

# The current context for community development

## Independent expert panel on community development

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### Introduction

#### *Purpose and scope of the paper*

This paper sets out the current context for community development (CD) in England. It analyses some of the enduring features of CD, their causes and consequences. It provides background information on the future of CD for discussion by the independent expert panel on CD. This is the first in a series of three panel papers. Paper two will consider the challenges and opportunities for CD suggested by the emerging economic and social policy priorities of the new coalition government, elected in May 2010, such as significantly reduced public sector funding, and increased ambitions for a 'Big Society'. Paper three will explore ways in which CD might need to reconfigure itself in order to meet such challenges.

Because post-election changes to the context for CD are to be discussed in papers two and three, this initial paper focuses on those challenging aspects of the current context which were re-cast and re-emphasised throughout the New Labour government period (1997 – 2010) and which still endure.

It is something of a paradox that involving communities has been brought into the heart of so many policy areas, and yet CD as a specialism and profession remains so poorly understood and precariously funded. This paper and the panel discussion are intended to address this puzzle.

## Policy landscape for CD

Under New Labour, community empowerment and well being came to be framed as policy goals in their own right. What is more, the involvement and engagement of citizens – a founding goal of CD – was cast in a central role across the widest possible range of social policy areas.

To address a lack of trust and confidence in the democratic system and in elected representatives, community empowerment, citizen engagement and civic participation became important dimensions of policies designed to promote democratic renewal. The 198 national indicators (NIs) announced as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007, contained NI4 which measures the percentage of people who feel able to influence decisions about their local area. The 'duty to involve', enshrined within the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act (2007), made engagement with citizens a statutory duty and emphasised the need to involve people who are 'hard to reach'. 'Best value' authorities<sup>1</sup> have been required to fulfil the duty to involve since April 2009. The Big Society ambitions of the current coalition government suggest that some of the underlying concerns about the difficulties of connecting policy with people persist.

A second policy theme of citizen involvement has been reflected in the emphasis on public involvement in health and across the full range of services provided by best value authorities. Engaging communities has become central to policies designed to promote public service reform. Communities and their representatives have been expected to participate in numerous partnerships, made up of statutory, voluntary and sometimes private sector stakeholders, which define almost every government programme. Their involvement was intended to improve the

quality and appropriateness of public services by harnessing the knowledge and experience that communities possess. In the empowerment white paper, *Communities in control: Real people, real power* (2008), the Labour government expressed the broader empowerment agenda, which took involvement in public services further, expecting citizens to become directly involved in the delivery of some services in their area. Various terms 'co-production' or 'social action', depending on emphasis, these policies aimed to depart from traditional models of public or private sector service provision. Some examples transfer ownership and control of assets, such as community centres, street markets, swimming pools, parks or disused schools, shops or pubs, from the public or private sector to local community organisations. As we shall discuss in paper two, the new coalition government has also proposed citizens could take over the delivery of mainstream public services, for example parent and teacher groups could set up academy schools. We can expect an increased emphasis on this kind of 'self help' in light of tightened public finances, though experience suggests that these community-managed services will still need considerable expert and intensive support.

Finally, in the face of public policy problems which have proved resistant to traditional public service solutions, many have advocated solutions which harness the hidden knowledge and expertise within communities to address these problems. Community cohesion has been one such area where government interest and policymaking have developed considerably during the last ten years, with community-based approaches and solutions taking centre stage in cohesion policy guidance.

## CD's place in the landscape

These related policy developments have increasingly required communities to understand and influence the operations of complex bureaucracies, and contribute to policy agendas they have neither shaped nor necessarily signed up to. The same policy developments have required authorities to improve their interaction and engagement with communities. CD workers (CDWs) have increasingly operated at the

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<sup>1</sup> This covers local authorities, national park authorities, the Broads Authority, fire and rescue authorities, waste disposal authorities, joint waste authorities, passenger transport authorities, Transport for London, the Greater London Authority in so far as it exercises its functions through the Mayor, and the London Development Agency. The duty does not extend to police authorities or Welsh authorities.

interface between them, providing support to both. This has changed the context and nature of many practitioners' work. As we shall see later in this paper, drawing on evidence from the 2009 survey of CD practitioners and managers, and the forthcoming report on the survey (Sender et al, 2010), policy developments have influenced both the kind of work undertaken, and the way the outcomes and impact of that work are gauged.

