Motherwell (August–September 2002), invited participants from other countries, and agreed on the issues to be discussed: sexuality, health, crime, racism, young people's involvement, employment; and equality.

## **Coatbridge survey**

To evaluate the impact of the Strategy and youth work in general, the member/officer group commissioned young people in Coatbridge to survey the views of 11–18 year olds in all local secondary schools. Funded by SIP partners, they were trained, worked with consultants and identified issues about promoting, uptake of and participation in a range of services. They reported that far too few young people had used community education services. Their recommendations included provision of a service based upon an agenda set by young people.

## **How was the practice co-ordinated and monitored?**

The original strategy did not include a specific monitoring framework. It was deliberately produced for a fixed term (2001–04) so that a review would then be required. An implementation plan gave timings for the main events expected to occur in the first year.

The ambitious ideas of building the development of the Strategy into departmental service plans and producing area-based strategies, including performance measurement and review, were not fully implemented, with the focus shifting to youth empowerment.

The member/officer group and to a lesser extent the Youth Partnership took an overview of progress, and alternative arrangements are now being sought.

## **How successful was it?**

Some of the young people initially involved are still active and have gained enormous confidence and experience. The development of a strong group of young people who can initiate projects and see them through, work actively to involve others, and stay committed in spite of setbacks is perhaps the key achievement.

As young people put it: 'The Youth Strategy is a very strong document, very relevant. But the only thing that was really worked up out of it was youth participation.' 'The major success of the project has been in developing the young people who have been involved.'<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Quotations from consultations for this report

The Youth Council members are articulate and involved, with varying levels of success in providing representation and feedback to their areas.

The consultations and conferences held were very successful, with particularly large turnouts: Motherwell Council Hall and Theatre were once filled simultaneously. But the young people involved also generated a series of innovative project ideas and developed the confidence and expertise to persuade others to back these and to put them into practice. These projects also kept people on board who might otherwise have lost interest.

The role of the MSYP has been developed, with support, into an important link between national developments and local communities and communities of interest.

The tale of success would have been less ambiguous if told a year earlier. Since then there has been slippage of at least a year on previously announced project timetables and a lack of continuity in meetings and support arrangements, as well as the loss of the corporate and partnership bodies that were intended to back the strategy. But, as Youth Council members said, 'We are still here and still funded.' Council staff felt that the basis existed for something more inclusive, representative and effective than before.

Looking at the record of the strategy as a whole it is clear that active young people were 'well supported by staff to carry out their roles within groups and in the wider community' and 'well supported to apply their knowledge and skills for community benefit'.<sup>64</sup>

As a result their organisations were 'informed very effectively about local and wider policy issues ... very well supported to engage positively with public agencies on issues of local concern and on wider policy issues' and 'see themselves and are seen by public agencies as important partners in policy and practice development'.<sup>65</sup>

Youth organisations are also 'creative and imaginative in securing resources that benefit their community. They work well in collaboration with other organisations and public agencies to ensure that priority needs are being met, particularly those of socially excluded groups'.<sup>66</sup>

### **What else happened?**

Although the Strategy had mixed success in its aim of promoting integrated services for young people, the dialogue established through the member/officer group showed the potential to stimulate innovative service provision. Projects that were influenced by the Strategy – all involving young people actively in varying ways – include:

- the NHS-based Collaborative Health Information and Promotion service collaborated with four youth groups to produce 'Alcohol: Myths and Facts';

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<sup>64</sup> HGIOCLD: 2.2 Developing skills and confidence

<sup>65</sup> HGIOCLD: 2.4 Assisting communities to exercise power and influence

<sup>66</sup> HGIOCLD: 2.6 Community achievement

- a North Lanarkshire Children’s Rights Conference: all services were invited to present and discuss examples of involving vulnerable young people;
- the Access project brings housing, community learning and development, and social work resources together to work with 16–19 year old people in short term supported accommodation;
- the New Start project adapted the Duke of Edinburgh Awards scheme for young offenders. It is now part of a wider Active Steps programme designed to reduce re-offending.

Even where the Strategy raised an intractable issue like transport, efforts were made to tackle it. For a while, Youth Strategy funding supported a pilot free bus to the distant communities of Shotts and Harthill where the commercial service stopped at 6 pm. However, this was not sustainable financially.

As we have seen, substantial efforts are being made to involve schools in the future process. Community learning and development staff are now heavily involved in supporting the Education Service to implement the national Dialogue Youth programme and it is hoped that this will greatly improve youth representatives’ future ability to communicate with young people and vice versa.

### **What are the key lessons?**

A Youth Forum, as one MSYP was warned when he first got involved, is ‘not a normal youth group – there would be a lot of serious stuff, but it would be fun too’. The North Lanarkshire experience shows that young people are prepared to get seriously involved in such institutions, and when they do they can bring tremendous commitment and imagination to bear, surviving even the unexpected changes to which local government and other big organisations are prone.

The young people involved emphasise two lessons:

- ‘The strength of the current system is that it is not one size fits all’: a variety of approaches to representation and support for young people at local level are possible;
- the motivational power of individual workers: ‘The dedication and interest of individual members of staff is vital: this is one of the great strengths, yet also one of the great weaknesses, of the process.’

Although the backing of partnership structures is currently absent, young people emphasise that the initial structure was important for giving access to a wide range of other departments and agencies that could be persuaded to give help. Continuing informal access to higher decision-makers has also been vital, as recognised in the somewhat ambiguous comment: ‘provided the will is there from a higher level, young people have been the single most important decision-makers in the process’.



# Case Studies: The Corner (Dundee)

Number eight



## **Summary**

The Corner Young People's Health and Information Project is a working partnership between Dundee City Council, Tayside NHS Board, Tayside Primary Care Trust, The Scottish Executive and young people. It provides a unique and integrated range of health and information services through its high profile city centre drop-in facility and outreach work in local communities.

Following consultation with young people in Dundee in the early 1990s, the need was identified for health and information services that were exclusively for young people as well as being informal and confidential. The Corner evolved from these consultations as a measured and considered response.

The multi-disciplinary staff team combines the disciplines of nursing, health promotion and youth work, as well as a family planning doctor. The Corner has developed its practice based on the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, with the best interests of young people at the core.

The multi-agency partnership at The Corner is committed to ensuring that services are relevant and 'young people friendly' and that the project continually reviews and refines all aspects of its work. Young people have played a major role in shaping, designing and influencing the project's direction to date. This is seen as vital if The Corner is to continue to be at the forefront of youth work practice.

One in three young people from the main target group (11–18 years) have used the drop-in facility, which has received 80,000 enquiries since 1996. There are on average 175 new contacts each month.

More than 200 agencies have referred young people to the project and on many occasions the project is a resource for other professional staff.

Young people say that they value the project, and see The Corner as 'different', because there are caring and helpful staff who show them respect and offer informal learning and support on issues they would not feel confident in raising with other agencies – for example, sexual health.

The project receives many requests to speak at conferences, and over 20,000 copies of the project's statement of principles and policies, 'Challenging Myths: Working with Realities', have been distributed across Britain and Europe and internationally.

In June 2002 The Corner obtained charitable status as part of a long-term strategy towards sustainability.

## **What was the need that was to be addressed?**

The Corner was created in response to concerns in both Tayside Health Board and Tayside Regional Council about high levels of teenage pregnancy, the heterosexual spread of HIV, drug and alcohol use, attempted suicides by young people and the lack of appropriate services and information for young people.

