

SCHOOL OF PARTICIPATION

WILSON CARLILE HOUSE

July – December 2007



Delivered by Community Pride Initiative
Supported by the staff at Wilson Carlile House, English
Churches Housing (part of Riverside)
Funded by North West Together We Can & NWIN

Introduction

Community Pride has been pioneering Schools of Participation since 2005. Schools are based on the work of the Brazilian Educationalist Paulo Freire and offer people the opportunity to design a programme of learning for themselves, based on their own issues and ideas. In the UK context Community Pride Initiative has found that schools have provided a much needed *alternative* space for communities to think and plan more strategically. Some key characteristics of the school are

1. Participants create their own programme of work based on their own issues and priorities
2. Schools are very inclusive and use materials and methodologies which are accessible for all.
3. Each school results in some specific public action for change.

Community Pride was asked in the Spring of 2007 to run a School of Participation for the residents of Wilson Carlile House, a hostel for homeless men in Longsight run by English Churches Housing Group. Following a series of meetings with key staff and a session with interested residents, we were able to begin the programme in August. Community Pride has been connected to the National and Regional Take Part Programme through Manchester Metropolitan University. Schools of Participation are an accredited module allowing participants to become associate students and to receive certificates of attendance and participation.

Wilson Carlile House



Wilson Carlile House is a hostel for homeless men, situated in the Longsight area of Manchester. Currently they have room for 35 men, plus 10 men who are living independently in the local community but who are still supported by the staff.

During 2007 the English Churches Housing Group, which runs Wilson Carlile, has merged with the much larger Riverside Housing Group.

The merger caused a great deal of upheaval and change in the organisation and the impact on staff and residents has been considerable.

The Programme

The programme has consisted of 14 two hour sessions. The residents spent some time at the beginning of the programme thinking about the issues that they wanted to address and the skills they felt they needed to develop their ideas and plans for action. Each session was divided into two parts. The first part consisted of a short workshop around the development of a particular skill. The second part of the session focused on exploration and analysis of the issues raised by the participants. The major issues identified by the men were on three levels; the personal, the group level and the wider society level. On a personal level, the men identified such things as confidence building, listening skills and working as a team. At the group level the participants wanted to look at the breakdown of relationships with the staff and the lack of appropriate support at the hostel. On a wider level the key issue was the lack of accommodation for men to move on to from the hostel, and the whole ethos of Riverside Housing which seemed to be very different from English Churches Housing Group.



Early on in the process one of the men living independently offered to act as a volunteer and help us with the recruitment and on-going support of the participants. He had been a chef and suggested that we should include a meal at each session. He organised the men and with his help they prepared a nourishing meal each week. As there was no food provided in the hostel the men were glad to eat together and apart from gaining some useful cooking skills they enjoyed the company and the opportunity to build some kind of community spirit in the hostel.

For more details on the programme and content please refer to the following:

See appendix 1. Recruitment leaflet (Hard copy only)

See appendix 2. The full programme

See appendix 3. Examples of a session programme

See appendix 4. A power map of ECHG and Riverside created by the men through their analysis.

The Participants

Over the life of the School we have worked with about 38 men in total. 12 to 15 men attended on a regular basis, which was over a third of the residents. We feel this was a real achievement as the men have a number of challenging issues in their lives, including mental illness, drug and alcohol dependency and complex personal and family situations. Even if a man was unable to attend he usually gave his apologies personally or sent them via staff or other residents. Sessions always began with a “Check-In” to allow people time to say how they were feeling and how well they would be able to cope on that day. The activities were always interactive and short to accommodate the fact that some men found it difficult to concentrate for any length of time.

Links with the Take Part Programme and Manchester Metropolitan University



During the early part of the process we took the participants to the University to enrol them as associate students and to give them some idea of the range of educational opportunities available. Some of the men have expressed real interest in a variety of courses and our one to one mentoring scheme is enabling further work with individuals. At the end of the programme on December 19th, Dr Carol Packham from the University came to present certificates to the participants. As a result of the work achieved the University has offered some further funding to continue the School of Participation for another three months.

