

## **Executive Summary**

### **ESP CONFERENCE**

Below is a summary of the 11<sup>th</sup> October 2012 ESP Conference. A full report will be presented to the December 2012 ESP Board meeting.

#### **1. WELCOME AND OPENING STATEMENT**

Cllr Doug Taylor welcomed everyone and gave some background information as to the positive impact that the Partnership had made on local people through its past sponsoring of projects. He explained that the ESP had evolved and defined its role over the years and is now working on a new delivery plan focusing on agreed priorities ensuring they are effective and sustainable.

#### **2. REVIEW OF THE YEAR**

David Bryan facilitated the event on behalf of the Partnership and began by providing a reminder of some of the closing remarks from the 2011 conference which were:

- Be more joined up;
- Better promote the success stories;
- Raise moral;
- Better share knowledge and communicate;
- Make better data so that it can become intelligence
- Engage in mutual strategic support;
- Be more 'can do'.

He expressed the challenges ahead as:

- Get past the uncertainty and create conditions for innovation;
- Harness the expertise, energy and focus of ESP members;
- Construct new modes of working based on evidence, good practice and innovative actions;
- Achieve sustainable outcomes.

#### **3. IMPACTS OF BENEFIT WELFARE REFORM ON ENFIELD**

Shaun Rogan provided a presentation about the fundamental changes to the benefit system, how it would impact on Enfield's residents. He stated that a positive and joined up response was required from the ESP to:

- Discuss the issues, identify opportunities and refine a partnership approach;
- Share information;
- Pool resources – joint working;
- Signpost to advice;
- Lobby Government;
- Get the message out to the community;
- Get people into work;

Following this presentation everyone was given time to reflect upon and discuss the critical issues the reforms would bring. Some key reflections were:

#### **Provide consistent, accessible information**

Improve awareness/promotion through all the existing channels among ESP members as well as electronic notice boards, advice agencies on estates,

religious organisations, social media and pop up shops. The construction of an infrastructure that reaches those impacted by the welfare reforms will also be useful for other long term initiatives that require effective communication.

#### **Empower communities to act**

Ensure that the Partnership enables communities to become active agents that are able to act for themselves. This empowerment enables individuals and groups to make informed decisions.

#### **Focus on areas where there is strong social capital**

Focus on local areas where there is social capital in evidence and where formal and informal networks exist to support a spectrum of people in need. Collective activity in these areas would increase a sense of safety and reduce isolation. Focus on areas of greatest need to raise confidence and aspirations for improve quality of life within these communities.

#### **Nurture local pride in disadvantaged communities**

The implication of greater hardship among communities that have had a history of under investment could lead to increased crime and a reduction in social capital. Nurturing a sense of pride of place, in poorer areas, is made more complicated with high levels of transient populations and this contributes to a lack of cohesion.

#### **Find innovative approaches to lifestyle challenges**

The implication for health and wellbeing are that the existing inequalities will become compounded. The ESP should find innovative ways to address lifestyle changes that will contribute towards healthier physical and mental states possibly around a shared campaign.

#### **Develop social capital through diverse means and organisations**

One of the great dangers is that communities become isolated, whether due to language, age, poor social and/or cultural networks. There is no evidence that there is volunteering fatigue however, we have to find ways to meaningfully make giving fulfilling and constructive. To achieve this we need a collective approach that involves Housing Associations and local developers become more community conscious and active, e.g.: funding groups giving something back. There is evidence that religious organisations have a positive effect on wellbeing.

### **4. HOW CAN THE ESP HELP TO SUPPORT RESIDENTS IN NEED?**

The first workshop session raised a number of points but some of the recurring themes revolved around helping residents into work. The main points were:

#### **Supporting people looking for work to manage their lives and access sustainable work opportunities**

There was a strong push towards training and re-training, with the concerns being that vocational training seems to have diminished in status with the emphasis creating wider access for young people from working class backgrounds into university.

In addition to improving the receipt of benefits, there was an acknowledgement that within Enfield the challenge was with the working poor. Addressing how to change the plight of the working poor and those seeking employment requires an examination not only into the relevance of the training that is provided but also into understanding the prospect of future employment opportunities.

