

**REPORT TO
THE LONDON REGIONAL EMPOWERMENT
PARTNERSHIP:
EVALUATION OF TARGETED SUPPORT FOR
EMPOWERMENT AND PARTICIPATION
IMPROVEMENT 2009/10**

JUNE, 2010

**ZAHNO RAO ASSOCIATES LTD
94 STAPLETON HALL ROAD
LONDON
N4 4QA**

**mobile: 07767 811117
e-mail: kamila@zahnorao.co.uk
www.zahnorao.co.uk**

CONTENTS

Executive summary	3
1. Introduction	7
2. The TSEPI activities and their findings	9
3. Overall impact of the TSEPI	17
4. Conclusions and recommendations	23
Appendix: mini evaluations	28

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

1. As part of its Connecting Communities Programme The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government announced the Targeted Support for Empowerment and Participation (TSEPI) programme, a £1 million package of support to local authorities, delivered through the nine regional empowerment partnerships, of which the London Empowerment Partnership (LEP) is one. The support is meant to complement both the Connecting Communities programme, and the empowerment agenda, and as such was meant to enable local authorities to reach out to communities reporting low levels of civic engagement and ability to influence decisions.
2. The targeted boroughs in London included 14 out of the 15 Connecting Communities boroughs, and one other, Tower Hamlets.

The Activities

3. There were seven activities selected to cover a mix of research, tools and techniques which the boroughs could use in the future to improve their empowerment activities:
 - *Supported self assessment:* the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) facilitated self assessment workshops for nine boroughs using its framework for an ideal empowering authority.
 - *Ni4 research and analysis:* The Campaign Company (TCC) 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 desk research, stakeholder interviews and focus groups with the public.
 - *Community evaluators:* Micah Gold Associates delivered a community evaluation programme to inform boroughs how they might train and use local residents to conduct 'mystery shopping' exercises of their own empowerment activities.
 - *Strategic on-line engagement:* izwe supported boroughs to increase their effective engagement with local communities, giving residents a voice through a social networking site so that they can engage on council issues.
 - *BAME Participation Programme:* Operation Black Vote set up this project to inform, engage and support BAME communities to participate in civic life and to influence decision making. This year it developed a bespoke *Who Runs?* civic and political guide and directory for each participating borough.
 - *Community leadership legacy programme:* this project will build on the Community Leadership/community communicator programmes within the existing Connecting Communities programme currently being undertaken by the Connecting Community boroughs.
 - *Councillor in the community website:* Involve has created an online resource that will support members to play a community leadership role.

The impact

4. While the supported boroughs appreciated the help given, they did not see the programme as a coordinated package of support, filling in gaps that they identified that they needed. However, to counter this view, we understand that the support had been devised, not to meet individual boroughs' needs, but to provide a regional perspective, piloting different methodologies of community empowerment across London to see what might work best in which circumstances.
5. The impact of the activities was analysed in the evaluation against the three main components of IDeA framework for an ideal empowering authority.

Mainstreaming empowerment

6. The self assessment workshops led by IDeA were an opportunity for a cross section of high level public agency officers from LSPs across London to assess their own empowerment performance and identify areas for improvement. These were generally well received by participants. Furthermore IDeA summarised the overall issues of importance identified by participants which could form a useful menu of activities for the LEP to provide further support. The TCC NI4 research could also have an important impact on the way public agencies target empowerment activities to different segments of the population, based on their motivation and values. The Community Evaluators programme trained two groups of residents to evaluate empowerment activities in their own boroughs. A guide was written about the process and boroughs attended a training course. It is the intention of some boroughs to introduce a community evaluators' programme to look at empowerment activities from a residents' perspective.

Working with diverse communities and neighbourhoods

7. Some of the TSEPI activities looked at improving communication between communities and public agencies. Notably izwe's social networking site will provide councils with the means to engage people in surveys and consultations, but also provides residents with the opportunity to engage in discussions on their own terms. Impact is yet to be felt as this programme continues into 2010/11. The impact of OBV's BAME participation programme and the Community Leadership Legacy programme (CLLP) has not yet been felt: OBV's programme was delayed because of the elections and the CLLP had not appointed its sub regional coordinators at the time of the evaluation. However, both have the potential to engage people at a grassroots level.

The role of councillors in community empowerment

8. The website Councillors in the Community provides a useful collection of existing resources on the empowerment agenda and how councillors can get involved, as well as helpful new information on governance structures for policing and health which were not available elsewhere. The website had not been launched at the time of evaluation and the real impact will not be felt until after the election.

Conclusions

9. Given the unrealistically short timescale to run these activities, a tremendous effort was made by LEP and the contractors to develop and deliver this package of activities. Our evaluations of each individual activity (see Appendix) show that boroughs appreciated the support. Real impact will only be felt in the coming year and it will be important to examine that in a further evaluation of the TSEPI programme.
10. There is not a great deal of strategic connection between the TSEPI programme and other empowerment programmes. The proposed new Commissioning Group established by some of the LEP partners should help in this respect.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Working with the London Civic Forum as the accountable body, the LEP should join with other REPs to make the case to CDF and to CLG that they should allow an adequate amount of time to deliver an effective empowerment programme.

Recommendation 2: A priority for LEP's work this year should be to disseminate the findings and resources gained from this year's programme through London Civic Forum as accountable body.

Recommendation 3: The newly established Commissioning Group should establish a commissioning framework to place all the empowerment programmes in a strategic context.

Recommendation 4: There should be an evaluation of how all the empowerment programmes in London connect and interlink. There could be a role for the Commissioning Group to commission this.

Recommendation 5: the overall impact of the TSEPI should be evaluated in 2010/11, along with other empowerment programmes (see Recommendation 4 above). The evaluation should explore:

- Use of tools and techniques such as Involve and Community Evaluators' Guide
- Improved strategy as a result of IDeA workshops
- Evidence of improved engagement and empowerment
- Evidence of better decision making as a result of improved engagement and empowerment

Recommendation 6: The LEP and the Commissioning Group together should consider how to meet the following priorities in their empowerment work this year.

Evaluation of the Targeted Support for Empowerment and Participation Improvement Programme in London, 2009/2010

- The LEP, together with the London Boroughs Community Empowerment Networking Group (LBCENG), could encourage better coordination between the engagement and empowerment activities of LSP partner agencies by showcasing some examples of LSPs that have coordinated their engagement and empowerment activities, demonstrating efficiency and effectiveness in reaching and involving the public.
- The LEP and its constituent partners, through this year's programme, should help boroughs devise a more strategic approach to their customer input to frontline services.
- The CLLP will encourage grassroots activity, but the LEP should consider complementing any training by helping boroughs and their partners to put in place mechanisms that will use the views from the grassroots in the context of public decision making.
- Through LEP's Third Sector Empowerment Network case studies should be collected which give examples of how the third sector has successfully impacted on public decisions drawing on the views of service users, and how this impact has been fed back to service users.
- Building on Involve's website, the LEP should commission a specific project around the role of councillors in the community should be a priority for the coming year.
- The LEP should research appropriate courses and events on community empowerment for public sector officers and upload them onto the interactive empowerment map.
- The LEP should promote the evaluation model it devised in its first year, and which it refined through case studies in its second year. The LEP should also provide support to boroughs to help them establish Community Evaluators' programmes.
- The LEP should establish, with LBCENG, a Community of Practice (discussion forums, training, events) with practitioners involved in community empowerment across the boroughs (and we would suggest other partners in the LSP including the third sector), with a remit to identify and share good practice in learning.