Outputs and Outcomes

| Outputs | Outcomes |
|---|---|
| 12 – 15 men attended the School of Participation on a regular basis which given the chaotic nature of their lives was a huge achievement. | The fact that the men set their own agenda for the School of Participation and worked on their own identified issues gave them a genuine ownership of the work. We designed materials that were very accessible for them to explore their issues and kept sessions short and quite fast moving. We spent a good deal of time setting ground rules and negotiating ways of dealing with any conflict or difficulties in the group. |
| 17 residents received certificates of participation (less than 10 sessions) and 9 residents received certificates of attendance (over 10 sessions). | This has been an incentive for the men to consider progression routes into more training or employment. |
| Re-instatement of a weekly residents meeting. | The relationship between the staff and residents has improved considerably and weekly staff and resident meetings have been reinstated. |
| Resolution of a number of issues regarding the garden, kitchen, and television aerials. | The men have felt listened to, whereas before this has not always been the case. They have seen evidence that their views have been taken seriously and this has greatly improved moral at the hostel. |
| A series of meetings with different key representatives from Riverside and ECHG, including meeting with ECHG regional manager. | The men have been able to understand where they fit in a new and bigger structure, how they can influence that structure, and challenge that structure to provide a better quality and effective service. |
| First of a series of staff and resident workshops, attended by 7 staff members and 13 residents. One member of staff has been identified as a key link between staff and residents. | Staff and residents have agreed to have regular workshops to work on issues together. An away day is planned for early 2008. |

| Outputs | Outcomes |
|--|---|
| <p>Reopening of the computer room and proactively looking for other resources to come into the hostel. Manchester Community Information Network have committed supported and resources to help reopen the computer room</p> | <p>This will develop IT skills, push for greater access to information, and network the men with other community groups and organisations in Manchester. Some of the men will help to plan for the future development of this room.</p> |
| <p>As a result of dialogue with the staff a Representatives from the staff and residents have recently attended a training workshop on user involvement run by the Supporting People Team at the Town Hall.</p> | <p>There has been an increased recognition of the need for training around tenancy involvement and the needs of homeless people. Ongoing training of existing and new staff could be delivered in house by an experienced member of staff.</p> |
| <p>Representatives from Wilson Carlile residents are attending Core User Group (Supporting People) and the Service User Network, previously many residents were unaware of these networks. The residents have arranged a meeting with the Supporting People Team in January.</p> | <p>Some of the bigger issues identified by the participants such as the lack of suitable accommodation for the men to move on to is also being addressed. The men have now agreed to attend important local networks where they can raise their concerns at a city-wide, regional and even a national level. There are two key networks in Manchester, The Service User Network and the Core User Group which links directly to the Supporting People Team in the City Council.</p> |
| <p>Further funding has been identified to deliver a phase two of the School of Participation.</p> | <p>This continues the relationship with Manchester Metropolitan University and allows us and the men to build on and develop the work.</p> |
| <p>Invitation to and attendance at the conference on social capital and social cohesion at which Robert Putnam spoke. Two of the men attended and supported one of the facilitators in presenting the work at the hostel.</p> | <p>During the School some of the men attended a conference on social capital and social cohesion at which Robert Putnam spoke. They greatly enjoyed the experience and did some networking of their own, including linking up with Manchester Community Information Network. .</p> |

| Outputs | Outcomes |
|---|---|
| <p>Identification of some small pots of funding to support greater resident involvement and participation.</p> | <p>A willingness of staff to share appropriate budget information with the residents and discuss the available resources. A recommitment by staff to engage residents. The whole issue of resident involvement in the hostel had been neglected due to pressure of resources and staffing issues. In effect no work was being done to engage the residents constructively. The staff team are now looking at ways of resourcing resident involvement more effectively. At the same time the residents have agreed to take more responsibility for helping to plan and organise events and activities in the hostel. The men have been able to voice their views and ideas and now feel that they are being taken more seriously and being listened to. We spent a good deal of time looking at representation and accountability issues within the hostel and with other service providers.</p> |
| <p>Key people from Riverside and English Churches Housing Groups responded positively to the Schools challenge to reengage in Tenant Involvement. This brought new levels of communication and understanding.</p> | <p>The issues raised through the merger have now been identified and are being addressed together with the staff. The School allowed the men to understand the reasons for the merger and the new demands placed on the staff.</p> |
| <p>More men participating in regularly activities and events at the hostel.</p> | <p>An outcome has been that men our coming together and working on joint issues where before they have had limited contact with each other. There has been a noticeable improvement in community spirit e.g. Spending Christmas day together and arranging activities over the Christmas holidays.</p> |
| | |

Participants Evaluation

Each man was asked to identify a goal or a change in each of the following areas which they felt has been achieved.

Individual

- Learnt different things
- Enjoyed meetings and listening to ideas
- The day out
- The cooking
- Independence
- Getting a better knowledge in areas I did not know about
- My own personal awareness
- Robert Putman at the conference with Anne
- Learnt to listen more and stay calm with people.
- Stayed the course instead of not finishing something I have started.

Group / Community

- Do things together
- Getting to know the people in Wilson Carlile House a bit more.
- Working as a team
- Getting fence fixed
- Getting on in a group
- Meeting with staff
- Better communication between residents
- More understanding of others
- A small reduction in negative thinking.
- Brought the lads together and now we are listening together

Wider Society

- Learnt how ECHG works
- Understanding the way ECHG is run.
- Learnt about other organisations that could help people with different problems.

