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your voice



Annual Report 2008—2009



Annual Report 2008 – 2009 Contents

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Chairman's Statement

This Annual Report demonstrates how Hyndburn Community Network has continued to support community empowerment and development by effectively applying 'engagement' at four key levels- information, consultation, representation and participation.

We started 2008 with real concerns about funding for the April 2008 to March 2009 financial year. Fortunately, by May we had secured funding for 2008 – 2011 but inevitably we lost one member of staff due to the uncertainties.

New funding streams mean that the needs and requirements of the communities of Hyndburn can remain at the forefront of Network core activities, community engagement and empowerment. Despite the vast number of Government initiatives the Network strives to be one step ahead and keep members and partners up-to-date.

During 2008/2009 the Network increased its membership by 5%. Our membership retention rate has remained the same with only six organisations terminating their membership. The reasons given were that these organisations were ceasing to operate.

We continued to support the community interest forums and the amount of support we gave to these forums was sustained even though we were down to one full-time member of staff from June to end of August (a quarter of the year). This demonstrates the commitment of the Network to provide a professional and high quality service at all times despite internal difficulties. Community interest groups are where local people meet and interact with people of similar interests or backgrounds such as older people, youth, women, people with a disability and those with an inter-faith or neighbourhood focus.

Staff continued to maintain the website on at least a weekly basis during the summer of 2008 to keep members, website visitors and stakeholders up-to-date on what is happening in Hyndburn and beyond. We have made changes to the website to make it easier for visitors to find the information they need. We welcome input from members and visitors to the website to make suggestions for additional improvements. Since October 2008 the Network has aimed to make sure the website is updated at least three times per week and provides information about events, training, consultations affecting the people of Hyndburn as well as a download section which is proving to be a valuable resource for the voluntary, community and faith sector.

The Network continued to keep our members up-to-date on a wide variety of issues by way of e-bulletins, meetings and the website. Representatives from the voluntary, community and faith sector attended many Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) meetings and worked with the LSP and thematic working groups on healthier communities, community safety, economy, employment, new enterprises, children and young peoples issues, housing, education and many other targets in the Local Area Agreement (LAA).

When agreeing the budget for the year, the Network was driven by the considerations of our reserves policy and funding for future years. Fundraising for the current year was on target and the forecast for the following two years 2009-2011 was promising which gave the Network time to look at longer-term funding.

The Network attended other meetings and conferences across Lancashire and the North West, which gave us an opportunity to meet with potential funders and to raise the profile of the Network and issues facing the residents of Hyndburn. In fact, a great deal of Board and staff time was spent on raising issues on behalf of forums and members and promoting Hyndburn at national, northwest and Lancashire level.

In 2007-2008 lobbying was undertaken at all levels from central Government downwards in respect of funding for community empowerment networks nationally.

Despite talk of engagement at local grassroots level no money came through from the Department of Communities and Local Government and many UK empowerment networks went out of business. The Network was one of the lucky ones and through its own endeavours is still operational and serving the people of Hyndburn.

2008 -2009 was a difficult year for communication and information with reduced staff but we remained on target inline with the communications strategy. A great deal of time was spent developing contacts with decision-makers in public sector organisations.

Despite no longer having a dedicated communications and information officer we maintained our links with members, partners, stakeholders including public sector organisations and the local media.

So much has happened the past year as you can see from the Annual Report.

I am happy to report that despite these difficult economic times we continue to increase our membership base, we are in a much better financial state, the variety of Forums is increasing and the existing ones are becoming more sustainable. Our reputation and standing is even higher.

During the year the number of Board members reduced but we continued to operate with a smaller, stronger but more efficient Board. We now have one new member of staff concentrating on two new projects – ‘working with lone parents’ and on ‘community cohesion’ related issues. We share two development officers with Pendle Community Network covering ‘emerging migrant communities’ and ‘rural communities’. In addition an apprentice funded through the Working Neighbourhoods Fund supports the Network.

The Network is looking more positively ahead and the Board is tackling issues for the long term future so the Network can continue to grow and support community engagement and empowerment in Hyndburn.

