

# Our vision for safe and active communities

A report by Baroness Newlove





## Foreword



I am very grateful to all those individuals and communities who have given me their time, helped me to understand the issues and challenges and informed this report.

In October 2010 I was appointed government champion for active, safer communities, with a mission to see how we can help change communities. I've spent much of the last six months travelling around England and Wales to find out what challenges the public face.

I've suffered the devastating consequences of crime, disorder and unchallenged anti-social behaviour. In 2007 my husband Garry was kicked to death by a gang of alcohol and drug-fuelled teenagers, in front of our three young daughters, practically on the doorstep of our family home. It was not a one-off incident but the peak of an escalation in anti-social behaviour we had suffered but which was categorised by the authorities as 'low risk' and which they did not guess would end in such a violent way. I'm determined that no-one else should suffer as we did, or the Pilkingtons or the Askews did, or

the many others not talked about and I wanted to make sure that something positive came out of our tragedy. I've spent my time since then campaigning and travelling extensively. I've seen vibrant, active, safe communities and I know they exist.

This report provides details of the research that I have undertaken and outlines my recommendations to government, to local agencies and to communities which, if acted upon, will help to make those safe and happy communities a reality for more people. No one person or organisation can make the changes that are needed – it's about all of us working together in a new, more unified way. This is the real 'people power' which will help reclaim our communities.

This report is the result of my work, but also, I hope, the start of an on-going wider debate

involving more local people, professionals, businesses and the media, all of whom have a really important role to play.

To cynics who may be saying "here we go again, another set of recommendations, another report to gather dust" I'd like them to remember the spirit that sustained then rebuilt this shattered country during and after the war. Or the many Japanese people who have brought food, blankets and water to share with those who have lost everything after the recent, devastating tsunami. People are inherently good neighbours. I have faith that together we can make changes to make life better. I shall continue to support and campaign for that.

*Heleen,  
Baroness Newlove*

Baroness Newlove

# Introduction

We all want our neighbourhoods to be safe and enjoyable places to live: a united community where we know and can rely upon our neighbours, where parents take responsibility for their children and where people are willing and able to intervene to challenge bad behaviour, confident that they will be supported by their neighbours, police, landlord, local council, ward councillors and their MP.



**This isn't an idealistic or impossible dream. I have seen neighbourhoods where this is a reality and each of us has the power to make it happen within our own community. Yet most of us, most of the time, choose not to.**

## Why?

I think we've become so dependent on the professional agencies (police, local authority, social landlords etc) to sort out problems that we've simply stopped seeing the safety and cleanliness of our community as something we're responsible for or even have any influence over. So, when we see things such as fly-tipping, graffiti or dog fouling, while we might feel disgust and frustration, we'll usually just ignore it. What can we do after all, and isn't it for the police, the local authority or whoever else to deal with?

Government has made the problem worse, by tying up agencies in stifling bureaucracy and targets. Fixated on statistics, performance tables, pilots and initiatives, agencies have

become distanced from the public they are there to serve. They have been encouraged to think that they exclusively have the skills, information and expertise to tackle crime and disorder. And all too often they've come up with solutions without even speaking to those who best understand what's going on within the community – those who live and work there, and are the victims of this disorder and crime.

Is it any wonder that an 'us and them' culture has developed? The public are on the frontline in suffering the effects of crime and anti-social behaviour but on the backline when it comes to decisions about how to deal with the problem.

**The report is divided into the following sections**

- Pg 8** Evidence on current levels of involvement
- Pg 10** My vision for active, safer communities
- Pg 12** Getting your community active – a guide for people who want to make a difference, including ten top tips for activists
- Pg 26** Working with your community – how agencies can make change happen locally
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- Pg 48** Annex – Case studies from the seven neighbourhoods, in their own words

## So what have I been doing?

Over the last six months, I've gone out to meet local people in their communities to learn and understand more from their experiences.

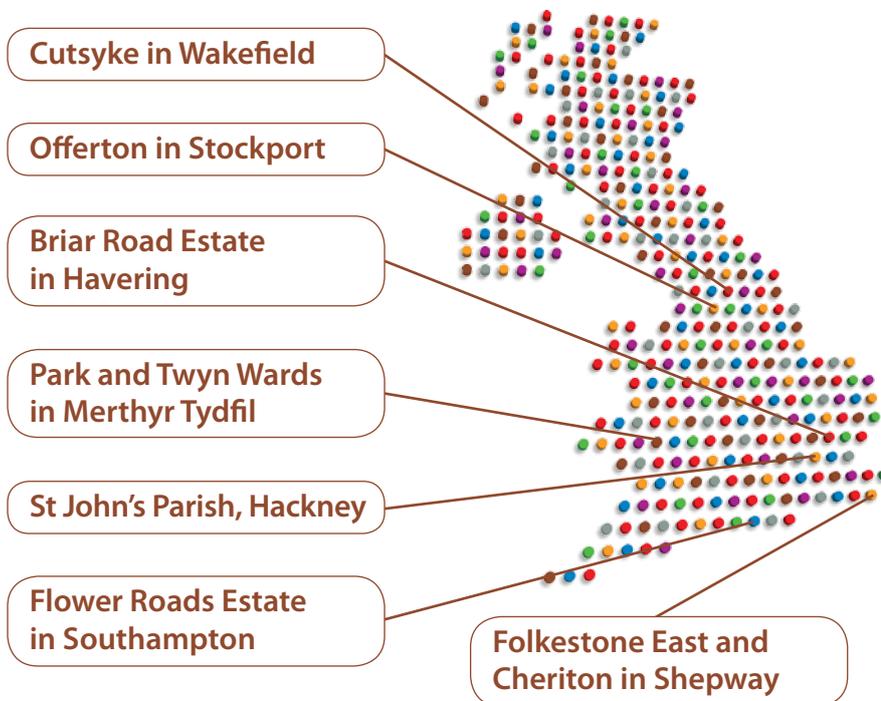
I've worked closely with seven neighbourhoods. I personally chose these neighbourhoods as they represented a cross-section of areas with different levels of problems and at different stages of community development.

I have listened to police officers, social landlords, local authority

staff, voluntary and community sector groups and victims; visited a number of 'good practice' projects around the country and consulted with the wider public via my blog<sup>1</sup>. I have also read comments from a survey of almost 200 experienced community activists<sup>2</sup>. I really wanted to dig deep into this area, to see what works and what doesn't and most of all to understand the barriers which stop ordinary people restoring the safety and wellbeing of their own streets.

I spoke to very many people over the past six months, and those conversations formed the basis of my report.

I am extremely grateful in particular to activists and staff in the seven neighbourhoods I worked with. I have been hugely impressed by the time and energy they put into their communities and would encourage you to read their personal stories in the Annex of this report. I would like to thank them dearly: Hayley Bell, Jill Slaine, Jan Palmer, Father Rob Wickham, Louise Brown, Erica Jones, Win Glead, Sara Griffiths, Bill Bass, Phil Morgan, Vera Rethon, Kelly Holkham, Shaun Taylor, Ann McGovern, Dave Barker, Ian Levy, Paul Morrall, Bonnie Navarra, Chris Barry, Richard Gardiner, David Jones, Rheta Davison, Gordon Hooker, Sue Hooker, Maggie Beckett, Jim Cappleman, Georgina Cappleman, Brendan O'Brien, Carolyn Anderson, Dave Springett and Alan Kebbell. Finally, I'd like to thank my dearest and most loyal friend Rani King.



1 Helennewlove.co.uk

2 183 Community Crime Fighters (CCFs) were surveyed by telephone in February 2011. The CCF programme was set up in September 2008 by the then Home Secretary to give participants the skills and knowledge to challenge criminal justice agencies on the level of service they provided; and to encourage their local communities to engage in community safety activities. Nearly 4,000 Community Crime Fighters (CCFs) from England and Wales received training in 2009/10

## What have I found out?

The 'Big Society' is already out there – it's the neighbourliness of putting on a street party, it's the parents running the local football team in all weathers, the hundreds of thousands of volunteers, faith groups, and many established groups including youth clubs, cadets, Brownies, Scouts, Guides, and Boys and Girls Brigades. It's the local befrienders of the elderly, housebound, people with physical or mental health issues, the most vulnerable and often the most easily targeted by bullies.

Delivering services closer to communities and letting local people make the decisions that affect them ('localism') is not rocket science either. People like the idea of their local bobby walking the beat and being part of community life - that's why Neighbourhood Policing Teams and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) are popular with local communities.

**We need  
to change mindsets -  
communities,  
local agencies  
and Government.**

My message to activists is, wherever possible, take that extra step.

## Move

**from complaining  
about the state of  
your neighbourhood  
or how much agencies  
don't do and do  
something about it  
yourself!**

There are many suggestions in this report about how you can get involved and if agencies aren't doing what you need, ask them 'why not'?

To agencies, I'd say don't assume that you always know best. Don't rush in with solutions but think about what the community can bring to the table. Join together to get the basics right. Give your community confidence that you are there when they need you, on their terms and on their side - and then step out of the way and unleash the amazing assets that exist in your community. Give them the baton, but don't drop it – keep a light touch until they can run with it.

And, I'm not just talking about statutory agencies. The voluntary and community sector also have a huge and important part to play here. Many victims may be unable to take action themselves, particularly the most vulnerable or excluded. Voluntary and community sector organisations have the

special ability to mobilise and support people, particularly those who sometimes struggle to find a voice.

Finally, I think Government needs to turn itself inside out and put information, people, money, and skills at the disposal of communities. Champion our work and say thank you!

**We need to  
trust each other,  
to believe in a  
common plan  
and destination.**

It might seem too simple, or too hard. It will involve some radical changes in how resources and power are distributed but we can all share in the success if we crack this new way of working.

This report explains how we might begin this journey and poses challenges to all of us as we move forward. If we had had this approach in 2007, the lives of me and my children might have been very different from the future we now face without Garry.

## Challenges to Action

This report is not a typical Government report. It is written for activists by an activist. You can make a difference and get things done. Agencies can and should be helping not hindering you.

For that to happen, some things need to change, and I have some key challenges for local agencies and central government:

- 1 Reward communities who come together to reduce crime by giving them back money to re-invest in crime prevention
- 2 Give the community cash from assets seized from drug dealers and other criminals
- 3 Create a national information source, a hub for activists, and support it with an award for the best examples of activism
- 4 Provide the public with a single point of contact for reporting non-emergency crime and anti-social behaviour - make sure other partners are linked up for the roll-out of the 101 number
- 5 Let communities set their own speed limits
- 6 Back a community 'Power of Competence' with a helpline to give the public advice to overcome cautious agencies standing in their way
- 7 Follow the Neighbourhood Policing example and get the justice system out of the court room and into communities, and put victims' needs and their protection at the heart of any action.
- 8 Pool agencies' budgets locally and give the community a choice about how money is spent
- 9 Ask Police and Crime Commissioners to commit at least 1% of their budget to grass roots community groups to use or have a say on
- 10 Take crime maps to the next stage – don't just show where crime happens, but what action has been taken against local crooks
- 11 End the 9-5 culture. Agencies need to be there for their community when they need them.
- 12 Get public servants out and into communities, and volunteering their time and expertise to support local groups

# 1. What does the evidence tell us about current levels of involvement?

Levels of volunteering in the UK are higher compared to many of our European neighbours<sup>3</sup>, **40%** of people living in England (over 17 million people) volunteered formally at least once in the last twelve months with **25%** volunteering formally at least once a month<sup>4</sup>. There is also good evidence that more people would like to get involved. Almost half of the public (**49%**) say that they would like to be more involved in decisions affecting their local area, and another **15%** would, depending on the issue<sup>5</sup>.



