

Newcastle Conflict Resolution Network

Working to Build Good Relations

Hello everyone. Welcome to our eighth newsletter.

We know that in many places around Newcastle the community feeling that holds people together and creates good relations is alive and well.

1. A council survey of residents in 2012 showed that:

- Two in three (66%) felt they belong in their local area
- Most had friendships or close associations (69%) and stopped to talk (61%) with people near where they live. 61% were comfortable asking a neighbour for help. A smaller number (29%) borrow things from or exchange favours with neighbours
- 35% agreed they can influence decisions affecting their area. This is higher than the regional average but had declined from 41% in 2010
- A third agree that local people pull together to improve things locally, but the same number disagree
- 20% did some formal volunteering, and 33% gave informal unpaid help to others, in the month before the survey – close to national averages

2. But, given what's happening, how might this experience change over the next 12 months?

- in the next three years to the end of 2016, city council spending will reduce by a third by about £100 million
- more cuts are likely to follow
- government reductions in the national welfare budget are predicted to lose the city £83 million or more each year (NOMIS labour market statistics, Feb 2011)

3. NCRN and its partners are concerned not only that changes could lead to greater inequality, but also to an increase in destructive conflict in the city.

This newsletter summarises:

- some practical consequences of the cuts
- the resulting dangers that could lead to damaging conflict (page 2)

And it shares:

- some of the things being done in Newcastle to reduce or prevent destructive conflict (pages 3 and 4)

GOOD RELATIONS: BUILDING A NATIONAL COALITION (Organised with ARCH in partnership with, and part-funded by, Talk for a Change and International Alert)

If you:

- are keen to be updated about the different approaches and techniques being used across the country.
- are interested in being part of a national coalition of people influencing the way forward...

You are invited to this event - one of eleven being held around the country exploring how the collective voice of those building good relations can be better heard.

Monday 15 July 2013; 9.30 for 10 to 4.30
(lunch provided)

**Friends Meeting House, West Avenue,
Gosforth, NE3 4ES**

**To book your free place,
contact Pauline Bittlestone:
ncrn1@yahoo.co.uk 079009 35664**

NCRN is a group of Newcastle people aiming to:

- prevent, reduce and resolve actual destructive conflict
- support those doing so
- channel experience, facilitation and resources

Some possible practical consequences of the cuts:

1. the disruption of communities

- because of the introduction of “the bedroom tax”, thousands of people may have to leave their homes and local communities over the next few years, to move to different, smaller homes in other areas. The reform reduces the amount of benefit people get if they are deemed to have a spare bedroom in their council or housing association home.

2. particular impact on young people

- loss of council youth and play services.
- proposals most likely to impact on young people are: reductions in or closure of libraries, sports, leisure, arts and cultural activities and facilities; reduced early intervention around community safety, school attendance and anti-social behaviour; and reduced access to free home-to-school travel, apprenticeships and Connexions support.
- without extra resources, by the end of 2016 cuts may well include the closure of Sure Start Children Centres, where parents can currently access integrated health, parenting, education and employment support and the educational psychology service.

3. particular impact on already-disadvantaged and vulnerable groups

- without extra resources (and in addition to reduced benefits), there could be some rationing of social care and damaging reductions in environmental and cleaning services.
- the closure of services like Customer Service Centres.

4. greater division within the city

- the closure of public spaces may restrict the opportunities to meet and interact with people of other backgrounds.
- a number of areas currently assessed as having decent standards and needing less support may resent resources being transferred to areas judged as needing more.

5. possible increase in crime

- although overall crime rates in the city have reduced significantly from 10 years ago, acquisitive crime increased last year in the West End, including products like meat and baby food.

Possible coming dangers in terms of potential destructive conflict:

- the loss of hopes and dreams – specially (but not only) in young people who lack aspiration and positive things to do
- a lack of knowledge about exemptions and flexibility to the reforms
- given that Newcastle is more diverse than 10 years ago (14.7% are not white (2011 census data), compared to 6.9% in 2001), questions about ‘who gets what, and why’, could become more intense
- public services making piecemeal and inconsistent responses which tend to reward more vocal residents at the expense of those in greatest need
- the reluctance of some to acknowledge a potential growing political gap
- an increase in racist confidence and hate crime
- the potential need for reactive (and costly) services should tensions and problems increase.