Staff from both agencies were seconded to investigate how they could best respond to these issues, and in 1993 they undertook a consultation exercise when hundreds of young people, supported by youth workers, participated in the 'Give Youth a Chance' event.<sup>67</sup>

Many issues were raised as a result of the consultation and the main findings were:

- there was an unmet need for contraception, including emergency contraception, and for pregnancy testing. Linked to this there was also a need for young people to acquire skills in using and negotiating with partners over the use of condoms;
- under-16s felt excluded from many services;
- there was a need for a range of health information services for young people and for single-door access to these services;
- confidentiality had to be guaranteed.<sup>68</sup>

### **What difference was the initiative intended to make?**

The Corner set out to offer a single-door – or one-stop-shop – health and information service to young people from across the city. The Corner's overall aim is to 'develop comprehensive, integrated and appropriate access to health and information services for young people in Dundee (12–25 years, with a specific focus on the 12–18 group)'. The objectives set as the means to achieve this are to:

- develop a responsive and sensitive service that reflects young people's concerns and priorities, and where they feel welcome;
- develop an approach that gives full information to young people;
- develop an approach that honours the needs and wants of young people and helps them make informed choices;
- involve young people in the planning, management and delivery of the service;<sup>69</sup>
- carry out relevant research and evaluation of its ongoing work and the resulting impact on young people's health awareness.<sup>70,71</sup>

The theory was that if young people were offered user-friendly, broad-based services, they would use and benefit from them and this in turn would improve their health.

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<sup>67</sup> HGIOCLD: Engagement and support

<sup>68</sup> 'The Corner Culture and its Impact'. Phyllis Easton, Project Evaluator, October 1998

<sup>69</sup> HGIOCLD: 2.4 Assisting communities to exercise power and influence

<sup>70</sup> HGIOCLD: 2.5 Monitoring and evaluation as part of building community capacity

<sup>71</sup> 'The Corner Culture and its Impact'. Phyllis Easton, Project Evaluator, October 1998

Although the original concerns of the Health Board and Council focused on teenage pregnancy rates and the heterosexual spread of HIV, The Corner adopted a positive approach that would offer one-to-one advice and crisis intervention. This approach would also establish a culture that empowered young people to make positive choices for themselves through exploring options in sexual health, areas of mental health, and relationships.<sup>72</sup>

### **How was success to be judged?**

From the outset, establishing a service that young people would engage with was considered the main indicator of success. That the service would lead to the improvement in the health of young people in Dundee was seen as the longer-term success indicator.

### **Who was involved?**

The proposal for a city centre young people's health and information project was produced by the consultant in public health medicine, the senior health promotion officer and a senior health care planning officer from Tayside NHS Board, working with community education staff in Tayside Regional Council. The proposal was presented as a case for funding from Tayside Health Board.

The project's management group (post local government reorganisation) has representation from Dundee City Council, NHS Tayside (formerly Tayside NHS Board and Tayside Primary Care Trust), the private sector (the Dundee Courier, the local paper), the voluntary sector, parents, teachers, a co-opted staff member and project users.<sup>73</sup>

From the initial consultation event, young people have shaped the project and been involved in its development in numerous ways, from involvement on staff appointment panels to project publicity, peer education, media and conference presentation work and project evaluation.

'The Corner Culture and its Impact' (1998) described the development of young people's involvement in decision-making about the project from an initial focus on a formal advisory group to a more flexible approach:

The suggestion of a Young People's Advisory Group was a proposal made by professionals in the planning stages, for implementation when The Corner was fully functioning. It was hoped that such a group would help, among other things, to plan the progress of the various services according to the needs of young people. However, the formation, the structure and mechanisms by which it would influence the project would be decided by young people themselves and so would require to be progressed at a later time.

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<sup>72</sup> HGIOCLD: 3.3 Values

<sup>73</sup> HGIOCLD: 5.4 Partnership working

When the drop-in centre did open and young people became involved in various roles and to different degrees, a good deal of exploratory conversations took place to establish what input young people felt they should have and how that input could be organised. It quickly became apparent that an advisory group in the formal sense was not something that young people wanted to be part of. There were some suggestions from young people that representation on the Management Group would be a good idea but on further consideration they foresaw several disadvantages to this:

- management group meetings would be quite boring!
- many young people would not feel comfortable about attending this kind of meeting;
- numbers would have to be limited to a small number of representatives and it would be difficult to choose people who would be truly representative. How would they be chosen?
- different representatives each time would mean lack of continuity .

Since then more flexible ways of consulting with young people have been created. Rather than having a fixed group of people who may or may not be representative of project users or potential users, regular sessions and occasional residential sessions are held with young people who are involved or interested at that particular time.

This has evolved into the *Suits You?!* Group which meets approximately once a month. This is not a formal group but a forum where anyone who is interested can come along and have their say. Around 10 people on average attend the *Suits You?!* meetings and they are usually a mixture of regulars and new people. The agenda is set by young people and covers items such as issues which have arisen in the drop-in centre, proposed trips or events and consultations over any changes or developments in the service.<sup>74,75</sup>

Routes for young people to have a say and input to the project are developed specifically for the issue. For example, involvement in Radio Tay required preparation with young people who had no experience of broadcasting, so that they could speak live on radio on social issues and activities at The Corner.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> HGIOCLD: 2.3 Promoting participation in community affairs

<sup>75</sup> 'The Corner Culture and its Impact'. Phyllis Easton, Project Evaluator, October 1998

<sup>76</sup> HGIOCLD: 1.4 Learning experience

The unique culture of The Corner is cited as the most significant contribution to the involvement of young people in all aspects of the project's development. While it is described as one which respects and values young people, young people's voices are best placed to articulate its effect:

It's the way you're treated ...

You feel they're listening to you and that what you have to say means something.

They made me feel that it mattered and helped me think about things and talk them over. If you feel they respect you it's easier to speak about things you might not be able to.<sup>77,78</sup>

### **How did they go about it?**

Tayside Regional Council and Tayside NHS Board led a multi-disciplinary working group to establish the principles of the project.

Consultation with young people about the nature of a drop-in facility resulted in suggestions that would help make The Corner acceptable and user friendly. High on the list of priorities was the need for any such place to be in a neutral, therefore non-territorial area.

It was believed that if it were to be sited in any of the peripheral housing schemes, young people from other areas would not use it and, in all likelihood, neither would many of the local young people. The need for anonymity and a 'no man's land' site were therefore prime considerations. This pointed to a site near the city centre. Indeed, because there were territorial affinities in many areas bordering on the city centre, the ideal location was thought to be right in the city centre itself. However, even with this in mind, it was necessary for it to be away from the main shopping area, so the ideal choice was narrowed down to the streets off the main shopping areas. The eventual location of The Corner did in fact fulfil that ideal.<sup>79</sup>

In addition to the appropriate location of a project, young people confirmed the types of services and approaches that would be required in a drop-in centre:

- a place specifically for young people;
- somewhere safe and welcoming;
- someone of the same age to talk to;
- confidential services;
- family planning services specifically for young people;
- information to make choices.

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<sup>77</sup> HGIOCLD: 3.1 Climate and relationships

<sup>78</sup> 'The Corner Culture and its Impact'. Phyllis Easton, Project Evaluator, October 1998

<sup>79</sup> HGIOCLD: 4.1 Accommodation and facilities

Once the project was established and the staff team in place, a management group comprising funding partners was established to maintain an overview of the project.

It was identified at an early stage that the media would take an interest in the project and that the way they represented the project would be important. Being proactive, rather than only reacting to media treatment of The Corner once it had happened, was identified as vital. The project brought together press officers from Tayside NHS Board, Tayside Regional Council, Dundee Health Care NHS Trust and Dundee District Council, and a strategy was put in place, setting out who would deal with enquiries relating to different aspects of the project's work, and what line of response would be taken on key issues.

The project is now jointly funded by NHS Tayside, Dundee City Council and the Scottish Executive, employs 11 full-time staff and is a registered charity.<sup>80</sup>

### **What resources were needed?**

It was clear early on that, to make The Corner work, it would need to be well resourced in terms of both its staffing and its capacity to respond flexibly to young people on a one-to-one basis when they presented a need. A successful urban programme bid was match-funded by Tayside NHS Board and Tayside Regional Council.

