

HOW IS ELMBRIDGE MEETING THE NEEDS OF EXCLUDED COMMUNITIES OR SUPPORTING LOCAL INITIATIVES?

The borough of Elmbridge in Surrey is one of the wealthiest in the South East and as such is perceived as “without need” and ineligible for most funding streams. However, this is far from the case and (based on Indices of Deprivation figures) work commenced in 2000 in the most deprived ward in Elmbridge, Walton North, supported by a multi-agency Partnership comprising Borough and County Councils; Housing, Police; Education and Health – **The North Walton Partnership**.

The work of the North Walton Partnership has been managed by a full-time Co-ordinator who has used a community development approach, building on what may already exist and focusing on the assets and strengths of the local community as well as their needs or deficiencies. Solutions would respond to local circumstances rather than taking a “one size fits all” approach. A key success of this approach has been the development of several Resident/Community Groups within North Walton supported by the Co-ordinator but driving their own agendas. This has resulted in successful local projects including healthy cooking, a mobile library service, improvements to local footpaths, a support group for vulnerable families, IT training, a youth shelter and a teenage art project.

In November 2004 an independent evaluation of the North Walton Partnership was carried out by the West Surrey Health Promotion Service which was extremely positive and supported the recommendation that the Partnership’s work should be extended to other “pockets” of deprivation within Elmbridge that were previously known anecdotally but which could now be formally identified using Super Output Area data from Neighbourhood Statistics.

In April 2005 the Partners agreed to continue the work of the Partnership at least until April 2007 working initially in the Lower Green area of the Esher Ward and the Ward of Molesey South, using the principles and best practice that had been achieved in North Walton. The Partnership would now be known as the **One Elmbridge Partnership** and would continue to increase community cohesion and the achievement of social inclusion by drawing together vulnerable and marginalized people and groups and involving them in the process of change. The new Partnership would also continue to work through the networks and partnerships that already exist to make the most effective use of the existing effort and resources available to support this community capacity building.

Through this work Elmbridge is well placed to embrace the national agenda which promotes the reforms to reinvigorate local government and pass power downwards and outwards to local communities to give people the chance to exercise greater influence in decisions that affect their everyday lives. The key issue for us, however, has been the recognition that in places like Elmbridge, ward level analysis of deprivation is not appropriate. For us, social exclusion is found in a small collection of streets or small neighbourhoods.

Stella Burgess

One Elmbridge Partnership Co-ordinator

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