

Next Practice in System Leadership – Case Study

Extended Services in North Hartlepool (ESINH)

Context for the Field Trial Site

ESINH aims to tackle long-term challenges to educational achievement by building capacity for community leadership.

At the heart of the partnership are seven schools, one secondary and six primaries with the Local Authority and a community organisation. The schools are:

- St Helen's Primary;
- St Bega's RC Primary;
- West View Primary;
- Clavering Primary;
- Barnard Grove Primary;
- St John Vianney RC Primary; and
- St Hild's Church of England Voluntary Aided School.

Some of the schools have worked in collaboration before, either as an Education Action Zone or as a Networked Learning Community. Attainment at Key Stage 3 is well below average for the Authority with 36% of students achieving A*-C at GCSE. 13% of young people are not in employment, education or training (NEET) and levels of crime, especially criminal damage to property, are persistently and significantly high.

North Hartlepool is in the 2% most deprived wards in England. 51% of adults hold no formal qualifications and 35% receive benefits. Teenage pregnancy is amongst the highest in the country and a significant number of adults have poor literacy (29%) and numeracy (70%) skills. The community demonstrates poor social cohesion, is culturally isolated and has very low aspirations.

Organisational structure underpinning Next Practice

ESINH is led by a 'Partnership' comprising leaders of the seven schools, representatives from the third sector community organisation and from the Local Authority. The schools in the partnership have recently formed a Community Interest Company, which will enable them to be better placed to support the work of local community groups in meeting the identified needs of families.

The partnership is working to establish a 'Brokerage Board' to ensure that statutory bodies, community groups and voluntary sector organisations hear the voices of the community, both adults and students. This is intended to create a context within which local families can access support to help them to tackle long-standing barriers to educational achievement. What is particularly ambitious about the ESINH approach is their vision for a collaborative model of community leadership for the 'Board' in the longer term, represented by its possible formation into a 'Not-for-profit Company' in its own right.

The Partnership is chaired by a headteacher from one of the primary schools, while two part time secondees provide additional capacity to both the Partnership and the Brokerage Board; one a leader in the secondary school and one a community activist working in the third sector.

Leadership management & governance practices being developed

The Brokerage Board was conceived as a new model for joint school and community leadership, where a wide range of stakeholders would together develop processes for collaborative planning and decision-making and protocols for delegating responsibility for the development of appropriate services to project groups.

The focus of the Next Practice in System Leadership Project has been the constitution of the partnership, the establishment of the Brokerage Board and consideration of the relationship between the two, in particular agreeing the terms for the not-for-profit company.

ESINH has worked with the Local Authority to negotiate a role that complements and adds value to existing provision such as Sure Start Children's Centres, Extended Schools provision and other community focused initiatives.

A series of facilitated stakeholder events using Next Practice tools such as the Bridge Change Framework and Delta 6 have helped to raise awareness of the Board and build a sense of ownership of its objectives.

Impact; actual and predicted benefits

ESINH aims to bring community groups and providers of services together to empower the community both to express its needs in its own terms and to be part of the solutions to meeting them.

Their belief is that community leadership and ownership of service design will increase the likelihood of provision meeting families' needs and therefore offering the right support to successfully tackle barriers to children's learning and achievement.

They offer a vision for the future of children in Hartlepool that is expressed through their success criteria for David, an archetypal Hartlepool student. They hope that through ESINH, tomorrow David will:

- benefit from enhanced, enriched and extended life chances;
- value learning for himself and his children;
- contribute to the community using his skills and abilities;
- be engaged with local politics and may be a future leader of his community;
- be able to mobilise his neighbours to help him to solve his own problems; and
- live in an inclusive, outward looking community that is solutions focused.

Clearly such aims are long term. Shorter term objectives centred on building bridges with other stakeholders, scoping need and establishing a robust constitutional arrangement with high levels of trust have been largely achieved.

Early joint ventures have included setting up a family befriending service and developing a shared approach to supporting children with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties.

Emerging issues

Compared with many localities, families in North Hartlepool appear to outsiders to be similar in more ways than they are different. There is a stable, white British

population mostly living in terraced, Local Authority controlled housing. There are some areas of private housing, which are poorly served by local amenities. But insiders see themselves as culturally and socially diverse, identifying with very small geographical areas, which mostly correlate with housing estates.

This means that any concept of a coherent community with whom ESINH might work is mistaken. By engaging deeply and seriously with their local communities over time, and through the contributions of community leaders and activists, ESINH has grown to understand how to differentiate their approach for different sections of the community.

ESINH recognised that they needed to become an effective strategic group, with high levels of social capital, equal to their ambitious plans and the challenging tasks they set themselves. At the same time they knew they needed to be, and to be seen to be, permeable to and connected with a much wider group of organisations and individuals. Learning how and when to invite contributions, how to balance inclusion with efficiency and how to maintain the pace of development has been an important journey for the group.

ESINH and the Local Authority have invested significant energy and expertise into building and maintaining a productive relationship. Internal and external brokerage, joint development work and time are combining to establish trust and an ongoing dialogue leading to mutual benefits.

Implications

The outcomes of this case study suggest that leaders of community partnerships could usefully consider the following questions:

What intelligence could help to identify and to connect with influential families and individuals from each of the multiple communities that a school, or a partnership of schools, serves?

What benefits might a formal arrangement, such as a not-for-profit company or community interest company, offer? What measures would be necessary to make certain that the benefits outweighed any costs?

What skills and additional capacity might the secondment of one or more specialists into a community partnership offer?

What are the different ways in which community partnerships and local authorities work together for the benefit of children and their families?