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CREW CASE STUDY

02

► Glyncoch Community Partnership

Programme Bending for Real

(Euphemism for 'making a difference without dosh')



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The big question:

How can we facilitate meaningful, participative democracy and regenerate our community?

A new team was recruited in late 2005 to support the community of Glyncoch to embrace the Communities First Programme. Glyncoch is a post war council housing estate two miles north of Pontypridd in Rhondda Cynon Taff. In the ward based Index of Multiple Deprivation developed in 2000, Glyncoch was categorised as the 26th most disadvantaged community in Wales, scoring poorly in areas relating to child poverty and household income.

The newly recruited team found a community that was strong in terms of community spirit with large numbers of people volunteering from a range of different groups. Partnership meetings, however, were made up of agency members and a tiny number of residents. They didn't reflect the spirit of the wider community nor did they lead to meaningful change.

The partnership enlisted the help of John Duff from Community Development Cymru to explore ways of facilitating a genuine participative democracy and finding ways to support local people to negotiate with a range of service providers to regenerate the area.

The big idea:

Forget traditional cyclical approaches to consultation, planning, delivery and evaluation and embrace CHAOS (sort of)!

The method eventually adopted by the Glyncoch Community Partnership does not follow traditional cyclical approaches to community consultation and planning; i.e. the consultation, planning, delivery and evaluation cycle. The fact that there were high numbers of people volunteering whilst there were low numbers of people attending meetings, suggests that many people are not attracted to formal meetings but they are attracted to action and they want to make a difference. The Glyncoch Partnership therefore decided to abandon an approach which focuses on meetings and instead takes an approach which:

- engages with people through action and low level activities, building relationships and levels of trust
- creates opportunities to develop a meaningful conversation and process of qualitative consultation and skills building
- community and agency members co-deliver the plan then review a year later using the above process.

To describe this approach, John Duff coined the term 'quadruple helix', which describes how the partnership is not following traditional cyclical approaches but undertaking four vital strands of activity (consultation, planning, delivery and evaluation) simultaneously, year upon year building upon the activities and capacity developed in the previous year.



Q: Is it making a difference?

A: Yes! For example, Glyncoch now has rock bottom crime rates and a better environment

In early 2009, crime rates in Glyncoch were soaring, one of the local shops was petrol bombed and racist graffiti and violent crime was on the rise. The head of Community Safety in the local council made a plea to a wide range of agencies work with the Communities First Partnership to reverse this trend. Local people and groups pulled together with the police, VALREC, RCT Homes and RCT CBC Street Care team and Community Safety Team reducing crime to almost zero within six months and putting an end to racist crime. The actions undertaken were all simple, yet engaging and involved a range of stakeholders coming together. It was the cumulative effect of these simple actions that led to meaningful results

Examples of such actions included:

- The police supported a local shop keeper who was a victim of crime to join a group of young people at football skills events and sponsor five aside matches in Pontypridd. With the help of VALREC he also sponsored a match with the police and young people from multi cultural communities in Cardiff.
- The Glyncoch Partnership sponsored a mural to replace racist graffiti.
- The police and the community safety partnership gave intensive support during school holidays term to build relations with the local community. They organised a helicopter and police dog show, played games with the children and young people and undertook bicycle maintenance and safety projects.
- The Glyncoch Festival Society delivered a series of multi cultural workshops and a multi cultural festival
- Local community groups, the CF team, the People and Work Unit as well as community members worked together to transform environmental grot spots into pleasant spaces for local people to enjoy and for children to play safely.
- Green and friendly Action Glyncoch is developed a network of street representatives.
- The council invested £195,000 in the community to clean up the estate and have supported an increase in recycling from 38% to over 70%.



Q: What else has Communities First Achieved?

A: Significant increases in active citizenship, a significant increase in people learning and entering employment, a strong, clear, achievable vision for a positive, sustainable future.

The partnership has employed the same ‘quadruple helix’ methodology to supporting active citizenship and supporting increased success in learning and education.

- Active citizenship hours are increasing by around 30% per year and are currently at around 37000 hours per year (in a community of less than 3000 people)
- With the support of the People and Work Unit, adult learning is increasing by 50% per year with 140 people engaging in accredited learning. The basic skills classes are full and have waiting lists.
- It is anticipated that this significant increase in adult learning will lead to parental confidence to support their children at school resulting in a cultural shift and a steady increase in young people accessing learning.
- Already, truancy rates amongst young people from Glyncoch are falling and are now equal to the most affluent areas around Pontypridd (the truancy rates amongst the hardest to reach group has fallen by over 30% in 12 months).

The partnership still has a long way to go before it achieves its vision of supporting Glyncoch to become a model of sustainability, however the intention is to continue using and refining the quadruple helix approach. There is a very strong sense that the community is developing a much more positive future. The most recent challenge the community has set itself, is to link up with the job centre and other agencies to develop joint targets and joint actions to increase the number of people accessing employment. Although a significant number of volunteers, gain employment every year, the partnership has decided to take a ‘quadruple helix’, approach and try to achieve the same dramatic results as it has achieved in other areas.



To ensure that the momentum continues to build, the partnership has set up a strong community anchor organisation, Glyncoch Community Regeneration Ltd, to undertake the following challenges within the next few years:

- Raise 1.3 million and redevelop the Community Centre into a hub of learning and enterprise.
- Set up a community owned wind turbine project which will generate £100,000 per year for the estate.
- Facilitate a village centre redevelopment.
- Continue to regenerate dilapidated public spaces
- Develop social enterprises particularly relating to the growing 'green economy' to increase locally based employment opportunities.

If public sector cuts impact upon the Communities First programme beyond 2012, it is unlikely that these goals will be achieved and the changes will not be sustained. Indeed, the community may be plunged into a steeper cycle of poverty due to loss of hope and focus on a better future. However continued investment will enable Glyncoch to achieve its potential as a flourishing, sustainable neighbourhood.

Contact us

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