

Community Development Strategic Vision and Framework Newcastle upon Tyne

1. Definition of Community Development

For the purposes of this Strategic Vision and Framework:

Community development is about building active and sustainable communities based on inclusion, social justice and mutual respect. It is about changing power structures to remove the barriers that prevent people from participating in the issues that affect their lives (CDX)

The key purpose of community development is to bring about social change by working with communities. Community development is about how people relate to the groups and institutions that shape their lives, and how they can help bring about change by being actively involved in the issues that affect them.

In practical terms this means empowering the citizens of Newcastle with adequate support and resources to find solutions to problems they identify in their own communities. It means equipping them to have an effective voice in the decision making processes on local issues.

“Community development is the process of developing active and sustainable communities based on social justice and mutual respect. It is about influencing power structures to remove the barriers that prevent people from participating in the issues that affect their lives”.

“Community development workers and activists, paid and unpaid, facilitate the participation of people in this process. They enable connections to be made between communities and with the development of wider policies and programmes”.

Community development is undertaken within communities of an area, identity and common interest. This includes communities based on a shared culture, heritage or faith, users of public and other services, those with common interests arising from their work, and people working together to promote the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

The community development process works with communities to analyse, initiate and influence social change. Communities themselves initiate changes and through networking have wider influence. Change can come from outside communities and present both threats and opportunities. Community development takes place in contexts of social, demographic, technological, economic, environmental, political and other change. These changes have global, European, national, regional and local dimensions.

Community development is an intervention that can be used to assist all communities, and not just those experiencing multiple deprivation. Where there is mainstream funding for community development it is proposed that a proportion should be allocated to address emerging or localized problems in more affluent areas of the city. However targeted resources in areas of the city experiencing multiple deprivation should not be regarded as a substitute for mainstream funding of community development. A clear and transparent link should be established to show how any ‘specialist / targeted’ resources are impacting upon and influencing the allocation of ‘mainstream’ expenditure.

Community development plays an important role in achieving equal opportunities, accessibility, participation in democratic processes and sustainable economic, social and environmental change is recognised. These themes are important across government and within the community and voluntary sectors. Organisations in all sectors can provide crucial support to community development, for example by adopting this framework and working towards applying it in the work of their organisation.

The National Occupational Standards for Community Development, specifically the roles and values listed, are recognised as the agreed basis for the practice of Community Development, applicable across the community, voluntary, and statutory sectors, and to settings ranging from grass roots community activism to the development of strategies, policies and specialist services and projects.

2. Community Development in practice

Community development workers and community activists in Newcastle serve in most communities. The majority are volunteers who receive no financial gain but nevertheless want to make a contribution to the community. Some are funded and are employed by different organisations and projects within the voluntary and community sectors, and the Local Authority. They have a variety of job titles and may be full or part time workers. Within this diversity here are four examples or practice models of community development work –

Practice Model 1 - Community Development - Activists

These are the 'grass roots' workers who volunteer their time, talents and energy for the benefit of the community or group. They do not gain financially and often are out of pocket when carrying out their work. Their work as community activists sometimes leads them on to undertaking training and on to become paid workers

Practice Model 2 - Community Development - Project Work

The voluntary and community sector and the Local Authority often employ community development workers on projects within a community – or sometimes communities of identity (e.g. older people) or interest (e.g. the environment). They work at the 'coal face' and traditionally play their role behind the scenes as catalysts, facilitators and enablers.

Practice Model 3 - Social Policy and Planning

Many local authorities have a policy and strategy team with some staff who play a community development type role. Their role may be seen as helping to explain and implement the strategy of the local authority but may include elements of engagement with the community. With increased government emphasis on community participation in decision making, similar roles are developing in other public authorities.

Practice Model 4 - Community Engagement

Many towns and cities have teams who focus on particular identified areas. Often they work in partnership with local councillors and the local communities which they serve. Their role is as community advocates, builders of local capacity and they make the links between public authorities and local people. They are employed by and accountable to the local authority. Engaging with the Community may be seen as the point – or zone - of contact between community development and social policy / planning.

