



Durham Rural

Community Council



Annual Review 2006 / 2007



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Introduction

This is the Annual Review of Durham Rural Community Council (DRCC) for the year ended 31 March 2007.

We are a rural infrastructure organisation, providing support, advice and information as part of a range of services for rural communities. We represent County Durham's perspective on rural issues at county, regional and national levels, working with a wide range of partners to design & deliver services.

DRCC is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. Established over 70 years ago, we operate across County Durham, primarily in the rural areas.

This review covers the work that we have developed and delivered during the past 12 months:

- Outreach work with communities
- Voluntary / community sector (VCS) support & partnership
- Organisational development

Each section sets out what we did, what we achieved and how it has influenced the work that we carry forward into 2007 - 2008. Case studies help to illustrate the range of approaches that we use in our work with rural communities.



Executive Committee & Company Registration

The Board of Trustees (Executive Committee) for DRCC are drawn from the members of Council. The Trustees serving on the Executive Committee during 2006 / 2007 and since are:

Chairman	Mrs Pat Wynne CBE
Vice Chairs	Mrs Jenny Flynn MBE Prof Alan Townsend (retired October 2006) Cllr Brian Myers MBE (retired October 2006)
Board	Cllr Joe Armstrong Dr Sarah Banks Ms Kate Culverhouse Mr John Espiner (Treasurer) Mrs Judith Lund MBE (retired October 2006) Mr Alex Peart Mr John Robinson Mrs Mary Tribe Mr George Porter Mr Henry Barron (appointed October 2006) Mr Dennis Dunn (appointed October 2006) Mr Gavin Bestford (appointed October 2006)
Secretary & Executive Director	Mrs Joanna Laverick (not a Director of the Company nor a Trustee of the Charity)
Registered Office	Park House Station Road Lanchester Co. Durham DH7 0EX
Charity No.	229119
Company No.	309329

*'We do what we say we'll do,
when we say we will do it, and
do it professionally and well'*



Members of staff

Staff members employed during 2006 / 2007 and since are:

Charlotte Bates	Support Co-ordinator (from 06/2006)
Carl Chapman	OVN Manager (09/2006 to 01/2007)
Liz Charles	RSCP Town & Parish Councils Officer (Seconded from Durham County Council)
Maggie Cherry	RSCP Officer (06/2006 to 02/2007)
Claire Creffield	One Voice Network (to 05/2007)
Linda Fenwick	One Voice Communications Officer
Michael Fishwick	PPI Co-ordinator (to 08/2006)
Joy Frostwick	Finance Manager
Alan Gregory	HR Manager
Russell Hayward	RSCP Manager (from 06/2006)
Ken Hazlewood	Quality Manager
Joanna Laverick	Executive Director
Anne Lewins	Cleaner, Park House
Lesley Millgate	RSCP Development Officer (from 06/2006)
Rita Minnikin	Cleaner, The Knoll
Carol Moody	Hands on Health Co-ordinator
Sandra Moorhouse	RSCP Development Officer
Kate Moralee	PPI Co-ordinator (to 11/2006)
Jo Myers	One Voice Network Administrator
Lindsay Nicholson	RSCP Development Officer
Michelle O'Keefe	RSCP Administrator
Ian Pillar	Village Halls Advisor
Allison Robson	Hands on Health Co-ordinator
Mark Robson	RSCP Rural Housing Enabler
Debs Siddle	PPI Administrator (to 12/2006)
Alanna Smith	One Voice Network Support Officer
Sara-Jane Stobbs	Funding Programme Manager (to 03/2007)
Janet Strong	PPI Co-ordinator (to 11/2006)
David Taylor-Gooby	PPI Co-ordinator (to 12/2006)
Charles Tremeer	PPI Manager (to 12/2006)
Karen Wilson	PPI Co-ordinator (to 12/2006)

Jo Laverick, Executive Director joined the RSCP team in July 2006 for a fact-finding visit to look at Social Entrepreneurship in Northumberland.

Photograph: Gordon Jones





Executive Director's Review

This was an exciting and optimistic year. We worked alongside colleagues in the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) to build on development work that had begun during the previous year. In addition, we expanded our own resources to build up support services for communities.

Government policy has promoted joint working between VCS infrastructure organisations, encouraging collaboration and consortium development. This approach is intended to simplify and shape the range of services we offer to local organisations and communities, and to build up expertise and resources to support front line community groups.

We operated in a climate of uncertainty and accelerated change during 2006/2007, as more of the traditional funding sources for individual VCS organisations and groups came to an end. The sources of support that replaced them became much more focused on strategic approaches, intended to strengthen support structures for the sector. The new approaches rely on strong and effective partnership working.

