



# 5 Estates Project Evaluation Report



June 2011

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## **Acknowledgements**

Our thanks to everyone who contributed to this evaluation, giving their time and sharing their opinions and ideas.

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## **1. Introduction**

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The 5 Estates Project is an initiative to support the integration of new communities on five housing estates in the Dudley borough. It has been mainly funded by the Barrow Cadbury Trust, following an initial small grant from the Yorkshire and Clydesdale Bank Foundation. This report presents the findings of a snapshot evaluation of the project that was commissioned by the Centre for Equality & Diversity (CfED) and undertaken independently in June 2011 by Merida Associates.

### **5 Estates Project objectives**

- To explore collectively ways of engaging with migrant communities within each respective area.
- Develop a programme of community involvement including outreach, information sessions and social activities to bring newcomers and wider communities together.
- Improve the life chances of asylum seekers and refugees.
- Work with Tenants and Residents Associations (TRAs) to address community tensions between the different communities on respective estates.
- Encourage dialogue between asylum seekers / refugees and the wider communities, the project being the interface with the general public.
- Reduce fear and anxiety and enable people to feel positive about diversity and proud of their community.

### **Evaluation objectives**

- To review the delivery of the project against its stated objectives.
- To assess the reach, outcomes and impact of the project.
- To consider how the project could be taken forward in the current policy context.

### **Summary of evaluation activity**

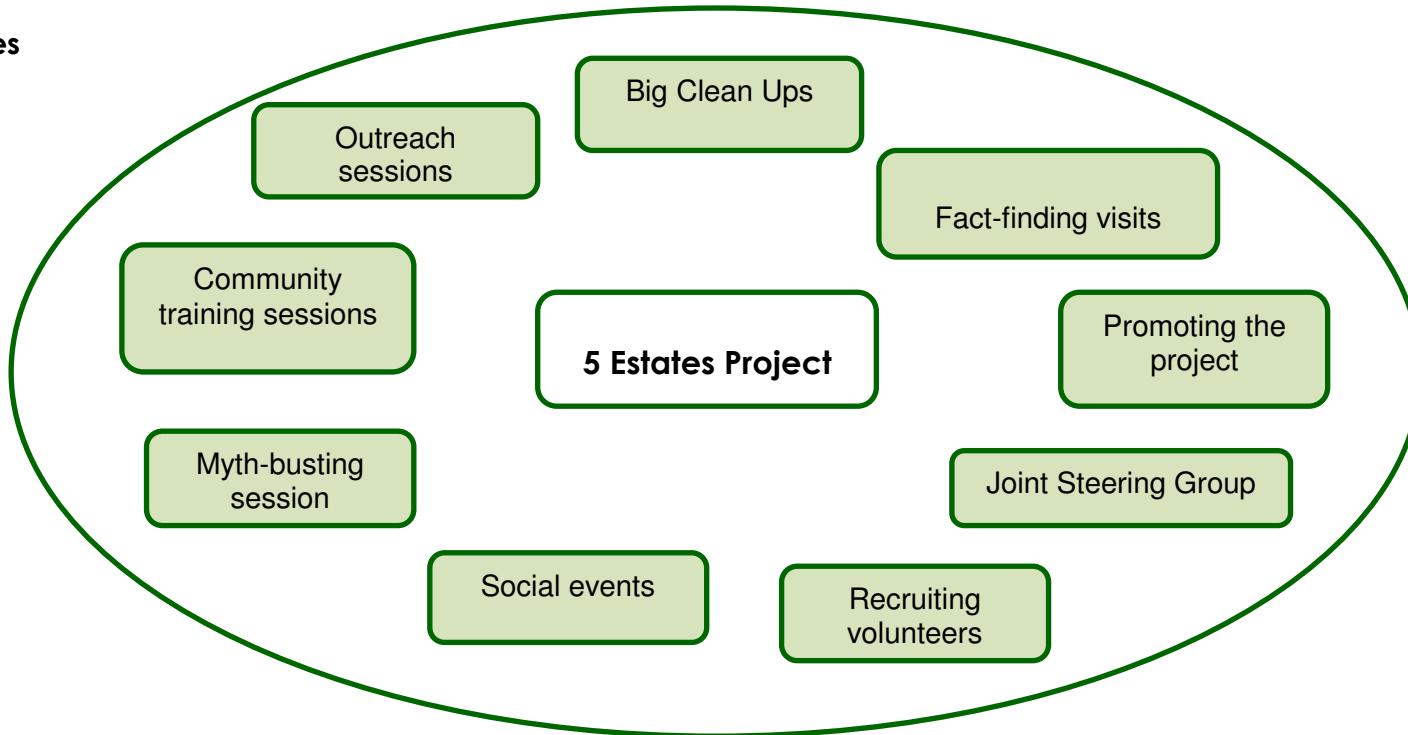
The evaluation was commissioned to provide a snapshot overview of project activity and outcomes, rather than an in-depth review and analysis. The following activities were undertaken within the minimal time available for primary research.

