"People are our greatest strength but the strength needs to be mobilized" May Blood 2010

Community Development recognises that health is a human right for everyone within our society. Not all of us experience the same access to education, housing, health care and as recent evidence suggests this leads to inequality within our society which has a negative impact on us all. (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010)

CDHN recognises the value of using community development to address health inequality. Within our society those who are affected most by health inequalities face issues such as poverty, low educational achievement, inadequate housing and poor employability prospects on a daily basis.

The conditions in which people live and work can help create or destroy their health (WHO, 2006)

This statement provides a good starting point to begin to explore how the process of community development can bring about significant changes to individuals, their communities and to the wider society.

CD is global!

Community development is established both internationally and nationally. At an international level much work is done through NGOs and closer to home, in the UK and Ireland the work of the Community and Voluntary sector tends to lead on much Community Development work.

CD is not new!

Community development has a longstanding track record of working with marginalised people. Examples range from the work of Paulo Freire in Brazil and the effect of the 1930' recession to diverse projects and initiatives working at local, national and global levels to effect change. It is the work of Freire and the publication of his book Pedagogy of the Oppressed that highlights the political context in which community development must operate. Freire recognised that people who were faced with poverty and social exclusion felt powerless to change their situation. Key to Freirian thinking is making the links between the lives of people in communities and the political structures which support this. (Ledwith, 2005).

Connected Knowing

Dialogue and understanding, the stories of the people with whom practitioners work with on a daily basis is the foundation on which community development begins. This leads to a better understanding of the people who often feel powerless and unable to make positive changes within their own lives. Connected knowing is built on trust and respect with the result that people begin to feel validated. It also requires us to suspend our own knowing in order to hear many truths based on different experiences. (Ledwith, 2012)

The very act of listening and interacting with people is in itself an empowering act thus begins the process of Community Development but it must also be located within the wider structures of people's daily lives. (Ledwith 2005) People realise that they are valued and their views and experience matter. This leads to better levels of self confidence and self esteem and the process of addressing need within people's lives begins.

BCPP Participant at Breakthru…."It made me feel like I mattered..."

Dialogue : Connected Knowing

Reproduced the permission of The Policy Press (Ledwith and Springett, 2010)

The Building Community Pharmacy Project (BCPP) is run by CDHN it works with pharmacists and local communities to identify and address local need using a community development approach.

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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND HEALTH NETWORK

The Distinctive Contribution Of Community Development

Role	Outcome
Help people see that they have common concerns about local or other public issues and they could benefit from working together under their own control.	• Reduction in isolation and alienation • Increase in co operation and social capital
Help people to work together on those issues, often by forming or developing an independent community group, supporting them to plan and take actions and encouraging evaluations and reflection as a way of improving effectiveness.	• Creation or improvement of bona fide community groups • Increase of opportunities for activity in the community • More effective community activity
Support and develop independent groups across the community sector non-directively but within an ethical framework, increase networking between groups.	Increase in: • Community sector • Volunteering • Mutual aid and autonomous services • Learning between groups • Improvements in the conditions locally
Promote the values of equity and inclusiveness, participation and co operation throughout this work.	Increase in: • Participation • Social capital • Co –operation • Community cohesion
Empower people and their organisation to influence and transform public polices and services and all factors affecting the conditions of their lives.	• Community engagement and influence Improvement in: • Dialogue between community and authorities • Coherence and effectiveness of public policies
Advise and inform public authorities on community perspectives and assist them to strength communities and work in genuine partnership with them.	• Increased capacity of agencies, authorities and professions to engage with communities • Improvement in delivery of public services • Increased resources for the community sector. *Community Development Challenge, 2006*

Values of Community Development

Community development is a long - term values based process which aims to address imbalances in power and bring about change founded on social justice equality and inclusion.

The process enables people to improve the quality of their own lives, the communities in which they live and societies of which they are a part.

The NOS identify 5 values that are identified as core to the process of community development.

Social Justice
Anti –discrimination, Collective Action
Community Empowerment, Working and Learning Together
(National Occupational Standards, 2010)

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Wilson R and Pickett K (2010) *The Spirit Level: why equality*

Community development is distinguished from social work and allied welfare professions through its commitment to collective ways of addressing problems. Community development is primarily concerned with meeting the needs and aspirations of communities whose circumstances have left them poorly provided for and often without adequate services with limited means to organise and excluded form mainstream opportunities to participate in activities or decision making. *(Gilchrist, 2009)*

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