While advocates like the Community Development Foundation (CDF) have argued that CD is crucial to delivering on community involvement, empowerment and engagement aims, CD provision nevertheless remains piecemeal and ad-hoc. While there has been an unprecedented, large-scale change in the expectations of engagement placed on both authorities and communities, at times CD still operates like a cottage industry. In 2006, representatives from national, regional and local CD organisations formed a working party to consider how to make the most of CD. A key issue identified in their first report, *The community development challenge*, endures today:

*'So, as social policy has taken shape over the last 10 years, it has moved on from trying to tackle inequalities on a top-down basis, and, in theory at least, realised the importance of a bottom-up approach. This means that CD theories and language are becoming increasingly used, as managers and policymakers wrestle with the complexity of drawing people into the decisions which affect them. But there is as yet no correspondingly clear strategy for CD, and funding and deployment continue on the piecemeal, semi-invisible pattern established in the preceding decades.'* (Communities and Local Government (CLG), 2006: 11)

*'...while the underlying ideas of CD and its values can be found in a wide variety of avenues of government social policy, the relationship between those aims and investment in CD remains unclear.'* (CLG, 2006: 32)

Far from growing in proportion with the increasing policy emphasis or securing long-term resourcing, however, recent experience and evidence suggests that CD provision continues to

be small scale, fragmented, and if anything increasingly precarious. Frontline workers across a wide range of public services have found that their roles require a far greater degree of engagement with citizens and communities. However, the importance or value of CDWs, teams and expertise has not increased correspondingly. As a profession and specialist practice, CD is losing its profile within local authorities. From 2008 onwards, there has been evidence of CDWs' posts and salaries being downgraded in job evaluation exercises and CD teams being disbanded (Archer, 2008).

So why has it been so difficult for CD, and CD training, workers and teams, to stand up and be counted amidst such a flurry of interest in involving communities? The rest of this paper highlights some of the different dimensions of this situation. Does CD lack recognition of its value because it is hard to identify from the outside? Why hasn't the increasing adaptation of CD to policy aims led to a widely valued strategic role for CD? Has the increasing adaptation of CD to policy aims weakened its claims to expertise and legitimacy? Should CDWs or professionals from other policy areas be trained, developed and supported to fulfil community involvement roles?

## Some enduring challenges

### *CD is hard to identify from the outside*

Something about the way CD is deployed makes it inherently difficult to identify from the outside. CD is applied widely but unevenly across a range of settings. The findings of the survey of CD practitioners and managers (Sender et al, 2010) demonstrate that CDWs:

- are employed by a wide range of different organisations
- work with different types of groups
- work across a wide range of policy areas
- work to differing indicators at differing levels of detail
- are greatly influenced by bottom up as well as top down factors.

### Range of organisations employing CDWs

In the survey of CD practitioners and managers, the main employers for survey respondents were:

- voluntary organisations and community groups (42 percent of salaried respondents)
- public sector organisations, including local authorities, the police, prison, fire and rescue services and health authorities (36 percent of paid respondents).

The remaining 22 percent of salaried respondents worked for different organisations including:

- social landlords (non-local authority)
- faith organisations
- social enterprises
- partnerships combining a number of employers
- training and education providers
- private businesses (Sender et al, 2010).

The community development challenge report (CLG, 2006) linked such a fragmentary pattern of CD provision to an 'organic' growth of CD champions across a wide range of settings:

*'It is quite often specific individual enthusiasts within front line agencies or funding bodies who realise the need for CD. This can vary from voluntary organisations like the Children's Society or Age Concern, and local VCS infrastructure bodies like Councils of Voluntary Service, to particular departments of local authorities, units of central government or philanthropic funding bodies like the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. It is these people who have realised that CD contains the kinds of practice and philosophy which could reconcile their organisations' strategic aims with spontaneous, half-emergent motivations by local residents.'* (CLG, 2006: 31)

### Who are community workers working with?

This doesn't quite do justice, however, to the multiple ways in which CD provision varies from one setting to another. CDWs work with groups of different types. In the survey of CD practitioners and managers, 76 percent of respondents stated that they worked with 'all community members within a local area' (Sender et al, 2010), but those who don't often work with very closely defined groups. Their post might exist specifically to work with particular 'identity' or 'equalities' communities (such as black and Asian minority ethnic (BAME) groups, over 60s, refugees and asylum seekers, faith groups) or with member or constituent groups of a particular forum, service or engagement mechanism (e.g. tenants' and residents' associations, faith groups, community empowerment network members). They also work across a variety of policy areas, to differing degrees of detail. While some CD practice is tightly focused on one particular NI, other practitioners loosely contribute to several or 'all' indicators (Sender et al, 2010).

