

Living Together, Working Together



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Universities UK

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Foreword

Welcome to *Living Together, Working Together*, the first joint publication produced by NUS, Universities UK (UUK) and GuildHE. Its aim is to illustrate the many creative initiatives across the UK that are addressing issues relating to students in the community.

We are aware that in some areas residents have raised concerns that the growing number of students living in the private rented sector has resulted in increased rubbish and litter, noise, anti-social behaviour, poor housing quality and feelings of a 'loss of community'. There has been criticism in the past of a lack of recognition or understanding of these issues by universities and students' unions, and by the national organisations that represent them.

Universities and students' unions are working proactively to address these problems. Indeed, in recent years there has been a real culture shift. Across the country there has been a marked increase in the number of community officer sabbaticals in students' unions, as well as staff with specific mandates in this area in universities, colleges, and students' unions alike. A real appetite has emerged to address residents' concerns and build more cohesive local communities.

NUS, UUK and GuildHE are committed to developing partnerships across the higher education sector, and to working closely with communities to develop locally workable solutions to the problems that exist.

The purpose of this publication is to capture some of the best practice across the sector, both to offer support to peers and to stimulate discussion on a policy level of how to address student housing and community relations in the future. This report is a very small snapshot of the many projects, staff and resources currently dedicated to this agenda.

The case studies illustrate just some of the ways in which universities and students' unions are looking to mitigate negative impacts of local student populations and to see students recognised as full members of their communities.

We hope these case studies will prove helpful to universities and students' unions looking to tackle issues in their own communities. However these examples also illustrate the importance of universities and students' unions working in wider partnership with their local authorities and residents. The initiatives rarely claim to be completed and are often part of a wider multi-faceted strategy or series of projects. We hope readers will therefore find this publication useful for future discussions on how universities and students' unions can – and should – work together to ensure that their impact on their local communities is a positive one.



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Introduction

Tensions between ‘town’ and ‘gown’ have been documented as far back as the 13th century¹ but it is following the expansion of higher education in the 1990s that this issue has become more prominent, and one to which universities, students’ unions, residents’ associations, and local and national policymakers have sought to respond.

The National Union of Students, Universities UK (UUK) and GuildHE are strongly supportive of policies to widen participation in higher education, both as a mechanism to increase social mobility and to spread the benefits of higher education as widely as possible. However, we recognise that in certain areas the associated expansion has had a negative impact on local communities, as university housing stock has been exceeded and significant numbers of students have moved into houses in the neighbouring streets and towns. In these areas problems have been exacerbated by relatively little forward planning by universities and local authorities in order to manage the consequent expansion of student housing.

These impacts are specific to the houses and streets in which they occur. In some areas students are seen to be responsible for a loss of ‘neighbourhood’, while in others the lucrative student housing market has priced out other types of buyers, leading to further changes in the composition of communities.² These issues have led to increasing tensions and arguably a new dimension to the ‘town’ and ‘gown’; the two now live side by side, but the divides are often deeper than ever.

In general the issues are associated with a specific cohort of the student population – those in their late teens or early twenties, who are studying full time and have moved away from home to study. They are often living independently for the first time. It is important to note that this student group is by no means the majority across the higher education sector, and some institutions will have far higher numbers of such students than others.

The involvement of NUS, Universities UK and GuildHE

As the representative bodies for universities and students’ unions (including guilds and associations) across the UK, NUS, Universities UK and GuildHE have been working closely both to support their members in their efforts to alleviate neighbourhood tensions, and to share best practice in how the sector can influence this area positively in the future.

Institutions are continually looking for new ways of responding to issues where they exist, as well as ways to harness the undoubted benefits that students bring and ensure that these are felt by the wider community. Every year more staff are employed by universities and students’ unions with this as their specific remit.

In 2006, UUK and GuildHE³ published a key piece of research by Dr Darren Smith, *Studentification: a guide to opportunities, challenges and practices*, which helped to map out commonalities in student neighbourhoods across the country and the positive and negative impacts that students could have on the neighbourhoods in which they live.

¹ ‘The city of Cambridge: Town and gown’, *A History of the County of Cambridge and the Isle of Ely: Volume 3: The City and University of Cambridge* (1959), pp76–86. (www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=66608)

² JRF, *Students and the private rented market*, 2000, www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/d60.pdf

³ UUK, *Studentification: a guide to opportunities, challenges and practice*, 2006, www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/Publications/Pages/Publication-232.aspx

The following year NUS published *Working together to achieve harmony*, in which elected representatives from across the student movement discussed the issues and shared best practice. UUK and GuildHE have also responded to a number of consultations concerning student housing and students in the community, ensuring that they remain at the centre of policy development in this area.

In autumn 2008, NUS and UUK started discussions with representatives from universities and students' unions to explore what more we could do as national bodies to further this agenda and promote positive change. These useful discussions gave us broad themes on which to focus, and ideas of what information was most useful to those working in this area. It also provided a steer as to the aims such a project should have. These were:

- To share evidence with policy and decision makers of the impact of projects already being implemented across the sector
- To equip practitioners with the tools to share best practice and lessons learned.

We are pleased that GuildHE has also been able to support this project as the representative body for some of the newer universities, university colleges, colleges of higher education and specialist higher education institutions.

Universities and students' unions working in partnership

The case studies which follow show the growing awareness by universities and students' unions of the need to work together to tackle neighbourhood-related issues. From the broader community's perspective, the university and students' union is essentially one institution and so a joined up approach is absolutely essential. All of the case studies were submitted jointly by universities and students' unions and many highlighted the importance of joint working in this area. Thus, throughout this publication we have used the term 'institution' to refer to universities, colleges and students' unions as a single entity.

The benefits of universities and students' unions working in partnership

'Joint working results in positive community change because the resources and potential of the university are utilised in creative and innovative ways by the students, who can respond quickly to requests and meet identified needs.'

