

Community Resilience Project:

PROJECT SYNOPSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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EXTRACT FROM FULL REPORT

‘Community resilience: a necessary ingredient in difficult times’

(Addressing underlying causes of social injustice)

Project goal

- To establish, amongst the local community and public sector organisations involved, an understanding of the concept of community resilience and its implications for policy as a tool for change.

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The Churches Regional Commission in the North East of England is a charitable company established in the mid 90’s by all the denominations to ***enable the churches to become more effectively involved in the economic, social and cultural life of the region...*** In recent years CRC, supported by Central Government, has played a central role in enabling the formation of the North East Regional Faiths Network an organisation committed to improving interreligious dialogue and interfaith action in response to the North East’s social, economic and political issues and concerns. The importance of faith in both public life and social and family relationships is central to the work of the Regional Commission and the denominational organisations that form its governance structures

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Project synopsis and recommendations

(a) Overview and Project Aims

The Community Resilience Project was a response to the concern that the pressure to consistently adapt to social and economic change had an adverse impact on communities like Jarrow and Walker. They are located on the opposite sides of the River Tyne east of Newcastle upon Tyne central area. It is widely understood that the decline of shipbuilding, heavy industry and manufacturing has had a major impact on the quality of life and wellbeing of those who live in such areas. Demographic, socioeconomic and other key change factors including inequalities in health provision are adding to the pressure.

Research shows that some communities seem to have a greater capacity than others to survive and respond to the 'weight of social and economic change'. The project at its inception aimed to identify and critically consider the internal and external factors that impact on communities like Jarrow and Walker. A further aim was to critically consider the factors or 'building blocks' that encourage and nurture the ability for local communities to recover and move forward in difficult times such as at present. The project set out to critically considering the idea and concept of 'community resilience'. To establish, in the local community and public sector organisations involved in these areas, an understanding of the concept of community resilience and its implications for policy as a tool for change. The intention was that this would be achieved through adopting an 'action research' approach to ensure that evidence was gathered and critically reviewed mainly through the prism and experiences of local community groups and individual residents. But also through the perceptions and practices of those who 'serve' these areas in public services or those who 'invest' in these communities commercially and economically.

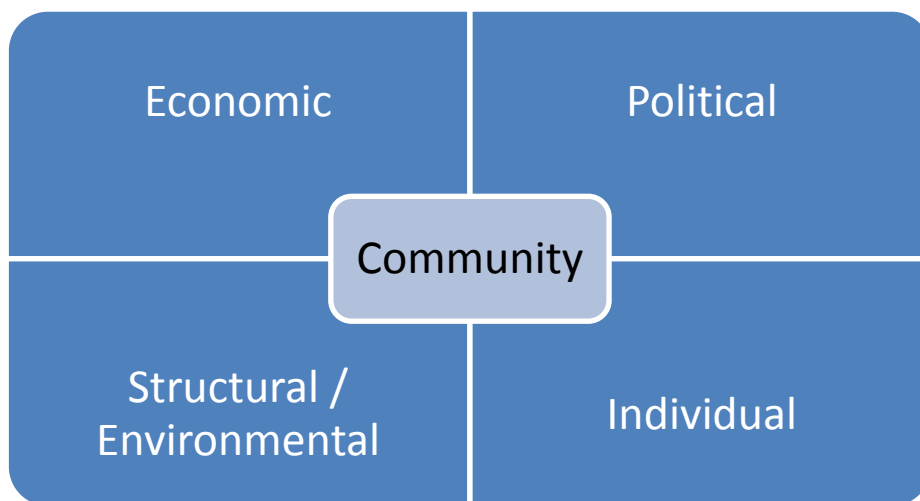
(b) Summary of Project Actions:

B1. What we have done and developing a practice rationale

The project brought people together from Jarrow and Walker, two deprived communities on Tyneside, to explore the idea of community resilience and what it means for their communities. This innovative approach, working with two broadly similar communities together over a sustained period, provided opportunities for comparative exploration of factors contributing to resilience. Over a twelve month period through a series of workshops and through collective analysis of social data, we looked at issues including:

- *community economic development and sustainability,*
- *social capital and networking,*
- *conflict and the link between deprivation and right wing political extremism, and*
- *the role of the community and voluntary sector in building community resilience.*

B2. The project team has looked at how the concept of community resilience is being used in a variety of contexts in the UK and elsewhere. In our workshops we arrived at an understanding of community resilience applicable to the Jarrow and Walker communities structured around four 'building blocks':



B3. We have developed a web based tool to measure community resilience based on four characteristics:

- Attitudes, views and beliefs
- Leadership, co-operation and communication
- Economy and sustainability
- Tradition, change and learning.

