

STREET CHAMPIONS

**Executive Summary from
The Annual Review**

**Compiled by Debbie Ingoldsby
Project Management & Consultancy Services**

June 2008

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Street Champions was set up in 2007 by Groundwork West Durham & Darlington (GWK), and Darlington Borough Council (DBC) through a partnership approach to improve the environmental quality of neighbourhoods across the Darlington Area. Groundwork provide day to day management of the programme and Darlington Borough Council's Street Scene Department carry out the practical works necessary to deal with the issues reported. Both organisations work together to develop the programme.

The programme seeks to engage local residents to assist the work of the Council's Street Scene department with the aim of cleaning up and improving neighbourhoods. There are now 142 registered Street Champions operating across all wards and the programme is working towards a number of key outputs and performance measures.

The findings have shown the programme to be well run and well received. Street Champions and project staff on the whole are happy and looking forward to future developments. Areas that do require some attention include communication, residents influencing service delivery, Neighbourhood Renewal (NR) ward targets and 'next steps'. The key findings for each specific output for the programme are outlined in more detail below along with suggested recommendations.

1.1 Key Findings & Recommendations

Empowered residents taking responsibility for the quality of their environment

The evidence suggests that the Street Champions feel happy with their efforts and feel they are making a good contribution to society by being a street champion. Whilst they probably would have phoned in issues before, the programme makes them more informed about a wider range of issues and within its structure they feel encouraged and empowered to take action.

Comments from Street Champions ranged from 'it has raised awareness amongst community', there is 'less graffiti less litter', its 'improved immensely' and 'feel Street Champions has given me licence to do more and provides a good structure to work within'

Other comments concluded that 'it's good but ongoing battle', 'might be worse without Street Champions— some people though just don't care about their neighbourhood', 'refuse collectors don't help by leaving a mess'.

The current structure of the programme appears to provide a suitable means in which to engage and empower residents.

Recommendations

- Many Street Champions are likely to be residents who have already phoned in with issues before – is customer services encouraging residents who do phone in to sign up and become a Street Champion?
- It was commented that it's an ongoing battle – 'some residents don't care...refuse collectors leave a mess'. Work should be done on engaging with the wider community particularly in NR wards to spread the message and stronger links made with refuse collectors.

Pool of Street Champions working in partnership with the Street Scene area teams (target – 110)

A total of 142 Street Champions have been signed up against a 2 year target of only 110. Excellent progress has therefore been made to exceed not just the first year target but the total overall target for the programme. Although work is still required to achieve the target of 10 Street Champions per Neighbourhood Renewal Ward.

Quality support and training has been given from the induction and throughout the programme plus there have only been 3 leavers since the start of the programme. The evidence suggests that the programme has been successful in retaining some (if not all) of the original champions and is still attracting new champions to join.

Recommendations

- Many Street Champions are already involved with their local Neighbourhood Watch and other community initiatives – this should continue to provide a key network to promote the programme.
- The majority of respondents were motivated to become a Street Champion to help tidy and clean up their local Neighbourhoods. Reducing litter appears to be the biggest motivator. This issue could be built upon by working closely with litter campaigners such as ENCAMS and encouraging community litter picks.

- Excellent progress has been made on achieving the overall target, however further development work is required in the Neighbourhood Renewal Wards to achieve the desired targets of 10 per ward.
- It is not clear how many of 142 champions are currently active. This figure may give a slightly distorted view of the success of the programme if it transpires that there is a high percentage of non active champions. Further clarification should be sought here.

Residents influencing service delivery

Respondents felt that just reporting issues and getting a response, whilst worthwhile, did not qualify as influencing how Street Scene operate. It was mentioned that Street Scene were probably restricted by budgets. It was also mentioned that the updates were useful as they allowed names to be put to faces and this helped to feel a 'little closer to Street Scene' but it was suggested that if Street Scene were able to respond proactively rather than just reactively to ongoing repetitive problems then this could be seen as influencing operations.

Recommendations

- A working group may be considered, comprising Street Champions and project staff to help plan future service delivery
- Consideration could be given by Street Scene to monitor trends and contemplate putting in prevention measures to avoid repetitive problems.

A closer and more effective link between the Street Scene teams and residents

The programme is certainly creating a closer link for residents to work with Street Scene. There were many positive comments from respondents about the work of Street Scene such as 'issues always dealt with', 'good response, issues being dealt with' and 'problems are sorted, I can't fault the work of Street Scene'.

There were a couple of negative responses such as 'response varies from issue to issue', 'Graffiti seems to get ignored', 'Littering near Honey Pot lane not tackled', Furthermore one respondent commented that when some issues are not dealt with, it's then difficult to follow that up and get an answer. And another commented that each issue reported needed a reference number.

Recommendations

- Consider review into the consistency of dealing with issues
- Examine reasons for difficulty in following up unresolved issues and confusion over reference numbers.

Improved image of neighbourhood and resident satisfaction

Mixed findings on how Street Champions feel about the general condition of neighbourhoods across Darlington. This is quite subjective and will no doubt depend on the actual neighbourhood that the Street Champion lives and is most likely to reflect recent issues such as more litter after bin collection day and other issues such as anti social behaviour, crime levels etc. The general state of neighbourhoods doesn't appear to be a major issue, but litter is the biggest complaint.

Recommendation

- Further development work required into resident satisfaction and neighbourhood image

Quality of ongoing interim evaluation methods

On the whole there is a lot of data being collected from the Street Champions on a fairly regular basis, and much of this is useful data if used properly. There are a couple of issues as to its effectiveness which are as follows: The questionnaires are inconsistent with different phrases being used and different questions added or omitted which makes it difficult to obtain sound comparisons. The method of data collection on the whole is via a questionnaire and a little ad hoc. There is a danger that the Street Champions will feel a little inundated and stop responding so readily. It is not clear what action has been taken in response to the answers obtained via the questionnaires.

Recommendations

- It is suggested that a mixed range of evaluation techniques are used to gather data or questionnaires sent 6 monthly/annually to prevent questionnaire overload. Also it would be beneficial if the questionnaires are consistent and the two main types of questionnaire are separated in order to be able to analyse against the initial baseline.