



**University of Brighton**

# **Both Sides of the Coin: Neighbourhood Renewal in Context**

**Research Based on Six Case Studies from  
Brighton & Hove**

**Dee MacDonald  
Carol Mullineux**

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Health and Social Policy Research Centre

**Faculty of Health**  
School of Applied Social Science



BRIGHTON & SUSSEX  
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Fyvie-Gauld, M. and Rodriguez, P. (2006) *Scoping and consultation exercise of the Bevern View – a residential care home for young people with profound disabilities*

Fyvie-Gauld, M., Kocher, P., Penn, A., Balloch, S. (2006) *Carers and Services for Carers in East Sussex*

Further information about the Centre can be obtained from:

Sallie White, Research Administrator  
HSPRC University of Brighton  
Falmer, Brighton, BN1 9PH

Telephone: 01273 643480  
Fax: 01273 643496  
Email: s.s.white@brighton.ac.uk



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This innovative approach to local research was largely funded by the Brighton and Sussex Community Knowledge Exchange, (administered via the Community University Partnership Programme within the University of Brighton). This funding stream supports a number of partnership projects between the University of Brighton, the University of Sussex and local communities. The initiative enables work on projects that organisations would otherwise not have the resources to develop. The support of the BSCKE Manager, Dana Cohen, was very much appreciated. An element of match funding was also made available via the ALTogether Programme and the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund for which we are grateful.



## Executive summary

Community involvement and the development of partnerships between local people and service providers is considered key to the success of Neighbourhood Renewal and reflects the Government's wider Civil Renewal agenda. Neighbourhood Renewal is the Government Initiative aiming to narrow the gap between the 88 most deprived authorities and the rest of the country (SEU, 2001), tackling so-called 'postcode poverty' by focusing on improvements to key public services.

Whilst nationally some Neighbourhood Renewal initiatives have been evaluated (see for example, SIGOMA, 2004; Murie *et al*, 2003), there remains a recognised deficit of evidence in terms of what works and what doesn't. This means that the information base available for local decision making is weak.

## Focus of the research

Research carried out by the Health and Social Policy Research Centre, of the University of Brighton, during 2005 aimed to improve this knowledge base by researching six case study examples of projects within Brighton & Hove, with a view to identifying successes and challenges in terms of how projects contribute towards Neighbourhood Renewal goals. The projects included:

- The Hangleton & Knoll Project -a community development project undertaking a community survey in partnership with the local community association.
- The Whitehawk Inn -a training organisation seeking greater involvement of local people in the organisation through volunteering.
- Engage -a Christian community development project providing action learning opportunities for those seeking to engage with their communities.
- The Carers Centre in partnership with East Brighton New Deal for Communities 'eb4U'-an outreach project identifying 'hidden carers' within East Brighton.
- Sussex Community Internet Project (SCIP)-an infrastructure organisation providing ICT support and training to community and voluntary organisations looking at the impact of web-design training.
- Sussex Police -project seeking to establish local police surgeries in Central Brighton.

The research was funded by the Brighton and Sussex Community Knowledge Exchange (BSCKE) and the ALTogether Programme. These programmes have a common ethos of sharing learning, which fitted particularly well with the aims of the research. This allowed scope for the development of a reflective, collaborative research style with a clear intention that participation in the research process should add value to the projects involved. The research represented an innovative partnership between the University and the Neighbourhood Renewal team within the Local Authority.

While clear routes and opportunities for local people to be represented in decision making regarding Neighbourhood Renewal exist at strategic levels within Brighton & Hove, the research findings are concerned largely with issues of involvement and capacity building at the local level –within a neighbourhood or organisation.

## **Findings**

Research findings relate directly to recent national guidance in the shape of 'Firm Foundations', a Government framework promoting a coherent approach to capacity building across the many departments which seek to support it (see Home Office, 2004). In particular, these findings highlight the importance of:

- i) Capacity building of local people, service providers and funders
- ii) Learning for local people, service providers and funders.

### **i. Capacity Building**

The research shows that much community activity and capacity already exists within communities and neighbourhoods and that 'getting involved in the community' means different things to different people. In many cases there is a preference for involvement on an informal level –helping out a neighbour, turning up at a community event, publicising events through personal networks, rather than sitting on a committee. Formalising such activity through formal group formation (as is often encouraged by funders) is not always appropriate and findings suggest an important role for 'umbrella organisations' in providing support for community activity in such cases.

The research highlights the importance of projects taking a community development approach, building upon existing relationships, capacity and trust and acknowledging local 'cultures of participation'. The projects looked at in this research illustrate that a central figure is often key in co-ordinating any involvement. The research highlights the time that may be required to achieve meaningful engagement. Many of the people the projects seek to engage have complicated lives and often require considerable support and encouragement to become involved in something new. Such support work is intensive and may not immediately relate to the project's outcomes.

Finding out what people's interests and skills are, and how they'd like to be involved, enhances the likelihood that they will get involved and stay involved. However, projects can experience difficulties funding work that meets identified needs as many funding streams have prescribed outcomes which do not necessarily match how local people choose to get involved. Successful projects recognise that a range of opportunities may be necessary to support the involvement of local people.

### **ii. Learning**

Communities and Services learning together is an important focus of Neighbourhood Renewal. The research illustrates how learning takes place and is being supported in a variety of ways and in a variety of settings e.g. between individuals, within organisations, by statutory services. If the ways in



which people tend to interact and participate within their communities are not understood and built upon, those seeking the wider involvement of local people in Neighbourhood Renewal (workers on the ground, funders and services) run the risk of being inaccessible and irrelevant to the very people they seek to engage.

The case studies highlight the value of adopting a reflective approach to the development of projects, allowing projects to respond and adapt, rather than stick rigidly to goals. Projects benefit when associated funding allows a level of flexibility around outcomes as well as recognising 'softer outcomes' which cannot always be measured.

The research identifies the potential value of enhancing training for service providers, specifically the Police and health care professionals. Relationships built with the community and voluntary sector via this process can raise awareness and strengthen and expand opportunities for referrals.

Building upon the existing capacity of local people to get involved and developing the capacity of service providers and funders to better understand and respond to the needs of local people are two sides of the Neighbourhood Renewal coin (Home Office, 2004). Both are necessary if local people are to be involved in making decisions and setting priorities in their neighbourhoods.

## **Recommendations**

1. Those seeking the wider involvement of local people in Neighbourhood Renewal (workers on the ground, services and funders) could benefit from actively developing their understanding of the local 'culture of participation' in neighbourhoods and the various ways in which people learn. Such knowledge ensures Neighbourhood Renewal processes build upon how local people choose to interact and get involved in community activity.
2. Service Providers could be supported (e.g. by the Neighbourhood Renewal Team and Neighbourhood Renewal Review Group) to develop more of a co-ordinated and responsive service by adopting a community development approach and employing development workers where appropriate.
3. Those seeking the wider involvement of local people in Neighbourhood Renewal could usefully explore ways of supporting one-off community activity or groups that wish to remain informal i.e. are reluctant or unable to constitute to access funding. The potential for umbrella organisations to support such groups should be examined and possible ways forward identified. (This could include relaxing restrictions on larger umbrella organisations to enable them to access funding on behalf of more informal groups).
4. Existing and developing funding streams could benefit from developing supportive, facilitative and flexible relationships with the projects they

fund. The Scarman Trust and their use of development workers to help projects develop their ideas provide a useful model. Such an approach enables projects to be responsive to developments within their work and allows funders to recognise and respond to the contributions projects are making to a range of outcomes.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 The Neighbourhood Renewal landscape

In 2001 the Government announced its Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, setting out its vision for narrowing the gap between the 88 most deprived authorities and the rest of the country (SEU, 2001). The aim of Neighbourhood Renewal is that, within 10 to 20 years, no-one should be seriously disadvantaged by where they live, so-called 'postcode poverty'. Dedicated funding in the form of the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, (and other short-term regeneration initiatives such as New Deal for Communities) would 'kick start' improvements to core public services in the most deprived neighbourhoods. This dedicated funding would be supported on a longer-term basis through processes of mainstreaming or changing the way the mainstream budgets of public services are spent so that they target the most deprived areas. Floor targets or minimum standards that Neighbourhood Renewal areas should achieve were defined in the areas of education, employment, community safety/crime, health, housing and the environment. Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) comprised of representatives from key public service providers, the community and voluntary sector and the private sector have responsibilities to develop and oversee an area's Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy.

Neighbourhood Renewal also includes a commitment to involving local people in making decisions and setting priorities in their neighbourhoods, acknowledging that local people know best what will work for them and should therefore be at the centre of renewal plans.

*"Renewal must be something government does in partnership with the community, not to it" (NRU, 2003)*

Community involvement and a partnership between community members and service providers is valued as key to the success of the strategy. This commitment is reflected in a wide range of government policy objectives which depend on the involvement of citizens and communities and therefore on successful efforts to build people's capacity to become involved (e.g. Community Planning; modernising local government through decentralisation; Local Area Agreements). Alongside specific policy objectives the government also has the wider goals of encouraging civil renewal and developing a stronger civil society through community capacity building (programmes and activities which enable people to take a more active part in their communities and the policies that affect them). These have been driven by the Home Office's 'Civil Renewal Unit' and strategies such as 'Together We Can'<sup>1</sup>, Firm Foundations (Home Office, 2004)<sup>2</sup> and the ChangeUp Programme<sup>3</sup>. The civil

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<sup>1</sup> 'Together We Can' is the Government's action plan on Civil Renewal

<sup>2</sup> 'Firm Foundations' sets out a framework for community capacity building to support community engagement across a range of Government policies. The framework is underpinned by a strong emphasis on community development.

renewal agenda often promotes a community development approach as a way of working and as a set of values (Jochum *et al*, 2005), encouraging individuals to come together in groups around the issues that affect them.

*“specific development processes are needed, firstly to foster a high level of general community activity and secondly to link that activity and awareness with local development processes. Individuals have to be involved in the community in order for the community to be involved in public policies.”* (Chanan *et al*, 2000: 15)

This policy context would therefore suggest that the Government desires to promote greater involvement in community activity at local levels, acknowledging that the building of civil society is a good end in itself. Additionally this may lead to and support government ambitions for more widespread involvement of local people in initiatives concerned with service delivery such as Neighbourhood Renewal.

## **1.2 Neighbourhood Renewal in Brighton & Hove**

Brighton and Hove was one of the 88 local authorities prioritised for Neighbourhood Renewal. Within Brighton & Hove a Local Strategic Partnership called the ‘2020 Community Partnership’ was formed to take responsibility for developing and implementing the City’s Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy. Ten neighbourhoods were identified as priority Neighbourhood Renewal areas, including the East Brighton area, which had already been identified as a priority Neighbourhood Renewal area through the New Deal for Communities initiative. In 2003 Neighbourhood Action Plans, or NAPs, were produced, led by locally based organisations where possible. These organisations carried out a consultation process within local communities and groups in each neighbourhood, and produced a Neighbourhood Action Plan, setting out priorities for the area based on the five neighbourhood renewal floor targets. Neighbourhood Action Groups in each area were then established to take responsibility for implementing the action plan, providing opportunities to bring service providers and local residents together to consider ways of tackling issues that had been identified.

A programme of funding in the form of The Single Community Programme (SCP) (previously the Community Empowerment Fund, until March 2005) is the main vehicle by which local people have the opportunity to get involved in making decisions and setting priorities for Neighbourhood Renewal in their local area. The Single Community Programme is intended to support community self-help activity in deprived neighbourhoods and to draw community groups into the wider decision-making processes around local public services (NAO, 2004).

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<sup>3</sup> ‘ChangeUp’ sets out a ten-year vision for building the capacity of frontline organisations within the community and voluntary sector through putting in place the infrastructure support they need.

In Brighton & Hove the Community and Voluntary Sector Forum (CVSF)-a membership-led organisation for community and voluntary organisations- is responsible for overseeing the Single Community Programme. Funding from the SCP enables the co-ordination of two city-wide networks -a Neighbourhoods Network and a Community of Interest Network. Election from these networks and the wider CVSF enables local residents and community members, and their issues, to be represented on the Local Strategic Partnership. These representative networks and bodies make up what is sometimes referred to as the Community Empowerment Network.

The second element of The Single Community Programme consists of small scale grant-making to community groups, in the form of the Community Chest and the Community Learning Chest. In Brighton and Hove, the grants are administered by The Scarman Trust, as part of their 'Can Do' programme. This small scale funding aims to:

*“support community learning to ensure that residents can access the skills and knowledge they need to engage fully in Neighbourhood Renewal”*

and also support

*“the development of active and resourceful communities by providing small grants to enable a range of self-help and other community-based initiatives to flourish. This investment in small-scale activity will support participation in neighbourhood renewal in a variety of ways that best suit local communities. It will help to meet the wider goal of increasing social capital.”* (Brighton & Hove Single Community Programme Action Plan Objectives)

The Single Community Programme is therefore based on a model that assumes that encouraging greater community activity at a local level (building civil society) may in turn support involvement in wider Neighbourhood Renewal processes. The idea is that as individuals and groups link in with networks, such as the Neighbourhood Network, issues can be raised on their behalf as well as providing a route for those who are interested to stand as community representatives on the Local Strategic Partnership (see figure 1.1). However, research by the National Audit Office (2004) suggests that the link between grants and wider involvement in Neighbourhood Renewal is weak, with most groups (59%) not going on to become part of wider networks. This begs the question ‘Is encouraging greater community activity valued in and for itself?’.

From April 2006, funding to provide this continued support locally will come through the Local Area Agreement<sup>4</sup>. A dedicated strand of funding to support the Community Empowerment Network will flow through the Local Authority (as accountable body for the Local Area Agreement) straight to the

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<sup>4</sup> Local Area Agreements (LAAs) are agreements between central and local Government which allow the local authority more flexibility in allocating budgets in the areas of Children and Young People, Safer and Stronger Communities and Health and Older People. Budgets from a variety of government sources are pooled into the LAA reducing the need for reporting to many different departments.

Community and Voluntary Sector Forum. This is a reduced amount compared to the Single Community Programme which runs to March 2006, and does not allow for continuation of the other aspects of the SCP, namely the grant making function. As a result, the Local Authority, working with partners, has taken the decision to identify a way of continuing this support to the community and voluntary sector through another strand of funding within the Local Area Agreement. The Neighbourhood Element of Safer and Stronger Communities funding, which aims to effect positive change in two of the city's most deprived areas, will be used in part to continue the commitment to community grants across the city. This can be justified as use of this funding stream will benefit residents from these two areas through ongoing support to the City wide structures that will enable them to engage with decision making processes.

Previous research has reviewed the experience of representation of local residents and community members on the LSP through the Community Empowerment Programme in a number of authorities including Brighton & Hove (ODPM, 2005). However, it was outside the scope of the current research to look at the Single Community Programme and the LSP within the City. Instead, the case studies consider issues of capacity building and encouraging involvement in community activity at the local level, within a neighbourhood or organisation i.e. at the level of building civil society, rather than reviewing involvement of local people in wider Neighbourhood Renewal processes. However, we believe that some of the learning emerging from the research will be useful to both the Single Community Programme and its successor and at the wider local policy level.

### **1.3 Context for the research**

Despite the fact that nationally some Neighbourhood Renewal initiatives have been evaluated with a view to identifying what works and what doesn't (see for example, SIGOMA, 2004; Murie *et al*, 2003), there remains a recognised deficit of evidence in this respect. This means that the information base available for local decision-making is weak. The Local Strategic Partnership, the body responsible for implementing Neighbourhood Renewal within Brighton & Hove, is keen to improve the knowledge base by researching local initiatives and developing case study examples for wider dissemination. In turn this would support more evidence-based decision making at both local and national levels.

A programme of learning has been developed in Brighton and Hove aimed at supporting people involved in Neighbourhood Renewal to develop and share the skills and knowledge they need<sup>5</sup>. This programme ('ALTogether'<sup>6</sup>) provided an ideal vehicle for identifying six diverse projects, driven by a range of stakeholders, within which new evidence of 'what works' for communities in terms of Neighbourhood Renewal

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<sup>5</sup> The Government recognises such learning as key to Neighbourhood Renewal. See for example ODPM (2002) 'The Learning Curve'

<sup>6</sup> A programme based on self managed action learning. See [http://www.brighton.ac.uk/cupp/projects/alt\\_home.htm](http://www.brighton.ac.uk/cupp/projects/alt_home.htm)

could be identified and disseminated. Although the projects were not directly funded by the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund they fitted within the wider agenda of Neighbourhood Renewal, addressing issues of community involvement and capacity building. The projects included:

- The Hangleton & Knoll Project -a community development project undertaking a community survey in partnership with the local community association.
- The Whitehawk Inn -a training organisation seeking greater involvement of local people in the organisation through volunteering.
- Engage -a Christian community development project providing action learning opportunities for those seeking to engage with their communities.
- The Carers Centre in partnership with East Brighton New Deal for Communities 'eb4U'-an outreach project identifying 'hidden carers' within East Brighton.
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- Sussex Police -a project seeking to establish local police surgeries in Central Brighton.

The research was funded by the Brighton and Sussex Community Knowledge Exchange (BSCKE) and the ALTogether Programme. It represented a partnership between Brighton University and the Neighbourhood Renewal team within Brighton & Hove City Council.

### **Research Methods**

As there was a clear intention that participation in the research process should add value to the projects, the approach taken was based on action research methods. The research therefore ran in parallel with the projects allowing findings to be reflected upon and responded to as they were identified.

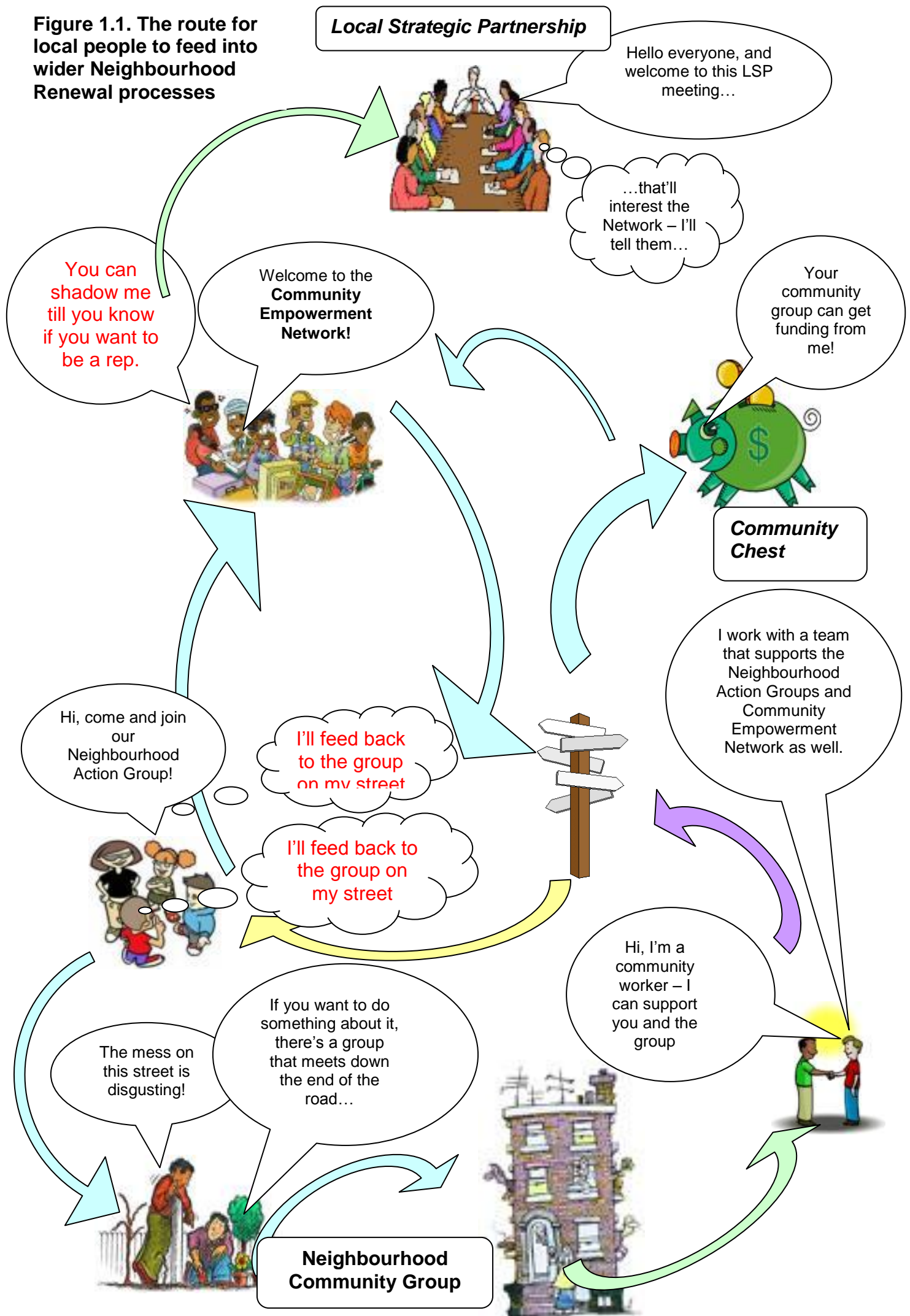
A researcher attended the beginning of the ALTogether Programme with a view to getting to know participants and their projects. This familiarity with projects and organisations enabled the informed selection of six case studies. There was an aim to ensure those selected represented a broad mix based on neighbourhood, project aim, relevance to various NR themes and variety of stakeholders. Once projects were identified, 'project leads' and their employers were contacted and the aims of the research were explained. A Research Agreement was drawn up to ensure all concerned were clear about the methods to be used and the input required. A second researcher was based within the Neighbourhood Renewal Team at Brighton & Hove City, Council with the aim of making links and enabling cross fertilisation between different Neighbourhood Renewal projects across the city. The information and understanding gained by the researcher enabled consideration of findings in relation to existing structures currently in place to support Neighbourhood Renewal. Considerable contribution from the Neighbourhood Renewal Co-ordinator provided essential context for the findings.

A literature review was followed by the use of semi-structured interviews and focus groups, supported by observations. Tape recorders were used, allowing for full transcription. The focus group method was chosen as a way of bringing stakeholders together to meet each other and work together, reinforcing the action research approach taken. Regular review meetings were scheduled with project leads providing an opportunity for findings to be reported and future research plans to be discussed. Participants reported that such review meetings provided valuable opportunities for reflection and planning (often informed by findings presented). The independence of 'outside' researchers/evaluators was valued as this enabled approaches to be questioned and possible future developments to be considered. In addition, feedback events involving all stakeholders that took part in the research were offered to each project, four took advantage of this. This provided useful opportunities for findings, recommendations and possible future action to be discussed and agreed, as well as providing a valuable networking and social opportunity, appreciated by the project leads.

The nature of this research, i.e. developed with a clear view to adding value to the projects involved, allowed researchers to be flexible and responsive in their approach. On occasions, their role expanded to include elements of facilitation and community development (see Hangleton and Knoll case study).

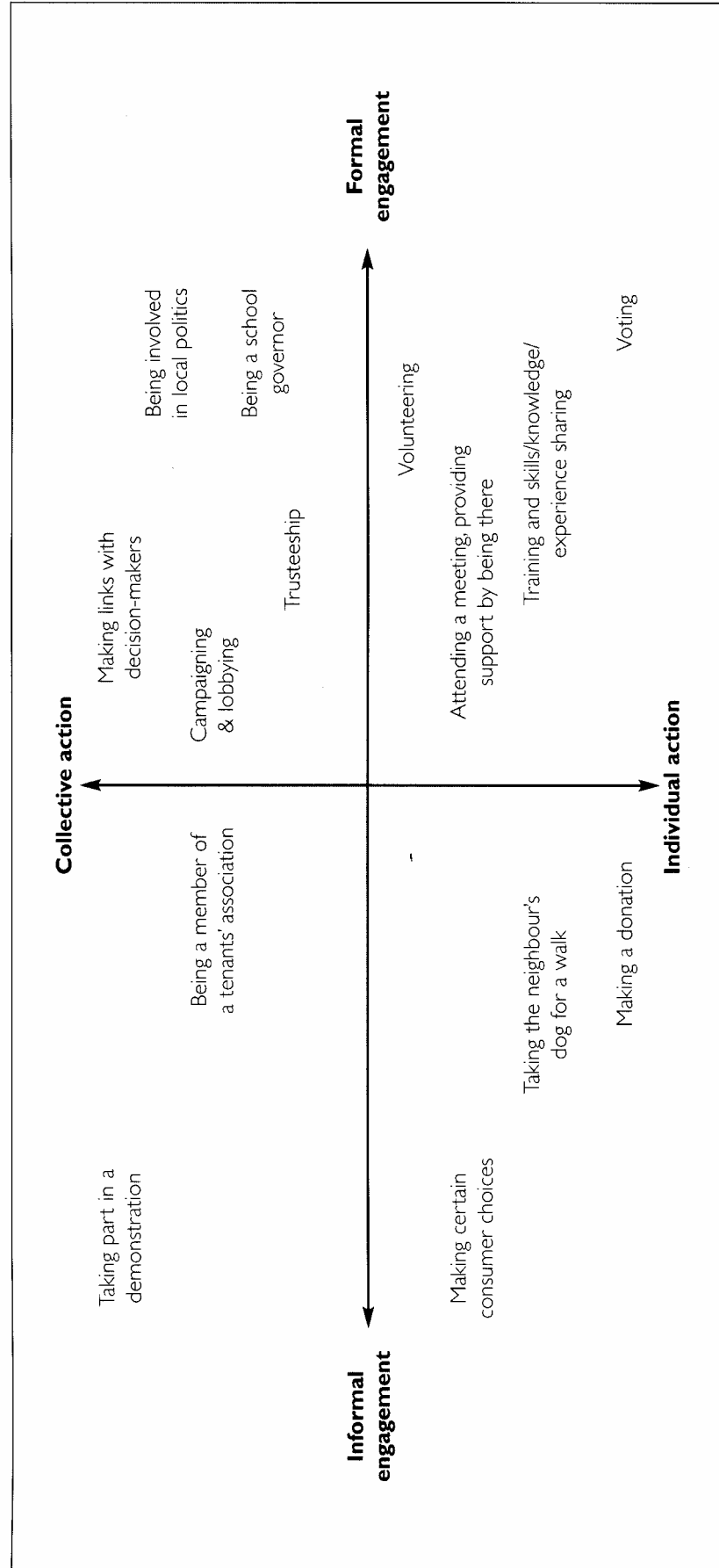


**Figure 1.1. The route for local people to feed into wider Neighbourhood Renewal processes**





**Figure 1.2 Jochum et al's (2005) Framework for understanding what 'involvement in the community' means to people**





## **2. The Carers Centre Project Carers Development Worker: to Identify Hidden Carers in East Brighton With a View to Signposting and Referring Them to the Carers Centre**

### **2.1 Background**

In 1999 The East Brighton area was successful in its bid for New Deal for Communities funding from Central Government. The area received £48 million and an organisation was established to manage the process (eb4U). One of the key themes the funding was to address was health. A Healthy Living Centre was developed and the work carried out in relation to this theme co-ordinated by the Health4All team. This team consists of a number of development workers, each of whom has a particular focus (see figure 2.1). The eb4U Delivery Plan stated that:

*“Our survey has highlighted the number of people in East Brighton caring for others, including many young people who are caring for parents with disabilities or substance/alcohol misuse problems. More development work is needed in this area”*

(page 29)

This research is concerned with the work of the Carers Development Worker. This worker took part in the ALTogether Programme<sup>7</sup> which required her to identify a particular ‘project’ to concentrate on. She chose the element of her work concerned with identifying hidden carers in East Brighton, with a view to signposting and referring them to the Carers Centre. The Development Worker was employed by the Carers Centre, a citywide organisation providing advice and support to carers. However, as the funding for the post was provided by eb4U, the worker was specifically involved in identifying and supporting carers within the East Brighton area. The ‘hidden carers’ project was selected as it tackles an issue at the heart of many service providers’ agendas in Neighbourhood Renewal (NR) areas. That is to ensure their service reaches those who, to date, have not been accessing provision. This was a new way of working for the Carers Centre, i.e. employing a development worker for a specific geographical area, and the issues raised for all concerned will be explored. The worker had been in post for approximately a year when the research began.

### **2.2 Research methods**

Due to the nature of this project and the Carers Centre’s link with Adult Social Care, the research proposal was submitted to, and approved via, the City Council’s Research Governance/Project Approval Process.

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<sup>7</sup> A programme based on self managed action learning. See [http://www.brighton.ac.uk/cupp/projects/alt\\_home.htm](http://www.brighton.ac.uk/cupp/projects/alt_home.htm)

In order to assess the measures taken to date to identify hidden carers, and the effect that such contact had had on those reached, the worker agreed to contact carers identified so far and ask for their participation. Of the fourteen people contacted, 5 agreed to be interviewed. Interviews were semi-structured and conducted, on the whole, in the homes of the participants. Tape recorders were used allowing for full transcription.

Semi-structured interviews were also held with the Carers Centre Manager, the Carers Development Workers and the team leader of the Health4All team.

In addition, observations were made at:

- the Carers Work, Rest and Play day (an event providing an opportunity for carers to speak directly to service providers)
- a meeting of the Steering Group for the development work
- a meeting of an existing carers support group which meets in East Brighton

Regular review meetings were scheduled with the project lead providing an opportunity for findings to be reported and for future research plans to be discussed. During the research period, the Development Worker left on maternity leave. The fieldwork was slowed to some extent as there was a time lapse between one worker finishing and her replacement starting. Also, the new worker needed time to settle in before it was felt appropriate to involve her in the research process. The change in personnel did not, however, affect the direction or focus of the project as there was a clear work/action plan.

## **2.3 Findings**

Findings from the research are presented in four sections:

1. Hidden Carers
2. Carer Support
3. Impact of development work
4. Partnership working

### **2.3.1 Hidden carers**

In order to develop a work plan, a needs assessment relating to carers in East Brighton was carried out by the Development Worker at the start of work in the area. This highlighted research indicating that East Brighton has a higher percentage of carers than Brighton & Hove as a whole.

In order to understand where the emphasis on identifying 'hidden carers' came from, we need to first be clear about what this term means:

*"A carer is someone who, without payment, provides help and support to a relative, friend, or neighbour, who could not manage to stay at home without their help due to age, sickness, addiction or disability. Carers look after relatives and friends at home, often at great personal and financial cost ...However, a significant number do not consciously recognise themselves as carers. They see their role as that of*

*husband, wife, daughter, son, relative or friend. **They are often referred to as 'hidden carers' and are not clearly identified by statutory bodies and therefore do not receive the recognition or support they need***"

(emphasis added, PRT, 2003, 1)

One element this research is interested in exploring is why some carers remain 'hidden'. The reasons seem to fall broadly into three categories:

**a) They don't identify themselves as a carer**

When exploring the issue of why she thought she had not been in contact with support earlier, a carer noted

*"I never thought of myself as that (a carer) because I was the mother so whatever was or wasn't wrong with them it was my duty to look after them ... you don't think of yourself as a carer cos you're their mother"*

Carer Centre staff are very aware of the implications of this:

*"I personally know people who get very angry if I suggest they are a carer because, for example, somebody who has a disabled child, if you say you are a carer that makes your child seem more disabled whereas if you don't say that then you are just a parent and they are normal ... so there are huge barriers to people actually identifying themselves just from their own perceptions"*

Stalker (2003) discusses this issue and notes that there are a range of factors which influence the way carers see themselves

*"Carers frequently assert that they do not see themselves as such; the term is unfamiliar to them and, some would argue, at odds with how they perceive their actions. They regard these as an extension of family or personal relations rather than in terms of being a carer with its formal, quasi-employment overtones"*

(Stalker, 2003, 122).

The research findings are in line with this. All carers interviewed demonstrated a strong sense of loyalty and, to an extent, a sense of duty, to those for whom they care. This extended beyond family bonds. One of those interviewed had a dual caring role, that of full-time carer to a spouse as well as carer to an elderly neighbour who had no family locally.

This indicates that measures taken to identify hidden carers need to be imaginative in their approach, possibly avoiding the term 'carer' in some instances.

**b) Fear of professional interference (or increased interference) in their family**

When the issue of hidden carers was raised at the Work, Rest and Play event, one person commented that when she had been a young carer she wouldn't

have contacted the Carers Centre as she would have worried about involving services in family life. This suggests that the approach taken by workers when contacting families needs to emphasise the supportive nature of their work and the ways in which their service differs from those of Health, Social Services etc.

Another aspect of why people may not make contact relates to the extent to which they are already involved with agencies or services. Whilst being interviewed about why she had not contacted the Carers Centre earlier, even though she was told about them, a carer stated:

*“They did originally at the time tell me about the Carers Centre but I just felt I couldn’t cope with another lot of people ...it was a long, slow struggle but they kept saying you want to go to this agency you want to go to that agency you want to do this and that but I just felt everything was too much and I couldn’t cope with it all”*

Any strategy developed around identifying hidden carers needs to be informed by such findings. A clear understanding of possible existing relationships with ‘services’ is essential if a sensitive approach is to be adopted.

**c) They do not know that there are specific services for them** (tending to concentrate time and energy on those they care for.)

Evidence from an interview with a carer helps to highlight the point that many carers fail to consider their own needs to the same extent as the needs of those for whom they care:

*“My mum’s nurse said there is help there for you and you can go and ask for it ... she said you can get out of this house a bit more. I said what about my mum’s care and she said that would be fine, you are entitled to all this, go on go for it”*

Interestingly, the needs assessment carried out in East Brighton highlighted a difference between national findings from research into what carers want/need and responses from carers in East Brighton. Locally, nobody mentioned their own health and well being, neither did they mention having more of a ‘voice’ with services, issues that were raised nationally. As the report states:

*“It could be assumed that maybe carers are unaware that these things are possible. For example, some carers did not know about the local Carers Centre whose work does involve training carers and giving them a voice”*  
(Reeve, 2003)

As will be explored in the following section, approaches to identifying hidden carers need to pay attention to the issues discussed above. Not only are there general issues such as recognising oneself as a carer in the first place, in the case of East Brighton, and possibly other areas of a similar demographic make-up, the particular needs and aspirations of carers appear



to differ from the national norm. Any outreach and support offered must be aware of this and attempt to address these implications.

### **2.3.2 Approaches to outreach**

Having explored possible reasons for carers being hidden, we wanted to look at what the most appropriate ways of making contact might be in order to ensure the option of accessing support was made available.

To date, various methods have been tried by the Development Worker to reach hidden carers in East Brighton. Some of these target specific 'groups' of carers (e.g. Job Centre Plus to reach those aged 18-25; local schools, including an extended school, to reach young carers etc). Others methods include: leaflet drops to homes; attendance at local events; participation in information days aimed at highlighting the work of the Health4All team; outreach sessions staged at supermarkets and within housing offices and building links with local primary health care professionals. Key issues arising from this work are:

#### **Outreach at Supermarkets (or indeed at any venue outside of East Brighton) might not be the most effective way of targeting carers from a specific geographic area.**

As there is no major supermarket in East Brighton, advice was sought from local people on which supermarket to target. The one chosen was a few miles away but was felt to be used widely by people from East Brighton. Inevitably, many people responded to the outreach who, whilst being carers, were not from East Brighton. Naturally, these were referred to the Carers Centre. Whilst it is a good thing that more carers are reaching support, for the purposes of the eb4U Development work, this approach runs the risk of diluting the capacity of the centre to respond to the needs of eb4U carers, when identified, if staff time is being absorbed by carers from other areas.

*"it's just it's the tensions in terms of the reporting back to eb4U monitoring and do you count these people or not count these people in your project?"*

However, whilst the location may not be ideal, it would appear the method taken (i.e. design of posters and leaflets to attract the attention of potential carers) worked well.

