



National Empowerment Partnership

EVALUATION REPORT

April 2008

Gray - King & Gray Ltd
GKG
C o l l e c t i v e

Acknowledgements

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About GKG Collective

This evaluation was carried out by GKG Collective, a group of independent consultants who champion the use of meaningfully-inclusive participation methods. We know that by designing-in the right processes from the start, a wide range of those affected by a decision can be included in how it is made.

Participatory action is key to the way GKG Collective works. Within the constraints of time and budget, we attempted to model a participatory approach in the way we worked with staff, stakeholders and community members in carrying out the NEP evaluation. In practice, this meant that we used a range of different data-gathering and analysis tools and that we developed our understanding of what was emerging from the evaluation in partnership with NEP stakeholders.

For more on GKG Collective, please visit our website at www.gkg ltd.co.uk/collective

Executive Summary

This evaluation was carried out by a team of evaluators between March 3rd and April 2nd 2008 using five methods of data collection including telephone interviews, on line survey and participatory tools.

- The evaluation uncovered widespread optimism about the potential of the NEP process, and about the public commitment from Government to embed empowerment in civil life.
- Due to late decisions on funding and short timescales for project delivery and reporting respondents thought it was too early to expect significant impact and change for communities.
- Impacts for this period included improved networks, increased profile of community empowerment and inspiration of local authorities and local strategic partnerships.
- Lack of clarity on role of the National partnership and lack of shared understanding of 'empowerment' has hampered achievements. Regional partnerships have been most effective when partnerships have had broad and open membership and good links with RIEPs, RDAs and GOs.
- There is great interest in quality assurance and a common evaluation methodology, however NI 4 should be accommodated but not define the framework. There is a need for wider consultation and consensus in this area
- In summary we believe that the partnerships have made significant progress toward the NEP aims in Year 1 of the programme and that with resources to overcome its early difficulties, NEP has every opportunity to be a successful programme.

Summary Recommendations

- The role and purpose of both the national consortium and CDF and their relationship to each other be redefined.
- Membership of the national consortium be reviewed and its dual roles of strategic and operational roles are both recognised and resourced.
- A shared definition of community empowerment be reached and partners look for continued separate funding for community empowerment work that is not covered by NEP.
- Decision-making be more transparent and communications overall be more streamlined and effective.
- Improved and increased opportunities for learning and sharing experience are created.
- The opportunity to develop a creative quality assurance framework is embraced
- A process for developing a common evaluation framework be developed and rolled out across all stakeholders.
- A participatory approach be used for evaluating the work of Years 2-4 and the evaluation be integrated into the whole project.
- Regional partnerships be given 'space' to embed and build upon work that they rushed to achieve in 2007/08.

1 Background to the project and research questions

This section briefly describes the context in which the evaluation was carried out and sets out its objectives.

1.1 Background to National Empowerment Partnership (NEP)

The NEP is an initiative by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) seeking to build upon and benchmark years of existing community empowerment work and establish regional and national priorities going forward to enable communities to better engage with decision making.

The aims of NEP are to:

- Demonstrate the difference community empowerment can make to individuals, community groups, communities and public agencies
- Develop effective methods of quality assurance for community empowerment
- Promote examples of good practice across the country.

CDF is the accountable body for this work, which is delivered via one national and nine regional partnerships across the English Government defined regions.

The operational context for Year One of this work was fraught with confusion over changing aims and outcomes for the programme both nationally and regionally and uncertainty over levels and length of funding. The impact of this can be noted through this report.

1.2 About this evaluation project

GKG Collective was commissioned in February 2008 by CDF to carry out an evaluation of the national and regional NEP programme. The evaluation is both summative and formative, in that it seeks to gather knowledge based on Year 1 to point the way forward for future empowerment initiatives.

The evaluation commissioned had two aims:

- To evaluate if and how the overall empowerment aims have been achieved in Year 1, highlighting areas where the programme has been most effective and identifying the contributing factors
- To design an evaluation framework for Years 2 – 4.

In referring to Year 1 we are evaluating any activities that took place during the financial year 2007 – 08. Much of the programme and funding was commissioned from September 2007 onwards therefore most regions started work from November 2007 and others much later. The programme therefore effectively ran for a maximum of six months in its first year and in most regions four or five months.

The research was to be carried out over a five-week period from late February to early April 2008. In keeping with NEP's mission, individuals, communities, regional and national practitioners and other key stakeholders were at the heart of providing the answers to the questions raised during the evaluation.

1.3 The research questions

The evaluation focused on the core principles of empowerment and attempted to find answers to the following questions:

- What contribution has been made to strengthening communities' ability to gain greater control over decisions that affect them?
- How are empowerment values identified and interpreted and how are they influencing emerging programmes?
- How has the empowerment of marginalised groups such as ethnic minorities, women and disabled people been furthered?
- What methods of quality assurance for community empowerment have been developed?
- What are the elements that contribute to successful regional partnerships?
- How can the programme best be evaluated in Years 2 – 4?
- How feasible is it to include cost-benefit analysis in future evaluation work?

2 Research strategy and methodology

This section describes our approach to the evaluation project.

2.1 Research Strategy

Our strategy was to collect data through a number of data streams in order to enable broad opportunity for engagement with the research; allow for good research validity as information can be verified between sources and to trial numerous methods that could potentially be used in future years.

The findings from these various data streams were then condensed, with the key messages being relayed to stakeholders for further comment and development. Significantly, the methodology was designed to include input from the ‘beneficiaries’ of community empowerment activity in the community.

Given the short timescale for the evaluation, all data collection methods used needed to be quick to set up, use and analyse. With GKG Collective’s commitment to participatory approaches, they also needed to allow shared processes for developing meaning from the findings.

The methods chosen combine classic methods (Survey Monkey online survey, interviews, information audit) with participation methodologies (teleconferences and learning exchange event). The purpose for such a combination (used highly successfully in other projects) is that the participation activity brings richness along with ‘buy-in’, which we have found almost impossible to match otherwise.

The participatory ingredients were provided by two workshop-style events. The first was the already-scheduled NEP Planning Day held on 4 March in London at which we able to run some simple participatory question testing and data-gathering activities. The second was a day-long Learning Exchange run on 2 April at which we presented the key findings and invited stakeholders to develop conclusions from them. In addition we hosted three telephone conferences on 19 March, supported by PowerPoint slide presentations of the emerging findings.

Therefore this research consists of five data streams:

- audit of existing data
- on-line survey
- phone interviews
- teleconferences
- participatory activities
-

The methodology was agreed in conjunction with an evaluation steering group made up of national and regional representatives.

