

Empowering disadvantaged communities.

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The importance of community engagement in deprived communities.

- Can be the first stage of changing a culture in deprived communities – no opportunities, powerless, negative.
- Builds confidence, self worth and realisation that communities can be in control.
- Creates a clearer and deeper understanding of issues and solutions.
- Effective, sustainable change.

How do you build capacity within communities?

- Invest time and commit resources.
- Give yourself time to develop trust.
- Be accessible.
- Listen, act and be honest.
- Understand competing priorities so make engagement easy, fun and meaningful.
- Do not work in isolation, seek out existing activists and partner organisations, especially the third sector.



Example – Marks Gate Community Ambassadors

- Worked with local volunteers who using mapping techniques asked others in the community what the issues and needs were on the estate.
- Using this local information ambassadors learnt how to bring about change, who to contact etc.



Why this approach to engagement worked

- Training – small, specific, local
- Support and encouragement throughout the project
- Tangible outcomes during the project
- Part of a bigger Council initiative – Neighbourhood Management



Outcomes...



- Improvements to community spaces & issues now on public agencies agenda
- Employment and skills development
- Continued positive engagement
- Increase confidence and understanding of public bodies – who does what

Summary

- It is nothing new. Effective engagement which can bring about positive change takes time and resources.
- Value partnerships, and celebrate successes as a collective.
- Ensure strong leadership from the Local Authority to encourage partnership working and engagement - Neighbourhood Management.
- Try not to allow targets and deadlines to dictate your methodology and level of engagement. Do not leave volunteers/the community stranded should your agenda and priorities change.

Any Questions