*"I recognised myself as a carer and I wanted to know what more help they could do for me"*

This person had not heard of the Carers Centre prior to this contact despite having been a carer for some time. The publicity attracted their attention and the worker's friendly approach encouraged contact. Another carer, reached via this method, observed that there was an element of luck with such outreach. The comment was made that if the worker had gone on a different day of the week:

*"I wouldn't have had a clue and I wouldn't have got all the information and the feedback and the help that I've got now, it was just fortunate (worker) was there on the day that I went"*

One respondent commented that there might not be a need for this style of outreach as there are a high number of organisations already working in the area which could be contacted with a view to identifying carers:

*"there are so many projects / professionals in eb4U area to have contact with in the first instance."*

### **Reaching young carers**

With regard to this, significant attention has been given to working with school personnel. In addition to identifying those who may be carers but not identified as such, the aim of this work was to raise awareness among staff of the issues facing young carers and to highlight the support that is available to them. Such work required the Carers Development Worker to liaise closely with the Carers Centre Young Carers Project (YCP). This relationship was not, at first, clear, i.e. how would the work of the development worker sit alongside that of the YCP? (Who were already working with young people from East Brighton prior to the existence of this post) A key issue here was that the Development Worker had a responsibility solely for East Brighton whereas the YCP covered the whole city. As the Development Worker's relationship with the YCP developed, more joint working was undertaken. It will be necessary to monitor the additional workload created for the YCP from development work, for example a waiting list may develop which the Centre may wish to address by seeking additional funding.

The Development Worker succeeded in working with Family Support Workers within schools and is working towards an agreement to embed carers' issues in the curriculum.

The work carried out with schools raised an important issue. There is a need to be clear on the definition of a 'carer'. The worker gives the example of staff identifying children as 'carers' when in fact they have some parental responsibilities (such as needing to pick up younger siblings from school) rather than caring responsibilities as described above.

*"in relation to definition of carer – we need to be very clear in getting it across to kids themselves, adults and professionals"*

The need to develop a strategy for dealing with discovery of need that may not fall within the carer category was established. This was in order to ensure that other 'needs' were not overlooked and that evidence was recorded with a view to developing an appropriate response:

*"we need to start logging who fits into our categories, who doesn't and then you've got information to say there is a huge need here"*

**Building relationships and trust takes considerable input and, at times, needs intensive one-to-one work**, as outreach work to date has highlighted. One example of this would be the work carried out with a young carer reached via the worker's attendance at the extended school's workshops for young people. The bulk of the work here was concerned with raising awareness among young people themselves about what being a carer means and the implications of it, rather than directly reaching young carers. However, it transpired that one of the young people that attended was a carer but it took considerable time and continued attendance at sessions for the worker to build up a relationship and so be able to engage the young person. A second example of how initial contact can be time consuming was highlighted by the example of work done with a carer who was particularly lacking in confidence. She had identified some training that she wanted to take part in at the local centre (seen in a booklet delivered to her house) but had not been able to do anything about it, as she said:

*"I am not very good with the phone because I am not too sure how to speak to people. I didn't know whether to or not"*

A key element of the worker building a relationship with this carer was the intensive approach she took which involved her in actually going to the person's house on the first day of the course, giving practical and emotional encouragement including accompanying her to the centre. The carer commented to researchers:

*"I wouldn't have gone. I was still in bed and I wouldn't have gone but she knocked on the door and I went with her. Now every week, Wednesdays and Fridays, I am raring to go!"*

When asked what this has meant to her in terms of her quality of life she commented:

*"It helped me out of my depression, it picked me right up"*

**The importance of 'word of mouth' information sharing and endorsement** of a service should not be underestimated.

When asked for guidance on ways of reaching hidden carers, respondents highlighted how their own informal networks could, and do, play a large part in 'spreading the word' about a service. One commented on the conversations struck up in places such as school playgrounds or hospital waiting rooms and the exchange of information that occurs. Another gave the example of how, once she was aware of the services of the Carers Centre and had had a positive experience of support, she was in a position to let other carers know. She works in a local Post Office and therefore has strong relationships with many local people. She is often aware of those who have a caring role and gives them the phone number of the Carers Centre. She points out that people seek her opinion and, because she endorses the organisation, are more likely to make contact themselves

*“since I’ve found out about the Carers Centre the amount of people that come in that I know care and I say get in touch and I keep their phone number now next to me and I say get in touch with them ...They all know what I’m like and they say ‘have you had them in?’ and I go yes and they say ‘are they alright?’ and I say yes”*

*“I suppose when it comes to other carers its just when you get chatting to people, like when I have to take my husband to the hospital and sit in the waiting room and when he goes in I get chatting to someone else. Sometimes it is only word of mouth, or up the school, in the playground chatting to other Mums”*

The importance of recognising the prevailing ‘culture of participation’ in a neighbourhood is discussed by Williams (2005). It is argued that those from more affluent areas lean towards ‘participating’, i.e. interacting with others in their community, in more formal ways, such as through membership of a group or organisation. People from less affluent areas have a greater tendency for people to interact in a more informal fashion, for example by ‘chatting over the garden fence’ etc. In order for methods of outreach to be effective, such ‘cultures of participation’ need to be considered in order to achieve the best results.

An important issue to raise here is that of monitoring outcomes of outreach work. As can be seen from the examples above, often the work done by the worker is just the beginning of a process. From a monitoring point of view, the worker presumably logs the initial contact with one person but the knock on referrals that result are not recorded in any way. Attention needs to be given to how such processes can be recognised, even if it is impossible to log numbers, the fact that such word of mouth work is being reported should be recognised as a positive output from the Development Worker’s work.

### **Capturing and monitoring outcomes and outputs.**

As different methods are tried, results should be monitored, where possible, and used to inform future strategy. For example, it is unclear what response the initial leaflet drop to houses got but indications from interviews suggest this might not be the most effective method of reaching people:

*“but you know how you get given a leaflet and then you just bung it in the drawer or whatever”*

However, it should be noted that it is not possible to capture all outcomes of outreach work as much will happen as a result of a contact that will not be known to the worker (e.g. of Post Office worker above):

*“I sometimes think that carers which may have been identified through (the worker’s) project aren’t being logged as such because she has done quite a bit of work with the PAs {Personal Advisors} at Falmer and Comart, well if the PA then rings {Young Carers Project} direct and says I want to refer you a young carer, {they} will take the notes, do a referral, enroll them in the project and {Development Worker’s} bit has*

*never been logged ... I think there is a growing issue of the more that you raise awareness with service professionals who then talk to us we then don't know whether it's {the Development Worker's} that's referred them and whilst that doesn't matter as such to us it does matter in terms of the project monitoring but then maybe what we have to do is just tell the project that this is what happens and that we may not have captured all the people because of this system"*

Funders could be encouraged to recognise and value different forms of monitoring (e.g. case studies), along with the fact that there are likely to be many outcomes which cannot be recorded, rather than relying largely on numerical information. One carer commented that:

*"written diaries might be time consuming but video diaries could be a good idea."*

### **Literature should be sensitive to all audiences.**

For example, would pictures featured on cards and posters represent a broad cross section of the community? When designing a poster which aimed to advertise a support group for carers, the worker consulted with the existing group and received valuable feedback. Publicity should be re-visited regularly, with input sought from a range of carers to ensure it is as fit for purpose as possible and that appropriate venues are being targeted.

### **Suggestions for outreach**

Participants were asked to suggest ways in which hidden carers might be reached. The following were suggested:

- Work with local health and other service providers - raise awareness, increase referrals (GPs, District nurses, community nurses / Matrons, Meals on wheels *"while we were away, my husband had Meals on Wheels"*)
- Build links with places of worship - Church ministers / nuns were specifically mentioned.
- Advertise in local venues (Community Centres, libraries, take aways, sheltered housing communal areas, pubs)
- Display posters in places where people have to kill time, e.g. pharmacies, railway stations, various hospital clinics (one carer offered to take posters and display them at the foot clinic, dermatology dept, out-patients)
- Build links with Black & Minority Ethnic (BME) groups in area (Mosaic, a black and mixed race family support group, estimate could be as many as 1200 BME carers in B&H based on census data).
- Attend local fetes / events  
*"they could have perhaps something there and just sort of 'do you know what a carer is?' sort of thing, 'could you possibly be one?' something like that ... I mean I never thought of myself as a carer"*

- Link with other providers of services for carers: Perhaps Carers Care Managers e.g. at the Care Work and Rest day a care manager mentioned outreach she has done with places of worship and advice giving organisations. One of carers interviewed said they had to get help filling in the form for Attendance Allowance, prompting the suggestion of linking with advice giving services in eb4U around enquiries for relevant carer related benefits.
- Distribute information via local schools (workshops for carers of those with learning disabilities stressed the importance of utilising 'everyday' settings such as schools, another carer interviewed also suggested schools - in relation to identifying adult carers, not just young carers).
- Link in with developing Children's Centre in East Brighton (could work be done at early stage to flag up carer issues? Hollingdean Children's Centre is already running and exploring how to reach 'hidden' children)
- Refer to methods used elsewhere (e.g. leaflets in prescription bags via pharmacies as detailed in PRT 3.report)

### **2.3.3 Working with service providers**

As shown above, there is recognition of the importance of working closely with other service providers. This is because many service providers (e.g. GPs, district nurses, teachers and housing officers) are in a good position to be aware of those who have caring responsibilities and be able to alert them to the fact that there is support available. Also, as the funding for the development work was short-term, it is important to try to 'mainstream' such work, to ensure statutory services are picking up this work where possible to carry it on once the Development work finishes.

One respondent described the complex chain that resulted in contact with the Carers Centre and highlighted the way in which the Health4All team model works:

*"eventually my son got diagnosed and went to special school and then obviously Social Services referred it on to another group of people and between them and housing and everybody else that was involved we got put in touch with (Mental Health Development Worker) and they were supposed to come and help me with mental health problems obviously and then they put me in touch with the Carers Centre"*

Research conducted in Scotland by the Princess Royal Trust for Carers (2003), (endorsed by the British Medical Association Scotland) highlights the pivotal role that primary health care professionals can play in identifying hidden carers:

*"GPs and other primary care professionals are well placed to identify carers and alert them to sources of help and advice ...The majority of carers are likely to be known to the health service first – either because of the health of the person they care for, or the impact of caring on their own health. We believe strongly that improving the capacity of NHS Scotland to identify and refer carers on to other agencies is one of the*

*most powerful ways of improving the lives of the large numbers of carers who currently get little or no support” (PRT, 2003, 1)*

Findings from this research support this approach. An example is given here of the way in which links with health care staff can tap into their relationship with people and boost the response from ‘cold’ outreach:

*“I met with some of the district nurses in the area ... This proved to be really useful, as later in the month I had a call from a carer in Whitehawk who had originally seen my advertisement in the Phoenix but felt that no-one would be able to get her respite for her husband. However then the district nurse mentioned me to her and encouraged her to ring and she eventually plucked up the courage to make contact.”*  
(Dev Worker Report)

The issue of training for primary health care workers was discussed in a steering group meeting for the project. It was recognised that it would be advantageous to work with those delivering training to ensure Carers issues were adequately covered. The Carers Centre has been developing its relationship with the local university with a view to influencing the curriculum.

Carers who took part in this research were asked about their own relationship with their GPs in order to try to understand the extent to which GPs are recognising carers’ issues. Whilst most respondents felt that their doctors understood the stress they were under, none reported that support for them specifically was highlighted:

*“I’ve had discussions with her and she knows what the situation is with my wife so when I go there we do discuss it and she knows that I am looking after this chap of 97 and she realises that I am under a lot of pressure and she is very good with that”*

*“They keep saying you’ve got to make time for yourself and it’s so easy to say but its difficult to find that time to yourself”*

When asked if her doctor had spoken to her about her role as a carer, the respondent replied:

*“No not really he just said to me you are under a lot of stress”*

Another opinion expressed in relation to GPs and the role they could play in signposting carers to support was:

*“it’s a waste of time going to the doctor but I think if they could take into account what you’re going through cos they don’t, they don’t ask questions ... but they obviously must realise something else is going to make you like you are but they don’t, they don’t want to know”*

The eb4U Health4All team was aware of the need to establish links with local GPs. They developed a Healthy Living Prescription form (Figure 2.2) which is

being piloted in the area. A number of GPs, known to have a high number of patients from East Brighton, were approached and asked to trial the scheme. In essence, the form allows the doctor to refer patients to the relevant development worker, should they feel it appropriate (e.g. mental health, carer support, smoking cessation, etc). The patient consents to their contact details being given on the prescription form, which then allows the relevant worker to follow up and make contact. The scheme has yet to be formally evaluated, however, early indications are that, whilst practices receive the idea with some enthusiasm, referrals via the prescriptions are slow to come in. Further research would be necessary to understand why this is so and how the scheme could be improved if necessary. Such research could usefully explore what the issues are for GPs and practices using the forms.

An important element of this scheme appears to be that contact details are supplied to the workers rather than expecting patients to make the first move and contact the worker. This is evidenced by the following quote from a carer noting how it would have helped her to have had someone contact her earlier:

*“I think sometimes if people are having problems like I was ...they need a lot more help to get in touch with them ... it’s difficult to say but I think if I’d had more positive help .. if I’d had that support from the Carers Centre then maybe I’d have got to grips with things sooner”*

A member of the steering group for the Carer Development Worker project (a local carer) commented on the issue of raising awareness among front line staff from various agencies. Data protection does not allow agencies to pass on details of their clients to other organisations, such as the Carers Centre. However, it was suggested that training for health, housing, social care staff etc could include raising awareness of carer issues. Such training might encourage staff to consider whether a person is a carer and not only inform clients of the existence of support but actually encourage and assist them to make the initial phone call. Evidence from this research indicates that this would be particularly helpful to those with less confidence. This is happening to an extent with doctors using the prescription system. However, the suggestion is that social care and housing workers could actively encourage the call whilst they are with the carer, offering moral support so at least the initial contact has been made which the worker could then follow up. Another respondent suggested that all health care professionals would benefit from such awareness raising, e.g. nurses who visit regarding stopping smoking, home visiting chiropodists etc. It was also noted that it would be useful to build in refresher sessions for those who had been working for some time. Staff from the Carers Centre commented that

*“this is a wonderful opportunity to pilot some ideas to involve professionals and if successful then roll out across the city.”*

Once again the power of ‘word of mouth’ was remarked upon in the Scottish report in relation to GPs. The report cites an example of a Carers organisation being present for a day in a local GP practice to raise awareness:



*“the second time the Carers Centre staff came here we had a number of people turn up in the practice only to see them not the GP. Patients had spread the word to friends and neighbours that they were in the practice” (PRT, 2003, 3)*

The Carers Development Worker agreed to work with two local doctor's surgeries to assist them to develop good practice in relation to the needs of carers.

#### **2.3.4 Carer support**

A key element of the Development Worker post is to ensure carers become aware of support available to them:

*“Accessing emotional support outside of a carer's established network is considered a safe way of exploring their anger, frustration, lost opportunities and possible guilt without appearing disloyal to the person they care for.” (Stalker, 2003, 133)*

‘Support’ can take many forms. Below are the findings from this research:

#### **Outings and activities**

The findings indicate a clear, enthusiastic response to the idea of social outings. Those that have been organised have been very well received:

*“it gives me a chance to get away and unwind a bit because if I go down town to do shopping I am still constantly thinking about what's going on here whereas when I go out with the other carers I am not thinking about here or what's going on or what's got to be done .. so for a little while I forget about it and you are talking with the other people and you do actually relax”*

Those who had not yet participated in outings raised concerns about respite care:

*“yes, but then there's the question of childcare, I mean are they going to provide someone to sit with my husband and the children?”*

Through participating in the research process, the respondent above has had greater contact with the Development Worker. In fact, having joined the steering group for the work, she will now be in a position to gain clarification of such issues and suggest possible solutions where appropriate.

#### **Support groups**

Three of the five carers interviewed said they did not feel the need for a support group either because they were private people or because they already had support systems in place (church, family). They did, however, see that such support might be required by others with less already in place. At an early stage of the development work, coffee mornings were tried but people did not attend. One respondent raised the point about whether people would want to mix with people from their direct neighbourhood

*“A support group would be good ... it’s not for me but for other people. I can only speak for people on these estates because working I deal with these couple of estates, they are all very private but quite close knit but the thing is if they go to a support group they wouldn’t stand there and say their business in front of anybody because they don’t know who you are standing next to and maybe you would tell everybody”*

Once again, this points to the importance of understanding how the local community tend to interact and tailoring development work accordingly.

When asked what people felt the important factors were when considering setting up a group, they responded:

- **Age range of members**

*“not for me personally, it might be for other people, although I am 60 I don’t view myself as 60 so when I see the pictures of the people that are going I am not being funny but I don’t feel they are my age group”*

*“anyone my age, maybe a few bit younger, few bit older”* (respondent in her early 30’s)

- **Activities offered / organised**

Organised outings highly valued.

- **Venues**

Some preference for meetings outside of estates (from a volunteer who preferred to work in central Brighton)

*“I think there are issues around like young people want maybe to come into the centre of Brighton to have groups to have activities they might not want to have their groups centered in East Brighton so they could come and join in a Brighton wide type group”*

- **Timings**

*“if you go out in the evening ... I would feel uncomfortable the whole time and I’d feel guilty being out in the evening .. whereas when you meet with the group it’s during the day and they are at school so you haven’t got to worry about them”*

One of the respondents belonged to a group established by the Mental Health and Carers workers which enables users of mental health services and their carers to socialise together. This group appears to be very successful:

*“Basically its like a social group isn’t it? So you get out ... you’ve got other people, I mean apart from that I don’t go anywhere or do anything, I am sort of here all the time doing the normal things so its nice to go out and do*

*something different and I think because you are doing something different you do relax more .... We are sort of there to help each other and we can draw strength from each other and it makes you realise that you are not the only one cos sometimes you really do feel that you are on your own and it helps you realise that there are lots of people out there but you can share things that happen and they understand"*

One issue raised, in relation to this group, was whether or not they should attempt to become independent of the development workers, i.e. become constituted in their own right, in order to access funding to continue with their activities. This idea was put to the group but feedback was that they would prefer to continue as they had been as taking on the roles of committee members etc. felt too onerous. It hardly seems surprising that there is a reluctance to take on further responsibilities when one considers the complex and busy lives many of these members have. It is suggested that this issue be looked at in greater depth in order to gain an understanding of how these groups currently operate and what their options for future financial and administrative support might be. One carer commented:

*"easy route to funding without having to form groups. We don't want more responsibility we want that taken away and somebody to do that for us"*

It was pointed out that organisations do exist that can support people to sustain their own groups but perhaps there needs to be more clarity around rules and processes.

Whilst considering support offered by groups, it was highlighted that a number of groups already existed in the town, e.g. drop-in sessions at the Buddhist Centre. It was suggested that the option of directing people to other groups or activities going on, like classes and courses, helps to build relationships with other organisations and raises the profile of carers.

Finally, one carer made the important point that not all carers want to be supported as a member of a group but would rather be supported to relax alone:

*"funding for individual needs as carers often want to chill out on their own NOT be surrounded by others".*

The Carers Centre does offer such support, by way of funding leisure activities etc, but perhaps the point is that new work, such as the development work being undertaken in East Brighton, should not necessarily prioritise group support over individual support.

### 2.3.5 Impact of development work

#### Impact on carers

Findings indicate that the impact that contact with the Carers Development Worker, the Carers Centre and the Health4All team has had on carers is positive in a number of ways. Firstly, it has reduced isolation:

*“it shows that somebody cares for you, somebody is interested in your welfare and she seems to be very helpful and she seems to be trying to do things that are within her reach to help me in the situation that I am in and that’s been good.”*

*“it has helped me a great deal. It has helped me open my eyes and say I can walk out of the house without being here all the time and without being tied down”*

Secondly, it has offered forms of relaxation:

*“She’s been very good to me (CC Staff), she phones me up every month and asks me how I am dealing with my wife, is there anything she can do to help and she has arranged for me to have some swimming lessons or some massages .. it helps you unwind and it helps you relax”*

*“Well they’ve had like some outings that I could go on with other people that are carers so you get to meet other people, you get a chance to relax and you also get a chance to talk to other people and you get advice from them about what they found helpful and you can talk to them and it does help because a lot of the time you feel isolated and knowing that there’s other people out there it does help”*

*“I’ve got in touch with the Carers Centre up Queens Road and I see a lady called \*\*\* and she’s organised a few days away for us all in August which is nice cos we’ll get a break ... they can go off and do activities and meet up for meal times or whatever and I can get time to myself which I don’t get at the moment”*

Thirdly, it has offered practical support:

*“she helped us fill in forms ... I was filling them out wrong and they put us in touch with people for like some handrails and things like that to start sorting out different bits and pieces that he needs”*

*“information, a lot of information they give you a lot of fact sheets, they assess your needs and give you the right fact sheet so that was interesting reading actually cos I deal with benefits all the time and some of the benefits I didn’t even know about”*

The following comment was made when asked how the service might be improved:

*“They said they could come and sit with my husband for a couple of hours – well he doesn’t need sitting with, he is alright .....It was practical help, I wanted someone to come and prune the plum tree and cut the grass, maybe get the curtains and nets down .. I wanted physical, practical help to do the big heavy jobs .. I was hoping the Carers Centre could do things to help if you’re a carer and they couldn’t”*

This information was fed back to the Carers Centre during one of the regular research reviews. The response has been to work with the Health4All team in exploring ways of getting the Neighbourhood Care Scheme extended and operating in East Brighton. This scheme supports older people and people with physical/sensory disabilities by finding local volunteers to help them with various tasks. The carer who made this comment has been invited onto the steering group for the project and should therefore have the opportunity to be fully informed /involved in future work around this issue.

### **Impact on the Carers Centre**

The work of the Development Worker has enabled the Carers Centre to build its networks, particularly in East Brighton, and learn from pilot schemes such as the prescription scheme mentioned before. The steering group for the project enabled the centre to develop a close working relationship with carers and related professionals in East Brighton and be informed by the issues raised.

An obvious outcome of development work is an increase in demand on the service. Whilst this is a good thing, indicating a higher number of carers in East Brighton are now in receipt of support, it has also increased the workload for core staff (in fact resulting in a waiting list) which has implications. There is recognition that there needs to be a strategy in place to monitor the effects of development work on both the YCP and the Adult Carers team. As the Princess Royal Trust report states:

*“quantity is not everything, and a desire for the rapid expansion of this work is tempered by a concern that the quality of service is not weakened by stimulating demands and expectations which are difficult to meet”*  
(2003, pg 2)

The findings of this report support the need for a balance between quantity and quality. With regard to the 'quality' of work the Development Worker does, we have already highlighted the importance of intensive one-to-one support at the point of initial contact with carers. The value of such work, with regard to the effect of contact on the carer and those connected to them, could be significant. It would be useful to capture some of this should a more intensive approach to outreach/support be considered desirable.

The issue of responsibility for funding and administering groups formed as a result of the development work will also impact on the Carers Centre. If groups, such as the one mentioned earlier, wish to continue following the end of development work, which is the appropriate organisation to continue supporting them? No doubt there are a number of options and, as stated earlier, it is suggested that discussions are held with interested parties, including possible funders, to explore options. The appropriateness of formal models, such as the group becoming constituted etc, for those with limited capacity to commit time (such as carers) could usefully be considered.

### **2.3.6 Partnership working**

As mentioned earlier, the Carer Development Worker post involves a range of partners in a variety of ways. Below we look at those partnerships most closely concerned with the management and running of the project.

#### **Project Management - Steering group (involvement of carers)**

The tender document outlining plans for the project stated:

*“we will set up an advisory group of local residents, to guide the project and ensure it is meeting the priorities of local residents, particularly those who are carers” (NDC tender document)*

The reasons for involving local carers in the steering of the project work stems partly from eb4U's commitment to resident involvement in all funded projects, but also from the Carers Centre belief in the value of carers' knowledge and input. Carer Centre staff, most centrally the Development Worker, believe that it is essential to have such input in order to ensure the service on offer is as responsive as possible to local needs. An additional factor in the involvement of local carers is related to the sustainability of activity once the worker has finished. A high involvement of local people increases the capacity to continue activities as knowledge has been accumulated and networks developed. The following comments from Carer Centre staff highlight this:

*“Local knowledge and the politics and the history of the locality has been invaluable with people on the steering group”*

*“If you're talking about hidden carers you want them (local, previously hidden carers) pulling people in so you want people who are in the community and active or*

*know a place to go where you could do a bit of outreach  
so I think it really is important that they live in the area”*

With regard to why carers might volunteer their time to sit on a steering committee, Stalker notes:

*“For carers, as for service users, one of the main reasons  
for taking part in service decision making ... is to ensure  
that their experiential knowledge is given equal weight to  
the professional knowledge of paid service providers”  
(2003, 133)*

There is also, however, a clear recognition on the part of the Development Worker and the centre that different people will be able to offer different amounts of time, varying expertise etc. In response to this, it has been suggested that the steering group alters its way of working. To date the group has had an over-arching role, with all members considering all aspects of the worker's roll. However, as parts of the action plan are quite distinct from each other (e.g. issues related to adult carers compared to those related to young carers), the suggestion is to develop ‘action groups’ around specific areas of work, made up of residents and professionals with relevant knowledge and experience. These groups could focus on clear areas of work and feedback to the overall steering group. This would seem like a good way of addressing some issues such as the lack of a young carer on the steering group due to the need for them to be accompanied. A different way of working (perhaps the action group around young carer issues based at a school) might ensure wider representation.

Any organisation looking to involve ‘users’ of services or local residents needs to be keenly aware of using appropriate methods. An example would be length of meetings – as one carer who had been asked to participate noted:

*“it seemed to be a long meeting and it started in the  
morning and then you have a break and a little bit of  
lunch or something and then it goes on, it was too long for  
me, if it had been like somebody giving an hour's talk  
then I probably would have gone but because it was an  
all day thing I felt it was too much”*

Researcher observations of the steering group highlighted the fact that membership seemed slightly fluid, some members attend regularly whilst others attend infrequently. Clear guidance to the worker on prioritisation of her work was not forthcoming, possibly due to the fact that there were not clear lines of interest / responsibility for aspects of the work. The new model of action group working would appear to offer a solution to this.

### **Line management of the worker**

The Health4All team model represents a partnership between eb4U and specialist organisations. In effect, each development worker has two line managers. Firstly they report to their employer (or ‘host’ organisation), in this

case the Carers Centre. Secondly, they have a responsibility to the Health4All team and as such report to the Health4All Team Leader:

*“The weaknesses are definitely sort of not double counting and the thought of the development worker having to report to 2 people and being torn in lots of different directions .. the strengths possibly are an ability for cross working, for example working quite effectively with the mental health support worker and there must be a lot of opportunities with the drugs worker and other workers so yes, I would say that would be a strength of joint working”*

At times it can be challenging to balance the needs of the Health4All team as a whole against the more specific needs of a particular development worker / host organisation. A good example of how such challenges are negotiated is the Health4All roadshow events. The team is required to showcase their work from time to time in order to ensure the local community is aware of the services available through this team. However, as the team is made up of such a wide variety of interests (ranging from carers and mental health workers to sports and cooking in the community workers) it is difficult to ensure a single event allows each worker to benefit equally from such opportunities. Different workers will wish to adopt very different approaches when trying to engage people. Whereas a lighthearted, game based approach might be suitable for one, others may feel that a different opportunity should be offered to people, for example in the case of the carer and mental health workers, it may be more appropriate to consider confidentiality etc. Feedback from workers from the last event highlighted such issues and has resulted in a different approach (i.e. separate rooms for certain workers rather than all workers being present in one large area) being adopted for the next event. This indicates the team works well as members are asked for feedback and their concerns are addressed.

In an attempt to address some of the issues raised from partnership working, such as dual management, a partnership agreement is being developed with a view to clearly establishing who will provide what support to the development workers (i.e. Health4All team management or host organisation). An event will take place to which all host organisations will be invited providing an opportunity for issues to be discussed and taken forward. This is another example of the way in which the eb4U model (Health4All team) provides partner organisations with the opportunity to network and build relationships with each other, another step towards sustainability once eb4U funding ceases.

### **Team working - work with other Health4All workers**

Another partnership fostered by the team approach is of course between the various workers themselves. The model allows great opportunities for cross referrals and information sharing (with client consent).



*“with adult carers, I’m just sort of thinking of the links. I’ve already had a referral from the smoking cessation worker so I’ll give this lady a telephone call and see what can be done there”*

*“yes that’s right ... I was put in touch with {Mental Health Development Worker} to help with the mental health and then she put me in touch with {Carers Development Worker}”*

*“we’ve got a fab team here of project workers who are on the ground and who’ve been great, I’ve been tagging on to what they are doing, I can see links of how we can work together”*

Team work is essential as all the workers are targeting the same limited population. Collaboration on publicity etc will help avoid an overload of information for residents and will promote joint working in relation to referrals etc. As noted by the Carers Development Worker, events run by other workers can provide an excellent vehicle for reaching a wide variety of residents, any of whom may be carers or know of people who are carers but are not currently identified as such.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

Findings from this research identified a number of ways in which the development work being carried out in East Brighton is effective whilst also capturing suggestions which could usefully influence future work related to hidden carers. The need for a sensitive approach to outreach, informed by knowledge of the local community, supports continued efforts to involve local carers in the steering and advisory groups. Carers interviewed for the research clearly identified a range of ways in which contact with the Development worker and the Carers Centre was of benefit. Where a carer indicated that their needs had not been met it was apparent that mechanisms were in place to involve that person in seeking solutions to the issues raised. The success of the development work has implications for the Carers Centre, such as an increased workload for core staff resulting, at times, in a waiting list for assistance. If such work is to continue funding will be required to ensure the needs of those being identified can be met. Findings suggest that the long-term sustainability of work related to identifying and referring hidden carers could be achieved through the raising of awareness of carer issues with front line service providers. For this to be achieved, the training of such staff, from health, housing, Social Services will need to be explored with a view to ensuring the needs of carers are firmly on the curriculum.

## 2.5 Recommendations

- i. Outreach should be conducted primarily within East Brighton in locations suggested within this report to ensure the target population (EB carers) are reached.
- ii. Prioritise work with primary health care providers, in particular GPs and community nurses/matrons in order to access hidden carers (Highlight the fact that local carers appear to put less emphasis on their own health needs when dealing with primary care staff).
- iii. Financial support to be sought to have additional case workers to respond to the needs highlighted by development work in order to avoid waiting lists.
- iv. Continue to develop relationships with other services, e.g. social care and housing workers (building on established relationships) and work towards highlighting carer issues in the training of front-line service staff (to encourage professionals to support carers in making contact with Carers Centre).
- v. Sufficient funding and recognition should be given to the need for intensive one-to-one attention required in order to engage many carers (Linked to fact that many do not identify as carers or prioritise their own needs).
- vi. Encourage local carers who are involved in the project, where appropriate, to help with outreach (maximise word of mouth and own positive experiences of contact with Carers Centre).
- vii. Continue to involve newly identified carers in the running of the project as this brings new perspectives, knowledge and networks.
- viii. Outreach approaches should be sensitive to the reasons why people are currently 'hidden' (ensure that the support nature of the service is highlighted and distinct from statutory services)
- ix. Clarify working relationship with Young Carers Project. Continue to reflect on the relationship as initiatives develop.
- x. Develop a task centered approach to project management offering opportunities for involvement based on people's interests and experience.
- xi. Fully exploit opportunities presented by membership of H4A team. All the workers are targeting the same section of the population – maximise contact with people (two birds with one stone approach).
- xii. Continue to offer social events or outings as a way of attracting hidden carers (working with local carers to advise).

- xiii. If group support seems required, a range of opportunities should be considered, e.g. pointing people to groups which already exist in an area. If development of a new, specific group seems appropriate, pay attention to factors such as age, venues etc.
- xiv. Involve a range of interested parties in discussions about a groups' status (e.g. formal/informal, constituted or not) and their support needs.
- xv. Develop systems to deal with additional needs that are identified (e.g. young people with parental responsibility). Need clarity of definition and clear case for separate support.
- xvi. Develop methods for recording the 'softer' outcomes of outreach work (e.g. young carers referred to a YCP Personal Advisor by the Development Worker – not necessarily recorded as an outcome by the Development Worker)

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## Figure 2.1

### **eb4U Health4All Team:**

Team Leader

Finance and monitoring officer

Project support workers x 2,

Carers development worker

Mental health development officer

Fresh Ideas worker (diet and nutrition)

Cookery in the community development worker

Young persons and family health worker

Health advisor for teenage pregnancy and Sexual health

Sports co-ordinator


Smoking cessation specialist

Substance misuse worker x 2



Figure 2.2

## The Healthy Living Prescription



information and support  
for east brighton residents

**Call 01273 294533 now to begin your  
Healthy Living Prescription**

Tick below to indicate which items make up the Healthy Living Prescription

<div style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 2px; margin-bottom: 5px;"><input type="checkbox"/> <b>DIET</b></div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Slimming support groups</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Increase access to fresh fruit and vegetables</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Community food groups</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Breastfeeding support</li> </ul> <div style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 2px; margin-bottom: 5px;"><input type="checkbox"/> <b>EXERCISE</b></div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Support in taking up healthy exercise programme</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Older people's sport</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Training to become a sports leader</li> </ul> <div style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 2px; margin-bottom: 5px;"><input type="checkbox"/> <b>SMOKING</b></div> <p><i>Please contact Marian Culwick direct on 01273 267397</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Quit plan and on-going motivational support</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> advice on use of stop smoking medicines</li> </ul> <div style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 2px; margin-bottom: 5px;"><input type="checkbox"/> <b>CARERS SUPPORT</b></div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Support for those looking after a family member, partner, friend or neighbour in an unpaid capacity (information, activities and training around caring issues)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Transport and respite care</li> </ul>	<div style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 2px; margin-bottom: 5px;"><input type="checkbox"/> <b>MENTAL HEALTH</b></div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Support for those feeling isolated, stressed or anxious, social support networks to access groups and individual counselling</li> </ul> <p><b>For clinical mental health assessments and people in crisis, referrals should be made to CMHT via normal routes.</b></p> <div style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 2px; margin-bottom: 5px;"><input type="checkbox"/> <b>SUBSTANCE MISUSE</b></div> <p>Covering alcohol, legal and illegal drugs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Free and confidential information and support to users, ex-users, families and the community; around primary prevention, harm minimisation and relapse prevention</li> </ul> <div style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 2px; margin-bottom: 5px;"><input type="checkbox"/> <b>SEXUAL HEALTH</b></div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Support in access to sexual health services</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> One-to-one support for young people wanting advice to make informed choices around sexual health</li> </ul> <div style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 2px; margin-bottom: 5px;"><input type="checkbox"/> <b>FAMILY SUPPORT</b></div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Support to East Brighton families in making positive lifestyle changes to benefit their health</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Support to young people, young parents, and families with children aged 8 and over, to resolve relationship difficulties.</li> </ul>
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The health4all team is a group of health and community workers supervised by Brighton and Hove city Council. The details supplied on this form and any further information provided may be shared within the team in order to best respond to the prescription and find the best information and support. We will only ask for information which is necessary for what we do. The information will be treated as confidential and will be handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. Further information about this can be obtained from health4all Finance and Monitoring Officer, Brian McGonigle.

**Prescriber name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Team/ place of work:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Patient name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Patient signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

The above information is for our records only. Patients must call health4all team on (01273) 294533 to begin their prescription

**PRESCRIBERS** You must now return a copy of this form via fax 01273 294542 or post to HEALTHY LIVING PRESCRIPTION, Winterbourne Centre, Hodshrove Lane, Brighton BN2 1EA (use prepaid envelopes provided)

**PATIENTS: YOU MUST NOW CALL 294533 TO BEGIN YOUR PRESCRIPTION**





### **3. The Engage Project: Exploring Group Action and Learning for Christian Community Workers**

#### **3.1 Engaging faith communities in regeneration**

It is recognised that many faith communities and their individual members already make a positive and significant contribution to regeneration work (Farnell *et al*, 2003). They bring strong and distinctive motivations for social action; a long term local presence (in contrast to the short termism that besets many funding streams); the provision of informal settings and activities and a commitment to listening to people.

Shaftesbury/Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DETR) research (2000) reported that faith based projects believed they offered added value in terms of focusing holistically on the situational needs of people in community, as compared with the fragmented and rule-bound services offered by a wide range of specialist secular agencies. Many Christian projects feel reporting on targets does not reflect the less tangible but perhaps more valuable work of supporting people through crises, providing time and a listening ear.

*“But for the funders this is what they want, they want us to be able to prove our work...Whereas a lot of our work is about making people feel comfortable, making them feel relaxed and able to talk about the situation they’re in“*

*“a lot of the things we felt were more important in a way were networking – things that didn’t count.”*  
(person talking about the outputs valued by a funder)

*“I think agencies are more required to be target led and if they haven’t achieved a target at such a point they move onto B and drop A whereas we won’t...our funding isn’t so tied to targets”*

Faith groups may work towards regeneration at many levels, from the spiritual to the political, are willing to address perceived ‘root causes’ of social exclusion and poverty and hold the belief that faith can help people overcome other issues in their life. They do not necessarily hold to the clear division that predominates in Western societies between the ‘spiritual’ and the ‘secular’.

