

Introduction

East Belfast Community Development Agency (EBCDA) is the 'umbrella organisation' supporting community development in East Belfast. Our membership is made up of community groups drawn from an area that contains almost 107,000 people. We are representative of a broad range of interests and needs within communities and encompasses a variety of groups, including local residents' associations, faith based organisations, sports clubs, older people's groups, women's groups and youth groups.

EBCDA's job is to add value to the activity undertaken by groups in local areas. We work with other key organisations to ensure the continued development of a community sector in East Belfast that is recognised, valued and effective. We seek to support successful community development, encourage reflective practice and promote cooperation and locally based solutions.

Our Strategic Plan for 2010 – 2015 is an important document because it provides the basis for the work that we will undertake in the next five years. It takes account of the external environment within which the Agency will be operating. We believe we have set out some challenging aims for the Agency, underpinned by a set of values and standards that will help to shape our work. Each year, detailed Operational Plans will be developed, based on a review of activity and outcomes from the previous year. The principles and plans set out in this document will underpin these yearly plans and attempt to identify key developments and planned initiatives that are likely to impact on our role and the community sector more generally.

Mission

East Belfast Community Development Agency exists to provide resources, support and capacity building programmes for community groups that are based on partnership, equal opportunities and sustainable outcomes.

For Further Information Please Contact:
East Belfast Community Development Agency
269 Albertbridge Road
Belfast BT5 4PY
T 028 9045 1512 F 028 9073 8039
E info@ebcda.org

www.ebcda.org

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East Belfast Community Development Agency



Foreword

In 2010 East Belfast Community Development Agency celebrated 40 years of supporting the community sector in East Belfast. During these years the Organisation has existed under various names but has always had the support and development of the community in East Belfast at the forefront of all the work it has done. We are excited to present this Strategy which we look forward to developing over the next five years. In doing so we acknowledge that EBCDA exists in a very different world to what it did 40 years ago, but we are confident that the development and management of this Strategy will help move our communities in East Belfast into a better and brighter future.

We have taken a theme with this Strategy of "Developing citizenship and civic pride in East Belfast" as we feel this theme best describes what we want to achieve, both for the Agency and for our communities. Citizenship and civic

pride has been at the forefront of work carried out by the Carnegie Trust UK, who established an Independent Commission of Inquiry into the Future of Civil society. Over a 2-3 year period the Commission explored and researched the role of civil society and produced 3 reports. EBCDA used these reports to create discussion with our staff, Board of Directors and with the community sector in East Belfast. This helped us form and shape this Strategy.

Looking ahead for any individual or organisation is always challenging – but our committed Board of Directors and competent Staff Team see the implementation of this Strategy as an opportunity to develop the Agency further, contributing enthusiastically, confidently and with professionalism to the ongoing development of the community sector in East Belfast. We look forward to working with communities in "Developing Citizenship and Civic Pride in East Belfast".

Cliff Kennedy
Chair

STRATEGY 2010 - 2015

Developing Citizenship and Civic Pride in East Belfast



Values & Principles

Participation

We will work proactively to ensure that people have the opportunity to fully contribute to, and share in, decision-making processes in relation to policies and programmes that will affect them.

Inclusion

We will support and promote work which builds communities that include groups and people that have been most marginalised.

Fairness

We oppose harassment, victimisation and prejudice of any kind. We are committed to ensuring that we do not discriminate against anyone within, or in contact with, the Organisation on the grounds of gender, race, nationality, ethnic origin, disability, and responsibility for dependents, sexuality, age, economic status, religious or political belief or marital status. This includes all the groups highlighted in Equality Legislation as outlined in Section 75 of the (1998) Northern Ireland Act.

Good Practice

We value learning from other places and will promote identified good practice amongst our members and other stakeholders.

The application of these values and principles to our work will contribute to:

- A greater awareness that the principles of community development are fundamental to successful regeneration in East Belfast.
- Equal access to a wide range of development opportunities for people living in areas of recognised disadvantage.
- All relevant agencies and organisations being involved in promoting community participation and consultation in developing policy and practice.