### Top down and bottom up drivers

Across a range of questions, the 2009 survey of CD practitioners and managers provides evidence that both bottom up and top down drivers exert strong influence on organisational approaches to CD. The community development challenge report goes one step further and argues that 'it is endemic to CD practice to face tensions between different pressures' (CLG, 2006: 31). For example:

- tensions between the practices and procedures of local or national government, which may be funding CDWs, and the wishes of people in their neighbourhoods and parishes
- being employed by an authority to support and empower groups which may, in the course of their growth, need to be critical of the authority. (CLG, 2006: 31)

### Strategic co-ordination across localities?

None of this diversity or divergence in CD practice overall means that the work of individual CDWs or teams is unfocused, or doesn't tackle real and thorny problems. Some incredibly detailed work is going on, in some challenging target areas. However, it does make CD difficult to recognise from the outside. It is a strength of CD that it can be applied to so many different levels and types of challenge. The fact that it is applied so patchily perhaps suggests that CD needs to be better co-ordinated across localities. Or is there something inherent in CD itself which makes it resistant to strategic co-ordination?

### CD's increasing adaptation to policy aims has not made it indispensable

Throughout the New Labour period, CD practice has become more aligned to government policy priorities. This section explores the impacts of adapting CD to policy aims. Why hasn't the increasing adaptation of CD to policy aims led to a widely valued strategic role for CD? Has the increasing adaptation of CD to policy aims weakened its claims to expertise and legitimacy? Is there something inherent in CD as currently conceived and practised that prevents a more strategic engagement?

The findings of the 2009 survey of CD practitioners and managers demonstrate that:

- CD is an insecure and unstable occupation
- CDWs are focusing on the policy aims of engagement, involvement and empowerment
- CDWs in the public sector don't feel that CD is understood within their organisation
- CDWs say the NIs influence their organisation's approach to CD
- CDWs would like to do more grassroots work.

### Short-term project funding, short-term contracts

Respondents to the 2009 survey of CD practitioners and managers identified the three

main barriers affecting their delivery of CD as:

- a lack of funding (62 percent)
- other political/policy agendas conflict with CD (48 percent)
- working on short term contracts/project funding (41 percent).

Clearly all three factors contribute to the current instability of CD as an occupation. A smaller proportion of survey respondents were on fixed term contracts in 2009, than in 2003 (25 percent and 39 percent overall respectively) (Sender et al, 2010; Glen et al, 2004). However, permanent contracts are no guarantee against redundancy in an environment of dramatic public sector cuts.

No wonder CDWs, teams and projects have adapted their practice to prevailing policy currents in the interests of survival. In the 2009 survey, 72 percent of respondents specified that their organisation aims to meet one or more government agendas through their work. Not surprisingly, participants highlighted 'engagement' (71 percent) and 'empowerment' (71 percent) as their main policy focus, with 'social inclusion' in third place (65 percent) (Sender et al, 2010). Does the fact that CD remains so insecure, however, suggest that these survival tactics have backfired?

### CD and strategy

Alongside this adaptation of CD to prevailing policy currents some commentators have vigorously argued for an increased strategic role for CD and CDWs, as a crucial platform for building a more stable and respected profession. *The community development challenge* report made the case persuasively for the addition of strategic work to national occupational standards to reflect growing public policy emphasis on community involvement. It argued that CD is the key profession that knows how to build fruitful working relationships with communities, trust in communities, and between communities and agencies.



*'The current reforms in local government and other major public services cover of course a much wider canvas than community development alone, incorporating a wide range of participatory mechanisms and changes in institutional culture. But without CD many of these mechanisms and changes may lie dormant or fail to achieve their objectives, especially for people in disadvantaged situations. The current wave of reform presents a huge challenge to deploy its methods more fully than ever before, and to government and all its agencies to support and enable it to perform this role by a more strategic approach to what they ask CD to do, how they fund it, and how they respond to the new level of citizen participation which a more concerted CD role will stimulate.'* (CLG, 2006, p. 37)

Similarly, calls from the Homes and Communities Agency for 'the development of more comprehensive and strategic forms of CD practice', are central to the issues raised in their paper on *Empowerment skills for all* (Chanan and Miller, 2009).