**Some do not know how to get more involved and I hope that this report might help them to**

**get started.**

Others may feel they do not have the time and again I hope this report will demonstrate that even getting involved in a very small way can begin to change the whole dynamic and feel of the community.

There are a small number of individuals who are already highly involved, and I hope that these people might begin to act as catalysts, creating a ripple effect, by encouraging more and more friends and neighbours to get interested and active. But we also need to recognise that there is a proportion of the population who are just not interested in getting involved, and that is their choice.

## **Community safety related volunteering**

It is difficult to accurately estimate the number of people who are already actively involved in making their community safer as there are so many different national and local voluntary groups, as well as thousands of different tenants' and residents' associations, small community groups and individuals acting informally.

But we do know there is real appetite to get more involved. 76% of those surveyed for the 09/10 British Crime Survey who did not have a Neighbourhood Watch scheme in their area said

they would like to join one if it were available<sup>6</sup>.

The survey of community crime fighters (local activists who are already involved in tackling crime) found that most were engaged in a whole range of different safety related activities. This suggests that once people get interested, they will take on a number of different roles. But it seems that we are expecting a small number of individuals to do too much.

Being actively involved in your community and helping to keep it safe needs to become the norm rather than the exception.

3 Volunteering in the European Union (2010). [http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/news/news1015\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/news/news1015_en.htm)

4 CLG (2010) Citizenship survey 2009/10. <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/statistics/pdf/164191.pdf>. Formal volunteering is defined as unpaid help given as part of groups, clubs or organisations to benefit others or the environment.

5 2008/09 Citizenship Survey :Empowered Communities Topic Report

6 Bespoke analysis of 2009/10 British Crime Survey data

## Intervening directly

People think that others would, but are less sure about themselves.

The 2009/10 British Crime Survey found that...

**77%** of the public thought that their neighbours would be willing to get involved to solve a community problem.

**75%** thought neighbours would intervene to stop a fight

**55%** if a child was being rude to an adult

**47%** if they saw a child playing truant<sup>7</sup>.

But interestingly, people tend to be less confident when asked about their own behaviour.

### In a 2006 Europe-wide survey

only **30%** of Britons said they'd be likely to confidently challenge or probably challenge a group of youths who were damaging a bus shelter<sup>8</sup>

The most common reasons people give for not taking action are concern about repercussions, and feeling that it's nothing to do with them or is not their responsibility. Concerns over repercussions are very understandable. In a survey of individuals reporting anti-social behaviour to the police the HMIC found that 32% reported suffering subsequent intimidation<sup>9</sup>.

### What difference does public involvement make?

Without public co-operation and participation very little crime would be detected, prosecuted and punished. For example, four-fifths of all directly detected offences had victims or witnesses

able to provide helpful leads<sup>10</sup>. Research from the US found that strong communities are more effective in reducing anti-social behaviour and maintaining order than tough policing tactics<sup>11</sup>. Home Office analysis indicates that people living in areas with strong informal social

control (i.e where residents think that neighbours are willing to intervene to stop minor crime and disorder) experience lower levels of crime and perceived anti-social behaviour compared to people in otherwise similar (in socio-demographic terms) neighbourhoods<sup>12</sup>.

7 Home Office Statistical Bulletin 19/10. Public perceptions of policing, engagement with the police and victimisation: findings from the 2009/10 BCS. <http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs10/hosb1910.pdf>

8 ADT(2006) Anti-social behaviour across Europe: An overview of research commissioned by ADT Europe

9 HMIC (2010) Anti-social behaviour : Stop the rot

10 Home Office (2005) Understanding the attrition process in volume crime investigations. HORS 295 <http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs05/hors295.pdf>

11 Sampson, R, Raudenbush, S and Earls, F (1997) Neighbourhoods and Violent Crime: A Multilevel Study of Collective Efficacy, Science 277, 918

12 Bespoke analysis of 2009/10 British Crime Survey data

## 2. My Vision

### How is the neighbourhood different?

- People feel safe in their area, know and can rely on their neighbours and feel happy to live there
- The community has a sense of pride and ownership in their area and are looking at how they can improve the neighbourhood rather than relying solely on agencies
- People feel confident and willing to intervene and challenge bad behaviour
- Parents take responsibility for their kids
- People within the community have skills, resources and support to set up their own groups and projects and these are growing in number and thriving
- BUT if they feel out of their depth or threatened there is a clear mechanism from agencies to support them – they do not feel abandoned
- People who do the right thing are celebrated
- Savings made by active communities are used for the benefit of those communities

### How are local agencies such as police, local authority and housing associations different?

- Professionals are more visible and known by name by their community
- All professional staff regard supporting the community as the purpose of their work, rather than an 'add-on' or extra
- Agencies' processes are transparent to the public, who in turn are clear who to contact to get their problem solved
- Agencies understand why they are working with the public and engagement is recognised and rewarded in their organisational culture
- Agencies share resources and knowledge with partners and the community
- Agencies are working in partnership, not in silos, and with a shared vision

## How is the relationship between local services and the community different?

- Community members feel listened to and their concerns taken seriously
- Information is shared two ways leading to quick outcomes
- Community members know their rights and are able to hold agencies to account
- Engagement is no longer a 'tick-box' exercise but a fundamentally different way of delivering services in collaboration with the local community
- The community are no longer just consulted, but able to make decisions and take the lead in making change happen, with agencies available to assist

## How will the outcomes be different?

- Crime and disorder are reduced
- Every crime is reported and people are prepared to act as witnesses, leading to higher detection and conviction rates
- Communities have growing confidence in the criminal justice system
- Re-offending is reduced as the community helps individuals to break from a cycle of crime and re-offending.
- Local papers are full of stories showing how people are making a difference

## 3. Getting your community active

There's no exact science about who chooses to get actively involved in their community. Motivations tend to be particular to the individual, and people and neighbourhoods vary hugely. But we do know that friends and neighbours are far more successful in getting others involved than agencies or organisations.



**More than half of volunteers<sup>13</sup>, for example, volunteer after being asked to by someone they know who is already**

# involved

As Barack Obama's successful Presidential campaign showed, when you start to empower citizens to engage each other, you can achieve a lot more than by trying to go directly to every citizen.

This chapter will focus on how communities can self-organise with practical tips and examples for anyone looking to do it in their own area.

Chapters 4 and 5 will explore how professional agencies and government can support and reward community action and remove barriers which prevent involvement. They will also look at the important role that voluntary and community sector organisations have to play in supporting victims and mobilising communities.

The community activists I've been working with said that their top five motivations for getting involved were:

- 1 Passionate about my area and want to improve it
- 2 Frustrated by current state of affairs and the poor response of agencies
- 3 Inspired by a local leader/champion
- 4 Could see that I might benefit (acquiring skills, experience, friendship etc)
- 5 Had the time available to do it

13 2008/09 Citizenship Survey: Volunteering and Charitable Giving Topic Report <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/statistics/pdf/1547056.pdf>

## Think first about developing community spirit (not necessarily fighting crime)

While your ultimate aim might be to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour, your first step could be to develop a shared sense of community spirit. People will only be prepared to get involved in crime prevention if they feel ownership about where they live, have a sense of belonging and neighbourliness and a shared ambition to improve the area. As one activist put it: "If you haven't got passion about where you live, why should anyone else?"

It doesn't have to start with a meeting in a church hall on community safety. Organise fun activities, such as a barbeque or a party. This will attract a wider range of people, and

neighbours will begin to get to know and trust each other, so minor problems can be ironed out informally.

Once you recognise a common purpose, you might choose to create more formal networks.

This could be a residents group or a Neighbourhood Watch scheme or you might choose to

take on responsibility for a neighbour. In Folkestone, for example, a neighbour organised for each elderly resident in the street to have a 'buddy'- a neighbour who looks out for them, clears their path of snow, picks up shopping if needed, and who they can call if they have concerns such as an unfamiliar person ringing their doorbell. The stronger these relationships become, the more trusting people will be and more resilient to deal with problems in their neighbourhoods. As one activist explained: "there is safety in neighbours and trust in friendship and that helps to diminish fear"

### Case study: Southampton

Neighbours on the Flower Roads Estate decided last year to organise a three day community youth festival to bring people from the estate together. About 600 people attended the festival to listen to bands and to visit the stalls set up by local youth organisations offering advice on employment, training and education. It was so successful that they are planning another this year to celebrate the transformation of the Daisy Dip communal space into a games area and nature reserve. They are planning to involve young people, particularly those who have been causing trouble in the past, to help organise it. Not only will the youngsters bring a range of talents, especially music, to the table, they will also learn valuable organisation skills along the way.



## Start with your street and neighbours

### Case study: Middlewich

After noticing an increase in the level of littering in her area, one resident wrote to the local paper to ask local shop owners to take responsibility for the area immediately around their shop. When the letter was published she got five responses from local residents who she invited to start the Middlewich Clean Team with her. They wrote to schools, Brownie groups and churches explaining why they wanted to clean up the area and invited them to an initial meeting. The team now has over 200 members, organises two litter picks a month and visits schools with a theatre company to act out the message of the importance of cleaning-up.

“Over the years we have proved ourselves. Our council now also provide money to our budget ... one of the things we had to overcome was other people in our town who just thought 'who are those people?' 'what are they doing?' With perseverance we have changed things, and by talking to people shown them that our town, belongs to us all. Just last week we had a community day and got another 8 members signed up. Everybody knows us now, we use the press whenever we can. We started with just five, we now have over 200 members. We go into all the schools, we have two people who go into the nursery classes too, we chat with the kids, sing songs and show them the litter picking equipment ... Our motto is love your town, keep it clean.”

## Don't be overwhelmed by the scale of the task

or feel that you have to change everything in your area overnight. Even the longest journey starts with a single step and you will begin to make a difference even if you just get active yourself, and begin to get your immediate neighbours involved. We are all influenced by the behaviour of those around us. If you choose to 'step up', so will others and it will soon become the social norm. In Folkestone,

for example, one resident was so worried about the anti-social behaviour and graffiti in her area that she decided to set up a Neighbourhood Watch scheme. As she explained: “It's about making each street accountable for what goes on... I want people to have pride in where they live.” At first only two neighbours were willing to get involved, but five years on 36 out of the 38 houses in her street are members.

You may have to be prepared to be a leader, as your neighbours may look to you to keep them motivated, and being the first to act can be hard, but if you get others involved, it can quickly create a ripple effect. An activist in Havering told me: “In the

beginning you do wonder what you've let yourself in for [but] it encourages people to do things for themselves and the community, and talk to each other”

### Case study: Essex

Eight families got around a kitchen table to source help for their severely disabled children. Finding none, they brought together others, friends and relations to do it themselves. Today SNAPS in Essex supports other families through an award winning website and from a purpose built building with the help of 80 volunteers and a Big Lottery grant.