My thanks go to the Board and the Core Management Team, including those who had to resign during the year, for their guidance and help. Also thanks to Barbara, new staff and volunteers on behalf of the Board and members. The hard work and commitment through all adversity is beginning to pay off at last.

Financial security is the most important area we need to address to secure the sustainability of the Network.

Staff resources to cover all the community engagement activities, work across the geographical boundaries of the borough and undertake the demands that partnership collaboration bring to the Network will need to be addressed.

I look forward to the next 12 months when we will strengthen the Board, continue to grow and develop the Network and work even closer with members, forms and partners.



Peter Shaw, Chair

April 2008 – March 2009

Financial Review

At the end of the financial year 2007 - 2008 much of the Network's funding was due to end and there were grave concerns about the future of the Network especially as decisions on some grants applied for were deferred until the end of May 2008.

An additional £7658 Neighbourhood Renewal Funding was secured from April 2008 to end June 2008 allowing us to continue working in the five priority wards of Barnfield, Central, Church, Peel and Spring Hill for another three months.

Hyndburn Borough Council provided £15,000 per year core funding so that the Network could fulfil its engagement and empowerment role. The Capacity Builders Improving Reach programme provided the Network with £4684 towards overheads.

In addition, £20,000 funding was secured from the Working Neighbourhoods Fund to provide opportunities for single parents in Hyndburn to learn through experience and to provide opportunities that would not otherwise be available to them.

A further £20,000 was secured to carry out community cohesion work and part of this project was delivered through the Hyndburn Inter Faith Forum and its associated activities and events.

A small amount of money, £2850, was available from Lancashire County Council to support the Hyndburn Over 50's Forum and £2500 from Hyndburn Borough Council for the Hyndburn Disabled Persons' Forum.

The Network had been managing the Hyndburn Voluntary & Community Resource Centre since September 2006 but at the end of April 2008 the Network had to let this go due to lack of staff resources so only £1500 income came from building management.

The Network has an excellent reputation and a good record for its financial management and accountability and for providing information on outcomes and outputs to funders in evaluation and monitoring reports. All the money held as restricted funding as at 31st March 2008 has now been released into unrestricted funding and hence can be used to further the aims and objectives of the Network.

The Network holds in its account £2939 restricted funds for 5 Wards Youth Forum and £200 towards a banner for the Hyndburn Over 50s Forum.

The post of Administration Apprentice was funded through the Working Neighbourhoods Fund via Hyndburn Borough Council in partnership with Accrington & Rossendale College.

The Network has been in a more secure financial position since May 2008 and did not have to use its reserves during 2008-2009 so is now in a much strong position to look at longer-term funding which must be secured by March 2011.



Barbara Sharples, Network Manager April 2008 – March 2009

Introduction

This Annual Report covers the activities during the financial period 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2009.

Hyndburn Community Network was founded in 2004 and established to interact with the community, voluntary and faith sector within Hyndburn through the principles of community empowerment and development.

The Network brings together community, voluntary and faith sector groups in Hyndburn, especially those who are marginalised or excluded and provides the link to the Local Strategic Partnership.

The area of Hyndburn encompasses the towns of Accrington, Huncoat, Altham, Rishton, Oswaldtwistle, Baxenden, Great Harwood and Clayton-le-Moors with 16 electoral wards. There are five priority wards in Accrington – Barnfield, Central, Church, Peel and Spring Hill.

The Network is now well established as a formal and accountable organisation that is effectively engaged in community empowerment and development.

Our work involves developing the capacity and skills of our members and the community of Hyndburn through the community engagement process in such a way that they are better able to identify and help meet their needs and to participate more fully in society.

Hyndburn Community Network continues to represent a vibrant voluntary, community and faith sector that works in partnership with the public and private sector.

“We are committed to putting communities in control and building stronger communities where people can influence decisions in their locality which affect their lives.”

Through this Annual Report we want to celebrate what we achieved in 2008 – 2009. Our achievements are due, in a large part, to our members, the Network staff knowledge of Hyndburn and also to the experience and skills of our volunteers and staff.

Vision

The Network aims to ensure that by excellent communications all staff, board members, stakeholders and the general public recognises Hyndburn Community Network as a high performing community empowerment network providing an excellent service to its members and stakeholders.

