DEVELOPING QUALITY IN COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT:

A DRAFT EVALUATION MODEL

THE LONDON EMPOWERMENT PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT GROUP

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DEVELOPING QUALITY IN COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

1.   Purpose and background

This paper presents a draft working Evaluation model which could be used to measure the quality and success of community empowerment activities in London, as part of the work undertaken by the London Empowerment Partnership. The Evaluation model developed will be used by the Partnership to assess good practice in community empowerment. The paper:

- Discusses what constitutes good practice in community empowerment
- Develops a set of principles that can be used as criteria to assess good practice
- Develops an Evaluation model which can be used to assess the quality and impact of community empowerment

The model draws from existing papers developed for and by Communities and Local Government (CLG) as part of its work on community empowerment, in particular the initial guidance for Every Voice Counts[1] and the Six Box Model for evaluation of community empowerment[2].

Two consultations have informed the development of this Evaluation model:

- Consultation on 18th December 2007 with a wide range of organisations across the third and public sector to discuss improving the quality of community empowerment
- Consultation on 30th January, 2008 with members of the London Empowerment Partnership Development Group to discuss quality assurance and how to use it to select good practice examples of community empowerment activities across London

Over the last year, the London Empowerment Partnership Development Group has undertaken a mapping exercise across London on community empowerment activity, targeted at young people or refugees and asylum seekers, with the aim of identifying good practice. Using the basic criteria from the Evaluation Model, several activities undertaken by local authorities were selected to study in further detail, with a view to producing them as case studies to be written up using the evaluation criteria as a structure. These case studies are currently being undertaken and the intention is that the Evaluation Model can be modified if necessary. Therefore the model is very much a working document. Over the coming year the London Empowerment Partnership will be able to consult on the approach taken and the use of this model, as appropriate.

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[1] Developing Quality Assurance on Empowerment (Community Development Foundation, 2007)
[2] Six Box Model for Evaluation of Community Empowerment (CLG, 2007)

2.   Definitions

Community empowerment in the context of civic society is both a process and an outcome.

Community engagement, for example, is a process whereby public bodies reach out to communities to create empowerment opportunities[3].

Community empowerment: assisting people in communities to acquire the confidence, skills and power to influence their conditions both directly and through what public bodies do for or with them[4].

While community engagement on its own may not necessarily result in an outcome that can be measured, there is an expectation that community empowerment should result in a tangible outcome for the participant, whether that is a subjective outcome or an objective one, as illustrated below.

Outcomes of community empowerment can be subjective:

- **Feeling** one can influence decisions in one's locality

They can be objective:

- **contacting** an elected representative, public official, attending a public meeting or rally, taking part in a public demonstration or protest, or signing a petition

- **being a member** of a local decision-making group or undertaking a community role such as councillor or school governor

These outcomes can be measured, and CLG has placed emphasis on both subjective and objective elements as outcomes of community empowerment activities. These are encapsulated in the National Indicator 4 (NI 4) in the latest Local Authority Performance Framework *"the percentage of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality",* and in NI 3 *"the percentage of people from equalities categories in decision making role or group"* (e.g. as a councillor, school governor or a member of a local group which makes decisions on public services).

[3] Quoted in An Action Plan for Community Empowerment: building on success (CLG and LGA 2007)

[4] The definition quoted in the Action Plan is *"Community Empowerment is the giving of confidence, skills and power to communities to shape and influence what public bodies do for or with them."* This was discussed in a Research and Empowerment NEP meeting on 13th December, 2007 and it was felt that this wording promoted the assumption that power resides with public bodies who may or may not choose to give it to them. The adapted definition, which is used above, was suggested in a follow up note (CDF, 13 Feb 2008)

3. Processes of community empowerment

The sort of processes that community empowerment encompasses have been categorised into the model below by the CLG. The top box of the table is simply an exercise in information giving and the model moves through consultation to community control, thus **deepening** engagement and empowerment.

