

Twelve lessons about building community



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. ➤ 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.

The Twelve Lessons are gathered from: *In Community: practical lessons in supporting isolated people to be part of community*. Order *In Community* from: HSA Press, 34 Broomfield Road, Heaton Moor, Stockport SK4 4ND; www.helensandersonassociates.co.uk or In Control, Carillon House, Chapel Lane, Wythall, West Midlands, B47 6JX; www.in-control.org.uk