Community Communication Pilot, 2008-09
Commissioned by the Home Office

Executive Summary
of
Evaluation Report

Executive   Summary

What were we trying to achieve?

In a recent poll, 94% of people felt that the public should play a role in tackling or preventing crime, and 75% said they would be prepared to do so.[1] But there can beuncertainty as to how this might translate into positive action taken by individuals or communities – and what exactly such action can achieve.

In the past, the Home Secretary has affirmed that where individuals stand up for law and order, enforcement agencies should take a common-sense approach to human rights. But cases highlighted by the media have fed this sense of ambivalence over when it is right and productive for a community member to assert common standards of behaviour within their community/ies.

A further 'inhibiting factor' for active community members is the fact that – in a world of such complexity, where statutory responsibilities for community safety and criminal justice are delegated among a variety of agencies – individuals feel that the 'little' they can do is pointless: that it won't play any part in bringing about the change they hope to see in their neighbourhood. The system makes us encourages us to be 'passive bystanders'.[2]

The **Home Office's Corporate Communication Unit** commissioned a one-off pilot project from REALLITY[3] to learn whether there was anything more the department could do to support residents and generate positive action at the community level, and thereby reduce the perceptions of the fear of crime, fear of anti-social behaviour and fear of other social groups (eg young people).

Together, we felt that a community communication/engagement model could be developed, which would encourage residents and stimulate officers to engage productively with community activists and community influencers.[4] Taking inspiration from Kaizen Theory and life-coaching techniques, we felt that there was a strong likelihood that all parties would benefit from a small and cost-effective intervention.

What did we want to explore together?

The questions this pilot sought to address are grouped as follows:

Identifying Perceptions of Community Safety:
Would residents want to 'deconstruct' their perceptions/fears about local crime, given that the best evidence was suggesting a different reality?
Would they then be willing to explore what they could do to help improve the quality of life in their neighbourhoods, and be motivated to put this into action?

Building Links, from the Strategic to the Local:
Would this encounter with Home Office/agency officers build residents' trust/support for their work?
Would Home Office/agency officers feel they had gained insight and ideas, as a result of this engagement?

Community Advocacy and Action:
Would residents be interested in relating a Home Office strategic objective to their own lives, and translating it into their own community messages?
If they felt strongly about that objective, would they want to advocate for it, and seek to bring it about through making small pledges?

---

[1] Louise Casey review, 'Engaging Communities in Fighting Crime' (July 2008). 75% prepared to play an active role in tackling crime. Finding also supported by British Crime Survey (2006-07).
[2] The think tank Reform's report, 'The Lawful Society' (Sept. 2008), argues that the complex policing/criminal justice system has created a nation of 'passive bystanders' who expect Ministers to be responsible for every crime committed.
[3] REALLITY is a voluntary sector organisation founded in 2007 which is Raising Everyone's Awareness of Lives Lost in The Youth. REALLITY engages in youth outreach, advises local/central government, and seeks to build unique, sustainable and effective consortiums.
[4] Community Influencers are more than Community Activists through their strong productive leadership abilities and persuasive communication skills; they have a significant sphere of influence on community advocates intent on making positive change(s) in their neighbourhoods.

What level of motivation would there be to act, and what inhibitions or barriers might there be which would prevent residents from taking action?

What happened? The format for the pilot:

In discussion with the Home Office and a small group of life coaches, REALLITY developed a programme for two workshops, designed to appeal to community influencers, and community activists. These two workshops, facilitated by REALLITY and the life-coaches, took a group of London borough residents on a journey; it created an opportunity for them to engage with Home Office Officials and local agency officers.

The first workshop asked residents to investigate for themselves their perceptions of their neighbourhood, and any media stereotypes they felt that they 'bought into'. Residents were encouraged to raise the issues that were important to them in their neighbourhood. Discussion then moved towards questioning what the impact of small, positive actions could be. Residents discussed the issues and possible solutions in small groups, then added their pledges of action to a pledge wall.

The second workshop asked residents how they had got on with their pledges, and workshop attendees shared their stories and reflected on the outcomes. Residents fed back in a plenary session and encouraged one another. They also critiqued the local approach to community safety – eg policing of young people, and made suggestions – in this instance, as to how the local police could improve their engagement technique with young people.