2.2 Methodology

Audit of existing data

We were provided with evaluation reports and action plans for each of the regions, reflecting where the regions had got to as of November 2007. These were read initially with a view to establishing whether it would be possible to apply any consistent criteria across all regions. It soon became apparent that this was not going to be possible due to the wide range of approaches taken by the different regions. What was clear was that the regions were mainly focusing on reporting the delivery of empowerment activities, thus supporting many of the aims of the NEP, but not in a way that would indicate how effective and efficient those activities were

Online survey

An online survey was developed to ensure a good range of inclusion in the research and as a trial tool to provide a baseline for future years. The questionnaire was sent to all National NEP representatives, each regional steering group member (via the Regional lead body) and to participants of regional events, workshops and training (again via the lead body or their delegated contact).

We asked people to rate on a scale of 1 to 10 how much they agreed with the following statements where 10 = strongly agree 1 = strongly disagree

1. I have learned a lot through the work of the NEP about how to foster community empowerment.
2. I have shared good practice about community empowerment through the NEP/REP.
3. I have learned good practice about community empowerment through the NEP/REP.
4. I have made relationships with other groups through the NEP that have enhanced our community empowerment practice.
5. My organisation is better able to deliver community empowerment as a result of involvement with NEP.
6. Public services are more open to influence from the public as a consequence of the NEP.
7. I use a set of measures to indicate community empowerment.

These questions were reviewed by the Evaluation Steering group before going live. The survey was 'live' between 10th March and 1st April and gained 286 responses, a high response rate from the potential respondents.

Total responses are as below

	Steering group responses	Wider group response
East	4	82
East Midlands	2	1
London	1	12
North East	2	32
North West	18	24
South East	11	15
South West	9	35
West Midlands	3	9
Yorks and Humber	4	1

These results indicate that this is an effective consultation tool in some regions. People in the less responsive regions said that they and their contacts were swamped with work for end of year, thereby accounting for their low response rates.

Phone interviews

A total of 38 stakeholders took part in individual telephone interviews, each lasting approximately 50 minutes. The interviewees included all members of the National Consortium and up to three members of each Regional Consortium. Each lead agency was asked to contact their steering group with our request, due to time restraints we interviewed on a 'first come first served' basis until the quotas were reached.

The questions used evolved in response to the findings which were emerging as the evaluation proceeded. In order to provide some baseline data for attitudes, we included the seven 'range scale' questions from the on-line questionnaire (see above). Results of these questions were then manually added into the on-line version for analysis.

In their final form, the questions asked in the interviews were:

1. What should the National NEP Look like and how should it work?
2. What is YOUR vision for the programme? (End points? Success measures? How will you know when it has happened?) What has contributed or not to this so far?
3. What would make this NEP/REP process work better?
4. Can you show how marginalised communities (BME, disabled, women, rural communities) have been affected or contributed so far?
5. What do you understand the working definition of community empowerment to be?
6. What in your region (or nationally) has/has not worked well?
7. Are you aware of any quality assurance methods in place or being used around community empowerment?
8. Are you currently evaluating your work and how this will improve future empowerment delivery?

Supplementary questions were asked when necessary to clarify a point, or to explore an issue in greater depth. Interviews took place between 3 and 20 March

Teleconferences

The purpose of the teleconferences was to allow stakeholders to reflect on and draw out meaning from some of the key findings that had arisen and allow for dialogue between different stakeholders, without the costly and time intensive burden of a meeting that the evaluation timescale would not accommodate. This participatory approach aims to involve stakeholders in the analysis and the development of recommendations.

Three telephone conferences took place on 20 March involving a total of 11 people from both national and regional consortia. Two of the conferences involved three participants, with five people taking part in the other. Each teleconference lasted approximately one hour.

Participants were sent in advance a PowerPoint file that contained key emerging findings and quotes that acted as a prompt for discussion and an agenda and focus for the discussions. One evaluator facilitated each discussion, two of the three conferences were recorded so they could be played back for notes and quotes. The other teleconference was noted by the facilitator. We committed to ensuring anonymity for participants and therefore these do not form part of our raw data submission with this report (NB. These can be transcribed on request if required).

There were four main sections to the discussion. We did not address all sections with each group due to the breadth of the discussion and the fact that some participants who declared a conflict of interest in some areas. Between the three conferences however all areas were covered, including the regional partnerships, the national role, success measures and planning the future.

The conferences were then written up in the form of mind maps and flip-charted diagrams including some quotations from the discussion. These were then presented to NEP participants the 2 April Learning Exchange day.

This was an innovative exercise and generated good feedback from the participants and provided some excellent clarity about a number of key issues.

Participatory activities

The first participatory activities took place during the 4 March national planning day in London at which DCLG Secretary of State Hazel Blears announced further NEP funding. The meeting was well attended by NEP members and included senior civil servants. GKG C seized the opportunity to scope out our research, testing out key topics and questions while at the same time gathering initial data.

Participants were invited to give their views using graffiti walls around the room in response to various questions:

- What's changing as a result of NEP?
- What's your understanding of empowerment?
- How is partnership working going?
- What's working well or less well?
- What questions should be asked as part of the evaluation?
- What indicators are useful?

Participants were also asked to complete in a pilot questionnaire in pairs and threes, with quick overall comments captured table by table in a closing go round.

The second participatory event was a day-long Learning Exchange event held on 2 April at the Institute of Education, central London. The aim of the Learning Exchange was to allow validation of the research findings by the stakeholders themselves and to develop shared understanding and meaning between the consultants and NEP partners.

The methodology involved mining into the raw data to find evidence for some of the key questions asked during the evaluation process, then commenting on these findings. As a result, participants were able to begin to form recommendations. The 2 April event brought together findings from all five data streams.

The Learning Exchange was attended by more than 30 participants from around the country, including members of the National Consortium, regional consortia, DCLG and CDF staff. Overall the day was felt to be positive and participants welcomed the chance to engage with each other and be listened to.

‘I feel I got the opportunity to say what my concerns were and that I got a chance to network which is what I wanted.’

‘It makes such a change from just sitting around in meetings all day and not knowing why we’re here and what we’re supposed to be doing.’

‘The workshop today [2 April] was really good. Very different from discussing things back and forth, everyone had their say and you got a lot of information and ideas going between us all.’

NEP evaluation website

To encourage wider contributions and further discussion, we created a demonstration website to which anyone could contribute. It was designed to be easy to upload data and for anyone to comment on information. This may provide a model for future methods of shared learning and evaluating NEP in Years 2 - 4 (see www.nepeval.net).

3 Key findings from the evaluation of Year 1

This section sets out the key findings emerging from the evaluation of Year 1 of the NEP programme. As previously stated this refers to the financial year 2007-08 in which the programme was live for the final 4 – 6 months.

