



**Regional evaluation of the Yorkshire and Humber
Empowerment Partnership**

**Lucy Grimshaw
Derrick Purdue
University of the West of England, Bristol
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Executive Summary

This regional evaluation of the Yorkshire and Humber Empowerment Partnership (YHEP) was conducted by the University of the West of England, Bristol (UWE) and the approach adopted was a formative process evaluation based on documentary research, survey work, in-depth interviews and discussion groups. In line with the NEP national evaluation framework, this evaluation report is focused on three aspects of YHEP work: co-ordination of empowerment work across the region; empowering communities (including through VCS networks); and empowerment through Local Authorities (including TSF).

Key lessons drawn from the regional evaluation reveal good practice across a range of aspects of the regional partnership, including: high levels of activity and output in an ever-more complex policy environment, strategic leadership, building 'relational capacity' at different levels across the region, strengthening VCS networks and supporting empowerment through the work of authorities within the framework of the TSF.

- YHEP continues to be the most active and visible regional empowerment partnership in the NEP, and has chosen to respond positively to the increasingly complex policy environment within the empowerment and engagement field. YHEP have improved their website and organised an impressive array of events and publications (with voices remaining popular), working more closely with Local Authorities in the region in response to the TSF programme and with community voluntary sector organizations.
- COGS / SBC have continued to provide strong strategic leadership to the YHEP, which has been reflected in the overwhelming positive assessment in the interviews and the survey conducted of the Consortium members of the added value generated by their leadership role.
- Building relationships and relational capacity (including the skills and confidence for collaborative working) has been central to the co-ordination of community empowerment across the region. The YHEP Consortium continues to be valued as a regional hub for empowerment work. YHEP has succeeded in providing safe places and spaces, being accessible and inclusive, acting as community champions and basing events around reflective learning, all of which contribute to developing the relationships across the region necessary for co-ordinated empowerment work.
- The Community Panel remains an innovative approach in the NEP, which has been properly resourced through TSF to develop working groups focussing for example on producing an LSP protocol for community engagement and a community conference for the region. The Community Panel model has now been transferred to another region.
- Through its network development fund YHEP has supported the development of regional networks. This has enabled networks to establish themselves and increase their activity and raise their profile regionally. With the continued support of YHEP the networks should leave a lasting legacy of working relationships and connections.

- YHEP has facilitated an open-minded approach to building constructive relationships and created networks across local authorities, including sub-regional groups, based on the recognition that councils have a variety of approaches and performance capacity. The existence of the YHEP has developed local authority participants' confidence. This will be part of the lasting legacy of YHEP. It has built capacity in individuals and has empowered individuals involved in local authorities to be 'Champions of Participation' in their own organisations.

1. Introduction

1.1 Yorkshire and Humber Empowerment Partnership

The National Empowerment Partnership was established by the Secretary of State for the Department for Communities and Local Government in 2007 with the aim to:

“... improve the quality and functioning of relationships between citizens and government, in order to increase the ability of people to influence the decisions which affect their lives.”¹

The aims of the 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

The Community Development Foundation is the accountable body for the NEP.

The Yorkshire and Humber Empowerment Partnership (YHEP) is one of nine Regional Empowerment Partnerships (REPs) in England. The REP is made up of a Consortium of partners from the public, voluntary and community sectors at both local and regional levels and a Community Panel made up of community activists from across the region. The Partnership is co-ordinated by COGS – Communities and Organisations: Growth and Support – and the Social Business Company (SBC).

The main aim of YHEP is to increase the number of people, particularly in disadvantaged areas, who participate in public issues, to press for and contribute to the improvement of public services and to help to shape the future of their locality.² The YHEP is also particularly concerned with the level of involvement in decision making of younger people, people living in poorer neighbourhoods and people living rural areas and the opportunities available to them.

1.2 Targeted Support Fund

The Targeted Support Fund (TSF) is funded by CLG and delivered through the YHEP. The aim of the TSF is to improve the engagement capacity and practices of local authorities to enable them to reach out to local people more effectively and respond to their concerns about public decisions and services. The TSF thus provides additional support to improve NI4 scores. TSF is administered through the Community Development Foundation and provides REPs with additional funds of approximately £500,000 per year for 2009/10 and 2010/11 for each of the nine REPs.

TSF aims to complement the work of Connecting Communities in neighbourhoods and estates and also aims to support work with particular sections of the community

¹ <http://www.cdf.org.uk>

² <http://www.yhep.org.uk>

including Black and Minority Ethnic Groups; disabled people and young people. In YHEP there are five strands to the TSF work:

- Place-based activity
- Active citizenship
- Workforce Development
- Leadership
- Re-imagining community involvement

The work carried out via the TSF supports and extends the YHEP's work. Evaluation this year concentrates mostly on the 'place-based' strand which focuses on empowerment through local authorities. In the next stage we wish to follow up the other strands of TSF work- workforce development; active citizenship; leadership and re-imagining community involvement. The framework in Appendix 1 shows indicates where the evaluation of the TSF would fits for the purpose of this evaluation (and is at present mainly within the 'empowerment at public agency' section). A very early draft evaluation framework for TSF is included in Appendix 3 and this will inform the next stage of the evaluation. The evaluation framework should be developed in collaboration with those delivering TSF.

1.3 The regional evaluation

Following last year's evaluation report YHEP commissioned the University of the West of England in Bristol (UWE) to complete a regional evaluation of the YHEP up to 2011. This evaluation builds on last year's evaluation and aims to:

- design an evaluation framework ensuring inclusion of the Targeted Support Fund element of the programme
- assess how the YHEP is contributing to/achieving stated aims and priorities
- assess the extent to which the partnerships are developing and providing an infrastructure for sustained empowerment activity
- complement the national evaluation and gain a more in-depth assessment of progress so far
- track the changing policy and programme context in which the REPs operate
- look at the added value to empowerment activity of having a dedicated empowerment partnership in the region

The evaluation is being carried out in collaboration with the evaluation for the North West Regional Empowerment Partnerships – Together We Can North West- North West evaluation. Following the 2009/10 reports it is hoped that joint 'learning' events can be held including NW and YH Empowerment Partnerships participants.

The evaluation is based on semi-structured interviews with fifteen participants, four case studies of selected activities, observation at key meetings/conferences, a focus group, a review of documents and events and a survey of Consortium members.

The regional evaluation fits within the framework for the national evaluation of Empowerment Partnerships. The proposal for the national evaluation sets out the relationship between the national and regional evaluations stating that regional evaluations will explore the impact of individual projects and interventions and how they

have contributed towards the overall Programme aims. The national evaluation sets out key indicators of progress and highlights where regional evaluations are expected to contribute evidence of progress. This forms the basis for our regional evaluation framework as set out in the Appendix 1. The framework focuses on three aspects:

- a co-ordinated approach to promoting empowerment;
- activity to promote empowerment at a community level;
- activity to promote empowerment at a public agency level.

2. Co-ordinating community empowerment

2.1 Introduction

The YHEP is about building 'relational capacity' across the region, that is, relationships between activists and organizations through which good practice and understanding of empowerment can be shared. As reported last year, the YHEP brings together a range of organisations from the public and voluntary and community sectors (VCS) operating at different geographical scales - local public sector organisations, regional and sub-regional networks and regional agencies.

The YHEP has made excellent progress in co-ordinating community empowerment within a crowded policy context which has spawned a plethora of initiatives over the last couple of years. This has been within a changing policy environment as one Secretary of State has replaced another and the government message on communities has shifted emphasis from community empowerment and devolution of power to localities to a focus on closing the gap between and within particular communities. It is clear that within this context that the YHEP has added value through its activity and primarily through building relationships which enable the sharing of good practice and information across the Yorkshire and Humber region.

A key forum and mechanism for co-ordination is the YHEP Consortium (see Section 2.5 for further details) which is a wide-ranging partnership of local authorities, community groups and regional agencies. The majority of participants involved in the evaluation, including those in the Consortium who were surveyed, were overwhelmingly positive about the role and impact of the YHEP.

2.2 Sharing evidence and good practice regionally and nationally

The YHEP has continued its approach from last year and has been excellent at delivering a range of events and materials which provide information about the context for community empowerment as well as practical examples. As one interviewee commented:

"The information flow is brilliant"

Following consultation the YHEP website³ has been redesigned this year and is now more accessible providing links to relevant documents as well as advertisement for events and booking forms. Most interviewees said that the website was a "*good resource*". Some admitted that they did not have the time to look at it on a regular basis but that the email updates sent out by COGS often served as a prompt to look at it.

