

Working together in neighbourhoods – how is neighbourhood management working for you?

**Monday 8 September 2008
Queens Walk Community Centre**

What was it?

Community Network dedicated a whole day to giving voluntary and community groups the opportunity to learn more about neighbourhood management and to share their views on how the approach is working for them.

The event was well attended, with 49 participants from over 30 different organisations. These included some participants from unfunded voluntary organisations and local people not affiliated to a group. You can see the list of everyone who attended, and their email addresses, [here](#).

Keynote speakers

The afternoon began with a series of short talks from city leaders, illustrating different aspects of neighbourhood working.

Lianne Taylor, Acting Director of Local Communities at Nottingham City Council

Lianne talked about the Council's developing approach to neighbourhood management, in the context of the government's community empowerment white paper¹. Lianne explained the structure of the Council's Area Committees and neighbourhood staff teams. She emphasised that neighbourhood management is not about what Council staff do – it's about how all the agencies work together. That's why she always talks about "working together in neighbourhoods".

The vision is that Nottingham will build on and strengthen a whole range of existing routes for identifying neighbourhood priorities, so that services are focussed on what local people say. Lianne said that she expects increasing opportunities for voluntary and community groups to both influence what happens in neighbourhoods and be paid to provide some of the services.

You can read Lianne's full presentation [here](#).

Anne-Marie Ainger, NCVS Trustee / independent consultant

Anne-Marie spoke about connecting small (often volunteer based) voluntary and community groups, including faith groups, to neighbourhood management. She fed back

¹ Communities in control: real people, real power 2008 Communities and Local Government

results from the research she has done on the barriers to involving small groups, and how these can be overcome.

The key message from Anne-Marie's research was that our databases are inadequate: we need to use the personal contacts of grassroots groups and workers on the ground. Anne-Marie also stressed that grassroots groups matter. They might not be delivering big contracts for the City Council but the 20 groups she met were, between them, working with 1,320 children, many of whom are a priority for Integrated Children's Services.

Read Anne-Marie's full presentation [here](#).

Dave Bell, Community Leaders Opportunities Group (CLOG)

Dave spoke about how it feels to be on the receiving end of the neighbourhood management model – how it feels to be neighbourhood managed.

He argued that the real experts in neighbourhood management are the people who live in neighbourhoods, and that residents and community leaders should be recognised as experts and treated as real partners in deciding priorities and judging the quality of services. Dave talked about the dangers of token gestures and said if involvement of local people isn't meaningful, then don't bother.

Dave also took the opportunity to promote CLOG – community leaders opportunities group – which is a new group that brings community leaders together across the city to share what they know, who they know and how to get things done.

The workshops

Delegates then split up into five workshops. Details of these workshops are given below, with links to any papers used, and a list of the key messages from each workshop.

1) Neighbourhood management and housing

Facilitated by Jenny Dickenson, Nottingham City Homes

- The neighbourhood management approach to the Crabtree Farm estate was given as an example, highlighting how City Homes, police, voluntary groups, City Council and local people all worked together. The group was impressed with the progress made using this level of partnership working. You can see how all the partners work together in neighbourhood management [here](#).
- There were lots of suggestions as to how City Homes could work within a neighbourhood management model, including:
 - Knock on doors to talk to people face to face
 - Build trust with tenants
 - Work with residents, not just tenants, when there are decisions to be made that affect everyone
 - Tackle any bad reputation
 - Show that you are doing something – take action and then feedback to residents
 - Tackle the confusion between the roles of City Homes and City Council

- Be more visible.

2) What do faith communities bring to neighbourhood management?

Facilitated by John Murray, Inter Faith Council

- The group started by talking about faith led activities in the city, and how they enhanced their communities.
- There was then a long discussion about how to improve links and relationships between different faith groups and the wider community. Here are just a few of the many suggestions made:
 - Get faith groups more involved in area meetings
 - Improve media relations
 - More outreach work across the city
 - More work towards community cohesion
 - Challenge stereotypes.

3) Including Black and Minority Ethnic communities in neighbourhood management

Facilitated by Afzal Sadiq, Racial Equality Council

- BME communities don't necessarily come together on a neighbourhood basis – many communities are cross city.
- It's important to make genuine links with and involve BME communities in neighbourhood management - they are part of the community and may bring different perspectives and priorities that need to be considered
- Consultation needs to be meaningful – say thank you and give feedback to those who were involved. Consider who is involved in neighbourhood management (who sits at the table?) and what effort is made to seek wider involvement. Have a standing agenda item at meetings – who is here, who isn't, why aren't they and what can we do about it?
- Needs to be a genuine partnership, considering the language that is used, accessible venues, and how to make it meaningful and accountable
- Afzal gave out a useful document called Top Ten Tips for working with BME communities – you can read it [here](#).

