

Hartlepool New Deal for Communities

## Evaluation of the Salaam Centre



Final Report

July 2009

<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. Background and context</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3. The evaluation process</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>4. The key findings</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>5. Conclusions</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>6. Recommendations for NDC</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Appendix</b>	<b>19</b>

**Partners Workshop Feedback Report June 10<sup>th</sup> 2009**

It should be noted that the findings in this report are based upon the views of those interviewed, along with information found in the documents reviewed and the outcomes of workshops.

These views are not necessarily endorsed by the consultants or the client, nor do they represent the views of particular authorities, organisations or agencies.

## **I. Introduction**

1.1 In 2009, Social Regeneration Consultants (SRC) was appointed as an evaluation partner for the in-house evaluation of various Hartlepool New Deal for Communities' (NDC) projects and themes. The first of these was an evaluation of the Salaam Centre, which is the focus of this report.

1.2 Hartlepool has been home to a small community of Bangladeshi and Pakistani families for more than 45 years, focused around the Murray Street area. Support for the Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities in central Hartlepool pre-dates NDC. It started with Hartlepool Borough Council Community Services work with Asian women, supported by the old Cleveland County Council's community development team. The arrival of NDC enabled this early support work to be turned into a significant long-term project, supported by WEA. NDC took over project management responsibility in 2004, following the last evaluation report, which was also undertaken by SRC.

1.3 This evaluation comes at a time when the project is facing major change. A new Salaam Community Centre is under construction, with facilities which will replace the existing centre on Murray Street. The current service is facing a short-term funding crisis, as NDC support comes to an end after 8 years and alternative funding sources are explored. One of the key challenges for the project is how to maintain the service during this difficult period. The outcomes from this evaluation should help to signpost the way forward.

1.4 This final report should be read in conjunction with the Interim Report to the NDC Steering Group, which was approved in May 2009. It does not include an assessment based on NDC's standard evaluation questions, although sections 4.7, 4.8 and 4.9 do look at how the project has changed since the last evaluation in 2003. We felt it would be more helpful to focus this report on the current position, charting a course for the project and its services over the next few years, post-NDC.

## **2. Background and context**

2.1 The key conclusions and recommendations from the 2003-04 evaluation were:

- project management responsibility for the Salaam Centre should be transferred from the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) to NDC
- an experienced Centre Manager should be appointed
- NDC should review the job descriptions of the project staff in the light of both the evaluation and the suggested review of roles and salaries
- training for Hartlepool Asian Association (HAA) Management Committee members should be continued on a regular basis

- the Salaam Centre should prioritise partnership working with local agencies
- the project should be actively promoting itself and its activities to a wider audience
- a new stand-alone Centre should be supported and preparatory work should begin during 2004. Business planning should begin once a suitable location has been agreed and secured
- the new Centre should be managed by a body comprising HAA representatives, NDC, agency representatives and other community organisations working with or from the new Centre
- the Centre should be used by the wider community and actively promoted as an International/Multi-Cultural Centre.

2.2 The NDC, which has been the main supporter of the Salaam Centre, both in terms of financial support and on-going advice and staff management, is set to wind up in March 2011. Over the last eight years, it has provided £636,000 to support the work of the Centre and has committed a further £408,000 towards the cost of the conversion of St Paul's Church as a new base for the Centre. An additional £4,600 was provided to employ fundraisers in November 2008.

2.3 A number of key questions or issues to be explored during the evaluation were agreed with the client and included:

- what has happened since the last evaluation in relation to training, project management; staff roles and responsibilities, Management Committee roles and responsibilities?
- have changes made since the last evaluation been broadly positive? Is the Salaam Centre more sustainable now than it was five years ago? Is it meeting its objectives more effectively? Has it made a significant difference to the lives of its clients?
- what are the options for NDC in terms of future support and use of grant?
- is the new Community Centre proposal viable? What are the outstanding issues, including in relation to staffing, management and finances?

2.4 It was also agreed that, although it was important to look at what had happened to the project since the last evaluation, the emphasis should be forward looking, identifying current issues, opportunities and problems and examining how these may or may not impact on future proposals for the Centre. That is the focus of this final evaluation report.

### 3. The evaluation process

3.1 The evaluation process originally agreed with NDC was as follows:

- a document and data review to include a review of the previous evaluation, a look at recent Management Committee minutes, a review of the business plan and a timeline review of activities and actions since the 2003/4 evaluation
- structured, individual, face-to-face or telephone interviews with Salaam Centre staff, Management Committee members and a variety of external stakeholders
- a Salaam Centre user survey
- a focus group with Management Committee members
- a public event to gauge support for a new Community Centre and raise its profile to potential users and the wider community
- a SWOT or STEP analysis of the Salaam Centre and proposals for the new Centre, leading to conclusions and recommendations

3.2 During the course of the evaluation, it became clear to the evaluators and NDC that changes to this methodology were needed – to take account of the difficult financial position, the threat to the future of the service that this represented and the need to reach an early consensus on the best way forward for the project. In this respect, the evaluation did not follow the standard process for other NDC projects.