*Lancaster University and
Lancaster University Students' Union*

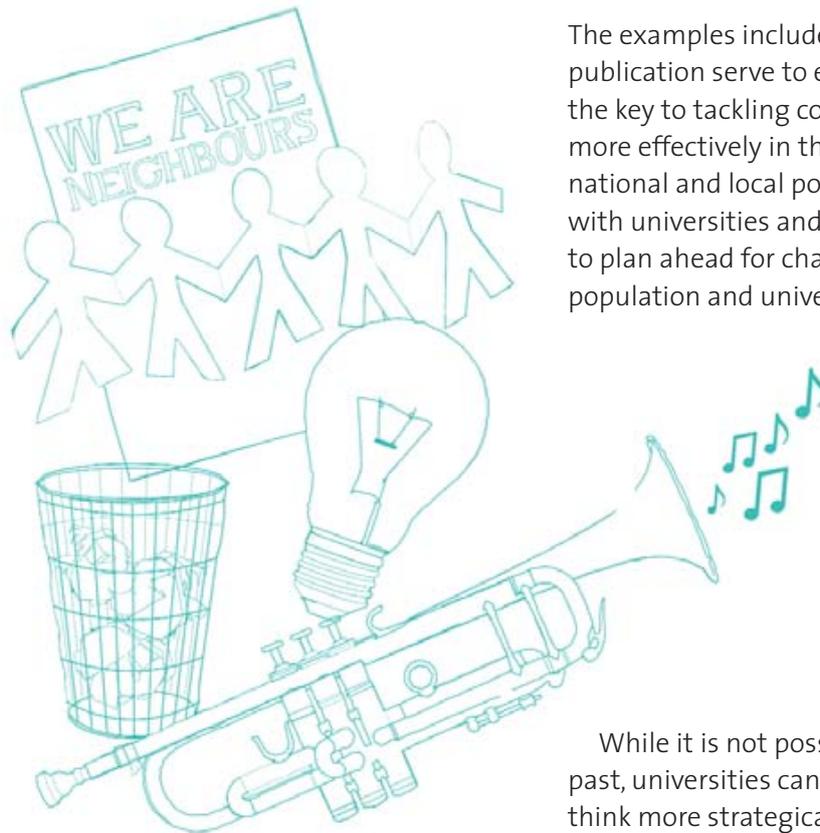
'The university and students' union have similar aims of encouraging students to take pride in looking after their houses and promoting a positive perception of student tenants to local residents. Both parties were able to involve various different stakeholders, due to their separate roles and strengths.'

*University of Reading and
University of Reading Students' Union*

'The main advantages of joint working have been to maximise the effect of different interventions; to dovetail and prevent repetition of the same activities; to allow the university to do what it can do best and the students' union to focus its activities where it is best equipped to make a response.'

*Loughborough University and
Loughborough Students' Union*

Strategy



In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the number of universities and colleges with community strategies, or with specific elements in their strategy maps dedicated to community issues. By working together on these, the resources of both the university and the students' union (and other institutions) can be used to establish a coordinated and targeted approach to community issues.

The examples included in this publication serve to emphasise that the key to tackling community issues more effectively in the future is for national and local policymakers, along with universities and students' unions, to plan ahead for changes in the student population and universities themselves.

While it is not possible to change the past, universities can be encouraged to think more strategically about the future; this requires good partnership between students' unions and universities, as well as consultation with local residents and students themselves.

This was recognised in a report to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in 2000 which made the recommendation that 'a housing strategy should be integral to the expansion plans of every HEI [higher education institution], and comprise an analysis of likely impacts on the local rental market and consultation with local community groups.'⁴

Mindful of this, Universities UK updated its 1990s planning guidance for its member institutions in 2008⁵ with the aim of assisting universities and local authorities to engage with each other. The guidance noted that there are 'real benefits for all parties in finding better ways of working together to deliver positive change, based on mutual understandings'.⁶

⁴ J Rugg et al
The nature and impact of student demand on housing markets, 2000, p34

⁵ UUK, *Universities planning guidance*, 2008, www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/publications/documents/uniplanningguidance.pdf

⁶ UUK, *Universities planning guidance*, 2008, p2

The case studies in this chapter illustrate several key elements to developing successful strategies and thinking strategically about how to mitigate issues that exist or might arise:

- **Establishing community engagement:** By embedding community and resident involvement in their strategies, institutions can target activities properly
- **Effective planning:** By considering this area strategically, institutions can plan ahead more effectively, allowing time to discuss developments with local residents and the wider community
- **Developing a framework:** This gives institutions a map of all stakeholders, resources and activities, both current and planned for the future
- **Adopting a cohesive approach:** A clear strategy facilitates good working relationships and successful joint projects between the university, students' union and local community
- **Inter-institutional partnerships:** Community strategies can help institutions work effectively with other educational institutions in the area, maximising impact.

Community engagement

These case studies highlight the importance of involving wider community groups and residents in projects, making sure these are seen as a community initiative and not something run solely by the institution. This approach also enables the broader community to give feedback on issues, setbacks or where progress is being made.

University of Leeds *Community and Housing Steering Group*

The university launched its first community strategy in 2000 and in 2007 developed a new five-year strategy following extensive consultation with the local community. The strategy is supported by Leeds University Union, which also has an extensive community strategy, and many of the actions are delivered in partnership with it as the two strategies reference one another.

The steering group monitors progress of the university's community and housing strategies and has allowed these to become 'live' documents, able to address emerging issues and shifts in priorities.

The group has also facilitated sharing of best practice arising from the strategy across a wide range of stakeholders, and opened up the policymaking and consultative process to a cross-section of groups including councillors, faith groups, community organisations, educational establishments, local authorities and statutory organisations.

York St John University ***Percy's Lane Community*** ***Engagement***

A strategy was drawn up to address potential issues associated with the development of student accommodation in Percy's Lane, a new area of the city for the university but with a long-established residential community. Initially the plans had been met with some apprehension locally. The project involved students and staff from the university and students' union, local businesses and the broader community. Its main outcomes included:

- setting up a community liaison group for the Percy's Lane area to facilitate open discussion between all stakeholders
- identifying issues that need to be addressed on an ongoing basis; this has led to planning an on-site police office
- inviting the broader community to an official opening event for the new accommodation, at which the students' union showcased some of its community-based projects.

There has been an overwhelmingly positive response to the projects arising from the strategy, and the partnership approach has had a positive impact on revitalising the area, including some neglected brown field land.

**'It will bring life into the community!
If my children were going to college,
I would be very happy for them
to have somewhere to stay like that.'**
local resident aged 86

Effective planning

Many institutions' community strategies are designed over a one, three or five-year period. Given the nature of community relations and the student lifecycle, it's impossible to predict everything that may happen during these periods of time; however, institutions that are successful in engaging with the broader community have benefitted from having a longer-term vision. This gives institutions a clear idea of upcoming projects or decisions likely to have an impact on the community.

Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU)

Beacon Lab

With two universities and some 50,000 students, Manchester's Oxford Road has long been seen as the city's 'knowledge quarter'. However, the institutions are surrounded by residents who feel removed from the knowledge-based assets and educational opportunities they house.

The idea behind the Beacon Lab was to look at how staff and students can work with the wider community to overcome some of these challenges. The Lab is essentially time and space for senior managers and relevant staff, including students' union officers, to discuss new ways to engage the community.

The establishment of the Lab has coincided with a three-month public consultation around MMU's development of a new £150 million community campus for healthcare and education professionals in inner-city Manchester. The Lab was a key part of MMU's commitment to the culture change agenda central to the Manchester Beacon for Public Engagement – a partnership whose aims are to listen and respond to the needs of local people. The Manchester Beacon, set up as part of a UK-wide public engagement initiative supported by the higher education sector funding bodies, includes three universities and the Museum of Science and Industry.

