

EMPOWERING WAYS OF WORKING INTERIM REPORT



CASE STUDIES – EMPOWERING WAYS OF WORKING

These case studies have been taken from data gathered via a mapping and base lining exercise on behalf of the Yorkshire and Humber Empowerment Partnership. These case studies represent what voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations, Local Authority departments and Local Strategic Partnerships feel works in implementing the Empowerment Agenda. The mapping and base-lining work is ongoing; consequently, these case studies represent a sample of the views to be gathered. The final report will present all of the case studies, as well as present the findings from the questionnaire.

South Sheffield Partnership (SSP) – Sheffield

What works?

South Sheffield Partnership (SSP) has been successful in electing community representatives to strategic boards and committees across Sheffield and the wider region. They have elected a delegate onto the 0-19 Partnership Board and two on the BME Infrastructure Board (steering group) for Sheffield. They have recently been commissioned by the Community Empowerment Network for Sheffield (OFFER) to review their marketing of vacancies and how they could improve presentation of information. Additionally, SSP are members of the Regional Forum and members of the Regional BME Forum for Yorkshire and The Humber.

Why was this successful?

The SSP believe this work is successful because it has enabled them to influence strategic thinking and decision making at city and regional levels. Additionally, the work provides a platform from which to promote BME organisations which are then given a voice on key themes that impact on local communities. Their success is measured by the number of seats filled on strategic boards and the number of delegate / sector representatives attending their meetings. Representatives are then able to pass on information and

feedback to their individual constituencies.

What difference has the work made?

Organisations across South Sheffield are more aware of current issues and can link their organisation more strategically, enabling them to be more effective in their work and have a greater impact locally.

Investment?

As a network organisation, all of their staff's time focuses on empowering local community groups to have their say. In addition they have given in-kind support to maintaining a BME Network - approximately 20% of one employee's week.

Challenges

The financial cost of undertaking community engagement and empowerment at grass roots level was viewed as the SSP's main challenge: *"funding limits capacity"*. The partnership feels that they have had to become very innovative in networking and undertaking joint working where possible: *"sustainability long term necessitates some core funding to maintain core activities"*.

How can the Regional Empowerment Partnership provide support?

Identify sources of funding, e-mail information and free training information.

Empowerment Indicators

The SSP feel that they are probably working towards the PSA21: Build more cohesive, empowered and active communities indicators, in a loose way.

Regional Forum (RF) – Leeds

What works?

The Regional Forum (RF) feels a good example of what works in regards to empowerment activity is the Networking Capacity Building Scheme. This scheme centres on the development of existing and new regional thematic networks of VCS organisations. This work has enabled such organisations to have a regional presence and therefore influence decision-making to benefit their users and members. Thus far, supported organisations include: UK Advocacy Network; Northern Network of Travelling People; Yorkshire and Humber Association of Civic Societies; Housing Action Yorkshire and the Humber; Yorkshire Women's Network.

Why was this successful?

The RF feels that the development of the networks has provided a collective, organised voice for 'grassroots' VCS organisations and as a result these organisations have been able to represent some of the most marginalised people in the region. The scheme's particular achievements can be grouped together within themes such as:

- increased engagement (e.g. membership of the Northern Network of Travelling People increased by 50%)
- better communications (e.g. The Yorkshire and Humber Association for Civic Societies produced a media plan)
- better networking and collaboration (e.g. a partnership forged between RAG - CD and the English Standards Board around community development training).

Investment?

The RF feels that their investment in empowerment is very difficult to quantify, either in staff or financial terms. One staff member was dedicated to this work but empowerment as a concept and as part of other Regional Forum work cuts

across all development officer, manager and senior staff work.

What difference has the work made?

The RF feel that the activity has created a voice and liberated resources at a regional level for people who are often marginalised from opportunities to influence decision-making. Coupled with this it has enabled some networks to secure a better financial footing and has raised their profile.

Challenges

To provide a voice and ensure input at a regional level, networks need at least a small amount of time (and therefore money) to be maintained. Once initial funding has been exhausted, it can be difficult to secure further resources. Ensuring that the voice of the VCS is taken seriously by regional agencies and that mechanisms for engagement at this spatial level are appropriate for those wishing to influence regional policy and practice is another challenge. Often, methods of involvement and engagement are based on public sector models - quite mechanistic and 'dry' - which doesn't always allow for the innovation or informality that characterises this sector.

