

Redcar and Cleveland Community Engagement Capacity Building Plan

The Story So Far.

The plan to develop the Engagement Capacity Building Plan had three key strands.

- The first was to strengthen the organisation of geographic and thematic communities so that they could improve their engagement with public services providers.
- The second was to support public service provider's to learn from each other and to more effectively and efficiently work together to coordinate their engagement with local communities.
- The third was to bring service users and service providers together to agree a series of priorities that would form the basis of the Engagement Capacity Building Plan.

In all cases the work involved mapping existing practices, identifying and sharing good practice and then identifying areas for further development. The plan builds on the existing high quality engagement activities and the positive relations that already exist between service providers and the communities they serve.

The work was taken forward by an Engagement Capacity Building Coordination Team that itself represented a partnership between the public sector and the voluntary and community sector. Members of the team included a Council officer supporting the Partnership, a Council officer managing a community development team, and staff from the Redcar and Cleveland Community Network, Tees Valley Rural Community Council and Redcar and Cleveland Voluntary Development Agency. The team was supported by Government Office of the North East with a Neighbourhood Renewal Adviser.

The project developed over the following stages;

- An interview process mapping existing engagement activities across all partnership service providers. The report Feedback from Data Collection Interviews was circulated in March.
- Two workshops were held with community organisations on March 19th and April 25th. These gave organisations from geographic and thematic communities the chance to consider how they would like to develop in order to maximise their ability to engage with service providers. They discussed the idea of "community anchor organisations" and developed it in ways that suited the context in the six different geographic communities in the Borough and the range of thematic communities. **(Please see Appendix 1)**

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- One workshop was held with service providers on March 29th. This considered the output from the data collection interviews and established a series of priorities for enhancing their engagement work. **(Please see Appendix 2)**
- Finally, a workshop was held on May 9th that brought together both the community organisations and the service providers. This workshop agreed the priorities that are developed in the recommendations contained in this report. **(Please see Appendix 3)**

On the 25th May 2007 a final Community Engagement Capacity Building Plan report was presented to the Redcar & Cleveland Partnership Board with the following recommendations -:

1. Recommendations.

1.1 That an Engagement Resource Review takes place.

Any plan that requires high levels of new financial resource will come up against the reality of budget constraints. It is recommended that we undertake an Engagement Resource Review. The purpose of this Review is to;

- take an overview of the resources currently being used across the partnership on engagement activities,
- Recommend how existing resources might be used more effectively to meet changing needs,
- Identify resource gaps and make suggestions for filling them.
- look at the financial requirements needed to implement the plans emerging from the Engagement Capacity Building work,
- Recommend a long term strategy for the Partnership's collective funding of its engagement work.

The Capacity Building Coordination Team has already begun the process of mapping the resources dedicated to engagement work across the Partnership. To date the response has been limited and with the support of the Partnership it is recommended that this work continues. It is also recommended that the Governance Group of the Partnership, supported by a member of the Coordination Team, takes responsibility for this area of work. It is proposed that they be briefed on progress to date in early June and that they make their recommendations by late September.

1.2 That Community structures for effective engagement are established.

Both geographic and thematic community organisations wish to establish the structures that allow them to most effectively engage with service providers. The purposes of this strand of work are;

- To work with the six geographic communities in the Borough and the communities of interest in order to put in place structures and mechanisms that allow the community voice to be heard. These structures will be different in different parts of the Borough.

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- Agree the support and capacity building needs of communities if those structures are to be sustainable.
- Discuss how, working through the agreed community structures, communities can be equal partners in the engagement process.
- Agree how each community wishes to plan its consultation work during the year and feed this into the Partnerships Annual Calendar of Consultation.
- Agree how the community wishes to be involved in its Local Neighbourhood Planning.
- Agree how the local community engagement structures work effectively with the Area Environmental Committees.

It is proposed that this work is undertaken in a series of workshops;

- The first will be with organisations representing communities of interest. This will decide how such communities wish to be engaged across the Borough and within each geographic community.
- There will then be a series of six geographic workshops, at which the local engagement structures will be agreed and established and their support and capacity building needs identified.

Responsibility for this work rests with the community organisations and thematic organisations involved in the Engagement Capacity Building process. The Coordination Team will take the responsibility for convening and facilitating the workshops.

Capacity building and support needs will then be reported back to the Partnership Board in the progress report in October.

1.3 That ways of managing data that support communities and service providers are established.

The overall purpose of this work is to enable data to be collected, stored and made available to all users in support of their work in general and specifically to build Neighbourhood Profiles and Local Neighbourhood Plans. More specifically, the work will;

- Map existing sources of data and identify how it is stored and accessed;
- Ensure (within the context of confidentiality) that community organisations can input into that data and access it easily.
- Identify gaps in data and propose how those gaps might be filled
- Propose how existing data sources might be brought together to establish simplified access for all.