The key findings are a summary and a synthesis of all the information gathered from the five data streams. The findings are given under headings corresponding to the research questions stipulated by the project steering group.

The findings are un-weighted, in that there is no attempt to give greater value to the views of particular stakeholders. Rather, the findings attempt to portray the full range of views presented with some sense of whether the views are widely or narrowly held.

After each finding we give abbreviations to indicate the sources of information from which it was obtained. The abbreviations are as follow:

4 March meeting	4
Background documents	D
Interviews	I
Learning Exchange	L
Online Survey	S
Teleconferences	T

Quotations that capture the essence of findings are provided in boxes throughout this section. The 'raw' findings (i.e.: presented as gathered) are submitted in a separate document.

3.1 Overall contribution to strengthening communities' ability to gain greater control over decisions that affect them

3.1.1 The wider view

- The evaluation uncovered a widespread optimism about the potential of the NEP process, and about the public commitment from Government to embed empowerment in civil life. (I, L, ,S, T)

'We've got a real opportunity with the National NEP and with the forthcoming White Paper...'

'This is brilliant, brilliant leverage.'

'It's the first time the government have put this so far up their agenda.'

- The huge majority of respondents see NEP as trying to strategically open doors to empowerment and to find ways to evidence successful practice more robustly. As the programme has only been running six months, and in some regions for even less time, most respondents felt it would not be reasonable to expect strong evidence in this area yet. (I, L, S, 4).

We need to be clear that not a year but months, so realism is required. Would look to hearts and minds and aspirations change.

- However, there is also widespread dissatisfaction with how the programme has been rolled out during Year 1. Respondents commonly criticised:
 - the late decisions on funding
 - patchy communication
 - poorly organised meetings
 - tendency to bureaucracy
 - short time scales for project-delivery and reporting(I, L, S, 4)

'It's all come together in a fairly ad hoc way - I think that's symptomatic of the process. I'm sure it's well-intentioned, but it's all been contradictory and rather muddled.'

- The late timescales and insecurity of funding have hampered the delivery of projects aiming at strengthening communities' ability to gain greater control over decisions that affect them. There was a considerable shared feeling that, after the late and rushed start, and the after the plethora of Government initiatives recently, the partners now needed to be left to consolidate and begin to deliver. Greater security about the future direction long-term sustainability of the NEP process would help this. (I, S,4)

'If stability comes, things will settle down.'

'We need to be left to get on with the work.'

'I think we are still at an early stage. We need at least five years to see real change.'

- However, some respondents felt that the NEP process was already delivering some change, either in the form of the projects which were being delivered, or through the new links and networks formed through the regional consortia, or through a shift in focus of their own organisation's activities.

'We are discussing things where we didn't before. We are creating a space for discussing things and there are significant new faces round the table.'

The reality is that it takes a while to get things up and running and to bring partners together. It is important that this lack of momentum does not mask the high quality and substantial work that is happening locally both in third and statutory sectors on Empowerment across the region.

- The majority of regional partnership survey respondents thought their organisation was 'better able to deliver community empowerment as a result of their involvement with REP/NEP. (S)

3.1.2 The Role of the National Consortium

- The evaluation has uncovered a widely-shared dissatisfaction with the role of the National Consortium, together with a lack of shared understanding about its composition. One or two voices questioned the need for a national body at all, or suggested that it should simply be constituted from the regional consortia. Others recognised the value of harnessing the skills and contacts of players on the national stage and the strategic influencing role such a body could play. (I, L, T, S,4)

The national consortium does not operate as an independent partnership. Decisions are taken by CDF staff and the national consortium is represented by CDF staff at meetings with government departments. and then information is channelled down to national consortium members.. and thereby lack of clarity around the role, responsibilities and function of national consortium members

Lack of equality across national consortium members: feels like a London based 'golden circle'; if you raise points around issues it feels like you are being a nuisance - a defensive adversarial culture - NEP doesn't model community empowerment in how it operates - it is a very disempowering set up

'They are better placed to link the regional agenda with the national one, there is the advantage of the fact that some of the national committee members are crossing the paths of CLG all the time.'

- There were many demands that the national level should provide (I, L, T, S):
 - greater leadership and vision-setting
 - harmonisation of activities and regional action plans
 - coordination of shared learning and good practice
 - space to debate and develop thinking about empowerment
 - some kind of advocacy role to Government departments, local government and other sectors and groups (e.g.: employers)
 - facilitation for the setting of standards and the development of an approach for quality assurance and evaluation.
- When asked to develop suggestions for how this role might be developed during the teleconferences and the Learning Exchange, respondents highlighted two different functions which the National Consortium ought to be fulfilling:
 - 1) strategy and policy development function i.e.: 'holding the field' for empowerment at the national level, advocating for, developing and promoting it
 - 2) programme management function i.e.: in partnership with CDF overseeing and facilitating the successful rolling out of the NEP programme, possibly with some role in allocating funding - or at least setting guidelines for how it should be allocated.

Participants at the Learning Exchange were invited to explore different possible structures which might enable these two functions to be manifested. There was a fair degree of consensus around the idea of having two separate bodies at the national level, one strategic, which

might meet as little as twice a year, and the other operational, which might be smaller and meet six times a year. This latter body would work closely with CDF on the details of the NEP programme. It was recognised that the latter body could be a sub-set of the former. Membership of both could be drawn from national and regional representatives. (T, L)

- Although some respondents were relaxed about the National Consortium delivering projects, most felt the National Consortium ought not to be delivering empowerment projects directly. (I, L)

3.1.3 The Role of CDF

- This evaluation has charted a widespread lack of clarity about CDF's role and function within the NEP programme. Many respondents are unsure how CDF sits within the process and worry about a possible conflict of interest because of its closeness to Government. (I, L,T)

'I don't really know what they are there for. Wasn't it meant to be CDF's job to bring us together anyway? I would far rather feel that they were clearer about their role. There needs to be much more transparency.'

'A lot of it boils down to how the programme is managed by CDF, and about if they want to drive a government line – if they do then that won't get people on board.'

'CDF is obvious as the lead body but as an NDPB [non-departmental public body] its role is ambiguous - perhaps we should get a partner to chair the partnership instead of CDF?'

- Several respondents acknowledged that CDF also has suffered from a lack of resources to carry out the functions they would have wished. CDF has applied for funding to employ dedicated staff. (I, L, S)

'You need a dedicated person to manage NEP – a coordinator. At the moment it's just been done by CDF staff and that's been difficult – there needs to be more of a shared resource.'

- Several respondents expressed their sympathy with the difficult position CDF has been in, recognising that it too has been a victim of the tight timescales. (I, S)

‘I think CDF has had a difficult job to do and they have not been able to do it in the way that they would have wanted, and the trouble is that the frustrations are being aimed at them.’