YHEP continues to create a bank of case studies and toolkits. The 'VOICES from experience' publications continue to be popular providing examples of community empowerment and reports from YHEP workshops/events. Each is written in an 'easy to read', "*glossy magazine format*" and draw out the challenges for community participation and key learning points. This year they have covered themes such as:

³ <http://www.yhep.org.uk>

- ‘Making the case for participation’ which reported on a workshop run by YHEP and part funded by the Community Development Journal. The workshop brought together a group of practitioners, policy officers, academics and two international participation activists.
- Neighbourhood Arrangements in Rotherham
- South Yorkshire Community Engagement Improvement Partnership
- Participatory Budgeting in Eastfield, near Scarborough
- The power of young people: what empowerment means for us: a report of the Youth Empowerment Champions residential which highlights key lessons for engaging young people.
- Give us a Voice: Gypsies and Travellers make it real: which is an amazing story of empowerment told by one woman in Doncaster.
- Community Anchors in ‘overlooked’ or remote areas.

This evaluation has not sought to assess the direct impact of the Voices publications beyond the YHEP interviewees. The Voices are easily accessible on the YHEP website and also available in hard copy. Interviewees generally found them useful sources of information. As one interviewee commented they provide the opportunity:

“to promote good practice and gather it from elsewhere”

One interviewee stated that within her council the VOICES on participatory budgeting (PB) had been influential and changed councillors’ views:

“We were committed to the piloting of PB in two areas, Ward members were cynical about it despite having been briefed, they had it in their heads that it was South American so what was the relevance to Leeds? But we gave them a copy of the Voices on PB with examples in Y&H and members saw it could happen. The Voices are in an easy format, and make things achievable, real life quotes are included to bring things to life.”

The YHEP organises a range of interesting and relevant events; all provide the opportunity to discuss how community empowerment and engagement can work in practice. Some take a more theoretical/philosophical and allow participants time to reflect on why participation is important (as the ‘making the case for participation’ example above as well as Champions of Participation events) whilst others are more policy oriented, for example, three events were held across the region in July 2009 and in collaboration with the Urban Forum on the ‘Duty to Involve: a reality check’. These events provided a space for participants to explore what the ‘Duty to Involve’ means to them and how it can be made to work in practice. In general interviewees thought that events provided an excellent opportunity to discuss and reflect on their work. As one respondent to the survey of Consortium members wrote:

“YHEP events are very good for encouraging people to take a step back and think about what they are doing.”

Evaluations of events continue to show a high rate of satisfaction, as one interviewee said:

“Feedback on events is very good – the events hosted by the REP have been well-received.”

The number of events is often quite astonishing and as a result there was some concern last year about the co-ordination and overlap of events at a regional level. This does not seem to be an issue this year (perhaps due to the progress in partnership working). However, some concern remains over the impact on people’s time of engaging with the high number of events generated by active engagement with such a complex policy environment, with Take Part running alongside the NEP and now the Targeted Support Fund. In the view of one interviewee:

“There is an issue, however, about the number of events, training programmes etc. going on. It’s a very crowded landscape.”

YHEP have responded by jointly running events with other regional bodies, as well as local authorities. A calendar on the website also advertises partners’ conferences and events.

As well as sharing good practice on a regional level the YHEP also works across regions as demonstrated by its involvement in the Northern REPs meetings which brings Y&H together with the North West and North East Empowerment Partnerships. The last meeting held in January 2010 was hosted by YHEP and provided an opportunity for the three REPS to learn from each other and discuss the challenges they face. One of the aims of the next stage of the regional evaluation is to work together with the NW EP and share learning. The NW EP has now established a group similar to YHEP’s Community Panel. The regional evaluator for the NE has also expressed an interest in how the YHEP has embedded ‘reflective learning’ into its processes and delivery. The YHEP as last year is recognised as being one of the most successful Empowerment Partnerships nationally.

Building relationships has been an essential part of the Empowerment Partnership’s work and this has resulted in valuable pieces of work. For example, on a national level YHEP has been working to increase understanding and influence on the Audit Commission and the CAA process. The work this year has been a continuation of last years linking of the Community Panel with the Audit Commission (as highlighted in last year’s evaluation). Following the first round of assessments YHEP in collaboration with YH Regional Forum delivered sub-regional workshops ‘The Big Picture’ in February and March 2010 aimed at increasing knowledge amongst community and voluntary groups. Representatives from the Audit Commission participated in the workshops and this was seen by one regional agency as one of the successes of the YHEP:

“The value of sharing information – a lot of closer relationships have built up between partners who are working on similar agendas. We have been able to link the Audit Commission up with regional and local partners – even at community level. We are running workshops with people working on CAA at sub regional level for third sector and community organisations, asking: does this reflect what you think about the areas? They are attended by sub regional Audit Commission staff. We’ve circulated these around locality managers at Government Office who play a key role. It’s a very interesting success story.”

The impact of the YHEP on the Audit Commission is difficult to assess at this stage but one regional agency interviewee claimed that the work had impacted on the Audit Commission:

“I am sure that some of the work done with the Audit Commission prior to the CAA influenced their approach. They were struggling at the beginning.”

Furthermore all Local Authority interviewees expressed an interest in developing a process by which stories of community empowerment practice could be captured through the CAA process in addition to focusing simply on the Place survey scores. As one interviewee stated:

“It is only the first round so it was a learning curve for Local Authorities and inspectors organising assessments.... [YHEP] enabled us to have a discussion with Audit Commission prior to CAA but we’ve still got a challenge to get CAA to reflect all this work.”

The continual assessment process and work on improving NI4 scores through TSF and Connecting Communities (to a certain extent) means that this will continue to be an issue for the future. As the same interviewee suggested:

“We need to do lots of work around perceptions and needing to record evidence better.... [I] would like to see YHEP get a grip on the CAA process and how we can ensure all the good work that is being done is factored into the process...If you’re looking at perception then you need more than numbers and need to get local people’s stories.”

During a meeting with GOYH in June the Community Panel committed to developing a proposal on how they might provide evidence of community influence over Sustainable Community Strategies and the Duty to Involve. There was a suggestion during discussion at the Community Panel Conference in March (see Section 3.2) that the Audit Commission reports should be scrutinised / audited by the community itself. A dialogue with GOYH and the Audit Commission has clearly been established as a result of the YHEP and the impact on the Audit Commission’s approach to the CAA process is being tracked by the national evaluation.

2.3 Relationship between GOs, RIEPs and REPs

The GOYH and Local Government for Yorkshire and Humber (LGYH) (which hosts the RIEP) regularly attend Consortium meetings and there is a lot of joint working across the regional bodies. The GOYH and LGYH chaired the Northern REPs meeting (as described above). This joint working has improved over the last year as one interviewee commented:

“Because of the new government initiatives this year there has possibly been more coming together. We’ve had to have a close working relationship. We’ve had to be very focussed, making sure we don’t duplicate; going out and meeting jointly with LAs and talking about government programmes.”

Both the GOYH and LGYH are positive about the YHEP and feel that the Partnership adds value to the regional approach to community empowerment:

“very well-connected regionally. It has a good reputation, energy and commitment.”

In its Review of Achievements for 2008/09⁴ the GOYH mention that it helped to establish an Empowerment Commission which aims to explore how regional and local strategies are contributing to the empowerment of communities (however the YHEP is not mentioned by name despite being the collaborating partner).

The close relationship between regional bodies such as GOYH and YHEP ensures co-ordination between the TSF and Connected Communities Programmes, with regional meetings for these initiatives held on the same day. Interviewees from networks and local authorities mentioned that through YHEP they had linked to the Regional Community Cohesion Network organised by the RIEP and one *“wouldn’t have known about it without the YHEP”*.

2.4 Relationships between stakeholders

As stated earlier the YHEP has been about building relational capacity. This has been progressed through a range of activities including the meetings and work of the Consortium and Community Panel as well as the events and the networking fund (see Section 2.6). As will be seen in Sections 3 and 4 the impact of this has been the sharing of knowledge, the establishment of new relationships between individuals and organisations, levering of funding and improvement in the organisation and delivery of community empowerment and engagement. One interviewee highlights the impact of the Partnership:

“We can say there has been a sharing of different ways of working and practice; we’ve pushed up knowledge; organisations have been able to come together. Relationships have been forged that would not have been forged.... So what evidence do we have? Relationships, an ability to point to the numbers involved – elected members, front-line workers, community activists... The number of LAs involved and other partners.”

The development of good relationships was reported in all interviews and responses to the survey. This bodes well for the future, as funding runs out for YHEP, it is hoped that these relationships will continue and provide support for those involved in community empowerment and engagement. The Consortium as the main multi-sector forum of the YHEP brings together people from a range of sectors. Most respondents to the survey were positive about the Consortium and agreed that it provided opportunities to share knowledge and ideas with the right set of people. Furthermore relationships and networks between local authorities have been established through the Consortium and these, with the support of YHEP and the existence of a successful network in South Yorkshire (promoted through a VOICES), have inspired the development of two new sub-regional networks of local authorities (see Section 4).

