



To generate effective community action, **Communities that Care** first constructs a local coalition then uses research-based 'diagnostic' tools to assess the community's strengths and weaknesses in relation to preventing drug problems among its children. Next steps are to formulate and implement an action plan to address these, drawing on a menu of proven interventions. From its US home, in 1997 the project came to the UK with funding from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. ❶ The UK arm's first programmes in Barnsley, Coventry and Swansea have now been independently evaluated. ❷ In each area the results were very different. Where the communities started from was the key to whether a coherent programme emerged. In one, local people were already involved in community development and the infrastructure and experience of successful partnership working provided a basis for the new project to quickly move forward. In the other two, "lack of infrastructure or tensions between professionals and local people made it very difficult ... to have an effect". Among the recommendations are a more systematic assessment of a community's 'readiness' for such a project and the development of variants to suit different starting points. Despite problems, Communities that Care offers a way to reach local consensus by basing decisions on a shared understanding of research into drug problems. Another report funded by Joseph Rowntree has argued that England's national drugs strategy "should not tie the notion of community so tightly to criminal justice interventions". ❸

**LINKS** Nuggets 4.13  
3.14 2.15

❶ [www.communitiesthatcare.org.uk](http://www.communitiesthatcare.org.uk)

❷ Crow I. *et al.* *Does Communities that Care work? An evaluation of a community-based risk prevention programme in three neighbourhoods*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2004. Download from [www.jrf.org.uk](http://www.jrf.org.uk).

❸ Shiner M. *et al.* *Exploring community responses to drugs*. ❷ for publisher and source.