

PEP Trust Project:
**Residents as
Neighbourhood Workers**

Independent Evaluation,
Final Report.

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Contents

Summary:	Overview of project and key findings
Section 1	Introduction
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the Neighbourhood workers project? • How and why it was set up. • Aims and objectives of the project
Section 2	How programme was delivered and who was involved.
Section 3.	Impact and Outcomes:
Section 3.1	Outcomes for neighbourhood workers
Section 3.2	Outcomes for employing organisations
Section 3.3	Outcomes for communities
Section 4	How the good outcomes were achieved.
Section 5	Challenges or weaknesses of the programme.
Section 6	Proposals for change.
Section 7	Measurement of outcomes against objectives.
Section 8	Value for money.
Section 9	Conclusion.
Annex 1	The PEP Trust Training Programme
Annex 2a	Participant pre-training questionnaire
Annex 2b	Participant after-training questionnaire
Annex 3a	Supervisor pre-training questionnaire
Annex 3c	Supervisor after-training questionnaire
Annex 4.	Evaluation of the project. Methodology
Annex 5	The SRB project

PEP Trust Project: Residents as Neighbourhood Workers.

Independent Evaluation by the University of Bristol. Final report, January 2007

Summary: Overview of project and key findings

In 2003, the PEP Trust, with support from the Housing Corporation and from the Chartered Institute of Housing, initiated a pilot project to train local people from areas of social housing to become neighbourhood workers in their own communities. This was in response both to a national shortage of neighbourhood workers and to the social inclusion agenda in areas of high unemployment. The aim was to offer a chance of employment and a career to those appointed and to achieve good outcomes for communities and landlords. Participating landlords appointed, paid and supervised the workers and allowed them time and support to attend formal training. This formal training was supplied by the PEP Trust and consisted of 7 two-day residential sessions during the course of a year. It was to be accredited by the Open College Network. External mentors were supplied to supplement the formal supervision. Between 2004 and 2006, two groups of workers -31 in all - started the 12 month programme and 27 completed it.

The project was independently evaluated throughout by the University of Bristol

Key findings were:

- 28 residents of local neighbourhoods who had previously been unemployed or in unsatisfying unskilled work were helped into a new career, with the great majority having secured continued employment in the field.
- The neighbourhoods where the trainees had been employed benefited directly from their work. Good outcomes included increased activities and inclusion for young and old; better information; more resources committed to those areas as the result of fund-raising and an increased sense that involvement was worthwhile. One area recorded a 28% reduction in anti-social behaviour following the introduction of the neighbourhood worker
- Landlords found that their improved understanding of the needs of local areas enabled them to target resources more usefully. The workers created bridges of understanding and communication between local communities and the landlords.
- The programme was of such good quality that workers achieved *average* increases of proficiency in 41 areas of relevant skill and knowledge of 43% for skills and 63% for knowledge, and this was reflected in their levels of confidence. The impact of the programme on the workers was judged by employers to be good or excellent in 89% of cases (100% in the second year).
- These outcomes were achieved because of the way the elements of the programme worked together. Work experience, employer support, formal training, local colleague support and for some, mentoring were all valued.

- The informal networking between the workers that took place as a consequence of the residential training sessions was a crucial extra element. This gave support and encouragement and prevented drop-out when other parts of the structure failed.
- The programme was felt by landlords to give very good value for money. 81 % of management supervisors in the first year and 94% in the second year rated the value for money 'good' or 'excellent'. The formal training was judged 'good' or 'excellent' by 82% of supervisors in the first year and by 100% in the second year, when adjustments had been made in response to the experience of the first year. Supervisors commented that there would have been no other way to obtain such directly relevant training at such reasonable cost.
- The major difficulty for employers, and reason for the small number of lower assessments, was mainly connected to the selection of candidates. Where appointments proved unsuitable, waste was inevitable. Suggestions have been made re broadening the pool for selection and introducing a probationary period.
- The workers' main difficulties were the very great demands made upon them, with some family tensions and some difficulties through becoming workers in their own areas. They nevertheless recorded a massively positive view of the long-term value of the programme.

Conclusion.

The evaluator's conclusion is that the Residents as Neighbourhood Workers Programme has been a most remarkable success. Local communities, social housing landlords and the local residents who became the neighbourhood workers have all benefited tangibly from the programme and there will be more benefits in the years to come. The programme was well conceived from the start, with a balance of work experience, support and formal training. The networks between workers that grew out of residential sessions provided an extra layer of support, so that drop-out rates were very low. The learning achieved in just 14 days of formal training was a credit to the trainers. It is only regrettable that the accreditation by the Open College network was not achieved by the end of the pilot project but this will hopefully be put right. The good quality training, good outcomes for communities and landlords and the likely long-term benefits have all contributed to the conclusion that this programme represents very good value for money. Responding landlords have expressed the hope that it will be continued.

PEP Trust Project: Residents as Neighbourhood Workers

Independent Evaluation by the University of Bristol

Section 1 Introduction

1.1 What is the Residents as Neighbourhood Workers (RNW) project? The RNW project was an employment opportunity programme run by the PEP Trust¹. It was designed to give unemployed residents of areas of social housing a chance to become professional neighbourhood workers in their own localities and to do work there that would improve the well-being of the community. Each participant in the programme was employed by the social landlord for a year's work experience and required to attend 7 two-day residential training sessions run by the PEP Trust in the course of that year. At the end of the training year it was hoped that there would be tangible benefits to the local communities and that the workers would be able to continue in employment.

1.2 Why was it set up?

The PEP Trust has a brief to foster vibrant and resourceful communities by pioneering innovative ideas and putting them into action. Social exclusion is a central focus of Government policy and a matter of great concern to social landlords. The RNW project was set up as an innovative way to tackle the twin aspects of social exclusion that are lack of employment and the problems of living in areas where there is a concentration of social need.

It has long seemed strange that projects of 'renewal' create jobs for outsiders but little for the local population. For capital projects there have been some policies of local employment in the building work, with training as necessary, but only in exceptional circumstances have local residents ever had a chance to access other skilled jobs connected with regeneration. Yet the move for sustainable development has increased awareness of the need to strengthen communities from within by offering to the talent that is already there a chance of good jobs with proper career prospects. There is also the likelihood that people who live locally will have both understanding and 'street cred' and will therefore start with considerable advantages compared with an outsider in the daunting task of changing life in areas of multiple deprivation.. A recent report from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation reviewing the long term effects of renewal stressed once again the central importance of employment and the priority expressed by residents of tackling social issues ahead of physical regeneration.² Ironically, too there is a known national shortage of trained neighbourhood workers, so that some

¹ The PEP Trust is a registered charity, founded in 2001 by Priority Estates Project Ltd as an independent organisation managed by a board of trustees. PEP Trust works nationally to support communities in areas of social and economic disadvantage. Its purpose is to foster vibrant and resourceful communities by pioneering innovative ideas and putting them into action.

² Page, D (2006) *Respect and renewal: a study of neighbourhood social regeneration*. York, Joseph Rowntree Foundation. *Findings* at www.jrf.org.uk.

landlords have found it difficult to recruit for the community work they want to carry out.

When these factors are set alongside the urgent social problems in many areas, and the desire to revitalise and restore hope to communities, the reason for the project evaluated in this report becomes clear. It is not the first project to try offering employment in community work combined with training, but it was set up with a great deal of care and contained elements which have not been featured in other projects.

1.3 How was it set up?

i) **Funding and core structure**

The RNW project was initiated by the PEP Trust. It represents a partnership between social landlords, the PEP Trust and the combined funders (Housing Corporation, Welsh Assembly and Chartered Institute of Housing)

It was initially established as a three-year pilot project to start in 2003, with six months lead in and two consecutive years of training for a target of 40 workers in total. Financial support of £277,674 for the training programme was obtained from the Housing Corporation Innovation into Good Practice programme and the Chartered Institute of Housing (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister - Innovation into Action programme) combined, and £11,124 from the Welsh Assembly. Accreditation for the training was to be arranged through the Open College Network so that the workers would have evidence of the training they had received.

ii) **Employers, recruitment, contracts and mentors**

Partners were invited from a range of social housing organisations in England and Wales. These were both Housing Associations and Local Authority Housing Departments and they recruited and appointed the workers, following the guidelines of the programme, and paid the costs of their employment and the costs of travel to the training. Each worker was to receive one year's work experience and training, and the whole programme would be run twice in the space of the three year pilot and be thoroughly evaluated. Workers were also to be offered the support of a volunteer mentor from outside the employing organisation.

The first intake of workers began their training in June 2004, and the second in May 2005. In both cases, supervisors, mentors and newly appointed workers were all invited to an Orientation day to help introduce and explain the programme.

1.4 Aims and objectives of the project

i) **Aims: "Bridges between landlords and the community"**

The documentation prepared by the PEP Trust for all participants explained the broad aims of the project.

- Neighbourhood Workers are all residents in the neighbourhoods in which they will carry out much of their work, balancing their roles as residents and employees of the social landlord....
- They will help identify local needs and aspirations to help local people, their landlords and other agencies to implement resident participation, and community / regeneration initiatives. They will ensure local communities

have the skills, knowledge and opportunities needed to develop and sustain such initiatives

- They will act as bridges between landlords and the community, aiming to improve the ability of service delivery to meet local needs.”

(PEP RNW Information Pack, p3)

The idea that the neighbourhood workers would become bridges was a powerful theme, implying that they would become the means of two-way communication between landlords and residents. Participation, regeneration, empowerment and sustainability were other strong themes in the overview of what the RNW project was about. When landlord representatives were asked at the start of each year why their organisations had chosen to take part in the programme, the most common reply was *‘to strengthen tenant participation in general’*. Further details of this are given in section 3.2, tables 14 and 15.

ii) Objectives.

The specific objectives given by the PEP Trust for the programme were:

- i) To develop skilled, local community and tenant participation workers
- ii) To support the transition from volunteering to paid employment
- iii) To increase community ownership of and involvement in local initiatives
- iv) To increase local community capacity
- v) To develop stronger relationships between social landlords and their communities
- vi) To encourage landlords to develop policies and practices more responsive to local community needs
- vii) To pilot an intensive programme of skill development and support for forty residents working in their own communities as neighbourhood workers.
- viii) To achieve beneficial changes in communities and for individuals and landlords in line with the over-all objectives of the PEP Trust
- ix) To demonstrate by a thorough evaluation the benefits and value for money of the RNW programme to communities, social housing landlords and the individual resident workers.
- x) In the event of the programme proving its worth, to establish it as a sustained mainstream programme.

1.5 The evaluation of the project

Evaluation was built in from the start of the project. The School for Policy Studies (SPS) at the University of Bristol was commissioned to undertake this in 2003, before the first training programme began. Evaluation has been ongoing throughout and details of how it has been done are given at Annex 4. A summary evaluation of how well each specific objective has been achieved is given at Section 8.

An additional opportunity arose when SPS was asked to evaluate a different but similar programme (called here the ‘SRB programme’). This was proposed by a manager involved in both projects, so that lessons could be learned from the comparison. Details of this are given in Annex 5.

1.6 Intrinsic problems and obstacles

The experienced professionals involved in setting up the RNW programme were aware that some difficulties would be intrinsic to the nature of the programme. The

points listed here are those that were anticipated as potential problems, and some of them did indeed occur. The challenge was to be how they were dealt with.

i) For workers: *divided loyalties, living on the job and money problems*

There was a risk that the neighbourhood workers would be caught between divided loyalties and opposing agendas and become more buffers than bridges. There was also a danger that 'living on the job' would make it be hard to draw a line between work and home life, so that excessive demands would be made upon them. And there were structural financial problems, endemic to national benefits systems, for quite a number of the trainees, as will be discussed in the body of the report.

ii) For employers: *the risk of heavy demands and wasted investment*

Employing people who had been out of work for some time, especially in an intensively demanding work/study programme carried the risk that some would find the burden overwhelming and would drop out.

iii) For the trainers: *the challenge of very mixed ability*

There was a structural challenge for the trainers in running a single programme for people of extremely varied experience and abilities.

iv) For all, *the disillusion of communities*

Finally, in some communities, there was no clean slate but a deep scepticism because of all the past attempts at regeneration, consultation not acted upon and undertakings that, for whatever reason, had not been kept.

Whatever the programme achieved, therefore, it would have to achieve in the context of these considerable intrinsic obstacles.

Section 2: How the RNW programme was delivered and who was involved.

2.1 The training programme

Formal training on neighbourhood work was delivered by Keith Mann and Alicia Francis of the PEP Trust.

The curriculum for the training programme, which covers a wide aspect of neighbourhood work, is given at Annex 1.

Sessions were held in a centrally accessible venue (most often a hotel in Birmingham) and involved two full days (including an evening session) and an overnight stay.

Workers were also given written assignments connected with their training.

Within the employing organisations, workers were given appropriate work experience, supervision and support and in many cases access to in-house training including IT training where needed.

2.2 The participating organisations

25 housing organisations from England and Wales took part in the programme as principal employers, employing a total of 33 neighbourhood workers³. There were four local authority housing departments and 21 housing associations, including one that was formed by voluntary transfer during the time of the placement. In two cases, one in each year, responsibility for the neighbourhood worker was shared. In one case this was with a community development trust and in the other with four other landlords. The geographical spread stretched from Yorkshire to London and the south coast and to different locations in Wales.

Two employers in the first year and one in the second year employed two neighbourhood workers at the same time. Five employers had one neighbourhood worker in each of the two years. Some of the organisations were already deeply involved in neighbourhood work whilst for others the RNW programme was seen as a way of beginning such involvement.

The exact nature of the contract and salary offered varied between organisations.

Some gave a 12 month contract. Some promised renewal subject to satisfactory performance, some gave two-year contracts from the outset, but in some cases with a fixed salary.

2.3 The Neighbourhood Workers

15 people were recruited in the first year of the course, and 18 in the second year. In both cases one person dropped out at a very early stage so that the numbers seriously starting the course were 14 and 17 respectively, 31 altogether. The numbers completing the course were 13 in the first year and 15 in the second: 28 in total.

In each year, one person had to be asked to leave fairly early on. In the second year one extra person left very near the end for personal reasons not related to the quality of the programme.

³ These figures exclude the two workers (one in each year) who never seriously began the programme.

Age group of neighbourhood workers	Year 1 (n=14)	Year 2 (n=17)	Both years
20s	6	5	11
30s	5	6	11
40s	2	3	5
50s	0	1	1
Age not given	1	2	3
Average age	29	35	31
Age range	21-47	20-54	20-54

Age range : Average age 31

The age of workers at the start of the course ranged from 19 to 54, with an average age of 29 in the first year; 35 in the second year; 31 over-all. Many had already been involved in their estates in tenants groups or other voluntary work.

Gender: 25 women, 6 men

Gender	Year 1 (n=14)	Year 2 (n=17)	Both years (n=31)	Number completing course(both years)
Female	13	12	25	24
Male	1	5	6	4
Total	14	17	31	28

As table 2 shows, many more women than men were appointed to the neighbourhood worker posts, and a higher proportion of women completed the course, although with such small numbers this may be just a chance outcome.

Ethnicity: A good mix

Ethnicity	Year 1 (n=14)	Year 2 (n=17)	Both years (n=31)
Anglo-Japanese	1	0	1
Bangladeshi	2	0	2
Black African	1	1	2
Black Caribbean	1	0	1
Pakistani	0	1	1
White	9	14	23
Other	0	1	1

⁴ After their birthday, in the year they started training

Table 3 shows the ethnic identities of the neighbourhood workers. Of the 31 people who started the course, 23 (74%) were white. This compares with 92 per cent of the general population (census 2001), though that figure is not specific to these age groups. People from other ethnic groups were therefore all slightly over-represented, although the small total number means that percentages are easily misleading.