Although it is too early to highlight specific outcomes, the Lab has been the starting point for increased interaction between university staff and student officers around community engagement agendas. It has helped join up different people and is informing the approach to community engagement as part of the new campus development.

Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh

Adopt an international student

The 'Adopt an international student' project came about because of the university's relocation to Musselburgh, a small town on the outskirts of Edinburgh. Various initiatives had been announced but it was felt many had focused on the facilities and opportunities for learning rather than on liaison with students themselves.

Supported by the Prime Minister's Initiative, activities included a cultural exchange between students and local primary school pupils, a Christmas tea party for local elderly residents at the students' union and a community clear-up at a National Trust property. The project helped international students engage with the wider community, and ensured that the students' move to Musselburgh was seen as a positive addition to the local area.

Developing a framework

As part of creating a community relations strategy, some institutions have developed a framework to map all current and future community-related activities. This means staff responsible for community issues are aware of what's going on in this area within the institution and externally.

Northumbria University

Community Strategy 2009–2012

The community strategy, which is still in its early stages, aims to provide a framework which will raise awareness of the positive impact of students on the wider community; identify opportunities to improve this positive impact; and raise students' own awareness of their role in the wider community.

Links with stakeholders include Newcastle City Council membership services, civic councillors, environmental health, the Newcastle Private Rented Accreditation Scheme and local residents' associations.

The project has led to the launch of a Newcastle City Council-sponsored student 'Community Rep' scheme and secured funding for a community liaison officer post via the local policing team. Shared projects between the students' union, university and other groups have increased, and communication between the City Council, the university, and other strategic partnerships has improved.

Adopting a cohesive approach

Community strategies have also helped universities and students' unions approach issues in a joined-up way. Cohesion requires trust on both sides, and is essential in forging genuine partnerships and in using resources efficiently.



Loughborough University Strategic Partnership

A partnership approach between the university and students' union aims to ensure that community relations initiatives are considered at a strategic level by university senior management and the students' union executive. It involves continuous dialogue between the two and a series of sustained and effective activities that form part of a 'matrix' response, rather than isolated single projects.

Community issues became more sensitive from 2000 as rising student numbers increased the student population resident in some areas. The university and students' union worked together on activities to mitigate the impact on the broader community and where possible to change behaviour to improve the situation. The university believes this approach has been 'much more effective than any of the individual initiatives would have been on its own'.

The university created a dedicated community relations officer role, while the students' union contribution included appointing a community students officer, increased security at the students' union building and various campaigns. Joint working has maximised the effect of different interventions, preventing duplication of activities and essentially allowing the university and the students' union each to do what it can do best.

'A "joined-up" approach by the university and students' union ... has been much appreciated and has greatly improved the relationship with the local community. But we encourage all universities to think strategically about community issues and to continue to look for and implement practical ways of addressing ongoing issues such as anti-social behaviour.'

Hilda Puttick

Storer and Ashby Area Residents' Group

Inter-institutional partnerships

In cities and towns where there are a number of higher education institutions and further education colleges, all educational providers need to recognise their role in community relations management. Students will often live with or socialise in the same areas as people attending different universities or colleges. Consequently, if issues are only being addressed by one institution, its ability to achieve change may be limited. Pooling resources also ensures that projects are well set up and that there is no duplication of effort, freeing up time and resource for other initiatives.

Queen's University Belfast and University of Ulster *Students in the Community Strategy*

In Belfast, both universities and students' unions are working closely together to improve relationships between students and neighbouring communities through a strategy based on partnership, education and discipline:

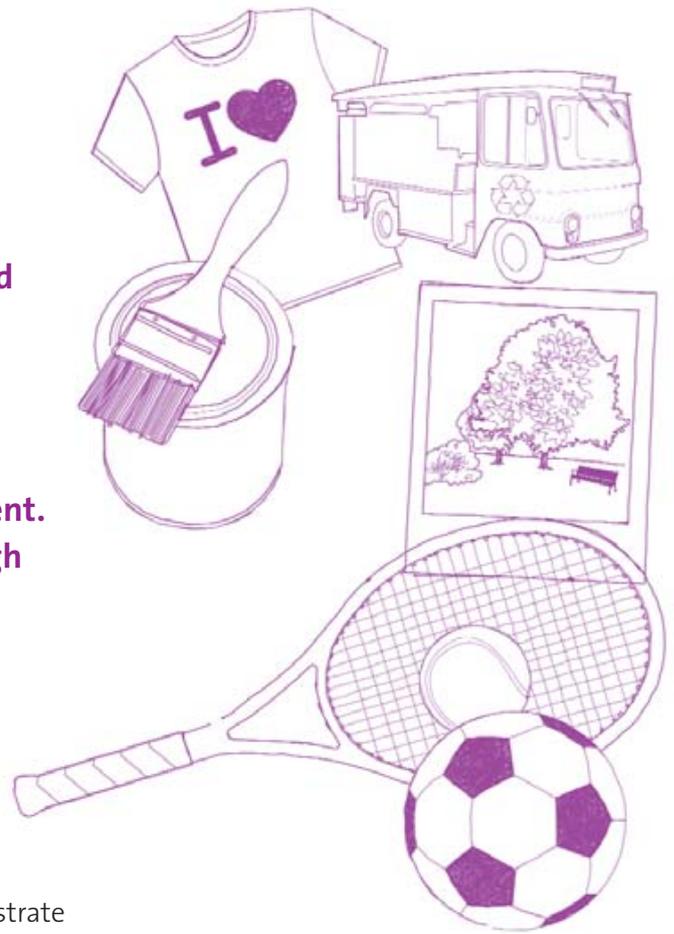
Partnership: Working in collaboration with residents, landlords, student representatives, politicians and statutory agencies to deal with problems involving students in densely populated areas. They have supported the development of a university area community safety wardens scheme aimed at ensuring the safety of residents including students. The wardens also tackle issues of anti-social behaviour. The initial three-year scheme was so successful that a City Wide scheme has been introduced. Other partnership events have included environmental clean-ups in conjunction with Belfast City Council and education training events.

Education: The universities have run a successful £50,000 awareness campaign within both student communities called 'Do you turn into a monster after dark?' using posters, flyers, beer mats and email. Students' unions work closely together to get students to live up to their civic responsibilities by taking a lead in educating their peers.

Discipline: Complaints of anti-social behaviour are investigated jointly – in many cases students from both institutions and the universities work closely to ensure that there is a joint approach to discipline.

Breaking down the barriers

If universities and students' unions are to become trusted and valued partners in their local communities, it is vital that they are seen as open, accessible and part of the fabric of the local environment. This may be achieved through the wider community's ability to access campuses and institutional facilities, or through institutions' involvement in local partnerships and projects.



