



Every Action Counts

Year One Activities and Achievements

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A report by **CAG Consultants and Community Development Foundation** for the Sustainable Development Unit, DEFRA

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CAG CONSULTANTS
Gordon House
6 Lissenden Gardens
London NW5 1LX
Tel/fax 020 7482 8882
hq@cagconsult.co.uk
www.cagconsultants.co.uk

For direct enquiries about this report please contact:

Emma Cranidge
Ewood House, Ewood Lane
Todmorden
West Yorkshire
OL14 7DF
tel: 01706 817347
email: ec@cagconsult.co.uk

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Summary

The Every Action Counts programme has been designed to help community groups, clubs and societies across England get involved in simple environment-friendly actions as part of a process of organisational change which embeds sustainable development into their day-to-day practice. The purpose of this report is to illustrate the achievements of the Every Action Counts programme in its first year. As a summary of some activities within the programme this report accompanies the more detailed, process-focused evaluation report prepared by CAG Consultants in April 2007.

The report demonstrates ways that the programme is having an impact on the community and voluntary sector in each of the five Every Action Counts themes - saving energy, travelling wisely, shopping ethically, saving resources and caring for your area. For example many participating organisations have:

- Developed actions to **save energy** through assessing their energy use, putting in place actions to reduce energy use, incorporating energy saving design and appointing Energy Champions;
- Instituted both policy and practical measures to **travel wisely** including green travel plans and information about them, promoting public transport and cycle use, home working, car sharing, use of bio-fuels, and discouragement of use of domestic flights for short trips;
- Committed to **shopping ethically** including using fair trade and local products where possible, incorporating ethical considerations into venue use such as ensuring these are run by charities or social enterprises, using eco-friendly products and undertaking training in ethical procurement practices;
- Reviewed their practices and made imaginative approaches to **saving resources** including encouraging re-use and recycling schemes in-house, avoiding using disposables, and investigating buying longer lasting goods, IT and furniture;
- Found ways to **care for their area** by managing gardens and discouraging littering and dog fouling, working on green space projects, improving the office environment, undertaking street audits, and running training on environmental skills.

In the first year of Every Action Counts, many organisations have also taken important steps towards embedding the programme's principles in the voluntary and community sector's own management and governance arrangements. Activities include 'signing up' trustees of organisations to the programme; setting up Environmental Management Systems; designating staff, working groups or office champions with particular Every Action Counts roles; measuring results of actions from recognised baselines; setting up monitoring systems to evaluate the impact of policy changes; meeting external environmental standards; raising staff and membership awareness of Every Action Counts themes and undertaking a range of relevant training.

Activities within the programme are already demonstrating 'step change' in all the Every Action Counts themes as well as in management and governance of the programme. This is occurring both inside organisations, and through their influence, to help other organisations to also make step changes towards sustainability.

1. Activity report

1.1. Purpose of the report

The purpose of this report is to illustrate the achievements of the Every Action Counts programme in its first year. This is not a full description of all the activity of the programme, but a brief summary of some of its early achievements. The report was developed by CAG Consultants who are the programme's independent evaluators, and by the Community Development Foundation who are the accountable body for the programme delivery consortium.

In writing this report we have tried to bring together a range of information that demonstrates ways that the programme is having an impact on the community and voluntary sector. In particular we have reviewed information that suggests moves towards a step change in the sector, especially within the five key areas that the programme seeks to influence. There are sections on each of these - saving energy, travelling wisely, shopping ethically, saving resources and caring for your area. We have also included a section on how the programme has been managed so far and two longer case studies highlighting approaches taken to Every Action Counts by participating organisations.

In preparing the report we have reviewed information from three main sources:

- Sustainable Development Action Plans prepared by consortium member organisations;
- Presentations developed by participating organisations; and
- Green Gauge Reports.

As a summary of some activities within the programme this report accompanies the more detailed, process focused evaluation report prepared by CAG Consultants in April 2007.