Each man was asked to identify a goal or a change in each of the following areas which they would like to achieve in the future.

Individual

- Learn how to write
- Do more courses

Group / Community

- Listen better
- Try to resolve problems in the hostel with staff.
- Help to get more activities for residents

Wider Society

- Hopefully get some results at the future meeting
- Less homelessness and more support for those who move on to the community with mental health issues.



Each man was asked what difference the School of Participation had made to them personally...

I have learned to engage my brain more before opening my big gob!

There is help out there and it is good to be involved in a group.

Help me to work in a team environment and to learn to listen more than talking, thanks.

It's made me feel you can achieve anything if you put your mind to it and working together brings better outcomes.

It's made me feel involved and I think it has made us as a group closer together.

It has helped me to bring to an end my support.

When you feel you are not apart of student achievements how do you become involved like they. Now I feel somewhat a team, because students work as a team, all of us here have done that like they have now. I hope all of us have done something that becomes apart of our lives. I have gone from strength to strength and my building confidence has become more of a positive step.

Each man was asked for any other comments

It has helped people to listen more.

It has helped the community spirit within the hostel.

Just a big thank you to all involved and can't wait till next year's sessions.

Facilitators Evaluation

Working with Partners

We had several meetings with the Staff at Wilson Carlile House before we began the School and we continued to keep them updated throughout. We built up good relationships with the staff and this was valuable when the tension and difficulties within the hostel began to emerge. We worked with both staff and residents and had a useful joint meeting towards the end of the School to build relationships and look at solutions together. We have planned another meeting for next term and an away day for staff and residents. Attendance at various network meetings in Manchester has enabled the men to build contacts with other service users and with the Supporting People Team at the City Council. Due to our work in Manchester we have been able to invite other organisations with skills and resources to offer support to the hostel. Manchester Metropolitan University has been a great support and is now looking at keeping contacts with the men at the hostel.

Delivery of sessions

We quickly learnt that sessions needed activities and exercises which were short, punchy and to the point. We were able then to maintain good numbers of participants. We had to negotiate about how to deal with conflict and the men created their own strategies for dealing with conflict and were able to monitor and maintain good working relations.

We learnt to be flexible and not panic when people joined late or left suddenly for different reasons. We developed a flexible approach which allowed men to access the sessions in a way appropriate for them.

The food became very important in the process as no food is provided in the hostel and the men never eat together. Many of the men do not know how to cook or eat healthily so we agreed initially to divide each session into two parts with lunch in the middle. The men themselves soon realized that this was not a good idea as it was too hard to get back to work. Towards the beginning of the programme the men suggested we put the meal at the end of each session and this proved very successful. The men chose the time of the sessions and this again worked very well. Overall they took responsibility for ensuring that once we had agreed details they were adhered to.



Mentoring

Only one mentoring session was delivered during Phase 1. More needs to be offered and spread across the course. It was hard to follow up on individual development needs within the time available. We realized that each man had so much happening for him that he needed a great deal of one to one time. We have identified a number of other organizations and agencies that could offer more support especially around training and employment. However, the staff have found in the past that there has been very poor take up of courses offered at the hostel. We have tried to show them that the men will respond to a different approach to training, especially a process that works firstly with the issues faced by them. Early on in the School a young man came to the programme from Iraq. He was quite clear that he wanted to go to college to learn English. We arranged meetings with an interpreter and he is now pretty much in full time study.

Role of volunteer

We were incredibly fortunate in being able to recruit one of the men as a volunteer. His role in supporting and encouraging the other men was crucial to the success of the programme. His leadership and skills motivated the men and he often challenged them in a way that they fully accepted. Although he is now living in the community he is still receiving support and tended to visit the hostel most days. He is now looking for work and we have been able to give him a reference. He has also been talking to the University about social work training starting next academic year.



Practical arrangements

The venue was provided free of charge by Wilson Carlilie House and was comfortable and appropriate. Having the sessions on site was key to success as it was so easy for the men to get there on time. The room we used was actually a sitting room but the men felt safe and comfortable and the informality made it feel less like a formal kind of training space. Many of the men would have been intimidated by such a formal setting. It was vital for the facilitators to be flexible about the environment and adaptable to the situation.

Staff Evaluation



Three staff members responded to the staff evaluation form and there were some significant differences of opinion between the three. The School of Participation was felt to have either no impact or a significant impact. Communication between the facilitators and staff were rated highly by all three staff; however some responses reflected a lack of understanding on what the School of Participation was about. The role of the volunteer was considered essential for the group cooking of a shared meal. Overall the staff response was positive but less than half responded.