1. INTRODUCTION

Background

- 1.1 In October 2009, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (CLG) announced a new £12 million Connecting Communities programme which aims to provide additional funding and support to over 100 local authority areas in England suffering most from the effects of recession. As part of this programme, the Minister also announced a £1 million Targeted Support for Empowerment and Participation Improvement programme (TSEPI) to be delivered by the nine Regional Empowerment Partnerships. In London this programme was delivered by the London Civic Forum (LCF) as part of the London Empowerment Partnership's work programme.
- 1.2 The activities within the TSEPI are meant to complement both the Connecting Communities programme and the activities delivered as part of the core programme of the LEP by providing strategic support to local authority areas to improve engagement and empowerment in their local area. This will provide additional capacity for local authorities to reach out to communities reporting low levels of civic engagement and ability to influence. Additionally, one of the activities will focus particularly on increasing engagement with BME groups where participation levels are disproportionately low.
- 1.3 The seven activities in the programme were aligned so they complemented the other empowerment programmes. They were selected to give a mix of support to local authorities and their partners, allowing them on the one hand to explore and analyse their existing empowerment strategies and the empowerment techniques used – and on the other to gain an insight of what empowerment means from a resident perspective. It was intended that the total package allowed LSPs to refine their strategies and activities in a structured way, and in a way that is informed by the people for whom they are providing services.
- 1.5 Complementary programmes include Connected Communities, the core programme of the LEP, and Take Part. Although we will make some reference to the fit of the TSEPI with these other programmes in our conclusions, they are all subject to their own separate evaluations which makes it difficult to join up.

Targeted boroughs

- 1.6 The targeted boroughs included 14¹ out of the 15 in receipt of Connecting Communities funding. Additionally it was intended to support three other boroughs as an analysis undertaken by LEP, closely working with the Government Office for London, had highlighted them as boroughs in need of support. In the event only Tower Hamlets took up this support. The supported boroughs are mainly the outer London boroughs, which also fits in with the London Mayor's focus on outer London boroughs, but also includes inner boroughs such as Tower Hamlets and Kensington and Chelsea.

¹ Barking and Dagenham, Barnet, Bexley, Bromley, Croydon, Enfield, Greenwich, Havering, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Kensington and Chelsea, Redbridge, Richmond, and Sutton

Evaluation of the Targeted Support for Empowerment and Participation Improvement Programme in London, 2009/2010

- 1.7 At the beginning of the programme the LEP and the GOL ran a workshop with the 15 boroughs to outline the programme and engage them. The Coordinator of the LEP worked for one day a week for two months with the GOL locality managers to engage the boroughs. Consequently buy-in has been high, with most of the boroughs involved in more than one activity.

Objectives of the evaluation

- 1.8 The objectives of the evaluation are:
- to see how far the original stated outcomes for each of the seven activities has been achieved
 - to see how far the programme as a whole has added to the boroughs' ability to engage effectively in the empowerment agenda

Structure of the evaluation report

- 1.9 The following chapters are structured as follows:
- Chapter 2: The seven activities and their findings
 - Chapter 3: Impact of the programme
 - Chapter 4: Conclusions and recommendations
 - Appendix 1: Individual mini-evaluations of each activity

2. THE TSEPI ACTIVITIES AND THEIR FINDINGS

Introduction

- 2.1 The seven activities were selected to cover a mix of research, tools and techniques which the boroughs could use in the future to improve their empowerment activities:

Supported self assessment: the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) offered peer support 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.

N14 research and analysis: The Campaign Company (TCC) 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. TCC undertook an initial quantitative and desk-based analysis of various factors such as demography and geography and perceived levels of influence across all boroughs. Using unique Values Modes methodology, they held discussion groups with different 'segments' of the population 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 motive (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.

Community evaluators: Micah Gold Associates (MGA) delivered a community evaluation programme to inform boroughs how they might train and use local residents to conduct 'mystery shopping' exercises of their own empowerment activities. MGA trained and facilitated community evaluators to develop their own evaluation framework to evaluate empowerment initiatives. MGA wrote a guide for boroughs on how to run a community evaluators' programme of their own, and ran a training session on the process.

Strategic on-line engagement: izwe supported boroughs to increase their effective engagement with local communities, giving residents a voice so that they can push for change. Working with Bexley and Hounslow initially, izwe identified causes of low engagement, researched the current engagement strategies and initiatives, and selected one issue to focus on for each borough. It has designed a social networking site to capture residents' opinions and to enable them to engage on the issue selected.

BAME Participation Programme: Operation Black Vote set up this 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 and directory for each participating borough. The intention in the second phase will be 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.

Evaluation of the Targeted Support for Empowerment and Participation Improvement Programme in London, 2009/2010

Community leadership legacy programme: this project will build on the Community Leadership/community communicator programmes within the existing Connecting Communities programme currently being undertaken by the Connecting Community boroughs. The London Voluntary Services Council (LVSC) worked with each participating authority and its local CVS to develop an action plan for 2010 – 2011 which will ensure the legacy of this year's leadership activity. From April 2010 sub-regional coordinators will support the continuation of local activity and work with the identified community leaders to increase engagement in hotspot areas.

Councillor in the community website: Involve has created an online resource that will support members to play a community leadership role. This was done through a stakeholders' meeting at the beginning of the project to identify a 'wish list of resources'. Involve identified existing resources and also developed new resources for the website.

Mix of activities

- 2.2 We have used the three 'pillars' of IDeA revised Framework for the ideal empowering authority to order and analyse the mix of activities.

Mainstreaming empowerment and developing a business case

- 2.3 This 'pillar' of the framework is concerned with changing organisational culture and structures to make them more responsive to communities, and providing evidence that community empowerment delivers efficient and effective services and stronger, more democratic communities. IDeA's **self assessment workshops** enabled local authorities and their partners to assess themselves against the whole framework and covered all three pillars, but the self assessment process itself enabled them to take a strategic look at how empowerment is, or could be, mainstreamed within their areas. Both TCC's **NI4** research and analysis and the **Community Evaluators' programme** gave boroughs the tools and skills to look at evidence and to evaluate empowerment practice. TCC's NI4 research and analysis looked at what factors determine the extent to which people feel they can influence local decisions. Delving quite deeply into what influence means to people, their experience of involvement, and their 'world view' gave insight into what sort of activities are likely to make people feel confident in their ability to change things, either for themselves or their community. The Community Evaluators' programme allowed members of the community to develop their own evaluation tool to measure how empowering or disempowering a particular activity is from their own perspectives. This could form part of a feedback loop which would allow boroughs to measure what actually works from a community perspective and to improve their activities.