**Desk research:** a review of background documents, programme materials, evaluation sheets and internal evaluation reports.

**Interviews:** 4 semi-structured interviews with contributors to the programme.

**Focus group:** with project Steering Group.

## Project activities

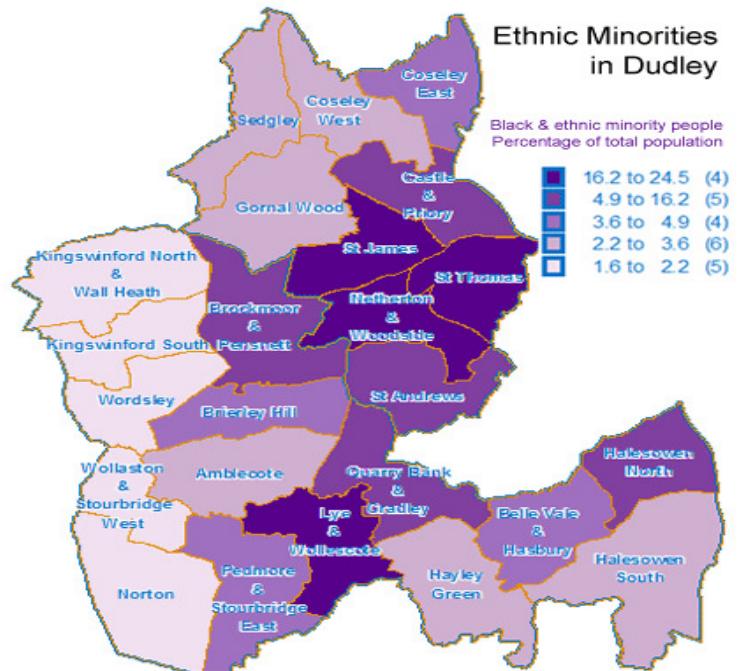


An assessment of how project activities have delivered against the project objectives is summarised at Appendix 1.

The 2-year project was set up as a partnership between CfED and the Dudley Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations, in conjunction with Dudley MBC. Tenants and Residents Associations (TRAs) on each of the 5 estates were engaged from the start of the project and a joint working relationship was later developed with the Hope Centre on the High Fields estate in Halesowen. CfED appointed a part-time project worker (18.5 hours p.w.) to develop and co-ordinate the project on the ground. The worker came into post in May 2010 and the project runs until December 2011.

A wide range of people are eligible to be engaged with the 5 Estates Project: refugees, asylum seekers, East European and other economic migrant groups. For the purpose of the research, these disparate groups are collectively described in the report as 'migrant communities'. Similarly, people whose connection to an area is long-standing, historical or well established are known as 'existing communities'.

Map 1



Source: NHS Dudley website - <http://www.nhsdudley.nhs.uk/sites/About/index.asp?id=8856>

The 5 Estates project initially focused its activity on 5 housing estates in the Netherton area of Dudley borough in the West Midlands. The 5 estates are Saltwells, Bowling Green, Darby End, Netherton Central and Arley & Compton. Map 1 indicates that Netherton is an area within the borough with higher numbers of residents from ethnic minority communities. The project subsequently delivered additional activities in Halesowen, in response to need, and made contact with some refugee residents in Lye.

