

# Respecting Success

**WATCH, Working Actively to Change Hillfields, is a flourishing community-led organisation working to transform Hillfields. This briefing looks at how showing respect and being realistic has played a key role in their success.**

Nine years ago Pat Walsh was working nights. *'All I did was come in in the morning, go to bed, and get up again in the evening for work. I didn't know anyone'*. He certainly hadn't met Farid Noor, despite living only one street away.

Farid was concerned about crime, drug dealing and prostitution in the area. So when he met Pat at a community meeting about street lighting, Farid asked Pat to help him set up a residents association. *'I said yes, because this is the only way I'll actually get to know people!'* So King Edwards Residents Association (KERA) was born.

Pat is now the chair of the management committee of WATCH, an organisation being recognised around the country for its contribution to the social, economic and environmental improvement of Hillfields. Farid is also on the committee and was its first chair. - So how did they get this far?

## Rocky beginnings

Once KERA had been set up, Farid was asked to be a member of the Core Working Group, a partnership between the Council and the community that was working towards the regeneration of Hillfields. Pat went along as his deputy.

But it wasn't an easy road – the working group was struggling. Some members had conflicting motives and there was a lot of friction. *'I walked out several times!'* recalls Pat. Fortunately the remaining group decided to build on the work and set up a community organisation.



Pat Walsh

## About WATCH

WATCH is a community-led organisation in Hillfields. They are helping long-term unemployed people, migrant workers and refugees to find jobs. They also have a community development project giving advice and support to community groups, Learndirect and Skills For Life courses, and computers with broadband internet available for public use. Their youth project runs courses and offers employment advice for 14-19 year olds. And WATCH is also very proud of its community radio station, The Hillz FM.

## Contact WATCH

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E [info@watch-hillfields.org](mailto:info@watch-hillfields.org)

W [www.watch-hillfields.org.uk](http://www.watch-hillfields.org.uk)

The Hillz FM: [www.thehillz.net](http://www.thehillz.net)

## A Coventry Community Empowerment Briefing

The Council employed community development consultants who worked with people like Pat, Farid and other active community members for 18 months. *'The training established who was really committed to the whole of Hillfields'*, says Farid. And in 1998 they voted 20 people onto the first management committee and WATCH was born.

### Making it work

A key feature of WATCH's success has been their ability to work together with bodies such as the Council, Area Co-ordination staff, local community organisations and the Police. - So how did they build and sustain these relationships?

**By showing respect:** *'We gave people respect and got the same level of respect back'* says Farid. *'You don't get respect by not showing it. It worked to such an extent that the Council gave us a Grant Aid Agreement, so we were in charge of our own fate'*.

**By being realistic:** *'We didn't ask for miracles, as people sometimes do in the community'* says Farid. *'People can make a mistake by demanding things that can't be done'*. *'The more reasonable you are with the Council or whoever, the more difficult it is for them to say no'*, adds John Shannon, development worker at WATCH.

**By learning from others:** *'I learnt a lot from the area co-ordinator'* says Eileen Smith, another committee member. *'When I first started going to some of the police liaison meetings I wouldn't say a word. But I do come out with it now!'* And the board is made up of people with a range of experiences of working at different levels, so that they learn from each other.

### Satisfaction

WATCH still face challenges of many kinds, especially in securing funding. But the changes they see around them in Hillfields inspire them to continue. For Farid, *'the greatest satisfaction is to see how things are, compared with ten years ago. To look outside today and see the difference in people's confidence, in their ability to walk along a main road without the fear of crime, to see the diverse community that we live in – that is a fantastic achievement'*.

### Neighbourhood Management

*Area Co-ordination* has been replaced by Neighbourhood Management. This is the way the Council now works to reflect the needs and preferences in local neighbourhoods to improve its services and quality of life for local people.

Contact:

North East: 024 7678 5910

North West: 024 7629 4429

South: 024 7678 5555

### Grant Aid Agreements

are contracts between a funding body such as the Council and an organisation that is delivering a service.

### Sources of support for developing a community organisation

Coventry Voluntary Service Council

T: 024 7622 0381

National Council for Voluntary Organisations:

T: 0800 2 798 798 (free)

E: [helpdesk@askncvo.org.uk](mailto:helpdesk@askncvo.org.uk)

Textphone: 0800 01 88 111 (minicom)

Their website has useful guides

W: [www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/askncvo](http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/askncvo)