Working with diverse communities and neighbourhoods

- 2.4 This demonstrates how agencies and communities can work together to identify priority outcomes and address them, deliver cohesive and inclusive communities and address inequalities. The **Strategic Online Engagement Programme** is developing an online platform which is both top down and bottom up. It creates an opportunity for citizens to give their views on local authority consultations and

surveys, but also allows citizens to create their own online debates, encouraging active participation. The **BAME participation programme**, with its 'Who Runs?' guides will give information on how the local council is run and how to get involved. The next stage of this project will be to broker conversations between public officers and councillors and the BAME community to enable a real dialogue to take place. The **CLLP** will give citizens the skills in community leadership so engagement at a local level will be increased.

The role of councillors in community empowerment

- 2.5 The third 'pillar' develops the role of the councillor as community leader, helping communities and agencies to work together, and strengthening democratic accountability. The website developed by Involve, *Councillor in the Community*, looks at the role of community leadership and is written as a resource specifically for councillors. It looks at how councillors and their constituents can influence agencies for which they have no direct responsibility, such as health and police.

Achievements and findings

- 2.6 This section looks at the achievements of each project: what they did and what was achieved. Although descriptive in nature, it sets the scene for the analysis of impact.

Mainstreaming empowerment

- 2.7 The findings from the IDeA workshops, taken together, are invaluable in identifying priorities that local authorities and their partners would like to focus on. Because these could be most useful for the LEP and others who fund support for agencies to improve empowerment, we have detailed them within each of these three sections. We have also made our own comments on how the LEP could provide support. For this pillar workshop participants identified that they would like to:

- develop the capacity, confidence and skill set of officers on empowerment e.g. running community events, focus groups etc.
- receive advice on how to evaluate and assess the effectiveness of empowerment activities
- improve strategic engagement with the third sector, enhancing its role and enabling it to fulfil it, in recognition of the fact that they can reach communities that public agencies may find difficult to connect with

- 2.8 The findings from the NI4 research should be very useful for agencies to use in devising and targeting their engagement activities. The desk research revealed that the strongest factors that impact on perceptions of influence are related to trust, and this was certainly borne out in the discussion groups where there was scepticism of representative democracy and its ability to influence on people's behalf. Local authority officers involved in engagement and empowerment, who were interviewed as part of the research, also 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

Evaluation of the Targeted Support for Empowerment and Participation Improvement Programme in London, 2009/2010

empowerment agenda. They also acknowledged a key challenge was harnessing the power of grassroots action and active citizens who wish to influence agencies. Key findings from the discussion groups are:

- The majority of those seeking influence are seeking solutions to personal problems; 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.
- Most participants recognise the importance of getting involved but many said they lacked information and awareness about how to get involved.
- Many participants felt some disillusionment with representative democracy and its ability to influence on their behalf.
- Settlers and Pioneers in particular are sceptical about the ability of individuals to influence and often seek to join others in grassroots action, bypassing formal structures.
- Prospectors are more likely to feel they can influence as individuals and may approach key people that they see as decision makers.
- In general people understand the limitations of public agencies and do not always expect that agencies can always take on board their views in their entirety. However, being heard is very important to them, and negative experiences of engagement and/or the feeling that nothing has happened as a result of their input is likely to impact negatively on their perceptions of influence.
- There were distinct differences in the way different people interpret the same experiences and this is a significant message for agencies. Settlers expressed frustration over lack of action resulting from their engagement with local agencies. Prospectors are much more likely to feel they can have an influence and are more likely to seek out someone with influence. Pioneers expressed scepticism about how data and their views would be interpreted and taken into account by agencies.
- Anecdotal evidence and hearing about experiences by word of mouth has the power to increase trust and this in turn may be more likely to increase people's perception of influence.

2.10 The emphasis on different user experience of engagement mechanisms and what makes people feel empowered leads us on to consider the findings from the Community Evaluator's programme. Evaluation of engagement activities is a very important part of mainstreaming empowerment, and who better to do it than local citizens themselves? As part of their training the Community Evaluators discussed what they felt to be good practice in empowerment and what they felt was actually empowering. From this discussion each of the two groups developed an evaluation tool that would lead to consistent reporting. The tools had similar headings looking at how well the activity publicised itself, the quality of the venue, the welcome, management of the meeting, whether there was a question and answer session, summary, and feedback/next steps. One of the groups developed a tool that allowed the collection and analysis of qualitative comments. Individuals or pairs then went out to test events, with one looking particularly at community safety events and one looking mainly at participatory budgeting events.

Evaluation of the Targeted Support for Empowerment and Participation Improvement Programme in London, 2009/2010

2.11 The tool proved to be an invaluable means to record feedback in a structured way and many of the findings chime with the views of the participants of the TCC discussion groups:

- Good publicity, excellent organisation of an activity and a welcoming venue were all deemed to be very important, making people feel valued. These factors all contributed to feelings of engagement.
- However, engagement was not the same as influence. Feed back from the organisers about next steps – as well as an indication of how they would be informed of any decisions - was the real test of empowerment.
- Whereas participants felt very empowered by the participatory budgeting events in Tower Hamlets, on reflection they wished they had been involved at an earlier stage to decide on the list of projects they were voting on, rather than selecting from a list which had been drawn up beforehand. In other words they wanted to be involved more strategically and to follow things through. They also wanted to be informed ‘what happened next and what were the outcomes?’ In fact all participants are informed of this once the projects have been running for a few months but the evaluators did not know.

Working with diverse communities and neighbourhoods

2.12 Participants in the IDeA workshops identified that they would like to:

- help LSPs to improve coordination across council services and partner agencies and develop a ‘smarter’ approach to how communities are engaged, perhaps in the form of a three year plan across partner agencies showing all planned empowerment activities
- assess what methods of communication, engagement and empowerment are best used in what particular circumstances, and ensure that residents are informed about the different methods used, how to get involved, and to what purpose
- support the effective use of social media as a tool for engagement and empowerment
- explore ways to build trust between agencies and communities including enhancing the transparency of decision making processes
- encourage councils and their partners to use feedback techniques to inform residents how they have taken on board their views and suggestions.

Some of these points were raised in the analysis of TCC’s discussion groups, particularly regarding a smarter and more targeted approach to how communities are engaged, encouraging feedback mechanisms and exploring trust, so there is some synergy between what agencies think would improved empowerment, and the views of residents, which is encouraging.