## Technology can help

Cultural changes over the last 30 or so years have undoubtedly weakened social bonds within communities. We're now less likely to live in the same community we grew up in, we're busier with work and other commitments, and our leisure time is increasingly focused within the home due to televisions, the internet and computer games etc.

Technology is, however, transforming the way we can connect

and create new networks, share information quickly and openly, as well as allowing us to fit community action more easily around other commitments. Think about how you could use IT to create your own community forum. Setting up an email group, a social network site or a blog requires far less technical skill or knowledge than you might think, and by using a free blogging platform it can be done quickly and cheaply. It will help you publicise your work and put more pressure on services. In the East End of London for example a group of streets suffering anti-social behaviour created an email group called 'Brick Lane Watch' which allowed residents to share intelligence about fly-tipping and proved to be very effective in getting action on extra street cleaning.

## Case study: Kings Cross Local Environment and other hyperlocal websites

In 2006, William Perrin had been active in his Kings Cross London neighbourhood for several years tackling crime and anti-social behaviour. But he was overwhelmed by the sheer quantity of information that an active community generates. So he started up a local (or hyper-local) website <http://www.kingscrossenvironment.com/> where he started writing and posting up photos and videos about what was going on – drug dealing and sex worker detritus, people lighting bins in garages and dumping fridges, acute noise pollution by local businesses – and bring it to the attention of the council, police, local businesses and other residents. The website also let other people know what was going on, good and bad and helped people act together rather than alone. The photos on the website today show how the area has become a much nicer place to live as a result of a huge community effort. The Kings Cross website now has a network of 20 local people who send in information and a handful of core volunteers who do most of the publishing. And it is not just about crime and anti-social behaviour but a local website where people can find out about all the interesting things to do locally. Will suggests the greatest prize is "making people realise they are not alone in trying to get things done. The website has helped us work really closely in real time with our councillors and public services to fix local problems." He has now started up an organisation <http://talkaboutlocal.org.uk/> which can help you set up your local website.

## Have a clear purpose: decide what you want to change and get people excited about that change

You will find it easier to convince others to get involved if you have a clear and achievable objective. It's difficult to get people excited about 'creating a safer community'; but they might be more interested in stopping fly-tipping in a specific spot, getting alley

gates put in, or creating a play area for the kids. People get motivated if they can see a tangible outcome which improves their lives directly. And remember, whenever you succeed, publicise these achievements as widely as possible. Tell

your family and friends, use the internet, and contact your local media<sup>14</sup>. By creating shared goals and successes, you'll be strengthening your sense of a shared community spirit, and encouraging more people to join you.

### Case study: Birmingham

"Many years ago on this estate you could not stand outside your house and have a conversation without prostitutes and clients coming up to you. 'If you form a group we will back you', that's what the residents told me. So we called a public meeting and everyone came including pimps, prostitutes, residents and police .. We got funding from a national retail chain to improve the gardens and built a 'growzone' in the local area. After making a strong case to the local authority, they agreed to install CCTV and white lighting in the area ... It is like we went to bed one night and we got up in the morning to find we had been parachuted into a new estate.

There is no secret to it, if you are determined to do something, when one door closes you have to try another ... This estate is lovely now. I couldn't have done it on my own though. We all work together, services and the community. We get people from all over coming here to see what we do"



14 <http://www.mediatrust.org/>

## Try to get everyone involved

### Case study: Havering

The community produced a rap video exploring the poor perceptions different generations can have about each other. Starring younger and older residents together, they all used hip hop moves and rap lyrics to communicate their feelings and misconceptions. This was a really energetic and enjoyable way of unravelling and discussing issues between different generations and for them to better understand and appreciate each other.

When thinking about community spirit, also consider where there are tensions within your community, who might feel socially isolated, and how your community could become more inclusive.

In many of the neighbourhoods I've been working with there have been particular suspicions between young and old, with older people being fearful to even walk past groups of young people, and youngsters feeling vilified and blamed for all the problems in the area.

Cross-generational work can be really successful in breaking down the barriers in understanding between old and young.

In Cutsyke, older residents teach youngsters how to bake in the community house. In Folkestone East and Cheriton, local people are about to buy tools and workbenches to start a new project where elder male residents can act as role models for young people who feel alienated and teach them DIY skills, getting them involved in the community and enhancing their self esteem.

It will be especially important to think about how you might involve the most vulnerable in your community.

This might include the elderly, socially isolated, intimidated or individuals who have been the victim of crime. Such

people are unlikely to put themselves forward, so you'll want to think about how you can reach out, support and integrate them into community life. Victims should not feel they are powerless or alone – watch for court reports and work with your neighbourhood police and charities to offer support. It is nearly always gratefully received.

Finally, be careful to keep everyone involved and not let overpowering individuals take over. As an activist in Havering warns: "Sometimes personalities can be a problem – there can be too much enthusiasm and people trying to be too dominating on the group".

### Case study

Saphron was targeted and beaten up by a gang from her school who bullied her. She was scared to report it for fear of reprisals, but with the help of Victim Support<sup>15</sup> and local friends who were there for her, she bravely testified and began to recover her self esteem and self worth. She went on to volunteer to support other young victims and now speaks for them, and works for the charity.

<sup>15</sup> Victim Support provide free support and advice to anyone who has been a victim of, or affected by crime ([www.victimsupport.org](http://www.victimsupport.org))

## Don't reinvent the wheel

Remember, other people have been there before you, and other groups in your community might be in a similar place.

Rather than battling forward on your own, why don't you team up? For example, a resident in Merthyr Tydfil has been trying to find somewhere for young people to hang out so that they have something to do other than drink in the 'cwttch'<sup>16</sup> up the

road. She has joined forces with the local Mencap group who are struggling to get parents to help out with the upkeep of their building. As she puts it "they're in need of help as much as us, we are a group".

### Case study: Hackney

In Hackney, the families of teenagers murdered through youth violence have joined together with local churches and retailers. They support Hackney Citizens - part of a nationwide initiative which knits community groups together in a common purpose. Several schools are part of this group and young people have a key voice in setting priorities, asserting that 'we are not the problem, we are the solution'. They work closely with the police, local agencies and businesses, building accountability and trust between neighbours. Although tackling the extreme end of crime – gang violence and 'postcode' rivalries they get strength and support from working together.



**Several schools are part of this group**

16 A Welsh word meaning cubbyhole/corner area

## Get your Neighbourhood Police and Council working with you



Think about how you're going to work with your local agencies.

Your local councillors, neighbourhood policing team, housing officer and council officials ought to be there to support you.

### How

are you going to get them working better for you?

Use the 'official channels' such as councillor surgeries and police beat meetings but also invite them out to your events to get them interacting and talking to you and your neighbours on your terms. Tell them what the problems in your community are and discuss how these could be practically addressed – not only what you need them to do – but also what you and your community might be able to do to resolve the issues. Build those bridges – even one like-minded partner can offer support, guidance and open doors for you, which all residents trying to make a difference need.

See whether there is a Key Individual Network (KIN) group which covers your

neighbourhood. KINS are made up of residents or local business people and share a real commitment and drive to make their community a safer place. They help the local Safer Neighbourhoods team to identify community issues and can also speak out on behalf of local people. Police often ask them to carry out surveys about crime and anti-social behaviour or to get involved in supporting an initiative or campaign.

### Information is power,

so use it to hold agencies to account where you are not happy with their performance. For example, take your local

crime map (find it by doing a postcode search at [www.police.uk](http://www.police.uk)) to a police beat meeting and ask them to explain what actions they are taking to deal with the crimes identified; or if you're suffering from anti-social behaviour, keep a detailed record of all incidents and any actions taken by authorities, and use this to inform and demand further action.

The recently proposed "Community Trigger" should make it easier for victims and communities to demand further action by allowing them to require agencies to deal with persistent problems where they have previously failed to take action<sup>17</sup>. It is absolutely right that services should be taken to task for inaction and when things go wrong, but the emphasis should be on getting it right first time.

Sometimes bringing in the police might not be appropriate

or could even aggravate the problem. When facing neighbourhood annoyances - such as youths screaming around on mopeds, or the continuous thump of a football against an elderly resident's side wall - which are not crimes but maddening all the same and damaging to quality of life.

Social landlords (such as the Peabody Trust<sup>18</sup>) will often be willing to call in mediators at the start. And many community members - teachers, parents, youth workers - will have mediation skills already. For those that do not, there is plenty of training available.

## Think

**about how you might use mediation. Bringing the parties together to discuss and understand the impact of their behaviour can often be more effective and nip problems in the bud before they escalate.**

### Community voices: Peterborough

One of the biggest barriers we had was recognition - services didn't know who we were. We persevered with networking, now we understand we have common goals and common resolves ... We work in partnership with all the services, we are so passionate with what we do.

<sup>17</sup> To see the wider reform of ASB tools and powers which the Government are currently consulting on visit [www.homeoffice.gov.uk/asb-consultation](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/asb-consultation).

<sup>18</sup> [www.peabody.org.uk](http://www.peabody.org.uk)

## Don't forget about local schools, charities, faith groups and businesses

Consider what they might be able to provide. Schools can too often be seen as part of the problem, as they can be hot-

spots for ASB issues, but if you work with them then they can become part of the solution. Local schools and colleges will

often be happy to get involved as it provides 'real life' experience for the young people who attend them.

### Case Study: Merthyr Tydfil

Activists are trying to tackle the sale of alcohol to young people and decided to start by asking young people what they thought. Not surprisingly, the young people came up with loads of ideas and were keen to get involved. Members of the Cyfarthfa Lower School Youth PACT and the Merthyr Tydfil Creative Youth Development Group are going to design a campaign leaflet – with one side aimed at parents who might buy alcohol for their children and the other aimed at young people – setting out messages about the impact of alcohol on the health and safety of young people and the impact on the community.

#### Young people came up with loads of ideas



Faith groups have members with similar values who can offer time and experience. Christchurch in Brentwood, for example, offers a free community drop-in advice surgery on parenting thanks to the voluntary efforts of a member of the congregation who is a retired paediatrician. It's a very welcome resource for local parents unsure of how to deal with issues around their children.

Businesses can often help with free or cut price goods or by

offering to share their skills or resources. Sometimes you just need to ask. In Havering, local activists wrote to 15 local businesses, and a major DIY chain responded with an offer to provide £3,000 worth of support through supplies of paint, fencing, flowers and plants.

Business people can also start groups and schemes themselves. For example one small business owner decided to create a local Business Watch scheme to tackle

ASB problems. He now has more than 40 businesses involved and they each have two way radios to communicate directly with their Safer Neighbourhood Team. It has reduced ASB as well as gathering more intelligence for the police.

Look locally for community recycling sites or set one up yourself, encourage donations of paint, books and materials. Your school or community can save money and help the planet.

## Finance

Purse strings may be tightening but there is still money available for people looking to make their communities better.

The difficulty lies in knowing where to look and how to ask.

**Start**

**locally**  
and be imaginative.

Look to other members of your community, consider sponsored events, organise concerts, write a letter in your local paper or even better start a campaign and ask for a column to update residents.

You don't have to limit your efforts to what you can raise from your own community. There are many small local Trusts and Foundations, who provide cash to local community groups. Take a look at specialist web sites and publications. The Directory of Social Change is one of the best known national sources of information about fundraising and funding sources, there are others too.