We will achieve this through high quality community engagement and the principle of communicating clearly and simply and ensuring that communication is open, regular, timely and two-way which will give the Network every chance of success.

Our Values

The principles of promoting social inclusion and community engagement and empowerment are fundamental to the way that we conduct our business. As well as our duties related to third sector (community, voluntary and faith sector) representation, participation and consultation we promote best practice and provide broader opportunities for decision-making in all aspects of our work by the voluntary, community and faith sector at local level.

Key Functions

The key functions of the Network are to: -

- represent the voice of the community, voluntary and faith sector in Hyndburn on the LSP;
- improve communications between the Network, its stakeholders and members;
- regularly consult with the membership and the forums;
- establish links with other appropriate organisations;

- position the Network as the leading voice for the third sector in Hyndburn;
- build awareness of the Network among a wide, defined group of audiences and user groups;
- build relations with key agencies and individuals both within and outside of the Hyndburn borough;
- influence and contribute to the work of the LSP;
- provide easily accessible information and news for all partners;
- establish thematic community interest groups and networks ;
- establish strong links and maintain open dialogue with local elected members, government bodies, statutory services and external organisations;
- make effective use of ICT where it is available and encourage access where it is not;
- be the first point of contact for external agencies seeking information on community networks and groups in Hyndburn;
- secure the commitment of a defined group of stakeholders to the aims of the Network;
- encourage participation and consultation with partner bodies;
- improve the quality of life for the people of Hyndburn.

Staff

We started the year with only one full-time member of staff (Barbara Sharples, Network Manager) and Joanne Slater (Community Network Development Officer) working her notice period. However, thanks to two new funding streams we appointed Mark Chappelhow as Community Network Development Officer in September 2008.

As a result of an East Lancashire wide partnership bid Daniel Popovici and Martin Bradley joined the team in October 2008 and work across Hyndburn on the CapacityBuilders Improving Reach funded programme but are employed by Pendle Community Network.

A temporary administrator was employed from an agency to assist the Network Manager from summer 2008 and until new staff had completed their six month probationary periods.

Janine Bowker is on an apprenticeship scheme funded through the Working Neighbourhoods Fund and also joined the Network in October 2008.

Aims

At Hyndburn Community Network we work with communities to develop strong, active and empowered communities, in which people are able to do things for themselves, define the problems they face and then to tackle them in partnership with public bodies and Government.

Our key aims for 2008 -2009 were to: -

- increase voluntary, community and faith sector participation in the LSP and themed working groups;
- provide a platform where matters of concern to the people of Hyndburn can be raised and policies developed;
- involve people in collective effort through ‘communities of interest’ so that they gain confidence in their own abilities and their ability to influence decisions that affect them;
- enable citizens from geographical areas to come together to tackle matters that affect their quality of life;
- provide opportunities for the socially and economically disadvantaged community of Hyndburn to learn through experience – opportunities that would not otherwise be available to them;
- To advance the education of the public in the subjects of community engagement, empowerment and development;
- To develop community leadership;
- To act as a resource for the VCFS in Hyndburn.

Membership

The Network represents more than 370 voluntary, community and faith groups across Hyndburn and our work involved Network staff working with communities of interest and specific target groups through funded programmes across the whole of Hyndburn. The Network has a large database of organisations that wish to receive information but as yet do not get involved in consultations or representation.

Meetings

Despite the reduced number of staff for three months of the year the Network staff team managed to organise and facilitate over 50 meetings including:

- 10 Network board meetings including an AGM;
- 9 Network management meetings
- 6 Hyndburn Voluntary Sector Forum meetings
- 4 Hyndburn Over 50's Forum meetings, 2 Forum workshops and 4 Forum sub group meetings
- 7 Hyndburn Inter Faith Forum meetings
- 3 5 Wards Youth Forum meetings
- 3 Neighbourhood Community Voice meetings
- 2 meetings for the VCFS representatives on the LSP
- 6 Hyndburn Disabled Person's Forum meetings

This was in addition to attending conferences, workshops, LSP meetings, LSP thematic working group meetings and dealing with the many phone calls received each day from members of the forums, community groups and stakeholders or professionals wishing to engage with the Network, our members or forums.