An update on the changes implemented and proposals for future data management collection and use will be made to the Partnership Board in October.

1.4 That proposals for the enhancement of coordination and joint working on engagement activities across all partnership organisations are established.

Building on the work of the Community Engagement Coordination Group and the service providers aspirations as expressed in their Engagement Capacity Building Workshop, the purpose of this recommendation is to;

- Review existing arrangements for coordination engagement activities by public service providers across the partnership.
- Building on existing standards and protocols, and in the light of the resources available, makes proposals for cross partnership structures that will enhance communications and joint engagement work.
- In coordination with the community structures being put in place, agree how engagement will be undertaken both with communities of interest and geographic communities.
- Agree the Calendar of Consultations both with service providers and with community organisations.
- Agree process for Local Neighbourhood Planning both with service providers and with community organisations.

Senior representation by partnership organisations on any cross partnership engagement structures proposed is required. This will ensure that cross partnership engagement structures

Dove-tail efficiently with the engagement structures of each specific partnership organisation. The boundary between joint and separate engagement work needs to be well established.

This work will be taken forward by the Community Engagement Coordination Group, with the support of Coordination Team Members. New structures established, the Annual Calendar of Consultations and plans for Local Neighbourhood Planning will be presented to the Partnership Board in October.

1.5 That innovative engagement best practise across the Borough is established.

The purpose of this work is to;

- To identify existing engagement practices, methodologies, hand-books, how-to guides and training in order to agree best practice.
- To identify innovations and new methods that will improve engagement, especially with hard to reach communities.
- To bring partnership innovative best practice together and make it available to all those involved in engagement work in a way that is simple to use, relevant to their specific engagement work and accessible to all.

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- This may well involve recommendations on a new linked engagement practice web-site, a partnership best practice guide to effective engagement methods, training and the establishment of an Engagement Experts Group across the Borough to sustain innovation.

This work will be undertaken by a group combining in equal proportions those working on engagement from service providers' organisations and those working on engagement from service users' organisations. It will report back on progress made to the Partnership Board in October.

1.6 That the Capacity Building Coordination Team continues to be responsible for the overall coordination of the work.

The Capacity Building Team is made up of Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council, Redcar and Cleveland Voluntary Development Agency (RCVDA), the Community Empowerment Network (CEN) and the Tees Valley Rural Community Council (TVRCC.) It is recommended that the Capacity Building Coordination Team will remain responsible for the overall coordination of the work. This entails;

- Supporting the work under the various recommendations contained in this report.
- Ensuring that time-tables are met.
- Drawing up the next report to the Board in October.

Many other people from the workshops have offered their help on the various tasks outlined in these recommendations. Members of the Coordination Team will ensure that they are involved.

1.7 That the Partnership Board agrees the following budget for work up to the end of October.

The work outlined in these recommendations will in the main be undertaken within existing resources. However, the following items will require additional resources;

1. Costs to convene six geographic workshops and one thematic workshop, to cover expenses such as crèche, translations, refreshments etc.
(Say £250 X 7) £1,750.
2. Venues and refreshments for three meetings for each of the five strands of Work. (Say £100 X15) £1,500.
3. in each geographic area and for the communities of interest, the cost of two further meetings, if required to complete the task, to bring other organisations into the discussions or for related purposes. (Say £100X 14) £1,400.
4. To produce best practice partnership resources, (web-site and print). Say £1,000.
5. A fund for each of the geographic communities and the thematic community to take forward their work from now until to October. (Say £500X7) £3,500.

Total budget
£9,150.

It is recommended that this budget be made available to the Coordination Team to be dispersed as required.

1.8 That the Partnership Board receives a further report in October.

The Coordination Team will report back to the Partnership Board in October. That report will update on the implementation and planning that has been undertaken in line with the recommendations in this report.

2. The key reasons to support these proposals:

The recommendations made in this report support the innovative approach that the Redcar and Cleveland Partnership brings to the question of engagement. There are three key areas of innovation;

- Supporting communities to develop their own, independent (anchor) structures is an essential part of the engagement process. Communities are not homogenous entities. They contain many different points of view and perspectives. They need the space, the organisation and the resources to be able to engage, discuss and reach consensus on many issues. Supporting the development of such a community space is a key contribution to enabling a diverse and coherent community voice to be heard. The Partnership's innovative support for this approach represents best practice in its work with communities and their development.
- Public service providers within the Partnership will develop greater joint working in many areas over the coming years. This will be done as part of the work of the Partnership both to improve quality of services and to win value for money efficiencies. The recommendations in this report will lead to greater coordination and joint working in the area of community engagement. This gives Redcar and Cleveland the opportunity to develop innovative joint working arrangements that will provide best practice arrangements that other Authorities will wish to copy.
- Throughout the process undertaken to develop these recommendations, the partnership has adopted a joint learning approach. That is to say, it has recognised that improving engagement requires learning and capacity building both for
- Communities (service users) and for service providers. Furthermore, it has recognised that learning is best done together; it is a mutual process of interaction and trust building. In this innovative way the Partnership has modelled the good engagement practice that it wishes to see across all of its work.

