

Manchester Community Development Practice Working Group

The Rise of Community Development in Manchester

This briefing is by the Community Development Practice Working Group, an informal group of skilled community development workers who are seeking to improve knowledge, understanding and practice of community development. The briefing begins with a short overview of the linkages between community development work practice and some key Manchester strategies. It then describes what community development work practice is and illustrates through a number of case studies.

There are many signs of renewed interest in the practice of community development in Manchester. This interest is driven by the reduction in state services and more positively, by the recognition that community empowerment and involvement is the long-term key to revitalising the communities that Manchester's financial success have left behind. This is a very welcome development, however, it is crucial that this renewed interest in the assets and strengths of communities, is informed and enriched by the learning and practice of Community Development. It is ironic that both Manchester Metropolitan University and Manchester University either have closed or are considering closing their community development courses at a time when this expertise is required more than ever.

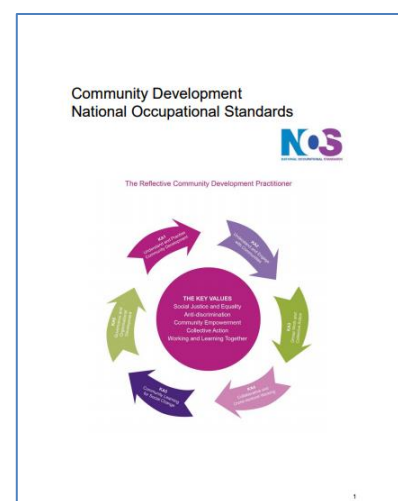
“Community development work is a huge force for good that could, if done well, transform the lives of people living in some of the poorest communities of Manchester. Equally, if done poorly, community development work can cause serious damage to communities.”

There are many workers and volunteers in public, private and statutory organisations for whom community development is a significant part of their work. For many, the reality is that the only way they can fulfil their duties is by supporting the development of the communities they work with. However, many of these workers and volunteers are learning through trial and error. Community development practice is an approach and a set of knowledge and tools that can help all of these workers to do their job more effectively.

Manchester City Council has adopted the “Our Manchester Approach”, a set of principles that closely echo some of the core principles of community development. The Our Manchester Approach promotes a different kind of relationship between citizen and state, a focus on “doing with” rather than “doing to”. It seeks to understand and build on the strengths of individuals, organisations and communities alongside understanding need. It is a long-term approach that seeks to work with people to create solutions that work for them. Community development work is the art/science of bringing communities together, helping them to recognise and build on their strengths.

In tandem with the Our Manchester Approach, statutory community health and care services, under the overall leadership of Manchester Local Care Organisation, are devolving to 12 neighbourhoods. This will allow closer integration of services and a better understanding of population needs. Each of the neighbourhoods will have a community development worker working alongside the neighbourhood lead, to support them in creating and maintaining connection to the people working and living in the area.

The approach at local level is strongly supported at a Greater Manchester level. The Greater Manchester Population Health plan (2017 - 2021) states “there is a strong moral and ethical case for person and community centred approaches for health and wellbeing” (p22). It also endorses key community development practices such as co-production, asset based approaches and social action.



Many other agencies within Manchester are involved in community development and have been for many years. Some housing associations employ “community development workers” directly, as do a number of voluntary sector organisations. Many more organisations may not employ staff called community development workers but take a community development approach in the way they carry out their work. Recently, there is a noticeable increase in discussion of Asset Based Community Development Work and many organisations are carrying out forms of asset-mapping.

In order for this resurgence in community development work to be as effective as it can be it needs to use nationally well-developed and well-understood community work development practice. There is no point in re-inventing the wheel or making the same mistakes that others have made.

Community development work is a huge force for good that could, if done well, transform the lives of people living in some of the poorest communities of Manchester. Equally, if done poorly, community development work can cause serious damage to communities.

What is the aim of Community Development?