3.3 An Interim report was given to the NDC Steering Group at its May 2009 meeting, where it was agreed that the following work would be carried out in June 2009 to complete the evaluation:

- additional interviews with members of the Salaam Centre Management Committee
- consultation with other communities, including Polish, Filipino, Chinese, Kurdish and Thai
- finalising the document review including getting evidence of use of the centre from the staff via monitoring data, which would replace the user survey; carrying out a review of recent Management Committee meetings and reviewing the business plan for the new Community Centre, now under construction
- holding a **Partners Workshop** to review the key issues, identify the management and funding options and agree a way forward; this would include representatives from NDC, the council (councillors and

officers), the Management Committee and staff and key agencies (such as the police and the community and voluntary sector). This replaced the Management Committee focus group and public event originally proposed.

3.4 We have interviewed the following as part of the evaluation:

- all four Salaam Centre staff members
- seven Management Committee members
- representatives from the Indian, Filipino and Korean communities
- 13 external stakeholders including NDC staff, residents and representatives from the voluntary sector and local authority

3.5 The Partners Workshop, held in June 2009, brought together 22 people (including 3 from SRC) for a 2.5 hour session looking at the future for the Salaam Centre service. A copy of the Feedback Report is included as an Appendix to this report.

## **4. The key findings**

### **4.1 The Salaam Centre's role**

4.1.1 The Salaam Centre's role has remained largely unchanged since its inception. In general terms, it is to:

- Provide a focus for BME communities in Hartlepool
- Provide advice and support through a drop-in facility
- Open up access for BME communities to other services and help these services access BME communities
- Provide space for meetings and running training courses
- Set up and run cultural events

### **4.2 Hartlepool's changing communities**

4.2.1 The black and minority ethnic community in Hartlepool is now more diverse than it was, with significant new communities from Asia and Eastern Europe. Different estimates put the BME community at between 1500 and 3000, with roughly equal numbers of Bangladeshi and Pakistanis, around 250 Polish people and 100 Filipinos. 27 languages are now spoken in the town.

4.2.2 The Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities remain the largest in Hartlepool and continue to provide the core business and support base for the Salaam Centre. Along with other service providers, the Centre has had to adapt to these demographic changes, a process which is not always easy.

### 4.3 Running the Centre

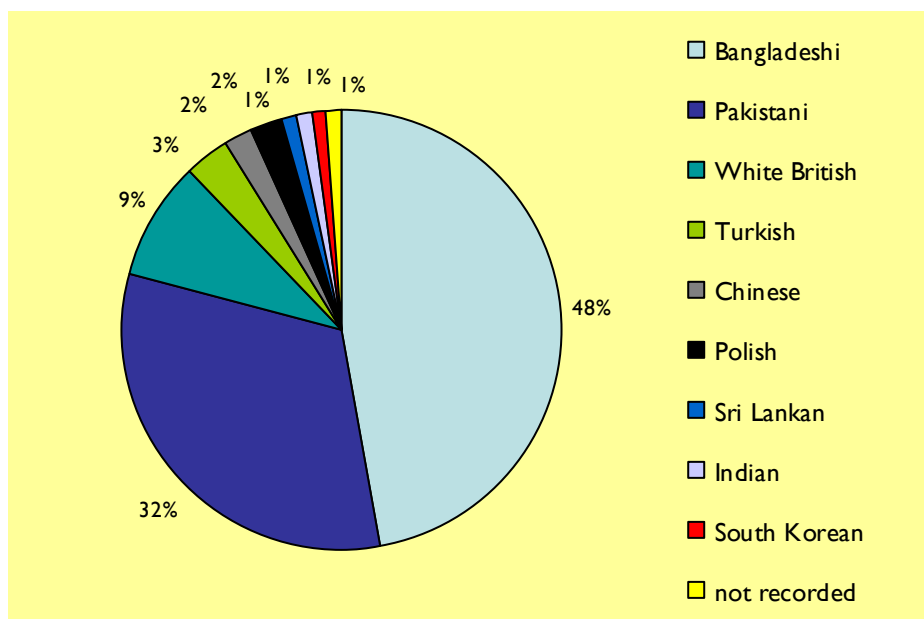
4.3.1 The Centre is run by the Hartlepool Asian Association, which operates as the Management Committee with one additional advisor. A staff team of four part-time workers provides the day-to-day service and have done so for many years. The continuity of staff and key members of the management committee continue to be a major strength of the project.

4.3.2 Project management has been a continuing difficulty. The previous evaluation was critical of the role played by the WEA in managing the staff team and recommended transferring this responsibility to NDC, with the appointment of a permanent on-site Centre Manager. Whilst the former was agreed and implemented in 2004, the latter was not and this remains a weakness.