The project has a Project Steering Group made up of the project worker (CfED), volunteers from migrant communities, TRA members and a support officer from Dudley council. This group plans all the activities of the 5 Estates Project and organises the delivery of them. It reviews feedback from the evaluation sheets completed at events and decides how the project can be improved and what else it can be doing to meet local needs, for example expanding to offer drop-in advice for people from migrant communities at the Hope Centre in Halesowen.

## **2. Findings and analysis**

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### **2.1 Project rationale and challenge**

The purpose of the 5 Estates Project is to promote integration and good neighbourliness by bringing people together to tackle shared problems. By encouraging people to collectively contribute to activities that make life much better, this pilot project hopes to break down barriers between established residents and newcomers who have been relocated onto the targeted estates. It aims to promote understanding between these communities so that established residents feel reassured and newcomers are able to feel a part of their neighbourhoods and are able to influence local decision-making.

A key challenge is that people from both the existing and migrant communities have needed to be persuaded to get involved with the project. Dudley has a history of British National Party and, more recently, English Defence League activity. These minority activities have been extensively covered in the media. Evaluation participants from both communities have commented that the media coverage supported a climate of mutual mistrust on some of the targeted estates. Dudley had seen little, if any, previous history of migrant settlement so vulnerable people found themselves placed in neighbourhoods where local residents, themselves often struggling to cope, may have felt threatened by the arrival of newcomers. CfED has reported that, in their experience, newcomers often respond to a perceived hostile environment by maintaining a low profile and, as a result, become isolated and disengaged from the people around them. Instead of thriving in a mutually supportive community, different groups end up living parallel lives in close proximity.

Research undertaken by the University of Birmingham and the Refugee Council in 2007(Refugee Experiences of Integration) recommended that new initiatives seeking to identify and build upon shared interest between asylum seekers / refugees and local community members would be beneficial in forming inclusive networks and reducing tension and isolation. The 5 Estates Project was set up to pilot this work, using the existing structure of TRAs as a mechanism for local decision-making as a key driver. It was decided to take a community development approach to the project, creating opportunities for people to work together for the benefit of each neighbourhood, and also including elements of myth-busting to help break down preconceptions and build mutual understanding.

## 2.2 Description of activities

The success of this project depends on people working together. The project worker has been supported by the Centre for Equality and Diversity and the Dudley Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations, and has been able to draw on the existing networks of those organisations who had already delivered some activities to get the project going in the first five months. Support has also been provided by a designated officer from Dudley MBC who has been a key member of the project Steering Group. Regular meetings have been held with TRA committees to engage them in the planning of activities and reporting back on progress. This communication process has been effective in maintaining the momentum of the project. A considerable number of different activities have been undertaken in the 18 months of the project so far, providing a range of opportunities for people to become engaged, gradually building up awareness of the project and increasing the numbers of people involved.

**Outreach work:** The project worker and TRA members on each estate undertook a number of 'door-knocking' exercises in order to 1) raise awareness of the project, 2) identify migrant households and families and 3) undertake some initial needs assessment with those families. They distributed leaflets that describe the project, in English and French, and encouraged people to volunteer with the project.

The project provides volunteering opportunities both to people who are already active in their communities, such as TRA members and existing CfED volunteers, and to people who have never before had a chance to contribute in their local neighbourhoods. Through this work and other engagement activities, 12 volunteers from refugee and migrant communities have been recruited. This achievement reflects that a start has been made to overcome the reticence of migrant communities to engage in their local communities.

Early outreach work on the Arley & Compton estate in Dudley proved a good way of meeting some migrant families at the start of the project. Asbestos had been found in flats on the estates and the council needed to evacuate people temporarily while the asbestos removed. They sent out leaflets and people were asked to respond with a convenient date. They received no response from many migrant families, mainly because of language barriers. There was a real risk of seriously alarming migrant families, for instance contractors turning up out of the blue wearing decontamination suits and asking people to leave their flats would have been very frightening, particularly for people who have already had to flee their own country. The 5 Estates Project got the remedial action postponed while leaflets were printed in different languages and they went round migrant homes and explained the situation. The result was a very high take up of asbestos removal action by migrant families and the council was very pleased.

