

LOCATION:

Northamptonshire

PARTICIPANTS:

Workshop participants included children and young people (aged 10-17) who live in the community, and representatives of organisations who work and live in the community. These representatives included: Community Association members, Local Police, youth group workers and the Borough Council.

ORGANISATION OF THE EVENT:

The workshop was planned and run by a group of young people from the local community in collaboration with researchers of the NUNC project. The young people participated in three planning events, led activities on the day and contributed to this workshop note.

PURPOSE:

The aim of the workshop was to initiate a conversation between the young people and local decision makers. It was an opportunity for adults engaged in community policy, planning and development to hear directly from the children and young people about issues that are important to them.

This Workshop Note is from a community event in January, 2012. The children, young people and adults who participated in the workshop participated in various group discussions and a community walk; this note will present the key issues and ideas made at the event. We hope this note can be used directly in future work regarding provision for the community, and signify the beginning of the involvement of children and young people in community discussions and activities.

WHAT WE LIKE ABOUT LIFE IN THE COMMUNITY:

Throughout the event many positive comments were made about the local community by participants: it is a well designed place in a good location; there is a good local school and access to shops; there are good outdoor spaces for walks and to visit and people in the community are friendly and helpful. As part of the workshop, participants were asked to contribute to the 'Fountain of the Future' – writing their reflections about different aspects of their community. Many positive comments were also written on here. The following are a few of these:

'A friendly place.'

'Good neighbours and people who care about the community both young and old.'

'Good to know and talk to the local police on a daily basis.'



Presentation by one of the young organisers

LEISURE AND FACILITIES

During the discussions and guided walks, community facilities, both present and future, were reviewed. The community is eagerly awaiting the construction of a community centre; currently in the early construction phase. Numerous suggestions were made as to what the new centre could be used for. Suggestions included: that it should be all inclusive for everyone; for community events; residents should be able to hire it for private parties; a place for worship; house children and young people's groups (i.e. pre-school, brownies, scouts and dance club). Several young people at the workshop expressed the need for somewhere to socialise and play indoors, currently there is nowhere for them to do so.

FOUNTAIN LAKE

The lake was identified as a good community space, for families, children, young people and dogs. It is seen as a safe place to go by children (due to the on looking houses). In terms of suggested improvements, participants noted that it is difficult to see the slope down to the lake in the dark and more benches are needed in the area.

LOCAL SHOPS

Throughout the day, the shops were mentioned as a safe place to be (although there is a lot of traffic in the car park, it is well lit) and provides a good facility. One group discussed the need of a coffee shop for families and young people in the local community.

WOOD

A wooded area runs to the centre of the community. Positive comments regarding this space included: it is open, pretty, it attracts nature, it is a good place to play in the fresh air. Children feel safe playing in this area during daylight hours and enjoyed going there with friends. Suggested improvements to the area included: bark chippings on the pathway so that access is less muddy; the area should have improved drainage and there should be a dog fouling bin in the area.

TWELVE ARCHES

This was identified as a place which used to be unsafe, but since the railings have been erected around the site, it is much safer. It was noted that there is litter in the area and the fence should be painted a more subtle colour to blend in with the natural surroundings and the area should be planted with further shrubbery.

PARK

There is currently only one park designed for children and young people. Children and young people identify this as a meeting place which is fun and has good equipment. There were several references to problems with litter and broken glass on the ground; and the issue of maintenance. The local youth band often collected litter. The young people taking part in this task pointed out the lack of proper bins and suggested suitable places to put these. There were numerous expressions of the need for a space specifically for the older young people. Their wishes included: a park with larger equipment; a skate and a bike park.



Community guided walks with workshop participants

COMMUNITY DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

Numerous comments were made throughout the workshop about the design of the community and the ongoing construction work. In terms of the design, the participants were positive. They said: there are a range of house of different sizes and styles for different families; the community is well designed; the houses are efficient; the site is in a good location, close to the countryside; and within the community there are large green spaces. Very small gardens were mentioned as the only real downside of the community design. However, numerous comments were made regarding living with the ongoing development and construction of the site. Both children and adults made reference to this. Their comments included: muddy roads; the wish for cleaner roads and less construction.



*'Fountain of the Future'
(the fish represented what they like about living in the community)*

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE LIVING IN THE COMMUNITY

In terms of children and adults working together towards common community goals and improvements, presently, this is limited. From the comments left on the 'Fountain of the Future' and individual reflections made on the evaluation forms, it is hoped that the workshop will be a starting point for adults and children working together in the community. The comments (to the right) by children, young people and adults are indicative of this:

'Younger children have good ideas and are worth listening to.'

