In Community

Practical lessons in supporting isolated people to be part of community

Edited by Carl Poll, Jo Kennedy and Helen Sanderson

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in Control®

Helen Sanderson Associates

Helen Sanderson Associates is a development training and consultancy team. HSA
works with people to change their lives, organisations and communities through
person-centred thinking and planning. There are HSA teams in the UK, Australia,
Canada and America.

www.helensandersonassociates.co.uk

In Control

In Control started work in 2003 to change the social care system in England. The old
system did not put people in control of their own support or life.

In Control designed a new system – Self-Directed Support. The Government now wants
all local authorities to change their systems to Self-Directed Support.

Today In Control Partnerships is a social enterprise – a charity and an independent
company. Its mission is to help create a new welfare system in which everyone is in
control of their lives as full citizens.

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Introduction

Introduction

This is an optimistic book.

It's about how the most isolated people in society can, with the right kind of support, be not just part of community but make important contributions to it.

It's a book that captures some of the most imaginative initiatives that are helping marginalised people to make connections – mainly in the UK, but also the US and India.

The book was originally conceived as a sequel to *Friendship and Community – Practical strategies for making connections in communities*[1]. The intention was to write about how people had applied ideas from *Friendship and Community*. Since 2002, though, both the context and our understanding of community work have changed. As we researched the book, we found other exciting community-building initiatives. We were inspired by the work we came across and started to see patterns and themes that joined quite different approaches.

We think the initiatives and ideas gathered here will be useful for a wide variety of people – social care staff, health professionals, community members and community workers.

Self-Directed Support and personalisation

The editors of this book – Carl Poll, Jo Kennedy and Helen Sanderson – had worked in different capacities to build a bridge between services and community for some years: Carl at KeyRing Living Support Networks; Jo at Scottish Human Services and the Scottish Community Development Foundation; and Helen in her work through Helen Sanderson Associates – especially in developing person-centred thinking and planning.

The three have worked together since 2003 to help in the development of a community strategy in Self-Directed Support and personalisation. We are publishing the book in this context.

Putting People First

In 2007, the Government set out its vision for the transformation of adult social care. *Putting People First* signalled the widespread personalisation of services. People who use social care would be able to receive a Personal Budget that they could use to create support that works for them. This is a radical change in the way social care is organised. Until now, someone needing social care support would usually find themselves slotted into a limited range of institutional services – residential homes, day centres and other special arrangements that cut them off from ordinary life and community.

The new system, Self-Directed Support, opens a door into community. People who have a budget to spend in creative ways to get the life they want can shrug off their previous status of service user, care home resident, or client and slip into new identities: worker, neighbour, community member and citizen.

In England alone, there are about 2 million people who use social care. Many are the most isolated people in society – including older people, disabled people and people with mental health problems. Services that support them have mostly not thought of, or prioritised, community-connecting work and have not been encouraged or required to do such work by statutory authorities. Community organisations, on the other hand, have generally viewed social care users as the responsibility of social services.

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Increasing social capital

Evaluations of In Control's work have discovered that offering people control over money and support leads directly to greater involvement in community life. Of 196 people asked about the extent to which they took part in and contributed to their communities since directing their own support, 64% reported improvements, 34% reported no change and 2% said things had got worse.[2]

This increase in numbers of people actively contributing to community represents a significant increase in social capital.[3] A number of chapters in this book recount a variety of experiments in consciously increasing social capital by mobilising the skills and talents of previously excluded people in local networks.

Community: the answer to a crisis in social care funding?

The fact that the majority of people who direct their own support seem to become more involved in their communities is clearly good news. However, statutory authorities cannot afford to rely on this tendency. They need to develop clear strategies to build community because investment in community may be the only way to solve the social care funding crisis predicted by the Government (an annual £6bn shortfall). Investing in community will lead to a reduction in needs – and a better quality of life. There is already evidence that a better quality of life in community for people directing their own support can go hand-in-hand with a reduction in social care costs. In Control analysed data provided by 10 local authorities about 104 people. Costs of Self-Directed Support were 9% lower than the social care previously used.[4]

People's needs are not fixed or absolute. They are reduced when people have resources, skills, family, friends, self-esteem and a sense of purpose and belonging. Needs reduce when communities are strong, supportive and welcoming.