The case studies in this chapter illustrate four ways in which universities and students' unions are attempting to break down barriers in their local communities:

Opening up campuses: Institutions are making their campuses and spaces more accessible to the local public

Getting out into neighbourhoods: Universities and students' unions are running projects to increase student visibility locally

Responding to neighbours: Institutions are adopting new methods to ensure that their complaints processes and communication channels are transparent, effective and responsive to local needs

Broader partnerships: Institutions have realised that addressing local concerns and bringing about change is not possible if delivered at institutional level alone.

Opening up campuses

Many institutions encourage wider community engagement through public lectures, sharing libraries and sporting facilities and providing access to archives. These all aim to help the wider community take advantage of the huge benefits of higher education. Through these initiatives institutions also aim to tackle the perceptions of 'inaccessible' university campuses.



Leeds Metropolitan University *'Another Year' Party*

Every year, a 'New Year' or 'Another Year' party is held on campus for elderly local residents. The event is held in university buildings and organised by the students' union and Leeds Older Active People, allowing the local community to benefit from the space available on campus. The project meets a specific need, as in recent years households in the area around the university have become younger which can leave older residents, particularly those with mobility issues, feeling isolated.

The project fits within the university and students' union's broader strategies for engaging the local community. These aim to facilitate student-led volunteering opportunities that tackle social issues, benefitting local people through sustainable, collaborative projects.

Feedback on the party has been overwhelmingly positive and good publicity has led to increased community participation. As the project has attracted a large number of student volunteers, it has been able to support the growing number of attendees.

Getting out into neighbourhoods

Lifelong learning and the constant development and exchange of skills and ideas are entrenched in the culture of higher education and can be a positive influence within the wider community. This culture is extended through the work of university staff and students who contribute hundreds of volunteering hours to projects as well as specific skills including expertise in their academic fields. This approach can also be a way of ensuring that information is being communicated to students about the area they live in, about what is acceptable, and what is not.



University of Cambridge FLIPP

The three-year FLIPP Project, funded and led by a consortium of Cambridge organisations including the students' union, involves student volunteers supporting groups of local young people to design creative peer education projects. The groups of 16 to 25-year-olds explore an issue of their choice, from sexual health to drink-driving, and the projects range from making short films to creating and displaying artworks.

This is a fantastic opportunity for students to communicate with young people about university and help break down the barriers between 'town' and 'gown' in Cambridge.

'Students often forget there is a world in Cambridge outside the university and this project allows them to give something back to this community. It is also good for our access and widening participation work as the more contact people have with university, the more they realise university might be something they, or their children or their friends, might want to try.'

Andrea Walko

Cambridge University Students' Union Welfare Officer 2008–09

University of Reading *Up Our Street*

An information pack 'Up Our Street' was delivered to 750 student households, with the aim of supporting and advising students who were living – many for the first time – in privately rented accommodation in the community. This was a practical response to complaints from residents that some students did not take the responsibilities of living in a community seriously. The pack addressed areas of concern raised by residents and students, including waste management and environmental issues, anti-social behaviour and noise nuisance, personal safety and household security.



'The packs are invaluable... it helps students understand what is needed when living in the community and gives them useful information. It also makes them feel part of the community.'

*Paul Johnson
Local pensioner, Reading*

The packs were hand-delivered in September/October, as students were moving into their houses. Student Community Reps also helped to deliver the packs to their neighbours. The project engaged Reading Borough Council, local residents and members of the Neighbourhood Action Group. The main successes included:

- Residents felt that the university and students' union had listened and acted on their concerns
- Students have a greater understanding of the impact they have on their neighbours
- There is a greater understanding of the problems faced by students living in the broader community and residents more often empathise with students who may be in dispute with their landlords
- Students are better informed about refuse collection and recycling regimes and thus feel more supported
- Students are more aware of household and personal safety issues
- Local residents have welcomed their student neighbours to the street and this has broken down barriers and lessened the feeling of 'us and them'.



Responding to neighbours

All too often division and an 'us and them' mentality is borne out of resentment at a perceived lack of action on the part of universities, and the frustration of not knowing who to contact to bring about change. Positive community relations require confidence from the local community that people know how to complain if they need to and that their complaint will be dealt with appropriately. It is also vital that, when change has happened in response to a complaint, this is communicated back to the whole community.

Swansea University *Complaint Response Partnership*

Established in 2004, the complaint response partnership is an institution-led initiative that brings together local partners including the noise and waste enforcement teams in the City and County of Swansea environment division, police and the Safer Swansea Partnership anti-social behaviour team.

It aims to provide a coordinated response to residents' complaints and to assist in applying statutory powers and responsibilities regarding waste, noise and anti-social behaviour. It also ensures that students know about the information available from the students' union advice centre, and that they are told about any complaints about their property and the consequences of further complaints.

The partnership's strategic approach and provision of a clear referral route into formal procedures has seen a decrease in general complaints. This in turn has improved responses by all agencies and improved cross-agency understanding and working. More recently, establishing a Local Residents Forum has provided an invaluable opportunity to obtain regular feedback from representatives of the broader community. Through this, residents are also able to find out in general terms the action taken in response to complaints.

'The Forum gives us a link to the university ... in the event of any problem. The chance to attend meetings keeps us up to date with university concerns about local residents' issues and allows us to raise items of concern easily.'

*Jane Sherrard-Smith
Sketty Residents' Association, Swansea*



University of Leeds *Leave Leeds Tidy*

Leave Leeds Tidy is a partnership project led by Leeds University Union (LUU) involving the University of Leeds, Leeds Metropolitan University Students' Union, Leeds City Council and UNIPOL, with a steer and support from the wider community.

The project was developed in response to complaints about the large volume of waste left on the streets of inner northwest Leeds at the end of June when students move house.

'I would like to say how much cleaner and tidier Leeds has been left this year by departing students.'

*Joan Brown
Leeds resident*

As part of Leave Leeds Tidy, Green Streets volunteers collect students' reusable items and donate them to local charities, homeless shelters and the public through free shops. In the summer of 2009 Green Streets collected from more than 10,000 houses, diverting nearly 22 tons of waste from landfill; all done using over 700 hours of volunteer time. LUU received a £15,000 grant from Leeds City Council to deliver the project.

Leave Leeds Tidy has won two awards at the Community and City Pride Awards and the award for best student initiative at the Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges Green Gown Award.

Broader partnerships

The institution's position in the community is not just an issue for residents, university staff and students. It is a key part of local authority initiatives, and institutions have a commitment to develop this partnership effectively. Engaging a wide range of stakeholders helps ensure that institutions are supported when planning and implementing projects.

Durham University *Sustainable Living Action Group*

The group's objective is to encourage changes that will make students' lifestyles more environmentally sustainable. It was acknowledged early in the project that this could only be achieved with the contribution and engagement of all members of the university and student community.

An initial aim was to better coordinate and support college-based volunteers. The university funds a one-year Sustainable Living Coordinator and the project supports individual students in personal, self-motivated projects that function independently. There is now a Green budget, and funds have been used by the Action Group for projects such as the Durham Bag Reduction Partnership, The Green Guide and a Green School project.