Obviously this list is by no means exhaustive and there are many other variations. Historically, there has often been tensions between those who are local activists, those who are employed by the voluntary and community sectors and those employed by the Local Authority. However, the move to the practice model of partnership working in Newcastle has the potential to move away from many of these tensions, between local authority, community/voluntary and local activists.

3. Community Development and local regeneration

In recent years a number of Government documents have been written stating the important role Community Development plays in regenerating and strengthening communities.

Firm Foundations – the Government's Framework for Community Capacity Building (2004)

“Adopt a community development approach – community development involves collective action to achieve social change. It describes the process of working with communities to identify needs and take action to meet those needs. It is based on an agreed set of values”

The Community Development Challenge document, (2006)

“we propose a range of actions to ensure that community development plays a more powerful role in meeting the needs of present day society.... achieving a more participative society as envisaged in the Strong and Prosperous Communities Local Government White Paper”

“community development plays an important behind-the-scenes role in achieving the objectives of a wide variety of public policies...areas blighted by decline, isolation and crime have been transformed into friendly co-operative with benefits for safety, health, employment, environment and general living conditions”.

CLG – An Action Plan for Community Empowerment – Building on Success (2007)

“the Community Development Foundation welcomes Community and Local Government’s re-emphasis on community empowerment, which is a fundamental outcome of applying community development principals and approaches when working with citizens and communities”.

The North East of England

Community Development as described above has the potential to play a vital and central role in social policy development in the North East of England, as it has elsewhere across the country. Statutory authorities and other agencies involved in policy development, housing provision, in health care, the care of older people, youth provision, family support structures, social problem management, employment generation and training and economic development have all incorporated in their strategy documents an expanding role for the community and voluntary sector. This expanding role is placing a whole series of new demands on community organisations and neighbourhood groups. In many situations they find themselves functioning as important local service providers, training agents and development organisations. There is now researched evidence that community development principles and processes and the practical application of these in the work of agencies, community groups and organisations can contribute to the effective and equitable management and resolution of many community concerns and issues. It can also enhance and improve the social well being of those living in the more disadvantaged situations. It thus has a central role to play in social and economic regeneration.

4. Why Newcastle upon Tyne needs a community development strategy

Community Development can contribute to the transformation of Newcastle upon Tyne by:

- enabling local people to participate in local governance, reinvigorating local democracy and promoting social inclusion and community cohesion
- connecting grass roots activity with strategic decision making within the statutory sector
- supporting the contribution of local residents and community and voluntary sector groups to local regeneration

The Community Development Strategy will:

- Underpin a ‘joined up’ approach to community development across sectors. This will include mapping existing provision, identifying needs and gaps, and securing new funding sources
- Provide a framework that ensures that best use is made of the limited community development resources available to communities in Newcastle
- Assist all parties to the Strategy to capture ‘outcomes’ and link mandatory indicators in the LAA with other community capacity building objectives, processes and measures.

- Ensure that all those involved in community development within the city work collaboratively to develop the community development workforce (both paid and voluntary) and bring practice up to the requirements of the National Occupational Standards

5. A Strategic Vision for the future of Community Development in Newcastle upon Tyne: The 'joined-up' approach

Our vision for the future of Community Development in Newcastle upon Tyne has at its heart the determination to promote a 'joined up' approach across the statutory, community and voluntary sectors. The role of Community Development within each sector will be as follows:

Statutory sector – an emphasis on

- Fostering the growth of self-sustaining community-led initiatives based on the National Occupational Standards in areas where community and voluntary sector led infrastructure is weak or non-existent.
- Developing innovative ways to engage local communities in local governance and service delivery in partnership with established and emerging community and voluntary sector led infrastructure organisations.

