

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The LEP was established in 2007, funded by CLG, to improve the quality, coordination and evidence of community empowerment in London. It consisted of a Task Force and four thematic groups covering local authority, community development, voluntary sector and equalities issues. This evaluation looks at the key achievements, barriers and learning of the LEP and its cross-sector audience over the past four years.
2. It has provided the direction for activities that have:
 - developed a picture of empowerment e.g. an interactive map of London boroughs to which organisations can upload empowerment activities
 - testing new approaches to provide evidence of barriers and enablers to community empowerment, most notably through its empowering diversity action research
 - supported LSPs through events, training and resources
 - provided examples of collaboration between the public and voluntary sector, through action learning sets, and a programme exploring community empowerment in health issues
 - raised awareness and disseminated information through regular e bulletins, its website, events and a catalogue of resources which lists the research developed through the lifetime of the partnership
3. The Targeted Support for Empowerment and Participation Improvement (TSEPI) programme brought funding into the partnership for the last two years specifically to support local authorities to improve their performance around NI4. The programme in London tested eight different approaches to supporting local authorities, which yielded interesting findings and results.
4. Barriers to effectiveness included:
 - lack of cross-fertilisation between thematic groups and the Task Force
 - a concentration on supporting the statutory sector to understand and deliver their own community empowerment activities targeted at individual citizens, and less on the role of the voluntary and community sector in delivering community empowerment, as well as less on empowering communities to improve their quality of life
 - although resources were disseminated through events and briefings, the website could be improved, and membership needs to be updated
 - although some activities which were developed as models for empowerment have had demonstrable impact, there needs to be a better strategy to embed the learning into the work of organisations across London
5. The LEP has agreed that it wishes to continue in a voluntary capacity with minimal administrative support from the London Civic Forum (LCF). Without a delivery arm it will concentrate on its role as a cross-sector space for learning about community empowerment, particularly in the light of the Big Society and Localism agendas. It is discussing its potential objectives as:
 - raising the profile and understanding of community empowerment
 - networking across sectors to improve the coordination of community empowerment
 - disseminating knowledge, advice and evidence about community empowerment

Some funding may be available through related LCF activities and in-kind resources offered by partners.

1. INTRODUCTION

Context

- 1.1 The National Empowerment Partnership (NEP), established in 2007, is a partnership of organisations whose remit is to improve the quality, coordination and evidence of community empowerment across England. Funded by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG), and managed by the Community Development Foundation (CDF), it works primarily with nine regional empowerment partnerships (REPs), of which the London Empowerment Partnership (LEP) is one. The NEP programme operated from for four years to April 2011.
- 1.2 In 2007, the Labour Government published its Action Plan for community empowerment which was defined as: *the giving of confidence, skills and power to communities to shape and influence what public bodies do for or with them*. A major part of the Government's new empowerment agenda was the NEP, set up in the same year to *improve the quality and functioning of relationships between citizens and government in order to increase the ability of people to influence the decisions that affect their lives*.
- 1.3 Since then the NEP programme has responded to policy changes that have affected its focus. In particular, the introduction of the national indicator set led to an increased emphasis in Year Two onwards on improving local authority performance around National Indicator 4 (NI4): the percentage of people who feel they can influence decisions in their area. During Years Three and Four the Targeted Support for Empowerment and Participation Improvement (TSEPI) brought a significant increase in funding to the REPs, designed to provide strategic support to local authority areas to improve engagement and empowerment in their localities. The TSEPI funding was more than twice that which came through the NEP, and reflected the Government's wish to help local authorities improve their NI4 scores.
- 1.3 The accountable body of the LEP is the London Civic Forum (LCF) which provided the programme management. The direction of the programme was undertaken by a small Task Force with individuals with expertise of the voluntary, community development and public sectors. The Task Force was informed by four sub-groups: the Community Development Network for London (CDNL): a network of community development practitioners; the Third Sector Empowerment Forum: a grouping of voluntary organisations; the London Boroughs Community Empowerment Networking Group: a network of local authority officers with an interest in community empowerment; and the HEAR Network: a group of equalities organisations.
- 1.4 The LEP had a number of objectives to further its main aim:
- Improving quality by:*
- identifying and promoting ways of **measuring the impact of empowerment activities**
 - providing a **space for reflection and exploration** by supporting research and discussion, as well as learning between partners, and to work towards improving quality

Improving evidence by:

- developing a **regional evidence base** of case studies and model approaches
- **facilitating delivery** through the Action Plan, identifying key principles that the activity should deliver, commissioning, monitoring and evaluating the Action Plan

Improving coordination by:

- promoting the importance of, and **developing a coordinated approach** to, community empowerment regionally
- ensuring **both statutory and third sector interests as deliverers and beneficiaries** of community empowerment are recognised and represented
- positioning the LEP as a **hub for community empowerment** in London
- using intelligence gained to **influence and support** the national community empowerment agenda to meet regional interests

1.5 Over the past four years the LEP oversaw the implementation of the programme's Action Plan which covered the following priorities:

- regional coordination and cross sector involvement
- developing the picture of empowerment in the region
- empowering diversity: narrowing gaps in participation between different groups
- supporting local authorities and their partners to meet targets around national indicator for the duty to involve and the comprehensive area assessment
- developing a regional focus
- disseminating information and widening import

Objectives and methodology of the evaluation

1.6 The LEP commissioned Zahno Rao Associates to undertake an evaluation of the impact of its work on community empowerment in London over the past four years. The evaluation has addressed the following questions:

- Has the LEP's work with communities in London improved communities' opportunities and mechanisms to become empowered to influence decisions that improve the quality of their lives?
- How effective has the work with public agencies been in terms of increasing their awareness and understanding of community empowerment, and their ability to better engage their communities in influencing decisions effectively?
- How well has the work been coordinated and disseminated?
- What will the legacy be, especially in the context of the new political environment?

1.7 The evaluation is based on:

- desk research: monitoring reports, project reports and previous evaluations
- interviews with key members of the Task Force and the sub groups

- interviews with project manager and some beneficiaries of the activities
- attendance at seminars and conferences which promoted topical issues about community empowerment
- attendance at Task Force meetings

Structure of report

1.8 The structure of the report follows the key evaluation questions and the chapters look at:

- description of activities and outputs
- impact on communities
- impact on public agencies
- overall coordination
- forward strategy

2. OUTPUTS

2.1 The table below lists the activities of the LEP and cross-references them with the relevant paragraph in the report where described.

LONDON EMPOWERMENT PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES			
Year	Activity	Para	Output
DEVELOPING A PICTURE OF EMPOWERMENT			
2007/08	Baseline of empowerment activities in London created		
2008/09	Empowerment Map created	5.24	
	Community Development Training Directory created		
	Supported GOL to identify readiness of London LSPs for NI4 improvement		
2009/10	Empowerment Map updated	5.24	
	Community Development Training Directory updated		
	Case studies developed demonstrating empowerment good practice		5 case studies
	Case study written on implementing the Duty to Involve		
	Supported GOL to identify readiness of London LSPs for NI4 improvement (informed TSEPI programme)		
2010/11	Empowerment Map updated	5.24	
IMPROVING EVIDENCE THROUGH NEW APPROACHES			
2007/08	Community empowerment evaluation model developed	4.31	
2008/09	Case studies of youth empowerment activities developed		15 focus grps 8 case studies
	Application of community empowerment evaluation model	4.31	
	Action research on barriers to empowerment: young people	3.8	24 interviews/ focus groups
	Action research on barriers to empowerment: faith groups	3.12	2 focus groups
2009/10	Action research on barriers to empowerment: Roma communities	3.14	4 focus groups
	Event to disseminate research on Roma communities		234 attendees
	Action research on Green Light youth campaign	3.10	11 participants
2010/11	Action research on barriers to empowerment: BAME lone parents	3.16	3 focus groups 150 q'naires
SUPPORTING LSPs			
2007/08	Community evaluators training course developed	3.3	
2008/09	Community evaluators training course tested	3.3	2 boroughs 15 participants
	Councillors in Control event	4.19	45 attendees
	Online resources produced for website	5.23	
	Participatory Budgeting Event		56 attendees
	'Mis' Understanding Youth Event	3.9	100 attendees
2009/10	Asset transfer event		82 attendees
	Networking of Empowerment Authorities Event		234 attendees
	Partner meetings to develop NI4 improvements		4 meetings
	Outreach to boroughs to develop intelligence re NI4		18 LAs
	Involve training on community engagement strategies	4.5	14 participants
2010/11	Partner meetings to develop NI4 improvements		4 meetings
	Outreach to boroughs to develop intelligence re NI4		5 LAs

