

# **Community development**

**Making a difference in social housing**

**Lucy Gaster and Richard Crossley**

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# 1 Recommendations

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We start this report with a set of recommendations for action. These place community involvement and community development firmly in the framework of 'Housing Plus', the overarching policy context within which this report is set. The evaluation reported here related to one particular housing association, the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust in York.

The Trust has had a long-standing commitment to supporting people in their communities ever since New Earswick village was founded by Joseph Rowntree at the beginning of the twentieth century. The Trust could be regarded as 'special', partly because of its history, partly because of access to non-housing revenue funds that have allowed a considerable flexibility in how it has developed. However, its 1990 registration with the Housing Corporation as a social landlord, and its use of government housing grants for new developments, has brought it more in line with other housing associations across the country. At the same time, the Housing Plus concept has triggered the need for the landlord-tenant relationship to be re-thought within a new culture for both staff and residents.

Translating this into practical reality, by working with local residents and using community development techniques to develop new relationships, and then evaluating the process over time, has provided useful lessons. These will apply to many different types of social housing landlords who are now considering how to implement Housing Plus, tenant involvement and Best Value policies.

The evaluation shows the importance of being clear and honest about the objectives, processes, relationships and outcomes of

Housing Plus and of the community development processes to support it. It shows that work needs to be done, both inside housing associations, with local communities and with other organisations whose actions affect tenants and residents. It underlines the need for an appropriate corporate culture and the development of new skills, as well as the need actively to include all staff, and to value the processes of participation and involvement.

The detailed recommendations are divided into three parts, relating to Housing Plus, to community development activities and their evaluation, and to the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust respectively. The Trust would also need to consider the first two sets of recommendations in relation to its own work.

## **Recommendations relating to Housing Plus: developing an infrastructure for working with tenants and residents**

- 1 Housing associations need to demonstrate strategic clarity about the type of organisation they are, their aims and their values.
- 2 Different Housing Plus activities and models will be suitable for different areas, even within the same housing association. Housing associations should therefore clarify and debate the nature of Housing Plus activities they may wish to develop, the rationale behind these decisions and the methods required to put them into effect.
- 3 Housing associations should develop comprehensive resident-involvement strategies. They should analyse, debate and

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clarify the nature of the intended involvement, ranging from 'information exchange' to 'control'. They should consider whether their aim is to 'empower' residents to take more control over their own lives, or to ensure that they can demonstrate some degree of involvement in their own decision-making processes – or both. They should consider whether to use the Tenant Compact framework required by local authority landlords, as part of their Best Value and Housing Plus processes.

- 4 Housing associations should support staff to develop new skills and new attitudes in order to take on activities outside the mainstream of housing management and develop an organisational culture appropriate for the new style of working.
- 5 Staff should be given time and resources, including training and effective communication and consultation mechanisms, for this to happen. This will be the case whether or not specialist staff, such as community development workers, are taken on for Housing Plus activities.
- 6 Housing associations will need to work with other organisations and agencies to carry out Housing Plus activities. Sometimes they will be lead partners, in other cases not. A clear value-base, and a clear joint agenda and programme for implementation will need to be negotiated. The needs of communities must be put ahead of organisational needs.
- 7 In order to avoid the danger of setting up 'talking shops', housing associations aiming to involve and empower their residents should devolve decision-making to the point

nearest the people affected by those decisions.

- 8 Where a housing association aims to empower its residents in their communities, it should consider the employment of a community development worker. Such a worker could be employed by an individual housing association, or jointly, as part of a partnership.

### **Recommendations relating to community development and its evaluation**

- 1 Community development work, whether carried out by a specially appointed worker or by adding community development skills to the portfolio of existing workers (or both), should be integrated into the mainstream of a housing association's work.
- 2 The issues which can and cannot be tackled through community development, both across the organisation and within individual housing schemes, should be openly identified and debated, enabling realistic expectations to be formed.
- 3 A clear work programme, with agreed targets and timescales, should be negotiated with all the main stakeholders and reviewed regularly. This should include specific (intended) results, in terms of processes, outputs and longer-term outcomes.
- 4 The community development process should involve as many residents as possible, through targeted programmes to solve particular problems, the development and strengthening of community-based

structures, and outreach to engage volunteers and to keep residents informed.

- 5 The process also needs to engage specialist staff, in order to develop their understanding and support, and to ensure that they will all continue to work closely and constructively with residents in the long term.
- 6 Organisational support for community development will need to be sustained over time, while recognising that the same level of support cannot, realistically, be available to all communities over long periods. The work should therefore aim to be self-sustaining wherever possible, and to put into place robust and agreed structures and mechanisms (including continuing staff and community training) that will support this approach.
- 7 An evaluation process should be agreed and funded at the outset, to be carried out by means of self-evaluation or through external evaluators. This should be based on the stated aims of the activity and the expectations of local stakeholders, including local residents and communities. It should actively involve all key stakeholder groups, including residents not currently involved in community development activity, and provide regular feedback for discussion and comment.
- 8 The evaluation should, whenever possible, establish a baseline which describes the situation and local capacity. The stated aims of any community development work should be periodically re-evaluated. The evaluation should also consider how external forces

affect the process and how the community development activities have responded to these forces.

- 9 The inputs, process, outputs and outcomes should be defined from the perspective of the different stakeholders. 'Added value' and the overall costs and benefits over time (tangible and intangible) should also be realistically measured.

### **Recommendations for the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust**

- 1 Community development processes need to be fully debated, understood and supported by all staff within the Trust.
- 2 The work of the housing and community services teams should be complementary, consistent, co-operative and, where possible, integrated. This can be achieved through joint organisational development processes (team meetings, away-days and joint training) and joint working at the local level. The benefits of this approach in helping staff to carry out their own work more effectively need to be spelt out.
- 3 Where appropriate, housing and other staff should be supported to develop their own links with communities on as wide a basis as possible. They should be informed and consulted about new policies and practices within the organisation. They should be part of the effort to enable residents to perceive and experience a single organisation and to be clear where to go for support on different issues.

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- 4 As the community development worker withdraws some of her time from New Earswick, she could take on a support and mentoring role with other staff, while certain tasks could be taken on by housing and maintenance staff. This would require the development of new skills and a reallocation of time between the tasks of day-to-day service delivery and developmental/preventative work.
  - 5 The Trust needs to develop a clear and agreed strategy to involve residents in all its housing stock, with an action plan and an annual review process.
  - 6 The Trust also needs to develop a range of methods to achieve this, including community development and support processes, providing information, and using different feedback, consultation and participation methods. Different areas will need different approaches.
  - 7 Representative and accountable structures to involve residents in Trust decision-making should be considered for all residents living in Trust stock, possibly in co-operation with other landlords in areas with scattered stock.
  - 8 The role of New Earswick Residents' Forum (NERF), and the support that it may require, needs to be re-examined. Both the Trust and the local community need to be clear about:
    - issues on which the Trust will consult with NERF
    - issues where NERF and the Trust will jointly make decisions
    - issues where NERF can make decisions.
- NERF should be able to agree its own structure and constitution within a broad framework set by the Trust. This framework should be designed to ensure democracy and accountability to the residents of New Earswick.
- 9 Active steps should continue to be taken to encourage and support volunteers to participate in community action, both to ensure the survival of democratic and participatory structures, and to help meet current and emerging community needs and priorities in all the Trust's areas.



## 2 Introduction and methodology

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### Background to the report

This report is based on a two-year longitudinal study of community development work in a social housing setting.<sup>1</sup> It describes and analyses the experience of one housing association, which decided to develop the concept of Housing Plus by making specific appointments alongside traditional housing management roles.

Community development can be – and has been – defined in numerous ways and, as it has been practised in the past, can be seen to reflect a wide range of values, from Marxist to Utopian. The history of community development shows that it can be part of top-down planned change, bottom-up social mobilisation, and/or a form of social learning, where professionals learn to work in new ways with local communities.<sup>2</sup> However, although ‘community development’ is undoubtedly a dynamic concept, certain common characteristics have been identified. Hubert Campfens sums these up as follows:

*Simply put, community development is a demonstration of ideas, values, and ideals of the society in which it is carried out. From a humanitarian perspective, it may be seen as a search for community, mutual aid, social support and human liberation in an alienating, oppressive, competitive and individualistic society. In its more pragmatic institutional sense, it may be viewed as a means for mobilising communities to join state or institutional initiatives that are aimed at alleviating poverty, solving social problems, strengthening families, fostering democracy and achieving modernisation and socio-economic development. (Campfens, 1997)*

In our research, one interviewee defined the values of community development as follows:

- community-oriented
- user-led
- empowering
- creating opportunities for involvement
- supporting individuals and communities
- resourcing that support
- sharing power.

These values can be compared with those associated with other professions, such as housing management, which has traditionally behaved as if the underlying values were those of control, the expectation of tenant compliance and ‘we know best’. This is a stark contrast, which was discussed at the seminar of stakeholders at the end of the research. In reality, the practitioners of each activity could learn from the other: community development workers needed to be more aware of the need to achieve specific targets, while housing managers needed to be more community-oriented and more facilitating, rather than controlling.

This raises the issue of whether community development is the sole prerogative of a ‘profession’ of community development workers. Could it be a way of working practised by many professionals as part of their ‘normal’ work? This question is explored in the report. It is a fundamental issue for organisations deciding to develop community development capacity and considering where to start. Should they go for special appointments, or for on-the-job training and new job descriptions? Real choices exist.

### Who is this report for?

The findings from the research naturally have implications for the work of the housing association studied (the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust) and its residents and partners. However, they will also be of interest and significance to other social landlords. Wholesale transfer of former local authority stock to the voluntary sector, the introduction of Best Value, and Tenants' Compacts have created widespread awareness of the value of working closely with residents and actively involving them in decision-making. Alongside longstanding work on 'tenant participation', advertisements for housing association posts in 'community development' are on the increase. A single, commonly agreed definition of 'community development' does not exist. Nevertheless, the emergence of practical models will help any organisation considering options for how it would like to develop in the future.

1997–99 was a period when new understanding of issues such as social exclusion, citizenship and 'governance' began to affect national policy. The community development work described here was actively linked from the first with national trends and policies. Equally, changes in the external environment affect the way local action develops: agendas change and shift, new priorities emerge, as do new ways of working. The fact that community development had already been identified as a prime necessity for the housing areas to be described in this report means that the housing association and the local communities were in a good position to take on the wider agendas as they began to emerge. This, too, provides learning points for other organisations that may only now be considering such issues.

The potential audience for this report is therefore very wide. It includes local activists and residents, community development workers, housing managers, other professionals, and policy-makers in the full range of statutory and voluntary organisations responsible for understanding and responding to the needs and problems of local people. It is particularly directed towards those working in or near the housing field, but would be relevant to a great many others involved in neighbourhood and area-based work, whether in the context of regeneration, or service delivery, or both. Housing associations and local authorities, which generally need to work together more closely and are affected by very similar issues, will be particularly interested in the findings reported here.

### The origins and scope of the evaluation

In January 1997, the community development worker appointed by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) to work in the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust's three York areas took up her post.<sup>3</sup> The areas to be covered<sup>4</sup> were:

- New Earswick, founded in 1904 and currently including just over 1,100 properties, of which 130 were built in the 1990s
- Woodlands, an estate of 126 properties built in the 1990s
- Victoria-Geldof (sometimes known as Huntington), an estate with 133 properties, also built in the 1990s (92 properties for rent, 41 in shared ownership).

The post was created in order to respond to a series of local research reports commissioned by the JRF (Bolton and Bovey, 1996; Osborn and Crouch, 1996; Vittles, 1995), as well as in response to national developments in the housing association movement, known as Housing Plus. The local research concluded that specialist community development work was needed, to engage local residents in decisions affecting their lives, to develop stronger local communities, and to enable the Trust's policies and practices to become more responsive and sensitive to residents' and communities' needs and wants. In addition, the use of the Folk Hall in New Earswick (a community centre created when the village was built) and local residents' low degree of involvement in the Hall were of considerable concern. The report by Community Matters (Bolton and Bovey, 1996) suggested options for action. The option that was adopted<sup>5</sup> implied the need for community development input.

The appointment of the community development worker in January 1997, for two years in the first instance, was supported by the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust, funded by the Foundation's Development Overview Committee and, until January 1999, managed from within the Foundation (the post was then transferred to the Trust). A primary purpose was to respond to the specific issues within the three areas where a community development input could make a difference. A £10,000 development budget over the two years was made available to the worker to use as seed money for new groups, for supporting participation (crèches, etc) and other appropriate uses.

The Foundation, whose interests are in both

development and research, decided to build evaluation in from the beginning. This would enable it to assess the effect and 'added value' of community development within the three areas, and to consider its wider implications for landlords, residents and other stakeholders in the development and support of local communities.

With this in mind, PEP and INLOGOV<sup>6</sup> were jointly commissioned to carry out an evaluation over the period of the community development worker's appointment. It was initially thought that the findings would inform the decision about whether to extend the community development worker's appointment. This aspect of the evaluation became redundant after internal decisions were made, first to extend the post for one year and subsequently to make it permanent within the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust (see later chapters). The evaluation started in September 1997, and 'baseline' interviews were carried out in November 1997.

### Methodology

The evaluation was both 'formative' and 'summative'. In the first stage, it was used as a developmental, feedback mechanism (the 'formative' approach). Towards the end of the initial period of the community development worker's appointment, in summer/autumn 1999, the evaluation turned to assessing what had been achieved, looking back at what was hoped for and intended, and noting factors that affected what actually happened (the 'summative' dimension).

The evaluation contained seven elements:

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- identifying the baseline (the current state of play) and the stated/ implied objectives for community development; placing the work in the context of Housing Plus and any other 'external' agendas
- reflecting on perceptions and expectations from different perspectives
- developing ways of assessing progress and achievements ('performance indicators' incorporating the views of different 'stakeholders')
- analysing what was achieved (processes and outcomes – the 'how' and the 'what'), aiming to link cause and effect as clearly as possible
- facilitating discussion of the above at key stages
- considering the wider implications of the role of community development work within housing associations and on housing estates
- analysing what else had changed.

The evaluation was carried out in two stages. First, there was a baseline study, carried out in late 1997/ early 1998. This included a briefing meeting with the community development worker and her manager (September 1997); the collection of documents and research reports provided by the Foundation, the Trust and individual interviewees; 23 semi-structured interviews (November 1997); observation of part of a New Earswick Village Council meeting (November 1997); a review of current issues in housing associations based on existing research

(Riseborough, 1998); and a seminar of stakeholders/ interviewees (March 1998).

The second phase of the evaluation began in mid-1999. It consisted of a briefing meeting with key Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust players, a series of 27 interviews, the collection of further documentation and a final seminar (November 1999).

