

Big society in Nottingham

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Big society is all about empowering local people and communities to bring about the changes they know their community needs.

Nick Hurd MP, Minister for Civil Society, 18 May 2010

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In Nottingham we have thousands of committed volunteers and innovative voluntary organisations that are working hard to bring about change in our local communities.

To develop the big society idea locally we need to understand and support

the good work that's already going on, as well as look for new opportunities to grow voluntary action.

Here are six examples of how big society is already happening in Nottingham.

Cooperative social action...

Sumac Centre

Sumac Centre is an independent community and social centre which encourages social action by providing resources, meeting spaces and support for groups and individuals campaigning for human rights, animal rights, the environment, peace and co-operation world-wide. The centre is a co-operative and all volunteers have a say in how the centre is run and the direction it follows.

The centre runs regular Skillshare events - free workshops run by members of the community who want to share their skills with others, covering topics as diverse as food

preservation, first aid, mass catering, bike maintenance and knitting. The resources, skills and knowledge shared enable local people to influence local, national and even global change.

The centre has been running since 1985, receives no regular funding and exists through the hard work of volunteers. The centre houses a community café and a social club and a vegan catering company. The profits from these volunteer-led initiatives help to sustain the work of the centre.

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We're independent and autonomous and try to find our own solutions to problems. Big society isn't a new concept to us.

Patrick Smith, volunteer

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Bike maintenance Skillshare at Sumac

Local people improving their local area...

The Independent Street Carnival Troupe



Local people celebrating their local area

The Independent Street area of Radford used to have a reputation for being unsafe. In 1997, local resident Joy Nugent set up the Independent Street Carnival Troupe to make sure that her children and their friends had something safe to do during the summer that kept them off the streets.

From humble beginnings in Joy's own kitchen, the street is now renowned for its carnival. Around a hundred young people regularly take part and the group travels all around England to perform on the stages at different carnivals.

The group relies on volunteers' donations and small grants and the young people that perform with the group help out with the fundraising activities that sustain it.

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The young people really enjoy being involved – they make new friends and get to perform all over the country. The Carnival Troupe has really transformed the atmosphere in our street.

Joy Nugent, Coordinator

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Social enterprises finding innovative solutions to problems...

First Universal Enterprises Limited (FUEL)

FUEL is a social enterprise that helps unemployed people get skills and find work, especially those experiencing disadvantage or discrimination in the workplace. Most recently, FUEL has been training people in construction skills, using their premises as a practice workspace and securing contracts for the trainees to deliver pieces of work elsewhere.

The project has a high success rate, with most people leaving the project straight into paid employment or going into college courses to develop their skills further.

The founder of FUEL, David Dean, set up the project having heard first-hand about local people losing jobs when the impact of the recession started to be felt, particularly in the construction industry. FUEL started with a pilot project funded by a One Nottingham small grant and now has over 50 placements through the Future Jobs Fund, working in close partnership with local businesses and the public sector.

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FUEL is all about local projects benefiting local people and local communities. We've proud of what we've achieved so far and want to continue to develop the support that we offer in the future.

David Dean, Director

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Local people running local services...

The Lenton Centre

In 2004, funding pressures led Nottingham City Council to close down the Lenton Leisure Centre. The community came together and, led by the Lenton Community Association which already managed the community centre next door, made a bid to take over the management of the entire building.

They bought the building from the City Council for £10 in 2005. The gym was re-opened within weeks and the swimming pool was finally re-opened in 2008.

The Lenton Centre also runs other projects for the benefit of the local community, including a credit union collection point and after school clubs, and the centre brings students and local residents together, promoting community cohesion.

Local groups are housed within the centre and the rent from this, as well as the income generated through the use of the leisure facilities, helps sustain the centre in conjunction with grants from a variety of different sources.



Enjoying the sunshine at last year's Lenton festival

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The centre is the first of its kind in Nottingham and has been highlighted as an example for others to follow but for me it's just about seeing people using the swimming pool that makes it all worthwhile. We're delighted with the success of the centre.

Carl Towner, Chief Executive

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Informal volunteering building cohesive neighbourhoods...

Partnership Council: Skills Exchange

The Skills Exchange was set up by the Partnership Council, a local neighbourhood charity, in May 2007. Today it has over 251 members who have contributed almost 5,000 hours of volunteering.

Skills Exchange members volunteer their skills for free to help other members and in return they 'earn' Time Credits – one hour of volunteering equals one Time Credit. Members can then spend Time Credits on volunteer help of their own.

Members receive help and support to organise skills swaps, to find the volunteering opportunity that's right for them, or to develop new and existing skills.

The Skills Exchange also holds regular social events including weekly coffee mornings, workshops and activities giving members the chance to learn new skills and outings to places of interest. As well as helping members get to know each other, these social events are also helping to develop volunteers, tackle isolation and loneliness and build stronger community relations.

Exchanging skills:
haircutting



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The Skills Exchange is a great place to meet new people and to learn new skills and to help others in a way that you thought you couldn't.

*Skills Exchange
member*

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Supporting and developing a culture of volunteering...

Nottingham CVS: Active Citizenship Project

Active citizenship is about taking an active role in your community to make things better. Nottingham Community and Voluntary Service recognised that some active citizenship opportunities were missing from their portfolio of volunteering placements. To broaden the scope, the Active Citizenship project was created in 2009.

The Active Citizenship project matched volunteers with hundreds of new citizenship roles including housing associations, football coaching, NHS organisations and magistrates.

By advertising these roles and advising potential volunteers the Volunteer Centre was

able to attract different types of people than those who traditionally get involved. Nearly 800 new vacancies were created in the six months that the project ran.

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The project generated hundreds of new opportunities which have created a lasting legacy for the project. The benefits to Nottingham have been huge.

Fergus Slade,
Active Citizenship Officer

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Young people working to improve their local community

The logo for Nottingham Community and Voluntary Service is a blue speech bubble shape. Inside the bubble, the text "Nottingham Community and Voluntary Service" is written in white, bold, sans-serif font, arranged in four lines.

**Nottingham
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and Voluntary
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