LONDON EMPOWERMENT PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES			
Year	Activity	Para	Output
COLLABORATION WITH THE THIRD SECTOR			
2008/09	Role of 3 rd sector in delivering LAAs: report and event	4.4 4.28	1 report 90 attendees
	Guidance for LSPs on principles of representation		
	Action Learning Set on barriers and enablers to effective representation on LSPs	4.29	6 participants
2009/10	Research on how community development can support communities to influence decisions about health	3.28	
	Health and Empowerment Event	3.31	96 attendees
	Looking at LINKs project – developed a blog	3.29	22 blogs
	Developed a model for a Community Network for Health in London (with GLA)	3.31	
RAISING AWARENESS & DISSEMINATING INFORMATION			
2008/09	6 e bulletins compiled and disseminated	5.23	1300 bulletins
	Website development	5.23	
	Community Empowerment White Paper Event		76 attendees
	Duty to Involve Event		80 attendees
2009/10	6 e bulletins compiled and disseminated	5.23	1300 bulletins
	Case studies, reports etc placed on website	5.23	
	Online consultation on Strengthening Local Democracy		
	Online discussion forums held		2 forums
2010/11	6 e bulletins compiled and disseminated	5.23	2900 bulletins
	Case studies, reports etc placed on website	5.23	Cumulative total = 73 resources
	Catalogue of LEP resources produced	5.23	
	Stalls held at various regional events		3 stalls
	Legacy event: Ensuring Equality in a Changing London	5.22	38 attendees
	Legacy event: Empowering People conference	5.22	150 attendees
	Legacy event: Parish Councils	5.22	69 attendees
	Legacy event: Take Part	5.22	92 attendees
	Legacy event: Community Organisers	5.22	81 attendees

TARGETED SUPPORT FOR EMPOWERMENT AND PARTICIPATION			
Year	Activity	Para	Output
2009/10	NI4 Research	4.6	4 boroughs engaged 12 focus groups
	Self Assessment workshops	4.24	8 workshops 164 attendees
	Community of Practice	4.22	14 boroughs engaged
	Strategic online engagement	4.12	2 platforms developed
	Community Leadership Legacy Project	3.24	15 CVSs engaged 5 action plans developed
	Community Evaluators	3.3	2 boroughs engaged 17 participants
	BAME participation project	3.18	6 boroughs engaged 6 guides developed
2010/11	Strategic online engagement	4.12	5 boroughs engaged 2 platforms developed
	Community Leadership Legacy Project	3.24	5 coordinators appointed 5 action plans revised
	BAME participation project	3.18	6 guides launched 2 events in boroughs 1 regional event
	Community Responses	4.10	3 boroughs engaged

3. IMPACT ON COMMUNITIES

Introduction

- 3.1 Part of the LEP's programme supported **individuals and communities** to engage and take up opportunities to be involved in and influence local public sector decisions. The focus of the programme, even when it has targeted communities and individuals, reflected the emphasis paid to empowering people to influence public service delivery and so obtain more responsive public services. This reflects the emphasis given to raising NI4 scores and the amount of funding brought through the TSEPI programme. This has overshadowed the attention paid to community empowerment at the grassroots. However, there has been some funding for community activity work and support at the grassroots to enable people to do things for themselves, and so improve the quality of their lives, as well as funding for the Community Development Network for London.
- 3.2 This chapter describes what the LEP programme has done to support communities to have a voice at local and regional level and the impact of this work. This has included the following kinds of activities:
- **community led planning:** the work of the community evaluators
 - **empowering diversity:** models of engagement and building influence at regional level to enable disadvantaged communities to have a voice
 - **sectoral work:** working on health issues
 - **community leadership:** growing community leaders and community activists through the Community Leadership Legacy Programme (CLLP)

Community led planning

- 3.3 In Year One the LEP commissioned a consultant to devise a Community Evaluators programme which would train a small group of participants in the concept of empowerment and what it means in terms of improving service delivery. It also trained people in the principles of evaluation so participants could devise their own evaluation tool to anonymously evaluate a local authority empowerment activity and to assess the effectiveness in empowering citizens. In Year Two, the programme was piloted in two boroughs; however, the evaluations were not very insightful and the impact on participants and on the local authorities was small. However, the various barriers to success were viewed as teething problems and the concept was thought to be worth testing again.
- 3.4 In Year Three the programme, now part of the TSEPI programme, was commissioned to a different consultancy, Micah Gold Associates, who had a clearer idea of the outcome of the programme. Two boroughs: Tower Hamlets and Bexley were selected to participate. In each borough a small group of participants was trained and they developed their own evaluation tool. They visited empowerment activities: in Bexley these were mainly organised by the Metropolitan Police, and in Tower Hamlets most participants evaluated the participatory budgeting programme *You Decide*. The legacy for the whole programme was a *Guide to Community Evaluation* which was informed, not only by the pilot programmes, but also by a group of

stakeholders familiar with this sort of tool. The Guide was used in a training day for a group of boroughs to enable them to take on the programme in their own borough.

Impact

- 3.5 The participants felt the training was enjoyable and participative and that devising and using the evaluation tool gave them a structure to assess whether they felt they had actually influenced things. The groups gave a presentation on their findings to key officers in their respective boroughs, together with recommendations, and felt they were taken seriously. In Bexley a commitment was made for the group to meet with the Police at a very senior level to discuss the findings; this subsequently took place and was positive. In Tower Hamlets the presentation was to officers with responsibilities for the borough's community engagement activities. The residents felt that the officers listened to them carefully and that they wanted to hear constructive criticism. Some members of the group from Tower Hamlets went on to become mentors on the council's mystery shopping team, using the skills they had gained from the Community Evaluators programme. In Bexley the officer convening the group has kept in touch but has not found other appropriate engagement activities in which to participate.
- 3.6 The council officers received the presentations with enthusiasm and stated that the feedback was extremely useful. Tower Hamlets took the feedback on board in the way it makes information available to residents. Other councils attending the MGA's training session also took on board the findings. For example officers at Kensington and Chelsea were enthused with the methodology which they felt had been refined since their experience two years ago. As a result they have commissioned training for Community Evaluators and have recruited participants.

Empowering diversity

- 3.7 Over three years the LEP commissioned action research that was intended to identify effective approaches to empowering groups that are typically excluded from mainstream empowerment activity. These included activities targeting young people, faith communities, lone parents and the Roma community. These activities gathered the empowerment experiences of marginalised groups, and identified barriers and enablers. A number of conferences and events were held to disseminate the results. In addition the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Participation Programme aimed to inform and support BAME communities to participate in civic life.

Empowering young London

- 3.8 Empowering Young London, carried out by the youth-led group Independent Academic Research Studies (IARS) in Year 2 of the LEP programme, explored the barriers young people face in 'having a say' and influencing local decisions. A model of youth empowerment was presented which included recommendations on how to design a project, the need to engage participants through outreach, the training and support needed rewards and benefits, an emphasis on youth-led research, and the need to actually engage with decision makers and be influential. The research findings formed part of the evidence that was fed into the LEP-sponsored conference (*Mis*) *Understanding Youth Empowerment*.

- 3.9 The objective of the *(Mis) Understanding Youth Empowerment* event was to encourage a dialogue between young people and policy makers and to develop recommendations on how empowerment activities should be designed and delivered in London. A key recommendation was that the LEP itself should set an example through setting up a Youth Advisory Group to influence its own plans. Discussing how this recommendation should be implemented resulted in the young people suggesting that instead of an ongoing advisory group to the LEP they preferred to do something more practical which would also fit into the empowerment agenda. The LEP built in a youth campaign *the Green Light Campaign*, for the following year.

The Green Light Campaign

- 3.10 The Youth Campaign in Year 3 piloted a practical approach that would lead to young people influencing a regional policy maker. Campaigning was thought to be an approach that would attract young people who might not be interested in a more formal and longer-term kind of participation such as a youth advisory forum. The campaign concentrated less on actual impact on the public agency than on the process so that the policy makers could learn lessons on empowering young people. The LEP engaged Envision to facilitate young people to run the campaign. The young people decided to focus on promoting the use of environmentally friendly forms of transport in London. They invited representatives from TfL to a campaign meeting where they asked further questions about the draft Transport Strategy and challenged policies that they felt were inadequate.
- 3.11 Meetings with TfL have made the campaigners feel that they have been taken seriously; this has motivated them to continue. The impact has been the sense that it has been worth doing, has not been tokenistic, and has lived up to the young people's expectations. They developed a proposal to submit to the TfL consultation and they also developed a petition to avoid getting stranded at night if the Oyster card has run out. TfL has also given a place to the young campaigners on its youth advisory group. A testament to its success is that the campaign is set to continue beyond the LEP's funding.