For both the baseline interviews and the final evaluation, a range of stakeholders' views was sought. This involved interviewing staff from the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust at all levels, including housing management staff, staff in other service departments and staff, including the community development worker, who were involved in Housing Plus activities and whose work was affected by, or touched on community development issues. We also interviewed people in the community, mainly Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust tenants from the York areas who were taking an active role at one or both stages of the evaluation, but also including the perspective of the Parish Council. Other agencies included City of York Council (youth service and neighbourhood services), community police and a voluntary organisation involved in developing training opportunities for residents. Finally, we interviewed the Director of the JRF and a freelance consultant who had been working with the newly established NERF (New Earswick Residents' Forum).

The interviews carried out at the final stage were mainly with those who had been interviewed in the first round (but not all of these were available) and added in some people who had become involved later on. At each stage, a seminar was held to which all interviewees were invited. The aim was to

reflect on and make suggestions about the issues that would be of importance in the future.

### **The structure of the report**

The structure of the report is straightforward. We move from the general to the particular and back to the general again. Our aim is to use the detailed learning from the experience of the three York areas to inform future developments, not only in those and other Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust areas, but also nationally, in organisations responsible for and involved in social housing.

Chapter 3 examines the national policy context, focusing on the main issues relevant to

housing associations and this evaluation: social exclusion, Best Value, neighbourhood working, and Housing Plus. In Chapter 4 we describe the character of the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust, as perceived by our interviewees. Chapter 5 describes the changes that took place during the period of the evaluation, both within the Trust and in the community. Chapter 6 analyses the effects of community development, both on the way decisions are made and work is carried out, and on the outcomes and 'added value' for the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust and the community. Chapter 7 considers the issues arising from the evaluation. Recommendations are included at the beginning of this report.

# 3 The context: national policy and developments in social housing

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This evaluation has taken place during a time when central government has been addressing issues of social exclusion, the delivery and accountability of public services, and citizenship and community involvement. At the same time, social housing has been shifting towards a recognition that housing is not simply about a landlord-tenant, bricks and mortar relationship, but about the wider needs and aspirations of residents, as individuals and communities. For housing associations, this is encapsulated in Housing Plus.

Many of these issues point to the need for concerted action at a very local level. This provides both a context within which to analyse the findings from this evaluation and a link to the wider policy implications of those findings. In this chapter, we summarise the main aspects of these contextual policy developments.

## The national 'social exclusion' agenda

The European Community and the British government have been increasingly focusing on the question of 'social exclusion' (or 'inclusion'). Social exclusion is a complicated and all-embracing notion, linked with well-known concepts of poverty and deprivation, but including both the effect of exclusion – the inability of people to take part in the mainstream of society – and the processes that cause people to be excluded.

The Social Exclusion Unit, set up by the Prime Minister in 1998, defines 'social exclusion' as:

*A short-hand label for what can happen when individuals or areas suffer from a combination of*

*linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health or family breakdown. (Social Exclusion Unit Home Page, Internet)<sup>1</sup>*

It is important to make a distinction between poverty and social exclusion. While poverty is the result of unequal resource distribution, social exclusion is more about lack of power and the inability to exercise citizens' rights (Birmingham City Council, 1999).

The Social Exclusion Unit and its Policy Action Teams have focused on a series of issues highly relevant to this evaluation. In particular, work on what have been called 'the worst estates' is leading to reconsideration of strategies for regeneration, neighbourhood management and community participation. The strategy being developed by a series of Policy Action Teams is now the main work of the Unit.<sup>2</sup> It is also looking at issues of teenage parents and of young people aged 16–18 who are not in education, work or training.

## Best Value, Tenant Compacts and citizenship

Best Value is the Government's method of assessing whether or not the right services are provided at the right price and quality. At its best, the Best Value process will stimulate service providers to work with their 'stakeholders' to carry out a root and branch review, starting with needs assessments and debates about priorities, and shaping services accordingly. It is being introduced initially in local authorities (1999 Local Government Act), but is also to be applied to housing associations.

‘Best Value will help RSLs deliver cost effective services that meet the needs and aspirations of their tenants and residents’ (Housing Corporation, 1999).

Best Value is a continuous process that starts with deciding whether a service is necessary, and then how it can be designed and provided, and to what standard. It is not intended to be simply about adjusting or restructuring existing services, but about developing a culture which ‘supports and rewards managers and front-line staff who are seeking continuous improvement.’ (DETR, 1999). Eventually, all housing association activities – mainstream and Housing Plus – will be affected.

As part of Best Value, local authority landlords are required to develop tenant participation compacts within a national framework. Compacts aim to ‘help tenants to decide how they wish to be involved in influencing and shaping the decisions taken by their council on housing issues in a way which meets their needs and priorities’ (DETR, 1998). Although the compact is not a requirement for housing associations, the Housing Corporation suggests that they may wish to use the framework to develop good practice. The Housing Corporation’s own policy proposals, *Making Consumers Count* (1998), encourage housing associations to enable tenants to influence policy and increase tenant participation within their organisation.

The current local government ‘modernisation’ policy aims to make decision-making more efficient and accountable, and to encourage more active involvement of citizens through the processes of community planning (1999 Local Government Bill) and Best Value. Local authorities now need to become more

open and responsive. One method of doing this is through area and ward committees, and neighbourhood working (this is an increasing trend in local authorities such as York). Tenant involvement policies of locally based housing associations should logically be co-ordinated with parallel consultation structures in their local authority. This would create synergies rather than ‘consultation fatigue’ among residents. Housing associations will thus have the opportunity to work in partnership with local authorities on their public involvement strategies.

### **Area- and neighbourhood-based working**

Since the early 1980s, many local authorities have developed policies of decentralisation, most commonly in relation to housing management. The work of PEP and many other researchers has shown that a local housing presence is a key factor in enhancing the accessibility and accountability of the landlord.

Recently, new models of service decentralisation, or area-based working, have emerged. These are increasingly multi-disciplinary, sometimes involving the establishment of one-stop shops of various kinds, sometimes setting-up area committees and neighbourhood forums through which local views can be expressed and heard.<sup>3</sup> Most recently of all, new approaches to local management and planning are emerging, working through multi-disciplinary teams, and local committees and forums, co-ordinated by area managers. Many regeneration schemes are also area-based, with a strong requirement for community involvement, participation and partnership.

The policy agendas of social exclusion, improved public services, democratic accountability, targeted regeneration and many types of 'zone' (health, education, etc.) have brought renewed interest in the area-based approach. Local government's new power to promote the social, economic and environmental well-being of their areas (1999 Local Government Bill) will also stimulate a more localised approach, using local consultation structures to develop and implement community plans.

At the same time, the area-management approach, bringing together a range of disciplines and agencies, is likely to receive support from central government and to be promoted by the larger local authorities (counties and metropolitan boroughs), in order to make their new problem-solving and needs-assessment role more manageable and flexible (Taylor, 2000).

### **Current trends and issues in housing associations: the Housing Plus agenda and 'balanced communities'**

Housing associations are currently at the heart of the 'social housing' agenda as a major provider of housing. External and internal pressures are pushing housing associations towards two main models: multi-purpose agencies aiming to meet the full needs of their residents (the Housing Plus agenda); or commercial organisations with the 'not for profit' label.

The Housing Corporation has not developed a definition and does not provide any extra funding for Housing Plus. The concept is therefore interpreted very differently in practice.

Housing associations and residents cannot say with certainty whether 'we are or are not doing Housing Plus' (Cole *et al.*, 1996). However, whatever the label, there has undoubtedly been a shift towards taking on more than just a housing role (Riseborough, 1998). Much of this is not new for some housing associations, some of which came into housing from non-housing philanthropic and charitable roots. They see the Housing Plus role as in some degree returning to those roots.

The external environment for housing associations is, however, very different from what it was. Housing associations receiving public money are now required to house people in priority housing need. The social and economic problems facing such people are often extreme. It is becoming clear that agencies cannot solve these problems alone. They need to work together, to pool their resources, skills and ideas, to solve the very deep problems of 'social exclusion' and multiple need (Gregory, 1998).

There is also greater awareness that top-down action, however well meaning and 'professional', will not be 'owned' by local people unless they have had a part in shaping and influencing what is done for their benefit. The slogan now has to be 'doing things *with*, not *to* people'. Three issues arise:

- active tenant and resident participation and influence
- community development work to support involvement and to help shape and bring it together
- policies and practices that enable meaningful involvement to take place.



Finally, the need to create and sustain 'balanced communities' is emerging as a key issue. The pattern of tenure on housing association estates, big and small, has tended towards the creation of 'unbalanced' geographical groupings of people with very high levels of multiple need (Page, 1993; Riseborough, 1998). This has been seen as unhealthy, leading to instability, alienation and exclusion, with many negative consequences for people living in those areas and for society as a whole. The Housing Corporation has expressed concern about the need for mixed tenure, community lettings policies and other measures, to re-balance such areas of social housing. Associations that are not 100% reliant on public funding have some discretion about whom they can house. Others are inevitably more constrained.

In summary, five issues need to be considered in relation to Housing Plus (Riseborough, 1998): These are:

- The need to be clear what kind of housing association is evolving – a philanthropic body, a business, a socially responsible RSL – or something else.
- The choices available about which aspects of Housing Plus are relevant and suitable in different areas. No single pattern exists: there could be differences even between estates owned by the same housing association, depending on geography and need.
- The implications for staff and residents. New relationships, new skills, new attitudes will need to be developed and supported. This is difficult and takes

time. At the same time, housing managers are besieged with 'performance indicator' requirements that pull them in the opposite direction.

- The need to work more closely with other organisations, in networks, partnerships and funding consortia.
- The need to work more closely with communities: participation, community development, and the relationship with communities in surrounding areas all need to be developed.

### Concluding remarks

There is now a far sharper and clearer national desire for public services and agencies providing those services to work in new ways at the local level. This is because the old ways have been recognised as being incapable of solving the complex problems faced by citizens, particularly those defined as 'socially excluded' and in the greatest need. In many cases, agencies and institutions have actually reinforced exclusion, through lettings policies, resource allocation and the alienating way that services were delivered.

It is clear that this now needs to change, and that partnership, co-operation and joint working will be essential to the success of services and regeneration in the future. This will require new skills, cultures and, in some cases, structures. It will also require an active and equal involvement of local residents – citizens – in the decision-making processes. Research and experience have shown that, unless local residents and communities are actively supported to take part, it is only the most

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articulate and self-confident who will do so. These are not necessarily the communities whose voices most need to be heard.

The implications for how organisations work, and in particular their ability to work with communities and local people, are clear. Some kind of community ‘capacity-building’ and empowerment are essential. The processes of community development are well-suited to the task.

The next two chapters record the development of these new approaches in one

housing association, the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust, in its York properties. These provide the context for a detailed discussion of the community development approach adopted there between 1997 and 1999. Appendix 1 includes a more detailed discussion of how community development can be defined and describes approaches to its evaluation, including the approach adopted for this report.

# 4 The starting point – Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust

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## Origins and purpose

The Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust was set up as a philanthropic, charitable body to develop affordable housing for those who would not otherwise have access to it. The first development in 1904, the New Earswick village, was to be a 'self-managed community', with key facilities such as the Folk Hall, a primary school, shops and a swimming pool. The Hall was leased to a locally elected 'Village Council'.

More recently, small estates have been built, both within York and elsewhere, with grants from the Housing Corporation. These have consisted mainly of housing, mostly for rent. The development of residents' associations has been encouraged, but has not always succeeded.

A new development in New Earswick is the Hartrigg Oaks continuing-care retirement community. This is a comprehensive development, targeted towards older people. It was being built at the beginning of this evaluation, and was up and running by 1999. A few New Earswick residents had moved there. However, New Earswick residents reported that they had not been involved at any stage in its development.

At the time of the second stage of the evaluation, another development was being explored on a playing field adjacent to New Earswick. A Steering Group, involving village representatives, had been set up to determine how best to proceed with this development. In addition, the Trust was proposing a new village development on a site on the eastern side of York, in discussion with the City of York Council and others.

Altogether, at the time of writing, the Trust was managing about 2,200 properties, both within the new unitary authority of the City of York (New Earswick had been outside the former York City District Council boundaries) and elsewhere in North Yorkshire. The Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust owns and manages the properties. Its key decision-making body is the Housing Committee, working to the Board of Trustees (which covers both the Foundation and the Trust). This has included a representative from New Earswick Village Council for many years and, more recently, a representative of the Woodlands estate. Other areas have not been represented.

In 1994 a local office was set up in New Earswick. This was to be a base for housing managers and welfare benefits workers. It was intended to represent a new relationship with local residents, being more open and accessible, although our 1997 interviews showed that local residents were relatively unaware of its services. They also felt that, while responses to requests for repairs were good, their opportunities for involvement in decision-making about issues such as parking, play spaces and the recent new development were much more limited.

By 1996, there was a clear commitment within the Trust to develop the wider social and economic approaches involved in the Housing Plus philosophy (see Appendix 5). This was supported and developed through the interaction of the Trust and the Foundation, which was able to bring its experience of research and development to the Trust's deliberations. Several new appointments had been made (the community development

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worker, a family advice worker and an energy advice worker) funded by the Foundation. The Trust was funding housing welfare advice workers, the Folk Hall, residents' associations, the nursery school and other items. Housing Plus activities had been provisionally costed internally at less than £180 per annum per resident. These costs were not reflected in rent levels.

### Involving local people

In 1997, the ethos of resident involvement was generally weak and patchy, though with some examples of 'good practice'. It was widely felt that information should be given to tenants before decisions were finalised.

*The Trust has an 'old style' – it's quick to respond to complaints and 'get things done', but it needs to move towards all staff 'seeing things in the round', recognising the potential of tenants, delegating responsibilities ... (Officer – non-Trust)*

*Participation would involve making sure your customers feel they have a right to be involved in decision-making and service provision ... even if people are happy with their houses, this shouldn't prevent trying to get them involved in decisions. (Trust employee)*

*If you want to get more involved in decision-making, who do you go to? (Resident)*

On paper, structures for involvement existed in New Earswick, though not on the other estates. The Village Council and the Parish Council were bodies elected to represent the interests of residents of the area (the Parish Council covers a wider area and in 1997 had one dual member). As already noted,

representatives from the Village Council were members of the New Earswick Management Committee, a sub-committee of the Trust's Housing Committee. The Housing Committee included one representative from New Earswick.

The flaw in this structure was that it depended on the openness of the first tier, the Village Council. This was identified in the Community Matters (Bolton and Bovey, 1996) report on the Folk Hall as being too narrowly based. One view, therefore, was that appropriate structures already existed and it was a matter of getting more residents involved. Another view was that new structures were needed, to signal the deep-seated nature of the intended changes and to draw more people in.

There had once been a short-lived Tenants' Association (TA) in New Earswick. It 'dissolved' through lack of support. A resident view was that a TA was not necessary ('there are no major gripes and we're probably getting quite a good deal'), but others felt that there was a problem. Residents felt intimidated when approaching the Trust: a collective voice and channel of communication on tenants' / residents' matters might be helpful. A Trust worker also felt that closer communication would be good – 'Get the professional eye to eye with the amateur – there may be something we're missing'.