Community and voluntary sector – an emphasis on

- Working and/or volunteering with local communities to identify and meet their needs through collective action and ensure that the community voice is heard
- Developing innovative ways to enable local communities to engage in local governance and service delivery in partnership with community development professionals from within the statutory sector

The 'joined up' approach will be rooted in:

- A lasting partnership between the Community Development practitioners within the Statutory, Voluntary and Community Sectors based on shared community development values, principles and ways of working rooted in National Occupational Standards.
- A common, cross-sector framework of community development training and support, linked to personal and career progression, covering all community workers (paid and voluntary) in organisations signed up to the national occupational standards. This would ensure that such workers in all sectors had access to personal and professional training and support.

The Community Development Strategy will promote the development of a 'joined up approach' by:

- Providing a rationale and operational framework for the development of cross-sector community development work across Newcastle upon Tyne based on the values of the National Occupational Standards.
- Establishing, through local collaboration, an co-ordinated approach to local community development in every part of Newcastle. This should be part of a Sustainable Community Strategy, integrated with Local Strategic Partnership and the Local Area Agreement. .
- Promoting change and learning to enable the development of the 'joined up' approach. This will involve individuals ranging from community activists to service delivery professionals in all organisations across the spectrum of organisations.
- Encouraging organisations, workers and activists across all sectors to sign up to the values and principles of the National Occupational Standards in Community Development Work and agree to work in line with the values of social justice, participation, empowerment, equality, learning and cooperation, supported by a common training and support framework

- Identifying and encouraging best practice across the sectors.
- Using cross-sector skills and resources to develop work plans with communities and partner organisations / projects and strategic initiatives.
- Establishing an appropriate learning and development framework.

The Strategy must be a living, working document that will be owned collectively across those engaged in community development work, and should be resourced to a level that ensures its future.

6. Delivery of the Strategy

The delivery of the Strategy will focus initially on two key groupings within the statutory and voluntary and community sectors.

Newcastle City Council Community Development Unit

The Unit works with communities at a number of different levels including grass roots community capacity building and engaging communities in decision making processes. The Unit has four teams, three geographic teams and the citywide Team of interest and identity doing targeted work with BME and LGB communities, older people and supporting Participatory Budgeting.

The Unit is committed to building successful relationships and partnerships fostering mutual understanding and clear ongoing dialogue with communities, groups, voluntary sector and statutory organisations. By creating a bridge between the City Council and the many diverse communities in Newcastle, the Unit plays an integral role in building social capital and civic pride, promoting active citizenship, equality and social justice.

The Unit plays a major role in delivering community engagement with key City Councils strategies. This is underpinned by the work the Unit has done to develop and implement the City Councils Engagement Strategy. The Strategies we have recently supported the City Council to engage communities on include the Corporate Plan, Newcastle Plan, Regeneration Strategy, Every Child Matters, Sustainable Community Strategy, Local Area Agreement, Strategy for an Ageing Population, Health Improvement Strategy and the development of the new Social Inclusion Strategy.

Newcastle City Council's Community Development Unit is in a good position to support communities engage with initiatives and agenda which are external to the city because the Unit is working at regional and national level. This involvement ensures that we are aware of and contribute to, national Government policy, we are therefore at the forefront of new developments and opportunities in Community Development Practice, which can have a positive benefit for communities.

Newcastle Community and Voluntary Sector Network Infra-Structure (Infranet)

To ensure community and voluntary sector involvement and engagement with Newcastle Partnership (Local Strategic Partnership LSP), in November 2005, the Partnership agreed a block of NRF money to go to four infrastructure support organisations. The organisations are:

- Newcastle Community Empowerment Network
- Newcastle Council Voluntary Service -:Regen Forum
- East End Community Development Alliance
- West End Community Development Consortium

Under the banner of the "INFRANET" these organisations are co-ordinating their efforts around the following goals:

- To develop the capacity of/and access for communities and voluntary organisations to making informed and effective contributions as equal partners in the governance of the city.
- To work more effectively together: sharing resources, skills and cross-sector working.
- To ensure that the community and voluntary sectors fully participate in the work of the Newcastle Partnership.
- To ensure effective and appropriate involvement of voluntary and community sectors in regeneration activity in the City.