1.2. Introduction to the Every Action Counts programme

The Every Action Counts (EAC) programme has been designed to help community groups, clubs and societies across England get involved in simple environment-friendly actions as part of a process of organisational change which embeds sustainable development into their day-to-day practice.

On 28th June 2006, when David Milliband launched the programme, he said that it would *"help unlock the potential of local groups and clubs across the country to encourage more people to join in and help to meet the big environmental challenges all of us face"* (DEFRA Press Release 28th June 2006).

The programme's stated mission is to *"provide a catalyst which helps embed sustainable development into the ongoing work of community groups and those that work to support them. It aims to re-invigorate community action on sustainable development and make a long-lasting difference through improved understanding about sustainable development, new tools, better information and communication.* The programme aims to mainstream the positive changes it brings about and build them into existing community networks, structures and practice." (Community Action 2020, Community Support Programme, Programme Prospectus, March 2006)

Following the publication of a Prospectus by Defra in March 2006, the Community Sector Coalition, together successfully bid to deliver the work. The group the Coalition set up to deliver the programme is known as the Every Action Counts Consortium.

The programme has five thematic areas noted above, as well as a clearly defined target audience, and the following work areas:

1. The 'Every Action Counts' Community Champion Scheme.
2. Embedding Sustainable Development in the Voluntary & Community Sector.
3. Building the capacity of frontline community workers on Sustainable Development.
4. The Online Resource Bank.
5. The Offline Resource Bank.
6. Recognition, Dissemination and Celebration of Good Practice.

2. Every Action Counts Themes

There are five Every Action Counts activity themes, and participating organisations are pursuing numerous actions in all of these areas - saving energy, travelling wisely, shopping ethically, saving resources and caring for your area. Some of the many activities undertaken so far are described in the following section.

2.1. 'Saving energy' activities

In this early period participating organisations are all very keen to assess their baseline energy use, in order to track the impact of the Every Action Counts programme and any changes it is responsible for. For example the National Community Reinvestment Coalition, Capacity Global, the Civic Trust, the Educational Centres Association, the Tenant Participation Advisory Service, Greenspace, the Furniture Re-use Network, the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens, the Urban Forum, the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts and Community Matters have all started to assess their baseline energy use. As part of this process Community Matters and Groundwork are also including an assessment of their CO₂ pollution and are setting targets to reduce it.

Having established this baseline, organisations are working towards putting in place a range of agreed actions to reduce energy use. Organisations who have defined actions to take place before March 2007 include the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts, the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, the National Community Reinvestment Coalition, the Tenant Participation Advisory Service, British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, the Educational Centres Association, the Community Recycling Network, the Civic Trust and Capacity Global.

As an example, Community Matters list a number of actions they are putting in place to reduce energy use, including appointing an Energy Champion to ensure lights, computers & photocopiers are turned off; ensuring energy efficient light bulbs are installed on replacement; reducing the number of light bulbs per office; investigating switching to a green energy supplier and holding tenants' meetings to discuss energy saving opportunities with landlords.

Other organisations have made a quick change to using a 100% renewable energy supplier. Organisations choosing this action before March 2007 include Capacity Global, National Council for Voluntary Organisations, the Community Recycling Network and the National Community Reinvestment Coalition. The

Community Recycling Network has also extended this action by starting to set up a brokerage deal for their members when buying green electricity. Not all of the participating organisations can make this change, as they are tenants. But among this tenant group, some, like the Urban Forum, are lobbying their landlords to make energy use improvements on their behalf.

Various participating organisations have incorporated energy saving designs and features into their buildings. For example the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers has incorporated such features in to their head office, and the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens are making further improvements to their head office. Community Matters, meanwhile, is reviewing office layouts to ensure that radiators are not blocked, furniture is space saving and that light bulbs are energy efficient.

2.2. 'Travelling wisely' activities

A second key theme is to travel wisely and again a number of participating organisations are developing actions, which include both policy and practical measures. For example, all participating organisations have devised or are working towards an organisational "green travel plan", while some, like the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, have set targets for reducing business mileage. The National Community Reinvestment Coalition meanwhile is offering interest free loans for bicycles and is delivering training for staff to promote the benefits of cycling. The National Community Reinvestment Coalition and Greenspace meanwhile are encouraging walking groups in their staff teams, while others, like the Community Recycling Network and Community Matters, are working to improve the numbers of people walking and using public transport to events.