How can the Regional Empowerment Partnership provide support?

The RF feel that the REP can support by ensuring that empowerment practices are not commoditised as a 'product', only applicable in certain circumstances and places, but rather as a holistic way of working that is organic, flexible and is underpinned by the ethos of empowerment as a way of working as well as the practice. Continue to champion the involvement of the VCS in the empowerment agenda; and not let it become a formulaic government programme that stifles innovation and passion.

Empowerment Indicators

The RF is working towards the PSA 21 indicator number 5 - A thriving third sector. The RF believe that all of their work is aimed at creating the conditions for

thriving third sector in Yorkshire and Humber, and all of their reporting could be used to measure progress against this indicator. They have created an initial set of outcomes which they report against quarterly, including evidence to support their assessment, and they also have to report against various outcomes for their different funders - most of which relate to creating conditions for thriving third sector.

What works?

The Avocet Trust take responsibility for providing a quality home life in the community for people with learning and other disabilities, as a consequence they have a number of examples, but feel that Malcolm's experience best represents what is possible as part of their work.

Through his involvement with the Avocet Trust, Malcolm has been able to achieve his ambition of having his own home supported by dedicated support staff. Initially, the Trust provided a number of community and life experiences which developed his ability to cope in the community. They encouraged him to make an active contribution to the life of the organisation, particularly through his interest in music; Malcolm volunteers as a Disc Jockey at the Avocet parties. With support, Malcolm chose his own home, furnishings and decoration. He also chose his own support team who he personally interviewed and approved.

Why was this successful?

Prior to joining the Trust Malcolm lived at his parents' home. This arrangement broke down leaving him to fend for himself and having to rebuild his life. The Trust is now confident that they have been able to empower Malcolm to make his own decisions. He now has the support and resources to cope and maintain a high quality of life as a full member of the community.

What difference has the work made?

The Avocet Trust believes that the difference they make is confirmed at a number of levels in the organisation. Those directly involved, such the support staff, are thrilled with what Malcolm has achieved with their help. At a higher level in the organisation, the work has motivated staff to achieve the same for other challenging clients. The Trust are now looking at increasing empowerment for Malcolm and other clients by investigating the opportunities for such clients to

purchase their own homes if they so wish. Not directly as a consequence of Malcolm's experience but supported by it, the Avocet Trust are looking to establish employment training schemes, with the aim of creating real employment opportunities for their clients. Malcolm could well benefit directly from these developments and be further empowered through securing his own income.

Investment?

Empowerment is a matter that is threaded through the fabric of the Avocet Trust and is something that they continually work on. Avocet's investment in empowerment includes: family carers and clients on the Trust management board; family carers on the Trust board sub committees; parents / relative committees; a clients committee; clients on specialist management committee e.g. staff training; client and carer involvement in project groups, interview panels and house meetings. As can be seen, there is a significant involvement of both clients and relatives in all aspects of the Trust's management and development. In addition to the above, they have a project group including a psychologist, nursing personnel, a social worker and others who are actively involved in developing methods for sampling the views of clients with profound disabilities. The aim of this project is to create an instrument which will allow them to translate non verbal communication into a form that communicates the wishes and choices of such clients to those who are in a position to meet their needs. Additionally, Avocet Trust is in the process of working towards the Charter Mark Accreditation; a significant element of this is focused on empowering users of the service provision.

North of England Activities - Bradford

What works?

North of England Activities (NEA) feels that what has worked for them has entailed investment in a range of personal development and confidence building activities between 1999 and 2004. This initial work has produced a cohort of young adults taking on leadership and management roles across the region. A similar range of activities is currently being supported, but on a smaller scale, so that the supply of future leaders can be sustained.

Why was this successful?

This activity helped NEA to develop a diverse range of leaders, who act as role models for younger people who are in turn empowered to become the next generation of leaders. Crucial elements have been provision of minibus transport so that young people, particularly those from marginalised backgrounds, can access opportunities. Young people from a dozen secondary schools in the Bradford district as well as school leavers, undergraduates and graduates working with current cohorts have been involved in the project.

What difference has the work made?

