

NORTH EAST SOCIAL CAPITAL FORUM

CONNECTED & COLLECTIVE: An easy guide to social capital

1ST EDITION

CONNECTED & COLLECTIVE: An easy guide to social capital

This easy guide to social capital has been produced for the North East Social Capital Forum.

It explains social capital, discusses why it is important and how it can benefit communities, and gives some ideas of ways that you can get **connected** and act **collectively**. There is also a list of sources of other information and support on social capital.

Connected (adj.):
linked; joined;
associated; united;
together.

Collective (adj.):
cooperative; communal;
shared; mutual; unified.

SOCIAL CAPITAL: CONNECTED & COLLECTIVE

*Crime is lower in places where people know their
neighbours*

What is social capital?



Social capital is the **social glue** that helps people, organisations and communities to work together towards shared goals. It comes from everyday contact between people, as a result of their forming social connections and networks based on trust, shared values, and reciprocity (or 'give and take').

Here are some other expressions that describe what we mean when we talk about social capital.

Being neighbourly



Give and take

COMMUNITY SPIRIT

*'You scratch my back
and I'll scratch yours'*

'It ain't what you do, it's the way that you do it'

SOCIAL CAPITAL: CONNECTED & COLLECTIVE

*When parents take an active interest in their child's school,
the teachers try harder and the children do better.*

SOCIAL CAPITAL: CONNECTED & COLLECTIVE

'Joining one group cuts in half your odds of dying in the next year' (Robert Putnam)

Why is it important?

Research tells us that:

- High social capital can be good for **children's behaviour, development and educational success**
- Areas with high social capital are **cleaner, safer** and **friendlier** places to live and work
- People who are active in their community or belong to groups and clubs tend to enjoy **better health**
- High levels of trust and strong social networks can help to **ease the effects of financial disadvantage** and may even help to **make us richer**
- Organisations with high social capital have good **knowledge sharing, low transaction costs, and low staff turnover**
- BUT social capital can be a bad thing if it **excludes certain people or groups** (e.g. 'old boys' networks', cartels) or **supports bad behaviour** (e.g. the Mafia, criminal gangs)



Drummed Up: a case study

Drummed Up has over 70 members from a range of ages and backgrounds, including mental health service users, members of local minority ethnic communities, asylum seekers and refugees. The group meets twice weekly to learn drumming techniques and play together as a group. The group regularly performs at local festivals and community events in the West End of Newcastle. As the group has developed, members have learned new skills and gained confidence. A recent evaluation has shown the benefits gained from playing and socialising. In the words of a project user: "...*People are concerned with you and how you are and they'd try to do things outside the group if they thought you were having a hard time and vice versa.*"

Choppington Community Association: a case study

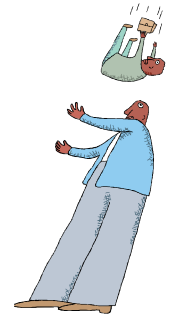
People living in Scotland Gate were concerned about the lack of pride in the area, high levels of anti-social and criminal activities, and the lack of facilities for young people. A number of meetings were held between residents, police, and the local authority to devise an action plan. **Choppington Community Association** was formed to develop projects that would improve the quality of life for local people. Four years later, the fortunes of the local community have changed. There is honest, open and respectful communication between residents, the Council and all agencies that come to work in the area. Members of the community have come together to successfully improve their own neighbourhood, and now have a real say in what happens.

How can you help to build social capital?

What you can do

Be friendly: get to know your neighbours, your colleagues, your children's teachers, and local shop owners; talk to the people you meet in your neighbourhood.

Give someone a hand: offer help with gardening, shopping, cleaning, babysitting, or odd jobs; make use of your skills to help others, e.g. by baking someone a cake.



Get connected: join a community group or club, take evening classes, go to church or another place of worship, or become a volunteer.

Organise something: a sports team or activity group, a community garden, a party, a local litter clean-up day, or a fundraising event.

Have your say: go to a public meeting, vote in elections, take part in a survey, or get involved in a local campaign.

SOCIAL CAPITAL: CONNECTED & COLLECTIVE

People who are active in their community are often more tolerant, less cynical, and have fewer prejudices than those who are not.



What your group or organisation can do



Provide places for people to meet up, e.g. drop-in centres, community cafes, open spaces, crèches or play areas.

