

Beyond the Jargon

Understanding Community Anchors

APRIL 2009

Characteristics of a community anchor organisation:

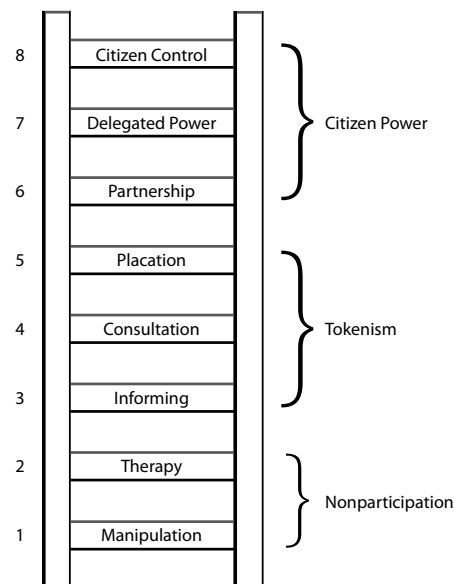
1. A building: a physical space which is community controlled, owned or led
2. A focus for services and activities meeting local need
3. A vehicle for local voices to be heard, needs to be identified and for local leaders and community groups to be supported
4. A platform for community development, promoting cohesion while respecting diversity
5. A home for the community sector which is supportive of the growth and development of community groups
6. A means of promoting community led enterprise, generating independent income while having a social, economic and environmental impact.
7. A forum for dialogue within communities, creating community led solutions.
8. A bridge between communities and the state which promotes and brings about social change.

Climbing the Ladder

Community Anchor organisations are living proof of successful community empowerment. They are active, community owned and led bodies which deliver creative local solutions to local problems. If we consider the ladder of participation then Community Anchor organisations are citizens taking control.

A government report in 2004 first came up with the term Community Anchor, and the government says it is committed to growing more such organisations. The Community Alliance wanted to see how the term was understood in Yorkshire and Humber, and to research and showcase what some up and coming Community Anchors had to offer.

We ran six workshops helping 90 participants representing a range of community organisations to explore the concept of a community anchor. The seminar enabled a self assessment against the eight characteristics as well as allowing and encouraging discussion. This document summarises some of what we have learnt about Community Anchors in Yorkshire and Humber. Additionally we produced a booklet highlighting the work of eight Community Anchor organisations across Yorkshire and Humber.



“Very good – we needed to know more!”
(delegate at workshop in Halifax)

1

There is a fantastic number and range of Community Anchors and aspiring Community Anchors in Yorkshire & Humber.

The process of researching the booklet, and carrying out the workshops, showed us that groups right across all four sub-regions are busy displaying the characteristics of a strong Community Anchor organisation.



2

More needs to be done to help rural communities understand the characteristics of a Community Anchor organisation.

Some people have said that the characteristics of a Community Anchor (as identified by the Community Alliance) seem to lend themselves more to urban organisations. This may not necessarily be true, but certainly people from rural areas have sometimes found it more difficult to adapt the concept to their own circumstances.

Next Steps

The Community Alliance is planning to carry out more development work in Yorkshire and the Humber, particularly focused on understanding how the concept might apply in rural areas (see learning point 2).

3

The breadth of definition of “community” in Community Anchors will continue to cause confusion and concern.

Clearly many people identify the community or communities in which they exist in different ways. Organisations can perform the functions of an anchor for groups of people who identify themselves collectively through interest or background, rather than just along neighbourhood lines. The characteristics of Community Anchors refer to organisations rooted in place and serving the whole community – not an exclusive demographic – acting as a force for cohesion. How then should communities of interest interpret their place in the Community Anchor concept?

“It helped clarify our understanding of ‘Community Anchors’ and the relevance to our organisation”

(Delegate at workshop in Doncaster)

4

There is significant interest in the forthcoming “Community-builders Fund” in Yorkshire and Humber.

A new £70m fund to support the development of new and existing Community Anchor organisations is due to be launched in the summer of 2009. A large number of organisations are awaiting the details of the fund with interest, and there will be an ongoing need for people to be supported around their understanding of the Community Anchor concept and their capacity to respond to these opportunities.

5

More needs to be done to encourage the foundations of future Community Anchor Organisations in more neighbourhoods.

As people began to understand the concept of a Community Anchor, there was widespread concern that neighbourhoods throughout the region are at such different starting points. If we are to ensure that opportunities such as Communitybuilders – now and in the future – don’t all go to those neighbourhoods already well advanced, then a lot of development work is needed.



communityalliance
transformation through community anchors

Community Anchors in Yorkshire and Humber

Request a copy of this brochure which contains eight short case studies from across the region.

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The Community Alliance is a national partnership of 3 community sector membership organisations – bassac, Community Matters, & the Development Trusts Association.



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