



Yorkshire &
Humberside
Empowerment
Partnership

Taking Stock – Learning from what works

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RACLA - REGIONAL ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP LEARNING ALLIANCE



In February, YHEP supported a discussion conference around the future of participatory democracy.

Hosted by the International Centre for Participation Studies at Bradford University – a member of the YHEP consortium, and typically in the middle of Bradford Assembly Week (The Bradford District Assembly is the new link between the Bradford District partnerships and the voluntary and community sector), this event launched three new publications focusing on participation and democracy. The chair for the event Jenny Pearce set the scene explaining that:

“We want to use these books to facilitate a discussion on the theme of participation in our political, activist, working and everyday lives. Amidst fears of a very low turnout in the election and in the wake of the parliamentary expenses scandal, how might we revitalise confidence and participation in our institutional structures and our democratic life? Can citizens rediscover the value and importance of democratic action at a time when society faces a frightening convergence of crises requiring the attention and understanding of every one of us to ensure equitable solutions? How would our existing democratic arrangements have to change in order for such a rediscovery to happen?”

Over the last two decades there have been many experiments in participation in the UK and other parts of the world and a great deal of social movement activism. The three books present empirical evidence (as well as theoretical argument) on what happens when people get the chance to participate.

Democracy must, in other words, become a little dangerous in order to be meaningful. However, this can lead to better representation, real accountability, more diversity of voices and new ways of combining experience as well as expertise, resulting in better decision making and improved services. Our research suggests that participation need no longer be the ‘utopian’ sibling to the ‘realism’ of representative democracy. However, it requires commitment over time to new kinds of processes and practices across our public institutions as well as within the places where we work and live.”

In this edition of YHEP update, we focus on what is working and what has been learnt. As the empowerment partnership faces its final year of the current funding programme, we need to learn this and build on its legacy.

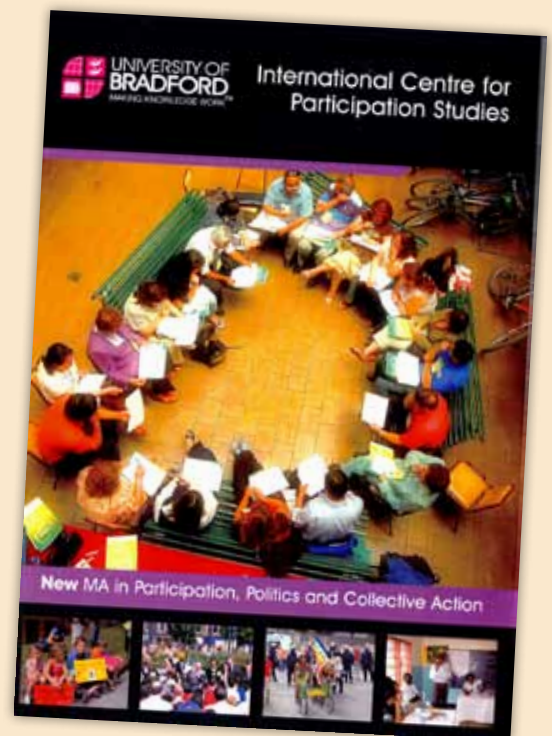
New MA in Participation and Politics, Bradford University

This looks at theories of participation and the values that distinguish participation as a practice with the potential for social change. It also examines the broad range of practical participatory ideas for engaging the State on the one hand, and empowering communities on the other, and for developing critical participatory citizens.

This MA is for anyone interested in new theories and approaches to democracy and politics. For those working in the public arena to encourage wider engagement, either in their neighbourhood, the community and voluntary sector, or in governance, and for activists seeking to bring pressure upon, or to build alternatives to the existing status quo. It takes as its starting point the need to bring together practitioner, activist and academic knowledge to better understand and inform positive action for social change.

For full details and application procedure, please email MA Admissions at: peace-ma-admissions@bradford.ac.uk.

Applicants with non-traditional academic backgrounds are welcomed and can be considered on the basis of experience or achievement for entry to the Postgraduate Diploma programmes and may subsequently transfer to the MA subject to academic performance. There is an OPEN DAY for prospective students to get to know the ICPS and meet staff on 29 April 2008. Those interested in the degree can contact Graeme Chesters – g.s.chesters@bradford.ac.uk to discuss the Programme.



WHOSE COMMUNITY IS IT ANYWAY?

YHEP has supported a Community Panel of activists and grass roots workers since its inception in Autumn 2007.

Comprising 19 members, recruited as individuals with knowledge, perspectives and experiences to share, as well as to learning to gain from each other about how the region works, they have met together on a regular basis. Janet Thornton, a member of the YHEP Regional Community Panel explains what this looks like for her.

Janet Thornton - Community Panel member

'The different journeys we take to arrive at the same place can be not only interesting, but informative, stimulating and inspiring. Panel members come from all over the region and bring a diverse range of experience, knowledge and perspective as a result of these journeys.

The Panel itself is quite amazed at the depth and breadth of insight that exists amongst its members.

My relevant background experience is activity with a rural perspective and primarily within my own village. I started off my 'community activism' by chairing the Mother and Toddler group, then moved on to chair the Young Wives group. I set up a Beaver Scout colony (group) with a friend which we ran for nearly ten years. I have been a Parish Councillor for nearly thirteen years. I became a trustee four years ago of Rural Action Yorkshire (the rural community council). I also represent the Yorkshire & Humber Rural Community Councils on the national board of ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England), which is the umbrella body for all 38 rural community councils in the country.

One of the issues affecting rural communities is the lack of affordable housing. Having developed some awareness of this issue, two years ago I accepted the opportunity to sit on the regional committee of one of the largest housing associations in the country. I have also recently become a trustee of the Yorkshire & Humber Regional Forum (the regional voice of Third sector organisations).

The Regional Community Empowerment Panel meetings and conferences and attendance at events organised by other organisations which we are invited to as a consequence of being Panel

members, have provided me with the opportunity to get to know people involved in a completely different range of activities from my own and whom I would have been unlikely to meet otherwise. We have the opportunity to share inspirational stories and good practice. It has given me a far greater insight into the different issues and perspectives of people around the Region.

As a Panel, we have had the opportunity to engage in dialogue with the Audit Commission and Government Office, Yorkshire and Humber.

As an individual Panel member I am part of a working group creating a protocol regarding the way in which the Community and Voluntary Sector is represented on Local Strategic Partnerships; I am part of the team organising a workshop at the Communities Conference in Doncaster on March 23rd looking at how we create communities where people feel included and connected.

The findings from this workshop will be used as evidence towards the Panel's response for the Integrated Regional Strategy that is currently being developed.

I am also hoping to organise an event to bring together people with an interest in youth provision as part of our new 'Food for Thought' initiative in April. I have been involved with the Yorkshire and Humber Community in Health and Well-being Network and have recently become one of the three Panel representatives who sit on the Consortium.'

New Voices: Community Anchors in 'overlooked' or remote areas

Following work around benchmarking the characteristics of a community anchor against 90 organisations in Yorkshire and the Humber, the regional Community Alliance Team explored the nature and type of community organisations that fulfil the role of a community anchor in rural and less well developed areas compared to larger conurbations.

They identified community organisations to test this concept with in seven areas, and learned lessons which were both informative and positive as to the presence and scope for development in 'overlooked' and remote areas. These community anchors can take the form of a renovated church turned into nursery, a community organisation serving 42 isolated villages, or an all-encompassing organisation on the seaside. The organisations surveyed pride themselves on being at the heart of their community, and understanding local need at grassroots level, therefore developing the most appropriate services for the area.