**Big Clean Up:** The Big Clean Up is organised by TRAs on each estate. It was set up independently before the 5 Estates Project but was soon seen as an opportunity to introduce volunteers from migrant communities to the wider population through a neutral, mutually beneficial activity. The project worker, 5 Estates Project volunteers and TRA members jointly promoted the Big Clean Up to residents on each estate and jointly delivered the Clean Up activities, collecting bulk waste from elderly and vulnerable residents and disposing of it. 5 Estates Project volunteers have reported that this activity helped them to feel more a part of the community and to make a contribution to their neighbourhoods. Volunteers on the Project Steering Group reported that the regular joint Clean Ups were helping to break down barriers between communities on the estates, people were beginning to recognise each other on the streets and say 'Hello'. Big Clean Ups are now being planned and delivered across the 5 Estates monthly, on a rotational basis.



Big Clean Up

Being involved with planning the Clean Ups, in joint meetings with TRAs, is helping migrant volunteers to understand how that particular local decision-making structure operates. It is a process of 'Action Learning' through which knowledge is being extended through direct experience. For TRAs, the joint working is extending the reach of the associations deeper into their local communities and helping them to understand and respond more effectively to the different groups they represent.

**Social events:** A key part of the project's community development approach has been to organise a number of social events in order to bring people from different communities together. For example, a skittle evening gave people from the local migrant community a chance to take part in a traditional British pastime, with a taste of Black Country food, in a sociable atmosphere. People from the 'host' community were able to share part of their culture and, while it was fun, the activity was about breaking down barriers. Similarly, other events introduced aspects of some of the other cultures represented in Dudley, the 'Celebrating your community' event included people from other organisations working in the borough to support refugees and other migrants, the Seasonal get together celebrated a number of 'end of year' festivals and the Hakuna Matata ("No Worries") event introduced the Masai culture to a mixed group of participants.



Dressing in Masai costume – Hakuna Matata

**Community decision-making training:** 18 people attended a joint training session for TRA members and 5 Estates Project volunteers, held with an external trainer, that was designed to empower and enable volunteers from migrant communities to participate effectively in TRA meetings. It covered confidence building, how to hold meetings and decision-making. The aim was “*to prepare people for meetings – to be ready for that environment and the challenging attitudes they may encounter*” and for trained volunteers to begin to cascade the learning about TRAs – what they do, how they benefit the community – more widely amongst migrant families. Feedback from participants was very positive and volunteers felt it had helped to increase their confidence to take part in meetings.

**Raising community awareness:** the project has organised 2 events to help raise awareness about migrant communities and to directly address some of the misconceptions and negative views held about them in some sections of the existing communities covered by the 5 Estates Project. An initial workshop in February 2010 attracted 22 members from different TRAs and 3 members of migrant communities, plus a representative from a local church, a representative from the Dudley Mental Health Partnership and 2 members of staff from DOSTI , the local community empowerment network, who supported the planning and facilitation of the event. The event provided an opportunity for members of existing communities to hear facts about the numbers and make up of migrant households and families in Dudley, facts about migrants' recourse to public funds (or lack of it) and to ask any questions they might have, to unpick misconceptions and interrogate media representations.

A second ‘myth-busting’ event was held for Arley and Compton TRA, in October 2010, attended by 15 people. Using a participative approach, participants explored their perceptions of migrant communities and discussed ways of engaging with them. Volunteers from local migrant families told their own stories, in groups they discussed media images and their two-way impact on how each community saw the other. One Project Steering Group member said “*it was an opportunity to ask the hard questions and see a different side of each other– to address racist comments*”.

Feedback suggests that this session helped to develop local knowledge of the different cultural groups living on the Arley & Compton estates and project staff report that it resulted in increased TRA engagement with the 5 Estates Project.



Awareness raising event

**Fact-finding visits:** The 5 Estates Project has organised 2 visits to help volunteers from migrant communities to understand more about the British political system and decision-making processes. The first was to the Mayor's Parlour at Dudley Council House where 21 participants (12 TRAs, 9 5 Estates) met the Mayor, heard about his ceremonial role and about how the council operates. The second visit was to meet the local MP at the Houses of Parliament. Participants undertook a tour of Parliament and discussed community issues with the MP who, participants report, was pleased that the local authority is supporting the 5 Estates Project and taking the issues of migrant communities seriously.

