INTER WOVEN PRODUCTIONS CIC

Specialists in **Creative Placemaking** and Asset-Based Community Development through Pod-Working

Connecting People-to-People and People-to-Place

"The Hamlin Gardeners"

A Case Study for the use of Quiet Voice Methodology™ in Community Animation and Participation

The project starts …

In late 2024 Live and Move, Exeter commissioned Interwoven to provide an Introduction to Quiet Voice Methodology (QVM™) training for practitioners and to run a QVM animation project on a local authority built housing estate in Heavitree, Exeter. Hamlin Gardens was identified as a pocket area in the relatively affluent suburb of Heavitree that hadn't received much community development and where low participation was noted.

The project was to run for 6 months and to have three stages:-

Stage One:-

Delivery of an Introduction to Quiet Voice Methodology workshop to Live and Move and invited staff.

Stage Two:-

i) Engaging and building a group (or "Pod") of 'quiet voice' residents.

ii) Working with the group to make a plan for activities and events for the neighbourhood.

Stage Three:-

Delivery and support those of events, and transfer to ongoing sustainability.

SEVEN significant project successes

1

A group of practitioners from Live & Move, Exeter City Council, Exeter City Community Trust and WSP convened at Exeter's Civic Centre for the training. Since then:-

1) Two CPAOs have been involved with further QVM activity with Interwoven, in their areas.

2) One attendee is now a Director with Interwoven and is continuing their professional development to full QVM Practitioner status.

"I think that is our aim, isn't it, to include people who aren't currently included in some of these activities, so yes I think it is the proximity work that stands out as an important reminder"

Course participant

The resident designed plan

2

An active group of Hamlin Gardens residents (a "Pod") have come together to share their ideas, time and energy for the benefit of their neighbours. Using QVM techniques we were able to bring together a group of around 10 residents, some who had not met before and many who had not previously engaged in community activity. **Together they created an action plan that would benefit the environment of the estate and encourage more physical activity.**

They have named themselves "The Hamlin Gardeners"

3

They quickly galvanised around community gardening on the estate and were keen to create elevated planters that could be reached by those with mobility difficulties. They also cleared over-grown areas and collected a fine harvest of blackberries!

4

They were also keen to link to the heritage of the estate and the nearby Playing Fields where older residents had shared that a circus regularly visited. They chose a loose circus theme for a family fun event and even provided a kite-making workshop in preparation so that everyone could have a kite if they wished.

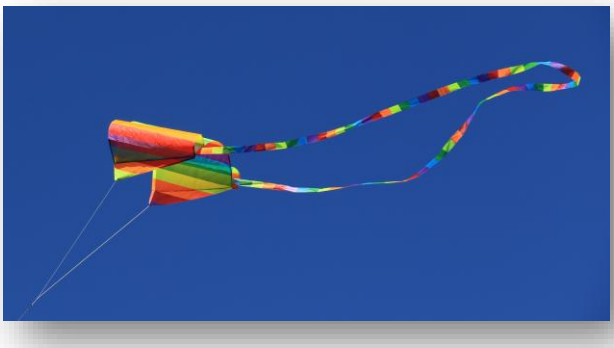
"Thank you for those who made the kite making happen! K absolutely loved it!! She's now super excited to fly her kite"

Participant feedback

5

The Family Fun event itself was a huge success attracting over 50 residents sharing a neighbourly happening. All engaged in place-inspired, fun, physical and community activity.

The whole thing was ably designed and hosted by The Hamlin Gardeners themselves



"The day's been amazing. Getting all the community together from Hamlin Gardens. People who haven't met before and the group organising such good activities for the children. It's been a brilliant afternoon."
"My little girl has had a great time. She's enjoyed all of the activities. It's been nice to see a lot of people here."
"It was really lovely, a nice event. I'm meeting new faces. I didn't know there were so many children around Hamlin Gardens which is nice."

Family Fun event participant feedback

6

The Hamlin Gardeners also undertook to survey their neighbours about secure bike storage and were able to establish that there is one area on the estate where this doesn't currently exist – thereby inhibiting bike-use. This important data provides a quick win for those wanting to encourage more physical activity.

7

The Hamlin Gardeners have gained in confidence at every step of the project. Their WhatsApp group has grown to 21, they've named themselves and established their own facebook group and have already laid plans for a further Family Fun Sports Day in Hamlin Lane Playing Fields.

This group now represents an excellent stakeholder partner in itself and, of course, a ready conduit to community "voice" that shouldn't be wasted.

"JoJo and her team were great at getting our community linked up with one another. Her passion for the community inspired the residents to feel heard and make differences which benefited many in Hamlin Gardens. The Hamlin Gardeners Group is now established and is moving forward with gardening, swap shops, up-cycling and much more. JoJo and her team have brought a newly revived sense of community and we are all looking forward to many new projects as a community in 2026."

"For myself personally, I suffer with extreme anxiety. Being in a group of people makes me feel physically ill. However, every time I've had an encounter with yourself, you have been calm and comforting. You initiate conversations but not in a pushy way. You've managed to bring a group of people together- I have lived here for a few years and have never spoken to many neighbours. You've come up with engaging ideas, you've encouraged engaging ideas- and you always offer biscuits which helps!"

Hamlin Gardeners feedback

How it was done

Working with Pods
A fundamental part of Quiet Voice Methodology is the formation of working groups of residents – i.e. "Pods". There's a very specific methodology for this that allows us to reach those who wouldn't normally participate. Traditionally known as hard-to-reach, we prefer the term Quiet Voice. You can learn more about Quiet Voice Methodology™ and how to apply it in your community work here – www.quietvoicemethodology.uk

Being placed-based
All aspects of the work used the physical, built and landscape heritage aspects of the estate to bring people together and broker conversation.

Giving agency
This particular commission was specifically to use QVM to animate more physical activity and this has been demonstrably achieved. However, it was important at the outset to keep the conversation open and the invitation broad. This left room for residents to present their own view of the estate – including its assets and those things that they would like to change.

This agency is a large of part the motivation to take action and to continue as a group. This project proves that providing that agency improves, rather than limits, the desired impact.

Conclusion

Again, Quiet Voice Methodology has been demonstrated to be incredibly effective in galvanising and supporting resident-conceived and -led action.

The Hamlin Gardeners, even though resident in an area not known for its participation and many of the Pod had not been active before, turned out to be a thoroughly dynamic and capable group who have every intention of continuing their great work.

References
EVALUATION REPORT Employing Quiet Voice MethodologyTM to enhance Community Health/Activity
A project commissioned by Live and Move, Exeter Hamlin Gardens, Heavitree, Exeter

Case Study Report prepared by JoJo Spinks, BA MPhil, PgCER
Quiet Voice Methodology Trainer and Consultant
info@quietvoicemethodology.uk
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