A book for social and health service workers

So social and health services have a vested interest in being knowledgeable about how to build community. However, supporting community building may seem like a daunting prospect because it may be unfamiliar territory. Where do we start?

The authors have distilled the lessons from years of painstaking and dedicated work. By setting out clearly what they have tried and learned, they have sought to take

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the mystery out of community-building activity. Their stories and conclusions are inspiring but also give practical ideas that can be included in a community-building strategy.

It may not be feasible or desirable to convert health and social service workers into community workers, but health and social services have a vital supportive role to play. They can become knowledgeable about how community is built so that they can support initiatives that strengthen communities. They can make staff, buildings and resources available to local people.

They can create alliances with those who are actively building community: individuals, families, neighbourhood associations and community organisations, knowing that the time and resources invested will pay dividends by reducing need.

A book for community members and community workers

Those who don't work in social and health services may find chapters here that describe familiar approaches: time banks, for example. Community workers may be surprised, though, to read how some services have battled for years to build a bridge into community for the people they support. Although community development theory and practice focuses on those groups that are most excluded, the priorities have traditionally been those groups that are excluded for economic or ethnic reasons rather than those excluded by age or disability.

The arrival of Self-Directed Support means that society's most marginalised people will be able to spend their support money to build the life they want in community. Community organisations will be able to include people who have till now usually been hidden from view. Communities will be able to welcome their contributions as neighbours, employers, workers and consumers.

Start with ourselves

A number of chapters suggest that one important resource in community building is us – our knowledge, qualities, connections and networks. There is no rigid formula here, no requirement that we must, for example, involve our own family network in community building. However, there is a strong suggestion that we will be successful to the extent that we give of ourselves in some way because we see ourselves as citizens and members of community, rather than as professionals making interventions that have nothing to do with our own lives.

Some readers may think this is obvious. However, in community-building workshops for professionals it is common to hear statements such as '*I live in another local authority area because I don't want to bump into clients*', or '*Where I live, I keep myself to myself. I don't have anything to do with the community.*' If we have such an approach, we are unlikely to be successful in helping people develop community connections.

Person-centred planning

We each have our own individual talents, skills, interests and dreams for the future. You can see below a summary of '*asset-based community development*'. This approach often uses capacity inventories to discover and log local citizens' talents and interests.

In the UK, some of the most sophisticated approaches to uncovering individual interests and talents have been developed in work with people with learning disabilities. There are a number of person-centred planning '*styles*' (for example, *Essential lifestyle planning, Personal futures planning* and *PATH*)[5]. Each of these has tools that can be used by anyone who wants to make a positive change in their lives (not just people with learning disabilities). When the skills, talents, interests and dreams of individuals are identified, these resources can be made available to communities. Those communities become richer and more interesting and have a stronger currency for social capital.

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A positive approach – finding the assets

Though the chapters are diverse – some written by people working from within services, some written by those involved in community work – there is a pattern in their approach: identify the gifts, talents and skills of individuals; locate the places in communities where those individual resources may be welcome; connect the two.

Person-centred planning is one approach to identifying these qualities and several authors describe how they use person-centred approaches.

A number of authors also refer to '*asset-based community development*' and the work of John McKnight and Jody Kretzmann at Northwestern University in Chicago. McKnight and Kretzmann have spent decades examining what happens in communities across the US when those communities are successful in some way. What they have discovered is that healthy, vibrant communities develop when the internal resources of those communities are mobilised: the skills, gifts and talents of individuals; the problem-solving capacity and mutuality of local (often very informal) associations; and the power, resources and knowledge of businesses and institutions such as social services, libraries and schools.