Existing employers need to be informed of the implications of the changing landscape in clear and simple terms. They too will be deluged with increased 'red tape' as a consequence of these changes and would be interested to know what they could do to be part of an expression of a responsive Enfield. Enfield Council also needs to work with employers to help demystify and explain the benefits to them of engaging young people through Apprenticeships.

### **Encourage employers and other services to adopt approaches that support people to work**

There is a need to extend good practice that enables people to seek and take up employment, such as breakfast clubs and after school clubs. Other agencies, like the Community Trust, further contribute to enabling employment through their support of childminders. Identify the requirements of 'Procurement' to ensure that the processes, lead to – 'buy and package locally'.

### **Work with significant local employers to improve their employment practice**

More can be done by significant local employers, both in the private and public sector, to ensure that staff are aware of the implications of welfare reform.

Broaden the local pool of opportunity for better career progression and greater personal development. An additional stimulus to retaining and increasing the circulation of money within the borough was suggested by the establishment of the Enfield £ - there is some evidence that the creation of local currency increases local spend, Bristol was cited.

## **5. STRONGER COMMUNITIES: BUILDING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE**

Cllr Del Goddard, Adria Bennett and Jermaine Lawlor - YEP representatives and Diane John and Karen Greene - PEP representatives all provided short presentations. Cllr Del Goddard chose to emphasise recent research into the importance of building social capital within communities. He asserted that there were, in a number of areas, substantial amounts of internal investment and networks but minimal in adjacent areas. How do we encourage an expansion of the existing resources into other areas?

The PEP and YEP were cited as great examples of building capacity among members of communities and encourage them to act as their own agents of change.

The representatives from the YEP and PEP talked about being credible voices who shared the concerns of peers/parents. Each of the YEP/PEP reps shared an insight into their backgrounds and how their organisations had not only made a difference but enabled them to build the confidence and abilities of others.

## **6. HOW CAN WE BUILD GREATER COMMUNITY RESILIENCE IN ENFIELD?**

The second workshop identified several ideas to building community resilience.

### **Develop the community's capacity to respond – doing *with*, not doing *to***

It is important to build resilience through building capacity within communities to support themselves as opposed to only doing things for them. Providing services to the community must continue but just doing things for communities can result in disempowering them. The quality of the data should provide real insight into the lifestyle and cultures that exist and how to meaningfully engage with them.

Points for consideration:

The LBE needs to be more of a community leader to get people out of their homes to community hubs. The ESP should think about places that can be used as hubs 4-5 across the borough. Community hubs need to be useful focal points that help to make a difference. In addition to physical locations, better use of IT and smart phones can create virtual community hubs which are just as useful as physical community spaces.

A major challenge to social capital is the need to get some of the good will that exists within particular communities to be shared and engaged by others. However getting higher levels of social and economic integration remains a challenge to address.

The ESP agrees that pooling is good - resources such as buildings, staff and communications should be considered not just financial help. More needs to be done to reduce the territorialism, silo working and the dread of surrendering power that creates resistance to pooling resources.

## **7. OUTCOMES AND FUTURE PLANNING**

While the ESP has had some notable successes in relation to partnership working it no longer has the benefit of financial resources to support ESP projects, so has to find ways in which shrinking budgets can be maximised; and where possible use its joint expertise to be more 'savvy' in making bids for future resources.

Building capacity within communities is a critical requirement to ensuring that they are resilient for the long term. This will involve the need not only to forge greater volunteering within but also across communities.

More needs to be done to engage the private sector as a contributor to social and economic betterment, and this will entail more dialogue and mutual support.

The delivery plan with its identification of future interventions to address both the existing challenges and those emerging out of government policy will need to ensure that they are set within a sustainable framework that can be built on. Thereby creating shared networks, varied outlets for giving and receiving information, meaningful engagement with those with the most challenging needs.

These are not times to be complacent and the ESP has to ask itself difficult questions continuously to ensure that the real difficult issues are being identified and therefore addressed by those best suited.

Acknowledging that this period of austerity and change are going to be a long term feature of life in the UK it is critical that all members of the ESP gear up for anticipating and designing systems and processes for the long term.

At the end of the conference both Cllr Doug Taylor and Cllr Del Goddard gave a commitment to ensure that ideas generated at the conference would be brought to the December ESP Board and made into an action plan.