

5. Different perspectives

Why should different people and organisations be interested in sustainable communities?



The individual's perspective

As individuals we need to understand and get involved in the sustainable communities agenda because:

- Our own quality of life is affected by the nature of the community in which we live and work
- Our choices and actions inevitably impact on those with whom we share a community
- We need to be aware of the wider issues affecting environmental sustainability and be prepared to modify our own behaviour accordingly
- We may have wider responsibilities – a family, friends, a community group or a role on a local council – where we can bring our own awareness and knowledge of sustainable communities to bear
- We can take an active role in our community – get engaged in activities and help make a difference



The professional's perspective

People working in the core professions obviously need to be aware of the sustainable communities agenda if they are to contribute effectively.

They need to:

- Understand the aims and objectives of Government strategy and understand how this is being interpreted at a regional and local level
- Keep aware of policy changes and any new guidance as it is issued
- Understand the roles and responsibilities of the key stakeholders involved in delivering sustainable communities – especially the other core professionals with whom they come into contact – and understand how they can best contribute
- Ensure that their professional skills and know-how are maintained by regular continuing professional development activity. And make sure that they take on board any advice issued by their professional body
- Assess their essential generic skills – as set out by Egan – and undertake learning and professional development activities to address any weaknesses
- Try to ensure that any staff for whom they have responsibility are kept aware and receive support for relevant training and to gain appropriate experience
- Act as champions of the sustainable communities agenda with all colleagues and clients with whom their work brings them into contact

People working in what Egan identifies as the ‘associated occupations’ still need a good understanding of the sustainable communities agenda, even though they are not directly involved in the design, development or building of such communities. They will benefit from:

- An understanding of the principles that lie behind the concept of sustainable communities
- An understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the main local players
- Assessing – and strengthening, where necessary – their own generic skills

The provider’s perspective

Training providers have a key role to play in helping to deliver the sustainable communities agenda, including:

- Helping to raise the awareness and understanding of the agenda across all sections of the population, but especially those who benefit from their training and learning programmes
- Helping to ensure that resources for skills development and capacity building are made available – and are built into the core budgets of all major programmes
- Developing critical generic skills and integrating them into other activities
- Acting as champions to inspire and motivate others to contribute through the professions and the community
- Encouraging collaborative working to ensure shared values and capabilities
- Improving the effectiveness of the learning process so that wheels are not continuously reinvented

The broker’s perspective

Brokers of business support and training services have an important role to play in helping to deliver the sustainable communities agenda, including:

- Helping to raise the awareness and understanding of the agenda across all sections of the population, but especially those managers and staff of companies with whom they come into contact
- Encouraging business leaders to take an active role in their local community – in providing leadership, resources and opportunities for local people
- Encouraging businesses to become embedded in the community, to grow, to innovate and to prosper
- Helping businesses to think about the impact of their activities on the local environment and their community, and to think about ameliorating these impacts
- Encouraging the development of generic skills and their integration into other activities
- Encouraging collaborative working to ensure shared values and capabilities
- Improving the effectiveness of learning
- Encouraging companies to take advantage of the many business opportunities arising out of the move towards sustainable communities – helping them to consider the implications for their skills base
- Encouraging companies to think about the implications of the sustainable communities agenda for their skills and capabilities – there will be particular implications for companies delivering the goods and services that are required to build and operate sustainable communities, but companies will also have to consider the impact of impending changes in legislation and environmental standards



The business perspective

Businesses need to understand and get involved in the sustainable communities agenda because:

- Successful businesses are critical to a flourishing local economy, and this is a vital component of any sustainable community
- Businesses need to be able to recruit and retain labour with the requisite skills and motivation – this is likely to be more effective where it arises out of strong local relationships with schools and other training providers, and where it builds on community loyalty
- Many businesses need to be able to sell their products and services into the local market – it follows that a thriving and prosperous community will support a higher level of sales
- Businesses need to know how to operate and trade in a way that minimises their adverse effects on the environment and people's quality of life
- Some businesses may need to know how to exploit the market opportunities for new products and services that will result from the sustainable approach
- Businesses will benefit from operating in a safe and clean environment – not only because it reduces the amount of money wasted on security and cleaning, but also because it improves their image, reassures potential investors and protects staff
- Businesses will benefit from improved generic skills. These improve the individual's ability to perform, improve team working and other forms of collaborative working, and are strongly related to personal and business productivity
- Businesses will benefit from having their opinions heard and being able to influence policy-makers

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