

Case Study – Community Researchers Training - April 2009

The Background

This case study describes a Community Researchers training course held for the Oldmixon Parents' Group, a recently formed group on the Oldmixon Estate in Weston-super-Mare. The course gave members of the group the skills and confidence to gather views of other residents and to feed those back to service providers to influence change. It is based on an independent Evaluation by Kamila Zahno for the Empowering Communities programme, SW Regional Empowerment Project,

The Project Objectives

The aim of the Community Researchers' Training, funded by Empowering Communities, was to train members of a community group so that they would feel better able to have a say and influence local agencies.

The Project

The group chose a subject to research: residents views of the Oldmixon Estate, their suggestions for improvement and whether they'd be interested in doing something to improve the state. They developed a questionnaire and they individually went out and conducted their research. The final day was the culmination of their research where they shared their experiences of interviewing. They analysed their findings by counting up quantitative information, grouping answers to qualitative questions and presented the results in groups.

The Outcomes

For individuals: they had all gained confidence and "found a voice". They could use their new skills in writing, interviewing, recording and analysing for future jobs or entry to college. In fact two women from this group of nine have successfully applied for college in September.

For groups: they are now operating as an effective group able to engage with the rest of the community and influence service providers.

For the community: the impact could be long term. With it's newly found confidence and voice this group made a number of suggestions about how they could influence service providers. For example the group would like to present a report to police on community safety. They could set themselves up as a residents' listening group so that other residents could approach them with their issues.

For empowering communities: this work can empower a local group to influence service provision in their locality. This model has been evaluated to show evidence of very real change in the confidence and skills of the participants, as an ongoing group ready to act as advocates for the community. It shows how, with little support, a group can move from focusing solely on social activities to being a real force for change.

Testimonial

"I've always worked in part-time jobs such as bars and cleaning jobs, but now I want a career. This course has given me the confidence to apply for college. I'm doing health and social care which will give me the equivalent of 4 A levels. I want to be a youth worker."
(participant)

Contact

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