Disability: not well represented

None of the 31 workers reported themselves as being disabled. Again, it is dangerous to generalise from small numbers, but it does indicate an under-representation of disabled people, who constitute between 10 and 30 per cent of the working age population.⁵ There are problems of definition (national figures include learning disabilities and mental health disabilities) and problems of disclosure (people may be embarrassed or may not classify their problem as a disability). However, since disabled people are statistically more likely to live in social housing and since those who are not well enough to work full-time are often active in the community as volunteers, this factor is something to be considered in any future programme. Although no-one reported themselves as disabled, one worker was the parent of a disabled child, who during the year had to undergo major medical treatment. The employers and worker had discussed this in advance and the worker felt massively supported by them even though a month off work was necessary. It is clear from this that being the carer for someone who is seriously disabled is as significant as being disabled yourself in terms of restriction on employment, and is a category that could usefully be added in future.

Qualifications or relevant experience, skills or knowledge

Neighbourhood workers starting the course were asked what special skills or knowledge they were bringing to the job. It should not be assumed that people eligible because they lived in areas of social housing were necessarily without relevant experience or qualifications. Some had missed out on formal educational qualifications, through having a baby whilst very young or because of serious illness that kept them out of school, but some others had degrees⁶. One had a degree in PR and said this gave them a knowledge of media contacts. Another had a degree in community development but did not mention it in their questionnaire answers: the evaluator learnt this fact from a housing association website describing the impact of the worker. One had been a freelance community artist and worked with all kinds of groups. Several listed particular skills such as office and computer technology, first aid or experience in fundraising for charity including practical skills like making costumes and bunting.

There was a good deal of voluntary experience, including youth work, arts and crafts work with children and old people. One person was a councillor, although again they didn't list this fact here but elsewhere, as a help to learning.

Personal life experience was listed in the form of good relations with neighbours or experience of caring for a (family member) stroke victim. People saw that their own life experiences could be an asset. *"I have had a very colourful life, which has put me*

⁵ <http://www.drc-gb.org/>

⁶ This was also true of the recruits to the 'SRB programme' (see Annex 5) that was evaluated alongside the RNW. It showed that having a degree is no guarantee of employment if the person cannot also obtain experience or a relevant professional qualification.

in lots of people's shoes, enabling me to understand and empathise with different issues."

In terms of personal qualities, patience, willingness to learn, willingness to share and "*not being afraid to jump in with both feet to start the ball rolling if needed*" were described. In true British fashion, there was a lot of reticence (or possibly exhaustion from filling in a very long questionnaire). It is interesting that those who spoke a second language did not mention it as an asset in answer to this question.

Just one person mentioned that their racial origin would be an asset in working with that community.

Section 3 Impact and Outcomes of the Programme

Section 3.1 Outcomes for neighbourhood workers.

“It would be difficult to have found training that would have been as specific to the post. The scope of the training has given both workers more confidence and direction in carrying out this new role.”

Supervisor, years 1 and 2

The RNW course was always multi-faceted, with benefits intended for the individuals who took part as well as for the organisations and the communities. In presenting the evidence of what was achieved for individuals, and of any weaknesses or problems there is a great deal of evidence to draw on, including not just the very detailed questionnaires filled in by the workers but the views of the supervisors and the transcript from the meeting in May 2006 when the evaluator had an opportunity to discuss certain issues in detail with neighbourhood workers from both years. Findings presented in this section will include the achievements in improved knowledge and skills; the broader effect on confidence; employment and career paths; the impact on families and the views of the supervisors.

3.1.1 Changes in Personal Characteristics

At the beginning of the programme, workers were asked to say what personal characteristics they considered to be important for a neighbourhood worker and how they would score themselves out of 10 for a range of characteristics. The expectation behind this was that the workers would judge themselves to be basically suited to the job they were going to train for and to give themselves reasonably high scores in the aspects they considered important. This proved to be the case and tables 4 and 5 below show that the lowest mean score in either year was 6⁷ (for ‘creativity’). Creativity was not considered one of the most essential characteristics. The ones judged most essential were, in the main, the ones where highest scores were given, such as integrity, reliability, polite friendliness, a desire to include people and communicate and a general open mindedness.

The evaluator did not expect to see much change in scores for personal characteristics as a result of the course and put the section in partly as a benchmark against which to judge the levels of change in skills and knowledge. Nevertheless, the workers’ replies shown in tables 4 and 5 show that in some things there were changes. These were mostly positive and were greater where mean scores were lowest to start with and there was more room for change. In the first year several people gave lower scores in the second questionnaire. Sometimes this was because they had grown in self-awareness and wrote that they had over-estimated themselves to start with:

“There wasn’t much improvement in areas that already scored high. In one area I noticed that my score had reduced. I feel this was due to being more realistic about ideas, eg health and safety regulations, cost etc”

In the case of ‘trusting other people’, the lower score at the end of year one reflected some disillusion felt by a couple of respondents about their employers. There was a

⁷ This was very different when scores were given for ‘knowledge’ and ‘skills’. Here average scores went down to 3, with lots of 4s and 5s.

marked contrast in the second year, where levels of trust went up. Other notable changes were the increases in both years at being good at including people, creativity⁸ and being well organised.

Characteristic	Mean score before course Year 1	Mean score after course, Year 1	change	%change
Able to trust others	7.0	6.8	-0.2	-3%
Well organised	7.4	8.7	1.3	17%
Intelligent	7.5	7.9	0.4	5%
Creative	7.5	8.6	1.1	15%
Not easily discouraged	8.0	8.3	0.3	4%
Energetic	8.0	8.2	0.2	3%
Good at including people	8.1	8.9	0.8	10%
Good at communicating	8.5	9.1	0.6	7%
Willing to try new things	8.7	9.4	0.7	8%
Polite and friendly	8.8	9.0	0.2	2%
Reliable	9.1	9.4	0.3	3%
Personal integrity/trustworthiness	9.2	9.1	-0.1	-1%

Characteristic	Mean score before course Year 2	Mean score after course, Year 2	change	% change
Creative	6.0	8.3	2.3	38%
Able to trust others	6.2	7.7	1.5	24%
Not easily discouraged	6.7	7.9	1.2	18%
Well organised	6.8	8.1	1.3	19%
Intelligent	6.9	8.1	1.2	17%
Good at including people	7.4	8.9	1.5	20%
Good at communicating	7.5	8.6	1.1	15%
Willing to try new things	7.6	8.8	1.2	16%
Energetic	7.7	8.2	0.5	6%
Reliable	7.9	8.8	0.9	11%
Polite and friendly	8.1	9.1	1.0	12%
Personal integrity/trustworthiness	8.5	9.4	0.9	11%

Two characteristics that, with hindsight, should have been included in the evaluation forms were 'a sense of humour' and 'confidence'. Comments to this effect were added on to the forms by the workers. The sense of humour was felt by several to be an essential characteristic, whilst 'confidence' was an important area where there was considerable growth. It is a shame that this was not captured in a quantitative way, but it will be demonstrated as far as possible in other ways.

3.1.2 Improvements in knowledge.

⁸ Though one worker in year two felt that his creativity had to some extent been stifled by the restrictions of the job..

Levels of knowledge of 21 subjects relevant to the work increased by an average of 63%

Tables 6 and 7 show the average scores out of 10 given by the workers in year 1 and year 2 for their knowledge of relevant topics before and after the course. At the start of the course, levels of knowledge were shown to be highest, as would be expected, in such things as knowing the local area, local lifestyles and residents' priorities. These extremely important areas of knowledge were modestly viewed by the workers although, for an incomer, achieving equivalent expertise would have been a considerable challenge. The same was true for the three workers who spoke a second language commonly used in the area, of their invaluable knowledge in that sphere. Areas where knowledge was weakest were similar in both years. The workers knew little about good community projects elsewhere or about relevant government initiatives; they were not familiar with the workings and regulation of the housing organisations they were going to work for or about employment laws; they were weak on knowledge of funding sources and on contacts with local businesses. They did not have strong theoretical knowledge of group dynamics (although year 1 felt stronger on this than year 2). These were all areas which the workers recorded at the beginning of the year were important to their work. Other areas that were weak included knowledge of gardening and plants and knowledge of practical building issues relevant to a housing-based project. These were weak but not felt to be so important. In the event, opinions about the importance of gardening changed somewhat as the result of the year, as will be described below.

Area of knowledge	Average (Mean) score out of 10 before course, year 1	Average (Mean) score after course year 1
Local lifestyles	7	8
Residents' priorities	7	9
Local area	7	9
Benefits system	6	7
Local residents names	6	7
Employment law	6	8
Potential partners	6	9
Child/youth behaviour theory	5	7
Substance misuse	5	7
Local government	5	7
Group dynamics	5	7
Funding sources	5	8
Business contacts	5	7
Local professionals	5	8
Gardening	4	5
Other language spoken locally	4	6
Council housing regulation	4	7
RSL regulation	4	8
Government initiatives	4	7
Building	3	4
Community projects elsewhere	3	7

Table 7. Increase in average scores for knowledge, year 2 (n=15)
(figures rounded to nearest whole number)

Area of knowledge	Mean score before course, year 2	Mean score after course year 2
Local area	7	9
Substance misuse	6	8
Local lifestyles	6	8
Residents' priorities	6	9
Child/youth behaviour theory	6	8
Benefits system	5	6
Local residents names	5	8
Local professionals	5	9
Potential partners	5	9
Gardening	4	6
Business contacts	4	7
Employment law	4	7
Funding sources	4	7
Building	3	5
Community projects elsewhere	3	7
Government initiatives	3	6
Local government	3	7
Group dynamics	3	7
Council housing regulation	3	7
RSL regulation	3	7
Other language spoken locally	2	3

Table 8. Percentage increase in knowledge from start of course to the end, years 1 and 2. (ordered on average scores for both years)

Area of knowledge	Mean % increase in knowledge year 1 (n=10)	Mean % increase in knowledge, year 2 (n=15)
Community projects elsewhere	115	115
RSL regulation	81	131
Council housing regulation	76	127
Government initiatives	81	107
Funding sources	53	114
Group dynamics	51	115
Local government	43	110
Building	70	84
Employment law	35	104
Business contacts	55	84
Professionals	58	61
Potential partners	40	62
Gardening	23	68
Local residents names	24	57
Child/youth behaviour theory	34	36
Substance misuse	39	29
Other language	37	28
Residents' priorities	24	36
Local lifestyles	22	31
Local area	24	25
Benefits system	17	21
All areas of knowledge	48	74

Table 9. Percentage increase in knowledge from start of course to the end, years 1 and 2. (ordered on average scores for both years)

Area of knowledge	Mean % increase in knowledge, both years (n=25)
Community projects elsewhere	115
RSL regulation	111
Council housing regulation	107
Government initiatives	97
Funding sources	90
Group dynamics	90
Local government	83
Building	78
Employment law	76
Business contacts	72
Professionals	60
Potential partners	53
Gardening	51
Local residents names	44
Child/youth behaviour theory	35
Substance misuse	33
Other language	32
Residents' priorities	31
Local lifestyles	27
Local area	25
Benefits system	19
All areas of knowledge	63

i) What the tables reveal about increased knowledge

Tables 8 and 9 show increase of knowledge achieved in different topics after the year-long course. Table 8 allows a comparison between the two years while table 9 gives the average percentage increase. In the first year there was an average increase in knowledge of 48 per cent in all areas of knowledge, with a range from 17 per cent increase in knowledge of the benefits system (high average score to start with and not considered important to the job) to 115% increase in knowledge about good community projects elsewhere (low base score and definitely considered important). In the second year, the average increase in knowledge rose to 74 per cent, with the lowest and highest changes being as for the first year. The mean for the two years (weighted for the different numbers of respondents) was a 63 per cent increase in the levels of knowledge of the neighbourhood workers in the subjects relevant to their work.

One surprising outcome was the 51 per cent increase in knowledge of plants and gardening: a subject not judged by many workers at the outset of the programme to be of great importance to them. When this was further investigated at the meeting with 20 year 1 and 2 workers, it turned out that quite a number had found gardening skills to be an important tool of their trade. One worker showed us photographs from the hanging-basket workshops she had been involved in. A second worker was running a young gardeners' club and a third was involved with a clean-up campaign including a wild-life garden with protected species and plants. There was a general sense of the importance of improving the local environment and the role of plants in achieving this. One person had spent the whole of the previous day in consultation with the residents about a clean-up campaign, and spoke of her determination to get the local

children involved in planting so that it would not, as people gloomily predicted, just be wrecked by them.

The workers views of how their increased knowledge in so many areas from employment law to Government initiatives and from the working of council landlords and housing associations to contacts with local businesses was achieved, and the great value of what they learned, are described further below in section 4.

ii) Improvements following changes to course for second year

The improvement in the rate of increase of knowledge in the second year reflects changes to the course that the tutors made in response to feed-back in the first year. Such crucial issues as fund-raising and group-dynamics have been covered more extensively, whilst other aspects have not diminished.

3.1.3 Improvements in skills.

The distinction between knowledge and skills is not always clear-cut, but in general it would be expected that to improve skills there needs to be an opportunity to practice them, so that replies about changes in skills levels might reflect the nature of the work experience just as much as the formal training. Also, it would not be possible to practice all the needed new skills to the same extent, so over-all levels of improvement would be somewhat lower than for 'knowledge. Although this proved to be the case, the workers still reported considerable progress.

Area of skill	Mean score before course, year 1	Mean score after course year 1	Mean % change year 1
Mediation	4	7	66
Managing premises	5	7	33
Evaluating projects	5	7	42
Budgeting	5	7	46
Grant applications	5	7	64
Using equipment	6	8	17
Working with media	6	7	21
Nurturing talent in others	6	8	25
Handling complaints	6	7	25
Presenting	6	8	30
Chairing meetings	6	8	34
Fund-raising	6	8	37
Discovering needs	6	9	39
Discovering opinions	6	8	41
Time management	7	8	21
Producing leaflets	7	9	24
Event organisation	7	9	27
Report-writing	7	9	29
Internet	8	9	13
Computing	8	9	17
Mean of all skill types	6	8	33%

Table 11. Increase in average rating of skills, year 2 (n=15)
(figures rounded to nearest whole number)

Area of skill	Mean score out of 10 before course year 2	Mean score out of 10 after course Year 2	Mean % change, year 2
Grant applications	3	6	69
Working with media	4	7	62
Fund-raising	4	7	56
Managing premises	4	7	61
Presenting	4	8	76
Budgeting	4	6	71
Chairing meetings	4	8	94
Producing leaflets	5	8	46
Handling complaints	5	8	47
Using equipment	6	8	20
Time management	6	8	23
Report-writing	6	8	38
Nurturing talent in others	6	8	41
Event organisation	6	8	46
Computing	6	8	53
Discovering opinions	6	8	38
Discovering needs	6	8	40
Evaluating projects	6	8	44
Mediation	6	8	37
Internet	7	8	26
Mean of all skill types	5	8	49%

What the tables show about improved skills

Tables 10 and 11 show the starting point of the neighbourhood workers in year 1 and year 2 at the beginning of the course, and the change achieved by the end, with the average score out of 10 for each skill rounded to the nearest whole number. It is clear that the second year workers rated their skill levels lower in the first place and therefore had more room for improvement, but both groups ended with a mean average score for all skills of 8

i) Confidence increased through practice

Table 12 shows the average rate of increases for different skills. As before, the lowest increases are likely to be where skills were highest in the first place. This applies to computing and the use of technical equipment. Levels of computing skill, though generally rated fairly high, did vary, however, and some people had almost no expertise and had to be sent on additional courses by their employers.