Faith-based communities

- 3.12 Action research to engage representatives of faith communities explored what community empowerment meant to them, and what their experience was in engaging with public bodies. Two focus groups explored enablers and barriers to empowerment. The barriers identified were that faith communities did not know where to go to find about how to influence public bodies, or whether they would be listened to when they exercised their voices. There does not seem to be a system for gathering views. In some boroughs there is a structure to enable engagement to happen (e.g. in Lewisham there is a faiths officer employed by the council whose role it is to engage with faith communities; in other boroughs there are faiths forums), but the structure is not complete across London, and although subsequently the Faiths Forum for London has been established this does not look at engaging borough-based faith groups.
- 3.13 In order to capitalise on the increasing willingness for different faith communities to work together towards a common goal, public bodies need to look at the enablers to engagement. They should be seeking to engage in a

variety of ways, such as through faiths forums, key individuals, and through outreach to marginalised individuals who may never be part of a formal structure such as informal women's groups. They need to be skilled up to understand the issues pertinent to faith communities. Above all they need to be clear what it is they want to consult on, undertake any consultation early enough on in the process so that views can be taken on board, and they must feed back what happened as a result of consultation, factors which of course are good practice for all consultations.

Roma communities

- 3.14 In Year 3, the Roma Support Group (RSG), a charity based in Newham which has been working with East European Romas since 1998, was commissioned to deliver an action research project. The objectives of the research were to raise awareness about the East European Roma community in London and the barriers they face when engaging with mainstream empowerment mechanisms; to enable service providers and the Roma community to overcome those barriers.
- 3.15 The recommendations arising from the research were that service providers must understand Roma culture and the barriers they face accessing public services before trying to engage them. The public sector should not consider the Roma communities as a problem but as an artistic and cultural resource. Engaging the communities through promoting cultural events, and including them in mainstream cultural events, would do much to raise the profile and help to tackle stereotypes. Roma people do want to engage in public life best done through a community development model. This can include supporting grassroots organisations and employing Roma people in public services to act as a bridge between the public sector and the Roma communities.

BAME lone mothers

- 3.16 The Limehouse Project, a community-based charity in east London, was commissioned to identify the barriers faced by BAME mothers seeking to engage with the public sector, and to highlight the approaches that are most effective in enabling them to overcome these barriers. It was found that the largest single issue was the lack of adequate targeted service provision, principally around training, literacy and childcare. This lack of provision makes it difficult to BAME lone mothers to address more complex issues about empowerment. Building trust and developing communications channels are crucial to overcoming the barriers to empowerment, and word-of-mouth is particularly effective. Without affordable and flexible childcare women cannot access many of the empowerment opportunities available to them. Policymakers therefore need to consult directly with the BAME lone mothers. They themselves have a clear idea of the problems and dangers they face and what can be done to overcoming them; listening to these should help service providers to create services tailored to meeting their needs.
- 3.17 The main recommendation coming from this research is that BAME lone mothers should be consulted as a specific group when designing services, particularly where some provision has to be cut.

BAME participation

- 3.18 Operation Black Vote was commissioned to set up the BAME participation project to inform, engage and support BAME communities to participate in civic life and to influence decision making. OBV developed a bespoke *Who Runs?* civic and political guide for participating boroughs. The original intention this year was to conduct a series of seminars to promote the guides at the community level, and to broker conversations between OBV, local community leaders, senior officers and members in the boroughs to share learning and expertise on engagement with BAME communities. This would hopefully build up trust between BAME communities and the councils and encourage people to gain access to influence.

Impact

- 3.19 OBV's BAME participation programme was slow to start in its first year because of delays due to the local elections. However, last year there was a small impact in Barking and Dagenham where as a result of OBV's work on the *Who Runs?* guide in that borough, the CVS approached OBV to produce anti-discrimination posters encouraging BAME communities to use their voice and their vote. The *Who Runs?* Guides are available online and in hard copy. However, we found that the engagement officers in three councils, although they knew about the project, they had had little contact with OBV and had only seen the guides when we sent them the links; they pointed out that they were already out of date, and in some cases inaccurate. Interviewing the boroughs some said that the concept was good and useful provided the dissemination strategy reached the intended audience. However, the officers said the guides have a limited shelf life and up-to-date information can actually be found in local council and London-wide agency websites. It would be time consuming and thus resource-heavy to update such secondary publications, and a clear strategy to update them. However, they were useful to use as a launch to a BAME audience to initiate a discussion around council matters.
- 3.20 In the second phase of the programme, in 2010/11, the intention was that conversations would be brokered between communities and public agencies. This would have enabled local authorities and their partners to learn about the different approaches to working with disengaged and marginalised communities. Because of the delays in the whole project due to the General Election it proved difficult to complete the project as envisaged, and one of the greatest weaknesses of the project was the lack of direct work with local authorities so that they could learn from the work. There has been little impact on local authority learning in this respect. Three events were, or are about to be run:
- a launch of the Redbridge *Who Runs* guide
 - a hustings event in Tower Hamlets for the directly elected Mayor
 - a large pan-London *Who Runs My City* event bringing together London's BAME citizens together with leaders from across the political spectrum, as well as high profile civic leaders from national charities, the BAME third sector and the media

The first two events were well attended and went well by all accounts; the third is yet to run.

Conclusions

- 3.23 The action research projects were not meant to yield long-term outcomes for the groups involved but instead the research drew on actions and examples of effective engagement methods which public agencies could use to engage disadvantaged groups.
- Policy makers need to understand the role of **community development** in accessing excluded communities. This requires outreach and facilitation by community groups who are trusted by that particular community. This can lead to excluded communities developing their own views on services and policy and being able to articulate them to policy makers directly. Eventually a particular community may develop its views on a range of services in an ongoing forum where they represent themselves to policy makers.
 - Public agencies should use the **networks and forums** of particular communities as a method of engagement, as well as some commitment to fund them – e.g. the Faiths Forums in some boroughs
 - Public agencies should use **representative organisations** as a bridge between an excluded community and the service providers; they can act as a vehicle for articulating individual voices.
 - However, it is important that the voices of that community are heard **directly as individual citizens**, as well indirectly through their community group. The action research commissioned by LEP enabled individuals to tell their own stories and to come up with their own solutions and advice to service providers. Public agencies can outreach into the communities themselves or employ a community organisation to do this.
 - Helping to establish **representative panels**, such as youth panels will not only inform public agencies, but also be an empowerment tool in their own right

Community Leadership Legacy Programme

- 3.24 The Community Leadership Legacy Programme (CLLP), part of the Targeted Support (TSEPI) programme, has provided an opportunity to create a legacy for the empowerment agenda in London by investing in a cross-sector programme of Community Leadership activity. The programme cut across three CLG-funded empowerment programmes: the Regional Empowerment Partnership, Connecting Communities and Take Part, and in London some of the Take Part Development Fund was added to the CLLP to enable focused activities to take place. The programme was designed to champion community leadership activity as a means for local authorities and their partners to achieve targets around engagement. Activity across London was coordinated by five sub-regional coordinators, covering 15 boroughs.
- 3.25 A range of activities was undertaken which did not only include the more formal active citizenship courses teaching individuals about how public agencies worked and giving them the confidence to gain access to, or become, public figures. Some activities also used more of a community development approach, such as work undertaken with residents in the Mottingham area of Bromley which has received funding under the Big Local programme; the CLLP coordinator has been helping the council-funded worker to build confidence and communications skills and to develop project ideas. Another sustainable project was carried out in Barking and Dagenham, focusing on community associations which have halls leased

from the council, building their capacity to develop an income stream from their assets. In Kensington and Chelsea the coordinator facilitated residents on the Silchester Estate to discuss the neighbourhood plan which had been drawn up by the council, and to write a paper on the issues they wanted to be addressed.

- 3.26 There should be some impact from individual projects, such as those mentioned above, but the CLLP should also have left some legacy in the boroughs, if not across the sub-regions. Kensington and Chelsea CVS has applied for a post similar to the CLLP coordinator through the Reaching Communities programme, and in Barking and Dagenham the CVS has become more aware of the needs of small community associations and will continue to help them. The coordinators agreed that the overall legacy should be about getting a community development approach embedded into the way both local authorities and voluntary sector infrastructure organisations work within neighbourhoods.

A focus on health

- 3.27 Most of the LEP's work has been undertaken within a local authority environment, without much involvement with other public agencies. However in Year 3 the LEP selected empowerment in the field of health and well being. A key regional policy driver associated with this was the launch of the Mayor's Health Inequalities strategy. The activities delivered under this priority were targeted at councillors (see Section 4.?) and third sector organisations, and aimed both to empower and inform the participants themselves and to support them in empowering their constituents, organisations or members to take a more active role in shaping local health issues.

Community development approach

- 3.28 Research with practitioners in community development work sought to identify how community development principles could be used in community empowerment work around health and well-being. The research concluded that a community development approach can facilitate engagement with communities to build their capacity to influence personal, day-to-day health decisions. As wider public health messages are also translated through this process, health services are able to be more responsive to local needs and adapt health information accordingly.