### 4.4 Using the Centre

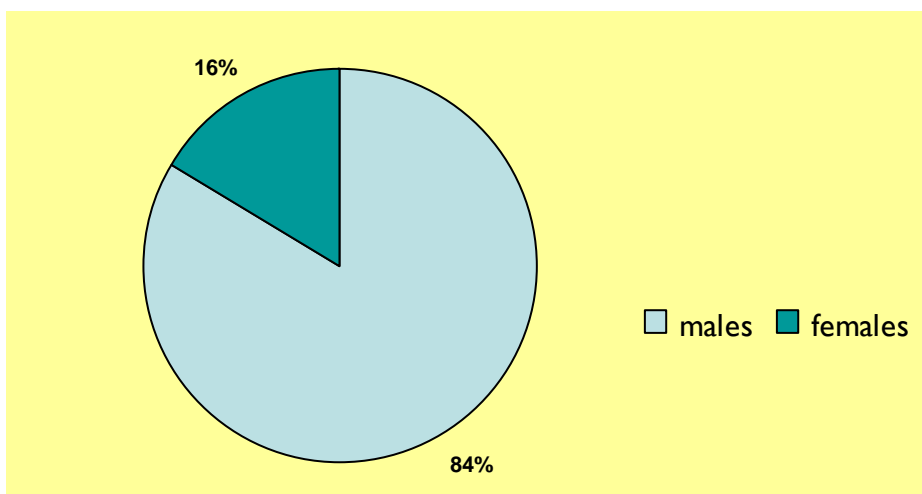
4.4.1 The Centre is used by a wide range of communities in Hartlepool and for various purposes. These are summarised on the three pie charts below, taken from attendance sheets for a typical week in April 2009. Numbers using the Centre averaged 15 a day in April 2009, although numbers are higher when courses are run there. This equates to around 3500 users a year. However, user numbers from the smaller BME communities are very low – 4 of every 5 people who use the Centre are from the Pakistani or Bangladeshi communities.

**Who uses the Centre?**

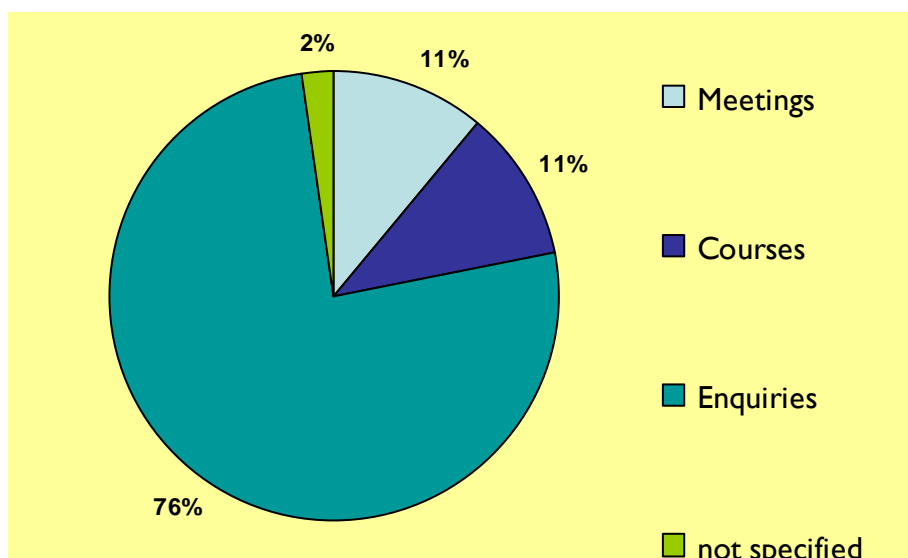


4.4.2 The Centre is used much more by males than by females; five out of every six users are men. The predominant use of the Centre is for individual advice and support; the present building is not large enough for anything other than small group courses and cannot easily be hired out for meetings.

#### Who uses the Centre?



#### What is the Centre used for?

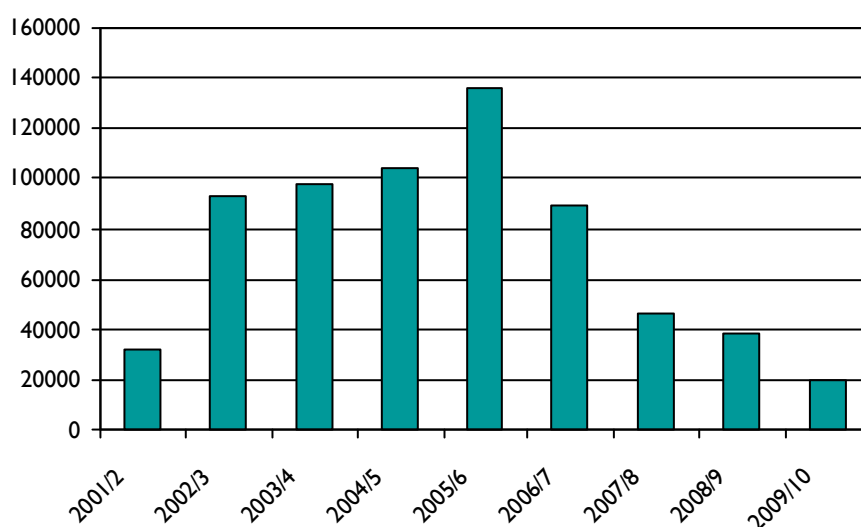


### 4.5 Financing the Centre

4.5.1 During the past few years, the Salaam Centre's running costs have averaged between £70,000 and £75,000 a year. Following decisions made by the Management Committee in May 2009, staff salaries have been reduced with a move to a 4 day week, reducing running costs to below £60,000 a year.

4.5.2 NDC has been the main funder of the Centre over the past 8 years, providing revenue grants totalling £636,000 since 2001. As shown on the chart below, the annual

funding commitment has been progressively reduced since 2006/07 and the project has been encouraged to look for matched funding elsewhere.



4.5.3 Non-NDC funding in the past has come from, amongst others, Northern Rock Foundation, Children’s Fund, Tees Valley Community Foundation, Connexions and Hartlepool Council.

4.5.4 The Centre appointed two fund-raisers in November 2008 to make grant applications to a range of organisations. 9 bids were submitted, including major applications to the Big Lottery (£233,000) and Northern Rock Foundation (£123,000), and smaller ones to Hartlepool Council’s Community Pool, Santander Bank, Greggs Trust and others.