The potential for faith communities to contribute to regeneration and Neighbourhood Renewal processes is increasingly recognised by Government and reflected in policy.

*“Faith groups may offer a channel to some of the hardest-to-reach groups. A pragmatic approach will be taken to funding faith groups, recognising that they may be the most suitable organisations to deliver*

*community objectives”* (SEU, 2001, National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, paragraph 5.31)

While public funding is not available to support the propagation of a particular faith, public authorities can, and do, fund certain activities run by faith communities. However, there is some feeling that authorities and funders do not fully understand faith communities’ aims and may distrust their objectives to serve persons outside of their own membership (Shaftesbury/DETR, 2000). They may also lack ‘religious literacy’ and face difficulties in trying to relate secular, liberal values to a variety of religious values.

The Christian community is one such faith community. For at least two decades Christian churches and their associated projects have been making an important contribution to social welfare and community development (Shaftesbury/DETR, 2000). Much involvement drew its inspiration from ‘Faith in the City’ (Archbishop’s Council on Urban Priority Areas (ACUPA), 1985), a report which drew attention to increasing levels of poverty in urban areas and to the widening gap between rich and poor. Projects were subsequently funded through the Church Urban Fund, a charitable grant making trust established in 1986 in response to the ACUPA report.

Lawrence (2005) describes how traditional approaches to tackling poverty and improving quality of life are struggling to address the challenges faced in communities throughout the UK today and that many government agencies, voluntary organisations, communities and faith groups alike are grappling with how to tackle the issues at their roots.

*“in the midst of the ‘professional’ responses, in many areas it is becoming harder for people to meet their neighbours, let alone get to know them in a meaningful way and love them.”* (Lawrence, 2005)

Lawrence (2005) cites recent research<sup>8</sup> which has highlighted a number of issues facing the church in its desire to engage with communities.

1. The church’s contribution in communities is often unrecognised and overlooked; there is much to be celebrated and built on.
2. The church is good at delivering services to meet people’s immediate needs e.g. work with homeless people, carer and toddler groups and lunch clubs. There are far fewer initiatives working with people to see whole communities transformed.
3. Christian community groups and projects tend to work in isolation, drawing on often dwindling church resources (e.g. people, money and prayer). There is a need to find common ground and to work, learn and share resources with others (congregations, voluntary or community groups, external agencies or government organisations).

The Engage project was motivated by a desire to respond to these issues.

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<sup>8</sup> Shaftesbury Society (2004) Challenging Church.  
Shaftesbury Society (2004) Hidden Treasure  
Engage and Shaftesbury Society (2004) Being Here.

## **3.2 Research methods**

A research strategy was agreed with the project lead and it was decided to focus the research on two elements. The first involved looking at a particular group he had been supporting, the Friend Raising Group (FRG) as an example of group action and learning. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 6 members of this group. Tape recorders were used allowing for full transcription. The second element of the research involved looking at the 'How do we...' series of workshop sessions, intended to support those new to ideas of engaging with their community and following up with 3 participants after the sessions to explore the impact of these sessions. A semi-structured interview was also held with the community development worker himself.

In addition, observations were made at one of the 'How Do We Engage?' Sessions and the 'Evolve Engage' planning event . The researchers were also asked to feedback emerging findings to Engage stakeholders before the fieldwork had officially been completed, at an event entitled 'Evaluate Engage'.

Regular review meetings were scheduled with the project lead providing an opportunity for findings to be reported and for future research plans to be discussed.

## **3.3 Background to Engage**

In 1997 a number of church people in Brighton & Hove came together with a view to developing the level of involvement of churches with their local communities. An informal interdenominational group 'the Brighton & Hove Church and Community Group' was formed and obtained funding from the Derwent Trust to undertake some research into ways in which churches might most effectively serve their local community. The research (Szanto, 2000) highlighted a clear need for a community development worker and the group was successful in obtaining funding for such a post, on a part time basis, through the Shaftsbury Society and the Church Urban Fund. In 2002 the group formally constituted itself under the name of 'Engage –the Brighton & Hove Churches Community Development Association'. A Development Worker was employed, who initially focused the work on three central wards in Brighton & Hove. This post was accountable to the Engage management committee but line-managed and employed through the Shaftsbury Society's Development and Regeneration Group.

In 2003 Engage also obtained funding from the Government's Regional Development Agency SEEDA, through RAISE (Regional Action and Involvement South East) and was able to extend the worker's hours and remit to a full time post covering the whole of Brighton & Hove. In 2003 the Community Development Worker undertook a city wide mapping exercise which asked 'How is the Church engaging with the communities of Brighton and Hove?'. The results of this survey were published in a report entitled 'Being Here' (Engage and Shaftesbury, 2004) which was presented to the

Community and Voluntary Sector Forum and was well received by both churches and Christian organisations in the city, as well as the wider community and voluntary sector. It was considered a useful resource in terms of highlighting the diverse range of Christian traditions and raising awareness of existing work.

*"I think there's definite value in recognising the work that many organisations do in the community..I think faith based organisations have had quite a bad press and sometimes rightly so in that they've had agendas or done things at quite an amateur level .... I think there's an awful lot that they are bringing to the community and [the 'Being Here' report] very much helped to highlight that"* (member of Engage's Friend Raising Group)

Despite the volume of existing activity it was recognised that much of it was not integrated into the community and voluntary sector in the city.

*" the church in B&H as a whole provides.....probably around 20% of the whole voluntary sector if you do it by numbers of activities or groups and projects, yet.....only a tiny proportion of that is integrated into the community and voluntary sector and they tend to be working in isolation a lot...and not accessing the support they could get and not working together with others in the way they could so that would be some of the issues we are trying to address is actually to look at 1. us providing support for that but 2. providing stepping stones to get more integrated and for the Church to recognise it's part of the voluntary sector and for the voluntary sector to recognise what the church is doing"* (worker)

The benefits of better integrating the Christian community into the wider community and voluntary sector are illustrated by the following quote. Within Brighton & Hove, organisations dealing with issues of homelessness appear to be more integrated into both community, voluntary and statutory sectors.

*"the mental health team have been trying to engage a chap on the street. Every time they go near him he runs away-he's known effectively as 'the running man'. I got called into a meeting and got asked if we knew who he was and I said 'yeah, we've been talking to him now for the last 6 months' and they asked us to keep them posted so I have to do write ups for the mental health team so they know where he's at."*

The mapping process enabled links to be made with the main infrastructure organisations and some neighbourhood-based ones with the aim of supporting future integration. The mapping work established good foundations and many contacts for the future work of Engage.

During 2005 the Community Development Worker took part in Brighton University's ALTogether Programme. This required him to identify a particular 'project' to bring to the programme, and he chose 'to explore and develop

group learning and action for Christian community workers'. This reflected Engage's aims of supporting the Christian community to engage more effectively with its local community through a particular approach, that of action learning.

The Christian community is characterised by a particular theology. The interpretation of this theology leads to varying motivations to engage with the community, which range from evangelism (or sharing of a person's faith) to social action (directly meeting need) and can include elements of both. However, members of the Christian community do not always find it easy to relate faith and action.

*"there's a real desire amongst a lot of congregations, and Christian community projects and Christians generally, to get involved more in the community.... people were seeing that the community activities around didn't really connect with the church.... they wanted to get involved in the community and social action and not to separate them off any more but didn't really have a framework for seeing how to do it.....so Christians want to get more involved but they don't want to lose their distinctiveness... they don't want to be secularised but at the same time they want to be sensitive ...most of them aren't the kind of in your face, cold contact or what's seen as manipulative or agenda driven in a bad way.....and if people ask then they can talk about [their faith]...but even then....people can say 'how do you relate the two?'.....so there's a struggle to relate faith and practice." (worker)*

Traditionally the theologies of different churches in the city had shaped their response to engaging with the local community. It was the aim of Engage that the community development worker would bring people together and work across organisational and denominational divides.

### **3.4 The group action and learning approach**

The decision was taken to encourage a group action and learning approach to work towards Engage's aim of supporting the church to work together more to engage with its local community. Group Action and Learning is a form of practical development work which includes systematic periods of planning, observation, reflection and analysis. Action learning encourages experimentation even if you are not necessarily sure of the outcomes. It lends itself to active participation by a wide range of people and encourages 'learning together' through both action and reflection. The worker used action learning himself to continually reflect on the programme and adjust it where necessary.

*"I wanted to bring in some of the group approaches ...rather than talking one to one about people working together and who to go and see I'd rather try and do more of that bringing together in groups"*

Such an approach appealed to the worker, given his previous training and experience. It was also favoured for the project as a method which affirmed

those new to the idea of engaging with their local community, who did not see themselves as experts, encouraging them to 'give it a go' and learn from one another. It seemed an efficient use of resources given the finite capacity of the worker.

*"I want to encourage people to get involved really...and let them learn even if it's messy and not perfect, rather than putting people off"*

The approach was supported by both the Shaftesbury Society and, perhaps more surprisingly, the Government's Regional Development Agency, SEEDA, who had part funded the project but unusually, given Shaftesbury Society and Engage the scope to experiment with different ways of working, including more flexible milestones.

*"Shaftesbury...are very keen to explore community development work from a Christian perspective and trying things out so it was a very supportive environment to try things out...even though they might not have been able to articulate when I started, they're very outcome and process oriented rather than outputs...so they've really welcomed this."*

The freedom of a group action learning approach proved refreshing to those working in a context often driven by the targets of funders.

### **3.5 Partnership working**

#### **3.5.1 Bringing people (from a community of interest) together**

##### **Presenting opportunities**

Following the mapping exercise a programme of opportunities to encourage people to work together through action learning was developed. This ranged from holding more traditional 'training' sessions, with content that aimed to introduce people to ideas and methods of engaging with their local community, to offering opportunities merely to bring people together in an initial informal but structured meeting to explore the potential to work further together. Each instance of providing an opportunity to bring people together was valued in itself, regardless of whether it led to further joint work.

The action learning approach enabled the worker and Engage to prioritise, building in time to stand back from the work and reflect on aspects of the programme that had been successful or less so and adapt it accordingly.

The learning 'programme' was publicised through a series of postcards sent out to a mailing list of 250 people (developed through the earlier mapping work) and followed up with telephone calls to 60 of these thought most likely to be interested. Time was taken to word the information in an accessible, 'user friendly' way and the term 'action learning' was deliberately avoided (see figure 3.1). However, there was a limited response to this publicity leading the worker to conclude that *"Even well produced and eye catching mail outs don't get much response"*.

*“The main thing in all of that advertising is just the importance of outreach and follow up...that it is very relational. Personal contact is what makes it a priority on someone’s agenda”*

Publicity sent to congregations was reliant on the member of clergy (who was often busy) as a gatekeeper to this information. Presenting a community development approach, supporting people to identify and work on the issues themselves rather than offer a particular ‘service’, also seemed unfamiliar to people.

*“I think a lot of them struggled to understand how we’re working...I think there was a general struggle with ‘so, what can you do for us?’ coming back with ‘well, what are your issues? What are you trying to do?’...so the whole taking a community development approach is I think quite new to a lot of them and some were just not interested at all”*

As a community of interest, albeit composed of a wide range of perspectives, there appears to be some common language within the Christian faith community which the worker was able to appeal to when presenting ideas that might be new to people, such as introducing ideas about community development.

*“I think that’s one of the great things about working with a group that has some kind of common (to use action learning jargon) ‘programme knowledge’... so I try and talk about community development perspectives in language and images and stories that they already have a grasp on so it’s not like ‘how does this fit?’; it’s more a matter of how does it change rather than taking on something new...so there is a sense where my job –I view it as a translation/interpreting service!”*

*“To link it theologically is actually quite important for churches so that they can see why they should be [engaging with community], not just because it’s a good thing but that there are actually theological reasons- Jesus says do it!”*

However, even within such a community of interest, it was not always clear what the ‘common ground’ was.

*“It’s not necessarily that everyone has a faith which unites people...it’s more the organisations that they come from started or continue to be based on a faith-inspired ethos...Not everyone in the group actually has a particular faith”*

One person suggested that in light of the wide range of Christian perspectives, the common denominator came down to social action.

*“Social action is social action and it shouldn’t really be based upon any doctrine in the sense of, you know, any particular ways of worshipping. It should be that there is a world out there that is hurting and how can we as a body, corporately, reach that?”*

### **Role of the worker**

Given the range of Christian perspectives that Engage works across and tries to bring together, the role of the Community Development Worker seems crucial and sensitivity is needed. The worker tries to find common ground and has been careful not to highlight differences in terms of particular theological, doctrinal or worship styles, or the active work of each denomination in order to avoid competition. The independence of the worker who is not seen as attached to any one denomination is also considered a positive.

*“You need somebody who brings it all together and I think having someone who’s not involved in any one organisation is good”*

*“I think quietly [worker] is bringing people together and getting A to talk to B and I really admire him for that because I think for me in an organisation that if other churches are involved they see it as a threat so they’re not so keen to chat...but he’s got more of an opportunity”*

Whilst it is recognised that prior to the role there would have been a degree of networking, a dedicated worker seems crucial in bringing people together.

*“Before (worker’s) post there would have been some contacts between organisations but more ad hoc, dependent on who you know or who you bump into....Some of the activities would go on but certainly the exhibition wouldn’t have happened and I think the networking would have been of a different quality”*

The worker has capacity to be able to do some of the ‘groundwork’, provide some direction and unite the group through facilitation.

*“I think it’s often the way with these sort of networky type groups is that you do need somebody to pull it together and take the lead, who’s got the time and who is actually committed to that”*

*“I have seen this happen in loads of settings that it relies on someone who is sort of tagged as being responsible for that...that’s their core work if you like, cos it’s nobody else’s core work so it will always be shunted to the back of the queue.”*

Whilst the worker’s role is one of supporting others to take action, at times much of the work behind the scenes has fallen to the Community Development Worker as the quote below illustrates, in relation to the exhibition planned by a group supported by the worker called the ‘Friend Raising Group’.

*“It’s definitely not my core work and in fact myself and this other colleague, we are responsible for doing fundraising and we are only just getting around to it because both of us have just not been able to prioritise this sort of thing because ...it’s not like we are fundraising for our services”*



Stakeholders at the 'Evaluate Engage' event acknowledged the current dependence of Engage on having a worker. In light of current funding for the worker's post coming to an end this puts pressure on the Trustees to find continuation funding.

### **3.5.2 Benefits of working together**

Prior to the Engage project there were very few examples of Christian organisations or congregations working together in Brighton & Hove. In the past a rather territorial or 'feudal' system of working appears to have been in place within parishes and denominations with projects jealously guarding their work, and lines of accountability and joint work occurring more *within* denominations rather than being geographically or issue based.

*"people are very jealous of their specialisms, what they do. They don't actually want anyone else to copy what they do in case their funding's cut, you know, same old story, we're all chasing the resources that are out there."*

*"we felt that whenever we communicated with say churches, we were sort of starting from scratch. It was really hard work to get lots of contact names and there weren't any directories that we could go to, to do that and sometimes we were stepping on each other's toes a bit, weren't aware of what other people were doing"*

However, it is increasingly recognised by Christian organisations that there is a need to work more closely together to build better networking, develop referral systems and avoid overlap in the work. This increased desire to work in a more unified way supports the aims of Engage.

*"building God's kingdom, rather than our own"*

*"We have to work more interagency now. I think it's the only way we can survive. We can't work in that isolated way anymore...because people's professional jealousies get in the way"*

*"It's the whole aspect of not wasting resources by everyone doing the same piece of work"*

*"I wanted to explore ways I could learn from other groups, learn more about how to interact with the other agencies and other communities and other churches so it's not just us...If we can meet a particular need on our own then that's great but probably we can't so better to work in conjunction with others and therefore networking to be able to achieve the goals we feel that God's given us."*

Working together may actually release resources to enable needs to be met in another area as these quotes highlight:

*"If you've got very much common client groups ... then there's so much potential for resources to be pooled to be doing exactly the same"*

*pieces of work..or working in the same area and actually they could combine over there and then set something up over here where there's nothing..so getting organisations who are very similar working together I think is very important"*

*"There may be smaller churches out there that feel frustrated that they can't actually do what they want to do...I know there was a mother and toddler group over in Woodingdean...well, we may well be able to help with that, we may have just someone in our congregation that lives in Woodingdean, who could move their work on.... Just a thought?"*

Bringing people together has led to referral pathways developing between organisations. These are already well developed between voluntary organisations working with issues of homelessness who are also making useful links with relevant statutory agencies.

*"we sort of all knew about each other from a distance, from literature or something you know, but to put a face to it and work together and know who to phone if you want information or advice or to refer someone, all this kind of networking is useful I think."*

*"We're completely unsure of what can be shared with other organisations and what can't be shared...and the ways around that are to network –you know a named person at the Council, at Off the Fence, in the Church of Christ the King, on the Soup Run and liaise with them. You call your person 'x' or 'y'. or 'z' rather than their name....but the issues around that need to be co-ordinated"*

For small organisations, working together also overcomes isolation of workers and provides an element of peer support. However, smaller organisations may also have less capacity to get involved in activities outside the work they currently do, as one member of the Friends Raising Group expressed:

*"I think in one way it has been really good in that very often people who work in organisations of this kind can feel very isolated..... So I think it has encouraged people to feel that they are not alone, that a lot of the work they do and a lot of the views are shared with other people"*

### **3.6 Three examples to illustrate an action learning approach**

#### **3.6.1 The 'Friends Raising Group'**

Through the initial mapping exercise, several projects had identified the need for help, support and advice in increasing their support base amongst the congregations in the city, in terms of prayer, volunteering and financial giving. In November 2004 the worker invited these individuals to attend an initial meeting to explore ways that might enable them to do this. This provided an opportunity to network and share stories about what they felt had worked or had not. Participants were then asked if they had found it useful and whether they wanted to meet again, which they did. A second meeting focused on practical ways group members could help one another given existing

resources and resulted in a list of ideas reflecting potential opportunities for sharing information and future joint work, including the idea of hosting an exhibition which the group unanimously agreed upon and began to focus on. Identification of this clear task ensured continuance of the group and a purpose to carry on meeting. The group called itself the Friends Raising Group (FRG).

*“I am quite pleased that it did turn out to be quite focused cos I’m not sure it would have survived otherwise”*

*“Definitely important to have the focus of something like an event otherwise it could easily be a group of people who either sit around and winge about a particular issue or perhaps have very different agendas that they’re pushing”*

The flexibility of this approach to group formation appealed. Potential members were invited to explore and then reflect upon the possibilities for working together, defining the process themselves rather than committing to join a permanent institution.

*“It grew very much from within the group rather than (the worker) saying specifically ‘this is what the group is going to do’”*

*“He wasn’t trying to impose his aims on them or even say the group had to go on existing, it only exists in so far as it’s useful to the organisations that are constituent parts”*

A key element of the approach was that each stage of the process would have value in and of itself. The formation of groups was seen as fluid –with a group coming together around a particular issue and potentially disbanding once the group had usefully served its purpose.

*“Then we were asked if we’d like a second meeting and we thought it had been a useful exercise so we did...”*

*“I wanted them to walk away if nothing came of the two meetings...that they would have got something out of it”*

The worker was encouraged at the group’s response to the first two meetings, particularly how useful people found sharing stories with each other and considering how they could help each other. Reflecting on this response encouraged him to continue with this approach in other areas of the learning programme such as the ‘How do we..?’ sessions. (see 3.7.3)

*“seeing it work really well gave me the confidence to I suppose put the other training on, especially the ‘How do we plan for change’ and thinking look this stuff actually does work, let’s go for it”*

In a context where organisations are required to meet targets attached to their funding, members of the Friends Raising Group welcomed Engage’s creative

approach and found it to be refreshing. A very clear process and framework, supported by written notes from the meetings as well as opportunities for reflection, helped people new to the group and clarified the discussions and decisions made.

Given the range of different Christian perspectives in the group, the value of investing time early on to build understanding of where each person was coming from was recognised. This was particularly important in terms of developing shared aims for the exhibition, agreeing the format of the day and who to invite as exhibitors. A shared vision statement was developed for the exhibition as:-

*“A day to celebrate Christian inspired voluntary and community work in Brighton & Hove, in order to raise awareness of who we are, what we do and who for, and to invite people to join in through volunteering, prayer and giving.”*

In planning the exhibition, a conflict emerged between group members that were keen to show the distinctiveness of the Christian community and others keen to make the exhibition more inclusive and invite exhibitors from other faiths.

*“Until we thrashed out the issues I think some people wanted to widen out who we invited. They used the word ‘inclusive’ –which I wasn’t sure about...They were talking about other faith groups like the Hari Khrishnas or Buddhists or whatever and I said ‘well, just a minute we’re meeting as Christians. Whilst I recognise that these other groups do do things, we’re flagging up Christ at the end of the day. We’re not flagging up Buddha...why shouldn’t we celebrate our Christianity?’”*

*“At one point ...I wondered if I was going to have to review my involvement but we talked it through, all of us, and these issues were dealt with. So this could have been a negative but it actually turned out positive.”*

Facilitation was seen as key here through promoting active listening (encouraging questioning rather than criticising to gain understanding of other perspectives) and respect for differences.

Participatory group methods, involving post its, prioritising exercises, drawing and role plays, were new to many but found to be effective in uniting the group and aiding discussion and decision-making.

*“The effect of this is that the dynamic of the group becomes one of working together rather than fighting –which is what we want the churches to do”*

Bringing people together through the FRG led to referral pathways emerging between individuals within the group, outside the work of the group and also provided the opportunity to bounce ideas off others in the group, even if these ideas weren’t actually taken up.

### **3.6.2 Open Space**

Open Space Technology is a method based on the premise that people get the most out of conferences during the lunch and coffee breaks when they get to talk to who they want, about what they want, setting the agenda themselves. It provides a structured way of capturing such conversations and exploring the possibilities of further work together. An Open Space event was planned for Christians already involved in serving their community to discuss the issues and opportunities surrounding their community work and possibly establish some action learning groups from this.

There was interest in this event, eight people had actually booked a place with fifteen expressing interest altogether. However, the event was cancelled as the number of participants was less than the twenty required to establish the diversity and potential common issues needed for Open Space groupings to emerge.

*“I thought about re-jigging it but with the eight people I had I couldn’t see immediate common ground”*

Cancelling an event such as this could easily be perceived as a failure. However, the learning approach adopted by Engage is one of encouraging experimentation and not being afraid to try things out.

*“obviously ‘Open Space’ didn’t run so that was cancelled...but in a way it still met the outcomes that I wanted it to... so it still worked...it’s been a good catalyst”*

It was hoped that this event would identify particular issue areas that groups of people would be interested in taking further. However, despite having to cancel the event this outcome was actually achieved through the outreach work and telephone conversations prior to the event. Clusters of people were identified with interests in the following areas: community work within two specific geographical areas in the city—Woodingdean and Hollingbury; the issue of developing ‘move on’ accommodation for those previously homeless; and a group for youth workers. The worker received several requests to co-ordinate getting people together and to facilitate initial meetings (the intended outcome for the Open Space event). Engage is now looking to support these interest groupings in working together.

### **3.6.3 How do we...engage with our communities?**

A series of three workshops entitled ‘How do we...engage with our communities?’ was planned to give an introduction for those interested in starting the process of engaging with their communities and brought people together to learn from one another rather than work in isolation. The sessions outlined approaches to engaging with the local community, from initial mapping for providing services, to taking a more grassroots community development approach based on priorities defined by the community itself and possibilities of linking with other services such as Social Services or the Police. The sessions also included theological grounding and consideration of

the Christian motivations to engage as well as practical examples of projects already up and running.

*“I think a lot of churches feel that they are less and less in touch with the community...we are more isolated from the community, we know less and less about it, we know less and less how to speak to it and with it, how to listen to it...it's a huge learning process and we need to be trained”*

The sessions were well attended by members of congregations (with an average of 10 people attending each week). Feedback from the 3 participants interviewed suggested the sessions did inspire them to consider ways to engage or keep ideas they already had high up on their agenda. The sessions also provided a useful opportunity to make links with and hear about others considering or engaged in similar types of work.

*“Engage workshops are very good for giving us a sense that it is possible to do something”*

*“It helped me to be able to ‘crystallise’ I suppose is the word, what were thoughts up until then and then put them in a shape which I believe is actually going to be of benefit to the church and the wider community.”*

*“I was planning to do it anyway but Engage just secured my thinking”*  
(referring to organising a Christmas day meal in the church)

It was hoped that this element of the training might result in some action learning sets emerging or groups in which people could develop their ideas with support and feedback from others. However, the planned follow-on sessions, intended to establish these groups, entitled ‘Plan for Change’ did not take off. Although there was definite interest in these sessions, participants either felt their ideas were not yet at a stage where they could bring them to share with others or that they felt it important to mobilise support from the wider congregation first.

*“Well I can say why I think they didn’t work for us and it was mainly because....we weren’t at the stage at which we could actually say ‘How to Engage’. It was as much as we could do to get an idea together and in fact by the time we came to those ‘How do we’ sessions we didn’t have the coherent idea that we’ve had subsequently so it was actually taking us beyond where we were...”*

Participants who felt their current experience was at a very embryonic / low key stage questioned what they could bring to such an action learning group. One person questioned whether it would actually be appropriate to work with others who might bring a very different project, suggesting it might give rise to frustrations.

*“There was always the feeling that I had ... of coming along wondering what we were able to share from our own experience because it’s so*

*low level...We weren't sure beyond vague dreams and visions what we actually had to share in terms of practical stuff on the ground. I mean there were other people who had substantial projects going on"*

*"I think to brainstorm could have been good but then also the diversity of objectives was quite large...I mean my objective is to establish a shop and a drop in centre in the local area...so therefore for somebody who might want to discuss how to run a mother and toddlers group...I might have got frustrated."*

This contrasts with the positive feedback of participants from the ALTogether programme who have experience of belonging to an action learning set in which other people's ideas and projects may well be very different to their own.

*"Set meetings are really useful –makes me examine my reasons for doing what I do. I'm surprised that other people's issues are of interest and relevant to me even if they don't appear to be at first. We share good practice, people share learning and experience around situations that I haven't yet had to deal with but might need to tackle in the future –it helps me be more prepared!"* (participant on ALTogether programme)

This would seem to suggest that the idea of trying to set up action learning groups is still one that may be worthwhile to people, despite these initial doubts.

Those who attended the 'How do we...?' workshops already had an interest in, or some experience of, engaging with their community. However, several obstacles to taking ideas forward were identified. Interviews with three of the participants highlighted the importance of being able to share, enthuse and motivate others in their congregations before any work could take off.

*"If you can mobilise people's passion then that's what it's all about really"*

*I personally need some practical stuff cos I'm not very good at getting other people to do things and I need to know how to do that to get them to engage in the community, to get them to commit themselves"*

*"In lots of ways I am a little wary myself of doing a project...whatever happens in this place wants to be the whole church as one"*

Two out of the three participants interviewed referred to jargon they felt had been used within the sessions which could affect their ability to enthuse and share the content of the session with others.

*"I wouldn't have felt worried picking a handful of people [from own congregation] and taking them along...I mean some of them would have struggled with some of the language I think, but as an experience and a taster it was really helpful."*

Also identified as a barrier to taking ideas forward was limited knowledge and experience of fundraising for projects and salaries, running projects and co-ordinating volunteers. One person described how he would love to contribute more to the community work his church is involved in but currently has limited capacity unless funding could be sought.

*“Personally I have to work, so I work four days a week and I give just one day a week to all this, which means I’m not really contributing an awful lot but there’s nowhere where I know of where you can actually get paid to do the work”*

One participant suggested he may have had more exposure to ideas about engaging with the local community through his training as a minister than the members of his congregation which might be an issue in terms of motivating/galvanising wider support to consider ideas.

*“I’m much more likely to be at home with the ways the group was being run and the kinds of ideas being put forward in terms of social action”*

Congregations with more than two people attending tended to be interested in going on to ‘Plan for Change’ suggesting it was easier to maintain momentum. Several people from Woodingdean, 2 ministers and a member of a congregation had attended the ‘How do we...?’ sessions, booking independently of each other.

Although new initiatives did not immediately result from the ‘How do we...?’ sessions, it was highlighted that in some cases participants might already be involved in supporting existing and wider community activity and that for smaller congregations this might actually be more appropriate than taking the lead themselves (see also Shaftesbury/DETR, 2000). In Woodingdean, one church had recently started a coffee shop, opening one morning a week and had also run a small but successful parenting class. However, members of the congregation also supported existing community activity in the form of the Java Café, a community run café which has proved an important meeting point in an area with no natural centre or focal point. Churches in Woodingdean are planning an ecumenical carol service for the community and are also linking in to the existing carnival event and plan to develop their contribution to this event next year, ‘adding on’ to it rather than starting a new initiative from scratch.

*“The small numbers in churches don’t make it easy to run larger projects so something like Engage or having a worker there can help draw together these smaller strands”*

*“One thing I’ve found very useful is volunteering myself [in the Java café] on a Thursday afternoon because it gets me into the community and it gets me to meet people”*

Strong relations exist between the churches in Woodingdean and the clergy already meet regularly together, a forum that enables them to follow up ideas.



The good links and co-ordination between the churches enabled a cross-fertilisation between the different groups that the churches run and has resulted in many of the existing groups benefiting from larger numbers attending. There was keen awareness that many community projects initiated by the churches are small strands with little momentum in terms of what they contribute locally. However, it was also recognised that work on this scale, such as volunteers running a small coffee shop in a church, had benefits in terms of its flexibility, evolving in response to resources available and need.

*“If you think of something that falls over and it’s small scale it doesn’t fall so heavily”*

The action learning approach led the worker to consider whether he would run universal sessions open to all such as ‘How do we..?’ again or whether it might be more effective to target his support towards specific neighbourhoods and offer more one-to-one support. This was supported by the three participants interviewed, one of whom had already received and appreciated follow up support from the worker. The other two mentioned how useful this kind of ongoing support would be to them.

*“I suppose I’d describe it as a catalyst so that the worker would come in and be a catalyst for the work, not to do the work but to....because it’s not easy with so many draws on time and calls for attention for the three or more people to keep focused on something that brings them together, but a worker coming in who spends most of their time concentrating on similar types of things is helpful in being that sort of sounding board, you know, somebody who can draw that focus together”*

*“After we have sort of worked out the fact that we do need to be doing some of this outreach and what we hope to achieve in the area then I would like to invite [worker] back and tell him what we want to do or what our plan is and how can he help us think about how we actually do it”*

Another example of meeting outcomes through a different route is a group of six people from one church who randomly attended one of the ‘How do we..?’ sessions but not subsequent ones. This could have been seen as a disappointing result, suggesting they had not found the session useful. However, this group later approached the worker and asked if he would visit their church to help them develop their ideas in relation to their specific situation.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

#### **The value of an action learning approach**

In terms of outputs for the work of Engage, while two of the opportunities presented were clearly effective (Friends Raising Group and ‘How do we...?’) two other approaches (‘Open Space’ and ‘Plan for Change’) did not immediately appear to be successful. However, their intended outcomes of

bringing people together to explore opportunities of working together have been met through alternative routes. For example, making contacts through outreach work enabled the worker to link people with similar interests, even though they had not attended the Open Space event itself.

Engage has benefited from an unusual funding situation where the work has not been driven by fixed, inflexible targets and alternative routes for achieving the outcomes can be recognised and valued. This has encouraged a more creative, responsive and reflective action learning approach that is honest in exploring what works or doesn't work, information that is useful for other projects considering similar work.

The model of bringing people together around particular identified issue areas to explore the possibilities of further joint work (e.g. through 'pairs' of meetings) works well and has led to tangible pieces of joint work such as the Friends Raising Group's exhibition. In addition, groups are seen as evolving rather than fixed institutions, useful only for as long as group members find them useful. This approach recognises that participants may dip in and out of a group according to how relevant an issue is to them at different points.

While the introductory training sessions such as 'How do we...' have been appreciated, they may require more targeted follow up support for participants to consider and encourage others to consider, ways to engage with their own local community, develop project ideas and promote 'work on the ground'. This might also include a recognition that sometimes the most appropriate way for Christians to engage with their community will be by getting involved in *existing* community activity, rather than taking the lead themselves. In future this may require the worker to make judgements about the relative time spent on targeted as opposed to city-wide support.

## 3.8 Recommendations

### Partnership working

- i. A worker seems key to the process of bringing people together. Engage's management committee should seek continuation funding for an independent community development worker post for Engage.
- ii. Bringing people together around a focused issue or task is an effective way of encouraging them to work together. Co-ordinate 'pairs' of initial meetings, following the Friends Raising Group model, to explore potential for those interested to work together. Areas of interest already identified include specific neighbourhood work (in Woodingdean and Hollingbury), the issue of 'Move On' Accommodation for those previously homeless and a group for city wide youth workers.
- iii. Balance providing city wide workshops and support for those considering engaging with their local community with offering more targeted support to those at the stage of developing project ideas. Targeted support could include supporting those already interested to enthuse others e.g. back in their own congregations via 'in house' sessions.
- iv. Where there is limited capacity for engaging with the local community, it may be more appropriate to support or 'add onto' existing community activity, sharing resources with others, rather than take responsibility for starting an initiative up from scratch.
- v. Build on existing personal contacts (including email contacts). Huge mail outs and even publicity that is well designed has limited success.
- vi. Investigate opportunities for linking in with the wider community and voluntary sector, particularly in terms of accessing the wide range of support and training that is already available.

### Action learning approach

- i. Continue to work in a way which values each instance of contact and considers how to make the most of each opportunity to encourage working together and to ensure the contact has some value to participants. One suggestion includes providing a contact list of people who have attended Engage sessions and making this widely available to others.
- ii. Continue to offer and develop a range of learning and 'training' opportunities for exploring ways of engaging with a local community. One suggestion included a 'job-shadowing' scheme where those new to community work could learn from others already doing the job. Offering opportunities for reflecting on the learning/training opportunity is likely to benefit and reinforce people's learning.
- iii. Use positive feedback from the participants of the Brighton University ALTogether Programme to illustrate the potential benefits of working together in an 'action learning set'.

iv. A continued commitment to Action-Reflection will enable ongoing evaluation of Engage's work and allow it to be adapted where necessary to increase its effectiveness.

v. Following the evaluation of the work of the Friends Raising Group and the exhibition, re-evaluate this group's priorities and commitment to continue meeting.

### **Measuring and valuing the impact of the work**

i. Engage should emphasise the strengths (to funders and the wider community and voluntary sector) that many Christian-inspired projects bring in terms of their ability to support people, often those most difficult to reach, providing time and a listening ear (qualities which cannot always be measured in terms of outputs).

ii. Encourage or negotiate with funders to recognise and value

a) a more flexible attitude to outputs and outcomes

b) a learning approach which moves from a black and white understanding of 'success/failure' to a willingness to learn and share learning

iii. Encourage funders to set a project's work in the context of the wider funding stream, which may enable a project such as Engage to identify any additional, unexpected outcomes that it is contributing to (will also benefit the funders).

iv. Record and reflect upon success stories to support future engagement and illustrate community development work or action learning.

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Figure 3.1

‘How do we...? plan for change’ leaflet



## How do we...? *Plan for Change*

A series of three workshops designed to help you plan the development of new or existing Christian community initiatives.

<b>May 9th</b> – Clarifying your Project	<b>7.30 pm – 9.30 pm</b>
<b>June 13th</b> – Planning for Support & Challenges	City Gate Centre
<b>July 4th</b> – Learning for Transformation	(above Blockbusters),
	84–86 London Rd, Brighton

**ENGAGE**  
The Brighton and Hove Churches  
Community Development Association

For further details please contact:  
**Tim Lawrence**  
**ENGAGE**, St Michael's CC,  
St Michael's Place, Brighton BN1 3FU  
**T** 01273 737893 **M** 07887 943843  
**E** [timlawrence@engagebrighton.org.uk](mailto:timlawrence@engagebrighton.org.uk)

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## **4. The Hangleton & Knoll Project: Using a Community Survey to Identify What Residents are Prepared to Contribute Towards ‘A Better Community’**

### **4.1 Background**

The Hangleton & Knoll Project is a community development project focused on four wards in the north west of Hove. It has been active in the area since 1983, supporting residents of all ages to identify the issues that affect them locally and to ‘work towards a better community’. Current staff at the time of research included several youth work staff and a volunteer community development worker (herself a local resident). The project had recently gone through a period of redundancy which had affected its capacity for community development work and the Senior Youth Worker (the project lead for the research) had taken on additional community development responsibilities. The project is overseen by a Board of Trustees.