The "INFRANET" partners work in existing neighbourhood renewal areas. But they also are doing some capacity building work outside of these, in the most deprived parts of the North and Outer West. In January 07, the Outer West Area Forum agreed to become the 'anchor point' for the Infranet in the Outer West of Newcastle.

The original four partners have received funding to March 2008 to provide staffing support for development and co-ordination work. But some of the money given to WECDC and EEDA forms the basis of locally administered grants programmes for work in the West and East of Newcastle. Information about this can be obtained directly from WECDC and EECDA.

7. Development of practice across the sectors

The learning and developmental process that is central to strategy would include -

- Neighbourhood pilot projects for joint, capacity building work across the sectors, aimed at identifying and extending good practice and building upon trust.. Pilot projects could help to identify areas of strength / good practice and areas of weakness / gaps.
- Development of training / support structure would be carried out in collaboration with all sectors.
- Consultation with regional, national and international practitioners such as CDX, FCDL, CWACNEE (Community Work Assessment Consortium, North East England) who aim is to promote the advancement of education leading to a recognised community work qualification. Again, this would be coordinated by INFRANET and the City's Community Development Unit.

8. Monitoring and Evaluation of the Strategy will be undertaken with reference to:

- Protocols /service level agreements.
- Government initiative indicators (e.g. Comprehensive Performance Assessment, Stronger and Safer Communities Programme, Local Area Agreements, Civil Renewal)
- Compact Plus (national and local protocols governing relations between public authorities and the community and voluntary sectors).
- The need for openness, transparency and equal treatment across the sectors.
- The ongoing development of the National Occupational Standards.

9. Consultation on the development of the Community Development Strategy

The first draft of the strategy was produced by a working party which was set up in November 2004 following discussions between by the Leader of the City Council, Officers of the Local Authority, Newcastle Community Empowerment Network and Newcastle Partnership Board members. The brief for the initial

working party was to draft a cross-sector Community Development Strategy for the City of Newcastle. The working party which was co-chaired by Newcastle City Council and Newcastle Community Empowerment Network. Over the two year period the working party has gone to great lengths to include the community and voluntary sector and the Local Authority.

The first draft of the Community Development Strategy was produced in January 06. The working party held meetings with a wide range of audiences who work in the community development field. paid and unpaid, A very lively debate took place and It was agreed that a second draft should be produced with the following amendments:-

- The strategy needed to be more inclusive of community activists.
- The jargon needed to be changed into 'plain English'.
- Acronyms needed explanation.

In April 2006, organisations providing support for community and voluntary sector representatives on the Newcastle Local Strategic Partnership linked up to deliver a broader community and voluntary sector infrastructure framework (with the project working title INFRANET). This, in collaboration with the city council's community development unit, is well placed to develop the strategy in consultation with communities, partner organisations and community development workers themselves.

This strategy continues to be a working document, written by representatives of the voluntary, community and statutory sectors. It aims to provide a community development framework for activists, practitioners, councillors and officers and the basis for a new, more effective way of community development working.

10. Risks / Issues

Key risks for not adopting the Strategy

- The strategic impact of Community Development will be weakened in the City.
- Resources will not be maximised and communities will not benefit from a more joined approach to service delivery.
- Opportunities for securing funding and additional resources may be lost due to the lack of a co-ordinated approach.
- 'More of the same' – a continuation of silo working and the status quo.
- The reputation of the Community Development sector in Newcastle could be (further) at risk.
- The ability to respond to key policies and strategies will be weakened.
- Trust and good will established in the process of developing the Strategy could be lost.

11. First steps

1. Agree a Final Draft with Community Development Working Group and INFRANET Group.
2. Consult more widely with the Statutory, Voluntary and Community Sectors.
3. Discuss the Strategy with the new elected Leader of Newcastle Council and the Director of the Local Strategic Partnership.

Appendices

- **Summary of National Occupational Standards in Community Development Work.**

