

Upper Horfield's Pride of Place Initiative: Residents and Partners Working Together for Change

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Organisation: Bristol Community Housing Foundation (BCHF)

Country: United Kingdom

Level of government: Local government

Sector: Housing and community amenities

Type: Partnerships, Public Service

Launched in: 2002

Overall development time: 1 year(s)

Link to the innovation's website

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Description

Bristol Community Housing Foundation (BCHF) has worked with residents and partners to improve the Upper Horfield estate in Bristol through the 'Pride of Place' initiative, forming a Pride of Place Group which links community representatives with key agencies in the area.

The initiative has recruited 36 street representatives and lead to projects where public service providers and the community work together to improve quality of life and increase social cohesion in Upper Horfield.

Why the innovation was developed

- Bristol Community Housing Foundation (BCHF), a small, community based social landlord in north Bristol, UK established their Pride of Place Partnership in response to concerns raised by a number of tenants living in the association's Upper Horfield estate about the rise in street litter after the regeneration of their estate.
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Objectives

Enhance public trust, Improve service quality, Improve social equity, Improve user satisfaction, Increase citizen engagement

- The Upper Horfield estate underwent significant regeneration of the housing stock between 1999 and 2007 which saw the eventual replacement of 450 failing prefabricated homes which had been blighted by concrete cancer.
 - As the old homes started to become vacated and boarded up, the long process of assembling the necessary finances and local authority support for the regeneration began. Throughout this period, many of the tenants who remained in the area had to endure issues including high crime rates, arson and anti-social behaviour.
 - The new housing was built in four phases between 2002 and 2007 on an estate designed using Home Zone principles. Each street mixed together social and private tenure at an approximate 50:50 ratio.
 - As the first two phases of the project in the west of the estate were completed and tenants began to move in, a number of them expressed concern to BCHF's Community Development Worker that they wanted to ensure a higher level of management of the neighbourhood than had been the case when the estate was managed by the local authority.
 - This was of particular importance to them as they had suffered such problems during the area's long decline and were keen to ensure the regeneration project marked the start of a new way of doing things in closer partnership.
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Main beneficiaries

Civil Society, Government staff, Low-income groups

- Residents of Bristol Community Housing

Results

Effectiveness

- One significant outcome for the POP partnership came when it decided to apply to Keep Britain Tidy for a national Quality Mark award for its work to improve clean, safe and green issues in Upper Horfield. This involved creating a Neighbourhood Action Plan which the group agreed through a series of workshops. The action plan highlighted a number of persistent issues which the partnership looked at in turn and agreed action that would be effective in dealing with the problem.
 - A particular example of this was to do something to increase the level of plastic recycling at the bring centres (this was before Bristol started trialling doorstep collection of plastic materials). The group set up a day of action on plastic and gave information to residents about their local bring centres. Residents were also invited to leave out their plastic bottles and cartons for the group to have collected. As a result of this action, the group identified a site and successfully lobbied for an additional plastic bottle bank in the area.
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User satisfaction

- For residents of Upper Horfield, POP has done more than simply remove items of litter from the street. It has led to a rise in confidence of residents when dealing with agencies responsible for particular issues and has enabled residents to take on more action for themselves and report things directly to the relevant agency as soon as they are noticed.
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Other improvements

- The Pride of Place Initiative has resulted in: Six new street litter bins installed; Three partnership Days of Action on CSG delivered; 36 Street Reps recruited in Upper Horfield; Walkabouts/Litter Picks held every month since October 2008; and a front garden and sunflower competition held each year.

Development

Design

The initial instigators of the POP initiative were residents who had lived in the area prior to the regeneration project and had been closely involved in establishing BCHF as the estate's new housing provider. In October 2007, they met with the Community Development Worker to start a simple project to walk around part of the estate with key BCHF staff and note down issues of concern.

Initially, these walkabouts comprised about six residents, BCHF's Community Development Worker, Housing Officer and Neighbourhood Caretaker. The list of issues was then logged onto a database by the Community Development Worker and farmed out to the relevant staff member or external agency to follow up.

Implementation

Tools used:

- After only two months of walkabouts, residents felt they would like to deal with the street litter as they walked around so BCHF invested in litter pickers, a pull-along garden truck and high-visibility tabards so that litter picks could be incorporated into the walkabouts. Walkabouts were advertised in advance and the group started to attract some additional members, including from residents starting to move into homes in the phases that were being completed to the east of the estate.
- In 2008, residents volunteering on the partnership were given the title of Street Rep and a further recruiting campaign was then commenced to try to recruit a Street Rep in every street. This led to a further 34 residents applying to become Street Reps – giving coverage in the majority of streets. A guidance manual had already been created by two neighbourhoods in south Bristol who had existing Street Rep schemes and BCHF was granted permission to use this and adapt it to fit their areas. This manual contains everything from how to report a broken street light to how hate crime can be reported.
- Contact was also being made by the Community Development Worker with agencies including the police and city council's waste services team and meetings were then introduced to enable residents to meet with these officers and raise neighbourhood issues with them directly.
- Of particular importance to the success of POP initiative are the links it has created with the Neighbourhood Beat Manager, P.C. Ben Lavender (latterly P.C. Alan Gentry), and the City Council's Waste Services Manager, Trudy Feeney. These links and the strong partnership approach which places residents in the driving seat has helped to change the dynamics of neighbourhood management in the area away from a simple list of anonymous issues to a setting where relationships drive action and all partners start to appreciate each other's position.

Resources used:

- Running the POP project costs BCHF little in terms of cash each year. It has a notional budget of GBP 1500 which is used to purchase equipment, send Street Reps on training or visits to other groups.
- The lead officer would typically spend about 1.5 days per week on average servicing the group which now extends to all other neighbourhoods where BCHF has properties. Other officers attend as part of their core work. The main savings that have been made have been to the amount of time the Neighbourhood Caretaker is spending removing litter and bulky items.

Lessons Learned

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- Taking time to grow residents' confidence so they can become the driving force behind this work. This means not imposing organisational timetables or priorities onto the group. Our residents are the experts and we should be able to evidence everything we do in the neighbourhood back to their needs and concerns. This has been fundamental to the success of this project as our residents know that they call the shots. Agencies come to answer questions, provide updates and enable action to take place.
 - Understanding how to create an effective local partnership that is more than a mere extension of top-down management is vital. The partnership is there to serve the residents' needs. Further guidance on creating effective partnerships can be found in the OECD publication 'Successful Partnerships'.
 - Achieving the Neighbourhood Quality Mark from Keep Britain Tidy was a major boost for our group and really helped to cement the partnership as a team. Agreeing a set of partnership goals each year helps to retain that sense of achievement by the group.
 - As our project depends so much on the goodwill of volunteers we recognise that we can't overdo the amount of work we ask of them without remembering to reward their achievements. Each year we take all our volunteers (Street Reps and Community Champions) out somewhere for a meal which gives us a chance to thank them for their hard work.
 - Don't forget to keep the local press updated about your activities. All our members feel a sense of achievement from the positive press coverage the project brings to their neighbourhood and organisation.
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Other information

*The program described in this innovation case study has been discontinued and is no longer in operation.

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