- Respondents identified CDF’s dual role within NEP as (I, L,T):
 - 1) An accountable body mandated by contract for the proper running of NEP and the management of funds
 - 2) As a secretariat to NEP, providing the day-to-day support services.

- There was a good degree of consensus between respondents that they would like CDF to facilitate day-to-day (I, L, T,S) :
 - coordination of activities between the regions
 - information sharing
 - debate
 - capture and dissemination of learning

3.1.4 Communication within NEP

- The evaluation revealed a widespread enthusiasm for the way in which NEP is already providing new opportunities for developing contacts and networks. (I, L, S)

‘On the positive side, it’s fantastic that people are coming together and having that debate... it does seem as if people are trying to look beyond the box, and to do that we need to look across the sectors and think about how we work together.’

- On the other hand, given the short timescales with which the NEP has been set up and the plethora of Government initiatives recently, many respondents complained of the complexity of information which they had to deal with. Many found it hard to understand what was going on and some felt embarrassed to admit that as individuals they did not have the whole picture in their head. (I, L)

‘Most people feel that they don’t know what’s going on. Even if you do know what’s going on, it’s still not really clear. Most people I talk to say “I’m still trying to get my head round it” ‘

'Very strange set up. Not sure who is set up to do what - seems very driven by government. Too many acronyms - not sure what is what anymore. Just bizarre, and I've pretty much disengaged from it now. I thought it could bring benefits to our organisation's work, but it just seems to be reams of e-mails tinkering with little bits of work, without any actual beneficial outcomes'

- There was a widespread demand that information flow should be filtered and streamed, so that it can be easily absorbed and accessed. There were several suggestions for improving the central website, with individual pages for the regions and for a regular information bulletin. (I, L, S)

'... sharing the vast amount of information there's been has been difficult. CDF hasn't had the capacity to do that. We're still trying to clarify the role of the national group, I think in the future they need to collate all the information from Government, coordinate it all, and coordinate responses to it. It's a translation job really.'

'I think it would be really useful for CDF to produce a mini newssheet / bulletin – perhaps just one or two pages – that would be really good. To keep people informed all the developments etc. CDF have a great communication person who could possibly do this. You need to simplify all the information, keep it brief, send it as an email with links to more detailed information.'

'There needs to be less information not more. It needs to be streamlined and non bureaucratic, distil it to its most useful parts... We need to think WHAT needs to be communicated, HOW and with whom?'

- Many respondents were unsure about what funding had been secured and how it had been allocated. This was a major source of aggravation. On the other hand, several respondents felt that a great deal of discussion has been given to this issue and they wanted to avoid getting further mired in talking about money. (I, L)

3.1.5 The Role of CLG

- The evaluation discovered a great degree of enthusiasm that central Government is taking on empowerment seriously and that it seems to be interested in embedding it widely across public services. Most respondents trusted Hazel Blears' personal commitment to empowerment, but several expressed an anxiety that if she moves on, DCLG might lose its impetus. (I, L, S)
- However, there is disquiet about the role of DCLG in shaping NEP's agenda. Some are worried that NEP is too closely aligned with the Government's own targets, thus missing much of what is important in empowerment where it can add value. Other respondents take a pragmatic line and recognise that DCLG will never be an equal partner in the process, but that NEP provides an opportunity to achieve something concrete nevertheless. (I, L, 4, S)

'At the national level – the project is confused, I would even say dishonest because it hasn't been clear who has been in charge, CLG are pulling it this way, that way and the other way at their whim. It feels too strongly held.'

There is lack of clarity regarding NEP's relationship to government..Is it an independent advisory group or merely a delivery mechanism for CLG.

- The majority of respondents complained of changing priorities and the tight timescale because of CLG's influence. There are signs of hope, including from within CLG, that this will now settle. (I, L)

Interviewer: 'What would make this process work better?'

CLG interviewee: 'Security of funding, stability – not to keep moving the goal posts, more clarity about what we are asking for.'

Interviewer: 'Do you think that the conditions for that stability and clarity are going to come about?'

CLG interviewee: 'Things will settle down a bit, I think. I'm an optimist!'

- The Learning Exchange participants were asked to what extent they agreed with this statement: CLG will impose a structure on NEP unless the NEP members devise it for themselves. A telling comment was made from a knowledgeable source: 'They don't have the time, they don't want to go into that much detail. There are a whole load of things we have to work out, and if we fail, I don't think CLG will impose a more detailed structure on us.' Another added: "There is no great enforcing unit that is going to impose anything.' (L)

- There is an emerging sense that DCLG have made it clear that its agenda is to drive up NI4 within local authorities. (I,T,L,S,4)
- Several respondents expressed their puzzlement about the apparent lack of joined-up thinking, in that DCLG is backing NEP to develop empowerment, but that many community development workers are losing their jobs due to changes in funding elsewhere. (I, L)

3.2 How empowerment values are identified, interpreted and influencing emerging programmes

- This evaluation has highlighted the wide variety of definitions of 'empowerment' and the broad polarity of views about the extent to which that is a problem. Given this huge diversity, there is no evidence that emerging programmes are being influenced by a coherent understanding of empowerment values. (I, L, S)
- The very variety of definitions, stemming from the experience of practitioners built over long periods, is seen by some respondents itself as an advantage, since it allows different organisations and regions to work as they see necessary. (I)
- Most respondents, however, felt confident that community empowerment or community development workers shared similar values and approaches, even if their particular definitions or focus differed. (I)

'That is HELPFUL because it allows debate and boundary-pushing, although misunderstandings can arise as a result.'

'There is constant discussion about this at regional level. NEP framework needs to support this exploration'

- Some respondents feel frustrated that there is no shared definition of 'empowerment' across NEP. While some are prepared for pragmatic reasons to work with definitions set by Government, such as NI4, others worry that the empowerment practice is being skewed towards a narrow, Government-led agenda. Almost all stakeholders acknowledge that the remit for NEP is a narrower interpretation of community empowerment than they would like to see. (I, L,4, S)

'We have a definition from CLG in the action plan – can we bypass all the semantics now? That is what we are talking about even if it's not what I would want to see.'

'Disagree! (We) need common understanding after an informed debate. A basic building block upon which action is based'

- Many respondents feel that the purpose of the whole NEP process is to trial and develop a better shared understanding of empowerment as a final output. There is widespread demand for NEP partners to keep in dialogue about how empowerment is defined and measured. Many feel that one role of the National Consortium is to initiate and facilitate this dialogue. However, some respondents expressed the view that prolonged discussions about definitions would be an unnecessary hindrance and a delay in doing the work. (L)

'We will distract ourselves if we contemplate our navels'.