On Woodlands, a residents' association did (and still does) exist and the Trust was responding to its views and suggestions. In Victoria-Geldof, there was no association and little sign of one emerging in the near future, despite active efforts to develop one.

For specific activities, tenants had been involved, for example in a rent-setting working party and in connection with localised

redevelopment. However, several of the Trust's housing workers felt that more could be done, involving tenants at an earlier stage and at higher levels of decision-making. Their concern was that, within the formal structures described above, it was not clear whom residents were representing, to whom they were accountable, or how they canvassed local residents' views. Also, not all areas were represented. These workers felt that a policy concerning tenants' participation needed to be developed within the Trust.

The initial picture (late 1997) was, therefore, somewhat mixed, with variation between areas and differing attitudes among interviewees. What was clear was that the Trust had not in the past given much active consideration to tenant participation and that existing structures for representation on Trust committees were seen as deficient by most interviewees. At the same time there was some concern that tenants were themselves 'apathetic' – too accepting and too uncomplaining – and not giving enough feedback to the Trust.

### Perceptions of the Trust

The 1997 interviews for this evaluation showed that stakeholders were consistent in their perception of the Trust in relation to recent past practice. They saw the Trust as:

- paternalistic
- isolated from other organisations
- a 'test-bed' for research and innovation relating to the Foundation's national research role.

Most interviewees – residents, workers and 'outsiders' – felt the main role of the Trust had

been that of a paternalistic landlord, doing things *for*, rather than *with*, the residents.

Despite encouragement and support to residents to attend courses run by the Tenants' Participation Advisory Service (TPAS), the general experience was of a relatively non-participative, 'we'll do it – and we know best' approach. One interviewee characterised this as a 'philanthropic, all-embracing, being looked after philosophy', now 'out of date'. However, a resident from one of the new estates saw the Trust as a good landlord, 'treating residents as people, listening, supporting the Residents' Association, clear about its own responsibilities, keeping to their word'.

The lettings policy on New Earswick was a concern to some. Since 1990, the local authority has had some nomination rights as part of the arrangements for the Trust to receive Social Housing Grant. Some residents saw the loss of the power to 'hand-pick' tenants and to seek references before they moved in as having had a negative effect. Others felt that newcomers had been stereotyped (negatively) before they moved in, thus causing tension within the community. Certainly the divide between 'old' and 'new' tenants, whatever their characteristics, was an important factor affecting the sense of community on the estate. The attempt by the Trust to develop a 'balanced community', via a Community Lettings Policy (covering 20% of annual lettings) and through sales of houses, was having only a slow effect (if any) because of the low annual turnover of properties.

'Outsiders' interviewed for this evaluation felt that the Trust had been somewhat isolated from other local service providers such as the police and the local authority, at least at ground

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level. Workers in those agencies had, in the past, felt that they were not being kept informed about what was happening (e.g. substance sniffing by young people in New Earswick) and had not been given the chance to work together with the Trust to solve local problems.

Some interviewees perceived the Trust as changing, but were less certain what this would mean in practice, particularly for residents. Was it a shift from paternalism to empowerment, to help the community help itself and to be 'at the forefront of change'? There was some fear that it could simply be 'add-on', represented by posts such as the community development and family support workers, but not really changing the ethos of the core organisation. 'Are the changes thought through? Do other workers see it as relevant or as a diversion of funds?'

Finally, there was an issue of the relation between the work of the Trust and that of the Foundation. The role of the Trust as a landlord had to be balanced with its other role as a

'test bed' for new ideas. It was suggested that only projects that would promote such ideas would be funded, while a resident felt that 'they should have the residents' interests at heart, but it's the Foundation's research which is the main goal'.

### Commitment to change

In summary, by the end of 1997, there was widespread recognition of the need for change and, within the Trust, commitment to change, affecting its range of activities and its relationships with residents. However, it was clear that a considerable cultural shift would be required, particularly in New Earswick with its long tradition of paternalism and dependency. Only then could all Trust workers develop new ways of working and residents take a more active part in decision-making. Community development was expected to play a significant role in all this.

## 5 1997–99: a period of change

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### The Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust

The Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust experienced considerable structural change during 1997–99. First, the completion of the Hartrigg Oaks development triggered a management change at the top. Responsibility for traditional housing was separated from responsibility for ‘care homes’: both had previously been handled by the housing director.

Then, in 1998, a newly appointed housing director, recruited with a brief to develop the Housing Plus elements of the Trust’s activities, decided to create a flatter and clearer structure. Two teams within the housing function were set up. The Housing Services team was to consist of the ‘core’ housing managers. The other, the ‘Community Services’ team, was to include most of the other housing-related functions supported by the Trust: housing welfare advice, family work, early years provision (including ten part-time child-care workers), community development, and the management of parks and gardens. These teams, and the Property Services team (including in-house repairs and maintenance) came under the Director of Housing Operations. Development services, health and safety and administrative/reception services remained as separate units, also under the Director of Housing Operations.

The community development post was then transferred from the Foundation to the Trust. It was also made permanent and would now cover all the Trust’s properties, not just the three York areas.

The structural changes were intended to support or drive cultural change towards a more open and consultative working style.

‘Resident partnerships’ would be used to work to a wider agenda than that involved in ‘tenant participation’. A more equal relationship with residents would be developed. This was symbolised by restructuring the New Earswick Management Committee (which reports to the Housing Committee), with equal numbers of Trust staff and residents.

### Perceptions of change

By 1999, residents could identify some changes, such as Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust staff taking an interest in the under-fives work, ‘which did not happen before’.

*There’s been quite a shift in ideas in the last six months ... they now realise that, instead of just doing things, they must find out what residents want. (Resident)*

The local office in New Earswick was described as ‘excellent’ and ‘approachable’, although a continuing top-down management style was perceived as a barrier:

*It takes a long time to filter down to front-line staff. (Council worker)*

Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust staff felt that the projected move of the whole of the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust team to a single location in New Earswick would help to improve internal communications and enable front-line staff located there to feel more included.

The key for many people would be whether the Trust could put ‘flesh on the bones’ of its Housing Plus policies, combining working with residents as communities with its continuing good housing management, based on high

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standards of service and clear accountability. The aim, as two housing officers put it, was now one of:

*Creating, maintaining and supporting viable communities through both the housing and community services ... Building communities, not just houses.*

Some staff were concerned that greater resident involvement would lead to increased demand for services. It would be important to discuss what could or could not be done and the limits of flexibility, while also finding out more about what other agencies, such as the local authority, could or should be doing. Staff were also concerned about the community's ability to engage with the new agenda and the Trust's ability to respond to challenge.

*We've said 'come and join us round the table in partnership'. This would be OK if the bodies involved were confident, representative and saw themselves as having the role of reflecting other people's views ... Partnership is good, but there is also a need to orient Trust workers to seeing tenants and residents as 'customers'. They pay our wages. We need to achieve consistency and equity in our day-to-day service. (Housing officer)*

### Changes in the community

At the community level, a great deal had changed by 1999. In New Earswick, where the intensive work had taken place, these changes had produced new structures for participation within the local community, changes in the Folk Hall and new relationships with outside bodies, including the parish and the city council. There were also some new forms of involvement in

community activity. A project for (and with) young people, the 'Sleeper Path' project, was officially opened in November 1999.<sup>1</sup>

Discussions with the Village Council and with other local groups had concluded that two organisations should now replace the Village Council. One – the New Earswick Community Association (NECA) – would deal with the internal matters of the Hall and its use by the community. The other – the New Earswick Residents' Forum (NERF) – would provide a platform for active participation in decision-making about the village (and the rest of the parish). A constitution for NECA had been agreed by 1999, while a draft constitution for NERF also existed. Both groups send representatives to the New Earswick Management Committee.

The potential role for community-based organisations needs to be very clear. It is therefore useful to compare the two that were established in New Earswick, as expressed through their agreed / draft constitutions. Table 1 sets out the key elements of each organisation.

The two organisations have different characteristics and different purposes. They began their life at roughly the same time and each involved some of the former Village Councillors, particularly at the 'shadow' stages. The two groups also had different support. The Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust community development worker worked with NECA. An external consultant was brought in to work with NERF.

After only a few months of existence, there was relatively little overlap in the active membership of the two organisations. The activists (mainly committee members) seemed to know very little about each other's activities,



**Table 1 NERF and NECA compared**

	NECA	NERF
<b>Objectives</b>	<p>(a) To promote the benefit of the inhabitants of New Earswick and the neighbourhood .... By associating the said inhabitants and the local authorities, voluntary and other organisations in a common effort to advance education and to provide facilities in the interests of social welfare for recreation and leisure-time occupation with the object of improving the conditions of life for the said inhabitants</p> <p>(b) To establish, or secure the establishment of, a Community Centre and to maintain and manage the same (whether alone or in co-operation with any local authority or other person or body) in furtherance of these objectives</p> <p>(c) To promote such other charitable purposes as may from time to time be determined</p>	<p>(a) To promote residents' rights and the maintenance and improvement of housing conditions</p> <p>(b) To promote equity between the full range of home ownership systems throughout the parish</p> <p>(c) To foster the participation of residents in the management of the housing, amenities and environment</p> <p>(d) To represent the residents and enter into effective consultation and negotiations on their behalf</p> <p>(e) To promote good services and amenities in the village and throughout the parish</p> <p>(f) To support the management and successful running of the New Earswick Folk Hall</p> <p>(g) To work in a non-political way</p>
<b>Membership</b>	<p>Individual members living in the area and paying a subscription; associations or organisations operating solely or partly in the area of benefit, non-profit, and supporting the aims of NECA. General Committee consists of matching numbers of representatives of individual members and of member groups (up to 35 ordinary members) plus executive. Fifteen-member Executive Committee (18 years and over). Annual elections. Sub-committees for specified activities (e.g. staffing matters)</p>	<p>All residents of the area are automatically members; all those aged 16 and over have voting rights; an executive committee (15 members) elected (annually) by all members</p>
<b>Meetings</b>	<p>Four meetings p.a. of the General Committee; ten meetings p.a. of the Executive Committee; AGM to elect the Executive Committee; special general meetings on request</p>	<p>AGM; general (open) meetings held regularly to discuss issues of general interest and/or raised by the Trust; working groups might be formed to look at selected issues in more detail; special meetings for specific purposes</p>
<b>Status</b>	<p>Charitable</p>	<p>Non-charitable (and therefore capable of campaigning)</p>

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even though formally there was a close relationship: NERF held the lease of the Folk Hall from the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust, but had negotiated a 'Management Agreement' with NECA to decide on its use and manage it. Potential causes of tension between the two bodies therefore existed, for example disagreements about letting or staffing policies.

### NECA

It was felt that NECA had successfully 'taken off'. It had made some 'hard' decisions about the use of the Folk Hall, which had, as intended, drawn in more people from the local community. There had been some refurbishment, making it a brighter and more welcoming place, and the staff were being encouraged to attract more use through reception and catering facilities. However, some staff also felt the need for training and better information from the NECA Executive Committee.

NECA had concentrated its efforts in the first months on the Folk Hall itself, leading to an official Open Day in July 1999. Some interviewees felt that the time was now coming for outreach work, to find out what people needed and to draw people in, particularly those who had benefited from the Community Lettings policy and other new residents.

*We have been bogged down in management issues: it's a lot of work and not what I thought I'd be doing – I thought it would be about the village as a whole. (Resident member)*

There had already been several changes in membership of the Executive Committee, in some cases due to a clash of styles, in others

because of the heavy workload. This was clearly a serious problem for the future capacity of the organisation, which some interviewees thought needed to re-focus on what it was doing and to clarify this to the outside world.

### NERF

NERF had been rather more difficult to establish. Although an outside consultant had advised and supported it in its early days, it was still very fragile. It had been difficult to attract new active members, meaning that, for local residents, it was the 'same old faces'. Internal relationships needed to be strengthened, while the potential for influencing local decisions through a sense of purpose, power and confidence had yet to be realised. It was regretted that the first elections to the Executive Committee had not been contested.

At the time of the interviews, the agendas and overall style of meetings, although formally in the hands of residents, were still quite strongly dominated by the Trust. However, the suggestion from the Trust that a Credit Union should be established had been resisted. This was perceived as an important victory for NERF, which was anxious to develop its own agenda.

*The Trust has a shopping list, and they would like a quick response. They'll have to learn to wait. (Resident)*

While acknowledging that making NERF truly effective would require a change of culture not only within the Trust, but also among local people – and this would take time – residents who were not involved in NERF felt the need for more information. It was suggested that, if it

truly intended to ‘represent’ residents’ views, it needed more of an ‘outreaching’ style, not waiting for residents to come to it, but actively finding out about their concerns.

### Other forms of participation and involvement

Several interviewees pointed out that the new structures of NECA and NERF were not the only means by which residents could be active in their community, or indeed the only mechanism for making their views known to the Trust. It was felt that a range of communication methods should exist and that people should be encouraged to use whatever felt right to them. An officer also expressed concern that basic issues of repairs and housing management could be lost among the agenda items of NERF. A resident agreed that these continue to be important issues, ones about which NERF should be asking residents’ views.

It was clear that consultation and participation were still at the early stages. Residents needed to develop the confidence to speak out and challenge, while Trust staff needed to learn how to respond. However, while the stage reached so far was probably more a matter of information exchange than full involvement, this should lead in time to a more power-sharing relationship. This was how Trust interviewees saw it, though residents were more cautious.

### Sustaining and developing community involvement

There was a clear need for residents to be supported and ideas for training were

constantly being put forward. Training through TPAS was also on offer, and one resident had attended courses over several years.

Networking was another possibility. One resident mentioned a trip organised by another residents’ association (Woodlands) to which people from New Earswick had been invited. This had provided a good opportunity to compare notes.

However, while the development of skills and confidence among residents was highlighted in the research, the position of Trust staff also needed to be considered. The Community Services team would certainly gear itself up to put the new agenda into practice. Would Housing Services staff feel that participation is too time-consuming and too difficult?

*How will this spin-off to other workers? Some have not been touched by this. (Resident)*

One staff member felt there ought to be consistency. If the Trust was pursuing a policy of consultation with the public, it should also be developing a policy of staff consultation. Another staff member felt that issues relating to his work were being discussed at NERF but that he was not being invited to the meetings, so could not ‘put his case’ (for example about reduced numbers of staff) or hear directly what was being suggested.

*If it’s housing oriented, maybe that’s why we’ve been kept away from it, but if things come out at the meeting, one asks oneself why we weren’t asked in the first place ... there’s no opportunity to put our own side of it. (Trust staff)*

Overall, while there had been major changes, both in New Earswick and within the Trust,

there were also major concerns. Were the New Earswick organisations sustainable? Would the new culture become truly embedded in how the whole Trust worked with residents?