Find out more on the yhep website

On 23rd March, the Community Panel organised a conference, focusing on the theme of how people can exercise real power and influence over decisions about their communities.

Speakers from Marsh Farm in Luton, where a grass roots group of local residents are leading regeneration on their estate, came to Doncaster to share their experiences at an evening reception and debate the night before and contributed on the day to illustrating different ways in which communities can take a lead towards empowerment.

The conference was attended by over 80 members of community organisations from across the region. A full report of the conference will be published shortly but in the meantime, Adam Howard, from Together for Regeneration, shares his learning from a visit to Marsh Farm last November.

A Day on Marsh Farm - A trip organised by Doncaster CVS's Community Empowerment Network with the Marsh farm Outreach Team

I had a sense of energy and warm welcome as soon as I set foot in Marsh Farm's Community Enterprise Resource Centre. The biggest community-owned building in the UK, there is lots happening – and a real sense of pride in the place from the people who showed us round. Glenn Jenkins, the chair of Marsh Farm Outreach, gave us an inspiring account of how MFO has developed over a decade and more. With an income of only benefits, often, people were clearly doing loads - and this included Glenn himself. Everybody shares in roles including the management – and the cleaning.

Marsh Farm is a big 1960s estate on the outskirts of Luton, and has some of the highest levels of unemployment and deprivation in the south-east. In 1997, there was 3 nights of rioting by young people on the estate. The riots were brought to an end when residents got together and organised a big party – attracting the national tabloid headline, "Rave Stops Riots". Today, Marsh Farm's Youth Forum is very active and engaged in the lives of young people and developments on the estate.

Keys to Success

In the afternoon, we had a "Question Time Panel" with representatives from the Marsh Farm Trust, Luton Borough Council, the Marsh Farm Youth Forum and MF Outreach. I asked...

"What would you say are the critical factors in Marsh Farm Outreach's success?"

Here – briefly – is the answer that emerged:

- a. We are **residents** – we live here, it's our lives, our kids.
- b. The **way** we work – it's like a family.
- c. Marsh Farm Outreach Team is 13 residents – **we're not spokespeople**, we're **catalysts** – involving people, giving them a voice. **Participation** is key to our success. For example we organised a referendum about a proposal to demolish the CERC centre and redevelop the site – and the overwhelming majority said "No!". We organise petitions on issues affecting the estate.
- d. **Flat management** – we rotate roles including project management and cleaning. It keeps the "family" system.
- e. **Background** – several of us have experience of bottom-up grass roots regeneration, for example squatting in empty buildings.
- f. **The Youth Forum** is central to our success, and to the future of Marsh Farm. 70% of teenagers on Marsh Farm are now engaged in some way through the Youth Forum.
- g. **Information Flows** are important, accurate communication – and this is **not** primarily through newsletters and leaflets, which people generally don't read. We go out and knock on doors, and talk to people.
- h. **Smaller projects** – in general – have made the biggest impact, produced the biggest gain.

So what is happening now to regenerate the local economy, create jobs and improve quality of life on the estate?

Flows of Wealth, Localisation and the Organisation Workshop

Marsh Farm Outreach have researched wealth flows. Each year £93 million comes into Marsh Farm - £50 million in personal incomes, £40 million public spending on services. Large amounts of this money flow back out, as goods and services are purchased from outside the area. Can more of this money be spent locally – creating jobs and regenerating the local economy?

Community research has revealed potential for 11 social enterprises, meeting local needs locally. Detailed – and impressive – business plans have been drawn up.

The next step is to run an 'Organisation Workshop'. This is based on a successful model from Brazil. Over an 8-week period, people from the estate – who have been unemployed for a long time - will start up and run these enterprises. Materials, premises and a basic weekly income will be provided – and there will be intensive mentoring support from advisors in key skill areas such as management, finance, marketing.

Beyond this time, the enterprise has to do what it takes to survive and grow – with support and advice on hand, to give it the best chance of success. This process is called "capacitation" – and has proved much more effective, the Team says, than traditional "capacity building" approaches in deprived communities.

There's more about the remarkable 'Organisation Workshop' at: <http://www.marshfarmoutreach.org.uk/PDFs/Final-OW-Business-Case-December-2008.pdf>

Adam Howard, Together for Regeneration
Email: adam.howard@tfr.org.uk



A recent CLG seminar tried to unravel what we have learnt about policies and practice within communities. Through the contributions, of Marjorie Mayo and Marilyn Taylor, we can share in the findings.

Learning for Active Citizenship: What Works & What are the Challenges?

Marjorie Mayo, Centre for Lifelong Learning and Community Engagement, Goldsmiths, University of London

Active Citizenship in the current policy context

Marj explained the significance of active citizenship:

- › Empowering citizens is central to public service modernisation strategies, across a range of public service areas, in a period of public spending constraints, and
- › It is centrally important to democratic renewal, addressing the democratic deficit, locally as well as nationally, in the context of devolution/ localism, whilst promoting community cohesion and social solidarity in the context of globalisation

Key lessons, building upon promising practices

- › Citizenship education as active learning for democratic participation, 'political literacy' for social change and social justice - in sustainable ways
- › Significance of value base emphasising equalities, respect for diversity, strengthening co-operation, promoting cohesion and social solidarity
- › Building upon models of good practice (Active Learning for Active Citizenship programme)
- › Rooted in civil society organisations and networks, locally, regionally and nationally
- › Working in partnership with providers (including universities & colleges) as well as local authorities
- › Starting from learners' own interests and concerns
- › Learning experientially/ reflecting upon learning in practice – learning itself should be participatory and empowering process, with flexible approaches, combining formal (accredited) learning with informal learning, workshops, exchange visits, mentoring, e-learning
- › A community development approach to learning for participation and empowerment, backed by practical support (e.g. access to transport, childcare)

These approaches have had significant outcomes in terms of:

- › Individual learners' learning, accreditation, and progression
- › Impacts on individuals' personal relationships and families as well as upon individuals as active citizens
- › Impacts on service planning and delivery
- › Wider impacts in terms of negotiating conflicts within &

between communities and promoting wider understanding, locally & beyond

- › Building networks for future sustainability

Challenges and constraints

There are continuing challenges re:

- › long term sustainability: going beyond specific one-off projects?
- › Resisting pressures that effectively narrow definitions and approaches (e.g. defining active citizenship as becoming a magistrate, councillor or school governor – but what about all the other ways in which people become active in their communities, informally as well as in formal organisations?)
- › And resisting pressures to focus too specifically on particular (and often rapidly shifting) political / policy agendas

Taking account of wider policy impacts including:

- › Refocusing funding towards vocational agendas and impact of ELQs
- › Resulting in loss of adult learning places
- › And increasing emphasis upon immigration, issues of cohesion and Prevention of Violent Extremism Agendas - with negative impacts in terms of social solidarity

Policy messages for the coming period:

- › Continuing importance of active learning for active citizenship
- › Need for continuing resourcing for long term sustainability, firmly rooted in civil society, strengthening its independent role, and working in partnership with providers in other sectors
- › In the context of holistic policy approaches to active citizenship for democratic participation and empowerment, social solidarity and social justice

For examples of active learning for active citizenship see: 'Taking Part?' eds. J. Annette and M. Mayo, published by NIACE, 2010.

What works and what doesn't in community development?