Prior to the workshops, prospective attendees were engaged in a pre-course questionnaire and a vox pops film, which gave them a chance to record their views on crime, the causes of crime, and their general feelings of safety. Threatening behaviour and physical assault/violence were commonly identified by under-30's and 31-50+ as having a significant impact on quality of life in the borough. Over-50's felt least safe.

After both workshops, all participants shared a meal, and this stimulated further debate and knowledge-transfer among Home Office delegates, residents, REALLITY staff/volunteers, and agency representatives.

How were participants identified? How was the pilot site identified?

REALLITY identified prospective participants using its database of local stakeholders, its youth outreach work, and street work – inviting people to participate in a set of vox-pops about safety in the area. Residents were aged between 15-50+; many were involved in community work (particularly those in the 50+ bracket).

The first workshop was attended by 32 participants, all of whom were encouraged to attend the second workshop. The second workshop saw a significant drop in attendance; it was attended by 23 people.

The London Borough of Waltham Forest was identified as a pilot site because of its demography; its ranking in the indices of deprivation; instances of recent high-profile youth-related violent crime; recent high-profile positive initiatives; the recorded above-average levels of fear of crime, and the good number of regeneration opportunities.

What were the key themes? What was felt to be effective in boosting community confidence?

The following aspects of the workshops were highlighted:
- There was strong consensus that localities were reasonable safe, and that society had become less trusting; people felt mistrust could spread where there was little contact among different groups: *"At most times I feel safe, I am aware of my environment. We have become very suspicious of each other. I can't live my life worrying."*
- There was strong consensus that small actions ("pledges") could be effective in building perceptions of community safety and positive relations between different social etc. groups: *"Even just saying, 'Hi, how are you?' makes them know I am not a bad person." "Next time I walk pass a group [of young people] I'll just say hello. I feel comfortable [doing this] as its just an irrational perception." "Take responsibility in small things – picking up litter on a bus… be reflective of the need to take care of each other, acknowledge each other, say hello…"*

- People felt that there was intrinsic value in a diverse group of people from the local community coming together to share discussion and a meal: *"There is a role in breaking socio- and closet mentalities – for example, people coming together and having information [given to them]."*
- People made a connection between community links, and the ability to self-police negative behaviour: *"Knowing each other shows appreciation and gives a sense of "consequences" for naughty behaviour... For example, if we know each other in the community, behaviour can be raised with family and friends... If we appreciate those in the community, say street cleaners, this can lead to building relationships."*
- People identified fear, lack of contact and stereotypes, as barriers to action; they also identified government policy (eg on child protection) as inhibiting parents in their role and responsibility to discipline their children and teenagers.

Feedback from those who worked on the project was very positive; all but one felt a personal and professional benefit from the pilot. Having participated, their response was that:
- Barriers to action were psycho-social – mainly relating to negative stereotypes and the scale of the task;
- Pledges were likely to work; this intervention improves personal morale (but doesn't extend beyond the personal sphere);
- Inter-generational interaction was a powerful motivator to change;
- There was a desire to see communication improved in local communities;
- The format of both workshops worked well, and the focus should be on facilitated group-work.

Typical comments were: 'the importance of community influencers and long-term commitment', and that the experience 'created a greater confidence in me and others that we can make a difference. We are not powerless.'

What was effective, in terms of the way the workshops were run?

Feedback confirmed that the following aspects of the workshops had been valued:
- Residents taking the lead, and feeding back after discussions;
- The value of the group discussions, provided they were actively facilitated by the life coaches and not dominated by one issue or one perspective;
- The value of bringing a large team of volunteers into the pilot, to help with its smooth running, and act as hosts to the participants;
- The value of using as a linking/bridging organisation from the local charity/voluntary sector that has independence and credibility, at the front-line.

The pilot gave us a versatile model which we also found could encourage peer mentoring. It was adapted by one identified community influencer (CI), who called in REALLITY to use a similar format in a workshop with ex-offenders. This then resulted in one participant putting themselves forward to be a peer mentor to 16-17 yr olds. After this second workshop, a further group of community influencers were identified. These young people wanted to advocate and carry important messages about the probation system to other young people.