4.5.5 At the time of writing, only one of these bids had been successful, with the Centre awarded £14,800 from Hartlepool Council’s Community Pool, in May 2009. This grant provides a contribution to staff salaries and overheads until March 2010. The outcomes from the major funding bids are not expected until late summer, early autumn 2009.

4.5.6 The financial position of the Centre became critical in early 2009, with the Centre relying on its limited reserves to keep the service going on a reduced basis and staff served with three month redundancy notices. Further NDC funding of £6500 was agreed in May 2009, following the Interim Evaluation Report, to keep the project operational until at least the end of July 2009, when this report was due to be completed. A final tranche of NDC funding of up to £13,500 may be released to the project for the remainder of 2009/10, subject to the outcomes of this evaluation.

## 4.6 Future plans

4.6.1 During the past three years, the Centre has been planning a move to a new community centre, following conversion work to the former St Pauls Church. This was a major recommendation from the previous evaluation, but it has taken longer than expected to reach fruition.

4.6.2 This building is now owned by the Muslim Welfare Association and work is currently underway to provide a new Mosque above a community centre. Planning approval for the project was given early in 2009, despite some local opposition, mainly associated with parking arrangements. The project is being funded by NDC, with a capital injection of £440,000 through the Opening Doors project, which is overseeing the renovation and conversion work. Work is progressing to timetable and the new Centre is due to be completed in February 2010.

4.6.3 A business plan for the new Centre was completed in November 2008 by Ribble Consultants. It envisaged annual running costs of between £90,000 and £128,000, depending on staffing levels, with income coming from a mix of new funding bids, user income and room rental. With NDC funding no longer available after 2009/10, this is certainly a major challenge for the project.

4.6.4 A Community Interest Company has been set up to run the new Community Centre and take over employment of the Salaam Centre staff team from August 2009, subject to sufficient funds being available. The Directors of the CIC include the current members of the HAA Management Committee.

#### **4.7 What has changed since the last evaluation?**

- The Management Committee now meets more frequently, but attendance remains focused on a handful of active members, mainly (but not exclusively) from the Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities
- More people are now using the Centre, particularly for individual advice and support
- The project's financial position is much more uncertain in both the short and longer term
- The new Centre has given everyone a new focus, but there have been disagreements about the proposals as they have developed
- The black and minority ethnic communities in Hartlepool are now more diverse than they were in 2003, which has placed new demands on the service

#### **4.8 What has not changed since the last evaluation?**

- There remains a strong commitment from everyone we have talked to during this evaluation to retain the Salaam Centre service, which fulfils an important need within the town.
- The Salaam Centre staff team remains unchanged, providing important continuity and a pool of skills and experience.

- Day to day staff and project management issues have not been resolved. There is still no Centre Manager. NDC's role as project manager is not regarded by either the Centre or themselves as having been wholly successful.
- Management Committee members feel they are no more in control of the project now than they were 5 years ago; they feel they are unable to take major decisions on their own and have not received enough support and training in the past.
- The Management Committee remains dominated by the two main communities – Pakistani and Bangladeshi. Smaller BME communities have always found it difficult to reconcile this with the multi-cultural nature of the project.
- Although the Centre has promoted itself more widely and become involved in some joint-working, there is still insufficient emphasis on commissioning, partnership working and networking.

#### **4.9 Our assessment of change**

4.9.1 The aims of the Salaam Centre project are to:

1. Provide a focus for BME communities in Hartlepool
2. Provide advice, support and a drop-in facility
3. Open up access for BME communities to other services and for services to access BME communities
4. Provide space for meetings and running training courses
5. Set up and running cultural events

4.9.2 Our assessment of the changes in relation to the above objectives since the last evaluation can be summarised as follows:

1. The Salaam Centre project continues to provide a key focus for BME communities in Hartlepool, but has not yet been able to involve the smaller communities as effectively as might have been expected; the Centre's work remains focused mainly on the Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities, despite recent efforts having been made to encourage wider involvement.
2. The project continues to provide an important advice and support role to significantly more people than it did five years ago. Although we have not carried out a user survey as part of the evaluation, we can be reasonably confident that the project continues to make a significant difference to the lives of many individuals in the local BME community.

3. The project has made some improvements in access to services for BME communities and for these services to access BME communities, but this has been limited in extent. Although there have been some positive developments in this important area, there is still a lot of scope for new partnerships and commissioned services.
4. The project continues to provide space for meetings and training courses, but still suffers from a small, cramped Centre which limits numbers and can compromise confidentiality. This should be resolved with the move to the new Centre in 2010.
5. The project continues to run cultural events

4.9.3 In summary, the project has performed better in relation to its objectives in some respects, but our overall assessment is that these changes have been incremental and slower than might have been expected. In our view, the project has been ticking over rather than pro-actively developing and innovating.

4.9.4 The focus has, understandably, been on plans for a new Centre over the past two or three years and, more recently on tackling funding and management issues. The Salaam Centre is certainly **less** sustainable now than it was five years ago – mainly due to significant changes in its funding base – and continues to suffer from a lack of decisiveness and consensus in its project management. Both should be resolved before the move to the new community centre.

