NCSL
National College for
School Leadership

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What are we
learning about...?

Community leadership in networks

Regeneration through community leadership

East Manchester Education Action Zone

An illustrative example of
what community leadership in
networks looks like in practice.

Community Leadership Strategy

Networked Learning Communities

| learning from each other | learning with each other | learning on behalf of each other |

Regeneration through community leadership

The accounts of practice presented within this series aim to provide concrete examples of community leadership in networks. In particular, they provide a practical illustration of the significant elements we have found to be evident when developing community leadership within a networked context.

❝ *Doing business as we have always done it is unlikely to have any effect in creating a more inclusive, holistic approach to the delivery of public services. At every level, we need to re-think our approach: how we consult, how we engage others, how we meet together, how we celebrate and how we lead.* ❞

There are now many schools, both in the UK and internationally, that are benefiting from working together as a network. By drawing upon their experience and that of others who are actively involved in community leadership through networking and collaborative activity beyond the education sector, it is possible to identify the factors that characterise effective community leadership in networks.

Four characteristics of effective community leadership in networks

1 *Sharing leadership with a focus on 'bridging' rather than 'bonding' relationships, processes and actions.*

2 *Collaborative working which builds social capital and coheres around a shared focus which is child-centred.*

3 *Joint planning and dialogue which promotes active participation in decision-making-for-action by all.*

4 *Designing local strategies for long term system-wide change.*

The accounts of practice in this series explore in different ways and with different emphases, these key characteristics of effective community leadership and in so doing they help to explain what developing community leadership in networks looks like in practice. Considering some of these factors in the process of developing community leadership within a networked context will help to ensure that future development is built from the best of what is known from current thinking and practice. We hope that these accounts of practice will, therefore, be of practical use to you – if you are considering developing community leadership activities within networks, schools or other organisations, or if you are simply interested in finding out more about community leadership in networks and its potential benefits for all. □

Acknowledgements

Regeneration through community leadership

This account of practice looks at the experiences of community leadership arising from an Education Action Zone (EAZ) and networked learning community in a deprived inner-city area. It describes how its aim of contributing to the regeneration of the entire community was put into practice. This example of an agency-led network will be of interest to those trying to engage the community in a deprived local area or in a multi-agency environment.

Participation in the network community

East Manchester is a deprived inner-city area that is the focus of numerous networks and initiatives working towards regenerating the community. Their overall objective is: *'Education at the heart of regeneration'.*
A total of 6,000 pupils are involved in the networked learning community drawn from 17 schools: 1 nursery, 11 primary schools, 3 secondary schools, and 1 special high school. The main characteristics of the network and the community in which it sits are:

- Neighbouring schools in East Manchester that are within a two mile radius of each other and one mile from the city centre.
- An area of urban deprivation, formally industrial now an economic development area.
- A comprehensive and aspirational regeneration programme which provides significant opportunities for multi-agency working.
- A fragmented and small local business community.
- Community challenges such as high crime rates, drug misuse, low income and poor educational attainment.
- Ongoing ICT initiatives which are seen as a key catalyst for transformation, with state-of-the-art facilities that place East Manchester at the forefront of the UK in ICT.
- ICT equipment funded by multiple agencies and ICT corporations.
- A brokerage role for the EAZ in the co-ordination of, and partnership working with, many local initiatives.

The EAZ has been the main driving force behind the networked learning community. It facilitates the network and introduces and maintains a wide variety of education and community-based initiatives. It is doubtful whether the network could have been sustained without the infrastructure and support provided by the EAZ. The experience of the network suggests that a multi-agency-led network model could be more sustainable in inner-city deprived areas, where the network is supported by a wide range of diverse local initiatives and projects. There are many different networks within this model, all having multi-agency links. There are also many school and community initiatives involving multiple partners. Participant groups within the network are drawn from the following:

- school staff
- parents
- local residents
- members of religious communities
- New Deal
- Eastserve
- New East Manchester Regeneration Company
- Connexions service
- Primary Healthcare Trust
- Eastland Homes
- Local Authority professionals
- Children's Services professionals from education, health and social services
- Manchester universities
- Sure Start
- libraries
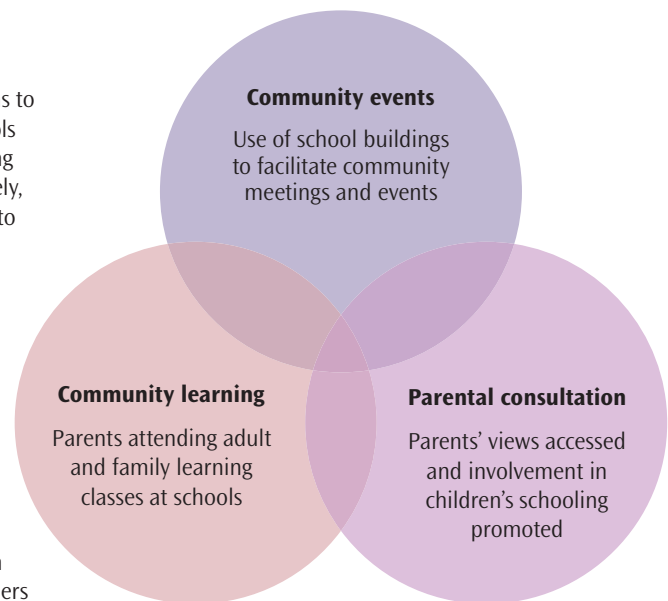- local voluntary organisations and charities

