

Building a Partnership in Knowle West- Report Summary

A Quick Read

The Past

Knowle West has a long history of residents being active and involved in supporting each other and coming together to solve problems, make local improvements, and to have fun. The area has had a lot of government regeneration funding in the recent past. This led to residents working in or with voluntary organisations and the public sector on some large projects, such as the Knowle West Health Park, improvements to Inns Court and Filwood Broadway, and projects to improve community safety, support young people and provide employment and skills support. Bristol City Council put in place structures to give residents a voice and get things done locally, through Neighbourhood Management and more recently, Neighbourhood Partnerships. In 2009 the Council identified the regeneration of Knowle West as a key priority for promoting growth in South Bristol and a Knowle West Regeneration Framework was developed.

However, since 2010 the cuts in public sector funding has meant that areas like Knowle West have much less support from the Council and other external agencies. Neighbourhood Partnerships have now been cut.

The Present

As a result of these changes, local voluntary organisations and community groups in Knowle West saw a need and an opportunity for working together in a new way and successfully applied for some funding from Quartet Community Foundation to get some help to develop a new approach.

Vivid Regeneration were appointed to carry out the research to see whether people want a new local partnership and find out their ideas about what it should do and look like. They worked to a small steering group and spoke to people in local organisations and community groups and active local residents.

Overall, people spoken to were positive about a new partnership. Local residents have skills, knowledge and enthusiasm about getting things done locally. Some people feel sad and angry about the loss of community facilities, lack of affordable new housing, lack of opportunities for young people and not enough visible progress to improve the area. They would want any new partnership to:

- Bring in more residents to be involved in the community
- Strengthen the voice and influence of all local residents
- Build people's confidence and skills
- Enable residents and organisations to work together on larger projects to benefit the area and make lasting changes
- Share resources and support each other
- Be open and transparent and focus on action
- Involve local businesses

People also said it is important that the partnership provides opportunities for informal, fun activities so that people can enjoy themselves and share skills.

Based on this feedback Vivid explored some options for a partnership with the steering group. Then they tested out the preferred option a bit more with people.

What is the new Partnership idea?

There would be 4 parts to the Partnership

1. **A residents group** or forum to bring residents together, encourage new people to join in. Residents would decide what they wanted it to be and how it should work. It could help residents have a stronger voice, put on events, support people to put their ideas into practice locally. The group would be supported in its development by a paid community worker, and residents would be able to allocate a small grants fund to help people get small scale stuff done or try things out.
2. **A business forum** to help local businesses get together, work on shared ideas and problems, improve the local economy and be a voice for the business community.
3. **A voluntary and community groups network**. This already exists in the form of Knowle West Together and its aim is to share information and improve co-ordination. Active residents also attend this.
4. **A Knowle West Alliance**. This is the working title for a partnership which would bring together representatives of the above 3 groups; residents, businesses and voluntary and community organisations together, with local councillors. They would work together on making some of the larger, lasting changes which residents want to see, and be a strong voice for the area.

What will happen next?

We have recently been successful in securing some funding which will help us to move forward in developing the partnership from September. This will include funding for a part time community worker to support the residents group, and a small grants pot for activities.