Marilyn Taylor, University of the West of England and Institute for Voluntary Action Research

The process that develops a powerful community is something like a tree. Its roots are the diversity of activities, organisations, learning opportunities and networks that involve community members in the issues that they care about, with people they share their concerns with and in ways that make sense to them. The trunk is the process through which these diverse activities are brought together and debated. The branches are the outputs – community-led services, engagement in partnership and other democratic fora, community social enterprises and community campaigns that are embedded in and accountable to the communities from which they spring. The fruits are the outcomes that government and communities themselves are looking for. This metaphor reminds us how important it is that community initiatives are based on firm foundations. It underlines the importance of community development – nurturing the roots of the tree that are essential to its flourishing.

Community development thus provides answer to many of the difficult questions of community policy. Some examples:

- › Why is it always the same people that get involved? And are they really representative? Why do most people only get involved if there is a crisis?
 - › Widespread engagement needs a strong community foundation that gives people a variety of ways in; community development can build this and also sustain activity and interest through ebbs and flows of enthusiasm and commitment. A strong foundation of engagement also helps to ensure that community representatives are accountable to their communities
 - › Why do people vote for the BNP? Perhaps because they knock on doors and are seen to listen to people's concerns – the starting point for effective community development. In many communities no-one else is doing this. As trades unions, political parties, many churches, and education institutes lose their traditional local presence, there are very few alternative spaces where local residents can find an independent voice, debate local issues, and learn negotiating skills. It is in the absence of such spaces that the BNP can flourish.
 - › Will community organisations lose their independence and distinctiveness, as they become more central to government policy? By developing alternative spaces and linking local residents in with organisations elsewhere, community development can help to ensure that engagement in government agendas is balanced and informed by independent initiative.
- If we look at the weight of evidence over the years, we can produce many examples of changes that have been achieved in policy and at community level as well as of individuals whose lives have changed as a result of their engagement in community development activities.

So, what works?

- › The drive from national level has been crucial to community engagement being taken seriously at local level.
- › Community and partnership initiatives work best when there is a bedrock of community development activity as well as a tradition of engagement between the community and public bodies. Where these don't exist, the ground needs to be prepared first before the desired policy results can be expected. This takes time.
- › Community engagement is most likely to be achieved when it starts from people's own concerns rather than external agendas and offers a variety of ways in. This underlines the need for generalist community development as well as more specific posts and initiatives
- › A variety of 'ways in' also allows different population groups to engage – people may need to organise separately first in order to gain the confidence to engage across ethnic, generational and other boundaries
- › Formal organisations and structures are most likely to work if backed up by informal networks, which may be less visible but generate bonding, bridging and linking social capital within and across communities.
- › Increasing regulation, risk aversion and a climate of official mistrust put real barriers in the way of engagement, especially in the most disadvantaged communities. Flexibility and risk taking are part of a community development approach.
- › Targets and goals need to be flexible, since, as people become more confident and engaged, the way they see issues - and their potential solutions - may change.
- › Effective community development works on both sides of the equation – developing capacities and motivation with public bodies as well as with communities themselves.
- › Some issues can be effectively addressed at neighbourhood level – research suggests that clean, green and safe issues work at this level. Other issues require changes at higher levels. This means that a strategic approach to community development is necessary that can link neighbourhood action with higher levels of governance. A strategic approach also ensures that resources are targeted where they are most needed and build on existing activity

and provision.

- › Effective community development is long-term and is unlikely to be sustainable if based on unpredictable and fragmented project funding.
- › Dissent is an essential part of democracy. While

partnership working is important if change is to happen, community development must also have the space to support alternative spaces for organising, dialogue and debate, so that all voices are heard.

Building stronger communities: are we up for trying to build real change?

In the current economic climate it is increasingly difficult to see how public services can up their game to work with residents; become agents of empowerment and support. Some would argue that we have little choice; 'more of the same' just hasn't worked during times of economic prosperity' the most disadvantaged remain disadvantaged suggesting that something different has to be tried as we move into time of greater economic restraint to enable public services and residents to work differently, to work together.

Whilst NI6 scores are showing increased levels of participation, NI4 scores that measure the % of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality are woefully low at 29% nationally and 28% regionally! Whilst we might challenge the measure, perceptions are complex, it none the less shows that providing opportunities for participation is not enough.

There is no doubt that good work is being done across the region at the very local level to address the 'crisis in local democracy' but how the evidence is leading to changes in policy and practice is less well understood.

Some of us argue that now is precisely the time to address head on community empowerment, to build the evidence base that demonstrates that greater influence by residents in neighbourhoods will lead to more self resilient and self reliant

communities. That empowered individuals build stronger communities (whilst we state for pragmatic reasons 'community' is the group/s of people living in a small locality there is a clear recognition that this definition can exclude transient communities). And... yes... I can hear the criticism, too much like new wave beliefs in enlightened individuals and not enough like social policy in the making, I would suggest that bridging personal/individual empowerment and social policy is precisely what many of us are already involved in and strive to do.

Leeds has submitted a proposal to the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership to support work in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods to build stronger communities through collaboration between residents and professionals, to develop new ways of working and new approaches to involve residents and communities in decision that affect them. The focus of the work will be neighbourhoods ranked amongst the 10% most deprived nationally. The approach will be evaluated externally with the intention that what is learned will affect change in future policy.

Leeds is looking for other authorities and/or Local Strategic Partnerships to join the stronger communities project and to share knowledge and experience. If you are interested in learning more about the stronger communities proposal contact Andrea.tarachand@leeds.gov.uk

Supporting community engagement, leadership and voice

By the time you are tucked up in bed, reading this, fifty people from across the region will be participating in the 2010 'Champions of Participation' residential.

These workshops provide a rare opportunity for people who are committed to participation and empowerment to 'think outside the box' and to explore issues from different perspectives. Participants come from across the sectors - politicians, officials, activists - and include leading practitioners from other countries. Their experience provides inspiration and also an opportunity to review our own practice in the light of international developments.

The focus for the March 2010 event:

- exploring the balance between participatory, deliberative and representative democracy,
- identifying practical and creative approaches that help overcome the challenges to engagement and empowerment,

- developing approaches that value participation and recognise success,
- building relationships that will sustain participation and engagement into the future.

Why this kind of event

The 'champions of participation' workshops have tapped into an explosion of interest, around the world, in more participatory forms of governance. Despite different national histories and contexts, there is widespread recognition that participation is central to the tasks of revitalizing democracy, delivering local services and strengthening local communities.

Exerpts from the residential framing paper by Tricia Zipfel, 'Champions of Participation' facilitator.

A published report of the event will be available shortly.

Creating the right environment for participation takes lots of different people using different skills working in different contexts. Here we profile some of these different roles:

Karen Wardman - Community Empowerment Network Manager

Karen Wardman, the Community Empowerment Network Manager at Doncaster CVS explains what Tuesday 9th March 2010 brought for her.

'My role at Doncaster CVS is to manage the Community Empowerment Network. This mainly involves managing and co-ordinating a range of activities that are undertaken by a team of five people to support third sector participation in the local strategic partnership (LSP).

The activities that are undertaken by the team are really diverse. They can include electing and supporting third sector representatives, disseminating information to the Network, outreach work with equalities and neighbourhood based groups, holding events, supporting one of the strategic boards, attending multi agency meetings to progress LSP work, and undertaking consultation.