For DRCC, the changes have brought about a shift in focus from small project delivery to a much more strategic approach, developing programmes of activity. The work we have undertaken this year has been developed through a detailed planning process within our own organisation, and with colleagues in the community and the agencies with whom we all work. We have been able to refine an increasingly pro-active approach to the areas of work we take on. This will ultimately sustain the support we offer, and lead to longer term impacts, benefiting the rural areas of County Durham.

Parish Planning session at Willington.
DRCC has a wealth of experience in
community consultation techniques
Photograph: Russell Hayward



Working with communities

Perhaps the most significant and important opportunity for us in 2006-07 was the advent of the Rural Social & Community Programme. This national initiative is sponsored by Defra and provides resources to consolidate and build on services that Rural Community Councils (RCC's) have delivered for a number of years.

Key work strands include rural housing, community development, support for community buildings, parish planning, and the promotion of social entrepreneurship. Our work on health and social care has changed during the course of the year. We have recognised a need for a wider and more responsive service to support community health issues, particularly where activities help address inequalities in health.

Working with the VCS

DRCC works in close partnership with other voluntary sector organisations, providing infrastructure support for smaller, community based organisations across the county. We are active members of the One Voice Network (OVN) for County Durham, through which we work to consult with other VCS organisations, share information, provide training, develop new skills and help local organisations to develop and manage their resources.

*' DRCC plays a key role
in helping to support and
sustain the vital range of
local services that keep
communities going'*

One Voice Network is an unconstituted network of organisations from the VCS, coming together to share information and champion the role of VCS in service delivery. OVN provides a reference point for the public sector and the voluntary sector to negotiate and discuss ways and means of working together. This is a key role, helping to deliver better services for communities through consultation and feedback on new ways of working and testing new policies.

Within the OVN, we have all been engaged in debate about the extent and range of services that could / should be delivered on behalf of the public sector by the VCS.

This debate is still current and developing. As support organisations within the VCS, we have a role to negotiate with our colleagues in the public and private sectors about where and how services should be targeted and structured so that they are most effective.

Local services can provide a vital lifeline for residents in isolated rural communities such as Romaldkirk in mid-Teesdale

Photograph: Sandra Moorhouse



At the heart of this debate is the need to support and sustain the vital range of local services that keep communities going, especially where they reach disadvantaged individuals and communities that are isolated from mainstream services.

Developing DRCC

Changing funding patterns are having an increasing impact on DRCC, and the environment in which we work. In recognition of this trend, we made organisational development a key priority in DRCC's 2006-07 Business Plan.

Having limbered up with thinking and planning throughout the previous year, we invested a lot of energy to develop our working practices, and to revise and refresh policies and procedures. We also established a stronger framework for planning and managing our work, including our ability to monitor the impact of the work that we undertake.

The energy we have put into this work has been enormously beneficial to the organisation, and has added to the quality and consistency of our work with communities. We have been able to operate with a clear set of priorities, ensuring that we have the right resources and skills. Our underpinning organisational focus for the year has been to do what we say we'll do, when we say we will do it, and to do it professionally and well.

Networking

During 2006-07, we began to seriously develop our regional network of RCC's, with our colleagues in Northumberland and Tees Valley. We have always enjoyed a supportive and constructive relationship with our fellow RCC's, working together through Action for Communities in Rural England (ACRE), which is our national umbrella organisation.

Our collaboration with RCC's in Northumberland and Tees Valley helps us to provide a North East perspective on a range of rural issues. New ways of working have helped us consolidate this relationship. We have tackled joint working, shared training and support for our staff and Trustees, together with ways of providing a better co-ordinated regional rural voice. This work is continuing throughout 2007 - 08, during which we aim to pilot some joint initiatives.



RSCP training session at Harehope Quarry, near Frosterley. As an Investor in People, we recognise the value of a well-trained workforce. Three of our staff have gained paralegal qualifications.

**Photograph:
Russell Hayward**



Building for the future

As with all development work, the results of what we do shapes the work that follows. The changes & impact of our work is measured in the context of what we aim to achieve.

Our outreach work with communities and the collaborative work with the VCS in County Durham continues to evolve. We have achieved a great deal in terms of organisational development, but must ensure that we maintain high standards of management and delivery so that our outreach work is successful.

By 31 March 2007, we had achieved in the following areas, giving us a real platform on which to build in 2007/2008:

- A more accurate and detailed understanding of needs and interests in Community Planning across County Durham.
- Stronger links with the Durham Association of Local Councils (CDALC); helping us to address Parish Council training needs and promote parish planning.
- Piloting and testing new methods of community engagement, to find ways to incorporate local views into Sustainable Community Strategic planning.
- Working closely with individuals and groups in remote and / or disadvantaged areas to build confidence, promote local initiatives and support local action.
- Strengthening the capacity of the County Durham Community Buildings Forum and developing our support service for community buildings. This will allow us to address asset transfers and the role of community buildings as local assets and service centres.
- Designing, delivering, evaluating and developing training packages for community building groups, village halls advisers and trustees.

