



New Cross Gate London SE14



Nine young New Cross Gate residents have just completed a 12-week intensive programme and eight of them have been awarded the City and Guilds Profile of Achievement

Wardens have helped identify community development projects on behalf of the NDC – for example, homework club, inter-zone Football and the Somali community group

The Challenge

'To support the work of the New Deal for Communities (NDC) and Lewisham Council by helping Community Wardens develop and use a data driven Web technology to enhance their communication, visibility and effectiveness to local people.

In 2005 Community Wardens in New Cross Gate, South East London participated in a Web-based pilot scheme to promote their activities in the area and to extend contacts with local residents and businesses. We have used the internet to make a real difference in the community.

The local authority web-site already provided support for local community groups and published details of their activities and contact details.

We wanted to do more; making the Wardens' role more visible, appreciated and encouraging public interaction and participation; this meant sharing objectives, plans, events, activities, news and results as often as possible.

Key targets were:

- Reduce residents fear of crime
- Reduce the incidence of crime and anti-social behaviour
- Increase satisfaction in the environment of New Cross Gate
- Increase community involvement in local decision making
- Promote active sports and social groups

Project Details

We began with a Home Page describing Wardens' roles and activities in the community then added the particular geographical zones of responsibility for each Warden where news and local events such as a Tenants' Association meetings, local church halls support groups and activities in the Borough's parks could be added daily.

Our company, Objective Internet, provided initial training and technical support but the team soon found their feet. We worked with the Wardens for over a year to learn from their user experience and get their feedback to add features to help them reach their community more readily.

The Wardens needed a system that is easy to use and update with news, photos, groups, events and which above all, given their close involvement with young people, had to be totally secure; not possible with most popular public web-sites. There are also links to other related groups.

Poor communication is a common cause of long term problems in urban communities; although many activities may be taking place it is easy for people to lose contact and become isolated. The Wardens see this tool as a conduit between individuals and groups and between groups within New Cross Gate. The pilot system demonstrated that this works; the ability to create a network of groups within a geographic area; set



up a network of communication for the Wardens and other groups that have access to the system

"Establish a community infrastructure that empowers all local people to actively play a part in achieving aspirations"

"Support young people through warden-run youth diversion schemes"

The next challenge is to roll out the benefits to the community groups within the Wardens' area. Some may be part of a wider national organisation but most are local. The system gives them a way to advertise their presence and promote their events giving dates, times, location, contact details and taking bookings if appropriate.

Managing membership is a time consuming and demanding job and is probably the biggest problem particularly for voluntary organisations. Many groups simply fade away because of the time required of a particular key person. This application hugely reduces that workload and also ensures that all data retained is both private and secure.

The Wardens do not manage these groups but can encourage and facilitate their inclusion into the wider network of groups in New Cross Gate.

Conclusion

The Wardens' web site has been a real success and we have gained great experience of implementation for the general public.

It helps the Wardens to meet all of their objectives and, with more support, could become a valuable part of their Service Delivery process.

Our expectation of levels of computing skills in the community was too high and a modest amount of structured classroom-based training was needed. This skills transfer was an additional benefit to the Wardens Group and could usefully apply more widely to other user groups.

The biggest benefit can now be achieved; setting up community groups who can manage their own affairs and also communicate directly with Wardens on all the range of activities and concerns. This supports inclusion and builds a strong sense of belonging.

To visit the wardens web pages go to:
www.newcrossgatewardens.org.uk
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