- A few respondents expressed fairly radical views about practitioners' need to carve out independent definitions of empowerment. (I)

'We could say goodbye to CLG's money and take back our freedom.'

- Many respondents were anxious that terms were wrongly being used interchangeably, or too loosely. Many were keen to keep clear distinctions between, for example, 'engagement' and 'empowerment'. (I,4)
- Some respondents felt that, since in the longer term this project is about fostering a development in empowerment practice, the mechanisms for assessing its value will need to reflect that (see section 4 – evaluation framework). (I)

3.3 The impact of NEP to date on the empowerment of marginalised groups

- This evaluation has only managed to discover limited evidence of a positive impact on the empowerment of marginalised groups in the first year. When asked, most respondents felt it was 'early days', given the late and confused start to the NEP programme. One respondent commented that he didn't have any evidence himself of marginalised groups being affected, but that this may be due to the poor communications systems not capturing what was happening. (I)

'It's too short a time period. We need to agree first about what works'.

- However, some evidence of impact could be found. Representative organisations of marginalised groups have joined some of the regional consortia. Some respondents pointed to projects affecting a range of marginalised groups, including: the homeless, New Londoners, gypsies and travellers, BME groups, gender, disability, Asian women, asylum seekers, rural communities, young people. (I, S)

'We actually have projects on the issues identified here - BME, disability, rural and urban areas and work with Local Authorities. We have a homeless men's hostel and there's been a fantastic project there on participatory learning. There should be a lot for other people to learn from that.'

My organisation is about equal opportunities and we have influenced the REP to consider empowerment of communities of interest as well as geographical communities.

- While some respondents felt that their consortia were sufficiently diverse, other respondents remarked that they tended to reflect mainstream society and that more needed to be done consciously to involve marginalised groups in the NEP process itself. (I)

'There needs to be more effort to include these groups... If they are not there, their voices should be there. There should be channels where they can feed in. That's another challenge...'

- The evaluation also uncovered evidence of planning preparatory to action, for example mapping exercises. (I, S)
- One respondent hoped that NEP would provide fresh ways of thinking about, and empowering, marginalised communities. (I)

... We should be talking about communities that aren't empowered, gypsy communities, migrant workers... I would like to see that in year 2, we have focused on these new and emerging communities ... mainstreaming some of their issues.'

3.4 Quality assurance for community empowerment

- This evaluation was unable to uncover evidence for quality assurance (QA) frameworks for community empowerment having been developed through the NEP process. Many respondents commented that the late start to NEP meant they were still in their start-up phase and had not addressed this issue yet. (I)
- For a quality assurance framework to exist stakeholders state that there must be predetermined requirements for practitioners to achieve. (D)
- The vast majority of respondents were looking to NEP to provide a space within which a robust set of QA measures could be developed (I, L)

‘From a quality assurance point of view, empowerment is looked at in broader ways. And NEP has an important role to establish community empowerment in other ways.’

‘What’s been talked about a lot is the measuring of the value of community empowerment – and that’s horribly complicated, but it would be great if someone could do that. That’s something NEP could do – that looks at ideas and concepts, rather than just responding to the government agenda.’

- Several respondents commented on the need for any QA model to reflect diversity - diversity not only between communities and people, but diversity in the types of community empowerment activities carried out. One respondent commented that a ‘one-size fits all’ approach would not work, but that a range of approaches might be needed. Whatever approaches to QA are developed, they should all (I):
 - recognize the difference between engagement and empowerment
 - be applicable to different types of activity
 - enable different aspects of empowerment activity to be assessed, for example: mechanisms (such as area forums), processes (such as citizens’ juries) or enablers (such as community development input)

‘If all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail.’

- Several respondents commented that any QA model(s) developed should not be driven merely by 'hard' indicators, but should reflect the subjective experience of individuals. There was some recognition that these could be captured through innovative techniques such as reflective diaries, online blogs or action learning. (I)

3.5 How the regional partnerships have worked

3.5.1 Terminology

- This evaluation revealed how diversely language concerning NEP is being used. Regions have given themselves different names: 'steering groups', 'management groups', 'partnerships' and 'consortia'. These partly reflect their stage of development. This terminology is meaningful to the individual regions, but opaque to outsiders. In this report, GKG C has referred to 'regional partnerships' for simplicity. (I, L, S)

3.5.2 Effectiveness

- In some regions, partnerships appear to be active and thriving. Others are struggling and little has happened in terms of concrete outputs (although many participants referred to activities due within days or weeks of the interview). (I, L, S)
- For many, this initiative represents the first time they have come together under a joint umbrella to work with each other on community empowerment and this was seen to be extremely positive and innovative. In fact, some suggested that the formation of the regional partnerships could be the single strongest sustainable element of the whole NEP programme. (I,S, L)

'They are working well. They are delivering lots and they've been very busy. But because of the late start it's been very frenetic; the meetings have had to be more businessy than they might have been.'

- Some respondents feel that political and interpersonal tensions within some regions (often historical and long standing) are causing problems. (L)
- In one region (South East) polar views were expressed on effectiveness and inclusion from within the regional partnership. (I, S)

'In our region there has only been one meeting and that was badly organised, only a few people turned up its not been effective at all in fact we complained'

'I think its working well ... we're having monthly meetings, I think we are shaking out a very useful agenda'

- The results from the online survey indicate that the East, North East, North West, South East and South West regional partnerships have developed the largest and/or most effective networks (S)
- Regional partnership members rated 'sharing and learning of good practice' the highest function of their involvement with the REP. The lowest rating was for impact upon 'influencing of public bodies via the NEP/REP' indicating that energies of the regional partnerships have been focussed on the internal group 'norming' processes. Interestingly the inverse of this is true for wider recipients of training and events hosted by regional partnerships, who rated that 'public bodies are more open to influence' the highest outcome for REP highlighting the effectiveness of bring decision makers and grassroots together .(S)

3.5.3 Role

- Many respondents emphasised the strategic role of the regional partnerships was emphasised. Many respondents felt there was a need to ensure politicians and bureaucrats better understand what empowerment means and that communities and activists better understand the politicians and bureaucrats. (L, T)

3.5.4 Membership of the Regional Partnerships

- Respondents reported fairly wide differences in how each regional partnership was constituted, although there was some recognition that the diversity of each region needed to be reflected in how each regional partnership was set up. In trying to establish who should become a member of each partnership, respondents reported a dilemma between 'going broad' and 'going deep'; should each partnership be a broad and loose gathering of all potential stakeholders, or a concentrated body of practitioners?. Some regional consortia (e.g.: in the NW) have built on existing strong networks, particularly of practitioners and Third Sector agencies. Others, (e.g.: London) have resisted forming until future funding was secured, working instead with a Management Group. (I, L)
- Some National organisations, expressed disappointment and frustration at being excluded from regional involvement despite there being a regional representative.(S)
- In the Learning Exchange, the importance both of inclusion as well as of reaching and involving the grassroots emerged as the top priorities for regions. However, there were differences in view about how the grassroots should be involved in the partnerships. Some regions had a model where they had a parallel group of practitioners advising the partnership, others included the practitioners in the partnership. This was because some regions perceived their role as a strategic one and felt that the regional partnership was a space for influencing decision-makers. The relevance and usefulness of the programme to the work of grassroots practitioners was not in dispute, in fact it was seen as key.