What needs to be improved, if the pilot is run again?

- Some group scribes noted comments in too generic and short-hand a style to draw out delegates' insights, and make it possible to feed comments and learning back to agencies and partners.

- Greater use could have been made of the life-coaches – who were largely limited to facilitating group-work sessions.

- Local crime analyst partners could provide a briefing which could be used in the 'myth-busting' part of the programme, and make this more powerful.

- Home Office could provide a briefing of 'motivating facts' – eg "1 million offences are brought to justice each year because members of the public come forward to report crime and act as witnesses."

- The pilot's sponsor team at the Home Office changed during the project, and continuation funding could not be identified. At the outset, a further pilot should clearly identify a grant-making funding stream through which the pilot can be followed-up – even if this is not a Home Office funding stream.

- The pilot did attempt to make close links with the Neighbourhood Policing leads in the area. This model could effectively complement beat teams' engagement, and raise the profile of the Policing Pledge and Neighbourhood Policing, and re-energise communities supporting the police.

- There is scope for greater involvement from local authority community safety partners. This could be stimulated by tying in to their communication/community engagement priorities.

What else do we recommend, as follow-up?

- Repeat the pilot in order to encourage the development of community influencers, under the strap-line, 'Without communication, nothing changes.'

- To see if there could be a common methodology adopted by governmental departments when engaging with communities for benchmarking effectiveness.

- Establish how easy/difficult it is for residents to follow-up their pledges. (This will determine whether the format should be altered, given the low attendance of the second workshop)

- The learning from this pilot should be shared with all partners, particularly those parts of the Home Office involved in stimulated community engagement.

- The majority of residents engaged in the pilot were happy to participate in a focus group, and/or be called on in any further market/customer research commissioned by the Home Office.

- All partners should be encouraged to 'own' for themselves the concept of the 'Urban Trinity' which describes the relationship between government strategies, Local Strategic Partnerships (delivering Local Area Agreements), and commissioned third sector partners working closely with the community.

- Affirm the value of third sector organisations acting as a bridge between central and local government – able to offer good advice on community engagement because they network with community influencers and activists.

- The project offers a natural springboard for Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnerships or Local Criminal Justice Boards to improve local communication. There was significant interest in supporting community influencers in their 'places of natural reasoning'. Residents identified community hubs (eg libraries, youth centres, churches, schools, shopping centres, local forums, hair salons etc) as places where people develop a sense of belonging, and messages about safety are well-received.

- Two ideas for community projects emerged from this pilot. A local funding adviser should support those interested individuals so that they can raise funds to implement these projects, through the development of a 'community chest'

In summary:

Home Office, REALLTY and resident delegates all demonstrated a strong appetite to engage in this format, and learn informally from shared experiences.

The "mood music" from the pilot was that provision of time and space, hosting well-facilitated discussion, can be enriching and affirming to residents and can provide a useful opportunity for policy workers to get back to the front-line. Residents wanted to do more, and liked the idea of being more empowered to persuade and influence their peer-groups, in their 'places of natural reasoning'. However, resources are seldom allocated to this – presumably because it seems to be a low-level priority, and may not result in hard outcomes.

The words of one resident serve well to summarise the strong consensus that emerged naturally from both these workshops: "That *"Humans create "community" through a series of small acts of communication – like match sparks – each match has only several hundred cells of the chemical that lights the spark, but it affects the whole match"*.

Appendix 1:

Community Communication Model Workshop I Outline

START	END	FORMAT	CONTENT
18.00	18.30	Plenary	Registration
18.30	19.00	Plenary	Ice breaker / Opinions
19.00	19.15	Plenary	Overview Presentation
19.15	19.35	Plenary	Vox Pop
19.35	19.50	Plenary	Drama Sketch
19.50	20.25	Facilitated Groups	Resident Responses
20.25	20.45	Facilitated Plenary	Moving Forward
20.45	20.55	Individual	Pledge Wall
20.55	FINISH	Supper and Further Conversations	Eating and sharing views

<div align="center">

18.30-18.50
Plenary
WELCOME

</div>

Ambient music, posters around the room showing the reflection(positive and negative) in the media of crime, young people and issues affecting residents, leaflets and similar images will be playing throughout on slides.
Opportunity for guests to have drinks, speak to each other and find the person paired up with them for the icebreaker.
HO Intro: we're only as effective as all the different people, groups, agencies we work with. We are here to help all of us work better together. Each of us can only do so much… and HO isn't the expert on Waltham Forest… you are.