Using a blog as a tool for engagement

- 3.29 Kensington and Chelsea LINK led a project which aimed to develop capacity amongst frontline voluntary groups to use social networking as an empowerment tool for getting involved in the LINK. The LINK set up a blog and ran a marketing campaign promoting it to other London LINKs. In addition, the LINK ran training sessions targeted at LINK members to encourage them to contribute to the LINK blog.
- 3.30 The LINK blog was visited, but few readers are prepared to add their own comments. Other London LINKs have contributed a guest blog when invited but there is little evidence of their being enthusiastic in developing a virtual community across London through this mechanism. However, the project has been successful in building skills locally to use e-communication more widely. One of the most useful outcomes was that the training highlighted new

methods of communication that could be used by individual front line groups. For example, Kensington and Chelsea's LINK's cancer sub-group is looking at developing a specific cancer forum. This has attracted interest from national cancer charities because the borough is home to national cancer services provided by the Royal Brompton and Harefield hospitals.

Community Voices for Health

- 3.31 The *Community Voices for Health* event was held as a joint event between the LCF, as part of the LEP programme, and the GLA. It developed out of the empowerment arrangements for the Mayor's Health Inequalities strategy and was targeted at community groups with an interest in health. It aimed to explore the relationship between health and empowerment and look at forthcoming policies and programmes. The day was also an opportunity to launch the *Community Voices for Health Network* – which has gone on to develop further events in response to the needs of its members e.g. an upcoming event is about the public health and NHS changes and ensuring the voice of the voluntary and community sector is heard in this new agenda.

Impact of health work

- 3.32 These were separate pieces of work and it is difficult to evaluate their overall impact in embedding the concept of community empowerment within the health sector. However, it does represent an attempt to work in a different sector, other than the local authorities, and we feel this work in this sector could be fruitful in the light of the new HealthWatch initiative.

Conclusions

- 3.33 This portfolio of projects was designed to support communities to have a voice at local and regional level. Much of the work was concerned with enabling diverse communities to raise their concerns about public services by identifying the barriers preventing their voice being heard, and the enablers that would help them overcome these barriers. Many of the enablers identified were about raising the awareness of public agencies of the best channels and methods of communication to reach particular communities. However some projects supported communities to raise their voice proactively, with the Green Light campaign being an exemplifier. Some of the best examples of this were found in the CLLP activities, some of which were designed to facilitate communities to enhance the quality of life in their neighbourhoods. For example, the work done in Mottingham was to build the capacity of the residents to do things for themselves. In Barking and Dagenham, capacity building very local community associations was designed to make more sustainable organisations. These community led activities were much more about empowering people to improve the quality of their life in a variety of ways, and not just about creating better channels of communication between communities and public agencies.
- 3.34 Whether learning across London about these sorts of community empowerment activities has happened is hard to gauge. But some project coordinators, particularly those engaged in the CLLP programme, emphasised that the learning was less about the impact of particular projects, but about how public and voluntary and community sectors work together to embed a community development approach into neighbourhoods. This approach is one that should be taken in both the local authorities'

neighbourhood work, and in the work of the CVS and other support organisations. This could fit in with the Big Society approach, although in the light of cuts in the public and voluntary sector this might be difficult to achieve.

4. **IMPACT ON PUBLIC AGENCIES**

Introduction

- 4.1 Community empowerment had always been defined by CLG as empowering communities to influence public policy and decisions, and there was an increased emphasis on the role of public agencies to enable this to happen, specifically supporting them to increase their NI4 scores in their areas. This chapter describes projects designed to support public agencies working at borough level in engaging and empowering local communities to exert influence. Most of the funding in Years 3 and 4 for this work came from the TSEPI programme: activities included analysing what needed to be done, exploring what makes people engage, building knowledge about community empowerment good practice, testing what might work, and developing an evaluation model.
- 4.2 In Year 2 the LEP, together with GOL and a representative from the CLG, collected and interpreted regional intelligence across London regarding LSPs' readiness to improve on their NI4 scores with the purpose of identifying the sort of support all LSPs (particularly local authorities) could benefit from. This informed a package of support to roll out across London which helped to inform the TSEPI programme in Years 3 and 4.
- 4.3 This chapter describes what the LEP programme has done to support local authorities and the impact of this work. This has included:
- **community voices influencing decision making:**
 - **the role of social networking:** developing a voice for citizens
 - **the role of councillors:**
 - **strategic self assessment:** strategic analysis and planning what public agencies should be doing
 - **collaboration between the third sector and LSPs:**
 - **developing effective models of quality assurance:** a model for evaluating young people's empowerment projects

Community Voices influencing decision-making

Exploring the community voice in LSPs

- 4.4 In Year 1 LVSC undertook research on the methods through which LSPs engaged with the community. LSPs were positive about the benefits that community empowerment could have for the community, service delivery and decision making within the LSP, and that they would appreciate support on delivering NI4. They particularly wanted support on how they could develop a meaningful community empowerment strategy, and this recommendation was taken on board through training on developing a strategy in Year 3.

Community engagement strategies

- 4.5 Involve undertook a training programme for local authorities on their community engagement strategies, enabling participants to define the

outcomes they wanted from their strategies; to review the contents of a community engagement strategy, and to identify the actions they intended to take in future. An immediate outcome was that participants were more confident to develop their strategies further and that they understood that they could adapt it to suit their own situation. This is timely since the majority of boroughs have now developed community engagement strategies and may be thinking of revising them. Immediate benefits were thought to be the links created with their counterparts in other boroughs.

NI4 research

- 4.6 The Campaign Company (TCC), funded under the TSEPI programme, aimed to better understand how different segments of the population in London define and understand the concept of 'influence' on local decision-making and what might motivate them to want more influence. Using *Values Modes* methodology, they held discussion groups with different 'segments' of the population (based on their values rather than their demography) in four boroughs to probe the different ways in which people actually understand the concept of exerting an influence on local decision-making, and might motivate (or demotivate) them towards seeking such influence. Stakeholder interviews were also held to establish top-level perception of influence and gather insight on current ethos and methods of engagement in these four boroughs.
- 4.7 The findings from the NI4 research should be useful for agencies to use in devising and targeting their engagement activities. A key message from the discussion groups was that the majority of those seeking influence are seeking solutions to personal problems (a **reactive** response); this is linked to their experience of service delivery and customer satisfaction. However, the majority of mechanisms identified by agencies are **proactive**, trying to engage people on wider issues.
- 4.8 Local authority officers involved in engagement and empowerment, who were interviewed as part of the research, identified a challenge for the third sector which may have sought the opinions of local citizens to use as evidence when trying to influence decisions, but whose influence is unlikely to be felt by the citizens themselves. However, it is still an important part of the empowerment agenda. They also acknowledged a key challenge was harnessing the power of grassroots action and active citizens who wish to influence agencies.

Impact

- 4.9 This analysis should have an important impact on the way agencies think about empowerment themselves and how they target empowerment activities to different segments of the population. One of the main recommendations was that there should be a closer alignment of input by citizens in service delivery and engagement mechanisms. Although borough officers found the research insightful they found it difficult to think how they could implement the findings, since engagement officers were generally not linked in with customer services. However, in Year 4 the LEP commissioned Micah Gold Associates (MGA) to undertake action research to demonstrate how public agencies could directly respond to issues of concern raised by residents.

Community responses

- 4.10 The Community Responses project, built on one of the main findings of the NI4 research described sought to demonstrate a new way for councils to respond to immediate issues, through a co-production method involving citizens themselves identifying a priority issue and working together with the council to resolve the cause of the issue, not merely the symptom. Three issues were identified by residents in Camden (coordination across the community to support local action in Somers Town); Kensington and Chelsea (how Friends of Cremorne Gardens might be supported to look into community ownership); and Enfield (a resident-owned facebook network discussing community issues, including gang related issues).

Impact

- 4.11 Because of the short timescale for the delivery of the project it proved logistically difficult to mobilise residents over an issue they had identified, gain buy-in from the council, design and implement a response. Thus no impact has been felt as yet by the three projects. However, MGA used the learning from the project to produce a guide to undertaking Community Responses which included:

- *Establishment of the building blocks:* identifying a current issue, community leadership, a co-productive approach, a willingness to try new solutions
- *Diagnosis of the issue:* symptoms and causes, what has been tried previously and what has worked or not, action being planned, stakeholders involved, desired outcome
- *Design:* developing different ways of achieving the agreed outcome and discussing these options with the community and public stakeholders, selection of an option (or combination of options)
- *Implementation:* action planning, implementation

The MGA report contains a catalogue of possible community responses e.g. tackling ASB, asset transfer etc, together with different methods of engaging the community such as community organising. This report will be disseminated through the LEP in its future work.