This is also about better information and the Community Development Exchange has incorporated new statements in their staff handbooks to ensure that staff are aware of the green travel policy and have the information they need to implement it. They have also incorporated public transport criteria in their 'venues checklist' for hiring venues for training etc. Similarly Community Matters are promoting public transport use for attendance at their events.

Another way forward is by reducing the need to travel. The Community Recycling Network is reviewing the possibilities of home working to reduce the impact of travel to work and has also introduced expenses for bike use. Along with the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts, they are investigating the use of teleconferencing as an alternative to travel.

To travel more wisely organisations such as Community Matters are working towards using bio-diesel vehicles and are also raising awareness of their staff to alternatives to driving to work. The Furniture Re-use Network also has measures in place to promote car sharing and the use of bio-diesel or other alternative for its 1000 plus member vehicles. The Civic Trust and the Educational Centres Association have begun to actively discourage the use of domestic flights, while the Civic Trust has started to use cycle couriers for short trips and carbon neutral providers for longer trips. The Urban Forum is considering season ticket loans for staff and is encouraging the use of green taxis. To promote 'mode shift' the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts has ensured their showers and changing rooms are available for cyclists.

2.3. 'Shopping ethically' activities

The third theme in the Every Action Counts programme is about shopping ethically and a number of participating organisations have made a commitment to ethical shopping through their Sustainable Development Action Plans. Actions

being taken include the use of fair trade goods where possible (being done 11 organisations); the use local products where possible (being done 7 organisation); maximising the growing of crops on land for which the organisation has responsibility or promoting projects which have food growing as an element of their work (being done by 4 organisations).

The Community Development Exchange has incorporated ethical considerations in their 'venues checklist' for hiring venues or training. The Furniture Re-use Network has also reviewed their venue hiring to ensure that they hire venues that are run by charities or social enterprises. Other organisations, like the Community Recycling Network, have begun to ensure that venues use local food suppliers.

Community Matters and Community Recycling Network are also using eco-friendly cleaning products and influencing their building landlords to do the same. The National Council for Voluntary Organisations has committed itself to becoming a fair trade organisation. The Urban Forum is also trying to source ethically made and traded products like the stationery it uses. Other organisations are either currently banking with an ethical bank, or, like the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts, investigating making the change.

In addition, a number of organisations have approached the issue of developing ethical procurement through running their own training, developing their policies and procedures, allowing staff time to be given to the process, or finding ways to source goods more ethically.

2.4. 'Saving resources' activities

The theme of saving resources has led a number of participating organisations to review their own practices and produce imaginative approaches to change. Some of the key actions and changes that participating organisations are making are described here.

Organisations are doing things as simple as encouraging double-sided paper use; encouraging paper recycling; recycling cardboard, print cartridges, and glass; pursuing in-house recycling schemes; buying recycled paper; re-using office equipment and IT components and using recycled furniture. Other actions include reducing mailings received and cancelling unwanted mail or subscriptions that are unread; reducing the size of organisational mail outs; committing to a zero waste policy; stopping the use of disposables and instead using only re-useable cutlery and crockery; and investigating buying longer lasting goods, IT and furniture.

2.5. 'Care for your area' activities

Within the theme of caring for your area, participating organisations have developed a range of interesting approaches up to March 2007. For example, the National Community Reinvestment Coalition is managing all gardens and woodlands using organic methods and is dedicating staff time to clearing litter. The Community Development Exchange also cares for their immediate environment in terms of picking up litter and safe parking. Capacity Global are paying staff one day per month to be released from work, to work instead on a local green space related project. Similarly, The Civic Trust has taken an outward looking approach through supporting members on issues of dog fouling and littering. The Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts is also creating relaxed areas within members' offices and working outside to improve the environment through staff action days and picking up litter. Community Matters meanwhile has set up in-house and external approaches to this theme. They have improved their office environment, with more plants, for example, and are working towards a street audit for the exterior environment.