In addition, the following arguments support the approval of the recommendation;

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- (1) Responsive public services are a key factor in improving the quality of life for the residents of the Borough.
- (2) Greater community engagement in the decisions that impact on the planning and delivery of those services is a key mechanism for improving those services.
- (3) The proposals outlined in this report are in line with the key engagement principles underpinning Government Policy.
- (4) The proposals are in line with many initiatives and existing best practice across the Redcar and Cleveland Partnership.
- (5) Resources available for deepening and developing engagement work are scarce. Therefore improving the use of existing resources is essential if the quality of engagement is to continue to improve.
- (6) These proposals have emerged from an extensive action-learning engagement process in which more than 75 key people have participated.
- (7) The proposals represent a consensus view arrived at by both service providers and service users.

The recommendations and proposals were endorsed by the Redcar & Cleveland Partnership Board on the 25th May 2007.

For further information relating to the Community Engagement Capacity Building Plan please contact a member of the Coordination Team -:

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Appendix 1
Community Anchor Organisations Workshop
Monday 19th March 2007.

Purpose of the Workshop.

The workshop brings a number of organisations that have the characteristics of community anchor organisations together in order to;

- Understand their perspective of the mechanisms and practices currently being used by service providers to engage and consult with the communities they serve;
- To discuss ways in which engagement could be developed and improved;
- To discuss the support that community anchor organisations might need in order to support that improvement of engagement mechanisms and practices.
- To discuss how the ideas developed today could be fed back to service providers.

What does a Community Anchor Organisation look like?

- Controlled by local residents and/or representatives of local groups
- Addressing the needs of their area in a multi-purpose way
- Committed to the involvement of all sections of their community, including marginalised groups
- Support the development of the communities in their area

Other points...

- Usually only one such organisation in a neighbourhood, but where communities are diverse, there may be more than one anchor organisation serving different communities of interest.
- Distinguished from the many thousands of groups operating at neighbourhood level

Examples of community-based organisations that could be playing an “anchor role”

- Successor bodies to regeneration programme boards
- Community associations
- Development trusts
- Well-established residents associations
- Village halls
- Churches or other faith-based organisations
- Tenant management organisations
- Neighbourhood level federations or networks

Discussion took place regarding Community Anchor Organisations, those present believed that they had a vital role to play and highlighted other organisations who should/may want to be involved.

Mind the Gap – Vision for Engagement

Improvement can be made by direct/focussed needs which should come from organisations then the community groups/residents should have their input and be listened to.

- South Bank Tomorrow took on an active role in getting the community involved and to engage, this brought about positive changes.
- Police, Fire Brigade, PCT, RCBC, consultation does not publicise enough and use jargon. The information should be given in laymen terms, with no jargon.
- How can the community participate with no crèche facilities, no interpretator, and sign language issues etc...?
- If engagement takes place then services will improve.
- Don't re - invent the wheel, see what is going well and build on it, i.e. Community Network.
- Invitations are given to organisations to come to Community Network to deliver presentations
- Many rural organisations deal with single issues but they may still want to get involved.
- Skills and confidence, team building, governance skills, negotiation, diplomacy, needs to be looked at within some of the organisations to become more effective to take action then they can engage.
- The Statutory services need to be trained.
- Agencies have got to proactively coordinate their activities.
- A Community Liaison Officer could be employed to engage and build the capacity of the community within the borough, however this needs financing.
- Anchor Organisations could network; create a medium through email/web link etc...

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- LA needs to open up and be more transparent, improve feedback and communications systems, ie. Residents cannot get past the switchboard.
- There must be a guarantee that some solution will be given even if the outcome is not as expected.
- Strong community organisations that are effective in achieving objectives isn't something that happens by magic – requires hard work by motivated local people and the community workers who support such organisations: needs to be an acknowledgement that this needs to be supported

How can it be Improved?

- Statutory agencies should consider a point of call
- Think about how this – a network of community anchor organisations – is resourced
- A network of anchor organisations with formal communication structures
- Skills for engagement for [C.A.O.] Community Anchor Organisations
- Statutory Agencies need to change [thinking culture etc...]
- Agencies need to be proactive with their exchanges
- Reliable contact points
- Feedback and Communication systems required
- Transparency and openness
- Implement the COMPACT
- A structure for engagement – i.e. Social Enterprise
- Organise and Coordinate
- Definite outcomes from engagement and consultation
- Full Cost Recovery

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Second Community Anchor Organisations Workshop.
Wednesday 25th April 2007.