Funded Projects

Mark was appointed in September 2008 and leads on the Working Neighbourhoods Fund project with single parents and a community cohesion project funded through the Department of Communities and Local Government via Hyndburn Borough Council.

Working Neighbourhoods Fund

The Network was successful in receiving three-year funding from the Working Neighbourhoods Fund via Hyndburn Borough Council to provide support and guidance to lone parents and those engaged with them. The aims of the project are to remove barriers to work and training, to promote effective participation, enhance individual confidence, raise aspirations and help individuals achieve their full potential.

The project provides a complementary service to that of the statutory and public sector and has been defined in the first year as 'the first step to progressing towards employment, education or training'. This is achieved by providing advice and information through group sessions to break down barriers and promote self-esteem and confidence.

In year one (2008 -2009) of the project work has been undertaken to map out the current service provision available to lone parents and to establish a baseline for how this project can add the most value to these services. Following the mapping exercise a five-week session was delivered in the spring of 2009 with 12 individuals attending and six successfully completing the course. Of the six individuals who completed the sessions one individual felt motivated to apply for a job and one contacted a local college with a view to starting a course in September 2009.

A range of agencies are supporting the project by advertising sessions and referring eligible lone parents to the sessions. A number of these agencies have agreed to support the weekly group sessions by delivering talks on their organisation, the services they provide and the benefit to single parents who access these services.

A list of the agencies that have supported the project in year one follows: -

Hyndburn Parenting Forum	Young Peoples Service
Gingerbread	Connexions
Registered Social Landlords	Surestart & LCC Children's Centres
Saheli Connections	Springhill Community Centre
HARV Domestic Violence	Scaitcliffe Community Centre
Calico - Floating Provision	Job Centre Plus
NHS health visitors	AAWAZ
Children & Parenting Services	H 7 RV BME Forum
Local Strategic Partnership	Homestart Hyndburn
Children & Young People 11-19 age group (Hyndburn Children's Trust)	Neighbourhood Management Boards

The project will develop in year 2 with a number of drop-in and 1-1 advice sessions being organised, alongside regular group sessions held throughout the borough utilising a number of community buildings and delivering a wide-range of informal training and information sessions.

PVE - Building resilience to violent extremism

The Network has a track record for successfully delivering community cohesion. We are developing our community work by building resilience to violent extremism throughout Hyndburn in order that people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area and people feel that they belong to their area.

There are several key aims in this project:

- Providing support to the Hyndburn Inter Faith Forum to administer their work and events programme and supporting their inclusion
- Promoting the inclusion of all communities in Hyndburn by disseminating information to community organisations supporting the BME community in Hyndburn
- The Network is developing a database of organisations that provide support. These organisations will receive relevant disseminated information to support and develop their work with the communities thus helping to empower communities.
- Developing dialogues and events within the community and with Accrington and Rossendale College raising awareness of violent extremism and the vulnerable individuals that can be exploited towards extremism.

The Network supported the "What is a Terrorist?" youth dialogue at Accrington and Rossendale College which built awareness and understanding of extremism and of different faith values to 30 students. We will be developing our partnership with the college to deliver a number of sessions throughout year 2.

The Network is helping to facilitate ACT NOW sessions in partnership with the Lancashire Constabulary. ACT NOW is a scenario bringing together individuals within the community and schools/colleges to develop their knowledge of extremism and police procedures. These sessions will be run throughout the Borough in year 2 of the programme.

Through our work with Hyndburn Inter Faith Forum we are running a series of dialogues funded by this programme. The first of these dialogue events was successfully held at Portland Street Community Centre and covered the topic of the progression of young people through different faiths. A number of dialogues will be held throughout Hyndburn in 2009-10 and the Forum has altered its format to run alternate events and business meetings.

Improving Reach - Community Engagement with Migrant Communities across Hyndburn

Funded by Capacitybuilders, the improving Reach Project is a partnership between Hyndburn Community Network, Pendle Community Network and Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale CVS. The project started in October 2008 and is set to reach new and migrant rural communities across Hyndburn, Pendle, Burnley and Rossendale.

