

Community development practical approach

[Sociology](#), [Community](#)



GROUP PRESENTATION ESSAY As part of 'Community Development in Practice, we went on a field trip to two community organisations, Tallaght Community Arts and St. Kevin's Family Resource Centre. The purpose of which was to look at how each project practices the principles of community development as described by the Ad Hoc Committee (2008). We had to work as a group of 3 students which included Samantha Hogan, Anthony Kelly and Elaine Vince-O'Hara, to put together a group presentation on the project of our choice.

We chose St. Kevin's Family Resource Centre as it is a grassroots community development organisation which we believe every community needs. St. Kevin's Family Resource Centre is a community organisation and is based in a local primary school in Kilnamanagh, Tallaght, and whose remit covers the areas of Kilnamanagh, Tymon North and Kingswood. Established in 1994, they were one of only three 'pilot' Family Resource Centres (FRC) funded through the Family Support Agency.

The centre is managed by a voluntary board of management of which 70% are people from the local community and run by Grainne Begley, the Coordinator, Cynthia Moore, the Administrator and a large group of 25 volunteers for additional support. St. Kevin's have a number of training rooms, counselling/ holistic therapy rooms, a youth cafe and a community childcare centre. They have an open door policy, where community members are at all times welcome to drop in and see what's happening in their community.

They have five key areas of work; Community Education, Supporting Community and Voluntary Groups, Counselling ; amp; Holistic therapy, Childcare and Youth Work. St. Kevin's Mission Statement: ' St. Kevin's Family Resource Centre is a community organisation whose mission is to bring about change through the process of empowerment and support at family, individual and community level. ' St Kevin's describe themselves as: ' a thriving and integral part of the community development structures in the area.... social inclusion organisation... concerned about the people in the community who.... are not participating in society to their fullest potential' (St. Kevin's FRC Work Plan 2010-2012). They work out of the values and principles of community development as described by the Ad Hoc Committee (2008) as they strive towards social justice, equality and anti-discrimination through participation, empowerment and collective action to support individuals, families and their wider communities and this is evident throughout their work.

They practice the principle of participation by aiming to meet the needs of the local community, enabling them to gain the skills necessary for full participation: They do this through a community consultation process for their work plans and the provision of; community education programmes, a counselling service to help overcome many issues including oppression, holistic therapies to promote individual well being and community childcare which provides people with the opportunity to participate and become empowered.

St. Kevin's practice the principles of empowerment as they: acknowledge value and build on people's lives and existing experiences which is the basis

of the community education which they provide. They work with people to; build an understanding of their reality and identify ways to overcome them and build confidence and self-esteem through the provision of their counselling service and holistic therapies offered. St.

Kevin's practice the principles of collective action as they collaborate and build alliances with other groups, organisations and agencies in order to advance key community objectives, they do this through their support of diverse user groups and networking with various agencies including; South Dublin Community Platform (SDCP), Active Citizenship Together (ACT), South Dublin County Council (SDCC), the County Development Board (CDB) This ' process empowers the community to develop new skills and be more proactive in their own learning'. Impacts include empowerment of groups, sustaining their development and development of partnership relationships between the Centre and new groups'. ' There is a large increase in community activity'. Motherway, B (2006) St. Kevin's practice the principles of social justice by building strategic alliances and encouraging active participation to create awareness of the work of the family resource centre, in order to bring about social change. They work with the community in developing appropriate responses to identified needs through consultation with the community and they provide opportunities to access community education for the purpose of achieving personal and community development. They build the capacity of the management committee and continue to build a strong community development organisation to ensure that resources are utilised to their maximum effect ' provide a safe, inclusive, happy childcare facility where children can grow and develop in

confidence, thus supporting the family' (St. Kevin's Family Resource Centre Work Plan 2010-2012) St.

Kevin's practice Equality ; amp; Anti Discrimination in acknowledging the diverse nature of their local community, where 20% are lone parents, 25% having no formal education, 10% have a disability, 8% are from an ethnic minority family and there is a high rate of unemployment. They promote difference and diversity, evidenced by their active role in developing a strategy to promote the integration of travellers and ethnic minorities, which was put forward to the County Development Board for consideration.

They also promote understanding and analysis of equality issues, and strategies to address them within communities through their community education programmes. Challenges Some of the current challenges faced by St. Kevin's include: adapting to the impact of the recession including: trying to meet the needs of unemployed people accessing the service who are looking to up skill and or retrain, having to reduce the number of community education programmes due to cuts and people not engaging due to the social and economic difficulties which are hindering their ability to participate.

Successes As well as challenges they have had many successes, primarily the development and progression of a hugely successful and affordable community childcare centre, which started over twenty years ago as a two parent, parent and toddler group and grew through true grassroots community development ' by the people, for the people'. To this day a weekly parent and toddler group are still going strong with up to 40 families

taking part. Cynthia Moore, another success first became involved in St. Kevin's FRC as a participant.

She went on to complete a community employment scheme in the centre after which she secured part-time paid employment as the administrator. She continued to participate on many community education courses and through empowerment she eventually gained the confidence to undertake a Leadership; amp; Community Development degree course which she successfully completed in 2011. Cynthia continues in her role of Administrator and she also volunteers as a ' Rainbows' facilitator, a peer mentoring programme aimed at supporting young people suffering varying degrees of bereavement and loss.

Cynthia has come full circle and is a great example of what community development and community education are about and of the outcomes it has the potential to achieve. Other successes include; many previous centre users coming back to help out in a voluntary capacity, their ability to provide support to and facilitate many diverse groups, continued provision of community education, which empowers members of the community to take charge of their lives and participate in their community and their ability to network with various agencies and take lead roles in devising strategies.

Conclusion Over the last 18 years the centre has grown and adapted to the ever changing needs of the community and is now a thriving and integral part of the community development structures in the area. As we see it, by continuing to work out of the principles and practices of community development as described by the Ad Hoc Committee, St.

Kevin's Family Resource Centre will continue to achieve effective community development, overcome challenges faced and continue to have many more successes in the future. Bibliography: Ad Hoc Committee (2008) Towards Standards for Quality Community Work, Dublin Motherway, Brian (2006) the Role of Community Development in Tackling Poverty in Ireland, Dublin, Combat Poverty Agency St. Kevin's Family Resource Centre, Work Plan 2010-2012 Samantha Hogan Anthony Kelly Elaine Vince O'Hara 10th October 2012