Social networking as a model of engagement

- 4.12 A social networking model was piloted by izwe in five boroughs, funded by both TSEPI and Capital Ambition, the aim being to support boroughs to increase community participation through online engagement. This has the potential to allow councils to listen, respond and engage with local communities, and use opinion data to make better decisions. It is both bottom up, giving residents the opportunity to voice their opinion through their own user groups, and/or to respond to consultations or to ask for information - and top down, in that it allows council officers to ask for views, and to consult on policies and strategies. It can also fill the gap in between, allowing residents and officers/councillors the opportunity to converse with each other.
- 4.13 Working with five boroughs, izwe researched the current engagement strategies and initiatives, and, in conjunction with the boroughs, selected appropriate issues to focus on for each borough. The sites developed by izwe gave residents the opportunity to respond to a **Quick Poll** or a **Survey** initiated by the council, initiate a **Call for Ideas** (start up a topic of one's

choice related to the Council, or give an opinion on other people's ideas); and to join a **Forum** on a particular issue, which can be used by residents and council members and officers alike, allowing for a more open dialogue.

Usage

- 4.14 The social networking sites have been up and running in two boroughs. Usage has been low in both boroughs, although promotion in one has been wide e.g. through the council newsletters, statutory and voluntary agencies. One borough had just under 1500 visitors to the site since the official launch in July 2010 and there are about 50 members signed up as users. It was piloted in October for those on the borough's Citizen's Panel, using the Big Society as a topic for users to feed back their views. The feedback was useful, mainly on technical problems, although people were not enthused by the topic. Other topics were added for general use after the pilot, including user-generated topics on the Council's spending plans for the next three years – this tested how a forum would work. The Council's Communications Manager commented on contributors' views. Library Services was another issue debated. The website linked to a consultation survey on the main Council site since the izwe Survey function was not considered to be user friendly; a conversation was also initiated by the Council on people's views and usage of the libraries. Other issues included information about the Census, and one on Celebration Events, designed for fun and to get a higher usage. This also tested the Quick Poll and Call for Ideas. The other borough is undertaking a pilot before going live to the public and tested pages on Community Streets, voluntary sector grants, Take Part, and sustainable transport. However, usage has been very low and it will be difficult to evaluate how successful it has been.

Impact

- 4.15 The technical teething problems appeared to be greater than izwe had expected and resulted in a feeling of frustration on the councils' part. One major hitch occurred because izwe had developed the platform in line with current platform capabilities. As most councils continue to use Internet Explorer 6 rather than the newer and supported versions of this browser, there were some compatibility problems. Resolving these became a priority and slowed development in other areas of the site. Another problem was that the survey function was not as user-friendly as Survey Monkey which the councils prefer. Additionally the officers wanted a function where it would be possible to download all the results once a conversation had finished. Other examples included the 'remember me' button not working, and users' registrations going into the council's spam. User feedback was that the site seemed unnecessarily complicated to navigate around. Izwe acknowledged these problems and fixed most of them eventually, although some of the updates still need technical improvement, and some of the functionality around surveys and analysis of conversations is still not satisfactory from the councils' point of view. In retrospect izwe admits that they needed more development time and user testing before launching publicly. On the whole, both Councils found the technical teething problems to be frustrating, as did the users, but, recognising that this is a pilot, feel that it has been a worthwhile journey. As they have been given technical support for the next two years, they remain hopeful that it will be a success if improvements continue to be made to the site and that a membership can be built up. Both

boroughs thought the experience was interesting and gave them the opportunity to think about how they might conduct online engagement in the future.

4.16 Lessons for izwe are:

- There should have been a service level agreement in place at the start of the project.
- Project management and action planning are essential activities which should have taken place throughout the duration of the project.
- Izwe need to have a greater understanding of the culture of local authorities, for example the way officers communicate with each other and with elected members.
- There needs to be a recognition that 'day-to-day' issues that the council is required to consult upon e.g. transport may have to be given a greater priority than more controversial issues such as consultation around the cuts.
- There needs to be more work carried out to make the whole process of online engagement more inclusive, for example outreach work with community groups to encourage them to use this form of engagement.
- There should have been more guidance and support in place on how the use of the site could have been maximised, from both the officers and residents' points of view – including user-friendly 'how to' instructions and/or a Help facility.
- There should be a pilot phase to sort out technical glitches before going live.

4.17 The lessons that can be learned from the council's point of view are:

- Content should be made meaningful to users, with short attractive summaries of issues to respond to, rather than a large technical document.
- It is important to seek views on users' priorities, even if they prove controversial.
- Councils need to think whether they really do have to pre-moderate residents' posts, or whether automated moderation, which blocks the use of certain words or phrases is sufficient.
- Clearly councils have to be careful in the way they respond to residents in that they should have a corporate view rather than a personal opinion. Officer response therefore needs to be thought out in terms of who has authority to respond to users.
- Councils also need to plan how comments and conversations are fed back into the council's decision-making processes.
- Numbers of users do matter if the council is to use the site to gain a representative sample of the population for a survey, and therefore successful marketing of the site is very important, although councils will obviously have to bear in mind that online engagement will remain only one of a number of engagement methods.

Working with councillors

- 4.18 There were four pieces of work within the LEP/TSEPI programme that engaged councillors in the empowerment agenda in an attempt to help them go beyond their work in surgeries and dealing with individuals' problems.

Councillors in Control

- 4.19 The *Councillors in Control* event held in Year 2 allowed space for councillors to reflect on the importance of their role in reconciling the different viewpoints of their constituents and getting people to feel they have been heard and had some impact on the general debate over an issue, even if their views were not able to be taken on board in their entirety. Councillors were urged to act as enablers by bringing people together in a variety of ways.

Health event for councillors

- 4.20 An event held in Year 3 targeting councillors sitting on health scrutiny committees and ward councillors who work with local health groups. The event offered the opportunity for a useful discussion on the barriers preventing them from engaging with health, including the view that health is of marginal concern to council matters. That view shifted as delegates recognised that concerns such as housing have an impact on health.

Self-assessment workshops

- 4.21 Self-assessment workshops run by IDeA took as one of their themes the involvement of councillors. Participants believed that helping elected members was a priority and that to enhance the role of councillors in community empowerment they should support officers to understand the community leadership role of the ward councillor and to develop member support to fulfil this role. They should also support councillors to take a lead role in area/neighbourhood forums and committees.

Councillors in the community

- 4.22 Involve was commissioned to create an online resource to support members to play a community leadership role. The website, *Councillors in the Community* specifically supports councillors' understanding of their community leadership role and how they can, as community representatives can influence services, such as health and policing, for which they have no direct responsibility. The website collates a range of existing materials linked to contextual information and has produced two thematic guides on health and policing which include newly developed material describing the governance structures for each of these service areas in the boroughs.

Impact of the work with councillors

- 4.23 It is difficult to assess the long-term impact of the events and the self assessment workshops without a survey of councillors that attended these. However feedback, particularly on the *Councillors in Control* event, demonstrated that councillors had taken on board their wider role in engaging the community. Initial feedback from the principle stakeholders who advised on the development of the *Councillors in the Community* website indicates that it is welcomed and that it had fulfilled its remit to fill the gaps in training and development materials in this area. However, with the changes in the government map and supporting agencies, the website is already out of date.

Strategic self-assessment

- 4.24 The Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) offered peer support under the TSEPI programme to nine boroughs to support them in their work on engaging and empowering citizens and communities in their areas. It facilitated self- assessment workshops for each borough using IDeA's NEA framework for an ideal empowering authority. The workshops promoted leadership and offered each participating borough an opportunity for a cross section of high level public agency officers from the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) to get together to assess their own empowerment performance and to identify areas for improvement.
- 4.25 The findings from the workshops, taken together, are invaluable in identifying priorities that councils and their partners would like to focus on, for example:
- developing the skill set of officers on empowerment techniques and evaluation
 - improving engagement with the third sector in the recognition that it can reach communities that public agencies find difficult to connect with
 - helping to improve coordination across council services and partner agencies together with a focused action plan
 - assessing what methods of communication, engagement and empowerment are best used in what particular circumstances,
 - supporting the effective use of social media as an engagement tool
 - exploring ways to build trust between agencies and communities including enhancing the transparency of decision making processes
 - encouraging councils the use feedback techniques to inform residents how they have taken on board their views and suggestions

Impact

- 4.26 Spending time talking about strengths, identifying areas for improvement and actually getting these ideas down on paper was seen as a first step to changing the culture within the whole agency. However, this is only a first step and gaining a commitment to, and understanding of, empowerment at the frontline was recognised to be a challenge. Some boroughs had followed up their action plans, for example one had used Take Part funding this year to run awareness training on empowerment techniques for its engagement staff.

Collaboration between the third sector and local authorities

- 4.27 It is important to emphasise the role that the voluntary sector plays in empowerment as there has been an emphasis by the labour government, and more recently by the coalition government, on the contribution of the voluntary sector to the delivery of public services, with less recognition of its contribution to the empowerment agenda.

London's LAAs: the third sector role

- 4.28 An event was held in Year 2, hosted by LVSC, to explore the case for involving the third sector in the delivery of Local Area Agreements (LAAs), emphasising the need to recognise that community empowerment takes place collectively through voluntary and community groups as well as through individuals. The event raised the issue of the role of voluntary groups in influencing decisions in their role on LSPs and in LAAs. However, the issue for the empowerment agenda is the role the voluntary sector could have in

facilitating and coordinating the voices of services users. Although the Coalition Government has abolished LAAs, there is still a potential role for the voluntary sector to coordinate local voices and influence local decisions, for example, in new arrangements outlined in the Localism Bill, as well as new consultation arrangements in other sectors, such as the local HealthWatch organisations which will replace LINks.

