

Calling all Residents

Do you want to have more influence over decisions made in your community? Improve local structures? Learn from other areas across the country? Attract more funding to your project? Or just want to know more about Neighbourhood Renewal (NR)?

The Neighbourhood Renewal Learning Plan is here to help everyone involved in Neighbourhood Renewal in Bristol to develop essential skills and knowledge and to provide learning opportunities for everyone who wants to participate in Neighbourhood Renewal.

What's happened so far?

In December 2005, Voscur was appointed by the Bristol Partnership to deliver a pilot Learning Plan for residents (and workers) in Neighbourhood Renewal.

After a brief consultation period the Learning Plan programme ran between March and July 2006. A range of sessions were offered including: confidence building; assertiveness; public speaking; how the council works; the Neighbourhood Renewal process; a shadowing local Councillors programme; and visits to other Neighbourhood Renewal areas. 161 people (residents, workers and councillors) participated in the programme. Following this Voscur produced the evaluation report "Excuse me, I want to say something" (download at www.voscur.org/brispartnership/nrplan) Voscur has now been commissioned to deliver the 2007/2008 Learning Plan.

So what did people think?

"I've gained a lot of confidence. I find myself speaking up in meetings – I hardly did that before. Now I do speak up and get my voice across. The other day I wanted to say something at a meeting but the chair wouldn't let me, so I said "Excuse me I



want to say something" I would never have done that before, I learned I had the right to an opinion, to be heard and to get an answer"

Resident and NRLP attendee

A random selection of participants were contacted 1 – 3 months after the programme to find out how they had benefited from attending the learning events. Their evaluation was overwhelmingly positive and they were able to identify specific benefits to themselves and their communities. Many people felt that they had gained confidence from taking part in the events, even from those events that were not specifically aimed at confidence building.

As well as generally gaining confidence people said they felt more able to challenge and communicate, because they were better informed.





“I know a bit better how the systems work, I know who to contact who to ring”

Resident, Knowle West

“The ‘Involving People’ course was good. A lot of ideas came across very quickly...I learnt a lot about equal opportunities and I was able to pick someone up on it at a meeting after. He was picking out bits of equal opportunities that suited him and ignoring the rest. The equal opportunities training made me feel I knew what he should be doing and I had some back up to say what I thought”

Resident, Lockleaze

Participants really valued the networking opportunities and the chance to gain a greater understanding of other areas. Through the visits they gained ideas about how to solve problems in their own areas and were able to pass on what they had learnt:

“The trip to Gloucester was useful. They do things we don’t do here and they were able to tell us about that. Whether we can do them here is another thing. They gave us papers about it so we got lots of really good ideas. Meeting the police there was really interesting – some of the ideas about crime we could use. We’re going to talk to the police here about that”

Resident, Southmead

It was also clear that the learning events have brought increased funding to the areas, as well as having the potential to bring in much more.

“The funding training was definitely useful, especially the more detailed stuff about milestones, targets and outcomes. It was good to have all the funding language clarified. Since the training, I’ve been doing lots of funding applications, including to Quartet for some funding

to expand the children’s savings scheme and was successful. This brought in £6,950. I’m now applying for the core funding and what I learnt is really useful for that as well’

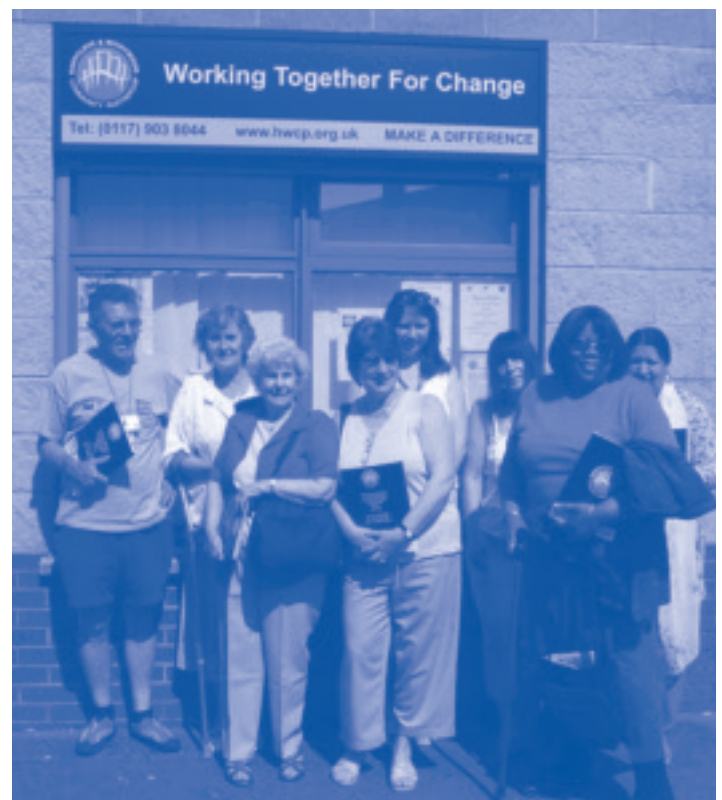
**Worker, Seven Four Credit Union,
Lawrence Weston**

As well as the learning events Voscur was able to pair ten local residents with Councillors for shadowing. Some of the aims of this scheme were to enable local people living in Neighbourhood Renewal areas to:

- broaden knowledge and understanding of the Council,
- experience the culture of the Council,
- share their ideas about the needs of their own neighbourhood or community of interest with the Councillor,
- find out how best to work with Councillors to improve their areas,
- consider becoming a Councillor.