During 2005 the Senior Youth Worker took part in the ALTogether Programme. This required her to identify a particular ‘project’ to bring to the programme and she chose ‘to consult and engage with local residents, young and old, to identify what, at a grassroots level, would improve community relations and encourage community cohesion and to identify in practical terms, what residents are prepared to contribute to this overall aim’. This piece of work reflected the community development approach taken by the Hangleton & Knoll Project and represented a partnership between the Project and the Hangleton Community Association.

The project was selected as one of the six case studies as it was felt to be tackling issues at the heart of many organisations' working in Neighbourhood Renewal areas. These include trying to increase a sense of ownership amongst members of the community, involving service users in decision-making and actively encouraging capacity building in the community.

### **4.2 Research methods**

A research strategy was discussed with the project lead and it was agreed to focus the research on two elements. The first involved tracking the community survey as a piece of partnership work with semi-structured interviews conducted with all those involved in the partnership. Tape recorders were used allowing for full transcription. The second element involved following up contacts made with residents through the Community Fun Day in Hangleton Park through a focus group. Five local residents had initially agreed to take part with three attending on the day. The focus group method was chosen as a way of bringing residents together to meet each other and work together (again reinforcing both the aims of the community survey work and the action research approach taken by Brighton University's research). An informal lunch afterwards provided an opportunity for the

residents to meet workers from the Hangleton & Knoll Project and get to know each other better.

This fact that researchers from Brighton University were following a project which was also a research project and taking an action research approach led initially to some confusion around roles. In following the process of developing the questionnaire for the community survey, researchers roles sometimes became that of advisor, sometimes that of observer. At one point the researchers suggested to those involved in the community survey that they might benefit from the research support available through the Community University Partnership Project's (Cupp) Support Desk which raised an obvious question "But surely *you* are researchers too so why can't *you* help us?". A similar issue emerged at the Community Fun Day. Should the researchers actually help facilitate the questionnaire or observe the process itself? Often the decision was taken to get involved and take a very hands-on approach, a role more similar to that of community development worker than independent researcher.

Regular review meetings were scheduled with the project lead providing an opportunity for findings to be reported and for future research plans to be discussed.

### **4.3 Process of co-ordinating a community survey**

#### **4.3.1 The need for a community survey**

In 2003 the area of North West Hove in which the Hangleton & Knoll project is based, comprising Hangleton, Knoll, Laburnum and Moyne estates was identified as one of the Neighbourhood Renewal areas in Brighton & Hove. Each neighbourhood had the task of producing a Neighbourhood Action Plan outlining the priorities of local residents in relation to 5 key National Neighbourhood Renewal Floor Targets. During June and July 2003 over 150 households, local community groups and young people gave their views as to what they liked and disliked under each of the following floor targets –health, community safety and crime, education, employment, housing and the environment. The findings, including priorities for the area, were published in a Neighbourhood Action Plan or NAP (Christie and Dawes, 2003). Issues identified in the NAP would be taken forward by an existing neighbourhood action group, called Community Action which brought services and residents together around local issues.

Information from the NAP has been used by local organisations to form the basis of funding applications. However, it was felt to be very service-focused and structured around the government's agenda of the five key floor targets. NAP issues were not necessarily seen to correspond with the issues young people were identifying locally and there was no mention of specific targeted services for specific groups or individuals within the community. The partners in this project, the Hangleton & Knoll Project and the Hangleton Community Association felt the need for a piece of community research that was less structured and more grassroots-led with the community defining the issues

themselves rather than commenting in relation to externally defined floor targets.

*“We’ve always felt it’s got to be removed from the NAP completely”*

*“Our survey is more grassroots with the community free to say exactly what they think”*

Local workers were aware of the NAP and of the issues raised within it but acknowledged that it did not necessarily inform their work. It was also recognised that some of the issues were beyond their ability to affect change.

*“The thing is that most of the things identified on the NAP are specific services, you know things like CCTV. It reaches a point where it’s almost out of the hands of residents.... you can get people together to start campaigning for these changes but you can’t make the changes happen.”*

It was also felt that issues within the community may have changed in the two years since the NAP consultation. In addition, the Hangleton & Knoll project was at a stage of developing its business plan, recruiting new staff and planning work beyond April 2006. Via the NAP, local targets had been identified with dates for review but workers felt that the NAP was not always explicit in terms of who had responsibility for taking the issue forward.

*“I suppose for me I find it hard to ground my work on [the NAP] ...whereas I have looked at other neighbourhood action plans like even Central Hove’s which has got very clear action points and what’s going to be done whereas this is very broad and you could really fit anything in”*

In contrast to the experience in Hangleton, the NAP process appears to have been utilised more creatively in other Neighbourhood Renewal areas. The co-ordinators of the NAP in Bevendean consulted with local people about key public services relating to Neighbourhood Renewal (as they had been commissioned to do) but also used this consultation process as an opportunity to collect a whole raft of other information which was utilised as the basis for ongoing community development work in the area.

*“We basically used the NAP process for more than one purpose”*

Had a similar approach been taken in Hangleton & Knoll, the process of producing the NAP may have generated a wider range of information that could have been useful to many organisations working in the area, ‘killing two birds with one stone’.

#### **4.3.2 Partnership work**

The need for some kind of community survey was thus identified by both the Hangleton & Knoll Project (H&KP) and the Hangleton Community Association (HCA) and it was decided to work together jointly on it. Links were naturally

made as the Hangleton & Knoll Project rent an office space in the community centre and there is much overlap in terms of awareness of each other's work and of the worker/Trustee roles of the two organisations.

There were obvious benefits in working together, avoiding duplication and maximising the resources available.

*"I felt we could have done it by ourselves but it's always good to have more people involved and to get more input from other areas"*

*"There'd be questions we both needed to ask and so obviously not to go out to residents with two different questionnaires, asking what might be the same things....to condense all that...maybe make life a bit easier for us and reducing the costs of doing it...it would have taken a lot of time for us to get the same amount of surveys back as when there's 5 or 6 of us doing it so it's been a real kind of help for us."*

### **Aims of the partner organisations for the community survey**

The HCA run the Hangleton Community Centre and were keen to consult with potential users of the community centre, to raise awareness of the centre, existing groups and activities as well as to plan future HCA activities to reflect what local people wanted. They were keen to know what people thought of Hangleton as an area, what people's interests were and whether they stayed in the area for activities or travelled outside Hangleton to do them.

The HCA was also keen to recruit new Trustees, to become more visible within the local area and to get back to being a community association rather than *'just the people that run the community centre'*. Trustees felt that the HCA had become hidden by the centre when there was potential for it to take on a more active, developmental role. Taking on such a development role was already happening to some extent with the centre manager supporting groups that used the community centre to fundraise to cover increased costs of renting rooms.

*"We've only just got to the point where we don't have to spend so much time managing the centre anymore that we can be free to take part in these kind of community surveys, take on the minibus and provide a bit more support to the groups – helping them do their funding, their budgets"*

The expected outcome of the survey, from the HCA's point of view was to increase contact with members of the local community and spread the word through them.

*"...so we can start getting our faces across to people, put faces to names. I always have my bit in the Harbinger (local community newspaper) but no-one knows who I am, what I look like"*

The Hangleton & Knoll Project wanted to find out how residents in Hangleton felt about their community, what they would like to see change and, importantly, how they would be prepared to contribute to making those

changes happen. As a community development project, resident-led work that aims to meet the needs of the local community is its *raison d'être*. At the time of the research, staff changes had led to the Senior Youth Worker taking on an additional community development role. The community survey work was specifically funded but represented an additional piece of work. This was seen as a positive, ensuring flexibility and not restricting the work to particular outcomes. However, with long and open-ended time frames it would have been easy to let the project slip.

*"I suppose all of our funding has an emphasis on actually meeting the needs of the community so [the survey]...is making sure that we are doing that and also in terms of looking at sustainability and funding that, where funding streams are coming to an end this is a way of preparing for new funding bids and putting together our business plan so really it's not specifically funded by anything which I think is the positive thing about it ....but I think it does fit with all our funding simply because it is finding out what the community wants and involving the community and then where funding streams are ending it is helping us identify where we need to go next with our work."*

It was assumed that the results from the community survey would be used as the basis for funding bids to support new posts. Both organisations aimed for the results of the survey to feed straight into their business and work plans.

### **Negotiating aims**

Even several months after initially agreeing to work in partnership, there was uncertainty over whether the aims of the two organisations were indeed compatible. As time went on the H&K worker began to identify specific areas of focus for the survey that would generate information that could usefully inform the organisation's funding bids e.g. for a health focused youth worker, and it was not necessarily clear how such information would be of use to the Community Association.

*"I know we were going for roughly the same thing but it was starting to seem like even a slight difference could have quite an impact on the research"*

*"so what Tom wanted was then going more and more into the community centre and what I wanted was potentially going more away from the community centre but actually in terms of the first step what we both wanted was actually the same and then there will be a next stage where it won't necessarily be a crossover"*

Constant revisiting of the aims was necessary to keep the partnership going, in a context where the situation within community and voluntary organisations can change in a short space of time. The process of drafting a questionnaire had the effect of focusing the partners' aims for the survey.

*"because we started off with a really long questionnaire, the negotiations actually came through how long the questionnaire could*

*be which narrowed it down...only doing a sort of one or two page questionnaire meant we could only ask really the key questions.”*

Having researchers attached to the project was felt to support the process of clarifying aims between the partner organisations. The Hangleton & Knoll worker was also able to use her action learning set (via the ALTogether Programme) to reflect upon and clarify the survey’s aims and the potential for joint working.

#### **4.3.3 Approaches to the community survey questionnaire**

Having taken the decision to work together, it was initially assumed that the community survey would be in the form of a questionnaire, delivered door to door.

*“We used a survey approach first of all as it seemed the obvious way of doing it...it’s kind of something everyone seems to do, you get it drummed into you that it’s quite simple to do and you can get results quickly with it”*

*“it seemed to be a questionnaire without any thought or questioning as to why”*

*“its funny because for some reason I hadn’t linked how I consult with young people and evaluate to doing this community questionnaire and I suppose I also hadn’t really considered that actually for adults that’s going to be way more interesting and I think because it was a community questionnaire and I wasn’t working specifically with young people, my mind had gone into a different zone altogether when actually thinking about some of the literacy in the area and certainly when I was thinking about door knocking I did then think well people are going to be more likely to engage if they’ve something weird and odd to do than standing there with a questionnaire”*

Through accessing research support from Brighton University and the Cupp<sup>9</sup> research helpdesk and through the worker’s set meetings this approach was questioned.

*“[researcher]’s been really helpful because he’s helped us clarify what it is we wanted to do, the fact that we were going to go and do door knocking and he did say that that’s really the last option, that’s when like everything else has failed and I guess in reality its not like we’re coming in cold, we do have an understanding of the community...He said it’s much more effective if you know what you want and you work out the best way to get there.”*

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<sup>9</sup> Cupp is the Community University Partnership Programme, a 4-year funded initiative set up by the University of Brighton to improve the relationship between the university and its local communities. In addition to supporting a small number of partnership projects around four strategic themes, Cupp also aims to act as a 'gateway' between the University of Brighton and local community and voluntary organisations. [www.cupp.org.uk](http://www.cupp.org.uk)

*“[my action learning set] really only said ‘does it have to be a questionnaire?’”*

This led to the consideration of various other approaches to the community survey.

### **Linking the survey with community events**

Research support from the Cupp helpdesk suggested that linking community research with a planned community event can be successful. Those attending the event are likely to be enjoying themselves and may have more time or be more prepared to fill in a questionnaire or chat to a worker.

*“People are coming to us to start with, we’re not imposing. Going to someone’s home is quite a personal intrusion really and doesn’t necessarily start on the right foot I think...whereas people are coming to the event, the fact there’s things going on for them”*

It was decided to link the survey with a planned Fun Day in the local park, (organised by a group of local agencies, residents and with support from the Police) as well as other Hangleton Festival events (see figure 4.1). The potential advantages of this approach seemed to be confirmed through talking to several residents who attended the day.

*“I was probably more likely to fill in a questionnaire... the kids were off doing their thing, my parents were around” (local resident)*

*“I was pleasantly surprised at how willing people were to sit and fill in the questionnaire and really consider their answers” (worker)*

Linking the community survey with the Fun Day provided a useful opportunity to make initial contact with people and reinforced the fact the survey was seen as the first stage of a longer community development process which was dependent on the process of building relationships.

*“It’s that face to face thing, it is actually quite powerful. Once you make contact and you talk to people that I hadn’t been in contact with before or hadn’t seen, or had seen around but I didn’t know and now I kind of know them a bit more” (worker)*

*“the questionnaire was actually quite a good excuse to go up and chat to someone that you haven’t got a clue who they are” (worker)*

Several contacts were made from these community events which the volunteer community development worker is following up as possible future Trustees for both projects.

Participatory and visual consultation methods such as getting people to draw their ideas, take photographs, use post it notes, mapping and prioritising exercises had been considered for the festival events. However, it was felt that because there were so many other activities on offer it would be easier

and less time consuming for people to fill out a short, straightforward questionnaire and it was actually decided to return to this initial idea.

Those involved in organising the events were asked to support the survey by encouraging those at their stalls to complete a questionnaire, harnessing extra capacity for getting questionnaires filled out. The researchers attached to the project also got involved in this. Getting other people on board was again made easier by having chosen a straightforward questionnaire method.

*“If we were to do something more participatory I think it would have taken a bit longer to get the amount of information that we’d get from the brief questionnaire...possibly not but I think because we will be able to hand out the questionnaires to different stalls so they can get people to fill it in whereas we couldn’t hand out participatory consultation methods to loads of different people –that would be quite a big thing to ask of them.”*

The community survey was also taken to several other Hangleton festival events. Linking the survey to such events gave it a driving force, and meant there were particular dates to work towards. This was important given the open-ended nature of the survey project.

The organisers of the survey took the questionnaire to a Hangleton Festival event at Greenleas Recreation Ground. However, interestingly, not all people attending this event were local to Hangleton. The Fun Day in Hangleton Park certainly attracted more local residents.

### **Workshops**

The organisers of the Hangleton Fun Day planned to run a specific workshop on the day around the theme of community safety. Community safety was an issue that had already been identified by several practitioners working in the area. Considered to be something affecting all ages of the community, it was felt to be an issue that could be supported and resourced in the future by paid workers with a community safety remit. It was hoped that the workshops would generate specific information around community safety and potentially an action plan for the community to take issues forward. However, on the day the workshops did not run as people were outside enjoying the activities, the live music and the sunshine and did not seem interested in gathering inside the community centre for such a discussion. It is hoped that these workshops will run later in the year, building on the awareness and interest generated on the day.

*“I think something has to come from [the Fun Day] and it can’t take too long”*

### **Targeted research**

The events enabled a universal sampling of residents, based on those attending. However, it was recognised that the Fun Day attracted certain people and that these people were already engaging with local community activity to an extent. It was also felt that the Neighbourhood Action Plan had



not mentioned specific targeted services for specific groups. This resulted in a desire to target the survey towards marginalised groups of people in the community who were harder to reach and potentially not visible. This would identify potential for those particularly marginalised to be more involved and supported at the community level through targeted work.

This type of work was already being considered at the time of the research and workers at the Hangleton & Knoll project had been developing opportunities for intergenerational work where young people could visit local elderly residents, possibly through the Neighbourhood Care Scheme that operated more widely in Brighton & Hove.

*“what we are doing is looking at the groups that aren’t necessarily represented and where there are no groups that we can see and then to actually target our work so for example if its looking at people who are housebound for example to think about maybe you need to make links with -health visitors, GPs to find out who is the gateway into those groups and then to tailor our consultation for those specific groups and for example young people with disabilities ....its about linking with the disability service or Amaze to find out how we can actually consult with those groups and actually..... even if a group could come out of that with ten young people then that’s brilliant and if there’s elderly people who are housebound, if there’s ways that the community can support those people rather than going and doing every tenth door which isn’t really what we want because its about looking at where there are those gaps and seeing if we are able to target in that way.”*

*“If it’s health visitors then we’ll find out what the picture is and whether there are things in the area, in which case we’re complimenting what’s going on and everyone’s needs are being met in different places...but if they’re not then that’s something we can prioritise.”*

It was identified that working in such a way might raise issues around sharing data between agencies. However, by the end of the fieldwork the organisers of the community survey were only just moving from a strategy of sampling universally through community events to the beginnings of a targeted strategy so the success of such a strategy is unknown. Having identified that fewer older people had completed the questionnaire at the festival events, this age group was targeted, with the community development worker initially starting with older members of the community already known to her and increasing her contacts in this way.

#### **4.4 Residents’ feedback on the aims and approach of the community survey**

The community survey was seen as the first stage in the process of working with local people to identify both local issues and what they would be prepared to contribute or how they would be prepared to get involved in addressing them. A focus group with several residents contacted through the Fun Day sought to get feedback on the organisers aims and approach for the

community survey and suggestions for ongoing work. Beginning with a discussion about the approach taken by the organisers of the community survey, linking it to the 'Fun Day' event, the focus group covered two main areas:

1. Unpacking what 'getting involved in the local community' meant to local people
2. Exploring residents' own ideas for encouraging people to get involved in community activity.

This section begins with the residents own feedback and leads into section 4.5, which involves a discussion of some of the issues that emerged from their suggestions.

#### **4.4.1 How local people get involved in Hangleton (Local Cultures of Participation)**

Colin C. Williams (2005) describes 'Cultures of Participation' or the ways that people may already be involved in their local community. In many areas people are already involved informally, helping a neighbour do the shopping or chatting over the garden fence. He contrasts this with the official 'culture of participation' which presumes that people will want to organise and come together in groups and formal structures. He argues that this model, which is reflected in much of government policy, is a middle class interpretation of how people will want to get involved in their communities and challenges such an interpretation. Williams' (2005) ideas suggest that increasing understanding of the routes through which local people are already involved in their local neighbourhoods will mean that attempts to encourage further involvement are more effective, enhancing what already takes place.

When asked what 'getting involved in the community' meant to them, the residents' definitions described just turning up to a community event or activity rather than necessarily being active in the organisation of it.

*"Just actually going to the school disco or school fayre, not actually having to have a stall or anything, just turning up...that's involvement because you are, you know with people"*

Other examples of involvement included helping out on a school trip or having a stall at a tabletop sale and '*anything that draws you in*'. The residents identified that their involvement in community activity had arisen from seeing a need. This often related to a lack of activities for their children. There was much existing informal community activity in Hangleton which often takes place spontaneously.

*"During the summer I have a swimming pool we get out and half of Buckley Close's kids are in our pool! I could have twenty kids around there. They just turn up –'Can we join in?' sort of thing and as long as they're well behaved and polite they can join in. Nobody gets turned away and they all have a good time." (resident)*

*“there is a lot of community participation....During the summer ...all our neighbours decided to have a community BBQ. It's things like that go on but not necessarily to do with the agencies you know, but it goes on all the time” (resident)*

One or two neighbours seemed key in this co-ordinating/organising role, operating as informal community development workers in their street. Other examples of this include a one-off Halloween Party which a group of young people organised at the community centre, mobilising their friends and relations to come and help and provide the food and music and funding the event from their own pockets.

#### **4.4.2 Residents' own recommendations for encouraging involvement**

The residents who attended the focus group were asked to give feedback on the Fun Day and their suggestions for the next stage for the community survey work. This section outlines their own recommendations for encouraging involvement in community activity.

##### **Communicating what's already going on in the local area**

The residents identified that there were already a lot of things going on in Hangleton but that they weren't always aware of this. This had also been identified as a target for improvement in the Neighbourhood Action Plan. Drawing people into existing activities may make them feel more involved and more likely to get involved in other things in the future. Communicating what is already going on in the local area increases peoples' awareness of what the process of community development is all about and what possibilities for involvement exist.

*“There is actually stuff going on that I didn't know about”*

*“You could have a website with things on that have gone on in the past, things that have worked...coz there's actually been loads!”*

The residents suggested that better use could be made of existing networks to more effectively communicate information about what is already taking place locally. One resident explained how helpful she found her PlayLink<sup>10</sup> home visitor in letting her know what was going on in the area, particularly in relation to activities for her children. Another explained how she got most of her information about what's on through her friend.

*“If [my friend] wasn't involved in the PlayLink then I wouldn't know anything about anything!”*

One suggestion was to make the most of contact with local residents through the community survey as an opportunity to publicise what was already going on in the area. Also mentioned was the scope to use the networks and contact other agencies working locally already have, to get the right information out to the right people, e.g. carers services visiting the homes of

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<sup>10</sup> Offers home visits and groups for families with pre-school children living in Hangleton.

housebound. This would link with the strategy of targeting the survey towards marginalised groups.

The need to communicate what community development is, what the role of a community development worker is and who they are was also identified as this was not always clear to people.

*“There’s no face to that title”*

*“It only means something to me because I know Nicole now...If you’d asked me two months ago, I wouldn’t have known”*

*“It could mean someone wants to build more houses!”*

The residents suggested the term ‘community friend’ was clearer

*“I think making it less technical to people doesn’t sound so daunting to people as well...because there’s nothing worse than saying ‘right, I’m a community worker’ and you automatically think ‘social worker’! What are they going to get up to?”*

*“It took me a while to understand the role..it takes a while to understand how they can help you and what role they play”*

One resident approached St Richards Community Centre on her own initiative trying to find out who the youth workers were and what activities there were for young people. She had been unaware that youth workers worked in the area before this.

When asking what local people would like to see in their area, it was suggested that it would be helpful to give examples of projects or activities that had resulted from community development work in the past. This supported one idea the organisers of the community survey had, which was to display a selection of old videos representing work that had been done in the past, including plans for the community centre dating back 20 years. The idea was that this might remind people of previous events and community activity and maybe lead people to ask ‘why doesn’t that happen now?’.

*“[we want to show] videos from over the years and just really see if people remember them happening, whether they’d like to see them again...we’ve got tonnes of photo albums....trying to make people feel a bit more nostalgic and for people who weren’t there at the time to say ‘Oh Wow! Why doesn’t that happen now?’ and just to let them know that it doesn’t happen now because we don’t have people involved ...nobody seems to really want to do it. “Night of a hundred Drums – basically music, fireworks, stage in the park ...it was a really cool night”*

*“We wanted to bring some of that back”*

Finally, communicating what was already going on could increase understanding of what people were already contributing.

*“I’ve got involved with the Knoll Scroll and am realising some of the problems they’ve had –it’s been run by one person for the last 16 years...I mean that’s not something that’s generally known and when you know that you think well, they’re doing a bloody good job really and are less likely to criticise. You get an understanding of .. how much work actually goes into it...you realise actually it’s someone like you who’s given their time”*

### **Using a direct approach**

Residents in the focus group were asked whether the community survey, particularly questions asking whether they were interested in taking a more active role, had encouraged them to consider how they might get more involved in the community.

*“I suppose it made me think about it....my immediate reaction is no –it generally always is...so no I don’t think it would really make me actually want to [get involved].... I think the direct approach, saying ‘we need someone to do this’ is easier...I think it works a bit better”*

*“Once you’ve got people you’ve got a start...you’ve got to get them first. It’s like this Fun Day. If you didn’t get the people then you’ve not got anything to work on. You’ve got to offer something... Think about your target audience, hope they turn up and see what else they want.”*

*“I think perhaps if you told them a bit about it ‘Can you help next Tuesday?’ you’re more likely to arrange other things around it, rather than it being up in the air ‘Can you help us out at some point?...Then at least you can plan your week around it, like we did today’*

Often the initial reaction to being asked to get involved is ‘no’. However, a direct approach -being specific about what you are asking people to do in terms of both the task and the commitment -appears more manageable for people. They are more likely to be able to arrange other things around it and make the time.

### **Personal relationships**

Having a personal relationship with a worker also appears to help encourage involvement.

*“It helps that I know them and it helps that you know what it’s for really, what they’re trying to do, what their aims are”*

*“the more you get to know someone, the more involved they feel like getting”*

*“Well I think if other people are giving up their time...I’m not really that busy and could give a couple of hours...cos I’d like to see more stuff*

*going on in the community and I think 'well, if I do a couple of hours well perhaps everyone else who's able to will do a couple'*

### **Issue based involvement**

The residents felt they were more likely to get involved in things they had an interest in or in the issues that affected them. Having children is a key thing that unites people. The residents in the focus group identified the need for youth activities/clubs and, when asked, these were the things they were most prepared to get involved with.

*"I think we're more likely to go and help at our children's schools and on trips...cos our children are based there"*

Similarly, residents will often come along to Community Action initially bringing a particular issue but this may lead to involvement on an ongoing basis.

### **Informality and presenting opportunities for involvement**

The way opportunities to get involved in the community are presented appears important. Suggestions included not calling a meeting a meeting, making the initial gathering as informal as possible or starting off with a social event, a chance for people to meet and explore ideas around a particular focus rather than having to commit straight away.

*"A meeting sounds very formal. Having a coffee morning sounds more casual and informal"*

*"When you've got kids to keep an eye on it's not always possible to have a quick meeting is it?"*

*"Maybe have a social for the first meeting and ask what people could offer."*

If starting off small, the residents said that they would prefer to meet informally in someone's home, until the group perhaps got too big or needed storage space for its activities when it might need to move to a venue such as the community centre.

Inviting people to bring a friend when they come to a community meeting increases people's confidence as well as increasing the numbers involved.

*"I don't know anyone who likes turning up without knowing someone really well beside them...you've got the double input that way and you've also got someone you know beside you who can sort of agree with you"*

Again, it was seen as important to communicate who the community workers were and be clear about what they could help with, giving examples of similar work that has been done in the past.

In feeding back about the idea for a community safety workshop at the Fun Day, it was highlighted that the term 'community safety' represented jargon and would not necessarily mean anything to residents unless it was broken down into its components –graffiti, crime, feeling safe etc.

*"'Community Safety' sounds really boring. But break it down into graffiti, crime and then people might think 'Oh actually yeah, that does bother me'"*

### **Co-ordinating role of the worker**

The residents were clear about the importance of having a central worker/contact person in bringing people together within the community.

*"I think you need someone definitely to co-ordinate [community involvement] and if somebody's got a job in the community, then it's their job....seriously!"*

*"You need a starting point. Someone to go to, to ask the right questions and someone who has the answers. People don't know where to begin"*

*"I think there's a hell of a lot of skills and people sitting there thinking 'Oh, I wish this was going on' but unless someone starts them off, it'll never happen"*

### **Responsibility**

Many of the suggestions for encouraging involvement were based on recognition that the local culture of participation was one of getting involved on an informal or one off basis or with a particular area/issue that affected an individual. Many people were reluctant to formalise or take on the responsibility of an officer or co-ordinating role. The residents appeared to recognise the need to balance the division of responsibility between the community worker, local residents and services.

*"I think people are willing to do something. They're not willing to take charge"*

*"they don't mind getting involved. They don't want to get stuck with it. They don't want to be thinking six months down the line 'everyone else has buggered off and I'm left on my own'"*

*"People want to know what have I got to commit and how long for?"*

In relation to the idea of a youth club which the residents suggested as an activity they could help to run, there was still the desire that such activity would be co-ordinated by a professional.

*"Someone you can look up to and ask 'are we doing the right thing?'"*

The perception emerged that getting involved in something that was already up and running involved less responsibility than starting up something from scratch.

*“there’s nothing to really get hold of...you feel like you’re at the start of something and it’s down to you to make it happen whereas if you get involved later, it’s not up to you, even though you’re putting the same contribution in”*

One of the residents was also wary of parents organising something such as a youth club when maybe that should be a service that is provided locally. Again, a contrast was noted between grassroots community organising in the form of parents running an informal afterschool or youth club and providing a place for young people to hang out, with the more formalised youth club provided by the youth support service, which would have to be working towards targets and offering a certain curriculum.

*“There is no area for young people to just go and socialise and as soon as it’s ‘youth service’ they’ve got to be ‘youth worked’ –they can’t just go and just chat to each other because that doesn’t pass any OFSTED and that’s the problem I think”*  
(Youth Worker)

### **Maintaining momentum and feeding back**

The residents felt it was important for the organisers of the community survey to try and keep momentum and a sense of urgency. This included feeding back the results of the survey to those who had taken part.

*“Every year we have someone doing a survey and then they come round the next year and that’s the next time you see them, doing the survey again...so sometimes it does feel a bit pointless.”*

This previous experience contrasts with the organisers of the community survey aiming to use the survey merely as the first stage in a longer and ongoing process of development work with residents.

*“Even if they tell you nothing’s come of it, at least you know”*

*“there’s nothing worse than having an idea and then six weeks later you go ‘Oh..whatever happened to that idea?’ Do it in the here and now –just do it!”*

### **Recognise the timescales that are involved**

Residents recognised the long timescales that might be necessary to involve people in community activity, from the point of making contact with them, to building confidence and supporting people to take the lead themselves.

*“You need to be able to put people in that position where they feel they can do it...if they are not ready there is no way!”*



*“It takes a long time- years sometimes! But somebody has to be there every step, guiding that process”*

Through the Fun Day, contact was made with one woman who didn't speak English. This was followed up by a worker who obtained some information for her about local ESOL English language classes. This example reflects the fact that meaningful engagement takes time to be done properly because of the levels of support or help people might need in other areas of their life. This is particularly important if the aim is to reach 'hard to reach' or marginalised members of the community. This particular woman might not have immediately got involved in community activity but this contact may help her to do so at some point in the future.

These long timescales and 'lead in' times contrast with the fact that timescales for funded projects encouraging resident involvement in regeneration activities tend to be very short.

## **4.5 Community involvement: issues arising**

The aim of the community survey was that it would be the first stage in encouraging local residents to consider how they might get involved within the community. A community development approach, as taken by the Hangleton and Knoll Project, traditionally does this by encouraging the formation of independent, constituted groups. However, given the residents' feedback from the focus group, there would seem to be a number of issues that arise from encouraging this type of involvement.

### **4.5.1 The official 'Culture of Participation'**

There was already a local culture of community organising/activity in Hangleton. This tends to be spontaneous and informal, organising activities over coffee or through 'conversations over the garden fence' (Williams, 2005; Dinham, 2005). However, such informal examples of grassroots community organising can sometimes conflict with formal structures. For example, a group of young people wanted to build skateboard ramps to use in Hangleton Park. They paid for the materials themselves and successfully built several ramps. However, these were later removed by the local authority, who were ultimately responsible for equipment in the park, because of health and safety concerns.

Such informal group activity could benefit from small amounts of funding and yet there is a drive from funders and policy to formalise resident involvement in Neighbourhood Renewal with funders requiring groups to formalise and become constituted, hold a bank account and elect officers etc. Given the fact residents would prefer to get involved on an informal basis, such formalising may actually dissuade people from getting involved. This has implications for the 'Official' culture of participation and initiatives such as Neighbourhood Renewal which invite residents to get involved in formal decision-making structures and commit to elected positions of responsibility.

#### **4.5.2 Formalising the informal. Where does responsibility lie?**

Formalising community involvement, through constituted groups aims to ensure accountability of public funds and ensure that groups that could potentially speak on the community's behalf are representative. However, it may not be appropriate to try and formalise such spontaneous community activity. When an activity is formalised, responsibilities for issues such as health and safety, managing volunteers, serving food, child protection etc must also become formalised and this can put a break on the type of spontaneous community organising which naturally exists.

*"That's what stops me from really pursuing young people having the community centre one night a week because I've got plenty of responsibilities already and I haven't got the time to co-ordinate that one!"*

(Youth Worker)

The requirement to formalise means that projects such as Hangleton & Knoll may have to tell people they can't do the things they want to do or need.

*"lots of pieces of work would be great pieces of Neighbourhood Renewal work but we can't do them...you have to tell people they can't do it!"*

Workers from the two organisations involved in this project recognised the role they had in supporting residents to negotiate and liaise with the relevant services where appropriate. The Senior Youth Worker was supporting a group of young people to get a Youth Shelter built in the park. This was an informal group of young people who were not constituted and wouldn't necessarily carry on working together. They were merely interested in getting their shelter. They had taken their idea to Community Action, the local Action Group which is supportive of the idea. Through Community Action, acting as an umbrella body for this group of young people, they had been able to work with a range of services including council officers, the police and the local councillor to go through the correct channels, gain the relevant planning permissions and raise the funding needed for their ideas to become a reality. However, many ideas for informal community activity are lost because of issues surrounding who will take responsibility. It is not always appropriate to form formal, constituted community groups.

The example of the youth shelter shows there is scope for unconstituted groups/groupings that come together for a one-off piece of work to link closely with an umbrella organisation such as Community Action. This would currently be limited to small umbrella organisations since the capping of certain funding streams prevents larger organisations such as the Hangleton & Knoll Project, accessing funding intended for small-scale community activity. This is ironic. Funders currently assume that by capping an organisation's turnover they are being more inclusive of smaller groups. However, it is precisely such umbrella support that smaller groups and those with informal or one-off ideas for community activity may desire.

Finally, considerable knowledge is held by service providers and officers of the local authority in relation to more formal requirements for holding a community festival event, health and safety etc. The findings from the research would suggest there is value in exploring the scope for some responsibility to lie with such officers, 'mainstreamed' into their work plans to engage with local residents and community groups and make their expertise available. This would certainly take some of the burden of responsibility for finding out the formal requirements associated with any planned community activity from the shoulders of small community groups.

## **4.6 The community survey**

By the end of the fieldwork the organisers of the community survey had 72 completed questionnaires (reflecting more people than this as many filled in the questionnaires together) and had begun to analyse the information generated. They were intending to produce a summary sheet of the results of the survey, to feedback to those who gave their addresses and were planning initial gatherings to bring residents together around the issues that had been identified. Emerging ideas included renovating the wildlife garden in the park or taking the park as a focus for more than one issue. This work was informed by the residents' recommendations from the focus group so that publicity for the wildlife garden 'get together' did not include the word 'meeting' which residents had identified as formal and off putting.

At the time this work was supported by the volunteer community development worker. The Hangleton & Knoll Project was also recruiting two new community development posts to take the work forward, recognising the need to properly resource this type of work. It was at this stage that the results of the community survey, as well as responsibility for taking issues forward' was likely to be divided up between the two projects, with the Hangleton Community Association fielding issues connected with the Community Centre and Hangleton & Knoll Project addressing wider community and youth issues.

### **4.6.1 The way forward: services or grassroots?**

The next stage for the community survey was to analyse the questionnaires and identify priority issues. It was hoped that groups may form around issue areas with support from the two new community development workers. Despite one of the reasons for the survey being a desire to move away from the service focused nature of the NAP, the division between services and grassroots is too simplistic. Organisers of the survey acknowledged that many issues within a neighbourhood would need to be solved through a partnership between residents, workers in the community, umbrella groups such as Community Action and service providers.

*"So like with the Youth Shelter there isn't a service that's taking it away and doing it- it's a partnership thing ...I took the two young people and we met with one of the local councillors and one of the people in the Council about getting permission, the police have gone away to do a funding bid, the young people went to the park and decided where they wanted the youth shelter and so its not getting one service to go and do*

*it - its about everybody being able to work in partnership in the area I think.” (staff)*

It is negotiating this partnership and being clear about where responsibility for taking forward some of the issues identified lies that will form a productive next stage for the work.

## **4.7 Recommendations**

### **Partnerships**

- i. When considering a piece of work such as a community survey/consultation within a community, think around it, never just think of yourselves. Link up, even if it is just to inform others of your intentions, and see who else can help you achieve your aims.
- ii. There is likely to be need for ongoing clarification of roles within a partnership, at different stages of the project. Be really clear to everyone what the research is for and how partners will use it in different ways. Moving into the analysis stage, we would recommend organisers need to clarify roles and agree responsibility for taking issues forward to avoid issues and interests slipping through the net.
- iii. Recognise the importance of community workers to support residents achieve their goals, either alone (through grassroots activity) or with service providers. This will avoid a clash of ‘participation cultures’ –the informal clashing with the formal.
- iv. Develop targeted consultation and explore possibilities for working with other partners to generate specific information e.g. health visitors, Playlink.
- v. Consider accessing research support that may be available e.g. Cupp Research Helpdesk.