⁴ <http://www.gos.gov.uk/goyh/>

The Community Panel is a group of community members from across the region who are actively engaged in their communities (see case study in Section 2.5). Panel members are appointed through a selection process based on their individual activism rather than as representatives of particular communities. The Community Panel meets four times a year and one of these meetings is held with GOYH. Following the last meeting in June 2009, the Panel thought that these meetings were positive, that greater dialogue was useful and established trust and mutual respect; they also felt listened to.

YHEP events are also often aimed at bringing the different sectors together. Although it is difficult to gauge the impact of these events in establishing long lasting relationships, one Consortium member said that he regularly briefed across his LSP following events in order to raise awareness amongst officers, partners and the VCS. The regional VCS networks interviewed felt overall that they had opportunities to build relationships at a regional level and with local authorities which they might previously not have had and that this has been a great opportunity. One statutory sector respondent to the survey stated that the Consortium:

“Strengthens the voice of the third and voluntary and community sectors [and their ability to] influence service delivery in the region.”

The quick and efficient delivery of the TSF work serves as an indication that local authorities have good relationships with some VCS organisations upon which they relied to deliver some of the TSF work on time. However there was also caution expressed about whether relationships had improved in a meaningful way. One interviewee felt there was still some way to go in building trust and shared principles and that the voluntary and community sectors should not be treated as identical and that the voluntary sector did not always practice ‘community development’. Another interviewee thought that the new structures at regional level, particularly the Regional Development Agency where the emphasis was on macro-economic policy, were not conducive to the voluntary sector. Finally a local authority interviewee highlighted the threat to the relationship between the third sector and local authorities as the reduction in public spending impacts on commissioning and service delivery. As will be discussed in Section 2.6 the YHEP has done a lot of work to support regional VCS networks to allow them to engage at regional level. The perennial problem of building shared understanding and partnership working between public, voluntary and community sectors remains in some places. The challenge is to sustain and develop further the relationships and networks over the next year and once funding has ended. It would be useful to maintain some kind of YHEP ‘memory’ so that once individuals move on the YHEP ethos and co-ordination of empowerment and engagement continues and the momentum built up is not lost.

2.5 Case study: The Consortium

An online survey of Consortium members was carried out as part of the evaluation. This survey repeated the questions asked last year as part of the regional evaluation. The data is available in Appendix 2. Fourteen members responded to questions about their participation in the Consortium and the extent to which they feel supported and able to contribute and influence the Consortium.

The Consortium continues to be highly valued by its members. Most respondents to the survey were clear about the aims of the Consortium although some (nearly half of all

respondents) who had not attended many meetings (and a couple who had attended five or more meetings) were less clear about the aims. It may be time to re-engage Consortium members in a review the aims to ensure all members are clear about the purpose of the YHEP, the Consortium and the activities carried out so that they continue to view the YHEP as a valuable asset to their work.

Despite this lack of clarity all respondents felt positively about Consortium meetings and continue to value the work of the Consortium as very or quite important. It is seen as a valuable resource for raising the profile and awareness of community empowerment, providing training and development opportunities; co-ordinating a diffuse array of central government policies:

“It strengthens and legitimises other empowerment work and brings a complementary regional dimension.”

“No other entity is pushing this agenda with such vigour and comprehensively involving a whole range of partners effectively.”

As last year, the majority of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they felt able to contribute to the REP. Consortium members have contributed to hosting, organising and advertising events, writing articles and case studies and participating in events to share knowledge and reflections. Again, as last year, most respondents agreed (or strongly agreed) that being a member of the Consortium has helped their organisation to improve its work on community empowerment. Respondents said the impact of the Consortium was to the development of networks and new partnerships; and an improved understanding of others' agendas. Additional funding was also cited as an impact. The beneficial impact on regional VCS networks of accessing funding through YHEP is discussed in Section 2.6 as is the additional TSF funding on local authorities in Section 4.3. There is also some evidence that members are sharing information about the YHEP and raising awareness of YHEP amongst staff in their own organisations for example one respondent said:

“I have populated the YHEP website with our organisation's details, and made my organisation aware of the facility to use the website as an engagement and communication tool.”

Last year's survey raised a question about whether the Consortium has the right membership. This year most respondents thought that it did have the right membership although a few were neutral or disagreed. They thought that the emphasis should be more on sub-regional or district level bodies/networks rather than solely on regional bodies. One implied that there should be more representation from rural areas. Another respondent said *“the consortium feels like a very 'professional' space”* and suggested that whilst the representation from the Community Panel was useful that perhaps local politicians should be represented on the Consortium. The overall feeling was that the membership was 'about right', the Consortium should not get too big but along with a clarification of aims perhaps YHEP should again check that Consortium membership is right for the purpose. One interviewee also expressed a wish to know more about where members came from. Perhaps more information could be placed on the website (although there is information for some of the partners some is missing). The information could be improved by adding links to partners' websites, for example for the GOYH and LGYH. Community Panel members have also discussed how their representatives on

the Consortium can be more effective including the possibility of briefings and a pre-meeting conference call.

2.6 Case study: Network development

The YHEP has a network development fund which aims to:

“Increase the number/range of organisations participating in, and benefiting from, networks and networking opportunities that will contribute directly to Regional Empowerment Partnership priorities and outcomes, i.e. create a broader base for the empowerment partnership.”

The outcomes sought are:

- Greater community led development
- Increased knowledge about what works
- Increased profile for empowerment networks with strategic bodies
- Greater promotion of empowerment best practice
- Greater awareness and contribution to empowerment partnership activities.
- More active involvement in the empowerment partnership

As such this case study of network development cuts across the evaluation framework and contributes to all three levels. The case study sought to examine the impact of the fund on four networks which support community empowerment in a variety of ways. In 2009/2010 the four networks received approximately £5,000 each to fund a range of activities. The networks are various stages of development, some well-established and others at early stages.

- The Regional Active Citizenship Learning Alliance (RACLA) aims to promote the learning dimension of the active citizenship agenda; to provide a forum for individuals and organisations to share information and practice; to discuss issues and to influence policy and developments; and to raise awareness of active citizenship learning opportunities at a community level. It builds on the take Part Pathfinders in the region.
- The Regional Refugee Community Organisation (RCO) Forum Network brings together members of refugee community organisations from across Y&H with the aim of building a voice at regional level; improving services for the sector, increasing the networking capacity of RCOs in sub-regional for a and ensuring their participation in decision-making and influence at local and regional level; and advocating on behalf of refugee communities and working with partners at regional level.
- The Yorkshire and Humber Community Empowerment in Health and Well-being Network is an emerging network which aims to build the capacity to empower communities to improve their own health and well-being. It is about building the capacity of local authorities, local NHS organisations, the third sector and other partners to work together to empower communities to improve their health and well-being. It builds on the work of the region’s Altogether Better Programme.

- The Regional Community Development Network (RCDN) is one of a number of regional community development networks. The Yorkshire and Humber RCDN brings together community development practitioners. The network aims to promote and support community development practice and learning. It does this through events, sharing information, a website, representing community development on regional and sub-regional bodies and responding to consultation documents.

The networking fund has supported each of the networks to carry out a range of activities including:

- Mapping active citizenship activity within the region
- Development of an IT network
- Administrative support
- Website development
- Training events
- Planning and development network meetings
- Voices publications
- Action learning sets

The money received has had a positive impact on the development of the networks and contributed to the outcomes of the networking fund. The networks are at various stages but all interviewees agreed that they have been able to substantially improve network development of the network as a result of YHEP funding. All of the interviewees said that without the support of YHEP funding the development of their network either would not have happened or would have been slower and more difficult. One interviewee summarised the impacts:

“It has made an enormous difference because it has enabled us to increase our activity, to develop...it fitted in well with our reason for being, it has increased our profile and our circulation list.”

The networks have also been able to be more actively involved in the YHEP. Through the funding network representatives have been able to attend Consortium meetings and share knowledge and ideas with other Consortium members. Representatives interviewed said that this brought greater awareness of YHEP activities, better networks and knowledge about the region and its agencies. One interviewee commented:

“It’s an extremely worthwhile grouping I gain an opportunity to liaise, link, network and develop work with a range of local authorities, regional bodies which I would not otherwise get access to. So my work is made a great deal easier as a result of the Partnership.”

These are opportunities which they might not have had without YHEP funding. Their involvement has led to the levering in of other funding and the delivery of events; and Voices publications. Interviewees also said that they shared information about the YHEP with their network members at team and network meetings and on their websites.

The support and inclusion of networks has also had an influence on the YHEP. For example it has broadened the YHEP agenda to encompass wider debates around the link between empowerment and active citizenship and learning and make it more inclusive, for example, bringing in refugee and asylum seeker organisations. One regional agency commented:

“There have also been regional events to bring together LAs and organisations working on active citizenship – that may be an important part of the legacy – a very strong partnership approach to active citizenship.”