Again training and knowledge development are key areas for action in support of this theme. The National Community Reinvestment Coalition is running courses or workshops on issues that relate to this key theme. Likewise, the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers is also continuing to provide training to individuals in environmental skills. The Community Recycling Network has appointed a specific staff member to find out about local 'care for your area' strategies.

The Urban Forum meanwhile has widened out the ambit of this theme by encouraging staff to participate in 'click here' activities to lobby for improvements on global hunger or climate change.

Case Study - Internal changes and external influences at the Tenant Participation Advisory Service

The Tenant Participation Advisory Service is a not-for-profit organisation led by its members. It works in England at local, regional and national levels. The Tenant Participation Advisory Service has changed the way it operates in the light of being involved in the Every Action Counts programme and believes that its members are now better informed about the simple ways they can make changes within their own homes and communities.

The Tenant Participation Advisory Service has taken a range of internal actions to embed knowledge and increase the potential for future action in the organisation. These actions include:

- Completing a Sustainable Development Action Plan
- Completing a Communications Plan
- Raising awareness of environmental issues amongst all staff
- Appointing one of the organisation's directors to oversee all of the work on the environment
- Training their five regional managers to deliver EAC presentations/ sessions for community groups
- Developing new partnership working with environmental organisations within the sector

In addition to these strategic changes the Tenant Participation Advisory Service has also implemented some practical steps for change, including:

- Using fair trade tea and coffee for meetings
- Car sharing or using rail rather than flying
- Recycling through giving old computers to community groups

In working towards informing their members about Every Action Counts themes, the Tenant Participation Advisory Service has undertaken a huge range of activities. These include presentations and updates on Every Action Counts to conferences and regional and local groups, as well as articles in members' newsletters and on web pages, and the production of an Every Action Counts work book.

Finally, the Tenant Participation Advisory Service is using its external influence to work with three landlord organisations to develop a sustainable development action plan template to help them embed the principles of Every Action Counts within their own organisations.

Source: Developed from Presentation to Defra, April 2007.

3. Governance and management

In the first year of the Every Action Counts programme there have been a range of important activities associated with the process of embedding the programme aims within the voluntary and community sector. Some of these actions - in particular during the development of Sustainable Development Action Plans - emphasise the importance of making sure that actions and activities occur within a context of improved management and governance arrangements. Participating organisations realise that such arrangements can guide their process successfully, add management quality to the work and establish a coherent policy context for actions being taken.

During the first year of the programme participating organisations have taken some exciting steps in this area. These steps are in themselves 'step changes' within each organisation. Below we list some examples of this work.

3.1. Management sign up

All targeted organisations have undertaken work to ensure that their trustees are 'signed up' to the Every Action Counts programme. For different organisations, this work has included updating of existing policies or setting up new ones. Five organisations are also being supported to set up Environmental Management Systems (EMS) with Every Action Counts programme support.

3.2. Staffing

To ensure that it is clear within organisations who is responsible for taking action forward, participating organisations have designated staff to particular roles. They have done this by either asking staff to nominate themselves for key actions that they feel they could do, or by appointing senior managers and others to defined roles.

Some organisations, like the Tenant Participation Advisory Service, have adopted a 'working groups' approach, and others, like the Urban Forum, have developed the role of office champions.

3.3. Baseline assessments

Some organisations are keen to measure their results from recognised baselines at the beginning of the programme. For example the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers explain that they are "*undertaking research to identify what BTCV's [British Trust for Conservation Volunteers] environmental footprint is. This work should calculate both the environmental impacts we have through the consumption of energy, fuel and resources and the positive impact our environmental improvement projects can have in offsetting our overall impact.*" (British Trust for Conservation Volunteers Sustainable Development Action Plan).