### **The Foxwood Neighbourhood Agreement**

The existence of a thriving residents' association on the Woodlands estate has been noted. However, there did not appear to be any links with the decision-making processes of the Trust. (The Association is now represented on the Trust's Housing Committee. It was unfortunate that Woodlands representatives were not available for the 1999 evaluation interviews, when this development and the neighbourhood agreement could have been discussed.)

The main development in the area had been Foxwood Neighbourhood Agreement. This covers a wider area than the Woodlands estate, involving three landlords (two housing associations and the council) and around 1,500 properties. The main development work was carried out by a Council community development worker, who worked closely with the Foxwood Community Action Group (Woodlands Residents' Association is an active member of this) and was actively supported by the Rowntree community development worker. The Neighbourhood Agreement is multi-agency, in which the Trust is a signatory, partner and co-funder. The Agreement covers housing matters; community policing; street and environmental cleaning and refuse collection; jobs, training and enterprise; and, in the future, youth services, welfare services and leisure services.

The 'Council and Housing Association Homes' section of this Agreement sets out a long list of housing-related activities on which

residents can expect a response, as well as setting out some detailed targets for response times, access to services and a commitment by all the landlord organisations to 'work to the same high levels of service'. Among the basic principles in this section of the Agreement is the following:

*The landlords will work with residents and others to develop a strong and active community.*  
(Foxwood Neighbourhood Agreement, 1998, p.16)

An evaluation carried out soon after the Agreement was signed in 1998 found that, in a survey of over 100 households in the designated area, there was general satisfaction and some optimism about the Agreement (McCoulough and Cole, 1999). It covered the right areas and would potentially raise service standards. There was some concern about its sustainability, mainly because it relied on a small core of activists, but residents favoured the principle once they had found out about it. City Council workers were concerned that this Agreement, together with that applying in Bell Farm, were not enough to ensure a long-term institutional commitment to the concept and that it would be vulnerable to political change. Nevertheless, the experience of the explicit community development focus of the project, the inter-agency working experienced, and the fact that the Agreement had been achieved without extra resources, were seen as very positive.

### **Residents' concerns about change**

The Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust was widely regarded as having made major changes in its stance towards tenants and residents. This was

encapsulated in an outline strategy for resident involvement, based on the principles of partnership and participation, developed in early 1999. Residents nevertheless continued to be cautious about the Trust's real commitment to change. A test of the sincerity of the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust, in relation to the partnership and participation policy in New Earswick, was the future use of a school playing field. Many interviewees thought that this would be a real challenge, both for the process of decision-making (a joint working party was being set up) and for the actual decisions made. The basic choices appeared to be between building development and green space. Could a spirit of compromise be developed, with neither party (residents and the Trust) taking fixed positions too early? If the final result turned out to reflect what the Trust had probably wanted all along, residents felt that this would undermine what was universally seen as a much more consultative and open style.

A further test would be how the Trust communicates to individual residents. A recent spate of official letters about rent levels and related matters had been a real irritant. Residents felt that the stated intention to become more consultative was not being put into practice at the day-to-day level.

The new community structures were undoubtedly fragile, and were generally perceived as such. The dominance of 'old faces' and the difficulty of encouraging new people to volunteer led many to feel that a good deal of support would be necessary to ensure the sustainability of the enterprise. The structures not only needed to work: they also needed to be seen to be making a difference.

It was generally understood that the

community development worker – and the rest of the Community Services team – would in the future work across all Trust properties. This would inevitably mean that less time could be spent on New Earswick. Some New Earswick residents felt that their groups had developed to a point of self-sustainability. However, they, and the many other groups in the area, would still need advice and support on particular issues (technical and legal for example). Where would such support come from? Would the community development worker be able to balance a withdrawal/shift from previous levels of support to a continued presence of some kind, while also developing new areas of work, either within this community or across the Trust's properties as a whole?

### Reflections on change

Major change has taken place within the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust and in two of the three areas covered by this evaluation. These changes have brought the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust and residents closer together, with much greater mutual understanding and respect, but still some wariness.

To some extent, the changes reflect the trends analysed in Chapter 3 (by 1999, Best Value, which will require active resident involvement, was also being taken on board). The changes also reflect an increasing ability to respond to local needs and priorities, and an increased commitment on the part of the Trust to take on issues that go well beyond traditional housing management.

The active involvement in and commitment of the JRF and the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust to the work on the Foxwood Agreement

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could provide a useful model for the future. In New Earswick, as the next chapter shows, a less formal set of relationships with other agencies has emerged. This underlines the fact that each area requires different approaches, but can also learn from each other. In both areas, the fragility and sustainability of community-based organisations suggest that active organisational

support will also be needed if such initiatives are not to be over-dependent on the enthusiasm and involvement of only a few people.

The role of community development intervention, both in stimulating the planned changes analysed above, and in helping to sustain them, is considered in the next chapter.

# 6 The community development approach

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## Responding to community and Trust concerns

In 1996, the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust decided to appoint a generalist community development worker (see Appendices 2 and 3). The work would cover:

- the future of the Folk Hall and the Village Council in New Earswick
- young people and community safety
- encouraging and developing volunteers
- linking the processes and results of community development with the mainstream policies and practices of the Trust.

The worker would thus help to shape the community's relationships with the Trust and with other partners. The work would at this stage cover only the three housing areas within York, the largest of which was New Earswick village.

Between 1997 and 1999, some new concerns emerged, but three continued to be important for residents and staff alike:

- young people
- the state of the local environment
- the question of 'balanced communities'.

For 'ordinary' residents, particularly in New Earswick, problems of young people 'hanging around' and intimidating other residents, of vandalism and possibly of drug-taking, were present throughout the evaluation period. The development of the 'Sleeper Path' project for young people, a new idea for 'youth shelters' (being piloted in Foxwood), the City Council's 'OASIS' (off the streets and into sport) scheme

and a 'Young People's Agreement' being negotiated for the Foxwood area were all seen as hopeful signs that something was being done. A high turnover of youth workers and the failure in 1999 to integrate the senior youth club into a more welcoming Folk Hall were more of a disappointment.

On environmental matters, New Earswick residents felt that the new development of Hartrigg Oaks was perceived to be absorbing resources that had previously been available to the older parts of New Earswick. A resident saw a contradiction between admonitory letters sent to residents about the upkeep of their gardens and the failure of the Trust to maintain their own public areas to their former high standards. The appointment of a high-profile resident caretaker in Victoria-Geldof was thought to be making a considerable difference there, although the lack of facilities for a cohort of children now getting older and needing more play facilities was an area of concern.

Concern about refuse collection and street sweeping (a City Council responsibility) had led to discussions with the local authority that had been very useful and successful. However, ideas about traffic calming and about a new footpath/cycle path needed more open debate.

On the question of 'balanced communities' (see Chapter 3), the 'community lettings policy' had enabled some children of residents to be housed in New Earswick in return for a commitment to 'do something for the community'. However, a Trust housing officer noted increasing national recognition of the dangers of building communities with very high proportions of people dependent on welfare benefits and/or with large numbers of small children.<sup>1</sup> This was an issue throughout

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the research, particularly for the newer developments (Woodlands and Victoria-Geldof).

### Expectations of community development

In the first phase of this evaluation, interviewees identified what they had hoped could be done in the time available. The suggestions are listed below by areas in Table 2.

### The role of community development

What could reasonably be expected of community development, in the shape of a single community development worker, in the

face of this wide range of issues? Clearly, priorities needed to be set and a programme of work agreed. A vital issue at the early stage of this evaluation was the fact that this was a two-year appointment, whereas community development is a long-term process. Residents feared that activities, once started, would die once the post had come to an end. Two questions arose:

- The nature of the work – could whatever was started be self-sustaining?
- The quantity and the range of the work – how much could or should even be started?

**Table 2 Community Development Targets identified by interviewees in baseline study**

<b>New Earswick</b>		
New constitution for Folk Hall to include user groups	Petrol sniffing – help parents take responsibility	Demonstrate to the Trust that there are real problems
Tenant participation	Contact local people, find out needs	Create activities involving Village residents
Find out what local people can do	Young people and children – immediate priority	Make Folk Hall accessible and welcoming (support work to do this)
Sleeper Path project for young people	Work with other agencies	Get Housing Trust workers to think about community issues (applies to all three areas)
Lay the foundations for change, e.g. to making Village Council more representative		
<b>Woodlands</b>		
Support Residents' Association	Parental skills training	Work with other agencies and Neighbourhood Forum
<b>Victoria-Geldof</b>		
Do some work there to develop sense of community – anticipate problems with 'bulge' of teenagers, etc. from very young present population	Consider need for a community centre	Play-groups, etc. for current young population



Neither of these questions could be subjected to scientific calculation. Both were necessarily a matter of judgement, both for the community development worker and for residents, staff and others involved in what could have been a short-term but time-consuming effort. A strategic view of what would be most effective was clearly needed, so as to make a real difference (impact) and to ensure sustainability (process). The main influences on the early development of the work programme were the need to deal with the legacy of past efforts and 'failures' (we've tried it before and it didn't work), such as a recent youth work project; and the need to respond to immediate concerns requiring specific action, in particular the fact that the lease of the Folk Hall to the Village Council was due to end in March 1998.

The community development worker decided to:

- 1 Work with and through existing groups, trying to help them change when appropriate (mainly the Village Council).
- 2 Support/initiate new groups and projects which would respond to identified problems. The key issues were:

- the lack of involvement of most residents, especially women, in community activities
- the need to take positive action with young people themselves and to enable better mutual understanding between young people and older people
- unmet need, particularly the need for alternative activities for children and young people when not at school.

- 3 Develop and build on networks with other workers within the Trust and workers from other agencies.
- 4 Develop good relationships between Trust workers and other local agencies, particularly when they had not worked together before.
- 5 Identify a geographical focus. The main work was to be in New Earswick. There would also be some involvement in the other two areas.

By working through existing structures, nurturing participation among broader groups, and developing resources for young people, she aimed for:

*A 'bottom-up' approach that will empower and enable participation, combined with a 'top-down' approach that will challenge present structures, processes and procedures and support changes that will make these more 'user friendly' and consequently easier to work with and more attractive to people to become involved with.*

In early 1997, the community development worker developed a workplan that aimed for achievability, sustainability and balance, with specific one- and two-year targets (see Appendix 4). This was revisited and revised regularly.

### Early action

By the end of 1997, less than a year after the appointee took up her post, there was a consensus among interviewees that 'It is very fast-moving already'. The learning curve had been fast, steep and, so far, effective. There was a consistent view that the action being developed was along the right lines, in

accordance with what might be expected and what was most needed.

Table 3 summarises the actions taken in the first year. It shows that the three main strands of the community development approach were being put into practice. Some actions cut across several categories.

### The development of performance indicators

We suggest in Appendix 1 that, when evaluating community development, it is important to know how different stakeholders would define 'success'. In the first phase of this evaluation we therefore asked our interviewees how they would know if the community development role had made a difference by the end of the two years.

A range of ideas emerged. There was considerable overlap between different interviewees, whether they were residents, workers or 'outsiders'. We summarise these views in Table 4, where the 'indicators' are roughly grouped according to whether they focus on achievements (outputs and outcomes), or whether they are about how things are done and how people feel – the 'process'.

### Assessing the impact of community development

Community development action was intended to have an impact on processes, outputs and outcomes in two main ways:

- empowering and supporting collective action by residents to improve their lives and their environment

- challenging and supporting the Trust to re-shape its internal and external role as a landlord and a local agency of 'governance'.

Table 4 shows that all the stakeholders – residents, Trust workers and 'outsiders' – shared these broad objectives.

It is not necessarily easy to evaluate the effects of community development work, particularly since much of it is long-term, developmental and invisible (see Appendix 1). However, this evaluation took care to establish a 'baseline' (albeit some time after the worker had started work). This gives some possibilities for comparing 'before' and 'after'.

Although the relationship between 'cause' and 'effect' is often a matter of judgement, all our interviewees did identify evidence of change attributable to the community development intervention. Sometimes this was almost entirely the result of direct work by the community development worker, particularly in the early days. In other cases, the work of the community development worker went alongside that of others, both inside the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust and, as in Woodlands, through complementary work with workers from other agencies.

### Sustainability

During the evaluation, the role of community development within the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust was changing (see Chapter 5). In particular, it will now cover all Trust properties, wherever located (see Appendix 3). This inevitably implies that the previous intensive work on New Earswick will diminish. The self-

**Table 3 Action taken in 1997, according to type of activity**

	Work with and through existing groups	Support/initiate new groups and projects	Networks and relationships with workers	Geographical focus
Work with Village Council on role, functions, constitution, etc.	√			New Earswick
Future of the Folk Hall	√		√	New Earswick
Women's group		√		New Earswick
Sleeper Path youth project	√	√	√	New Earswick
Time-out course		√	√	New Earswick
Reminiscence group (older people)		√	√	New Earswick
Line dancing (children)		√		New Earswick
Football pitch and posts; football scheme		√	√	Woodlands
Local service agreements			√	Woodlands
After-school and holiday play-schemes		√	√	Woodlands
Co-operation and networking	√		√	All three areas
Helped set up (abortive) meeting for tenants			√	Victoria-Geldof
A play		√ (all generations)		New Earswick
Video on Housing Plus	√	√	√	All areas

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**Table 4 Performance indicators for community development achievements**

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<b>Process</b>		
Activities don't collapse when the worker leaves	Groups have ability to sort out their own problems	Housing Trust ethos of 'seeing things in the round', working in more integrated (holistic) ways with residents and others
Housing Trust thinks through the impact of new activities	Networking takes place	People talk to each other
<b>Outputs</b>		
Number of new groups and activities	Who belongs/ gets involved in these	Young and old brought together
More people of all age groups involved in, using and running the Folk Hall	Welcoming atmosphere in Folk Hall	The worker is well-known in the local community
New 'community lettings' policy in Folk Hall	Planned use of Folk Hall to avoid conflicts	Folk Hall financially viable
More flexible rules (e.g. re. use of New Earswick swimming pool)	Sleeper Path building complete and 'buzzing'	
<b>Outcomes</b>		
Residents enthusiastic and involved, less lethargic	Liaison takes place with other local landlords to develop consistent housing standards and tenant involvement	Fewer acts of 'mischief' and vandalism
Continued involvement and commitment to change among existing activists in Folk Hall	Activities more in line with local needs, money directed at 'community-led' issues	Tenants are involved in policy planning and decisions
Devolved Trust budgets	Greater self-confidence	Residents happy to live in the village/other Trust properties
People are not dependent on community development worker	Local people feel they have more influence in relation to landlords and local service providers	Better linkage between all three areas

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sustainability of that work will therefore be an important test of its effectiveness. However, three other factors will also affect sustainability. These are:

- external factors
- the results of democratic processes
- people moving on.