Rather, respondents felt it was a question of how to constitute the partnerships in a way that would be most effective in shifting policy and practice with the decision-makers. (L)

3.5.5 Links with other bodies

- Regional partnerships reported different experiences in working with RIEPs – some regions were beginning to establish a relationship. Where that was possible (e.g.: when the RDA was the lead body) the relationship tended to remain on a bilateral level rather than being a genuine relationship with the partnership as a whole. (T, I, 4)
- Several respondents commented that DCLG could take a much bigger role in encouraging the RIEPs to work with NEP. There are also suggestions about linking empowerment ‘beacon’ local authorities to RIEPs and NEP. (L)

‘We are being pushed to form that link from our end, but I don’t think they are being asked to make the link from their end’.

‘I am disappointed that RIEPs haven’t embraced NEP as delivery body’

- Some respondents suggested that local authorities have a tension around empowerment and active citizenship and that the Empowerment Advisor model could be useful. They felt a need to encourage buy-in at Chief Executive level. (L)
- Respondents felt independent support for citizen groups was important. (L)
- Government Office support is reported as cooperating well with the regional partnerships in some regions and less well in others. The relationship between NEP and the RDA is a strong factor in ensuring a good relationship. (I, L)

3.5.6 Structures

- Breaking England into nine separate regions was welcomed as a sensible structure. However there was some view that empowerment work tends to be carried out on a far more local scale than the Government regions; forming the NEP consortia on regional boundaries did not adequately reflect this localism. (I, L, 4)
- There were widespread calls for greater coordination between regional consortia to avoid duplication and to share learning and good practice. (I, L)

- Getting regional partnerships formed has been difficult as a result of short term funding commitments. The same reasons have made it difficult to stabilise the partnership when it has formed (T, I)

'People weren't willing to commit themselves; they need to know that this is something that will be happening long term. Its taken time to convince them.'

3.5.7 Links with the National Partnership

- Very many respondents felt a lack of clarity about how the National and Regional Consortia should communicate and what their individual roles were. (4, I, L)
- There was a feeling that the regional partnerships were not being provided with a clear enough vision or steer from the National Consortium. Some regions had a strong vision for their own work; others missed a clearer lead from the national level. (I) There was a call for more leadership (as opposed to direction) from the national level. This was not seen as necessarily incompatible with the more bottom-up approach of regions. The role of leadership in this instance would be to facilitate a shared way forward. (I, L)
- National meetings were felt to be very frustrating. The present confusions around vision and structure were seen to be sapping of energy. The lack of clarity and short term funding commitments at national level has had a significant negative impact in the regions. Many felt that good networking opportunities and the sharing of inspirational practice would help to revitalise the partnerships and reverse flagging motivation. (4, L, I)

3.5.8 Communications at regional level

A majority of respondents;

- Felt they did not adequately know what was happening in other regions, and there was a great deal of demand for more sharing of information between regions, and between regions and the national level. (I, L)
- Called for a package of support for local authorities, including training for local authority staff in empowerment policy and practice. It was felt that councils which are doing well in this area could help those who are struggling. Empowerment advisors could be appointed. (L)
- Felt that NEP could do more to develop a communications campaign targeted at local councillors and council chief executives to raise their awareness of empowerment, of opportunities and methods available. (L)

- Felt they did not adequately know what was happening in other regions, and there was a great deal of demand for more sharing of information between regions, and between regions and the national level. (I, L)
- Called for more to be invested in communication methods. These could provide a focus and a useful developmental tool, complimenting other methods of engaging people and promoting inter-regional work. (L)
- Requested a more coherent way of communicating evaluation and monitoring information from regions to CDF. Many respondents commented about too much form-filling for monitoring purposes.

3.5.9 Success and limiting factors

Success factors were said to include (I, 4, L)

- Having an existing network to build on and not starting from scratch
- Some said having a broad range of stakeholders, open rolling membership, allowing the group to grow organically – much more likely to go beyond the usual suspects and be inclusive

The diversity of the group has been a great thing, shared resources and avoiding duplication

- Others thought that a smaller more strategic approach to the regional partnership worked well for them.
- Focus on grassroots community groups rather than only professionals, work with practitioners getting closer to the ground and outreach
- Having flexible, locally determined funding to spend as seen relevant for that region
- Use of a website to provide a focus, information sharing and as an interactive developmental tool
- Success stories and case studies to inspire
- Mapping exercises
- Good relationship with RIEPs, LA and RDAs
- Regular, monthly meetings
- Practitioners forum and LA learning exchange seminars

Limiting factors were said to be; (I, 4, L)

- Unclear, changing selection process for lead body role; appointment of a lead body which is in a state of change, flux and insecurity
- Poor communications; too much information that isn't clear
- 'nepotism', word of mouth membership; having 'usual suspects' in the consortia
- Too much to do in too short a time scale

'We need more time to plan and develop projects if they are to be true partnership'

'Focus hasn't yet been on building understanding of each other as partners – been too busy planning work'

'More networking than partnership at this stage, however there is great potential'

- Where a regional partnership had not previously been in existence potential members were unwilling to commit particularly due to lack of clarity on future funding
- Neglect of the networking/collective role between regions; allowing each region and national consortium to develop alongside each other but without engagement with each other.

4 Evaluation framework for Years 2 - 4

4.1 Summary

This section outlines some informed proposals about an evaluation framework for Year 2-4 however these are suggestions only and require more consultation among NEP partners.

These proposals draw out and bring together ideas from all the data sources and show an unequivocal wish for better sharing of evaluation approaches. There is a wide range of different approaches emerging, some of them developed over a number of years. There is great interest in sharing these methods. Indeed, some state is as strongly as (T):

‘That IS what NEP is about, is it not?’

Very few survey respondents were actually evaluating their empowerment work. (S) However a fair number of respondents were able to identify evaluation frameworks used in a variety of fields, although not all the respondents were actively using them. Frameworks mentioned included (I):

- Achieving Better Community Development
- A model being developed by Ruskin College
- Civic Forum model
- DOSTI Model of Influence, developed by ChangesUK
- PQASSO
- National Occupational Standards for Community Development
- IPAC (Individual Profile in Active Citizenship City and Guilds)
- The ‘Scottish Model’
- Performance Hub measures
- Landlord Accreditation model
- Social auditing.