The current funding package is drawn from Tayside NHS Board, Dundee City Council, the Scottish Executive and small grants for specific activity. A team of 14 full-time and 6 part-time staff delivers The Corner's services.

The need for a multi-disciplinary team, which would share responsibility for service delivery, was agreed. The team was made up of nurses, youth workers and a health promotion worker, all of whom brought different but complementary skills and experience to The Corner.<sup>81</sup> However, they also brought diverse working cultures and professional codes of conduct, so the project set out to establish a perspective geared around young people's expressed and identified needs. Preparation for the project to become operational included the formulation of principles and policies that provided guidelines to enable the different disciplines to work in a consistent manner.<sup>82</sup>

The drafting of the project principles and policies, were, in the words of the project co-ordinator, 'critical to the smooth running of the project' and resulted in a clear, concise document which was adopted by all involved.

The document stated two operating principles:

- The Corner aims to work with young people in a manner which reflects the principles stated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and in the Scottish Agenda for Children/Young People;

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<sup>80</sup> HGIOCLD: 4.6 Organisation and use of resources

<sup>81</sup> HGIOCLD: 4.3 Staffing

<sup>82</sup> HGIOCLD: 5.1 Community learning planning

- The project will strive to redress the inequalities which are experienced by young people through offering them assistance to develop skills and confidence, and support to move forward and make positive choices in their lives.<sup>83</sup>

The search for appropriate premises resulted in a delay to the project starting. The principle of a base in the city centre but not in a 'shopping street', stipulated by young people, was adhered to until suitable premises became available.

### **What were the actions taken?**

The range and number of services and types of support have developed over the seven years as the needs of young people using The Corner change. They include:

- *drop-in use* for advice or support, or to check out how the project operates before raising an issue requiring more detailed support. Issues of mental health, sexual health, homelessness, family or school difficulties, drug or alcohol use, bereavement, eating disorders and self-harm have all been presented at the drop-in. Since 1996, 80,000 enquiries have been responded to;
- *sexual health services*, including pregnancy testing, emergency contraception, oral contraception, condoms, information and testing on sexually transmitted infection, and other sexual health advice;
- *outreach work* in nightclubs, public facilities such as the local ice rink, and hostels for homeless people;
- *social education in schools* on issues identified by young people as their priorities and issues;
- *arts work*, including an exhibition created by young people on the topic of mental health;
- *effective partnerships*, including those with psychologists, lawyers, GPs, key local forums, and at a national level the Scottish Parliament and the Save the Children Fund; development of partnership working with arts organisations, such as Dundee Contemporary Arts, working together to expand and add value to services including specialist counselling and arts development;
- *summer programme* of activities for young people of secondary school age;
- *participation in national and international conferences* as an example of best practice, particularly in relation to sexual health work with young people;
- *co-ordinating consultation* with young people across the city on a range of issues;

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<sup>83</sup> HGIOCLD: 3.2 Expectations and promoting achievement

- *reaching excluded groups* with the support of a dedicated minorities worker, whose remit extends to shaping services and ensuring they are accessible to all minority groups in the city through innovative and outreach approaches (for example, through work with an Asian girls group or with young people from the Visual Impairment Society);
- *developing tools and games* and using drama to help tackle sensitive issues;
- *producing information material* including attractive and accessible leaflets on issues of interest to young people;
- *campaigns* to raise awareness of health issues. A Christmas 2003 sexual health public awareness campaign was a recent example.

The Corner recognises the challenge of balancing national priorities and targets with young people's health priorities. By firmly placing young people at the core of its work and seeing them as part of the solution rather than the problem, the project is well equipped to deal with dilemmas and sensitive issues in constructive ways.

### **How is practice co-ordinated and monitored?**

A multi-agency charitable board manages the project. The 14 full-time and 6 sessional staff in the multi-disciplinary team are employed by either Dundee City Council or Tayside Primary Care Trust, depending on their professional background.<sup>84</sup>

The project co-ordinator manages the day-to-day running of the project, which includes recording service usage and monitoring target group usage and trends in issues raised during the drop-in and other activities.

From the beginning, the project has had access to a project evaluator through NHS Health Scotland. The project has used the evaluator both as a tool for reflecting on progress and practice and for planning new services. Evaluation reports have included detail on trends, myths, eye openers and the impact of The Corner culture.

Annual reports are presented in an accessible, attractive format and record progress made by The Corner.

### **How successful was it?**

The high number of young people accessing the services of The Corner is an indication of its relevance to young people's lives. Staff report that when the drop-in service opened they were overwhelmed with young people looking for information and advice about employment, school difficulties, homelessness, mental health and relationship difficulties.

A reduction in teenage pregnancies in the city has since followed. It is now generally accepted that The Corner contributes to health improvement in young people in Dundee through action to prevent ill health and positive promotion of health choices.

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<sup>84</sup> HGIOCLD: 4.4 Effectiveness and deployment of staff

The service provided by The Corner is respected and valued by young people. It is well known as offering comprehensive information and has pioneered a model of multi-disciplinary practice. All of this is now viewed as part of the overall success of The Corner.

Young people's own views, gathered as part of a series of evaluation exercises, offer an insight into its impact:

I'd be too embarrassed to go anywhere else.

They're not looking down on you ... it's not like other places.

... you could be in for anything, without everybody knowing what you're in for.<sup>85,86</sup>

The Corner is an award-winning project that has acted as a model for best practice in engaging with young people. It has attracted worldwide interest in how it has achieved this in areas traditionally complex and difficult for services to progress.

The Corner's culture is cited as being particularly successful and crucial to its continued engagement with young people. It can be summed up through the following:

- holistic and diverse, responding to young people as individuals facing particular issues and challenges, rather than as a set of problems;
- commitment to challenge, support and negotiate with young people;
- understanding complexity of pressures young people experience;
- services based on young people's priorities;
- reaching places young people go;
- respect for the different disciplines working in The Corner;
- using action research to refine practice;<sup>87</sup>
- extending boundaries of professional practice;
- management structure developed to deal with rapid change.

At The Corner, staff listen to you and understand you. They're not just saying 'do this or do that,' they talk to you and suggest things but you decide what to do. They don't

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<sup>85</sup> HGIOCLD: 1.1 Engagement and support

<sup>86</sup> 'The Corner Culture and its Impact'. Phyllis Easton, Project Evaluator, October 1998

<sup>87</sup> HGIOCLD: 5.3 Planning for improvement

talk down to you. We respect them because they respect us.<sup>88</sup>  
*Male, aged 18 years*

### **What else happened?**

The Corner has already been described as a model of best practice in engaging with young people and one that has received national and international recognition.

For Dundee, The Corner pioneered the city centre, multi-disciplinary model. This has now been rolled out to other initiatives including Xplore, the social inclusion partnership aimed at supporting excluded young people, and Better Neighbourhood Services priorities in three secondary schools.

Young people involved in both The Corner and Xplore, as well as other youth work settings, identified a gap in city centre focus for activity that had a more leisure/informal learning focus. They led the development of The Shore, an innovative city centre venue offering space and workshops for arts, music, band nights, special interest activity, ICT access and a café. The Shore looks likely to be the next award winner from Dundee.<sup>89</sup>

Creating multi-disciplinary teams has enabled more complex issues facing young people to be addressed on a one-stop-shop basis: the success of this is evidenced by the numbers of young people presenting increasingly complex issues. This is now acknowledged among managers, and steps are being implemented to share best practice from youth work approaches to staff training.

### **What are the key lessons?**

The Corner was developed as a response to what were viewed as negative statistics and trends.

The combination of creative and positive engagement with young people, based on their expressed needs, has demonstrated its impact both in Dundee and in international arenas.

The Corner's culture, developed by a staff team committed to delivering high quality services and opportunities to young people, has much to share with others working with young people. It includes respect and value of young people, which, in turn, breeds respect and value among young people who use or hear about The Corner.