External factors include changes in policy and practice, by Government, other agencies and within the Trust itself. These have knock-on effects on the focus, strategy and processes carried out at a very local level. During the three years of the evaluation, York has become a Unitary Authority; Best Value and (soon) Community Planning have been introduced; and the concept of Housing Plus has been strengthened through the activities of the Housing Corporation. These all have a direct effect on how different agencies carry out their work and how they relate to local people. Community development might not, then, be the *cause* of change. However, it can strongly affect *how* that change happens.

Second, democratic processes such as elections bring different people to the fore at different times, with different skills, attitudes, experience and knowledge. The dynamics of this are unpredictable, depending largely on personality and commitment. However, a robust structure and culture, supporting a community-oriented way of working, provides a better chance of continuity within both the Trust and the local community.

Finally, both residents and staff move on. Residents may do this as the direct result of having been empowered through the community development process. However, what they and their new organisations gain may

constitute a serious loss to their original community.

We now look at what our evaluation identified as the direct result of community development intervention. We distinguish between processes – the ‘how’ – and results – the ‘what’.

### Processes

Community development is best defined through the methods used to do the work. Results may, as we have said, be the effects of a range of different factors, particularly in the long term (but see below for more on this). Processes are, we believe, the identifying feature of community development. In the situation analysed in this report, this process was largely taken on by a specifically appointed community development worker, adding to the core skills her own values, personality and experience. It can be argued, however, that such skills and approaches may be transferable to other workers, who can bring them to their ‘core’ work, such as housing management or environmental maintenance.

Examples of the community development processes experienced in the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust’s York housing areas between 1997 and 1999 included:

- *Pulling everything together, encouraging people to do things.* (Resident)
- *Using her power for good ends.*
- *Politically sensitive about how she handles meetings.* (Council worker)
- *Acting as a catalyst for change, with courage in her own beliefs.* (Council worker)

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- *Demonstrating that getting involved has a payback, both for the individual and for the community.* (Community development worker)

The process included implementing specific projects and getting things done. Reliability, practicality and efficiency were mentioned as assets, and:

*Turning an idea into a vision and a practical plan, and getting people enthused about this – a conceptualiser and a motivator.* (JRF worker)

*Inspiring confidence, both in her as a person and in yourself, that you can do it, you don't need her all the time.* (Resident).

The worker was seen as having influenced how the Trust thinks about and responds to residents, partly through challenge, partly through getting individual Trust staff involved in new projects, such as the Sleeper Path.

*Before that, everyone chugged along; no one questioned anything or asked if tenants had been involved.* (Trust community development worker)

*She developed a set of actions which has re-shaped the thinking of key people – bringing the Trust with her on all this.* (JRF worker)

She was also perceived as having supported, helped and advised other workers (for example, the Foxwood community worker) without undermining them. This was important for the broader aims of the Trust. One Trust worker commented that multi-agency working is good for the Trust (for credibility and visibility) and can demonstrate productive ways of working.

Devolved power and a devolved budget were very important in underpinning and reinforcing these processes. The community

worker was described as having the 'clout' of being backed by a respected and well-funded organisation, and of being independent of the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust (for the first three years). She also had a budget (£10,000 in the first two years) which could be used quickly and flexibly to benefit the community in whatever way the community development worker thought appropriate. This was seen as a major benefit.

### Outputs

The outputs – 'a hell of a lot in a very short time' (resident) – are perhaps the easiest to identify. Three in particular were mentioned again and again. These were:

- the establishment of NECA and NERF
- the changes in the Folk Hall as a venue
- the Sleeper Path project for young people.

NERF and NECA have been described and analysed in Chapter 5.

For the Folk Hall itself, the idea was to develop a more open and welcoming style, with greater access and use by people living in the local community. This approach had been developed 'sensibly and practically', for example improving sightlines so that people coming in and out could be seen, developing a reception function, creating a non-monopolistic catering service. Although the reported downside to this was the loss of income from non-New Earswick groups, there had been a noticeable increase in local use. The trick now would be to maintain this increase while also balancing the books (a considerable subsidy from the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust was currently going into the Hall: £65,000 in 1999,

compared with £48,000 in 1998).

The Sleeper Path project (the youth project mentioned above) was designed to meet several objectives. It drew in a wide range of agencies and individuals, in active participation and in funding terms. It demonstrated to older people in the area that efforts were being made to develop creative occupation for young people. Most important of all, it involved young people in a meaningful way, working with older people in the steering committee and taking a full role in, for example, the design and renovation of the building and choosing staff.

Many other activities were noted, including: the establishment and support for the Junior Youth Club; the widening of the editorial board for the Village Bulletin; the development of a football area in Woodlands; establishing clubs of various kinds; summer play schemes, and working with and for young children; working closely with the Trust's family advice worker, local volunteers and paid play-workers. The potential downside was that the benefits of this work were thought by one resident to be 'invisible' to most residents, especially those without children.

The worker had thus both supported and strengthened existing groups, encouraged the establishment of new groups, and encouraged individuals to attend training courses and develop their own skills and knowledge (ensuring the regular presence of a voluntary training organisation at the Folk Hall in the process).

*People wanted change, then they saw opportunities once (she) came, and then they saw things happen, lots of things, even small things like basket-ball hoops. (Resident)*

Finally, she had supported the development of a city-wide community development worker network. The aim of this network was to provide an independent forum for ideas, keeping up with issues, linking in with City Council neighbourhood-based policies, developing training initiatives and sharing skills. The Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust worker's enthusiastic involvement with this was perceived as having created a 'bank of good-will' in partner agencies, which would provide an excellent infrastructure for future policy-related work (for example in relation to the 'Modernising Government' agendas of central government).

### Outcomes

*Self-development, self-reliance ... There's now a lot we can do for ourselves ... We've now done things which we wouldn't have known where to start ... we still rely on her for contacts, but this way of thinking is getting into the culture. (Resident)*

For residents, the outcomes (so far) were clear. More people were involved, even in small ways. There was a pool of knowledge, skills and experience, which meant that other people could now be helped to put their ideas into practice. Significantly, there was a developing sense of ownership, with less dependence on the paternalism of the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust.

*People are beginning to feel that this is 'our' village, and that the Trust will help, rather than do. (Trust worker)*

For the Trust, the main outcome was the new approach to working with residents. This could be regarded as an 'intermediate' outcome, with a longer-term possibility that residents would be more in control of their own affairs. The Trust would then act more as a facilitator and enabler, than as a provider with a bottomless pocket.

### **The 'added value' of community development: problems of interpretation**

A very senior Trust employee suggested that the community development post was a *consequence* of change, not the cause of change, in that the Trust had already decided to develop its Housing Plus policy and to develop new relations with residents. However, although the need for change was recognised in some quarters, the same interviewee acknowledged that, if the changes had taken place at all, they would have been 'hard work, crisis driven and put off for ever'. In other words, they would not have taken place without an active 'change agent'.

Other Trust staff reinforced this point. A preoccupation with new technology and other housing-related change meant that no time would have been available to develop a community orientation. And the experience of the failed youth work project underlined the need for particular skills which existing workers simply did not possess.

In theory, a community-led Housing Plus approach might have been developed by anyone in the Trust, existing staff or new workers. In practice, at least until the appointment of a new housing director committed to Housing Plus, the key player in bringing about change was the community development worker.

This placed high expectations on one individual, with a short time-span within which to achieve results. Added to this were the potential isolation and possible marginalisation of the post, taking into account that it was set up not only to challenge long-standing structures in New Earswick, but also how the Trust itself worked. Assessing the 'added value' of the post in these circumstances leads to the conclusion that it is not just a matter of trying to measure what would not otherwise have been achieved. It is also a matter of judging what barriers have been overcome in the process and considering the techniques used to overcome these cultural and organisational difficulties.

It also has to be remembered that there was no history of working with other organisations. Here, too, possible barriers of suspicion or ignorance had to be overcome, trust built up and common agendas identified. None of this was susceptible to a 'quick fix' approach.

### **'Added value' in practice**

In spite of all these potential difficulties, we found that remarkable changes had taken place attributable directly to the community development worker. In fact, most of our interviewees said quite simply: 'None of this would have happened without her'. A resident added: 'We would still have been stuck with the Village Council and the Trust would have walked all over us. We do have a say now.'

*Attitudes have shifted on all sides in the last 18 months. We now recognised that (resident) involvement is important in its own right, for individuals; and it is important for what it contributes to the community. (Trust worker)*



The reasons for this success need to be considered carefully, since they are at the heart of the issue of transferability to other housing association or indeed any social landlord developments. In this case six factors appear to have been significant:

- the values and working style of the community development worker, assisted by her considerable experience
- a broad all-round vision for community development work, and the ability to respond to new ideas and issues
- a commitment to this vision from the highest level within the organisation
- the application of specific skills
- synergies with other workers and agencies
- a clear workplan with timed targets.

It was felt that the worker's ability to balance clear leadership with truly democratic practice, combined with effective organisational support were key factors.

The worker's own youth work background was also helpful, since young people were considered to be a major problem in New Earswick and a previous appointment had created a backlog of failure and mistrust. Skill was needed to repair the damage and to create new ways of working, with the young people themselves, with the Youth Service and with other parts of City of York Council.

As the work gathered momentum, and especially after the appointment of the new housing director, synergies began to emerge between community development and other

work in the Trust. It is this aspect of the work that is likely to be particularly important for future success.

While it was frequently argued that two years was too short for achieving real change, having a two-year time scale did also create pressure for results.

*It might have happened without her, but more slowly. And some projects (e.g. Sleeper Path) would certainly not have happened without her.*  
(City Council worker)

### **The future: exit strategies and further development**

Interviewees made many suggestions for work that the community development worker could engage with in the future. These could be categorised in five groups.

- 1 Completing and consolidating key projects already started.
- 2 Moving towards working with the whole of the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust housing stock.
- 3 Reducing the level of activity in New Earswick and encouraging self-sustaining organisation.
- 4 Working with the other members of the new Community Services Team to develop a new resident-oriented culture across the whole of the Trust.
- 5 Developing multi-agency work across the Trust's stock.

Alternative models, such as that developed in the Foxwood Neighbourhood Agreement,

could be considered. However, they would need to suit the local situation. In New Earswick, for example, the future of the Folk Hall and the Village Council had to be sorted out first before new ideas could be considered.

From the New Earswick residents' point of view there was still work to be done. There was concern that too much depended on the action of the community development worker. It was now time to move forward more self-sufficiently. 'It's all about helping people to help themselves', while also supporting people to develop self-confidence – 'get us more into an equal opportunities society, which we're not. You still feel you shouldn't be there because you're a woman and you're young.'

One resident felt that community development needed to be more widely felt:

*She needs to reach people like me: single, middle-aged. She's paid to think about what they'd like, she can't forget about us ... This is the target audience who are paying the rent and paying the wages. We want to see something from it.*

A resident and a senior JRF officer both suggested that community development work should in future concentrate on supporting people to volunteer in a 'focused' way, that is, for particular tasks. They feared that, if this did not happen, community structures such as NECA and NERF would be in dire straits. It would also involve people who had not previously thought of volunteering. More inter-generational work should also be encouraged. Suggestions for future work in New Earswick included the need to complete the Sleeper Path project; to work on the integration of Hartrigg Oaks with the rest of the village; to help NECA

turn itself into a 'listening body'; and to find a way of sustaining and broadening the work with young people.

The community development worker suggested that training should be a major emphasis, as a way of supporting residents and staff to change and to develop their roles. Developing local resources, such as an IT centre, could be helpful.

Recent recruitment of residents as play-workers showed what could be done with local resources. Recruiting a local person as a youth-worker could similarly help the community and encourage continuity. Work with schools, to develop contact as early as possible with each new group of children, would help to sustain and improve the situation with regard to young people. Local groups should raise as much of their own funds as possible, aiming to avoid dependence on the community budget.

The 'exit' from New Earswick therefore had to be carefully planned and constructive:

*Consolidating, ironing out the differences that are still there ... it would be a shame to lose the impetus.* (Resident)

The stock-wide role would certainly be focusing on how to involve residents in other areas, while 'letting go' of some current work. For Woodlands (Foxwood), the concern was to sustain the Residents' Association over time, while, in Victoria-Geldof, there continued to be a problem of getting any kind of association established at all. The possibility of wider residents' associations, covering more than just single estates, was suggested: this could provide support for the smaller estates, while giving voice to residents within wider partnerships.

Other Trust staff could be enlisted, for

example to 'spot' issues, recruit volunteers and make connections between their work and that of other agencies. The role of the community development worker could then be to act as a sounding board and to support other workers in moving forward.

The Trust was now clearer about a need to work more closely with other landlords and 'partners'. Its involvement in the Foxwood Neighbourhood Agreement was seen as very positive, both in developing new relationships (for example with the City Council) and in thinking less about 'estates' and more about multi-landlord 'areas'. This would be an important concept for the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust properties geographically scattered in other parts of Yorkshire.

### Reflections on the community development role

Returning to Table 4, with its suggestions for how community development might be evaluated over the initial period of the appointment, a pattern begins to emerge. In terms of *processes*, a considerable amount had been achieved, or at least started. Better communication between the Trust and residents did appear to exist, not only with the community development worker, but also with other housing and non-housing workers. Trust staff were more aware of what needed to be done, though there were reservations about whether they were the ones to do it. The ethos of Housing Plus – of seeing issues in the round, not just as 'tenants' problems', was taking root. Trust staff were considering more carefully how to consult and what to consult about. A community orientation among all Trust staff

could be said to be emerging.

*Outputs* were relatively easy to assess. Many new groups had emerged and more individuals were involved (not enough, but a start). The Folk Hall was being used more by local residents, although there was concern about the loss of income from former user groups (this was the perceived 'trade-off' of moving from being commercial to community-led – but the Trust had, in any case, subsidised the Hall for years).

For *outcomes*, there was quite a long way to go. Changes, such as a reduction in vandalism, the emergence of more volunteers and the influence of communities on policy and practice, could not yet be identified with confidence. However, the fact that the Trust as a whole is becoming more community-oriented is likely to mean that work begun under the auspices of community development will, in the future, be reinforced and developed. What can eventually be attributed to community development, assuming that some of the intended outcomes are achieved, will not be easy to pinpoint.

In the short term, however, community development has certainly brought an immense amount of 'added value'. It was universally agreed that the new infrastructure of community groups and formally constituted organisations, and the range of specific short- and long-term projects such as 'Sleeper Path', play-schemes and youth groups, would not have existed without community development intervention.

This is, of course, part of a continuous process. Our final task is to draw out the lessons, question and dilemmas facing workers attempting similar work in other organisations,

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as well as the work with the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust's own residents. This is addressed in the next chapter.

# 7 Issues for housing associations and communities

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The aim of this chapter is to reflect on the findings from the evaluation. Recommendations for action were put at the beginning of this report.

The experience over the first two and a half years of community development work in the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust's York areas, and the assessment of impact and 'added value' analysed in the previous chapter, show very clearly that community development intervention makes a positive difference. The beneficiaries include the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust and local residents, individually and collectively. Communication, interaction and self-confidence have begun to improve in many areas of work, as this report demonstrates.