The neighbourhood workers were keen to increase their skills in hard areas such as grant applications and budgeting, and did so. They also wanted to improve their chairing and presentation skills, and this was particularly well achieved, especially in the second year with a 94% perceived increase in chairing skills. Workers specifically mentioned in their feed-back the confidence they felt as the result of practice sessions on presentation in the formal training. Other high priorities were planning and promoting events; finding out what people think, and helping others to develop their talents.

**Table 12. Average percentage increase in skills.
(ordered on average scores for both years)**

Area of skill	Mean % change year 1	Mean % change year 2	Mean ⁹ change, both years
Using equipment	17	20	19
Internet	13	26	21
Time management	21	23	22
Report-writing	29	38	34
Nurturing talent	25	41	35
Producing leaflets	24	46	37
Event organisation	27	46	38
Handling complaints	25	47	38
Discovering opinions	41	38	39
Computing	17	53	39
Discovering needs	39	40	40
Evaluating projects	42	44	43
Working with media	21	62	46
Fund-raising	37	56	48
Mediation	66	37	49
Managing buildings	33	61	50
Presenting	30	76	58
Budgeting	46	71	61
Grant applications	64	69	67
Chairing meetings	34	94	70
Mean of all skill types	33%	49%	43%

There were significant improvements in all these areas and a great growth of confidence as a result, though one or two workers found themselves frustrated at the slowness of their employers to respond to the new methods and ideas they were keen to put into practice. One supervisor noticed this too, and wryly commented that maybe this was in itself a useful learning experience!

3.1.4 Employment and future prospects

Although the evaluator has not obtained full information about the destinations and prospects of all the neighbourhood workers after the course finished, Keith Mann in May 2006 asked the 15 year-two neighbourhood workers what their plans were. Eight of them, it emerged, had already been given contracts to continue with the sponsoring employers (in some cases this had been the deal from the start). For one person the extension was 6 months, for four it was another 1 year and for three it was another 2 years. In some cases the exact nature of the job was changing but still relevant. One other person had already secured a new highly relevant job on a 2-year contract at salary of £20k. Four people had applied or were planning to apply for new, suitable jobs. One person's post was lost because a stock transfer did not happen, but they had set up a mother and tots group and were continuing to work with that as a volunteer whilst considering more training. One person was planning a holiday whilst taking stock of their next move.

Of these 15 people, therefore, 9 had jobs already and all the others were optimistic about their futures, planning job applications or further training. Not everyone was

⁹ This is year 1 figure x10 (the number of participants) plus year 2 figure x 15 (the number of participants) all divided by 25 (total no of participants)

going to remain precisely in estate-based community development. There was interest in youth work, and training as a trainer in community arts. One person was contemplating a qualification in housing. But the over-all picture is of commitment and confidence about their employability from the whole group.

Outcomes for the first year workers seem to have been equally encouraging and one person had acquired a full time permanent REO post with a salary of £27k not long after the end of the course.

3.1.5 Other outcomes. The impact on families.

i) Short term- not very good

Everyone involved in this programme knew that the change to full time working and training, including residential sessions and written assignments, would be an enormous challenge for the people concerned. It was also bound to have an impact on their families, and this subject was discussed at the meeting of year 1 and year 2 neighbourhood workers. Asked whether their participation in the course had been beneficial to their families during the time the course was going on, just two of the twenty people present thought that it had been. One said that because he was happy the family was happy and the other said she was now more available to her children than in the job she had had before. She worked flexi-hours and was always at home or just across the road when the children came home.

Three members of the group had no family to be directly affected, but for the remaining fifteen the short term effect on families was not so good, and some felt their families had definitely suffered. One person with children aged 10 and 12 said they had begun saying, "You don't love us, you only love your work". Another said her grandchildren had expressed distress that she was going to be out yet another night; another said they had worried at their children being out late in the park after school while they were on the course. There was pressure on the families not just because a parent/grandparent wasn't at home, but also because of the written work they had to do when they were at home, with the need to concentrate when other family needs were pressing.

More seriously still, two people had realised that their families might be targeted because of the work they did. One was concerned about a sibling, another about a 17 year old son and both had decided to move as a result.

ii) Long -term beneficial

The other side to this dilemma is that, asked whether the families would benefit in the long-term, all 17 who had families felt that they would. They would benefit because their parent/ relation had a proper career with good long term-prospects. Nobody said they regretted their choice, despite the pain and conflict they sometimes felt.

Several workers, including the mother of a disabled child, also said they had made their commitment to the needs of their families clear from the start, before taking on the job, and that their employers had been really good in keeping their word and making allowances for this commitment

3.1.6 Impact on workers: the supervisors' views

“The whole training programme linked with work experience results in a complete shift in attitude to work and self development. (Supervisor)

In addition to the worker's views of their progress, we also have the views of their employers. At the end of the training year, the supervisors were asked: 'As far as you can judge, how would you sum up the effect of the whole training programme (both the employment and the formal training sessions) in meeting the neighbourhood worker's needs?'

General impact of programme on the Neighbourhood Worker's needs?	Year 1 (n=11)	Year 2 (n=17)	Total: years 1 & 2 (n=28)	Total % years 1 & 2 (n= 28)
Harmful or wasteful	0	0	0	0
Little impact	0	0	0	0
Fair	3	0	3	11
Good	4	10	14	50
Excellent	4	7	11	39
Total good or excellent	8	17	25	89%

Table 13 shows that their views were overwhelmingly positive and that ratings in the second year were higher than in the first, so that 100 per cent of supervisors in the second year thought the programme had had either a good or an excellent impact on the workers.

Detailed positive comments included the following:

“I've seen her develop real and valuable skills over the year. She's become an excellent community development worker”

“X was transformed by the whole programme and we learnt a lot from it too”

“The whole training programme linked with work experience results in a complete shift in attitude to work and self development. The Neighbourhood Workers increase significantly in terms of confidence and ability during the year.”

“I think M's skills and confidence have increased enormously since she arrived in post. Some of this is down to learning on the job but the training sessions have clearly played a vital role”

“ J has changed considerably and has a much broader understanding and interest in community work. He was very sports focussed when he arrived”

“It would be difficult to have found training that would have been as specific to the post. The scope of the training has given both workers more confidence and direction in carrying out this new role.”

These ratings and comments from the supervisors are a most encouraging endorsement of the programme, especially noting the improvement from year 1 to year 2. Section 4 of this report will consider what it was about the programme that achieved these good outcomes in skills and knowledge and general fitness for the work.

Section 3.2. Outcomes for employing organisations

3.2.1 Major reasons for participation in the programme

In the questionnaires that were sent at the start of the programme, supervisors were asked to consider a range of possible reasons behind the decision of their employers to take part in the RNW programme. The choice for each factor was ‘very important’; ‘moderately important’; ‘not very important’ and ‘not a factor at all’, and there was no requirement to choose between objectives so it was possible for respondents to tick everything (or nothing) as very important if they so wished

Reason for participation in the programme	Number of respondents describing this reason as very important		
	Year 1 (n=13)	Year 2 (n=13)	Both years (n=26)
Want to strengthen tenant participation in general	12	9	21 (81%)
NWs will act as bridge between organisation and tenants	10	5	15 (58%)
To offer employment opportunities to local people	7	8	15 (58%)
PEP programme good value for money training that would cost more elsewhere	6	8	14 (54%)
Some problems on estate (s) hope NWs will help solve	6	7	13 (50%)
Is way of achieving full time landlord engagement on estate	5	4	9 (35%)
Want to retain tenant loyalty to us as landlord	4	1	5 (19%)
Planning refurbishment programme, want good consultation with tenants	4	2	6 (23%)
Hope programme will lead to better inspection rating	0	4	4 (15%)
To reduce voids and revenue loss	0	1	1 (4%)

Table 14 shows that ‘strengthening tenant participation’ was easily the most common single factor seen as very important by the management respondents. This, taken together with the neighbourhood worker acting as a bridge between organisation and tenants, indicates an emphasis on the value of tenant participation for its own sake that is really striking. The evaluator had expected considerably more interest in the reduction of voids and revenue loss (chosen by just one out of 26 respondents) or the improvement in inspection ratings (4 out of 26). And although 50 per cent of

respondents indicated that there were problems on the estates and this was very important, it was not a given reason for all who chose tenant participation. It is significant for this evaluation that over half the respondents said that the good value for money of the PEP training was a very important reason for the employers choosing to take part. This makes their evaluation of the value for money at the end of the programme all the more important.

Table 15. Important objectives for employing organisations, with extra factor.

Reason for participation in the programme	very important or moderately important			
	Year 1 Number (n=13)	Year 2 Number (n=13)	Total (years 1 and 2) (n=26)	Total % (years 1 and 2) (n=26)
To offer employment opportunities to local people	13	12	25	96
Want to strengthen tenant participation in general	12	12	24	92
NWs will act as bridge between organisation and tenants	11	13	24	92
PEP programme good value for money training that would cost more elsewhere	11	12	23	88
Some problems on estate(s) hope NWs will help solve	12	10	22	85
Is way of achieving full time landlord engagement on estate	12	10	22	85
Want to retain tenant loyalty to us as landlord	10	4	14	54
Planning refurbishment programme, want good consultation with tenants	4	4	8	(31)
Hope programme will lead to better inspection rating	0	6	6	23
To reduce voids and revenue loss	0	4	4	15
To address shortage of trained community workers ¹⁰	2/2	N/A	2/2	(NA)

When the factors listed by respondents as ‘moderately important’ are added to the ‘very important’ and the two are taken together, the emphasis of reported motivation shifts. Table 15 shows the figures, and shows that offering employment opportunities to local people overtook strengthening tenant participation as the most consistently important reason for taking part in the programme, although the figures are very close. Alongside this offering of employment, the strengthening of participation and building bridges; landlord presence; tackling problems on estates and being a programme that is good value for money are clear front-runners over the more management-focussed objectives of revenue loss and inspection ratings. Obviously, the question about consultation in a planned refurbishment could apply only to those employers where this was the case, so the percentage figure is a little misleading,

¹⁰ extra reason suggested by two respondents in 1st year, not offered as choice to all

except that it tells us that such refurbishment was going on in nearly one third of cases, at least.

In the first year, two respondents added to the options under ‘other reasons’ the issue of the ‘shortage of trained community workers’. This was listed by them as a very important reason for participating in the programme. The evaluator regrets that this option was not offered to all respondents in the standardised questionnaire. In the SRB comparative project evaluated alongside the RNW programme¹¹, the national shortage of trained community workers whilst local people on estates were without work was a major reason for setting up a similar programme. At this point the question of recognition for the training becomes of great importance, however, or those who have taken the course may still find themselves barred from obtaining advertised community worker posts, as was the case in the comparative project.

3.2.2 Objectives achieved: views of the supervisors.

At the end of each training year the supervisors who were then in post were invited to assess the value of the programme from the point of view of their organisation, and were asked three key questions about this:

- How well did the employment of this neighbourhood worker meet your organisation’s needs?
- How beneficial to your trainee were the 7 two-day training sessions provided by the PEP trust trainers during the year?
- From the point of view of your organisation, has the programme been good value for money spent?

3.2.3 Meeting the needs of the employing organisation

“K’s role in the community has enabled us to develop and deliver action that is much more tailored to local community needs. He has been able to take on a community development role that was not being performed.” Supervisor, year 2

How well did the employment of this Neighbourhood Worker meet your organisation’s needs?	Year 1 (n=11)	Year 2 (n=17)	Total: years 1 & 2 (n=28)	Total % years 1 & 2 (n= 28)
Harmful or wasteful	0	1	1	4%
Little impact	0	0	0	0%
Fair	2	0	2	7%
Good	6	7	13	46%
Excellent	3	9	12	43%
Total good or excellent	9	16	25	89%

¹¹ see Annex 5

Table 16 shows the very high general levels of satisfaction concerning the impact of the programme, and also how these increased between year 1 and year 2. The one case where the impact was harmful or wasteful concerned an appointment made because the employers had understood that the worker had to be a resident of the estate where work was needed and so appointed someone they would not otherwise have chosen:

“The ‘wasteful’ impact of the Neighbourhood Worker was due in no part to the programme itself. Unfortunately, we had a limited choice of applicants and the individual who was appointed failed to perform or carry out set duties, despite intensive management and support.”

i) Strengthening participation and building bridges

The comments that supervisors added reveal more detail about the objectives being achieved. In line with the stated objectives of strengthening participation and building bridges, most of the comments are about the improved relationships between tenants and landlords

“Our trainee was very visible within her target community and very motivated. This commitment has helped to strengthen the relationship between the landlord and our tenants”

“K’s role in the community has enabled us to develop and deliver action that is much more tailored to local community needs. He has been able to take on a community development role that was not being performed.”

“The flexibility inherent in possible areas of work is a huge advantage and has allowed us to respond to needs in the community. Other funding routes are very prescriptive.”

“They have shown they are able to work at a grass roots level and build bridges between the Association, its tenants, and the wider community.”

“The employment of a Neighbourhood Worker has had a significant impact on the area.”

ii) Improving communication to the tenants

One comment was not so much about responding to community needs as about effective passing down of information. Because this was in a clearance area, it was known to be very important.

“The community liaison role has proved invaluable in providing a resident focused approach which ensures those involved and those adjacent to demolition proposals are kept accurately informed regarding regeneration proposals. This is not always easy where multiple agencies and resident organisations are concerned and inaccurate information can arise which is disruptive to the local community and its relations to the delivery agencies.”

iii) Value of new kind of worker;

Other points that were made concerned first of all the positive boost that came from the nature of the new workers, and the important issue of effective joint working:

“Our team was undergoing a rough transitional time and P’s presence was a godsend.”

“The neighbourhood workers have brought loads of enthusiasm and commitment, and lots of ‘character’ to the work place.”

“Both posts are integral not only to their own job but to other projects that they have become involved with. Without these posts it is difficult to see how this organisation would have been able to take part in these projects”

3.2.4 Value of the formal training from PEP

The management supervisors’ views on the formal training supplied in the 7 two-day residential sessions during the year is clearly of great importance to the evaluation as it was one of the aspects that made the RNW programme different from other combined work and training programmes. Table 17 shows that 93 per cent of all the supervisors thought this training was either good or excellent.

Usefulness of formal training from PEP	Year 1 (n=11)	Year 2 (n=17)	Total: years 1 & 2 (n=28)	Total % years 1 & 2 (n= 28)
Harmful or wasteful	0	0	0	0
Little impact	1	0	1	4
Fair	1	0	1	4
Good	6	8	14	50
Excellent	3	9	12	43
Total good or excellent	9 (82%)	17(100%)	26	93%

It will also be seen in table 17 that there was a marked improvement from year 1 (82% good or excellent) to year 2 (100%). Particularly generous was the comment of the supervisor whose worker turned out to be no good and whose organisation therefore lost out.

“The training seemed to be really good – the worker would come back from it with a temporary injection of enthusiasm and a clearer idea of how he would achieve his goals. If only he could have sustained this”

Detailed points of criticism will be given below at section 5.

3.2.5 Value for money

In the eyes of the organisations who added their own resources to the grant-assisted programme, the RNW programme was good value for money. The views of the supervisors are presented here in table 18 and are a really strong endorsement. Once again, moreover, there was an improvement from year 1 to year two, so that 16 out of the 17 supervisors in year 2 thought the programme either good (7) or excellent (9) value for money.

Table 18. Value for money: employers' views

	Year 1 (n=11)	Year 2 (n=17)	Total: years 1 & 2 (n=28)	Total % years 1 & 2 (n= 28)
Harmful or wasteful	0	1	1	4
Poor	0	0	0	0
Fair	2	0	2	7
Good	4	7	11	39
Excellent	5	9	14	50
Total good or excellent	9	16	25	89%

The circumstances of the one employer who experienced poor value have already been explained but their constructive comments about what went wrong, and why, deserve to be given.