External Context

It is widely recognised that the community and voluntary sector in Northern Ireland has been very active since the early 70's. The sector now, and in the future, has a key role to play in the transition to a more 'normal' society in which people have opportunities to shape their own lives and the communities in which they live.

In the 1990s a number of developments contributed to an improved position for community and voluntary organisations. These included a government strategy on the voluntary sector and community development in 1993 and increasing support under mainstream EU structural funds and 'peace money'. The role of DSD in supporting communities to develop themselves has been an important one and whilst it is not perfect it has changed the way community development is being delivered in east Belfast. The changes already implemented within the Health Trusts, through RPA, and to be implemented throughout 2011/2012 in other Government Departments and Councils will have a lasting impact on our communities. The fact that through the life of this Strategy we will be operating in an increasingly fragile economic base, will have a compounded evident decline in some neighbourhoods into the future. The need to build and develop civic pride is further emphasised by the economic context in which East Belfast, as part of the city of Belfast, exists.

In East Belfast there are some well-organised groups that have developed the ability to articulate need, attract resources and support for their neighbourhoods. In contrast, other communities are fragmented and a lack of positive civic leadership and co-operation has left communities unaware of support opportunities and at times disconnected from their neighbours. The interface areas between Protestant neighbourhoods and the predominantly Catholic community in Short Strand still presents some challenges, particularly if tensions translate into localised violence. EBCDA's role in promoting collaboration and reconciliation around common issues of concern is likely to remain a key theme in the next five years. This local context is important when shaping the direction of EBCDA's work to 2015 and irrespective of the language that is used to characterise the situation, engaging people, supporting the development of citizenship and civic leadership and building effective ways of working in neighbourhoods is essential to our work being effective and efficient for the communities we work with.

Relationships

The development of positive relationships within and between communities in East Belfast is essential to the development of a respected, effective community sector. The development of our membership base to date suggests that we have been successful so far in providing support to a broad range of groups. We are also well placed to identify opportunities for working together on shared issues and building a strong agenda for community development and civic leadership.

In the period covered by this Strategic Plan, we anticipate that relationships with the following organisations will be key to effective delivery:

- East Belfast Partnership
- Belfast City Council
- Inner East Neighbourhood Partnership
- Tullycarnet Neighbourhood Partnership
- Community Development Networks Forum
- Belfast Health & Social Care Trust
- East Belfast Interface Forum
- Inner East Forum
- Short Strand Community Forum
- Short Strand Partnership
- Titanic Watch
- NICVA
- PSNI
- Community Places
- Councillors, MLA's and MP



Strategy

EBCDA has identified the following strategic aims for 2010 to 2015:

1 Community Support/Capacity Building

To assess the needs of the community sector and work with other key organisations to draw up programmes, projects, plans and strategies that build capacity.

The outworking of this aim will mean:

- Administrative support for local groups;
- Promotion of best practice
- Co-ordinating local networks;
- Consultation responses;
- Partnership working;
- Infrastructure development within communities;
- Development of a Network Centre for East Belfast;
- Developing and managing a community development strategy for the sector in East Belfast.

2 Community Resource and Finance Services

To promote good financial management practice in the community sector by offering financial management advice, training services and a community accountancy service.

The outworking of this aim will mean:

- Financial and professional services;
- Administration of salaries on behalf of groups;
- Finance training;
- Independent examinations;
- Use of meeting and training rooms;
- Provision and production of leaflets, Newsheets and other copying material.



3 Community Development Education and Training

To encourage, support and facilitate the provision of quality community development education and training opportunities.

The outworking of this aim will mean:

- Advice;
- Preparation of constitutions;
- Establishment of new organisations;
- Networking guidance;
- Sourcing funding;
- Information resources;
- Developing newsheets;
- Training (community leadership, committee skills, writing funding applications, equality and political issues, monitoring and evaluation, organisational development);

4 Advocacy

To seek to influence the policies of community, voluntary, government and public agencies so that they recognise the value of adopting a community development approach and that the community sector in East Belfast might benefit from this.

The outworking of this aim will mean:

- Lobbying;
- Supporting collective action;
- Representative role;
- Supporting the development of strong local organisations;
- Representing the sector.