Today, I started my day as I always do – reading and responding to e-mails. The first meeting I attend is a meeting of the LSP. In Doncaster this is called the Discover the Spirit (DtS) Board. It is made up mainly of leaders of the Borough and is chaired by our elected mayor.

Following the Board meeting I head back to Doncaster CVS for a quick lunch and for a de-brief with the DtS Director and the DCVS Director. We reflect back on what was discussed, and agree how we will take forward action points relating to the third sector.

Back in the office I work with a member of the team on a 'Food for thought' dinner party event we are planning. The event is funded by COG's and is to discuss community empowerment and leadership. I also follow up on some work for a workshop we are planning with the LSP in relation to national indicator (NI) 7: Environment for a Thriving Third Sector.

Later I head to a meeting at the NHS. This is to introduce myself to a new contact and to discuss their potential role in the new Stronger and Sustainable Doncaster Board in the LSP.

After a bit more time catching up in the office I go to an evening meeting with a member of the team. The meeting is about a new project we are supporting to facilitate networking and partnership work between local Black and Minority Ethnic community groups. Following a very positive hour discussing how we will develop this work, I drive home.'

Liz Hardy - Community Policy Manager

Liz Hardy, Community Policy Manager for the Cohesion and Communities team at the Government office for Yorkshire and The Humber, describes two days (yes, two!) in her life.

'I'm more of an early bird so, if I'm in the office, I usually get there between 7.50 and 8.20 depending on whether it's been my turn to walk the dog or whether I've been able to just get up and out.

First thing – and very important is to have a cup of coffee and then to look at emails and check my calendar as a reminder of what I have coming up over the next couple of days.

Next up I have a KIT (Keeping in touch) meeting with Isobel Mills, Deputy Regional Director, Parliament and Communities and my line manager to catch up on what work I had on and what was coming up in the world of stronger communities. The meetings are the more formal way of keeping in touch, though we chat informally on a regular basis.

I had the luxury of a few hours in the office in the morning and with a week's leave coming up it was needed.

The afternoon promised to be very interesting. One of my GO colleagues who is the main link with the West Yorkshire local authority areas (called Locality Managers) had arranged for a visit to Bradford. Bradford has recently introduced new arrangements for working at ward and neighbourhood level and we were keen to find out more. They had arranged for us to meet with the Head of Neighbourhood Services at Bradford Council and then to go onto visit the Keighley West Ward offices and sit in on one of the Ward Officer team meetings.

Visits like these are important as they provide the link between the policy work that we are involved in and finding out what the issues are and also the good practice at the frontline. They also give us the opportunity to pick up on stories and information to feed back to central government.

At the end of the afternoon we'd had the chance to listen and discuss the new arrangements and how they might be developed, talk to the Area Team Leader and listen to how frontline workers from different agencies could share information and plan action together. For me, the added bonus was that one of the Connecting Communities areas in Bradford and District is covered by the ward.

The following day was quite different. On a fairly regular basis meetings are arranged between Office of the Third Sector, Communities and Local Government and those GO colleagues who cover the 'stronger communities' policy areas – third sector, empowerment and cohesion. These are usually held in London and so mean a relatively early start to the day. So, I was on the 7.00 train from Leeds to London Kings Cross and then onto Eland House in Victoria, where CLG are based.

The agenda was quite packed, with issues from Connecting Communities, to reports on a third sector commissioning round table, updates on OTS programmes and looking at the current policy landscape.

However, with about an hour or so to go the unexpected happened and the fire alarm went off. It wasn't just a practice so we all trooped out; luckily it wasn't raining though nor was it the warmest of days. And even more unexpectedly there were some other familiar faces out in the meeting spot including Mandy Wilson, who was at another meeting organised by CLG.

I had to leave before we were allowed back in the building so left all my colleagues stood in the cold waiting and arrived back in Leeds on time.'

Chris Parsons - Project Development Officer

Chris Parsons, Project Development Officer for Eastfield Residents Association, provides a flavour of what one day in March held for her.

'The first meeting of the day was a Financial Inclusion Partnership (FIP) meeting at the Link Centre, this was the first time we had met for quite a few months, and part of the agenda was to look at restructuring the group to not only look at financial inclusion but also employment and education.

Quite a good meeting and plenty of people attended, my only concern is that good ideas formulated in Eastfield have a habit of ending up in Scarborough and the local focus can be lost.

Meeting finally finished, must take some time out for lunch before the next meeting. Took some posters to the library to advertise the

Incredible Edible Eastfield (IEE) trip to Todmorden also put some on the noticeboard.

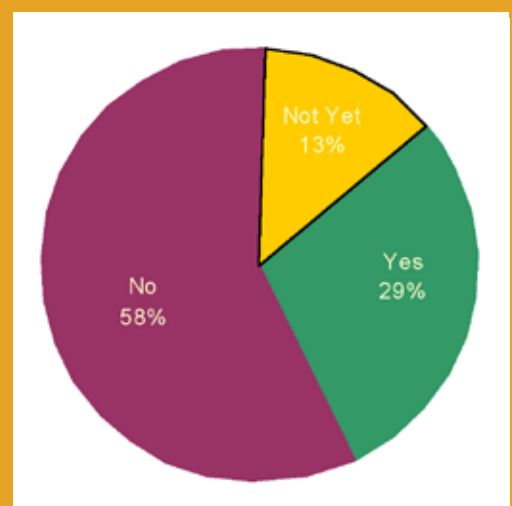
This afternoon was really good, held an IEE project meeting; this is a really good project and is gaining quite a lot of support from residents and organisations which makes the delivery of the project really easy. Got back to the office to check emails and started to do a bit of work on the up and coming Community walkabouts, which when completed will form a map of the Eastfield Environment and highlight issues that need addressing over the coming months if not years.

The difference between the two meetings became very clear to me when I sat down to write this up, the FIP felt very official, full of jargon and talk, while the IEE was very much a doing meeting with lots of enthusiasm from residents wanting to get involved.'

We asked...

Are you currently using a toolkit or methodology for community engagement?

You said...



Approaches to Community Engagement

On 2nd March 2010, Harmonious Leeds hosted an event for 80 delegates to share ideas and practice around community engagement. Financial support was provided by the RIEP and YHEP. During the day, participants designed eight discussion topics of their choosing through an 'Open Space' approach. Here are some of the themes:

Title of the discussion: *How do we engage with the "hard to reach"?*

Discussion points: *No such thing as hard to reach, just a question of starting from the right place.*

Title of the discussion: *A thriving third sector – How do we measure this? NI 7*

Discussion points: *DANGER – 'something only exists if it can be measured'.*

The key is an 'environment' for thriving. What is being done to provide this environment? Who is creating the conditions for this and are partners signed up to it?

Recommendation - Pooled budgets from local authorities, police, Primary Care Trusts etc to provide funding to support agencies to build capacity.