3.4. Measurement and recording systems

A number of participating organisations are setting up or developing systems through which onward monitoring can take place. For example the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers is developing their existing annual environmental audit to become a more fully rounded sustainable development audit. Meanwhile the National Council for Voluntary Organisations is starting to evaluate the impact of their 2006 Eco Audit. Other participating organisations have detailed plans to monitor progress within their Sustainable Development Action Plans.

3.5. Meeting external standards

The British Trust for Conservation Volunteers and others are committing to participating in the opportunity provided by the Every Action Counts programme to receive external recognition for their environmental auditing process by

applying for a BS8555 award. Groundwork meanwhile is working towards achieving what is known as Phase Three for BS8555.

3.6. Staff awareness raising

Staff awareness is an important aspect of the programme. There is a vast range of activity taking place to raise awareness of the themes among staff groups in participating organisations. For example the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers is developing a One Planet Living Road Show as a one-day training event. This explains the principles behind the concept of One Planet Living, enables local teams to produce simple action plans which complement a national plan, and encourages them to change their environmental behaviour.

Community Matters meanwhile is arranging Every Action Counts training for staff, consultants and trainers. The National Council for Voluntary Organisations and the Tenant Participation Advisory Service have included staff training and staff induction processes as part of their Every Action Counts changes. The Royal Society for Wildlife Trusts has sent a questionnaire to all staff to ensure that they feel involved in developing the organisation's Sustainable Development Action Plan. The Urban Forum has created an information pack for trustees and staff to raise awareness.

3.7. Membership and awareness raising

Participating organisations are seeking to inform and raise awareness among those they influence as well as their own staff and trustees. For example, as a way of communicating the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers' commitment to One Planet Living, they are designing an eye-catching poster for display in each of their offices, training centres, community buildings and tool stores.

Community Matters is introducing sustainable development standards for all conferences and workshops and to assist in this process is investigating what others have done successfully. The Urban Forum has also put in place a 'greener events checklist' and, from the use of this, plan to celebrate getting greener at all events. Capacity Global too has ended the use of disposables at their conferences.

Community Matters meanwhile is incorporating Every Action Counts actions through all their publications.

Case study - Bassac: linking strategic policy to practical steps in collaboration

The British Association of Settlements and Social Action Centres (Bassac) is a national umbrella organisation that is a registered charity. It has 100 member organisations to whom it provides a service that includes a support programme, publications, events, and research and development. In the main the members of Bassac and those it seeks to represent, are multi-purpose, community-based structures.

In order to bring about change within their organisation Bassac has developed a management commitment to the process and principles of Every Action Counts, backed up by improved policy. This has been followed by a launch event with staff to raise their awareness of the issues within the key Every Action Counts themes, plus the practical process of the development of a Sustainable Development Action Plan (SDAP). The changes that Bassac has made include a combination of actions to develop an internal support structure, raise staff awareness and develop practical steps that contribute to the Every Action Counts key themes. Some of these are shown in the table below:

Support structure	Raising awareness actions	Practical actions
Green Team	Devising clear and simple messages about actions	Changing to lower impact cleaning products
Training analysis	Regular email for staff updating them on progress and actions	Removing waste paper bins
Budget allocation	Energy saving posters	Developing ways to recycle card, glass and plastic
		Ensuring all printing is double sided
		Replacing spotlights with more energy efficient lighting
		Bicycle racks and loans

Bassac intends to measure their progress against a baseline survey carried out at the beginning of their work on Every Action Counts themes. Bassac together with other partners has taken a collaborative, participative approach to ensure that all staff buy in to the change. This approach was kicked off after the baseline survey with a 'Greening the Building' workshop to which all staff were invited to discuss changes that could be made.

Source: Developed from Presentation to Defra, April 2007.

4. In conclusion

As this activities and achievements report demonstrates, the Every Action Counts programme aims to bring about a step change towards sustainable development in the voluntary and community sector. To that end it has already generated a very significant amount of useful and interesting activity towards more sustainable behaviour in the target audience for the programme. Activities within the programme are already demonstrating step change in all the Every Action Counts themes as well as in the management and governance of the programme. This is occurring both inside organisations, and through their influence, to help other organisations to also make step changes towards sustainability.