“My apologies for being so negative. The problem for us is that once we had committed to the programme, we felt obliged to recruit, even though we had a small pool of residents to recruit from. For a small HA such as ourselves, being able to open the post up to all our tenants, not just those that lived on large estates, would have been very useful. The amount of time spent supervising the worker had a negative impact on our tenant involvement work, as the supervisory input took time away from it for little or no positive return. Our contract with him should have been tighter, so that we could give a week or a month's notice during the probation period when it became apparent he could and would not do the job. As it was, we were stuck with him for a further 3 months until the end of the probationary period, and ended up giving him over a month's paid garden leave at the end as we got better value paying him to stay away. Maybe we could do with a standard contract for future workers with a clause that enables you to give them a week's notice if it's really not working?”

What is particularly sad about this case is that the association had a planned budget for the worker to use in response to work with residents, and other good things in place. What the case illustrates is the importance of having a system of not losing everything if an appointment turns out to be a mistake (this applies to all walks of life!). Two landlords in the first year and another whose worker never even started in the second year experienced similar problems.

I have given the details of the problem areas because this is part of the function of an evaluation, so that improvements may be made. These points should not be allowed to obscure the fact that 89 percent of the employing organisations found the programme to be good or excellent value for money.

Section 3.3 Outcomes for local communities

“We have recorded a 28% drop in anti-social behaviour since the introduction of the NEIGHBOURHOOD WORKER, this compares to a general rise of ASB of 9% across the local authority area generally”

3.3.1 However pleased the workers are with their training and career prospects, and however pleased the employers are at improved structures for consultation, if the RNW programme does not produce some good outcomes for communities, it could be argued that the real objectives of the PEP Trust will not have been achieved. The impact on communities is the ultimate test

3.3.2 Landlords’ views of outcomes for communities

From the questionnaires to the supervisors it is clear that, even in the short time span of a year, significant outcomes were achieved in some areas.

These are presented here under some of the key headings that were objectives for the projects:

i) Improving tenant-landlord relationship, including role model effect

Reading the comments here, it is pleasing to see that there was a value for residents whether the landlord was already very involved in community work or, as in the fourth example here, just beginning to explore its possibilities.

- *“The community saw the appointment of the Neighbourhood Workers as a commitment by the housing association to their area and project.”*
- *“The trainee is a positive role model who is trusted by the community and valued. Members of the tenants’ forum were particularly pleased to see a lone parent with young child able to access this and gain so much in terms of confidence and drive for the future.”*
- *“The Neighbourhood Worker had a huge impact on building the confidence of tenants to report housing management issues, especially anti-social behaviour. She was instrumental in forming close relationships with key tenants which has been sustained since the project has ended. This has resulted in more informal consultation with tenants and the development of ideas in partnership with the Landlord to improve the estate and quality of life for tenants.”*
- *“There are no other workers specialising in Community development work within the area, and as such M’s post is unique. We are therefore starting from quite a low base in building more of a community development ethos here. Against this background, the programme gave M a deeper understanding of her role and the tools to carry it out more effectively. The knock-on effect has been that she works more confidently and effectively alongside residents, colleagues and other agencies.”*

ii) Preparing the ground

As was understood from the start, however, the early stages of community work are slow so it was not surprising that some supervisors experienced this:

- *“Progress has been very limited here, mostly because it has taken longer than expected to set up the governance structures. However, J’s work has helped to*

prepare the ground for developing a resident service organisation to deliver environmental services.”

iii) Better information for Landlord

Although this may appear to be a heading to do with benefits to the landlords rather than to the community, the objective of allowing community views to be heard and to influence landlord decisions is of great importance to local people as well.

- *“Better information for Housing Management decisions”*
- *“M has been involved in consultation work around our stock transfer proposal to identify priorities for future investment should the transfer go ahead.”*

iv) New Activities in neighbourhoods.

The list of new activities that came about from the neighbourhood workers’ work is very encouraging and those listed here are indicative of some of the directly beneficial work that went on because of the RNW programme

- *“What we have seen from the programme is an ‘added value’ to our planned aims and objectives. We have been able to offer more to residents due to the efforts of our trainee and her work at a grass roots level. She has been instrumental in helping to set up a Community Office and running events, workshops, and trips and without her contribution the task would have been far more difficult.”*
- *“P helped to set up a number of new community groups/activities and as a result we put more resources into making these projects work (eg “cook and eat club”, Elders Wednesday at Café reconnect, Community Garden project, Advice surgery in doctor’s surgery)”*
- *“Additional support to community house management committee and youth activity night. This arose following NEIGHBOURHOOD WORKER identifying lack of financial resources.”*
- *“A number of focus and other groups have been set up, including a resident focus group on local improvements, two dance groups, a skateboard group, a youth football team, and a revitalised Community association. None of this would have been achievable without the neighbourhood worker’s involvement.”*
- *“Having an extra worker meant that it was possible to deliver a more comprehensive programme of activities, especially during the holiday periods. A budget to support these activities was already in place, but due to the programme, this was well used in the target community. This additional expenditure, though relatively small, reaped good rewards and certainly events and activity sessions have been far better publicised and attended, giving value for money.”*

v) Extra resources put in

Supervisors were asked if the neighbourhood workers’ work had led them to put in extra resources for the benefit of communities. Some already had large budgets committed but others did indeed respond to the neighbourhood workers’ work. It is particularly poignant that the association that was unlucky in its choice of worker was one that had specifically ear-marked a large responsive budget.

- *“Funding for establishment of residents group & general running costs – room hire, admin etc. Community Fun-day, newsletters and notice-board.”*

- *“We have provided an assignments budget of £500 towards the cost of project work.”*
 - *“In one area project a large mobile unit has been provided for the community, it is used as a community centre, office equipment etc. In another , office equipment and community facilities have been made available.”*
 - *“We have provided a start up grant of £400 to set up two youth sessions on a Friday evenings. We are presently reviewing our budget and have sought internal funding for further youth activity and a gardening project.”*
 - *“Financial resources for notice board, estate clean-up, other events.”*
 - *“In excess of £20,000 for new play facilities, matched by a similar amount from the other major RSL in the area. “*
 - *“We had a budget of around £6000 which we were intending to put into community activities generated by the worker. We also had a training budget for tenants. Unfortunately, his failure to progress any activities meant that we could not spend it, which was a real pity.” (This relates to a worker who proved a bad appointment and had to be asked to leave)*
- vi) Improved Quality of Life on estates**
- *“We have recorded a 28% drop in anti-social behaviour since the introduction of the neighbourhood worker, this compares to a general rise of ASB of 9% across the local authority area generally.”*
 - *“Reduced incidents of ASB” (different association)*
 - *“Greater community cohesion”*
- vii) Capacity building: sustainability of local projects**
- *“Some projects have become self-supporting following the worker’s involvement, allowing the worker to move on to other projects.”*
 - *“Capacity building with residents”.*
 - *“M has assisted local groups to obtain funding from our Community Safety Fund by developing projects that help improve community safety in their local area.”*
- viii) Improved community relations**
- *“It has improved community relations as the residents could see the benefits that the neighbourhood worker was receiving as a result of our intervention.”*
- ix) Joint working with good outcomes**
- *“Youth work provision has always been an issue on the estate. The Neighbourhood worker has been extremely supportive of youth workers and play rangers on the estate and has helped them to deliver a range of extra activities in response to children’s needs. Alongside this, through the neighbourhood worker, other agencies have been able to gain support and attendance for events on the estate such as personal safety sessions, pamper days and community parties.”*
 - *“Better multi agency working”*
 - *“Better use of the community centre through a joint working initiative with the Youth service, Somali Support Group and Warden.”*

x) **Model for future**

- “*Our Guide Neighbourhoods has had the overall focus of developing the Association’s model of neighbourhood management into wider adjacent areas.*”

3.3.3 More detailed examples of impact in neighbourhoods

In addition to these fairly brief comments from supervisors, the evaluator found some information about the impact of neighbourhood workers on the web.

Example 1. An article on the website of the empty homes agency¹² by one of the first year workers describes how she encouraged a handful of young local skate-board enthusiasts to form a group and organise fund-raising, and how she went with them and helped them, and of their delight in their achievements. She also describes organising meetings between older tenants and young people, with the outcome of improved understanding and respect, young people helping out some older people and a planned gardening project. She was also organising, as the biggest undertaking of all, a street party, which was to take place in the function room of the local football club. These activities have been referred to in the supervisor’s comments above, but the web-site article gives more detail.

Example 2. On the website of a Welsh Housing association¹³ there was also information about the over-all impact and achievements of the RNW projects in four partner Welsh associations, each of whom recruited two trainees. It says that over the two years the activities accomplished included support for youth projects, advocating for individuals, setting up tenants’ groups and tenants’ forums; skills building for lone parents; toy and book libraries; literacy projects; support to credit unions; setting up and managing a community house; helping to organise carnival, festival and summer party; running trips; working with schools; running computer project and joint working in projects for all ages.

Example 3 One supervisor provided an extract from the association’s own RI impact assessment document, (Figure 1) which again provides more detail of the many things achieved in local communities.

¹² <http://www.emptyhomes.com>.
(Bulletin February 2005)

2. [Http://www.cymdogaeth.com/main.cfm](http://www.cymdogaeth.com/main.cfm) (go to ‘projects’ then ‘volunteer to professional’)

Figure 1. Impact of the Neighbourhood Worker post in a consortium of 5 housing organisations.

1.	Input:	Staff time, financial resources (internally and through a consortium of local RSL's), ODPM & Housing Corporation funding (for training programme), Priority Estate Projects (project sponsors).
2.	Output:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) A local resident becoming a paid member of staff and receiving accredited training in community work. b) A community newsletter (produced by volunteers). c) Increased community centre usage. d) Regular drop-in coffee morning. e) A weekly parent/toddler group. f) A weekly Pilates group. g) Funding bids (Learn Direct, Capital Learning Fund, Scarmen Trust) h) Sabbatical placement for American Express Director. i) A weekly Art Club
3.	Outcome:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Increased centre income b) Increased external funding. c) Increased services and participatory opportunities for local residents.
		d) Increased partnership working on the estate.
4.	Impact:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Centre income has increased from £432 to £2000 (6 months). b) In excess of £25,000 external income has been generated in terms of cash grants (£5,000 Capital Learning Fund for equipment needs of the centre) and services (£13,000 Learn Direct courses). c) All the groups itemised above are new (since the employment began). The most notable evidence is the Art Club, which has 44 regular members and 7 regular parent volunteers. d) The very nature of the funding demonstrates increased partnership working (as the post is jointly funded on a pro-rata basis (based on number of houses in management in the area) by a number of RSLs). Additionally, increased involvement has been demonstrable from; Community Wardens, Police Community Support Officers, Sussex Clubs for Young People and through the sabbatical arrangements with American Express (which generates additional staffing resources with a cashable value of circa £25,000).

3.3.4 Workers views of challenges and outcomes

i) **Long-term objectives in communities:**

The achievements for communities after just a few months of the neighbourhood workers' work are worth celebrating. But everyone involved in the programme knows there are bigger, underlying issues that will take longer to tackle.

The 20 neighbourhood workers who met in May 2006 at the end of the training were each asked to write down the two main concerns of residents in the areas where they worked. Because the answers had been written down, they were at least partly immune from the focus group 'agreement' effect. Table 19 indicates the replies.

Government, central, regional and local, the Housing Corporation and landlords should all take note of the content of these replies.

Loss of trust (in government and/or landlord) because of broken promises and short-term programmes	6
Polarisation of residents and housing association; feeling they were not involved in the regeneration; frustration at lack of information, lack of dialogue or answers from landlord; failure to deliver goods, delay in declaring NRA.	6
Lack of facilities, amenities and services	6
Young people: including lack of facilities for them	5
Anti-social behaviour, including low-level ASB	5
Vandalism and graffiti, litter and fly-tipping	2
Lack of funding for youth club or jobs	2
Lack of jobs and general poverty	2
Isolation	1
Feeling unsafe	1
Location of estate	1
Overcrowding	1
Language barriers	1
Insufficient training for Resident Director	1

ii) Need to tackle loss of trust from unfulfilled promises, and lack of follow through after consultation.

Given just two things to mention, no-one specifically chose drug-dealing, serious crime, or inter-racial problems, other than language barriers. Even unemployment and poverty were mentioned only three times. The behaviour of other residents, whether young people or not, was one major concern to a great many people. Concern for and about young people specifically was also important. But what stands out is powerlessness and loss of trust. Failure of dialogue with the landlords, promises that are not fulfilled, short-term government programmes that are not sustained with funding however good the work being done, these are the concerns of the residents that so many of the neighbourhood workers picked out. The analysis this reveals is that the problems they are working with are structural and stem from a lack of sustained commitment to achieve change, and from a lack of dialogue with the people affected, so that even when there is money spent on regeneration, it is still a top-down process that leaves people without a sense of ownership and involvement.

The neighbourhood workers project has produced a group of new professionals who are aware of these deeper, structural issues and will know they need to be tackled.

3.3.5 Residents' evaluations

'The Chair tried very hard to keep control but things soon got far out of hand and after two hours of shouting most of the residents walked out until there was no-one left except the council reps, the chair, secretary and the two people doing all the shouting. No-one stopped to fill in a post-it!'

i) As part of both the training and the evaluation, neighbourhood workers were asked to find a way of consulting some local people to establish some reasonable objectives, benchmark a position and later on measure progress. Two workers in the first year were instructed by their employers not to do any consulting about people's wishes because of fear of raising expectations while things were politically sensitive, and others for different reasons did not manage to achieve this extra task. But four workers in the first year and five in the second succeeded in setting up the initial structure and meeting with a particular local group to agree some tangible objectives. The second year worker who described the meeting in the quotation above was not in practice able to consult people on this occasion because of the disruption. But her account of the meeting is an important reality check, as are the topics chosen as targets by the other workers' reference groups.

ii) Targets local communities chose

Year one

Litter and household rubbish

Dog-mess

Drug-dealing at a problematic local shop

Vandalism

Anti-social behaviour

Lack of things for young people to do (several times over)

Racial tension (This was from a worker who left very early)

Year two

Lack of things for children to do, with consequent 'getting up to mischief'
Rising problem of graffiti, and bad message its presence sent out about the area.

No facilities in village for children aged 5-15 and village hall under-used.

Renovation of village hall (different village)

Increased membership of village residents group to increase community based events.

In a Neighbourhood Renewal Area, a number of targets to improve the very poor living conditions being experienced. These included, provision of alley gates and better street lighting; CCTV cameras; better provisions for children and young people; community wardens; action on rubbish, litter and dog-fouling; improved traffic management and upkeep of roads and pavements; dealing with derelict properties; control of private landlords and vetting of tenants and renovation grants for owner occupiers.

iii) Outcomes and value of this exercise

Because the time limits were much too short, none of the workers' projects got as far as the next stage - a recording of residents' views of what had been achieved in line with the agreed objectives. This is a shame, but is countered by the knowledge that in general these were issues which were addressed and where progress was made. The projects certainly serve to remind anyone not at the front-line of the practical issues that concern local residents, including litter, vandalism, bored young people, lack of facilities for all age groups and the problems of planning blight. Although the deeper issues about lack of control and lack of trust are not specifically mentioned because they would not

have been appropriate as benchmark targets, they are implied many times in the background material the workers describe.

Neighbourhood workers said the exercise helped them to determine their objectives, practice consultation, overcome difficulties and understand the value of evaluation

3.3.6 Summary of achievements in communities

In the areas where the neighbourhood workers were employed, there is evidence of an improved range of activities for different age groups; inclusion of some very marginalised groups; better outcomes for money spent on the estate and local groups helped to raise extra funds. There has been better information for management use in policy making; better joint working with voluntary and statutory agencies in the area, producing added value to the landlords' investment and in some areas a clear reduction in anti-social behaviour.