**Refugee Week events:** In Year 1 (2010), the project hosted a Banner theatre production, "We share the same sky", that used multi media to look at the world of work in the context of the current global economic downturn, weaving the stories of 3 different visitors to Britain, as part of the Dudley Refugee Week programme. This year, the Project Steering Group planned and organised an outdoor event/fun day at the Hope Centre in Halesowen. There was significant community engagement in the planning and running of the event, which was supported by the new Mayor of Dudley, Cllr Michael Evans and his Consort and other local dignitaries including James Morris MP. This engagement gives a strong indication that the project is gaining local support and reaching out more successfully into migrant communities.



Houses of Parliament visit



Refugee Week June 2011

## **2.3 Project reach**

The 5 Estates Project has delivered activities on each of the 5 Netherton estates, plus some work in the Priory area of Dudley and the High Fields estate in Halesowen. Strong joint working has been established with TRAs in Saltwells and Bowling Green, both of which are represented on the project Steering Group, and good relations are established with the 3 other TRAs where Big Clean Ups are now established. Additional work has been done with the Arley & Compton TRA to help address some community reservations about engagement with the project. The project worker is continuing to develop joint working opportunities with the TRA. Project monitoring data shows that the involvement of people from migrant communities has built up over the lifetime of the project to date. It took time to raise awareness of the project through leafleting and door-knocking to recruit volunteers, although 2 or 3 people were involved from early on. The project now has 12 regular volunteers from migrant communities.

Between 6<sup>th</sup> September 2010 and 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2011, the 5 Estates Project was involved in 47 meetings and events, at which 568 attendances were recorded. All of the recorded meetings and activities were attended by people from migrant communities and one event (the pre meeting for the Houses of Parliament visit) was attended only by people from migrant communities.

- 230 attendances (41%) were by people from migrant communities.
- People with disabilities attended 17 sessions (3%).
- 308 attendances (54%) were by men.
- Women from migrant communities attended some of the activities. Migrant community women were present at the following events: the Community Decision-making training, two 5 Estate project meetings, the Seasonal Get Together, the visit to the Mayors Parlour in Dudley, the Hakuna Matata event, the Parliamentary visit, the Arley and Compton Big Clean Up, planning meetings and the Refugee Week/Fun Day Event.

Cultural social events appear to be particularly popular with women from migrant communities, especially when they are able to bring their children along. The Hakuna Matata event was attended by 44 people of which 25 (57%) were from migrant communities, 14 of whom were women. The Refugee Week/Fun Day 2011 attracted the largest number of participants to date, with 112 people attending. Of these, 75 (67%) were from migrant communities and 52 of those were women, making it the most successful event for attracting migrant women so far. The Seasonal Get Together attracted 49 attendees of which 10 (21%) were from migrant communities and 30 people took part in the Skittles event, of whom 10 (33%) were from migrant communities.

7-10 people, both TRA members and 5 Estates Project volunteers, together with the project worker and the Dudley MBC support officer, regularly attend activity planning meetings and Project Steering Group meetings. Numbers attending have reached as high as 19 people (10 TRAs, 9 5 Estates) in some cases. This indicates a significant commitment by local people to the project.

## **2.4 Outcomes and Impact**

### **Engaging migrant communities in the 5 Estates Project**

The menu of meetings, outings, social activities and practical volunteering, such as the Big Clean Up, has been successful in engaging members of the Tenants and Residents Associations with the 5 Estates Project, as well as residents from different migrant communities in the project. As mentioned in section 2.3, the increase in participant numbers has gradually increased and would seem to indicate that awareness of the project is spreading amongst migrant communities; this is what would be expected from a community development approach. Evaluation participants have talked of telling their friends and neighbours about the project and that they were encouraging others to attend events and to come to TRA meetings. They also report sharing information about how the Borough works and reported being more aware of and knowledgeable about the communities and areas in which they are living.