' We can be trusted to provide honest reliable advice; with over 70 years experience we really understand what makes rural communities tick '

- Supporting rural (LSPs) with information and participation on issues including rural housing, parish planning & capacity building in community partnerships.
- Working with the One Voice Network to set up an Action Plan for exploring and developing a new approach to VCS delivery in County Durham.
- Providing leadership & representation on behalf of the VCS in County Durham within the

LAA Board.

- Significantly developing the base of experience, skills and expertise within DRCC. This has enabled us to provide qualified support services for communities covering legal, governance, funding, training and sustainability issues. Surveys suggest that these services are highly valued by the communities that we serve.
- Developing a flexible and responsive structure in DRCC.
- Continuing with a strong advocacy service on rural issues, playing an effective leadership role by co-ordinating activity between RCC's and regional agencies.
- Making a commitment to promote agendas on climate change and sustainability across all of the work we undertake, and within our own organisation.

Jo Laverick
Executive Director
Tel:ephone 01207 529621
E-mail: joanna.laverick@durham rcc.org.uk



Outreach work with communities

Working with communities sits at the heart of everything we do at DRCC. Over the past 70 years we have built up a wealth of knowledge, experience and understanding that allows us to speak with authority as the voice of Durham's rural communities.

The Rural Social & Community Programme (RSCP)

Given our credentials, DRCC was the natural choice to lead delivery of the Rural Social & Community Programme for Co. Durham. RSCP is a two years Defra funded initiative underpinned by three high level strategic objectives:

1. To improve opportunities for socially excluded individuals.
2. To build the ability of rural communities to shape their own futures.
3. To develop the VCS, Parish & Town Council sectors.

Following recruitment of additional staff to further strengthen DRCC's outreach capabilities, delivery work began in earnest in June 2006. Limited resources have meant that our efforts must be concentrated into a small number of locations. This approach allows us to achieve maximum impact, and test the effectiveness of a team-based approach. Five locations were selected, based on an assessment of geography, past development, size & capacity to embrace the RSCP approach:

- Middleton in Teesdale
- Stanhope
- Wheatley Hill
- Willington
- Witton Park & Escomb

Whilst previous initiatives have necessarily focused on the negative aspects of communities, we

deliberately adopted a different approach for the RSCP. Using an 'asset based community development approach' we have explored the potential of local people, the environment, and the physical assets in partnership with local community groups, to bring about lasting improvements..

Our experienced team of staff have been on hand in 2006/07 to help all five hubs get the best from their assets. Proven community planning techniques have been used to find out what concerns the community, what they value about their area, and how they wish to see it develop in the future. The findings have helped to give local people a voice to inform the work of Local Strategic Partnerships and service providers. We have been actively helping community groups to put some of their good ideas into effect.



The RSCP team have helped Wheatley Hill Community Association with advice on housing, legal & governance issues.

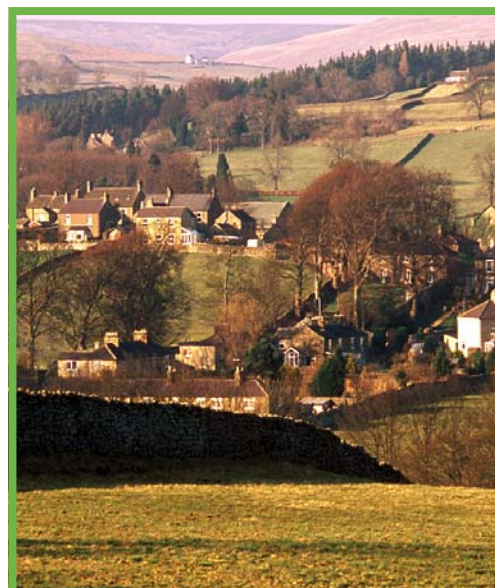
Photograph: Russell Hayward

Practical assistance with business planning and fundraising has helped to build the skills and experience of local volunteers. Further up the ladder, our knowledgeable & qualified staff have provided practical, impartial and user-friendly advice on legal & governance issues. This has helped to ensure that local groups are fit for purpose, and able to evolve into fully fledged community enterprises, should this be their preference

We have also been working closely with CDALC to promote the 'Quality Parish Agenda', and to explore the potential for local charters to define new ways of working between County Durham's current three tier structure of local government.

The lack of affordable housing for families and young people is a major issue especially in remote upland areas of County Durham such as Teesdale.