Daniel Popovici is the Migrant Community Development Officer and is based at Hyndburn Community Network. The aim of this project is to build relations with the migrant communities in Hyndburn. This is an ongoing process and so far it has been achieved through liaising with partner organisations in order to create a partnership approach to identify and integrate migrant communities. Wherever possible migrant workers should be helped to settle and provided with practical information on how to live in the UK.

Leaflets describing the project have been designed and translated in different community languages, which will ensure that non-English speaking residents are able to access essential services. Future work will give them information about their rights, responsibilities and UK law and how things work in the local area. There will be opportunities for them to meet local groups and integrate with local people in order to develop public acceptance and understanding.

Migration also poses challenges for local communities. In Year 2 a myth busting leaflet will be produced for the settled community which will help them to adapt to the change in their community. Through this project the settled communities are being informed about migration into their local area and supplied with reliable and accurate information about where newcomers have arrived from, why they have come, the implications of their arrival, their needs and the benefits they will bring to the community.

In Year 2 there will be a conference aimed at migrant workers and those that contribute to policy, service delivery, employment, social inclusion or any aspect of life for East Lancashire's Migrant Workers.

The start of this project was delayed until September 2008 at the request of the funders.

Improving Reach - Community Engagement with Rural Communities across Hyndburn

Martin Bradley is the Rural Development and Training Officer for the Improving Reach Project. Whilst Martin is based with Pendle Community Network he works across rural Hyndburn from the Network office, as this is a partnership project. The project also covers Burnley, Rossendale and Pendle.

Traditionally, rural communities and organisations have lacked the support offered to their urban counterparts. The aim of the project is to improve the skills and profile of rural organisations by providing advice, information and training in both personal and organisational development, and to ensure that groups are aware of the range of financial and other opportunities available to them.

The project involves encouraging and supporting isolated communities to become actively and creatively engaged in the decision-making processes which affect them, thereby ensuring their views are heard and acted upon.

Initially, work has been undertaken to establish positive networks with partner agencies. A leaflet and other publicity materials describing the project have been designed and distributed. In addition, a rural conference is being planned for year 2. The Conference is aimed at groups and individuals in rural communities and partner agencies, who contribute to rural policy and service delivery. The start of this project was delayed until September 2008 at the request of the funders.

Local Strategic Partnership

The Network brings the voluntary, community and faith sector together to work in partnership with the public and private sectors on the Hyndburn Local Strategic Partnership Assembly Board (LSP), which aims to tackle and overcome problems for the benefit of citizens. There are 14 representatives on the LSP from the voluntary, community and faith sector – 2 from Hyndburn Inter Faith Forum, 2 from Hyndburn and RV BME Forum, 3 from Hyndburn Voluntary Sector Forum, 1 from the Hyndburn Disabled Persons' Forum, 1 from Hyndburn Over 50's Forum, 1 from the priority wards and 4 community representatives elected from the Network membership.

Representation & Participation

Community & Geographical Forums

Throughout 2007 -2008 the Network supported and assisted: -

- Hyndburn Over 50s Forum
- Hyndburn Disabled Person's Forum
- Hyndburn Inter Faith Forum
- Neighbourhood Community Voice Forum
- 5 Wards Youth Forum
- Hyndburn Voluntary Sector Forum

Hyndburn Over 50s Forum

The Over 50s Forum is a group of people with a desire to improve services for the over 50s in Hyndburn. These volunteers are willing to work together and use their influence to stand up for the interests of the over 50s. The Hyndburn Over 50s Forum is supported by CC Dorothy Westell, the Older Persons Champion for Lancashire and Hyndburn Borough Council appointed Cllr Lynn Wilson as the Champion for Hyndburn.

Funding for the Forum is through Lancashire County Council Adult Social Services. The support and guidance given to the Forum is through the Network in partnership with Age Concern Hyndburn.