Regeneration through community leadership

What does community leadership mean in East Manchester EAZ?

The community objectives are based on the idea of building social capital by unlocking the potential of schools in the area, with an emphasis on supporting schools throughout this process. The network also aims to challenge the current ways of working to enable schools to do things differently in order to improve the learning environment and the potential of every child. Ultimately, the network model aims to use the education system to help regenerate the entire community, to build social capital, to promote multi-agency working and to end deprivation.

In East Manchester, community leadership means working together to end deprivation and its effects on children's achievement, where *"Learning together is about continuity and coaching each other"*. At the moment, the focus is on engaging parental and community involvement to support teaching and learning. At this stage, the community is involved in decision-making through Residents' Forum representation on the EAZ Forum. Beyond this, members of the local community are not as yet undertaking any formal leadership roles. However, it is hoped that if the network is able to sustain their involvement, then shared leadership can remain a viable aspiration for the next phase of the network's development. The network is led and facilitated through a steering group and a headteacher group. The community targeted for network involvement tends to comprise those people closest to the schools – parents, families, local residents, local volunteers and agencies. These groups of network participants are reached largely through a programme of projects and initiatives implemented by the EAZ. Within this broad portfolio of initiatives, school-community activity is described as falling within the following three domains *(see figure 1)*.

Figure 1: The domains of school-community activity within the network

Community events
Use of school buildings to facilitate community meetings and events

Community learning
Parents attending adult and family learning classes at schools

Parental consultation
Parents' views accessed and involvement in children's schooling promoted

Community leadership in the network – action and impact

The network identified three major areas where action was needed to improve student and community outcomes. These were: involving parents and community, multi-agency working, and engaging disaffected young people. Many initiatives have been introduced, and the EAZ and other multi-agencies have worked together to tackle specific issues and facilitate action in each of these areas of focus. In working towards our aim of regeneration within the East Manchester community, we have developed a number of projects which have been specifically aimed at involving pupils, parents and other partners in the community. These constitute the major focus of our action in building community involvement and striving towards shared community leadership for the network in the longer term.

Regeneration through community leadership… in action

1 VIP (Very Important Parent) days

The objective of these days was to make parents aware of the numerous projects and services available to them. A neutral non-school venue was chosen to host the conference which included stalls, activities and workshops from all the different agencies and project workers in the area.

2 Neighbourhood friends

This project is funded through the local Quaker group, which recruits and trains volunteers to support children on a one-to-one basis outside the classroom over a period of a term. It supports unhappy children at school and provides useful training and experience for the volunteer.

A second EAZ volunteer project develops trained and experienced volunteers to undertake a range of support roles in schools.

3 Family learning scheme

The aim of the project is to educate families so they are able to help children with their homework and improve their educational achievement. Courses included: parent power, first-aid, parents and reading, beginners' computers, learning through play, English as a second language, and drama and maths workshops. Parents are encouraged to gain accreditation. Tutors from the Adult Education Service work alongside teachers in classrooms and with parents, providing a link to classroom learning and adult education, helping parents to support their children effectively.

4 Online communities

ICT investment remains a major resource for regeneration within the schools and within the wider community. Eastserve provides broadband to 16 schools, 9 community locations, and 4,500 homes. Schools are linked online and their resources can be accessed from homes.

Regeneration through community leadership… impact

" The whole day is about celebrating parents in East Manchester. " (Community Links Manager)

Each event was attended by over 500 parents and members of the local community. Future events can be sustained due to the multi-agency nature of the support and involvement provided for this community activity.

" It's been great. I've been surprised by how much I've got out of it. " (Neighbourhood Friends Volunteer)

47 pupils have taken part. Every one has shown measurable positive benefits from being on the programme.

A number of volunteers have gained paid work as a result of the training. Although this has meant that schools have lost their volunteers to paid employment, there are still benefits for the wider community.

This scheme is aimed at improving the educational achievements of both parents and children. It has been shown to increase job prospects and help parents to meet together in a mutually supportive environment. An important outcome has been the breaking down of the barriers between schools and parents. The work has been significant in reinforcing the fact that all education relates to the wider community and promotes lifelong learning.