You don't have to be a charity, although it can help as there are some financial benefits and there are some philanthropic sources which will only give to charities. You could always find a charity that is willing to work with you and hold the funds on your behalf. You can also join forces with other community groups and launch a joint appeal.

You might want to consider keeping your fundraising targets modest in the first instance and remember to have complete transparency in your financial arrangements. Make sure that anyone who wants to know can find exactly how and why you have spent the funds you have raised. This builds trust and, once you can demonstrate success it becomes easier to convince other donors that you are worth backing.

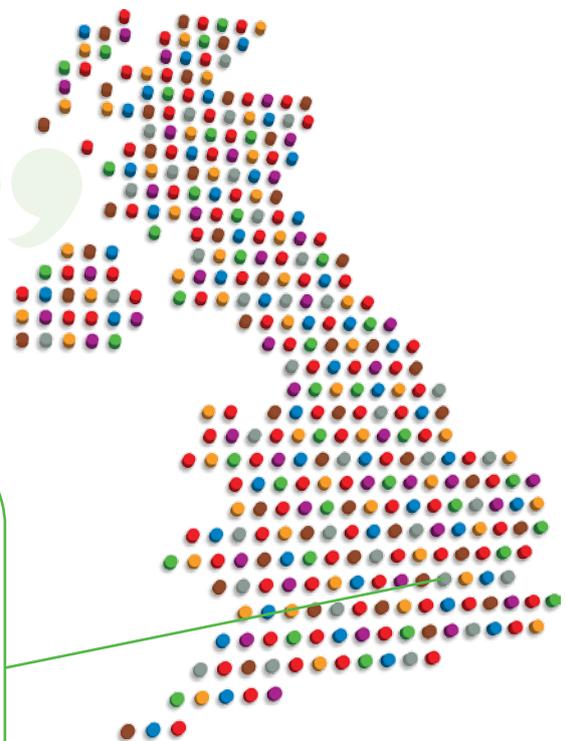
## Focus on your end goal and work towards it

The most important things are energy, perseverance and not taking no for an answer.

### You will

**face challenges,** barriers and knock backs and sometimes these will seem impossible to overcome, but if you keep going and take your neighbours with you, you will win through in the end.

Finally, watch this space as more powers are likely to be coming your way. The Localism Bill, for example, has a number of proposals which will put more power back in your hands. These include communities being given more time to raise funds to buy community assets, having far more information about empty land and buildings so you can start asking questions of landlords, including whether you can use empty buildings for community events, and having a much greater say in local planning and development.



### Community voices: Staines

The main thing is not to give up, I am a full time mum and I work full time too ... what makes our Neighbourhood Watch successful is partnership, it's very important to work together. The police cannot work without the community. Crime has gone down dramatically. Reporting crime is the most important thing. What we have now are community meetings, we want people to come together, all ages. We get all together, communicate, report, and listen. People have the confidence to report now. We had a lot of problems in the park burnt out cars, drugs, motorbikes ... I fought and fought and fought and now we have CCTV, with support and persistence we have managed it.

## Top 10 Tips for Activists

### 1 Think about developing community spirit (not necessarily fighting crime).

Focus on watching out for each other, rather than just watching out for criminals. Research shows that stronger communities where neighbours know and look out for each other have lower levels of crime, so don't think that you need to be out catching criminals to make a difference!

### 2 Start with your street and neighbours.

You don't need to start with huge plans, just getting your immediate neighbours involved in a neighbourhood watch scheme or with street pastors/angels for example, will start to make a difference.

### 3 Technology can help.

Email, social networking sites, blogs and twitter can all help to create a sense of community and allow you to keep in touch despite your busy lives. It requires less technical knowledge than you might imagine but do remember that not everyone is online.

### 4 Have a clear purpose: decide what you want to change and get people excited about that change.

You'll find it easier to get people motivated and involved if you have a clear and achievable objective. And remember, once you're successful, publicise your achievements before moving onto the next challenge. Everyone loves a winner!

### 5 Try to get everyone involved.

The wider the range of people you can get to work together the better. Let young people take some leadership and allow them to feel that they have a stake in their community. Use technology - but don't forget the power of face to face communication.

**6 Don't reinvent the wheel.**

Look at what local groups already exist and join them. Remember there's strength in numbers. Search for good practice on the internet. Learn from people who are already doing it or have done it and remember to share your successes with others.

**7 Get your Neighbourhood Police and Council working with you.**

Go out to their meetings, but also get them along to yours, or agree to have joint meetings where everyone is present, including statutory and voluntary sector agencies as well as community representatives. Be clear about the problems in the area and work together on solving them. Hold each other to account if they (or you) fail to deliver. Get the agencies to support activists and to watch out for your safety.

**8 Don't forget about local schools, charities and businesses.**

They might just be your greatest source of support and resources. Most banks and supermarkets for example will have locally focused volunteering and fundraising. Don't be shy to approach them with your ideas or to ask them for help.

**9 Be imaginative when looking for funding.**

There is more around than you might imagine, local charities and trusts are a good source. Research online and consider teaming up with another group to apply.

**10 Don't give up!**

Changes won't happen overnight, but persevere. Get more and more people involved, including your councillors and your MP. Remember the bigger you are, the louder your voice will be. If no one is listening or helping, go higher and use the local media to highlight your issues.

## 4. Working with your community – making change happen locally

Encouraging more active, self-organised and self-regulating communities is, of course, only half the story.

Agencies also have to be prepared and willing to work with their community and back them up when needed.

### My vision

**of safer, active communities** is not about cutting costs or leaving communities to 'do-it-yourself' but about getting local people and agencies working together to deliver services in genuine partnership.

And it's not all about changing from top down to bottom up, it's about meeting in the middle.

Services have moved closer to the community in recent years, and the activists I've worked with greatly value their Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPTs), Street Wardens and locally based council staff. People like having professionals who are permanently based within their community, who are easily contactable, understand the local issues and know local people. But in terms of how services are actually delivered on the ground, public involvement is still limited.

For all the talk of 'community engagement' over the last decade or so, in practice, it has tended to mean little more than consultation with the community. And activists have told me that far too often this has felt like a tick box exercise with the overall aim of driving through an organisation's agenda rather than really understanding and responding to what the public wants.

Communities are fed up of being ignored or "done to" by agencies. They feel that they have the answers to their problems and need agencies to listen, support and resolve them.

This chapter will look first at how agencies can do the groundwork to build strong and trusting communities

who are able to get active, and then move beyond simply responding and consulting, to working in partnership with an active community.

And let's not forget the crucial role that voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations have to play. Organisations working with victims, for example, will often be the first point of contact the individual has with anyone other than the police and can provide crucial support and links to other organisations and community groups. And VCS organisations also support offenders and their families, linking with statutory agencies locally.

As a senior police officer said, "It is clear that there needs to be a culture change - on the part of communities to realise that they have a responsibility to get involved. And on the part of agencies like the police to let them. This is not about the police walking away, and it is not about the police being community workers either. But neighbourhood policing teams can act as a huge catalyst for this change; working day in day out in communities, building up their confidence and identifying and supporting those who could be active and brave to make the first move".

## Give your community confidence to come forward by getting the basics right

### Case Study: Manchester

Four years ago Sale Moor suffered from what the local MP described as, “a real lack of confidence in policing - crime and anti-social behaviour was rife,” while the chair of the Community Partnership described it as a “no-go area.” The Neighbourhood Police Team (NPT) made long-term plans to improve community confidence.

The first task was to destroy the culture glamorising criminal behaviour by some really visible enforcement: relentlessly targeting criminals, hunting down wanted persons and closing the pub used by the criminal fraternity.

Once the community was more confident that police were on the case of the criminals, the NPT could start engaging with residents to prevent crime: knocking on doors street by street to find out what people’s concerns were, providing crime prevention advice on cars and homes, and with partners working with young people to give them positive activities which would keep them out of trouble.

By being in the neighbourhood day in, day out, the neighbourhood policing team got to know the issues affecting everyone, even the particularly vulnerable who often have no voice. After becoming aware of unscrupulous door to door salespeople who were ripping off elderly people in the area, for example, the NPT organised a joint enforcement action with Trading Standards officers. The offenders were convicted, imprisoned and importantly, through asset recovery, the victims were compensated for their financial losses.

Crime has been cut dramatically and Sale went from being one of the worst areas in Manchester for confidence in the police and the local council, to one of the best.



For the community to even be prepared to step forward and take on more responsibility, they need to first be confident that agencies are giving their total support.

Unfortunately in some areas, particularly those with high crime rates, trust and faith in agencies is very low. And fear of anti-social behaviour can be as debilitating as the anti-social behaviour itself. It can have a really serious impact on people's lives. I know that some people avoid certain areas or streets and that others dislike walking or going out at night.

People won't bother reporting crime if they think no action will be taken and they won't be prepared to challenge anti-social behaviour if they think no-one will back them up. So, agencies need to be highly visible, providing quick and effective

action, as well as working to solve longer term problems. They should proactively visit those suffering from anti-social behaviour to make sure they feel protected, and take swift action to deal with crime by bringing the full force of the law to bear upon perpetrators.

At their best, neighbourhood policing teams, or better still, neighbourhood partnerships have managed to work closely with neighbourhoods to turn even the most crime ridden areas around.

The common element in most success stories is agencies building strong and trusting relationships with their communities. Activists have told me that all too often they lose officers just at the point when they are really getting to know them because staff

need to move on or get promoted. I was therefore delighted to read that the recent independent police pay review<sup>19</sup> has suggested that officers be given a small financial reward if they stay in a neighbourhood role for more than three years, and very much hope the government accepts this recommendation.

Given the success that the best neighbourhood police teams have had, we should consider what other elements of the criminal justice system might be better delivered closer to the community, including for example restorative justice and neighbourhood justice panels. Magistrates are supposed to be representatives of our communities, but how many of us could name one who lives near us?



19 Winsor (2011) Independent Review of Police Officers' and Staff Remuneration and Conditions ([www.review.police.uk](http://www.review.police.uk))

One of the most effective ways to tackle re-offending can be to work as a community to rehabilitate offenders back into society.

In terms of getting the basics right, agencies also need to be very active in providing swift feedback to the community.

People will only be prepared to engage if they are confident that their concerns will be listened to and acted upon quickly. So, if you're asking people to give up

their valuable time, you need to be clear about why and what difference their involvement will make and don't forget to let them know the outcomes (for example priorities changed, arrests made or eyesores removed).

This will not only reward those who are already involved, it will motivate those who are not. As an activist in Havering explained: "We have got the energy, got the spirit and now have the

relationships [with services] but if we don't get things going [demonstrate some results] all that energy and spirit will go". Think about how technology might help you to publicise changes to a wider audience. A number of police forces for example, use Flickr to display before and after photos following community clean ups<sup>20</sup> and the new police.uk portal offers a great opportunity for local teams to put on information and updates for their local community.