Mechanism	Description
Information/ Choice	Information provision to inform choice, provide transparency and accountability and improve service delivery. E.g. Choice-based lettings
Consultation	Formal mechanisms for gaining insight into public views and to provide opportunity to comment on proposals and voice concerns E.g. Duty to consult
Community capacity building	Provision of skilled stimulus and assistance to people and community groups to be more active on civic issues and take advantage of the menu of empowerment opportunities
Deliberative Engagement	Ongoing, periodic or one-off dialogue to influence decisions and inform decision-making. E.g. Citizens Juries
Delegated Power	Public bodies/legislators delegate limited powers to individual citizens or community based groups. E.g. Citizens ballots
Co-Production	Service providers involve users and communities as partners in service delivery, co-producing improved outcomes E.g. Community policing
Co-Governance	Citizens and service-users work jointly and share power with service providers and public bodies to govern projects and activities. E.g. NDC boards
Community Control	Power and control over service delivery, public budgets and assets are devolved to community-based organisations. E.g. Asset transfer, participatory budgeting

It is interesting to observe that this 'ladder' has developed from Sherry Arnstein's original ladder of citizen participation[5] which goes from non-participation, through to tokenism, but only at the partnership and citizen control levels does Arnstein define participation as citizen power.
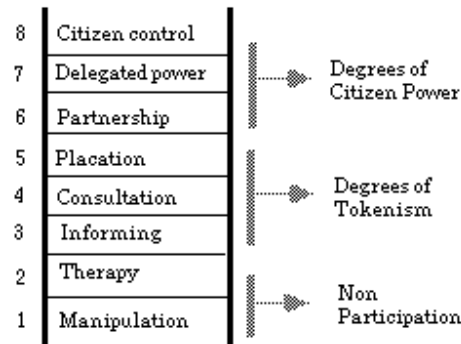
At the lower level, manipulation and therapy are not considered empowerment mechanisms as they are only designed to enable powerholders to 'educate' or 'cure' citizens. Tokenism, too, is not viewed in this model as true empowerment since these activities allow citizens to hear and have a voice, but there is no assurance of their being able to influence decisions. These are all processes of engagement which does not necessarily have an outcome for the citizen, and are therefore not necessarily empowering.

Although there is some similarity between CLG's ladder and that of Arnstein, the tone is less judgmental. It is true that empowerment deepens as one goes from information-giving to community control, but the CLG would see some merit in information-giving as long as it 'empowers' citizens to make a choice. Similarly, consultation can be empowering as long as there are feedback mechanism as to how the consultation exercise influenced decisions or policy. Thus each type of empowerment activity in the CLG ladder could be seen as having merit as long as the process has resulted in people feeling that they are able to exercise more choice or influence than they were before the activity. All the activities can result in an **outcome** for citizens. Furthermore, one activity that leaves people **feeling** more empowered (such as community involvement training) may lead to their participating in an activity where they are **actually** empowered e.g. getting involved in a local group or participating in a citizen's jury.

It is important to explore in the case studies what it is about the particular empowerment process that enables citizens to exert that choice or influence.

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[5] Arnstein, Sherry R. *A Ladder of Citizen Participation*, Journal of the American Planning Association, Vol. 35, No. 4, July 1969, pp. 216-224.

4.   Measuring community empowerment: the outcomes

Empowerment is an important means of improving local services. A service that reflects people's needs will be a better service. Community empowerment should result in people feeling they have made a contribution to the way local services are designed or delivered, or that they are now better able to make a difference. It is therefore important to measure community empowerment activities to demonstrate how far participants feel they can or have contributed to local conditions or services.

Community empowerment has a **subjective** aspect about it, for example:

- Do people **feel** that they can influence local conditions and decisions?

While people's feelings as regards their ability to influence things are important, naturally people's expectations may differ according to their previous experiences. Thus an empowerment activity may not have the same impact on all participants since their backgrounds and experience may differ. When interpreting this sort of subjective measure it is therefore useful to find out why people say they feel influential.

Community empowerment can also result in a more **objective** outcome:

- Do people **actually** participate in civic affairs (as a councillor, school governor or a member of a local group which makes decisions on public services)?

England runs a regular Citizenship Survey that measures both subjective and objective empowerment. These two questions form indicators in the latest Local Authority Performance Framework[6]. From April 2009, local authorities and their partners will be judged on the increase or decrease in the percentage of people who agree that they can influence decisions affecting their local area (NI 4) through the Comprehensive Area Assessment. Local authorities will be required to carry out in their areas the new Places Survey[7], to be finalised in the summer of 2008 following a consultation period. The draft Places Survey contains the following questions which measure both influence and actual participation:

- To what extent do you agree or disagree that you can influence decisions affecting your local area (within 15-20 minutes walking distance)?
- In the last 12 months have you given unpaid help to any groups, clubs or organisations?
- Overall, about how often over the last 12 months have you generally done something to help these groups, clubs or organisations?
- In the past 12 months have you been a local councillor, member of a local group making decisions on local health services, member of a decision-making group set up to regenerate the local area, member of a decision-making group set up to tackle local crime problems, member of a tenants' group decision-making committee, member of a group making decisions on local education

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[6] NI 3: % from equalities categories in decision making role or group
  NI 4: % of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality
[7] http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/newplacesurvey

services, member of a group making decision on local services for young people, member of another group making decision on services in the local community?