2.13 Online engagement with residents has the potential to allow councils to listen, respond and engage with local communities, and then use this opinion data to make better decisions. It is both bottom up, giving residents the opportunity to voice their opinion, give their views or ask for information - and top down, in that it allows council members to ask for views, consult on policies and strategies. It can also fill the gap in between, allowing residents and officers/councillors the

Evaluation of the Targeted Support for Empowerment and Participation Improvement Programme in London, 2009/2010

opportunity to converse with each other. Although, as the TCC research found, online engagement will not capture everyone's imagination, it is a tool that is starting to be used by citizens, councillors and public agencies (e.g. on Facebook, Twitter, and specific neighbourhood sites). In developing the prototype Strategic Online Engagement platforms for two boroughs, izwe undertook research to establish their current engagement strategies and activities and to select an issue to pilot. Currently both boroughs are interested in seeing whether social media will work as a tool to engage and empower residents. The sites will give residents the opportunity to have 'conversations' of different types:

- Take part in a *Quick Poll*: usually a 1 minute single question poll on a topical issue, to get people involved and to lead them to deeper parts of the site
- Undertake a more lengthy *Survey*. This can range from a quick 5 minute survey to a full-scale detailed consultation. In its first iteration, this survey function will be kept relatively brief, to avoid survey fatigue
- Initiate or comment on 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. This is the most highly deliberative function on the site.
- Join a *Forum* on a particular issue: this can be used by residents and council members and officers alike. This will allow for a more open dialogue between the council and residents.

- 2.14 Although the site is 'top down' and managed by izwe and the Council, it can also act as a 'bottom up' social network in that people will be able to create their own user groups. It is a relatively new concept and worth testing and evaluating to look at its impact and potential power to create efficiency savings.
- 2.15 The BAME participation programme is intended to build trust between BAME communities and public agencies by engaging the communities in civic affairs. The first phase of this programme was to develop a series of *Who Runs?* guides to civic affairs and how to get involved. These provide comprehensive information about the governance arrangements in each borough, including information on elected representatives, officers and other statutory agencies that form part of civic life. While this is useful as it will hopefully encourage people to gain access to influence, the main part of the programme, which will start in 2010/11, will build trust between agencies and the BAME communities by brokering conversations between local community leaders, senior public sector officers and members to share learning and expertise on engagement with BAME communities.
- 2.16 The Community Leadership Legacy Programme (CLLP) will invest in an infrastructure for developing a community leadership programme across London. This will provide a legacy for the Community Leadership programmes put in place as part of the Connecting Communities programme and also integrate with Take Part initiatives. The main thrust behind the CLLP is to provide a coordinated cross-sector strategic approach to community leadership. The sub-regional coordinators will be responsible for coordinating a range of activities which will encourage active citizenship: for example by providing training and learning opportunities, resources to support those opportunities, and capacity

building to develop community leaders. It could include supporting community representatives to take part in civil engagement mechanisms, but equally it could support grassroots activists. So far Councils for Voluntary Services in 15 boroughs have developed action plans for the next year, integrating voluntary sector led community leadership activities with those managed by the council.

The role of councillors in community empowerment

- 2.17 The findings from the IDeA workshops identified that participants believed that priorities were to:
- support officers to understand the community leadership role of the ward councillor and to develop member support to fulfil this role, ensuring that councillors are involved in empowerment initiatives.
 - support councillors to take a lead role in area/neighbourhood forums and committees
- 2.18 The website, *Councillors in the Community*, developed by Involve goes some way to support councillors in their role as community leaders. It 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. The first section 'Community Leadership Resources' is a compendium of existing material drawn from IDeA, LGA, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, London Councils, LGIU and the Leadership Centre for Local Government. These materials comprise a mix of 'think pieces' reflecting on research into the role of councillors as community leaders; case studies giving specific examples of how councillors have translated that theory into practice and 'how to' guides such as the LGIU's guide for councillors on 'Making an impact'. Although all these materials are already available on publicly accessible websites, *Councillor in the Community* has performed the invaluable role of selecting material with specific relevance for the target audience (councillors, especially newly elected councillors) and bringing it together in one place. The two thematic guides – health and policing include newly developed material describing the governance structures for each of these service areas within any borough and across London. These charts indicate the channels of direct influence and indirect scrutiny. The 'at a glance' flow charts are supplemented with more detailed references to the roles of different bodies and links to their websites. The 'contact book' templates allow individual councillors or boroughs to supplement this London wide information with specific information for the ward/borough.

Conclusion

- 2.19 Many of the activities have produced materials to help public agencies and their representatives to engage with communities, and communities to engage with their local agencies: for example, the Community Evaluation Guide, Councillors in the Community website, and OBV's Who Runs? guides. Other activities, such as the findings from the IDeA workshops and the TCC discussion groups have implications for the way public agencies devise and promote their engagement

Evaluation of the Targeted Support for Empowerment and Participation Improvement Programme in London, 2009/2010

and empowerment activities. We turn to a consideration of the impact of these findings in the next chapter.

3. OVERALL IMPACT OF THE TSEPI

Introduction

- 3.1 This chapter looks at the immediate and potential impact of the seven activities, as an overall package. The following section explores two boroughs' views of the package as a whole. Five boroughs were contacted as a sample, but only two responded. The remainder of the chapter again uses IDeA's framework for the ideal empowering authority. The outcomes and impact of each of the seven activities is covered in the case studies (Appendix 1).

The package of support

- 3.2 Boroughs did not see the TSEPI activities as a coordinated package of support, but saw it as a set of unrelated activities which they could pick and choose from. Although they agreed that they had benefited from the support given, it would have been more helpful, they thought, if a more coordinated approach had been taken. Which activities complemented each other? Where were the gaps in each borough? It was not marketed as a package of activities that would get boroughs from one particular point to another. There was a real sense that the activities had to be delivered in a rush, and therefore the maximum benefit had not been felt.
- 3.3 The package was not specifically targeted at individual boroughs' needs as it was meant to provide a regional perspective, piloting different methodologies of community empowerment across London to see what might work best in which circumstances. In this it was a prescriptive, rather than a customised service. Interviewees from the boroughs expressed a preference for a customised service in which the LEP would undertake a prior analysis of where each particular borough was in developing and implementing its engagement strategy and then developing a more bespoke set of activities. However, quite apart from the timescale involved in developing a customised service, we feel that the LEP's approach was more strategic, allowing boroughs to sample different programmes that looked at community empowerment from a different perspective.
- 3.4 One borough consultee was not convinced that the model of engagement/empowerment promoted by the LEP would work in every borough. It seemed to be promoting a model that assumes that citizens have time and the commitment to be an active citizen. However, active citizenship has to be built up over time. In this respect, the Community Leadership programme was highlighted as being of potential benefit since it would work with residents, developing their sense of leadership. The different values of residents influences how they experience engagement and empowerment. TCC's Values Mode research is useful in this respect, based as it is on a segmentation of the population according to people's values.