During the year agenda items covered: LCC Service Level Agreement, LCC Single Assessment Process, Lancashire Strategy for an Ageing Population - Outcome framework and delivering the strategy, Hyndburn LSP, LINKs, Help Direct, Fair Access to Care Services, LCC & Disabled persons parking bays at HV&CRC, National Pensioners Convention – current campaigns, LCC Welfare Rights, County Welfare & Youth – Royal British Legion, Patient Advice & Liaison Service (PALS), LCC Adult Social Care Access to Care Services & Assistive Technology Services and the John Elbourne Review.

The main event during the year was a workshop in September which covered: Developing District Older People's Forums in Lancashire Review, How older people can build links with younger people (Aim 5b), How older people can have improved access to a range of services (Aim 2b), How older people can play an active part in decision-making (Aim 5d), How older people can be made to feel safe at home and in the community (Aim 4b), How older people can have suitable and decent accommodation (Aim 4c), Reviewing the Lancashire LAA, LSP Healthier Communities Action plan, LCC Service Level Agreement & the Hyndburn Over 50s Forum.

The Forum has representatives on a number of East Lancs and Lancashire wide bodies. During 2008-2009 the capacity of the Forum developed, a sub group was formed and as a result the Forum hopes to become a constituted group and manage its own funds and governance in 2009.

Hyndburn Disabled Person's Forum

The Hyndburn Disabled Forum was formed to give those residents with a disability an opportunity to contribute to decisions about which local problems need the most attention and money and also decisions made about local issues and service delivery.

The purpose of the Forum is to enable disabled persons to meet and discuss their priorities and needs and work with both the public and voluntary sectors to try and find solutions to problems.

The Forum is still at a relatively early stage in its development and is supported by Cllr Malcolm Pritchard who is the Disabled Person's Champion for Hyndburn.

A key initiative of the Forum is to set up a Hyndburn Disability Centre in Accrington town centre and the work done in 2008-2009 should result in the centre opening in 2010.

Agenda items included: highways, pavements and parking, buildings and venues with issues for disabled access and usage, the Shopmobility in Hyndburn scheme, transport and the Now card, the Wellbeing and Health Inequalities Funding 2007-2009, tackling health inequalities, fire safety for people with sight, hearing or mobility difficulties, the principles of inclusive design for buildings, the health profile for Hyndburn, the DCLG Disability Equality Report (EasyRead Report), Connect to Work and disabled swimming sessions at Hyndburn Sports Centre and Mercer Hall baths.

There were presentations from Hyndburn Homewise, Access Lancashire and East Lancs into Employment and an NHS PCT presentation on Neighbourhood Health. The Forum has produced an access document entitled – Meeting Community Needs.

One area of key interest to the Forum and that is improved access to buildings and open spaces so the Forum uses the inclusion access checklist tool to assess buildings in Hyndburn.

During the year the Forum held drop-in sessions where people could bring their problems to the attention of the Forum and be signposted to an appropriate agency or voluntary sector organisation.

Hyndburn Inter Faith Forum

The Hyndburn Inter Faith Forum was initiated to promote positive relations between the faiths in Hyndburn.

The Inter Faith Forum is the recognised forum for Hyndburn in which people represent the diversity of faiths in Hyndburn. The Forum promotes social and community cohesion.

The Forum provides a central voice of the faith sector for the benefit of the media and works towards racial and religious equality in all areas of life. The Forum acts as a consultative forum on local issues for local government, to influence decision-making, to provide advice to public bodies and form links with statutory agencies and other voluntary groups.

The Forum compiled a response to the Department of Communities and Local Government, Face-to-Face & Side-by-Side consultation. This consultation investigated the development of a framework for partnerships which will support increased inter faith dialogue and social action. The Faiths in Action Grant Fund was created as a direct response to the consultation and the Forum submitted an application to the fund to develop inter faith work in Hyndburn.

Neighbourhood Community Voice Forum

Through the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund the Network continued to support Neighbourhood Renewal Community Voice until the funding ended in June 2009.

Over the years the Forum gave a boost to community involvement and led to more residents having a real say as members took ideas from the Forum back into their local community organisations and cascaded the information to the wider community.

The Forum ceased to operate in September 2008.