Photograph ©
Charlie Hedley / the
Countryside Agency



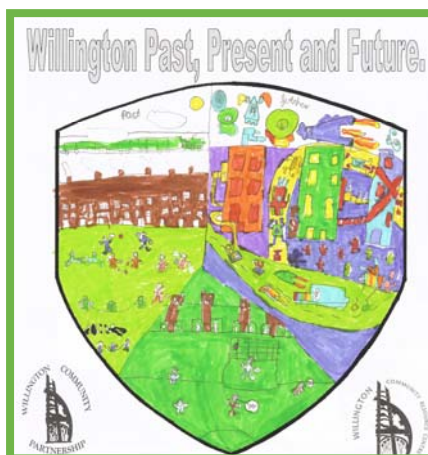
The impact of rising house prices and growth in second home ownership has been most pronounced in rural areas. In County Durham the impact has been acutely felt in Teesdale and Weardale. Our Rural Housing Enabler, Mark Robson, has built a solid understanding of local needs, and has worked with the LSP thematic groups and other structures to ensure housing remains high up the rural agenda.

At the grassroots level, Mark has worked to identify potential sites for affordable housing development, whilst using solid community engagement techniques to assuage concerns about the local impact of such development. Housing quality remains a concern, particularly in the ex-mining communities of east Durham. Mark has developed a thorough understanding of issues and needs, ensuring that DRCC is able to speak with authority on the local, regional and national stage.

With 12 months of solid delivery under our belt, we can be well pleased with our achievements to date, including:

- Completion and launch of 7 Parish Plans in Teesdale, and the establishment of the Mid-Teesdale Parish Partnership, an umbrella body encouraging collaborative working and giving local people a stronger voice.
- Assisting the Upper Teesdale Agricultural Support Service (UTASS) with advice on legal and governance issues, helping them to become a company limited by guarantee.
- Supporting Teesdale Day Clubs with business planning and fundraising advice, helping them to continue to providing a vital service for older people across Teesdale.
- Assisting Weardale Community Partnership with advice on legal and governance structures, and facilitating a visit to Cornforth to investigate one stop shop service delivery.
- Significant input to Willington Town Plan, including public consultation events, developing questionnaires for residents, young people and businesses, and data analysis.

Willington Past, Present and Future. Effective Parish Planning should involve all sections of the community. In Willington, DRCC helped to organise a competition to ask the youngest members of the community for their ideas. Their enthusiasm helped to capture the interest of their parents as well!



Dominic Vasey, 7 - 11 winner



Lauren Patterson, under 7 winner

- Community development work in Witton Park & Escomb, including the establishment of new working groups to take forward actions from the community plan, and the launch of a quarterly newsletter.
- Assisting Wheatley Hill Community Association with legal & governance advice, and information on housing issues.
- Developing and delivering the West Durham Pathfinder project on 'asset mapping' and 'deliberative democracy' in conjunction with The Scarman Trust. The project has been acclaimed as an example of best practice by Government Office North East.

Looking forward, 2007/08 promises to be an equally productive year. Our hub-based work continues to progress; local partnerships in Witton Park & Escomb are now well attended, and working groups have the confidence and skills to submit funding applications for local projects. Willington Town Plan is approaching completion, and we continue to fulfil our commitment to provide solid reliable advice to local groups. Feedback from DRCC's Customer Survey (see back cover) bears testament to the quality & range of our support.

The importance of community (parish) planning is being increasingly recognised by key decision makers. DRCC's Spring Meeting has introduced parish planning to a large and enthusiastic audience from Co. Durham and beyond. Over the coming months we will be supporting up to 8 communities to prepare their own parish plans. In Teesdale, we are working with partners to deliver the 'Quiet Voices, Big Noise' case study for West Durham Pathfinder. This combines additional parish planning with research to identify a more effective and sustainable model of community engagement.

Russell Hayward - Programme Manager
E-mail: russell.hayward@durhamrcc.org.uk

Liz Charles -Town & Parish Councils Officer
E-mail: liz.charles@durhamrcc.org.uk

Lesley Millgate - Parish Plans, Stanhope, Witton Park/Escomb
E-mail: lesley.millgate@durhamrcc.org.uk

Lindsay Nicholson - Parish Plans and Willington contact
E-mail: lindsay.@durhamrcc.org.uk

Michelle O'Keefe - RSCP Administrator
E-mail: michelle.okeefe@durhamrcc.org.uk

Mark Robson - Rural Housing Enabler
E-mail: mark@durhamrcc.org.uk
Telephone the above team members on 01207 529621

Sandra Moorhouse - Parish Plans, Teesdale contact
E-mail: idmsjm@btinternet.com
Telephone: 01833 650730

Case Study - Parish Plans, a success story

In December 2006, the Mid Teesdale Project Partnership celebrated the launch of 9 Parish Plans. Cotherstone, Eggleston, Holwick, Hunderthwaite, Lunedale, Mickleton, Middleton-in-Teesdale, Newbiggin, and Romaldkirk, parishes, supported by Durham Rural Community Council, had worked hard to complete individual plans. A number of subjects emerged that were of interest to all, including young people, health and care, education, training and employment, environment and countryside, land use and housing, crime and safety, recreation, transport, traffic and travel, business interest and tourism. At the launch, local people were able to look at the finished plans and displays appertaining to each parish.