## Case Study

Twenty year old Amir received a supervision order, jointly handled by the Probation Service and a community organisation, the Himmat Project. He was allocated a community mentor who he saw twice a week. Gradually, he became a regular visitor at the Himmat Youth Club, as well as beginning to attend Friday prayers with some of the volunteers. He joined the Himmat Project community 'Clean-Up' campaigns and by the end of the year, was a volunteer staff member. He has never been in court again. He said "I realised that frustrations and stress at home were leading me into a life of spiralling anger and crime. Himmat allowed me to see my responsibility at home ... to gain a new set of friends, and know that there were people who cared what happened to me."

<sup>20</sup> Forces using Flickr include West Yorkshire, Avon and Somerset, Essex and the Met.

## Provide a service on your community's terms not yours

If communities are to build trusting relationships with their services, then services need to be available when their community needs them.

It is crazy for example, that many staff whose prime function is to support and assist the community only work standard office hours when most people are busy at work or in education. There needs to be flexibility to attend weekend or evening events as part of the job. Shops open late and on weekends to meet the needs of their customers – why shouldn't services?

One way in which agencies could better understand the communities' needs is to involve

local people in staff training. In south London, Southwark Young Advisers are involved in training police in approaching and stopping young people and are helping to break down racial tensions. Some police forces (such as West Yorkshire) require all newly recruited officers to do a period in a neighbourhood team and this helps to ensure that services are rooted in an understanding of the community. Why not senior officers too?

The methods which some Neighbourhood Policing Teams still use to interact with the public also need to change. In too many areas, it's still about public meetings and formal questionnaires. Now, given that almost anyone with a job and/or family responsibilities is unlikely to have time to spend several hours in a public meeting, is it any surprise that fewer than 1% of the general population have ever been to a beat meeting or a police organised event?

Some forces have begun to hold beat meetings online and this has increased the number and diversity of those engaging<sup>21</sup>, but agencies need to move not only online but out into the community.

**Stop**  
**expecting the public to come to you**  
and get out to where the public already are: engage in the community's places, in their language and on their terms.

This could mean holding a drop-in surgery in the café of the local supermarket (as Matlock Safer Neighbourhood Team do); having a ward 'walk-a-round' to allow local residents to point out problems (as Hartlepool Council does); putting information out via Twitter (as Greater Manchester Police<sup>22</sup> have pioneered) or it could mean using a popular local website forum (the local police regularly use MyTunstall.co.uk, for example).

Providing a service that meets the needs of your community (rather than the interests of your organisation) also means moving out of your 'silos' and starting to work together.

21 For example, a Staffordshire Police 'Ask the Commander' online session attracted 63 participants, with the page viewed a further 622 times afterwards. South Yorkshire Police have found that online meetings in Barnsley attract a different type of audience, including families, disabled people and those who are too intimidated to go to public meetings.

22 In October 2010, Greater Manchester Police tweeted every call for a 24 hour period. By the end of the day over 19,000 people were following them compared to 3,000 at the start. A significant audience to then put other crime and safety messages out to.

The public want to have a single conversation with agencies – they don't distinguish between a police responsibility, a local authority responsibility or a housing responsibility.

To the community it's a problem that needs sorting and they don't care who does it as long as it gets done.

It's unbelievably frustrating to be passed between agencies when you need help and it makes no sense to the community if they are separately consulted on exactly the same issues by the police, the local authority and their social landlord.

There should be a single reporting process for the public – with agencies working together behind the scenes to

broker how the problem will be dealt with and resolved. The Government is committed to rolling out 101, a single national non-emergency number for the police by April 2012. This is a good start but areas need to think about how they can get all their partners involved (as the Police and City Council already do in Sheffield). We need to seize this opportunity to create a 'one-call – one-stop' option for the public.

Senior staff also need to be more aware of what's happening in local communities. One way of achieving this, and ensuring it's a meaningful ongoing relationship, rather than just a PR exercise, would be to get each senior manager (from across the Community Safety Partnership) to 'adopt a neighbourhood'. They would assume a championing role for safety and service delivery in the area and would be a named point of contact for the public in that area.

I would like to see senior officials who make decisions about public matters spend at least a week with their staff on the frontline each year.



## Ask your community not only what their problems are but how they should be dealt with – and include them in the ‘how’

Over the past couple of years, agencies have got much better at asking communities what their priorities are, but with the removal of central government directions and targets, there is even more opportunity for services to ask the community not only what their problems are but how they want agencies to respond to them, and what success looks like. This would mean frontline staff’s work is truly driven by the public they serve.

Agencies also need to recognise that communities not only understand their own problems but have some of the answers to them.

You’ll find that your community knows far more about why, where and when incidents occur than you do and will come up with innovative ideas to solve problems that you might never have thought of. And you will be making use of some incredible assets - your local people and your community!

### Consider what powers you could give to local people.

If speeding is a problem in your area why not let the community set the speed limit? Local highways agencies are supposed to consult on speed limits, but how well is this advertised? You could then involve them in enforcing the new limit. In Cambridgeshire and Devon and Cornwall volunteers are given speed guns to monitor and catch people speeding in their neighbourhoods, passing the evidence on to criminal justice agencies to prosecute and making their streets safer.

In Sutton, the PCSOs systematically carry out in-depth interviews with community members, asking them to identify the anti-social behaviour and crime problems that cause them most concern. They often uncover more crime than is formally reported, but also the community can often tell them the underlying reasons why it is happening and how they could solve it<sup>23</sup>.

Problem solving can be done on an ad hoc basis but is best if structured around a more formal agreement. Neighbourhood Agreements can be a good way of bringing together residents and services to work as partners. They outline what standards people can expect from their services (what they will do, who will do it and by when) and what responsibilities the community will take on in return. Local people who have been involved in drafting Neighbourhood Agreements say that they feel more of a sense of ownership following the process and often become local champions, encouraging more of their neighbours to get involved.

### Why not

**take a specific crime or anti-social behaviour problem in your area and work with them to solve it?**

23 <http://www.upsi.org.uk/>

## Provide lots of opportunities for the public to take action

As well as getting the public to report crime, act as a witness, and form community groups such as Neighbourhood Watch or a tenants and residents association, agencies should look at how they could encourage and support more local people to get more directly involved in the delivery of safety and justice in their area.

This could be as part of a street patrol with or without uniformed officers (for example StreetWatch<sup>24</sup>), by joining up as a Special Constable or police volunteer. It could be putting on sporting or cultural activities for young people to keep them from hanging out in the street or

joining a community litter pick to make sure the area looks clean and tidy. It could be by helping to dispense justice, as a Magistrate or as a youth referral panel member.

Another good way of involving the community is restorative justice (a process which brings together victims, offenders and community members to decide how to make good the harm caused by an offender). Mentoring low risk offenders to get them back on the straight and narrow, or meeting offenders at the prison gate and helping them integrate back into society, can stop the revolving door of re-offending which is so costly to the individual, their

families and the community. You could also increase the opportunities for the public to nominate and vote on what work is undertaken by offenders on unpaid work orders.

The important thing is to make the public aware of the opportunities – many people don't get involved because they do not know how to. And make sure that there are opportunities to suit everyone. Time is often a constraint. So think about how you could get the community to do very small things like re-tweeting crime prevention advice, or providing bulbs so they can plant flowers outside their house to make the street look nice.



### Case Study: Worcester and Norfolk

The West Mercia Probation Trust has developed a strong partnership with the local authority to nominate community payback schemes, whereby offenders are punished in such a way as to benefit the community. One such project saw a team of offenders clearing a private road which had been used for drug taking. There is real potential for this approach to be taken wider across the country.

Over in Norfolk, Community panels take the lead on making sure offenders repair the harm that they have caused in their neighbourhoods. This does not just mean picking from a list of options for reparation that the police provide. Local people are taking real ownership of the issue, identifying potential projects and running the whole process, increasingly independently from the police. From refurbishing the war memorial to beach cleaning, offenders are making good their debt in ways that really mean something to the community affected.

24 <http://www.street-watch.org.uk/>

## Give frontline staff discretion to take decisions



Staff working directly with communities must be given more discretion to make decisions and take work forward.

Risk aversion within our public services means that junior staff refer almost all decisions back up through their hierarchy. Just as communities get frustrated when they are passed from agency to agency, they are also put off by the constant “we’ll come back to you” refrain, and lose faith in the process as change is so slow.

Managers need to empower their staff to take decisions. The presumption should be that the frontline takes a decision and if they choose to refer it up, then they must justify why.

Lack of discretion can also stop agencies working together, as staff at local level often do not have the power to decide to quickly share information, resources and budgets across agencies. Again this simply slows down the process and stifles innovation. It is of no value to the community if these types of decisions need to be passed up to a Community Safety Partnership which only meets quarterly.

## Devolve power and budgets

Historically, public agencies 'owned' all the resources and the public had no say in how money was spent.

This is beginning to change with the introduction of a number of different new budgetary techniques,

but just the variety and names of these can be enough in itself to put the community off - community budgets, place-based budgets, small area budgets, neighbourhood budgets, participatory budgeting and Local Integrated Services to name just a few!

**We need**

**to keep it much simpler**  
if we want to get the public involved

I would propose the following clear principles:

- Anything to do with money must be absolutely transparent and uncomplicated.
- Budgets should be pooled at the most local (neighbourhood) level and be attached to results and not to individual agencies. So it's not police money, or local authority money, but money to solve a problem.
- Agencies should consider putting their available budget into this pool, and not just a small proportion as is currently the case in some models.
- Efforts should also be made to get others such as local businesses to contribute.
- Money from the shared pool should be allocated to agencies and community groups depending on what they can bring to the table to solve the identified problem.
- There must be an independent adjudicator to decide who will do this to stop agencies arguing for their own service. And who is better than the public?

The process must be simple, transparent, with enough time to give everyone an equal chance in bidding, and widely advertised to allow for the widest participation from all groups in the community.

I know that public influence over budgets worries many agency staff, but the public are not stupid.

Give us proper information on which to base our decisions, with necessary protections for some vulnerable groups, and why shouldn't we help decide how money that we have provided in taxes is spent?

## Nurture your community and give them the skills to lead

Changing the role of communities from being users of services to being 'equal partners' - engaged in design and delivery - is not something that will just happen overnight or by itself.

### Communities

will need  
your support to grow.

Don't make assumptions about what support is needed - individuals are all different, so ask them what help they need to get involved or more involved. Some people might want you to spend time with them before a meeting explaining the process so they are confident to attend and speak up, or perhaps it might be assistance with navigating their way round governmental bureaucracy.

I know that small amounts of funding can make a big difference for some volunteer-based activities and a little injection of cash can often get things off the ground. But accessing funding can be a complicated and frustrating process. Ask communities what would help them to access funding and think about

how you can make funding more easily available to small groups. Look at how application processes can be simplified and offer help to people making funding applications. Could you complete the paperwork with or for them?

And it's not just about funding. Red tape at all levels can make life difficult for activists and sap their energy. An activist wanting to organise a street party for example is faced with a whole raft of separate requirements, regulations and applications, including health and safety, music licensing and road closure applications. It can be very daunting and how do you know where to start or even if it's worth trying?

Agencies should take on responsibility for knocking down those barriers.

## Look at your bureaucracy and what could be removed, reduced or simplified.

Could you waive charges for street and park parties for example? Or extend your public liability insurance to cover small events being put on by communities?

Help communities to negotiate the red tape that remains. Draw up a 'quick checklist' for communities who wish to put on events and talk them through what they need to do, don't just send them paperwork or links to websites.

