25ᵗʰ Anniversary Lecture Series: New Policies for a New Era

Summary of lecture two – Creating Resilient Communities and Supportive Environments, 8 November 2012

Background information: The fostering of resilience is critical to protecting and promoting health and wellbeing at both the individual and community level. Resilient communities respond proactively to new or adverse situations, prepare for economic, social and environmental change and deal better with crisis and hardship. This lecture explored ways to build capacity and resilience within communities.

Opening address: Henry Johnston, OFMDFM
Presentation: *Building community resilience through Programme for Government*

Key messages:
Henry highlighted priorities within Programme for Government to deliver on a range of measures to tackle poverty and social exclusion through the 'Delivering Social Change Framework'. Within this framework he said that "*In terms of maximising outcomes it is clear that we should initially target children and young people. We need to concentrate on those services and measures which will have the greatest early impact*".

Five Priority Work Programmes within the Delivering Social Change Framework include:
1. Early Years and Early Interventions
2. Literacy and Numeracy
3. Transitions – between levels of education and employment
4. Integrated Delivery
5. Joined up Planning and Commissioning

26 million pounds has been allocated for six Signature Programmes to take forward these priorities. This was announced on 10 October 2012 by the First Minister and Deputy First Minister.

These will focus on:

> ➢ Improving Literacy and Numeracy - newly qualified unemployed teachers will be employed to support this work;
> ➢ Direct Family Support e.g. through family support hubs;
> ➢ Support for Parents - at a range of stages of development;
> ➢ Accelerating Social Enterprise;
> ➢ Pathways to Employment for Young People;
> ➢ and Early Intervention for Vulnerable Children.

The Permanent Secretary of DSD will lead a project board responsible for delivering on the six signature programmes.

Laura Dosanjh, Director of Applied Innovation, Young Foundation
Presentation: *Building Community Resilience and Wellbeing: practical examples*

Key messages:
Laura suggested that recent definitions of resilience tend to emphasise the defensive nature of community resilience e.g. ability to deal with disasters, violence and ability to survive.

The Young foundation defines resilience in terms of assets – natural resources; social; financial; built resources; and cultural assets. She also emphasised the role of community resilience in adapting to change. Laura gave an example of how this tool was used in a community in Spain to identify assets and vulnerabilities.

Laura questioned how sustainable it is to continue to think of resilience in terms of survival and coping. A quote from a resident emphasises the importance of thinking differently and promoting an adaptive approach to resilience.

"It's a deprived area so people are hardy. The main quality is resilience. Life constantly throws things at them. Life isn't smooth here for people. But they have learnt to overcome and move on, and brace themselves and they move on to the next thing. It's necessity that makes them resilient; they get used to dreadful things getting thrown at them" (quote from a resident).

Laura outlined a number of pieces of research that the Young Foundation have carried out:
➢ GRIT – Skills for success and how they are grown – this paper emphasises the importance of skills such as creatively, how to collaborate, how to empathise to prepare young people for life and employment
➢ Sinking and Swimming – Understanding Britain's unmet need. This study reviews statistical data, case studies, surveys and interviews with people across England showing where the most acute needs are and how they interrelate. The study highlights that psychological needs have become as pressing as material ones: the risk of loneliness and isolation; the risk of mental illness; the risk of being left behind
➢ WARM – wellbeing and resilience measure. This tool measures wellbeing by firstly looking at three domains: Self: the way people feel about their own lives; Support: the quality of social supports and networks within the community; and thirdly Structure and Systems: the strength of the infrastructure and environment to support people to achieve their aspirations and live a good life. The next stage involves creating a map of assets and vulnerabilities in the community
➢ The state of happiness – This report brings together four years of work based on in-depth pilots, from teaching resilience to children in schools to promoting neighbourliness, with three councils in England
➢ Adapting to change – this paper defines community resilience and the role of the voluntary sector in community resilience

Laura also highlighted practical work with individuals and organisations:

➢ Local wellbeing programme – piloted resilience interventions in three local authority areas
➢ Bounce back – training teachers to deliver resilience curriculum in schools
➢ Face up – resilience training for young people at risk of involvement in gangs and crime
➢ Full of life – training volunteers to deliver resilience support to isolated older people
➢ Local Minds – working with local branches of Mind to map and identify needs for resilience building for older, unemployed men