What Is Community Development?

The following is a definition of Community Development agreed by a number of Community Development organisations in the UK and was adopted by EBCDA on 12th August 2008.

- Community development is action that helps people to recognise and develop their ability and potential and organise themselves to respond to problems and needs which they share. It supports the establishment of strong communities that control and use assets to promote social justice and help improve the quality of community life. It also enables community and public agencies to work together to improve the quality of government.

- Community development is an occupation (both paid and unpaid) which aims to build active and influential communities based on justice, equality and mutual respect. Community development work is done in ways which challenge oppression and tackle inequalities. It involves changing the relationships between ordinary people and people in positions of power, so that everyone can take part in the issues that affect their lives.

- Community development work involves working with communities to:
 - Identify their strengths, needs, rights and responsibilities
 - Plan, organise and take action
 - Assess the effect of any actions taken

- It also involves working with agencies to increase their capacity to understand and work with communities. Communities can be based on where people live (geographic communities), or on a shared concern, issue or identity (communities of interest).

What Community Development Is Not!

- Quick. Community development is a long term process, focusing on people and their needs and aims. This long term approach is essential to ensure that changes are sustainable and long-lasting.

- A numbers game. If only five people turn up to the public meeting, these are the five people you start working with.

- Partnership working. Community development is the activity which enables many people to get to the partnership table in the first place.

- Consultation. Community development is much more than consulting on decisions already made.

- A cheap way of delivering services, demonstrating management efficiency or validating funding bids.

- Talking with three 'community representatives' and saying that their responses are the demands of the community. Community development enables many more voices to be heard.

- Volunteering. For most people involved in community activity, it is because if they want a service such as a playgroup, they have to provide it themselves. It is not necessarily because they want to be volunteers.

- The answer to everything!



1970 – 1973



1973 – 1989



1989 – 2012



2012 onwards

Making Good Society

Excerpt from the foreword of 'Making Good Society', the final report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Future of Civil Society in the UK and Ireland.

Take a few streets in a typical town in Donegal or Denbighshire, Devon or Dumfriesshire and you don't need to look far to find civil society. Whether it's visible on the streets or behind closed doors, every community hosts an extraordinary array of civil society activity including sports clubs, care for family members or local residents, homework clubs and support networks. As individuals, many of us are active in local groups, charities, in churches, mosques and temples or trade unions. We play our part in campaigns to end poverty or combat climate change. As consumers we support ethical products offered by co-operatives or social enterprises.

Civil society is not governed by profit or power but by values and enthusiasms – a word that originally meant the god within us. Some of us are inspired by frustration and anger, others by hope, and others still by fun. Together, the many parts of civil society contribute enormously to our everyday quality of life.

The good news is that right across the UK and Ireland the daily life of civil society activity is thriving – with no signs of long-term decline and decay, or for that matter any rise in selfishness and other ills, despite the pressures of recession. Civil society is made up of a myriad of circles of freedom and circles of cooperation that have proved to be remarkably resilient.

The short-term push to strengthen civil society comes from the coincidence of three crises: the financial crisis and its economic effects, which have sharply reduced

the status and confidence of market liberalism; the ecological crisis, which has moved centre-stage as never before in the wake of the Copenhagen Summit at the end of 2009; and a crisis of political confidence.

This makes now a remarkable time of opportunity. We need to set our sights far beyond the narrow arguments about contracts or fiscal treatment for the voluntary sector, and look instead at how civil society activity can shape our world, and how we can make the transition from an age of 'me' to an age of 'we'. Civil society was born out of the idea that we do best when we work with others, and when we understand our interests as shared with others. That idea is more relevant than ever in an intimately interconnected world.

This is a great time of possibility for civil society to spread its values not just in fields such as care and community, where it is already strong, but also in fields where it is relatively weak, including the economy and the media, energy and politics. We believe that if that happens, everyone stands to benefit. That is the ultimate promise of the hundreds of projects, ventures and organisations mentioned in the final Commission report, which add up to a radical vision of how our society could grow, not just in material wealth but in social wealth too.

Geoff Mulgan
Commission Chair