There had already been some dialogue between key stakeholders on a common framework although this work has not been continued. Arising from the Learning Exchange day there is unequivocal agreement with the need for a common evaluation framework for regions. Some outcomes for the framework were drafted at the 2 April event.

4.2 A framework for an unfunded project?

Whilst funding for Years 3 and 4 had not yet been agreed, respondents felt that Years 2 – 4 should be planned on the basis that NEP would secure on-going funding. However, it would be important to ensure that there are some tangible stand-alone achievements at the end of Year 2, should support for

Years 3 and 4 not be forthcoming. Any evaluation framework will therefore have to be developed on the basis that NEP may not be funded beyond the next few months, but that concrete outputs may need to be assessed at end of Year 2. (T)

4. 3 Purpose and aims of evaluating - why do it?

Respondents felt that any evaluation of NEP would need to:

- scope and define the need for community empowerment interventions and demonstrate how to go forward
- validate certain approaches to community empowerment and identifying barriers to their delivery
- provide formative learning about best practice within community empowerment
- enable the Department for Communities and Local Government to assess the extent to which they have achieved their objectives (for example targets measured by NI4 and the as yet undefined indicator set for Duty to Involve)
- communicate best practice to policy makers and managers, evidence achievement in community empowerment
- as a tool for communication between stakeholders. (L)

4. 4 Audience - who is it for?

The evaluation of NEP is aimed at policy makers and managers primarily, though frontline community workers and community activists should be involved and should benefit from the formative element of the evaluation. An evaluation process is weakened by having too many disparate audiences and the priority target for the learning is policy makers and managers. (L)

4. 5 Principles - what do we base our judgement on?

4.5.1 NI4 and indicators

NI4 needs to be accommodated - but not define - the framework. Measuring performance against it needs to be built into the evaluation framework but as one of a number of different performance criteria and indicators. There was a widely shared and strongly held view that NI4 as an indicator on its own was of limited use and was vague, but also recognition that it is a central measure against which CLG will be measured. This is reflected in the proposed outcomes. (I,T,L,S,4)

‘CLG is quite fixated on local authority decision-making even though the indicator [NI4] doesn’t just specify local authorities.’

- Indicators were generally considered to be an unsuitable measurement for community empowerment, the only indicator suggested was more personalised services i.e. if local services are more personalised this would demonstrate public inclusion in decision making (4)

4.5.2 NEP as one aspect of a broader approach

Regions will evaluate according to their own processes and criteria. Their range of work will be designed according to their own definitions of empowerment and their own local opportunities and challenges. The NEP evaluation and the NEP programme of work will be one part of that wider work stream. (L)

4.5.3 Flexibility

There needs to be sensitivity to the time needed to complete monitoring and evaluation processes and to the different stages of development that different regions are currently at. It is important not to be too prescriptive and an important element of formative and participatory evaluation is to 'follow the learning'.

There therefore needs to be sufficient structure to make a common approach meaningful together with flexibility to show that different roles have to be measured in different ways. Regions should also be able to add individual elements to the evaluation framework, though all should work to a common core. (L, T)

4.5.4 Cost benefit analysis

When asked about evaluating community development, a common response from stakeholders is: 'it's too early to talk about indicators'. On the other hand, the majority of respondents are of the view that the development of indicators is what the whole of the NEP is about. Given that there is still a great deal of discussion, research and learning about measuring community empowerment, it was felt by respondents that it would be premature to develop a cost benefit framework. However, such a measure would be a useful focus for cross-regional research which may be initiated by the national body. (T)

4.6 Elements of the evaluation

It is proposed that evaluation in Years 2 -4 should measure two elements of NEP's performance: management of the programme as a whole and activities across the regions.

4.6.1 Management of the programme

Management has been the main focus of the comments about Year 1 of the programme and there is a good baseline for using the findings from the Year 1 evaluation to investigate progress at the end of years 2, 3 and 4. This will include aspects of communication, organisation, membership of consortia at regional and national level and the roles of those consortia.

'Q. What measures would you want to be using for NEP years 2 – 4?

'A. Measures that show whether the NEP has been effective in influencing the governments' empowerment policy.'

4.6.2 A common framework for action across the regions

Activity across the regions should be evaluated on outcomes. These outcomes can be grouped in the following clusters:

- a) Influence - the citizen's potency
- b) Influence - agencies' receptivity
- c) Capacity building among community empowerment enablers
- d) Impacting other programmes.

Each cluster will be gauged by a number of individual indicators. What these might be are indicated overleaf.

'Q. What sorts of processes and decisions would you expect people to be engaging in as a result of feeling more empowered?

'A. Voting, lobbying, campaigning, challenging, advocacy for others, demonstrating'

'Cooperation between groups and local level to address large issues, have they had influence? Infrastructure to engage, clearer communication/articulation on needs/wants/desires'

<p>a) Influence - the citizen's potency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People feel more able to influence decision making. • People are aware of opportunities to influence decisions. • They have a greater ability to use those opportunities. • They use those abilities 	<p>c) Capacity building among community empowerment enablers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community empowerment practitioners (people delivering NEP) have increased their ability to evidence community empowerment more robustly
<p>b) Influence –agencies' receptivity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agencies have a wider awareness of the use of government indicators • Agencies have opened themselves to influence • Agencies have been influenced by citizens • Public services have been delivered better as a result of citizens' involvement • To enable and empower parishes to have more influence and respond to more influence (1) 	<p>d) Impacting other programmes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other empowerment programmes have been strengthened
<p style="text-align: center;">Management of the NEP programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Organisation • Membership of regional and national consortia <p style="text-align: center;">Clear roles for those consortia</p>	

(1) Note: A particular focus on parishes was proposed by the respondents at the Learning Exchange, though it was acknowledged that this wouldn't be appropriate for the London region.

4.7 Process and evaluation methodologies

Early indications are that the participatory approach taken for the Year 1 evaluation has been appreciated by those taking part in the evaluation. (L, T)

'It demonstrates how little we as regions get to talk to each other about what we are actually doing, which is zero at the moment.'

'This [the teleconference] has been one of the more empowering processes that I've been involved in and this is what we haven't had, the opportunity to hear what has been going on in the regions ... I hope that the programme going forward can build in much more things like this.'