Section 4 How the good outcomes were achieved

4.1 Assessing the different elements of the programme

In their 'post training' evaluations, neighbourhood workers were asked after each major section (skills, knowledge, work with groups) to say what factors had contributed to their progress in that area over-all. The standard choice was 'Doing the job', 'Formal training', 'Help from supervisor' and 'Reading'. They could tick any or none of these boxes and add any others, as well as adding comments. The results were that the work experience was universally chosen, and the others were chosen by most, but not quite universally. Some neighbourhood workers were unlucky with supervision; some particular skills, it was felt, could not be acquired through formal training or reading and also not acquired if there was no relevant work experience.

4.1.2 Value of the formal training from PEP

"Information I received has been really useful and offered me the direction I felt I lacked at the beginning"

i) Increasing knowledge of the nature of neighbourhood work.

The comments of workers on how their knowledge increased refer especially positively to the formal training and also to its inter-action with their work experience:

"To get the community to work together was the big barrier But it has slowly got better with the help on the training. I now know how to get more involved"

"These training sessions gave me direction and understanding of my role"

"This training and my job gave me a lot of knowledge of working with the community."

" I have been given good guidelines where to find relevant information along with sessions and paperwork and neighbourhood workers' inputs"

"Information I received has been really useful and offered me the direction I felt I lacked at the beginning"

"Course certainly worthwhile, thoroughly increased knowledge"

ii) Value of the trainers experience and wisdom

There was one thoughtful comment, too about the value of the experience of the trainers, and the depth this gave:

"It was useful to gather information from other neighbourhood workers but also to gain the long-term experience from the tutors along with the formal training."

iii) Training in skills

In the acquisition of skills, the neighbourhood workers' comments are again very positive about the training sessions and again also interweave this with other aspects. The comments made explain the key areas where the training was felt to be particularly useful:

Public speaking and presentation, leading to increased confidence

"Training has been good, especially public speaking"

"Doing the presentation skills helped me to realise that my presentation isn't as bad as I thought it was. Has given me more confidence"

"Doing presentation, IT skills improved."

“Confidence building through PEP”

“I think most of my skills have been vastly improved since last year. The skills that have not made great leaps are those which I feel are not exercised enough in my role. Others have just not been fully touched upon in great detail.”

Techniques for consultation and participation

“I have learned new techniques that are applied on a daily basis. These tips/techniques would not have been available through my organisation’s induction training programme”

“I couldn’t have done without the training. Especially about tenants’ participation and consultation etc.”

4.1.3 Contribution of supervisors and other workplace colleagues

Not all the supervisors were as good and effective as they would have liked to be, and the job was especially hard for those who came in to replace some-one else, sometimes after a long gap with no-one in post. But there was tremendous appreciation from the majority of neighbourhood workers for the help they received from supervisors and the way this contributed to their learning. Where the supervisor was not a community development specialist there was still appreciation for the help given with personal development and needs outside what the PEP Trust course provided

One worker, asked what had contributed to their progress, wrote

“It is a combination but supervisor has been main driving force, recognising my ability to develop a role and then allow myself to gain experience from the job”

Some supervisors wrote in their feedback that they themselves did not have time to give the help that was needed but therefore delegated this to other colleagues. This was noted and recorded in the feedback from the neighbourhood workers who specifically listed ‘learning and help from colleagues’ as an important element in their progress

4.1.4 Work experience

All the neighbourhood workers were clear that the work experience was the most central and crucial aspect of the programme. This was clear from the feedback. For some it was even more important. One supervisor wrote:

“The trainee found the formal training challenging and was not always able to make a connection between the theory and what she was actually doing on her placement. The work experience, I feel, for her was the most relevant element and vital in allowing her to gain in confidence and develop professionally, learning through doing. For her the positive and immediate feedback from the community gave her the reassurance that she was ‘on the right track’ and the motivation to continue and improve.”

It was good also, to read a supervisor’s comments that stressed the contribution of a worker to the work specifically because he was a local resident, (and that point about learning from frustration):

“His general experience of the work has, I suspect, been mostly a positive one. His local knowledge has proved invaluable in making community contacts and in developing/delivering projects. However, it might also have led to some frustration as he saw how organisational inertia led to caution and inaction –

a useful learning experience in itself! Working out why things don't happen can be as helpful as discovering why they do."

4.1.5 Mentors

In the first year, arrangements for mentoring were not consistently made and mentors were specifically mentioned as helpful by only three of the first year workers. Two others said mentoring had not worked for them, one that they had enough support within their organisation and did not need a mentor and four others made no comment. In the second year, four workers said that mentoring had not worked for them - and that they had met the mentor either never or only once, while an additional person said that one mentor (later replaced) had been no help because they had no time to give. Two again said that a mentor was not needed because they had such good internal support, and three workers made no comment. But the difference from the first year was the nature of the positive comments made by six of the second year workers, which are here reproduced.

"I found my mentor very helpful as (because of) his experience in community work I felt I could connect with him.

"My mentor was brilliant and has been a valuable part of my training"

"Third mentor "until recently saw on a regular basis, very helpful."

*"My mentor is ****. She used to come a long way every 2 months. She is an excellent mentor as she supported me with my job. Every month I prepared the list of things to discuss and to sort out and she gave me excellent ideas to implement. I could suggest that there should be something written to add to her cv or anything to thank her for her hard work"*

"The mentor was a great idea and our relationship ran its natural course."

"My mentor was very encouraging and helpful"

In at least one of these cases it was clear that support from inside the organisation, through changes of staff, was largely lacking, and the mentor made an important difference. Sadly in both years there were situations where this filling of the breach by a mentor would have been very useful but did not happen, so that some of those who would have welcomed external guidance did not receive it whilst several who reported good help from mentors were also getting excellent internal support. The fact that mentors were specialists in community work, however, and could help where that was not the line manager's expertise, was mentioned by several workers. The evaluator's conclusion is that the mentoring idea worked more effectively in the second year and was of major importance to some of the workers.

4.1.6 The Network of other neighbourhood workers.

It is always exciting for an evaluator to learn something unexpected in the course of their research. There was no direct question in the formal questionnaires about 'networking', yet it emerged from the answers of both supervisors and neighbourhood workers as an element of central importance to the value of the course.

i) How supervisors saw the network

Comments from supervisors included the following:

“Q has been extremely positive about the training programme and the support it offers through the network of other neighbourhood workers.”

“Key benefits of the course: meeting other people, networking, getting new ideas, learning to work in groups.”

“The course opened Y’s eyes to her own potential. By working with others in a similar situation to herself she was able to build up her confidence and self-esteem.”

“The interaction between course participants both in formal sessions and informally was also very important. Shared experience seemed to be a valuable learning tool here.”

ii) How workers valued the network

In the replies from the neighbourhood workers, comments on the value of this networking between themselves were added in many places throughout the questionnaire when they were asked to comment on reasons for progress and improvement other than the work experience, formal training, supervisor’s help and reading.

“Help and encouragement from the other neighbourhood workers”

“Also I have learned a great deal from the other students on the course and they have been a great source of support.”

“The year’s training has been brilliant - networking with the other workers proved invaluable.”

it was great to have other individuals as neighbourhood workers being there to support each other and share ideas.”

iii) How it happened

At the meeting on May 16th 2006 with neighbourhood workers from both years, the question of how this networking occurred and how it worked was pursued in more depth. It arose in a response to a question as to when people had been tempted to drop out and why they had not. Neighbourhood workers said that some people dropped out because they had not known what they were letting themselves in for, but for those who remained their commitment to their communities helped them to keep going. A year one worker then explained how the pressure of what they were going through led them to bond, and how this led to the network

“The first day of the training session we were saying “If we’ve got another day of this we have to get plastered!” We all met in the pub¹⁴, we all wanted each other’s phone numbers and we are all still corresponding. In that year we got bombarded with e-mails from each-other. “What are you doing about this?”

Another worker added *“We left at 5 o’clock in the morning to get there”* And others chimed in how exhausted they were by lunchtime, when the training went on into the early evening, and how the meeting up was so important.”

iv) How it worked when most needed

Other workers then explained how this networking (which was set up just as strongly in year two) came to support them when they most needed it The following quotation is just one of several examples.

¹⁴ This included teetotal members of the group: nobody was left out for cultural reasons although one person with an exceptionally long journey said he was usually too tired to go out in the evening.

“In the first week I started, my manager announced she was taking voluntary redundancy. For the first few weeks, the manager above her didn’t know what to do with me and I didn’t get a proper manager for seven months. For the first two months I had no idea what I was supposed to be doing and there were so many times when I was that close to thinking, ‘I can’t do this; I really don’t want to do this’. The only thing that sort of kept me in the job was that I had actually done the first part of the course (the first one, in June). I started the job in July and the one thing that made me think ‘I can do it’ was the fact that we had the course. If there was a problem I didn’t know what to do, I could always e-mail someone off the course. When we were on the course we could just talk about it. When nobody knew what to do with me, it was the support of the rest of the group that kept me in the job.”

v) Access to e-mail important to sustain networking

The only sad part about the importance of this networking was the loss it meant for one person who, throughout their training time, never had an e-mail address. Otherwise, it is clear that the network of workers was one of the great strengths of the design of the PEP Trust training.

4.1.7 Holistic nature of the programme: more than the sum of the parts

“It is a combination of all these factors” (Neighbourhood Worker)

One of the neighbourhood workers was very particular in their answers to questions about their personal development during the course. Asked what elements of the programme had contributed to progress, they chose ‘formal training sessions’ for ‘polite and friendly’ ‘good at communicating’ and ‘good at including people’. ‘Help from supervisor’ was ticked for ‘personal integrity’ ‘not easily discouraged’ and ‘reliability’; and ‘doing the job’ were selected for ‘ability to trust others’ and ‘being well organised’. This answer very nicely illustrates the way the elements of the programme were connected and intertwined. Other workers and supervisors explained how theory, training and visits fed into practice and how all the elements of the programme inter-acted

“The formal training provided a good reference point for future use in work. Visits to other projects and good practice initiatives were very helpful. Good content mix in terms of balance and theory” (supervisor)

A worker who decided in the end to leave the job in order to be more free in the community work they did also described the intertwining, and introduced the element of evaluation. .

“The PEP course for neighbourhood development workers that I am on is great. The commitment that the other workers show to their community is inspirational in itself. The learning has been great and how this learning will help my community work, the people... - their e-mails can brighten your day – and Keith and Alicia (the tutors) who are a real encouragement.”

“I also now recognize the need for good evaluation and monitoring and how it helps to reduce the work you have to put into a project.”

4.1.8 Summary views of the whole programme from the neighbourhood workers

“The year’s training has been brilliant - networking with the other workers proved invaluable. Information I received has been really useful and offered me the direction I felt I lacked at the beginning”

This section simply reproduces summary comments from the neighbourhood workers about the overall impact of the course, and the sub-section below presents some of their wider visions for the future.

“Challenges have been fast and furious, however. I have been very well supported whilst in post.”

“I have enjoyed the training and the help it has given me to be able to do this job.”

“I have loved the job. I have worked hard on it to get a lot of community events, on helping the renewal group in the area and also on working well with the local city council.”

“The job experience has been a great source of knowledge and I feel I have learned an enormous amount.

“I found my mentor very helpful (because of) his experience in community work I felt I could connect with him. My supervisor has been helpful in explaining the assignments and encouragement. I would like to say a thank you for giving me the opportunity to participate in the PEP Trust training”

“I really liked the course, it was great to have other individuals as neighbourhood workers being there to support each other and share ideas.”

“I now think I’ve proved to myself that this is the type of job I would like to proceed in. Hopefully over the next year more improvements will be made by residents in the area in which they live and their quality of life.”

“My dream was to do my job perfectly, to understand my role and be confident, which I got during this whole year. The place where I live...is much more clean now than before and by me it has got more attention. Now there is less drugs and there are safer streets.”

“Training was excellent”

“I still have real enthusiasm for the community I live in. Watching the community come together is a real buzz!”

“The year’s training has been brilliant - networking with the other workers proved invaluable.”

“I have changed so much during this year, my knowledge and capacity to share has been such a buzz, people around me know I have changed.” “I learnt how to jump hurdles”

“My only ambition is to continue progressing. The course has helped me to learn new skills but I aim for career development and more job responsibility”

“My ambitions now are to go back to college and have further training”

“I now think that what I want to do with my life is achievable”

Future, wider vision

“Another dream is to develop the job I am already in and help the council realise it’s an important and valuable service to offer.”

“My dream is to bring the community together and to have them help themselves.”

“I still have a dream about our community building and we as residents are working towards that.”

“I still think I can make a difference to how the area I live in is managed. I am feeling confident in my ability and have still not blunted my desire to further myself both personally and professionally”

Section 5 Challenges or weaknesses of the programme

5.1 Scale of the challenge to the individual workers;

However good a programme is, there will always be some weaknesses and some major challenges that will not easily be solved. One basic challenge in such a project will always be the enormous demands made on the individuals who undertake the programme.

- **Drastic change in life-style**

One manager summed this up when he wrote:

“Acknowledgement should be made in relation to the very steep learning curve workers have to go through in such a short period of time. However there have been times when it has been extremely stressful and difficult for Q to achieve balance between personal and professional life and a learning curve in terms of professional boundaries. She has worked through these difficulties with the organisation and is managing this balance well now”

- **Feelings of inadequacy, despair and loneliness**

What the manager wrote was echoed by the workers at the feedback meeting when some of them spoke of the utter despair and desolation they had felt sometimes, alone in a room completely unable to do the task they were required to do and not knowing where to turn; or torn between the needs of their families and the needs of the job, or between the needs of their communities and their obligations to their employers.

This also showed in what some workers wrote:

“With the large gaps between training sessions I found it very difficult to find the confidence to really make a real difference in the community as I had no previous experience and I felt a bit lost for the first few months, especially when working with very experienced organisations and resident volunteers. I felt they wouldn’t (and shouldn’t!) take me seriously and I was constantly apologising for my lack of knowledge, it was hard to come back from that.

- **Divided loyalties and exhaustion**

“In practice I have found the course a commitment that has been difficult to keep due to work and family issues. There is a large amount of travelling which takes energy. It is often difficult to concentrate till 7pm on the first day”

The implication of these factors for supervisors was that there was usually a need for very intensive support in the early stages of the project and any evaluation needs to make it clear that this is intrinsic to such a project and has to be allowed for.

- **Living on the job.**

It was known from the start that there would be disadvantages as well as advantages for workers being employed to work on the estates where they lived. In the evaluation, the majority of employers thought the advantages had outweighed the disadvantages, but for the workers themselves (although this was still the balance of opinion) it was more problematic. Certainly, some said that their appointment had sent a very positive signal to the neighbourhood about the landlord’s attitude to the tenants. But some encountered jealousy and several felt that they were compromising the safety or well being not just of themselves but of family members by their position, something they had not considered in advance. One worker had moved for this reason. Another had asked to be employed on a different estate.

- **The dulling hand of bureaucracy and structural and political barriers**

Neighbourhood workers in their feedback forms were asked to identify what had in practice proved the greatest barriers they had had to overcome. For some it was the structural factors that stifled initiative.

“I am now more easily discouraged because I understand how difficult the simplest tasks can be and how much red tape is involved and how responsible you are for the health and safety of people etc. So, for example, taking a group of people for a trip to the sea-side is now like climbing a mountain when previously I would think it is simple and straight forward”

“Getting support from agencies/ them coming through on commitment and promises made”

“Company Policy, Community associations and councillors not really having the residents’ best interests on their agenda”.

Hearing these very profound points, the challenge for any training programme is to equip the workers to face these realities and still make progress.