Over time partnerships have grown to include Durham Friends of the Earth, Durham city councillors, the Durham MP and MEP, local retailers and national supermarket chains.

Being the solution

Working together, universities, colleges and students' unions can respond creatively and directly to issues raised by the community. A project which responds to specific concerns will achieve results that are relevant to the day-to-day lives of residents living in a university town. Equally, projects which focus on institutions 'being the solution' take a strategic approach, engaging with key stakeholders to identify which issues to address, and how to measure impact.

Key aspects of the approach which institutions take to ensure that they are part of the solution include:

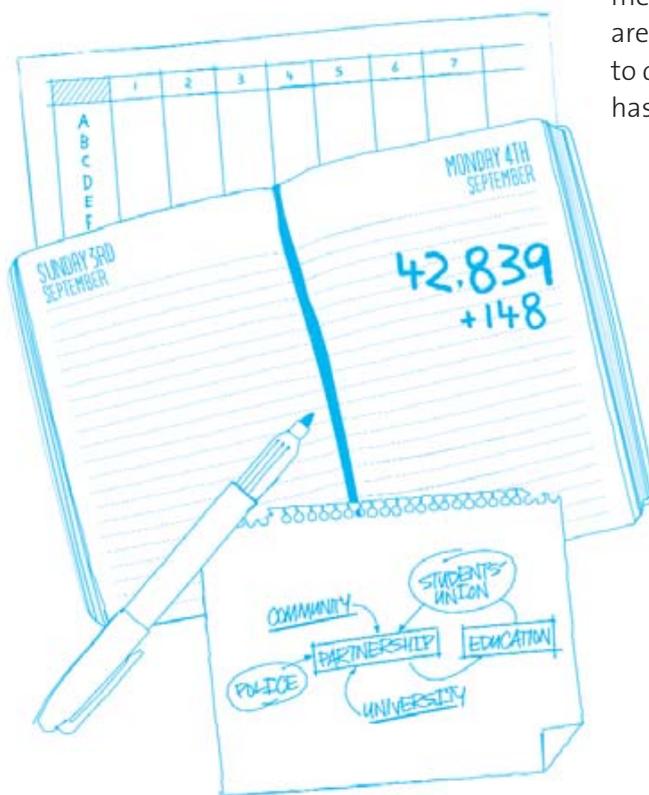
Finding locally workable solutions:

The relationship between institutions and the community manifests itself differently in different local settings; a successful approach looks at issues specific to the locality and develops an appropriate response

Consultation: Vital to ensuring that solutions meet the needs of the broader community

Playing to strengths: Projects which harness the capabilities and resources of universities and students' unions as part of the solution can have a big impact

Measuring the impact: Projects which measure impact ensure resources are appropriately targeted and are able to demonstrate that positive action has been taken to bring about change.



Finding locally workable solutions

Issues arising from a high concentration of students will vary according to the size of institution, make-up of the student body and local resources and planning. Approaches are required which recognise this and which build upon local concerns to find locally workable solutions. All the case studies in this chapter illustrate action specific to the local context. These projects recognised that the presence of the institution and a large student population can have some negative impacts on the broader community, and took action accordingly.



'The gala is about looking for positive ways for local residents and councillors, the University of Lincoln staff as well as students and the local policing team to work together and come up with something good.'

*Cllr Lee
Lincoln City Council*

University of Lincoln Community Group

One of the group's key objectives is to have a joined-up approach to community issues affecting students and to come up with locally workable solutions. The group brings together the university and students' union, police, elected representatives, council staff and residents. Particular issues have been noise, refuse and changes to the area brought about by the university's development.

There are now regular forum meetings, community items on joint university and students' union liaison agendas, an institutional presence on key city and council committees, training with police and a 'three strikes' policy by the anti-social behaviour team for problem households. Discussions have led to a coordinated police presence in the community at key points in the year, additional refuse collections and joint campaigns on noise, crime and alcohol awareness.

A community gala, at the end of Freshers' Week, was organised jointly to promote good relations between existing residents and new student residents.

University of Southampton *Operation Batcombe*

Operation Batcombe is a high visibility patrol of areas of the city with a high student density between 9pm and 3am. Volunteers from the university, students' union, and occasionally local residents, partner police and city patrol officers on these operations as observers. This operation also runs in partnership with Southampton Solent University which runs another Operation Batcombe.

The patrols educate students about the negative effects of their behaviour and inform them of local byelaws, such as there being no drinking permitted in any public place in Southampton. The operation involves seizing alcoholic drinks being consumed in public areas (roads) at the point of contact and at the time education is taking place. They also monitor students and provide information and advice on anti-social behaviour and personal safety.

The university and students' union recognise that, as a large organisation occupying a number of sites and with many thousands of staff and students, the university has a significant impact on the local neighbourhood. As such they are committed to acting as a good neighbour.

The scheme has received good local feedback and residents say it has made a difference.

Consultation

The case studies here show how institutions and students' unions sought to involve the broader community in finding solutions to issues raised. This consultation and inclusion is key to developing initiatives that will genuinely tackle problems.

Southampton Solent University *Ernie*

Ernie is a milk float used by students during student changeover and throughout the academic year to collect rubbish and recycle textiles and glass. The project was developed to tackle issues in an area fairly densely populated with student houses. It aims to work with the local city council to provide an opportunity for all residents to recycle.

A key emphasis has been consultation with all residents and local stakeholders, including Southampton City Council. This has been achieved through regular attendance at residents' meetings and through ideas generated by staff and students at Solent. This approach has enabled the project to use the resources of all the agencies involved and to increase coverage.



‘Though still in its infancy, the scheme shows very clear signs of positive interaction with the local community.’

*Steven Kearney
chairman, Sudley Area Residents’ Association*

Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU) Community Rep Scheme

A high proportion of LJMU students live at home or in halls of residence. Those who live independently in the wider community tend to be concentrated in two areas, which are also popular with University of Liverpool and Liverpool Hope University students.

The university has invested more than £250,000 in a three-year Community Rep Scheme following a proposal from the students’ union which builds on models established in Birmingham and Leeds. The funding pays for a full-time Community Coordinator and 23 community reps who work five to seven hours per week in pairs, visiting each property about once a month.



The scheme is run with Liverpool Guild of Students and engages local councillors, residents associations, police and the Landlord Accreditation Scheme. Council managers and staff, from environmental wardens to the anti-social behaviour team, are also involved. Since the scheme launched in January 2009 the reps have:

- delivered almost 3,000 letters introducing the scheme and their role
- attended local community consultation events across four wards
- made over 1,500 visits to properties, receiving a more than 90 per cent positive response
- received referrals from councillors, the local MP, residents associations and the university
- launched a Leave Liverpool Tidy campaign, advising students moving out over the summer.

During the same period 177 residents raised issues with the reps, from requests for new alley gate keys and wheelie bins to reporting broken streetlights.