Mainstreaming empowerment

- 3.5 *Leadership and understanding:* the IDeA workshops were an opportunity for a cross section of high level public agency officers from the LSP to get together to assess their own empowerment performance and to identify areas for

Evaluation of the Targeted Support for Empowerment and Participation Improvement Programme in London, 2009/2010

improvement. This was seen as a means to mainstream empowerment within the LSP and its constituent partners, through identifying a common set of areas for improvement as an LSP, rather than a disparate set of activities for each agency. However, this proved more difficult to organise operationally since the workshops had to be organised at short notice, which limited the number of agencies that were able to attend. Another thing that came up in at least one of the workshops was a focus on engagement, rather than empowerment. Local authorities, in particular, appeared to focus quite heavily on community engagement as an end to itself. The fact that the workshops were facilitated by peers from other boroughs meant that this view could be challenged, and participants encouraged to think about how their activities could actually lead to citizens feeling they have changed and influenced something.

- 3.6 *Joining together and sharing information:* this was seen to be the most valuable part of the self assessment workshops. Attendees found it valuable to meet others with a role in engagement and to share issues. There was a particular mention of the value of sharing issues between the public and third sector. The workshop was seen as a means to draw people together to achieve a more joint approach.
- 3.7 *Changing the culture:* the self assessment workshops probably did most out of all the activities to directly develop a culture of empowering communities within public agencies. 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. One participant we interviewed spoke of the emphasis her organisation would now put on motivating their own staff, improving techniques for empowerment, and putting on training for both staff and councillors. The links to the Take Part programme were seen as beneficial.
- 3.8 *Information and data:* the TCC NI4 research looked at data through its desk research, exploring what drives feelings of influence. The Values Mode approach segments the population by their values rather than on the basis of demography. The qualitative discussion groups provided evidence, not only of what motivates people to become engaged, but also how they measure empowerment and influence from their own perspective. 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. This is a piece of research and its impact will only be felt once agencies find a way of acting on the findings. They could do well to consider the following:
- Different people may interpret empowerment experiences in different ways and agencies need to develop a range of engagement mechanisms to suit different people's different expectations of empowerment.
 - There is a mismatch between what the public want to engage in and what opportunities are available. Customer engagement in services does happen, but is not generally planned by the local authority as part of its engagement

strategy. There should be a closer alignment of input by citizens in service delivery and engagement mechanisms.

- Related to this is that people's experience of influence is most likely to be positive when it is direct. Many opportunities to engage are somewhat indirect and often happen through a representative from a third sector organisation sitting on, for example, the LSP. It remains a challenge for the third sector to engage people more directly in consultations and to feed back what happens when they sit on decision making boards.
- In a similar way there is a distinct role for councillors to engage local citizens in more than individual surgeries.
- Bottom up grassroots action, lobbying and campaigning is often ignored as a mainstream engagement activity. Councillors may actually have a positive role to play here as there are examples of their taking an active role in residents associations and 'friends' groups. Engagement officers could do well to think how to tap into this rich resource.
- The importance of feedback on any engagement process or survey is paramount since being heard is a key ingredient to a perception of influence. The phrase 'You Said, We Did' is becoming more widespread but it needs to be accompanied by 'And this is what happened as a result'. This is likely to increase the positive nature of the engagement experience and increase trust.

3.9 *Evaluation:* community led evaluation has been a theme for the LEP since its inception and Micah Gold Associates, who ran the Community Evaluators' programme, was able to use the findings from the pilots in Tower Hamlets and Bexley to write a guide to community led evaluation which will enable boroughs and other public agencies to run similar programmes. The pilots had good outcomes for both the evaluators and the council.

- *The evaluators* enjoyed the training and found that working in a group was empowering in itself. They felt they could set the agenda, and felt they owned the evaluation tool that they tested at empowerment events. In Section 2.11 we described their feedback from the events they evaluated, but the real impact was felt when they presented their findings to the council and received feedback. Both groups of evaluators found the feedback sessions empowering because they enjoyed their presentations, felt the council listened to them and felt that something would change as a result. In Bexley, where the evaluators mainly attended community safety meetings, a follow-up meeting was held with the Met Police which proved to be fruitful. In Tower Hamlets those officers who had responsibility for neighbourhood management, participatory budgeting and engagement engaged in a dialogue with the evaluators at the meeting, and discussed some of the findings.
- *The council:* In terms of a longer term outcome for both boroughs, the officers showed that they would like to repeat the exercise over a longer period so that different events could be sampled. In Bexley an interest was expressed in organising a 'buddying' scheme whereby the trained community evaluators could pass on their skills to new evaluators and so the evaluators' pool could be expanded. The Tower Hamlets council officers were very interested in

retaining the evaluators and plan to set up a residents' mystery shopping group for Council services which would take this work further on. The evaluators were interested in this and also expressed an interest in becoming involved in the work of Tower Hamlets' Community Communicators.

- *Other boroughs:* Ten boroughs attended an interactive training session on Community Evaluation, based on the Guide to Community Evaluation written by Micah Gold Associates. All the boroughs were in the process of, or thinking of, setting up Community Evaluators' programmes and recognised the importance of the evaluator training. The vast majority of the boroughs attending found the training very useful, particularly valuing the question and answer time. They also liked the interactive nature of the course which gave them the chance to develop their own programmes during the day.

Working with diverse communities and neighbourhoods

- 3.10 *Communication between communities and agencies:* izwe's social networking site will provide the council with the means to engage people in surveys, consultations etc., but also provides residents with the opportunity to engage in discussions between themselves on council affairs. The programme has the potential to engage large numbers of residents in a meaningful way to help the council with its decision making. Better engagement should lead to better decision making. It can also produce efficiency savings, such as developing and analysing in-house surveys which would otherwise be contracted out. It will also be interesting to see whether users feel more empowered or more influential as a result of setting up their own user groups and discussions. Will they use it as a means to lobby or campaign?
- 3.11 The project is very much at an initial stage and so it is difficult to evaluate impact at present. The two boroughs who are piloting the sites currently both believe that this will offer them the opportunity to test something out that they may not otherwise have done. Both have agreed to dedicate a staff member's time for half a day a week to moderate the site which demonstrates commitment.
- 3.12 This project has the potential to radically change the way councils engage with their residents. Collecting a solid evidence base during the project will help measure success for the final evaluation of the project. It will be essential to compare the evidence from all eight boroughs at the end of the project to record any differences in engagement, community cohesion, decision making and efficiency, and what factors contributed to those differences. The final evaluation will help to build a case for this kind of strategic online engagement for other boroughs. Izwe recognises this and has developed an evaluation framework which will measure achievement in four key goals:
- Empowerment
 - Community cohesion
 - Better decision making
 - Efficiency savings

Evaluation of the Targeted Support for Empowerment and Participation Improvement Programme in London, 2009/2010

Developing this framework will enable izwe to plot over the time of the project things like: changes in statistics related to empowerment, use of the site, as well as qualitative aspects such as changes in perception of Steering Group members, case studies of how people are using the site etc. Setting up this framework now will produce a strong evidence base to measure the success of the project.