Conclusion

The School was mainly focused on the issues being faced by the men raised through the merger of Riverside and ECHG. Riverside has brought with it a new culture and ethos focused much more on performance and targets. The focus on the essential support to men which would enable Riverside to effectively meet these targets has diminished. In the restructuring process housing management has been divided from the support role function of staff. We have witnessed and heard from the men that they are either moved on before receiving the support to be able to make the transition to independence successfully, or they are left in hostels for more than two years with no evidence of any real progression. This separation of the housing management and support role has led to a less holistic approach and does not seem to have been very effective. Men have raised this with the staff and management of ECHG.

With this new structure there is no specific role for the tenancy involvement worker; each person needs to cover an element of this alongside their other work. We have recommended that this role needs to be reinstated, especially given that Riverside's mission statement states that tenant participation and involvement are crucial to the delivery of their services. We have flagged this up and at Wilson Carlile one of the workers has been willing to take on some of this role, but this is temporary. There is no specific role or resources for tenant participation and involvement work.

A much wider scale issue that has been encountered is the lack of housing available for homeless people to move in to once they have been through the hostel system.

In the next three months we will be supporting the men to tackle some of these bigger issues through their networks on a local, regional and national level.



Plans for the Future

We have managed to secure some further resources to enable us to continue until the end of March and we will be meeting with the residents again on January 16 to plan a Phase 2 of the School. Manchester Metropolitan University is supporting this second phase through their work funding by North West Together We Can.

We will doing some joint work with the staff and residents and hope to have an away day in late February. There will be joint work with Manchester Community Information Network to ensure that the Computer Room is utilized and that the men are able to take responsibility for monitoring its use. We are also hoping that through the various networks in Manchester there may be some kind of big regional event to address some of

School of Participation

Wilson Carlile House

Draft Programme

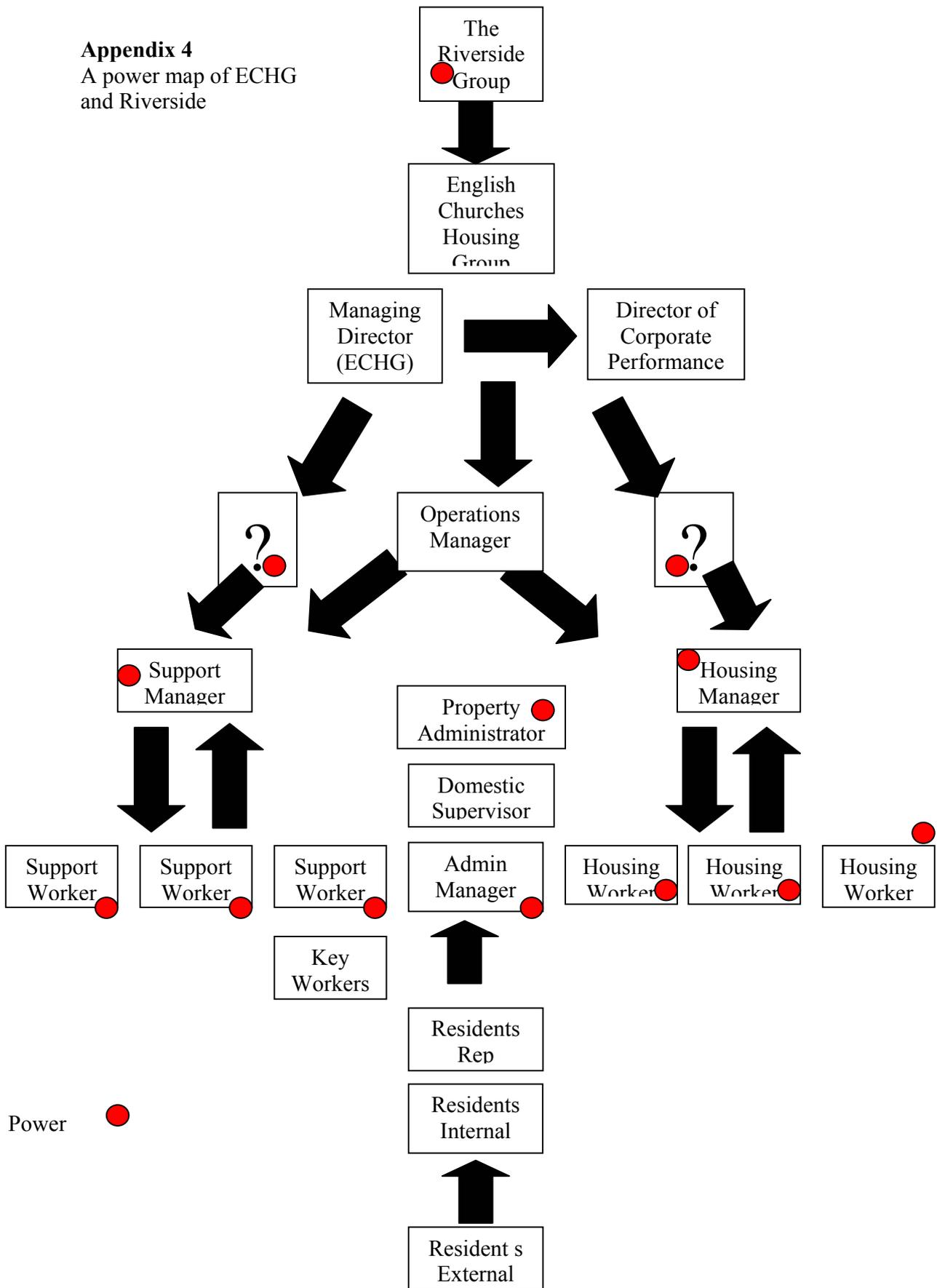
| DATE | SESSION 1 | SESSION 2 |
|---------------------------------|--|---|
| 29 August | Listening Skills [1] | Team Building Ground Rules |
| 5 September | Listening Skills [2] | Housing [1] Personal |
| 12 September | Visit University | Visit University |
| 19 September | Building Confidence | Housing [2] Wilson Carlile |
| 26 September | Influencing Policy [1] | Housing [3] The Bigger Picture |
| 3 October | One To One Mentoring | One To One Mentoring |
| 10 October | Exploring Cultural Diversity | Making good decisions |
| 17th October | Housing He Bigger Picture | Taking Effective Action |
| 24th October | Planning meetings and events | Planning Action |
| 31st October | Conflict management? Speaking in public | Planning Action |
| 7th November | Preparing for meeting with staff | Preparing for meeting with staff |
| 21st November | Preparing for meeting with staff | Evaluation |
| 5th December | Joint workshop with staff and residents | |
| 19th December | Certificates and celebration | |