The EAZ's ICT initiatives have been shown to have an impact upon teaching, learning and exam results within the network's schools.

The ICT investment has created an online network to link parents to school resources, in addition to the major impact it is having on teaching and learning.

Regeneration through community leadership

Regeneration through community leadership… in action

Regeneration through community leadership… impact

5 Home-school liaison service

Home-school liaison workers based in schools have been working closely with families where there is a pattern of poor attendance.

Pupil attendance at school has been improved.

Improvements across network schools have been achieved by co-ordinating support with the Educational Welfare Service and other appropriate children's services.

6 School and family link worker

This worker attended three designated primary schools in East Manchester, working with 14 families from 3 schools. The main roles are to facilitate the identification of children deemed at risk and to introduce early preventative measures.

The project has benefited children by reinforcing healthy functioning and reinforces the *Every Child Matters* (DfES, 2004) agenda. The worker also co-leads fast-track parent and survival groups, helping to improve parenting skills.

7 Reading projects

Many different strategies are being implemented to improve attitudes and skills in reading. Mentors were introduced, as were Reading Buddies to support the development of pupils' reading and literacy skills. This involves parents and families by encouraging them to read with children regularly. Reading Buddies were linked to the Read Together month which involved recruiting members of the community to read to groups or individual pupils.

More than 100 adults have been involved in the reading projects. In particular, the involvement of positive adult male role-models in the reading mentor role was seen to have an impact on male pupils, both in increasing motivation and interest in reading, and developing more positive attitudes to learning. Within the EAZ schools Key Stage 2 SAT results in English have also demonstrated improvement, particularly in achievements at Level 4 and Level 5.

8 Pyramid project

The Pyramid Club was designed to engage children who are in danger of not being visible or getting the attention they need to thrive. Ten children attend this after-school club which runs once a week for ten weeks. The Pyramid Clubs are staffed by volunteers from the community who received training and support.

55 children attended and all network schools identified positive developments. Children classed as of 'no concern' rose from 30 per cent to 55 per cent and children classed as of 'considerable concern' decreased from 6 per cent to 1 per cent.

40 volunteers were successfully trained. Of these, 10 qualified in first aid, 20 accessed training courses provided by the Local Authority, 2 gained employment in childcare settings, 8 applied for summer sport schemes and 12 enrolled on a 'Play-Worker Level 2' course.

End note

" Pupils, adults, families, school members – all people involved in the endeavour of East Manchester now have higher aspirations and a greater concerted effort to reach them. "

The future direction of the East Manchester network is set to be driven by the piloting of an innovative approach to the delivery of the *Every Child Matters* (DfES, 2004)[1] agenda, on behalf of Manchester's Children's Board. This will involve the development of the following initiatives through a consultative, 'bottom-up' process:

● District governance and management structures covering all Children's Services including schools.

● District commissioning of Children's Services.

● A 'protective schools' pilot project to examine the ways in which schools can most effectively engage in the *Every Child Matters* agenda.

● Further development of social capital within schools, between schools, between schools and other Children's Services, and between schools and their communities – through collaborative activity, projects and initiatives, including the facilitation of 'public conversations'.

Involvement in NCSL's Community Leadership Network (CLN) will underpin this process by capturing the learning emerging from this innovative work and supporting the development of new ideas, processes, structures and outcomes within the community leadership activity undertaken. Crucially, this will be done through the facilitation of dialogue between network and agency partners and with other networks. It is intended that this process will inform the implementation of district governance across Manchester as a whole. In this regard, the multi-agency network model which the EAZ has established has been recognised as having a significant role to play in progressing the work of the network in the community in the future.

The East Manchester network has exploited its positioning within the area's regeneration structures to build on the project-based work of the EMEAZ within the new context provided by the *Every Child Matters* programme of public service reform. Multi-agency working and the development of social capital are key elements of this approach. There is a particular focus on developing the role of schools within this programme with a view to nurturing community-based involvement in education. This work has been progressed with a mind to the aspiration of shared leadership in the near future. It is intended that this current and future development work, will enable learning to be captured and emerging theory grounded in the practice of community leadership.

" There is now a recognition that education is a key component of the success of the long-term regeneration of East Manchester. " □

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[1] Department for Education and Skills, 2004, *Every Child Matters – next steps,* London, DfES

What are we
learning about...?

The 'What are we learning about…?' series is designed to make public the learning that has emerged from NLCs in the last two years.

The first nine titles in the series will focus on:
What are we learning about…?

- LEA involvement in school networks
- Establishing a network of schools
- **Community leadership in networks**
- *'Making mathematics count'* in school networks
- The impact of school networks
- Sustaining a network of schools
- Facilitation within school networks
- Professional development in school networks
- Leadership of school networks

To order a copy of this series, please email **nlc@ncsl.org.uk** quoting the reference **WAWLA/Community leadership**

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