The development of these networks provides the basis for a lasting legacy from YHEP and should be supported over the next twelve months to ensure their sustainability. Here are a few lessons which can be drawn from the experience of developing networks through YHEP:

- **Leadership:** Networks often need leaders to develop. One or two leaders are needed to manage the network in its early stages and develop it into a thriving network. However a network needs to be more than an individual. Over-reliance on one individual can inhibit the development and sustainability of the network particularly if the ‘leader’ leaves or moves jobs. This is a risk particularly if the leadership is done on an unpaid basis rather than as part of someone’s role in paid employment. A network can suffer in its development if control and/or ownership of a network is dominated by one individual rather than the group of people belonging to the network.
- **Nature of membership:** Members of networks inevitably participate at different levels, in the active contributions to planning and delivering of websites, events or more passively as recipients of information. There is room for different levels of involvement at different stages but members must note that the network relies on its members for its existence and all must be responsible for its continuation.
- **Small pots of funding:** Funding like the YHEP network development fund can help networks develop and establish themselves as viable networks. As illustrated above the funding can be used in a variety of ways to help networks through a developmental phase.
- **Lifespan of networks:** It can take time to develop networks and the relationships which sustain them. Small steps are needed. However networks don’t have to go on forever, they can change and develop into different entities. Some of the more informal networks were not too concerned if the network ended since this would only be if members decided that the network was no longer of any use. There is no point continuing a network if it has outlived its usefulness. However the shame would be if a useful network disappeared solely because the leader moved or ceased to be interested. Network members need to have a contingency plan if they believe the network is of value.
- **Informality:** Networks can take different forms, virtual or meeting on a regular basis to plan and develop the network or events around a particular topic. Networks can be very informal in nature. This informality can mean that things do not get done but can also lead to creativity.

- **Evaluating networks:** The complexity of network development means it is difficult to assess impact. None of the networks evaluated their development formally. This evaluation did not capture the views of network members beyond the key network leaders/developers so it is difficult to evaluate the impact on members and community empowerment in this evaluation. It may be that this could be followed up in more detail in the next stage of the evaluation

2.7 Learning from co-ordinating community empowerment

- YHEP have improved their website and organised an impressive array of events and publications (with voices remaining popular), working more closely with Local Authorities in the region in response to the TSF programme and with community voluntary sector organisations.
- COGS / SBC have continued to provide strong strategic leadership to the YHEP, which has been reflected in the overwhelming positive assessment in the interviews and the survey conducted of the Consortium members of the added value generated by their leadership role.
- Building relationships and relational capacity (including the skills and confidence for collaborative working) has been central to the co-ordination of community empowerment across the region. The YHEP Consortium continues to be valued as a regional hub for empowerment work. YHEP has succeeded in providing safe places and spaces, being accessible and inclusive, acting as community champions and basing events around reflective learning, all of which contribute to developing the relationships across the region necessary for co-ordinated empowerment work.
- Through its network development fund YHEP has supported the development of regional networks. This has enabled networks to establish themselves and increase their activity and raise their profile regionally. With the continued support of YHEP the networks should leave a lasting legacy of working relationships and connections.

3. Empowerment at community level

3.1 Introduction

The agenda for REPs this year has been to focus more on the role of local authorities in promoting and improving community empowerment and the YHEP is no exception. A shift in emphasis has not meant that developing empowerment through community organisations has been neglected by YHEP. There has certainly been activity that has enabled community organisations to take part and has raised awareness amongst community organisations and groups. This activity has included holding the 'Duty to Involve' sub-regional events as mentioned in Section 2.2 and the 'Big Picture' sub-regional workshops which provided information to voluntary and community groups and organisations about the CAA in their areas.

A review of documents, focus group with Panel members and observation at the Community Panel suggests that the number of people aware of the YHEP and getting involved in YHEP events is increasing. This is shown by proxy indicators, such as the increase in the number of people receiving information and people attending events. Over the last year the number of contacts on the YHEP's database has increased from 510 to approximately 1,177 this year, an increase of over 100%. The number of community activists attending the Community Panel Conferences has also increased as described in Section 3.2 below. Information packs are distributed to participants at events which include material about the YHEP. Voices and Newsletters are also available at events. The support of regional networks of community and voluntary sector organisations as described in Section 2.6 means that there is potential for increased awareness.

The Regional Community Panel Conferences have been an effective way of engaging with community activists, groups and organisations. Two conferences were held in the last year 'Communities: Recession,-Resilience – Responses' in June 2009 and 'Whose community is it anyway?' in March 2010. Both conferences have been effective at bringing together community activists.

Thirty three people from twelve organisations attended 'Communities: Recession,- Resilience – Responses'. The report and evaluation of the conference in June shows that participants found the conference extremely useful and enjoyable. They were able to network and meet new people; gain and share knowledge and ideas which could be taken back to their own communities; and for some the conference helped to reduce their sense of working in isolation by meeting people working on common problems. The delivery of the conferences is very informal and they can be empowering for participants as one person wrote in their feedback:

"Never thought of myself as a community activist but after today's conference I feel more empowered to voice my concerns to the appropriate authorities regarding my community."

The second conference was the result of YHEP funding with TSF funding also providing support for community representatives to plan the conference through the Community Conference sub-group. 'Whose community is it anyway?' brought together community activists representing more than thirty organisations. This was a great achievement and successfully widened the audience for YHEP events bringing in new community

organisations and groups. The conference itself had several workshops which provided different ways of allowing participants to share knowledge and experiences of community work. One workshop for example provided the opportunity to discuss with the keynote speakers from Marsh Farm NDC, another aimed to create a discussion which would feed into the Community Panel's input to the Regional Integrated Strategy. In an informal data gathering exercise participants were asked at the beginning and end of the conference 'To what extent do you think you can make a difference to your community and gain more power and influence?' An overwhelming majority were positive about their ability to influence. Discussion at the conference provided several examples of community groups influencing their local area and local institutions.

3.2 Case study: Community Panel

The Regional Community Panel provides a voice for community organisations and activists at regional level. Following on from the findings of last years' evaluation the Community Panel continues to make progress. New members have joined the Panel following a recruitment process (which was reported in last year's evaluation). New members were made to feel welcome in the group and liked the informal and friendly atmosphere, as well as the high level of knowledge and "*incredible commitment*" of existing members. New members said they were supported by a 'buddying' system, which helped them to integrate successfully into the group and to feel welcome.

The Community Panel continues to have an impact on individual members in terms of personal confidence and empowerment. One said that they were "*able to take things back [to my own community] and feel stronger*". The combination of members from different geographical areas with different interests – young people, rural, BME, neighbourhoods– means that they gain knowledge about a range of issues and this benefits them: "*It stops you being blinkered.*" Another commented that given the high level of expertise in the group the Community Panel was "*excellent value for money*" particularly since it is more than just a meeting around a table but is an active meeting with a high level of input from all. Overall the Community Panel is said to give members "*the confidence to challenge things*" and "*provides a safe place to air things that we wouldn't necessarily share at work or elsewhere*".

The development of the Community Panel has been partly supported with additional money from the TSF this year and this has enabled the Panel's work to be more focussed and better supported by COGS/SBC. For example, sub-groups have been formed to focus on particular issues:

- An LSP working group which supported by the Regional Forum to develop a protocol to strengthen community sector representation in LSPs.
- A sub-group to support work by the Community Panel to inform the Integrated Regional Strategy for Y&H.
- A Community Panel Conference sub-group which developed and planned the Conference in March 2010.
- 'Food for Thought' – a sub-group which organises informal meals for a range of people from different organisations with the aim of discussing ideas and sharing knowledge about community empowerment.

Community Panel members are concerned that it should meet its potential as a channel for community voice at the regional level and feedback at the conferences indicated that participants want the Community Panel to give them a voice at regional level. The GOYH views the Panel in a very positive way and engages with the Panel in a proactive manner as evidenced by the annual joint meetings. It will important to capture the impact of the Community Panel's work in next year's evaluation and to work with the Panel to develop a framework for assessing its impact. This could be done within Community Panel meetings and should aim to capture impact on three levels: personal development and empowerment; on community/own local area; and the impact the Community Panel as a group.

3.3 Learning about empowerment at community level

- The Community Panel remains an innovative approach in the NEP, which has been properly resourced through TSF to develop working groups focussing, for example, on producing an LSP protocol for community engagement and a community conference for the region. The Community Panel model has now been transferred to another region.

4. Empowerment at public agency level

4.1 Introduction

One of the challenges highlighted in last year's national evaluation was the need to change local authority cultures regarding their approach to community empowerment and engagement. This year YHEP has sought to increase its support to local authorities and has worked with and involved all local authorities in Yorkshire and Humber.

The policy context has provided both opportunities and challenges for local authorities this year. The Place Survey and CAA have been an important influence on this agenda. Those authorities who received low scores for NIs 4, 1, and 7 saw this as a catalyst for improvement. In some cases interviewees said that low scores perversely meant that others in the council had begun to see the community agenda as more important. The Duty to Involve is another driver which interviewees thought might ensure that the culture of empowerment and engagement is embedded in local authorities.

