

Empowering Communities Case Study: Cemetery Support Group

Empowering: Supporting people to get involved, emphasising and developing their assets and experience, and – where appropriate – enabling communities to influence decisions and make decisions of their own



Project: For two years the Batley Cemetery Support Group has campaigned and raised money to rebuild and restore the 'Stairway to Infinity'. This restoration work would improve access for visitors to the Twin Chapels and for relatives tending graves within the cemetery. However it was felt by members of the group that the work hadn't been as co-ordinated or as inclusive of the community as they would have liked.

Design: The Support Group aimed to develop a fundraising strategy to raise £14,000. They would draw on and develop their own skills and bring in the contributions of a wider group of people than the original volunteers.

Method: The Community Engagement and Development worker was engaged to help the Support Group 'grow' their confidence and increase and build on their skills in the hope of empowering them, and a wider group of people from the community, to get involved and make a difference. It was decided that engagement with the Indian and Pakistani community was a priority as they were users of the cemetery, but had no links within the Support Group. The Engagement Worker approached local Masjids and Muslim Community representatives, who are well known and connected to local neighbourhoods, and facilitated meetings at which the project was discussed and developed.

Results: From difficult decisions and ambitious plans the Support Group exceeded expectation and raised £999 more than their original target of £14000. The generosity of time given by members of the Support Group and community members from local Masjid's allowed expectations to be raised, and this was reflected by the donations received. With help from the Engagement Worker the Support Group and the Masjid Community members connected on common ground to the benefit everyone in the wider community of Batley. Those involved have commented on a sense of satisfaction by their involvement in this project and its activities.

Outcomes:

- The Group's volunteer co-ordinator was shown around the Snowdon Street Mosque, which she said was a fascinating first-time experience for her
- Masjid representatives led an informative talk about local projects with residents and the volunteers from which they all discovered many areas of common interest
- As a result of their new understanding of wider issues in the community the Masjid also made donations for four other local charities. This served as a powerful message to help bust myths and stereotypes about the involvement of Muslims in charity work



Conclusion: The Community Engagement and Development Workers engagement enabled meetings and bridged a gap between groups that support to community and want to get involved. The relationship built through this project empowered residents and volunteers involved to influence and develop decisions that affect the whole community. It has proven to be very positive and a dialogue of shared neighbourhood commitment has improved understand and acceptance of the difference between the groups and generations.

For more information on this project please click on this [Involve link](#)