

Integreat Yorkshire – Town Team Facilitator Development Programme

Empowering local communities in Yorkshire

Overview

Town Teams work within communities to identify and shape projects to transform the neighbourhood. The Town Team project sits at the heart of Yorkshire Forward's programme to improve the regional economy. In 2005, Integreat Yorkshire took over responsibility for providing training support and quickly devised a skills development programme for members of the Town Teams. Participants found this new training invaluable as it improved their ability to consult with the community and take difficult decisions. Partnerships and relationships were forged, with the potential that other geographic regions could benefit from a similar training project.

Town Teams are supported by the Partnership Skills Programme (PSP), but this support will end in March 2009. Integreat Yorkshire will undertake an external review to identify the work that has made a valuable contribution to the longer-term sustainability and success for towns in their renaissance programme. Some of the mechanisms used within the PSP influenced the development of the Town Team Facilitator Development Programme, designed to create facilitators within Town Teams, develop skills in regeneration and ensure knowledge stayed within the local community.

The Town Team Facilitator Development Programme included four phases of development activities: participant identification, guidance in formal facilitation, training of members to facilitate a meeting, and participate in action learning sets to embed the learning.

Participants found the training invaluable as they gained skills that helped with important community consultation and decision-making. The continued partnership between members and Integreat Yorkshire has been strengthened and has encouraged improved communication between the Town Teams and the Regional Centre for Excellence, which in turn could feedback positively into the Regional Development Agency.

Summary

Town Teams are groups of people who work with their community to identify and shape projects designed to transform the place where they live.

Integreat Yorkshire trained facilitators within the Town Teams to develop regeneration skills and ensure that learning stayed within the community.

The programme had three phases: identify participants, provided formal facilitation training, facilitate a number of meetings.

Participants gained skills which supported meaningful community consultation and community decision making.

Integreat Yorkshire now has a better understanding of the individuals who join Town Teams. Improving their skills will be an important contribution to future sustainable communities projects.

Background

Between 2005 to 2009 the Partnership Skills Programme (PSP) continued to support Town Teams across Yorkshire in the development of regeneration skills. Town Teams are at the forefront of Yorkshire Forward's Regeneration and Renaissance for Yorkshire and Humberside. An Integreat Yorkshire external review was undertaken where the PSP was identified as making a valuable contribution to the long-term sustainability of towns in the renaissance programme through the Town Teams programme.

It is considered vital to ensure the programme is fully supported once the initial funding ends in March 2009, particularly in terms of keeping skills in the local community. At the same time it is also critical that the skills of the Town Teams members are at a level where they could continue to deliver their objectives. The audit also revealed a worrying shortfall which needed to be addressed. It devised a programme to make sure that not only could the Town Teams continue to deliver their essential service, but that the teams remained fully qualified for the job.

The Project

Integreat Yorkshire designed the project to have three phases of development activity:

Phase One identified appropriate candidates for training as facilitators.

Phase Two was a three-day intensive facilitation training course for all members of the pilot scheme, led by a qualified practitioner in facilitation.

Phase Three offered participants an opportunity to facilitate meetings within a suitable and relevant environment. Participants also attended monthly Action Learning Sets to provide on-going development in a supportive environment.

The Impact

The project generated a number of benefits for the participants and partners. Participants felt empowered by the commitment shown in them to deliver the regeneration programme in their local communities. They described higher self-confidence and widened personal horizons. The development of facilitation skills and active learning gave the members a better understanding of consensus building, community consultation and decision making.

The potential for facilitators to be active elsewhere, cross-fertilising ideas and sharing best practice with other local Town Teams, has helped support Yorkshire Forward's wider Regeneration and Renaissance programme.

Participants found the training genuinely useful. As a result the idea of raising the skills level of members as a way of promoting regeneration has been judged a success. The relationships built between participants and Integreat Yorkshire have created a better understanding of what motivates people to become involved in Town Teams. This has encouraged better communication between the Town Teams and the Regional Centre for Excellence, which in turn could feedback positively into the Regional Development Agency.

Lessons Learned

Invest in your people. The idea of building on and improving the skills of the Town Team members was key to the success of the Town Team regeneration project. Participants were then even more committed to put these skills to use in their communities.

Building strong relationships leads to success. The relationships built between participants and Integreat Yorkshire resulted in a better understanding of the people who are motivated to become involved in Town Teams. This ultimately led to better communication and relevant training to achieve the best results for the communities.

Find the right people to train. Integreat Yorkshire ran into difficulties in the identification and recruitment of suitable candidates, which led to fewer facilitators being trained than planned. It's vital to understand and target the potential members at the outset to ensure success for the communities and partners involved.

Reference

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Project Images