B4. We have related these characteristics to the Big Society agenda and identified a synergy between community resilience and Big Society issues, *public sector reform, localism, devolving power and development of the capacity of the third sector and active citizenship*

(c) Recommendations and next steps

Project activities have led to greater insight about the following:

1. community resilience in Walker and Jarrow
2. community resilience, leadership and power
3. community resilience and economic development
4. community resilience and conflict
5. the power of community resilience
6. measuring community resilience.

C1. Community resilience in Walker and Jarrow

Resilience can be enhanced by activities which increase people's sense of belonging and of being included. Factors which create barriers or sustain divisions need to be re-examined. For example, people living in Walker have considerable pride in their area but feel a sense of isolation, transport routes bypass Walker and it lacks a common networking focus. Shopping now takes place almost entirely outside the area and most services and facilities such as secondary schools and health services lie outside or on the fringes of the community.

Recommendation One (a)

In the **Walker area** there is a continuing and key future role for the East End Community Development Alliance and its partners,

- Bringing diverse community organisations and community groups together
- Organising community celebrations and events
- Mediating between institutions, groups and individuals
- Working with the public sector and private sector to plan-in resilience by locating services and facilities which bind the community together.
- Creating and developing common spaces

In the **Jarrow area** - There is a strong sense of identity and pride in Jarrow but also sense that the area is divided physically into isolated communities. Despite being a key road transport location, at the southern end of the Tyne Tunnels Jarrow feels isolated from the main centres of Tyneside, a place to travel through not, to. Jarrow retains its retail centre which provides a focus for networking but access to the centre from areas such as Low Moorside is restricted by highways.

Recommendation One (b)

There is a need in Jarrow for an infrastructure organisation and for third sector infrastructure development similar to the local infrastructure role played by the East End Alliance in Walker

- Bringing diverse community organisations and community groups together
- Organising community celebrations and events
- Mediating between institutions, groups and individuals
- Working with public and private sector to address isolation of Jarrow's communities
- Developing ways of increasing visitor retention.

C2. Community resilience, leadership and power

Resilience can be enhanced by sharing power and actively seeking to develop leadership capabilities within the community. In both Jarrow and Walker more could be done to ensure that people feel that power is shared. Consultation processes often leave people feeling that their views have been disregarded.

Recommendation Two

A stronger and more focused lead should be taken by the third sector in its practice in helping to develop leadership skills within the community. Current activity is limited and less structured than would seem necessary to make a substantial step change regarding substantiating local leadership knowledge base and leadership practice competence.

In the **Walker** area the East End Community Development Alliance is in a position to take this forward, working with and through its member organisations. Faith Groups should be supported further by the Churches Regional Commission with North East Churches Together to develop local leadership through faith and interfaith networks

In **Jarrow** evidence suggests that there is a need for an existing or new body to take this forward. Both communities would benefit from actions which strengthened the relationship between elected members and community organisations and community groups.

C3. Community resilience and community economic development

Community Resilience is strongly related to locational economic sustainability and viability but it is often the case that communities are not in a position to influence their own economic development. There are few if any opportunities, at the community level, for issues of economic development and sustainability to be addressed. There is no information available to trace the inflow and outflow of money and resources at a local level. Without this information the Jarrow and Walker communities are not in a position to assess their economic situation or to begin to actively manage it.

To achieve real resilience communities have to become more self-sufficient, relying less on external and public sector initiated action. Both Jarrow and Walker suffer from not being in control of their own economic development. Walker is a community which still mourns the loss of major industrial employers and local retailers. Our research has highlighted the communities' feelings of economic powerlessness with decisions being made by powerful external political and commercial interests. Any community led future economic development strategy for Walker will need to recognise that it would be starting from a very low base. Jarrow's situation is somewhat stronger, it has an important shopping centre with a good variety and mix of national and local retailers and industrial parks which, although they have experienced loss of enterprises moving to central Europe, have retained important local employers in traditional areas such as clothing manufacture.