The arrival of new funding streams such as TSF and Connecting Communities was generally welcomed by local authorities as a boost to their activity providing the additional resources needed to deliver improvements in community engagement and ultimately the NI4 scores. For example, the local authorities involved in TSF were content that they had been able to access pots of funding to replace, in some cases the gap following regeneration money (SRB, Objective 1, etc) and in other cases to receive money where previously they have not (due to not scoring high enough on the Index of Multiple Deprivation). The continuation of TPP (and its associated funds, e.g. Take Part Champions), the arrival of the Transformation Fund, Innovation Fund and Prevent have added to what is becoming a "*crowded landscape*". This increase in funding pots brings some confusion about the raft of initiatives focusing on the broad area of community empowerment. The complexity of the policy environment means that some still felt that it was difficult to get a handle on everything that was happening in the locality.

The biggest threat to the progression and embedding of the community empowerment and engagement agenda is the reduction in spending on public services. This next year will test the extent to which culture has shifted in public agencies and whether the principles and benefits of community empowerment have been mainstreamed across public sector organisations and partnerships.

4.2 Support for local authorities

YHEP has increased its support to local authorities in a number of ways, through the development of networks including sub-regional networks of local authorities; through the Consortium; through activities and events which enable local authority officers and elected members to share and improve their knowledge. Local authorities have also benefited from one to one support from COGS including support for mapping exercises; reviews of neighbourhood and area-based working and LSP structures; planning community engagement strategies; YHEP presentations to senior local authority managers and officers; planning for Connecting Communities and TSF. Other examples of support include:

- West Yorkshire Community of Practice has brought together officers from local authorities and third sector in the sub-region. The establishment of the group was inspired by the South Yorkshire Community Engagement Improvement Partnership which is also represented in the YHEP Consortium. The group provides a space for sharing knowledge across a range of authorities.
- YHEP worked in partnership with Urban Forum to run workshops on the aims and implications of the Duty to Involve which LAs have participated in alongside other partner agencies including voluntary and community sector organisations.
- Last year the evaluation provided case studies of the Champions of Participation residential and the Empowerment Commission which has a focus on NI4. These have continued this year and local authorities have benefited from these successful events. Which have brought together a range of participants including local authority officers and members; the voluntary and community sector; and regional bodies and provided the opportunity to learn, share experiences and knowledge.

Disentangling support from YHEP and COGS/SBC is sometimes difficult since the YHEP provides the context for COGS's support. The TSF work in particular has provided COGS additional time to provide more intensive support to local authorities and has added much value to the YHEP programme. COGS have taken on a critical friend role and as such have been both supportive and challenging. This support has been invaluable to local authorities. As one interviewee said:

"I feel really privileged to be part of such a journey"

4.3 Mainstreaming community empowerment

As stated in Section 4.1 over the next year the evaluation will be able to explore whether empowerment has been properly mainstreamed. This year interviewees pointed to the CAA as the main driver for mainstreaming empowerment. The CAA certainly was seen as helpful in promoting the agenda but it is not yet clear how widespread the principles are embedded.

Amongst TSF councils in particular there were some of the lowest NI4 scores in the country. This was perversely seen as a positive since, as one interviewee stated it gives community engagement/social inclusion officers a *"strong mandate to improve the co-ordinated approach to communications for the LSP and partners"*. This was particularly so in councils which were said to have not taken community empowerment seriously in the past which are now focusing on improving their score. As one interviewee said, the policy context including the Communities in Control White Paper, the CAA and the Duty to Involve has had an impact on the council community engagement officers:

"It's empowered us to take a leading role"

Another said that as a result of the CAA the council had an incentive to change from a *"hit and miss... sporadic"* approach to a more Corporate one:

“The NI4 was one of the worst in the country so we need to focus on community empowerment and put it at the centre of the local authority.”

Whilst recognising the benefits of the CAA in ‘sparking action’ interviewees also highlighted the weaknesses of the process, in particular, the reliance on data gathered from random samples of the local population and on data which is based on indicators of perception. This was seen as a challenge for the next twelve months and the links between the YHEP, the Audit Commission and GOYH were thought to be helpful in this respect. The Empowerment Commission event in November 2009 which included a presentation by Ipsos Mori was said by interviewees to be useful in enabling local authorities to reflect on the problems of relying on NI4 targets and scores as well as developing ways of improving them. There was acknowledgement in interviews that even high scoring authorities had further work to do since the scores are an average and often mask differences between neighbourhoods and areas and low scores in some areas/neighbourhood. For example, in poorer neighbourhoods responses to the survey were low.

One interviewee said that the Oneplace narrative was *“okay, quite accurate”* and this was a welcome supplement to the statistics but others stressed the need to capture all the work being carried out to empower communities in the locality and region. They wanted the CAA process to:

“recognise these stories [of empowerment] and factor in the work of YHEP”

Some interviewees thought there were opportunities to influence the development of the CAA process due to the YHEP and because it is a new assessment process in need of improvement (see also Section 2.2).

Overall interviewees in local authorities were fairly optimistic about the chances of mainstreaming community empowerment and saw the policy context as conducive to their way of working. Many pointed to work that they were carrying out with the support of YHEP and COGS as evidence of this - the development of community engagement strategies; the implementation of better area and neighbourhood working; the development of neighbourhood plans; and the co-ordination of communications and consultation strategies. Local authorities appear to be responding and adapting to the needs of communities more and this has been given extra impetus as a result of the additional funding streams such as TSF.

4.4 Quality assurance

YHEP is making some progress in promoting and embedding quality assurance in community empowerment and engagement in local authorities and other partner organisations. Local authorities are concerned with ensuring best practice in their community engagement strategies and YHEP is beginning to provide support.

The LSP ‘Leeds Initiative’ hosted a workshop on behalf of the YHEP; ‘approaches to community engagement: mapping and assessing.’ The idea for the workshop developed out of discussion in the West Yorkshire Community of Practice. This workshop brought together a range of participants and examined a range of community engagement toolkits and frameworks. The aim was to increase awareness of best practice in

measuring and assessing community engagement and its contribution to NI4; develop a greater understanding of the diversity of models, techniques and approaches available and increase knowledge of the quality assurance elements of engagement and empowerment. The workshop was attended by officers from local authorities, the police, the fire and rescue service, PCTs as well as councillors and participants from third sector organisations.

The workshops during the day allowed detailed discussion about empowerment quality assurance and evaluation frameworks and how to choose the right one given that there are at least forty five (that we know of). Another finding from the day was that not many organisations are using a particular methodology and only about a third of participants had used specific tools to assess community empowerment.

The evaluation last year reported on the Empowerment Commission and the piloting of an NI4 toolkit in three authorities. The Commission continued this year with a greater focus on evidencing empowerment /opportunities to influence by public agencies and regional bodies. An event was held in November 2009, hosted by GOYH and chaired by GOYH and YHEP chair. Over 40 people attended and heard presentations of evidence re neighbourhood activities (Barnsley MCD), building the business case (EYRC), Participatory Budgeting and community governance (Sheffield CC) and the use of perception indicators (Ipsos Mori).

One example of YHEP “*pushing boundaries*” is the work of the South Yorkshire Community Engagement Improvement Partnership in promoting Community Engagement Standards developed by the Scottish Community Development Foundation but adapted for the English context. Workshops were held in 2008 which including organisations in Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham. Barnsley MBC has reported internally to its Corporate Customer Consultation and Intelligence Group, and planning to spread use of the standards across the LSP to improve practice. This year the standards have been rolled out to 3 new authorities, N Lincs, York and Wakefield. Training sessions were held in November 2009 focussing on an introduction to the standards and the use of VOICE software to plan and monitor community engagement work. As a result an interviewee in one authority of these three authorities said that they were trying to embed the Standards in the Action Plan of their newly developed Community Engagement Strategy. The linkages between local authorities have enabled the sharing of information about quality assurance tools and their implementation.

4.5 Case Study: Targeted Support Fund and local authorities

As stated in Section 1.2 the evaluation this year focuses mainly on the ‘place-based’ element of the TSF. This work is focussed on six local authorities with some of the lowest NI4 scores in the region and aims to improve these NI4 scores. Activity in the six localities includes work which can be split into four themes. All of the local authorities involved cover a range of these themes and some of the activity inevitably cuts across themes (but has been allocated to a theme for the sake of simplicity). Examples of activity carried out this year and planned for next includes:

Active Citizenship

- Barnsley MBC is running citizenship learning programmes at town and neighbourhood level; providing opportunities to influence 'events'; and holding area conferences and ward level plans.
- Calderdale MBC is piloting 'How your town works' sessions at Ward level.
- Rotherham MBC is aiming to support greater community involvement in decision making structures through active citizenship courses in prioritised neighbourhoods and for particular groups of people including disabled people and young people.