<div align="center">

18.50-18.55
Plenary
<u>INTRODUCTION</u>

</div>

Short and concise introduction to be given outlining the importance of residents coming on the day. It will be explained that the Home Office/Statutory Partners can find it increasingly difficult to listen and respond to communities' concerns in a way that translates to their reality. Old 'tried and tested' channels become irrelevant. Fear of crime/perceptions of crime is still a national problem. Could there be another way of 'publicising' an accurate picture of life at ward-level?
 The main onus should be on the consequence of non co-operation, namely that *'without communication, nothing changes'* and the Home Office and Home Secretary's new commitment to be actively '*putting the public at the heart of all we do'*.
The importance of small changes will be highlighted - which will later be reiterated at the end of the workshop, which will in turn act as catalysts for big changes. Examples such as 'smiling at a neighbour in the supermarket' and 'allowing someone to go onto the bus before you'.
It will be pointed out that there are a number of Home Office representatives at the workshop (*who should NOT be wearing suits!)* who are here to listen and to learn.

<div align="center">

18.55-19.15
Plenary
<u>OVERVIEW PRESENTATION- FACTS AND MYTHBUSTING</u>

</div>

This presentation shall be conducted with a slideshow of just simple images. The presenter will talk about our perceptions and how they are shaped by the different elements of the Social Change Model and then invite the residents to participate by asking them how they feel when they see specific images and what words come to mind. For example residents will be asked what comes to mind when they see the particular image (Black Oxford graduate/prison cells/London Bridge etc) with the view to their opinions being challenged and discovering how conditioned our minds have become by the media.

(it would be good also to have some images of areas around the estates such as designated play areas and community centres to elicit opinions about negative/positive aspects of the areas that are already part of their collective consciousness)

<div align="center">

19.15-19.35
Staged Buzz Groups
<u>ICE BREAKER</u>

</div>

At this point the residents will pair up with their allocated partners (hopefully having met in the welcome period) and they will introduce each other. The pairs will be made up to a

large extent of people from differing backgrounds and areas. They will ask to identify and represent the 3 main concerns/issues for their partners.

Might need to have them feeding back to the main group, intro. their partner/issues? Stick something on a wall? We need to be sure people have divested themselves of any "baggage" issues…

There will be at hand the Safer Neighbourhood Inspector (Johnathan Macrum maybe) and also Crime Analysts who can take notes and also where necessary directly speak to the issues that will be raised. For example, if a resident firmly believes that the main issue in their particular area is street robberies, the SNI may be able to point out that there is actually a drop in that particular crime in the area but that domestic violence and graffiti are actually the main areas for concern. This will link back to the myth busting section. There will also be a number of positive and negative statistics on the projector relating to the Waltham Forrest area and other London boroughs and residents will be asked to identify where these statistics relate to- again to go some way to challenging perceptions.

<center>

19.35-19.50
Plenary
<u>DRAMA SKETCH</u>

</center>

This will be a short and interactive scene performed by two actors. The scene may be of someone in their mid thirties/forties standing at a bus stop and a young person wearing a hoodie will approach and stand by the other person who will then shift away from the young person looking uncomfortable, maybe clutching onto their purse/belongings. At this point the young person will turn to the audience and ask 'what did I do?' and the residents will be called upon to comment on the scene. The other actor will in turn talk to the audience and maybe ask 'am I not right to be scared of this intimidating hoodie' and again the residents will comment and a discussion will ensue.