4) Increasing residents' influence on planning issues

Facilitated by Jacky Dobson, Meadows Partnership Trust

- Residents often don't engage in consultation because they don't see how it might affect their community or don't understand the information they are given.
- Knocking on people's doors and talking face to face is more effective, but very time consuming.
- Need to ensure that residents' views are heard at a strategic level, and it's important to give residents feedback about what changes as a result.
- Get as many people as possible involved
- Don't just send out leaflets – you need to knock on people's doors to really engage them

- People need to be empowered to feel they can challenge decisions. This should be done through training, not just on the planning process, but on assertiveness and confidence building.
- Planning is complicated!

5) How does neighbourhood policing fit?

Facilitated by Paul Cottee, Nottinghamshire Police

- The group discussed neighbourhood policing, including:
 - the importance of having good local knowledge
 - weeks of action were good
 - police attendance at tenants and residents meetings and local action groups is important and valued
 - the service is patchy across the city
 - need a greater police presence on our streets
 - communication and feedback could be better
 - there seems to be a high staff turnover
 - Police Community Support Officers (PCSO) need more back up and more power
- The local action group in Aspley was highlighted as an example of best practice. It meets every 6 weeks, and is a forum for local people, community groups and the police to raise concerns and talk about solutions. This is a model of neighbourhood police engagement which has been piloted successfully in Aspley and St Anns and will be rolled out across the city.

New research on influencing decisions

Mark Bowyer, Broxtowe Partnership Trust, gave a presentation about findings from some new local research into what it means to influence a decision. This relates to one of the key targets in the new local area agreement - the percentage of people who feel they can influence decisions in their local area.

The research used focus groups to ask:

What do people understand by the word 'influence'?

Where do people want to be able to use that influence?

What are the opportunities that we can provide to make that influence possible?

The findings showed that people want to be able to influence decisions that affect them and their local area, but that it is rarely at the front of their minds to do so. Many people simply wanted to be able to complain about services and be listened to, and get feedback. Many respondents in the survey were unaware of the opportunities to get involved in influencing decisions in the city, and many were cynical about how their input would make a difference.

Conclusions from the research suggest

- ensuring basic services are responsive and effective
- ensuring complaints are addressed
- providing regular and visible opportunities to get involved in decisions about neighbourhood priorities

- making sure that you provide timely and meaningful feedback.

If these things happen, the focus group findings suggest we will not only be closer to reaching the LAA target on community empowerment, but also have a more positive response to questions on community cohesion and neighbourhood satisfaction.

You can read the rest of the recommendations and Mark's full presentation [here](#).

Focus on Community Network

We also took the opportunity at the conference to focus on Community Network and how we link voluntary and community groups to One Nottingham's neighbourhood renewal work in the city.

Jo Dean, the Community Network manager, introduced the team and talked about how we support groups to get involved in the work of One Nottingham. Jo explained that the Network is a team within Nottingham Council for Voluntary Service.

Jo also talked about some of our achievements – including the popular weekly email bulletin, the bi-monthly open meetings, and helping to achieve the city's commitment to a thriving third sector in the local area agreement. You can read Jo's full presentation [here](#).

Jo asked everyone at the conference to tell us what the Network should be prioritising over the next 12 months – there is a summary of the feedback we got at the end of this report, or you can read the full list [here](#).

Evaluation and feedback

Unfortunately not as many people completed the forms as we would have liked. However, the feedback we did get, from eight delegates, was positive:

- Everyone agreed that the catering and the information we provided was good or very good.
- Everyone agreed that the format of the event was just right.

Here are some positive comments we received:

- "Very useful in a practical way"
- "Research into small groups and influencing decisions was interesting"
- "Workshop was very good"

There are a few things the delegates told us we could do better next time:

- Several delegates felt the timings weren't quite right – we needed to have lunch later, and give people time to go to more than one workshop.
- Some of the presentations were hard to hear, and the structure and jargon of some was difficult to understand.
- A couple of delegates would have liked more time for questions.

Three quarters of the delegates who completed evaluation forms were from community groups or were paid workers in the voluntary sector. Of those who answered the question about where they heard about the event, two thirds of the delegates had seen it in Community Network's e-bulletin.

So where do we go from here?

Community Network will continue to:

- Tell you about opportunities to get involved in our weekly e-bulletin
- Give you a chance to network and talk directly to decision-makers in the city at our open meetings
- Champion the voluntary sector through our support of the voluntary sector representatives on the One Nottingham Board
- Make complex information and news easier to understand, by making sense of strategies and consultations, and telling you what you need to know.

You told us we need to work harder to:

- Involve smaller groups and those with no paid staff
- Develop a single forum with a strong representative voice for equalities groups so that they can get their voice heard
- Secure funding for the local area partnerships
- Be clearer about what Community Network does, and what it has achieved
- Set up reference groups to link in to each of the theme partnerships
- Get voluntary sector representatives on all the theme partnership boards, and fight for more representatives on the One Nottingham Board
- Re-engage with the BME sector.

We can't do it all immediately, but we're going to try to make these things happen.



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