Recommendation Three

Community economic analyses of Jarrow and Walker should be undertaken with the full involvement of a broad spectrum of the local population looking at individual and community assets and at the inflow and outflow of money and other resources. Using this information people from both communities should develop community economic strategies.

The Project has identified small successful economic development initiatives in the North East region which have the potential for replication in the Walker and Jarrow areas. Further, the project has gathered information about resources that lie outside the North East which can contribute to serving the interests of this recommendation such as the Tools for community economic analyses available from the UK's New Economics Foundation and from community economic development organisations in Canada, USA and Australia.

C4. Community resilience and conflict

The level of conflict within the community is a key element. Conflict is an important factor which can undermine resilience. In our work with people from the Tyneside communities of Jarrow and Walker we have seen how decades of poverty and deprivation have affected levels of resilience exposing their populations to exploitation by extremists and weakening their economic position. But we have also seen how the development of a strong and independent community and voluntary sector infrastructure, particularly in Walker, has helped to sustain the resilience of the community.

Resilience to political extremism is strengthened by open, informed and honest conversation. Political and media leaders have a major responsibility not to exploit negative feelings for political and commercial gain. Political extremism feeds on inequalities, not only economic inequality but also inequality arising from discrimination. People in poverty (of all races and faiths) experience discrimination leading to anger and alienation.

Housing issues are crucial in Walker and to an extent also in Jarrow. Much effort is being devoted to addressing tensions arising from increased diversity. Participants' comments reveal fear of crime and disorder and a lack of confidence and trust in the police and judicial system. In Walker the local authority's ARCH project has been proactive in conflict prevention and the Newcastle Conflict Resolution Network (funded by local Quakers and the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust) has been helping local people with gaining the skills needed to resolve conflict without violence. A joint workshop focussing on conflict was held during the course of the project.

Recommendation Four

Continued support should be given to conflict related learning including policy analysis, power and powerlessness, and conflict prevention and resolution. The work being undertaken in Walker by the Newcastle Conflict Resolution Group and ARCH Newcastle (part of Safe Newcastle, the statutory Community Safety Partnership and Drug Action Team for Newcastle upon Tyne) should be given continued funding and be used as a model and resource for other communities in Tyneside and the North East region.

C5. The power of community resilience.

In the UK use of the resilience concept by government has tended to be limited mainly to disaster and emergency planning and to the prevention of violent extremism agenda. This has restricted the application of the concept within local government and the third sector. In

the process the power of the resilience idea and the value of the community resilience idea in particular, has been lost. Evidence from project activities has shown that the strength of the concept of 'community resilience' lies in its capacity to encompass all the factors that contribute to the development of strong and sustainable communities. If it is used rigorously as a unifying concept resilience can then be applied to evaluate a community's vulnerability and precariousness to any threat whether natural or man-made.

Resilience is closely related to communities' collective knowledge and capacity to learn. The majority of the actions needed to enhance community resilience require collaboration between the public sector and the third sector. At a strategic level local government has a leading role to play working closely with third sector infrastructure organisations through the adoption of co-production approaches¹.

Resilience can also be enhanced by close bilateral collaboration between public and third sector agencies addressing specific issues. Third sector infrastructure organisations can play a key role by:

- bringing groups together to address common issues
- creating opportunities for community celebrations and nurturing community identity
- promoting and developing community leadership
- promoting community economic and environmental development
- developing community learning strategies

Recommendation Five

The community resilience approach should be more widely disseminated within the local government and third sector including all faith networks. A work based learning programme should be developed with employers and member organisations to enhance the practice knowledge and skill development of practitioners in both the statutory and third sector organisations.. A conference should be held in the North East of England involving leading international community resilience practitioners from which a UK community resilience network could be developed.

The project has piloted an introductory seminar in the North East and this evaluated well with a positive response from participants. The initial response from community resilience practitioners to the possibility of a conference has been encouraging. There is also the

¹ The term co-production refers to a way of working whereby decision-makers and citizens, or service providers and users, work together to create a decision or a service which works for them all.

. <http://www.peopleandparticipation.net/display/Methods/Co-production>

potential for a 'reader' type publication drawing together case study material illustrating 'best practice' and what benefits can accrue for local communities adopting a community resilience orientation to their developments.

