



partnerships for schools
building schools for the future

This case study looks at how South Tyneside and Gateshead local authorities (STaG) have joined together to promote community engagement under the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme.

Inspiredspaces STaG, the Local Education Partnership, used a variety of approaches to extended provision reflecting the different natures of the communities served.

Key project information

Local authorities: South Tyneside and Gateshead

LEP: Inspiredspaces STaG Ltd.

BSF Wave: Wave 1

Number of schools: 10 in Wave 1

Project timescale: First school opens September 2009

Effective community engagement across two local authorities: the STaG experience

Project description

Both local authorities have a strong history of community engagement and have always sought to provide opportunities for leisure and lifelong learning through their schools. A key role of Inspiredspaces STaG was to take advantage of existing best practice and build on community use based on consultation with the communities concerned.

Charter for community involvement

Inspiredspaces STaG asked the local communities how they wanted to be involved during each stage of the process and took part in initial discussions with schools to establish a charter for the design development process.

This charter looked at how to best engage and inform pupils, staff, parents and the wider community in the design process.

Community consultation

A range of community consultation events allowed parents, pupils, staff, and representatives of the local community to give their opinions direct to Inspiredspaces while the projects were still in draft form.

Inspiredspaces STaG used a straightforward approach to the structure of each consultation and based the sessions around the three key areas of:

- we asked,
- you said,
- we did.

Each project had a basic minimum of three public consultations and were well attended, attracting over 200 members of the local community keen to find out more about the transformation of their schools. All suggestions were taken into account, and as a result of community consultation one school was moved to a different part of the site in order to increase community access to the main entrance of the building.

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Listening to what the community needs

It was important to gauge the demand for facilities in the proposed designs with community groups such as childcare, music and sports and to ensure that they would be suitable and appropriate. These groups were engaged through a variety of approaches in order to discuss how the designs could facilitate the activities they wished to promote.



A public engagement event in Jarrow.

Harton Technology College has a strong sporting history and as part of BSF were keen to build on the new sports hall and gym that had been provided through lottery funding. In order to develop community integration Inspiredspaces STaG worked with the school, the Rugby Football Union (RFU) and local rugby clubs. As a result, this has led to the inclusion in the project of an all-weather rugby pitch for school and community use.

Mortimer Community College is co-located with the Community Association and the Community Association manager is an integral part of the core team for school engagements. As well as reporting back to the school's governing body, Inspiredspaces STaG met with the Community Association Management Committee throughout the consultation process. In other schools key community user groups were identified and specific sessions set up to work with them.



Engaging students at Heworth Grange School in Gateshead.

The future of community integration

As part of ongoing development work, Inspiredspaces STaG has started to look at a new model for supporting extended provision and community use. 'Today's Green' would be a values led social enterprise set up by Inspiredspaces and the local authorities to develop, manage and promote out-of-hours community and third party use of the schools in the STaG BSF programme.

The scheme would place schools at the heart of their communities – the village green for today's modern neighbourhoods – used throughout the year by a range of people and organisations engaged in diverse activities.

However, for some schools this will not be the best way forward and so Inspiredspaces STaG is also supporting schools to develop other community opportunities such as creating sports trusts.

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Top Tips

- The major lesson learned is that you can never do too much consultation.
- It is important for the Local Education Partnership to consider how this will be managed to be genuine and effective consultation, while also managing expectations.
- The process has enabled a wide variety of stakeholders to have an input into the BSF design development process and really influence the futures of young people and their local communities.

Key contact

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Further information

More details about the STaG scheme is available at: www.inspiredspacesstag.co.uk