Young people have reported greater confidence (Allerton Survey 2008) and have developed an increase in their social networks through meeting people who are not their usual peers at school. Young adults have gained experience of working with younger people, which has aided their progression and developed interest in careers in teaching, youth work and many other person-centered services. Additionally, young adults have gained leadership and other qualifications to enhance CVs and been able to access a network that spreads across Bradford district in particular and the North in general.

Investment?

NEA feels that their investment is difficult to quantify as it is an integral part of their activity.

Challenges

The Trust feels that the Youth Opportunity Fund is unfair and has chaotic administration procedures, which has left thousands of potential beneficiaries (many from the government's own target groups) disillusioned. They believe it is not reasonable to raise expectations and then leave young people with nothing. Additionally, they feel that there is a lack of equal opportunities afforded by the local youth service, which has cut off communication with hundreds of young people who wished to be engaged in activities but who could not, for whatever reasons, attend youth service buildings at specific times.

How can the Regional Empowerment Partnership provide support?

Giving publicity to cases of unequal treatment and exclusion from services.

Carers' Centre - Hull

What works?

The Hull Carers' Centre supports the Hull Carers' Forum which is a ten-times-a-year gathering of carers and former carers to discuss issues surrounding caring. This is in turn publicised by the Hull Carers' Forum Newsletter, which is the vehicle for enabling carers and former carers to engage in consultation and activities provided by many local and national sources.

Why was this successful?

Carers can feel very isolated and many often feel out of the loop especially when it comes to national and local decision making processes. Both the Forum and its newsletter allow carers and former carers to gain knowledge about current issues, consultations and possible future changes to things that could affect their role. The centre has seen a marked increase in the number of individuals requesting further information or who are willing to participate in national and local consultations.

What difference has the work made?

Funded by Hull City Council and Hull Primary Care Trust, the Centre employs a Carers' Consultation Coordinator who acts as one stop shop facility for workers in any organisation, and for individual carers, to gain access to events concerning local decision making processes. This worker offers support to those wishing to participate by a number of different means. It has been noted that there has been a marked increase in the number of participating carers and former carers involving themselves in the national and local consultation / decision making process. This has formed a very knowledgeable and proactive community of carers and former carers who have now broken down the feelings of isolation and helplessness which are regularly associated with caring for someone.

Investment?

The Centre has three core functions: information, advice and support. They believe that all three functions are empowering and as a consequence deem their investment to be one hundred per cent.

Challenges

Due to the high level of care offered by some carers, many feel that they do not have the time to offer to local decision making mechanisms. Some mechanisms would demand up to four hours in one go or a series of two hours per week during time which is often unsuitable to a carer due to a lack of sitter or respite provision. As many carers have been socially isolated many experience an inertia or lack of confidence in getting involved in these processes. On many occasions these carers have valuable knowledge and experience which could add depth and value, yet are not supported in the simplest of ways (such as travel expenses or induction support). All this, combined with the lack of feedback to individuals, has eroded the confidence of individuals in becoming active in these decision making processes.

How can the Regional Empowerment Partnership provide support?

Primarily by supporting the call for Local Authorities to secure funding for capacity building in the third sector and to offer suitable forms of finance for the sector as it is now the main conduit for community engagement.

Empowerment indicators

The centre works towards the PSA 21 Indicator number 4: The percentage of people who feel they can influence decisions affecting their local area. However, their activity is not marked against this indicator.

Neighbourhood Management - Barnsley

What works?

The Neighbourhood Management Scheme feel that their partnership with Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council (BMBC) in delivery of a light touch Neighbourhood Management approach in Bank End, Barnsley (funded through the Safer Stronger Communities Fund), is a particularly good example of empowerment and engagement activity.

Why was this successful?

Initially, in order to kick-start resident involvement in making improvements to local services and the quality of life in local neighbourhoods, the Neighbourhood Management scheme undertook a period of intense community engagement. A resident group was formed and produced detailed action plans for their area. The activity involved many partners, such as: Voluntary Action Barnsley; BMBC Area Forum and community engagement officers; Berneslai Homes; elected local authority members; Primary Care Trusts; local and Impact Wardens; local Volcom groups; school and clubs; and residential groups.

What difference has the work made?

