



New Wortley Community Association



Location

New Wortley, Leeds



Founded

1982



Legal structure

Charity and Limited Company



Description of services

Operates and runs New Wortley Community Centre, a hub for local services and support

Overview of the business

New Wortley Community Association (NWCA) has existed since 1982 and works to provide services and support to the people of New Wortley, one of the most deprived parts of Leeds.

The Association formed in response to road safety concerns following the death of a young boy in a road accident in 1982. Having raised money to set up a pedestrian crossing, the association decided to continue its work locally and built a community centre. This was the first community-owned community centre in Leeds.

It has grown to operate and run the New Wortley Community Centre, a hub for services and support to help the people of New Wortley, with 20 employees.

The building is owned by NWCA and generates about 75% of its income through social enterprise activities. The rest is raised through grants and funding applications.

Why is community accountability important?

The organisation has been community-led from the outset. Being accountable to the community is based on an organisational belief that 'local people have the solutions'. It works hard to reflect the local population by providing a range of activities and services. The approach is based on asset-based community development, focusing on supporting local people to make the most of the assets available to them.

What does accountability look like locally?

Here we use three categories to provide a snapshot of some of the mechanisms and methods that the business uses in community accountability. These categories are not hard and fast; there is some overlap between the areas outlined.



Structures

The organisation has a principle of having local residents on the management committee – there are eight trustees, five of whom have lived in the local area for most of their lives. The board meets monthly. *'The board reflects what we are trying to do as a charity – it is about local people, it's important that they are holding us to account.'*

Staff and volunteers are drawn from the local area and co-produce plans for the work. Many of them first became involved with the business as clients before becoming volunteers and later being employed by NWCA. *'Employing local people is key for us... investing locally, giving people the chance to use their talent. The aim is to lift the area out of deprivation.'*

Local residents are listened to and engaged in the business in a range of ways, one of which is formal consultation processes, which can be led by an independent agency.

A new community centre has been built which was designed by local residents and has words and phrases local people feel about the building etched into the concrete and plaster.

Relationships

NWCA works closely with local partner organisations, including schools, health centres and the police. These partnerships operate on both a strategic and operational/delivery level. It has developed a local business forum in order to create opportunities for employment for local residents. They are in the process of a developing a community-led housing project and undergoing community consultations about this as well as working closely with the local council.

The organisation has an 'open-door' policy in order to act as a hub for local residents: *'my door is always open and we don't have a buzzer deliberately so you can just come in'*.

The centre is used for multi-agency meetings for the area, by the local residents' association and for public meetings to address problems and changes in the local area: *'in-depth conversations about what matters most to communities'*.

In 2014, the organisation set up a New Wortley Our Place partnership to build a strong local partnership focused on the plans drawn up by the community (through consultation). The key themes were community safety, better health and opportunities for education, training and employment. The New Wortley Our Place partnership was recognised as one of the most effective in England by the Department for Communities and Local Government. The partnership continues to take part in shaping local plans and influencing services and accountable bodies and attracting investment to the area.

Communications

The community centre is open seven days a week with an open-door policy. It runs a full timetable of activities and services including a community café, laundry and charity shop as well as a community hall which can be hired out to community groups and agencies.

It is active on Facebook and Twitter and uses these along with its website to signpost people to activities, organisational policies and how to have a say in what is happening locally.

They also run a range of celebratory activities in the community – such as open days, festivals, and concerts – as part of building their local presence.