Action Learning Set

- 4.29 An Action Learning Set (ALS) on the theme of Learning in Action with LSPs was held with six participants, including two local authority officers who were paired with voluntary sector participants in their boroughs. The local authority officers gained an understanding of how they could strengthen relationships with voluntary sector representatives working with the LSP and its sub groups, and they both will work more strategically with their Council for Voluntary Service as a result. In both boroughs the work done could help to change the culture of the local authority with regards to joint work on commissioning, representation and working to provide a thriving third sector.

Impact for the third sector

- 4.30 We feel that it is very important to continue to explore ways for the third and public sector to collaborate. We found the ALS particularly effective for its participants for whom it made a difference in the way they approached their work on community empowerment. Third sector participants felt they could influence the way local authorities and LSPs engaged with both the third sector and individuals, and the public sector participants felt that a more collaborative way of working could enhance their community empowerment activities. But it is a very small project and the question is how to encourage more boroughs to take this on board.

Developing effective methods of quality assurance

- 4.31 In Year 1, an evaluation model was produced to measure the quality and success of community empowerment activities in London, and tested the following year using eight case studies of youth empowerment projects. The model allows an exploration of the **inputs** and resources devoted to the project; **processes** - the methods used for the empowerment activity, analysed from the perception of users, their facilitators and public agencies; and **outcomes which** looked at the degree to which participants can and do influence actual decisions, and the impact of the project on the participants themselves in terms of their learning, development and progression. The report stressed that real empowerment has to take account of the issues of importance to those who are 'being empowered', and not the issues important to those who are already empowered.
- 4.32 Although it appears to be a useful tool to evaluate individual empowerment activities and it has been published by the LEP and is available on LCF's website, we are unsure how widely it is being used, and it did not appear to have been fed into national research on empowerment evaluation.

Overall conclusions

- 4.33 There has been an interesting range of projects aimed at supporting public agencies, in the main local authorities, in their community empowerment activities. This has included some interesting and innovative methods of engaging communities, and an analysis of what makes communities engage with public agencies. The finding that the most common methods of engaging communities tends to focus on input into forward strategies and policies, and misses out on the more immediate issues that residents commonly want resolved, has implications for the way the public sector interprets these 'reactive' issues more strategically and engages its customer services officers in seeking strategic solutions to problems identified by the public. The work involving councillors and their role in the community, although not perhaps having the impact that was hoped, is an important aspect of community empowerment. Additionally the work of the voluntary and community organisations and representatives has been identified as an important way to engage local citizens and service users.
- 4.34 Has this resulted in a culture change within public agencies? This has yet to be demonstrated. Impact has been patchy. Individual boroughs may have benefitted from support that has been customised for them e.g. some councils have taken action on their community empowerment self-assessment action plans. The NI4 research has raised a great deal of interest across boroughs but they remain unsure how to implement the findings. It may be that the Community Responses work gives them a practical way forward, but because at this stage it is still difficult to say that this method of engagement will yield results that have more of an impact on feelings of influence than other methods of community engagement. Social networking as a way to engage citizens has also raised a great deal of interest and boroughs we talked to are all looking at this method, and we believe that this does represent a change in culture; however, this will also require a change in culture on citizens' part. There has not been evidence that the LEP has been able to influence councillors to take on more of an empowerment role.

5. REGIONAL COORDINATION

Introduction

- 5.1 This chapter looks at how the LEP has built relationships through its structures, and how it has coordinated activities at a regional level to improve community empowerment across London, both at a regional and local level.

Building relationships within and between sectors

The structure of the LEP

- 5.2 The LEP evolved from an informal Development Group in 2007/08 to a two-tier structure with a small Steering Group and much larger Consortium in 2008/09. Following a previous evaluation which concluded that this structure was unwieldy and not as effective as it might be the LEP restructured in 2009/10. The new structure provided partners with a more clearly defined role and a mechanism to enable information exchange between a range of sectors and networks to inform the development of a strategic improvement programme for community empowerment. The new structure consisted of a small Task Force of nine members, informed by four Thematic Groups. Task Force members comprise representatives from the four Thematic Groups; the LCF as the accountable body; Capital Ambition and the Government Office for London, both of whom hold community empowerment funding programmes; IDeA in its capacity of managing the Network of Empowering Authorities; and the GLA.

The Task Force

- 5.3 The role of the Task Force is to:
- oversee the development and implementation of the Action Plan, and support the fulfilment of key tasks within it (some activity areas will be delegated to thematic groups)
 - evolve and provide the collective voice of the Partnership through delivery of the aims outlined above
 - shape and guide the overall strategic direction of the Partnership
 - provide a space for discussion and comparison of key issues emerging from thematic groups

Views of the effectiveness of the Partnership

- 5.4 We asked Task Force members, through semi-structured interviews, what they thought the objectives of the partnership were and how far they thought they had been met. Most said that they believed the main objective was to raise the profile of empowerment and engagement within statutory agencies, to improve their understanding of engagement, and embed good practice into their engagement work. Because of its emphasis on helping statutory authorities improve their NI4 (feelings of influence) score, the LEP focused very much on raising the knowledge and awareness of statutory authorities on how to engage communities in influencing better quality services. There were also activities, such as those delivered under the Empowering Diversity work strand, that looked at ways people could have more control over their own lives. However, there was a feeling amongst some partners that there

was little emphasis on grassroots support of very small local community groups and their role in community empowerment.

5.5 We asked whether partners felt these objectives had been achieved. It was felt there had been a slow start over the first two years of the partnership when there was a much wider, but less stable membership. Theoretically, the structure that has been operating for the past two years comprising a core membership which plans and coordinates delivery, and four sub groups representing four stakeholder interests (statutory, voluntary, community and equality), should have worked to bring together the various interests and to share the learning and experience of community empowerment from four different constituencies. This in turn should have informed delivery against key objectives. However, there were structural problems in communicating between the sub groups, and a lack of joining things up. The opportunity to discuss the difference between civic and civil society and to join up the two was lost.

5.6 Interviewees agreed that the objectives had been partially met but not fully:

- **Improving quality:** there has been some work done on a quality model to measure impact but it has not been widely disseminated or used beyond research on youth involvement. Although individual sub groups discussed what community empowerment meant to them and what was good practice, ideas had not been brought together as a Partnership.
- The objectives around **improving evidence** had been met, mainly through the delivery of the programme which has provided the basis for case studies and the means to disseminate community empowerment practice.
- It is the objective around **improving coordination** that has not really been met through the Partnership. Some coordination has been achieved through the programme manager, the London Civic Forum, which has created a community empowerment information hub through its briefings and website.

5.7 **Achievements** have been mainly around delivery and dissemination:

- excellent project management
- good project delivery
- dissemination of good practice through LCF briefings, the Empowerment Map and events
- LEP sub groups in the main offered valued spaces for their own constituent members

5.8 The **barriers to achievement** appeared to be:

- lack of strong leadership able to pull the different aspects and perspectives of community empowerment together, and to resolve conflicts
- different values and approaches did not get aired genuinely
- the proposal and creation of the commissioning group proved rather divisive

- sub groups may have worked effectively in their sector but there was little attempt to coordinate them
- too much time devoted to discussing the delivery of the programme and not enough on reflecting on experience, on learning, and what gaps there were
- programme appeared fragmented with a collection of projects that does not add up coherently
- projects appeared good but no information about how the work had been embedded into community empowerment practice

5.9 We have addressed these concerns in the final chapter where we discuss the legacy of the LEP, but before this the coordination role of the LEP needs more exploration.

The Thematic Groups

5.10 The four Thematic Groups exist to design, develop, oversee and discuss specific activity areas within the LEP's Action Plan. Members come together to discuss community empowerment issues relevant to their sector. There are four Thematic Groups:

- The Community Development Network for London: Network of Practitioners (CDNL)
- The London Boroughs Community Empowerment Networking Group (LBCENG)
- The Equalities Scrutiny Committee managed through the HEAR network
- The Third Sector Empowerment Forum

The Community Development Network for London

5.11 The CDNL, established in 2007, and coordinated through a voluntary Collective, exists to:

- provide networking opportunities and informal peer support
- enable policy dissemination and critical discussion
- develop a campaigning capability to raise the profile of community development
- encourage the growth of community development networks at a local level or on an issue basis

The CDNL has held about three events per year looking at issues - for example on the role of community development in health, and also at new policy - for example an event to discuss the implications of the Big Society. These are always very well attended and involve deep discussion of the issues in question. Participants find them useful and we know of examples where people have made useful contacts to exchange information and views e.g. on the LinkedIn network.