### **Initial engagement**

- i. Make the most of what’s already there -communicating what is already happening in the area and networks that exist to get information through to people. Use an opportunity such as the community survey to take round information about existing community activities.
- ii. Be clear about what community development work is. If people are unclear about the work or the role of a community development worker, examples may help them consider the possibilities.
- iii. The way opportunities are presented to people is important so consider the methods of communication you choose. The residents preferred the informal, so be clear about what you are asking people to get involved with or commit to in terms of the task and length of time.

- iv. Be aware that the term 'meeting' can be off-putting to some people, appearing too business-like in a culture of participation where people prefer informality and opportunities for socialising.
- v. Each instance of contact has value –bringing people together to meet as a one-off to explore possibilities, even if it doesn't necessarily go anywhere.
- vi. Give prompt feedback and try and maintain the momentum that you have started to generate through the survey. Those carrying out survey should be clear and honest with participants about its limitations and timescales.

### **Involvement**

- i. Recognise and value existing grassroots community activity. Develop an understanding of the local 'culture of participation' –how people are already involved with friends and neighbours in community activity and consider whether it is appropriate to try and build on that, harnessing existing capacity for involvement. In some cases residents may be content with their existing levels of involvement. Such involvement should be recognised and valued.
- ii. Be clear and specific about the task, commitment and timescales that you are asking people to get involved in. Appeal to a person's interests.
- iii. Recognise where informal and formal examples of involvement may clash and establish a process for negotiating where it is appropriate for responsibility to lie. (Who takes responsibility and for what) For example, could council officers who have a lot of expertise in areas such as health and safety, the organisation of events etc take a more active role in offering support to groups?
- iv. It may not always be appropriate for grassroots community involvement to be formalised in terms of a constituted group. Groups that are reluctant to formally constitute could link closely with a local umbrella organisation. e.g. Community Action.
- v. Build and maintain personal relationships as more sustained involvement is achieved. A personal approach should be adopted to build relationships. Follow up contacts gained via the survey with personal, individual contact where possible.
- vi. Be clear about how ongoing engagement of local people will continue once the community survey ends.
- vii. Specific individual needs identified through the survey may need to be met. This can be resource intensive but may support involvement in the longer term.

### **Measurement of impact**

- i. Build in reflection to working practices for the benefit of the projects' themselves, allowing future direction to be adapted where necessary. All stakeholders can be involved in this.

- ii. Record success stories both to celebrate what already exists and to support future engagement (having examples to illustrate the work).

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Figure 4.1 Publicity for Community Safety Fun Day

**COMMUNITY SAFETY  
FAMILY FUN DAY**

**Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> July**  
**Hangleton Park & Hangleton  
Community Centre**  
**1.00-4.00 pm**  
**Harmsworth Crescent Hove Bn3**

*Entertainment*  
*Live music*  
*Fun*  
*Film screenings*  
*Crime Prevention Info*

**For more info call 01273 292962**

**PRESENTED BY**  
Hangleton Community Association and Hangleton and Knoll  
Festival in partnership with local residents and young people,  
Hove Police, the Hangleton & Knoll Project, Youth Inclusion  
Support Project, Partnership Community Safety Team



## 5. Sussex Community Internet Project: Reviewing the Impact of Web Design Training on Community and Voluntary Organisations.

### 5.1 The organisation and its ethos

Sussex Community Internet Project (SCIP) works with staff and volunteers from local community organisations, helping them to use computers and the Internet for the benefit of the whole community. While SCIP are funded for pieces of work across Sussex, much of the work is focused on Brighton & Hove where the organisation is based. The project grew out of a desire to share and publicise the opportunities that the recent development of the internet (around 1997) had provided to the community and voluntary sector. The project initiator had himself worked in the charity sector and had seen the opportunities the internet provided in terms of giving organisations an online presence. In its early stages, the project offered informal seminars or workshops introducing people to the internet and how to make use of it, particularly in relation to the community and voluntary sector.

*“so you could get people in and say ‘you’ve heard about the internet, and all we’re going to do is show you it in language that relates to your everyday work’” (staff)*

*“And the web design thing on the back of that was ‘well we’ve worked out about how to do it. Do you want to do it? Do you want to put your stuff on the internet?....you can go and do this elsewhere but it won’t necessarily be relevant to the community organisation and, more particularly, won’t be free” (staff)*

Sharing learning and exploring the possibilities together was the ethos of this early ‘training’ which continues in SCIP’s current work.

*“As the internet is such a new tool, we are just as involved in the learning process ourselves, working with communities to try out new ideas, sharing knowledge and building information and support networks”*

Today SCIP provides a range of learning opportunities in the form of training and taught courses, technical support and consultancy to specific organisations. Web design continues to be a key part of the training programme and has always been a popular course.

From its informal beginnings, SCIP has become a recognised training provider offering a programme of training and courses. This has happened almost by default, as this has been a way of SCIP securing the funding to meet its aims of supporting the community and voluntary sector to use Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for the benefit of its communities.

*“We weren’t quantifying this ‘impact’ –just supporting this and facilitating it and then it was called ‘training’ because that’s what people told us it was called. They said ‘Oh are you running another training course’ and we were thinking well no, we were going to run another ‘seminar’ or ‘workshop’ or ‘meeting’ and then it became ‘training’ because it was one of the ways of funding it...so a way of getting money to pass on knowledge is to call it ‘training’”*

SCIP successfully managed to secure funding -from the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) and from Adult and Community Learning through the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) - to enable courses to be offered free of charge to community and voluntary organisations. Funding from SRB (to March 2006) enabled SCIP to deliver approximately 14 stand-alone workshops, 2 beginners web design courses and 1 intermediate web design course over a six-month period, with SCIP often exceeding these outputs. However, the focus of such funding on delivering towards stated outputs does not give an indication of the quality of impact SCIP’s courses have. In addition, such funding can give rise to pressures to formalise courses, in terms of having clear course aims and content. It can also lead to expectations from individuals and sending organisations that attending a SCIP web design course is merely a free version of the more formalised taught training provided by colleges, such as Pitmans.

However, SCIP has consciously chosen to retain its ethos of sharing learning in an informal and flexible way that is accessible and appropriate to the particular needs of the sector in which it works. This results in diverse classes, comprising individuals from a range of organisations and backgrounds and often with mixed ability.

*“the real advantages to workshops is always the fact that different organisations come into a room together and share what they do”*

*“ because we’ve needed to keep getting the funding ... we now do lesson plans –but that’s not where we started at all”*

*“I mean there are other people who do training in Brighton & Hove – none of them target this group of people and none of them offer free training –that’s why we do it! That’s why people come to us!... whereas if you go down the road to City College that’s the **only** thing they do, their reason for existing...so why can’t they do it? Why have we got to do it?”*

During 2005 SCIP’s Learning and Outreach Co-ordinator took part in the ALTogether Programme. This required her to identify a particular ‘project’ to bring to the programme, and she chose ‘to review the impact of current training on community and voluntary organisations’. This reflected SCIP’s aim of helping staff and volunteers from community and voluntary organisations to *“learn how to use computers and the Internet for the benefit of their communities”* through promoting individual learners to share their knowledge with their wider organisations and communities. It has not always

been possible for the organisation to gather information on the impact the training has had on a) individuals and b) their organisations once learners have completed a course. However, SCIP are aware that often several people from one organisation will attend the same course at different times, suggesting skills and learning remain with an individual rather than being shared. The research was concerned with exploring this issue further.

Given the imminent changes in funding for SCIP's training programme, the research provided a timely opportunity to consider the effectiveness, in terms of sustainability, of the current model of delivering training.

## **5.2 Research methods**

A research strategy was developed with the project lead (in this case SCIP's Learning and Outreach Co-ordinator) and it was agreed to focus on one element of the training, the web design courses that SCIP were offering. This consisted of a 4-week Beginners Web Design (BWD) course and an 8-week Intermediate Web Design (IWD) course, intended to follow on from the BWD course.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with four learners from the most recent Intermediate Web Design course at the time of the research and three learners from previous Basic Web Design courses held earlier in the year. Semi-structured interviews were also held with the Learning and Outreach Co-ordinator, the web design trainer and the senior member of staff who had originally been responsible for setting up the organisation and therefore had knowledge of the history of the organisation and the web design courses. Tape recorders were used allowing for full transcription.

The research aimed to follow learners back to their respective organisations, catching up with them a couple of months after the end of the course. However this only proved possible with one learner because of time restraints. Despite this, it was been possible to draw conclusions about issues related to 'taking the learning back' from the interviews carried out.

The researchers were also asked to feedback emerging findings and contribute to discussions at a staff learning meeting looking at restructuring the way learning and training was facilitated within the organisation. In particular the findings appeared to corroborate ideas SCIP was already considering, including offering a more modular approach to the learning programme and greater one-to-one support direct to an organisation.

Regular review meetings were scheduled with the project lead providing an opportunity for findings to be reported and for future research plans to be discussed.

## **5.3 Sustainability and impact**

Whilst acknowledging that individuals will attend training courses for their own personal development reasons, SCIP's aim is to support the *whole* of the

community and voluntary sector, rather than individuals themselves. SCIP is therefore interested in the issue of sustainability, in terms of individual learners passing on skills and making use of what they have learnt for wider benefit back in their own organisations.

The idea of sustainability is introduced and built into the web design courses. At the start of the Beginners Web Design (BWD) course, participants are encouraged to write a mission statement outlining what they want to achieve from their website and to develop the structure of their site (pages, menus etc) in conjunction with their organisation.

*“we do talk about sustainability within an organisation to make sure that the skills are transferable and that they make notes so they know the construction of the site and lots of other things about where the codes are to get into certain places.... everything is all there so that someone else can easily pick it up if they leave” (staff)*

*“On the workshops I always ask people why they’ve come on it and I always ask them what they are going to take away and during it I always get them to use examples that are specific to their organisation”*

This process aims to provide an opportunity for the whole organisation to consider how they will resource, update and maintain a website once it is built.

It has not always been easy to identify the impact of the training once learners have left the course. SCIP has identified at least two measures that would suggest the web design courses are having a limited long-term impact on the organisations. The first measure is the limited number of finished websites actually up and running.

*“...if you wanted a gross overall picture of what’s happening, ... from the last 7-8 years very few websites have been built and then maintained as a result of the work that we’ve done...relative to the number of people we’ve seen ...but if we’d spent the same amount of time and effort building the sites for them and then maintaining them for them, then a whole lot more information would have been available about the community...” (staff)*

While SCIP is keen to use case studies to illustrate “what skills a learner came in with and what skills they felt they left with, how long it took them to build the site, how often they update it, whether or not it was easy to tell anybody else how to use it”, this would require examples of completed websites.

A second trend suggesting a limited impact of the courses relates to situations where more than one person from the same organisation has attended consecutive courses (or even the same course), suggesting the learning has remained with the individual rather than being shared within the organisation.

*“why aren’t skills being transferred? And why don’t the people ever put into practice what it is that they came to do on the course? Is it*

*because the course is rubbish or is it because they didn't have any time or because they left?...all these things would be really interesting to find out" (staff)*

*"Sometimes it's just because somebody said '[the course] was really useful- you should go on it too' because they see it very much as that they learnt it and then SCIP would need to show somebody else how to use it -they wouldn't show them themselves" (staff)*

It was recognised that staff changes, which tend to be high within community and voluntary organisations, were likely to contribute to this. SCIP anticipate that in future, with the ending of key funding streams such as the Single Regeneration Budget and with the funding of local infrastructure organisations such as SCIP likely to be affected by the government's 'ChangeUp' initiative<sup>11</sup>, it may be harder to obtain funding to deliver the current programme of 'taught' courses free of charge. With potentially fewer free courses on offer, it seems less likely that several representatives from the same organisation will be able to attend consecutive courses.

A range of factors appears to affect sustainability or whether web sites are completed and maintained and learning shared following the web design courses. These factors operate at a variety of stages, from before the course itself, in terms of the expectations of the individual and their sending organisation, to factors which operate whilst a learner is on the course, to the context in which a learner returns back to their own organisation, having completed the course.

*"those are the types of things which affect whether or not anybody adopts this I think...it's the situation into which you're pitching this sort of learning. Not necessarily the quality of the teaching." (staff)*

These factors run like a thread through the whole process of delivering the web design courses (see Figure 5.1) and will now be explored in more detail.

### **5.3.1 Managing expectations**

The expectations of both individuals and their sending organisations appear to have an influence on whether learning is transferred from the individual to the wider organisation.

At the time of booking onto a course, SCIP currently don't speak to a person's line manager. In some cases an organisation may have an unrealistic aim for sending a worker or volunteer on a web design course.

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<sup>11</sup> 'ChangeUp' is the Government's framework on capacity and infrastructure in the community and voluntary sector (Active Community Unit, June 2004). It describes the basic architecture of support needed by frontline organisations in the community and voluntary sector which is accessible to all, truly reflecting diversity, structured for maximum efficiency and sustainably funded. In future, funding is more likely to go direct to frontline organisations to pay for the services they need themselves.

*“The training was excellent but it didn’t teach me what I needed to know in terms of what the Director thought I’d be able to do when I got back” (learner)*

In the quote above, a worker was sent on the Basic Web Design course with the aim of him being able to manage the organisation’s existing (and complex) website. In this case the worker felt his director had not been particularly ‘ICT literate’ and it would have helped for him to have had a discussion with SCIP staff prior to the course to clarify what skills his colleague might realistically expect to have by the end of the 4-week course.

*“the expectations of their bosses -that’s one thing that I always wanted to make sure that people knew why they were sending their person there and just how much work is actually involved because sometimes people don’t have a concept of how much work is involved in making a website and therefore underestimate what that person is actually giving....I don’t have any contact with their managers and ....it would be good to be able to speak to managers sometimes.” (tutor)*

One way of managing expectation could be to make more information available to prospective learners and their organisations. SCIP provide a brief course description for people at the time of booking which seemed sufficient for the majority of learners interviewed in this research.

*“I never consciously thought I haven’t got enough to go by. I was given a start date, where to come, that it was looking at Front Page” (learner)*

However, being clearer about what the course actually covers and the fact that SCIP run ‘mixed ability classes’ might increase their ability to manage expectation and match the needs within organisations with what they are able to offer.

In planning course content, SCIP try to balance having clear achievable course outcomes with the flexibility to respond to learners’ specific queries. It is an important balance to strike and can contribute to the expectations of learners not being met. This trade-off is described more fully in section 5.3.3.

SCIP’s own Course Overview Document (used internally) states clearly what the outcomes for each course should be. In 2006, the introduction of a system called RARPA (Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement in non-accredited learning)<sup>12</sup> to projects funded by the Learning and Skills Council will focus more heavily on the setting out of clear learning aims and objectives by both SCIP and its learners. Whilst this might help to clarify course learning aims and objectives and better manage the expectations of sending organisations, it also represents a step towards further formalising training and away from SCIPs ethos of providing informal opportunities for shared learning.

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<sup>12</sup> developed by the Learning and Skills Council, DfES, Ofsted and ALI (Adult Learning Inspectorate)



### 5.3.2 Assessment of skills

Assessment of both skill and expectation is a factor affecting the sustainability of learning at an early stage. In most cases learners self-assess (based on their understanding of the course description) when booking onto a course. Bookings are taken via email and telephone and in some cases SCIP does assess the skill/knowledge level of a potential learner via a telephone call. SCIP expect learners to be able to use a mouse and to be able to save, organise and manage files. Telephone calls also enable specific support needs to be assessed prior to a course.

*“What we generally do is like a telephone interview so that we try to determine whether or not they feel that they are out of their depth or that they know too much depending on what course they pick and that is a really good system, it works really well. Sometimes people get through the net but that tends to not happen so frequently” (staff)*

However, even with a telephone call it is not always easy to match a learner's perceived skill level with the appropriate level course. In addition several people with substantial experience express interest in the Basic Web Design course.

*“You do find people really haven't used a computer before mixed in with people who have quite a high level of skill” (staff)*

*“the only way that I know that [the booking system] hasn't worked is when somebody comes through who hasn't got the skills that they said that they had and they come onto an Intermediate Web Design course when they should have been on the Basic Web Design course or the other way round where its just too easy for them” (staff)*

*“To be quite honest the BWD course didn't meet my expectations –too basic” (learner)*

One learner questioned whether having mixed ability classes was the most effective way of delivering the training.

*“I think it would work better if the range of abilities was more on a par...I think that if everybody was starting from scratch, all on the same level then it would be better because then you help each other but when you've got some people who just don't know their right hand from their left or that are like me, sort of way ahead...then I get bored ...but the guy next door to me was really running like mad and not even keeping up...so he wasn't getting the best out of it and I certainly wasn't getting the best out of it.” (learner)*

At the time of booking learners onto courses SCIP do not assess expectation levels from sending organisations.

*“We don't differentiate or have any entry requirements, one of which could be ‘are you going to do this when you finish the course? Yes or*

*no? No –well you’re not allowed on it then.’ ‘Are you in a position to decide what you do with your time everyday...will you be able to prioritise this over other things that you have to do?’ ...We could cut out a load of people and then only have people on the course who are actually going to make use of what we’re doing. (We obviously don’t do that)” (Staff)*

The research would suggest that spending more time at this assessment stage would provide a way of managing expectation and matching the needs of an organisation or individual with what SCIP is able to offer.

### **5.3.3 Supporting learning during web design courses**

Web design is taught in small classes. The quality of teaching was recognised by learners and the small class sizes, their informality and flexibility was appreciated.

*“I thought it was a really good course...it achieved a lot in a relatively short period of time. It whetted my appetite” (BWD learner)*

*“The size of the class is really excellent. I was surprised at how small the group was –only 5 –and I thought Yes, this is great! Cos if they’re small you’re going to be able to get a lot of tutor input”*

*“It was originally going to be in the afternoon, like 2-5 and we all said that none of us would be able to go unless it was in our own time [after work] so then SCIP actually reorganised it.... which was really good”*

*“The groups were smaller than I expected, which was good, as there was scope for asking questions, tailoring the sessions etc. The tutor’s enthusiasm for the subject is really obvious, and she’s obviously sensitive to her class’s different levels, needs etc.”*

*“I’ve tried to learn web design applications before, but they’ve been presented from such a techie point of view that I’ve been none the wiser....This was very accessible, to the point where I’d feel able to tackle designing a site from scratch”*

Comments from learners suggest a need to balance covering the material planned for the sessions and meeting the stated course aims with being able to respond flexibly to the specific needs of learners. Both these factors seem to contribute to sustainability in terms of supporting a learner to share learning back in their own organisation and a trade-off appears to operate between them. If sessions are too flexible, the tutor may run out of time to cover all the content planned for the course, leaving learners feeling that ‘interruptions’ had prevented them from covering sufficient material to feel competent and seen as a factor contributing to their not finishing their web site by the end of the 12 weeks.

*“Interruptions mean we cover less in the next session –it gets squashed” (learner)*

*“One person missed a week and then the next week...we recapped on stuff but this meant that we might have missed stuff at the end...there were things we never got round to because we ran out of time”*  
(learner)

On the other hand several learners appreciated the tailoring of sessions to their needs and being able to apply what they were learning to the specific situation in their own organisation, something which a more formal, rigid course may not have had scope to offer. One learner appreciated the time the tutor had taken during a session in showing her how to use Dreamweaver, the web design software available back in her own organisation.

*“To start with [the tutor] decided what it was we needed to know but when we had got to a point when we knew the basics then we were saying what it was that we actually needed to know and then it was better because we were learning according to what we wanted to learn and doing it in a more practical way”* (learner)

*“There were a couple of weeks when I couldn’t go...so [tutor] wouldn’t do the module cos then we’d all have missed it. Then maybe her and [another learner] might have got on with something that was specific to her but then because we all ended up finding that so useful, that ended up being the way that we carried on doing it rather than saying this week we are going to learn about java scrip ‘cos maybe we didn’t need to know about it”* (learner)

It is a difficult balance to strike. The tutor attempts to keep the sessions both ‘responsive’ to learners needs and ‘on track’ with the material planned for the sessions through regular, ongoing review of the course structure and progress and of the learner’s mission statements.

The courses are currently supported with written course notes, often with step by step instructions which many learners’ value (given the technical nature of the subject matter) and can refer back to in their own time. However, if the tutor is responding to specific learners’ needs, the course notes would need updating regularly, a task which is highly labour and resource intensive. As a result there have sometimes been cases where the written notes have been out of sync with what has been taught. An alternative is to point people in the direction of online tutorials and to encourage learners to know where to go online to search for the information themselves. This may promote more sustainable, ongoing learning in the longer term.

The transition between the beginners and intermediate courses appears to work well. The Beginners course is intended as an introduction or taster with the intention that learners will progress onto the intermediate course. The following comments suggest that some learners decide to progress onto the IWD course either because they were not able to cover all the material planned for the Beginners course or felt the BWD course was too basic.

*"I decided to go onto the IWD as soon as I knew about it because I didn't feel my grasp of it was thorough...to be honest we're quite a chatty crowd!" (learner)*

*"Well the beginners one was for me personally too basic so I thought if I was going to learn anything that I could take away, that I would have to carry on doing it" (learner)*

Having access to a computer and the relevant software (Microsoft FrontPage) taught on the course supports learning as learners can practice, reinforcing what they've learnt in the session. Whilst access to a computer and FrontPage is not a requirement for attending the course (nor is it assessed at the time of booking), practice time is encouraged. A lack of access to either computer or software can contribute to learners not progressing as far as the tutor is intending by the end of the course.

*"It's very rare to find anybody who does anything at home which is really unfortunate because that's where they build their confidence really....One hopes that they have the skills in order to continue with that as long as they do it straight after the course finishes. If they leave it any amount of time ...it is just ridiculous and they don't have a chance to pick it up." (tutor)*

*"You will find that people will come to the next lesson and they will go 'Oh, I've forgotten everything. If only I had done something in between' and they still don't do it" (tutor)*

SCIP took the decision to teach web design using Microsoft FrontPage as a more affordable package compared to other software (and therefore potentially more accessible to the community and voluntary sector). However, several learners identified their lack of access to a computer and/or the relevant software as limiting their confidence or progress.

*"There were people on that course ...that were three weeks into the intermediate and didn't even have Front Page! Now how can you do a course...it's like trying to play the piano if you haven't got one at home" (learner)*

One learner was keen to practice what she'd learnt as soon as possible after the session.

*"you can't if you haven't got Front Page –it's a real drawback of the course. I'd love to go back the next morning when it's fresh in my mind...I feel I'm not getting enough rehearsal time" (learner)*

*"At the end of the week none of us really finished -I said could I come back and use these machines and she said they don't let you do that" (learner)*

Access to both computer and software is key to the issue of sustainability of learning if a participant is to reinforce learning during the course, continue with web design following the end of the course or be able to share skills learnt with others. Aware of this issue, SCIP has explored possibilities of loaning out equipment/laptops to learners but are not currently able to offer drop-in times for learners to come in and access SCIP computers.

The effects of this are illustrated by one learner who, as a result of not having access to the relevant software and not being able to practice outside the sessions, had ended up paying the tutor to build the site for her following the end of the course.

#### **5.3.4. Support following the end of the course**

*“Follow up would help people share the learning with those back at their organisation instead of just ending...Inviting people back, maybe just for an evening to say ‘How are you doing? What have you done? Bring us your stuff and let us have a look at it’...to keep the interest going” (learner)*

Previously SCIP have tried two models of follow up support following the end of the 12 weeks of training. These include surgery-type sessions where previous learners could return to SCIP to get some help troubleshooting and follow-up workshops, intended to update skills and inform learners of developments in web design such as changes in accessibility guidelines encouraged for web sites.

However, such events were extremely staff intensive and although SCIP do receive a small number of queries from learners following the course, the organisation is currently limited in the forms of support they are able to offer on an ongoing basis following the end of the Intermediate Web Design course.

*“I get a few emails and a couple of calls after every session, nothing that isn’t unmanageable and nothing that’s long term. People don’t call back ages afterwards.” (staff)*

#### **The E-Forum**

The idea of having an ‘e-forum’ resulted from the perceived need to provide ongoing support to learners in some way. It was also seen as a tracking mechanism by which SCIP could understand exactly what happened to people once they left the course and a network through which to disseminate knowledge in the form of new packages and developments, new accessibility rules as well as advertising new SCIP courses. Previous and current learners were invited to sign up to the list and receive emails from the list. The expectation was that the list would enable learners to support each other, based on material covered during the BWD and IWD courses. Staff from SCIP would be ‘in the background’ but would not have the capacity to get too involved. The idea was well received by the majority of learners.

*"We've been informed about the email group, which I think is a fab idea. We've all commented how things seem to go far more smoothly when we're in a session than when at home alone, so it will be good to still have that support on a remote basis both from each other and from SCIP" (learner)*

*"If the e-group took off I would be in there because they are such a wonderful resource and you're constantly learning stuff in web design. Over the years I'm becoming aware of the fact that I've learnt just as much from other students as from tutors" (learner)*

However, in practice, by the end of the fieldwork, few learners had signed up and there was virtually no list activity. Only one learner had posted a question and had received no reply from others on the list, suggesting some limitations of trying to establish a forum for online learning.

*"It's very difficult for someone to come back to you and solve a technical issue...they might miss out a stage and then you're stuck...it's hard to phrase in an email, a technical question...it's even harder to answer it" (learner)*

*"the whole thing about online learning and these kind of lists... is a bit of a tricky one. They normally take much more moderation to keep them alive really ...my personal view is setting up lots of new ones when you can just join ones that already exist that have a huge wealth of experience and knowledge and life in them, we just haven't really got the time and commitment to make it a particularly valuable offering." (staff)*

*"I think the difficulty is that –my experience of lists- you've got to put quite a lot of time and effort into getting a list up and running unless it spontaneously exists and it doesn't spontaneously exist so you must have to put a lot of time and effort into it" (staff)*

One suggestion was that SCIP learners could join the wider 'SCIP discussion list' (used to share ideas, ask for help, pass on news, gossip about things to do with using computers and the Internet for community benefit in the local area) which has considerably greater number of members and greater list activity. The limitations of online learning in what is quite a technical area (web design) is recognised and SCIP acknowledge that being shown how to do something, preferably with the person there beside you is often more effective.

*"...I think the problem underneath it all is that if I was in the shoes of most of the people who come in the room- what I'd really want is me to go to their office and sit down next to them and fix what it is that's wrong...that's what I really, really want...and there's loads of other substitutes for that but really that's what I'd like!" (staff)*

*“It’s much better for people to feel they can have one to one support”  
(staff)*

In addition to the idea of an e-forum, the Learning and Outreach Co-ordinator identified that there was more scope for SCIP’s technical support and consultancy services to support the training programme and vice versa.

*“the idea is that training will be much better integrated into all the other bits of work so for example... it would be much better I think if some of the technical support that we offer organisations was backed up with some training so for example if the technical support team go and put in a completely new network and upgrade everyone’s computers ...and then they’re shown it very briefly but not particularly supported in it so it would be quite good if we could link in with that” (staff)*

Whilst this would require organisations to ‘buy in’ such support from SCIP (rather than benefit from free training), the reorganisation of infrastructure support to frontline organisations through the ‘ChangeUp’ initiative may provide some funding for this.

### **5.3.5 Returning to the organisation and gaining ‘Buy In’**

As SCIP’s aim is to support the community and voluntary sector as a whole, it is hoped that participants will share and implement learning from the web design courses when they return to their own organisation. Although SCIP’s web design training is well received and the high quality of the training appreciated, the participants interviewed in the research varied in their confidence to be able to share learning with others.

*“I would never be able to teach someone, not from 12 weeks, no way! I could totally mess someone up trying to teach them...because of the technical nature of the course” (learner)*

*“Yes I suppose I could go back and show someone else how to do it...I think there’s an element of achievability there...you know, I’m not going to go out and hold classes and teach people but if somebody was doing it and they’d got stuck I could say ‘try doing such and such’”  
(learner)*

Having some support in place following the end of the course such as the follow up surgeries SCIP ran previously, would certainly be appreciated by the learners interviewed, who felt it would help them share learning with their organisation and keep the website at the front of their mind. However, other factors including the context into which a learner and the learning is being placed along with the organisation’s receptivity to it, influence whether learning is shared.

*“....So those are the types of things which affect whether or not anybody adopts this I think...it’s the situation into which you’re pitching this sort of learning, not necessarily the quality of the teaching.” (staff)*

Web design represents a particular technical skill which is not always easily transferable and not something that everyone within an organisation will be interested in.

*“they’re not interested. They’re happy for me to just get on with it. It’s an acquired interest!” (learner)*

Whilst SCIP can encourage organisations to recognise the value of having an online presence in the form of a website, they have no control over the response to an individual learner when they return to their organisation. Sending organisations may have high expectations for the learner to implement what they have learnt and get the website up and running, or they may be reluctant for a staff member or volunteer to devote their time to this. This is the context into which learning is ‘pitched’. As highlighted in section 5.3.1, managing expectations is crucial.

*“if [learners] go back and get stuck because their manager isn’t giving them enough time to actually keep the website running because it’s not given enough priority then it probably doesn’t matter what you’ve taught them because they can’t do anything about it anyway. We’re not in a position to then go and persuade their manager...- that this is a high priority and it will lead to some other benefit....that’s down to them, one person in that organisation trying to find some space to do what they’ve been doing.” (staff)*

*“...Teaching people how to build a website or explaining to people why a website is important and getting the whole organisation to buy into it may be different things- very difficult to reconcile” (staff)*

One learner expressed how she was keen to develop a new web site for the project she was involved in but had done the course in her own time and did not have the support from managers. She found herself having to persuade them of the value of having a site.

*“I don’t think they want me spending my time on that”*

*“It’s made me realise that setting up a website is never straightforward and that it should be done and so I’m saying to my managers that there’s no excuse for us not to set one up and run it!”*

In promoting the sharing of learning there is a need to gain an organisation’s ‘buy in’ to the benefits of having a website. Often an organisation will assume that one ‘technical’ person should take responsibility for the website. However, this is not necessarily sustainable. Buying in to the idea of having a website also requires an organisation’s commitment to supporting systems and processes for the whole team to contribute to providing information to update the site. (‘Buy in’ may also be literal in the sense of ‘buying in’ relevant software such as FrontPage).



Sustainability may actually mean a learner finding other ways to share the learning rather than to expect colleagues to learn the specific skills of web design.

*“Do they bring the website to the team meeting and say ‘right now we need to talk about the website and how we get material for it’? Now if they’re good at it, they won’t talk about technical stuff. If they’re good at it they’ll talk about ‘what do you want to talk about....who do you want to communicate with?’” (staff)*

*“If one person in the organisation is good enough at what you want them to do that they do it and then if the others help it’s better...that’s often the best solution in any situation isn’t it –that someone says “I’m willing to have a go at it, I’m willing to learn how to do all of this stuff (whether running website or filing system), you’re going to have to help me, but if I do it all on my own and no-one else helps me at least it’ll be good enough to be better than what we’ve got at the moment and then if everybody joins in then it’ll be really good –that’s the sort of model probably” (staff)*

A barrier to generating this wider buy in/responsibility from an organisation can relate to the attitude of individuals to learning.

*“there’s another type of person who doesn’t know how to use a computer or don’t feel that they have a responsibility to learn that... ‘No, I don’t do that. Someone else does...speak to someone over there.’ That’s the barrier to whether or not that’s shared, rather than whether or not the teacher in the room with the person who is learning has made any headway in persuading this other person to go off and share stuff with their team” (staff)*

Whether or not learning from the web design course (and indeed other SCIP courses) is shared and implemented within a learner’s organisation therefore becomes a wider issue of organisational development- how an organisation encourages learning and development, publicises itself, fundraises, keeps in touch with its membership/clients etc. SCIP is keen to develop better links with other key infrastructure providers in Brighton & Hove (such as the Working Together Project, the Trust for Developing Communities, Brighton University who run a Foundation Course in Community Development Work) who support and train organisations to consider these issues but who perhaps don’t currently make the most of what SCIP is able to offer to the community and voluntary sector.

*“...the people who run those programmes don’t consider our work to be in their menu of choices...that seems to me to be part of the problem....If you were going on a general ‘working in community orgs’ course, why is nobody showing you how to use email because surely, if you work in a community organisation and don’t use email then you should probably start! (cos it’s cheap, it’s easy, it’s egalitarian –what a great thing to show someone working in the community!) and they*

*might say they do it but they're not very good at it and you could say 'OK just do this and this and this and then you could be better at it'....Similarly, have you thought about how your organisation publicises itself, how your organisation positions itself in the wider community because being on the internet is part of that, having a web page so that people know who you are and what you do is an ingredient in being part of a community" (staff)*

The issue of organisations viewing ICT as something particular to one person is backed up by the fact that SCIP has found it difficult to persuade managers to attend courses such as 'ICT Planning'. It is clear ICT is not always seen as a wider part of an organisation's development.

If teaching people how to build a website and getting the whole organisation to buy in to the benefits of having a website are different things, the issue of organisational development becomes key in determining whether learning through SCIP's web design courses is sustained in terms of being shared for the benefit of the wider community and voluntary sector.

#### **5.4 A new model: options for restructuring the web design course**

Individual learners enjoy SCIP's web design courses and the courses are well attended. However, given the fact that in the years SCIP has offered web design training very few websites have actually been built and maintained, combined with the ending of a key funding stream (SRB) in 2006 which is likely to result in fewer free SCIP training courses, the organisation is considering possibilities for restructuring the way web design and other courses are delivered.

*"To cut our cloth then we're going to have to find money from other places or we're going to have to charge for it or we're going to have to do less" (staff)*

SCIP is considering moving to more of a modular approach which would break down the current web design courses into key component skills -saving files, manipulating images, using internet browsers etc. This would help in terms of assessing skill level and ensuring a basic skill level of learners who could then go on to learn a package such as FrontPage.

SCIP is also considering whether it would be more effective to offer a greater proportion of support on a one-to-one basis rather than through taught courses (such as the 12 week BWD and IWD courses) which are resource intensive yet may not result in getting websites actually up and running. SCIP currently offer 36 hours of web design training (12 x 3-hour sessions) to a learner who completes the basic and intermediate courses. However, this time could be broken down so it included elements of classroom-based training which could be followed up with one-to-one direct to an individual or their organisation.

*“.... I think we’re putting a lot of time and effort (12 weeks) into [web design] from a budget which is quite finite and quite a bit smaller than we spend –we might be better off just teaching people how to do Communigate for example, and then getting them to pay if they want to learn how to use Dreamweaver (because there’s loads of places you could do that anyway)...but concentrate on doing outreach work and support and more of the pre-and post support or surgery type stuff, or phone calls –imagine if we phone them up and said ‘We’ve just been looking at your website and noticed it’s a bit out of date....is there anything I could do to help?’, ‘Can I remind you what the password is even?’”*

SCIP have been aware that learning a programme such as Microsoft Front Page which enables you to build a website yourself, is only one option- the “D.I.Y. option” - in terms of an organisation getting a website. Other options include making use of an umbrella website, which allows you to create a simple site based on a template, an online Content Management System (CMS). Since 1998, the Communigate website (offered by NewsQuest, the owners of the local newspaper) have offered a free website publishing service for any community organisation in Brighton & Hove. Despite SCIP’s concerns over advertising appearing on the pages and the fact organisations have to agree to the content belonging to NewsQuest, they discovered that many organisations had already signed up for a Communigate website.

*“We were concerned that it wasn’t a particularly brilliant solution although what it did was what people said they wanted to do which was put their information online very simply” (staff)*

Increasingly SCIP feels that offering a one-off workshop on a Content Management System, such as Communigate, would further its aim of encouraging more organisations to benefit from having a simple, online presence.

*“I always thought that we should teach people how to use Communigate so that that person comes to one of our workshops and goes away with a Communigate website. Because that’s possible, that’s very, very easy to do” (staff)*

*“It would simply be a presence with their phone number and a map – that’s all some organisations have the capacity for” (staff)*

This is backed up by the comments of the learners:

*“The CMS idea seems the best one to share with others” (learner)*

This recognises that not all organisations will have the capacity to learn the fairly complex technical skills of web design or to regularly manage a website.