Title of the discussion: *Participatory processes/prioritisation*

This session was focused on techniques that people have used/found useful:

- *Planning for real techniques incl. Now, soon, later decision kit.*
- *Emotional ranking - what one thing you would do if you could only do one.*
- *Prioritisation techniques*

- *World cafe – how to do it and how to overcome barriers e.g. literacy.*
- *Graphic facilitation – drawing rather than writing (can be trained to do this).*
- *Take another person's viewpoint (not role play)*
- *Street stalls for finding out about the neighbourhood and engaging lots of people*

Title of the discussion: *Empowerment = Powerlessness?*

Discussion points:

1. *Power vs Love – the more you give the more you have. Genuine power sharing.*
2. *Empowerment = helping people realise the power they have and to grab it.*
3. *Contrast between power given by election and power given by community. It is not representation vs participation but representation vs abstention.*

Recommendations:

1. *Decision making at lowest level possible – street, neighbourhood etc.*
 2. *Develop forums for conversation for all – not just representatives.*
- Title of discussion: Do no harm. What does harm look like?*

Key discussion points:

- *Evaluate before you start – evaluate your processes. Set expectations, explain limitations.*
- *OU MA Development Studies has Do No Harm topic*
- *See also community engagement standards from Community Development Foundation*
- *The feedback loop – explain decisions that took place along the way.*

As part of the work programme of the IDeA supported Network of Empowering Authorities (NEA), some new tools have been produced to help map empowerment.

The design and development work has been carried out by Social Regeneration Consultants and Pete Duncan, an SRC Director, shared the tools at the recent Approaches to Engagement Conference (2nd March Leeds). Formally launched on 17th March, here is a taster of the tools and the thinking behind them.

Why map neighbourhood empowerment?

1. To **base-line** existing public and voluntary sector empowerment practice and its impact on communities and neighbourhoods

2. To **identify existing empowerment activity** by communities in neighbourhoods and localities

3. To assess the **strength and depth** of empowerment in these places

4. To inform an **Empowerment Plan** for neighbourhoods

The basic requirements of a mapping tool – what underpinned the design

Keep it:

- › Simple
- › Practical
- › Useful and relevant
- › A gap-filler
- › Quick & easy to complete
- › Non-resource intensive
- › Inclusive
- › New and innovative
- › Engaging
- › Best practice
- › Plain English

How strong are your neighbourhoods? - A new tool for local authorities and their partners

This tool helps local authorities and the partners to explore:

- Information needs and sources
- Current empowerment activity
- Strengths, weaknesses and gaps in empowerment structures, policies and activities
- Effectiveness and quality of empowerment activity
- Impact of empowerment activity in neighbourhoods
- Links to broader public sector indicators, strategies and policies

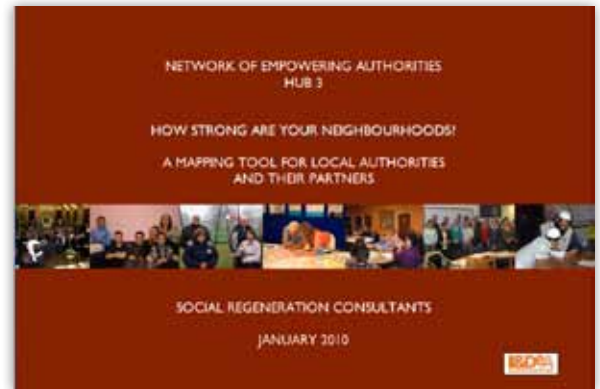


TABLE D: PUBLIC AGENCY PERCEPTIONS OF COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT
(to be completed by all public sector agencies - please refer to the definition of community empowerment in section 1.1)

ORGANISATION.....
 NAME.....
 POSITION IN ORGANISATION.....
 DATE.....

Please indicate on a scale of 1-5 how much you agree or disagree with the following statements (where 1 = strongly disagree, 3 = neither agree or disagree and 5 = strongly agree).

Qualitative Data	Score
Local communities should have an opportunity to control local budgets	
The quality of public services is more important than who provides them	
Community organisations rarely represent the whole community	
Decisions about how to allocate scarce resources between neighbourhoods must always be made centrally	
Communities should lead neighbourhood partnerships	
Public agencies should provide more resources for community development	
Unelected community leaders do not have the same legitimacy as elected local councillors	
The best experts, advocates and leaders for local communities are local communities themselves	

TABLE G: INDIVIDUAL EMPOWERMENT IN COMMUNITIES: QUALITATIVE APPRAISAL x INDIVIDUAL NEIGHBOURHOOD and OVERALL LOCAL AUTHORITY (to be completed by local authority or LSP officer)

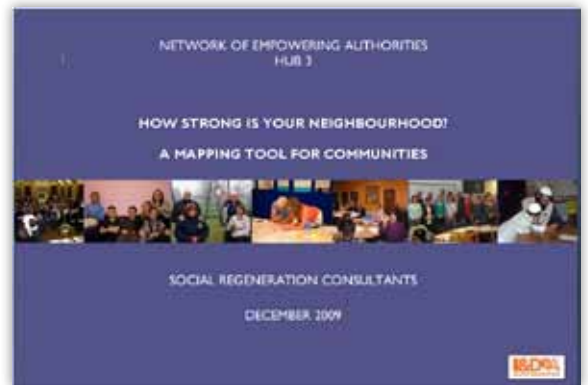
ORGANISATION..... NAME.....
 POSITION IN ORGANISATION.....
 DATE.....

Qualitative Data	Measurement	Data Sources	N1	N2	N3	N4	N5	N6	AVE
Cohesion	% of residents who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area	Place Survey National Indicator 1							
Belonging	% of residents who feel that they belong to their immediate neighbourhood	Place Survey National Indicator 2							
Volunteering	% of residents who regularly volunteer for community activities in their neighbourhood	Place Survey National Indicator 6							

How strong is your neighbourhood? - A new tool for local communities

This looks at:

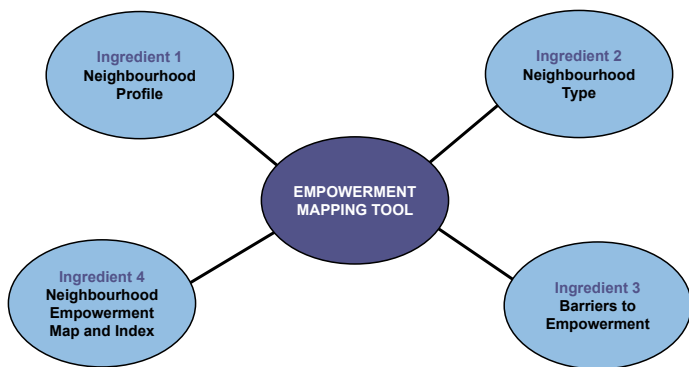
- Neighbourhood boundaries and statistics
- Residents feelings about their neighbourhood
- How successful/strong the neighbourhood is
- Community perceptions of public service providers
- Barriers to neighbourhood empowerment
- A neighbourhood empowerment index



STEP 3: A SUCCESSFUL EMPOWERED NEIGHBOURHOOD - HOW DOES YOURS MEASURE UP?

Step 3 should provide an initial assessment of how empowered you feel your neighbourhood is. The table below asks you to look at some key factors and decide which of them apply to your neighbourhood. Discuss and agree them in a Neighbourhood Workshop and then tick the appropriate boxes. There may be an overlap with some of the conclusions you came to in step 2.

KEY FACTORS	YES	MIXED/ NOT SURE	NO
Does your neighbourhood have a representative body which makes decisions on local issues? (eg a Parish Council)			
Is your neighbourhood represented by residents or outside bodies? (eg a housing association tenants forum)			
Do your local councillors act as community champions?			
Does your neighbourhood have strong and influential resident leaders who are well supported?			
Is the neighbourhood managed locally in your area, with community involvement in decision making about how local services are provided?			
Is there a wide variety of community groups in your neighbourhood catering for different interests and age groups? (eg lunch clubs, parent and toddler groups, keep fit groups etc)			
Does the local community own and manage any community assets (buildings or land)? (eg a community hall, park or playground)			
Do people support each other in your neighbourhood? (eg would you be able to turn to your neighbours if you needed help moving something heavy or feed the cat whilst you were away?)			
Do different communities get on well together in your neighbourhood?			
Is your neighbourhood welcoming to outsiders and newcomers?			