Since the official launch, the parishes have continued to work together to lobby the LSP and other agencies about their issues and concerns. A recent follow-up event at Mickleton Village Hall attracted a large audience including representatives of local and countywide service delivery organisations. The model of collaborative working is already paying dividends in the form of funding for spin-off projects such as Timelines (funded by the Local Heritage Initiative), and by giving the community a much stronger voice in local affairs.



The launch of DRCC's latest round of Parish Planning in Staindrop.

Photograph: Russell Hayward

Village Halls and Community Buildings

DRCC has a long history of providing support for village halls. We offer help, advice and training for community based groups with responsibilities for managing them.

This work has generated a strong support network for village hall groups across County Durham, some of which e.g. the highly successful Teesdale Village Halls Consortium (TVHC) started out as a project within DRCC. We maintain a strong supportive role to TVHC, and continue to provide a service that covers all groups and organisations across County Durham. Increasingly we are working with colleagues in local authorities and the private sector over issues affecting the ownership of community buildings. This includes the provision of advice about how legislation and deeds of ownership can affect funding and management obligations.

In 2006-07, DRCC was the lead and accountable body for a Defra funded project to develop

community buildings across County Durham. We hosted the Community Buildings Consortium, leading on work in a wide range of locations across the county, from remote rural village halls through to large community associations. Through the Consortium, we have addressed a broad range of management and sustainability issues, including:

- Health checks on the buildings infrastructure, management capacity and sustainability.
- Training needs, including licensing legislation, insurance requirements, quality standards, health and safety, and fire regulations etc.
- Service level agreements for public sector owned buildings

We achieved:

- Over 100 health checks with community building groups
- An agreed action plan for the Community Buildings Consortium for County Durham, to deliver training and provide follow up support for delivery of actions arising from the health checks
- Partnership working with Teesdale Village Halls Consortium to support their membership and assist with developing new activity and training
- Continued provision of a brokerage service for insuring village halls and community buildings
- Design and delivery of an accredited training course for village halls advisors through the ACRE network

We are continuing to lead the Community Buildings Consortium for County Durham. Work during 2007/08 is increasingly focused on asset transfer and development. In this context, our work with assets refers to community buildings and the people who manage them.

Case Study - Training for Village Hall Advisors

RCC's across the country have provided services for Village Hall management groups for many years. In County Durham the significance of community buildings to the life and wellbeing of former coalfield communities cannot be underestimated.

ACRE facilitate a national network of RCC specialist Village Halls Advisors (VHAs). They meet regularly to share good practice and review new policies and legislation that impact on small community groups managing buildings. During 2006 -07, a number of new policy issues and legislative changes emerged with profound implications for the management of buildings and range of local services on offer.

DRCC acted on behalf of the ACRE Network to design a comprehensive and practical training programme for VHAs focusing on key topics including financial management, full cost recovery, health and safety, insurance and new licensing laws. DRCC is a registered training body, and we were therefore able to offer a training programme for 25 VHAs accredited via the North East Open College Network.

ACRE provided funding for the course, which took place in County Durham over an intensive five day period in January 2007. Participants came from RCCs across England. The course was led by our Village Halls Advisor and delivered through a small team of key DRCC staff. It was evaluated through the ACRE network and there are plans to roll it out elsewhere in England.

The Consortium is currently refining a work programme to broker delivery on priority areas of activity, including:

- Asset auditing and transfer
- Capacity and confidence building for community building groups
- Continued delivery of support for actions identified through the process of health checking
- Training and support to develop the Consortium so that it continues to meet support needs across the county.

Ian Pillar
Village Halls Adviser
Tel:ephone 01207 529621
E-mail: ian@durhamrcc.org.uk



Scarth Hall, Staindrop - part of the Teesdale Village Halls Consortium network of community buildings that provide an essential resource for isolated rural communities across Teesdale

Photograph: Russell Hayward

Health

Recent years have seen a shift in public health and health promotion policy, with an increasing emphasis on initiatives to reduce health inequalities. The focus has shifted to actions that change the circumstances which determine health.