The statistics and trends have changed. The Corner has achieved its original target and has changed lives, views, aspirations and practice along the way.

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<sup>88</sup> 'The Corner Culture and its Impact'. Phyllis Easton, Project Evaluator, October 1998

<sup>89</sup> HGIOCLD: 2.1 Work with communities to identify their needs

## Case Studies: Quality Action Group (Stirling) Number nine



## **Summary**

In 1993 the Social Work Services Group of the Scottish Office, Key Housing Association and Enable shared their concerns that people with learning disabilities, although they had moved out of hospital, did not feel part of their communities. The 'quality action initiative' was developed and Stirling was a pilot.

A staff member was seconded from Key Housing to work with community education staff and support people with learning disabilities interested in the initiative to form a group.

The Group was clear about the outcomes it was seeking. It wanted to:

- make changes to the way that services were delivered;
- make changes to the way group members were treated, both by services and by the community at large;
- have a voice in all the areas that impacted on their lives;
- advocate for the people who remained in hospital.

In order to achieve these outcomes, the Group, using an initial grant from the Equal Opportunities Fund of Central Regional Council, employed a staff member, became constituted and attracted funding from the Community Fund, Lloyds TSB, the European Social Fund and the Unemployed Voluntary Action Fund (UVAF), among others.

The Quality Action Group (QAG) is managed by a committee of 23 adults with learning disabilities, supported by Key Housing and Stirling Council Community Services. The Group has provided an opportunity for people to develop personally in a range of ways. Individuals who started out scared to voice an opinion and struggling to manage their money have learnt to chair meetings and to manage large budgets.

QAG now receives most of its funding through a service level agreement with Stirling Council. It employs its own staff, delivers training and awareness-raising sessions, provides a drop-in and advice service, is integrally involved in local and national planning, manages premises and is part of the consortium that runs the Scottish Centre for Learning Disability. It combines providing services with influencing policies and services on behalf of people with learning disabilities at a local and national level.

## **What was the need that was to be addressed?**

Following the introduction of community care in the early 1990s, the Scottish Office became concerned both about the lack of user involvement and the lack of inclusion of people with learning disabilities in mainstream services. A grant under the quality action initiative allowed Key Housing and Enable to employ a member of staff jointly to examine ways of addressing these problems.

At the same time, people with learning disabilities in the Stirling area realised that they were missing out: 'Many of us found that being in a community is not the same as being part of it. We needed to find ways that we could be included.'<sup>90</sup> They based their identification of need both on their own experience and on research carried out with other people with learning disabilities which found:

Some people with learning difficulties lacked experience spending time both in and with the wider community. This lack of experience contributed to feelings of uncertainty, a lack of confidence, and perhaps over-reliance on professional workers. ... The wider community lacked experience of spending time with people with learning difficulties and therefore, at times, appeared unwelcoming.<sup>91</sup>

The research was undertaken by people with learning disabilities under the quality action initiative.

Those providing support from the statutory and voluntary sectors shared these concerns. Managers in Key Housing were particularly struck by the proximity of some of their houses to a community centre that was never used by their tenants. They approached the community education service team to look at how they could address the lack of opportunities for people with learning disabilities to access mainstream services.

### **What difference was the initiative intended to make?**

The original intention behind the Quality Action Group (QAG) was to bring people together to share information on how they could live decent ordinary lives. This was described as pursuing justice for people with learning disabilities and giving them opportunities to be active citizens. One of the managers in community education described the challenge as 'people with learning disabilities having the right to access our service and our service having the responsibility to include and involve them'.

The Group itself clearly identified the outcomes it was seeking. As set out in the summary, these involved making changes in the way that services were delivered, gaining a voice in decisions that affected them, and advocating on behalf of other people with learning disabilities.

At the same time as sharing relationships with the outside world, people with learning disabilities were also asking for the opportunity to spend time together.

### **How was success to be judged?**

In their funding application submitted to the National Lottery Fund in 1996, the Group outlined how it would judge success. Quantitatively, it agreed to count the numbers of

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<sup>90</sup> 'The Chance for us to Change Things: Stirling Quality Action Group': an information booklet.

<sup>91</sup> *ibid.*

people using the services, the numbers of volunteers who had received training, the number of training days run by QAG and the number of training packs written. Qualitatively, it agreed to ask users what they thought of the new services and how they had benefited.

Regular monitoring processes were set up including staff supervision and a project monitoring group.

### **Who was involved?**

Managers from Key Housing and Enable, facilitated by a grant from the Scottish Office, instigated the QAG initiative. They approached the Community Education Service in Central Region and enlisted their support. The Equal Opportunities Unit of Central Region gave financial assistance in the early stages. Both the Council and the voluntary sector describe this partnership as very productive from a philosophical as well as a practical perspective. Philosophically, community learning and development's (formerly community education) emphasis on empowerment complements, and at times challenges, the voluntary sector's concern with support needs and duty of care. Practically, the partnership allows access by both people with learning disabilities and the wider community.

Apart from people with learning disabilities themselves, the primary partners (since local government reorganisation) are still community learning and development in Stirling Council and Key Housing. The group is also engaged in a wide range of other partnerships with education providers such as Falkirk College, the volunteer centre and several funders.<sup>92</sup>

### **How did they go about it?**

Initial work involved consulting people with learning disabilities and listening to what they might want from a group. A staff member talked to potential group members about whether they wanted a group and, if so, what it would do.

The first committee was formed in 1995 and consisted solely of members with learning disabilities supported by staff from Key Housing and Central Regional Council's Community Education Service. The Group became a registered Scottish charity in 1997. People with learning disabilities throughout the area were approached through day centres and tenants' groups to elect members on to the committee. The Group moved from being a set of people who were interested in the ideas to a representational management committee of a fully constituted organisation. The management committee was appointed at the conclusion of a conference organised by the steering group. QAG has been consistently supported to be inclusive, open and representative of its community and to adopt procedures that ensure it is accountable to its community.<sup>93</sup> The job of the first paid worker, seconded from Key Housing, was to support the management committee and help them to explore how people with learning disabilities might be more included in local communities.

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<sup>92</sup> HGIOCLD: 5.4 Partnership working

<sup>93</sup> HGIOCLD: 2.3 Promoting participation in community affairs

At the same time the Group were learning new skills in finding premises, interviewing, employing and supervising workers. When recruiting the first co-ordinator, the Group asked candidates to send in a video or tape describing themselves to make the information properly accessible. The Group shared out the work associated with funding, recruitment, premises etc. by establishing sub-groups of the main committee to ensure that as many people as possible were involved.

Since then, the Group has been involved in a wide range of activities. Raising awareness about people with learning disabilities in youth groups and schools forms a key part of their drive to change attitudes.

Members of the Group have accessed numerous training opportunities including taking courses through Falkirk College. The range of learning opportunities responds to individual needs. Members have good opportunities for progression, for instance from courses to relevant experience within the office.<sup>94</sup> They also write and deliver training to professionals in a variety of fields.

Providing opportunities to socialise and get to know each other is integral to the success of the Group. The reception of visitors and members is well organised and welcoming. Staff and members play a significant part in fostering a warm and lively atmosphere and it is obvious that people feel relaxed and at home. Relationships between staff and members are very positive, relaxed, purposeful and empathetic.<sup>95</sup> Members of the Group have always taken an active interest in mainstream community activities. For instance, individuals have become members of local health councils and conservation and community groups.

Members highlighted a need for outreach provision for those living around Stirling who could not always access the office or the Stirling drop-in. A rural development worker has been employed and classes and drop-ins have been organised, based on the expressed needs of people with learning disabilities living rurally.