In addition to offering a simple one-off CMS course SCIP is still considering offering a taught web design course but might have to charge organisations for this. Restructuring learning in this way, and moving away from delivering standard web design courses, would enable SCIP to focus on other aspects of generating 'sustainability' such as offering one-to-one organisational support. Offering the more manageable 'Communitagate' option could also encourage a broader range of learners, attracting those keen to have a simple online presence for their organisation but who might previously have been put off by the technical nature or commitment required from a full 12-week web design course.

Such restructuring and, in particular, SCIP's capacity for offering one-to-one support, is clearly funding dependent. SCIP may need to focus on the 'paid for' element, offering training in FrontPage which organisations pay for, in order to 'cut its cloth'.

As an infrastructure organisation SCIP has received some funding (for work across the whole of Sussex) through 'ChangeUp', the Home Office funded programme, which sets out a ten year vision for building the capacity of frontline organisations within the community and voluntary sector through putting in place the infrastructure support they need. ChangeUp's aim is that by 2014 the needs of frontline voluntary and community organisations will be met by support which is both 'structured for maximum efficiency' and 'sustainably funded'. A focus of ChangeUp is that a higher proportion of infrastructure costs should be funded by frontline organisations themselves through membership fees and the sale of services with the costs of infrastructure services included in their core costs of delivery. This is likely to result in the introduction of charging for infrastructure services such as SCIP, with fees set according to income of the frontline organisation purchasing the support.

*"I think the ChangeUp money is probably going to mean that groups are going to be much more geared to having to pay for all the services they receive and not having organisations that are paid for giving them free because its not particularly cost effective, I don't know whether its true but I think that's the idea behind ChangeUp so hopefully organisations will be much better funded and they won't need infrastructure groups to be funded."* (staff)

More locally, within Brighton and Hove, a Consortium of local infrastructure organisations has been established in response to ChangeUp, which by December 2005 had developed a Draft Local Infrastructure Development Plan<sup>13</sup> identifying priorities for local infrastructure provision. There is the possibility that in future SCIP will receive funding through ChangeUp in Brighton & Hove, as 'effective ICT support and development', including one-to-one support are identified as priorities within the Infrastructure Development Plan. However, this is likely to be on a limited scale and there is reluctance within SCIP to move towards a system of charging for training.

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<sup>13</sup> Available at <http://www.cvsectorforum.org.uk/infrastructure/>

Future sources of funding are therefore likely to affect whether SCIP is able to adopt the new model of delivering learning and training that is under consideration.

*“There needs to be a balance between what we’d like to do and what we can do” (staff)*

*“If people don’t pay to come on courses –and we’re not really intending to charge people which is another step towards doing something we never really wanted to do...so we’re unlikely to go that route....so you then look to government programmes and lumps of money from the council, lottery etc” (staff)*

## **5.5 Conclusion**

It is SCIP’s aim that learning from the web design courses is shared for the wider benefit of the community. While the organisation is clearly competent in delivering a high standard of training that is accessible and relevant to the community and voluntary sector, the research has shown how a variety of factors, not simply the quality of the teaching, affect whether an individual learner goes on to share learning with a wider audience and whether websites are completed and maintained.

SCIP recognises that rather than merely offering ‘technical support’, its work contributes to wider issues of organisational development and it is keen that this is recognised and utilised by other infrastructure organisations locally. If teaching people how to build a website and getting the whole organisation to buy into the benefits of having a website are in fact different things, the issue of organisational development becomes key in determining whether learning through SCIP’s web design courses is sustained.

The research suggests that restructuring SCIP’s web design course (by offering a modular programme supported by greater one-to-one assessment and follow up to an individual and their organisation) would seem to offer more effective opportunities for learning to be shared and for a greater number of websites to be built and maintained for the benefit of the wider community. Securing funding, particularly for increasing the element of one-to-one support that SCIP is able to offer, will determine whether the organisation is able to move towards this new model and continue to provide support free of charge to frontline organisations within the sector.

## **5.6 Recommendations**

### **Existing training programme**

- i. Explore the option of offering one-off sessions in simple Content Management Systems, such as ‘CommuniGate’, for organisations merely wanting an ‘online presence’. This would increase accessibility, enabling those without the ‘FrontPage’ programme and those with limited capacity to build a website.

- ii. Develop a robust assessment process in order to manage expectations of both individual learners and their sending organisations. Such a process could usefully consider:
  - being clear about SCIP's ethos e.g. sharing learning and learning from one another, which results in mixed ability classes (requiring classes to be flexible and responsive) and the benefits of this approach
  - having clear outline of content of the course and skills required to attend
  - stressing the importance of practice between classes – encourage sending organisations to invest in 'FrontPage' to facilitate this
  - applicants and their organisations could be asked to provide evidence of how the learning will be integrated into the general work of the organisation and who will take responsibility for this (This may require SCIP spending some time during assessment to help the organisation see the benefit and 'buy in' to this).
- iii. Follow up training offered with one-to-one support as 'remote' support e.g. e-forum is limited in its effect. (This also provides an opportunity for SCIP to encourage wider buy-in by organisation – perhaps by suggesting manager attends sessions. This could be good opportunity for wider issues (i.e. not purely technical) to be raised, e.g. the importance of a web presence more generally and how the learning achieved could be shared) This is backed up by the recognition within the Local Infrastructure Development Plan of the value of one-to-one support.

### **The future – impact of Change Up**

- i. Fully exploit the emphasis put on the importance of ICT training for the community and voluntary sector detailed in the Local Infrastructure Development Plan (i.e. work closely with other infrastructure organisations to ensure they recognise and value the contribution SCIP makes, not only in terms of ICT expertise but, more widely, in organisational development).

## References

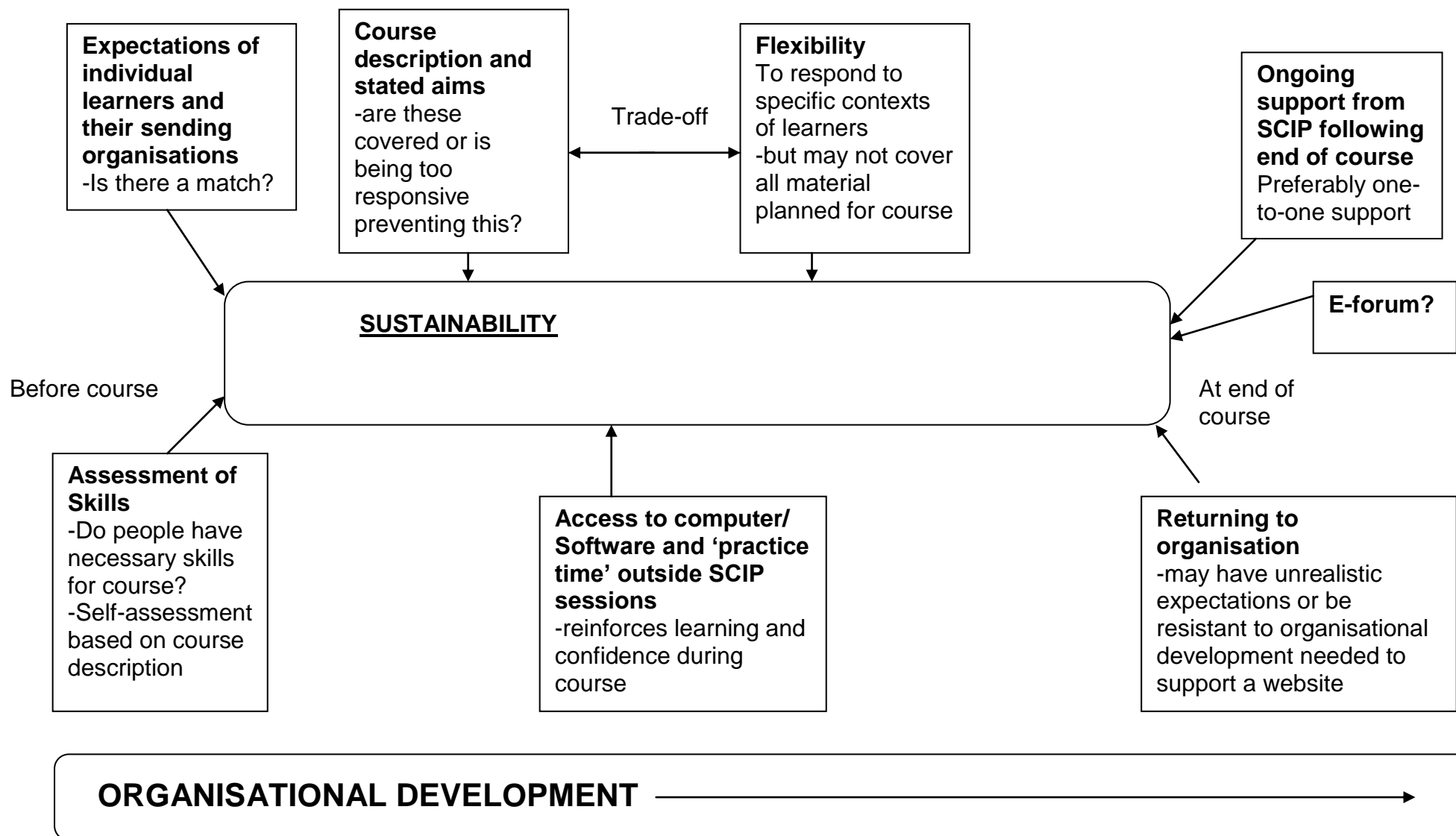
Draft Local Infrastructure Development Plan for Brighton & Hove (2005) available at <http://www.cvsectorforum.org.uk/infrastructure/>

ChangeUp Executive Summary (2004) available at <http://communities.homeoffice.gov.uk/activecomms/ac-publications/publications/290693/changeup-exec-sum.pdf?view=Standard&pubID=184957>





Figure 5.1. Factors affecting sustainability of learning within SCIP's web design courses





## **6. Sussex Police Project: The Development of Police Surgeries in the St. James Street Area of Brighton and Hove.**

### **6.1 Background**

This case study aimed to follow the work of a Police Community Support Office (PCSO) in relation to organising and running Police surgeries in the St James Street area of Brighton, an area benefiting from a Neighbourhood Policing approach. The PCSOs' role is to provide a highly visible presence in neighbourhoods. They receive different training to regular Police Officers and have restricted powers. The team to which the PCSO belongs is the Kemptown team, part of Central Division which consists of a Sergeant, 2 Police Officers and 4 PCSOs. Their work receives considerable recognition and support from the Command team as well as at Force level. An emphasis has been put upon building up particular expertise around policing issues related to the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community as they represent a considerable section of the local population, both in terms of residents and businesses. The fact that this small team continues to be supported is testament to its success as many other such teams have short life-spans:

*"There have been occasions where I've had to fight the corner of the team to keep it because there is always a demand on resources within the division to disband smaller, ad hoc units, as they are referred to sometimes, and put the officers back onto mainstream policing" (Sgnt)*

### **6.2 Research methods**

Findings from this case study are limited. This is due, to a large extent, to time constraints experienced by the PCSO at the centre of the research (project lead). The unpredictable nature of Police work, often necessarily responsive, affected her capacity to progress the project as quickly as she would have liked and also restricted her participation in the research process. Her capacity was further reduced by the fact that she played a key role in the training of new PCSOs. The nature of this commitment was also unpredictable but, as it happened, a new recruit was assigned to her during the research period.

Nevertheless, researchers were able to conduct limited fieldwork which involved semi-structured interviews with two Police Community Support Officers, Sergeant of the Kemptown Team, Secretary of the Residents Association and a local Vicar who was a member of Local Action Team. In addition, observations were made at one Police surgery and one meeting of the Local Action Team. Key points are detailed below. It is recognised that certain issues raised here may have moved on which is why we will be commenting on findings in the form of questions which, it is hoped, may be

useful should issues wish to be pursued by either the Police or the St. James Street Local Action Team.

### 6.3 Neighbourhood Policing

A consultation on police reform found that

*“the public wants more visible, accessible and responsive policing. Over 70% of respondents said they wanted better information about their local police officers, how they could be contacted and the results their police are getting. Sixty per cent wanted to get their views across by personal contact with local offices while on patrol. A common theme was the need for continuity of officers in post so that trust and familiarity can develop. The Government agrees with this – and the spread of neighbourhood policing will make it happen”*

(Home Office, 2005)

In relation to the local implementation of Neighbourhood Policing, the Sergeant working with the PCSO at the centre of this project described different approaches to Policing:

*“ Yeah well it gives a face to policing again I think. Certainly during the 12 years that I’ve been a Police officer now, we seem to always go through full circles and loops with the Police service. You’ll have Police officers on the street, community beat officers, one for each beat with a name and face for the area then they’ll be pulled off and then a great response team will be created and you know we’ll be improving response times and more officers getting to the jobs quicker but the community would not know the name and face of the Police Officer and then I think the whole PCSO element has added that face to policing again”* (Sgnt)

The advantages of adopting a Neighbourhood Policing approach, i.e. one with dedicated resources for local areas, with the aim of building strong relationships with the local community, are recognised and appreciated by both police staff and local people. In describing various, informal ways in which members of community give her information, the PCSO commented:

*“I cannot see a fault in keeping your micro beats because it just works”*

However, the teams do not work in isolation from city wide policing and, at times, resources may be used elsewhere, as need dictates. As mentioned above, it can be difficult for a PCSO to carry out developmental work within communities due to the fact that their duties, similar to that of Police Officers,

depend upon what is happening in the local area, or the City generally, at any given time.

Historically, a key mechanism used by the Police and other service providers to communicate with the local community (and vice versa) was the St. James's Street Action Group. This was a voluntary group made up of interested residents and traders who held regular meetings to which local service providers were invited. At one point these meetings were hosted by the Police. A number of circumstances resulted in the disbanding of this group (illness, people moving away etc). However, recently the Vicar of one of the local churches has been instrumental in attempting to reform the group though, as will be discussed later, it is hoped that its aims and ways of working can be more clearly stated and agreed and structures put in place to support their achievement.

## **6.4 Role of PCSOs**

Police Community Support Officers were introduced to Police Forces across the country in 2002. As the following quote highlights, individual forces could use their discretion with regard to both the training of PCSOs and their deployment:

*“The fundamental role of the PCSO is to contribute to the policing of neighbourhoods, primarily through highly visible patrol with the purpose of reassuring the public, increasing orderliness in public places and being accessible to communities and partner agencies working at local level. The emphasis of this role, and the powers required to fulfil it, will vary from neighbourhood to neighbourhood and force to force”*  
(ACPO, 2002)

This means that there is scope and support for PCSOs to develop projects within the community such as police surgery idea. However, any such initiatives are, to some extent, restricted:

“What I wouldn't want if for them to come and see me and say they've got an idea that would take a lot of planning ....which essentially would be taking them off the street for quite a number of hours. As far as I see, and I'm sure a lot of people would agree, that would be taking them away from their main priority which is high visibility patrol. So as long as it is still engaging with the community, they are fulfilling the basic requirements of their role, the support is there to progress whatever they can.” (Sgnt)

A key issue that arose out of this research was that of recognition of the work carried out by PCSOs. The findings suggest that it could be beneficial to explore ways of capturing some of the 'softer' outcomes of their work in the local community in order to better understand and exploit the relationships which are being built. Commentators note that this can present challenges

*“The monitoring and supervision of officers who have to learn the intelligent and sensitive use of discretion called for in community policing are tricky” (Tily 2003)*

However, the benefits of capturing such information are recognised:

*“Definitely, yes definitely, I mean certainly as far as the amount of people they are actually stopping and speaking to .... They’re carrying out the level of policing which really each police officer would like to do and certainly years ago, when I was a beat officer, that is the sort of stuff I used to do, community work, .... So it is really valued work”*  
(Sgnt)

Researchers understood that methods for recording outcomes of PCSOs’ work were being revised. However, it was not clear whether the community and relationship building element of their work would be given the same consideration as statistical information such as SIPs forms (Street Intervention Policy).

*“Certainly as far as the amount of people they are actually stopping and speaking to...we sent them an email ... and its really just a big well done for all the hard work you’ve put in and the improvement in intelligence reports and stop and search reports”* (Sgnt)

The emphasis laid upon such results could, potentially, affect the direction of PCSOs’ work and what they feel they can spend time on:

*“because everything needs paper, everything needs a history before you can deal with it ... before you can warrant time on anything you need a history”* (PCSO)

Questions raised:

- Might the prioritisation of measurable outcomes of PCSOs work (e.g. stop and search reports) arguably have a detrimental effect on attempts to build relationships with the local community?
- What processes could be developed to enable the identification and recognition of ‘softer’ outcomes’ of PCSOs’ work? (which may be acting as preventative measures but not recognised as such).

## **6.5 Police Surgeries**

The aim of Police Surgeries is to provide a regular drop-in session at local venues, which will give opportunities for members of the public to have more informal contact with local police. When asked why she wanted to establish surgeries in the St. James Street area, the PCSO responded:

*“There’s nowhere for anybody to complain about the silly little things that really aggravate them. They wouldn’t think it important enough to come and waste police time but slowly it affects their quality of life, you*

*know, mentally and sometimes physically, people going slowly mad because they didn't feel they had anywhere to complain or anybody to complain to"*

It was recognised that, if surgeries were well run and well attended, the relationship between the local Police and the local community could be strengthened, improving outcomes for both the public and the Police.

*"I think building up the trust between members of the public and the Police, I think that is very important because we do need the information from the members of the public to help us deal with the criminal element of things ... we get time and time again 'I wouldn't tell a Police Officer but I'll tell you'" (PCSO)*

The fact that some people were saying to PCSOs that they felt more comfortable talking to them than Police Officers inspired the PCSO to consider how this might be exploited in order to increase levels of contact between the Neighbourhood Policing team and the local community. Police surgeries, run by PCSOs, were considered a good vehicle for achieving this. Whilst the Sergeant of the team supported the idea, he was aware of the potential impact such an initiative could have on the work of the team as a whole, as well as on the PCSO's day to day activities because:

*"we're always running on what feels like a minimum staffing level and a high work load" (Sgnt)*

Such an environment, i.e. Policing teams working at full stretch most of the time, does not easily support experimentation with new ideas, particularly where the 'outcomes' may not be easily quantifiable in the usual monitoring format. The findings suggest a tension in relation to the support of such initiatives from senior staff. On the one hand, there is recognition that such initiatives need time to become established, known about and used by the community whilst on the other, due to staffing pressures etc, there is a need to ensure good use of officers' time in relation to their main priority, high visibility patrol, and wider Police targets and monitoring criteria. As will be discussed below, low turn-out to surgeries raised questions about whether the surgeries were the best use of PCSOs' time.

Having established support from within the Force, local Residents' meetings were attended and used to test the idea of surgeries, which received a positive response. Discussions were held with the Vicar of a local church who felt it appropriate to house the surgeries, as a wide range of people and groups used the church who might, it was felt, have taken the opportunity to speak to the Police if they were easily accessible. The initiative was timely for the Vicar as she was keen to open-up the use of the Church building to the wider community. Surgeries were held for 6 weeks. Each was two hours long and were attended, on average, by 3 people. On the advice of senior officers, the surgeries were advertised by corporate, standardised posters. It was explained that this was to give a clear signal that the initiative was supported at a corporate level which, it was felt, would signal the value being attached to

the work. Findings suggest that an alternative approach to advertising might have proved more effective. A number of respondents felt that posters should have a discernable 'local' appeal, specifically aiming to capture the attention of local people.

*"There's got to be publicity...I would disagree with the standardised poster. There needs to be a personalised poster for this area" (Vicar)*

Such an approach was adopted in another part of the City, largely residential, where the surgeries were better attended. Surgeries in this area were arranged and advertised via Neighbourhood Watch networks. The St. James Street area is very much a mix of businesses and residents (which include a high number of short-term residents). As neither surgery initiatives were monitored or evaluated in a formal sense, it was not possible to fully understand what factors contributed to attendance or what the outcomes were. Reasons for low turn-out were no doubt varied but a number of respondents commented that, on reflection, the location might not have been as suitable as first thought. A member of a local Residents' Association wondered if perhaps the fact that the venue was a church and therefore religious might possibly have made some people uncomfortable. Another suggestion was that there was a problem with the location of the building, which is in a very busy area with a history of street drinkers, some residents may not wish to visit in the evenings (when surgeries were typically held).

In response to concerns about poor attendance (and therefore questionable use of PCSO's time) consideration was given to ways in which the delivery of the surgeries might be changed in order to try to increase attendance. Building on the existing strong relationship established between the PCSO and one of the local Residents' Associations, it was agreed that surgeries could be held in the public rooms of one of the large blocks of flats in the area. It was felt that this would address a number of issues. Firstly, many of the residents of this block were elderly so having the Police come along was seen as beneficial as it helped those who found it difficult to get out. Secondly, the Police felt that such an approach could potentially reach a large number of people as each resident was likely to have other links in the community and so could let others know about the surgeries. Thirdly, the venue was used regularly for meetings so there is a fairly regular stream of people in and out which, one respondent noted, enabled people to attend without others necessarily thinking it was to see the Police specifically. This corresponds with the information received by PCSOs which indicated that some people would speak to them but were unlikely to speak to the Police more formally. Unfortunately, no surgeries had been held by the time the fieldwork of this research was completed so levels of attendance, issues raised etc are unknown.

One final aspect which needs highlighting in relation to Police surgeries is the personal commitment required from the PCSOs involved. Ideally, surgeries should be held on a regular basis on the same day of the week each time so that local people get to know that is the time and place when they can make informal contact with the Police. PCSOs work shifts, in common with other



Police staff and shift patterns do not readily lend themselves to this type of regularity. Therefore, the PCSOs had to negotiate changes to their shifts in order to ensure the smooth running of the surgeries, presenting issues not only for them but also their colleagues.

## 6.6 Training

The importance of the right sort of training for PCSOs emerged from all those concerned with the research:

*“it’s all very well saying that right we’re going to put some officers on the street now for community policing but if you haven’t given them the right information and the right tools then you might as well not put them out there, in fact you can almost end up doing damage. .... That is important, you can’t just create these new ideas and run with Government led initiatives without training the officers.” (Sgnt)*

Findings suggest that whilst there is recognition of the need for good quality training for PCSOs, further attention could usefully be given to ensuring officers are adequately supported to take up such training. There was mention of PCSOs going to great lengths to juggle their working days in order to accommodate training and, occasionally, forgoing rest days.

The content of training was also touched upon. PCSOs benefit from some of the core police training, e.g. making house to house enquiries, the content of the sexual offenders act etc, as well as awareness raising on diversity issues. The success of using a range of organisations for the delivery of such training was commented on:

*“There are a lot of people out there, certainly when we did the LGBT awareness training we got community contributors in .... You know why sit there for an afternoon and talk about the transgender community when a transgender female could come in and talk about it herself.” (Sgnt)*

The benefits of including a wider range of organisations in the training of Police Officers has already been recognised and implemented by Sussex Police. All new recruits are now offered a placement within local organisations providing support in a variety of ways to members of the community. The organisations approached include youth groups, mental health charities, drug and rehabilitation centers, BME groups and LGBT forums. The aim is to “*expose student officers to the types of diverse communities they will be policing*” (Community Placements Manager, Sussex Police). Extending Police Officers’ knowledge of support services available within the City enables them to have a wider range of options to choose from when dealing with people with specific issues. An increased knowledge of different agencies to which they could refer meant police could develop the preventative side of their work, rather than simply dealing with the presenting problem.

*“I think it is important to use community contributors. You know, you have professional people that train and we do use those. I think we are now building up that resource level, people we’ve used in the past or would like to seek new ideas and groups.” (Sgnt)*

It was beyond the scope of this research to explore what issues the placement element of training has raised for both the Police and for some of the organisations they have approached. It is understood that building such relationships with a diverse range of organisations may not be straightforward. Organisations have varying ‘cultures’ and methods of interacting with clients. It was not clear at the time of the research, what the implications of such differences might be on developing placements.

Questions raised:

- Would it be appropriate to offer similar training to PCSOs, potentially enabling them to increase the level of preventative work they carry out.

## **6.7 Communication**

### **6.7.1 Within the Police Service**

The issue of communication within the Force emerged in a number of ways. With regard to the Police Surgeries, whilst the rest of the PCSO’s team were aware of the surgeries it was not apparent to what extent they were involved in supporting them.

*“because it’s just a PCSO doing it, it is not really priority for them to know exactly what I’m doing” (PCSO)*

It was beyond the scope of this research to thoroughly explore working relations between PCSOs and regular Police staff. The limited findings highlight that there is a sense of dislocation. It was suggested that one of the aims of placing the tutor unit for PCs at the central Brighton Police station was to enable Police Officers in training to develop a better understanding of the work of PCSOs:

*“what they’ve done now is integrate us so they can see what we can and can’t do and get us to find a happy medium ....because when we first started PCs had no idea what we could and couldn’t do” (PCSO)*

This sense of dislocation was also highlighted in relation to more senior colleagues:

*“an Inspector will arrive that we don’t know about, a Superintendent will change, you’re not privy necessarily to the rank structure and who is coming or going” (PCSO)*

It seems that at times the apparent and somewhat fractured relationship between PCSOs and the rest of the Force can create a sense of frustration. This stems from a lack of process around information sharing. Often, a PCSO might be the first link in the chain of dealing with a crime but the issue “gets

*taken out of my hands*" (PCSO) with no mechanism for future feedback. This further impacts on communication with the local community. While PCSOs are in a good position to be able to feed back to the community, the research would suggest that they currently seem limited in their ability to do so.

Questions raised:

- What measures could be taken to increase communication between PCSOs and Police to increase the cohesiveness of the Force?

### **6.7.2 Communication with the local community**

As mentioned earlier, in the past the main vehicle for exchanging information between the local community and the Police was the St. James Street Action Group. This group was made up of local traders and residents and it invited relevant service providers to meetings as issues arose and the Police were regularly invited along. The group's activity ceased for a number of reasons but recently efforts have been made to re-kindle the activity of the group, with the local Vicar playing a central role. A meeting was held during the research period and a researcher attended in order to gain a better understanding of the nature of such exchanges. The format of the meeting was formal, in that there was a top table at which the 'professionals' sat, with Community members facing (theatre style seating). Attendance was good with a broad mix of traders and residents. Service providers represented included the Environment Department, Police, Community Safety Partnership and a local hostel. The meeting was chaired by a Councillor. Observations were as follows:

Police were represented by Chief Inspector and Sergeant. When asked by researchers why PCOSs were not present, the Sergeant explained that:

*"If I'd have taken the two PCSOs that were on duty at the time that would have meant there were not PCSOs on St James Street and you are caught between a rock and hard place. I made a specific decision to represent the team, to turn up and feedback the issues but leave the service we provide still there out on the street rather than bring everybody off the street."* (Sgnt)

This reasoning is rational. However, the presence of one of the well known PCSOs may have gone some way towards countering claims by some members of the community that the local Police are not known.

*"The people who I deal with on a day to day basis do know who I am"*  
(PCSO)

Attendance by PCSOs would enable them to meet members of the community that they don't already know and build relationships. Such meetings could also provide opportunities for letting people know about the surgeries.

Questions raised:

- Are there potential benefits if PCSOs attend community meetings?
- How are the issues raised at community meetings fed back to the rest of the team?

Many issues raised related to anti-social behaviour. In response to these concerns, it was pointed out that there was an Officer with specific responsibility for issues related to begging and street drinking. This Officer was not, however, a member of the St. James Street Neighbourhood Policing team, but rather covered the City as a whole. It is recognised that this Officer has established links with a variety of both statutory and Community and Voluntary organisations.

Question raised:

- Might a closer working relationship be developed between the PCSOs and this Officer, in order to improve the flow of information between Police staff, as well as between Police and the local community?

In response to issues raised regarding anti-social behaviour, the representative from the Community Safety Partnership offered to work with the community on a strategy/action plan. A negative response from one member of the community dominated (saying they didn't want any more committees etc) resulting in no action regarding the offer. The researcher felt that this was a missed opportunity which, due to the lack of formal minutes, runs the risk of not being revisited.

Question raised:

- How could community meetings develop a process for recording concerns and actions?

Both the Police and a member of the community noted the need for such meetings to be minuted in order that actions could be clearly identified (with a specific person or organisation taking responsibility) and revisited. This does, however, raise the issue of capacity within the group. Full exploration of the reasons for the inactivity of the group was not undertaken so therefore it is not possible to know whether resources were an issue. However, such groups are commonly run on a voluntary basis and one commentator raised the question of whether it would be appropriate for them to be supported from service providers' funds, as their meetings provide an important route for communication and consultation:

*"How can the Home Office, Councils or police chiefs expect to meet the objectives outlined in the Police Reform Programme, more accountability at service delivery level, or more say by local citizens in policing without any mandatory requirements and funding for such neighbourhood groups?"*  
(King Taylor, 2005)

This is an issue relevant to wider Neighbourhood Renewal processes. Support 'in-kind' was offered in the past by way of the meetings being hosted by the Police. However, meetings became increasingly dominated by members of the community pursuing personal issues, which, at times, led to an air of confrontation. As noted by a member of the group, clearer processes and 'ground-rules' would increase the effectiveness of future meetings and no doubt influence levels of co-operation and support.

The domination of personal agendas at such meetings caused frustration. Time and attention were taken away from other issues many of which were actually whole city issues – parking, drug abuse etc. When discussing the reformation of the group, the Vicar described an approach she would like to see fostered, one based on encouraging members to think about ways in which the community itself could play a larger part in addressing issues, rather than relying to such an extent on services:

*“The community needs to think along the lines of how we can solve our problems so that we are not just shouting at the statutory agencies who can’t do it all.” (Vicar)*

Findings suggest that both the community and the Police are keen to continue developing an effective form of communication. As noted by the local Vicar:

*“that’s what (PCSO) was wanting to know ...what do you suggest, what are your issues and what are your thoughts and locals do know, we know who is in the garden right now doing drugs, we know who gathers at the telephones and if they want to know we can tell them”*

The issue appears to be what form of communication would be best. PCSOs' mobile phone numbers were given out at one point to some local businesses and resident's associations. An extension of this approach was under consideration at the time of the research. The idea centered on the distribution of leaflets to all letter boxes in the area, possibly with photographs and contact numbers of the local Police team. This might go some way to addressing concerns such as this:

*“its very hard to track them down, I know there’s huge demands on their time and their phone lines and they don’t do a 9 to 5 and you know there are all sorts of shifts and things, it would just be handy to know” (Vicar)*

Another aspect of communication emerging from the findings is that of feedback from the Police to the community on actions taken in response to issues raised. Regular, well managed meetings of the Action Team with clear processes such as the taking and agreeing of minutes and actions, would provide a suitable mechanism for this to happen. Currently the Police do attempt to publicise initiatives and successes in the area through the City newspaper as, at the time of the research, no local community newsletter existed. The Police commented that they would be happy to contribute to

such a newsletter, following the model they currently use for communicating with the local LGBT community via their local publications:

*“We do feed back through those publications on a very regular basis on what goes on. I have a monthly column in G-scene magazine, half a page every month and I use that as a window to report back to the LGBT community what the current issues are...the LGBT community specifically requested that and they got it. So if residents of St James’ Street and around wanted to know the level of crime on a monthly basis, we can look at things like that” (Sgnt)*

## 6.8 Summary

Findings from the research highlight a number of issues which relate to the capacity of Police Community Support Officers to carry out community-based initiatives such as developing Police surgeries. These included the importance of appropriate advertising and liaison with the local community in order to maximise the benefits of such events. The difficulties of establishing and running surgeries when working to shift patterns were highlighted along with the commitment needed by individual officers. Measures used to recognise and monitor the value of PCSOs’ work were discussed, particularly in relation to the potential benefits of greater recognition of some of the softer outcomes of ‘community’ work. A Neighbourhood Policing approach was described and recognised as working well within the St. James Street area. It was suggested that such work might be enhanced by a greater range of training opportunities being made available to PCSOs, possibly along the lines of the work placement model currently being used in the training of Police Officers.

Underpinning all of the findings is the issue of communication, both within the Force and with the local community. The importance of the efficient exchange of information and, particularly, feedback on issues, was highlighted. The role that the Local Action Team has played in the past in relation to such an exchange of information was described, along with consideration of processes that could be put in place to increase the effectiveness of meetings in the future. The following questions were identified which, it is suggested, could usefully be given consideration by both the Force and the Local Action Team:

- Might the prioritisation of measurable outcomes of PCSOs work (e.g. stop and search reports) potentially have a detrimental effect on attempts to build relationships with the local community?
- What processes could be developed to enable the identification and recognition of ‘softer’ outcomes’ of PCSOs’ work (which may be acting as preventative measures but not recognised as such).
- Would it be appropriate to offer training incorporating work placements (similar to that given to PCs) to PCSOs, potentially enabling them to increase the level of preventative work they carry out.

- What measures could be taken to increase communication between PCSOs and the rest of the Force to increase the cohesiveness of the service?
- Are there potential benefits if PCSOs attend community meetings?
- How are issues raised at community meetings fed back to rest of team?
- How could a process for recording concerns and actions be developed for community meetings?
- Might a closer working relationship be developed between the PCSOs and the Officer with responsibilities around street drinking and begging in order to improve the flow of information between both Police staff as well as between Police and the local community?

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## **7. The Whitehawk Inn: Using Volunteering to Increase the Involvement of Local People at all Levels in the Organisation**

### **7.1 The organisation**

The Whitehawk Inn Training Centre, based in East Brighton, started as the result of a local person's vision and motivation. He identified the need for an IT training centre to be located in East Brighton and in 1997 sought funding to get the project started. At the same time he worked with a group of interested friends and colleagues to set up a company with charitable status, Clarion Projects. The original plan was that the Training Centre would be one of several projects for the charity but this plan has now been abandoned. The premises were originally a pub which had been vacant for a period of time and although some small funds were available to do initial renovation, the main funds to renovate and equip the Centre were accessed in 2001. The current Project Manager of the Centre has been in post since July 1999 when funding from Learn to Earn was granted. At the same time a tutor was employed to deliver IT courses. In 2000, the work was continued and expanded under URBAN funding and as a pilot Centre for LearnDirect.

In 1999, East Brighton was successful in its bid for New Deal for Communities funding from central Government. This funding was generous, £48 million, and long term (10 years). An organisation, eb4U, was established to manage the money. Priorities were identified, one of which was to address education and employment needs in the area. The centre secured funding via eb4U from 2001. Also in 2001 the Centre accessed Government funding (linked to the UK online initiative) for capital work to the building resulting in renovation and the purchase of new equipment. This grant paid for the ground floor and basement to be equipped with classrooms, offices, open learning areas, new toilet facilities, ramped access and a café.

The model of delivery for the training had altered during the lifetime of the Centre. It moved from the Centre employing tutors directly and being predominantly IT focused, to more of a 'franchise' model, i.e. educational organisations commission the Centre to recruit to their courses, which are run at the Centre but the tutors are employed by the colleges etc. The advantages of this are that a more diverse range of courses, i.e. not all IT based, can be delivered which, as will be discussed later, accords with what local people want.

The change in direction, though planned, was somewhat hurried by the necessity to fit in with funding time-scales and procedures. The Centre had developed a work plan based on a reasonable assumption that they would receive another 3 years funding via eb4U, applied for in Autumn 2003. However, eb4U had made the decision to move to a new model of project appraisal (Project Cycle Management) and therefore only funded the centre for a year, on the understanding that they would apply again, utilising the new model. This robust project appraisal model requires scrutiny of how a project

is developed, funded, monitored and evaluated. The Whitehawk Inn were one of the first projects to go through this process and unfortunately could not benefit from the 18 months development time (aimed at ensuring all stakeholders are involved in the development of the project) recommended for Project Cycle Management (PCM), but rather had to complete the process in 4 months in order to keep the Centre open and viable.

*“what we wanted to do was make a gradual move across but we were actually forced by the financial situation to take that decision in April 04 to make July 04 the end of our work as a training provider and then from September 04 we became a facilitator/co-ordinator. Project Cycle Management itself didn’t specify how the training was delivered but because of the financial restrictions in the year before, we were really forced to do that so it just brought it forward.” (Staff)*

Preparation for PCM required the organisation to demonstrate that the full range of stakeholders had been involved in the development of the bid. An advisory planning group was established, which included existing staff and volunteers along with representatives from the Friends Centre, eb4U, Working Links and the Trustee board. This group met 3 times with the purpose of taking the proposed project through the PCM process.