Further information on the work of the Young Foundation and the projects listed above can be found at: http://youngfoundation.org/our-work/resilient-communities-housing/

Keynote address, Professor Jennie Popay, Professor of Sociology and Public Health, Lancaster University
Presentation: *Exclusionary processes and vulnerable spaces: addressing the drivers of health inequalities*

Key messages:
A common approach in policy is to identify groups of people or communities in places that are labelled as 'socially excluded', 'disadvantaged' and/or vulnerable.   It is important to look at the factors which cause exclusion e.g. cultural, political, social, and economic capabilities. The continuum of inclusion/exclusion is characterised by unequal and unjust distributions of resources, capabilities and rights. People's position on these continuums determine their social position and determine life chances and outcomes. To promote health equity we need to focus more on social justice.

Jennie highlighted that vulnerability is a characteristic of spaces not people. These spaces are created, perpetuated and exacerbated by those in safer more affluent spaces. People living in these spaces develop coping strategies which are drawn from their capabilities and knowledge.

Jennie argued that focusing solely on behavioural health outcomes do not provide an ethical or sustainable basis for policies that aim to promote social justice – this creates a challenge for people engaged in health promotion. A better approach would be to prioritise 'human flourishing' as the aim of policy and practice. Supporting individuals to address the underlying causes of unhealthy behaviour and offering alternative coping mechanisms for dealing with life's circumstances is important.

She argued that means tested and conditionality approaches to stimulate behaviour change to improve health outcomes is not socially just as they do not release the capacity/capability of people. An alternative would be to renew universalism (services available to all) and include social protection for everyone. She urged people to think about what a health outcome would look like if social justice underpinned it.

Jennie also suggested the use of the term **Capability releasing** rather than **capacity building** in the context of community resilience. This approach supports the release and development of individual/collective capabilities. The importance of linking and bridging communities should be a core element of capacity releasing.

Panel Session

3 speakers from Northern Ireland contributed to this session giving practical examples of activities to support communities and build community resilience.

Paul Nolan, Community Relations Council

Paul highlighted that capacity-building programmes often failed to have a clear answer to the question 'capacity to do what?' There is a dark side to social capital and the dense social bonds within communities in Northern Ireland often led to the closing off of outside influences. Attempts to survey social capital frequently ran into the sand because of methodological problems about how data is collected and evaluated, and the concept of resilience might also elude capture by the statisticians.

He indicated that the useful part of the concept is the way in which it illustrates that the health of community cannot ever be measured by the objective data alone – it gives a place to the idea of community 'spirit'.

Seamus Mullen, Public Health Agency

Seamus outlined work that is going on through Belfast Strategic Partnership under emotional health and wellbeing. This involves extensive consultation with the public gaining their views via focus groups and questionnaires on 'what has helped them deal with life's ups and downs'. The results will inform the development of an action plan for the city. Initial results of the consultation has shown the importance of the role of family, love, friends, in particular as well as employment and financial security and the environment (home and immediate surroundings) to help people cope with many of the stresses they deal with day to day.

Brendan McDonnell, Community Evaluation Northern Ireland

Brendan argued that the possession of Social Assets can determine community resilience and mapping diversity can help inform interventions that are targeted at building community resilience. Factors to measure include:

- **Organisation capital**: Level and effectiveness of local organisations
- **Social capital**: Relationships conducive to the development process
- **Human capital**: Volunteer involvement, paid community workers,
- **Physical capital**: Access to facilities and community safety
- **Financial capital**: Access to financial services

In 2008 CENI and CFNI produced the first Social Asset database for NI – for more information on this go to:
http://www.ceni.org/publications/The_Social_Assets_Database_June_2011.pdf

General discussion

Jennie argued there is a need to rethink some of the current language being used to support communities e.g. the use of the word 'assets' for instance, as this uses economic language that originated in America and is not social language that may resonate with communities.

Powerpoint presentations for Lecture 2 are available at:

http://www.belfasthealthycities.com/25th-anniversary-lecture-series.html