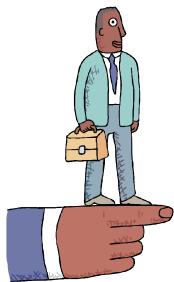
Provide opportunities for people to meet up, e.g. special events or activities.

Make links: get together with other groups and organisations with a common interest or that your organisation may be able to help (or be helped by), learn from, or work with in some way.

Put people in touch with each other: start a newsletter or community notice board; invite people in positions of power to visit your project and talk to your staff, volunteers, and service users.



Involve volunteers in the work you do.



Set up a **mentoring scheme** to support staff, service users, and volunteers.

Help people to stay connected by keeping up contacts and looking out for – and mending – any problems or holes in people's relationships.

SOCIAL CAPITAL: CONNECTED & COLLECTIVE

Getting connected: an example

Why do you need to get connected?

You live in an area where the local primary school is very poor. The teachers have low morale, the building is shabby, and there is not enough equipment to go around. There are no extra-curricular activities for pupils. Educational attainment is low.

How do you get connected?

You decide to form a Parent Teacher Association (PTA). To do this, you have to talk to other people - the Head, school governors, teachers, and other parents – and persuade them to give up their time to help. You start by approaching the people you know, and get them to ask people they know as well.

How do you use these connections?

Working together as a PTA, you decide on a course of collective action. You plan events to raise money, get support from others in the local community, and lobby the local education authority to give more help.

What are the benefits?

- 1) The school now has more money to buy equipment and improve its physical surroundings.
- 2) The teachers are more motivated and work harder. They encourage the children to work hard in lessons and plan extra-curricular activities.
- 3) The reputation of the school improves, and more people send their children there.
- 4) You know more people in your community, especially the parents of your children's friends. This helps your relationship with your children.

5) Knowing your children's teachers better encourages you to take more interest in what they are doing at school, and look for ways you can help them to do better.

6) Your children's educational experience improves, they do better at school, and their future looks brighter as a result.

How do you maintain the connections you've made?

The PTA continues to meet regularly and look at other ways to make improvements to the school.

You keep on talking to the other people you have got to know - other parents and your children's teachers - when you see them at school or in the community. This helps you keep in touch with community events in general, and things that might be of interest to you and your family in particular.

Riverside Community Café: a case study

Riverside Community Cafe opened in 2003 in Skinningrove, a small fishing village in Redcar and Cleveland with high levels of deprivation. It replaced a for-profit café, which had been the only local community meeting place but which had been forced to close down. The new café was planned as a community enterprise led by volunteers. The volunteers acquired confidence by learning new skills, consulted customers to plan a new menu, and in 2004 formed the Goodlife Forum, which supplies the café with organic produce. Some of the volunteers now work as school health supporters or in the catering trade, or have gone into further education. The café has become the focal point of the community in Skinningrove and East Cleveland.

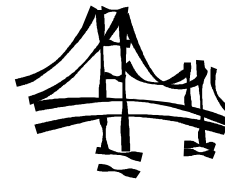
Types of social capital

There are three main types of social capital: **bonding**, **bridging** and **linking** social capital.

Bonding social capital



Social capital can be a **bond** between people: a common identity, purpose or tie that connects similar people, such as members of the same family, ethnic group, club, or community organisation, or neighbours. Bonding social capital is the strongest type, linking us with friends and family and helping us to *'get by'* in life.



Bridging social capital

Social capital can be a **bridge** when it links people with different interests and views - such as people in associations, trade unions, or fellowships - or from different age, ethnic, or income groups. Bridging social capital involves the weaker ties we have with work colleagues and contacts, acquaintances and friends of friends. It can help us to *'get ahead'* in life.

Linking social capital



Social capital can be a **link** between people who have differing levels of power or social status, such as different social classes, or political links. Linking social capital can be a way to get support from formal institutions or people in power.

Social capital key words

When people talk about social capital they often use words like **networks**, **trust**, **social norms**, **sanctions**, and **reciprocity**.

Networks

Networks are the building blocks of social capital. They bring people together with a sense of common purpose based on shared values and identity. They also enable us to exchange information, debate and discuss matters, and give and receive support.



Almost all of us belong to networks. A network can be **informal** – such as a family, group of friends, neighbourhood, or community group - or **formal** – such as local government, the courts, trade unions, or a workplace. The best networks do not exclude people, but help to spread knowledge, power and capacity.