Neighbourhood Charters

- Barnsley MBC is focussing on the development of neighbourhood agreements in six neighbourhoods.
- Calderdale MBC is developing six neighbourhood action plans.
- In Doncaster MBC the focus is on support for greater community involvement in local decision making structures through its Neighbourhood Alliance programme
- Wakefield Council is using the analysis of local area engagement information to develop neighbourhood action plans and community governance.

Structures/co-ordination and collaboration across departments

- North Lincolnshire Council is reviewing its LSP structures to facilitate the involvement and influence of local people in decision making as well as improving co-ordination of engagement activity.
- Calderdale MBC is providing capacity building support for the recently established Equality Forum.
- In Doncaster work is being carried out to strengthen neighbourhood structures through workforce development and Neighbourhood Team training; increased support for the Safer Doncaster Confidence Team.
- Wakefield MBC's activity is focussed on the development and co-ordination of engagement activity and the development of the BME and migrant worker sub-panel.

Communications

- Calderdale MBC is carrying out additional publicity and awareness raising campaigns about their newly established Ward Forums.
- North Lincolnshire Council is developing more effective methods of involving people in decision making and feedback through ICT and social marketing methods.
- Rotherham MBC is also producing 'meaningful communications' by including community bulletins within the LSP newspaper.

The TSF is in its early stages and it is too early to measure the impact on local communities and NI4. However TSF has already provided 'added value' to the work of local authorities. It has enabled them to make a "*step change*" in how they think about, organise and deliver services in neighbourhoods. It has helped to focus on NI4 and capacity building work. It will hopefully increase knowledge amongst citizens about how to engage in decision-making processes and thus increasing their confidence to do so.

The additional money has been welcomed by all the local authorities involved. The TSF authorities all have in common that they are in receipt of TS funding because they have low NI4 scores. Some have been working on this agenda for a number of years and

have a history of receiving regeneration money or more recently have received support, through Connecting Communities. For a minority TSF has had a big impact on their ability to progress, particularly if they have not received much regeneration money previously. For example one interviewee said their council was further behind than others in the development of area-based working and was just about “*getting into the 21st century*”. Regardless of their starting point the TSF work should have a positive impact in these areas over the next twelve months. TSF builds on existing work and adds value; the additional resources provided by TSF are invaluable, as one interviewee said: “*Resources enable us to do something*”.

TSF is being delivered in the context of an increase in the number of initiatives connected to NI4/community engagement/active citizenship and there is evidence that the local authorities are linking these strands together so that they complement one another. For example in one area the TSF and TPP is led by same person. In other areas Connecting Communities and TSF are being led by the same person. There is also a drive to include a range of organisations and people from the LSPs, the public and community and voluntary sectors in this work, in Calderdale for example, the development of the Equality Forum is being led by Voluntary Action Calderdale.

COGS has supported the TSF local authorities with one to one meetings which have helped to focus activity and to plan and develop the TSF work in each locality. As one interviewee said COGS have very helpful in their role:

“... acting as a sounding board... to identify problems and work together to solve them and put a bid together”

COGS has appointed a Project Manager to support the TSF work and the COGS team has monitored progress on a monthly basis.

The TSF local authorities and their third sector partners along with COGS should be commended for being able to progress the delivery of their TSF programmes in such a short timescale. COGS has facilitated this progress by making connections between authorities and sharing good practice from around the region, drawing on their work with the YHEP. For example, North Lincolnshire were linked by COGS to Solace and CDF who carried out a short review of LSP structures as part of a study in three authorities. Connections are also being made between TSF and non-TSF authorities through the YHEP network, for example, a non-TSF local authority (interviewed as part of YHEP evaluation) said that they wanted to “*do a ‘how your town works’ like Barnsley*” and had also been in touch with another TSF local authority to find out about its digital inclusion initiatives.

COGS has organised joint meetings between the TSF local authorities and has held one so far. This has enabled local authorities to meet, share their progress and learn from each other about their working practices. The meeting was thought to have been useful by the participants interviewed.

The experience of delivering the first few months of delivering TSF has provided some useful learning points:

- Additional support from COGS has provided additional capacity which has helped to design and implement the TSF in each local authority and added value to their empowerment and NI4 work.
- The local authorities involved have approached TSF with enthusiasm and a willingness to build capacity and learn. TSF has provided an impetus for local authority work which builds on and complements other empowerment initiatives.
- TSF provides councils and LSPs which are less advanced in terms of area-based working and community engagement strategies with a welcome opportunity to progress NI4 focussed work.
- Delivering TSF within the context of YHEP has enabled mutually beneficial links to be developed between TSF local authorities and other 'better performing' authorities through the sharing of good practice. The learning from TSF is not confined to the TSF authorities because of the relationships built up through YHEP learning can be spread easily throughout the region.
- The next twelve months will allow councils to roll out TSF activity in a less pressurised way. However TSF will also be delivered within a changing policy context following the general election as well as in a period of reduction in funding and public service cuts. This will inevitably impact on the relationship between the citizen and the state (and thus possibly on NI4 scores) and between the third sector and local authorities.

4.6 Learning about empowerment at public agency level

YHEP has successfully supported empowerment at local authority level and this has been boosted by the arrival of TSF funding.

- YHEP has facilitated an open-minded approach to building constructive relationships and created networks across local authorities, including sub-regional groups, based on the recognition that councils have a variety of approaches and performance capacity. The existence of the YHEP has developed local authority participants' confidence. This will be part of the lasting legacy of YHEP. It has built capacity in individuals and has empowered individuals involved in local authorities to be 'Champions of Participation' in their own organisations.

5. Conclusions and Learning

5.1 Conclusions

YHEP continues to make excellent progress in carrying out effective activities to promote empowerment at community and public agency level. It also successfully co-ordinates the approach to empowerment at regional, sub-region and local levels and enables the sharing of good practice. YHEP clearly adds value to empowerment activity within the region and provides support, information about good practice and space for reflection and learning which would otherwise be unavailable. Participants in the evaluation were overwhelmingly positive about the contribution of YHEP and COGS to their work. The general request for the final year was *“more of the same please”*.

The strong strategic leadership from COGS/SBC was highlighted in last year’s evaluation report and that continues this year. All interviewees stated that leadership from COGS has been excellent and added enormous value to the YHEP. Their knowledge of community development and empowerment issues, the policy agendas and the breadth of networks are valued by all interviewees and respondents and clearly has an impact:

“[COGS] put me in touch with another member who was delivering similar project. We have been able to share experiences and explored potential for future joint activity.”

“COGS have been tremendously supportive of our work and have been a constant source of expertise, enthusiasm and practical advice in all matters related to empowerment and active citizenship.”

Through the TSF COGS have been allocated more project management resources and as a result have been able to provide more support this year to a range of stakeholders and local authorities in particular. This additional support and time was welcomed by local authorities who valued the co-ordination of TSF with Connecting Communities:

“The good thing is that the support is there if you ask, it’s not a finite amount of time.. [I] can pick up the phone to [COGS] any time. It’s a huge support as a resource and psychologically, knowing people are out there.”

“Whenever I ring COGS I always feel that they are well networked/have information, it’s great having them at the end of the phone/email.”

There is a difficulty of disentangling COGS from the YHEP (SBC has a lower profile within the YHEP programme this year).

“Its strength is having COGS as the lead body – the problem is that people tend to think of the REP as COGS – they use the term interchangeably.”

“When you say REP I think of COGS”

One of the key issues and challenge for future is the gap that will be left when funding ends. There is a reliance on COGS to provide support and be on the ‘end of a phone’;

there is a danger that this will continue unpaid and on the basis of goodwill (COGS are partners as well as leaders in the YHEP). It could be manageable but could also be an excessive burden for COGS. Having said that the development of sub-regional networks of local authorities and regional VCS networks supported by COGS where they continue after 2011 should provide similar opportunities for support. The Consortium and Community Panel will need to devise a strategy for the end of funding in order to fill the gap which will inevitably be left when COGS are no longer paid to lead an Empowerment Partnership, either by continuing to fund COGS or by developing and sustaining current networks/relationships themselves.

5.2 Key lessons

Key lessons drawn from the regional evaluation reveal good practice across a range of aspects of the regional partnership, including: high levels of activity and output in an ever-more complex policy environment, strategic leadership, building 'relational capacity' at different levels across the region, strengthening VCS networks and supporting empowerment through the work of authorities within the framework of the TSF.