“I really enjoyed the shadowing day – it was excellent. I found out about a lot of things that I didn’t know - things that are going on – like all about the Harbourside development and what they are doing around Henbury. It was really useful. I have been doing work on Neighbourhood Renewal and in the community for years but I still learnt a lot. I would recommend it to anyone”

Resident, Lawrence Weston





What was it like running the Learning Plan?

“Organising the learning plan was very satisfying because you could see that people were really benefiting. It was difficult to get residents interested at first for a number of reasons, including that some people have had negative experience of learning before. I spent a lot of time on outreach, going out into the communities and talking to people, and encouraging them to take part. Once the programme started, and people began to hear about the quality of the training, more and more people wanted to get involved. We were very fortunate in finding some excellent trainers who really knew how to build up people’s confidence”.

Karen Bell, Voscur’s Neighbourhood Learning Plan Co-ordinator in 2006

The Future

Consultation throughout the 2006 Learning plan provided information on what people would like to see in a future Learning Plan these included:

- Confidence Building.
- Public Speaking.
- Chairing Skills.
- Finding and Supporting Management Committee Members.
- Representing your Community.
- Fundraising.
- Financial Management and Book-keeping.
- What’s Happening in Your Community?
- Time Management.
- Assertiveness Training.
- Neighbourhood Renewal – Structure and Processes.
- Shadowing Councillors and other Statutory Sector Providers.
- Neighbourhood Renewal Tours - Learning from Other Areas.
- Communicating with Residents (for Service Providers).
- Engaging Communities (for Service Providers).

Case study - 6 months on

The following resident shadowed a Councillor for the day and found it really interesting, gaining an insight into how to participate and influence in local structures.

“I went on three different things, the diversity and confidence building and shadowing a Councillor for the day, it was all really interesting. I think I’ve learnt a lot and got a lot more confidence. There is this meeting where this man was always telling us that we had to do things a certain way like to get the Chairs attention you had to say “point of order” but when I went to the Councillors meetings they just put their hands up!

The confidence training made me realise that I had the right to speak and people were no different from me, I feel now that I’m not frightened to say something. I just put my hand up!

The things I did on the Learning plan have resulted in my applying for the position on the housing board..... and I got it!”

Resident, Horfield

What’s in it for you?

Lots of things! Participants from the 2006 Learning Plan were really impressed and identified some significant benefits resulting from their involvement in the programme. Some of these were:

- Increased revenue to Neighbourhood Renewal areas.
- Increased ability to understand Statutory Sector policies, procedures and structures.
- More ideas for how to go forward and tackle problems.
- Increased confidence and willingness to take on challenges.
- Increased understanding of Equal Opportunities and ability to implement related policies.
- Increased ability to put forward their views in meetings.
- Increased networking across the city.
- Increased understanding of problems and solutions in other areas of Bristol.
- Learning benefits passed on to other members of the community.

BUT there could be many more benefits depending on what goes in the programme for 2007/2008. We want to know what should be included. Do you think the learning needs identified above are still relevant or can they be added to?

So what next? The Neighbourhood Renewal Learning Plan 2007/2008



Voscur has been commissioned to deliver the Neighbourhood Renewal Learning Plan between March 2007 and March 2008. The evaluation has provided us with some useful lessons on which we can build, but there is much more to do. We are underway with developing the programme and will continuously carry out consultation to establish what the needs are and how we can work with residents, community organisations, workers, agencies and elected members to ensure we deliver an exciting, relevant and interesting Learning Plan. Here are some of the ways we have incorporated the ideas so far:

We have designed a flexible programme, which includes a variety of learning opportunities, which meet a range of needs. There will be advance notice of all events, which will be publicised in a variety of ways and repeatedly. This will be done using local communication systems to reach less engaged people. Using accessible, jargon-free language that will appeal to people.

Where possible, learning events will be free with all access costs and transport provided. Venues will be accessible and where possible in places where people already go.

Networking opportunities and visits to find out how other neighbourhood renewal areas are doing it, and a process where this learning can be shared.

Our shadowing programme will be expanded, offering a range of shadowing opportunities including residents shadowing Councillors and Councillors shadowing residents.

We are investigating the benefits of piloting a leadership and personal development programme within one area.

We are planning a pilot new worker induction programme - this may be in the form of a pack which has all the key issues and local contacts in it for when a new worker comes to an area.

There will be assistance with individual learning, setting goals which identify what people want to gain from being part of the learning plan, with follow up work to monitor the impact of any learning. Individuals will get certificates to show that they have attended events and what learning they have gained (this will not be accredited).

And a bursary to fund individual and local learning needs.

What do you think? Are we getting it right?



Neighbourhood Renewal Areas

- Southmead
- Lawrence Weston
- Lockleaze
- Easton & Lawrence Hill
- Knowle West
- Hartcliffe & Withywood
- St Pauls

We want the Neighbourhood Renewal Learning Plan to be a responsive process, which delivers what is needed.

If you live or work in a Neighbourhood Renewal area we really want your ideas and input. Or you might just want to find out a bit more.

Either way please call Hannah Parker at Voscur on 0117 909 9949, email: hannah@voscur.org

There will be regular updates on what's happening in the Neighbourhood Renewal Learning Plan in our newsletter and on our website www.voscur.org