5 Wards Youth Forum

Through 5 Wards Youth Forum we involved young people. The end of Neighbourhood Renewal Funding made it difficult for the Network to continue to support this forum however the 5 Ward Youth Forum has continued to promote the voices of youth in the priority areas. The Forum actively engaged with the Children's and Young Peoples Consultation developing, along with a number of schools in Accrington, a pod cast to highlight the needs and aspirations of the youth of the Borough. This work will support the development of the strategic plan for young people over the coming years.

Two planning meetings took place and the Forum took part in the 'Have Your Say' children and young people's consultation run by Lancashire County Council on behalf of Hyndburn Children's Trust.

The Network is now engaged in developing inter-generation activities that the Forum will play a key role in.

Hyndburn Voluntary Sector Forum

The Hyndburn Voluntary Sector Forum is the leadership body that works on issues of local concern such as the provision of services, self-help and advocacy, campaigning, borough co-ordination and support.

Its membership reflects the diversity, knowledge, experience and common interests of voluntary organisations working across Hyndburn.

Hyndburn Voluntary Sector Forum aims to enable members of different voluntary organisations to learn about each other's area of expertise, practices and work to form partnerships and eliminate duplication by promoting knowledge and appreciation of each other and their areas of work.

The Forum partners get together to submit joint grant applications in order to bring much needed funding in to Hyndburn.

During the year the Voluntary Sector Forum agenda has covered the Local Area Agreement (LAA) and Lancashire Partnership, representation on the LSP and LSP thematic working groups, Hyndburn COMPACT, Hyndburn's Community Cohesion Strategy, Sustainable Community Strategy and Equality Scheme Action Plan, LCC Neighbourhood Engagement Framework, Help Direct, the Comprehensive Area Assessment process, participatory budgeting (giving more people a say in local spending) and the Government's action plan 'Real Help for Communities' which sets out how government will support charities, social enterprises and volunteers through the recession.

Changes to funding and public service commissioning and procurement from the voluntary sector are a challenge to the sector. This is an ongoing agenda item as public service contracting means third sector organisations will be included in the design and delivery of public services in the future. The forum has also campaigned for the Cabinet Office 'Code of Practice on Consultation' to be followed together with the 'Code of Good Practice in Consultations and Policy Appraisal', which supports the COMPACT on relations with the voluntary and community sector. Members have attended conferences such as 'Doing More for Children and Young People' voluntary, community and faith sector conference in November 2008.

The voluntary sector is working hard to create an environment for a thriving third sector, to provide opportunities for people to participate in regular volunteering and is in a strong position to influence local decision-making.

Geographical Forums

Changes in funding at the Network meant we were unable to support neighbourhood and local community groups outside of the priority wards during 2008 -2009.

Hopefully we will secure funding so that this much needed community engagement work undertaken by local people can have support from Network staff in order that the Forums can continue to have a real say on policies and developments affecting their neighbourhoods and we can assist in the development of real community leadership.

The Network acts as a resource for the VCFS local groups in Hyndburn through its website and brings to their notice key consultations and strategies such as the 'Community Engagement Strategy'.

Consultations 2008 - 2009

Many public sector organisations want to hear about people's views so we promote both national, regional, Lancashire and Hyndburn consultations on our website.

Through the Network the community interest forums, member organisations and individuals have been given an opportunity to take part in the following consultations:

- DCLG - Participatory Budgeting: a draft national strategy
- DCLG – Side-by-Side & Face-to-Face
- DCLG - Tackling race inequalities
- DCLG - The Empowerment Fund
- DCLG - Third Sector Partnership Board -Consultation Paper on the third sector's strategic voice within Communities and Local Government
- HBC - Accrington Town Centre Master Plan
- HBC – Community Engagement Strategy
- HBC – Core Strategy
- HBC – Scrutiny at Hyndburn
- Lancashire - Centre for Inclusive Futures
- Lancashire LINK Consultation
- Natural England - Future Landscapes
- NW Regional Strategy

Representation

Through the Network, and the many community interest Forums we support, Hyndburn has representation on many Lancashire, East Lancashire and Hyndburn bodies such as: Links, East Lancs Older People's Partnership Board, Help Direct, Lancashire Forum of Faiths, Lancashire Infrastructure Consortium, Pennine Lancs VCFS Group, Hyndburn Fair Share Trust Panel, Age Concern Lancashire Chair's Forum, Hyndburn Better Government for Older People, Hyndburn Parenting Forum and Homeless in Hyndburn. Through the voluntary sector Hyndburn is represented at national level and at regional level on the NW Community Empowerment Forum.