#### **4.10 Further consultations with smaller BME communities in Hartlepool**

4.10.1 Representatives of the Indian, Filipino and Korean communities were interviewed, all of whom had had some contact with the Salaam Centre. We also made contact with a representative from the Polish community, but she did not wish to be interviewed as part of the evaluation.

4.10.2 It was clear to us from these contacts and interviews that the smaller communities are not engaged with the Salaam Centre project. Whilst some make use of the service, particularly for courses, there has been a reluctance to join the Management Committee, despite some recent encouragement by its members. They feel it is too dominated by Pakistani and Bangladeshi representatives. This reluctance to engage also applies to the new Centre, which is seen as likely to perpetuate the current arrangements rather than offering a broader, multi-cultural service.

#### **4.11 Outcomes from the Partner's Workshop**

4.11.1 The Partners Workshop brought together 19 representatives from the Salaam Centre and external organisations. The emphasis of the workshop was on finding new ways of supporting the project and ensuring its future sustainability.

4.11.2 The discussions focused around four main questions:

1. How can the current funding gap be bridged, to maintain the service?

2. What new support can external agencies provide?
3. How can the Management Committee/CIC be strengthened?
4. How can the new Community Centre be more sustainable?

4.11.3 The outcomes can be summarised as follows:

**Funding requirements:**

- A new emphasis on earned income and less reliance on public grants
- Fund-raising by staff and the local community to support the centre
- Developing new programmes of work
- Selling staff skills, particularly for training, translation and interpretation
- Starting a volunteer development programme
- Exploring new opportunities for commissioned services

**External support requirements:**

- A stronger emphasis on partnership working to attract new supporters
- Representation on the Community Network
- Marketing the Centre's skills and experience more widely
- Recognising that commissioned services requires both sides to benefit
- Providing new courses and encouraging room hire by different types of organisation

**Management Committee requirements:**

- A much more independent role for the management committee is vital, but it also has to operate more formally and raise its profile and status in the wider town community
- External, ongoing help and support from Becon and HVDA is available and should be taken up
- Introducing new people/organisations onto the management committee should be a priority, especially where it adds skills and expertise and helps to find new sources of income

- Induction and training for existing and new members should be prioritised
- The management committee requires a clear remit, with defined roles and responsibilities

**New Centre sustainability:**

- Explore the potential for staff secondments
- Begin charging for some services
- Make more use of volunteers
- Widen the user base, through marketing
- Commission a much stronger and robust business plan for the new Centre
- Strengthen staff skills

**4.12 How viable is the new Community Centre?**

4.12.1 We have reviewed the proposed arrangements for the new Community Centre and the business plan prepared by Ribble Consultants in 2008. We have also carried out a Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) analysis as follows:

**Strengths**

There is broad agreement that a new Centre is needed, to provide a focus for BME communities in Hartlepool

There is a strong commitment from the existing Management Committee and staff to the new Centre

The new Centre provides scope for a wide range of potential uses and income generation from new users

The negotiated arrangement with the Muslim Welfare Association, which provides the Centre with rent free accommodation for 5 years, offers a significant level of financial security for the initiative

**Weaknesses**

The current business plan does not make a strong enough case for the sustainability of the new centre; a more robust plan is needed, once the outcomes of current funding bids are known

The revenue funding base is not yet in place and remains a serious concern

The potential user base is currently too narrow

Management Committee members may find it difficult to manage the new Centre and its wider role, given their existing commitments, without help from new members who can fill experience gaps and give voluntary time to the project

The new Centre is seen by smaller BME communities as run by and predominantly for the Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities; it is not yet seen as a multi-cultural centre

### **Opportunities**

Expanding the user base, through marketing and promotion prior to the Centre opening and continuously once it is up and running

Negotiating service level agreements with public sector organisations, to provide a regular, secure income, post-NDC

Exploring the potential for staff secondments, to add appropriate skills and experience to the staff team without adding to revenue costs

Beginning to charge for some services

Strengthen staff skills and qualifications, marketing those that can generate additional income, such as translation, interpretation and training

Establishing a volunteer development programme, making more use of volunteers to help run the Centre - covering for staff when they are training, networking or providing external services

### **Threats**

There may be insufficient funding to employ a Project Manager, which would weaken the sustainability of the Centre and leave a long-standing weakness in the project's staffing arrangements unresolved

Local authority support for the project may continue, but revenue funding is likely to be restricted by public sector finance pressures, requiring a much higher proportion of income to be earned

Insufficient funding may make it more difficult for staff to find time away from the Centre for external networking, promotion and marketing

There may be insufficient earned income and external grants to cover the projected costs of running the Centre as planned, placing pressure on staff costs and potentially limiting the scope for new initiatives as well as maintaining the existing service

The Centre may remain focused on meeting the needs of the Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities and may not attract people from other communities

4.12.2 Overall, our view is that the new Centre has the potential to be an important asset for the town and one that can meet the needs of a wide range of communities. Whilst there will always be risks with a venture of this nature, these should be manageable, provided certain key elements are put in place before the Centre opens. These are dealt with in the following section of the report.

4.12.3 A particular concern we have is that the current business plan is not yet robust enough to provide potential funders and supporters with the comfort they need to support the Centre through the next few years. The funding gap created by the end of long-term NDC support should not be under-estimated. Financial sustainability is the most pressing issue to be resolved over the next six months.