This project started in May 2007 and finished in March 2008. During this period the residents involved in the group have been supported by a steering group made up of the various officers from partner organisations. These residents understand that their group needs continued support and development in order for them to take their activity forward. They have shown enthusiasm and commitment to build this group's membership in order to have a stronger voice, become constituted and eventually become sustainable.

Investment?

Initially 2 days per week in Bank End. However, by the end of the project 3-4 days a week were needed to support this work.

Challenges

The project lead feels that locally elected members are not prepared to demonstrate shared local leadership as they should be doing in line with the Government White Paper *Strong and Prosperous Communities*.

Empowerment Indicators

This project relates their work to the performance management framework within the LAA for Barnsley and measures it against the 35 indicators within the LAA.

What works?

This project, within Leeds University, believes that their employability programme, which helped local people gain skills and access facilities to assist in finding a job or setting up a business, works well in delivering empowerment and engagement activity.

Why was this successful?

The work treated participants as full and equal partners, giving them full access to the resources available at the university. The project targeted groups such as lone parents and older men in long term unemployment. A secondary project assisted people recovering from brain injuries into self employment.

What difference has the work made?

The project lead feels that the project made a huge difference. For example, 58% of the long-term unemployed males aged over 45 found employment after taking part in the project. The brain injury group successfully set up their own business and have recently won an award for this. The University believes that projects such as these assist in reducing social exclusion and employment inequality. They follow up the employment outcomes of participants, but the most important outcomes are the soft outcomes, such as increases in confidence and self esteem.

Challenges

The project experienced initial challenges with statutory agencies such as Job Centers (JC). Some of the JC staff members were reluctant to refer their clients to the project, and different JCs seemed to be operated in conflicting ways, creating a lack of consistency in this important relationship. Additionally, the project felt that some JCs saw the project's work as a threat, whereas the community groups the project worked with saw the initiative as an opportunity.

How can the Regional Empowerment Partnership provide support?

The REP has the opportunity to be a useful forum to forge partnerships between agencies working on similar agendas, to ensure that we work together rather than against each other.

Neighbourhood Area Development – Hull City Council

What works?

As part of the Objective 2 European funding for community-based economic development activity, eight Neighbourhood Areas were set up. Each was overseen by a board made up of and chaired by local residents, and the chairs of each area formed a city-wide board, which in turn fed into the LSP. Over the course of the six-year programme, 136 residents were involved in this management structure.

Why was this successful?

The project didn't just deliver the narrow requirements of the European funding, but acted as a platform for the creation of a series of new community and social networks. For example, boards in the east of the city created, on their own initiative, an alliance to encompass various community projects for the benefit of all so that, for instance, community cafes could carry out their purchasing as a group and negotiate favourable costs. Local residents and representatives from the community and voluntary sector accessed technical assistance provided by the programme in the form of a secretariat for each area. Area Directors were involved as 'guardians', acting as champions for the activities of the boards in their areas.

What difference has the work made?

A new programme of city-wide packages has recently been introduced, which could not have happened without the Neighbourhood Area boards. Many poorly used community facilities across the city have been renovated as a result of the increase in activity sparked by the project. New networks are now in existence independent of the Local Authority, such as the recent faith-based network that is currently securing funding from Yorkshire Forward.

Investment?

The Neighbourhood Area programme was part of a £60m investment in the area under European Objective 2. Funding for technical assistance such as the secretariats was provided by Hull City Council.

Challenges

At the outset the project was hampered by the existence of community gatekeepers, those who claimed to speak for communities without justification but who hindered attempts to reach a wider population. The early stages of the programme were characterised by competitive behaviour between projects, and the project also encountered negativity from other departments within Hull City Council. During the period of the programme, a number of organisations involved in community development and engagement work went out of existence leaving a legacy of debt and structural problems that had to be overcome.

How can the Regional Empowerment Partnership provide support?

The REP will be a useful network, especially in the current climate of European / business - driven policy, where the third sector needs to retain a voice and gain experience of working on wider geographical levels.

Empowerment Indicators

We are working toward the PSA 21 agenda, but not specifically by prioritising these indicators.

Yorkshire Planning Aid – Leeds

What works?

Yorkshire Planning Aid (YPA) feels an example of what worked well, in terms of empowerment and engagement, can be seen in their training & capacity building sessions on the planning system.

Why was this successful?