- 3.13 *Increasing trust:* OBV's BAME participation programme has not yet taken off because of delays due to the local elections, and thus major impact is yet to be felt. However, there has been 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. In the second phase of the programme, in 2010/11, the conversations to be brokered between communities and public agencies will explore the potential application of OBV engagement models to communities that traditional communications do not reach. This will enable local authorities and their partners to learn about the different approaches to working with disengaged and marginalised communities.
- 3.14 *Skills to take part:* although the impact of the Community Leadership Legacy Programme has not yet been felt since action plans to coordinate community leadership programmes are only just in place, by investing in community leadership infrastructure across London, it has the potential to encourage grassroots activity and to increase its influence with public agencies. As it is a cross-sector programme, it should strengthen the relationship between the third sector and the local authority so that future community leadership activity will be more strategic in nature, meeting identified needs and avoiding duplication. The boroughs we consulted were keen on the potential of this programme. They believed it would encourage participative democracy, and as one consultee said, it was best led by third sector so that leaders would emerge out of a genuine commitment to the local community and not out of vested interests or party politics.
- 3.15 Consultees from the boroughs pointed out that organising sub-regionally would represent quite a challenge. The CLLP cuts across three CLG empowerment programmes and we feel that it has the potential to maximise resources and be strategic, but it must be very tightly managed and there must be excellent coordination between the sub-regional coordinator and those managing and delivering community leadership activity on the ground.

The role of councillors in community empowerment

- 3.16 It was envisaged that councillors would participate in IDeA's workshops but with the local elections being imminent and the workshops being convened at short notice it was hard for them to be involved.
- 3.17 Thus the only activity targeting councillors was Involve's website, *Councillors in the Community*. Feedback from the principle stakeholders who advised on the development of the website indicates that the website is welcomed and that it has fulfilled its remit to fill the gaps in training and development materials in this area. The website provides useful collections of existing resources and helpful

Evaluation of the Targeted Support for Empowerment and Participation Improvement Programme in London, 2009/2010

new information on governance structures for policing and health which were not available elsewhere. The clear remit – the need to provide a set of materials for councils rather than for officers – should strengthen its impact. Its launch in March 2010 means that the first real opportunity to test its practical value will not come until May.

Conclusion

- 3.18 A number of the activities have produced guides, websites and information which has had little impact as yet, but the potential for impact on a regional scale. The findings from some of the activities such as the NI4 research and the IDeA workshops have the potential to impact on the way public agencies engage communities. There is a role for the LEP to support boroughs to do this, and we turn to this in the next chapter.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Delivery of the programme

- 4.1 Given the unrealistically short timescale, a tremendous effort was made by the LEP and all the contractors to develop and deliver an interesting package of activities. Activities were delivered on time and to specification with the exception of the BAME participation programme which was delayed because of the local elections.
- 4.2 Our evaluations of each individual activity showed that boroughs appreciated the support. However a couple of boroughs we consulted said that they felt that the package as a whole could have been more customised to their particular circumstances, and that the support felt as if a number of activities were delivered separately rather than as a strategic package. IDeA, in its overview report, also raised this issue, pointing out that the offer was a fairly standard one, which could have limited its usefulness to the authority which may have chosen a different style of support if they had commissioned it directly.
- 4.3 One option, which was taken by some other REPs, would have been to give boroughs funding to spend on their own priorities. However, we believe the option chosen by LEP allowed innovative research such as TCC's NI4 work and pilots, such as izwe's social networking site and the Community Evaluators' programme, to take place. These sorts of programmes have regional (and actually national) significance, and potentially offer far more value for money than offering a smaller amount of money to 18 individual boroughs.

Connection with other empowerment programmes

- 4.4 We did not see feel there was a great deal of strategic connection between the TSEPI programme and other empowerment programmes. There was a connection between the IDeA framework which was developed as part of the Network of Empowering Authorities, and there was a linkage between the community leadership work done as part of the Connecting Communities programme and the Community Leadership Legacy Programme. This has also the potential to link to the Take Part programme. LEP coordinates the core empowerment programmes funded by CLG, which is the subject of a separate, but linked evaluation. These two programmes had synergy and were linked together by the partnership, forming part of the same agenda at partnership meetings. While the LEP concentrated more on regional networking, and promoting and disseminating good practice, the TSEPI programme focused on research and pilots of regional significance. Although Capital Ambition jointly funded izwe's social networking pilot we feel that there was little or no connection between LEP activities and other empowerment projects funded by the RIEP. For example there is obvious synergy between izwe pilot and the Capital Ambition funded research on neighbourhood social networking sites.
- 4.5 The LEP has agreed to establish a new tripartite commissioning group, comprising Capital Ambition, GOL and the manager of the LEP on behalf of the LCF. These are the three accountable bodies for spend on community empowerment. This group provide strategic coordination of a number of funding

streams: Connecting Communities, Targeted Support, LEP core programme and Capital Ambition's empowerment funding; clarity in the accountability in commissioning activities funded by the different programmes. The role of the commissioning group would be advisory in that it would make recommendations to the various funding bodies on spend. It would be informed by the LEP Task Force which would retain its responsibility for the overview and developing of the LEP Action Plan and for shaping and guiding the overall direction of the Partnership. In our evaluation of the LEP core programmes we recommended that the new commissioning group should develop a strategic framework for the commissioning of projects within all the empowerment funding streams. This would ensure gaps are filled and activities are not duplicated.

Recommendations

4.6 We recommend the following:

Recommendation 1: Working with the London Civic Forum as the accountable body, the LEP should join with other REPs to make the case to CDF and to CLG that they should allow an adequate amount of time to deliver an effective empowerment programme.

Recommendation 2: A priority for LEP's work this year should be to disseminate the findings and resources gained from this year's programme through London Civic Forum as accountable body.

Recommendation 3: The newly established Commissioning Group should establish a commissioning framework to place all the empowerment programmes in a strategic context.

Recommendation 4: There should be an evaluation of how all the empowerment programmes in London connect and interlink. There could be a role for the Commissioning Group to commission this.

Impact of the programme

4.7 Because of the extremely short timescale within which the activities of the TSEPI programme were delivered, impact has yet to be felt. Many of the contractors have yet to launch their findings. While we have looked at the potential impact of each individual activity (see Appendix 1) it is too early to say what the overall impact of the package of support has been. It was difficult for boroughs to make time to talk to the evaluator, and those boroughs that were interviewed found it easier to talk about individual activities than the overall impact.

4.8 **Recommendation 5:** the overall impact of the TSEPI should be evaluated in 2010/11, along with other empowerment programmes (see Recommendation 4 above). The evaluation should explore:

- Use of tools and techniques such as Involve and Community Evaluators' Guide
- Improved strategy as a result of IDeA workshops
- Evidence of improved engagement and empowerment

- Evidence of better decision making as a result of improved engagement and empowerment

Taking forward priorities

- 4.9 We feel that the IDeA workshops and the NI4 research undertaken by TCC have raised important issues through listening directly to stakeholders in the public sector and citizens on the ground. These have brought out issues that could form priorities for the LEP and other empowerment programmes.