At the same time, many issues have been raised, both by interviewees and in the course of our analysis, which affect how the process and effects of community development might be perceived, developed and improved in the context of social housing. Some of these will be picked up by housing associations and other social landlords. Some are more relevant to the people who work in and are part of local communities.

In practice, the community development evaluated in this report has focused on enabling and empowering people in communities to take more control over their own lives and, in the process, to have more influence on decision-making bodies affecting their lives. It thus includes both the 'humanitarian' and the 'pragmatic' elements of the definition of community development presented at the beginning of this report.

## The nature of the issues

The issues we shall be discussing in this chapter are the following:

- objectives, values and expectations of community development
- developing new structures and cultures in organisations and communities
- developing an infrastructure for democratic practice
- participation, consultation and influence: how far to go?
- keeping day-to-day services going while developing new approaches
- partnerships and relationships with other agencies
- fragility/sustainability
- costs, benefits, effectiveness and 'added value'.

## Objectives, values and expectations of community development

The values of community development – being community-oriented and user-led, empowering, supporting, facilitating and power-sharing – were contrasted with the traditional values of housing management. These were described in an interview as controlling, expecting/requiring tenant 'compliance', and professional 'we know best' attitudes.

Our final workshop showed that these sets of values are not immutable and that they are

not inevitably associated with a particular job or profession. Within a policy of Housing Plus, opportunities exist for a more flexible and mixed approach. The conditions for this to succeed would include:

- organisational commitment to working with and involving the community
- organisational commitment to working alongside each other
- continuous development of joint and mutual understanding.

This 'partnership' approach, acknowledging different roles and skills, would be based on joint goals and shared values.

A key point, then, is the need to be clear about goals and values, and to discuss them explicitly and regularly. Differences might emerge, but, if they are recognised and agreed, they would not have to cause the tensions experienced in the past, either between professions or between service providers and communities.

In our evaluation, we found a reasonable consensus about what community development might (or ought to) achieve, but less clarity about priorities, timetables and areas of disagreement. The community development worker had developed a detailed workplan and reported regularly on her activities. This was a good way to provide focus, consistency and accountability. It also provided the basis for review. This was an essential part of moving on – or shifting emphasis – as some actions succeeded and others fell by the wayside.

Nevertheless, the potential problem of unrealistic expectations was ever-present, particularly in terms of what could be achieved

within specified time scales. How much difference could one worker make to long-standing issues, like attitudes towards and the involvement of young people, environmental improvement, or the vital question of community empowerment? Were these agreed goals among all the key stakeholders? What support was available to achieve these goals?

Discussion of values, goals and expectations is essential – not only after the appointment of a worker, but also at the preliminary stage, when a housing association and people in the community can develop ideas (not necessarily agreed) about what needs to be done and whether a community development approach would help.

### **Developing new structures and cultures in organisations and communities**

New structures, in organisations or in communities, can be difficult to agree, but relatively easy to put into place, especially if this is done 'top-down'. A more fundamental problem is changing 'hearts and minds'. Those affected may not feel they 'own' the idea, perhaps because they were not consulted. The purpose of the change may be unclear. It may be doubtful whether the stated purposes will actually be achieved by new structures. The public and voluntary sectors have undergone innumerable structural changes in the last couple of decades. There is very little evidence that, without parallel changes in cultures, these have achieved very much. And all too often, the objectives have not been explicit, leading to concern about hidden agendas and job security.

Two examples of structural change were identified in this study. First, the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust separated 'core' housing staff from 'community services' staff. In 1999 these changes were recent and had not had time to become embedded. Nevertheless, there was concern that the teams would be too separated, that some housing staff might feel excluded from work to develop and support the community, while other housing staff might feel 'let off' from having to be involved in community or Housing Plus issues.

This finding points to the need for explicit thinking about the need to develop an organisation-wide culture. A common culture, based on common or complementary values, would avoid the possibility of a hierarchy between 'core' and 'non-core' functions. If there is no common culture, the community services will be in danger of being marginalised, while residents will see no changes in the housing staff. The use of staff meetings and collective 'away-days' would be a straightforward vehicle for developing a consistent, community-oriented culture.

The other structural change, the development in New Earswick of two new community organisations to replace the old Village Council, was perceived as a very positive step. Table 1 in Chapter 5 shows that each organisation had different objectives and processes, broadly divided between educational and developmental (NECA) and influencing, challenging and campaigning (NERF). Even so, some people felt the need to revisit these broad agendas, to clarify what would be expected of active members and to consider how to attract

new members. Cultural issues – of leadership, of democratic practice, of being representative and accountable – therefore need attention and support. If people do not know what to expect, or, worse still, feel they are being treated unequally when they do offer their services, the strength of each organisation will be seriously undermined.

New community structures need to be accompanied by new cultures, with all the support necessary – training, counselling, outreach and publicity – to make these effective. Such support can come from within the organisation, from community development and other community-oriented workers (not necessarily from within the Trust), or from housing staff in the normal course of their work. Joint working across and between all agencies is needed if real and lasting change is to be achieved.

### **Developing an infrastructure for democratic practice**

The next question is, what is 'good' democratic practice? Although there were some new faces, not enough people were coming forward for either NECA or NERF for them to be able to claim confidently that they 'represented' the community. For NERF, both in its first elections in autumn 1998, and in the second round in 1999, no seats on the Executive were contested.

It was felt to be unfortunate that, in both organisations, the senior posts were nearly all filled by people with a long history of involvement with the Village Council or similar bodies. Despite the stated intention to move

away from the historic paternalism of the Trust, the failure to recruit new people could in turn lead to a failure to challenge the Trust – or to respond to challenges from the Trust. It could also make other residents wonder what difference the changes were really making and whether it was worth becoming involved.

Our 1999 evaluation workshop collected ideas about how democratic practice could be demonstrated. These would apply to any community-based organisation claiming to ‘represent’ their community. They included:

- regular, contested elections
- being representative (i.e. reflecting the whole community)
- accountability – accounting to the community; accepting challenge from the community
- open decision-making processes
- the ability to make real decisions.

The ability to make real decisions would be the key to whether the new structures were to be a ‘talking shop’, or would they, NERF in particular, have real influence and power? Could NERF make and control its own agenda? How much power would the Trust give to NERF, and how much responsibility would NERF take on? After a year of existence, these issues needed to be discussed openly: there were clear implications for organisational culture within the Trust, and for support and training within NERF.

### **Participation, consultation and influence: how far to go**

How far a housing association is willing to share decision-making with residents and how deeply involved residents wish to be in decision-making are therefore crucial issues. Token or symbolic involvement will lose credibility and support very quickly. But, if residents feel that they are being kept informed, that there are no hidden agendas, that they have the right to challenge policy and practice and even decide on issues affecting their lives, it is likely that, given adequate support, democratic structures will survive and, in some cases, thrive.

One way of analysing what degree of involvement is being aimed at, or exists at present, is what we call here a ‘spectrum of involvement’ (similar to the widely used ‘ladder of participation’ but avoiding the implication that there is a hierarchy of ‘better’ or ‘worse’ practice). This identifies five forms of involvement, from giving/receiving information to power-sharing and control. The intermediate positions are advice-giving, participation (i.e. some influence) and partnership.

At the evaluation seminar held in November 1999 we asked those present to describe where on a spectrum of resident influence they thought the Trust was now and where they would like it to be. This was done for six activities drawn from the government’s Tenant Compact consultation document. The exercise was carried out by separate groups of Trust staff, residents and others. Table 5 summarises the findings.

The table shows that residents thought they



## Issues for housing associations and communities

**Table 5 Participation: where people think the Trust is now (X) compared with where they would like it to be (O) for particular issues**

	Trust gives residents information	Residents give advice	Participation	Partnership	Residents control
Renovation		Staff X	Others X <sup>1</sup>	Staff O Others O Residents XO	
Capital programmes	Staff X Residents X		Staff O Residents O		
Budgets / finance	Staff X Others X		Staff O	Others O Residents XO	
Rent setting				Staff XO Residents XO	
Allocations / lettings	Others X	Staff X		Staff O Others O Residents XO	
Anti-social behaviour policies	Staff X	Residents X	Others X	Staff O Others O Residents O	
Standards of management and neighbourhood services	Staff X	Residents X	Others X <sup>2</sup>	Staff O Others O Residents O	
Monitoring and evaluating services	Staff X Residents X		Others X <sup>2</sup>	Staff O Others O Residents O	

<sup>1</sup> 'Others' included a mixed group of members of the Trust's Community Services Team and workers from other agencies, notably City of York Council.

<sup>2</sup> 'Others' felt that the Foxwood Neighbourhood Agreement gave Foxwood residents a higher level of participation in relation to service delivery.

## Community development

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had greater influence than staff thought they had. Also, in all areas except capital programmes, staff, residents and others wanted the Trust to move beyond resident participation to a partnership arrangement. However, it was striking that all three groups felt that at this stage resident control was neither desirable nor being sought.

Findings from this kind of exercise could be used to consider future changes. It is one thing for an organisation to declare itself 'community-oriented' or 'community-led'. It is another thing to put this into practice. Open discussions about the spectrum of involvement, and analyses of the difference between the 'now' and the 'desirable' could well lead to constructive discussions about how to bridge the gap. Without such discussions, there is a real danger of misunderstanding, mixed expectations, disappointment and, eventually, withdrawal (by any of the parties involved).

### Keeping day-to-day services going while developing new approaches

In the real excitement of developing new ways of thinking and acting, there could be a danger of taking the eye off the ball of everyday business. Certainly, as this report has noted, both housing officers and residents expressed just such a fear.

Within a community-oriented approach, how can a clear focus be kept on the core tasks, not just to keep them going, but to consider their existing quality and where possible to improve them? The four 'C's of Best Value are:

challenge, consult, compare and compete. They fit well with residents' real concerns, with the Housing Plus agenda, and with the national development of resident consultation and participation. Residents must be able and willing to:

- challenge day-to-day practice
- consider whether existing services meet their real needs
- compare how it is done in their own organisation with similar organisations
- be consulted at every stage.

Day-to-day services need to be kept at the forefront, when other problems (the use of open space, the 'problems' of young people and so on) are also at the top of the agenda for consultation and discussion. It will also be important for the Trust to avoid the temptation, because of pressure from government, the Housing Corporation or other external bodies, to hurry or manipulate consultation on the vital and long-term issues of basic service delivery and standards.

### Partnerships and relationships with other agencies: lessons from community development

There is increasing recognition that the problems faced by people living in estates (and elsewhere) are complex, cannot be pigeonholed into existing service patterns and cannot generally be responded to by single agencies acting on their own. This is a major break from past traditions of service provision and delivery,

requiring deep cultural changes, the acquisition of new skills, and the redefinition of the tasks and roles of public service organisations. Housing associations, particularly as they embrace the philosophy of Housing Plus, are part of this wider pattern.

In considering how to empower residents and communities, and the role of community development in this, it is clear that wider horizons than ever before need to be opened up. It is now clear that networks, alliances and partnerships between service-providing agencies are needed if deep-rooted problems are to be solved.

The community development skills of networking, of communicating and influencing without control, are highly relevant to inter-agency working. There is much to learn from this approach, particularly for professions that have traditionally worked in a hierarchical, task-oriented, agency-led way.

### **Fragility/sustainability in community-based organisations**

If it is difficult and time-consuming to develop new community attitudes, aspirations, structures and cultures, it is even more difficult to sustain them. Great dependence is placed on a few individuals who, once the organisation is up and running, are often left to get on with it as best they can.

Despite the considerable inputs from community development and other sources inside the Trust and outside it, the two new community organisations in New Earswick were quite fragile. There was a general

understanding that the community development worker would be required to turn her attention elsewhere, particularly since she now had stock-wide responsibility. However, people were anxious about losing the gains so far achieved if some kind of support was not to hand. The basic issue was survival and sustainability.

This issue was discussed at the 1999 evaluation workshop. The following ideas were suggested as key methods of ensuring sustainability:

- Continued community development: encouraging new people to get involved, effective networking, use existing networks, e.g. the Sleeper Path project, transferring skills to other staff and residents.
- Policies of the Trust: genuine say for the community on issues people care about, real participation, devolving power, listening to old and young, rewarding voluntary effort, seeing results, route to employment / careers – possibly within the Trust.
- Support to community activists: empowering and supporting key individuals, training.

While community work values and skills would still be needed, others, such as local housing workers and members of the community organisations, could now also take responsibility. A community development worker could take more of a back-seat role, ensuring that training needs are identified and relevant training is offered, helping to nurture new groups,

providing technical support for existing groups, advising local staff. Continuing support will certainly be needed in one form or another, and it is essential for the Housing Plus landlord to recognise this. Pump-priming will never be enough on its own.

### **Costs, benefits, effectiveness and 'added value'**

The final issue to be considered here is that of costs and benefits, effectiveness and 'added value'.

We have noted that it is not always easy to attribute long-term outcomes to the intervention of one particular project or worker. Many other influences and factors will have been involved. Nevertheless, in this two-year evaluation, it was relatively easy to detect the immediate results of community development. Clear targets had been set, the key stakeholders had identified performance indicators and, for most of the period under review, the community development worker was carrying out distinct and different tasks. With the increased commitment to and involvement in Housing Plus from the whole Trust, and with the increased involvement of other agencies that are also developing a community orientation, it will almost certainly be more difficult in the future to distinguish the effects of community development from the effects of other types of action.

A few years ago, the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust calculated that the cost (or 'investment') of Housing Plus would be about £180 per year for each resident. When

calculating the costs and benefits of community development, it is helpful to think about both tangibles and intangibles. Tangible costs would include the salaries relating to special appointments (the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust model) or the costs of developing and training existing staff in housing associations which decided on an alternative, more integrated model – or both.

Benefits are bound to be more intangible. Some, such as the employment of residents by the housing association (as with several of the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust's part-time play-workers) are measurable, and reflect higher levels of self-confidence and skills among local people. Others, such as reductions in numbers of empty properties, perhaps because residents no longer wish to move away, would apply to some areas but not to others. Lower levels of rent arrears, achieved perhaps by helping people into employment, increasing the take-up of benefits, or achieving a more 'balanced' community, are also measurable – but less easy to attribute. A sense of well-being, of 'civic pride', is almost completely intangible, but could be a useful measure of whether residents feel satisfied with their housing, local facilities and community. It is easy to see that community development could be a major contributor here.

It is not, therefore, easy to measure costs and benefits. It is, however, possible. The value of qualitative assessments, preferably by a range of stakeholders, including local residents, needs to be recognised. Despite the years of numerical performance indicators experienced by all public service organisations, it is now

recognised that these are not necessarily measuring the right things, or coming up with useful answers. A wider approach needs to be taken.