Frontline staff also have an important role in nurturing activists within their communities.



Photography: Peabody Trust



## In Havering

Members of the newly established residents group each have a 'buddy' in the professional agencies (including a local Inspector, a council ASB coordinator, the Street Scene co-ordinator) who they can call upon for support and advice and who will assist them in navigating services.

## Find, inspire and support those community members with influence in your local area.

And be aware they aren't necessarily the people who currently attend your community meetings!

We all know that sometimes we need a little push to do something, or for someone to hold our hand the first time we do it. Put yourself at the communities' disposal!

Activists not only enthuse and inspire others to get involved, but can pass on their skills and knowledge and so enable the community to become more

self governing. In a similar way to Jamie Oliver's 'pass it on' cookery classes, agencies can give skills to community leaders and then ask them to share these more widely. For example invest in conflict resolution training for a number of activists and ask them to train the community. Conflict resolution training can also be acquired free from local education services and from your local police force. Or rather than services organising events to which they invite the community, why not support a local community group to organise the event and transfer the budget you would have used to them? Or could you think about diverting some of your agency's IT resources to training community members to give them the skills to set up and run their own hyperlocal site rather than creating your own forum?

## Value and reward the contribution the community makes

The activists that I have been working with said that personal incentives motivated people to get involved.

It is really important that people who give their time and energy are valued for the work they do.

After all, if they did not do it, services would often have to pay someone else to do it, or put even more resources into sorting out the consequences of inaction.

This can be as simple as saying 'thank you' or publicly recognising and championing their achievements, for example through a local awards ceremony or an article in the local paper. This costs nothing and can really encourage local people to continue and for others to get involved too.

Portraying volunteering and challenging anti-social behaviour as the social norm in a community is a powerful way of getting others to follow the example.

You should also make sure that any costs incurred by volunteers, such as transport or childcare, are covered as this can make the difference in allowing someone to take on a community role.

Training, accreditation and the chance to acquire and use new skills can also be a big incentive, particularly for young people, those who are unemployed or those who are retraining for a new career.



## How

**are you advertising these benefits?**

Have you linked in with your local schools, colleges and Job Centres?

Think creatively about how you could reward and thank those who get involved,

but without putting a cash value on their contribution which can 'rub against' people's reasons for wanting to get involved. 'Time bank' type schemes are popping up across the country, where volunteers 'bank' their time and receive council tax rebates, free access to public amenities, vouchers from local businesses, or credits that can be exchanged on a peer to peer basis.

For example Spice Community Credits in South Wales rewards people who contribute to their community and public services with credits which can be redeemed for trips, events and at local leisure, sporting and recreational services and has been very successful in increasing the participation of community members in public services. The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead are now developing a similar scheme to encourage people to provide informal low level care for those around them in exchange for time credits that can be used to access incentives or exchanged between peers as a time based currency.

## Create financial incentives to genuine partnership working by allowing services and the community to keep the savings.

Throughout the course of my work, people have started to suggest more innovative ways of providing financial incentives to communities. This isn't about making funding easier to access but it's about giving the community a much greater stake in local services, and an incentive to getting involved.

I'm not talking about paying people to volunteer but I am thinking about how communities might be 'rewarded' where action they have taken has made a real difference to the safety of their community. Think of this as a community re-investment model. So, just as in a business partnership model, staff who have contributed to the company's success are rewarded with a share of the profits, so if the actions of an active community contributes towards reducing crime and disorder and/or reducing demands on statutory agencies, they should also see a benefit in their neighbourhood from the savings made.

Some of it could be given back to the community for them to decide on how the money should be reinvested in crime prevention. The community could draw up and agree a shortlist and vote on what preventative activities this money might be spent on.

I do realise that it is not straightforward to identify savings or extract them from the system, so perhaps a nominal financial reward might be a first step. Obviously this will need further exploration by agencies and central government.

### I have some suggestions as to how this might work:

- Community Reward - where information provided collectively by the community (rather than by an individual) leads to a conviction, the community is given a reward and can decide what preventative activities this is spent on
- 'Bling-back' - where the community provides information which leads to conviction and seizure of assets of drug dealers and other criminals. Some of the money made from the sale of assets is given directly to the community to spend on preventative activities
- Community Re-investment - if the community and partners succeed in reducing crime and anti-social behaviour (as measured by the local crime maps) they are able to retain savings made for re-investment in the community. Alternatively, the five neighbourhoods in a Police Force area which reduce crime by the greatest amount, could be given a reward.
- 'Turnaround' – a reward for the community if their action has helped turn someone away from crime, for example by intensively mentoring a young person or supporting the successful rehabilitation of an ex-prisoner.

## Top tips to make change happen locally

- 1 Give your community the confidence to come forward by getting the basics right.**

Local people need to have faith and trust before they will be prepared to work with agencies. The public need to know that you are on their side. Be very visible in the community, respond quickly and effectively to problems, proactively visit those who are suffering anti-social behaviour and provide protection by bringing perpetrators to justice.
- 2 Provide a service on their terms not yours.**

Go out to where the community are and be available when they need you and not just during office hours. Keep staff in place for long enough that they get to know and understand the community and involve local people in training staff. Recognise and value your staff who do go that extra mile for the community.
- 3 Ask your community not only what their problems are but how they should be dealt with – and include them in the 'how'.**

Involve the public in defining and resolving problems. They know more about what goes on in their community than you do. Use problem solving techniques to make the community part of the solution and think about neighbourhood agreements as a way of cementing a partnership between your teams and local people.
- 4 Provide lots of opportunities for the public to take action.**

Consider how you can get more people directly involved in delivering justice, such as through joint patrols, expanding use of restorative justice and deciding what work is done by offenders on criminal orders.
- 5 Give frontline staff discretion to take decisions.**

Empower staff across all agencies to solve problems by sharing information and resources. Give them discretion to take action there and then, not pass it up to the Community Safety Partnership. Allow staff to challenge risk averse cultures.

**6 Devolve power and budgets.**

Break-down budget barriers between organisations and try to ensure that money is attached to outcomes. Think about how you can give the public real power over how this is spent, and transparency on how you do this.

**7 Nurture your community and give them the skills to lead.**

The community will bring skills and insights your staff won't have, but equally your staff can pass on skills and support to the community. Allow residents to become a real partner in the change process. Help make change sustainable locally by supporting the community to take the lead.

**8 Value and reward the contribution the community can make**

People will get involved when they see it can make a difference, but think about how you can incentivise them. Are there benefits you can offer from your wider services, such as leisure services. How are the community rewarded and celebrated when they get involved?

**9 Create financial incentives for genuine partnership working by allowing services and the community to keep the savings.**

Consider a community re-investment model. If an active community contributes towards reducing crime, catching criminals or rehabilitating offenders, reward them and allow them to decide how to spend this money.

## 5. Letting communities lead - what and how central government need to change

### The Government

has made it clear that its role is no longer to direct, but to devolve power down to the most local level, and to give local people, rather than Whitehall, responsibility for holding agencies to account for delivery.

**For example, in the criminal justice sphere, from May 2012 all Police Chiefs will be answerable to a directly elected Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), rather than having to meet performance criteria set by the Home Office.**

The first test of government will be whether they are prepared to let go in practice.

Restoring discretion to frontline professionals, allowing communities to shape the services they need, and liberating organisations from the grip of performance targets and measures will mean that areas take radically different approaches. There will be risks and there may be failures, and will government be prepared to stand back and let that happen?

And if power is devolved downwards, then what role does central government have in promoting and supporting community activism?

#### Strip back the bureaucracy

An overly cautious interpretation of legislation or guidance by local agencies has led to a risk-averse culture where peoples' first instinct is often to say no rather than yes and to 'cover their backs', rather than support the community to innovate. This can stop activism in its tracks, as many ideas get snuffed out in their infancy, destroying the enthusiasm of individuals and communities.

I've worked with neighbourhoods who've been prevented by the council from doing something as simple as putting up football goalposts for "health and safety" reasons. This has to stop. The Localism Bill will give Local Authorities a General

Power of Competence. This will give councils the power to do anything that is not explicitly forbidden in law.

It's a very welcome step, which sends the right message to council workers with 'can do' attitudes, but why not extend it to all members of the public?

I suggest that the government introduces a General Power of Competence for local residents backed up by clear guidelines and a free helpline that people could call to find out whether their idea contravenes any rules.

This would give the public powerful information to cut through any overly cautious agencies standing in their way and would knock down one of the main barriers to activism that people have raised on my visits.

In the previous chapter I looked at the many bureaucratic barriers faced by activists who want to do something as simple as organise a community event. These include health and safety (if preparing food), licensing (if music is involved), road closures and safety requirements. And I made recommendations to local agencies about simplifying requirements and negotiating processes on behalf of the community.

Additionally, I would like government to consider whether there is anything in legislation or central government guidance that prevents simplification? For example that might prevent portability of agency insurance to community groups, that would stop councils waiving fees or regulation in certain cases, or that prevents information sharing. The Department of Communities and Local Government have

already uncovered some of these through their 'Vanguard Areas' and their website ([www.barrierbusting.communities.gov.uk](http://www.barrierbusting.communities.gov.uk)) and I would like to see this work expanded.

Even more ambitiously, could communities be given the ability to seek to 'overturn' national or local rules and regulations if they accept some of the responsibility themselves? And if they can't to ask 'why not'?



## Support innovation by setting up an information sharing hub and getting civil servants out there

Whilst innovation and difference is to be welcomed, it would be hugely wasteful if every area out there was simply re-inventing the wheel.

**We need**

**to find more efficient means of sharing best practice and allowing areas to learn from and support each other, rather than looking to government for direction.**

So, without duplicating what is already out there, I would like to see a central information hub for activists. This could provide information and guidance, including 'how-to' kits allowing anyone with an interest to get started, links to useful organisations (such as the national young volunteers service [www.vinspired.com](http://www.vinspired.com)) and a mapping device to enable them to find their nearest community group. Many activists have told me how difficult it is to find out and share information. This hub could showcase what works,

enable areas to explain how they have overcome problems and encourage the sharing of ideas through a discussion forum. The emphasis would be on enabling peer-to-peer discussion and support, with content provided by activists and practitioners and rather than government. Creating a 'home' in this way for activism would both make it much easier for people to access information and help to generate a sense of a national community of activists.

This hub should not be government managed or branded as this might put activists off. Government could support it by running an award for activists, possibly exploring private sector funding. The hub would need to be easy to find via Home Office, Police and Community web sites.

**I would also like government to consider how more of its staff resources might be put at the disposal of the local community.**

Civil servants have many skills - including administration, project management, policy making, a knowledge of funding processes and an understanding of how to navigate bureaucracies. These could be extremely useful to community groups.

Some government departments, such as the Home Office, offer employees up to five days paid leave for community work, but some departments offer significantly less and take up rates are low. This needs to change. With 116,000 civil servants working in the three criminal justice departments<sup>25</sup> alone, over half a million days could be made available to charities and community groups.

I very much welcome the recently announced cross civil service volunteering initiative<sup>26</sup> and am delighted to hear that hundreds of thousands of professionals will be encouraged to volunteer at least one day a year. I am particularly pleased to see that senior civil servants will be expected to champion and encourage volunteering. That sort of proactive encouragement is exactly what is needed.

