

Further Information and Resources:

If you would like this in another format or a copy of the East End Community Development Alliance case study, "Releasing the Potential of the People" please contact:

East End Community Development Alliance
Walker Library
554 Welbeck Road
Walker
Newcastle Upon Tyne
NE6 2PA

0191 275 9477
enquiries@eastendalliance.org.uk
www.eastendalliance.org.uk



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Author: Rob Errington 2008





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"Releasing the Potential of the People"

Lessons from the East End Community Development Alliance Newcastle upon Tyne

What is the East End Community Development Alliance?

-  It is an independent network of community and voluntary sector groups in the East End of Newcastle upon Tyne. It has over 90 members.
-  The Alliance's aim and 'mission' is "To improve the community's role in developing local solutions to local problems".



-  The Alliance helps the community and voluntary sector participate as an equal partner in the development and regeneration of the area. It doesn't speak for people - it helps to strengthen their voice.
-  The Alliance aims to employ workers most of whom live in the area. These Community Linkworkers have a distinctive practice role: to engage with, and offer support in the process of developing local communities.

This leaflet gives an insight into one organisation's experience of building a community response to the issues faced by local residents and groups. We hope it will be of interest to others seeking to do the same thing. It is taken from a full research report, 'Releasing the Potential of the People'. Further details of how to get a copy of this report can be found on the back page.



What does the Alliance Do?

Key Lessons from Practice and Experience

a The Alliance **provides information** – producing a regular newsletter, and a website providing a virtual ‘consultation corner’.

a It **engages with local communities** in a number of ways - organising consultation events around important concerns, inviting guest speakers from other areas and providing opportunities to meet around regular, informal coffee mornings. It also employs local Linkworkers who can bridge the gap between ‘professionals’ and ‘residents’.

a It **provides advice and capacity building support** – including how to write constitutions, setting up bank accounts, fundraising.

a It **runs small grants programmes** for local groups, and schemes such as ‘Small Sparks’ for individuals.

a It **delivers training** – learning programmes such as Introduction to Community Development, Asylum Awareness Raising and STEPS.

a The Alliance **provides support for community involvement in strategic decision making** – support and resources for local residents and members on regeneration partnerships and running consultations on local issues.

Local ownership and independent status for the organisation from the outset is essential. It needs to be the organising principle and the foundation upon which the organisation is developed, not an add-on.

How the organisation works can be just as important as what it produces, sometimes more so. **The best organisations are ‘developing organisations’, bringing growth for everyone involved.**

Employing local residents who understand the issues facing their communities has been vital in gaining the trust of local people. It is hard for such workers to switch off from work, but this ‘problem’ for them is offset by the advantages of local insight and expertise.

A community development approach throughout the organisation is imperative. It provides a clear set of values that informs and shapes the management of change. Community Development National Occupational Standards clarify the roles and expectations for Advisory Group members and all who engage with the Alliance.

Each community group has its own identity and unique characteristics. The role of **strengthening** community groups involves recognising their uniqueness and learning to support them in different ways. This requires flexibility in approach and rejecting the ‘one size fits all’ practice mentality.

The recognition that **empowering people often means giving up control yourself.** Good practice is more than putting your logo everywhere and claiming credit.

Organising and processing a grants programme can be a means of building relationships with local groups. A little bit of money, if used effectively, can go a long way and often unleash hidden resources of energy and imagination.

Listen to what local people want – and act on it!

