

## Benefits of Community Buildings

Community Halls are multipurpose hubs for serving local needs and are essential to community resilience.

The uses associated with community buildings are wide and diverse. The following is a list of potential benefits associated with well-run community buildings:

- Health, Welfare and Leisure activities provided within community buildings include: parent and toddler groups, after school clubs, youth clubs, bingo, lunch clubs for elderly people, smoking cessation, benefits and legal advice, slimming classes, Tai Chi and exercise classes. As well as contributing to physical health many activities also contribute towards reducing incidences of social isolation, an issue of particular importance to older people.
- Education and Training activities provided within community buildings include: IT training, basic skills classes, English speaking classes, homework support clubs
- Community Cohesion. Community buildings have great potential to provide 'neutral ground'; enabling interaction between diverse groups and hosting activities to promote better community relations.
- Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour can be addressed through activities for young people as distractions and alternatives to anti-social behaviour. Some community buildings have also enabled the provision of support for people dependent on drugs or alcohol and have provided a base for crime prevention initiatives.
- Economic Benefits tend to be an indirect, but often very substantial, consequence of the types of activities undertaken within community buildings. Education and training activities for example raise the ability of local people to gain employment. Health and welfare activities including the provision of childcare in the form of pre-schools/breakfast clubs and after school clubs in community buildings also have the effect of enabling parents to take part in training and employment.
- Environmental Improvement for communities can be achieved through the provision of high quality community buildings that represent a flagship building for the area. Maximising the use of a community building can also reduce environmental blight by discouraging vandalism and graffiti
- Civil Renewal refers to the process of building the capacity of individuals and groups to develop their own solutions to the issues that might affect them, and to make a positive difference in their communities. Specific activities contributing towards civil renewal include participation in community consultations, area panel meetings, community forums and even festivals and fairs
- Social inclusion and social capital. People are excluded when they are not part of the networks which support most people in ordinary life- networks of family, friends, community and employment. Among many others, poor people, ex-prisoners, homeless people, people with AIDS, people with physical or mental health difficulties may be excluded and their potential contributions ignored. Community buildings can foster social inclusivity.