However it's difficult to pin down exactly what is meant by being strategic in this sense. There are some good examples of public agencies where CDWs and CD teams have worked closely with heads of services, and chief executives to change the way things are done. Where CDWs are advising on appropriate structures for involvement, so that all communities across an area can influence service provision (Bowles, 2008), and their expertise is recognised and valued, then CD really is operating strategically to influence the way the state builds relationships with citizens. However, evidence from the 2009 survey of CD practitioners and managers suggests that culture change and senior management buy-in to CD remain a long way off for many in the public sector. Overall, 42 percent of survey participants stated that 'CD is embedded in the organisation's approach', but respondents from the voluntary sector (58 percent) were much more likely to choose this option than people from the public sector. Public sector respondents (55 percent) were most likely to state that 'CD is not well understood throughout the organisation', and most likely to argue that 'it is important

strategically but not well understood at senior level' (43 percent) (Sender et al, 2010).

### *Measuring and demonstrating impact*

Measuring and demonstrating the impact of CD is surely crucial here, if CD teams are failing to argue the case for CD, or strategic managers are failing to understand the case put to them.

In the 2009 survey of CD practitioners and managers, participants were given a list of NIs (NI 1, 2, 3, 4, 6 and 7<sup>2</sup>) and asked to choose all indicators that influenced their organisation's approach to CD. Overall, 72 percent of respondents listed one or more NIs as influencing their organisation's approach to CD. The majority of respondents (55 percent) stated that NI 4 influenced their organisation's approach to CD. By participants' own admission, changes to what gets measured have influenced what gets done. However, several factors make NI scores a poor proxy for CD outcomes, including the scale on which NI data is gathered, the quantitative and snapshot approach, and the inability to distinguish between respondents whose organisations have received CDW support and those who have not. NI scores are clearly no substitute for robust evaluation data on the impact of CD itself. But how is the field doing on measuring and demonstrating impact?

Evidence from the 2009 survey suggests that most CDWs' organisations try to capture the long term benefits of their work through feedback from the community (72 percent), and recording stories and events to show how the community is changing (56 percent). Survey findings indicate that there are a wide range of different evaluation tools in use, but considerable confusion surrounding them. Worryingly, 15 percent felt that they do not or cannot measure the longer term benefits of their work. (Findings from CDF's pilot work on CD and Social Return on

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<sup>2</sup> NI1 – percentage of people who believe that people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area; NI 2 – percentage of people who feel that they belong to their neighbourhood; NI 3 – civic participation in the local area; NI 4 – percentage of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality; NI 6 – participation in regular volunteering.

Investment (SROI) will be shared at later sessions of the independent expert panel on CD). Do CD practitioners need to reach more clarity about what they are trying to evaluate – for example the quality of the CD intervention, rather than the project outcomes overall – before they can successfully demonstrate the impact of their work?

### *Rebuilding the relationship with grassroots groups*

Having a CD or engagement or empowerment strategy is not the same as operating strategically. While there are examples of CD teams contributing to culture change in public agencies there seem to be many more examples of CDWs getting bogged down in bureaucracy. Servicing partnership structures and engagement mechanisms designed to meet local authority requirements may not deliver as much change for communities as working closely with those communities to help them to negotiate better and have more influence.

The 2009 survey of CD workers and practitioners contains evidence that respondents would like to rebalance their relationship with grassroots groups. Respondents would like to do less office based work (16 percent mean time spent; as compared to the 9 percent mean the time would like to spend). They spend about 12 percent of their time liaising with non-CD practitioners on CD issues, and judge this to be about right. But they do not spend as much time as they would like in direct contact with grassroots community organisations. The 2003 survey of CDWs, showed that over 70 percent of workers spent almost half their time in direct contact with communities (Glen et al, 2004). In the 2009 survey, workers only spent 27 percent of their time, on average, working face to face with community members. This rises to 40 percent when you add in the work done with communities to support their relationships with service providers. Workers said they would like to be able to spend 56 percent of their time on these two issues (Sender et al, 2010).

This need expressed by CDWs, to refocus CD on grassroots work seems urgent for a number of

reasons. Firstly, a CDW's key role is to help people tackle their own social problems and support their collective action. It is more than 'empowerment', 'engagement' or 'cohesion'. It is supporting groups that give people a stake in community and a sense of belonging. It means supporting groups that meet a purpose that people in the community have identified as important to them, be that friendship, childcare, affordable food, sustainable energy, social care or something else.