As one person commented “*After joining the project I know about the areas. I know about Saltwells and Netherton area. I know how the system works. I didn't even know before who was my housing officer.*”

### **Improving the life chances of people from migrant communities**

Evaluation participants felt that the project had made a number of improvements to their lives, these included:

- Raised awareness about the political system works through the visits to the Mayors Parlour and the Houses of Parliament.
- Raised awareness about the range of services that are on offer and how to access them. From this knowledge evaluation participants told us that it had helped them to find out about how things work. For example, before becoming involved in the project one person told us that he didn't know about the TRA, what it was or how it worked. Now is he very proud of the fact that he knows how to solve problems for himself, his family and his neighbours. He also feels that he can contact the TRA to help him solve problems and issues.
- The internal evaluation report on the Community decision-making training session identified that people had increased their understanding of decision-making processes in their community.

- 1 of the volunteers is learning office skills by volunteering with his local TRA.
- Others reported that the project had helped them to gain a better understanding of local community expectations of migrant communities, what sort of activities enhance acceptance within existing communities, such as joining in with the Big Clean Ups. As one evaluation participant commented “*It has helped us to understand what the community expects from us*”.
- The core group of people from migrant communities that are involved in the project are now known to the local authority, they could contribute to the council’s consultation mechanisms and they have a clearer idea where to go for help and advice about local services.

### **Bringing communities together, building community relationships and reducing social isolation**

The project has delivered a range of opportunities that brought people together and that were all designed to increase social interaction between members of the community.

The internal evaluation reports written for 5 of the events<sup>1</sup> hosted by the project show that people enjoyed working together, learning about different cultures and that they found the events interesting and enjoyable.

The internal evaluation report on the Community decision-making training session identified that people had increased their understanding of the issues that migrants face in engaging in decision making in their community. The Celebrating Your Community event internal evaluation report quotes one participant as saying that the event was “*interesting and informative. Interaction surpassed anything I have seen before, good fun, positive and committed group.*”

Evaluation participants noted that:

- People from the existing community and from migrant communities were greeting each other on a first name basis and /or acknowledging each other by waving etc.
- More people were increasingly coming to events, as one person noted “*People who wouldn’t previously have come to social events have come*”.

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<sup>1</sup> The Celebrating your community event in Nov 2010; the Community decision-making training, the Seasonal Get Together event, the Hakuna Matata event and the visit to the Houses of Parliament.

- One person described the skittles evening as a good example of how the project has been successful in bringing people together, helping to break down barriers and encouraging people to talk and spend time together. “*Everything is about people getting involved and about getting people together. At the event TRA members sat together and all the refugees and asylum seekers sat together at opposite ends of the room really, but then the teams got mixed up and everyone was working with everyone else and laughing.*”
- Practical community volunteering activity such as the Big Clean Ups have brought mainstream TRA members and migrant community members together, working alongside each other to achieve lasting benefits for their community. One evaluation participant noted: “*This kind of project very good, must get people involved it is very good. It's how you become a part of the community, first you understand your streets, you're neighbours and you are not just a resident, you understand your community.*”

### **Addressing community tensions, reducing fears and increasing positive attitudes towards diversity**

The project has sought to address public hostility towards, and general ignorance about, refugee, migrant and asylum seeking communities through a variety of activities, in a Borough with reported and documented English Defence League activity at neighbourhood level. The project delivered a Myth-busting session intended to raise awareness about racism, and the impact of racist comments, at which people from migrant communities shared their own personal narratives about the realities of their lives. TRA members on the Project Steering Group report that the session was so successful that 60 more people now want to participate in a similar session.

Members also stated that Dudley council have changed some of their literature promoting community-based services as a result of feedback from the Project Steering Group. The council are now using different community languages in their information, which shows that the project has had a much wider influence on the Borough than just the participating 5 Estates.

The project printed booklets (distributed by TRA members and 5 Estates volunteers) designed to help people to understand the issues that migrant communities face. Information gathered for this evaluation clearly indicates that the attitudes of some people have changed and that a strong community development process has been embedded on the participating estates.