5.2 Weaknesses of the training

i) **Need for change of level (already addressed in year 2)**

In the first year, several workers said that the level of training need to change as the year progressed to reflect the workers’ changing abilities. In the second year this must have been taken on board, as no such comments were made. One person said that “sometimes the training was too easy and did not push their abilities far enough”, but this is probably an almost inevitable occasional problem, given the great range of education and experience of the workers.

ii) **Assessment of written work: no resources allocated**

The one area of weakness in the formal training was that the task of assessment of written work had not been provided for. It was undertaken by Keith Mann, but in addition to all else that he did, was too much work. Some students in both years complained at the non assessment or slow assessment of their work. In some cases completed assessments appear not to have reached the workers.

The evaluator believes that this weakness is due to a structural failing of the programme and should not be attributed to the trainer as an individual.

iii) **Accreditation and communication**

One supervisor wrote on his feedback form:

“The formal training will only be relevant at the point where the training has been accredited and we can demonstrate real outcome”

This is a fairly extreme statement, for the training clearly had intrinsic and practical worth, but it does raise a very important point. In the last six months of the project, the evaluator was contacted by a number of neighbourhood workers anxious to know when the accreditation process would be complete. It had become urgent for some because of their need to apply for jobs and their desire to be able to state that they had completed an accredited course. The extreme slowness in achieving accreditation was compounded by great difficulty in communication. Workers contacted the evaluator because they could not get responses from the PEP trust staff. Undertakings given at the meeting in May 2006 have sadly not been fulfilled.

The evaluator had some difficulties in this way too, and feels it would have been better if there had been more information about the changes at PEP Trust that meant drastically reduced availability. The real failure at the end of the project has been non-communication. It is much to be hoped that this will soon be put right.

5.3 Problems for employers:

Too small a pool to select a good candidate

One relatively small housing association had also suffered by feeling it was constrained to choose a worker only from the fairly small pool of people on an estate, and had therefore made an appointment that produced the only 'bad value for money' assessment in the programme.

The evaluator's tentative conclusion is that the crucial point is that the person appointed is a tenant and someone of the area, but that getting a good enough candidate is more important than appointing from a specific estate. Also it may be better in some cases if local workers 'swop' estates if this is feasible. They will still have all sorts of local knowledge, but they will not be so vulnerable when not at work.

Section 6: Proposals for change

Many points concerning possible changes have already been made.

The key points, however can be summed up as follows

- i) The basic programme as run in the second year is extremely good and very little change is needed. Trainers will have to continue balancing needs of individuals versus needs of the wider group.
- ii) Accreditation must be arranged
- iii) Resources need to be increased enough to reduce the burden on the chief trainer and provide support with marking assignments
- iv) A slightly longer programme would be desirable. Extension to 18 months or two years has been suggested
- v) If the programme could expand and run in several areas, travel distances for the workers could be reduced.
- vi) The residential factor is, however, of the greatest importance in helping to establish a sense of collegiality between those who are training.
- vii) Employers need to have enough leeway about the eligible selection base that they are not pushed into making unsuitable appointments. Some simply acted on their own judgement but the point needs to be made clear.
- viii) There needs to be a simpler way of ending an unsatisfactory appointment swiftly at an early stage so that a substitute may be appointed, to avoid a wasted opportunity and wasted resources
- ix) The rule that workers should work on their own estates needs to be reviewed. It may often be better that they work in a similar area but not where they actually live.
- x) 'Shared appointments' were not very good for the workers
- xi) Supervisors need to be given more, on-going information about the programme. This would be part of what might be possible if the resources for the training element were increased by, say, 0.5 of a worker.
- xii) A preparatory pack for employers should make clear the intensive amount of support needed for very inexperienced workers at the beginning of the programme (but re-assure that this will ease off)
- xiii) It is striking that local communities were not apparently involved as partners in planning the appointments (This may have happened in some places, but it has not been made apparent). Where this is possible, it would provide a useful reference point for workers seeking to establish objectives and measure impact, and might also supply a local source of support.
- xiv) Disabled people have a good track record of neighbourhood involvement. The possibility of appointing a disabled neighbourhood worker should be emphasised..
- xv) For purposes of equal opportunities, the category of carer for a disabled household member is worth recording as well as whether a person is themselves disabled.

Section 7 Measurement of outcomes against objectives

How well were the objectives of the programme achieved in the pilot years? An attempt is made here to answer the question on the basis of the evidence gathered for the evaluation.

- **Objective 1: To develop skilled, local community and tenant participation workers**

Evaluation: This was powerfully achieved.

- **Objective 2: To support the transition from volunteering to paid employment.**

Evaluation: This was exactly what happened for many of the workers. It was seen by many as a sweet-sour change. There was a strong awareness amongst the workers of how gains in status and influence were tempered by loss of freedom and independence. One worker chose to return to volunteering. The majority are glad to have made the move and continue to wrestle with the compromises involved.

- **Objective 3: To increase community ownership of and involvement in local initiatives.**

Evaluation: There is a long way still to go to achieve this objective. Workers said they had been empowered by the teaching on the course to stand up for this principle, and several had done so in real situations. But not many housing organisations are ready for a situation where the local community sets the agenda and makes crucial decisions about land use, for example. Employing the Neighbourhood Worker is an important step, however.

- **Objective 4: To increase local community capacity.**

Evaluation: The evaluator has not been able to assess this objective as fully as would be wished. As a minimum, local community capacity has been increased in every community where a neighbourhood worker completed the course and has stayed in the area by one better trained and educated and more confident person with good career prospects. There is certainly more than this, however, as some of the workers set up courses for and with local people and saw real changes as a result.

- **Objective 5: To develop stronger relationships between social landlords and their communities.**

Evaluation: many encouraging signs, partly as the result of the signal that the appointment of a local person sent to communities. But the workers' assessment is that once a bridge was set up and dialogue established, the landlord had a great responsibility to make the dialogue two-way and responsive. Failure to do this could be seriously harmful.

- **Objective 6: To encourage landlords to develop policies and practices more responsive to local community needs.**

Evaluation: This, as already indicated above, is the crunch point and is something which may take a lot longer to judge. There were certainly examples of responsiveness in small matters. Making major policy changes in response to local community needs is something much harder for housing organisations to do.

- **Objective 7: To pilot an intensive programme of skill development and support for forty residents working in their own communities as neighbourhood workers.**

Evaluation: This was powerfully achieved, albeit not quite for 40. 33 were recruited, 31 started and 28 completed. Two of these did not live actually in the communities where they worked although they lived close by.

- **Objective 8: To achieve beneficial changes in communities and for individuals and landlords in line with the over-all objectives of the PEP Trust.**

Evaluation: Beneficial changes for all these parties were clearly achieved.

- **Objective 9: To demonstrate by a thorough evaluation the benefits and value for money of the RNW programme to communities, social housing landlords and the individual resident workers.**

Evaluation: The evaluation has produced clear and quantified evidence of the benefits to social housing landlords and individual resident workers. There is also evidence of benefits to communities, albeit less quantified. This was a weakness of the evaluation process, partly as the result of economic constraints.

- **Objective 10: In the event of the programme proving its worth, to establish it as a sustained mainstream programme.**

Evaluation: The programme has proved its worth magnificently. The rest remains to do.

Section 8 Value for money

8.1 General view of employers

The RNW programme was considered good or excellent value for money by all the employers whose workers completed the course.

8.2 Cost of the training

Grant aided funding for the programme, including the cost of evaluation, came to a total of £288,798. This is just over £10,000 for each worker who completed the course. From the point of view of government, this seems a very reasonable price to pay for moving some one from being unemployed and claiming benefits into a worthwhile career that will not only save the costs of individual benefit claims for years ahead but may well also produce savings to public expenditure in all sorts of ways, again for many years to come.

8.3 Full cost with salaries and other expenses

The full cost has also to include the contributions of employers, who paid salaries and travel costs and in some cases provided budgets for assignments or other activities. Contributions here ranged from £12,000 to £35,000 per worker. If the average cost was £23,000, then the total per worker who completed the course was about £33,000. As mentioned above, the views of all the employer representatives whose workers completed the course was that the programme as a whole represented good or excellent value for money (see table 18). This reflects the workers own views that by the end of their year they were competent members of the workforce and were certainly earning the money they were paid.

The thoughtful view of the employer whose appointed worker was seriously unsatisfactory and did not complete was that the waste of resources this mistake represented could have been prevented if they had had more discretion about appointing from outside a small tenant base and if they could have had a probationary period and a chance to re-appoint quickly.

8.4 Comparison with the SRB project

One way of comparing the value of the RNW programme is by comparison with the SRB programme described in Annex 5. For the SRB programme, it is not possible to be sure of exact costs per head of the trainees who were well launched into employment or a good chance of employment as the result of their year, because the whereabouts of and outcomes for quite a lot of participants were not known or not yet decided as the programme was not quite over.. The highest number obtaining careers as a result of the programme was 19, the lowest 11 and a reasonable likely figure 15. As the programme cost £672,025 the cost per head was £35,400 if 19 people were helped; £44,800 per head if the number was 15. These costs are higher than the PEP costs and in addition, most of the trainees concerned were not provided with any training specific to community work during their year. The PEP Trust programme was more expensive initially, because of the training, travel and residential costs, but it was better value for money because of low drop-out and much more tangible outcomes in terms of appropriate skills and knowledge learned, leading to greater fitness for long-term employment. Workers in both schemes did good work in their neighbourhoods but there was better value with RNW not least because more workers remained in the scheme. To sum it up, some of those who took part in the SRB project

as trainees were so determined to make use of the opportunity they were offered that they endured many difficulties to persist and succeed. Some of the SRB supervisors were also very committed to helping and gave support that was highly valued by their trainees. But the structure of support was not so sound, so there was a greater likelihood of drop out and wasted resources, human and financial.

Workers interviewed for the SRB scheme evaluation said that, because they were unemployed, they applied for any job that was brought to their attention and were not necessarily especially interested in neighbourhood work. It is useful to understand that this is a hazard of running such schemes. It may have been a factor for a few of the RNW recruits too and shows again the importance of having good selection procedures.

8.6 Conclusion

The central evidence is that the RNW project was judged by employers to be very good value for money.

Section 9 Reflection and Conclusion

‘At the start I was hoping to do good and help people, fill in forms, be a good neighbour. Now I feel our estate as a whole will get better. There is more tenants’ participation and the different organisations involved are actually listening. We are now working together to make our estate a better and more inspiring place to live. Instead of expensive, not always successful schemes we now realise that just a lick of paint in the right place makes a whole difference. We don’t have an expensive “youth project” but are now running a successful club for and with the kids with parents actively helping’

“I couldn’t have done without the training. Especially about tenants’ participation and consultation.”

9.1 The wider context of social exclusion

The RNW programme has a value that goes beyond the achievements of individuals or even the organisations for which they worked. The fact that a group of people with exceptional inside knowledge were all working simultaneously at the front line of neighbourhood work in different parts of the country meant that, from their feedback, it is possible to get a perspective of the structural context of problems in neighbourhoods. At local levels, troubles are nearly always seen as the fault or failure of individual residents, or landlords, or the police. The currently preferred solutions include ASBOs¹⁵, probationary tenancies and reduction of benefits, all aimed at individuals. Landlords, the police and other professionals are similarly controlled through centrally set targets, and penalised for failing to achieve them. But the reflection of the neighbourhood workers shows that a trail of short-term initiatives with funding withdrawn, unfulfilled promises and structures that consult only to ignore for reasons that are seen as over-riding considerations are the structural causes of many of the problems on estates.

9.2 What the RNW programme has achieved

The Residents as Neighbourhood Workers Programme has achieved a high level of very good outcomes (learning, employment, changes in neighbourhoods) and has been viewed as a success by a large majority of those who took part, both workers and employers. It has also seen some good outcomes for local residents, though long term success will depend on the commitment of the Landlords to keep the work going. And it should also be said that in appointing these workers, the employers have started something, which, because it is embedded in the workers, will go on growing for years.

The workers themselves, especially those who had been community activists before they were appointed, are aware of a tension between their own career progress and their ambitions for their neighbourhoods. Not all appointed were saints. Some stated clearly that their ambition was career progression and to leave the local area. But others are deeply committed to their local area and community work and are aware that in being paid to work for the landlord they have compromised to some extent their ability to speak up for local people. One person decided quite late on to leave the

¹⁵ Anti-Social Behaviour Orders

job for this reason, in order to revert to the voluntary position that gave her freedom. Her account of this decision is very moving and gives food for thought. But those who decided to stay in and keep juggling see that, as long as their thinking is clear (and this is where they said the training had strengthened them) they can keep acting as bridges for residents to the landlord and working for change in their employing organisations, believing as they do that such change will be beneficial for all concerned. And as many of the supervisors were themselves community development workers, they are likely to be supportive. If, therefore, the employers are willing to respond to the ideas of the new workers, there is a chance that objectives like reduction in voids and improvement in health that were described by most as 'not expected' could indeed be achieved in the long run. Making the connection between these bigger objectives and the need for real consultation and commitment is what is required, but it is required right up to corporate level, and beyond that at regional and national strategic levels. If local residents want eight bungalows or a play area on a site, but central management has decided it can get funding for eighty units in a five-storey block there, what chance is there that the reasoning of the residents will be taken into account when the decision is made? And which solution will be more sustainable? That is the sort of question to which this programme ultimately leads.

“This is an amazing project and we are so glad to be part of it “

(supervisor, year 1)

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OPCS.(2006) National Statistics Online. [http:// www.statistics.gov.uk](http://www.statistics.gov.uk) *Ethnicity and Identity*. Population of the United Kingdom by Ethnic Group, April 2001
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Page, D (2006) *Respect and renewal: a study of neighbourhood social regeneration*. York, Joseph Rowntree Foundation. *Findings* at www.jrf.org.uk.

Annex 1. The training programme

Session One	The Neighbourhood Workers' Job	Understanding the role of a Neighbourhood Worker within a landlord organisation. Creating a personal work plan and measuring success. Project Management Techniques. Making use of your mentor and other support. Balancing roles as a resident and a worker. Understanding conflicts of interest. Assessing local situations and conducting community audits.
Session Two	Understanding Community and Community Participation	Defining Community. Working with diversity and engaging different sectors of the community. Current practice in tenant participation. Working in partnership with other local agencies and organisations. Meetings skills. Understanding community group dynamics.
Session Three	Personal Empowerment Programme	A course aiming to help participants increase their potential and understand their personal barriers to self-empowerment.
Session Four	Community Engagement and Consultation Techniques	Understanding the nature and types of involvement. Using a range of involvement and community research techniques. Using Participatory Learning techniques.
Session Five	Presentation Skills	Using a range of presentation techniques. Newsletters.
Session Six	Resource Management	Fund raising. Dealing with grant applications. Basic budgeting, recording and financial control. The use of community buildings. Financial accountability.
Session Seven	Review and Forward Planning	Revisiting personal work plans and forward planning. Solving problems that have arisen for Neighbourhood Workers.

Annex 2a

Residents as Neighbourhood Workers

Year2

Pre-training self-assessment questionnaire to Participants

Introduction

What are the qualities that make a good neighbourhood worker? What skills do they need? What knowledge do they need?

In this questionnaire you are first asked to use your own experience to reflect on what someone needs to be a neighbourhood worker. The questionnaire then asks how well equipped you feel you are at present and what you hope to get out of the PEP Trust training. In this way you will be using your knowledge of the job and of yourself to set your own key goals.

At the end of the training, you will be asked to complete another questionnaire, designed to discover what progress you feel you have made and whether the training met your needs.

This questionnaire (with the one at the end of the training) is just part of the evaluation of the programme. The two other main parts will be: a similar before-and-after questionnaire to employers and the research you yourself will be doing with the residents to find out their views of what is needed and what is achieved.

When these three strands are put together, it should be possible for PEP to know whether they are on the right lines and what needs to be improved.