MAPPING TOOL INGREDIENT	SCORE
A. INGREDIENT 1 STEP 3 (Residents feelings about the neighbourhood score Page 9)	%
B. INGREDIENT 2 STEP 2 (Your Successful Neighbourhood score Page 13)	
C. INGREDIENT 2 STEP 3 (Your initial Neighbourhood Empowerment score Page 15)	
D. INGREDIENT 2 STEP 4 (Community perceptions of public services score Page 16)	
E. INGREDIENT 2 STEP 5 (Where your neighbourhood is now on the Community Empowerment Journey score Page 19)	
F. INGREDIENT 3 STEP 1 (Your Neighbourhood Empowerment Barrier score Page 21)	

Now add B, C, D and E together; then subtract F; finally, multiply by % A

THE OVERALL EMPOWERMENT SCORE FOR YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD IS:

STEP 4: COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS OF PUBLIC SERVICE PROVIDERS

The way public sector agencies deliver their services to your neighbourhood may or may not be empowering. Do they listen but not act, do they act but not really change too much, or are they re-inventing themselves to be much more neighbourhood-focused? In most neighbourhoods, some providers will be better than others on the empowerment agenda. An explanatory box is included immediately below the table.

Use the neighbourhood workshop to discuss and agree how each service provider works in your neighbourhood. Then put a tick in the relevant boxes. You may want to complete different tables for different groups of people within your neighbourhood - older people, young people, black and minority ethnic communities etc, who may well have different perspectives.

	LISTEN	ACT	CHANGE
Housing - Independent Social Landlords (eg a housing association)			
Housing - Council or ALMO (a housing stock transfer organisation)			
Health - Primary Care Trust, including GPs			
Police			
Local Councillors			
Council - Neighbourhood and Environment Services			
Council - Adult Services			
Council - Children and Young People			

What can these mapping tools deliver?

1. Enable communities to map the nature and extent of empowerment activity in their neighbourhood
2. Enable services to establish the extent and quality of their empowerment practice
3. Provide a picture of what's working and what's not, from both perspectives
4. Generate new qualitative and quantitative information about neighbourhoods – facts and figures; views and perceptions
5. Identify strengths and weaknesses, barriers and gaps which can inform priorities for action
6. Provide an evidence base for plans, action and investment

What does empowerment mapping involve?

1. Assembling existing quantitative and qualitative information
2. Self-assessment questionnaires for services and communities
3. Running neighbourhood workshops
4. Analysing the outcomes
5. Producing an empowerment map or neighbourhood empowerment index
6. Feeding back the outcomes to communities and partners

Supporting empowerment mapping in the region

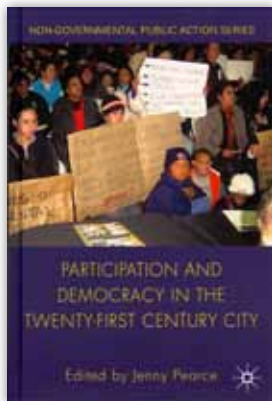
- › Empowerment mapping requires time and effort
- › Everyone's resources are stretched
- › Community Empowerment Networks phased out
- › Each local authority's needs and aspirations will be different
- › Tailored support could provide staff training; workshop facilitation; ad-hoc support; help with analysis; debriefing; pulling together regional learning; disseminating findings

The tools alongside guidance are available on [IDEA website](http://idea.gov.uk) for download in electronic format: www.idea.gov.uk - go to the Knowledge page and then select Community Empowerment

Politicians, activists, academics, researchers and practitioners come together for a conversation about the future of democracy in the UK.

Book launch and discussion - 24th February 2010

This conference launched three books which focus in different ways on the participatory components of democracy and the state in the UK and beyond. Below we present the themes of the three books and questions arising as presented to participants for discussion.



Participation and Democracy in the 21st Century City
J.Pearce (ed) (2010) Palgrave



Urban Regeneration Management: International Perspectives
Edited by John Diamond; Joyce Liddle; Alan Southern and Philip Osei (2010) London: Routledge



Reclaim the State, Experiments in Popular Democracy
(second edition) H.Wainwright (2010) Seagull Books

Jenny Pearce

Participative democracy has long been seen as the ‘utopian’ twin to its ‘realistic’ sibling of representative democracy. Our equal right to vote for representatives is widely considered the only feasible way to organise our democratic politics. Those who want to make a case for participation mostly turn to Athens of two and a half thousand years ago to support their case, where democracy was based on the equal right to take part, or else they recall certain emblematic moments in history when the old order collapsed and participatory momentum was unleashed.

However, over the last two decades or so there have been interesting experiments in participation at the local level. Participation, we argue in this book, need no longer be seen as ‘utopian’. We now have practical experiences and empirical evidence of what happens when people are able to participate in decision making spaces. As global challenges mount in the first decade of the new century, this book argues that learning from participatory experiments becomes a critical task; engaging all human beings in the art of decision making, even at the most local level, may prove essential if we are to find a democratic solution to those challenges. However, the evidence also suggests

that faith in representative democracy is at a low level and fewer and fewer people exercise their right to vote in some of the most advanced democracies on the planet. This book argues the case for more experimentation in the shaping of meaningful participatory space and practice. The experimentation should allow for constant learning about the democratic structuring required to enhance democratic intelligence and capacity to make decisions for the benefit of all.

The book is the outcome of a two year research project funding by the Economic and Social Science Research Council and part of the Non-Governmental Public Action Programme. We set out to learn something about the possibilities and potentialities of a more participative democracy by tracking with participants how they made use of new spaces for participation at the city level and analysing the outcomes. We worked in six cities: Manchester, Salford and Bradford in the UK and Medellin, Caracas and Porto Alegre in Latin America. We used a participative methodology of co-producing knowledge with research participants. The book includes detailed case studies from all these cities and distinguishes between processes of participatory democracy

and those which we call participatory governance. We draw out the potentialities, record the transforming moments as well as recognise the limitations of new participation spaces.

Jenny Pearce is professor of Latin American Politics and Director of the International Centre for Participation Studies, Bradford University

John Diamond

In preparing this book which draws upon 16 colleagues discussing their research in 9 different settings and countries we wanted to examine the following questions:

- › To what extent can we observe a particular or distinctive approach to regeneration;
- › What has been the response of the Academy to the proliferation of regeneration programmes across the globe and can we see an emerging school of regeneration management or practice;
- › To what extent can those who manage or act in a leadership role in these complex initiatives work independently of local social, political and economic pressures;
- › What are the key theoretical and conceptual debates which inform our understanding of these processes;
- › To what extent are (or were) institutions of liberal democracy able to exercise oversight and accountability over regeneration projects?

A key question raised by each of the authors in this edited collection touches on the extent to which individual communities or neighbourhoods are able to exercise an influence on these regeneration programmes. We were interested to observe and to reflect upon the ways in which community or neighbourhood based networks and organisations sought to engage with these schemes. Of equal significance was the varied responses to such requests. Across different places we were able to hear and to record how such attempts to

engage were often rejected or where individuals felt that they had been incorporated rather than included in the process.