Secondly, this move to an engagement and empowerment focus has coincided with a shift away from generic CD work, towards short term interventions based on particular themes. This growth of thematic projects around short term interventions probably owes as much to the need to demonstrate innovation and novelty in funding applications as it does to the prevailing policy climate, but both have to impact on practice. CD is predicated on CDWs having freedom to pick up the issues from communities that are most important to them, allowing communities to genuinely set their priorities and CDWs to support their collective action in addressing them. Applying CD approaches thematically can lead to situations where CDWs go in looking for one type of issue (for example health needs), while the community wants to focus on other concerns and priorities. This effectively leads to two different conversations. The community regards the CDW as not that useful and very little change takes place. While an experienced CD worker who is working in health would be able to make a strong case for getting involved in other issues, CDWs currently training are not being prepared to anticipate and negotiate this kind of adaptability in their practice. (See final section, below.)

Finally, teams and organisations that align very closely with specific policy goals may need to constantly reposition themselves in relation to new government themes when, for example, a new secretary of state takes over a department, or when the government changes in an election. (The implications of the Coalition government's localism and Big Society agendas will be explored in detail in paper two.) There are clearly both opportunities and threats in any future rebalancing of the CDW's relationship with

community groups (Archer, 2009: 5). It will be harder, however, for CD practitioners, teams and projects to build grassroots relationships successfully where communities judge that CD's primary relationship is with government policy, and only secondly with communities.

## Mainstreaming engagement has undermined specialist CD skills

The previous section identified that workers want to spend more time in face to face work with communities, promoting their interests. This will mean that communities feel more supported, are more able to get involved in decision making and service delivery, and be more confident in creating solutions to their problems. This section considers whether appropriate support exists for CDWs to develop the skills to do so. Has making the case that CD helps with engagement and empowerment risked undervaluing what is unique about CD, subsuming it within these agendas, and even reducing it to a set of techniques that other professions can adopt? (see below).

The findings of the 2009 survey of CD practitioners and managers demonstrate that:

- a significant minority of CDWs are managed by people with no direct experience of CD
- the CD workforce is ageing (but ethnically diverse)
- CDWs are highly qualified, but not in CD
- CDWs find networking with local organisations and local practitioner networks the most useful forms of support.

### Which skills? For whom?

New and high profile policy agendas create demands for the skills to deliver them. This in turn leads to the development of a new infrastructure and industry of definition and training for the skills required to deliver it. Thus, in the case of the empowerment agenda there were calls for the development of a new set of national occupational standards for empowerment (this despite the fact that empowerment skills were being promoted across a range of existing occupations, there being no

occupation of empowerment per se). We see the same issues currently being played out in the implementation of the Big Society policy with regard to the definition of 'community organisers'.

This presents a challenge to CD by again threatening to subsume it within the policy agenda of the day. In the summary report on *Empowerment skills for all*, the Homes and Communities Agency states:

*'Community engagement has been identified as such a skill, which the Academy takes as an umbrella term to cover community engagement, development and empowerment, whilst acknowledging important differences between these.'* (Chanan and Miller, 2009)

The report accurately identifies the changing relationship of CD (and specialist CDWs) to the other frontline professionals who need some of the skills and knowledge embodied by CD but whose use of these skills is undertaken in a very different context. It acknowledges, but doesn't propose a counter-balance to, the negative impacts of the changing relationship. This is clearly a hugely important challenge for CD skills and infrastructure organisations.

*'Allowing the CD profession to decline whilst attributing CD skills to other occupations, which can only be used in an auxiliary role, could merely conceal an overall loss of these complex skills'* (Chanan and Miller, 2009).

### Dilution of CD skills and training

In recent years, the skills and knowledge embodied in CD as an occupation have been drawn upon for engagement and empowerment work, but in a piecemeal fashion, often divorced from the values and political context which has historically defined CD. There is, therefore, a perception in some places that core CD skills and knowledge are being diluted.

Experienced practitioners fear that CD is being reduced to a set of techniques or toolkits, when it should be far more about the realities of group work and the unplanned nature of the human interactions that take place. They fear that inexperienced CDWs will not see their role as



helping communities to organise for social change but as preventing dissent and circumventing conflict. They worry that engagement practitioners will not know what to do with the issues raised by communities, or how to convert individual hurt and anger into productive social action.

Support on these kinds of CD issues may not be forthcoming for the sizeable minority of CD practitioners (28 percent) who are managed by someone with no direct experience of CD practice (Sender et al, 2010). The problem may be even more acute in agencies which have disbanded specialist CD teams, and embedded engagement and empowerment approaches within mainstream services. More than half of the 200 survey respondents worked in teams where less than three quarters of the staff were dedicated CD professionals. Real and important cultural shifts can occur when new practices are mainstreamed, but resistance occurs also. Where officers remain sceptical of the value of involving communities, any difficulties in doing so may reinforce their view that communities shouldn't be involved.

