

Strategy for Supporting Neighbourhood-Based Community Development and Capacity-Building in Exeter *(as at 27.9.06)*

Overall Vision

To implement the Exeter Vision commitment to create a city of strong communities by focussing resources on supporting community development and capacity-building in disadvantaged neighbourhoods of the city. More detailed objectives need to be developed at the consultation stage, but will reflect some of the issues referred to in the rest of this paper.

Key Neighbourhoods

Wonford; Whipton/Beacon Heath; Exwick; Cowick/St Thomas; St David's/St James'/Newtown, and possibly parts of Countess Wear.

Need

- Limited capacity of existing community groups
- Lack of support for the development of new initiatives
- Limited local ownership and involvement in identifying and responding to local needs
- Need for development of local neighbourhood/community plans
- Lack of learning and development support for small community groups

Evidence of Need and Local/National Context

- Exeter's Community Sector - Unlocking The Potential (Exeter Community Network report – 1999)
- Social Inclusion Task Group report (North & East Devon Health Authority – 2001)
- LINKS Project Final Evaluation (2004)
- Firm Foundations (Home Office – 2004)
- Exeter City Council Community Review (2005)
- Experience of Farm Hill and Kinnerton Way Project (FHKWCP) and TVRS
- Experience of Exeter CVS's learning and development work e.g. ALAC, Speaking Up, etc

Methodology

Employ four Community Development Workers, one based in each key neighbourhood(s), working to agendas set by partnership steering groups (including local residents, councillors, and key partner agencies), based on FHKWCP model. Workers employed by ECI and line managed by the Community Development Manager post. Exeter CVS to employ a Small Groups Worker to meet the learning and development needs of local communities, partly as identified through the work of the community development workers.

Staff Roles

These roles are likely to include the following tasks:

Community Development Workers

1. Build trusting relationships with local people, community groups and agencies, as a worker independent of any particular agency agenda, with an honest-broker role.
2. Work with local people in each neighbourhood to identify local needs and aspirations.
3. Work with local people to develop agreed responses to meet these needs and aspirations e.g. setting up a community group/activity, campaigning/lobbying, networks, etc.
4. Develop a neighbourhood plan to reflect these needs and responses, and identify resources/sources of support to enable its implementation.
5. Convene local networks in each neighbourhood of key community activists/local groups and key local partners to share information/ideas/best practices and be a conduit for engagement with statutory partners.
6. Support the development of active community resource centres/'hubs' in each neighbourhood, managed and owned by local people.
7. Liaise with agencies and partners to draw in appropriate resources to meet needs identified in each neighbourhood.

Community Development Manager

1. Line manage and supervise the Community Development Workers and ensure appropriate accountability of their work to the neighbourhood-based Steering Groups.
2. Convene regular meetings of workers and partners to share good practice across the city, and inform the development of a strategic approach to community development.
3. Support the SHIP and its partner agencies in the development of a strategic approach to community development.
4. Liaise with agencies and partners across the city to draw in appropriate resources at strategic level.

Small Groups Worker

1. Liaise with community development workers and people in local neighbourhoods to identify the learning and development needs of these areas, with a particular focus on the needs of small community groups.
2. Develop, and ensure the delivery of, a programme of appropriate learning and development activities to meet these needs, delivered locally in each neighbourhood.
3. Ensure the learning and development strategies of key local partners take account of the needs identified in these neighbourhoods.

Outputs and Outcomes

More work needs to be done on this at the consultation stage (see Next Steps), but initial tentative indications might include:

Outputs

- 120 groups/activities/events per year supported, both new and existing
- 5 community networks established with 20 meetings per year
- 1 city-wide network established with 4 meetings per year
- 1800 local people per year benefiting from groups/activities/events supported
- 30 learning activities per year delivered benefiting 300 learners
- 5 neighbourhood 'community plans' developed (Year 1)
- 1 city-wide strategic plan developed (Year 2)
- 40 volunteers/community activists per year identified and supported

Outcomes

- Local communities with clear plan for the future development of their neighbourhood
- Increased community/self-help activity within neighbourhoods leading to improved social capital
- Increased community participation in the life of the city
- Increased understanding by partners of local needs
- Improved ability of local statutory partners to engage with local neighbourhoods and deliver more responsive and effective services
- Increased skills and self-confidence of local people
- Strategic approach to supporting community development and the learning and development needs of disadvantaged neighbourhoods

Resources

Likely to be about £180K per year, initially over 3 years. ECI has identified an initial £75K towards this, and if local statutory partners can identify up to £50K per year*, then we would be hopeful of raising the remaining £315K needed from external funding sources.

Next Steps

From September to November 2006, ECI staff are consulting with key local partners in each of these neighbourhoods and at strategic level, to develop a more detailed strategy and Business Plan, with a view to using this to secure resources from April 2007 onwards.

Alistair Macintosh – Director – Exeter Community Initiatives

(* these resources are additional to the current core funding of Exeter CVS by local partners which is vital to its continued development as the lead infrastructure organisation in the city)