5.12 The CDNL Collective has a role to advise the LEP of the community development perspective of empowerment - one which focuses on organising and supporting civil society and informal community networks. However, it believes that the LEP has had rather a limited scope because of its focus on the managerial model of community empowerment that looks at skilling the public sector to work with communities rather than shifting power down into

the community. Thus it concentrated less on what the public sector could do to facilitate grassroots development, and more on how the public sector could engage communities in its own policy agenda and/or in improving public services. Attempts to engage other sectors (public and voluntary sector) in a dialogue about different views of community empowerment have not been particularly fruitful. The sub-groups have all operated in relative isolation and there has never been time to have this sort of debate during Task Force meetings. The spending of the programme money and its monitoring took most of the time resources of the Task Force. The CDNL Collective believes that a voluntary cross-sector Task Force could work better as a shared space for learning in the future as it would be unencumbered by commissioning, spending and monitoring the funding. Furthermore, the agenda of the Coalition Government has a greater focus on community development and community organising and the different sectors should have a greater impetus to share different ideas of community empowerment in the context of the Big Society.

The London Boroughs Community Empowerment Networking Group

- 5.13 The LBCENG acts as a forum through which members will be supported in improving community empowerment in their borough, to obtain information and to inform current debate on community development and empowerment. It hosts presentations and discussions on community empowerment ranging from national issues (such as the IDeA Framework for an Ideal Empowering Authority, how the CAA will explore community empowerment practice in areas, Participatory Budgeting) through good practice exemplified by particular boroughs (e.g. Brent Council's Neighbourhood Working, Lewisham's Area Assemblies) to particular topics (e.g. health and LINKs, members' role in community empowerment). The LBCENG is very well attended. Evidence shows that borough representatives ask for further information from the boroughs presenting good practice. For example, there was interest generated from Newham's Neighbourhood Forum approach where there is a councillor community lead for each of the eight forums who coordinates neighbourhood problems and issues, bringing these to a quarterly meeting attended by officers who plan how to solve the problems.
- 5.14 The LBCENG still intends to continue, and we have found, in discussion with boroughs, that they are keen to continue to meet to critically discuss new ideas such as Community Organising, implications of the Localism Bill and how they will operate in practice. They would also value discussion with other sectors as they believe that there is much to learn from each other's point of view. For example, the role (or roles) of the community activist can seem threatening to local authorities but a shared understanding of what community activism is or is not - and how local authorities could support it - would be beneficial, the boroughs thought.

The Equalities Scrutiny Committee

- 5.15 The LEP has engaged the HEAR Network, a third sector equalities network for London, to act as an Equalities Scrutiny Committee to ensure that the LEP's work benefits those who are least empowered and sufficiently addresses inequality in London. HEAR's work is not exclusively to do with community empowerment and it tends to report wider issues, such as the work it is doing on the Equalities Act and the general and specific duties.

The HEAR Network does not exclusively focus on community empowerment but was funded over the past two years to participate in the LEP and the Task Force and to 'scrutinise' the work of the LEP from an equalities point of view. The HEAR Network was also funded by the LEP in Year 3 to undertake research on the relationship between equalities and empowerment. This highlighted the need to ensure that the definition of empowerment included a consideration of empowering diverse communities, as well as a consideration of individual needs and concerns. The research recommended that there needs to be improved communication to enhance and increase dialogue between HEAR and the LEP, especially with regard to the equalities scrutiny role.

- 5.16 This year there has been much more dialogue about the work of the LEP within the HEAR network, and the LEP Coordinator has attended meetings to discuss the Action Plan. However it was agreed that 'scrutiny' was an inappropriate function for the LEP which had more or less commissioned all its work by the time the HEAR Network. There was also no formal structured methodology for HEAR to scrutinize the work in terms of how effective it has been at engaging equalities groups in all its work. However, there is a role for such a group in the future, contributing to the debate about the policy agenda, for example the equalities implications of community organisers, and the new public sector requirements of the specific duties of the Equality Act to engage diverse communities.

The Third Sector Empowerment Forum

- 5.17 The Third Sector Empowerment Forum brings together representatives from generic third sector organisations to debate and reflect on community empowerment issues impacting on the role of the sector. It has similar objectives as the CDNL and LBCENG but was set up specifically to feed in views of the third sector to the LEP. The Third Sector Forum helps to refine the community empowerment argument and to make the case that public sector community empowerment initiatives should involve third sector organisations. It does this through sharing good practice, for example involvement in a network which shares ideas for improving well-being through community led activities and the development of an anti-discrimination charter for the VCS which will be used to enable the VCS to empower tenants and residents. The Forum has found its meetings useful as information sharing meetings, but they do not always focus on empowerment. Members find the word 'voice' a much more meaningful term and how to mobilise those voices is the issue of concern, rather than 'empowering' those voices.
- 5.18 Last year the Third Sector Forum felt it was more influential e.g. it informed the work of the health strand within the LEP Action Plan, particularly around LINKs and the work LEP is doing around the GLA's Community Voices for Health. The Forum is also directly coordinating the delivery of the CLLP. However, this year, as all the work has been commissioned, it felt its role has not been particularly fruitful. The representative on the Task Force feels that a forward looking Task Force which is about setting a strategic direction for the partnership would be easier to engage with; the role of the sub group coordinator would be more about defining a specific issue to debate, collecting views from the sector and feeding this back into a general discussion at the Task Force.

Conclusions on the role of the Task Force and Thematic Groups

- 5.19 Members of the Task Force agreed that they had spent most of their time commissioning, overseeing and monitoring the work programme and less time on a regional coordination role. They would have liked to have had more of a strategic and forward thinking role within the region, and felt that they had missed the opportunity to make links with other appropriate networks, such as the London ChangeUp Consortium and LVSC's network. Representatives from the Thematic Groups thought that their role within the Task Force could have been improved if they had more debate about particular topics and were able to bring back the views of their constituents. They would then be able to feed in and discuss issues from the different perspectives of the sectors, and collectively gain more insight into those perspectives.

Dissemination/Events

- 5.20 Both the London Civic Forum website and the *Shape Your City* portal are vehicles for the dissemination of information and participation by visitors to the sites.

Learning events

- 5.21 Over the past four years a programme of events has been organised on topical issues such as community asset transfer, health, equalities. Some of them have been targeted at a particular constituency such as councillors. They have always been over subscribed and had good evaluations. One interviewee said that this was what the LCF in particular was good at undertaking since it had good contacts across all sectors.
- 5.22 This year the intention was to organise five events on issues in a 'changing London'. A first event on Equalities in a Changing London was very successful with delegates giving good feedback and learning the new context. However, the uptake on Leadership in a Changing London was low and it was decided to redesign the events with a much more focused and topical theme. So far two have been run: on the role of parish councils in London and one on Community Organisers. Both were over-subscribed and people we spoke to either praised the event, or said they had been disappointed not to be able to attend. A number of factors contributed to their success: the issues were very topical, the events were in the early evening which meant that delegates could attend after their day's work. Furthermore, several borough participants said that these types of free events were invaluable as there was an embargo on attending fee-paying conferences.

Disseminating information

- 5.23 Bi-monthly **e-bulletins** on community empowerment have been sent to almost 3000 recipients on LCF's contact database and it is estimated that a further 5000 receive it from partnership networks such as bassac, LVSC, MiNet, the LBCENG, CDNL etc. The e-bulletins are informative and up-to-date. The content includes news and updates on national and London-wide empowerment work. Those on the list also receive invitations to LEP events. However, in discussion with borough engagement officers as part of our evaluation, we found that not all engagement officers received the bulletins and got to hear about the events by word of mouth. It is important to get an updated list of all those local authority officers who have some interest in community empowerment, democracy and engagement. The LCF has also

published a **Catalogue of Resources** listing and summarising all the research and reports coming out of the LEP's work over the past four years.

- 5.24 Visitors to both the LCF website and the **Shape Your City** empowerment portal have the opportunity to provide input by participating in discussion forums, consultations and surveys. These visitors had contributed to the last Government's consultation on *Strengthening Local Democracy* which set out a range of proposals to promote democratic renewal and strengthen the power and responsibility of local government. This in turn was used by the CDF in its response to the consultation. However, the discussion forums have not been very active, and consultations generally yield a poor result.
- 5.25 There have been almost 5000 visits to the **Shape Your City** portal over the last two years with 22,000 page views. On average people spent between three and four minutes browsing the site. The portal has attracted 70% of new users each year. There was less activity this year than last on the particular parts of the portal. Whereas 591 viewed the Empowerment Map last year, only 293 looked at the general this year, with only 128 viewing the page where it is possible to upload information onto the Map, compared with 615 last year. However, there were more numerous views of the particular boroughs' empowerment activities on the map ranging from 191 of Southwark's activities to 21 in Bexley. Fewer people viewed the resources, discussion forums, consultations and survey than last year (under 200 each this year compared to 200 each last year).
- 5.26 In our last evaluation we recommended that there should be a proper marketing strategy which would include getting contacts updated on a regular basis, and also getting the Empowerment Map more populated. We believe there is still work to be done on marketing and dissemination of the resources of the LEP, otherwise there is a danger that usage will reduce and the good practice learning will be lost.