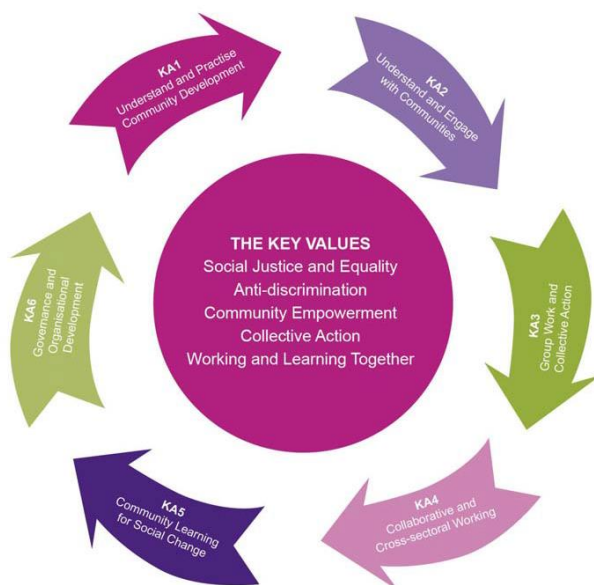
The aim of community development is:

- helping people find common cause on issues that affect them
- helping people work together on such issues under their own control
- building the strengths and independence of community groups, organisations and networks
- building equity, inclusiveness, participation and cohesion amongst people and their groups and organisations
- empowering people and their organisations where appropriate to influence and help transform public policies and services and other factors affecting the conditions of their lives
- advising and informing public authorities on community needs, viewpoints and processes and assisting them to strengthen communities and work in genuine partnership with them”

(The Community Development Challenge. DCLG, 2006)

What is Community Development Work Practice

There are a set of values, principles, skills and methodologies that are key to good community development. These are described in the Community Development National Occupational Standards ([CDNOS](#)). These same standards apply whether learning Community development work at degree level or building up skills and practice through on-the-job training.



Key Areas

- ❖ KA1: Understand and practise community development
- ❖ KA2: Understand and engage with communities
- ❖ KA3: Group work and collective action
- ❖ KA4: Collaborative and cross-sectoral working
- ❖ KA5: Support community learning for social change
- ❖ KA6: Governance and organisational development support

(Federation for Community Development Learning, 2015)

Developing Better Community Development Work Practice in Manchester.

In 2006, the Department of Communities and Local Government developed, through a panel of experts, a set of proposals for improving the practice of community development ([The Community Development Challenge](#)). These recommendations are just as relevant now as they were then. The recommendations cover:

1. the definition and status of the community development occupation
2. improving the evidence base
3. creating a strategic approach across localities, and establishing regional support
4. funding
5. management and delivery, and
6. training, education and recruitment

It is time for a renewed debate in Manchester about how we can apply these recommendations locally.



Case Studies

Grass Roots Community Development Work – identifying issues and planning action for change.



Levenshulme Women's group has a culturally diverse membership of local women who first met at a toddler group with English conversation. Realising that they all shared the same concern of finding it difficult to go to English classes because of having small children, they began to work together, with the support of a qualified community development worker, to find ways that they might help themselves. Now, four years later they are a constituted group who seek out ways to support migrant women, develop their own potential and improve their local community. Most recently they

spearheaded a local clean-up day, bringing people together and challenging the perception that 'foreigners' are the ones who cause all the mess.

Liz Kam is a Church related Community worker at Levenshulme Inspire (www.lev-inspire.org.uk), a long term post aiming to create positive change in the local community particularly in the areas of new arrivals, people with mental health needs, older people and young people. She has professional accreditation as a Community Development Worker (England Standards Board for Community Development Practice). "This group of women have so much potential, yet were isolated and, in their own words, excluded from society. Time has been a luxury for us and key to working through the community development principles together. I have been able to build up a trusting relationship over 4 years, which has in turn enabled me to ask challenging questions of the group, helping them to recognise their shared concerns and plan action to overcome them'. Her role as a development worker has intentionally evolved from toddler group leader, through advisor and provocateur to trusted friend and supporter. As a result the women have moved from service users to finding their own solutions, and even challenging and encouraging others to do the same.



Community Grocers – Taking Local Control



Rich Browning played a central role in creating the 'Community Grocer' projects for redistributing surplus food which is about much more than alleviating food poverty. They are hubs for putting local people in control of their neighbourhood by enhancing resident's capabilities for community organising and social action. The project is based on the principles of community development work practice by viewing neighbourhoods as a network of people sharing interests and

providing an 'escalator' to involve them in decision making and service delivery. This approach offers people the opportunity to become involved in undertaking assessments of community needs, reviewing resources, identifying partnerships, developing programmes and participatory practices. This enables local people to come together to decide on local priorities and needs, and how these are best met. This in turn addresses the determinants of inequality and the impact on health, unemployment, educational attainment and crime.