Playing to strengths

By working together to tackle issues, universities, colleges and students' unions are able to play to their strengths; some organisations or individuals may have particular skills or resources that may benefit other partners. For example, staff in a students' union may have established partnerships with a number of stakeholders, while university staff may have a comprehensive list of local authority contacts. Without either, a project may have far less impact.

Bournemouth, Sheffield Hallam, Manchester and Manchester Metropolitan Universities *'I love' campaigns*

Several institutions have aimed to raise student awareness of community issues using the 'I love' slogan. This common approach shows how institutions have drawn on existing expertise and sharing of good practice, adapting this to local contexts and using individual strengths.

Bournemouth University and Bournemouth Students' Union's 'I love BH' campaign was developed to tackle issues such as recycling, anti-social behaviour and car parking. The university has provided an authoritative voice when speaking at local forums, while the students' union produced the campaign materials and provided volunteers to campaign on campus and in the local area. The project is still at an early stage but residents have already said they have been encouraged to see student representatives involved in resolving issues.



The 'I love Sheffield' campaign, run by Sheffield Hallam University and Hallam Union, focuses on personal safety and wellbeing, community issues and the environment. It is also being used to reinforce working relationships between the union, the university and relevant local authority bodies. Key outcomes so far include forming a Student Safety and Welfare Campaigns Group where union staff and officers meet university staff and local bodies, and creating a framework for future Hallam union officers to build on.

'Love Withington' is a project run by a number of partners, including Withington Civic Society, Manchester Student Homes, The University of Manchester, University of Manchester Students' Union, Manchester Metropolitan University and MM Union, has a long-term goal of more effective service to the community. A steering group draws on the ability of the two students' unions to bring together 70,000 students and the resources of the universities in a coordinated approach to community relations.

Measuring the impact

Finally, responding directly to community concerns enables projects to use community feedback to measure impact. This is vital to ensure that often limited resources are targeted appropriately and that future projects can draw on lessons learned.



‘The area has definitely improved since the introduction of the student wardens, and this is because they have taken the trouble to find out what the issues are and then been prepared to actively seek solutions.’

*Glyn Selwyn
chair*

Tiverton Area Residents’ Association Birmingham

University of Birmingham *Student Community Wardens*

The University of Birmingham is adjacent to Bournbrook, an area in the Selly Oak ward where students are thought to make up some 70–80 per cent of the population. The scheme was developed after the Guild of Students’ community liaison officer attended community meetings where it became apparent that more student-led, proactive solutions to issues raised were needed. Initially funded through the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, the scheme is now fully funded and supported by the University of Birmingham.

Through partnerships with the city council and West Midlands police, the scheme focuses on raising awareness and making improvements in environmental health, crime prevention, housing-related health and safety, and neighbourhood disputes. The scheme also delivers projects each year which demonstrate the Guild and university’s commitment to the local area. These include after-school workshops, repainting and renewing a local play scheme and setting up coffee mornings for elderly residents.

Successes to date include a scheme to drive up standards in accommodation which has accredited over 1,000 landlords, and a reduction in the number of environmental blights (such as bulk waste abandoned in front gardens) recorded each month.

Regeneration

The expansion and development of higher education institutions has made a major contribution to the physical renaissance of many UK towns and cities in recent years. The contribution to economic regeneration and development provided by the higher education sector is one of the reasons why a number of communities are applying to increase their higher education provision as part of the Government's initiative *A new University Challenge*.⁷ The cultural, sporting, environmental and financial regeneration of communities helps strengthen links between a university, its students and the broader community, and tackles the perception that the university is an exclusive establishment.

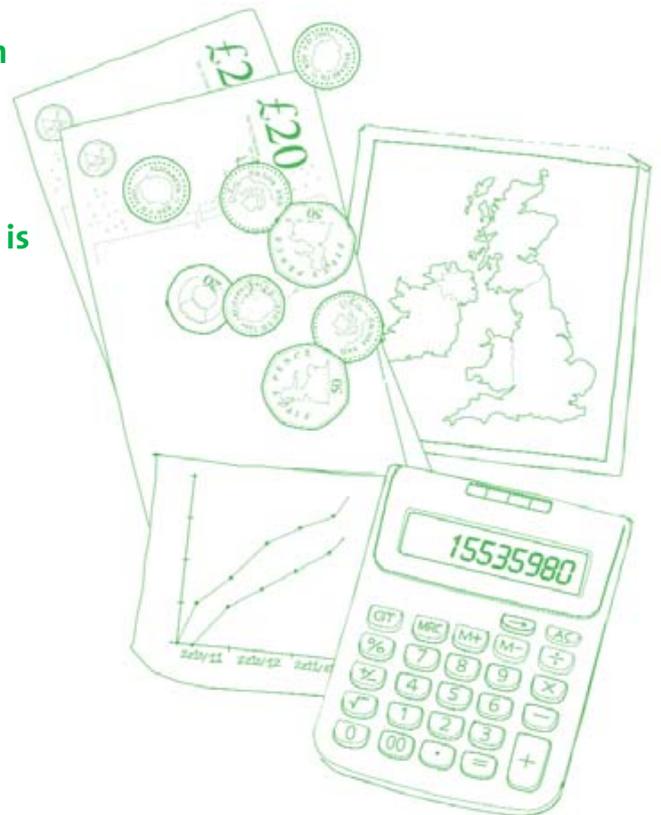
The case studies in this chapter identify different ways in which an institution's activity has helped community regeneration:

Economic regeneration: Maximising the economic benefits that institutions have on the community

Sharing cultural wealth: Using the creativity and talent of university staff and students to open doors for all residents

Planning for environmental impact: Ensuring that institutions are aware of the impact they have on the environment and how they can counter this

Developing communities through sport: Investing in sports facilities for the benefit of the broader community to help encourage wider social cohesion.



⁷ DIUS, *A new University Challenge: Unlocking Britain's Talent*, 2008, p7

Economic regeneration

Higher education provides a massive economic contribution to local communities: nationally it contributes £55 billion to the economy and employs one per cent of the workforce. This economic contribution is not limited to when students are studying; graduates are often likely to stay in their university town, and as a result the community retains their skill and financial contributions.⁸

Universities and students' unions are increasingly recognising the importance of fostering entrepreneurship in the local community. Local graduates and institutions provide workspaces, education and training programmes, mentoring, professional advice and access to support networks and to specialist facilities and expertise.⁹



Lancaster University *Voltage*

The award-winning Lancaster University Volunteering Unit (LUVU) was founded in 2002 and is managed by the Lancaster University Students' Union in partnership with the university. LUVU exists to harness the skills, expertise and energy of its students to help communities create a brighter future.

LUVU's flagship project Voltage sees volunteers supporting young people aged between nine and 25 to start their own social enterprise. Young people use their enterprises to address problems in their community and tackle issues they really care about: bringing together divided communities; raising the profile of homelessness and highlighting the need for environmental change. Voltage has assisted over 700 college students and 150 primary school pupils.