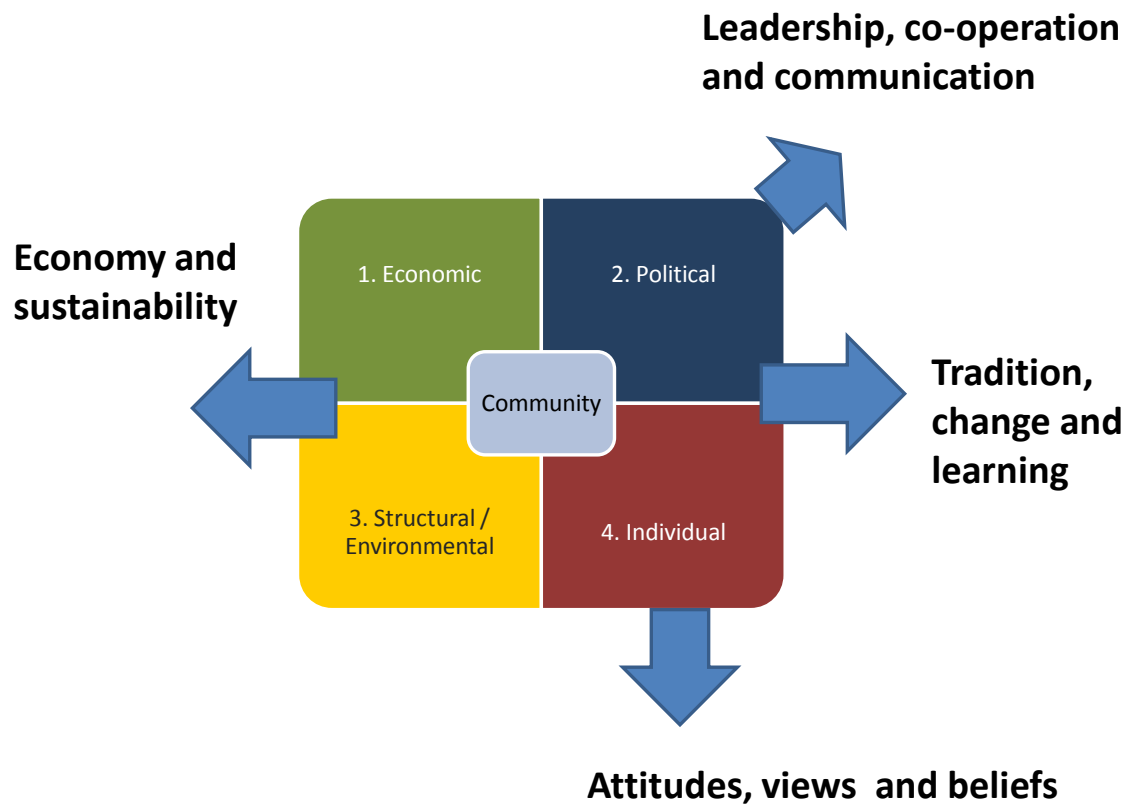
C6. Measuring community resilience

BNP support in local elections in Newcastle upon Tyne and in South Tyneside seems to be related to relatively low levels of resilience but the picture is not clear or conclusive. Levels of BNP support in 2010 in the Primrose ward (Jarrow) were the highest in Tyne and Wear but statistical measures of resilience do not identify it as an area with outstandingly low resilience. Conversely BNP support in Walker has been relatively low despite the area having poor levels of resilience based on external statistical indicators. This suggests that using external indicators alone does not provide the full picture of resilience. It should also be said that further research would be required for comprehensive measurement of resilience at a very local levels such as wards.

Recommendation Six

The on line tool developed during this project to measure community resilience at a local level should be tested further, fully evaluated and refined by local people in a variety of community settings. The evaluation and development of the tool should take account of a range of variables including demographics (age, ethnicity etc), urban / rural factors, and relative wealth / deprivation.

(d) Models, Measuring Tools and Step Change



Making Step Changes

Using the building blocks of community resilience described above (in section B2) the above diagram relates these to the four sets of resilience characteristics used in the resilience questionnaire referred to in Recommendation 6 above. The models and measuring tools developed in the project have been designed both to inform and to shape understanding about the concept of community resilience and to aid the process of identifying step changes that might be possible in the process of nurturing sustainable and resilient communities.

The following table summarises a series of possible step changes in: attitudes, values and beliefs; leadership, cooperation and communication; economy and sustainability; and tradition, change and learning. The table gathers evidence around each domain and provides an indicative tool regarding specific characteristics.

