



National Empowerment Partnership and Empowering Communities

John Skrine

The Context

National Indicator 4

'Percentage of people feeling that they can influence decisions that affect their locality'

Duty to Involve

Programme 2008/09

- Establishing clearly where local authorities stand in relation to NI4;
- Developing support for them based on their specific needs;
- Developing our relationship with other players who deliver support on NI4 and the duty to involve;
- Providing support for the wider community of practitioners in the statutory and voluntary sector, without creating new networks or mechanisms unless these are clearly called for, and within our resources to deliver

Final Report

Local Area Agreement National Indicator Four Benchmarking Exercise



September 2008

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Empowerment and engagement ... **summary of findings**



**'A little more conversation and
a lot more action please!'**

Goals of engaging the community:

Increase the **capacity** of people to **influence**
decisions that affect their lives

Improve the **quality and function** of **relationships**
between citizens and government

find out more

This briefing is one of a series produced by Empowering Communities, the South West partnership of a national programme, the National Empowerment Partnership, funded by the Department of Communities & Local Government to improve the quality and functioning of relationships between citizens and government, and to enable people to influence decisions which affect them. The briefings summarise reports covering engagement and empowerment work across seven different areas (see right).

The full reports can be downloaded from the Creating Excellence website at: tinyurl.com/58myhf

To find out more about Empowering Communities and the National Empowerment Partnership visit the Creating Excellence website at: tinyurl.com/5tsuj9

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2 Black and minority ethnic communities

This report looks at examples of engagement with groups including recent arrivals from eastern Europe and gypsy and traveller communities, in a range of locations across the region. It considers issues for effectively empowering communities whose past experience may have left them distrustful of 'officialdom' and cynical about such exercises.

Children and young people

3 Strong empowerment values underpin youth services and other work serving young people, but too often do not influence wider strategic planning. This report looks at good practice in Gloucestershire and Devon, and offers examples of engagement applicable anywhere.

Older people

4 A plethora of government policies and initiatives in recent years have sought to place the engagement of older people at the heart of plans for an ageing society. These are summarised in this report, with a particular focus on the growth of older people's forums as a way to address issues that concern them and to communicate these to professionals and policy makers.

The rural setting

5 The challenges for networking and consultation where people are dispersed, poorly served by public transport and have few opportunities to meet are considered in this report. It looks at efforts in small towns and rural areas to help people influence decisions that affect them. It uses examples from Wiltshire, South Somerset and Dorset, and considers engagement work by housing associations.

An urban setting

6 This report looks at work in the city of Plymouth to encourage local people to take a more active role in improving their lives and neighbourhoods. It draws out learning on what positively supports effective engagement and empowerment. Many of the challenges Plymouth faces are common to any urban area, and what works here could therefore be replicated elsewhere.

Networks

7 Plugging into the enthusiasm and knowledge found in networks has real benefits for local authorities, and they can offer a useful, cost-effective way to hear a community's needs and aspirations. This study provides an overview of many of the smaller networks in the region, and the role they play.

Measurement and indicators

8 Based on a wide review of written materials and interviews with a range of agencies, this report tackles the difficult issue of measuring empowerment activity. It includes a case study on the use of measurements and indicators in a neighbourhood management project which illustrates some of the factors in play.

Overview

The learning from these seven areas is pulled together in a single 28-page report, of which this briefing is a summary.

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Empowering Communities

Empowering Communities is aimed at getting more people in the South West involved and influencing the decisions that affect their lives and local communities. The initiative is seeking to increase the number of people, particularly in disadvantaged areas, who participate in public issues, press for and contribute to the improvement of public services, and help to shape the future of the place where they live.



Empowering Communities is the South West consortium of a national programme, the National Empowerment Partnership, funded by the Department of Communities & Local Government (CLG) to improve the quality and functioning of relationships between citizens and government, and to enable people to influence decisions which affect them. Find out more about the [National Empowerment Partnership](#).

Download a Word document [list of current members of the Empowering Communities consortium](#).

See here for more downloadable [background papers on engagement and empowerment](#).

For more information contact John Skrine at Creating Excellence: [E-mail](#), or phone 01823 250805 or 07814 387090.

[Important Engagement and Empowerment Research Published](#) [Empowerment Links](#)

Practitioners Good Practice Programme

- Focus on Local Authorities
- Not just the committed!
- Zebra Collective

Working with Networks Programme

- Practitioners in voluntary and statutory sectors
- Through existing networks, if possible
- South West Foundation

Lyme Regis Development Trust



Empowering Communities Report 5 - Rural

http://www.creatingexcellence.org.uk/ceimages/ECReport5Rural.pdf - Windows Internet Explorer

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Engagement and Empowerment in Rural Areas: A Case Study

Ingredients for Empowerment and Engagement in Lyme Regis

- Consultation should be ongoing, not just one off.
- People must be able to make a difference. Consulting on issues that people cannot influence is disempowering and should never take place.
- Making sure there are some quick wins-issues that people can influence and make happen are important to people getting involved and wanting to engage.
- The presence of a community development worker is essential to bringing people together and getting them to take part in the discussion about issues that affect them. Without the input of the community development worker it is difficult to make this happen.
- Having a plan that is backed by evidence from the community gives the tool to ensure that resources are argued for in the right place.
- The involvement of elected members, whether this is the Town District or County Councillors, assists to take the agenda forward.

Resources

- Empowerment needs appropriate funding behind it.
- Community anchors in the form of buildings and resource centres gives engagement and empowerment a visible base.
- For true empowerment to take place those organising and arranging the consultation should be independent and not have a vested interest in the outcome.

Done

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Empowering Communities

Thank you

Further information:

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