- How often in the last 12 months have you done any of the things you have indicated in the question above?

This Evaluation Model ascertains how far community empowerment activities have tried to measure these kinds of outcomes, although it must be recognised that there is a difference between the outcomes above which measure what has happened for the total population in a whole area, and outcomes for a small number of participants in a local community empowerment activity. In the latter case it is probably reasonable to expect that the subjective elements will be measured i.e. whether people feel as a result of the activity that they can influence local conditions and decisions, and whether they think that they may participate in decision making in the near future. Testing the objective measures, such as actual influence, could be asked if the process is an ongoing one, or if it spans only a short timespan, say six months after the activity has finished.

5.   Interpretation

A number of issues arise when interpreting these sorts of statistics:

- Why do different groups of people feel more or less empowered or are more or less active than others?
- Why do different groups of people feel empowered but are in fact less active, and others don't feel empowered but are in fact more active?

There are important questions to ask in the local context of empowerment: exactly how do empowerment processes (such as consultation, capacity building, delegation etc) result in a person's feeling more or less able to influence decisions, or actually going on to participate actively in decision making? These questions are particularly pertinent, given the London Empowerment Partnership's initial target groups of young people and refugees and asylum seekers who generally have low levels of influence. However, it is important to unpick the reasons why people feel more or less empowered. For example, refugees may feel **more** able to influence decisions in the UK, compared to their country of origin, whereas people who have had more experience of political processes in the UK may have more of a sense of how influential or not they actually are, and therefore say they are **less** able to influence decisions.   Another example might be that the activity might lead to unrealistic expectations of people's ability to change service design and delivery in all aspects (regardless of cost, conflicting views of other citizens etc). This could lead to disappointment and to the activity being disempowering rather than empowering. It is important to capture whether the empowerment process is able to manage expectations so that people understand the difference between influencing a decision and actually participating in making a decision.

The Evaluation Model developed here gives an opportunity to interpret these feelings by asking why participants feel as they do, and what action they might go on to take as a result of newly-acquired knowledge or experience gained during the empowerment activity.

6.   Values and processes

There have been a number of recent publications which seek to set out the values and the processes of community engagement and empowerment, including the Scottish national standards for community engagement which have been discussed by the National Empowerment Partnership. Summaries of three of these publications are appended to this document. Drawing from the research and the consultations with the sector, a set of values and processes has been incorporated into this Evaluation Model.   The values act as **quality indicators of empowerment** while the processes are the **activities considered necessary** to fulfil the values.

Values of community empowerment:

- Be underpinned by fairness, equality and social justice
- Have clear and agreed purposes and methods to achieve these purposes
- Demonstrate a clear commitment to learning
- Employ skills to enable people to work together to identify and implement action, and to enable all views to be reflected
- Share and use existing knowledge of participants
- Provide opportunity for participants to build on skills and knowledge
- Provide accurate and timely information
- Be committed to make something happen

Processes of community empowerment

- **Planning and objectives:** the objectives of the empowerment activity should be clearly defined and the methods used should be appropriate to meeting the objectives
- **Fair, equal and inclusive:** the activity has been inclusive (e.g. involved a wide range of communities OR has targeted a particular community of interest, for example LGBT communities or environmental groups), not just involved the usual third sector organisations or community activists
- **Working together**: working in cooperative ways bringing people together around common issues and concerns
- **Influential:** working in ways that encourage and equip people to take part and influence decisions, services and activities
- **Code of practice:** code of practice in place on how participants and statutory bodies should respect and behave towards each other
- **Resources:** the activity is adequately supported and resourced by the organisation e.g. training, funding etc
- **Learning:** working in ways that increase people's skills and knowledge and give them confidence that they can make a difference
- **Feedback:** the results of the activity should be fed back to the wider community and the agencies affected
- **Evaluation:** the activity is evaluated against certain criteria of success

7.   Evaluation Model

The model will be used as a method of evaluating and evidencing what has worked. The National Empowerment Partnership has developed an evaluation methodology which it believes is more rigorous than prevalent local evaluation models. This covers the following:

- objective facts as well as, and distinguished from, participants' judgements
- balanced information on input, process and outcome
- taking account of known results of local government indicator surveys
- distinguishing between the roles of practitioners and activists
- information on the primary empowerment outcomes (x people involved, x people increasing their influence…)
- information on secondary outcomes affected by empowerment (improved services, amenities, social capital)
- perceptions / judgements on the causal relationship - i.e. whether empowerment affected the other outcomes
- clarity about the context, initial problem/ baselines, before-and-after picture

From these points the National Empowerment Partnership developed a six box model which looks at what goes into the community empowerment activity (inputs), the processes used, and the outcomes.   This model also collects information on both verifiable facts which are objective, and judgements which are subjective and represent the qualitative views of practitioners and participants.   The format of the six box model has been used for the London Empowerment Partnership's Evaluation Model and the processes and outcomes developed through consultation and research have been included.

This Evaluation Model is a tool for eliciting information about community empowerment activities that tests whether the values (outlined in Section 6) have been fulfilled and the processes undertaken.

It can be used as an evaluation tool by a public agency to evaluate its own community empowerment activities and to identify any gaps. It is intended to be used in the coming year by the London Empowerment Partnerships as a structure to write up case studies of community empowerment good practice.

	INPUTS: context and baselines	**PROCESSES:** empowerment methods used	**OUTCOMES:** what was achieved
Verifiable facts	For example • Stated objectives of the activity • Description of who the activity is for • Description of area covered • Funding • Worker time • Management time	• The methods used and the activities carried out: e.g. as in the CLG model: giving information, consultation, community capacity building, deliberative engagement, delegated power, co-production, co-governance, community control • Cooperation received	This could include how the proportion of participants and/or statutory agencies who: • believe that the objectives of the empowerment activity were achieved • now feel that participants can influence a public organisation in its decision making (can compare this to NI 4 in Places Survey) • believe that the process has actually influenced a public organisation in its decision making • now feel that participants may want to engage in some form of civic participation • know that participants have actually gone on to engage in a form of civic participation (can compare this to NI 3 in the Places Survey)
Practitioners and participants judgements	Meaningfulness of the objectives of the activity *as seen by*: • Local agencies/funders • Community empowerment workers • Local people	Quality of empowerment processes *as seen by*: • Local agencies/funders • Community empowerment workers • Local people These would be views on whether the processes of community empowerment (e.g. planning, inclusive, working together, influential, code of practice, resources, learning, feedback, evaluation) have been used and how far they have been effective	Quality of the outcome *as seen by*: • Local agencies/funders • Community empowerment workers • Local people It is very important to explore why participants say what they do about the outcome of the empowerment activity

7.   Next steps

This paper has set out values for community empowerment which can be used as indicators of quality. Also identified are the processes which will contribute to the values being fulfilled. The Evaluation Model is a framework to collect information to evaluate how far those processes have been undertaken and whether the values have been fulfilled. It collects and analyses factual information and people's judgements on the inputs, processes and outcomes of community empowerment. It also distinguishes between the viewpoints and experience of participants, statutory agencies and local people. The Model measures quality and impact but is not a quality assurance tool or kitemark where community empowerment activities will be 'scored'. Community empowerment activities across the capital will be very different, with different objectives, processes, outcomes and target groups. Exploring how well such a broad range of activities fulfil the values and undertake the processes outlined in this model requires qualitative judgement from someone who is experienced at conducting qualitative evaluation.

The London Empowerment Partnership Development Group has researched community empowerment activities which have targeted either young people or refugees and asylum seekers across London. From this initial research a number of case studies have been selected for further detailed study on the basis of whether they appeared to fulfil the values that have been identified in this paper. The case studies are currently being undertaken using the Evaluation Model as an interview format for practitioners and participants. These will be written up to describe the quality of the community empowerment processes and to identify barriers that hindered the community empowerment activity, and how well these were able to be overcome.

It is expected that the case study interviews will reveal practical suggestions that will improve this Evaluation Model and that it will therefore adapted and amplified through use.

Furthermore, it is expected that more specific guidance on how to use the model will be written, using the experience of conducting the case studies.

APPENDIX 1: The Scottish national standards for community engagement

The National Empowerment Partnership has looked at the national standards for community engagement produced by Communities Scotland[8] to see whether they can be used or adapted to use as part of a quality assurance tool to measure the quality of the processes use in community empowerment. These are reproduced below.