## 5. Conclusions

5.1 The conclusions from the evaluation are all forward looking. **It is important for Hartlepool that the Salaam Centre service continues and is successful.** To do so, it will require significantly stronger external support post-NDC, from both the local authority and the voluntary and community sector. It will require a willingness to commission services from the project, to take calculated risks and monitor outcomes. But more external support, whilst welcome, will not be enough on its own to sustain the project.

5.2 Those involved in the project, both staff and management committee members, must now take on full responsibility for its future. They will need to speak with one voice and focus their efforts single-mindedly on sustaining and diversifying the service. They will need to adapt to survive and, no doubt, there will be many problems along the way. But we feel there is a reasonably sound base on which to build.

5.3 The essential components of the future service are:

- A staff team with a full-time Centre or Project Manager
- A base in a new, sustainable Community Centre with a sound business plan
- A financial model which balances earned income with grant support
- A strengthened, well-trained and fully independent Management Committee, which includes key representatives from the public and voluntary sector, but also other BME communities in Hartlepool
- New partnership arrangements with public service providers in Hartlepool
- A new emphasis on commissioned services, to run alongside the project's traditional advice and support role

- A stronger emphasis in the staff team on promotion and marketing of the Centre's services

5.4 We are aware that the project has already begun work on some of these components. New management committee members are being recruited and there was a willingness amongst those present at the Partner's Workshop, to look at new ways of offering external support. **The important thing now is to maintain the momentum.**

5.5 NDC support for the project is currently due to end in July 2009, but the new Salaam Community Centre is not due to open before February 2010. Without appropriate support and new funding sources, there is a significant risk that the project may flounder during this six month interim period, despite the best intentions and efforts of all those involved. **A key question is how this can be avoided.**

5.6 Further NDC funding support is potentially available - £13,500 remains in the 2009/10 Action Plan which, when matched with Hartlepool Council's Community Pool funding, should help to keep the project afloat until February 2010. However, as we set out in the Interim Report, this funding should be tied to specific conditions which will provide reassurance to everyone with a stake in the project that the new Centre will be sustainable and well managed. These conditions are outlined in the recommendations to NDC in the following section.

5.7 NDC has supported this project for the past 8 years, with substantial funding. It is never an easy process to disengage from a long-term commitment, but the time is right to make the change. However, it is important that this disengagement is handled in a way which does not put the project at further risk.

5.8 The Salaam Centre needs to be given the best possible opportunity to take over full control of the project and its services with a reasonable prospect of sustainability well into the future. **There will need to be a transition period.** To some extent this is already underway, but it will require further short term support.

## 6. Recommendations for NDC

6.1 Bearing the above points in mind, we make the following recommendations to NDC:

- I. NDC should initiate an early meeting with Hartlepool Council, Salaam Centre Management Committee and staff representatives and possibly an appropriate representative from Becon and/or HVDA's Community Network, to discuss and agree a **Transitional Support Package**, to start on September 1<sup>st</sup> 2009 and finish on January 31<sup>st</sup> 2010. The package would offer staff time to support the management committee and staff team to help ensure that the funding milestones set out below are met and preparation for the changeover to the new Centre runs smoothly.

2. NDC project management and staff management should be transferred to the Salaam Centre Management Committee from 1st September 2009.
3. NDC, in discussion with Hartlepool Council, should put together a specific one-off funding package of **£5,000** (excluding VAT) in Autumn 2009 for a revised, more robust and sustainable 3 year business plan for the new Salaam Centre, to fully test its future viability. The business plan should be commissioned directly by the Salaam Centre Management Committee.
4. NDC should release the remaining **£13,500** of grant from its 2009/10 Action Plan in three tranches of £4,500, against specific milestones being achieved. The funding should be specifically for staff costs and essential office running costs and should be linked to Hartlepool Council's Community Pool funding.
5. Remaining NDC funding should be released as follows:

#### **Tranche 1**

Release conditions: **at least 3 new active Management Committee members from the public sector, voluntary sector and non-Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities appointed**

**Responsibility for project management and staff employment transferred to Management Committee**

Target release date: end of August 2009

#### **Tranche 2**

Release conditions: **at least two funding bids contributing to the revenue costs of running the new Centre approved**

Target release date: end of October 2009

#### **Tranche 3**

Release conditions: **Approval of 3 year sustainable Business Plan**

Target release date; end of December 2009

6. Update reports to the NDC Steering Group should be provided at the August, October and December 2009 meetings

## **APPENDIX**

### **FEEDBACK REPORT ON PARTNER'S WORKSHOP**

This feedback report summarises the outcomes from a workshop for invited participants to look at the future of the Salaam Centre and build a consensus on the way forward. It forms part of an external evaluation of the Salaam Centre project for Hartlepool NDC, being carried out by Social Regeneration Consultants.

The workshop was held on Wednesday June 10<sup>th</sup> 2009 at St Pauls Resource Centre in Hartlepool. 22 people attended the 2.5 hour session.