**School of Participation
Wilson Carlile House
October 31st 2007**

Programme

- 12.00 Arrivals
- 12.10 Welcome and check-in
- 12.15 Recap
Communicating your issues.
- 12.35 Feedback – what have we learnt which is useful for us?
- 12.45 Chinese whispers – why it is important to communicate well.
- 12.55 Break
- 1.10 Community Development Values & Principles
- 1.25 Two working groups. 1 group working on expectations, are these realistic, what could be prioritised for the first meeting, and what could be addressed in further meetings. 2nd group work on the fears and concerns – how could the meeting be run to prevent these fears or concerns happening?
- 1.40 Groups feedback and next steps
- 1.55 Closing exercise – check-in
- 2.00 Food

Appendix 4
A power map of ECHG and Riverside



SCHOOL OF PARTICIPATION

WILSON CARLILE HOUSE

January – March 2008



**Delivered by Community Pride Initiative
Supported by the staff at Wilson Carlile House, English
Churches Housing (part of Riverside)
Funded through North West Citizenship Take Part
Network (MMU) with North West Together We Can &
NWIN funding.**

Introduction

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4. Participants create their own programme of work based on their own issues and priorities
5. Schools are very inclusive and use materials and methodologies which are accessible for all.
6. Each school results in some specific public action for change.

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Wilson Carlile House



Wilson Carlile House is a hostel for homeless men, situated in the Longsight area of Manchester. Currently they have room for 35 men, plus 10 men who are living independently in the local community but who are still supported by the staff.

During 2007 the English Churches Housing Group, which runs Wilson Carlile, has merged with the much larger Riverside Housing Group.

The merger caused a great deal of upheaval and change in the organisation and the impact on staff and residents has been considerable.

The Programme

The programme has consisted of 10 two hour sessions. The residents spent some time at the beginning of the programme thinking about how they wanted to continue their work from the first phase. Most sessions were divided into two parts. The first part consisted of a short workshop around the development of a particular skill. The second part of the session focused on exploration and analysis of the issues raised by the participants. The major issues identified by the men were on three levels; the personal, the group level and the wider society level. On a personal level, the men identified such things as working as a team, communication, public speaking and influencing others. At the group level the participants wanted to look at the Residents Forum. On a wider level the key issue was the Move On Plan Protocol which links to the lack of accommodation for men to move on to from the hostel.