Social and economic influences on the lives of individuals affect levels of health and wellbeing. With this in mind, policies are increasingly being designed to promote healthy living and wellbeing in communities. This means that volunteers are increasingly involved in the design and delivery of health and social care services in their communities.

During 2006/2007, DRCC has been working with two projects, each with objectives to tackle health inequalities, and both delivering outreach services directly into rural communities.

Hands on Health

This project tackles health inequalities, starting with individuals. It has been described as the 'translation of healthy lifestyle guidelines in a way that acquires meaning and importance in people's daily lives'.

Put simply, it delivers on a highly successful formula by providing bespoke courses in response to community demand. The courses offer practical cookery classes, using fresh local ingredients that can be purchased on a budget. Each session provides informal advice, information about diet and nutrition, and a realistic and enjoyable approach to building confidence through exercise. All the activities are run from local, community based buildings, which are familiar to the participants and easily accessible.

The courses have been targeted in Derwentside and the Durham Dales, and have reached a wide range of individuals both young and old. During 2006/2007, Hands on Health has responded to an increasing demand from schools. The project has also worked with groups of young parents in conjunction with Surestart, introducing them to basic nutritional training.

Groups of older people are also targeted, looking at how simple and nutritious food can be prepared for single people or to help with changing dietary needs in later life.



Hands on Health offers straightforward practical advice and information about cookery, diet and health in a friendly and informative manner, using community buildings that are easily accessible and familiar to participants

Photograph: Russell Hayward

Funding for this long-standing and highly successful project came to an end as the year closed. Previous sources of funding for the project had disappeared as the PCTs reorganised, and other public sector bodies changed their roles. Diminishing sources of public funds for community action meant that the increasingly pressurised charitable trusts became over-subscribed with requests for funding.

The board of DRCC remains fiercely supportive of the value of Hands on Health, and are determined to carry forward the work of the project into 2007-08. We have a longer-term commitment to seek mainstream support for developing the work into a broader and wider reaching programme.

Carol Moody
Hands on Health Coordinator
E-mail: carol.moody@durhamrcc.org.uk

Allison Robson
Hands on Health Coordinator
E-mail: allison@durhamrcc.org.uk

Telephone Carol or Allison on 01207 529621

Case Study - Healthy Start at Ebchester

Mums and toddlers who meet at Ebchester Community Centre began the year with a healthy eating course, delivered by the Hands on Health Programme Coordinator, Carol Moody.

Twenty two children, all under the age of three, played in the crèche while their mums got together and cooked delicious, quick and wholesome food. They learned new recipes and methods of cooking, which the children were able to taste and try before their mums bought the ingredients to prepare the dishes at home.

The tasting and trying proved to be the biggest surprise of all for their mums, because the children ate and enjoyed the food. 'I was amazed to see my two year old eating a salad' said one mum. Another said 'I have been struggling to get fresh fruit and vegetables into our diet and needed fresh, easy recipes'.

Durham Rural Community Councils
Hands on Health



Carol said that the mums who enrol for the courses experience a real boost to their confidence. Familiar dishes are made with a healthy twist and often cooked in one pot, such as chilli, shepherds pie, toad-in-the-hole and chicken & broccoli bake. The course was so well received that the mums asked Carol to go back to the Community Centre and set up a course for their teenage children.

Public and Patient Involvement in Health

This initiative came to be known by many as the PPI project. It was part of a national approach from the Health Commission to enable patients and members of the public to contribute towards the improvement of local health care. In County Durham, DRCC acted as the Forum Support Organisation for PPI.

A number of Forums were established along the lines of the now merged PCTs. They were made up of volunteers from the community, with the brief to monitor, research into and visit a variety of health care providers. Forums covered the following areas:

- County Durham and Darlington Acute Hospitals Trust
- County Durham and Darlington Priority Services Forum
- Derwentside PCT

- Durham and Chester-le-Street PCT
- Durham Dales PCT
- Easington PCT

2006/2007 was the third and final contracted year for the PPI activity. Forums met regularly, working together to deliver their action plans with the support of Forum Co-ordinators. They produced reports as the result of visits to healthcare facilities or in the wake of research into specific topics of local interest or concern.

During Autumn 2006, the Health Commission restructured the coverage of PPI Forums into defined local areas across the North East region. This heralded changes in the way local engagement in health issues will be managed in future. The PPI approach will be phased out, to be superseded by LINKS networks, which will be in place by Spring 2008. These will provide access to local community based networks and organisations, in order to monitor and track the effectiveness of health services and provision across County Durham.



Given the changes in PPI areas of coverage, DRCC's contract with the Health Commission ended in December 2006, with the Commission taking on management of the new areas of work from January 2007. The existing PPI staff members were transferred into the employment of the Commission and will continue to provide services, albeit over changed geographical areas until the Spring of 2008.