We think that there are some important contributions here to the international public debate on the experiences of those who seek to participate and those who find themselves seeking to manage the process. We can, of course, situate the discussion in terms of the global changes in the economy and the growth of urban areas. We do focus on the implications of the collapse of the financial and banking system in our context and review chapters. But we, also, wanted to situate some of the debate in the context of the rise of neo-liberalism and the response or challenge to its consequences through the experiences of activists and members of social movements.

As we observe at the end of the book we can see examples where residents and local groups have offered alternative voices and that it is these different but localised and community based voices that regeneration practitioners need to listen to - not incorporate or co-opt or marginalise but listen to and reflect upon.

The challenge for the Academy is to support and to promote ways of working, learning and reflection which value this approach as a model to practitioners and managers. Are we able to nurture and to validate such approaches?

John Diamond is a Professor at the Centre for Local Policy Studies, Edge Hill University

Hilary Wainwright

Context

A. The political institutions

Three notable features:

- › Over the past 30 odd years (we have seen) signs in the North of steady disengagement from institutions of representative democracy - low turn out; exit from political parties; low levels of new membership
- › At the same time a multiple process of withdrawal of political institutions from the people: shifting of key decision-making processes away from elected assemblies of nation state; diminishing differences between

main parties under pressures of globalisation, especially the seemingly unchallengeable global financial markets; the closing down of party democracy. In effect, an increasing **disembedding** of politics, which in turn influences institutions associated with them like trade unions.

- › By the end of the 20th century a crisis of legitimacy in 'advanced' capitalist countries is producing an interest from sections of the political class in forms of participation that have developed autonomously (see below) leading often to a partial appropriation, often in a depoliticised, 'administrative' form of their language, and to the creation of **ambivalent spaces**, locally and internationally.

B. Civil society

Meanwhile since the 1970's, trends in civil society have been developing unevenly and often in struggle in and against political institutions but with a fundamental organisational autonomy. In practice more than in theory, these trends have produced visions and experiments aimed at giving real content to political equality and popular control, the original meaning of democracy. North and South, and increasingly in collaboration and mutual co-influence, this practical search has been driven by both urgent daily needs and distinct but mutually recognisable traditions from the participatory democracy of CW Wright Mills (effectively updating Tom Paine, socialist feminism, and liberation theology and the popular pedagogy of Paulo Friere).

There are many converging trends here, the most notable are:

- a. the radical forms of democracy emerging from the struggle against the dictatorships in Latin America (eg participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre etc).
- b. the continuing influence of the spirit of the late 60's and 70's in the community, social economy/third sector, global and environmental justice movements and to a less extent trade union organising of the 90's and 21st century.

Themes

These radical autonomous trends in civil society have many themes in common. Firstly, the wider political significance of forms of democracy - participatory, horizontal, egalitarian - developed in civil society; and second, a belief in people as

subjects, knowing subjects, of politics rather than the objects. Related to this is a recognition of the plural and social character of knowledge. Flowing from these, is a commitment to the autonomy of civil society organisations but (within) a recognition of the need to negotiate with representative institutions to achieve a sharing of power between the institutions of representative and participatory democracy.

A concluding theme is that the idea of 'democratic bargaining power' sums up the potential of combining participatory and representative democracy. The combination leads to potentially stronger democratic bargaining power than either can achieve on their own.

The book explores both the theoretical underpinning of these themes along with a range of messy and unfinished experiments and asks:

- › How far could this provide an antidote to the processes of disembedding, described above?
- › And what would be the institutional, political and economic conditions for this democratic bargaining power to grow?
- › How far and how can the ambivalent spaces in today's broken democracy provide opportunities to develop these autonomous sources of democratic bargaining power? And could lasting – but continuously changing learning - forms of democracy emerge?

Hilary Wainwright is a Fellow of the Transnational Institute and Senior Research Associate of the International Centre for Participation Studies, Bradford University

Communities Matter

Community Matters, the national umbrella organisation for the grass-roots community sector, has published Communities Matter – A Vision for Neighbourhoods, setting out five ambitions for Britain's communities, and how these can be realised.

1. A community building in every neighbourhood for local people to meet, to organise, to socialise and to run activities
2. More lottery funding for communities, including capital funds for community assets and small funds for activities and start-ups
3. A national network of community enablers (activists, community workers and multi-purpose community organisations) to mobilise local residents and to start new projects
4. A strong, strategic community voice and the means to use it effectively
5. A less bureaucratic operating environment free from the burdensome regulation and hidden costs that are strangling community action

For more information, go to www.communitymatters.org.uk/about-us/whats-new/Communities+Matter+-+A+Vision+for+Neighbourhoods.

TOTAL PLACE – IS THIS A SOLUTION?

This is a new initiative that looks at how a ‘whole area’ approach to public services can lead to better services at less cost

Total place seeks to identify and avoid overlap and duplication between organisations – delivering a step change in both service improvement and efficiency at the local level, as well as across government. Here, two people from within this region but with very different roles, share their perspectives on, and experience of, Total Place

The Project Manager: Humber Innovation Partnership

Whilst Total Place is less than a year old, it is already gaining significant traction. The initiative was launched by Sir Michael Bichard in early 2009 as part of HM Treasury’s Operational Efficiency Programme to explore how taking a ‘whole area’ approach to public services could improve the effectiveness of the sector and at the same time, realise significant efficiency savings. Thirteen pilot areas across the country have just reported back to the Government confirming how delivering public services differently in a place, designed around users, can lead to better outcomes for communities at less cost to the public purse. It’s little wonder that Total Place is in the headlines.

At the heart of Total Place is collaboration. Far too often, public resources are spent in isolation, whether by the Council, the NHS, the police, the Department of Work and Pensions or even the third sector. The result is that the customer experiences disjointed and disconnected services which are designed around the convenience of each agency, not around them. This traditional approach can be highly wasteful and not achieve the results that communities want. Some of the key findings of the pilots were that our spending is too focused on dealing with the ‘symptoms’ of issues, whether that be poor health, housing, crime, drugs or low achievement. Shifting our spend to ‘prevent’ these issues and addressing the causes could save the public purse significant amounts. In addition, agencies often duplicate the work of others. There were many examples of some families receiving over 100 visits a year from a multitude of different agencies, each with their own narrow remit. Redesigning

services, involving the full breadth of professional expertise and resources available in the public sector, and tailoring these to the needs of users can address these issues, achieving improvements to both efficiency and effectiveness.

Part of the empowerment agenda?

Sir Michael Bichard is keen to stress that Total Place is not ‘just another initiative’. Rather, it’s about embedding a new culture in the public sector within a place, where a partnership of agencies assesses, prioritises and responds to the needs of its place in an integrated and coordinated way. Empowered communities have a key role to play in Total Place. This ranges from helping partnerships understand the experience and needs of users, what works and doesn’t work in communities and perhaps most significantly, being involved in the design and potentially, in the delivery of services.

Part of the day job?

The Humber Innovation Partnership established a project in February 2010 to work with the four local strategic partnerships in the Humber sub-region and support them in implementing the Total Place principles and approaches that have been demonstrated in the pilots. The project runs until March 2011, by which time Total Place may well be ‘part of the day job’, rather than ‘just another initiative.’

If you would like to know anything more about the Humber Innovation Partnership’s Total Place project, please contact Stuart Diack on 01472 324466, Stuart.Diack@nelincs.gov.uk

The Service User: Bradford Total Place pilot

Bradford is one of 13 Total Place pilots across the country, and is focussed on an overall theme of providing an ‘gateway to integrated services’.