The Centre has always benefited from the involvement of volunteers. At the stage where tutors were employed directly by the Centre, a member of staff had responsibility for recruiting and supporting them. This was a reasonably informal process which worked well. People who volunteered tended to be those who had been on a course, enjoyed it and got to know the tutor. Many responded positively to being asked to volunteer in the classroom to enable the next set of learners to benefit from more individual attention and help. Volunteers were encouraged to meet one another, socialise etc which promoted an atmosphere of mutual support. As the mode of delivery changed and tutors left the centre, so the pool of volunteers decreased. Both staff and Trustees are committed to re-energising volunteering in the Centre in order to offer learners additional ways of developing skills and confidence to those gained as a student. It is hoped that increased volunteering opportunities, particularly increased involvement in management, will ensure the organisation benefits from the experience and knowledge of learners, informing the direction the Centre takes in the future. Early 2006 saw the Board of Trustees expand to include representatives of 5 partner organisations along with 3 community Trustees, two of whom had previously volunteered at the Centre. There are plans to develop a membership scheme which stakeholders will have the opportunity of joining with a view to the membership electing representatives to the Board in the future.

The process of developing volunteering opportunities will undoubtedly be aided by the addition of the Gateway to Learning team, established within the organisation in 2004. This team (currently a Manager, two support/outreach workers and an advice worker) was funded by eb4U and employed to provide an outreach element to the organisation as well as enabling more structured

learner support once people start on courses. This team enables the organisation to provide a more rounded service, to identify barriers to learning, such as childcare or transport, and respond to them to ensure the service is as inclusive as it can be. The team have worked hard to establish strong links within the local area, using a variety of methods, such as making contact with local community organisations, as well as linking in with statutory services active in the area, e.g. local schools and social services provision. This style of working, i.e. building close links with the local community and gaining a deeper understanding of local issues and needs based on community development processes, will provide the Centre with a good base of information on which to develop its plans for volunteering.

## 7.2 The project

In order to further the aim of re-energising volunteering, the Centre Manager identified this element of the Centre's development strategy as her project whilst attending the ALTogether Programme<sup>14</sup>. This research is concerned specifically with this element of her work, i.e. *"to increase involvement of local people in the organisation, across all levels, via volunteering"*. We attempt to explore the motivations and aims of this strategy along with gathering evidence from a range of stakeholders about the issues it raises. This project was selected as it tackles an issue at the heart of many service providers' agendas within Neighbourhood Renewal areas. That is to:

- Increase a sense of ownership (in this case of the centre) amongst members of the community.
- Involve local residents in decision making.
- Actively encourage capacity building in the community.

The commitment to this strategy stems from the success the Centre has had in the past in recruiting and supporting volunteers, along with a recognition that increased involvement of users will increase the long-term sustainability of the organisation by increasing 'ownership' of the organisation by the users. Three of the volunteers interviewed for this research have been with the centre for some considerable time, greatly enhancing the service the Centre is able to offer. Volunteers have been supported to gain further qualifications which, for one, has resulted in making the transition from volunteer tutor to paid staff member. Others describe the development of confidence and skills and all expressed a sense of loyalty to the organisation, often in terms of repaying the organisation:

*"I feel I've got a lot out of it and it's just a way of giving something back".*  
(Volunteer)

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<sup>14</sup> A programme based on self managed action learning. See [http://www.brighton.ac.uk/cupp/projects/alt\\_home.htm](http://www.brighton.ac.uk/cupp/projects/alt_home.htm)

## 7.3 Research methods

Semi-structured interviews were held with the following people:

Volunteers x 4 (including a volunteer classroom support worker, volunteer tutor, volunteer advisor to management and volunteer in café)

Centre Manager

Gateway to Learning Manager

eb4U Training and Enterprise Manager

eb4U Customer Relations Manager

eb4U Board Support Worker

Board of Trustees (focus group, 4 present)

Regular review meetings were scheduled with the project lead providing an opportunity for findings to be reported and for future research plans to be discussed. The research period coincided with a busy period of enrolment which meant there was not the staff capacity to address the Centre's aims for volunteering to quite the extent they had hoped. However, as will be demonstrated, this was not necessarily a bad thing as any such development needs careful planning and time for ensuring all who need to be involved in decisions can be involved.

A key question was how does the development of a volunteering strategy fit with the overall vision of the organisation? To aid consideration of developing an agreed vision, it is helpful to consider the issue of involvement of local people and related issues.

## 7.4 Involvement of local people

*"it's not just what you think, it's taking on board what other people think and taking on board that other people might know more than you do."* (volunteer)

### 7.4.1 Involvement (background)

Whilst developing and expanding the services of the Centre over the last few years, the Management and Board adopted a clear vision. This revolved around a key element, to ensure that the facility had an air of professionalism, with high quality service and equipment.

*"That was always one of our visions .. to bring a bit of the centre of town to here"* (Trustee)

As mentioned before, in the early stages whilst the provision was IT based, the involvement of service users, predominantly to assist with teaching, was an important element of the Centre's operation. Those volunteers (or ex volunteers who had then become qualified to teach) interviewed for this research have all been with the Centre for some time and have gone through the changes in service delivery with them. The major shift in approach was the wish to extend the involvement of users and people from the locality to all areas of the Centre's work, including decision making processes. This was in

order to ensure the organisation developed appropriately and that the services it provides are informed by the needs and wishes of the community in which it is based. Volunteering is seen as the 'vehicle' for achieving this. It was felt that by doing this the organisation would become more sustainable as it would have 'buy in' and a sense of ownership by those who use it. There was a recognition that this was not going to be a quick and straightforward process.

*"I think ... it is not a question of a radical revolutionary approach. I think I would advocate an evolutionary approach because of capacity and because they so far have developed their learning programmes so strongly and are just getting them bedded in nicely"*  
(Trustee/advisor)

As the quote above indicates, management and staff have worked hard to expand the learning opportunities offered which absorbed available staff capacity. This was achieved and, combined with further funding coming on stream, resources and staff could be directed towards increasing volunteering opportunities.

#### **7.4.2 Why involve local people? (motivations, objectives)**

In this section we examine attitudes to the idea of greater involvement of local people in general terms. We will go on to look at volunteering specifically in a later section. We asked participants why they felt greater involvement of local people in the organisation, at a range of levels, was beneficial.

Responses from volunteers themselves differed in some ways to those of Trustees. The latter tended to emphasise the contribution that local knowledge could make to the direction of the organisation and its sustainability:

*"my hope is that we are entering a period of some stability and that actually for the project to continue to be valuable and also to be sustainable it needs to be much more of a community project rather than something we do and the community takes part in "* (staff)

*"They [local people] can give important advice on what works, doesn't work, what else can be delivered and what's the best way for it to be delivered. They will also be the people that tell other local people and discuss with other local people .... what the Whitehawk Inn provides"* (Trustee)

*"you need to get people involved so that you know you're going in the direction they want to go"* (Trustee)

*"because involving people is part of our and their journey"*  
(Trustee)

In order to explore the issue further with Trustees, researchers referred to a report (Robson, P. Begum, N. and Lock, M., 2003) which discusses models of user involvement. Two broad approaches are identified, one being management centred user involvement *“where service users took part in existing structures with the agenda defined by the organisation”* and the other user-centred user involvement *“where service users’ objectives and priorities became those of the organisation”*. When asked which of these models the Centre aspired to, the response was

*“The intent is probably closer to the second but we’re probably currently closer to the first”* (Trustee)

Research findings would support this view. The Board of Trustees were clear that the organisation had developed in a particular way and had not grown out of the local community in the way that other projects have. Until the recent additions to the Board, the overall drivers of the organisation were not from the local community but it was recognised that such input is necessary to further develop the centre and ensure it is delivering what the local community want:

*“Our journey started from a different place than perhaps the Crew Club [a local youth organisation set up and run by local people] but, nonetheless, our goal would be to have a high level of community involvement without losing some of the distinctives that we think are very important and are actually helpful to the people who come in”* (Trustee)

Volunteers, and staff to a certain extent, concentrated more on the practical support offered to learners by volunteers and the benefits they personally experience from greater involvement in the centre. These would include an understanding of the issues faced by learners, enabling them to reassure and encourage participation in learning, along with a recognition of the importance of local knowledge:

*“like myself, I know how it feels to be out there trying to get in through the door”* (volunteer)

*“I actually spoke to a lady last week who was a bit older than me and wanted to learn the computer and was very nervous about coming because she said they will be young people. I said do not be afraid of that, they are not young people, it is mixed ages, our tutors are mixed ages and I said I have what I considered then to be a young lad teaching me but never did he make me feel stupid or inferior”* (volunteer)

*“yes, we know where there are buildings that are not in use and we also hear things that are happening around that sometimes [staff member] isn’t aware of “* (volunteer)

Taken together, responses indicate that there was an appreciation of the range of benefits greater involvement of local people and users could bring, both to individuals themselves and to the Centre. However, as will be discussed below, there is a lack of clarity around how this might be achieved.

#### **7.4.3 How to involve local people (what processes might encourage involvement?)**

One issue that emerged was the use of the building, i.e. who had access to it and when. It would appear that a debate could usefully take place with regard to this issue as both staff and volunteers commented on it in relation to increasing involvement of local people. Unfortunately, it was not an area covered by questions to all respondents so views were limited to those who specifically raised the point. Their input to the debate, along with the views of other service users and colleagues from local community groups, would enable a thorough examination of the pros and cons of varying approaches. Different views were expressed about the value of 'opening up' the venue to the wider community, as expressed in the following quotes:

*"it's about them [the Whitehawk Inn] retaining their professionalism, the high standard of facility they've got there but softening it a bit and certainly with physical space I'd say for me there's a big issue about looking at opening up upstairs ...let's open it up to community groups so they can come and meet ... yes, it's highly risky but there are things that I think could happen within a 3 to 5 year timescale" (Trustee/adviser)*

However, a member of staff comments that:

*"there is a lot of mileage in having things in the community at different venues, they use blocks of flats that have a tenant's room .. I think maybe it would be an interesting question to ask how important is it for other community groups to use this building and as an organisation, how important do we think that is? ..... our expertise in how to set up and manage learning is more important than the fact that we have got a space to rent I think"*

Naturally, one does not exclude the other, i.e. the building could be made available for use by groups etc, at the same time as learning is delivered in alternative venues. Issues such as the possibility of offering Gateway to Learning support in alternative venues would need to be considered. Another suggestion with regard to ways in which the Centre might increase community involvement was described by a member of staff as a partnership approach. This might include working with groups of learners, possibly assisting them to become established in their own right to access funding. The key questions are what are the benefits and challenges of these approaches for all concerned and who should be included in decisions?

It is likely that such issues will become clearer as the work of the Gateway to Learning team becomes more embedded within the organisation and as the knowledge they build up is used to inform strategic decisions.

*“looking at the Whitehawk Inn, again it comes to this definition of local people, what sort of volunteers are you thinking about? who are you thinking of? and that’s where knowing the local population is very important and what they might want out of things ... the Gateway to Learning team are going to be able to give you that sort of accurate info” (Trustee/advisor)*

Volunteers offered opinions on methods which have either been used in the past to promote involvement or that they feel should be considered in the future. Some of these suggestions were based on experience gained from participation in the advisory group, described earlier. With regard to meetings, it was felt people should be given clear information on how many meetings they are likely to need to attend, for how long and that the meetings should keep good time, i.e. not over-run. It was also felt that attempts should be made to keep meetings to a manageable number of people as it is difficult for all to be heard in larger groups:

*“probably not as big as the advisory group was because that was, I think, at least 12-15 of us each time and it seemed in an hour and a half not everybody can say what they want to say” (volunteer)*

There was a suggestion that meetings should follow the lines of current staff and volunteer meetings, that they should be kept informal:

*“they are meetings but they are not solely round a table, the chairs are round so they are slightly informal and there’s time for everyone to put their view and for us that weren’t so experienced in it they gave us time to think and put our points” (volunteer)*

Finally, two of the three volunteers mentioned the importance of feedback from staff, as this highlighted that they had been listened and responded to. It was felt that a possible barrier to people choosing to become more involved is the fact that, in East Brighton, people feel they have not been listened to in the past:

*“I think the only barrier there is sometimes is the fact that around here particularly there have been a lot of management groups, a lot of advisory groups that have gone nowhere so they’d like to know it was actually going to go somewhere and that they weren’t going along giving up an hour of their time and nothing coming of it” (volunteer)*



Another volunteer suggested that a volunteer forum could be established, similar to one that existed before, to facilitate such communication.

#### **7.4.4 Initial engagement (first contact with the Centre)**

Of course greater involvement in the organisation will only come about if people's first contacts with the Centre or its staff are enjoyable, encouraging and non-threatening. All categories of respondents agreed that many people in the 'catchment' area lacked confidence in relation to learning and taking an active role in their community:

*"I think a lot of people here lack confidence in doing things for themselves, they have been given a bad name and they are stuck with that, but if you look underneath that there are a lot of good, sensible people who do know a lot, can do a lot"* (volunteer)

As mentioned earlier, the Centre has gone a long way to ensuring they tackle this issue by establishing the Gateway to Learning team. The work of the team, its methods of outreach with the local community and the intensive support it is able to offer people, help to address a key barrier raised by so many, *that the hardest thing of all is walking through the door in the first place*. The team's support to prospective and early learners can be very personalised and time consuming but, as demonstrated in other case studies in this research, can make the difference to a person becoming involved:

*"Gateway to Learning assess each learner individually and then offer them the support that they need ...we can go with them to the housing office or to the doctors ..."* (staff)

Current volunteers are proof that such an approach works:

*"In Whitehawk especially, there's a lot of people I think who have just kind of given up and if they could be coaxed in and get them into feeling, you know, I'm worth something, I can be something and it does do that, that's what happened to me."* (volunteer)

On a practical level, certain points were made about the value of the layout of the building and approaches to advertising the services of the centre, i.e. encouraging the first step of getting through the door:

*"I think on their open days when its good weather to have a table outside so the place doesn't look quite so austere, they had a stall at the Festival that we did in June and I think they had a lot of people come and speak to them but it was nice to see them not behind a desk"* (volunteer)

*"As you walk through the door it is a café, before the education ever comes near you, it's a café"* (Trustee)

*“it’s small, friendly, it’s not a school, it never has been”*  
(Trustee)

Volunteers recognised the value of their experiences and were keen to find ways of sharing those with other people, to encourage them to make contact with the Centre:

*“I think from being a learner you can pass onto people that it is a good place to learn, that it’s friendly, there’s no age barrier, there’s no disability barrier, being different doesn’t make any difference at all, it’s good like that and if you don’t understand something there’s always somebody that’s willing to show you and take time helping you through it and I think that is the most important thing to pass through to people”* (volunteer)

When developing new areas of service, such as employment advice and guidance, the management were keen to ensure that these services are also presented as appropriately as possible in order to engage people. There was recognition of the need to establish services slowly and sensitively:

*“you can sell it as a soft thing, you can sell it as a ‘come along and have this aromatherapy taster’, so this aromatherapy course is actually a basic skills course .....People don’t feel trapped and threatened by that sort of approach but ‘come along and talk to the job centre advisor about your benefits’ has a bit of a different feel to it and one of the things that we are anxious to avoid is that people see us as an extension of the job centre so we are going to take it very slowly and be really careful how we deliver that service”* (staff)

The way in which services are developed and delivered is dictated, to some extent, by the guidance attached to funding for such work. We go on now to discuss some of the issues raised in the research in this regard.

## **7.5 What increasing involvement means in terms of funding**

Funding, and its associated guidance and targets, necessarily impacts on decisions made by community and voluntary organisations. Whilst looking at how an organisation such as the Whitehawk Inn might work towards increasing its level of user involvement, it is important to bear in mind ways in which funding systems can affect such an aim.

For example, one way of achieving maximum engagement with potential learners is to attempt to ensure that the services offered are in line with what the local community say they want (in the case of the Whitehawk Inn this includes a need for flexibility of delivery and a desire for a range of courses including non-accredited ones). Staff highlighted some of the difficulties

*“but sometimes we go to the training providers and say right this is what we want to do and they say ‘well we can’t really do that we have our own targets and our own outputs to meet’ and so then that’s when you negotiate between what they can provide through their funding and what we have gathered in terms of information about what people want - so there is a bit of a friction sometimes between what people want to do and what the Learning and Skills Council will fund through the training providers” (staff)*

*“The needs that are expressed by our learners are much broader than the NDC (New Deal for Communities) outcomes that are being worked towards by eb4U .... nationally, from a government level, there is a real focus on level 2 qualifications, on people being skilled to go back to work and actually people’s reasons are much broader than that.” (staff)*

*“yes .. I mean .. if you look at the education and enterprise targets it’s to ‘reduce levels of unemployment’ .. the residents might not be interested in that!” (eb4U staff)*

Such issues are beginning to be recognised by Government. A recent review of support for community capacity building, conducted by the Home Office, recognises:

*“For some adults and young people, their past experiences of education may have been negative. Learning should start from people’s immediate needs and life experience and should recognise that ‘peer learning’, or learning through shared experience is often the most effective method” (Home Office, 2004)*

Another consideration is how other organisations in the locality are funded. As stated earlier, the Gateway to Learning team go to great lengths to establish good relationships with other organisations operating in the area in order to reach as broad a range of learners as possible. If, as happened in East Brighton, some smaller projects do not receive funding whilst larger concerns, such as the Centre do, relationships can be affected:

*“In terms of the community perception, you see small projects closing down so whilst we were trying to forge relationships with projects, they were in process of coming to the end of their funding so that has been quite difficult” (staff)*

Such circumstances are difficult to plan for and to deal with when they happen. A more holistic approach to the funding of projects in discreet neighbourhoods, with attention paid to the interaction between projects, might be advantageous. However, it is not just the funding of community and voluntary organisations that need to be considered in such a holistic

approach. The way in which statutory services are funded and delivered in localities also affects relationships:

*“I would like to work a bit closer with Social Services but the Family Centre is closing in the area ... and they are probably going to be detached workers so there will be no central place for the Family Centre clients to meet” (staff)*

It is difficult to see how such issues can be effectively addressed. However, the Gateway to Learning team’s work offers the chance for evidence to be gathered which could be used for campaigning purposes. We will be discussing the need for the Centre to develop a clear vision around its approach to involvement and volunteering in a later section. It was suggested (by a member of staff) that such a vision might incorporate an advocacy and campaigning role, with the aim of raising funders awareness of what is happening ‘on the ground’.

Having discussed issues related to the involvement of local people, with particular reference to initial engagement and funding, we will now move on to look at volunteering, the vehicle that the Whitehawk Inn have chosen to use to achieve greater involvement.

## **7.6 Volunteering**

The organisation sees the development of volunteering opportunities as helping to meet two aims. Firstly it is central to ensuring service users get as much value as possible from their contact with the centre. Secondly, it acts as a vehicle for increasing local peoples participation in the centre,, which will contribute to the long-term sustainability of the service. Attempts to unpick what such opportunities might be pointed to differing understandings of what constitutes volunteering. Some viewed it very much in terms of employment, whilst others recognised that the very fact of choosing to re-enter education is a form of volunteering:

*“Really that’s what volunteering is all about, learning new things and going into paid employment” (volunteer)*

*“volunteering to be involved in education .... That is fundamental volunteering” (Trustee)*

Clarity and consensus around the role that volunteering is to play within the organisation is essential:

*“the key strategic question is how far do they want to be an owned organisation and what is the purpose of the volunteering structure? ..I think if the organisation genuinely wants to become more community owned then there are risks associated and there are losses and there are changes of culture and they have to be prepared to*

*allow that to happen and that, in my experience, is a very hard thing to do” (Trustees/advisor)*

In order to discuss this further, we have presented findings in two broad categories. Firstly, we aim to explore why offering increased volunteering opportunities might be useful. Secondly we move on to discuss some of the issues that were raised in relation to how such an aim could be realised, what processes might need to be considered and what different stakeholders see as the benefits and challenges of this approach.

### **7.6.1 Why develop volunteering opportunities?**

The reasons for prioritising volunteering are varied. They include personal development/progression for the volunteers themselves, along with providing an opportunity for learners to help others achieve what they have. From the Centre’s point of view, it enables the organisation to tap into the knowledge and experiences of learners and local people in order to inform the way in which the service is developed, as well as adding value to the core business of learning in the classroom.

One volunteer highlighted the value of the work they had done in terms of their own personal journey. They described how they started with a couple of taster sessions and then progressed to taking certificates. One of the courses taken proved to be more difficult and so it was suggested they volunteer with beginners on that course as a way of consolidating their knowledge and building confidence by helping those with less knowledge. This proved to be very effective for the volunteer, who found they enjoyed helping others achieve what they had achieved. The following quotes illustrate what volunteering meant to those interviewed:

*“On a personal level it would be so easy to go and sit back at home ...it gives me something to get up for you know ‘oh .. I’m going down there today’ and it’s really exciting because every day is different ...it keeps your confidence boosted, keeps you motivated” (volunteer)*

*“when I first walked in the door I didn’t imagine I’d go on to do other things” (volunteer)*

*“I’m applying for a job with all of the skills I’ve learnt from Whitehawk Inn – it’s like the job description has been written for me. Any job now you need to be computer literate and I didn’t have that before” (volunteer)*

Also, volunteers commented on how working within the Whitehawk Inn broadened their knowledge of the local area, in particular of eb4U, and encouraged them to become more involved in other community organisations.

All the volunteers who were interviewed highlighted the way in which volunteering increased their self confidence and allowed them to help others do the same

*“The biggest thing for me personally was self esteem, I was rock bottom when I went in there, they had some very good staff there ... and they just coached me and mentored me and I found that very encouraging. I’d like to see a lot of other people do the same as I’ve done because .... they don’t appreciate their abilities.”*  
(volunteer)

*“really rewarding because there were quite a few people who would sign on for these courses and struggle and think ‘oh I’m going to give up’ so I used to say to them ‘just see this one through and see if you can pass the exam because I know how you feel because I felt the same way but I passed it’ and all of them did. Three ladies in particular, when they finished, said ‘if it hadn’t been for you we’d have given up’”* (volunteer)

Staff and Trustees demonstrated a good understanding of the role volunteering can play in helping individuals on their own personal journeys:

*“It’s actually an increasing sense of control of one’s own destiny and influence over that and participation involves that whereas learning is almost a third party objective thing, you can apply it, you can see how it affects other people but participation, you feel how it affects yourself.”*  
(Trustee)

*“I think a degree of ownership which they couldn’t get from just using the service and the thought that they are actually effecting change ... maybe giving back a little bit of power”* (staff)

With regard to value added to the organisation, the following comment was made in relation to why learners and local people might be encouraged to participate at decision making level:

*“I think it is about valuing the opinions and the perspectives of a wide range of people and a wide range of stakeholders ... what it’s like to be a learner, what it’s like to live in poor housing, what it’s like to have to send your kids to a school that you don’t really like, what it’s like to experience mental health problems”* (Staff)

Perhaps it is useful to summarise the benefits that volunteering can bring from two perspectives, firstly the benefits to volunteers and secondly benefits to the organisation (though the two over-lap and affect each other). Volunteers describe the benefits as follows: it increases confidence; provides a (supported) challenge; enables greater involvement in the community and can lead to qualifications and employment. From the organisation’s viewpoint, volunteering increases understanding of the local community enabling the service to be directed appropriately. Volunteers’ presence in the classroom increases the effectiveness of lessons and provides increased support to learners

*“The other thing the volunteers do is that during the coffee break and before and after the class they are available to talk to the learners and to give them lots of support and to promote the services and Gateway to Learning and it works really well” (staff)*

*“the benefits to the organisation are massive really, I mean you get all sorts of skills and services that you can’t afford to pay for that’s obviously the biggest tangible benefit for us” (staff)*

### **7.6.2 Things to consider when developing volunteering opportunities**

The Centre is not new to recruiting, training and managing volunteers and findings suggest that the Centre can usefully build on previous experience:

*“towards the end of 2001 we developed a programme whereby people were actively recruited and given an induction, they were offered training, they had mentoring and they had a group identity in that they used to meet together to do social things and have group training and feedback their opinions about what was working and what wasn’t” (staff)*

At the time of the research the difference was that the organisation was looking to expand the opportunities available to volunteers as, in the past ...

*“I think it is fair to say that volunteering was confined within the education programme” (Trustees/Advisor)*

A key factor affecting the development of a volunteering strategy is what resources, both in terms of staff and funds, are (or might become) available. Past experience indicates that having a central person co-ordinating the recruitment, training and support of volunteers works well. It is suggested that a broad range of people be involved in making decisions about how best to develop and run an effective volunteer programme, particularly those with volunteering experience:

*“good idea to involve volunteers in thinking about volunteer co-ordinator. Their point of view should be taken into account” (Volunteer)*

The responsibilities associated with developing and running a volunteer programme should not be underestimated and keen attention and planning needs to be put in to ensuring work in this area is properly resourced. A member of staff noted that management of volunteers, and the associated training, is not a small task and differs in nature to the management of staff:

*“to manage people who are skilled and experienced and well motivated is always a challenge .. but to bring to that management of people who need a lot more support and have training needs ...” (staff)*

Ideas for working jointly with other organisations regarding volunteers had already been floated by the Board of Trustees. This might involve the Centre working with one or more of the other organisations represented on the Board to address the issues and work together to develop a strategy. An alternative approach was suggested during the research which was to explore the possibilities of working in partnership with organisations which have specific experience of volunteering (two possibilities mentioned were Brighton and Hove Community Initiatives or the Volunteer Bureau) to enable applications for joint funding. Either of these partnership working approaches, and the associated possibility of pooled resources, might enable a more cost effective approach to be taken to the recruitment, training and support of volunteers.

Also, the training needs of staff and Trustees need to be explored to ensure they are best placed to work with volunteers in a range of settings. As pointed out by a volunteer:

*“there are some staff training issues I think with developing volunteering and user ownership and community ownership”*

Staff are aware of this issue, the following quote highlights the implications of increasing the size of the Board of Trustees:

*“for people to feel comfortable about coming into that environment, there is a lot of work to be done in terms of changing the way that we work as a team so it’s a long process really”* (staff)

In the case of volunteers, staff and Trustees, different individuals will have different experience and knowledge and so the approach to training related to a volunteer programme would need to be flexible.

Having given consideration to some of the planning and resource issues associated with developing a volunteer strategy, we now go on to highlight responses which were more practical in nature. Below are findings relating to discussions about approaches to volunteering, including some references to ways of working which have already proved successful within the organisation.

It has been noted earlier that volunteers appreciated the informal approach taken to meetings etc, along with preference for smaller groups to ensure everyone had a chance to be heard. In relation to the development of a volunteer strategy, the following comments illustrate that informality, a personal approach (which recognises issues such as benefit receipt, disability, etc) and, where appropriate, clarity around what they are being asked to do are considered to be key to the success of any volunteer programme:

*“people need progression into volunteering or into contributing or participating and you need to make that a little bit more*



*progressive, you need some first steps into contributing which can be through things like having an open day which is an ideas day .. which is actually a very informal way of gathering people's local knowledge and expertise but without it feeling too onerous."* (staff)

*"when we are trying to attract people into learning we take into consideration that people's life patterns don't necessarily allow for them to sign up for a 30 week course so we do a one off so in order to engage people in volunteering, maybe we should be using a bit more of that model"* (staff)

*"just having a chat informally or whatever, what do people want, would they want to volunteer, what would they be wanting from it"* (volunteer)

*"I'd always say, well go along and you know, see what's going on ... if you don't feel comfortable then you don't have to take part but sometimes the best things come out of things you're not sure of but you think I'll go and see what's happening and you find out it's something you get involved with and you like"* (volunteer)

One volunteer described how a local community group she had had contact with encouraged her participation and commented that the informal, no pressure approach worked well and resulted in her becoming heavily involved:

*"The Project Manager sent me a copy of the minutes and said we'd love to see you ..... and I thought I'd go coz I'm not quite sure why she wants me there but I ended up on the Steering Group and then we ended up forming this community project, applying for grants ... and now we've got our own money ..... There was no pressure to say you've got to do this if you come, it was just like 'come along and give us your ideas and tell us what you think'"* (volunteer)

Another suggestion with regard to encouraging people to consider volunteering was to build on the positive experiences expressed by current and past volunteers. The idea of producing case studies, detailing the personal journey they had taken through volunteering, was thought to be useful. The Centre was already using this approach for sharing success stories of learners.

To summarise, a developing volunteer programme needs to be mindful of a number of issues. These would include:

- What mechanism will be put in place to support the volunteering strategy and how will it be resourced?
- Who will be involved in making such decisions?

- What range of opportunities can the organisation offer? (Is there a time limit to various options?)
- What can be offered to volunteers, i.e. training, expenses, support etc?
- How can staff and Trustees best identify their own training needs?
- Will volunteer staff be treated in a similar way to paid employees (particularly with reference to input to decisions regarding the direction of the Centre).
- How can possible barriers to becoming a volunteer be identified and addressed? (findings indicate these might include low confidence levels, fear of the lack of knowledge, fear of organisational structures, time, child care and organisational jargon)

One respondent usefully identified the following as questions an individual could be encouraged to ask themselves when considering volunteering:

- Does this meet my needs?
- Have I got the time?
- What will it involve?
- What support will I get?
- Can I stop if I am not happy with my role?"

Some people considering volunteering may well be interested to know where it might lead, i.e. is there a progression route within the volunteering programme? An example of this might be if someone volunteers as a classroom assistant and then becomes interested in training to become a tutor, they will want to know whether the Centre can support this. Prior consideration of, and planning for, such situations will enable the Centre to respond assuredly. We go on now to look at issues raised during the research around progression for volunteers.

### **Progression for volunteers**

The research identified a variety of views on, and approaches to, the issue of progression for volunteers. By progression we mean the ways in which the Centre might plan for and implement stages of development for volunteers, if thought desirable by both the individual and the Centre.

*"progression routes need to have flexibility because people and volunteers of different types have very different needs and so ..you need to have multiple progression routes"*  
(Trustees/advisor)

*"I think that in education progression is quite often thought about as being quite a linear thing where you do GCSEs, A levels, Degree, Masters but actually progression I think in people's real lives doesn't work like that. ... so I think with that progression idea it's not to make being on the trustee board the pinnacle"*  
(staff)

One aspect of offering volunteering opportunities might be to increase a person's chances of employment. As we have noted earlier, this has been an outcome for some volunteers. However, the following quotes indicate that each person's situation is likely to be fairly unique, requiring the co-ordinator of volunteering to have access to information (e.g. about the effect of volunteering on benefits) to allow the best possible advice and guidance to be given:

*"she had a paid post going in there for part-time and I'm partially disabled ... I was interested but when I looked at it, the amount of money I would have earned, it wasn't worth the upheaval, I would probably have lost out so I decided no, I'd stay just a volunteer but I'd love to have been more involved"* (volunteer)

*"well I'm only actually doing 4 hours teaching at Whitehawk Inn but what I've got to do is at least double it because when they worked everything out you know I had to go to the Job Centre and talk to them"* (volunteer)

The volunteer strategy needs to be clear on the issue of progression. Is equal value to be given to volunteering opportunities which may be short-term and stand alone as to those that are more developmental in nature? The quote below is actually about learning but the message applies equally to volunteering:

*"because Gateway to Learning investigate the reasons why people don't progress it's actually a very positive thing cos it's often nothing to do with us or the course ..it's actually that it just didn't work out, wasn't what they wanted or they learnt everything they needed. People come to an IT for beginners course and don't progress to the next course and you think 'I wonder why I must have done something wrong' but actually, when you talk to people, they say well 'all I wanted was the email and the internet and that taught me that so I don't need to come any more'"* (staff)

The message seems clear, volunteering opportunities should include consideration of progression for volunteers to ensure opportunities are available should people want them. However, equal planning and support should go into 'stand alone' volunteering opportunities, i.e. those where people wish to offer their help in a particular way but have no desire to increase their involvement or avail of training. Whatever capacity a person volunteers in, the Centre needs to ensure there is a clear process for offering support.

### **Support for volunteers**

In the past, there was a designated member of staff with responsibility for supporting volunteers. Those volunteers interviewed for this work indicated that the approach taken was appreciated and worked well

*“Yes well there was a guy ... who was very animated and he was motivated and he was good fun and he used to make a lot out of it which is very important he really put energy into it .... there used to be quite a large group of volunteers .... and everybody knew each other and we would have little days and meetings and it was a nice atmosphere.” (volunteer)*

*“informal support suits people – why make it more formal?”*  
(volunteer)

At the time of the research, plans were to expand the range of volunteering opportunities available to people, such as participation on the Board of Trustees. Specific support might be considered to enable people to feel comfortable and contribute in such a setting. It was stressed that Board meetings are conducted in an informal rather than formal way, which seems appropriate for such an organisation. However, attention could usefully be given to issues such as literacy, disability, language difficulties, indeed all aspects of equality and diversity, not only when considering the overall composition of the Board but also when planning how best to ensure that all those at the meetings have an equal opportunity to understand and comment on issues:

*“you cannot assume that because someone is articulate that they are literate” (staff)*

One method used by eb4U is to employ a Board Support Worker whose role is to ensure all members of the Board of eb4U are equally equipped to contribute to meetings. The person in this role appreciates that the support needed varies from person to person and can be anything from going through papers in advance of a meeting, highlighting issues where a person might feel they have a particular contribution and rehearsing it, to getting drinks for people during the meeting. In essence the role is to make Board members feel as comfortable with their role as possible so that they and the organisation get the most from their involvement.

## **7.7 Governance (decision making)**

The Board of Trustees of the Whitehawk Inn have recently taken the decision to expand. The Board has increased to include 3 community representatives, (co-opted for the first year) and 5 members from relevant local organisations. Findings from this research indicate that it would be advisable for the newly established Board to prioritise the development of a vision around the issues of user involvement and volunteering.

Consideration needs to be given to issues of:

*“transparency / collegiality .... with board, staff, volunteers, learners and community included to ensure involvement and ownership of the vision” (staff)*

One respondent suggested new Board members be invited to an induction event in recognition of the likelihood that individuals could have their own agenda for being involved and the induction process would serve as a means of ensuring everybody is 'bought into' a shared vision.

Responses from volunteers give a useful insight into reasons why involvement of service users and local people would be beneficial, both to the individuals and the organisation:

*"Personally I'd like to know ... because if you know all the different points I think it gives you a better perspective on things because you start to realise what's possible and what's not, .. and I don't like finance much but it's something you have to do, in all projects so I'd certainly stay in the meeting .. it's more if they asked me to do any maths I couldn't do it!!" (volunteer)*

*"they could get some good input really into how to organise things cos I always felt that the Whitehawk Inn didn't fill in what it should have filled in, there was something missing somehow that not enough people were coming through the door and that's what needed a lot of attention." (volunteer)*

Responses from Trustees indicated the need for clarity around the issue of greater user involvement:

*"I think we could look at Sure Start .. they'll have a lunch and invite everybody along to it and the subject will be raised " where is Sure Start going?" so even the discussion about whether you get more people involved involves the people .. I mean it's often as informal as going to a local community centre, community group ...and saying 'we think we provide this, is it what you want?' I think perhaps ...we haven't had a model where we've thought 'that works'" (Trustee)*

*"the decision making shouldn't be so inclusive that it actually ends up not being a decision but being a complete compromise" (Trustee)*

Similarly, a variety of opinions were expressed in relation to the extent of volunteer Trustees' involvement:

*"I think it is about being transparent and not allowing it to become too professional heavy. If local people are to be involved in the board and have a positive experience, then they have to be given an equal say on the issues" (Trustee)*

*"when I think about local people's involvement, I don't necessarily mean 'final point decision making', I mean a*

*very strong influence over the direction that we take”*  
(Trustee)

*“it doesn’t have to be a local person that makes sure the financial situation is fine but you very well need to ensure that you’ve got local understanding and opinion in the way that you set up policies and have processes and practices”* (Trustee)

The above indicate that different Trustees held differing views on the issue of opening up decision making processes to a wider range of stake-holders. Whilst one felt there could be mileage in exploring models which are highly inclusive, another raised concerns about the possible effects of such a model, where one stated clearly that all should have an equal voice, another indicated that it may be appropriate at times for this not to be the case. Until there is a clear vision around what greater involvement means and how and why it is to be encouraged, it will be difficult to go on to produce a clear strategy around volunteering.