Working to influence policy and service delivery has always been part of the Group's activities. As an organisation they are 'informed very effectively about local and wider policy issues'. They are also 'very well supported to engage positively with public agencies on issues of local concern and on wider policy issues. They see themselves, and are seen by public agencies, as important partners in policy and practice development.'<sup>96</sup> Two members of the Group are trustees of the Scottish Consortium for People with Learning Disabilities and take an active part in its work. The Group contributed to the manifesto drawn up by the Learning Disability Alliance and challenged local MSPs to raise questions in Parliament. It also facilitated a workshop as part of the development of the Scottish Executive's 'The Same as You?'<sup>97</sup> review and spoke at the launch, which led to an interview with the chair of QAG in the Herald. First Minister Jack McConnell has visited the group to discuss rights and services for people with learning disabilities. Because of their success,

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<sup>94</sup> HGIOCLD: 1.2 Learning opportunities

<sup>95</sup> HGIOCLD: 3.1 Climate and relationships

<sup>96</sup> HGIOCLD: 2.4 Assisting communities to exercise power and influence

<sup>97</sup> 'The Same as You? A Review of Services for People with Support Needs'. Scottish Executive, 2000

members have high expectations of what they can achieve, and staff successfully promote an ethos of achievement in their activities.<sup>98</sup>

The Group also works in partnership with the local council, thus maintaining strong links with community learning and development. It is directly involved in the community learning plan for people with learning disabilities which is being developed for the area, and is frequently asked to comment on council plans and strategies. QAG is supported and encouraged to engage positively with other groups and agencies concerned with community learning and development. They contribute fully to achieving the outcomes of community learning and development strategies and plans,<sup>99</sup> and to the Stirling Council strategic plan and related sub-groups, for example, evaluation and transport.

Members of the Group have always been concerned about other people with learning disabilities who are not able to speak up for themselves and they make a particular effort to find ways of including people with more complex disabilities.<sup>100</sup> Funding has just run out for the advocacy service, set up in 1999, which established citizen advocacy partnerships for people still in hospital and those with complex disabilities living in the community. The Group plans to apply for more funding to enable the service to continue.

### **What resources were needed?**

In 1995 one year's start-up funding came from the Equal Opportunities Unit of Central Region. It enabled a worker to be seconded from Key Housing to the Group. The first major grant of £141,000 came from the National Lottery Fund in 1996. Members of the Group were involved in putting it together and presenting it to the representative from the Lottery when she came to visit. It enabled premises to be found and a co-ordinator, a development worker and administrative staff to be recruited.

The management committee is supported by staff from Key Housing and Stirling Council Community Learning And Development Services.

QAG's advocacy work was originally funded by Lloyds TSB and the Unemployed Voluntary Action Fund, and the Rural Project was originally funded through the European Social Fund.

As the lottery grant neared its end, QAG began negotiations with Stirling Council. It was seeking to change its status from an organisation whose main role was seen as raising awareness to one that could work in partnership with a council and provide services that it would be willing to pay for. The process was rigorous, involved extensive preparation and a searching interview with 14 council officials. QAG was treated in the same way as any other organisation with whom the council contracted. In the end QAG and Stirling Council agreed two service level agreements:

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<sup>98</sup> HGIOCLD: 3.2 expectations and promoting achievement

<sup>99</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> HGIOCLD: 1.1 Engagement and support, and 3.3 Values

1. to provide an advocacy service, called Listen Up, for adults with Learning Disabilities. Funding was agreed for this project until September 2003;
2. the Core Service: to support people with learning disabilities to participate fully and effectively in shaping services. The core project was funded until March 2004.

Included in the agreement for the core service were:

- promotion of personal life plans;
- networking and bridge building in relation to day services;
- provision of information on direct payments;
- provision and promotion of group advocacy;
- provision of consultancy, advice and information;
- development of partnerships to promote views of people with complex needs;
- organisation of conferences;
- delivery of presentations on active citizenship;
- development of and participation in public education activities;
- support of people with learning disabilities to participate in the design and development of services.

The core service level agreement pays for two staff plus premises and expenses.

QAG members sometimes earn money through delivering training outwith the service level agreement, or through speaking at conferences. This money goes back into the Group's funds to pay for away days and social events on the basis that those who are behind the scenes have often contributed as much to the training as the trainers themselves.

### **What were the actions taken?**

In the early days as the Group was being formed it produced leaflets advertising itself to attract new members and inform people about their work. The process of consulting and listening to people with learning disabilities culminated in organising five big conferences, including Breaking down the Barriers (1993), Look Who's Talking (1996) and Look Who's Talking Too (1998/99), to inform and attract new members from across the area. The Group continues to market its activities through leaflets and information booklets: advice and information is available through the office or at the drop-in. The marketing strategies adopted by the Group are tailored to meet the needs of the intended audience. Potential members are provided with effective and high quality information. Staff and members provide direct guidance and support and have effective systems of referral to and from other appropriate agencies.<sup>101</sup>

The management committee meets once a month. All 24 elected committee members are invited to attend. Staff from Community Learning and Development and from Key Housing support the Group, providing advice particularly on funding and

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<sup>101</sup> *ibid.*

staffing issues. The Group is well supported to manage its services. They have access to high quality information and advice in relation to funding sources and technical advice on planning, evaluation and project management. They control and manage their own assets.<sup>102</sup> QAG has an elected treasurer who regularly answers questions on the accounts.

Active Group members are consistently well supported by staff to carry out their roles within the Group for the benefit of everyone.<sup>103</sup> A pre-meeting is always held for office bearers in advance to sort out how to tackle the agenda. They try to make their management meetings as open and accessible as possible by using a system of red and yellow cards to help people have their turn and prevent them using jargon. Minutes are written, taped and recorded graphically. The Group describes the challenge as 'a long hard road':

We are learning many skills other people might have learned in their schooldays or in their workplace. Many of us have not had those opportunities. We need to learn and develop at our own pace. But we know this is our chance to change things.<sup>104</sup>

The Group also holds an Annual General Meeting every year. At the most recent AGM over 70 members attended. Membership is open to anyone within Stirling and the surrounding area who has an interest in the quality of life for people with learning disabilities. A worker from the local council commented that it was the only AGM where she saw competition to be on the committee. There are systematic and effective processes in place to recruit, train and support new members who are always valued for their contribution. At the first Group meeting following the AGM, office bearers are elected to serve for the next year. The Group elects a chairperson and an assistant chairperson (ring-fenced for new people to learn), a secretary and an assistant secretary (ring-fenced for new people to learn) and a treasurer and assistant treasurer (ring-fenced for new people to learn).<sup>105</sup>

There is a continuing programme of awareness-raising sessions and training courses both attended and given by members. Recently members have received training in person-centred planning and training the trainers. They have also delivered training to, among others, caretakers in community centres, social workers, doctors, nurses and community learning and development staff. QAG was part of a team that wrote an Open University training pack, 'Equal People', aimed at people with learning disabilities, families and staff. Members of the group often speak at local, national and international conferences.

A regular drop-in is held four times a week in Stirling and once a week in Callander. It is used to talk about issues, access support from the sessional worker or co-ordinator, listen to music and chat. The Group describes the drop-in as being at the heart of everything they do. It recognises that for many members coming to the drop-

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<sup>102</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> HGIOCLD: 2.2 Developing skills and confidence

<sup>104</sup> 'The Chance for us to Change Things: Stirling Quality Action Group': an information booklet.

<sup>105</sup> HGIOCLD: 2.3 Promoting participation in community affairs

in, it is their social highlight of the week. Parties and away-days are regular features in the calendar.

The Quality Action Group headed up the work on direct payments for the Scottish Consortium for People with Learning Disabilities, producing accessible information leaflets.

### **How was the practice co-ordinated and monitored?**

Minutes from the management committee meetings and the AGM are recorded in accessible formats. Leaflets and training packs are produced. The service level agreement outlines targets and specifies procedures for regular updates on progress. Members of staff receive regular supervision sessions, which are recorded.