Your name.....
Organisation you are working for.....

Note before you begin!

This is a questionnaire, not a job application form!! We are asking for your views and there are no right or wrong answers. Its purpose is to allow the PEP Trust to know how effective the training is, but we hope it will also be helpful to you in clarifying your objectives for the training.

Be as truthful as you can. The information is for you, your supervisor and the researchers who are evaluating the PEP Trust training programme. They will observe strict confidentiality and ensure that findings about participants' views of the effectiveness of the programme are produced only in a generalised way, with no identifying names or details.

Please answer all the questions. At the end, please check
Have you put your name on this page?
Have you ticked the boxes and put scores in each of the tables?
Have you answered question 9 ?
Have you answered question 12?

Section 1. Personal characteristics

Q.1. What personal qualities does a neighbourhood worker need? Please look at the list in Table 1. If, from your experience, you think there is something missing that ought to be there - please add it on at the bottom in the space provided. Then, for all items, including your additions, tick whether it is 'essential', 'useful' or 'not important' to a neighbourhood worker. Finally, have a go at self-assessment by giving yourself a rating score out of 10 for each item.

Guide to scoring: (you can give any number from 0-10)

0 = Rock bottom	5 = just ok	6 = not too bad
1 = extremely weak		7 = fairly good
2 = very weak		8 = good
3 = weak		9 = very good
4 = not quite good enough		10 = perfect

Table 1: Personal Characteristics needed by a neighbourhood worker	Essential	Useful	Not Important	Your score out of 10
Ability to trust other people				
Being well organised				
Creativity				
Polite and friendly				
Good at communicating				
Good at including people				
Personal integrity/trustworthiness				
Intelligence				
Not easily discouraged				
Plenty of energy				
Reliability				
Willing to try new things				
Other (please add)				
●				

•				
•				

Q.2 Which (if any) aspects of your personal characteristics do you hope to work on in the course of the year's training?

1.

2. _____

Section 2. Knowledge

Q.3 As before, please first look at the table (Table 2), and if you think any knowledge a neighbourhood worker needs is missing from the list, please add it on. Then, using the whole list including your additions, please tick in the columns whether you think the item is 'essential', 'useful' or 'not important' to a neighbourhood worker. Finally, give yourself a score out of 10 for every item.

And please don't be discouraged if you are giving yourself low scores in some areas. If you had all the knowledge already there would be no need for a training course.

Q.4 Which areas of knowledge do you feel you most want to improve during your year of training?

1.

2. _____

3. _____

Table 2: Knowledge needed by a neighbourhood worker	Essential	Useful	Not Important	Your self-rating out of 10
Knowing plenty of local residents by name				
Knowing where things are (streets, shops, schools, bus routes, etc)				
Knowing the professionals who work in the area				
Knowing key people in local businesses				
Knowing of organisations that might be partners in neighbourhood work				
Knowledge of funding sources for community activities				
Knowing of good community projects in UK and elsewhere				
Knowledge of current or forthcoming Government initiatives				
Understanding local government and its relations with regional and central government				
Employment law, including health and safety, equal opportunities and data protection				
Knowledge of the rules under which housing associations work.				
Knowledge of the rules for local authority (council) housing				
Practical knowledge about buildings, construction etc				
Knowledge about plants, gardening and wildlife				
Understanding how local people live and how they manage				
Understanding what is important to local people (including different age groups, ethnic groups etc)				
Knowledge of benefits systems				
Knowledge of a language other than English widely spoken in the area				
Theories of community group dynamics				
Theories of child and teenage behaviour				
Knowledge about drug and alcohol abuse				

Other (please add)				
•				
•				
•				

Section 3. Skills

Q.5 Once again, please first look at the list of skills in the table (table 3 this time). If you think we have left out any skills that are important to a neighbourhood worker, please add them on. Then, using the whole list including your additions, please tick in the columns whether you think the item is 'essential', 'useful' or 'not important' to a neighbourhood worker and finally, give yourself a rating out of 10 for every item.

Guide to scoring: (you can give any number from 0-10)

0 = Rock bottom	5 = just ok	6 = not too bad
1 = extremely weak		7 = fairly good
2 = very weak		8 = good
3 = weak		9 = very good
4 = not quite good enough		10 = perfect

Q.6 Which skills do you especially hope to improve during the year's training?

1.

2. _____

3. _____

Table 3: Skills needed by a neighbourhood worker	Essential	Useful	Not Important	Your score out of 10
Techniques for finding out what people think about something				
Techniques for finding out what people might want				
Ability to help others develop their talents.				
Ability to plan an event and get people to attend it				
Ability to chair a meeting well				
Ability to speak in public at a meeting, and use suitable presentation techniques				
Ability to produce leaflets or newsletters				
Ability to write short reports				
Skill at working with local media				
Word processing skills				
Internet skills				
Ability with other technology: microphones, video/dvd players etc				
Ability to manage a community room or building and organise its use and maintenance.				
Dealing with neighbour or other disputes				
Dealing with complaints arising from your work				
Good management of your time				
Skills in measuring the progress of projects and recording success				
Ability to fund-raise				
Dealing with grant applications				
Budgeting, recording and financial control				
Other (please add)				
•				
•				
•				

Q.7 Your skills with particular groups

How do you rate your current skill at working with different sorts of people? The list in Table 4 is not a complete list! Please add any other groups or sorts of people who are

important in your local area and then tick the boxes to indicate how good you think you are at working with these groups.

Table 4: People/groups	Not very good	Fair	Good
Children under 12			
Teenagers			
Young parents (under 30)			
Older people			
People of different racial/cultural group from yourself			
Women			
Men			
People with learning difficulties			
Other (please add)			
•			
•			
•			

Q.8 Is there any particular group you want to work with, where you would like to improve your skill?

1.

Q 9 What results do you think your employer is hoping to see as a result of the programme, and over what time span? Tick as many boxes in table 5 as you like

Table 5: Employer's objectives	Within 12 months	Longer term	Landlord not expecting this outcome
Stronger/more active tenants' group(s)			
Better information for the association to use in making policy			
Better outcomes for money spent on the estate			
Reduced number of empty properties and consequent revenue loss			
Less rent arrears			
Reduced vandalism and crime			
Less drug/alcohol related problems			
Better relations between different ethnic/cultural groups			
Improved inclusion for excluded groups			
Improved health for tenants			
Improved educational and employment opportunities for tenants			
Improved range of activities for various age groups			
Better joint working with both voluntary and statutory agencies in the area			
Increase of tenant voluntary input helpful to the estate			
Other, please add.			

Q.10 Barriers to progress

Please write here any thing you think may make it difficult for you to make all the progress you would like during the year.

Q.11 Special skills and knowledge

Do you have any special knowledge or skill that might be beneficial to colleagues or others on the training course?

(Please say what it is)

Q.12 Dreams/ambitions

And finally, allowing yourself to think as freely as you like, do you have any dreams or ambitions, either for yourself in this kind of work, or for the place where you live? Please write something about these.

Q.13 And, just for the record, a few details

Are you Male Female ? (please circle)

Year of birth? _____

To which of these ethnic groups do you consider yourself to belong? *

White		Indian	
Irish		Pakistani	
Black – African		Bangladeshi	
Black – Caribbean		Chinese	
Black – Other (Please specify)		Other (Please specify)	

* Please note: these categories of ethnic origin are those recommended for monitoring purposes by the Commission for Racial Equality

Do you have a disability? Yes No

If 'Yes' please specify.

Thank you

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Annex 2b

Residents as Neighbourhood Workers

End of training year questionnaire to

Name:

Organisation:

Introduction

In 2004, as the training began or quite soon after, you filled in a questionnaire.

This gave your own assessment of your skills and knowledge and what you hoped to get out of the PEP Trust training.

We are now asking you to complete this 'end of training year' questionnaire, so that we can evaluate what has been achieved.

This will be put together with the questions to employers and any evidence you have gathered on the impact on residents

When these three strands are put together, it should be possible for PEP to know whether they have been working on the right lines and what needs to be improved.

Note before you begin!

As before, the information is for you, your supervisor and the researchers who are evaluating the PEP Trust training programme. They will observe strict confidentiality and ensure that findings about participants' views of the effectiveness of the programme are produced only in a generalised way, with no identifying names or details.

Section 1. Personal qualities

Q.1 In the first questionnaire we looked at what personal qualities a neighbourhood worker needs. You gave yourself the score out of 10 shown below. What score would you give yourself now?

Guide to scoring: (you can give any number from 0-10)

0 = Rock bottom	5 = just ok	6 = not too bad
1 = extremely weak		7 = fairly good
2 = very weak		8 = good
3 = weak		9 = very good
4 = not quite good enough		10 = perfect

Table 1: Personal qualities needed by a neighbourhood worker	Score out of 10 you gave yourself in first questionnaire	<u>Score out of 10 you would give yourself now?</u>
Ability to trust other people		
Being well organised		
Creativity		
Polite and friendly		
Good at communicating		
Good at including people		
Personal integrity/trustworthiness		
Intelligence		
Not easily discouraged		
Plenty of energy		
Reliability		
Willing to try new things		
Your own additions, if any:		

Q.2 If there has been an improvement, do you feel this is the result of ... (please tick as many boxes as you wish - and tell us more if you like)

a) Just doing the job (experience and practice)	
b) The formal training sessions	
c) Help from supervisor	
Other (please describe)	

Q.3 If there has been no improvement, please describe briefly why you think this is.

Section 2. Knowledge

Q.4 In the first questionnaire we also looked at what areas of knowledge a neighbourhood worker needs. You gave yourself the score out of 10 shown below. What score would you give yourself now?

Guide to scoring: (you can give any number from 0-10)

0 = Rock bottom	5 = just ok	6 = not too bad
1 = extremely weak		7 = fairly good
2 = very weak		8 = good
3 = weak		9 = very good
4 = not quite good enough		10 = perfect

Table 2: Knowledge needed by a neighbourhood worker	Score out of 10 you gave yourself in first questionnaire	<u>Score out of 10 you would give yourself now</u>
Knowing plenty of local residents by name		
Knowing where things are (streets, shops, schools, bus routes, etc)		
Knowing the professionals who work in the area		
Knowing key people in local businesses		
Knowing of organisations that might be partners in neighbourhood work		
Knowledge of funding sources for community activities		
Knowing of good community projects in UK and elsewhere		
Knowledge of current or forthcoming Government initiatives		
Understanding local government and its relations with regional and central government		
Employment law, including health and safety, equal opportunities and data protection		
Knowledge of the rules under which housing associations work.		
Knowledge of the rules for local authority (council) housing		
Practical knowledge about buildings, construction etc		
Knowledge about plants, gardening and wildlife		
Understanding how local people live and how they manage		
Understanding what is important to local people		

(including different age groups, ethnic groups etc)		
Knowledge of benefits systems		
Knowledge of a language other than English widely spoken in the area		
Theories of community group dynamics		
Theories of child and teenage behaviour		
Knowledge about drug and alcohol abuse		
Your own additions, if any:		

Q.5 If there has been an improvement in your knowledge, do you feel this is the result of ... (please tick as many boxes as you wish - and tell us more if you like)

a) Doing the job (experience and practice)	
b) The formal training sessions	
c) Help from supervisor	
d) Reading	
Other (please describe)	

Q.6 If there has been no improvement in your knowledge, please describe briefly why you think this is.

Section 3. Skills

Q.7 In the first questionnaire we looked at skills needed by neighbourhood workers. You gave yourself the score out of 10 shown below. What score would you give yourself now? (chart on next page)

Guide to scoring: (you can give any number from 0-10)

0 = Rock bottom	5 = just ok	6 = not too bad
1 = extremely weak		7 = fairly good
2 = very weak		8 = good
3 = weak		9 = very good
4 = not quite good enough		10 = perfect

Table 3: Skills needed by a neighbourhood worker	Score out of 10 you gave yourself in first questionnaire	<u>Score out of 10 you would give yourself now?</u>
Techniques for finding out what people think about something		
Techniques for finding out what people might want		
Ability to help others develop their talents.		
Ability to plan an event and get people to attend		
Ability to chair a meeting well		
Ability to speak in public at a meeting, and use suitable presentation techniques		
Ability to produce leaflets or newsletters		
Ability to write short reports		
Skill at working with local media		
Word processing skills		
Internet skills		
Ability with other technology: microphones, video/dvd players etc		
Ability to manage a community room or building and organise its use and maintenance.		
Dealing with neighbour or other disputes		
Dealing with complaints arising from your work		
Good management of your time		
Skills in measuring the progress of projects and recording success		
Ability to fund-raise		
Dealing with grant applications		
Budgeting, recording and financial control		

Your own additions, if any:		

Q.8 If your skills in these things have improved, do you feel this is the result of ... (please tick as many boxes as you wish, and tell us more if you like)

a) Doing the job (experience and practice)	
b) The formal training sessions	
c) Help from supervisor	
d) Reading	
Other (please describe)	

Q.9 If there has been no improvement in all or some of these things, please describe briefly why you think this is.

Q.10 Your skills with particular groups

In the first questionnaire you thought about your skills at working with different groups of people. How good do you think you are at working with these groups now? The choice is 'good' (3), fair (2), not very good (1) or have not worked with this group (0)

Just checking- have you noticed it's a different scoring system this time?!!

Table 4: People/groups	Score you gave yourself in first questionnaire	<u>Score out of 0-3 you would give yourself now</u>
Children under 12		
Teenagers		
Young parents (under 30)		
Older people		
People of different racial/cultural group from yourself		
Women		
Men		
People with learning difficulties		
Your own additions, if any:		

Q.11 If your skills with these groups have improved, do you feel this is the result of ... (please tick as many boxes as you wish, and tell us more if you like)

a) Doing the job (experience and practice)	
b) The formal training sessions	
c) Help from supervisor	
d) Reading	

Other (please describe)	

Q 12 In the first questionnaire, we asked you to say what you thought your landlord was expecting the programme to achieve, and over what time span. Would you indicate in the next table what you yourself think has been achieved in the first year and what you think may still be achieved in the longer term.

Table 5: objectives	Have already achieved some progress	Expect this outcome to be achieved in the longer term	Not expecting this outcome
Stronger/more active tenants' group(s)			
Better information for the association to use in making policy			
Better outcomes for money spent on the estate			
Reduced number of empty properties and consequent revenue loss			
Less rent arrears			
Reduced vandalism and crime			
Less drug/alcohol related problems			
Better relations between different ethnic/cultural groups			
Improved inclusion for excluded groups			
Improved health for tenants			
Improved educational and employment opportunities for tenants			
Improved range of activities for various age groups			
Better joint working with both voluntary and statutory agencies in the area			
Increase of tenant voluntary input helpful to the estate			
Your own additions, if any:			

Q.13 Barriers to progress

A year ago we asked you what the barriers would be that might stop you making as much progress as you would like. In practice, during the training year, what (if any) have been the biggest barriers?

Q.14 Dreams/ambitions

Do you remember what you wrote?

Have your dreams and ambitions for yourself and the place where you live changed during the year?

Q.15 Any other comments you would like to make about the year's training? (Including anything particularly helpful, anything not good. If you worked with a mentor as well as with your supervisor, you might want to make a comment here on whether that was helpful)

Q.16 Just for the record, were you able to set up a system for resident feedback?

Yes

No

Please add comment if you wish.

Thank you

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Annex 3a

Residents as Neighbourhood Workers
Independent Evaluation by the University of Bristol
Year 2

‘Before the Programme’ questionnaire
to supervisors /management representatives of participating landlord.

Introduction

This questionnaire is part of the evaluation of the programme, ‘Residents as Neighbourhood Workers’. The two other main parts will be:

A before-and-after questionnaire to trainee participants and

The research that the trainees will themselves undertake with the residents to find out their views of what is needed locally and what is achieved.