There was recognition that the organisation was going through a period of change, putting into place ambitious alterations to the governing structure and that this would take time:

*“they are making the right moves, in my view, which will create a more effective Board in order to represent more accurately the user and local community dimension ... but of course there are models, there are different opportunities and it is the Board that sets the culture and sets their objectives ... you need to be allowed to have stages of development .. give it 3 to 5 years”*  
(Trustees/advisor)

It is understood that the Board were considering a model based on having an Executive Committee with responsibility for the day to day decisions, supported by a Board of Trustees focusing more on financial management, employment issues and strategy. Such a model might work well, with the Executive Committee providing a way for members of the Centre to participate in areas of particular interest to them but avoiding long-term commitment. Findings from research carried out in relation to the experiences of local people in participating in New Deal for Communities (Dinham, 2005) seem to support this model as it found that:

*“people reported much greater ease of access at the level of the forums, less formal groups clustered around key objectives which fed into the elected board”*

However, there needs to be clarity around what the options are for members to get involved more widely if desired, particularly what the mechanisms are for greater involvement at Board level. It needs to be clear who will be involved in decisions around appropriate models. Suggestions for informing the vision included staff and Trustees investigating other organisations’ structures, perhaps identifying one that has been down a similar road, and

asking them for feedback from a range of their stakeholders about what the benefits and challenges have been.

The suggestion was made that, once a vision had been agreed, a 'Board Champion' could be elected who would have a clear remit around volunteering and ensuring the vision did not get lost.

At the point at which the fieldwork for this research was carried out, the Board had recruited one 'new' Trustee who commented as follows:

*"As for coming in new, it was a welcoming experience but like being part of anything new I haven't fully found my role yet. The Board before me, and still are, a close group of people and it is my responsibility to find where I fit within the management structure (Trustee)*

The Board could consider capturing lessons from this person's experience, along with those of other new Trustees, to inform future work around involvement and volunteering as:

*"It's often difficult for people who are involved to understand how others may experience methods which they are used to" (Beresford and Croft, 1993)*

As mentioned earlier, the idea of working jointly with other organisations around issues of involvement and volunteering were being considered. The suggestion was made that funding might be sought from eb4U to facilitate such work as part of their exit strategy. Local organisations could perhaps run 'governance workshops' with a view to ensuring their sustainability in the future.

## **7.8 Recommendations**

### **Volunteering**

- i. Agree a clear vision regarding involvement and volunteering: who is to be involved in related decisions (and from when, now?). Identify what would be the gains, losses and risks (for whom – different for different stakeholders). Give consideration to use of building and off site delivery of training.
- ii. Once vision has been clarified, draft a strategy, to be agreed across the organisation, outlining time-scale, resources, possible risks etc of recruiting and supporting volunteers. Build in regular reviews of the volunteer strategy to ensure the opportunities for volunteering that newly developing services could provide are included (e.g. employment advice)
- iii. Volunteer strategy should include consideration of opportunities for progression where appropriate. Involvement of volunteers at Trustee level is not seen as 'pinnacle' but involvement at all levels is valued.

- iv. The Volunteer strategy should highlight the need for awareness around all aspects of equality and diversity (findings suggest particular attention should be paid to interaction of volunteering and the benefit system).
- v. Replicate 'taster session' and 'open day' approaches for recruiting volunteers (i.e. a soft approach, not always asking people to commit to anything – more 'give it a go')
- vi. Seek co-operation from current volunteers to write up case study examples of their experiences to use to encourage others to consider volunteering.

### **Governance (Decision making processes)**

- i. Decide on the most appropriate management / governance structure to achieve stated aims. Be clear on who is to contribute to this decision and why. Identify what additional information may be needed in order for all stakeholders to fully understand the choices.
- ii. Identify training needs or gaps in knowledge for all stakeholders involved in governance and investigate how these can best be addressed (to enable people to contribute in an informed way to volunteer strategy – possibly run 'field trips' to other organisations who have volunteer schemes in place similar to that aimed for, or invite Trustees/volunteers/staff from other organisations to share their experiences, e.g. working together on a management committee)
- iii. Trial wider participation (e.g. on Board of Trustees) with current volunteers who are interested and capture lessons which can then be incorporated into an internal induction pack or programme for other volunteers who may wish to be involved in management.
- iv. Establish clear lines of communication between volunteers, staff and Trustees. If volunteers have contributed opinions on issues, ensure feedback is given which demonstrates they have been heard and how their contributions fed into decisions.
- v. To ensure the needs of the local community are being met by the project, clearly identify examples of where there is a mis-match between courses that users request and those that funders (e.g. LSC) will fund. Also gather evidence regarding engagement with learning and styles of progression (where appropriate), both in learning and volunteering, to feedback to funders to increase their understanding and influence the setting of targets. Identify routes / allies / channels for most effective campaigning.



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## 8. Key Findings

In relation to Neighbourhood Renewal, the findings from this research are concerned largely with issues of engagement and involvement at the local level, rather than those related to representation at a strategic level. A recent Home Office report, 'Firm Foundations', sought to review how community capacity building is valued and supported across Government departments. The report defines community capacity building as:

*"Activities, resources and support that strengthen the skills, abilities and confidence of people and community groups to take effective action and leading roles in the development of their communities"*

(Home Office, 2004:7)

It is relevant to explore the issue of capacity building as Neighbourhood Renewal guidance stresses the importance of 'promoting community involvement' (NRU, 2005) and all of the case study projects are concerned with capacity building to a greater or lesser extent.

The Firm Foundations report identifies principles which, it suggests, are used in the future to underpin Government action so that a coherent approach is taken to capacity building by the many Government departments which seek to support it. Findings from this research relate to a number (the majority) of the principles. These are:

- a) Adopt a community development approach, accepting as a starting point the values on which community development is based.
- b) Recognise and build on what exists – focusing on the assets and strengths of communities, as well as their needs or deficiencies.
- c) Take a long view – there are no quick fixes if change is to be lasting.
- d) Accept that learning is a key to success for everyone involved.

Examples of findings from the case studies will be given in relation to these principles. This is a useful way of making the links between national guidelines and what is actually happening at a local level in relation to capacity building. Rather than refer to the four principles individually, findings have been grouped under two themes, capacity building and learning. In addition, findings specifically related to funders are outlined. This is followed by discussion of the key issues arising from the findings which centre on: how people get involved; how service providers could be supported to increase involvement in service delivery; ways in which funders might adapt processes and the role that umbrella organisations might play in supporting involvement.

For a greater understanding of these examples please refer back to the relevant individual case studies in the preceding chapters.

## 8.1 Findings related to capacity building

Findings from the case studies clearly demonstrate the value of a community development approach to Neighbourhood Renewal. Such an approach prioritises the views, knowledge and skills of the community and seeks to support people to work collectively to:

*“bring about social change and justice, by working with communities  
....to: Identify their needs, opportunities, rights and responsibilities;  
plan, organise and take action; Evaluate the effectiveness and impact  
of action all in ways which challenge oppression and tackle  
inequalities”*

(Home Office, 2004:33)

The Home Office report recognises that a community development approach is an effective way of drawing marginalised and vulnerable people and groups into the process of change.

The projects studied for this research demonstrated that such an approach is at the heart of much of the work they do. Below we identify ways in which local projects are adopting a community development style and finding out what already exists within their ‘communities’ to ensure their work is informed by this and can build on it.

### **Building on existing relationships**

Recognising the importance of developing knowledge of what already exists in the local community to build trust and to ensure any project work is grounded in the community it seeks to serve.

- The Gateway to Learning team at the Whitehawk Inn prioritised attending local fairs and events, making contact with local community groups and running their own ‘pub quiz’ in order to ensure they became known within the community and had a clear understanding of the ways in which local people chose to participate within their community.
- The Engage project highlighted how, for certain groups, it was more effective to link in with existing community activity (e.g. involvement in community café) rather than start new initiatives up from scratch.
- The Hangleton and Knoll research highlighted the way in which two community organisations pooled resources (and their knowledge and contacts) to conduct a community survey.

### **Importance of a central, co-ordinating, figure**

A central figure is key to co-ordinating engagement and involvement.

- Those interviewed in the Engage research commented that it would be difficult, in the shorter term, to see how the work started by the Development worker would continue if such a post did not exist. The networks and shared ways of working developed were in their infancy and it was felt the foundations laid by the worker might crumble if the post was not sustained.

- Residents interviewed for the Hangleton and Knoll research commented on the need for a 'worker' to co-ordinate information about what was already going on in the local area as well as supporting new activity.
- Likewise, findings from the Whitehawk Inn highlighted the importance of a central figure to co-ordinate the volunteer strategy. The community development approach taken by the Gateway to Learning Team was seen as vital to supporting the involvement of local people in the organisation.

### **Finding out what people's interests are**

Projects prioritise finding out what people's interests are and how they'd like to be involved – assumptions are avoided. Appealing to a person or group's interests and recognising their skills enhances the likelihood that they will get, and stay, involved.

- Volunteers at the Whitehawk Inn expressed wider interests related to their involvement within the organisation than anticipated by Trustees.
- Engage carried out extensive mapping of services provided by the Christian community which demonstrated that those involved in community work had a variety of motivations. Despite this, bringing people together around a focused issue or task related to their interests (in this case an exhibition) proved an effective way of encouraging them to work together.
- The Carers Development Worker's project was expanding the opportunities for local carers to get involved in the work of the project. An effective way of doing this has been to break down the work of the project steering group into tasks, recognising the particular skills and interest's people have e.g. action groups rather than all members considering all aspects of the work.
- Research carried out with the Police indicated that surgeries held specifically for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender community were well advertised (via specialised media) and attended whereas the generic surgeries were less successful.

This style of involvement, i.e. around a specific issue for, perhaps, a limited period of time, arguably encourages a wider range of people to become involved than the often used management committee style. It also gives the opportunity for people to 'dip in and out', i.e. not commit to long periods of involvement which might, perhaps, go some way to addressing the issue of the 'usual suspects' dominating representation.

### **What 'involvement in their community' means**

There needs to be recognition that it can mean different things to different people.

- A respondent in the Hangleton and Knoll project made the point that attending a school fair *is* getting involved, you don't necessarily need to run a stall.
- Respondents in the Whitehawk Inn research highlighted the importance of an individual making the decision to 'walk through the door' of the centre. This can be viewed as volunteering to be involved in learning and, for some, is a huge step.

### **One-to-one support.**

Many of the people such projects seek to 'engage' have complicated lives and often require considerable support and encouragement to become involved in something new.

- One of the carers interviewed for the hidden carers research described the intensive support she received from the Development Worker to enable her to access locally delivered courses. She acknowledged that although she knew of the courses and had contact details, she would never have had the confidence to pursue them on her own.
- The Gateway to Learning team at the Whitehawk Inn also recognised the importance of intense support in the early stages of contact with some people.
- The SCIP research highlighted the need for more intensive support for some of its learners, who either struggled to keep up in a classroom setting or got ahead more quickly than others. Research suggests that the impact of SCIP's web design training might be increased by following up training in the classroom with a greater proportion of one-to-one support to individual organisations.
- Whilst respondents in the Engage research appreciated the value of the group training, many felt that intensive support from the development worker for their individual organisation would be necessary to help them develop their work and ensure its sustainability.

Infrastructure organisations such as SCIP and Engage highlighted the decisions that need to be made when directing resources towards either one-to-one support or more generic support

### **The power of word of mouth communication.**

- The carers Development Worker project highlighted ways in which services can be endorsed by members of the community. This clearly demonstrated the importance of local level trust and enabled the information to reach a greater number of people.
- the Hangleton and Knoll research found that residents were effective in spreading the word about local events, encouraging others to attend. The research also highlighted the potential for building greater links with workers who regularly visit homes, as residents commented that they often heard of events and services via Playlink workers.
- The Police are working with resident associations in the delivery of surgeries as there is a belief that residents will know others in the community and 'spread the word'.

### **Involving local people in project development**

The involvement of local people in the endorsing of services and advising on processes is highly valued.

- The Carers project involved local carers in the design and location of posters to reach 'hidden carers' in East Brighton. Advice received through this process was invaluable and could only have come from those who had experience of being a carer in that location.

- The Whitehawk Inn were committed to involving existing volunteers when developing their strategy for increasing volunteering opportunities at the centre (e.g. existing volunteers emphasised the importance of informality and opportunities for social gatherings). They planned to develop case study examples of existing volunteers to encourage others. The organisation also benefited from feedback from the community which resulted in them offering taster sessions and short courses, along with more traditional courses, in order to meet the needs of a wider range of learners.
- The Police research highlighted the importance of appropriate advertising of planned surgeries (i.e. posters etc directed overtly at the local community rather than standardised police posters).
- SCIP planned to use case studies of learners who had already developed web sites.
- Hangleton and Knoll used videos of past community events to let people know what had happened and been achieved in the past. Residents identified their own clear recommendations for encouraging involvement in community activity and stressed the importance of informality in order to ensure people felt comfortable participating. They also emphasised that many people felt more comfortable going to events etc with a friend so organisations should explicitly encourage this in advertising.

### **Stand alone events are valuable**

Efforts should be made to ensure that each instance of contact has value as a stand alone event.

- The Engage research highlighted the importance placed on making each stage of the community work training valuable as a stand alone event, so that even if a person did not choose to continue they would gain something (e.g. a list of contacts of others attending, some practical suggestions regarding their work).
- The Whitehawk Inn run taster sessions which are useful in themselves or can be starting point for further learning.

### **Giving feedback**

There needs to be recognition of the importance of maintaining momentum following initial contact and giving feedback.

- The development worker for Engage ensured that each time people got together to explore ideas of community work, notes were written up and circulated. Participants particularly appreciated being kept informed in this way, especially if they had missed a meeting.
- Findings from the Police project implied that there was an issue around the local community receiving feedback on issues raised with the Police. It appears that lack of communication leads to frustration, on the sides of both the community and the Police, as actions taken and successes achieved by the Police were not necessarily fed back to those who raised them.
- The Hangleton and Knoll research demonstrated a commitment to 'striking whilst the iron was hot' by following up those people who had offered

contact details during the survey quickly in order to work with them on the issues they had raised.

### **Sustaining activities**

Organisations extended their remit to enable users to continue their activities (taking on a Community Development role)

- A group of learners from the Whitehawk Inn were being supported to seek funding in their own right to continue their activities.
- The Hangleton and Knoll research highlighted the additional and vital development role staff at the community centre were taking on in supporting community groups to fundraise to cover increased costs of renting rooms at the community centre.
- Several organisations were exploring how their assets (e.g. buildings) could be used more broadly by local communities (Engage – church buildings for cafes, Whitehawk Inn possibly exploring wider use of their premises by community groups). Extending the use of buildings was recognised as contributing to building stronger links with the local community.

### **Partnership working**

Projects recognise the need to build better links between organisations - understanding what was already available and how different organisations and agencies can complement each other.

- Engage research demonstrated the value of increasing communication between organisations in order to avoid overlap and to pool resources. This is seen as providing scope for resources to be released to meet additional needs and set up new projects in other areas.
- The Hangleton & Knoll survey considered which agencies to collaborate with in order to target specific groups (e.g. housebound people) which might be missed when carrying out the survey at community events.
- Police training adapted to include work placements with wide range of organisations.
- SCIP's work identified the importance of Voluntary and Community sector infrastructure organisations collaborating in order to promote organisational development within the groups with whom they work.
- A number of the projects highlighted the benefits of partnership working in relation to developing referral pathways (e.g. carers via work with health professionals and Engage where the networking facilitated by the project enabled workers to refer to a wider range of organisations/agencies).

### **Engagement takes time**

The research highlighted the time required to achieve meaningful engagement because of the levels of support or help some people might need. It is recognised that such intensive one-to-one support takes a lot of workers' time but the rewards, i.e. the eventual involvement of some of the hardest to reach people, is valued.



- The Whitehawk Inn research highlighted the frustration felt by the organisation when insufficient time for involvement of all stakeholders was available in order to meet revised funding deadlines.
- In contrast, the benefits of the flexibility surrounding the community survey carried out by Hangleton and Knoll were appreciated. As the survey was not tied to any particular funding stream, workers were able to go at their own pace, developing and carrying out the work as appropriately as possible to ensure a broad range of stakeholders' involvement.

### **Organisational change**

Recognition that encouraging greater involvement and ownership may require changes in governance structures.

- Whitehawk Inn was seeking to broaden the involvement of volunteers and expanding representation on the Board of Trustees. There was recognition that this would be most effective if there was a clear vision stating the organisations' commitment regarding the involvement of local people. The Whitehawk Inn was considering a range of ways for people to get involved, from sitting on the Board to taking part in a specific Advisory Groups and Open Days.

## **8.2 Findings related to learning**

Neighbourhood Renewal requires change and this research highlights the importance of identifying how and what those involved learn and how lessons might be captured and shared. Examples of the variety of ways in which learning emerges are given below:

### **Knowledge building, training and skills development**

These are being recognised and addressed in a range of ways. There are examples related to staff from statutory agencies as well as community members. A key message to emerge is that learning happens (and is supported) in a variety of ways and in a variety of settings. The work of the Whitehawk Inn illustrates how learning is valued in relation to the impact it has on a person's well being. Such learning does not have to be (and often won't be) formal or long-term (e.g. taster sessions / short courses).

- The work that SCIP does takes a broad view and every effort is made to ensure the opportunities they offer promote personal and organisational development.
- The Police demonstrated that they recognised the value and potential of greater interaction with the community and voluntary sector by including placements with such organisations as part of police training.
- The Carers Centre aimed to increase their input to the training of social workers and health care professionals (training carers to deliver this) in order to raise awareness of carers issues. Such work should increase the likelihood of such professionals being better equipped to identify hidden carers.

### **Exchanging knowledge**

Projects recognised the importance of the exchange of knowledge between different stakeholders.

- The Carers Development Worker was keenly aware of the learning to be gained from local carers and therefore broadened the ways in which they can be involved in the running of the project, whilst at the same time ensuring all carers were made aware of learning opportunities that exist.
- A key element of the work of Engage was to raise awareness of the work carried out by faith groups among the wider community and voluntary sector and vice versa.

### **Reflective planning**

Recognition of the value of adopting a reflective planning approach to development of services was demonstrated by the projects.

- The work carried out by the development worker at Engage was founded on an action learning model. This approach was new to many of those with whom he worked and was thought to provide useful tools for community work.
- The Hangleton and Knoll community survey developed in a different way than initially anticipated as a result of the application of an action learning based way of working.

The action research model adopted when working with the case studies highlighted how useful such an approach can be. On-going reflection of what has been done and achieved allows future action and direction to be adapted where necessary.

### **Learning ‘on the job’**

Examples demonstrating the value of learning via ‘doing’

- The Whitehawk Inn provided an example of learners becoming volunteers and then, in some cases, becoming tutors.
- SCIP and Engage were considering whether to work in a more bespoke way with organisations, rather than people trying to learn in abstract in class.

### **Sustainability**

The research provides evidence that projects learnt from activities undertaken and plan in order to ensure relationships built throughout a project’s lifetime continue, if appropriate, after funding for the activity finishes. The organisations attempted to put in place mechanisms that would ensure the work continued.

- SCIP learners’ requested on-going support once the classroom-based course had finished, this was addressed by provision of an e-forum.
- The Engage project gives a good example of a group being supported to come together and decide on shared priorities. Having successfully completed one action together (the exhibition), participants had the

opportunity of re-grouping and taking the next priority forward, building on previous work, if they felt this was appropriate.

## **8.3 Findings related to funding**

### **Flexibility with regard to outcomes**

Projects benefit when associated funding allows a level of flexibility around outcomes. The existence of 'softer' outcomes, which cannot always be measured, could usefully be recognised by funders.

- The Engage training programme did not run in as anticipated. However the worker reflected on the strengths of what was achieved and revised his approach. By making use of the outreach he'd already done he was able to achieve similar outcomes through a different route. This was recognised by funders.
- As the work of the Carers Development Worker and the Gateway to Learning team of the Whitehawk Inn demonstrate, outcomes from outreach are often not known at all or, at the least, are very hard to measure.

### **Matching community need with funding targets**

Projects can experience difficulties funding work to meet identified need as many funding streams have prescribed outcomes which don't necessarily match community needs.

- The Whitehawk Inn identified courses wanted by the local community but found that they could not be funded as such courses (often interest based) would not lead to the required level of qualification currently prioritised by Government funding (Whilst there is funding for interest based courses which might precede more formal learning, it often has restrictions associated with it e.g. minimum number of learners for course to run).
- In contrast, SCIP received funding to run training courses and were able to exceed the targets. However, the organisation was concerned that the courses were having a limited longer-term impact on individual organisations attending the training.

### **Group constitution**

Projects identified that encouragement of formal group formation by funders to increase involvement was not always appropriate. Findings suggest an important role for 'umbrella organisations' where there is reluctance to formalise a group.

- The Carers Development Worker research identified a group that wished to continue its activities but did not wish to formally constitute. The Carers Centre were exploring possibilities for supporting this group.
- In Hangleton a group of young people keen to provide a youth shelter worked with the local action group to access funding and support from relevant service providers. This was a one-off activity, they did not wish to formalise their group.

## 8.4 Discussion

The research demonstrates that local organisations work in a variety of ways to increase the involvement of local people in issues that affect them and their communities. The majority of organisations involved in this research were striving to ensure that people were supported to achieve the level of involvement they wanted and recognised that a range of opportunities were necessary to make this happen. Below we discuss issues raised regarding involvement in relation to: how people get involved; how service providers could increase involvement; how funders might promote and support involvement and the role that umbrella organisations could play in encouraging involvement.

### 8.4.1 How local people get involved

The case studies illustrate that much community activity and capacity exists already within neighbourhoods. In addition, ‘involvement in their community’ means different things to different people, ranging from walking through the door of a training centre, to helping out a neighbour, to attending a local action group (see Jochum *et al* 2005’s useful framework, figure 1.2). Much of this activity is informal in nature, such as chats over the garden fence, valued for its social benefits as much as for its contribution to wider community goals, and dependent on word of mouth. Those who get involved are often motivated by self-interest, perceiving a need that affects them in some way e.g. a lack of youth activities. The nature of how people get involved is changing. Jochum *et al* (2005) suggest that engagement is now more episodic. Individual membership organisations (based on duties and responsibilities) requiring longer term commitment are now considered less attractive. In the light of this, informality has certain benefits:

*“informality makes it possible for people to become involved on their terms. This is important for community development which relies on the voluntary engagement of community members.”*

(Gilchrist, 2004:75)

The research suggests that people are more likely to get involved when they are asked directly and when they can negotiate their involvement. Such negotiation may include breaking down involvement into manageable, ‘doable’ tasks that appeal to their skills and interest. Informality also provides opportunities for ‘dipping in and out’ of an activity.

In addition to acknowledging peoples’ preference for informality, a number of the case studies illustrate the importance of an understanding of the ‘culture’ of different areas. For projects to be successful and contribute to civil renewal in neighbourhoods, time must be put in to building relationships with local people and groups. Williams’ (2005) work, highlighting the difference between modes of interaction and participation between more and less affluent neighbourhoods, explains why a lack of such understanding could result in projects, and programmes such as Neighbourhood Renewal, failing to meet their aims. If the ways in which people tend to interact and participate within their communities are not understood and built upon, projects run the risk of

being unable to engage local people and inspire them to become more deeply involved. As Williams (2005) argues, there is a tendency for policy to view participation in community based groups and networks (on a hierarchical basis) as a more 'mature' form of involvement and one-to-one aid (helping out a neighbour, the importance of word of mouth recommendations of services etc) as 'simple' or 'immature'. This means that informal involvement and one-to-one aid is undervalued. Williams (2005) calls for greater recognition of such involvement in policy.

*"If the intention is either local democratic renewal (e.g. SEU, 2000) or encouraging local solutions to be sought to local problems...then a hierarchical depiction is valid and appropriate. Community-based groups, after all, lend themselves to fulfilling these objectives far better than one-to-one aid. However, if an intention is to bolster community spirit (Putnam, 2000) or deliver support to those in need ....then .....an alternative conceptualisation and more variegated policy approach may well be required"*

(Williams, 2005:31)

The findings from this research would back this up since they demonstrate that people respond well if a variety of opportunities for involvement are made available. This would seem to suggest that the 'official' routes for involvement in Neighbourhood Renewal -election as representatives on networks etc- could usefully be expanded to ensure that a variety of appropriate opportunities are made available to enable people to exercise influence, while achieving the level of involvement they want. As the research highlights, some will wish to be heavily involved and feel comfortable with more formal processes whereas others will wish to have their concerns heard via a more informal approach.

Recognising a range of opportunities for involvement would both contribute to a healthy civil society (a good end in itself) and strengthen the base from which local people can potentially feed into wider Neighbourhood Renewal processes. There are encouraging signs that the need to provide such a range of opportunities is starting to happen (see for example, the Firm Foundations Report, Home Office, 2004).

Given the ways people tend to interact within their communities, we will now highlight ways in which service providers and funders can better support the involvement of local people in Neighbourhood Renewal processes.

#### **8.4.2 Service providers**

In each Neighbourhood Renewal area in Brighton & Hove, a designated Action Group or organisation has responsibility for taking forward the issues identified by their communities in the local Neighbourhood Action Plan (NAP). Such groups typically include representatives from services implicated in the NAPs. Our research illustrates that this process works well in some cases, for example the development of a youth shelter in Hangleton, and highlights the pivotal role 'umbrella' organisations (such as the action group in Hangleton) can play. This model of communication between communities and service

providers works on the basis of the community identifying issues and asking the services to respond. One way in which the process of Neighbourhood Renewal could be usefully developed would be for service providers to also adopt more of a community development approach. As pointed out in the Home Office report:

*“Public servants and other major service-providing organisations need to be equipped to engage better with citizens and communities. Building community capacity and learning and development in public services are two sides of the same coin”*  
(Home Office, 2004:7)

We would suggest that a structure is already in place within Brighton and Hove which could help services with the identification of need and offer guidance on how best to deliver its services. Responsible to the Neighbourhood Renewal Review Group (a sub-group of the Local Strategic Partnership), the NR team co-ordinate communication between neighbourhoods and services and it is this co-ordination role that is key. The team is well placed to pass on information to service providers and encourage them to develop knowledge about particular areas and the skills for engaging effectively and proactively with communities.

One way in which the team is already working effectively with service providers is identifying themes which are common to a number of neighbourhoods and liaising with relevant services to enable communities to do what they want to do more easily. An example of this is the running of community events or festivals which potentially requires input from a number of local government departments and other organisations (e.g. environment, health and safety, transport). The Neighbourhood Renewal Support Worker, who works across the Neighbourhood Renewal areas, organised some training for residents involved in the neighbourhood community festivals. The relevant officers within the local authority were invited to come and meet the festival teams as well as provide information and offer practical help. This enabled a more co-ordinated and responsive service.

*“The presence of a manager or co-ordinator who can manage the interface between different tiers and spheres of action and secure the involvement of wider partners is an important factor in the success of interaction”*

(Local Government information Unit (LgiU), 2006:3)

We would suggest further support and development of this model, with the neighbourhood renewal team supporting service providers to work in this new way across the city. This would require buy-in from the local authority and other service providers, as well as the development of mechanisms for service providers to be responsive (through NAPs, Neighbourhood Action Groups etc) in *all* neighbourhoods, in the context of their overall delivery, not just within the 10 current Neighbourhood Renewal areas. As the Police Case Study shows, many issues raised within Neighbourhood Renewal areas are actually city

wide issues - parking, drug abuse etc. King Taylor (2005) even raises the question of whether it would be appropriate for local neighbourhood groups to be supported from service providers' funds as they provide an important route for communication and consultation.

When involving local people in making decisions and setting priorities in their neighbourhoods, it is important to negotiate when it is appropriate for issues to be supported by local community development work or when issues are most effectively addressed by encouraging service providers to take on a development style of working themselves. The Neighbourhood Renewal team, as well as community development workers within neighbourhoods, are key in this process of negotiation between residents and service providers.

### **8.4.3 Funders**

While the relationship between funders and projects on the ground is typically viewed as a reporting relationship between giver and receiver, the research demonstrates the value of funders cultivating a more flexible relationship based on more detailed knowledge of the projects they fund.

*“There is an increasingly established picture of the relationship between funders and community organisations in which the former set the agenda and the latter do the work. However, this model of the relationship can limit the capacity of community organisations to deliver and of funders to learn”*

(Craig, J. and Skidmore, P., 2005:73)

Developing more flexibility within this relationship could benefit both funder and project. For the project, flexibility ensures it can respond effectively to the situation it finds itself working in, rather than adhering strictly to the original project delivery plan. A funder seeking to achieve a range of outcomes could be aided to do so by developing continuing dialogue with a project (which may include actually visiting project on the ground). This increased contact and understanding of issues may highlight that the project is actually impacting on a range of outcomes (for example contributing to wider health and education targets), not simply the one they are funded to deliver (e.g. community safety). Better understanding of projects and their outcomes further increases the evidence base for project work and may potentially result in expanding the sources of funding available for a project (as the work contributes to a range of funder's outcomes).

This model, based on a more flexible relationship between funder and project, is already in use within Brighton & Hove by the Scarman Trust as part of the Single Community Programme. The Scarman Trust's role is more one of facilitator than of funder. Its support for groups is characterised by a simplified grant application process, visits to groups by development workers, the acceptance of more flexible and creative monitoring and reporting, and the sharing of learning between projects at celebration events.

#### **8.4.4 The role of umbrella organisations**

In addition to developing the support that services and funders could offer to encourage involvement in processes of Neighbourhood Renewal, the findings suggest that umbrella organisations or 'community anchor organisations' do, or could, play an important role.

*“Strong, sustainable community-based organisations can provide a crucial focus and support for community development and change in their neighbourhood or community. We are calling them ‘community anchor organisations’ because of the solid foundation they give to a wide variety of self-help and capacity building activities in local communities, and because of their roots within their communities.”*  
(Home Office, 2004:19)

Formalising community involvement, through constituted groups, aims to ensure accountability for public funds and ensure that groups that could potentially speak on the community's behalf (e.g. through the Community Empowerment Network) are representative. However, as the research highlighted, a preference for the informal means that it may not always be appropriate to try and formalise community activity. Activity may be one-off or stand alone. In addition, when an activity is formalised, responsibilities for issues such as health and safety, managing volunteers, serving food, child protection etc must also become formalised. This can put a break on the type of spontaneous community organising which naturally exists, as people are unsure where responsibility lies or are reluctant to take on the responsibility themselves. Given the fact that respondents in the research preferred to get involved on an informal basis, such formalising may actually dissuade people from getting involved. This has implications for the 'official' culture of participation and initiatives such as Neighbourhood Renewal which invite residents to get involved in formal decision-making structures and commit to elected positions of responsibility.

Informal community activity could often benefit from small amounts of funding. However, whilst there may be a reluctance to formalise there is a need to account for public funds. We would therefore suggest a greater role for umbrella or anchor organisations, which would allow unconstituted groups to link with them in order to access small amounts of funding to continue their activities.

The research shows that organisations, such as the Whitehawk Inn and the Carers Centre, are taking on additional community development roles, outside of their main remit, and may wish to apply for small amounts of funding on behalf of the informal groups they support. However, because of their size they may be restricted from applying for the small pots of money intended for small community groups to access. Funders assume that by capping an organisation's turnover they are being more inclusive of smaller groups. However, it is precisely such support from a larger, umbrella organisation that smaller groups, reluctant to constitute, may need.



## 8.5 Conclusion

The findings of this report highlight the fact that much community activity and capacity already exists within Neighbourhood Renewal areas and should be recognised. The case studies illustrate some of the successful ways in which the projects are supporting community capacity building, both within and across neighbourhoods. In contrast to the official, formal channels offered for residents to get involved in Neighbourhood Renewal processes, the research has highlighted peoples' preference for the informal and the importance of providing a range of opportunities for involvement.

In addition to supporting capacity building at the community level, we have suggested there is greater potential for developing the capacity of funders and service providers to engage with local communities. Funders and service providers should be encouraged and supported to adopt more of a community development approach themselves in relation to Neighbourhood Renewal. These are 'two sides of the same coin' (Home Office, 2004) and both are necessary if local people are to be involved in making decisions and setting priorities in their neighbourhoods.

## 8.6 Recommendations

Findings from the research were presented by way of a workshop at the local Community and Voluntary Sector Forum conference. Participants, who included representatives from a range of community and voluntary organisations, as well as one from a statutory service provider, were asked to respond to the recommendations presented below. Where appropriate, the wording of the recommendation has been altered in light of the feedback and additional comments received via this process are shown beneath each recommendation.

### Recommendation 1

Those seeking the wider involvement of local people in Neighbourhood Renewal (workers on the ground, services and funders) could benefit from actively developing their understanding of the local 'culture of participation' in neighbourhoods, including the many different ways in which people learn. Such knowledge ensures Neighbourhood Renewal processes build upon how local people choose to interact and get involved in community activity.

#### Feedback:

*"Exactly – don't try to develop new structures but try and find out what is already there. Twenty + residents attend bingo at the centre – many of whom would not be seen at a meeting"*

There was unanimous agreement that this was a sound recommendation. It was suggested that there is a need to think about developing training on how to engage with the community, based on an understanding of the local 'culture of participation'. It was also suggested that attention should be paid to the

definition of 'community involvement' in relation to community work and funders. Such a definition should highlight the fact that 'involvement' includes 'just turning up' to a community activity.

## **Recommendation 2**

Service Providers could be supported (e.g. by Neighbourhood Renewal Review Group and the NR team) to develop more of a co-ordinated and responsive service by adopting a community development approach and employing development workers where appropriate.

### **Feedback:**

This recommendation was supported in general. There was a recognition that:

*“some services can’t always be delivered in the same way in all areas – age, ability, environment etc can make a difference”.*

Whilst the recommendation proposes that services be encouraged to adopt a more community development led approach, it was pointed out that decisions on the spend for Community Development (CD) workers are made by the Neighbourhood Renewal Review Group (NRRG) and that neighbourhood network representatives had successfully increased this amount of funding. This highlights the fact that the NRRG and the NR team are well placed to support services to collaborate with existing CD workers as well as establish need and deliver their service most appropriately in areas which lack CD workers. In a similar vein, the person at the feedback session representing a service provider also highlighted the need to give consideration to those areas which did not benefit from the Neighbourhood Action Plan process:

*“We need a short-cut to community groups for assessing their priorities and feedback on how development may affect them – is this via the NR team?”*

## **Recommendation 3**

Those seeking the wider involvement of local people in Neighbourhood Renewal could usefully explore ways of supporting one-off community activity or groups that wish to remain informal, who are reluctant or unable to constitute to access funding. The potential for umbrella organisations to support such groups should be examined and possible ways forward identified (This could include relaxing restrictions on larger umbrella organisations to enable them to access funding on behalf of more informal groups).

### **Feedback:**

The role that 'umbrella' organisations could play in supporting groups who wish to avoid constitution was recognised, along with corroboration of reasons why such groups may not wish to be formalised.

*“The pressure on small projects to be over formal can definitely be undermining of their natural state and culture and result in excluding people who might be key players. Umbrella organisations can help to take on some of the bureaucratic burden”.*

The importance of clarifying the style and make-up (i.e. resident-led) of appropriate umbrella groups was highlighted. It was suggested that care needs to be taken not to move back to former community development methods where large organisations held funds for a community group. The need for collaborative working was recognised along with the difficulties smaller organisations may have in being fairly represented.

#### **Recommendation 4**

Existing and developing funding streams need to develop supportive, facilitative and flexible relationships with the projects they fund. The work of the Scarman Trust and their use of development workers to help projects develop their ideas provide a useful model. Such an approach enables organisations to be responsive to developments within their projects and allows funders to recognise and respond to the contributions projects are making to a range of outcomes.

#### **Feedback**

*“Yes, I think the Scarman approach is a good one for community groups – makes applying for funds much less intimidating and builds positive relationship with funder”.*

However, the question was asked whether the Government (as a funder) would have the time and money to adopt the “thorough and thoughtful” approach taken by Scarman? In addition, a respondent flagged up ways in which funders tend to operate:

*“Funders tend to like something new and this could dilute the aims of the project. Also, some funders require a time break between successful applications”.*

When encouraging funders to work in more flexible and responsive ways, it would be necessary to address such issues.

*“Being supportive and flexible is key as organisations develop. Scarman use other Community Development workers in this process – again it depends on what is there – who is helping those where no NAP group exists etc”*

There was agreement that funders should adopt a more flexible approach to outcomes.



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