Voltage sees young people increase their confidence and raise their aspirations, while the student volunteers gain vital work experience that enhances their job prospects and allows career paths to be tested. The project has received significant publicity with stories covered in *The Big Issue*, *The Guardian*, *BBC News Online* and *USA Today*.

The project is delivered in partnership with Blackburn, Burnley and Morecambe football clubs and the National Football Museum.

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DIUS, *A new University Challenge: Unlocking Britain's Talent*, 2008, p7

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Prospects, *Graduate Market Trends*, 2008

Sharing cultural wealth

Cultural activities are fundamental to developing a vibrant community. They also play an important role in community regeneration through their contribution to the community's physical, economic and social environment.¹⁰ Using their resources of creativity, diversity and experience, institutions have developed arts and cultural projects with the wider community.



University of Sunderland *The Great North Big Band Jazz Festival and Competition*

The Great North Big Band Jazz Festival and Competition aims to bring big bands from across the north of England together to compete in schools, youth and open/senior categories. The event provides a regional focus for the appreciation and development of big band jazz for both performers and audience. It is underpinned by professional tutorial support, while giving musicians in the institution, Wearside and wider regional community opportunities to perform.

The Festival evolved as part of the university's vision to develop as a great civic institution. The university is committed to reaching out to the wider community, and partnership working has been harnessed to extend its appeal to the community it serves locally and beyond.

While the primary collaboration continues to be between the university and the students' union, funding for the Festival has been secured from the Arts Council and from the Sunderland Partnership. Sponsorship has also come from the Musicians' Union, which has indicated a hope that it can provide continuing support for the Festival and other music events in the future.

Collaborative working, through the use of premises and facilities, students' union expertise in event promotion and marketing, and the use of student volunteers throughout the Festival, has led to significant cost savings. Performers and audience numbers are rising, and the competition's increasing popularity is also shown by the widening geographical spread from which competing bands are drawn.

¹⁰ Department of Culture, Media and Sport, *Culture at the heart of regeneration*, 2005, www.culture.gov.uk/images/consultations/DCMSCulture.pdf

Planning for environmental impact

Institutions have a role to play in maintaining and improving their local environment. In addition to tackling issues such as litter and anti-social behaviour, environmental regeneration has the potential to develop civic pride and bring communities closer together.

The University of Nottingham *Tea Party*

A tea party in the local park brought together students, university staff and residents to share a cup of tea and cake, plant bluebells and exchange ideas on using and improving the park.

The party was held in response to residents' concern that heavy student usage meant high levels of park maintenance were needed over the summer months – a time when the broader community also made more use of the park.

Local residents' groups, Nottingham City Council Street Scene, councillors, community protection officers, community workers, Nottingham in Bloom and Nottinghamshire police all got involved. Sponsorship was £3,000, in addition to the volunteer time of students and residents. As well as improving communication between students and the broader community, maintaining the park has helped promote a healthy and clean environment for everyone.

Other successes have included:

- a greater acceptance in the wider community of students using the park
- a more active and healthy student population
- more interaction between all park users
- a beautiful and Green Flag award-winning park
- less park maintenance required
- fewer complaints about students' irresponsible use of the park.



University of Reading *Blooming Students*

The Blooming Students project was inspired by the national Britain in Bloom initiative and was a practical response to complaints about the gardens and exterior of student houses. The project aimed to:

- encourage students living in private rented housing to improve their front gardens
- improve local residents' perceptions of student houses, in particular the lack of care given by students to their houses and community
- foster a culture among students of looking after their houses and of being involved in the local community
- involve stakeholders in tackling environmental issues in the community.

Starter kits of bulbs, plant pots and compost were given to students who signed up for the scheme, and more than 60 households took part. The front gardens were judged in the spring and two winning households won £100 each. The scheme has been extended, thanks to the university's Annual Fund, and gardening toolkits and equipment are now available for students to borrow.

As well as encouraging students to take pride in their local community, the project was a good partnership initiative, benefitting all those involved. It extended the work of the university and students' union on community environmental issues and has led to visible improvements for the broader community.

'This competition was a brilliant idea: it brightens up the neighbourhood, is good for the environment and makes student houses less obvious and therefore less likely to be targeted by burglars.'

*Stuart Henderson
local resident and member of the judging team*

Developing communities through sport

Sports facilities can make an important contribution to the physical infrastructure of communities, providing a social focus and affecting people's perception of their neighbourhood.¹¹ Almost half of higher education institutions have developed a joined-up approach to sports strategy and community engagement.¹² Institutions have recognised the benefits of incorporating and including residents in their activities and opening up their high quality facilities to the wider public. This helps to encourage the broader community to feel part of the institution.

The University of Hull Football Community Club Site

The Football Community Club site provides training and development opportunities and high quality football facilities for students and the wider community. Its overarching aim is to increase social inclusion and community development through football.



As a result, the institution has improved its position as a valued provider of sports facilities in the area. It also helped to squash the myth that institutional facilities are for students only. Other main outcomes have included:

- the development of high quality football facilities and clubs – more than 12 clubs and 15 teams – creating clear pathways between participation and excellence
- making recreation accessible to all groups independent of cost
- training and developing coaches, leaders and officials – in three years hosting more than 90 specialised coaching sessions and producing more than 200 qualified referees.



¹¹ Fred Coalter, Mary Allison and John Taylor, *The Role of Sport in Regenerating Deprived Areas*, The Scottish Executive Central Research Unit, 2000, p3

¹² Sport England, *Higher Education and Community Sport: A Partnership Plan*, 2009, p2, www.sportengland.org/support_advice/children_and_young_people/higher_education.aspx

The project grew out of the institution's decision to maximise the institution's impact in Hull and surrounding areas by providing opportunities to develop football and other field-based activities. Funding capital was required and a full-time Football Development Manager post created.

Looking ahead

As outlined in the introduction, many of the tensions between ‘town’ and ‘gown’ have been exacerbated in the past by poor planning in terms of the impact an expanding higher education sector might have on the communities within which universities are situated. The examples in the chapter on strategy demonstrate that universities and students’ unions are learning from the past and are looking to involve the broader community more fully in their forward planning.

As the strategy section suggests, the key to tackling these issues effectively in the future will be for national and local policymakers, along with universities and students’ unions, to plan ahead for changes in the student population and universities themselves.

So what are the likely trends in higher education which may affect community relations in the future?

The prospect of large cuts in public spending as the Government starts to tackle its growing funding deficit is only one indication that a buoyant period has come to an end, even though applications and enrolments for full-time undergraduates are currently at record levels.