The purpose of *this* questionnaire is to discover your views, as a representative of the employing organisation that has made a big commitment to the programme, of what it is hoped the programme will achieve. Please fill it in from your own perspective within the organisation. At the end of the programme we will be returning to ask you to assess what has been achieved and to make any suggestions for changes to the programme.

Note: The answers you and other respondents give will be treated in confidence, and used only in a generalised and anonymised way in the evaluation reports.

Your Name

Organisation

Position held

Name of area(s) estate(s) where trainee will be working

Were you personally involved in promoting the decision to take part in this programme?

Yes No

Are you acting as supervisor to the trainee neighbourhood worker?

Yes No

[Note: Management representatives who are not supervisors are now asked to complete questions 1-14. Those who are supervisors are asked to complete 1-14, *plus* the additional questions 15-20]

Reasons for participation

Q. 1 What do you think are the reasons for your organisation deciding to take part in the 'Residents as Neighbourhood Workers' training programme? Please tick as many boxes as you like and feel free to add more reasons of your own in the spaces at the bottom of the table

Reason for participation	Very important	Moderately important	Not very important	Not a factor at all
Have some problems on the estate(s) and believe that resident neighbourhood workers may help us to solve or reduce them				
Want to offer employment opportunities to local people.				
Want to reduce voids and consequent revenue loss				
The PEP programme is an opportunity for good quality training that would otherwise have cost a lot more to procure.				
Believe neighbourhood workers will act as bridge (e.g. to help us explain to tenants our policies and decisions).				
We are planning a refurbishment programme and want to be sure in advance that our tenant consultation is as good as possible.				
Hope programme may help lead to better inspection rating.				
Want to strengthen tenant participation in general – have more tenants involved, better means of discovering what is needed and implement more of their suggestions.				
Want to retain the loyalty tenants have shown to us as Landlord.				
Is a way of achieving full-time Landlord engagement on the estate				
Other – please list <i>and also tick a box</i>				

Q. 2 Is this participation part of any wider general strategy?

Planned programme

Q. 3 Do you yourself already know the details of what will be covered in the 12 month training course? Yes/No (please circle)
(add any comment if you wish)

Resources

Q. 4 What resources will be made available to the trainee during the year of the course?

Support from a supervisor daily/ weekly/ fortnightly/ monthly/ on demand/ other (please circle)	
An office base	
A room in which to hold meetings	
A budget for neighbourhood work	
Other (please specify)	

Impact of Tenant Consultation

Q. 5 In recent years, how have you consulted and engaged with tenants and residents within the community or communities where your trainee will be based?

Q. 6 Could you list one or two examples of actions taken to improve housing or community services as the result of tenant views expressed through your Tenant Participation and/or Community Investment Programmes?

Q. 7 Conversely, can you think of any housing or community issues tenants have raised consistently over several years that are still not resolved or significantly improved? (please give brief details)

Views on employing local resident

Q. 8 What do you see as potential advantages (if any) of using a *local resident* as a neighbourhood worker, rather than an outsider?

Q. 9 And what do you see as the potential disadvantages or risks?

Desired Outcomes

Q. 10 What results are you hoping to see as a result of the programme, and over what time span?

	Within 12 months	Within 24 months	Within 3-5 years	Not expecting this outcome
Stronger/more active tenants' group(s)				
Better information for management to use in making policy				
Better outcomes for money spent on the estate				
Reduced voids and consequent revenue loss				
Less rent arrears				
Reduced vandalism and crime				
Less drug/alcohol related problems				
Better relations between different ethnic/cultural groups				
Improved inclusion for excluded groups				
Improved health for tenants				
Improved range of activities for various age groups				
Improved educational and employment opportunities for tenants				
Better joint working with both voluntary and statutory agencies in the area				
Increase of tenant voluntary input helpful to the estate				
Other: please specify				

Future expectations

Q. 11 Resources and satisfactory outcomes permitting, would you expect a trainee to go on working for your organisation as a neighbourhood worker after the 12 month programme is finished? Yes No (please circle)

Q. 12 If you have circled 'no', what will you be doing to ensure the trainee obtains employment or further training elsewhere?

Q. 13 If the answer to question 11 above is 'Yes', but as result of this training the neighbourhood worker quite swiftly moves on to employment elsewhere, would you still consider your investment in the year's training to be worthwhile?

Yes No (please circle)

(add comment if you wish)

Q.14 Are there any other comments you would like to make about your expectations of this training programme?

Extra questions to supervisors

Q. 15 How well is the trainee neighbourhood worker already known to you personally?...

Very well Well Slightly Not at all (please circle)

Q. 16 ...and to your organisation?

Very well Well Slightly Not at all (please circle)

Q. 17 How much time per month have you been allocated, or do you expect to spend, to act as a supervisor to the neighbourhood worker?

Q.18 Is there a support system in place for you as supervisor, if problems arise during the training programme? Yes No
(please add details if you wish)

Q. 19 Do you feel you have the basic skills you need to undertake the task of supervisor? Yes No

Q. 20 Whether you have answered yes or no to Q. 19, Are there any areas concerned with supervision where you might welcome additional knowledge or training? (please specify)

Thank you

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Please hand in the completed form at the Orientation Day in Derby on May 26th

Annex 3b

Residents as Neighbourhood Workers

End of training year questionnaire to supervisors

Your Name:

Your Organisation:

Introduction

Now that the pioneering 1st year of the Residents as Neighbourhood Workers programme is ended, and the neighbourhood workers themselves have completed their feedback forms, the evaluators of the programme want to seek the views of those who acted as supervisors on behalf of the participating employers. You will see that one column in question 12 has been filled in with information from the first questionnaire and is specific to you or your organisation.

This evaluation is very important, both in making the case for whether or not the programme should be continued, and for knowing what things need to be changed to make it more effective.

We would therefore be really grateful if you would fill in the questionnaire and return it either by e-mail or as a hard copy, whichever you prefer. If you would prefer to have a hard copy posted to you, please e-mail as below, or phone 0117 954 5581 to request this.

The e-mail address is f.heywood@bristol.ac.uk

The postal address is:

Frances Heywood
School for Policy Studies, University of Bristol
8, Priory Rd
Bristol BS8 1TZ

NOTE: As before, the answers you and other respondents give will be treated in confidence and used only in a general and anonymised way in the evaluation reports.

General impact of whole programme on neighbourhood worker

Q.1 As far as you can judge, how would you sum up the effect of the whole training programme (both the employment and the formal training sessions) in meeting the neighbourhood worker's needs? (please tick)

excellent	good	fair	little impact	harmful

Q.2 Please add comment if you wish

Usefulness of the formal training sessions provided by the PEP Trust

Q.3 From what you observed, how beneficial to your trainee were the 7 two-day training sessions provided by the PEP Trust trainers during the year?

excellent	good	fair	little impact	harmful

Q.4 Do you have any suggestions for changes to the content of these training sessions or the way in which they are delivered?

General impact of programme on your organisation's needs

Q.3 How well did the employment of this neighbourhood worker meet your organisation's needs? (please tick)

excellent	good	fair	little impact	harmful or wasteful

Q.4 Please add comment if you wish, including any suggestion you might have.

Your role as supervisor

Q.5 Were you the supervisor when the programme started? Yes/No
(please circle, and if yes, please go to question 8)

Q.6 If not, at what stage did you take over?

Q.7 Are there any comments to want to add about this transition (briefing, hand-over, time available to you etc)?

Q.8 While you were the supervisor, how much support did you feel you were able to give?(please tick)

As much support as was needed	
Not as much support as was needed	

Q.9 Please add any comment or suggestion if you wish

Resources for the neighbourhood worker's work

Q. 10 During the year, has your organisation put any extra or specific resources in, in response to the neighbourhood worker's work with the residents? Yes/no
(please circle)

Q.11 Please give brief details or add any comment.

Impact of the programme: outcomes observed

Q.12 . In the pre-training questionnaire, supervisors were asked what possible results they were hoping to see from the programme, and over what time-span. In the first column in this table we have recorded the expectation you or your predecessor gave. Please tick one of the other columns for each item to indicate what has happened in practice

	Expectation recorded by you or your predecessor in pre-training questionnaire*	Some tangible progress made	Things moving in right direction	No change	Things have got worse
Stronger/more active tenants' group(s)					
Better information for management to use in making policy					
Better outcomes for money spent on the estate					
Reduced voids and consequent revenue loss					
Less rent arrears					
Reduced vandalism and crime					
Less drug/alcohol related problems					
Better relations between different ethnic/cultural groups					
Improved inclusion for excluded groups					
Improved health for tenants					
Improved range of activities for various age groups					
Improved educational and employment opportunities for tenants					
Better joint working with both voluntary and statutory agencies in the area					
Increase of tenant voluntary input helpful to the estate					
Others specified by you					

* Four options were given in the pre-training questionnaire. The answers you or your predecessor gave are recorded in this column here as:

“1” = within 12 months

“2” = within 24 months

“3-5” = within 3-5 years

“NE” = not expecting this outcome

Q.13 As you and the workers knew, there were both advantages and disadvantages to the neighbourhood workers in working in an area where they lived. What did you feel was the end result on balance? (please tick)

Advantages outweighed disadvantages	
Disadvantages outweighed the benefits	

Q.14 Was there any other impact of the programme concerning the estate(s) where the neighbourhood worker has been involved, or the residents there, that you wish to mention?

Continuities

Q.14 Is the worker still employed by your organisation? Yes/No (please circle)

Q15 If not, have they found employment elsewhere? Yes/No/NK (please circle)

Q.16 Has the work the neighbourhood worker was doing been continued in some form? Yes/No (please circle, and add details if you wish)

Q.17 From the point of view of your organisation, has the programme been good value for money spent? (please tick)

excellent	good	fair	poor	harmful or wasteful

Q.18 Any other comment or suggestion you wish to m

Thank you very much indeed for your time and trouble.

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Annex 4. Evaluation of the project: methodology

Methodology and parameters

The School for Policy Studies in the University of Bristol was commissioned in 2003 to undertake the independent evaluation of the RNW project. The task was to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme from the point of view of the workers, the employers and the local communities.

This has been done through

Questionnaires sent to the neighbourhood workers at the beginning and end of the training year (annex 2a, 2b) The questionnaires were tailored to reflect the syllabus and declared objectives of the training programme

Similar 'before and after' questionnaires sent to the management supervisors from the employing organisations. (annex 3a, 3b)

A structured discussion with 20 neighbourhood workers from both years, held in May 2006, which gave a chance to explore in depth some of the matters raised in the questionnaire replies. This was recorded and transcribed.

In addition, to secure some direct feedback from residents, each neighbourhood worker was asked at the orientation day to set up a system for agreeing one or two targets with some local people and asking them to measure progress towards the end of the year.

There was also some telephone and e-mail correspondence with some neighbourhood workers and some supervisors during the period of the evaluation. This was especially useful in alerting the evaluator to problems that arose.

Limits of the evaluation

Community development work is not a field where outcomes are achieved in a few months. In the Castle Vale Housing Action Trust in Birmingham, for example, where whole teams of workers were employed and many £millions invested over a 10 year period, major results began to be apparent in only about the eighth year¹⁶. So the outcomes on estates that can be evaluated after one year of this PEP programme are limited and expectations should be modest, unless the worker is joining a team where neighbourhood work is already deeply established. It is wholly reasonable to expect tangible outcomes for the workers, and to some extent for the organisation. For local areas, it is appropriate to look for signs of change but this should be done within a strategic outlook and longer term perspective.

¹⁶ Mornement, A (2005) *No Longer Notorious: the Revival of Castle Vale, 1993-2005* Birmingham, Castle Vale Housing Action Trust

Annex 5 Comparing PEP Trust RNW project with ‘the SRB project’.

In 2005, a senior manager who had become involved in the Residents as Neighbourhood Workers project suggested to the evaluator that a useful comparison might be made between this PEP Trust pilot and a similar programme which was taking place in her own local authority. This local authority initiative was funded with money from the ‘Single Regeneration Budget (SRB6) of the European Union and will be referred to hereafter as the ‘SRB project’.

Description of the SRB project.

The SRB project was set up by a local authority in the year 2000 to give an opportunity to unemployed people from named areas in a county district and county town to gain work experience and training that would lead them into permanent work or further training. The emphasis was on community work, partly in response to the local shortage of qualified community workers. Funding, through SRB6 and match funding from a range of sources was £672,025 over six years, enough for a target of 27 trainees altogether.

Trainees were offered paid work experience and given opportunities for training, though not, in most cases, any training specific to community work. Placements included placements with voluntary organisations who had committed match funding to the SRB bid.

The stated objectives of the SRB project were very close to those of the PEP Trust scheme. They were:

- To increase the capacity of disadvantaged neighbourhoods from within by increasing employment.
- To bring benefits to local people and to the local authority by tackling a range of social problems through community work in local areas undertaken by the trainees.
- To empower local communities by making use of the local knowledge and understanding of the trainees and increasing participation, especially of young people, in order to influence the policies of the local authority.

In the event, 22 SRB traineeships were begun, three people dropped out and, of the 15 that had completed at the time of appraisal, 11 had obtained employment whilst the whereabouts of 4 were unknown. Thus at least half of all the trainees have been helped by the SRB project into further work, and it was hoped that some of the 4 still training at the time of appraisal would also make this transition. The number of trainees was less than the original target of 27, but the number who attained employment after the programme was above the project target of 7. The age range of trainees was 17-40 (average 26), and the great majority were unemployed at the time of recruitment. Some had experience but no qualifications and some had qualifications (including degrees) but no experience. Some had neither. Those who completed the project were very satisfied with the chance it had given them and also felt they had achieved good things in their neighbourhoods.

There was much in common between the two schemes. Both offered a chance to local unemployed people that would not otherwise have been available, and in theory¹⁷ paid a proper salary from the start. Both required considerable effort and determination from participants. Both led to some excellent results for local communities, with more local people involved in projects and more projects and resources than would otherwise have been the case.

Some aspects of the SRB scheme were good for the employees. The project did not impose the demand that trainees travel seven times in the year to attend a residential course. It also deliberately offered a range of work experience and training courses, not limited to neighbourhood work, so that people could find what suited them best.

Advantages of the PEP scheme: less drop-out, better value for money

In general, however, for value for money and achieving good outcomes, the PEP project had several advantages. The most striking differences of outcomes between the two projects as set up were the greater numbers in the SRB project who either dropped out or did not make clear career progression. Drop-out rates represent wasted resources and the reasons why this happened less in the PEP project are therefore very important.

Proper preparation and generous provision of facilities

It is clear that most of the PEP employers made excellent provision for their workers to be provided with a desk, computer and e-mail facilities, and also placed them appropriately and had suitable tasks for them to do. The lack of these essentials caused much distress to the SRB trainees, and is thought to have contributed to people leaving.

Key safety nets of support

Similarly where there were problems because supervisors had left or were too busy to give the amount of support needed, the PEP scheme offered two safety nets beyond the supervisor. One was the provision of an external mentor, which proved really important to some participants. The other was the network of fellow trainees who acted as the best support of all for most neighbourhood workers. Their bonding was especially strong because of the shared training

Proper training in neighbourhood work.

Finally the PEP Trust workers received 14 days of training specifically on community development work and at the end of the year showed a massive increase in knowledge and skills, which they were already using in their work. Learning at this level was not available to the SRB trainees.

Eventually, the Neighbourhood Workers will also have a certificate in community work accredited by the Open College Network, though this had not been finalised at the time of the evaluation.

¹⁷ 'In theory' because in the SRB project the initially-agreed minimum salary was abandoned in the later stages, when its worth had already been reduced by inflation, because of shortage of funds. Also, some workers in both schemes were caught out by the term 'pro rata' and did not understand how little they would be getting compared with the advertised salary..