Regional coordination to improve empowerment locally

- 5.27 The LEP had as one of its main aims to improve the coordination of community empowerment across London through a number of objectives. How well has it done this?
- **Developing a coordinated approach to community empowerment regionally:** theoretically the LEP should have had a coordinated approach to community empowerment through the Task Force and its constituent Thematic Groups. However, there was a lack of cross-fertilisation between the Thematic Groups and the Task Force itself spent much of its time commissioning work and monitoring the work programme.
 - **Ensuring both statutory and third sector interests as deliverers and beneficiaries of community empowerment are recognised and represented:** the point here is not who delivered the work programme but who is delivering community empowerment projects and who is the ultimate beneficiary from community empowerment. Much of the work concentrated on supporting the statutory sector to understand and deliver their own community empowerment activities, targeted at individual unorganised citizens; indeed this is how the community empowerment agenda has been interpreted all along. We feel that the

third sector and the community sector have a delivery role in community empowerment but there were few projects aimed at enhancing their capacity to do so – of note were projects within the CLLP programme, some of the Empowering Diversity projects and the health projects. Furthermore, the community sector and community activists should also be beneficiaries, as they need support in galvanising community activity and exercising a voice for their neighbourhood or issue. These are the issues that tended to be discussed within the CDNL, but this received a low profile within the LEP as a whole.

- **Positioning the LEP as a hub for community empowerment in London:** this was done fairly successfully through events and briefings and through the LCF's website. However, there are a number of issues relating to how these are marketed, although it is recognised that at the end of the funding programme combined to severe cuts to the sector have jeopardised what could have occurred with more vigour. As events tended to be marketed through the LCF there was often a confusion as to who had supported them – ultimately this does matter if the LEP is to raise its profile. The briefings may also be confused with the LCF, but another major point is that many of the borough officers working in engagement, democratic services and consultations are not on the mailing lists. The website has useful information, but again it is LCF's website and although the LEP has its own profile as a programme within LCF's work programme the resources and events funded by the LEP are indistinguishable from those funded by other programmes. Again this matters in terms of the LEP's profile.
- **Using intelligence gained to influence and support the national community empowerment agenda to meet regional interests:** the LEP has disseminated research and models of community empowerment across the region through events, guides and websites. However, there are issues about how these are disseminated so that organisations actually use the learning, as well as issues about how they are kept updated and live. One of the successful methodologies for disseminating learning was the training session and guide on Community Evaluators which has resulted in at least one borough taking this on. However, some of the other pieces of research, for example the Empowering Diversity research, without a practical marketing (and not just dissemination) strategy which aims to influence the right people, risk remaining on the shelf.

We take these issues on board in the next chapter on the legacy of the LEP.

6. LEGACY

Introduction

- 6.1 This chapter looks at the legacy of the LEP and how to continue that legacy. We discussed with the LEP about continuing to exist in a voluntary basis. Partners did want to keep the LEP space open and alive, otherwise they thought shared learning would be lost. Boroughs interviewed were also keen that the LBCENG should continue and that the LEP could add to the discussions by running focused events on particular topics. The CDNL will also continue in its own right. The HEAR Network will continue in its own right and would, we feel, have an essential role in exploring the role of equalities in a new political agenda. Negotiations are continuing with the third, or voluntary sector; although there is a view that the voluntary sector does not have a role in empowering individual citizens; however, we feel it does surely have a role in facilitating citizens to have a voice.
- 6.2 Our consultations found that partners believed the main overall role of the Partnership to be as a facilitator and coordinator. It should be a space to reflect thinking, especially how community empowerment fitted with the Big Society and Localism agendas. It should be planning discussions and events to further that thinking, rather than managing direct delivery, although keeping briefings and the website up to date was considered important.
- 6.3 The LCF has resources within other related programmes to continue to give administrative support, albeit in a scaled down way, and there may be connections within its Policy Voice programme that would enable it to run events and round table discussions.

Critical success factors

- 6.4 We believe that the following critical factors of a successful partnership must be in place for the Partnership to be effective.
- **A strongly defined role:** with no funding for projects, and a very different political environment the LEP could define its role as one with more of an emphasis on collaborative cross-sector learning about community empowerment with a view to raising the profile and understanding of community empowerment, and the various ways of promoting it within all sectors.
 - **A learning and reflective space:** with no delivery function there would be the time and space to have genuine cross-sector debates on the role of community empowerment – exploring a wider definition to include grassroots activity – and the implications for supporting it to happen.
 - **A strong leader who can command respect across the sectors:** the current Chair is well connected in Government and is certainly respected, and has been more proactive than the previous Chair. Other REPs have independent Chairs (East and Yorkshire and the Humber) and this could be something the LEP might consider.
 - **A REP structure that engages all sectors and brings them together:** the current structure seems good on paper, bringing in three

sectors and a separate equality network. However, the sub-groups have not coordinated together and have tended to operate independently within their own space. An informed discussion on the role of the sub-groups and how exactly they should be brought together needs to happen, using some of the findings in our previous chapter.

- **Influential relationships with regional bodies:** our interviewees suggested membership from a wider group of regional bodies such as the GLA and the London Funders Group. This needs to be discussed and tested.
- **A link to Government:** there may be a civil servant who is to act as a regional coordinator for the Big Society in the regions. This person is an obvious link to Government and should be a member of the Task Force.
- **A good marketing strategy:** it will be very important to maintain and indeed increase the profile of the LEP through a marketing strategy. This includes **promotion** of some of the previous work that goes beyond the Resources Catalogue (e.g. some form of event), as well as promotion of the LEP's new role, remit and activity; and an **offer** that would include briefings, and easily navigable, appropriate and up-to-date website, and a programme of events/discussions. Importantly it also includes the need to invite people to become members in a **membership drive** rather than waiting for them to hear about the partnership. As part of that membership drive we feel there is a need to involve other sectors, such as education and health.

Overall aim

- 6.5 The current overall aim of the LEP is *to improve the coordination, quality and evidence of empowerment activity across London*. As a Partnership with no or little delivery function we believe that a more appropriate aim might be **to promote collaborative cross-sector learning (and influence?) of how community empowerment (involvement?) should be undertaken in the context of the new political agenda**. This emphasises the learning and debate angle in the context of the Coalition Government's new policies.

Objectives

- 6.6 We suggest the Task Force discusses objectives that reflect a potential role as a cross-sector space for learning:
- **To raise the profile and understanding of community involvement in the context of the new Government agenda** – a campaigning and influencing objective aimed at widening the understanding of what community empowerment is (or might need to look at a new word/phrase)
 - **To network between the public, voluntary and community sectors with a view to improve the coordination of community involvement practice across London** (role of the private sector?) – a web of people joining things up – better coordination and learning between the sub-groups

- **To disseminate specialist knowledge, advice and evidence around good practice** - maintain the website and keep the Empowerment Map populated

Activities

- 6.7 We feel that the Offer should be focused on learning, networking and dissemination and suggest the following:

Raising the profile and understanding of community involvement by:

- reflective events or round tables for the Task Force or a small group of invitees to discuss topical issues e.g. get London Funders around the table
- a series of seminars on what community involvement means in the new agenda: e.g. growing of community groups; role of community organisers; (Big Society); neighbourhood planning (Localism) co-production (Commissioning agenda); engagement around equalities (Equalities Duties) – this could be aimed at the Task Force itself, or could bring the sub groups together in larger events
- running larger events aimed at a more open audience around new topics – e.g. parish councils and link to neighbourhood planning; community organisers; right to buy and community assets; community anchors
- Lobbying on a regional or national scale – can CDF help take issues to the Government?

Networking between the sectors by:

- giving an analytical oversight in Task Force meetings of what each constituent sector is doing especially in light of ‘austerity times’
- getting the different sectors to give presentations in each other’s thematic groups

Dissemination:

- through LCF’s website and briefings
- undertake some further work on impact of previous LEP projects to see how well these have been embedded in practice

Questions to consider

- 6.8 To summarise, the Task Force now needs to discuss its role, remit, membership, operation and marketing. To help with this we have asked the following questions:

- What should be the aim, objectives and activities?

- Is there a case for a slightly larger group with two or three representatives from each thematic group as well as regional representatives?
- What other statutory sectors should be represented e.g. health, police?
- Is there a role for a private sector representative and thematic group?
- Should the Task Force merely be a planning group or should it run internal reflective/awareness meetings for itself?
- How often should the Task Force and sub groups meet?
- How will the LEP promote its legacy?
- What should be the components of a marketing strategy?
- What can the LCF bring in the way of secretariat support and running events, and what is the timetable for deciding this?