Making step changes in:

1. Attitudes, values and beliefs		
<p><i>Characteristics of a resilient community</i></p> <p>Community Self-image and identity. Values, attitudes and norms deriving from gender, religion and faith background; ethnic background and nationality; and other types of social and cultural groups.</p>	<p><i>Protective Factors</i></p> <p>Access to key common value systems that may provide cohesion and support. The nurturing of a sense of community identity and affirmed self image. Access to key cultural institutions with 'healthy' and 'positive outlooks.'</p>	<p><i>Risk Factors</i></p> <p>Extremism and other expressions of oppression. Public services offered in a mind-set of a community with ' many deficits and problems' Failure to recognise the potentialities inherent in the people and place.</p>
2. Leadership, co-operation and communication		
<p><i>Characteristics of a resilient community</i></p> <p>Assessment of the capacity of local leadership for mobilising community initiatives, civic engagement and political power. Capacity, skill and competence of local leadership to manage and develop community economic development initiatives. Networks of friends, family, neighbours, colleagues, and acquaintances in community groups and associations. Involvement in Faith groups and local clubs.</p>	<p><i>Protective Factors</i></p> <p>Community organisations and leaders provide support and services in response to capacity building requirements. Political power allows needed resources to be leveraged into the neighbourhood</p> <p>Recognition of the value of social capital which can offer social support and economic opportunities. As well as health Services, advice sources and resources. The importance of 'role models' and peer networks influencing and impacting on old and young.</p>	<p><i>Risk Factors</i></p> <p>Lack of leadership, organisation and political power impedes the flow of resources needed for local community problem-solving and restricts development of community leadership</p> <p>People and community groups lack social supports and role models, particularly access to networks and resource systems outside the neighbourhood. That could link them to employment and other key opportunities [sometimes referred to as absence of 'bridging" social capital.</p>

3. Economy and sustainability

<i>Characteristics of a resilient community</i>	<i>Protective Factors</i>	<i>Risk Factors</i>
<p>Enhance the Presence of community owned enterprises providing commercial services, grocery stores, banks and restaurants. Increase the quantity of community owned enterprises within a visioned sustainability strategy.</p> <p>Improve the quality and quantity of employment opportunities available to residents. Increase the amount of collective wealth and assets in the community. Redirect a percentage of the economic and financial assets that leave the community to locally owned cooperative businesses and share ownership enterprises. Appraise the public funded services that could be managed and delivered locally.</p>	<p>Balanced economic development profile to ensure that commercial presence will attract public and private investment in services and infrastructure</p> <p>Living waged jobs; with linked health benefits. Safe workplaces and share ownerships schemes. Work linked credit unions. Apprenticeship schemes and skill enhancement measures</p> <p>State supported Intermediate Labour Market programme linked to Welfare reform programme.</p>	<p>Disinvestment can lead to loss of jobs and businesses and to decline in perception of economic potential of a community or neighbourhood area.</p> <p>Low wage jobs with unsafe working conditions. Failure to address inappropriate wage ratios resulting in economic exclusion and social segregation. Failure to development economic enterprises linked to indigenous skills sets – actual and potential.</p>

4. Tradition, change and leaning

<i>Characteristics of a resilient community</i>	<i>Protective Factors</i>	<i>Risk Factors</i>
<p>Residents and outsiders perception of the community or neighbourhood may affect behaviour connected with it.</p>	<p>Neighbourhood perceived as 'good' or 'improving' with important social and economic attributes may be conducive to new investment of time and resources on a range of actors.</p>	<p>Poor and 'bad' neighbourhoods are often subject to negative stereotypes and discriminated against, limiting success of improvement efforts.</p>

Sources

People living and working in the Tyneside communities of Jarrow and Walker in the North East of England have helped to develop this questionnaire from a longer set of questions adapted from questionnaires developed by the Canadian Centre for Community Renewal (*draft for testing June 2010*), the Australian Government Bureau of Rural Affairs '*Assessing a community's capacity to manage change: A resilience approach to social assessment*' Maguire, B. and Cartwright, S. (2008) and the University of Queensland and University of Southern Queensland. '*Building resilience in Rural Communities- Toolkit*' (2008).

See <http://learningforsustainability.net/susdev/resilience.php> for source of the two latter models.

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