

Case Study: Luddendenfoot Community Association (LCA)

Luddendenfoot is a small village near Halifax in West Yorkshire. The LCA is a lively organisation based in a Victorian church hall called the Civic Institute. This case study shows how assessing impact helps small organisations and can support future plans for a new build community centre.

Luddendenfoot is a long, narrow village spread out along a valley bottom. This has hampered a sense of a village centre and several shops and local amenities have closed, ironically at a time of increasing population in the area. In this context, the LCA has had a crucial role to play. The Institute building is owned by the local authority and rented to the group. LCA have no staff and rely totally on volunteers. What it may lack in financial capacity, it more than makes up for through energy and vision. The centre's activities include:

- a daily playgroup taking over 80 children per week and involving a large number of parents
- youth clubs including a Boys Brigade Company with over 100-year history
- Women's Institute and sports groups using the facilities
- an active church community
- a multi-purpose meeting hall with new kitchen.

The LCA act as a catalyst for wider community activities but they are very aware of the limitations of their current building – there is no wheelchair access, some facilities are below standard and there is creeping damp coming up from the river. They are now looking ahead to a long term solution: *'a new build environmental community centre, built from straw bales, tyres and reused bricks, with young people involved in the design and construction; an innovative educational and community facility, located in the park near the canal, surrounded by woodland with diverse wildlife and a wetland river area as a focus for arts, drama, sport, workshops, exhibitions – the hub of the village.'*

They are developing a business plan and funding strategy for the new centre. What role could an impact assessment play and what particular findings did the method reveal to help the group in their current phase of development?

The group carried out their information gathering in August and September 2006, collecting views from individual users, groups based in the building, as well as agencies and local businesses based near by.

Their impact assessment indicated the LCA is making:

- a major contribution to life-long learning and social wellbeing through the playgroup. This serves not just Luddendenfoot, but surrounding villages and involves 5,844 hours per month volunteer time
- a significant impact in the area of culture and leisure, even with only limited hours per month volunteer time going into it
- a significant impact also through the youth clubs, with 210 hours of volunteer time per month contributed
- a major impact in the area of faith - including spiritual wellbeing as a category - was seen as important part of the exercise for this Christian-based centre.

'The approach helped us to see active volunteers more as an asset.'

The review session also revealed that:

- only five hours volunteer time per month are currently given directly to environmental activity - this was a surprise considering how important the vision of building an environmental centre was to the group's future
- the impact of community involvement and cohesion was at a lower level than expected – it is mostly based around involvement by parents in the playgroup

'It helped in the sense that seeing what was important to you may not be important to others'

In terms of future actions, the management group concluded they need to:

- broaden the age range catered for in their activities
- increase the level of activity currently directed to environmental work
- expand their scope to involve local neighbourhoods more, especially the new housing development, rather than be limited to specific identity groups of parents, young people and so on
- market their existing activities and services better, especially given their plans for generating funds for the new building
- use the impact assessment as part of their funding applications and future campaigns to add credibility to their track record

The impact assessment was particularly useful in this case because it helped the group to:

- take stock of their resources and strengths – in particular, that local parents contributed over 8,000 hours per month in volunteer time – a remarkable achievement
- have an overview of their current range of activities, identified more clearly who is benefiting and where some of the gaps are
- get a sharper idea of the basis of fundraising for the future building and a strengthened confidence as a group.

This work with the group added key learning points about the use of the impact method:

- the choice of the actual month for the analysis of use of staff and volunteer time can make a difference to the findings – the group wisely intentionally avoided choosing September because the gala held in that month would have skewed the pattern of volunteer time
- adding local businesses to the list of ‘agencies’ to be used for one of the three surveys added a lot, as these included some of the remaining shops still based in the immediate area
- the group wanted to broaden the wellbeing categories to explicitly include faith or ‘spiritual wellbeing’ and included hours dedicated by volunteers to this aspect of their activities.

Created with *ChangeCheck*, part of *bassac*'s Community Impact Programme

ChangeCheck

www.changecheck.org



33 Corsham Street
London
N1 6DR
Tel: 0845 241 0375
Email: info@bassac.org.uk
www.bassac.org.uk