

The Power of Communities

What we can do... together

Much of our lives we can feel as if we are controlled by people and institutions far removed from the world we inhabit. Whereas once people socialised regularly with those living around them, we now spend on average 26 hours per week watching fictional characters socialise on TV. Basic ingredients of our existence, such as food and clothes, are flown to us from other parts of the world. A decision made on the other side of the globe can close a factory down the road. And yet...



...We are not powerless. When people get together with others around them, to improve something, to change something, to create something, they can make a profound difference. If we act together, with vision, determination and self-belief, we can transform our communities, here and now.

Look around and we find examples of community action transforming virtually every aspect of social life:

- *Housing* – tenants associations having their say, tenant management organisations running social housing...
- *Environment* – community gardens, green gyms, clean up campaigns, community allotments, neighbourhood wardens...
- *Jobs and income* – local labour schemes, resident services organisations, credit unions...
- *Skills sharing* – child-sitting circles, local exchange trading schemes, parenting projects...
- *Local services* – neighbourhood forums, community businesses, development trusts...
- *Social events* – fun days, summer trips, festivals, lunch clubs
- *Culture and sports* – community arts projects, sports clubs...
- *Children and young people* – breakfast and after school clubs, community run youth clubs, play schemes...

And there's a great pay-off for individuals: research has shown that participating in your community leads to better health, well-being and longer life.