



# Community Organisers

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# Locality

Two established networks of long term, independent community organisations

Merged to form a new membership body with a common cause – over 400 members in England

A movement based on localism, community assets, enterprise and social action

We want local organisations to meet local needs today, and we want them to survive & thrive so they can meet local needs tomorrow. We want communities to be resilient and cooperative.





## Common responses to the programme

- The voluntary sector is already doing this (or we were until government took away our money)
- It's not sustainable
- Who's going to support the volunteers?
- What about what's already going on – how does this fit?
- People have been consulted to death – why do we need more listening?
- It's just community development re-branded
- We don't want some national programme parachuting people in to OUR community
- Why is a Conservative government interested in empowerment?



# Wikipedia

- **Community organising** is a process where people who live in proximity to each other come together into an organisation that acts in their shared self-interest. **A core goal of community organising is to generate *durable* power for an organisation representing the community , allowing it to influence key decision-makers on a range of issues over time.** In the ideal, for example, this can get community organising groups a place at the table *before* important decisions are made. Community organisers work with and develop new local leaders, facilitating coalitions and assisting in the development of campaigns. Organising makes use of the voluntary efforts of a community's members acting jointly to achieve an economic or other benefit. **As opposed to commercial ventures, gains that result from community organising automatically accrue to persons in similar circumstances who are not necessarily members, e.g. residents in a geographic area or in a similar socioeconomic status, or persons having conditions or circumstances in common who benefit from gains won by the organising effort.** This may include workers who benefit from a campaign affecting their industry, for example, or persons with disabilities who benefit from gains made in their legal or economic eligibility or status.



# Roots

- 1880s Settlement movement, trades unions
- 1900s neighbourhood based social work
- 1940s Saul Alinsky (founder of community organising) – *Rules for Radicals*,
- 1960s Civil rights movement
- 1970s Organising for international development -Liberation theology and Paulo Freire (Brazilian educator) – *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* – listening, dialogue, consciousness-raising
- 1980s Citizens UK – broad-based, urban, faith-based
- 1990s ‘Root Solutions - Listening Matters’ - RE:generate approach – neighbourhood-based



# and community development?

- Consensual community development efforts to improve communities through a range of strategies, usually directed by educated professionals working in government, policy, non-profit, or business organisations, is not community organising. Community development projects often include a community participation component, and often seek to empower residents of impoverished areas with skills for collaboration and job training, among others. However, community development generally assumes that groups and individuals can work together collaboratively without significant conflict or struggles over power to solve community challenges.



# What will happen?

- 500 paid community organisers will spend a year working and learning within a community. The essence of the work is listening and building powerful networks which lead to action.
- Each paid community organiser will recruit along the way at least 15 voluntary activists who will also listen. Some will go on to run their own campaign, project or businesses to address problems which have been articulated widely in the community. Thousands of people will be listened to and will commit to taking action for the benefit of their community.
- At the end of the year some communities will have powerful networks which can continue to develop and grow on their own. Many areas will seek ways to keep 'their' community organisers for longer to support networks, develop plans and take action.





# What do Organisers do?

- Organisers listen to people and encourage dialogue. They do not bring any message or seek any specific outcome. Listening is the key.
- They listen to hundreds of people – one 2 one and then in groups. They are looking for the 'generative themes' that motivate people to act. They organise action around these themes.
- Actions may aim to change the powerful or to create a DIY response, or both. Actions emerge from analysing power and identifying where change can come from. Actions may be entirely new solutions or may build on existing work. The goal is a intelligent shift of power to citizens & communities.



# Training Community Organisers

- Training 'on the job'
- 500 training bursaries (£20k covers salary, expenses and deeper training)
- Foundation training in 'Root Solutions - Listening Matters' by RE:generate
- Guided actions, mentoring, peer learning, e-networks, annual action camp – accredited by OCN
- Choice of deeper learning in 2nd half of year
- Learning is cascaded to voluntary community activists through the process



# Hosting Community Organisers

- COs need 'a place to be'. Hosts will be locally rooted organisations who are interested in transformation and are not afraid of challenge. Hosts provide support and help organisers to hit the ground running
- 11 Kickstarters – places/orgs identified for the bid to provide range and get started quickly
- 100-200 hosts over the lifetime of the programme – diverse locations and types of host. Recruitment ongoing with a new group of hosts every 3 months
- Started recruiting in July. Over 200 applications.



# Where are we now?

- 11 kickstarter hosts have recruited between 2 and 5 trainee community organisers each. This first cohort of 45 organisers had their initial training in Sept and have got started on the ground
- 11 host areas, including one in Leicester and one in Leics had their induction in October and are recruiting their organisers to train in December.
- Next selection of hosts end of November



# Keep Informed

- [www.cocollaborative.org.uk/](http://www.cocollaborative.org.uk/)
- [www.locality.org.uk/communityorganisers/](http://www.locality.org.uk/communityorganisers/)
- Tweets from @corganisers using the hashtags #communityorganisers.
- Programme manager's blog at <http://jesstele.wordpress.com/>.

