

The Nehemiah Project, Birmingham Engaging Young People in Area Plans

St Thomas Church, Yardley
Wyrley Birch Area Forum, Kingstanding
St Boniface Church, Quinton

Summary

The Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation was asked to undertake community consultation training for The Nehemiah Foundation (under a programme run by Anthony Collins Solicitors) as part of an on-going programme of training and supporting active residents and Regeneration Workers to undertake community consultation within a number of areas of Birmingham. Three of these groups had an emphasis on consulting and involving young people - Wyrley Birch Area Forum, St Thomas's Church Community Project and St Boniface Church Community Project.

Both St Thomas's Church and St Boniface Church have representatives working directly as Regeneration Workers, funded through The Church Urban Fund, guiding the consultation processes whilst the process in Wyrley Birch was driven by a Community Development Worker.

The aim was to train up and support these groups in order to enable them to gain a better understanding of their communities needs, with emphasis on young people, and to ensure young people support the community led consultation to develop Local Action Plans.

St Thomas, Garretts Green, Birmingham

In August 2006, with support from The Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation, St Thomas Church undertook 3 community led consultation processes with over 500 people participating. Over 100 of those who participated were between the ages of 10 and 19.

Four young people were also actively involved in delivering the consultation process. This included engaging and involving two young people at both the training sessions and the consultation events and two young people recording the information from the consultations.

Outcomes

Young people were given the opportunity to put forward ideas and suggestions for improvements to the Garrets Green area of Birmingham. Some of the key issues put forward by the young people included: - community safety issues i.e.

access to safe play, access to adequate public transport for young people and issues relating to the lack of youth facilities in the area.

More general ideas put forward by groups of young people who participated included access to a youth club, the need for goal posts on a particular open space area and further requests for social activities at St Thomas Church (as part of the church's existing youth programme).

Young people involved in the process made positive comments relating to the consultation tool used (Planning for Real[®]) in terms of its ease of use, participative approach and the way young people can openly express ideas and views.

The Regeneration Worker for St Boniface Church brought together a collective group of young people from the Chestnut and Garretts Green areas to discuss the issues relating to young people. A number of young people within the group highlighted ways of solving some of the issues relating to young people.

The comments below were made by young people relating to Planning for Real[®].

Erin (14 years old)

"I enjoyed helping out with Planning for Real[®] because I found out about how people feel about their area and that it is important to them. My responsibility was to help people understand what it was all about. I felt like I respected them and they respected me. At the Junior School, I helped the children to understand about the important things that are needed in their area. I helped the children find what they wanted and find where they wanted to put it. I enjoyed helping out at both places because I felt that people really respected me and also I really enjoyed it because I know that the area is really important. I did not like the prioritisation stage because I didn't feel comfortable because I was the only youth there".

Kerrie (16 Years old)

"The first thing I did with Planning for Real[®] was the training and at that stage I thought it was a bit too much and it would not solve anything. There did not seem to be enough people involved and I did not think local people would be interested in it. When we started making the map and putting the houses on, I thought it was a good idea and that it might work. I thought the first Planning for Real[®] at the Fun Day was brilliant because everyone was involved and people were really taking an interest in it.

When we did it at the Junior School, it was different because it gave the kids a chance to put down what they wanted to put down. It was a good way for the children to express what they want in the area. At the start I thought it was not

going to go the way everyone planned, but I changed my mind when everything was being prepared and thought it was a success. It taught me that more people are interested in the area than I first thought. It was really good “.

At the end of the consultation stages the group noted that it was important that there was a real strategy for the information to be taken forward. Therefore all the consultation information relating to young people has now been fed into the Priority Neighbourhood Task Group and disseminated to relevant agencies involved in young people’s provision.

St Boniface, Quinton, Birmingham

Members of St Boniface Church congregation undertook the consultation with a high emphasis on consulting with young people through the local secondary school, existing youth clubs and other faith based youth groups.

The number of young people consulted through the consultation process was:

Under 12 yrs	136
13 – 16 yrs	135
Total number of people consulted	429

A successful prioritisation event took place, attended by Councillors and agency representatives, which has been useful in bringing forward issues and concerns relating to young people. Many of the agency members found the information gathered very useful in terms of identifying the needs and priorities of local people including children and young people in the area.

The Regeneration Worker involved in the project has used the information from the process to work with Four Dwellings Secondary School to look through the issues relating to young people and the school itself and, also, to establish actions and suggestions which the school can take on board and deliver. The school is very committed to an extended school approach and is looking to use the information from the consultation to support this.

Wyrley Birch, Birmingham

Three young people were actively involved in training for and delivery of the consultation process within this project.

Wyrley Birch Local Forum undertook a community led consultation process in order to gather views and suggestions about improvements to existing open spaces including gathering views from young people about what services, activities and facilities would be ideal in supporting young people on the estate.

Wyrley Birch estate suffers from a complexity of issues include poor housing, a high proportion of young people and high transient population - many of whom are young people on low incomes.

There is currently some major demolition being undertaken in Wyrley Birch and it is anticipated by Wyrley Birch Local Forum that the information from the consultation process will be used in the decision-making process for further regeneration work.

Bearing in mind that there are some major physical changes planned for the estate some young people through the consultation process, expressed concerns about their lack of involvement in some of the decisions, including possible loss of open space / recreational land which has been highlighted that it may become part of the redevelopment.

Overall Outcomes

All three of these groups that carried out the consultation processes, already undertake youth involvement programmes and activities; but have used the consultation processes to further understand the needs for local people.

All three consultations have highlighted further community and youth needs in these areas. Both the St Boniface and St Thomas groups will be undertaking further work with their local secondary schools to look at the possibilities of increased youth facilities and support at the schools as a result of the Planning for Real[®] process.

As a result of going through this process there had soon been a number of small scale suggestions put forward where actions are already being taken - such as St Thomas Church working with the local Youth Service to erect goal posts in the local area, whilst one of the findings in this project has been the lack of implementation of young people's views / concerns after consultation.

All three groups felt that it was important to ensure that in working with young people, the momentum is not lost after consultation. It was felt through discussions with the Regeneration Workers that there is still evidence that there is, in many cases, poor feedback to young people about how their views have been taken on board.

Public Service Agreement Target(s)

- Engage and empower local people and communities
- Provide appropriate provision for children and young people, and tackle inequalities