Map-making

One of the basic activities of asset-based community building is, therefore, to create an assets map of a community, starting with individuals and associations and then adding the public institutions that are relatively easy to identify. McKnight and Kretzmann note that '*It is usually the case that the depth and extent of associational life in any community are vastly underestimated.*'[6]

Our own experience supports this statement. Many support staff assume that there are relatively few associations in any locality or that associations are plentiful in the US but not the UK. Those staff usually change their minds after an hour spent asking people on the street about associations in the area. Usually they return with a list of at least 100. McKnight suggests that associations are responsible for starting 80% of all successful community-building initiatives.

Someone arriving fresh to community building might well think that this positive, grass-roots approach is the obvious and natural way to do things. It makes sense. However, in the US and UK, there has been another dominant paradigm – a deficit-based approach that maps the needs of local communities and then creates professional services to tackle these failings. The Blair Government's

Social Exclusion Unit conducted such a needs map exercise on a national scale and catalogued a long list of problems in deprived neighbourhoods: poverty, unemployment, lone parenthood, poor housing, crime and problems with racial harassment and vandalism.

McKnight and Kretzmann say the problem with this kind of exercise is that:

'These negative images, which can be conceived as a kind of mental "map" of the neighbourhood often convey part of the truth about the actual conditions of a troubled community. But they are not regarded as part of the truth; they are regarded as the whole truth.

Once accepted as the whole truth, this "needs" map determines how problems are to be addressed, through deficiency-oriented policies and programs. Public, private and non-profit human service systems … translate the programs into local activities that teach people the nature and extent of their problems and the value of services as the answer to their problems. As a result … residents come to believe that their well-being depends upon being a client. They become consumers of services, with no incentive to be producers.'[7]

Self-Directed Support now offers the chance for people to be producers – making a contribution through, for example, neighbourliness, family relationships, work, volunteering, joining associations, buying locally, being an employer, and generally taking part in community life.

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Chapters

A common structure

The chapters all describe the lessons learned in carrying out practical pieces of work. These pieces of work range in size. Some describe the work of one or two people. Others are large in scale.

We encouraged authors to write their chapter around a common structure:

- the problem they wanted to tackle
- what they tried
- what they learned
- suggestions for others.

This is the overall structure but the reader will see variations because authors have naturally adapted the structure to their particular story. We hope the overall structure provides the reader with an easy-to-follow route through each chapter.

Common themes and patterns connect all the chapters. Also, chapters fall into loose groups. There are groups of chapters:

- written by authors working from within services to help people connect to communities – KeyRing (3), Circles of Support (8), Grapevine (10), for example; and working with a foot in both the service and community worlds – Local Area Coordination (7)
- about reaching out from community organisations – for example, time banks (4) and *Small Sparks* (2)
- which have a strong theory component – In Control (1) and Learning power for community development (5), for example
- about ways of charting progress – Life Domains and the Inclusion Web in mental health (11); Standards in Community Connecting (12)
- about using personal experience and local presence to build connections – School community worker (6), faith groups in Bradford (9), Manavodaya (13).

A brief summary of chapters

There is a short introduction at the head of each chapter. Here is an additional, very brief, summary of what to expect:

Chapter 1: Simon Duffy describes how the welfare state systematically leaves community out of its schemes to help people who need support. Simon also sets out In Control's model of community capacity.

Chapter 2: Carolyn Carlson analyses the success of Seattle's *Small Sparks* Programme, a small-grants initiative that funds individuals to carry out their own community project. *Small Sparks* has virtually no bureaucracy; the application form is small enough to fit on a paper napkin.

Chapter 3: Carl Poll and Karyn Kirkpatrick describe how KeyRing Living Support Networks function. Networks are made up of nine people who might otherwise be in residential care or struggle to maintain their independence. They each have their own ordinary home. A part-time volunteer who lives in the Network offers practical support and helps Members to build self-reliance, mutual support and community connections.

Chapter 4: Martin Simon tells us how time banking works. In time banking, everyone's contribution is valued equally – one hour of '*volunteering*' earns one time credit. The time credits are '*banked*' and people cash them in to '*buy*' the skills of other time bankers. Time banks are an effective way of tapping into the '*core economy*'.

Chapter 5: Titus Alexander reports on the success – and withdrawal – of the Government's *Community Champions* small grants programme. He also considers how good initiatives at the local level can be vulnerable to wider political forces. This chapter is about how communities need to understand power and develop skills and influence to affect how political decisions are made.