Recommendation 6: The LEP and the Commissioning Group together should consider how to meet the **following highlighted priorities** in the empowerment work programmes this year.

Public agencies

- 4.10 **The LEP, together with the London Boroughs Community Empowerment Networking Group (LBCENG), could encourage better coordination between the engagement and empowerment activities of LSP partner agencies by showcasing some examples of LSPs that have coordinated their engagement and empowerment activities, demonstrating efficiency and effectiveness in reaching and involving the public.**
- 4.11 Engagement and empowerment strategies and delivery has tended to focus on neighbourhood planning through local forums. Yet the NI4 research identified a mismatch between what the public and empowerment opportunities are usually available. Encouraging input by citizens in service delivery and feedback could result in real service improvements and better customer satisfaction and feeling of influence. **Helping boroughs devise a more strategic approach to their customer input to frontline services could be a role LEP and its constituent partners could play.**

Grassroots action

- 4.12 Taking grassroots activity seriously as a way to feed in citizens' views of public services is a bottom-up approach that has had little emphasis so far within the public sector empowerment agenda. Yet there are innumerable examples of neighbourhood groups that have the expertise to make a real difference to services. Amenity groups, residents' groups – and more recently neighbourhood social networking sites - are a case in point. Local authorities may provide small grants to support such groups to flourish, yet often do not take them seriously as consultees or co-designers of services. **LEP's network, the CDNL understands this role, and tapping into this in the context of public decision making is something the LEP could prioritise.**

Engagement with the third sector

- 4.13 TCC's finding that people's experience of influence is most likely to be positive when they have been directly involved represents a challenge for third sector representatives who are influencing public sector agencies through high level partnership groupings such as the LSP. Yet there are good examples of third

sector organisations encouraging local people to give their views on these groupings, and feeding back to their constituency. For example the Speak Up Forum in East Sussex brings together representatives of a significant section of the VCS to liaise with the statutory sector on a regular and formal basis; the representatives act as a channel for frontline organisations to raise particular concerns and issues affecting their individual members. **Collecting such case studies across London, through LEP's Third Sector Empowerment Network would be helpful in promoting the role of the third sector, and any such work should strongly explore the role of the third sector in involving and feeding back to individual service users.**

The role of councillors

- 4.13 The recent local elections should offer the opportunity to work with member support services and directly with councillors to promote their role as community leaders. **Building on Involve's website, a specific project around the role of councillors in the community should be a priority for the coming year.**

Developing techniques

- 4.14 The IDeA workshops identified that boroughs would like to develop the capacity, confidence and skill set of officers to engage in empowerment activities. **A role of the LEP could be to research appropriate courses and events and upload them onto the interactive empowerment map.**
- 4.15 The NI4 research in particular identified that different people may interpret engagement experiences in different ways and that it is therefore important, not only to have a wide range of activities for citizens to engage in. Social networking may appeal to a computer literate set of people who use social networking in their social and professional lives, but is unlikely to appeal to those who do not tend to use the computer for leisure. Some people may be more comfortable going directly to people in influence, so making it easy to gain access to people in power will help this group of people feel more influential. Others get a lot out of the more strategic forward looking area planning forums. Because different people may choose to get engaged in different activities, participation statistics would have to be intelligently analysed as it should not be assumed that all groups of people will get engaged in all activities in the same proportions.

Feedback and evaluation

- 4.16 Participants in TCC's discussion groups repeatedly emphasised the importance of feedback as a key factor affecting their perception of influence. It made them feel listened to, even if they did not get the exact outcome they were looking for. As long as feedback could explain why a particular outcome had been chosen they felt at least they had been heard. While promoting the You Said, We Did concept, people also wanted to know what had actually happened as a result of the initiative. This was raised in relation to participatory budgeting decisions, but we feel it also applies to a large range of council decisions.

- 4.17 Evaluation of empowerment techniques is important but it should not just concentrate on process, important though this is i.e. how well was the activity organised etc. Objectives should be clearly set, including both the public sector objectives and those of the community. **The LEP could also promote the evaluation model it devised in its first year, and which it refined through case studies in its second year. The LEP has a role to promote community evaluation through the Community Evaluators' guide and other support.** Other support on Community Evaluation suggested by participating boroughs in the training session included a library of tools on the process and media resources to help with the training; a community of practice to share knowledge between boroughs; benchmarking community evaluators' performance from past programmes with future ones; partnering arrangements for officers and evaluators; supporting accreditation centrally; and a review in a year's time which evaluates and updates the guide. A further suggestion emanating from the borough training was to introduce the programme regionally so that a pool of evaluators could be developed to work across authorities which could improve the quality and independence of the evaluation.

Community of practice

- 4.18 **IDEA suggested that it could establish a Community of Practice with practitioners involved in community empowerment across the boroughs with a remit to identify and share good practice in learning, which we feel would be useful.** We feel that other public sector partners and third sector practitioners ought to be included in such a Community of Practice if it is established.

Building trust

- 4.19 Both the self assessment workshops and the NI4 discussion groups identified the importance of building trust between communities and agencies. These suggestions, if implemented across London, should enhance the understanding of agencies of what drives people's perception of influence. By putting in place a variety of activities which effectively increase the citizen's ability to influence decisions, trust relations and feelings of mutual respect should be enhanced.

APPENDIX ONE: CASE STUDIES

Supported Self Assessment

Background

The Improvement and Development Agency, IDeA, working with the Network of Empowering Authorities, has developed the framework for the Ideal Empowering Authority. This Framework provides a series of benchmarks and sets out a set of success factors empowering communities. It was first published in April 2009, and has very recently been edited and restructured. The original Framework consists of five inter-linked pillars and eight high level success factors that, between them describe a high performing empowering authority. The five pillars are:

- Mainstreaming: culture change in councils and partnerships
- Working with communities, neighbourhoods and localities
- The role of members in community empowerment
- Building the evidence and business case for community empowerment
- Integrating community empowerment with equalities, community cohesion and human rights

The revised Framework, published right at the end of the period of this programme, has reduced the five pillars to three, incorporating the evidence building and the diversity elements into the first three strands. This makes it a simpler, more focused framework, but does not lose any elements.

IDeA has developed and piloted a methodology for supporting authorities, and their partners, to assess their current performance, strengths and areas for improvement against the benchmark as a whole, or a selection of pillars within it. LEP has commissioned IDeA to deliver a one-day facilitated workshop to introduce the Framework to local authorities and their partners.

Objective

The programme aimed to provide a benchmark for London boroughs to self assess their empowerment performance and to stimulate and provide impetus for their empowerment work. A facilitated workshop allowed them to identify strengths, areas for improvement, and issues to consider within the council and in partnership working.