- YHEP continues to be the most active and visible regional empowerment partnership in the NEP, and has chosen to respond positively to the increasingly complex policy environment within the empowerment and engagement field. YHEP have improved their website and organised an impressive array of events and publications (with voices remaining popular), working more closely with Local Authorities in the region in response to the TSF programme and with community voluntary sector organizations.
- COGS / SCB have continued to provide strong strategic leadership to the YHEP, which has been reflected in the overwhelming positive assessment in the interviews and the survey conducted of the Consortium members of the added value generated by their leadership role.
- Building relationships and relational capacity (including the skills and confidence for collaborative working) has been central to the co-ordination of community empowerment across the region. The YHEP Consortium continues to be valued as a regional hub for empowerment work. YHEP has succeeded in providing safe places and spaces, being accessible and inclusive, acting as community champions and basing events around reflective learning, all of which contribute to developing the relationships across the region necessary for co-ordinated empowerment work.
- The Community Panel remains an innovative approach in the NEP, which has been properly resourced through TSF to develop working groups focussing for example on producing an LSP protocol for community engagement and a community conference for the region. The Community Panel model has now been transferred to another region.
- Through its network development fund YHEP has supported the development of regional networks. This has enabled networks to establish themselves and increase their activity and raise their profile regionally. With the continued

support of YHEP the networks should leave a lasting legacy of working relationships and connections.

- YHEP has facilitated an open-minded approach to building constructive relationships and created networks across local authorities, including sub-regional groups, based on the recognition that councils have a variety of approaches and performance capacity. The existence of the YHEP has developed local authority participants' confidence. This will be part of the lasting legacy of YHEP. It has built capacity in individuals and has empowered individuals involved in local authorities to be 'Champions of Participation' in their own organisations.

Appendix 1

Evaluation Framework and questions 2009-2011

Indicators of progress	Change expected as REP progresses	Methods for regional evaluation
<i>Empowerment at community level</i>		
Community organisations aware of and participating in REP initiatives and using REP resources	Increase in the number of voluntary and community groups reporting awareness and use of REP resources	Review of documents including reports from events/monitoring information Case studies of REP events where necessary
Community organisations more aware of opportunities to engage	Increased awareness of opportunities to engage	Interviews, focus groups at REP events.
Groups involved in empowerment and feeling that they are making a difference	More groups saying they are making a difference and being able to evidence this through their own monitoring evaluation and quality assurance methods. REP support for groups to develop robust evaluation of empowerment outcomes	Use of impact measurement tools by REPs Interviews, focus groups with a sample of community groups at REP events
Community networks developed and supported	Increase in number of community networks engaged with REPs	Interviews with network stakeholders.
<i>Empowerment at public agency level</i>		
Recognition through CAA processes that empowerment has been mainstreamed	CAA reports would reflect progress	Interviews with NI4 leads in sample of LAs (including TSF LAs).
Increase in 'empowering initiatives'	Increase in number of initiatives happening	Case studies of selected REP initiatives and projects
Evidence of public bodies responding and adapting to the needs expressed by communities and citizens	Increase in evidence being collected by REPs showing 'positive' outcomes from community engagement	Review of any regional research/documents. Interviews with sample of LAs (including TSF LAs)
LAs (including councillors) and other public bodies aware of REPs and govt empowerment strategies; participating in REP initiatives; using REP resources; feeling more	Increase in recognition and use of REPs over the life of the programme	Interviews with key stakeholders/partners. Review of documents to assess outcomes of REP initiatives. Review of monitoring information re attendance at

informed about what community empowerment means		events
More LAs and other public agencies have community engagement and development strategies with implementation plans and resources	Plans in place and evidence of implementation	Review of documents and REP activity, in particular focus on TSF work. Interview with LA empowerment leads
Community development workers and others working directly on empowerment participating in REP initiatives and using REP resources	Increase in awareness and use of REP amongst community development and empowerment staff	Review of documents/monitoring/ event reports re activities for community/empowerment staff
<i>Co-ordinated approach to community empowerment</i>		
Good relationships between GOs, RIEPs and REPs	Increase in joint working particularly to promote NI4 (jointly funded projects; attendance at Board and other meetings; regular one-to-one meetings between regional leads)	Case studies of joint working Review of GO, RIEP REP strategy documents
Sharing evidence and good practice regionally and nationally	Research and good practice examples being made widely available via REP CLG aware of research and good practice examples	Review of documents including website Interviews with REP delivery partners and sample of community groups involved in empowerment work.
Stakeholders feel able to trust one another	Increased trust manifested in perceptions but also in effectiveness of joint working, planning, delivery of projects, mutual respect and recognition of the contributions made by different sectors	Interviews with Consortium members and possibly regional leads

Evaluation Questions

Activity to promote empowerment at community level

- What progress has been made in supporting community organisations through YHEP and NWTWC initiatives?
- How well are YHEP and NWTWC promoting opportunities to engage in empowerment activity in the region?
- What progress has been made in developing and supporting community networks?

Activity to promote empowerment at public agency level

- How well have YHEP and NWTWC provided support for the achievement of NI4?

- How effective have YHEP and NWTWC been at supporting the mainstreaming of empowerment in local authorities?
- What evidence is there that demonstrates that public agencies are responding and adapting to the needs expressed by communities and citizens?
- How effective have YHEP and NWTWC at engaging and developing the skills of a wide range of public agency staff?

A co-ordinated approach to community empowerment

- How effective is joint working between GOs, REPs and RIEPs?
- How effective are the REPs at sharing research and good practice examples across the region and nationally?
- To what extent is the Consortium Partnership/REP Board developing and providing an infrastructure for sustained empowerment activity in the region?
- What is the added value of the REP to empowerment activity in the region?

Appendix 2

Consortium Survey

Consortium members were asked to answer a number of survey questions about their participation in the Consortium. Fourteen members responded to the questions. Overall the responses were very positive.

Figure 1 shows:

- Respondents varied in their attendance at Consortium meetings.
- Three had attended one meeting
- The majority of respondents (nine) had attended four or more meetings.
- Seven had attended five or more meetings.

Figure 1 Number of times respondents attended Consortium meetings

	Number (Respondents)
One time	3
Two times	1
Three times	1
Four times	2
Five times or more	7
Total	14

Figure 2 shows:

- Just over half of the respondents (seven out of thirteen) were very clear about the aims compared to six out of thirteen who were clear about some but not others.
- This year the proportion of respondents who were very clear about all of the aims was lower than last year (54% compared to 80%)
- No one was unclear about the aims and this is the same finding as last year.

Figure 2: Clarity of aims

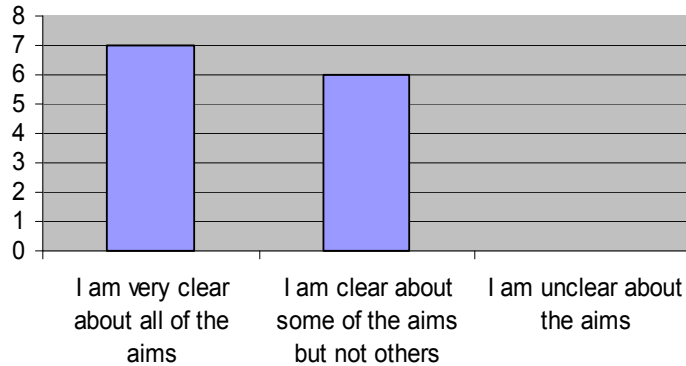


Figure 3 shows:

- Most respondents who had attended the Consortium meetings four or more times were very clear about all of the aims of the partnership
- Respondents who had attended the Consortium meetings once were clear about some of the aims but not others

Figure 3: Frequency of attendance and clarity about aims

	Number of times attended				
	1	2	3	4	5+
I am very clear about all of the aims	0	1	0	1	5
I am clear about some of the aims but not others	2	0	1	1	2

Figure 4 shows:

- Most respondents felt positively about Consortium meetings and agreed or strongly agreed with most of the statements.
- As last year the majority of respondents strongly agreed that ‘meetings are used to share knowledge about empowerment activity in the region’
- Very few people disagreed with the statements which is similar to last year’s findings.

Figure 4: View on the Consortium

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
The Consortium has the right membership	0	10	3	1	0	14

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Consortium meetings are run effectively	4	8	2	0	0	14
The Consortium is an effective forum for decision making	3	4	5	1	0	13
Consortium meetings are used to share knowledge about empowerment activity in the region	9	5	0	0	0	14
Consortium meetings are used to share ideas about good practice	6	6	2	0	0	14

Figure 5 shows:

- Most respondents strongly agreed or agreed that being a member of the Consortium has helped their organisation to improve its work on community empowerment. This is similar to the finding on 2008/09.
- Four people neither agreed nor disagreed that being a member of the Consortium has helped their organisation to improve its work on community empowerment.
- No one disagreed.