25 Home Office, Ministry of Justice and the Attorney General's Office

26 [www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/news/professionals-join-big-society-volunteer-drive](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/news/professionals-join-big-society-volunteer-drive)

## Give the public the power of information

But what many communities and voluntary sector organisations want is **sustained** volunteering, for example a few hours every week or month, or sustained activity over a set period where civil servants can regularly input skills which groups do not have. I would urge government to think beyond "X days", to think creatively, to be responsive to requests and to allow and enable the flexibility that this requires.

It's great to see that under the new initiative charities will be able to request specific help when it is needed, but that offer must also extend to small community groups. I am pleased that some businesses are already supporting the plan and urge the Government to get more businesses on board, leading by example and challenging others to do likewise.

The public need timely, accurate and highly localised information on crime and anti-social behaviour if they are going to be able to hold agencies to account.

Since January official information on crimes reported to the police has been available at street level detail at [www.police.uk](http://www.police.uk).

The government is already working with some forces to see how they might develop crime maps further, for example by allowing victims to track online what has happened to their crime report. Two 'trailblazer' areas<sup>27</sup> are also testing the feasibility of adding information on justice outcomes (ie. whether anyone has been caught and prosecuted; and details of any sentence). I would like giving the public access to outcomes information to be prioritised, so that members of the public in all areas are able to judge the effectiveness of the whole criminal justice system and also their Police and Crime Commissioner once they are in post.

Government should also explore how 'real time' crime reports and local intelligence data might be more easily shared. A number of non-governmental websites such as [www.citizensreportuk.org](http://www.citizensreportuk.org), [www.themissinglist.co.uk](http://www.themissinglist.co.uk) and [www.fixmystreet.com](http://www.fixmystreet.com) already allow members of the public to self-report crime and environmental problems and for others to share that information in real time. These sites make reporting transparent to the wider community and could be used to pressure the services into taking speedy action (or explain why they haven't).



## Make it easier for the community to access funding

This report has highlighted lots of examples of people making their neighbourhoods safer and cleaner places to be.

**Many**

**got started without funding and aren't waiting for funding to keep going but are working creatively and dynamically with the money they have and are raising themselves.**

But access to resources (both financial and in-kind) remains an issue for most community groups, at some point.

I recognise that most funding for community groups comes from local agencies, charities, trust funds and companies which the Government has no direct control over and with the drive towards localism this is likely to be even more the case in the future. Putting control back in the hands of local partners doesn't prevent Government from setting a vision for what it expects to happen and having strong relationships with local agencies. I would like Government to ask Police and Crime Commissioners to commit to making a small proportion, say 1%, of their budget directly

available to community groups to use or have a say on.

Where money is made available it is essential that it is easy to access and manage and that it does not act as a burden for those receiving it. The amount of time spent going through a bidding process, developing detailed spending plans and undergoing evaluation can leave little energy and time to get any real work done. Government should look at how bureaucracy could be cut and how conditions attached to current funding could be unravelled and simplified to ensure maximum value and return on the funds/ money received. A starting point would be to remove restrictions where money provided in one financial year has to be spent in that year, even if the community activity it has been planned and earmarked for continues into the next year or beyond.

Government can also have a very constructive relationship with the private sector. I will touch on this only briefly as it is slightly outside the remit of this report, but I would encourage the government to consider what additional tax incentives could be introduced to encourage businesses to support local activism. In many of the areas I've been working with, major local employers had significant corporate social responsibility programmes, but this did not always impact in a significant way on the immediate local community.

## Shine a light and celebrate success

And finally, government has to say thank you.

In the same way as local agencies have to reward and recognise activists, so too does national government. Ministers have an important role in highlighting success, visiting projects and publicly praising local activists. This will motivate those who are already active, inspire those who want to get involved and say to the rest of the country "in Britain, taking part is what we do". Changing a culture is about championing those who say "I will". Peer pressure can be a good thing and everyone wants to be the best.

## Leading by example – what central Government needs to do

### 1 Stop stifling communities by cutting bureaucracy and red tape.

Government is already cutting bureaucracy and red tape. This needs to be not just about cutting it for professionals – but more importantly for communities. Give communities the power to make change happen – with **powers of competence** extended to the public not just local authorities.

### 2 Support innovation by setting up an information sharing hub and getting civil servants out there.

Communities will often know what works and what needs to happen better than Whitehall. But, learning needs to be shared across areas. Support the development of a hub with a community award. Provide an 'offer' to communities of civil servants, on their terms and to help them.

### 3 Give the public the power of information.

Often Government has monopolised information on how services are doing – but it's the public who can make change happen locally. The public need timely, accurate and highly localised information on crime and anti-social behaviour.

### 4 Make it easier for the community to access funding.

Unravel and simplify some of the daunting and overly complex financial rules for community groups. Set an expectation that PCCs will make a proportion of their budget directly available to community groups to use or have a say on, and work with businesses and the private sector to encourage corporate social responsibility – however big or small - to work for neighbourhoods.

### 5 Shine a light and celebrate success.

Say "thank you" to those who are making a difference and champion those who say "I will".

# Annex

## Case Studies from the 7 neighbourhoods

### Introduction

Over the past six months, Baroness Newlove has been working with activists in seven neighbourhoods across England and Wales. They are all taking a different approach to tackling their very different crime and anti-social behaviour problems, and they are at different stages of their journeys. Some have been doing this for years and

some are just starting. The one thing they have in common is they have passion about their local area and want to do something to make it better.

Working with Baroness Newlove has encouraged them to keep going or inspired them into action. They have received support from Home Office civil

servants, given a small amount of funding to get things going and came together for the day in London where they could meet and motivate each other and share their experiences.

Here are their inspiring stories, in their own words.

### Jan Palmer, Merthyr Tydfil

I'm Jan Palmer and I've lived in Twyn, Merthyr Tydfil for 42 years. I'm passionate about my community and improving it for everyone that lives here.

When I first became involved in the community, I started a residents group called The Action Group and later a Neighbourhood Watch Group for my area. I'm now the co-ordinator for 5 streets on my estate and have, and will continue to, successfully improve many aspects of community life in my area.

Most recently I've been trying to get access to a building, owned by MENCAP Society, to provide a venue for community groups such as Mother and Toddler Groups and Youth Groups, as there is a lack of community facilities in the area. I realised that even

though the MENCAP society and I might have different aims, we both have the same problem – creating a lively and welcoming place for people to meet – and therefore we should work together as a team.

I identified the possibility of using the building and approached the owners. They gave me permission to use the building but I've come up against a number of barriers that have prevented me from going ahead with running the groups in this building.

The problems I've faced with this particular project are similar to problems that I've had with many of the projects that I've tried to do. The barriers are things such as applying for insurance, finding the funding for insurance, getting guidance on completing paperwork and finding the necessary forms.



I've also found that people such as Councillors, who I thought would help me, are sometimes obstructive and consequently it can be difficult to find the right person to speak to, to get the answers I need.

Despite these barriers, I've continued to work tirelessly to improve the quality of life for the residents in my community. Last year I was recognised by the South Wales Police Authority who gave me an award for Volunteer of the Year and an Award for Volunteer of the Year for the Borough of Merthyr Tydfil for my work on ASB and underage drinking.

## Ann McGovern, Shepway

My name is Ann McGovern and I am from East Folkestone in the South East. Over the last six weeks since Baroness Newlove first visited us we have made lots of progress. Helen was highly impressed with various projects in action and then we held a meaningful and productive meeting with a number of community leaders. We have been busy chasing highways for our grit bin and it is going to be fitted to the ground in 3 weeks. We are in the middle of organising a street party for Sunday 14 August. Paperwork has been made easier and we are getting help from the council.

This extra boost of activity means that we are expanding work that we started previously. Last winter we got every house in Tyson Road garden bulbs to plant and we are seeing some nice flowers coming up. We are now working with the neighbouring street and we

have started a gardening group, we will be encouraging houses to grow vegetables this summer. The older generation is going to help us young ones.

More people are getting involved which makes me positive about our plans for the future. We had 19 people turn up to our meeting on Tuesday 8 March and we are getting the youth involved by getting them to do a dance performance at the street party. With some of the money from our work with Baroness Newlove, we will be holding an anti-graffiti course and getting residents trained on how to use the chemicals and equipment to remove it, saving time in the long run. Some money is going towards the street party so no one is out of pocket, and some to a project to tackle issues with the migrant population after we hit the headlines in January. We are also looking in to 20mph signs for the street and holding a clean up day before the street party.



A useful learning tool I took away from my visit to London was how to use social networking; from this I have started a Tyson road group on Facebook which we will use for people who live here now and to get others who used to live in the street involved. We will advertise all events people are having over the coming year. Anyone with pictures from over the years can post them on the page and hopefully build this in to a great site. I am excited at the challenge ahead and seeing some good results, please feel free to join our Tyson Road Group on Facebook to support us and track our progress over the coming months!

## Ian Levy and Father Rob Wickam, The Parish of St Johns-at-Hackney



I'm Ian Levy and I've lived in Hackney since 1987. On the 16th September 2004, my son Robert Antonio Levy (16) was murdered by a 15-year-old schoolboy as he was trying to prevent a fight. He was a bright young man who had his whole life ahead of him, and a desire to fulfil all of his dreams and ambitions. His life was taken by another youth who felt the need to carry a knife, without thinking of the consequences.

My family established the Robert Levy Foundation to promote activity centred around the core principles of education and a good united community. All young people have the absolute right to be protected, but the responsibilities that accompany this right must be made clear to them through education and our communities. The need to provide real life changing opportunities cannot be overstated and if we are to change the mindset of those who walk the criminal path a real viable alternative has to be available.

I'm Father Rob Wickam, I have been the Rector of St Johns-at-Hackney Parish Church for four years. There has been a church on this site since the

thirteenth century: it served the local population then, and it does so today. With all the challenges in Hackney, the church must try to tackle what is preventing our communities, particularly the young, living fulfilling lives.

The church stands at the crossroads of three postcodes; continual trouble between rival gangs has meant I have had to bury several teenagers, often complete innocents caught up in this violence, and support their families through these distressing bereavements. So much of what is happening to our young people and their families can be stopped, but we all need to contribute, and we all need to work together. We must learn from our mistakes and build on our successes.

### **Our Parish – Our Plans**

We are working together with other organisations (London Citizens CitySafe, Campaign, Word4Weapons, Chickenshed Theatre) and individuals to support greater community activism against this terrible violence. We have had successes over the years in creating opportunities for young people at risk of becoming involved in, or a victim of, violence, through

- mentoring programmes in schools,
- summer projects,
- education and training apprenticeships,
- work placements, and
- youth campaigns.

But now we want to 'step up a gear' – or two.

We are ambitious! We would like to set up a Hackney youth radio station but know that it will take time and resources. We also want to increase the opportunities for young people to participate in drama and arts through working with Chickenshed Theatre.

We know that many of our projects are about young people expressing themselves, having fun, and engaging with each other, but they are also based in the 'real world' of their lives, and therefore at the heart of all our projects will be education, training, work, and the creation of opportunities to live their lives constructively and with responsibility to their community.