### *Highly qualified, but not in CD*

The findings of the 2009 survey indicate that the CD workforce is highly educated. Only 8 percent of respondents did not have a further or higher education qualification and more than two thirds of respondents were educated to graduate or postgraduate level. However, many of their qualifications, whilst helpful in their work, were not CD qualifications: 54 percent of respondents did not have a CD qualification (Sender et al, 2010). Survey participants' qualifications were an eclectic mix, covering a wide variety of topics and different techniques, at different levels. There was no sense of a recognised route into a profession, or of knowing when you're qualified to practice.

### *An ageing CD workforce*

Debate continues about whether the lack of progression routes causes the instability of the CD profession, or whether the instability of the profession means there's no reliable demand for CD progression routes. These debates intersect with the issue of the ageing CD workforce. In the

2009 survey of CD practitioners and managers, the single most common age group for both men and women was 45 – 54 (36 percent). More people of pensionable age responded to the survey than people under 25 years old, accounting for 5 percent and 1 percent respectively. On the positive side, however, new entrants to the CD workforce are more ethnically diverse than their older counterparts. With 13 percent of England's population classed as non-white British in the last census, our survey found 22 percent of respondents were non-white British. Young people under 25 were most likely to be of BAME origin (60 per cent).

In comparison to the age of the CD workforce in 2003, respondents were older on average though the male to female ratio was about the same and more people had a disability or long term illness.

- 27 percent of respondents to the 2003 survey were under the age of 35. This compares to 17 percent of respondents in the 2009 survey.
- 37 percent of respondents to the 2003 survey were aged 45 or over. This compares to 62 percent of respondents in the 2009 survey.
- 7 percent of respondents to the 2003 survey had a disability/long term serious health problem compared to 17 percent in the 2009 survey.

One line of argument is that the lack of a clear progression route in comparison with professionalised roles, such as social work and youth work, and poor levels of funding for CD courses, means there is no training to attract young entrants to the CD occupation, and this explains the ageing workforce noted in the 2009 survey. An alternative view argues that demand for CD qualifications has reduced for a number of reasons – lack of new entrants to the occupation, the dilution of CD skills and knowledge across other frontline services, and the simultaneous downgrading of CD by employers – resulting in patchy provision and poor funding of courses for those that do enter. Either way, clearer progression routes and better quality and coverage of CD training and qualifications are of

vital importance to involving more young people within the CD profession. The current trend of an ageing workforce is not sustainable.

### Accessing support for CD skills and practice

Such external factors present significant challenges to the CD infrastructure organisations seeking to support skills development, training and qualifications. Does there need to be a professional body or joint negotiating committee (as in the case of youth work) to accredit CD as a profession? By what other means could CD infrastructure be strengthened or reshaped to ensure high quality qualifications at all levels?

Equally, CDWs practising in such challenging times will need considerable support and networks are one important aspect of this. Over half of 2009 survey respondents were involved in CD practitioner networks, but they were most likely to find local networks and organisations most useful to their work. The majority of respondents were not a member of any of the main national and regional networks. The survey showed that 17 percent of respondents were members of the Community Development Exchange (CDX) and 12 percent were members of the Federation for Community Development Learning (FCDL). More people said they found their local CVS useful in supporting their work (9 percent), than CDF (four per cent) (Sender et al, 2010).

For CD to significantly reshape or reconfigure itself in response to the kinds of challenges identified in this paper, the national infrastructure organisations must also, perhaps, change the way they operate. Survey findings certainly suggest that anyone wishing to reach the CD workforce needs to work more in partnership with a range of local organisations in order to understand and address the support needs of CDWs, and not just rely on national dissemination channels.

### Summing up

During a period of increased emphasis on involving communities in social, economic and other policy areas, the CDW profession has experienced a number of challenges. Drawing upon the 2009 survey of CD practitioners and

managers, and other recent studies, we have identified these challenges as broadly focusing on three areas: the difficulties in clearly bounding and identifying CD; the challenges in managing the relationships between CD and policy and grassroots groups; and the difficulties in maintaining the specialist qualities of CDWs as some CD approaches become mainstreamed. Many of these tensions are enduring features of CD, which are likely to persist under the new government, though in new configurations. Many appear to be challenges, but might they also present opportunities for rethinking and reinvigorating the CDW profession?

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