

Community Development

The issues:

The Meadow Well Estate is split between two wards, Riverside and Chirton. It developed in 1938 when families that had lived on the banks of the Tyne moved into new council housing. At this time it was known as the Ridges. In 1991 Meadow Well came to national attention during a night of riots, and whilst many on the Estate have worked hard to give a different image, this was the event that has defined the area.

The 2010 Index of Multiple Deprivation shows that the area continues to rank poorly, with six data zones in the LSOA (Lower Super Output Areas) falling within the 5% most deprived - five of these actually in the bottom 1% - marked over several indices including: income, employment, health, education skills and training, housing, geographic access and crime.

The Estate has two take-away establishments, a butchers and a convenience store which are based on Avon Avenue, the Cedarwood Centre is located in the middle of these services. On the same block there is a mixture of private and social housing in buildings that were. Initially, local shops.

The Estate has seen much physical regeneration, and whilst this has raised the quality of housing the external environment is described by residents as "grey" and lacking in any feel good factor with the ever watching eye of CCTV cameras monitoring any public gathering 24/7. Schools, doctors, supermarkets, cash points and other community facilities do not exist on the estate, there is a lack of space for residents to meet, and a visit to the estate leaves an impression of a ghost town with houses surrounded by metal fences that have resulted in putting up physical barriers to community cohesion and affecting the mental health and well-being of residents.

Our Response:

The Trust has worked with key partners to begin to tackle the issues as faced by residents of the Estate. We began the process by working with residents on a "Cardboard Community", identifying issues which affected residents in their daily lives and we also appointed 4 Community Organisers to work on the Estate. Our Community Organisers have spent a great deal of time listening to the needs and aspirations of residents encouraging action and identifying, with residents, a way forward.

Play

A key feature of the aspirations of residents was a focus on play, answering the needs of the children of the Estate. This was followed up through the work of the Trust's Play Champions and Pocket Park projects and has been a focus for the Trust.

Colour

The greyness of the Estate has been highlighted by many on the Estate, as there is a reluctance by the Local Authority to tackle this through painting, we have worked with residents to use plants and flowers to increase colour on the Estate. Our own centre has also been transformed with colour.

Elderly

A lack of resource for older people has also been highlighted as a key area for the Trust to focus on. Work with older people and young families has been developed in response to the needs identified by the community.

Community Hub

With the potential purchase of the Avenue centre in the middle of the Estate the Trust aims to support the development of a community hub, led by and for the residents of the Meadow Well Estate.