## Win Glead, Havering

I am Win Glead from BRAG – the Briar Residents Action Group – and we started to get together and take action because there is so much rubbish left lying around on the estate even after rubbish collectors have been and escalating problem with drugs.

The first step was to set up a residents group of people who feel the same as I do and want to make the area a better place to live.

The second step was for us to buddy up with services so we have a direct way in and can be more effective at getting things done. We have met with Homes in Havering, Havering Council, Streetcare, Police and shop-keepers on a regular weekly basis. BRAG members have made buddies with top management in all the servicing departments including my own with Inspector Phil Morgan. The residents are also making buddies with local councillors. This has made it easier to start developing our Neighbourhood Agreement, where we all – agencies and residents – note down what we can all contribute to keeping our area safe.

And it has worked! For example, Streetcare have put

into operation a request we made that the road sweepers clear up immediately after the bags of refuse are collected to avoid rubbish falling out of the bags and being left to be kicked around.

We have also formed a good relationship with HAVCO – our local organisation who supports the voluntary and community sector. They are supporting us to take out liability insurance so we can organise events, apply for Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks so the team can work with young people and the vulnerable and apply for courses for all who wish to take up a position and further their CV's or career.

In our neighbourhood we've wanted to build a sense of community and get more people involved. We've reached out to young people by creating a facebook page and keep in contact with local people who use the net, but we shall soon have a web page with a logo. The children in a local school are having a competition to design the logo and we shall have it on letter headings tea shirts etc.

We've also wanted to bring groups of people together. At a really successful recent meeting at the Betty Strathern Community Centre, we made



more connections with the youth that live on the estate and we intend to have an intergenerational event with the young and the elderly having competitions. Even the wardens have said they will have a team competing! In May the Generation team from Havering Council are also having an event in the Betty Strathern to help get the disabled and elderly out to meet our group.

We have made good friends on facebook with other activists all over the country who we met at the London workshop. We are making plans to see some of them in April to renew our friendship and talk about ours and their progress.

There has been some interest from the factory units and big companies that are on the estate with a view to make donations to the group. B & Q have already donated plants for some of the flat gardens.

So far the future looks good.

## Rheta Davison, Cutsyke

I'm Rheta and I'm part of the Cutsyke Community Group. Cutsyke is a small village with many homes owned by the local council. It was a community cut in two by a main road which resulted in the two half's of Cutsyke (mainly the young people) not mixing. Many of the residents were born in the village and they were proud to be born in Cutsyke but this was going to change.

The group was set up in 2000 by a group of people who thought that the council were going to turn two houses into one for a large family. They had seen their village torn apart by the large industries closing leaving many families without work. Empty houses did not bring in revenue for the council and so larger families were brought in who often caused problems.

The housing issue proved to be nothing but a rumour so the group considered the other problems mainly drugs petty crime and anti-social-behaviour. Sometimes it was like hitting your head against a brick wall the resources wasn't there to help us so we had to help ourselves. I knew from having my children that you had to keep the young people occupied so we leased

a downstairs flat on the worst road in Cutsyke and looked for help from the community to run a kids club. We then had the chance to get the flat upstairs which we also successfully applied for funding and leased. This became our computer suite fitted out for the homework club and to help the older residents learn about computers.

When I first joined the group I went to loads of meetings, met loads of people and learnt from them. But most of the time workers from the council and agencies looked down on you and did not help in any way. It was "you get what we say" but that didn't wash with me so I challenged them every chance I could but I also learnt along the way and could talk their lingo, I think the biggest challenge was gaining their respect.

The trouble with some young people is that because they haven't lived within a household with a parent in full time employment they think that living off the state is the right way. We need to break this cycle and one way is to work with the young people from an early age. While not all young people have the potential to get good grades at everything, they might have potential in other areas such as gardening and cooking etc. We need to show them that these

skills can lead to jobs that pay money and help them accordingly.

We could not get the youth service involved in helping with the older kids so I set up a group called Youth 61. This group had their own management structure and held meetings and by doing this it encouraged other young people to come on board. Being part of this gave them a sense of responsibility as well as diverting them from crime and antisocial behaviour. I would showcase their achievements every where I went and how they made a positive contribution to their local area. In one sense it was showing them how they could be part of the local democratic process. We also knew by getting younger children doing positive activities in the drop-in for the arts and crafts we could not only give them skills but instil into them the idea that some rules are there to help them. Equally, getting the older members of our community involved with the youngsters working side by side at the drop-in shows the elderly that these kids treat them with respect and the fear of crime goes down.

Working with Baroness Newlove has given us a new



lease of life. We have been shopping and painting - giving the drop-in a new look. The funding has enabled us to hold courses from the drop-in for members of our community giving them the chance to get some qualifications and hopefully on the road to work. We also are targeting young mums, offering them some training courses so they are confident and more aware of the help that is out there for them.

My advice to other groups is be dogmatic if you are passionate about your area then you will succeed but you have to keep punching away at bureaucratic

jargon and the stigma of being a voluntary activist. Some workers will look down on you and try and make you trip up in many ways. But you have to confront someone (a councillor or council officer) make sure you have all the relevant information with you so you can backup your argument the internet can help you gain that information.

Don't ever give up if it's worth fighting for then fight for it.

## Hayley Bell, Offerton

I'm Hayley and I've lived in Offerton for 12 years. Eighteen months ago the estate was struggling with anti-social behaviour, low sense of community and very little space for us to meet. There were some things going on for children on the Estate, but nothing that suited all my children's age groups.

So I got involved because I heard about the opportunity to get community funding through You Say We Pay. Louise Brown and I set up Offerton Mum's Group and organised two free fundays during the summer holidays. Hundreds of people came and enjoyed the events. Families could come all together, there aren't many opportunities for that. The events provided activities, entertainment, food and information on services for residents.

The place still needs a lot of attention but through the energy of some of the locals and staff from some of the services and You Say We Pay, anti-social behaviour is down by 40% and things feel better. There are still incidents though and we need to come together to tackle it - we shouldn't stand for it.

Through the work with Baroness Newlove, we are doing a number of things:

- Improving communications on the Estate with the What's On Offerton!!! face book page, the newsletter update and communications week which brought in some 'shock tactics' to encourage behaviour change
- Encouraging residents to ask themselves if the environment and anti-social behaviour is acceptable, and if not what can be done. This will result in a Neighbourhood Agreement which will show that the responsibility for this is shared between services and the community to make improvements, in particular around dog mess, litter and general upkeep of the estate.
- Encouraging more people to get involved through You Say We Pay, hoping for new energy and new ideas which can be brought together through Friends of Offerton residents group.

Community activism does take time and energy but it also shows how communities can give back to each other. I am now joint chair of the Friends of Offerton group as well as treasurer. But first and foremost I'm a wife and a mum to 8

gorgeous children.

And if that's not enough I'm often nurse especially to my 12 yr old daughter Georgia who has chronic lung disease she has been in and out of hospital since she was 3 weeks old. Like any family we have had our struggles especially around money, particularly with changes to the benefits system. Throughout February everything was so busy with community projects and it was really hard to juggle that with Georgia being in hospital and also support my family on £50 per week hardship payments. But out of all that I saw something I hadn't before, I saw how people living around me, my neighbours my friends all helped. My best friend Lou invited all 10 of us to hers for meals. A lady down the road brought a bag of food around and slipped me £5. She didn't have a lot of money but that never stopped her sharing. My 84yr old neighbor came and paid my phone bill. People cared. I care and that is what inspires me to do what I do.

I have enjoyed the energy the Newlove project has created, all the services coming together responding to the call to action has been good. I just wish more members



of the community would respond... but we will keep working at it.

The opportunity to go to London to the Newlove workshop brought lots of learning (not just about how the Tube works!) around communications - now going to get support with our website; and also meeting others and learning how others do things. I gained confidence from realising that others could learn lots from us too. I made good contacts especially with Havering, we have kept in touch and will support each other during and beyond the rest of the project.

### So what next?

- Develop the facebook page and potential website into something people automatically turn to for fast, reliable information.
- Take forward the Neighbourhood Agreement and make

sure the services and community are held to account if they don't keep their side of the bargain

- Keep connecting with others through different ways, for example theatre workshops with local youths around issues such as anti-social behavior, bullying and domestic violence.
- Plan and deliver my summer event - a massive summer communities together party.

Things are changing, Offerton is starting to get more connected. The only way we can be a strong, resilient community is if we are connected. We now need more individuals coming forward to support their community - that would make a huge difference.

## Jim Cappleman, Flower Roads Estate

I'm Jim Cappleman and I've lived in Southampton for 57 years and on the Flower Roads Estate for 15 years. I've always been interested in improving my neighbourhood and the lives of those who live here, but as a busy manager for the NHS I could never dedicate enough time. So following early retirement a couple of years ago, I decided to 'give it a go.' I started by resurrecting the Flower Roads Residents and Tenants Association, I was voted Chair of the Association (there wasn't a queue!) and set about recruiting other like minded residents (including young people) who wanted to do something.

The Estate is in fact 15 interconnecting roads named after flowers. The housing is predominantly a combination of terraced and semi-detached family housing built in the 1950's. The Estate is surrounded by relatively affluent areas and by a large residential campus belonging to Southampton University. Residents of the Estate often feel they have been neglected for council improvement programmes because of its 'hidden' location and the competing demands on local resources.

After discussions with local residents the Association drew up a list of priorities and issues:

- Providing more activities for young people in the local area
- Engaging with, and making a difference to, for people experiencing long-term unemployment and deprivation
- Improving the quality of roads and road safety generally, particularly around the school and GP surgery
- Creating a safe place to live in for everyone
- Using the open space of Daisy Dip for recreation, nature, relaxation and creating a sense of community ownership.

We knew we had to be realistic about what we could achieve in the short term, initially we focused our discussions with the City Council on the quality of the road surfaces and road safety generally. We presented our case logically, taking into account the economic situation and the challenges facing the Council. We could evidence our case and had the support of residents, the local school and businesses. As a result a puffin crossing was installed relatively quickly and the roads were resurfaced within nine months.

Once we had received approval for the roads and road safety, we quickly moved on to organising a three day youth festival to be held on our much loved green space, Daisy Dip. We also applied to the Peoples' Lottery for funds to rejuvenate Daisy Dip, which is conveniently divided by a road: one half would be multi-activity space for young people and the other a nature reserve for families, conservationists and schools.

I know these plans were ambitious! But 'nothing ventured, nothing gained'. We were awarded the lottery funding (£48,000) against very stiff competition, and Southampton City Council match-funded the award. Work will start in the Spring, with another youth/community festival to celebrate the rejuvenation. We really hope Daisy Dip will provide a focus for community activity, such as getting to know each other, volunteering on the reserve (especially the unemployed), and supporting one another.

We know 'we are on a roll,' but it hasn't always been easy; it's been hard work, frustrating at times, especially after setbacks, but this makes the successes more enjoyable,



especially the collective sense of achievement helped by a sense of fun with lots of laughs!

We have long way to go: we need a venue for our young people, we need to do more to get old and young people together, there is still too much isolation on the estate due to poverty, cultural differences, health problems, etc; but we have plans, and believe me, the number of residents, police, teachers, students, businesses who want to join is increasing all the time, people like being part of something happening.





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