Involvement

Being an ex-service user of Criminal Justice Services it is my belief that Service User Involvement is the key when making any changes and development to services and systems. I have spent numerous years in the Criminal Justice System following a fifteen

year heroin addiction. I attribute becoming an ex-service user to having a say in what happened to me.

Being empowered to take some responsibility for my own life and changes was the start of Service User Involvement for me – I was a Service User and I was involved. Further to this I became involved in the development of a Service User Involvement Forum and became a Representative for the Service Users of Bradford Drug Rehabilitation Requirement. This gave me

opportunity to consult with my then peers and, on their behalf, have some influence over decisions at a high level.

On an individual level being involved in a Service User Involvement forum was a positive and valuable experience in terms of developing skills and most importantly increasing my self esteem and confidence. Often, Service Users who take part in Service User engagement develop both professionally and personally, which can help them progress, increasing their employment options, for example. In addition to the individual benefits there are numerous benefits to involving Service Users and these benefits are apparent at many levels.

Community Voice

Service User Involvement can take many forms and be done in many different ways. Meetings, steering groups or committees are all possible methods of involving Service Users in Total Place. Basically though, it is about making sure that the views of the people who use the services have the chance to be heard in order to make positive, long term changes. The people who use services are the true experts on how those services should be developed and delivered, they know what is going wrong but also what is going right and they know the systems inside out and upside down! They are the ones that know exactly what they need, what works well, how things should be delivered and what improvements need to be made. The most effective Service

User involvement allows Service Users to share decisions and responsibility, it is not enough just to ask Service Users what they think and then give them limited influence over what happens. To date Total Place in Bradford has worked hard to consult with Service Users about what is currently going on in systems and services. However, that isn't where it stops, it is important that Service Users continue to be involved at the highest level. It is imperative to the long term success of Total Place that we remember that Service User Involvement is a process rather than a one-off event.

Effective user involvement needs commitment from policy makers, practitioners and Service Users and should play a significant part in the Total Place process.

Making sure that the voices of Service Users are heard, ensures that they are able to have a genuine influence on the services they receive, which leads to greater effectiveness and positive outcomes. This means that services are needs led and that resources are used effectively. It is absolutely vital that Service Users continue to be consulted with and that a representative of Service Users is always present at all levels of Total Place.

This piece has been supplied by Bradford's Total Place - offenders theme, Newsletter 2 - February 2010.

Comments on 'Approaches to Engagement' conference:



Regional Active Citizenship Learning Alliance

On page 6 of this newsletter, we have reproduced a presentation from Marjorie Mayo to a recent CLG seminar entitled 'Learning for Active Citizenship: What Works and What are the Challenges?' This presentation highlights the significance of active citizenship in the current policy context, and its continuing importance for democratic participation and empowerment, social solidarity and social justice. The idea of establishing a regional network in Yorkshire and Humber that could bring together all those involved in active citizenship learning has been developing for the last 2 years, supported by the Empowerment Partnership.



Where did the idea for developing RACLA come from?

In 2004, the government funded a 2 year pilot programme, developing and mapping the provision of active citizenship learning and looking at the diverse approaches. It identified what these approaches have in common - for example, the role of local people, the importance of accessibility, the variety of approaches for people to choose from, and range of flexible learning and teaching methods. It resulted in the ALAC framework (Active Learning for Active Citizenship) - and set out a core curriculum based on the values of social justice, participation, equality and diversity and co-operation. It also led to the development of the Take Part (TP) pathfinder projects. In this region the Round One Take Part projects are in Rotherham, Barnsley and Doncaster.

The region has a long history of this kind of activity, particularly within Adult Education through organisations such as the WEA, Northern College and many local authority adult education centres and FE Colleges. The voluntary sector has also developed courses with titles like, 'How your City Works' in a number of cities such as Hull and Sheffield. Some areas for example in Barnsley have adapted this to a 'How Your Neighbourhood Works' course and the Regional Forum have been running sessions about 'How your Region Works'

What has been done?

There have been a number of events over the past 2 years, and an initial mapping identified over 40 projects, organisations or initiatives that were providing some kind of active citizenship learning. There are no doubt many more.

Over the past 6 months there has been a rapid increase in work in this area including:

- › The development of Round 2 Take Part projects in Bradford, York and some links with work in North Lincolnshire
- › Development work to spread Take Part style activities to Kirklees and Sheffield carried out by the WEA and funded through the Targeted Support Fund element of the Empowerment Partnership
- › Active Citizenship activities in a range of neighbourhoods through the Connecting Communities programme
- › A specific programme of support and development for RACLA supported by additional government funding from the Transformation Fund awarded to the WEA

RACLA ran a workshop in November last year sharing good practice between projects, which also featured 2 fascinating videos: one with some inspiring learners stories from South

Yorkshire, and one remarkable insight into the work of the Highlander Centre in Appalachia in the South of the USA (sometimes referred to as the 'Radical Hillbillies') which has supported grassroots action and education for many years.

In February RACLA organised a second event, 'Share Your Story', in Barnsley which aimed at bringing together people who had been on some of the active citizen learning provision, and those who see them selves as active citizens. The main focus for the day was the sharing of stories. In small groups, people talked about how they got involved, how they become 'active' citizens and what (or who) had inspired them. Many people said they found this session very moving and sometimes inspiring.

A third event took place on March 26th for all the organisations and agencies involved to take a strategic view, review progress with RACLA, share their experience of 'what works' (and what hasn't worked so well) and develop a collaborative action plan for 2010/11.

The Regional Active Citizenship Learning Alliance (RACLA) is a network for everyone involved in promoting and participating in learning for active citizenship in Yorkshire and the Humber.

Active Citizenship lies at the heart of strengthening democracy: empowered people, groups and communities playing an active role in shaping services and influencing decision making. With the increasing focus on communities that are disengaged from the democratic process, and the critical need to find ways for more

people to become active, engaged and empowered, RACLA may be a network whose time has come.

For more information about RACLA, and to get involved, please contact Tony Herrmann at COGS

Building Cohesive Communities – practical steps and approaches

2 Free workshops: York 15th April and Doncaster 16th April 10.00 – 3.30

In October 2009, DCLG published the guide: *Building Cohesive Communities: What frontline staff and community activists need to know*. These two events are an opportunity to share the approach, practice and learning that informed the authors of the guide, Jo Broadwood and Nicola Sugden.

Who are the workshops for?

- Local authority officers with responsibility for building cohesive communities and supporting implementation of strategy
- third sector organisations – especially those with an interest in mediation, conflict resolution etc

This is an opportunity to better understand what's needed and who might provide it (i.e. this isn't a training workshop for frontline workers and community activists).

The aim is to help you identify the understanding and skills required within your workforce and communities in order to build greater community cohesion, and to help identify and inform those who might deliver future training programmes:

- Promoting interaction between people and groups
- Tackling attitudes, perceptions and myths
- Building trust in local institutions
- Developing the role of young people
- Developing effective community leadership
- Developing a sense of belonging
- Developing commitment to a shared future
- Building community resilience
- Using communications and the media to promote cohesion
- Working on underlying causes

A booking form is available on the YHEP website www.yhep.org.uk. Places are limited.



For the Regional Empowerment Partnership contact COGS on **0114 268 7070**, or email mail@cogs.uk.net. Also find us online at www.yhep.org.uk.



The views and perspectives expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of all YHEP partners or of COGS.



National Empowerment Partnership

Managed by the Community Development Foundation

Funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government