### **How successful was it?**

The Group is active and vibrant and has exerted considerable influence on public policy and the delivery of services. It has worked well in collaboration with others to ensure that needs of people with learning disabilities are being met.<sup>106</sup>

Community facilities in Stirling and the surrounding area are now much more aware of the needs of people with learning disabilities, as a result of training. Stirling Council information is now available on tape for those who need it. Mainstream staff in council services testify to how their attitudes have been changed. There is a dedicated community learning plan for people with learning disabilities, which council staff are sure would not have existed had it not been for QAG.

The Group has made changes to the way they are treated both by services and by the community at large:

- members notice how differently people in positions of authority react to them;
- members of the Group are listened to by council staff, MSPs and other services. They were recently asked to give a talk to police officers who wanted to be more aware of the issues facing people with learning disabilities;
- QAG has received good coverage in the local and national newspapers and on the radio. It is now well known among other agencies – such as Volunteer Development Scotland – who work with the community and include people with learning disabilities in their initiatives. However, no real research has been undertaken which looks at change in the attitudes of ordinary people;
- the Group has a strong voice nationally and locally on a wide variety of issues from direct payments to what they do with their free time;
- their work has been highlighted as an example of good practice in Open University course material;
- members of the Group sit on voluntary sector committees;

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<sup>106</sup> HGIOCLD: 2.6 Community achievement

- the Group has won several awards for their work including: the Nationwide Building Society Voluntary Endeavour Award; the Provost's Civic Award for achievements in the field of Voluntary Service; the Volunteer Development Scotland Award for contribution of the committee; and the Adult Learning National Award;
- members of the Group sit on the Scottish Executive's Users and Carers Committee set up to monitor the progress of The Same as You?
- the Group provided advocacy through the citizen advocacy service for people who are in hospital, although this has stopped while the search for funding continues.

### **What else happened?**

Several of the Group's main achievements were not anticipated when it was set up, although later publicity literature has set additional outcomes to take into account the changing needs of, and opportunities for, the Group.<sup>107</sup>

Being involved in the Quality Action Group has changed the lives of both people with learning disabilities and professionals. Members of the Group are clear about how they have benefited. They demonstrate and report substantive developments in their personal and interpersonal skills, their self-confidence and self-esteem, and their core skills such as working together and problem solving. They understand how what they have learnt through QAG can be applied in other ways.<sup>108</sup> Elsa talks about how it 'brought me out of my shell' and provided 'a light at the end of the tunnel'. She met new and old friends and has developed her ability to speak up for herself as well as learning new skills in accounting. Another Group member has become a part-time youth leader and others volunteer at the LETS café and local youth clubs.

The community learning and development staff are very proud of their connection with the Group. One of the staff that worked with the Group from the start has now got a job as the local area co-ordinator. He regards his work with the Group as one of the most worthwhile things he has done.

The Group recognises that there are risks attached to empowering individuals. Some people have struggled to be democratic once they have achieved positions of power. To avoid it becoming dominated by one or two strong personalities, members are constantly keen to attract new people to the Group.

The work of the Quality Action Group has undoubtedly increased the social capital in the community. There has been an evident growth in the skills, resources, networks and opportunities of people with learning disabilities in the Stirling area. Buoyed by their successes, they have more confidence and are more motivated to improve the quality of life for themselves and others.<sup>109</sup> The Group has provided a social lifeline to

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<sup>107</sup> compare 'The Chance for us to Change Things' and 'Pride not Prejudice' publicity leaflet

<sup>108</sup> HGIOCLD: 1.6 Participant achievement

<sup>109</sup> HGIOCLD: 2.6 Community achievement

many people. When asked what would happen if the Quality Action Group closed tomorrow, a Group member said that it would be a return to loneliness and exclusion.

The Group has made an impact nationally as well as locally through their connections with local MSPs and their involvement in the Scottish Consortium for People with Learning Disabilities.

### **What are the key lessons?**

The Quality Action Group is keen to emphasise that it takes time to involve people with learning disabilities effectively in changing services. The professionals involved have supported the Group to take that time and have been rewarded for their approach. Members of the Group are confident and fully in control. The organisation runs its activities and services effectively, and is never short of members. It is well-recognised and listened to locally and nationally because it is the genuine and representative voice of people with learning disabilities.<sup>110</sup>

As their lottery grant drew to a close QAG were proactive in approaching the Council, not as a charity but as an organisation that could provide essential services to a minority community. Their prompt action resulted in a three-year service level agreement which, providing QAG honours its commitments and is still needed when it comes to renewal, offers a much greater chance of sustainability than previous funding.

The voluntary organisations' initial work that ultimately led to the establishment of the Quality Action Group deliberately sought to collaborate with mainstream council services. The partnership has been a very fruitful and occasionally fraught one, enabling much learning on both sides and giving the initiative the inestimable advantage of a double-pronged approach. The voluntary organisations had good access to people with learning disabilities while community learning and development could give them access to the services they wanted to change.<sup>111</sup> It is this approach that the organisations involved would like to see replicated elsewhere. Attempts have been made to do this but they have struggled with an attitude within many community learning and development teams that people with learning disabilities belong in special services.

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<sup>110</sup> HGIOCLD: 3.3 Values

<sup>111</sup> *ibid.* and HGIOCLD: 5.4 Partnership working

# Case Studies: Dunbar Hallhill Healthy Living Centre (East Lothian)

Number ten



## **Summary**

Dunbar Hallhill Healthy Living Centre opened in September 2001. It is a purpose-built community-controlled facility comprising extensive playing fields, a children's playground, an indoor badminton court, two squash courts, several meeting rooms (which provide space for resources including public access computers and a crèche) and a bar/café.

To set up, East Lothian Council provided land and funding supplemented by the Sports Lottery and the Landfill Tax Fund. Now the Centre is almost self-sufficient, receiving only a small grounds maintenance grant from the Council.

It is managed by the Dunbar Community Development Company, made up of representatives from sports clubs, churches, businesses, disability groups, schools, and children and families groups, and is chaired by a local councillor. It was set up in 1997.

Dunbar has a population of approximately 7,000 people and 2,000 of them come through the doors of the Healthy Living Centre every week. The Centre has achieved its aims of supporting people to have healthier lifestyles as well as promoting social cohesion. On weekdays mothers and toddlers use the meeting rooms and playground, schoolchildren play sports at lunchtime and local sports clubs use the pitches in the evenings. In addition young people have deserted the High Street in the evenings in favour of playing pool alongside the adults in the bar area. At weekends community events and sporting fixtures take place and families come down to the bar for a meal.

Although Dunbar is not an area with high rates of social exclusion the centre makes efforts to accommodate excluded groups. People with disabilities use the facilities for activities and Centre staff work with children who have been excluded from school.

In November 2002 the Company hosted a planning seminar, attended by 75 community members. On the basis of their recommendations a five-year plan was drawn up which focuses on how to get yet more people involved.

## **What was the need that was to be addressed?**

The original intention behind setting up the Dunbar Hallhill Healthy Living Centre was twofold: to address both the decline of sports in schools, and the general rates of obesity in children. The founders were concerned that there were not enough opportunities for all children, whatever their ability, to be involved in some kinds of physical activity, and that this led to the development of unhealthy lifestyles.

Plans to set up the Centre originated as early as 1991 and one of the first developments was a study tour to Denmark organised by Sports Scotland. It was there that a local councillor saw what was possible. He was particularly struck by:

- the sporting and social needs of all ages and all abilities being met in one place;

- the democratic structure of the facilities – they were truly run by the community;
- the emphasis on developing the whole person rather than just their sporting prowess.

On his return he recruited sports clubs, schools, community groups, businesses, East Lothian Council and other interested individuals and organisations to set up the Dunbar Community Development Company with the aim of securing the establishment of a sports and healthy living centre for the town. The Company's vision for Dunbar was not just the creation of new sports facilities but the sharing of resources, talent and opportunities to offer all residents the chance to participate in physical recreation. The Centre was to be located in the heart of the town and would also be the focus of a new community framework uniting all ages.