Rich Browning is Chief Executive of [Healthy Me Healthy Communities](http://www.healthy-me.com) - a Manchester social enterprise. HMHC's aim is to improve health and life outcomes by connecting people, building skills and strengthening communities. Rich has a Community Practice MA and over 15-year of CDW practice in the fields of regeneration, adult education and health.



Place-based organising through action research



[Mums Mart](#) and [Lower Broughton Life](#) are two women-led groups who want to improve life and build trust in their neighbourhoods. They have been engaging in community exchanges with members of an international social movement called [Slum/Shack Dwellers International](#). They recently visited South Africa to learn directly from the women's savings schemes that are the building blocks of the National Slum Dwellers Federation. Mums Mart and Lower Broughton Life are trying to

identify other groups like theirs across Greater Manchester who they can meet and share experiences with in order for place-based groups in low-income areas of the city-region to have common spaces and platforms just as professionals do.

[Sophie King](#) is a Research Fellow at the [Sheffield Urban Institute](#). She facilitates the action research process that currently provides the funding and process for these groups to come together: "I try to co-create spaces and processes through which groups can support each other to achieve positive change in their area. I consciously avoid directing the process but am regularly present as a sounding board and a link into wider sources of information. Together we are adapting helpful principles from Slum/Shack Dwellers International (SDI) – a successful example of how low-income communities can come together and effect real change. Within SDI processes the role of professionals is to ask the right questions but enable the community to find answers for themselves. This is not about placing responsibility on the shoulders of people in challenging circumstances. It is about supporting people to access the knowledge, relationships, funding, and capabilities that can enable them to attract developments that local people want and need.



Research and Empowerment



One of the tools used to involve local older people in the development of the Wythenshawe Age Friendly Network is Participatory Appraisal. This tool was used to talk and listen to older residents – exploring what keeps them happy and well, what is good about their neighbourhood, and what isn't so good. The task ahead is to share the findings and to include older residents in setting priorities and developing the work. The aim is to empower residents to run the Network, to work together on issues that affect them and to share their knowledge, skills and expertise, and for them

to use their voice in the shaping of services and projects.

Jane McAllister has been a Youth and Community Worker since 1984, and a Community Health Development Worker with the NHS in Manchester since 1993. In 1990, she completed the Youth & Community work course at Manchester Polytechnic. She became interested in the field through being a volunteer on a community action project in York. She now works for [buzz](#), Manchester Health and Wellbeing Service.



Recognition Project –Validating Existing Skills and Strengths



A [housing association](#) understood that for a deprived ward to become thriving and resilient, investment in the physical regeneration alone was not enough. To address this through empowering residents and communities living in Limehurst, Oldham, Regenda commissioned Sostenga to deliver a [Recognition scheme](#). Recognition validates people's existing (Community Development) skills, demonstrates their employability and leaves them with clear pathways to future learning, employment and better community activity. Mentoring and training are an

integral part of Recognition, supporting residents to reflect and improve their community work, and through this residents' confidence and skills grew in leaps and bounds.

Adam is a freelance Community Development worker, trainer and facilitator, and since 2006 a director of [Sostenga](#), a national Community Development partnership. He is also director of a training and facilitation co-op, [Rhizome](#). Adam co-ordinated the Manchester Community Development Learning Hub and the Oldham Recognition Project, and is active at a local community level in inner-city Manchester. As scheme co-ordinator of the Recognition Scheme, at the awards ceremony, I was honoured to hear the difference it had made to people's lives, empowering many to seize the chances they deserve despite their postcode, and the difference it had made to the life of their vibrant community.



Demonstrating the wealth of knowledge and expertise within our communities



For several years Dr Carol Packham has been working to encourage University/community partnerships and to encourage universities to see the mutual benefits of these arrangements. This has developed into a year round [Community Learning Festival](#), comprising of free short courses and activities, and a three day event in July with workshops, talks and activities for all ages. The festival is an opportunity to work with community partners to co-design and deliver a

range of activities to demonstrate the wealth of knowledge and expertise within our communities, and how these can be developed for mutual advantage, e.g. through joint research or training programmes and widening participation into higher education.

Dr Carol Packham is the former course leader and lecturer on professionally qualifying youth and community work courses at under and post graduate level at MMU. She was also the Director of the MMU Community Audit and Education Centre



If you want to know more or want to join the working group contact Nigel Rose at nigel@macc.org.uk

9/5/18 – Produced with the support of Macc

Macc is a Charity Registered in England and Wales No 1145921 and a Company Limited by Guarantee