'Actively go out, talk to / listen to young people more.'

'Great to see so many young people caring about how [name of the community] develops.'

'Will make more time to talk / listen to them [young people] in the future.'



Workshop participants discussing by the 'Fountain of the Future'

'FOUNTAIN OF THE FUTURE'

The lake was designed to elicit feelings and thoughts from those that attended the workshop. The fish in the lake represented what people like about living in the community, the fountain droplets represented what people would like to see changed in their community and the fence posts, what they would do as a result of the workshop. In total, 29 comments were made by children, young people and adult workshop participants. The local primary school decided to keep the display in the school, for more members of the community to contribute to.

IF THE COMMUNITY WAS A PERSON, WHAT WOULD IT LOOK LIKE?



Workshop participants split into four groups (a mixture of all ages) and they were asked to draw a section of a body, in line with the question 'if the community was a person, what would it look like?' The resulting body is shown on the left. Whilst drawing, each group discussed the rationale for various bodily elements:

<i>Smiling face:</i>	Happiness
<i>V sign:</i>	The potential the community has
<i>?!:</i>	The ideas that people have
<i>Coloured hair:</i>	Diversity of people
<i>Coloured body:</i>	Diversity of people
<i>Big ears:</i>	Listening to each other
<i>Holding hands:</i>	Connectedness around the community / with others
<i>Patches on knees:</i>	Local identity
<i>Wellington:</i>	Mud and puddles
<i>Trainer:</i>	Healthy lifestyles / walkers and runners.
<i>Duck:</i>	Places to go

During the day there were several references made to the diversity of people living in the area and that more needs to be done to facilitate integration. One participant commented: 'would like to see the various nationalities celebrating their differences together.'

REFLECTIONS FROM THE YOUNG ORGANISERS:

Five young people assisted with the planning and delivery of the event. After the workshop they wrote about the day. The following extracts are from their summaries, about their participation and hopes for the future:

PARTICIPATING IN THE WORKSHOP:

'We did a lot of activities a quiz, some icebreakers, a walk and other interactive games. The band is a club that pays back into the community instead of paying the leaders.'



A selection of photographs taken at the workshop

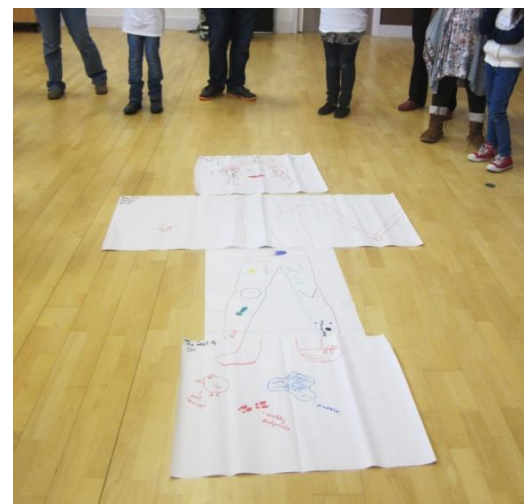


THEIR HOPES FOR THE FUTURE:

'I hope that we will be able to run another event like the one we did (today) in the future because it was very successful.'

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION:

'I hope that the adults of [place name] will listen to children and take on some of the advice that all the children gave.'



Young people and adults working together on a workshop activity

LOCAL BAND PLAYED AT THE WORKSHOP



The local band played at the end of the event to all participants and parents.

FEEDBACK FROM THE EVENT:

Overall, feedback from the event was positive. Adults' comments on the learning from the day mainly related to gaining new understanding of the valuable contribution of the children and young people. In this way the workshop achieved the aim of initiating and enhancing adult /child relations in the community. Young people identified a broad range of topics that they were engaged in and their hope for new events to discuss and contribute to their community as a good place for all to live and play.

TWO-THIRDS OF THE WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS SAID THEY WOULD BE INTERESTED IN ADULTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE CONTINUING TO WORK TOGETHER IN THE COMMUNITY.

NEW URBANISMS, NEW CITIZENS RESEARCH PROJECT:

This workshop note stems from an ESRC funded research project into the lives of children and young people growing up in new developments in Northamptonshire, a region which has seen unprecedented growth in the past decade. Primarily, the research focuses on young people's mobility within new urban areas, their sense of belonging and implications for their citizenship and their status within planning and participation of new communities.

RESEARCH FINDINGS:

If you or your organisation would like to receive specific outputs from the NUNC project please contact: Professor Pia Christensen (PI), Institute of Education, University of Warwick, Coventry, CV4 7AL. Email: P.H.Christensen@warwick.ac.uk

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