### **What difference was the initiative intended to make?**

The Dunbar Community Development Company was set up in 1997. In its company documentation it stated its aim as:

to promote the benefit of the inhabitants of Dunbar and environs by associating the residents, churches and voluntary organisations, educational and local authorities in a common effort to advance welfare and education and to provide facilities in the interest of social welfare for recreation and leisure time occupation with the object of improving the conditions of life for the said inhabitants.<sup>112</sup>

It identified the outcomes it was seeking as:

- the establishment of a sports and healthy living centre for education, training and community business development: the Company was particularly concerned to work in partnership with as many sections of the community as possible;
- the encouragement of every member of the community to participate in a sport or physical activity of their choice: 'it's about taking part not just winning';<sup>113</sup>
- the provision of training and information on how members of the community can live a more healthy lifestyle: 'you can't become a whole person until you have learnt to look after your body as well as control your mind';<sup>114</sup>
- the provision of a coach development programme to help improve the fitness and performance level of members of the community;
- the provision of a social framework that would enhance the social cohesion of the community: the Company regards socialising, particularly between young

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<sup>112</sup> Dunbar Hallhill Healthy Living Centre publicity brochure

<sup>113</sup> quote from researcher's conversation with staff member

<sup>114</sup> *ibid.*

and old, as an opportunity for personal development which should go alongside sporting development.

In addition:

The Healthy Living Centre should become a hub for the community ... the social bonds ... could provide support for many people such as the recently bereaved or recuperating individuals ...<sup>115</sup>

### **How was success to be judged?**

At the outset no formal criteria for judging success were set. When asked how they judge success now, staff point to several pieces of evidence:

- the Centre has been built;
- the number of people through the door has risen steadily to approximately 2,000 a week (out of a population of 7,000);
- positive feedback and stories of individual achievement;
- reports of an increased confidence in the town through having such a good facility;
- local people taking the opportunity to influence the work of the centre.

Despite their conviction that the Centre is achieving its outcomes, staff and management acknowledge that the lack of a formal evaluation process is a weakness, which they are seeking to address by employing more staff and setting up new systems.

### **Who was involved?**

The original idea for the Centre came from a local councillor, who became chair of Dunbar Community Development Company. It provides a clear strategic direction based on a vision which takes into account the views and needs of all those with a stake in the area.<sup>116</sup> The Company includes representatives from:

- Dunbar Community Council;
- East Lothian Council;
- the Council of Churches;
- Dunbar Utd Football Club;
- Countess Youth Centre;
- Dunbar Day Centre for older people;
- local schools;
- Dunbar Business;
- Dunbar Disabled Group;

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<sup>115</sup> Dunbar Hallhill Healthy Living Centre publicity brochure

<sup>116</sup> HGIOCLD: 5.5 Leadership

- Dunbar Learning Disabilities Group;
- a representative for children and families groups.

Each group holds elections every two years and every member of each organisation is entitled to vote for their representative. There are plans to invite a representative from the Youth Forum and the Older People's Forum, once they are well established, onto the Company.

The Centre works in close partnership with all the organisations represented on the Company, community learning and development and other council services, support groups and individuals who use the facilities.

### **How did they go about it?**

From 1997 to 2001 the Company was busy raising £3.5 million to set up the Centre. Fundraising was a process of partnership working, involving East Lothian Council, the Community Development Company and supporters in the community. The Council still provides £25,000 per year to maintain the grounds but otherwise the Centre is fully self-sufficient.

Once the Centre had been built, and staff recruited, the health and sports development worker asked schools, sports clubs and the local community for their views on what should go on in the Centre. Planning the programme involved attempting to meet the needs of a wide range of people including mothers and toddlers, older people, sports clubs and schoolchildren, as well as ordinary community members. The range of activities responds to needs in the community and the diversity of opportunities on offer is well matched to local circumstances.<sup>117</sup>

The active empowerment of members is ongoing and is strongly evident in the attitudes of staff. Members feel consulted about the nature of the activity they are participating in, and are often actively involved in designing and delivering it. At all times staff contributions are designed to empower members.<sup>118</sup>

Community organisations that use the Centre are supported to be inclusive, open and representative of their communities, and encouraged to adopt procedures that ensure accountability to the communities they serve.<sup>119</sup> The strategy document<sup>120</sup> outlines an intention to support individual clubs to devise development plans to further their own aims and the aims of the Centre.

The Company and staff are committed to partnership working. These relationships are open and based on a commitment to providing the best service to the community.<sup>121</sup> Partnerships entered into by staff are effective and productive. They contribute to improved efficiency and effectiveness and improve the quality of

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<sup>117</sup> HGIOCLD: 1.2 Learning opportunities

<sup>118</sup> HGIOCLD: 3.3 Values

<sup>119</sup> HGIOCLD: 2.3 Promoting participation in community affairs

<sup>120</sup> 'The Dunbar Hallhill Healthy Living Centre: Towards a Healthy Community: Long Term Strategy Jan. 2003–Jan 2008'

<sup>121</sup> HGIOCLD: 3.3 Values

provision.<sup>122</sup> For instance, the Centre has a close working arrangement with the local primary and secondary schools, which are both located across the road. The local Active Primary Schools Co-ordinator acts as a liaison with the schools and uses the Centre for many of his coaching sessions.

Although it needs to generate enough income to keep going, the Centre has always been concerned to keep costs low in order to make it as accessible as possible: indeed the sports facilities are far cheaper than local council or privately run services..

Publicity materials are minimal and groups are effectively targeted through word of mouth, the school bulletin and advertisements in the local press. There are plans to produce a Dunbar community promotion brochure. The community is fully aware of the available opportunities, and marketing strategies adopted by staff are appropriate to the intended audience.<sup>123</sup>

Community involvement has always been a key feature of the Centre's culture, described as:

the process of developing and promoting an 'extended family', to which all members of the community of Dunbar can belong ... this will depend on all members ensuring that they take personal responsibility for looking after this facility, fellow members and the common good whenever necessary, even if this means some level of personal sacrifice i.e. if something needs doing don't always expect someone else to do it!<sup>124</sup>

Volunteering is central to the success of the Centre and volunteers are valued for their contribution.<sup>125</sup> They help in a variety of ways: for instance, during the winter, members of the bowling club teach carpet bowling to older children from the primary school. Being based in the local secondary school has given the Active Primary Schools Co-ordinator the opportunity to involve older students in coaching primary students. Members of the Company have been known to help out behind the bar when it gets busy.

Although there has been no formal drive to recruit volunteers, the Centre has sought people out when necessary. Both the financial advisor and the legal advisor donate their services to the Company for free. Their involvement began through their passion for rugby.

Giving community members opportunities to socialise has always been integral to the mission of the Centre. People can be members of clubs without actually playing. The bar offers healthy snacks as well as alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks. It is large and fully non-smoking. At weekends, it is used by families and gets very busy, particularly when there are sporting fixtures or community events. The Company is proactive in

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<sup>122</sup> HGIOCLD: 5.4 Partnership working

<sup>123</sup> HGIOCLD: 1.1 Engagement and support

<sup>124</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> HGIOCLD: 2.3 Promoting participation in community affairs

hosting family social events like fêtes, in supporting clubs to hold social events, and in devising activities like carpet bowls that bring people together.

The Centre has very productive contact with excluded groups and individuals and particular effort is made to contact them.<sup>126</sup> Teenage girls are one such group who notoriously give up physical activity as they go into secondary school. A local resident provides dance classes free of charge for all ages and the Centre has worked with the Active Primary Schools Co-ordinator to set up football coaching for girls, which has attracted 60 participants in one year. A range of activities, such as table tennis, carpet bowls and golf, try to cater for children who suffer from low self-esteem because they are unfit or obese. The Centre has worked with the new community schools initiatives to set up boxercise classes for children who are non-attenders at school.