The Redcar and Cleveland Community Engagement Plan supports communities to work with the providers of public services in the planning and shaping of those services. An important element of this work is the development of community anchor organisations that can speak on behalf of geographic communities and communities of interest.

Purpose of the Workshop.

The workshop brings together a larger number of organisations that have the characteristics of community anchor organisations. The purpose is to;

- Update everyone on the discussions that took place in the first Community Anchor Organisation Workshop.
- Update everyone on the work of the Engagement Capacity Building Programme to date.
- To build upon our understanding of mechanisms and practices currently being used by service providers to engage and consult with the communities they serve;
- To build on the discussions at the first workshop on ways in which engagement could be developed and improved; (see Mind the Gap section of the notes to the first workshop.)
- To discuss the support that community anchor organisations might need in order to contribute fully to the improvement of engagement.
- To discuss the joint anchor organisations and service providers workshop which is planned for Wednesday 9th May 2007.

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Service Providers Workshop.
Thursday 29th March 2007.

Purpose of the Workshop.

This workshop is part of the project to build a Community Engagement Capacity Building Plan. The workshop brings together statutory service providers and colleagues from voluntary and community sector service providing organisations. Its purpose is to share ideas on the practices you are currently using to engage and consult with the communities you serve. In preparation for the workshop you will have received a report that outlines the ways each statutory service provider currently engages with their service users. The workshop will provide space for;

- Each service provider to highlight key points from their current engagement practices;
- Questions and discussion in order to understand and compare practices of colleague organisations.
- Consideration and reflection of the overall engagement picture. Do any opportunities suggest themselves for enhancing our engagement work?
- Listing and analysing any ideas for enhancing our engagement practices.
- Prioritising the ideas and suggestions and discussing how to take them forward.
- Making suggestions of how communities might be involved in the discussions about taking forward ideas for enhancing our community engagement work.

Appendix 3

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Workshop with representatives of Service Providers and Community Anchor Organisations.

Purpose of the Workshop.

This workshop is to facilitate a crucial dialogue between the users of public services, represented by the community anchor organisations that are developing their capacity to speak for their communities, and those responsible for the public services on which the communities of Redcar and Cleveland depend. The purpose of that dialogue is to;

- Discuss the proposals coming from the community anchor organisations on how they would like to be involved in discussions, planning and decision making about the public services they use.
- Discuss the proposals coming from the public service providers on how they would like to work more closely with each other and with the communities they serve.
- Discuss how the two sets of proposals compliment each other and how they can be best taken forward together.
- Agree the capacity building work that needs to be undertaken in order to develop an engagement Plan of Action
- Develop an outline Plan of Action to which everyone can subscribe.
- Agree how best to present that Plan of Action to the Partnership Board on that 25th May.

Work to date with service providers.

13 service providers were interviewed in order to build up a picture of the engagement mechanisms that are currently being used. Interviewees included the Police, Fire and Rescue Services, the PCT and various departments of the Council. In addition, 4 engagement infrastructure organisations were also interviewed. These interviews created a database of engagement mechanisms for use with individuals, (for example, project newsletters, the Citizens Panel quarterly survey, call centres, telephone surveys, individual questionnaires) and with groups in the communities (for example, the Area Environmental Committees, public meetings, tenants forums and partnerships.)

Service providers then met to share their data from the interviews. This allowed them to learn from each other and to draw up suggestions about how they might work more closely together. Their suggestions, which will be discussed today, can be summarised under the headings of coordination, better resource allocation, more efficient collection, storage and use of data, work with community anchor organisations and innovation in developing new engagement mechanisms. Some of the specific ideas include;

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- An annual calendar of engagement, listing the consultations that occur each year; for example around the Council budget, around the Fire and Rescue Service annual plans. These consultations could be coordinated across service providers in consultation with community anchor organisations.
- A process of Community Action Planning, which would involve planning around many services at one go. This would prevent consultation overload.
- Building neighbourhood profiles, with data collected by all and openly available to all on a website. Again community anchor organisations would be important in building this data-base.

During our workshop, service providers will be outlining their ideas for discussion.

Work to date with service users.

Service users, represented by a number of community organisations, have met twice during the project. They have been told about the work being done by service providers and the vision for engagement to which they are working. They have shared examples of good engagement practice and discussed the gap between the vision and practice. Gaps include;

- Are the results of consultation taken into consideration? Where is the feedback?
- Too much jargon. Too many initials.
- Not enough time.
- Don't duplicate. Don't complicate.
- People are over consulted and under consulted.

They discussed many ideas for improving the situation, and have developed their thinking on the role of community anchor organisations (both communities of interest and geographic communities.) They will share these ideas in the workshop.