The PPI staff group have retained their office base within Park House, as tenants of DRCC. We are pleased that we are able to retain some synergy and close contact with their work as we monitor the role of the VCS in lobbying for health services in the community.

Charles Tremeer,
PPI Manager

Team members during 2006/2007 were:

Michael Fishwick, Kate Moralee, Debs Siddle, Janet Strong, David Taylor-Gooby, Karen Wilson

The PPI Forum Support Organisation may be contacted by telephone on 01207 529621 or 07703 099741, or by e-mail at ForumSupport.Inhouse@cppih.org



DRCC is the accountable body for the One Voice Network (OVN) in County Durham. As OVN remains an unconstituted network of organisations, we employ a small staff team on behalf of the Network. They provide a secretariat facility, covering the county and providing links with other VCS networks at regional and national level.

This means that DRCC takes financial and management responsibility for staff and projects that are generated through the Network. Our colleagues at DISC provide a similar service for the Voluntary Sector Academy, which provides training and work force development for the VCS.

During 2005-06 the VCS in County Durham worked through a year of Change Up; VCS support organisations collaborated on a range of projects to build up the skills and resources for infrastructure organisations. It was a challenging year, as we worked through new structures to manage and develop projects, which would benefit a much wider range of organisations and individuals. The key lessons we learned from this process were about collaboration and brokerage of funding resources within the VCS, for wider benefit and increased efficiency.

In 2006-07 we moved from Change Up into an evolving national structure for funding VCS development. Capacity Builders was established by government to provide the VCS with further challenges. One of their key priorities has been to build a consortia led approach to the sector, helping to equip us for emerging procurement strategies, which are being promoted through the public sector.

Achievements in 2006/07 and priorities for 2007/08

- We are continuing to work together with partners to develop a stronger VCS infrastructure. This is being achieved through a coordinated business plan to develop the County Durham VCS Consortium.
- Management and support for the OVN staff team.
- Assuming representational roles on behalf of the VCS on various consortia and partnerships.
- Brokering advice and information on procurement and commissioning.



One Voice Network secretariat is based in DRCC's offices at The Knoll, Wheatley Hill
Photograph: Russell Hayward

- Identify & support communities of interest for the VCS.
- Continuing to champion and develop the County Durham Compact between the VCS and the public sector.
- Champion for VCS engagement with the LAA.
- Consulting, engaging & informing the wider community sector about development and change in policy and services, from public and voluntary sector perspectives.
- Working through the transition from two tier to single unitary authority in County Durham.

One Voice Network, The Knoll, Wheatley Hill.
Telephone: 01429 529621 www.onevoice.co.uk



Organisational Development

During 2006-07, we placed a particularly high priority on staff and Board development. In April we re-structured the staff group, bringing in new members of staff to work on outreach with communities and to support the Board of Trustees.

We consulted on and developed a Training Plan for DRCC, and provided a comprehensive range of training and good practice exchanges for both staff and Board members. Tasks included developing and sharing good practice with communities, meeting and consulting with stakeholders, setting up joint working arrangements and building strong and effective systems for communications and sharing information. The RSCP Teamzone is a good illustration of new technology being used to effectively share information across several offices.

The Board and staff agreed that we should consolidate and maintain the high standards that we have set in place through our Quality Standards. DRCC has worked through Action for Communities in Rural England (ACRE), our umbrella organisation, to sign up to the ACRE Quality Standard. The Standards are assessed at three levels. DRCC successfully achieved Level One during the period under review.



**DRCC's main offices at
 Park House, Lanchester**
 Photograph: Russell Hayward

Although outside the reporting period, it is gratifying to report that we have recently secured ACRE Standard Level Two, and have successfully assessed for renewal of our Investors in People Award. This completes a hat-trick of successes for staff and Trustees of DRCC, in the space of 11 months.



Financial Summary

The following extract is taken from the Audited Accounts for Durham Rural Community Council for the year ended 31 March 2007. This summary may not contain sufficient information to allow for a full understanding of DRCC's financial affairs.

Full accounts for 2006/2007 are available from DRCC on request. If you would like to receive a copy, please contact Charlotte Bates at Durham Rural Community Council, Park House, Station Road, Lanchester, County Durham, DH7 0EX.

Policies and procedures

Over the past two years we have developed a policy and structure for operating all of our activities on a full cost recovery basis. The Board of Trustees will only endorse activities, projects or programmes of work, which are fully funded.

Our financial planning follows an annual cycle, linked into the Business Planning and reporting rounds. The financial year runs between April and March. All activities planned for the year ahead are set out in an annual Business Plan and Work Programme for DRCC.