Disabled people use the Centre for mainstream activities and specific classes, like wheelchair dancing, are also put on. The Centre is looking for additional funding to set up better facilities for disabled people.

Older people use the facilities for activities such as tea dances, and the Centre has plans to re-engage them in sports, particularly focusing on activities they might have enjoyed in the past. The Centre is keen to complement physical activities with discussion groups, singing/writing groups and arts and crafts to encourage social participation.

Although the Centre does not go out of its way to target people with an unhealthy lifestyle it aims to catch young people and show them by example. It wants to give people a chance to make better choices about their lifestyle and once a new manager has been recruited, the health and sports development worker plans to work more with health visitors on smoking cessation, ante-natal classes, sexual health and ageing well.

### **What resources were needed?**

The land on which the Centre is built was gifted to the Council by a local developer as their contribution to the community. The Council gave it to the Centre, along with a grant of £750,000. The Sports Lottery donated £1 million, and £500,000 was raised from the landfill tax. Other initial funding required was gathered from smaller donors.

Once the Centre had been built, two staff members were employed – a manager and a development worker – along with sessional workers to provide particular classes. The first manager had a background in hotel management and struggled with the community ethos of the Centre. After he resigned, his duties were taken on by members of the Company and by the development worker in order to save money. However, the Centre needs someone in that role and a funding application is being submitted to the Council to provide for it.

The Centre has an impressive record of working in partnership and making the most of the skills both of community members and also of professionals from schools and

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<sup>126</sup> HGIOCLD: 1.1 Engagement and support

sports clubs. Schools access the Centre free of charge and the headteacher of Dunbar High School is particularly supportive.

Volunteers are essential to the running of the Centre and there are plans to involve parents more, with a view to encouraging them to continue their involvement beyond the participation span of their child. The Centre is keen to enlist more people as coaches and to put them through a training programme, which will enable them to achieve qualifications at the end. Funding is being sought to facilitate this process.

### **What were the actions taken?**

For the past two years the centre has provided coaching and classes in a wide variety of activities for all age ranges. It also provides facilities for community services. It is used as a location for a surgery by welfare rights, the local councillor and Careers Scotland.

During the day:

- mothers and toddlers use the crèche and playground for meetings, music and activity sessions;
- local services hire the rooms for advice or consultation sessions;
- disabled people use the centre for meetings and activities;
- older people have tea dances.

During lunchtime and after school:

- children from the local primary schools attend squash, badminton, netball, hockey and football in the summer, and carpet bowls, table tennis, handball, volleyball and tag rugby in the winter;
- coaching sessions take place in football, rugby and hockey;
- children attend dance classes.

In the evenings and at weekends:

- community members hire the badminton or squash courts;
- families socialise in the bar;
- the rugby, football and running clubs hold sporting fixtures;
- community fêtes and children's parties are held.

In November 2002 the Company hosted a community seminar, which was attended by 75 people. The findings from the seminar were written up into a five-year strategy.

This includes plans for more publicity materials and a recognised coach training programme.

### **How was the practice co-ordinated and monitored?**

The Community Development Company holds regular monthly meetings at which the accounts and progress reports are presented.

The development worker has developed timetables for recording regular activities in the Centre and booking sheets for individual sessions.

The Company has a brochure outlining their vision for the Centre and has recently put together a long-term strategy document, which was based on the findings of the community seminar.

Future plans for increased staffing levels include more capacity for monitoring and evaluation.

### **How successful was it?**

The Dunbar Hallhill Healthy Living Centre relies on the passion and commitment of volunteers from the local community as well as on the hard work and dedication of members of the Company and paid staff. In the two years since it opened, the Centre has achieved a great deal using very limited resources:

- it has secured the establishment of a sports and healthy living centre for education and training, although there is little evidence as yet of community business development;
- it has made great efforts to encourage every member of the community to participate in a sport or physical activity of their choice through targeting particular groups such as girls, older people and disabled people, and through laying on a wide variety of activities and keeping prices low. The numbers using the Centre are steadily rising and staff have noted in particular increasing uptake of opportunities by schoolchildren;
- although the Centre provides opportunities to live a healthy lifestyle through promoting sport and providing healthy food in the café, as yet there has been little attempt to provide more direct training and information to the community. However, the five-year strategy includes a commitment to developing 'a range of means for providing information about healthy living including hand-outs, seminars, posters, providing healthy lifestyle training courses for coaches'.<sup>127</sup>
- at present the Centre relies heavily on volunteer coaches but sees the training and development of these unpaid people as a priority for the future;
- the open-door policy and the welcoming atmosphere go a long way towards providing a social framework that enhances the social cohesion of the community. Both staff and members testify to the mix of members: young and

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<sup>127</sup> *ibid.*

old; incomers and long-term residents; women and men. It is unique in the town as a place where families can socialise and join in activities together;

- this community capacity building has resulted in significant increases in the social capital of the community, clearly evident through the growth in skills, resources, networks and opportunities in the centre as well as the confidence and the motivation in members to contribute to improving the quality of life in their town.<sup>128</sup> Members identify strongly with the activity they are involved in and staff are proud to be associated with the service. Relationships between the Company, staff and members are very positive, relaxed, purposeful and sympathetic.<sup>129</sup>

Members demonstrate and report substantive developments in their skills, self-confidence and self-esteem and they can apply what they have learnt in other contexts.<sup>130</sup> The following stories illustrate the effect the centre has had on the lives of individuals.

Billy started coming to the Centre when it opened. He had a reputation in the town as a troublemaker and was failing at school. But it soon became clear that he had sporting talent. Supported by the Centre and in particular the Dunbar Colts coaches he started playing football. He is now 17, has a job, still plays rugby and is respected by everyone in the club.

Louise has lived in Dunbar all her life. She has a seven-year-old child and a baby. After her first child was born, she became depressed and found it difficult to leave the house. She says that at that time there was very little in the town for mothers and babies. She now comes to the Centre several times a week and sometimes stays all day. Because of its location, between the new housing development and the rest of the town, it provides a place for new and old residents to meet. During the school holidays Louise worked with staff from community learning and development to set up summer activities for the under-fives which included outings as well as using the Centre's facilities. She now plans to set up more services for women like reflexology. She likes the fact the community can go anywhere at any time in the Centre and that the place is so friendly to children. Having a baby has been a very different experience this time round and Louise describes the Centre as 'a godsend'.

### **What else happened?**

In the evenings teenagers have started coming off the High Street to the bar to play pool or watch TV alongside older people who are using the sports facilities. Such social mixing is seen as both positive and unusual. Anecdotal evidence shows that this has led to a reduction in vandalism and graffiti in the town, although there are still calls for more specialist youth provision.

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<sup>128</sup> HGIOCLD: 2.6 Community achievement

<sup>129</sup> HGIOCLD: 3.1 Climate and relationships

<sup>130</sup> HGIOCLD: 1.6 Participant achievement

The Company did not state as one of their outcomes that it wanted the community to feel as if the Centre belonged to them. It may be that as a community organisation it took this outcome for granted. In any case it has been achieved. A sense of membership is evident in a variety of ways. It happens informally when members of the community suggest ideas about what they want to take place in the Centre. Recently some young people approached the Centre with a proposal for a skateboard park and BMX club, and a site is being considered. And it happens more formally, for instance when the centre consulted the community about their strategy for the future, eliciting a response from 75 community members.

### **What are the key lessons?**

The setting up of the Dunbar Community Development Company at an early stage meant that a large section of the community of Dunbar were firmly behind the Centre from the very start. This has been invaluable not only in attracting people to use the Centre but also in enabling extremely effective partnership working. Because it is a truly community-led initiative it has gone a long way towards the achievement of some more intangible outcomes, such as promoting social cohesion in Dunbar. Members of the Dunbar Hallhill Healthy Living Centre are truly proud of a place they perceive as their own.