Figure 5 Views on improvement in organisations' work on community empowerment

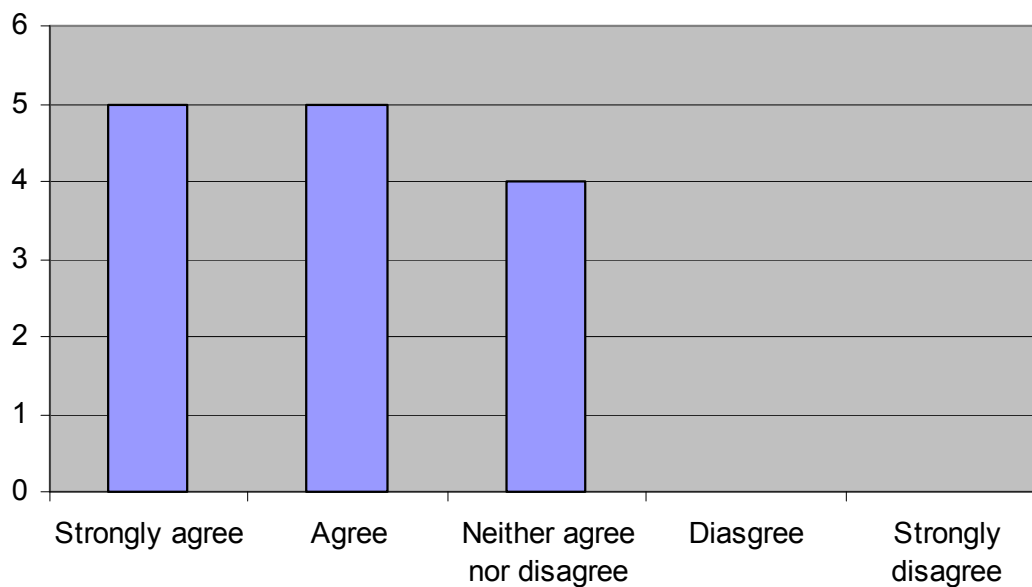


Figure 6 shows:

- As last year the majority of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they felt about to contribute to the REP.
- Last year more a higher proportion of respondents tended to strongly agree compared to this year where most respondents agreed.

Figure 6 Members' contributions to the REP

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
I have been able to inform the development of the REP	3	5	5	0	0	13
I have been able to organise and deliver REP activities	4	6	2	1	0	13
I have been able to attend REP events and workshops	5	8	1	0	0	13
I have been able to share knowledge and best practice about community empowerment	4	6	2	1	0	13
I have been able to disseminate information about the REP and community empowerment within my organisation	5	8	1	0	0	13

Figure 7 shows:

- All respondents thought the work of the Consortium was very or quite important
- No one thought that the work of the Consortium was not important.

Figure 7: Views on the value of the Consortium

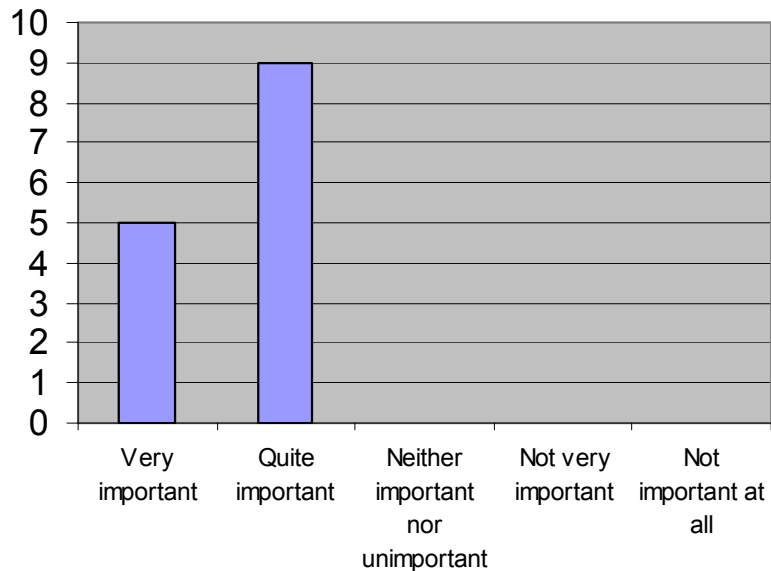
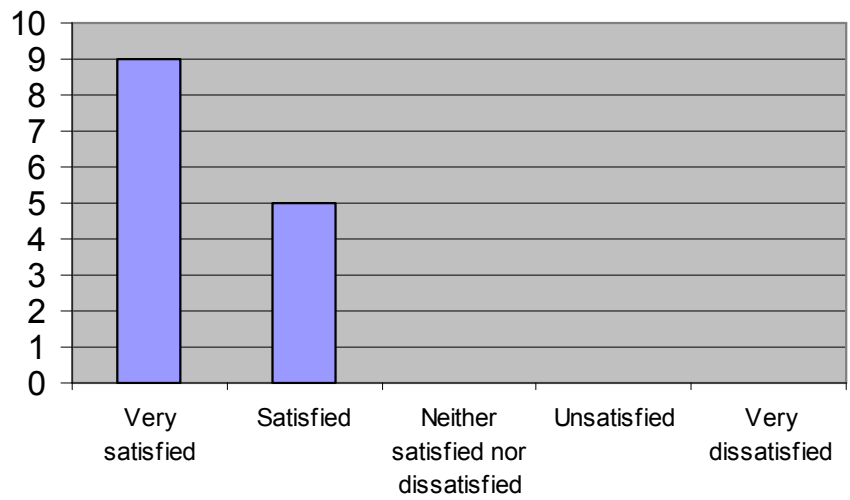


Figure 8 shows:

- All respondents were very satisfied or satisfied with the support from COGS/SBC which is the same finding as last year.
- Nine out of fourteen respondents were very satisfied with the support
- No one was dissatisfied

Figure 8: Satisfaction with support from COGS/SBC



Appendix 3: TSF evaluation framework

This Appendix begins the process of developing an evaluation framework for the coming year. It is very much a draft and incomplete framework. It is based on the work carried out this year on evaluating TSF which did not cover the whole range of activity across the five thematic areas. The brief for the evaluation of YHEP and TSF stated that the evaluation should take a participatory approach, it is essential therefore that organisations and individuals involved in the delivery of TSF activity are involved in the delivery of the TSF evaluation framework.

YHEP will need to consider the information being collected at local and regional levels and for the national evaluations of both NEP and TSF. As such this Appendix provides the basis for further discussion between evaluators and participants.

At this stage the evaluation framework is focuses on two levels - the individual and public agencies – covering place-based activity; active citizenship; workforce development and leadership. Other issues to consider:

- The TSF evaluation might want to focus more specifically on its themes rather than fit in with the NEP evaluation framework although it would make sense to build on the NEP evaluation and streamline the two as much as possible.
- The TSF evaluation might also want to consider including and building on the third element of the NEP evaluation and evaluate the impact of a co-ordinated approach to empowerment (see Appendix 1)
- Finally the Community Panel expressed an impact in measuring their won impact during this evaluation. Indicators based on the expected outcomes of the ‘active citizenship’ theme could be developed with the Panel to enable them to collect information to feed into the evaluation in the next twelve months.
- Data collection methods will need to be decided but could include
 - In-depth case studies of particular authorities or themes.
 - Interviews with LA TSF leads
 - Collection of secondary data, Doncaster, for example, will collect data from residents following the development of neighbourhood plans.
 - NI4 scores next year.
 - Review of documents
- Possible indicators focussing on two levels – individual and public agencies. Where possible the thematic area is indicated and link to the NEP evaluation framework.

Individual empowerment (measures of overall programme) (and indicators should include individuals in general and from particular groups of people – BME, disabled people and young people, etc.)

- Individuals reporting that they are able to influence local decisions (NI4) in 6 local authorities
- Individuals reporting that they are able to influence local decisions (NI4) pockets of low score neighbourhoods within higher scoring authority areas.
- Individuals stating that they have influenced a decision in their local area
- Individuals taking part in active citizenship courses (active citizenship)

Local authority activity (place-based activity incorporating the four themes) to promote empowerment (these build on the YHEP indicators to avoid duplication and overload of data collection)

- Number of LAs selecting NI4 as part of their LAA (NEP indicator)
- Recognition through CAA processes that empowerment has been mainstreamed (NEP indicator)
- Evidence of public bodies responding and adapting to the needs expressed by communities and citizens (NEP indicator)
- More LAs, LSPs and other public agencies have co-ordinated community engagement and development strategies with implementation plans and resources (NEP indicator and leadership)
- More LAs have developed neighbourhood charters/plans/agreements with implementation plans and resources
- LAs (including councillors) and other public bodies aware of REPs and govt empowerment strategies; participating in REP initiatives; using REP resources; feeling more informed about what community empowerment means (NEP indicator and leadership?)
- Frontline staff in neighbourhoods working directly on empowerment participating in TSF initiatives (for example workforce development opportunities) (workforce development)
- Frontline staff have the skills, knowledge and understanding of community empowerment and neighbourhood working (workforce development)
- More local authorities and LSPs have communications strategies which are acted upon and provide clear lines of communication between the local authority and citizens
- LAs and other public bodies aware and understand the contribution of the third sector and community development to community empowerment (re-imagining community involvement)
- Innovative models of engagement being tried in local areas/neighbourhoods (re-imagining community involvement)