

New report recommends aggressive intervention to create local change

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A new report from the University of Birmingham and the Centre for Welfare Reform argues that delivering real and lasting neighbourhood change, a key plank of the government's localism agenda, requires aggressive intervention to engage local communities.

'Positively Local', which is published today, focuses on the use of a new strategy called C2. C2 is based on the idea of engaging local people to change their own communities. The idea is to raise local people's aspirations at an early stage to ensure change is ambitious and sustainable.

The seven step process it sets out starts with locating the energy for change within local communities and extends to the building of sustainable partnerships in communities. The report argues that C2 is particularly effective in a time when local budgets are being cut because it works by deploying existing resources more effectively rather than requiring significant new spending.

These methods have been trialed successfully in communities like Falmouth, Camborne and Redruth, where they delivered significant improvements in everything from levels of childhood accidents to unemployment rates.

John Gillespie the report's author comments: "*Too many places are damaged by the negative way they are seen by public services. As such, 'solutions' can make things worse rather than better. Perceptions about what is wrong with a place drown out the voices of local people who would like to make things better.*"

We look at a new approach to delivering local change that focuses on being ambitious on engaging local people and in convincing communities that they can improve the situation dramatically."

Some of the key principles of C2 are:

1. Aim High - Don't just aim for the next level up.

Don Berwick formerly of the Institute for Health Improvement has said that you are very unlikely to achieve significant change if you only aim for the next level up. His point is that transformational change is far more likely to come about if you try to do something fundamentally different.

2. Create the Conditions for Change - It isn't possible or desirable to predict in advance what the outcomes of a complex change process will be but it is possible to create an environment where change can happen.

3. Challenge 'Locked-in Thinking' - Connecting events and workshops held at the beginning of the process provide the opportunity for glimpsing new ways of doing things.

4. Make the Tipping Point Inevitable - Robin Durie from Exeter University describes the need for intervention in terms of the overwhelming sense that some communities have of stagnating.

5. Remember the vision - The power of positive assumptions is a key factor.

Professor Jon Glasby, Director of the University of Birmingham's Health Services Management Centre who edited the report comments: "*The coalition government's focus on localism is admirable but ultimately an empty promise if communities are not adequately empowered to enact change.*"

The model we propose demands intensive action at the start of the process but the benefits are demonstrable. Too often local projects fail through lack of ambition and lack of proper engagement particularly if people have been disappointed by similar efforts in the past."

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For further information contact **Ben Hill, PR Manager, University of Birmingham, Tel 0121 4145134, Mob 07789 921163**

For anybody who is interested in finding out more Hazel Stuteley, who developed the C2 approach, is running a 3 day residential workshop in Exeter in September 12th - 15th and repeated 19th - 22nd. Please contact Susanne Hughes - susanne.hughes@pms.ac.uk (<mailto:susanne.hughes@pms.ac.uk>)

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