



SUSTAINABLE PATHS TO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Helping deprived communities to
help themselves

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ANATOMY OF THE PROBLEM

- Entrenched and persistent social exclusion
- High levels of distrust especially towards official world
- Massive costs/ expenditure to treat symptoms, not causes

HISTORIC OPPORTUNITY FOR CHANGE

- Body of evidence about underlying factors & approaches leading to improvement
- Almost no disagreement on nature of problems – though there is about causes
- Study aims to bring answers together for discussion and to influence policy

WHY IS NEW APPROACH NEEDED?

- Central & local government want quick, tangible results
- But cannot generate ownership & commitment
- Their role is to provide national & local infrastructure
- To change long-term chances, must also support people to help themselves

SUCCESSFUL INITIATIVES:

- Recognise & support **individuals & small groups** of Trusted Community Activists – local knowledge & emotional commitment
- Allow ownership of programmes to be **bottom-up**
- Focus on **concrete problems & small gains** not on generalised ambitious “improvement targets”

- Emphasize **local assets**, not deficits & imported skills
- Provide **small “pots” of money** & delegate control
- Support **low-profile facilitators**; avoid advisers especially target-driven for financial rewards

- Emphasize “**viral learning**”, rather than scaling up and rolling out
- Establish **light, collaborative evaluation**
- Recognise **doing and learning**, rather than advising and teaching

CONVENTIONAL APPROACHES HAVE NOT WORKED

- Top down causes money to be wasted & communities to be deprived of valuable learning and empowerment
- Democratic representation can be a dangerous red herring in community regeneration
- Contracts with large, professional organisations mainly reinforce lack of trust

BONES OF THE ATTITUDE SHIFT

- From Parent / Child to Adult / Adult psychological states
- Making learning the central process to fuel social change
- Recognising that learning through action is essential for adults – teaching & preaching almost never works
- “Linking social capital” must be re-established where it has been lost

PROBLEMS OF IMPLEMENTATION

- Legitimising local activists – self appointment brings problems
- Breaking down resistance in officials and professionals – loss of control and ambiguity of role – “deskilling”?
- Stimulating activism in demoralised communities

SUCCESSFUL BOTTOM-UP INITIATIVES LEAD TO:

- Growth of confidence and capability
- Shift from passivity and distrust
- Development of social capital beyond the family
- Incremental but exponential change