#### **People attending**

Rajab Malik	Salaam Centre
Khalid Hussain	Salaam Centre
Tasawar Hussain	Salaam Centre
Nur Uddin	Salaam Centre
Dr Bano-Mahroo	Salaam Centre
Hamid Khaliq	Salaam Centre
Abul Ashan	Salaam Centre
Zeba Alam	Salaam Centre
Peter Gowland	HVDA
Tracey Herrington	HVDA
Rosa Leto	Methodist Church
Malcolm Walker	Hartlepool NDC
Martin Booth	Hartlepool NDC
Abdul Khan	Becon
Vijaya Kotur	Hartlepool Council
Carl Richardson	Hartlepool Council
John Mennear	Hartlepool Council
Stuart Green	Hartlepool Council
Andy Summerbell	Cleveland Police
Pete Duncan	Social Regeneration Consultants (SRC)
Sally Thomas	Social Regeneration Consultants
Nicola Lewis	Social Regeneration Consultants

#### **Presentation**

SRC presented an overview of the Salaam Centre's work and a summary of the Interim Evaluation Report presented to the Hartlepool NDC Steering Group in May 2009. A copy of the presentation is included at the end of this feedback report.

#### **Discussion groups**

The workshop divided into 3 groups to discuss four questions:

1. How can the current funding gap be bridged, to maintain the service?

2. What new support can external agencies provide?
3. How can the Management Committee/CIC be strengthened?
4. How can the new Community Centre be more sustainable?

## **DISCUSSION GROUP A**

Malcolm Walker, Stuart Green, Andy Summerbell, Zeba Alam, Tasawar Hussein, Dr Bano-Mahroo, Peter Gowland, Sally Thomas

### **How can the current funding gap be bridged to maintain the service?**

The Centre is currently running on reduced hours but with a full staff team. It is closed on Fridays. It is anticipated that it can run on this basis until February 2010, with financial support from NDC, Hartlepool Council and its own reserves.

There are numerous bids for funding in with a range of funders and one to the EHRC (Equality and Human Rights Commission) has recently been submitted.

It was felt that there were additional areas of potential income that could be explored, both in the short and longer terms:

- commissioned services – tendering for the delivery of services through public sector agencies, i.e. the Council is currently restructuring and creating a ‘people department’ which may be putting out to tender services which require specialist expertise; the Centre could do this on its own or in partnership with another voluntary sector organisation
- programmes of work – the Centre, either on its own or together with other voluntary organisations, putting together programmes of work which it could deliver to benefit, complement or add value to the work of public sector agencies, i.e. such as translation, advice to specific communities, training, etc
- marketing – marketing the skills and expertise of staff to public and private sector organisations, i.e. training, interpretation, etc
- grant aid – continuing to identify sources of grant aid and submit applications where relevant

The Centre staff (and Management Committee members where possible) should also start attending local and regional meetings, forums and networks which may help them make contacts and identify opportunities.

### **What new support can external agencies provide?**

External agencies that might be able to help could include the Council (a variety of different departments and sections), neighbourhood management, the police and the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB).

The kind of services that external agencies might find useful include:

- language support – translation and interpretation
- meeting the ‘duty to involve’ – access to a range of communities
- improving and increasing access to services for BME communities
- accessing the ‘voice’ of BME communities for a variety of purposes and in a variety of ways (i.e. to get feedback on services, identify needs, etc)

External agencies could help the Centre become part of consortiums and partnerships to expand and develop their services.

### **How can the Management Committee/CIC be strengthened?**

The current Management Committee has business and other skills but little time to put into the Centre beyond day to day.

It was felt that new additions to the MC could include the Council, through Councillor Carl Richardson and a senior officer, HVDA (Peter Gowland), the police, and possibly a rep from the CAB (locally or regionally).

It was felt that Becon could provide some helpful advice and support to the Management Committee and on expanding it. It will be important to ensure that the Management Committee remains led by local people and therefore has the right balance of local people and professionals.

It will be important to check the new constitution to be clear about numbers of Management Committee members and what status they have (i.e. full members, co-optees, etc).

### **How can the new community centre be more sustainable?**

The Management Committee will also need further training and support to plan for the new Centre and make sure it works.

It was agreed that the new Centre will need a Manager, someone who can take responsibility day to day for its running, staffing and financial stability.

The new Centre needs good marketing and management in order to sell space, hire out facilities and make money. The Business Plan need reviewing in order to provide more detail on how the income generation areas are going to work.

Finally, the Centre needs to find the time and skills to do all these things just at a time when resources are limited and staff and Committee are stretched. It was suggested

that secondments from other organisations in the town would help to supplement staff time and skills in order to do some of the work necessary. Work placements may be another way of doing this, including potentially from the private sector. The tasks could include:

- Marketing the Centre's skills and expertise in the form of services
- Identifying sources of funding and making applications
- Making contact with forums and networks in order to identify potential partners and opportunities

### **Discussion Group B**

Abul Ashan, Khalid Hussain, Rajab Malik, Rosa Leto, Carl Richardson, Vijaya Kotur, Pete Duncan

#### **How can the current funding gap be bridged to maintain the service?**

The Management Committee has already taken steps to cut costs, by reducing staff hours (eg to 10 hours a week for Development Workers), and closing the Centre on Fridays. It remains open from 10am-5pm Monday to Thursday.

There was agreement that this had weakened the service, but would enable the Centre to continue operating until at least the end of August 2009, when the outcome of funding bids (including NDC) should be known. The Management committee feels it should be possible to get through to the opening of the new centre in February 2010.

Future funding from the public sector is bound to get more difficult, especially if there is a change of Government in 12 months time. The Salaam Centre needs to become more self-reliant.

There was a suggestion that the Centre should begin raising its own funds by staging local events in the community. The staff may feel they can offer some free time to help organise these. Around £10,000 was raised for the Bangladeshi floods appeal, which involved restaurants donating food. There was an opportunity here over the summer to raise the profile of the Centre, raise money and extend the volunteer base.