Communications Strategy - Information

Through the communications strategy and our publications our key aim is to advance the education of the public in the subjects of community engagement, empowerment and development. Press coverage, both nationally and locally, has helped to raise the profile of the Forum.

Through out the year we continued to increase the Network's series of quick guides under the banner of 'How Hyndburn Works'. Seven were completed in 2007-2008 year and a further five this year. All these are available in the download section of the Network's website.

- QG1c Local Development Framework
- QG2c Communities & Neighbourhoods
- QG2d Community Empowerment Glossary – jargon buster
- QG2e How to Get Involved
- QG4c Hyndburn Disabled Persons Forum
- QG5a Migrant Communities

Summary Voluntary, Community & Faith Sector

The third sector contributes to community involvement by providing a voice for local people and communities, as an advocate and campaigning on issues.

Hyndburn Community Network is the umbrella organisation for the VCFS in Hyndburn. During 2008 – 2009 we believe we have given local communities a stronger voice in the decisions affecting their lives. Our real achievement has been the contribution to empowering local people and communities in the decision-making of the Hyndburn Local Strategic Partnership and the Hyndburn Core Strategy. Volunteers give thousands of hours to the LSP, LSP working groups and the themed Forums associated with the Network and the amount of representation they undertake. This has enabled strong partnership working with the public sector and in turn meaningful consultation and partnership working with the voluntary community and faith sector.

We believe that with the support of the Network the voluntary, community and faith sector provides an environment for a thriving third and invaluable links to local people and communities which are now better placed to influence decisions in their locality through improved understanding of local issues and commitment to strong values.

Legal Structures

The Network is a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee with a Board of Directors. The Memorandum and Articles of Association were incorporated on 14 March 2006 and the Company Registration Number is 5741364.

Background

Community involvement is part of the UK Government's vision to improve public services and at the Network we aim to give more opportunities for local people to get involved. This means talking to people about the services they use and their perceptions of these services and helping them to take direct action to address issues.

In recent reports it has been shown that **community empowerment** through the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and its themed working groups can result in:

- reductions to the cost of services,
- increased satisfaction and easier access to services,
- lower crime rates and reduced fear of crime,
- more attractive local environments,
- better prospects for improvements in health,
- improved employment opportunities,
- joined up services,
- communities feeling empowered and engaged in the democratic process and feeling they can make a difference in their local area.

Community engagement is about local residents engaging with public bodies such as the Police, Fire & Rescue Service, health service and the local authority. Where people engage with service providers services are improving, crime is falling and solutions to local problems are being found.

At the Network we support community **development** and show people how to get involved, become active citizens, access information, have an influence, hold the public sector to accountability and redress the imbalance between the public and third sector to put communities in control.

Acknowledgements

The Network and its Forums would like to thank the following for their support both financial and in-kind contributions during 2008 and 2009: -

Accrington & Rossendale College
Age Concern Lancashire
Broadfield Special School
Community Foundation for Lancashire
Community Foundation for Merseyside
Help the Aged
Hyndburn Borough Council
Hyndburn Community Safety Partnership
Hyndburn Fair Share Trust Panel
Hyndburn Voluntary and Community Resource Centre Ltd
Lancashire Constabulary
Lancashire County Council
Lancashire VCFS Consortium (now Lancashire Infrastructure Consortium)
Leisure in Hyndburn (Hyndburn Leisure Trust)
Local Strategic Partnership
Neighbourhood Community Voice Forum
NHS East Lancs PCT
Pendle Community Network
Portland Street Community Centre
Preston Racial Equality Council
St Augustine's Church, Huncoat

We would also like to thank all the organisations and bodies that supported us and worked in partnership with us during 2008 – 2009.

These are far too many to mention and we feel sure we would offend if we left any organisation out so please accept this as our thanks for all your valued support and encouragement through the year.

ENDS...