The annual budget for DRCC's core costs is set by the Board at the start of each financial year. Income and projected expenditure for programmes / projects and work streams during the year are factored into the budget as overheads. We operate an accounting system which ring fences project / programme funding within our accounts, ensuring that monitoring and auditing systems are transparent.

Against a backdrop of rapidly changing policy and funding cultures it has continued to be difficult to plan or develop services for the long term. The Trustees & staff have worked together to minimise the impact of reducing income streams for infrastructure support organisations such as DRCC.

Principal funding sources

Our funding covers two areas of activity:

1. Core activity

Core activity incorporates our organisational management. It also includes strategic planning, information & consultative activities with partners and stakeholders in the rural areas of County Durham. Currently we operate core services through Service Level Agreements with Defra and Durham County Council. Incoming resources from these funders amounted to £89,811 and £23,000 respectively during 2006/2007. Expenditure was maintained within budget.

2. Programmes / Projects / Workstreams

This work informs our strategic input at regional and sub regional level. It forms the basis of our linkages with community and locally based organisations. Broadly the work areas cover

health, social inclusion, housing, community buildings, transport and parish planning. The work is funded through a combination of Service Level Agreements, grant aid, or funding linked to public policy rounds. Some resources are brokered through consortia arrangements with partners in the VCS (Capacity Builders, Change Up, Infrastructure, RSCP) and some are targeted more closely into specific geographical areas, or areas of interest, which DRCC develops with communities.

Expenditure is undertaken in accordance with agreed principles. We only undertake fully funded projects and programmes, and monitor activity against agreed budgets.

We continue to work with a wide range of funding sources and systems including:

- Charitable Trusts (Big Lottery, Comic Relief, County Durham Foundation, Northern Rock Foundation)
- European
- Government
- Local Authorities

We also draw some income from our capital assets, which comprise two buildings at Park House in Lanchester & The Knoll at Wheatley Hill. The buildings house our staff, and a small number of tenants, from whom we draw rental income.

Surplus cash balances are invested on deposit to earn interest at the best available rate, having due regard to the balance between risk and reward.

DRCC provides a number of administrative and printing services for community organisations, which generate a small income. This includes printing newsletters, conference room hire and training facilities.



Acknowledgement

The Trustees and Staff of Durham Rural Community Council gratefully acknowledge the support of our funders, including the Big Lottery, Change Up / Capacity Builders, Defra, Durham County Council, and the Northern Rock Foundation. We also thank our members, partners and our customers in rural communities across Co. Durham for their support.



**Members of the DRCC Team
enjoying the delights of the
Durham countryside**
Photograph: DRCC

**Durham Rural Community Council Limited: Statement of Financial Activities
(including Income & Expenditure Account) for the year ended 31 March 2007**

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds £
INCOMING RESOURCES				
Incoming resources from generated funds:				
<i>Voluntary income:</i>				
Grants	4	112811	-	112811
<i>Activities for generating funds:</i>				
Rental income		26312	-	26312
Insurance commissions		11927	-	11927
Other income		22037	-	22037
<i>Investment income</i>	3	12906	-	12906
Incoming resources from charitable activities:				
Grants receivable	4	-	643461	643461
TOTAL INCOMING RESOURCES		185993	643461	829454
RESOURCES EXPENDED				
Costs of generating funds		3168	-	3168
Charitable activities		185695	727951	913646
Governance costs		16749	-	16749
TOT. RESOURCES EXPENDED	5	205612	727951	933563
NET INCOMING RESOURCES BEFORE OTHER RECOGNISED GAINS AND LOSSES	6	(19619)	(84490)	(104109)
Gains on revaluation of fixed assets for charity's own use	7	-	-	-
NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS		(19619)	(84490)	(104109)
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS				
Balances brought forward		537018	190175	727193
Balances carried forward		517399	105685	623084

Notes refer to the main Audited Accounts available on request from DRCC (see page 21 for details)



And finally . some words from our customers

Each year we invite our customers to complete a short survey about the quality of services offered by Durham Rural Community Council. Our latest survey in June 2007, covers our work during the year under review. We received a record response of over 90 returns with comments being overwhelmingly positive. It is fitting that we close this years report with a selection of those comments, testament to the commitment and dedication of DRCC's talented staff.

More like a one-stop shop
Chilton & Windlestone Community College

Hands on Health 5/5
Durham Association Youth and Community Organisations

Willingness of staff to go the extra mile to help with queries
Belmont Community Association

Sandra Moorhouse's expertise
Middleton / Newbiggin Parish Council

Help with Parish Plan and other information
Willington Community Partnership

The whole of the assistance given has proved invaluable and we could never have achieved without the help of DRCC
Mid Teesdale Project Partnership



Park House, Station Road,
Lanchester, Co. Durham DH7 0EX
01207 529621
www.durhamrcc.org.uk