

16. LINWOOD RESOURCE CENTRE

Officer responsible Community Advocate	Author Eleanor Bodger, Community Worker, Linwood Resource Centre
Corporate Plan Output: N/A	

Eleanor Bodger, Community Worker, Linwood Resource Centre, reports:

Report to Hagley Ferrymead Community Board
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Te Whare Taonga O Nga Iwi Katoa
Linwood Resource Centre

“Having worked in the Linwood area now for almost two and a half years, patterns and trends are becoming clearer. Many of these are consistent with national trends. There are however local characteristics that decision makers in the area need to be aware of. It is very clear that both national and local government policies support the notion of building stronger communities/neighbourhoods. Whilst this is a noble sentiment, the question needs to be asked about how realistic is it to expect communities/neighbourhoods to pull together in this day and age?

At the Linwood Resource Centre we felt we had sufficient anecdotal evidence about problems of cohesion in the community/neighbourhood to explore this issue more. To this end a student from Canterbury University studying for the Diploma of Social Work was engaged in a field work placement with the Centre. The outcome of this ‘impressionistic’ (cf research) study was that there are a number of factors working against the building of stronger communities. These include issues such as; increased individualism, increased choice, different value systems, a wish for privacy, the increase in part time work and casualised work, a more transient community and the fear of being wrongfully ‘dobbed in’.

Impressions of the changing nature of neighbourliness came from; community constables, schools, other agencies and the residents themselves. For some people, neighbourhoods are not ‘nice places’. Neighbourhood disputes are quite common and a level of tolerance and withdrawal were ways that some people coped with this. Others became confrontational. Many people nowadays draw their friendships and interest groups from further afield than their neighbourhood. This impacts on the local area. Whilst we looked at the issue of neighbourliness in a sociological way we also looked at it in terms of how changes in the nature of neighbourliness impacted on peoples personal lives, e.g.

- for those who had had a multitude of new neighbours in the flats next door over the years, they lacked energy to take the effort to meet the next lot of new neighbours,
- for those who had different values to their neighbours they didn’t know how to respond in varying situations eg how to handle the neighbours children when they got out of hand,
- for those who were victims of petty crime they reported that they didn’t know who to blame any more because they can’t keep track of who is doing what, in the neighbourhood anymore,

- for those who felt lonely, who knew they even existed? for those who wanted to get involved in local things, there were the number of things that took them away (including short term part time work, changes in their own energy level and family concerns/obligations)
- for those who worried about their neighbours drawing the wrong conclusions and ‘dobbing them in’, they withdrew behind closed doors
- for those for whom life was just too tough, they likewise withdrew

Despite these difficulties most Linwood people have shown their resourcefulness in coping with the situations facing them. They also like living in the area. However, can stronger communities really emerge in this context? **We believe that this process needs to be helped along.** The Hagley/Ferrymead Board must continue to support community based initiatives in the area. Paid ‘anchor’ people are needed in this community to give stability and continuity to projects. Expertise is also needed in what are quite complex situations.

The ‘Impressionistic’ study has helped us to identify the best ways in which to respond to Linwood issues. Amongst these are; greater networking and co-working amongst groups (ie demonstrating the ability to work together and the value of doing so) ensuring that ‘anchor’ people are involved in the projects, continuing to be responsive to local issues, encouraging and supporting people, affirming peoples skills/abilities and understanding that many peoples commitment is likely to be variable etc.(designing projects and appointing personnel to accommodate this)

The Linwood Resource Centre has been involved in a number of cooperative projects recently including the Linwood LYFE youth festival, public meetings at the Linwood Library encouraging local people to vote and meet politicians, involvement in the Linwood Forum and ongoing dialogue with other workers in the area.

The two garden workshops that we are currently running are very popular and a great cooperative spirit is developing. The community development process ensures that these are not solely ‘courses’ but that they facilitate new friendships and cooperation. A lot of exchange of skills and resources is happening. The Local Issues group, computer, food coop (albeit small) and Heritage groups are continuing. The Heritage Group recently received certificates for their video on the Linwood Cemetery, which was presented to the Hagley/Ferrymead Heritage Awards. The Centre has a resource file re the genetic engineering debate. The Centre is open Monday to Thursday for people to call in and have a ‘cuppa’ etc Advocacy and support is given as required.

There are several new initiatives that we are exploring in the new year, these concern youth and older adults (involving co-working with another group) and support for women. We are also investigating the possibility of expanding the organic community garden.”

Chairman’s

Recommendation: That the information be received and that Eleanor Bodger be thanked for this informative report.