Demographic change

An indicator of the uncertainties that universities will face in the future is the likely impact of demographic changes on future demand for university education. Recent population projections from the Office for National Statistics indicate that the sector faces significant demographic change over the next 20 years among the age groups from which it traditionally recruits undergraduates. In particular the number of 18 to 20-year-olds who make up over 70 per cent of entrants to full-time undergraduate programmes is projected to fall by nearly 13 per cent from 2009 to 2019, before rising again up to 2028 (to roughly the same level it was in 2009)¹³. Assuming no change in policies or other external factors, this equates to a decrease in the full-time undergraduate population of just under 6 per cent by 2019, before increasing to just above 2006 levels in 2027.¹⁴ The older age groups, from which part-time undergraduates are mainly drawn, will, on the other hand, experience modest growth over the same period. The projections assume an increase in net inward migration to the UK and without this the rate of demographic decline would be much steeper.

¹³ ONS 2008-based National Population Projections (www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_population/NPP2008/NatPopProj2008.pdf)

¹⁴ UUK, *The future size and shape of the HE sector in the UK: Demographic projections, 2008*, www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/publications/pages/publication-282.aspx

Regional variations

The issue is likely to continue to manifest itself differently in different local settings, as these national projections conceal significant regional variations. The young population of the most northerly and westerly regions is projected to decline more steeply than the regions in the south and east of England. It is only the London, East and South East regions that show an upturn in 20 years' time, bringing their young population back towards the 2006 position. In Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland the demographic decline is even more marked and this is likely to have an impact on the pattern of cross-border flows within the UK although other factors, including different fee regimes, will also have an effect.¹⁵

Other factors

Although demography is the major driver of higher education demand it is not the only contributory factor. There are social as well as economic drivers. The numbers of young people taking GCE A-levels is the major factor influencing the numbers that go on to higher education. The proportion of the 17-year-old population achieving two A-levels increased steadily until 2002, when the increase stalled. There is no evidence that achievement at this key point is improving in a way which suggests that participation will increase in the future.¹⁶

However, a continued commitment to widen participation in higher education will undoubtedly have an impact on the diversity of the student body and their housing needs, and see the sector become more permeable to all classes and social groups.

For example, increasing diversity may lead, and add, to take-up of alternative modes of full-time study, such as part-time and work-based learning. Indeed, between 1994–95 and 2007–08 numbers of part-time undergraduate students have grown at a rate three times that of full-time undergraduates.¹⁷ Mature students, those with caring responsibilities or those fitting education around employment may also be more likely to be looking at courses available locally. Furthermore, if the UK is to meet its targets for a skilled population by 2020, then the education system will have to meet the needs of learners who have already left education and are currently in the workplace.

Housing implications

Of course it is difficult to know for certain what the implications of the above projections might be, but based on past experience we might expect the following factors to have an impact on community relations in the future:

- The number of 18 to 20-year-olds is expected to drop by a projected 13 per cent over the next decade; this coupled with an ageing population may see the student population become increasingly 'mature'
- As universities look to widen participation to new groups of learners there is likely to be an increase in part-time students, mature students and work-based learning. This will in turn lead to an increasingly diverse population with different lifestyles, responsibilities and roles within the community.

¹⁵ UUK, *The future size and shape of the HE sector in the UK: Demographic projections, 2008*

¹⁶ Department of Education, *Statistical First Release, 2009*, www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/

¹⁷ HESA Statistics available at www.hesa.ac.uk/

Reflections and conclusions

Institutions are making an impact

The case studies in this publication demonstrate just some of the ways in which universities, colleges and students' unions are improving relations between the institution and the broader community.

Through providing significant dedicated resources, developing a wide range of partnerships and thorough qualitative and quantitative evaluation of projects, institutions are endeavouring to address the specific concerns of their local community with projects that respond to local need.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the student demographic is going through a period of significant change. This will no doubt have a consequence for the broader aspects of the student experience, including students' lifestyles and where they live.

While institutions cannot reverse changes to housing stock, there is still much that can be done to mitigate the negative impacts that student communities can have on their local neighbourhoods. Many institutions have learned from past experiences that they need to be more responsible neighbours and take an active role in their communities. Institutions are increasingly recognising their role in ensuring that students and staff are aware of their responsibilities to the local community and the collective impact they can have.

Policymaking for the future

Of course, issues faced today may be different to those in five or 10 years' time, so stakeholders and policymakers need to think critically about these potential changes and how to create policy for them. There needs to be assessment at a local level of how best to support stakeholders in managing student housing requirements.

In turn, policymakers at both a national and local level should recognise that institutions are part of the community and can contribute significantly, not only to the wealth and vitality of local economies but also towards finding solutions once, if not before, problems arise. Local authorities and national government must recognise their role in this agenda, and be committed to investing resources and time to develop strong partnerships with institutions and support the work they are doing.

The importance of successful and sustainable partnerships

Partnership working is central to any community engagement work, whether it be between the university and students' union or with stakeholders in the broader community. This publication has sought to focus on the importance of partnership working between students' union and institution. This is because this area – arguably more than any other – is one in which both entities are seen to represent the same people and issues. To be working individually is a waste of resources and often confusing to the wider community.

However, in many of these projects, other stakeholder engagement is paramount. Close consultation and good working relationships with the wider community are essential for all project planning and decision-making. Working with a range of departments within the local authority and other agencies is also vital to ensuring true community focus and the use of all resources.

By collating the lessons learned by those submitting case studies, and drawing on their recommendations for future projects, it has been possible to identify the key features of successful partnerships and projects.

Prevention is better than cure

- Often institutions are responding reactively to issues as no one can forecast what will come to the fore. However, where possible effort should be made to initiate proactive projects which seek to prevent issues developing

Broader partnerships

- The broader community must be involved in plans and activities from the start
- Projects will benefit from the collective buy-in and input of interested parties from an early stage
- Local authorities, with their resources and links, will be vital partners for community relations projects

Local solutions

- While sharing best practice and the flow of ideas is useful to this agenda, each institution and community is unique. What is successful in one area may not necessarily work in another. It is important to focus on the local agenda and tailor materials appropriately
- It is important to establish good contacts to ensure that, where the university or students' union is not best placed to deal with an issue, it can be referred appropriately

Resources

- Institutions should agree the resource and capacity for the project early in the planning stages to ensure that the activity can be maintained and that goals are realistic
- There should be early consideration of the longevity of a project in terms of planning and budget, as most activities will need to run for longer than one year

Management

- Project management is essential to identify expectations and to allocate resources and responsibilities effectively
- Regular meetings are essential to tracking progress

Communication

- Honesty and transparency are vital to developing trust between stakeholders. Projects should aim to deliver on original objectives. However if these change, this needs to be clearly communicated to all those involved or interested in the project
- Sufficient time needs to be given to marketing the initiative to students and creating links with local organisations

Measuring success

- Project evaluation is vital to ensure that improvements can be made, in order to increase impact. Good evaluation requires:
 - establishing clear and consistent systems for measuring the success of any initiative
 - the willingness to change projects that are not having the desired impact

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