The volunteer from the first phase who has helped with recruitment and the food preparation was no longer able to be involved. A couple of the men offered to act as volunteers early on in the second phase. One of these volunteers took up a place on another course and the other volunteer worked every week bar one on buying and preparing food. This in itself was an achievement for this man to see this piece of work through; given that he did not have the skills of the previous volunteers. Food continued to be vital to the programme; the eating together helped to build the group and community. It provided a focus with the session.

For more details on the programme and content please refer to the following:

See appendix 1. The full programme

See appendix 2. Examples of a session programme

The Participants

The second phase worked with 17 men including 4 new residents who were new to the School of Participation. Over the three months 5 left the programme; four because they moved on to different accommodation, one who took up a course at the Imperial War Museum North. There were a further two men who were doing a computer on the same day but kept in contact and came when they could. On average 8 men came to each session, the largest number was 12 when Carolina Oteyza came in to do a session on Diversity; this had been requested by the residents in the first phase. The lowest number was 4, which was during the last two weeks. There may be two factors effecting this low turn out. Firstly that this may be an issue with endings, secondly the manager who we had worked closely with and who the men had begun to build a rapport with had left. The atmosphere in the hostel appeared very low after his departure.

Links with the Take Part Programme and Manchester Metropolitan University



On the last day we went to the University and Dr. Carol Packham joined the group and presented certificates to the men. Some of the men new to the School of participation enrolled as associate students.

The University awarded 13 certificates; 7 for attendance and 5 for participation.

Outputs and Outcomes

| Outputs | Outcomes |
|--|---|
| 8 - 10 men attended the School of Participation on a regular basis which given the chaotic nature of their lives was a huge achievement. | The fact that the men set their own agenda for the School of Participation and worked on their own identified issues gave them a genuine ownership of the work. We designed materials that were very accessible for them to explore their issues and kept sessions short and quite fast moving. We spent a good deal of time setting ground rules and negotiating ways of dealing with any conflict or difficulties in the group. |
| 5 residents received certificates of participation (less than 6 sessions) and 7 residents received certificates of attendance (over 6 sessions). | This has been an incentive for the men to consider progression routes into more training or employment. |
| Facilitator presented workshop at Take Part Seminar (18/03) on focused on Wilson Carlile SoP. | Widening awareness of issues facing homeless men, and principles on Popular education. |
| Consultation on weekly residents meeting with staff and residents, producing a new format as a House meeting removing the them and us element, and covering other issues raised. | This new format has not yet been initiated, but commitments have been made to work more collaboratively. |
| Resolution of a number of issues regarding including the gardening project. This was through an analysis exercise which enabled the men to produce a strategy to take the project forward, which they presented to the staff team. | The men have been involved in the gardening project and some of their ideas are being put into place e.g. punch bag. |
| An information sharing meeting with the Support Manager and a representative from Riverside regarding move on accommodation and process and tenant participation. | The men have been able to understand where they fit in a new and bigger structure, how they can influence that structure, and challenge that structure to provide a better quality and effective service. |
| Direct link with staff member at Riverside Housing | Input into improving tenant participation in Riverside/ECHG projects. |

| Outputs | Outcomes |
|--|---|
| There is a plan for the computer room and a member of staff has been identified to lead on this project. This work will be done in partnership with Manchester Community Information Network. | There has been a slight shift in culture regarding partnership working with other agencies and seeking external funding |
| Wilson Carlile residents have been kept informed about the meeting with the Core User Group (Supporting People) and the Service User Network. | Residents are having more opportunity to influence wider policy debates. |
| Resident involvement in Move on Plan Protocol (MOPPs) consultation. | In the long term partners working together to address barriers and identify solutions to the lack of move on accommodation. |
| Trip to London (In planning stage) for meeting with local MP, Chair of All Party Parliamentary Group on poverty and the Chair of All Party Parliamentary Group on Housing. | Presentation of key issues facing homeless men in Manchester to key policy makers. |
| Budget information regarding tenant participation has been shared with residents. | The residents feel they have a little bit of say about how this money is spent and know that their funds for activities and the House meeting. |
| Key people from Riverside and English Churches Housing Groups responded positively to the Schools challenge to reengage in Tenant Involvement. This brought new levels of communication and understanding. Riverside is undertaking a study project of tenant involvement. The worker came to visit the School of Participation. Ongoing form first phase. | The issues raised through the merger have now been identified and are being addressed together with the staff. The School allowed the men to understand the reasons for the merger and the new demands placed on the staff. Ongoing form first phase. |
| Facilitators called in to Support Managers office because the School of Participation had led the men to become assertive and challenging some of the procedures or lack of procedures within the hostel. | Men are more knowledgeable and assertive; and began to realise they had rights and with a new gained self respect used their power to try and influence change. |
| The 1 man who was able to complete the baseline evaluation at the beginning and end of the course showed increases in almost all the areas. See Baseline Evaluation section. | This could be seen as an indicator of all the men who access the programme increasing in each of the baseline evaluation areas. |

Baseline Evaluation

Early in the course we asked each man to complete a simple Baseline evaluation form. This consisted of 6 statements which they had to rate from 0 – 10. The statements related to the outputs and outcomes of the course and the funders. It was designed to help both the facilitators and men to recognise progress and development, and areas where the course could be improved.