- i) Tailored to individual groups or communities' needs
- ii) Timed to link into statutory planning consultations regarding development plans or planning applications relevant to those groups and communities.

What difference has the work made?

Participants gained a better understanding of the planning system, as well as the consultation process with which they were being asked to become involved. Informal analysis of feedback forms shows a high percentage of participants felt that they were more able to engage with the planning system as a result of YPA's input. Formal analysis of the events from 2007-08 will be available in April 08.

Challenges

Making contact with and establishing communication routes to the right people was initially difficult, but some Local Authorities now allow time for capacity building prior to community consultations.

How can the Regional Empowerment Partnership provide support?

By supporting good local information networks and local authority wide contacts to disseminate information (we have worked effectively with a couple of Community Empowerment Networks, and feel that these should be maintained).

North Lincolnshire Council

What works?

North Lincolnshire Council recently funded two community consultation projects; one urban, via Voluntary Action North East Lincolnshire and the other rural, via Humber and Wolds. Both pieces of work engaged local people in establishing impressions of their communities using Participatory Appraisal (PA) methods.

Why was this successful?

Previous consultations regarding impressions of community life were gathered via Area Action Teams who targeted their explorations at an organisational and group level. Using PA ensured that anyone could give their opinion on their local community providing the Local Authority with a grass root perspective.

What difference has the work made?

The voluntary organisations commissioned to undertake the work received a cash investment, which in turn builds capacity of the sector and meets the Local Authority commitment to work closer with the VCS. The Local Authority has been able to develop a number of more in-depth area profiles from the findings of the PA exercise which have enabled organisations to target their services more effectively.

Investment?

Financial investment of £50,000

Challenges

The department felt the projects encountered difficulties engaging with hard to reach groups.

How can the Regional Empowerment Partnership provide support?

By disseminating examples of best practice with regard to engaging with hard to

reach groups.

Empowerment Indicators

As a Local Authority they are measured against all 198 LAA indicators and in terms of the LAA 35 they are working towards Stronger Safer Community targets and the obvious ones encompassing empowerment. The department is at the stage of setting targets around the PSA 21 indicators - establishing a baseline and action plan which can be measured against annually.

Community Development - Sheffield Primary Care Trust

What works?

The Sheffield Primary Care Trust (PCT) work in partnership with community groups and organisations to provide health training for local people. They work in partnership with VCS groups, whereby the PCT provide funding and the training content and community groups involved provide venues and associated facilities. All of the project's current trainers are people who have gone through the initial training themselves and have taken on further training to become trainers and now get paid £21 hour for the work they do. People also use the training as a networking and social experience, and it provide an opportunity for like-minded members of the local community to come together and in some cases create new social groups and community organisations.

Why was this successful?

The PCT lead considers the whole project to be dictated by the needs of the learners and this is one of the main reasons for its success. They have the flexibility to respond to learners' requirements on issues such as venue, course content and times. The project generally targets the work at deprived areas of the city or at communities of interest that suffer large health inequalities compared with the rest of the population. The community groups that work in partnership with the PCT help hugely in finding clients.

What difference has the work made?

Attending these courses gives people new information and skills to take care of their own health, but has wider effects as well. People find a new venue for social interaction, an increase in their confidence and self esteem, and in many cases go on to achieve employment as trainers themselves.

Investment?

In terms of time and effort, the PCT feels that empowerment is at the heart of all

their work and so is at the forefront of any project they embark on. In financial terms, the training courses they run cost £8000 per client, which is probably above average for this type of course, but which is seen as a worthwhile investment given the positive outcomes that are not directly related to health issues.

Challenges?

The PCT feel that outcomes are often only evident in the long term and it can be difficult to get other professionals and organizations to accept this lack of immediate payback when they seek to work with them. This reflects a general lack of understanding of the nature of the empowerment agenda as a whole.

How can the Regional Empowerment Partnership provide support?

The PCT feel that the REP have a role to play as a clearing house for gathering evidence of the benefits of tackling the empowerment agenda, in order to help tackle the challenge mentioned above. It can also provide opportunities to share ideas and experiences in tackling common problems.

What works?

