

CF 01

Ymchwiliad i dlodi yng Nghymru: Cymunedau yn Gyntaf – yr hyn a ddysgwyd
Inquiry into poverty in Wales: Communities First – lessons learnt
Ymateb gan: Cyngor Dinas Casnewydd –
Response from: Newport City Council – Communities First Clusters

1.0 Introduction

Newport Lead Delivery Body (LDB) is embracing the changes and challenges of undertaking a phased closure of the Communities First programme. This approach involves the transitioning of some projects to other services, whilst reviewing and adapting others in the new approach to building resilient communities, using a Neighbourhood Hub model.

2.0 What worked and didn't work about the Communities First Programme

2.1 What worked?

2.2 Community Trust

Local Communities First teams had by their presence over the years gained the trust of the communities in which they worked. As a result Communities First became a 'brand' that was trusted and valued by community members.

2.3 Livelihoods Worker Quote

"...you develop trust by spending time in the community, and getting to know the connections between the community members. Individual cases can bounce between other bodies who've spent a couple of hours each with the client...we've been there the whole time, they text and call us with their problems, so we're in a better position to identify their needs."

2.3 Relationships

Communities First staff invested in building relationships with individuals, families and communities. These trusted relationships are essential for workers and agencies to be able to deliver services to people.

2.4 Diversionary Activities

Through their strong relationships with young people Communities First were able to develop a wide range of diversionary activities across Newport which reduced the likelihood of anti-social behaviour. For example the Friday Night Projects offered diversionary sessions which were delivered in hotspot areas.

2.5 Example: Anti-Social Behaviour Reduction

Communities First was involved in the multi-agency approach to addressing ASB. Operation Bang for example operated during Halloween and Bonfire Night and offered additional diversionary activities which resulted in a 30% reduction of ASB calls.

2.6 Local Intervention

There is evidence to suggest that the targeting of local interventions by Communities First was particularly effective when the needs of particular groups, such as the elderly; disabled; single parents or young people.

2.7 Example: Livelihoods

The Livelihoods Projects uses an 'assets-based' approach to tackling poverty (the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach) which works in a person-centred way on the understanding that everyone's experience of poverty is unique, and that everyone has assets or resources that they can build on to forge a more sustainable route out of poverty.

This approach was undertaken with a Nurture Class at Dyffryn Primary School and the impacts were so great that the approach was put to the test in a three-year, nine partner project that monitored closely how the approach worked compared to more traditional models of service provision.

2.8 Local Engagement

Communities First has been critical in providing the initial engagement with local people, supporting them on a pathway to improve their life experiences, become more resilient and ultimately gain skills and access volunteering and/or employment opportunities.

2.8 Livelihoods Worker Quote

'Joanne continually emphasises the years that it took for them to earn the trust of the community. Their location means that their faces are seen continuously throughout the area, and their office door is always open for community members to pop in and talk.

She also cites word of mouth as a huge promotional tool for the team. The more work they did in the community, the more word spread about how much they'd helped with everything from setting up benefits to simply hand holding through job interviews.'

2.9 Volunteering / Work Experience Opportunities

Communities First has been able to provide a wide range of work-related opportunities for communities through volunteering and work experience.

2.10 Example: StreetGames Volunteer

Jordan Nichols, aged 18 from Somerton, was named Volunteer of the Year at the StreetGames National Conference held at Warwick University in the spring of 2016. He was recognised for his volunteering in a variety of roles over the previous two years at RASCAL, a Community Association based in Somerton.

The citation said that Jordan's self-belief and confidence has come on in leaps and bounds. "He has chaired a youth forum and his commitment to volunteering in his community has never faltered," it read. "He is a leading volunteer and very effective at engaging with young people."

2.11 What didn't work?

2.12 Postcode restriction

Local communities felt that services should have been more widely available across Newport and should not have been confined to certain postcodes.

2.13 Example: Post Code Eligibility

During the period 1st April 2013 to 31st March 2017 the issue of postcode eligibility proved problematic in a number of ways. For example when DWP Job Centres referred individual clients to a Cluster Job Club the individual's post code was not always co-terminus with the Cluster.

In such cases if the Prosperity Co-ordinator accepted a number of these referrals they impacted on the percentage of customers from the target group and provided a Red RAG Status on the Ffynnon / Aspireview systems.

This was also the case with other projects such as the X Pert Diabetes Programme where referrals from the Aneurin Bevan Health Board were Newport wide but the Cluster Health Project would incur a Red RAG Status Ffynnon / Aspireview systems.

2.14 Strategic Approach

Local communities felt that post April 2013 Communities First lost its local / community focus with the programme perceived as being overly 'top down' which coincided with the shift to cluster working. This resulted in the programme being seen as less accessible by some.

2.15 Example: Impact on Volunteering

The change in focus from the original community development 'bottom up' Communities First programme to the strategic 'top down' thematic approach adopted in 2012 /2013 appears to coincide with a decline in the number of local people volunteering in their community. This was particularly noticeable in the number of people volunteering in community centres and although the introduction of Time Banking went some way to redressing the balance the original numbers were never restored.

3.0 How local authorities will decide which projects continue to receive funding after June 2017

3.1 Neighbourhood Hub Model

In response to the Ministers decision to phase out the Communities First Programme by April 2018 the LDB is adopting a new approach to building resilient communities which uses the Neighbourhood Hub model.

3.2 Project Closure and Transition

As a result some Communities First Projects will close or be transitioned to other services. These are mainly projects that are delivered in partnership with schools and will be phased out by the end of the current academic year. The LDB is currently in discussion with other services areas (Families First / Flying Start / Youth Service) around transitioning these services earlier where possible.

4.0 How different poverty reduction programmes (Communities for Work, Lift, Flying Start etc.) will change as a result of the end of Communities First

The implementation of the new neighbourhood hub model will result in a move away from the cluster model to a Hub model. This will include building the infrastructure to support the Communities for Work programme and enable the expansion of employment support by reshaping employability support for job ready individuals, and those furthest from the labour market, to acquire the skills and experience to gain and maintain employment.

4.1: Collaborative approach for WG and ESF funding streams

This new approach will focus on employability, the early years and empowerment using a collaborative approach in partnership with other Welsh Government funding streams and European Social Fund (ESF) operations.

4.2 Improved alignment of services

The Neighbourhood Hub model will see the co-location of staff teams and therefore an improved alignment with other Welsh Government programmes and other ESF operations. Services will continue to be aligned across Newport working collaboratively with partners such as Flying Start; Families First; Youth Service; Play Development and Work and Skills.

4.3 Mapping Services

Work is underway in Newport around mapping services within communities in order to better align service delivery; identify gaps and develop a common approach to assessment with the aim of having a single point of entry for the customer.

4.4 Seamless Service Provision

This should result in a seamless (wrap around service) for residents accessing poverty reduction programmes across the city.