Eight men completed the form at the early stages of the course and four at the end. However, only 1 man filled in the form twice leaving very little evidence of progression across the whole group. When writing this report no opportunity had become available to contact each man and ask them to complete the form for the second time.

The six statements were as follows:

- The amount of influence you have on decisions taken in Wilson Carlile House.
- Your confidence.
- Your skills and understanding to feel able to get involved and take positive group action in Wilson Carlile House.
- The importance of Social Justice and opportunities for all.
- How linked you are with local networks and resources.
- Your capacity as a citizen to engage in activities which you identify as civil or civic. (Civic relates to local government activity and Civil relates to community activity).

The 1 man who completed the form twice had increases of between 2 – 6 in all but one statement. How linked he felt to local networks and resources had been scored 2 points lower. The scores on the second form ranged from 5 – 10, where as on the first form all but one score had been below 5.

The other evidence in the report indicates the growth in confidence, skills and understanding. The report also reflects the barriers found in participation and housing systems which work against progress in some of the other areas.

Participants Evaluation

What difference has the School of Participation made to YOU?

It has given me a wider opening to know what is available to me and it's given me the chance to learn more about the lack of resources as a student.

It has given me a wider opening to know what is available to me.

In the group I feel happy and useful and on the way to getting back to my flat.

A positive experience – to work with Anne / Di / other residents (I'm a bit of a loner usually) and it was nice to have a forum and a structure – many thanks.

It is the only place to trust

A place for self motivation and a more structured environment

Something to take away with me when I leave.

Helped me to move out, and the encouragement to move on.

What difference has the School of Participation made to the group or Wilson Carlile?

I have found out that other people in my situation have a lot to offer - they are good honest and decent and this has helped me keep faith with people.

Without the group and the people involved there would be no outlet or chance to show goodness.

Ability to challenge the staff when feel not getting a quality of service we need.

In my self in general I think the School of Participation has made a Big impact on the residents side of things. But in general it should be brought more forward with the charity itself.

A forum to interact with other residents.

What difference has the School of Participation made to the wider society/Manchester?

It has helped put my situation into perspective

- housing – employment – the real world.
- Again without it I would not know who to turn to.

The School of Participation would have made a large impact on the community in general and other places in Manchester and with what you are doing it gives others hostels a wider scale and anew beginning.

Any other comments?

I think it is the start of something big and a new chapter if people would only listen.

Facilitators Evaluation

Working with Partners

The facilitators relationship with the staff at Wilson Carlile has been very difficult this term, compared with last term as there appear to be major issues in their team. The facilitators felt that staff may have felt undermined by the work of the School of Participation; particularly as the men became more assertive and critical. The support manager with whom the facilitators built up a good working relationship left in early March before the end of the programme. Despite the fact that he had made some really good inroads into the management of the project, the facilitators detected regression after he left. This Manager had brought a level of leadership in to the Hostel which has again been lost with his departure. We have a good relationship with one particular member of staff, who appears to have become demoralized and frustrated. The facilitators are still working with the staff and seeking to find ways of supporting the new House meeting and other pieces of work started with School of Participation.

There are still connections with the Supporting People team the Core User Group and the Service User Network. The link will continue as the MOPP process developed through the Supporting People Team.

We now have direct links with Riverside and will be using these to influence Tenant Participation in the Hostel.

We have ongoing good relationships with Manchester Metropolitan University which has been a great support. One of the facilitators gave a workshop on the principles of popular education focusing on the Wilson Carlile School of Participation.

Delivery of sessions

Building on what we learnt from the first phase we continued to deliver sessions with short activities to sustain concentration levels. The further we continued in the programme the men's concentration expanded; this allowed for greater listening and depth of reflection and discussion. The sessions continued to be a mixture of real life issues and fun activities.

The food continued to be very important in the process no food is provided in the hostel and the men never eat together. With the departure of the volunteer from the first phase, who was a chef, we were delighted to see that several men with far less experience stepped forward. They were well able to take ownership and responsibility for the planning and preparation and provided good meals.



Mentoring

Only one mentoring session was delivered during Phase 2. The limited number of sessions and the wealth of material needing to be covered meant that we restricted the mentoring to one session each. We had hoped to offer more. However informal support was provided on a weekly basis to any man who needed.