The Barnsley Primary Care Trust (PCT) feels that its health promotion work is particularly successful. It works to promote local health and attempts to co-ordinate activity and local support by :

- Employing Community Development and Health workers in deprived areas
- Recruiting health trainers and attaching them to CD and Health workers based in local communities
- Training and deployment of lay health workers for specific tasks, for example, peer breast feeding supporters who run local support groups; walk leaders; cook and eat tutors etc
- Provision of accredited Community Development and Health skills training in local areas geared to the needs of learners who may have little or no further education (we have recruited learners from the travelling community and from housing projects for those with substance abuse problems)
- Providing general empowerment training on health issues and following up with offers of voluntary or paid ongoing involvement in deprived areas

Why was this successful?

The project lead felt that the activity created enthusiasm in local people to take on tasks for themselves, such as lobbying (successfully) for breast feeding rooms in a new shopping complex, obtaining funds for local groups, and running breast feeding support activities independently.

This coordinated approach in local areas means that those who get involved have some ongoing support and means of progression through volunteering, training and employment opportunities. The PCT have also recently started work

on a Healthy Communities Collaborative in three neighbourhoods to improve early detection of cardio-vascular disease. This involves local volunteers working with health professional and other local workers.

What difference has the work made?

The PCT have trained trainers to deliver the Community Development and Health skills course. They were recruited from the group that initially took the course. People then progress onto other education activities and/or get employment. Learners often report personal transformational experiences such as losing weight, overcoming phobias, and so on.

Challenges?

The leadership of the PCT are seen at times to be supportive and at other times very undermining. The project lead feels that there is a constant request for measurable outputs. Additionally, there are always challenges in getting statutory agencies to recognise the skills and expertise that exist outside of their frameworks. Getting maternity services to accept the presence of lay breast feeding supporters on wards involved a huge amount of bureaucracy, and the project lead described a tortuous process of updating organisational policies on volunteering. The lead believes that it has been something of a struggle to get the levels of funding they require to apply their approach on a large scale, as there is believed to be an expectation that if community members are involved very little money will be required. However, the PCT's senior management has recently shown much increased commitment to this approach.

City of York Council - Without Walls: York's Local Strategic Partnership

What works?

York Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) views their Participatory Budgeting and Neighbourhood Area Plans to be a success as they have allowed communities to focus on what was important to them.

Why was this successful?

The local community had greater responsibility for helping to set priorities for the spending of partner organisations

What difference has the work made?

Members of the local community have grown in confidence and gained a greater knowledge of how budgets are planned, prioritised and distributed.

What works?

Doncaster CVS views their 'Small Grants' work as successful. When the Local Authority's Single Community Programme grants were phased out, the CVS negotiated to retain a small grants scheme from the Local Authority. The Community Empowerment Network, part of the CVS, provides support for applicants, ensuring that grant applications are aimed at the Borough Council's strategic priorities and indicators.

Post-grant training is provided to ensure that monitoring needs are fully understood, hence helping to measure outcomes and outputs of organisations and increasing the sustainability of such projects. This empowers organisations to participate in project delivery without the need for complex contracting and procurement, which in turn enables more people to be engaged. Training means that more people are informed about the strategic priorities of the Borough Council.

Training activities linked to empowerment is another project that Doncaster CVS sees as successful. This provides training that is indirectly linked to empowerment. Examples are courses on Public Law, Local Area Agreements, and training for being part of the Local Strategic Partnership. These are specifically targeted at members of the network, and induction events are held regularly for new members.

Additionally, neighbourhood level meetings are viewed as being successful within their empowerment and engagement work. These meetings allow the CVS to bring together the sector groups at a local level, to meet with neighbourhood management, where they can discuss the needs of their area and how the sector is or could be supporting priorities set out in Local Area Agreements. These types of meetings are held four times a year in five neighbourhood areas and

direct contact from the neighbourhood manager to members is arranged if needed.

Themed meetings are another example enabled by the CVS. The meetings allow the CVS to bring together local sector groups to discuss issues and give information to statutory bodies dealing with the various LSP themes, such as Crime, Health, Children and Young People and Economy and Enterprise. Additionally, the CVS have employed specific engagement officers to work with marginalised communities, in particular gypsies and travellers, faith networks, and BME partnerships or small groups. They also work to recruit representatives to all the boards of the LSP partnership.

Why was this successful?