Chapter 6: Natasha Jules, a school community worker, underlines the importance of knowing your neighbourhood. Her strong personal investment in the locality and curiosity about the many cultures in the neighbourhood enable her to build up strong relationships based on trust.

Chapter 7: Jo Kennedy, John Higgins, Tricia Grey and Archie Rose discuss how Local Area Coordination – an approach developed in Australia – tries to bridge the separate worlds of community and services. This balancing act can be challenging but, at its best, Local Area Coordination can make a real difference to people's lives.

Chapter 8: Helen Bowers, Alison Macadam and Lorna Easterbrook describe how Circles of Support – a model usually used with people with learning disabilities – are an effective antidote to the '*shrinking of ordinary life*' experienced by older people whose lives are dominated by services.

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Chapter 9: Roisin Hannaway and Mary Horan immerse themselves in the life of their mainly Muslim neighbourhood in Bradford. They set about the patient and painstaking building of relationships. Theirs is an account of an intuitive, highly personal approach to overcoming the barriers created by difference.

Chapter 10: Clare Wightman writes about how Grapevine applies methods of asset-based community development – discovering the interests and talents of individuals and looking for places in the community where these will be welcome or needed.

Chapter 11: Peter Bates, Jo Seddon and Antony Dowell outline original approaches used in work with people with mental health issues. One of these is the *Inclusion Web*. The authors describe how the *Web* creates a rich picture of a person's life and records information in a graphic format that can be read at a glance.

Chapter 12: Jo Kennedy, Michelle Livesley, Carl Poll and Helen Sanderson write about a way of gathering evidence of organisations' effectiveness, *Standards in Community Connecting*. The *Standards* were designed to be used by support organisations, commissioners and regulators. They can also be used by individuals to assess how effective their support organisation is in helping them to make connections.

Chapter 13: Varun Vidyarthi describes a genuinely empowering approach to the facilitation of social change. This approach was developed by Varun and colleagues while working with very poor rural communities in India. The chapter also explores another paradigm: how our effectiveness as community builders is directly connected to the development of ourselves, our '*inner dimension*'.

Notes

1. *Friendship and Community – Practical strategies for making connections in communities,* J. Kennedy, H. Sanderson, H. Wilson (Manchester 2002), republished by In Control Publications with an introduction by Carl Poll, Jo Kennedy and Helen Sanderson, *Self-Directed Support and Community,* London (2007).

2. *A report on In Control's Second Phase – Evaluation and learning 2005-2007,* Editors: C. Poll and S. Duffy, London (2008).

3. Social capital can be defined as *'the networks, norms, relationships, values and informal sanctions that shape the quantity and co-operative quality of a society's social interactions. One of the commonly used measures of social capital is trust in other people.'* Robert Putnam's book, *Bowling Alone*, is an important book about social capital.

4. *A report on In Control's Second Phase – Evaluation and learning 2005-2007,* Editors: C. Poll and S. Duffy, London (2008).

5. As well as the planning styles, there is a useful range of person-centred thinking tools. For more information on person-centred thinking and planning: www.helensandersonassociates.co.uk.

6. *Building Communities from the Inside Out*, J McKnight and J Kretzmann, Chicago (1999).