NCRN's latest response:

1. Helping maintain a network of people (residents and paid staff) who are trained in handling conflict

a. Next event: Good Relations: Building a National Coalition (see page 1)

b. 'Handling Conflict' workshops

Following our first highly successful series, and a new 'taster' at the St Martin's Centre in Walker, NCRN ran a free residential weekend workshop for local people and workers in March. All who took part rated it as 'excellent' and two further workshops are planned for 2013: A Level One workshop 13-15 September, and a Level Two, probably at St Martin's in November.

c. Recent event: A training day – Facilitating in a Diverse Society (5 June)

87 people attended this workshop led by Mike Fitter (consultant psychologist with wide experience of mediation and conflict resolution), Gina Clayton, Leah Bijelić and Neil Denton. It explored ideas that help make for good facilitation, eg:

- starting by making people feel warmly welcome and comfortable.
- then addressing unacknowledged grievances and pain, and how this can lead to conflict with others whose stories are different, or not well known.
- helping people recognise the depth, complexity and validity of others' stories.

- sharing more of our own stories, stepping outside our own role and meeting others authentically from our own feelings without becoming emotional.
- sharing stories of how best, and when, to challenge the stereotypical single stories that people perpetuate about others in pubs, on social media or during public protests.



One of the four facilitators sharing a distressing personal experience of conflict.

2. Work with young people

a. Zippy's Friends and Zippy at Home

By July 2013, over 160 children in two primary schools in Walker will have taken part in a programme which:

- teaches children emotional coping skills by working with and through their teachers' in school.
- involves their parents and carers in the hope of extending the school-based work into the family.

NCRN continues to support and develop this work and will be pleased to share information about the work to other schools and community groups.

For more info, see our last newsletter on www.newcastlecrn.org.uk

b. WIRED! A course of five sessions for 15 front-line professionals working with challenging young people in difficulties. It explored:

- how trauma/neglect affects brain development in children
- the impact on behaviour
- how this knowledge can transform approaches to working with young people

This pilot course, part-funded by ARCH, ran between April and June 2013. Rating its helpfulness, participants gave it an average 8.8 out of 10. All would recommend it to colleagues.

The aspects most liked were:

- The role plays: ‘.. made training so real and relevant’
- Learning about the brain and trauma ‘In particular the areas covering the fight or flight responses and behaviours that indicate a young person is feeling threatened.’
- Stress and relaxation: ‘both fascinating and practically useful’
- Learning about difference: ‘.. personality types and how knowledge of our own can help us to be more mindful in our dealings with others’
- The course design: ‘The balance of theory and practice’

Aspects for future courses:

Coping with really confrontational situations, dealing with endings, dealing with inappropriate sexual behaviour, background materials, eg booklet and personal work between sessions.

In response to further requests from organisations, NCRN is developing this, possibly also with parents and teachers, and will be pleased to share information about the work with other enquirers.

A recent report from four major churches, called **‘The Lies we Tell Ourselves’**, challenges six ‘myths’ about the poor which enable the majority to live with the comfortable assumption that both poverty and wealth are deserved.

Myth 1: ‘They’ are lazy and don’t want to work.

Myth 2: ‘They’ are addicted to drink and drugs

Myth 3: ‘They’ are not really poor – they just don’t manage their money properly

Myth 4: ‘They’ are on the fiddle

Myth 5: ‘They’ have an easy life

Myth 6: ‘They’ caused the deficit

See: a 2-page summary addressing those myths at:

<http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Truth-And-Lies-Report-smaller.pdf>

For its coming fifth year of work, NCRN has received full funding from Newcastle Quaker Meeting and the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust. Extra support has also been received from the Hospital for God at Greatham. NCRN warmly thanks them all.

**For more info about any of this, e-mail: ncrn1@yahoo.co.uk
or ring Pauline Bittlestone, 079 009 35664
or visit our website: www.newcastlecrn.org.uk**