Principles of Empowerment

The over-arching principles are that the activity should:
- Be underpinned by fairness, equality and inclusion
- Have clear and agreed purposes and methods to achieve these purposes
- Demonstrate a clear commitment to learning
- Employ skills to build communities, ensure practice of equality principles, ensure ownership of the agenda and enable all views to be reflected
- Share and use existing knowledge of participants
- Provide opportunity for participants to build on skills and knowledge
- Provide accurate and timely information

Standards

These relate to the processes used in the empowerment activity. The Scottish national standards include:
- **Involvement** of people and organisations having an interest in the focus of the engagement activity
- **Support** to identify and overcome barriers to involvement
- **Planning** to gather evidence to be used to agree the purpose, scope and timescale of the engagement and the actions to be taken
- **Methods** that are fit for purpose
- **Working together** by using clear procedures that enable people to work together effectively and efficiently
- **Sharing information** to ensure that necessary information is communicated between the participants
- **Working with others** who have an interest in the engagements
- **Improvement** by developing the skills, knowledge and confidence of all the participants
- **Feedback** of the results of the engagement to the wider community and the agencies affected
- **Monitoring and evaluation** to see whether the engagement has achieved its purpose and has met the above standards

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[8]Scottish Community Development Centre, *National Standards for Community Engagement* (Communities Scotland, undated) www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/documents/webpages/cs_006607.hcsp

APPENDIX 2: Deepening democracy

Research[9] for the London borough of Lewisham, which explored the potential to strengthen partnership working and empower local communities through a greater emphasis on community democracy, identified seven key features[10] to community participation.

A framework for 'community democracy:

The following seven key features are important if participation is to be genuinely empowering and lead to a deepening of democracy:
- It must involve **real decision-making** – direct input into planning, setting priorities, implementation and scrutiny
- It should provide a forum for **pragmatic problem-solving** – seeking to unite rather than divide people, through a focus on common problems
- Decisions should be made through a **deliberative process** that seeks to resolve differences and reach consensus
- In order to have credibility, there must be **the power to make things happen** – through devolved decision-making and where possible, access to a budget
- It needs to be **supported by a strong centre** – to avoid isolation, ensure quality control, provide access to resources, disseminate learning and resolve more complex problems
- Links between the locality and the centre should **encourage culture change** through different relationships and a shift in power
- Local communities should also have the **capacity to mobilise** in other ways in order to challenge participatory governance and prevent complacency.

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[9] Tricia Zipfel. Strengthening Partnership Working in Lewisham through 'Community Democracy' (London Borough of Lewisham, 2008)
[10] Archon Fung and Erik Wright (Eds). Deepening Democracy – Institutional Innovations in Empowered Participatory Governance (Real Utopias Project 2003)

APPENDIX 3: DIMENSIONS OF COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

The consultancy Changes has developed the Dimensions of Community Empowerment model DiCE[11] which lays out a set of values for community empowerment and five community empowerment dimensions.

Community Development Values

Real community empowerment is the result of putting community development values into action. These are values of:

Learning: recognising the skills, knowledge and expertise that people contribute, building on these and what has gone before

Equality: challenging discrimination and oppressive practices within organisations, institutions and communities

Participation: facilitating democratic involvement by people in the issues which affect their lives based on full citizenship, autonomy and shared power, skills, knowledge and experience

Co-operation: working together to identify and implement action, encouraging networking and connections between communities and organisations

Social justice: enabling people to claim their human rights, meet their needs and have greater control over the decision-making processes which affect their lives
When thinking about community empowerment we draw on decades of theory and practice concerned with developing and understanding community development.

Dimensions of Community Empowerment

Community empowerment has five dimensions:
Confident…working in ways which increase people's skills, knowledge and confidence, and instill in them a belief that they can make a difference

Inclusive…working in ways which recognise that discrimination exists, promote equality of opportunity and good relations between groups and challenge inequality and exclusion

Organised…working in ways which bring people together around common issues and concerns in organisations and groups that are open, democratic and accountable

Co-operative…working in ways which build positive relationships across groups, identify common messages, develop and maintain links to national bodies and promote partnership working

Influential… working in ways which encourage and equip communities to take part and influence decisions, services and activities

Changes has also started to develop a model for public agencies to explore how open they are to community influence in relation to their potential to respond to community influence[12].

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[11] Summarised in a recent leaflet: What is Community Empowerment (cdx and Changes, 2008)

[12] Empowering Agencies to Engage Communities (Changes, 2008)