7. Ibid.

Twelve lessons
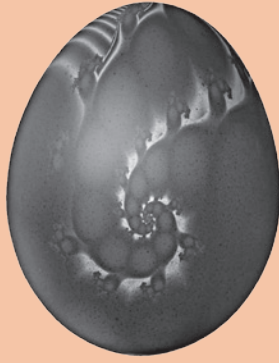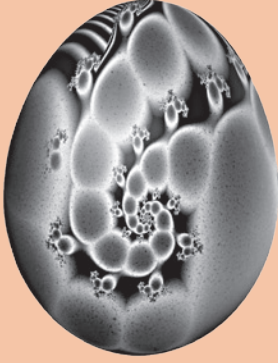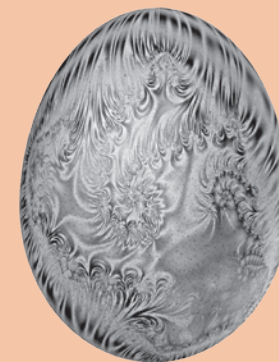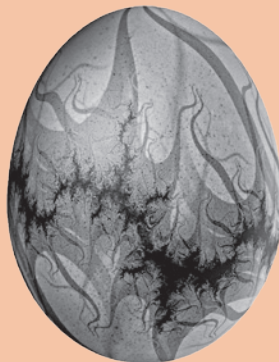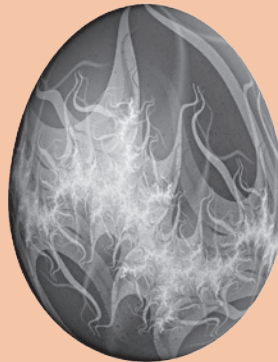
Twelve lessons

Chapters in this book are organised to help the reader to get a clear picture of the author's experience and understanding.

We end the book by offering twelve core lessons from the community-building initatives gathered here.

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Twelve lessons

Each lesson is evident in many chapters. However, below we pick out a chapter which particularly illustrates each lesson.

1. Start with ourselves

We will be successful in community building to the extent that we give of ourselves.

> ❯ Varun Vidyarthi illustrates this lesson in chapter 13.

2. Believe in people and community

We have a choice about how we view people and communities: as a problem or a resource. Focusing on positives rather than problems is the way to build community.

> ❯ Clare Wightman describes this approach in detail in chapter 10.

3. Build equal relationships based on trust

We are unlikely to achieve sustainable change by making quick interventions from outside. Relationships that are carefully built and are based on trust are a key to meaningful change.

> ❯ Chapter 6 by Natasha Jules describes the importance of building relationships based on trust.

4. Start small and build from there

Manageable small steps lead towards larger goals. It is better to experience small successes than the disappointment of never getting closer to the goal because the task we set is too great.

> ❯ In Chapter 9, Roisin Hannaway and Mary Horan's work exemplifies a patient and modest approach.

5. A clear vision is essential

Unless we know very clearly what we want to achieve, it is too easy to be diverted from the end-goal. This is true for both individuals and organisations.

> ❯ Chapter 1 by Simon Duffy analyses how we can reach a goal of citizenship for all.

6. People are experts on themselves

People know better than anyone else what they need and what makes them happy. Professionals need to listen and be humble in order to be helpful.

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> ❯ Carl Poll and Karyn Kirkpatrick describe how the support of KeyRing was built on this principle.

7. Tools are helpful

Tools are useful in community building. Person-centred planning, mapping and many other techniques are important aids in the service of a clear vision.

> ❯ Helen Bowers, Alison Macadam and Lorna Easterbrook consider the role of such tools in Chapter 8.

8. Community building is a long process

Community building is a constant process. It never ends. Those involved in community building need support to sustain their efforts.

> ❯ Jo Kennedy with Tricia Grey, John Higgins and Archie Rose illustrate this lesson in Chapter 7.

9. Community building should be enjoyable

Community events often take place around food, children and celebrations. Don't have a meeting if you can have a party.

> ❯ Carolyn Carlson, in Chapter 2, urges this approach.

10. Community is based on mutuality

All community interactions are based on an unspoken contract: I help you; you help someone else; someone helps me.

> ❯ Martin Simon in Chapter 4 describes how time banks mobilise the mutuality within communities.

11. Be open to new things

We need to be curious, adapt to the unexpected, be willing to change our plans.

> ❯ In Chapter 5, Titus Alexander discusses how communities need to develop political skills.

12. Measure progress and celebrate success

Action without reflection may be pointless or even counterproductive. We need some means of measuring progress and must reflect together on what we do. Success, however small, should be celebrated.

> ❯ This lesson is illustrated by two chapters: Chapter 11 by Peter Bates, Antony Dowell and Jo Seddon and Chapter 12 by Jo Kennedy, Michelle Livesley, Carl Poll and Helen Sanderson.

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