'My time's been well spent today – a good opportunity to contribute to developing a piece of work. We've all had a say and been empowered'

4. 7.1 Spaces for practice exchange

Stakeholders are looking for specific spaces for exchanging ideas and peer learning which could be met from a set of options including (I, T, L):

- Action learning sets – within regions or across regions. There has been some experimentation with action learning sets in London region. (I)
- Teleconference discussions. These could perhaps be part of ongoing evaluation on key themes linked to the outcomes. This method lends itself to cross-region interaction. One member from each region could take it in turns to prepare a PowerPoint presentation/ discussion agenda and facilitate the conference on each occasion. (T)
- Blog – a blog format is available to view at www.nepeval.net which is linked to other sites that can feed in photos, videos and other files. This could be an online learning exchange.
- Reflective diaries – people from different regions could write up reflective diaries of their work and exchange them with others for comment online. The diaries could reflect on certain issues relevant to the outcome set. (I)
- Sharing evaluation expertise and learning. There is a huge opportunity and a significant need to share approaches to evidencing effectiveness. Some workshops on evaluation have taken place and this initiative needs to continue and be extended. Regionally hosted workshops with invitations to other regions and national group members would probably be most appropriate. (I, T)

4.7.2 Baselineing

Some of the outcomes would lend themselves to baselineing. (L) And some organisation are already baselineing their activity, although this is inconsistent.

The On-line survey tool developed for this evaluation provides some insight on baseline data for some regions, particularly on reach and content of regional partnerships and wider networks.

4.7.3 The role of partner agencies

Members of regional consortia (particularly local authorities) could probably supply existing data that would evidence some of the outcomes listed above or could be asked to add an element to their monitoring. For example, they could ask how NEP interventions are influencing changes in satisfaction with public services. It was thought that the NEP had a role on collating and sharing what already existed and might be possible. (L)

4.7.4 Common templates

Many of the outcomes could be evidenced qualitatively through case studies. Common templates for case studies could be created showing, for example, how a decision has been made in a different way as a result of an intervention. (L)

5 Conclusion

There has been significant distance travelled both nationally and more significantly, regionally in the four – six months that this programme had been active. This is despite the fact that delivery has been hampered by rapid changes in operating context, timescales and goal posts and by the blurring of roles. This has discouraged many partnerships from establishing work programmes or networks in the absence of sustained if funding for future years.

A lack of shared understanding of community empowerment between the partnerships, regionally and nationally, and DCLG has frustrated the process for many. Partners perceive the DCLG definition as too narrow and as not doing justice to the breadth of their existing work in community empowerment that has a much broader approach; however there is overlap between the NEP/DCLG definition and the wider fieldwork of Community Empowerment.

The main outcomes of NEP in year 1 have been networking, scoping, baselining, improved dialogue with some LAAs and RIEPs and a raised profile of community empowerment. There has been significant time investment in developing and building partnerships and in providing a foundation that can be built upon. With a strong focus on delivery, partnerships have had little opportunity to share learning and identify best practice and this has limited development and impact.

In just four – six months achievements have been gained by tremendous levels of support, passion and enthusiasm for community empowerment across the country. The partnership and CLG must be careful to not exploit in future years the good will that has been shown so far.

There is unequivocal support for the exploration of a common evaluation framework and for partners and stakeholders to continue the discussions started in this area in 2007.

6 Recommendations arising from the findings

In light of our findings we recommend that:

- This report is circulated to all contributors; in addition there were a number of requests at the 2 April event that the event write ups and raw findings also be made available.
- The role and purpose of both the national consortium and CDF and their relationship to each other be redefined, the issues raised in this report relating to this issue are resolved via a facilitated process and the results of this clearly communicated to all stakeholders.
- Membership of the national consortia to be reviewed in light of the above and that its dual roles of strategic and operational are both recognised and resourced.
- A shared definition of community empowerment be reached and partners look for continued separate funding for community empowerment work that is not covered by NEP.
- DCLG to increase its support for this work by strategically opening doors across government departments, Local Authorities, RIEPs and others.
- The role of CDF as both secretariat and accountable body is recognised and resourced.
- Decision making be more transparent and communications overall be more streamlined and effective with better use made of virtual communication tools and websites for both national and regional work.
- Improved and increased opportunities for learning and sharing experience are created; both real (conferences, workshops and action learning sets) and virtual (teleconferences and blogs).
- The opportunity to develop a creative quality assurance framework is embraced.
- A process for developing a common evaluation framework is developed and rolled out across all stakeholders, continuing and building upon initial work already started.
- Regional partnerships be given 'space' to embed and build upon work that they rushed to achieve in 2007/08.
-
- A participatory approach is used for evaluating the work of Years 2-4, and the evaluation be integrated into the whole project i.e not tagged onto the end as in year 1.
- Regional membership is reviewed in light of the success factors raised here.
- National meetings are professionally developed and facilitated.

Appendix 1 List of those contacted as part of the evaluation

With thanks to;

Bec Clarkson - Community Alliance
Beth Longstaff - CDX
Carolina De Oteyza - Manchester University
Caryl Agard - (Y&H)
Charles Wood - DCLG
Debbie Roberts - Regional Action West Midlands
Dennis Artis (North East)
Dorothy Newton Scarman Trust
Edward Anderson - Involve
Eve Davidson - North West Together We Can
Fiona White - Portsmouth Council
Gabriel Channan - CDF/CLG
Guy Nokes - Scarman Trust
Hannah Peaker - London Civic Forum
Helen Hughes - IDEA
Helen Marsh - DCLG
Jackie Richards - City and Guilds
Jackie Longworth – (South West)
Jan Crawley - SW Foundation
Jane Dobie - CDF
Jayne Humm - CDF
Jemma Basham - Academy for Sustainable Communities
Jen Wingate - Inspire East
Jim Simpson - Every Voice Counts
Jo Dean - Nottingham Community Network
Joe Mitcheli - Barnsley Social Inclusion
John Potter (South East)
John Skrine - Creating Excellence
John Steven - Equal Voices
Lorna Prescott - Dosti
Lorraine Roberts - London Civic Forum
MandyWilson - COGS
Mark Proctor (East)
Neil Cleeveley - NAVCA
Nicky Stevenson (East)
Pat Roberts (East)
Rachel Legget - Inspire East
Rhiannon Bearne - 'Voluntary Organisations' Network North East
Safi Price - Wolverhampton Council
Salima Hafejee - Bradford Youth Development Partnership
Shamsher Chauhan- Imagine
Sharon Palmer - Regional Action Wes Midlands
Stephanie Linham - Community Matters
Sue Halstead - London GO
Ted Hartley - Together We Can
Toby Blume - Urban Forum
Val Woodward - ChangesUK
Zoraida Mediwlson Bendek - East Midlands Take Part

Appendix 2 Raw data

This will be a separate file including all data collected

1. Write ups from 4th March
2. Interviews
3. Teleconference PowerPoint
4. Teleconference facilitator notes
5. On-line survey excel files
6. On-line survey findings PowerPoint used at Learning Exchange
7. Learning exchange write ups