The CVS feel that all involved gained more knowledge about the work being done throughout the community. Having said this, they believe the greatest benefits have been felt by the voluntary and community sector organisations that have gained contact with relevant people in statutory bodies and participated in various consultations. Via their participating in consultation activities local communities have gained greater knowledge, a chance to get their voice heard and the opportunity to set the agenda within strategic partnerships.

What difference has the work made?

Representatives gain the opportunity to ask questions of key people, access to new funding opportunities, information about the future, and opportunities to develop contacts with other interested parties.

Investment?

The work of the CVS team is deemed as one hundred per cent empowerment activity.

Challenges

Working with groups specifically on community-wide strategic activities rather than support for the development of their own individual projects has been difficult. Most groups and organisations are aware of their own needs, but seeing how their work fits into a bigger picture and strategic decision making sometimes is a big shift in thinking. That is why the link to the small grant funding is so beneficial, as it motivates groups to be engaged.

How can the Regional Empowerment Partnership provide support?

The CVS feels that more needs to be done in terms of a public campaign to ensure the general population know what participation means and what doors it can open for them, involving advertising, media coverage, public events and so on, and that the REP might be in a position to act as an umbrella organisation for such a campaign.

Empowerment Indicators

The CVS are currently working towards PSA 21 indicators number 4 and 7. They do not currently measure progress specifically, although they have undertaken work to establish a statistical baseline through a workshop discussion at a recent event, and also a poll on their website.

Kirklees Local Strategic Partnership

What works?

As a LSP a priority is to ensure that they have local Voluntary and Community Sector representatives on their boards providing a local voice at a strategic level. These representatives are known collectively as the Empowerment Network (EN). The EN came about as a result of Voluntary Action Kirklees being awarded funds, via the Community Empowerment Fund, to support voluntary and community sector involvement in the LSP. The LSP's main partnership board has 6 EN representatives, their executive board has 1 EN representative, and the Public Service Board has 2 representatives. As well as this, each of the 4 themed sub boards has 2 representatives.

Why was this successful?

These representatives gain a strategic level view of Local Area Agreement delivery and are able to influence how the Local Authority prioritises, plans and implements service delivery. This is an important role because at this level they are able to challenge how the Local Authority does things.

What difference has the work had?

This depends on the individual, but generally EN representatives bring a fresh perspective to the proceedings. The LSP feel it is very difficult to measure board participation and are currently undertaking a partnership qualitative review with regard to how they can improve the way they work for all board members

Challenges

Due to the breadth and variation in the agendas that the LSP tackle, it is sometimes difficult for VCS organisations to keep abreast of developments and inform the work of the Local Authority and partners effectively. Additionally, there is a concern that EN representatives sitting on the LSP boards represent the needs and priorities of their own organisations rather than providing a voice of

the wider community.

How can the Regional Empowerment Partnership provide support?

The LSP feel that best practice examples could be provided of what is working elsewhere, especially regarding the development of Empowerment Networks.

Empowerment Indicators

The LSP are working towards achieving the PSA 21 indicators numbers 3 and 4. They are currently developing a more localised indicator 5 as they feel the national one too narrowly focused on organisational issues.

EARLY THEMES

Identifying themes from such a small sample is problematic, as is quantifying the information gathered in case studies. However, there are some quantitative measures that provide some indication of gaps in provision and support mechanisms that may be required to fill them:

Is your organisation prioritising any of the Government's empowerment indicators (as included in PSA 21: Build more cohesive, empowered and active communities)?

Yes = 6 No = 3 Unsure = 7

Would you be interested in meeting with others from across the region to share plans and experiences, learn new ideas and participate in trouble-shooting with regard to the Government's empowerment agenda?

Yes = 14 No = 1 Unsure = 0

Have you experienced any challenges in tackling engagement and empowerment?

Yes = 15 No = 1 Unsure = 0

Would any of the following be interesting to you in discussing and exploring challenges, issues and opportunities?

Action Learning Sets

Yes = 10 No = 4 Unsure = 2

Empowerment Network

Yes = 12 No = 1 Unsure = 2

Learning Exchange

Yes = 12 No = 2 Unsure = 2

Conferences

Yes = 9 No = 3 Unsure = 4

Workshops

Yes = 12 No = 2 Unsure = 2

Study Visits

Yes = 11 No = 0 Unsure = 5