Trust

Trust is needed to build social capital, and can also be an outcome of it. If we can trust that other people mean what they say and will do what they say they will, without having to wait for or demand proof, then this will save us time and energy.

SOCIAL CAPITAL: CONNECTED & COLLECTIVE

Connected communities are good for children: babies are born healthier, teenage pregnancies are few, and young people are less likely to get involved in crime.

SOCIAL CAPITAL: CONNECTED & COLLECTIVE

People who work outside the home are often more involved in their community than those who do not

Norms and sanctions

We come to expect certain things in our dealings with people, e.g. that others can be trusted, that they will generally do things for the public good, and that if we do something wrong people will disapprove of us. These social **norms** and **sanctions**, together with formal rules and laws, help shape the way we behave towards one another.

Reciprocity

Reciprocity is about *give and take*. We tend to do things for others in the expectation that we will get something out of it ourselves – whether as a direct result of what we did, or at a later date, or in the form of indirect benefits to others or to our community in general.



East End Women's Forum: a case study

East End Women's Forum supports and encourages women living in Walker and Wallsend, particularly asylum seekers and refugees, helping them access community services. One of its main events each year is International Women's Day. The Forum promotes and co-ordinates a range of events to celebrate the day, and attracts a diverse range of women of all ages from different communities and cultures across Tyne & Wear and Northumberland. The one-day event gives women an opportunity to access services, gain new skills and develop self confidence, and form important social links.

About the North East Social Capital Forum

What is it?

The North East Social Capital Forum is a two year project looking at ways of building social capital in the North East region. It is funded by One NorthEast and managed by the Community Foundation and Regeneration Exchange.

What does it do?

The Forum aims to raise awareness of social capital and identify good practice in the North East. A multi-disciplinary group of policy-makers, academics and practitioners meets every two months to explore how building social capital can benefit the region. There are quarterly public seminars, and a conference looking at the role of local authorities will take place in summer 2007. The Forum will also produce a series of case studies of social capital in action.

Contact details

For more information about the North East Social Capital Forum, go to the Micro Network hosted by Ignite. It can be found at: www.ignite-ne.com/ignite/NorthEastSocialCapitalForum-sig.nsf?OpenDatabase

Karen Dent, Community Foundation serving Tyne & Wear and Northumberland; Telephone: (0191) 222 0945; email: kd@communityfoundation.org.uk

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SOCIAL CAPITAL: CONNECTED & COLLECTIVE

Connected communities usually find it easier resolve collective problems.

Further information on social capital

BetterTogether

An initiative led by *The Saguaro Seminar: Civic Engagement in America* at Harvard University. It can be found at:

www.bettertogether.org

NCVO/Countryside Agency

Case studies and information can be found in *It's who you know that counts: the role of the voluntary sector in the development of social capital in rural areas* (£10 by email from ncvo@ncvo-vol.org.uk)

New Economics Foundation

www.neweconomics.org

A New Economics Foundation publication, *Prove it: measuring the effect of neighbourhood renewal on local people* can be found at:

www.neweconomics.org/gen/uploads/nrir51m3fwdtanbj2mehub4516012006142151.pdf

New Hampshire Charitable Foundation

Including 100+ ideas for ways to build social capital

www.bettertogethernh.org/bluepic.pdf

renewal.net

How to do it: How to build social capital and Solving the problem: Building social capital can be found at:
www.renewal.net

Robert Putnam

A key writer on social capital and the author of the 'plain English' book, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000). His website can be found at: www.bowlingalone.com

Social Capital Gateway

Resources and further reading on social capital can be found at:
www.socialcapitalgateway.org/index.htm

World Bank

Resources and information can be found at:
www.worldbank.org/poverty/scapital



SOCIAL CAPITAL: CONNECTED & COLLECTIVE

'If you don't go to somebody's funeral, they won't come to yours' (Yogi Berra)

We welcome your views

Do you have any comments about this guide or about social capital? Would you like to share your own experiences? Do you want to know more about the North East Social Capital Forum?

Please write your comments below and send them to: Karen Dent, Community Foundation serving Tyne & Wear and Northumberland, 9th Floor, Cale Cross, 156 Pilgrim Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 6SU. Alternatively you can email or phone Karen (telephone: (0191) 222 0945; email: kd@communityfoundation.org.uk).

I have read **Connected and Collective: An Easy Guide to Social Capital**, and want to give you the following feedback:

Thank you – we appreciate your comments