Supporting evidence from the evaluation research includes feedback that:

- The project has fostered better relationships between communities on the 5 Estates, with one evaluation participant commenting “Once you get to know each other, you realise we are the same”.
- TRA members had learnt about the issues migrant communities face when they come to this country.
- TRA members welcomed the opportunity (created by the project) to find out about the needs of the whole community they serve.
- Undertaking practical tasks such as Big Clean Ups have an impact on the whole community, break down barriers between communities and engender positive attitudes to migrant communities.
- People felt that barriers were being removed between communities with people noting that “we are getting there” in terms of building better community relationships.
- Migrant community members were more aware of the TRAs and how they could help and support them.
- They also felt clearer about how they could play a role in local decision-making and making a contribution to their local community – and were telling other people in their community too.

### **3. Taking the project forward**

The project has been successful in engaging TRA members and people from migrant communities. From the information gathered for this report, and from internal evaluations and monitoring information, it has succeeded in breaking down some of the barriers between communities and building better relationships across the communities of the 5 Estates in Netherton. This is a notable achievement in less than two years, particularly in areas where existing communities are long established and often have cross-generational family associations with an area. It would seem that working through TRAs has helped to ‘fast track’ some aspects of integration by using the networks and local knowledge that TRA members can bring to bear. Further, the project has made people from migrant communities more aware of how local and national civil society works and given them tools and knowledge to understand both their local communities and the wider system within the local authority.

Partnering with the 5 Estates Project for the Big Clean Ups (part of the Dudley Federation of TRAs BIG Lottery-funded work) has seen people from TRAs and from migrant communities on the 5 Estates actively co-operating and working in partnership to make the

areas of the 5 Estates cleaner. Such activity, in partnership with Dudley council, could be seen as embryonic co-production<sup>2</sup> as it is able to add value to the TRAs' environmental work by also challenging negative views of migrant communities and building trust between neighbours at the same time as improving local areas. Further, such co-production activity has resonance within the current Government agenda for service delivery and for actively engaging people in caring for the area in which they live.

It can be argued that the project is reasonably well positioned within the current Big Society policy context in that it has been encouraging people from migrant communities to be active members of their local TRA groups (Big Society policy documents talk about “....wanting every adult to be an active member of an active neighbourhood group”). In terms of encouraging people to take charge of their own lives and communities, again there is a strategic policy fit with current Government thinking in that the project has supported and enabled people to improve not only community relationships but to improve the area in which they live: “*the Big Society is about helping people to come together to improve their own lives.....*”<sup>3</sup>. The work of the project could be more broadly shared across Dudley borough, as an example of community organising that other groups can learn from. Interest has already been expressed by other TRAs wishing to partner with the 5 Estates Project, however limited resources currently restricts the project's ability to expand further.

Given that evaluation participants, across both existing and migrant communities, report improved understanding of how local and central Government operates as a result of the project, there is scope to continue to broaden their knowledge by extending the links of the project further with other local service providers such as education, children's services, the police and health.

The 5 Estates Project has been able to pilot a wide range of community development activities over the past 18 months that are now beginning to bear fruit. Increasing numbers of local people are becoming engaged and are perceiving personal and community benefits from volunteering their time. Community development is a gradual process and consideration must be given to how the work of the 5 Estates Project can be sustained in order to build on its early successes and to enable the model to be rolled out further, across the borough and potentially beyond.

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<sup>2</sup> Co-production is a way of delivering services and meeting needs that see professionals working hand in hand with local people in a reciprocal relationship, organising services with people in mind, rather than imposing services on them. See RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW Taking co-production into the mainstream David Boyle, Anna Coote, Chris Sherwood and Julia Slay NESTA NEF July 2010

<sup>3</sup> Source: Cabinet Office website accessed July 1<sup>st</sup> 2011

## Appendix 1: Project activities and objectives

Project activities ☞	Door knocking/ outreach	Leaflet distribution	Big Clean Up	Social events	Community decision-making training	Myth-busting session	Refugee Week event	Visits to Mayor and MP
Project objectives ↗								
Engage migrant communities	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
Programme of community development	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Improve life chances of asylum seekers and refugees					✓		✓	✓
Work with TRAs to address community tensions	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Encourage dialogue between communities	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Reduce fear and anxiety	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Enable people to feel positive about diversity and proud of their community			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

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