A possible follow on sketch drama sketch after the bus stop sketch that highlights that it's not only about casual body language and 'terms of engagement in public spaces', but it's **also** about conversations that take place around those 'events' that are influencing perceptions and future actions. So perhaps a follow-on sketch could be 'older woman talks to someone at her lunch club'… 'young man talks to his mentor from the Prince's Trust' – where the person they confide in manages to persuade them to behave differently (go beyond the 'knee-jerk reaction') simply by saying a couple of really sensible and true/wise things.

Good to practise prompted by audience suggestions. Might be an idea to give groups different scenarios. If there is only one scenario then it might limit the scope of ideas generated at the 'pledge wall' stage. Multiple scenarios might generate a wider range of pledges…?

<center>

19.50- 20.20
Facilitated Groups
<u>What Is Going On And What Should Our Response Be?</u>

</center>

4 groups of breakout groups with 10 residents will be led by professional facilitators. The discussion will centre around how to turn the current situations described earlier around. For example, in terms of the drama sketch there can be a discussion about the negative media images of young people affecting the reactions of the person at the bus stop and how this can be challenged and also the responsibility of the young person and what they can do- for instance pulling down their hood when passing elderly people who may be easily intimidated. This will result in a ripple effect of behaviour, fostering a sense of individual and collective consciousness which can lead to a 'social contract' in which all residents can feed into.

This should get the residents thinking about what steps they can take which will then feed into the Pledge Wall later.

20.20-20.25
VOX POP PRESENTATION

This will showcase the opinions of some of the residents shot a few weeks earlier responding to the question 'where do you feel safe?'

20.25-20.45
Facilitated Plenary
How To Move Things Forward And What Would Success Look Like?

This will be a group discussion centred around moving the situation forward. The residents perceptions and views should have been challenged or even reinforced and this can be highlighted.

The 'Call to Action' will be introduced at this stage and the people in the vox pop will be called upon to describe whether their opinions have changed over the course of the day from when they spoke a few weeks ago.

The key question will be 'what would success look like to you?'- the residents will be called upon to describe what would be the small but significant changes (symbols of change) that could take place that would in turn make them feel safer in their neighbourhoods and improve the quality of their lives. This may include going to the shops twice a day as opposed to going twice a week for fear of being attacked/allowing children to walk home from school unassisted/smiling at people at the supermarket etc etc.

20.45-20.55
Individual
PLEDGE WALL

This is the time for the residents to make a pledge on the pledge wall making concrete the steps that they will be taking to make a change such as those described in the earlier discussion. The residents will also be invited to suggest the pledges that should be made by the Home office/Police/Local Authority to also feed into the 'social contract' and ensure that the quality of life improves for the residents. These may take the form of support and follow up meetings.

There will be a grid format with the residents name on it and also the timeline (the next meeting).

The team will be at hand at this point to signpost residents to appropriate community agencies if their issues have been identified to be connected to a specific agency.

Could loosely structure the pledge wall; facilitators could then elicit feedback: an informal 'group scoring' of ideas. We need to understand their **understanding of the ideas, gut reaction of the quality of the idea/what possible barriers they anticipate, and what level of general motivation there is to** enact **the idea... Better to get from them than us to make an interpretation.**

20.55-Onwards
SUPPER AND FURTHER CONVERSATIONS

Over supper the team will be available to continue key conversations with residents.

Appendix 2:

List of pledges from workshop 1

- Say 'hello' to anyone already in the lift in my block of flats
- Engage with more young people and not view them with fear
- Talk to the neighbours and get to know them
- Raise awareness
- Attend community events
- Make things right for the community
- Communicate to others what took place today to drum up support
- Be friendly to a new neighbour and if possible lobby for more youth workers/activities in the borough.
- I have learnt to be a great influence in my area and to lead a good and pleasant life in helping other people that I meet
- Keeping offenders off the streets to keep them out of trouble
- Continue to listen and take forward ideas
- Say hello to groups of young lads on street corners when applicable/possible
- Continuous communication with the young people
- Listen more
- Help talk to the young people about improving the community
- Spread the word
- Will talk to more people of all age groups
- To smile and be nice to people
- Talk to people on the street and get to know my neighbours. Try not to walk away from challenging situations.
- I pledge to change the entire borough-Give me the opportunity and you will see
- Seek to help community around