### **The need for evaluation**

Regular evaluation – by self-evaluation or through an external evaluator – needs to be an integral part of Housing Plus. Only in this way can the intangible but vital aspects of ‘costs’ and ‘benefits’ be assessed and built into the equation.<sup>1</sup> The relative advantages (or drawbacks) of building community development processes into Housing Plus can then be made explicit, comparable, and understood by residents and workers alike. It will certainly be true that not everyone will feel the benefits all the time – although one of our

more doubtful interviewees did recognise that if, in the longer term, young people are occupied and developed, or the environment improved by more co-operative working, that would bring real benefits to people who had not been directly ‘touched’ by the community development process itself.

Having carried out an evaluation, with a baseline study and a two-year follow-up, we can say that the experience of community development in the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust’s York areas has been positive and constructive, with a range of short-term tangible, and, longer term, less tangible, results identifiable by residents, Trust workers and many others, including the local authority, the parish council, the police, and training institutions. This is no small gain.

# Notes

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## Chapter 2

- 1 'Social housing' is a relatively recent concept. A working definition for people who are not housing specialists may be helpful. We have taken it to mean housing provided to meet social need. Social housing landlords may be local authorities or, increasingly, housing associations, trusts and local housing companies, now referred to in professional jargon as 'RSLs' (Registered Social Landlords). The non-local authority organisations are subject to national legislative requirements and are regulated and monitored by the Housing Corporation, which is also responsible for the allocation of monies to RSLs. In this report, we have preferred to use the term 'housing associations' to cover this not-for-profit housing sector. Much of the housing in this sector is rented, but there is an increasing variety of tenures, including shared ownership and, as in New Earswick, some outright sales to new owner-occupiers.
- 2 For a full discussion of these issues, see Campfens (1997).
- 3 The Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust is separately constituted from the JRF. Its sole responsibility is to manage the houses and land owned by the Foundation which, while largely concentrated within the York area, also extend beyond it. Founded in 1904, the Trust has supported a range of building programmes, which now includes the self-contained community-care development of Hartrigg Oaks (adjacent to New Earswick). Under the 1988 housing legislation, it became a registered housing association, eligible for government financial support, accountable to the Housing Corporation, and required to open its housing allocations to nominations from the relevant local authority. The Trust has regularly been a 'test-bed' for new ideas relating to housing, and much of its work has been independently evaluated over time. It is closely connected to the JRF through financial and other links, and by the fact that there is a single director and Board of Trustees for both organisations. However, it is increasingly looking to become self-financing.
- 4 New Earswick was reported in 1995 as containing a high percentage – 59% – of households with no one at work. Twenty-seven per cent of adult residents were aged over 65 years and more than half had lived on the estate for over 40 years. However, there was also an increased number of single parent families, while 54% of households included children between six and ten years. Other, recently built estates were also reported as containing large numbers of young families with children and high numbers receiving housing benefit. In Victoria-Geldof, 45% of all residents were children. In these cases, they were not balanced by a group of older residents (Vittles, 1995; Cole *et al.*, 1996).
- 5 The option suggested by Bolton and Bovey was as follows: 'To pursue a community development model which does not completely rule out commercial activity but gives a balance between commercial and community activity; a model based on a community association would accommodate and facilitate greater

community involvement. This fits the original purpose and constitution of the (Village) Council; and enhances the partnership relationship with the Trust.'

- 6 PEP Ltd (Priority Estates Project), founded in 1979 to tackle housing problems on some of Britain's hard-to-let estates. Government funded until 1987, now an independent not-for-profit company working on housing and community issues. INLOGOV (Institute of Local Government Studies), School of Public Policy, University of Birmingham, founded in the mid-1960s to work on local government and related issues, including community governance and public participation.

### Chapter 3

- 1 The website address is: <http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/seu/index/faqs.html>
- 2 This work arises from one of the Social Exclusion Unit's early reports, *Bringing Britain Together: A National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal* (Social Exclusion Unit, 1998). This report aimed to develop ideas about how to 'develop integrated and sustainable approaches to the problems of the worst housing estates, including crime, drugs, unemployment, community breakdown, and bad schools etc'.
- 3 See Gaster and Rutqvist (2000, forthcoming). This paper uses research in

the UK and Sweden to examine the extent to which the local 'front line' can be shaped to meet citizens' needs and priorities. The authors concluded that the balance is too often towards the internal bureaucracy, at the expense of the citizen and community, and leaving the front line in an exposed and difficult position in the middle. The support of the 'back line' is demonstrated to be crucial to the success of neighbourhood and one-stop shop approaches to improving service delivery.

### Chapter 5

- 1 This project formed a case study in DETR-funded research on 'cross-cutting issues' (Richards, 1999).

### Chapter 6

- 1 David Page identified this issue in research in 1993 for the JRF. See bibliography.

### Chapter 7

- 1 For example, PEP Ltd is currently working with four housing associations on a Housing Corporation funded study to develop a measure of 'added value' in Housing Plus activities. The results will be available in 2000.

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# Appendix 1

## Evaluating community development

### Defining community development

Any evaluation model has first to try and define what activity is to be evaluated. With regard to community development this can be a problem. Is it the activities of a specified community development worker, is it specifically defined processes carried out by any number of different professionals, or is it both? Can all tenant participation work be classed as community development work, or does community development work require particular aims and processes to be defined as such?

The consultant working with the New Earswick Residents' Forum (Marion Horton) drew a helpful distinction between 'community development', 'community work' and 'tenant participation'.

- *Community development* is about community empowerment, and involves engagement with political and managerial structures.
- *Community work* is about working with groups, helping them to form, enabling them to continue.
- *Tenant participation* is specifically concerned with the landlord-tenant relationship, and is about enabling tenants to be involved in decision-making and service delivery within that relationship.

There is likely to be overlap between the three.

### Aims and principles

In our proposal for this evaluation, we suggested a range of possible aims of community development. These were:

- supporting and encouraging resident participation and empowerment
- supporting residents in their daily life at home and in their communities
- considering the range of residents' needs and developing projects and services to meet them, including working with statutory and voluntary services to develop a collaborative approach
- drawing on wider research and development to develop a strategic approach to community development
- supporting organisational change.

These fit well with Hubert Campfens' general definition of 'humanitarian' and 'pragmatic' community development quoted in Chapter 2. They also reflect our findings from the first stage of this evaluation. Residents, workers and other interviewees generally saw community development as needing to be facilitative and supporting, rather than 'leading'; they hoped for some tangible results in relation to current issues and problems; and they all felt that the work should be self-sustaining.

Interviewees also identified values and principles that could or should inform the day-to-day work. These included the idea of

- working with the whole community, and ensuring that no-one feels left out
- not seeing people (especially young people) as 'problems'
- being straightforward and open, accessible and supportive
- working jointly with others
- encouraging people to do things for themselves.

Being flexible, developmental, organic, willing to challenge and having a strong commitment to empowerment – 'doing herself out of a job' – were also vital ingredients for community development.

How should community development be carried out? Again, the interviewees for this evaluation had some very clear ideas. Working with existing community structures and, where appropriate, facilitating change within them, acting as a catalyst and support for new activities, finding out needs, bringing together those willing to be involved and networking with other professionals to exchange ideas and practice were important in relation to working with the community. At the same time, community development was expected to influence the organisational, management and policy-making ethos of the Trust, as well as its relationship with other agencies. It had to be sustainable, ensuring that work would continue without direct community development inputs. Helping residents to understand group dynamics, to see why people drop out and what they need to keep going, would be part of this.

These are the characteristics of one example of community development, carried out in one

place at a particular time. They demonstrate the complexity and dynamism of community development and the need to be clear and explicit about its underlying values. They also demonstrate that evaluating such work could be difficult.

### **Context, perspective and purpose**

There is an increasing awareness of the need for community development work to support 'bottom-up' initiatives. Community participation is now a mainstream activity for many local authorities, regeneration partnerships and registered social landlords. As more resources are committed, so there is an increasing need to evaluate its effects, as well as the techniques and processes within it.

Evaluation inevitably reflects the perspective of those doing the evaluation or those wanting the evaluation. Different players may have very different perspectives on the aims of the work and on the achievements, which in turn will influence what they may wish to see from an evaluation. A funder's perspective may differ from a scheme manager's. A landlord's perspective may differ from that of residents. A community development worker's perspective may be different again. Community development evaluation will therefore differ according to its audience and funder.

An evaluation for an employing organisation will want to check the effective use of resources and the impact of the work on the rest of the organisation. Evaluation for a community development worker should be an ongoing process, enabling the worker to look at skills and resources and to review issues and community needs. An evaluation for the

community might concentrate on whether the employing organisation's objectives fit with community objectives, and whether the community development worker is helping the community achieve its objectives.

### **Our approach to evaluating community development**

Most performance indicators currently in use focus on inputs and throughputs. For example, the amount of time staff spend on void management can be quantified and compared with the number of voids and the time taken to let a property. The figures can then be compared with similar housing organisations. However, these indicators provide a limited picture of the overall housing service, let alone community development activities, which tend to be less tangible and more long-term.

Over the years many different models of evaluation for community development have been tried. The traditional research model is based on examining outcomes in relation to original aims and a defined 'baseline'. This is limited on two counts. First, it is often difficult to attribute results directly to the effect of community development work, compared with what might have happened anyway, or with the effects of other factors. Second, the model does not take into account the need for community development work to respond to changing situations, which will influence and change the objectives. Nevertheless, it is a useful model if it stimulates those involved to consider explicitly and in some cases collectively the objectives that can reasonably be set for community development, and over what period. Failure to do this has certainly contributed in the past to a

devaluing of the community development process.

An alternative model – the 'systems' model – allows for the revision of aims and objectives and the changing external environment. It sets out to discover the reactions of stakeholders to the community development interventions and encourages feedback to those stakeholders.

We have combined the two models described above. We have looked at the aims, objectives and outputs of the appointment of a community development worker, analysing these from different stakeholders' perspectives. We have also taken into account external changes which have influenced the work programme and outcomes. Our interview process, which included feeding back the results through seminars and reports, analysed these interactions. Our interview schedule was semi-structured, based on open questions to stakeholders. We have thus recorded a range of perceptions and experiences. Through a process of 'triangulation', these perceptions can be built up to provide a more complete and robust picture of whether community development has had an effect and, if so, what that effect has been.

We have evaluated the overall process of community development rather than the work of a particular post-holder. Nevertheless, the role of the person designated 'community development worker' has inevitably loomed large. The changing policy environment, of which the community development work forms an integral part, resulted in our interviews and evaluation also including discussions of 'community work' and 'tenant participation'.

### Conclusions

Community development is a relatively intangible process, which is as much about development and prevention as about achieving pre-defined outputs or outcomes. Nevertheless, we believe that it is possible to define, through different stakeholders' eyes, the objectives, values and processes that combine to produce effective community development, recognising that objectives – and certainly priorities – may well change over time.

We have brought our own ideas and expectations to the task, but would suggest that any evaluation of community development needs to start from where the local stakeholders are. The hopes, expectations and perceptions of these stakeholders will almost certainly be different from each other, in degree if not in content. It is the task of the evaluator to make sense of this and to report back the common factors, as well as the contradictions and tensions.

Many of the underlying values and objectives will nevertheless be common to different stakeholder groups and to different community development initiatives. We therefore feel that scope exists for making comparisons and learning lessons which apply elsewhere. An evaluation can therefore be 'formative', in that it feeds back and influences action on the ground. It can also be 'summative', in that it reaches conclusions about community development inputs, processes, outputs and impact, identifying and reflecting on the key factors that produce positive (and negative) results.

In applying this approach to the evaluation of community development in the three York areas of the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust, we feel we have demonstrated that community development can be evaluated and, indeed, that it is essential that this be done.

# Appendix 2

## Community Development Officer: 'further particulars'

### 1 The Foundation

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation was established by Joseph Rowntree in 1904. At that time, its primary objective was to provide social housing within the new community of New Earswick. From the outset Joseph Rowntree laid stress on the need for New Earswick to encourage civic responsibility and to be 'self-governing' within guidelines laid down by the Trustees. Formally, the process for the involvement of residents in village life has taken place through their election of a Village Council, which has substantial responsibilities for the Village Hall (the Folk Hall) and other social amenities in New Earswick. The Village Council has a consultative role, through the New Earswick Management Committee which is central to the performance of the landlord's duties by the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust. Residents also engage directly with the Trust through membership of the Lettings Committee whose work includes the selection of tenants under the *Community Lettings* arrangements which account for 20% of re-lets.

At the time of writing, a brief study by the national organisation Community Matters has just been completed about the future uses of the Folk Hall. This has examined the range of activities already taking place within the Hall, but has also looked at needs within the Village and whether or not these are currently being met by the existing facilities. The study has been carried out in close collaboration with the Village Council, and has proved a valuable means of suggesting some changes and of preparing the Village Council for the arrival of the Community Development Officer.

In recent years, the Foundation has also built two new estates: the Woodlands Estate in Acomb to the west of the city centre and the Geldof Road Estate in Huntington to the north east of the city. Compared to New Earswick (which has about a 1,000 homes) these are smaller communities (of up to 150 homes), but residents' associations have already been created on both estates.

On these new estates, much of the Foundation's energies have focused on helping new residents to settle into their new homes and communities. As part of this work, on the Geldof Road Estate, a recent study has been completed by the Safe Neighbourhoods Unit. This was originally conceived to advise on community safety, but broadened out to look at a range of other issues of concern to residents, including child density and community facilities.

In addition to its responsibilities as a landlord, the Foundation supports a large research and development programme which includes the following areas of work: Housing, Social Policy, and Social Care and Disability. Within the Housing Research Programme, the Foundation has a long-standing interest in urban regeneration and community development. The recently completed Action on Estates Programme focused on the role that residents can play to turn around some of the country's worst housing estates; and this interest is being followed up in a new Area Regeneration Programme which will focus on the wider strategies needed to underpin regeneration at the local level. The postholder will be responsible to the Area Regeneration

Co-ordinator (who has a community development background), and this will provide an opportunity to make links between the project and good practice elsewhere in the country.

### 2 The Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust

The Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust manages the Foundation's housing estates and liaises with the Village Council and the Residents' Association on the two newer estates. Although the maintenance of social facilities and other services draws fairly heavily on the Foundation's own funds new housing is developed with grants from the Housing Corporation. Besides employing housing management staff like any other housing association, the Trust employs more specialised workers like the Housing Welfare Advice Officer, and a Family Support Worker to work with young families on the Trust's estates.

The decision to establish a new Community Development post stems from the Foundation's long-standing conviction that social landlords must do more than building and maintaining homes, and collecting the rent. Nominees to social housing in the UK increasingly suffer from homelessness, long-term unemployment, poverty and a range of related problems. As a result, landlords commonly find that they need to initiate projects tackling: unemployment; the needs of youth; crime and fear of crime; and neighbour nuisance.

While New Earswick cannot be compared to the country's worst estates, it nevertheless attracts its fair share of these problems. There have been attempts recently (through the appointment of a Youth Worker) to engage in

the problems of young people in the area, although the results have not been entirely satisfactory. Building on this earlier work, there is felt to be plenty of scope for engaging the energies of local residents in finding solutions to youth problems, and other social and economic problems.