Practical arrangements

The venue was provided free of charge by Wilson Carlile House and was comfortable and appropriate. Having the sessions on site was key to success as it was so easy for the men to get there on time. The room we used was actually a sitting room but the men felt safe and comfortable and the informality made it feel less like a formal kind of training space. Many of the men would have been intimidated by such a formal setting. It was vital for the facilitators to be flexible about the environment and adaptable to the situation.

Length of course , endings and other barriers.

We took a risk of moving into phase two because the men's lives are changing all the time. We felt it was a success to sustain a core group of men in the second phase as quite a lot of the men were in the process of moving on or accessing other training, in the early part of the course. We continued with a core group with new men joining it, and on the whole this worked well. We did have to include more group building activities than we planned to, to incorporate the new members. The question is posed: Would it have been better to end and look for a completely new group of men?

The men facing the ending of the School appeared very difficult for the men and several of the men who had attended throughout chose to stay away for the last two sessions, including the celebration and certificate giving. The facilitators recognized the pain involved in the ending and in hindsight should have talked more about this throughout the sessions, in order to plan and reassure the men. In addition to the ending of the School, the manager left, and the impact on the positive feeling which had developed over the early months of the year was considerable.

Bringing about change and action can be a long process and with the each mans particular needs many struggled to be able to sustain the energy and commitment to ride the ups and down of the process and see it through. This is influenced by the instant culture and society we all live in; where we wait for nothing and can get almost everything on demand

The longer we worked with the men the more we became aware of the factors which impact on them, in terms of their mental health and misuse of substances. This had lulled us into a false sense of security and then and we progressed wit the second phase, more of these factors came into play and we needed different strategies and approaches to come into play. As facilitators we could have paid more attention to the personal dimension of the School.

There are still a number of action steps which are still in process:

- The new House meeting
- The Move on Plan Protocol process (feedback from consultation and implementation)
- The links with Manchester Community Information Network
- The taking of key group members to a meeting at the House of Commons with key people in government.
- Meeting with Riverside about overall Tenant Participation

Conclusion

The men in the hostel have immense talent and potential and the fact they have worked on the School of Participation for several months, shows their ability. This talent and potential is not being channeled, nurtured or developed in the hostel process. What is the hostel for or offering? – is it just a roof over men’s heads, or is it something more. The men recognized the strength and usefulness of coming together to work as a group and community. One of the things the men wanted and looked for was a group; they recognized that it is a place where they can grow. How can men be fitted to become active citizens in their communities, when a hostel leaves them isolated in their rooms, with only bumping into each other in the communal areas of the hostel. The men recognized the benefit and importance of eating together. Unless hostel provision recognizes the need for these opportunities to be human it will fail to help men to make the transition back into the community. The School of Participation was the only opportunity the men had to meet as a group. If the hostel is trying to promote reintegration in the community then how this be achieved? A strategy, resources and plan for how personal growth and development are implemented is needed.

The School of Participation covered issues which the men were facing and wanted to address; many action steps regarding these are still in process. The School of Participation attempted and was successful in enabling the men with new skills, experiences and knowledge so that they could effect change both as individuals and as a group in the situations they face. The men have developed as active citizens which will be of use now and in future life situations.

Recommendations

- Riverside and ECHG have to think about providing more leadership and strong management in Wilson Carlile.
- Riverside and ECHG need to consider the staff structure, as it lacks overall leadership and management.
- There need to be far more structured activities in Wilson Carlile for them to develop and move forward.
- There need to be more structured and consistent activities, as part of planned approach.

- There needs to be more training for staff on working with homeless men – particularly on how to engage the men in a positive way.
- Riverside and ECHG need to have a staff member with dedicated time, resources and responsibility for supporting Tenant Participation.
- Riverside and ECHG need put in to place agreed policies and procedures which are implemented in a fair, transparent and consistent way.

The impact of the merger has been enormous and the senior management do not appear to have either prepared for the change or addressed it several months later. The culture and ethos of Riverside is very different to ECHG and this needs to be worked out as it is not clear. This has an impact of staff and resident moral and leadership. It has put staff and residents at odds with each other. This whole area needs addressing.



Plans for the Future

We have managed to secure some further resources to enable us to continue until the end of March and we will be meeting with the residents again on January 16 to plan a Phase 2 of the School. Manchester Metropolitan University is supporting this second phase through their work funding by North West Together We Can.

We will doing some joint work with the staff and residents and hope to have an away day in late February. There will be joint work with Manchester Community Information Network to ensure that the Computer Room is utilized and that the men are able to take responsibility for monitoring its use. We are also hoping that through the various networks in Manchester there may be some kind of big regional event to address some of the bigger housing issues raised through the School.