There was a suggestion that money raised by the Salaam Centre itself should be matched by the local authority or NDC.

#### **What new support can external agencies provide?**

Stronger partnerships are needed with a much wider range of external agencies. This must be a two-way process, with both sides feeling they are getting something of value from the arrangement.

There was a suggestion that the Salaam Centre needed to maximise its opportunities with the Council – every Department would make use of it if the approach was different and there was more initial and productive dialogue. The Centre needed to market itself differently.

There was a discussion about whether the Centre could do some commercial work – especially offering a translation and interpretation service. One staff member is already qualified, others would need to be trained and achieve qualifications.

### **How can the management committee/CIC be strengthened?**

It was agreed that this was important, but that it would not happen unless the Management Committee was able to operate independently, with a clear remit. It must be able to make its own decisions and implement them. This had not been the case to date.

The Committee members would be very keen to have someone from HVDA, Becon and the Council, provided they were individuals who could help fill gaps in skills and experience and provide the project with more influence, enabling it to secure a wider spread of work in the future.

It was also agreed that the Management Committee needed to speak with one voice and move on from some of the problems in the past.

### **How can the new community centre be more sustainable?**

The group had big concerns about the sustainability of the new Centre. A new and much stronger business plan was needed – the current one was not good enough to convince funders. The key issue was – how could this be funded, when money was already very tight?

Training for Management Committee members is critically important, so they can run the Centre independently.

### **Discussion Group C**

Hamid Khaliq, John Mennear, Martin Booth, Tracey Herrington, Nur Uddin, Martin Booth, Nicola Lewis

### **How can the current funding gap be bridged to maintain the service?**

The reduction of staff hours is already in place and the Centre is now closed on Fridays. This has reduced costs, but also the quality of service.

3 of the 4 staff have other jobs which provides them with some income,

The possible use of volunteer staff was discussed, but this was thought to be more appropriate for the new Centre than the current one, where much of the work was one-to-one advice which required significant skills and experience.

The current funding gap and reduced staff hours, means that staff are even more tied to the Centre when they are working than before – which means it is difficult to do the networking and promotional work which may help to bring in additional funds.

### **What new support can external agencies provide?**

The Centre could be represented on the Hartlepool Community Network, which provides opportunities for representation and support.

There are opportunities for the Centre being commissioned for new work, but the scale and scope of this is difficult to quantify. The Centre would need to have the skills the commissioning bodies required and would need to adopt a more commercial approach.

There is also potential for widening the courses provided by the Salaam Centre, and linking in with the Adult Education Centre. To achieve this, the Centre would need to be more pro-active and able to use staff time to pursue new opportunities.

New funding support, especially in the short term, from the public sector, is unlikely. The Community Pool currently supports 32 organisations with a £400,000 overall budget. This budget is under pressure and the number of organisations may have to be reduced.

### **How can the management committee/CIC be strengthened?**

The general view was that the Management Committee operates too informally at present and that it would also benefit from having new people on both the Hartlepool Asian Association and Community Interest Company. Current Management Committee members are open to these changes – they recognise the need to widen the skills base.

Various people and organisations were suggested – including the Community Network/HVDA; the local authority (particularly Councillor Richardson), Becon and possibly someone from Business in the Community.

### **How can the new community centre be more sustainable?**

The new Centre needs to look carefully at generating income from new sources. Rooms could be hired out to organisations that would attract different people into the Centre. Photocopying and fax charges have already been introduced.

It might also be useful to begin changing the expectation of a free service from current users – it's an important issue when grants are hard to come by. It may be possible to charge for certain parts of the service, providing it is of high quality.

There was some discussion about whether alcohol might be allowed within the Centre. This issue is likely to be discussed by the Salaam Centre Management Committee.

It was suggested that volunteers from other BME communities in the town need to be continually encouraged to commit to the new centre; there are on-going discussions with the Polish community.

## **Report back**

Summarising the discussion groups, the following points were made:

### **Funding:**

- A new emphasis on earned income and less reliance on public grants
- Fund-raising by staff and the local community to support the centre
- Developing new programmes of work
- Selling staff skills, particularly for training, translation and interpretation
- Starting a volunteer development programme
- Exploring new opportunities for commissioned services

### **External support:**

- A stronger emphasis on partnership working to attract new supporters
- Representation on the Community Network
- Marketing the Centre's skills and experience more widely
- Recognising that commissioned services requires both sides to benefit
- Providing new courses and encouraging room hire by different types of organisation

### **Management Committee**

- A much more independent role for the management committee is vital, but it also has to operate more formally and raise its profile and status in the wider town community
- External, ongoing help and support from Becon and HVDA is available and should be taken up
- Introducing new people/organisations onto the management committee should be a priority, especially where it adds skills and expertise and helps to find new sources of income
- Induction and training for existing and new members should be prioritised
- The management committee requires a clear remit, with defined roles and responsibilities

### **New Centre sustainability**

- Explore the potential for staff secondments
- Begin charging for some services
- Make more use of volunteers
- Widen the user base, through marketing
- Commission a much stronger and robust business plan for the new Centre
- Strengthen staff skills

### **What happens next?**

The outcomes of the workshop will be included in the final Evaluation Report, to be considered by the NDC Steering Group in July 2009.

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