A further reason for employing a Community Development Officer is to take some of the burden off the shoulders of a small group of committed individuals on the Village Council who tend to be constantly re-elected to this body. As is often the case with community bodies, not everybody in New Earswick uses their right to vote, let alone participate in the affairs of New Earswick. There is scope then for the Community Development Officer to engage with groups and with individuals in New Earswick, to understand what their needs and priorities are, and to encourage them to become actively involved in project work of various kinds.

On the newer estates, without New Earswick's long history of community involvement and consultation, the task is more likely to revolve around the needs and problems faced by residents settling into new homes and coming to grips with new neighbourhoods. Community leadership on such estates can be very fragile, while at the same time the list of problems that need sorting out can be very long. Many issues are already being tackled by the Foundation but there is valuable work still to be done in nurturing the new residents' associations and in supporting those who have begun to take on a leadership role.

### 3 The role of the Community Development Officer

Attached to this paper is a Job Description for the post and a Person Specification. To some extent, the details in these two documents reflect the needs and priorities that have already begun to emerge through the Foundation's on-going work with individuals and groups in the area. The post will run for two years in the first instance. At the end of this period there will be a review, and the Foundation will decide whether or not to extend the post.

At the same time, the postholder will be expected to adopt a strategic and innovative approach to the work (in conjunction with the Area Regeneration Co-ordinator) and will be expected to take all necessary steps to organise and prioritise the work.

As the Job Description shows, various themes and needs have been identified within the Foundation's various estates, for example: youth work; community safety initiatives; use of the Folk Hall; and the encouragement and support of volunteers from the various communities. It is important for applicants to understand however that the Foundation is not looking for a *specialist* Community Worker with the capacity to pay detailed attention to one field of work (e.g. youth work and related activities). Instead, the Foundation is looking for a *generalist* worker who is able to respond effectively to a variety of needs and is able to help the community (and other partners) shape their approaches to tackling these needs.

As a result, the postholder will probably need to draw on the full range of skills as laid out in the attached Person Specification. In particular, the Foundation is looking for somebody who can:

- Relate in a sympathetic, direct and down-to-earth way with individual residents and community groups on the various estates. This includes the ability to work with more than one type of client group, gender, age range, etc. It will also involve having considerable negotiating and mediating skills.
- Link up with a range of other statutory and voluntary agencies, in particular those who may have staff time or resources that can be brought to bear on the Foundation's estates.
- Relate effectively with colleagues in the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation at all levels. This will include the establishment of appropriate links between local community development work on the estates and the policies and practices of the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust.
- In addition to the communicating, organising and networking skills as outlined above, the postholder will be expected to have the ability to evaluate the work as it progresses, to change the strategy on the basis of these evaluations; and to respond to changes and developments in suitably flexible and innovative ways.

The Community Development Officer will have access to the Foundation's research and development programme through the Area Regeneration Co-ordinator as outlined above. Another valuable link will be with the Development Overview Committee which supports research and development projects



## Appendix 2: Community Development Officer: 'further particulars'

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linked to the work of the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust. Plans are already in hand for an on-going evaluation of the community development post, possibly including a look at similar work in other housing associations, to be funded out of the Development Overview Committee budget. The purpose of this study would be not only to help evaluate progress during the initial two-year period of the post, but also to make useful links with work elsewhere in the country and to feed information and lessons back into the work in York.

A small budget of £5k per annum is being created to assist the Community Development Officer with activities related to the work. These might include: seed money for new groups; training for residents; visits and attendance at conferences by residents; budgets for meetings; and publicity.

### 4 Terms and Conditions of Employment

#### Salary

The salary will be on the JRF scale 8 (points 34–37): between £19,818 and £21,351 depending on experience. The post is for two years in the first instance. Appointments are usually made on the first point of the scale. Salaries are reviewed on 1 April each year (continuation subject to review).

#### Pension

There is an optional contributory scheme.

#### Holidays

25 days per annum plus statutory holidays.

#### Hours of work

The Foundation operates a Flexible Working Scheme based around a 35-hour week. Formal working hours are usually between 8.00am and 6.00pm. The postholder's core hours are to be agreed with the Area Regeneration Co-ordinator. The postholder will be expected to work unsociable hours from time to time.

Arrangements are being made to find a base for the Worker at the Folk Hall in New Earswick. A desk will also be available in the Foundation's offices at The Homestead.

#### Car allowance

The post will carry an essential car user allowance.

#### No smoking

By agreement with all members of staff, The Homestead has been designated a non-smoking office.

#### Equal Opportunities

The Foundation strives to be an Equal Opportunities employer. Applications from people from ethnic minority groups and from disabled people will be particularly welcome.

#### Closing date

The closing date for applications is Wednesday 9 October 1996.

#### Interviews

Interviews will be held at New Earswick on 1 November

#### Relocation

The Foundation has a relocation package, and details are available on request.

## Community development

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Applications should be sent to:

John Low  
Area Regeneration Co-ordinator  
Joseph Rowntree Foundation  
The Homestead  
40 Water End  
York YO3 6LP

# Appendix 3

## The community development post: job descriptions, 1997 and 1999

JOSEPH ROWNTREE FOUNDATION

JOB DESCRIPTION

Department	HOUSING	
Job title	COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OFFICER	Job grade Scale 8
Responsible to	AREA REGENERATION CO-ORDINATOR	
Responsible for		
Purpose of job	To work with residents and colleagues in shaping a community development strategy for the Foundation; and to work with a similar range of people, including other local agencies, to implement this strategy.	
Duties and responsibilities		
1	To develop and maintain structures to enable residents to identify problems, needs and solutions.	
2	To work with appropriate local organisations, or form new ones, in order to take various projects forward. To provide support and assistance to local residents, and encourage links between community groups.	
3	To develop and co-ordinate work with young people on the Foundation's estates, facilitate links with other professional and statutory authorities in the area of youth provision and work to increase the involvement of local volunteers in this work.	
4	To help community groups respond to Community Safety initiatives undertaken by the Housing Trust, for example the establishment of Neighbourhood Watch groups and appropriate links with North Yorkshire Police.	
5	To provide support, advice and assistance to the Community Issues Committee and other locally based organisations with regard to initiatives and ideas brought forward by residents.	
6	Other duties will include:	
	i)	To encourage the active participation of residents in community activities and project groups and help them to gain, as necessary, training and advice.
	ii)	To liaise with the Housing Welfare Adviser, Nursery/Playgroup Committee and Family Support Worker, to facilitate multi-disciplinary working and effective communication.

## Community development

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### Duties and responsibilities: (Cont'd)

- iii) To advise and support proposals brought forward by the New Earswick Village Council for any new developments, or programmes of work, related to the use of the Folk Hall.
  - iv) Preparing reports and attending quarterly New Earswick Management Committee meetings, when required.
- 7 To keep apprised of developments and trends in appropriate areas that relate to the work in the local community, e.g. national community development issues, legislation, local authorities' policies, and good practice within other housing associations.
  - 8 To work consistently with the Housing Services Manager and other colleagues to develop a team approach to the work, and to help the Trust develop a community development strategy.
  - 9 To meet on a regular basis with the Area Regeneration Co-ordinator in order to: discuss community development policy; discuss progress and problems within project work; maintain appropriate links to the Area Regeneration Programme, the Development Overview Committee and other research programmes; and to facilitate appropriate access to colleagues in the Foundation.

July 1996

### Appendix 3: The community development post: job descriptions, 1997 and 1999

#### JOB DESCRIPTION

Department	HOUSING OPERATIONS	
Job title	COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OFFICER	Job grade Scale 8
Responsible to	DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF HOUSING OPERATIONS (COMMUNITY SERVICES)	
Responsible for		
Purpose of job	To work with residents and colleagues in shaping Community Development and Residents' Partnership strategies for the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust and to work with others, including other local agencies, to implement this strategy.	
Duties and responsibilities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 To develop and maintain structures to enable all residents to identify problems, needs and solutions. To assist the DDHO (CS) in developing and implementing the Residents' Partnership Strategy.</li> <li>2 To work with appropriate local organisations, or form new ones, in order to develop and maintain community and resident involvement. To provide support and assistance to local residents and encourage links between community groups.</li> <li>3 To develop and co-ordinate work with young people on the JRHT estates, facilitate links with other professional and statutory authorities in the area of youth provision and work to increase the involvement of local volunteers in this work.</li> <li>4 To support community groups in responding to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Community Safety initiatives, for example through the establishment of Neighbourhood Watch groups.</li> <li>– Health Education initiatives.</li> <li>– Training and Employment initiatives.</li> <li>– Funding issues.</li> </ul> </li> <li>5 To provide training, support, advice and assistance to NECA and other locally based organisations with regard to initiatives and ideas brought forward by residents.</li> <li>6 Other duties will include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) To liaise with the Housing Welfare Advisers and Family Worker and Housing Management staff to facilitate multi-disciplinary working and effective communication.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	

## Community development

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### Duties and responsibilities: (Cont'd)

- ii) Preparing reports and attending New Earswick Management Committee meetings, when required.
- 7 To act as the main point of contact for JRHT with NECA; to advise and support the Association and review with it periodically its management of the Folk Hall and other village facilities.
- 8 To keep apprised of developments and trends in appropriate areas that relate to the work in the local community, e.g. national community development issues, legislation, local authorities' policies, and good practice within other housing associations.
- 9 To work consistently with and provide training support to the Housing Operations Department and other colleagues to develop a team approach to the work and to help the Trust develop a community development strategy.
- 10 To meet on a regular basis with the Area Regeneration Co-ordinator in order to: discuss community development policy; discuss progress and problems within project work; maintain appropriate links to the Area Regeneration Programme, the Development Overview Committee, and other research programmes; and to facilitate appropriate access to colleagues in the Foundation.
- 11 Act as Secretariat to CIG (Community Issues Group).

January 1999

# Appendix 4

## Example of a community development workplan

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Overall the strategy for Community Development work in New Earswick can be presented on three levels.

- 1 Work with the existing structures which would include the Village Council (both established and new members, both individuals and the group as a whole), various sub-groups and forums including the VC Community Issues Group and the Joint Working Group; the Housing Trust and various village Clubs.
- 2 Work on developing interest, activity and participation within the broader community in relation to new groups and to existing facilities and amenities in the village.
- 3 Work on developing appropriate and sustainable resources for young people.

Working on all three levels at the same time represents a 'bottom up' approach that will empower and enable participation combined with a 'top down' approach that will challenge current structures, processes and procedures and support changes that will make these more 'user friendly' and consequently easier to work with and more attractive to people to become involved with.

Clearly we are engaged in a developmental process that by definition makes it difficult to predict outcomes. However, realistic short-term and long-term targets will need to be identified along with the evaluation team.

After 12 months from January 1997 it would be reasonable to expect:

- an increase in the number of community-based groups using the Folk Hall
- developments in relation to meeting the needs of young people
- increase in the number of residents involved in the management of the Folk Hall and other Village Council activities
- increased awareness of activities within the village by residents
- clear recommendations to Trustees on the future use of the Folk Hall
- increase in residents' access to village clubs and amenities
- increase in residents' involvement in community-based activities.

After 24 months from January 1997 it would be realistic to expect:

- a shift in the management structure and ethos of the Folk Hall
- the consolidation of new developments identified within the first 12–18 months to ensure sustainability
- an ongoing Playscheme planning group and playschemes
- young people using the Folk Hall in a variety of ways
- an increase in the range of opportunities for people to become involved in community activities

## Community development

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- greater understanding by residents, VC and JRHT of the community development process via the evaluation process
- the infrastructure support load shared between VC, residents, JRHT and CDW.

On the Woodlands Estate after 12 months from January 1997 I would expect:

- increase in the number and range of community groups
- increase in community participation through new groups
- increase in the number of joint events and activities with neighbouring estates
- increase in opportunities for joint events and activities with local organisations and workers.

After 24 months from January 1997 I would expect:

- a strong residents' association with a range of people involved and undergoing regular training
- a residents' association that is able to include and attract younger people in order to sustain itself
- a range of community-based activities and groups including regular holiday play
- a range of joint initiatives including youth work provision
- improved communication between the residents' association and other agencies and individuals through the development of a community newsletter

- involvement in and representation on other local bodies including JRHT groups.

On the Victoria-Geldof Estate after 12 months from January 1997 I would expect:

- establishment of a Toddler group or Playgroup
- involvement of other agencies on the estate
- increase in number of residents identifying their needs in relation to community support.

After 24 months I would expect:

- an increase in the range of community activities available on the estate
- an increase in the number of residents accessing activities and resources being offered in areas off the estate: New Earswick; 68 Centre; Family Centres
- the establishment of a residents' forum for communicating with the JRHT.

In conclusion, there are also some general targets in relation to the Community Development process and the Evaluation of the work that can be identified.

Targets within the first 12-month period, from January 1997 would include:

- establishing positive working relationships between the evaluation team and the CDW
- establishing clear, realistic and achievable targets with the evaluation team
- establishment of the methods that will be adopted by the evaluating team



## Appendix 4: Example of a community development workplan

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- an increase in the level of understanding of the CD process by VC; Trust; residents; other agencies
- the establishment of an Advisory group to support the work being undertaken.

Targets for the 24-month period from January 1997 would include:

- evidence of the effect the CD process has had on individual and group

participation in the village activities, groups and forums

- evidence to support the further funding of a CDW post or not
- quantitative and qualitative evidence that identifies the costs and benefits of adopting a CD process
- information and knowledge of the CD experience that can be disseminated.

# Appendix 5

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## Events and developments in Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust areas in York, 1904–99

- 1904 New Earswick village built as a 'self-managed community'.
- 1990 Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust registers as a 'Registered Social Landlord' (RSL) with the Housing Corporation. It is now eligible for Social Housing Grant and is open to local authority nominations.
- 1994 Local housing office opens in New Earswick.
- 1996 Study of the Folk Hall (Bolton and Bovey, 1996).  
Commitment to 'Housing Plus' approach; decision to appoint community development worker with wide brief.
- 1997 (January) Appointment of community development worker.  
(November–January 1998) Community development evaluation, Phase One (baseline study).
- 1998 (March) Evaluation Interim Report and feedback workshop.  
Change in Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust management structure. New Director of Housing Services appointed. Housing Plus becomes core business. 'Housing Services' and 'Community Services' teams created.  
Foxwood Neighbourhood Agreement signed (this includes Woodlands estate).  
Village Council (New Earswick) abolished. NECA (New Earswick Community Association) and NERF (New Earswick Residents' Forum) established.
- 1999 Representative from Woodlands estate co-opted to Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust Housing Committee.  
(July) Refurbished Folk Hall officially opened.  
(November) Sleeper Path (youth project) building opened.  
(Summer – autumn) Interviews and workshop for Phase Two of the community development evaluation.