Process

A facilitated half-day or full day self assessment workshop was held for each of eight boroughs² and their partners in which they considered their performance in relation to the benchmark. The process allowed a constructive discussion across the authority and partners, providing the opportunity for them to discuss and debate the issues and take a group approach to self assessment, agreeing together where they need to improve.

The eight boroughs were at different stages and thus the workshops were tailored to meet the specific needs of the boroughs. One authority had completed the majority of the self assessment already and wanted the workshop to focus on bringing partners on

² Barking and Dagenham, Barnet, Bexley, Hounslow, Kensington and Chelsea, Richmond, Sutton and Tower Hamlets

Evaluation of the Targeted Support for Empowerment and Participation Improvement Programme in London, 2009/2010

board and developing the next step of the action planning. For another, the workshop provided the opportunity to add impetus to its aspiration to develop a community empowerment framework. Another had already had a peer review of its community empowerment activity and wanted the workshop tailored to take forward two of the recommendations from the review.

A total of 164 people attended the eight workshops; these were mainly council officers, with some representatives from partner agencies, including the third sector. Few councillors attended. In part this was because of the timing so close to local elections, and also because of the short timescale allowed for this programme.

The workshops were facilitated by accredited experienced peers, including members in half the sessions, and IDeA improvement managers. The structure for the workshops varied but typically included an introduction to the Framework, illustrated by case studies of good practice, along with a 'world café' method used for the group discussions around each pillar, or some of the pillars. Strengths and areas for improvement were identified and potential actions agreed upon.

The evaluation forms, which were completed by 79 out of the 164 delegates, showed that while the outcomes were viewed as positive, the process scored less well. IDeA's obvious knowledge and expertise was rated quite highly, but some delegates found the role that some IDeA member peers played was less clear. A couple of comments on the form suggested that they had not fully exercised their role as peer in sharing best practice and giving ideas from another council. The quality of the agenda and content scored less well than one might have expected. From the comments this might be because more time and better facilitation might have been required to focus on actions and going forward. A high proportion (38%) of those delegates completing the evaluation form did not rate the materials and tools presented highly, and delegates from one workshop commented on the quality of the powerpoint presentations, with one delegate pointing out that they needed more "concrete tools on how to empower and specific case studies". However, it has to be said that delegates were signposted to a number of excellent sites on community empowerment which together give a huge range of tools and techniques. Another point raised was that a high proportion of those completing the evaluation form (57%) either did not answer the question "How well did we address equality and diversity principles in the subject of the event?" or rated it average to poor. This is surprising, given that one of the pillars is devoted to this theme, and hopefully now the new Framework integrates this with the Communities and Neighbourhoods pillar it will get addressed in an integrated way. There were a number of comments about the fact that the timescale for organising was not conducive to getting enough delegates involved, nor a wide range of stakeholders, including councillors. Indeed the timescale for the TSEPI programme acted as a considerable constraint as IDeA was required to organise and deliver the workshops in a space of only three months. There was one comment on the role of the evaluator who was observing in terms of confidentiality and that it might have been more beneficial for her to participate in some way rather than merely observe.

Evaluator's reflections on the process: we attended two workshops as an observer, one half day session and one full day session. We also spoke to two of the participants some time after one of the workshops to ascertain their view of the process and outcomes. Our views are similar to the issues raised above and we would recommend that:

Evaluation of the Targeted Support for Empowerment and Participation Improvement Programme in London, 2009/2010

- There should be more of a role for a peer officer or member to challenge, and also to give examples of good or different practice. This happened in one of the workshops we attended where the peer member did refer to good practice, but also challenged the delegates to think about empowerment and not just consultation and engagement.
- The structure should be more focused at the end of the workshop to allow delegates to summarise and agree a few key actions going forward.

IDeA's reflections: IDeA also commented on three constraints in delivery which are in fact relevant to the whole package delivered through the Targeted Support Programme and to which we will refer in our overall summary:

- The timescale was a considerable constraint and limited the number and range of delegates able to attend.
- Other elements of the TSP were being delivered at the same time, mainly to the same authorities which put pressure on the capacity of the authority to draw down the support and use it to the greatest effect.
- Although IDeA did tailor the workshops to suit the needs of each authority, the offer was essentially a standard one. This can limit its usefulness to the authority which may have chosen a different style of support if they had commissioned it directly.

Outcomes

The workshops

Almost all delegates agreed that the workshop provided them with a basis for further improvement. Comments showed that they found value in having the time and the space to talk through issues and plan actions with their colleagues: *“a great opportunity to plan with partners how to take the empowerment agenda forward”, “good to look at future actions and discuss real ‘next steps’”* and *“has given added impetus to our work on empowerment”*. They found it valuable to meet others with a role in engagement, and in sharing issues: *“really good cross section of people here, helps re: information sharing.”* One mentioned the value of sharing issues between the public and third sectors.

The findings

IDeA gave an invaluable summary of the overall headline findings from the workshops, commenting on the three pillars in the revised Framework. This section picks out practical activities that would be useful for the LEP to focus on in future support to boroughs.

Mainstreaming and developing the business case

- Develop the capacity, confidence and skill set of officers on empowerment e.g. running community events, focus groups etc.
- Give advice on how to evaluate and assess the effectiveness of empowerment activities

Evaluation of the Targeted Support for Empowerment and Participation Improvement Programme in London, 2009/2010

- Improve strategic engagement with the third sector, enhancing its role and enabling it to fulfil it, in recognition of the fact that they can reach communities that public agencies may find difficult to connect with.

Working with diverse communities and neighbourhoods

- Helping LSPs to improve coordination across council services and partner agencies and develop a 'smarter' approach to how communities are engaged, perhaps in the form of a three year plan across partner agencies showing all planned empowerment activities
- Assess what methods of communication, engagement and empowerment are best used in what particular circumstances, and ensure that residents are informed about the different methods used, how to get involved, and to what purpose
- Support the effective use of social media as a tool for engagement and empowerment.
- Explore ways to build trust between agencies and communities including enhancing the transparency of decision making processes
- Encourage councils and their partners to use feedback techniques to inform residents how they have taken on board their views and suggestions.

The role of councillors in community empowerment

- Support officers to understand the community leadership role of the ward councillor and to develop member support to fulfil this role, ensuring that councillors are involved in empowerment initiatives.
- Support councillors to take a lead role in area/neighbourhood forums and committees

Conclusion

Even though there were constraints on delivery, as has been identified by IDeA, the participating boroughs and their partners generally felt the workshops were valuable in helping them think through the issues related to community empowerment. They valued the space to share ideas. Most importantly the issues arising from the workshops and summarised by IDeA are extremely useful in informing the future work of LEP and it is this that should be focused on in the recommendations.

Where next for Supported Self Assessment?

It is recommended that the suggestions above are used to develop a package of support in the coming year. Some work needs to be done, however, to avoid a 'top-down' approach and to ensure any offer is tailored to each authority's needs.

An idea developed at one of the workshops was IDeA to establish a Community of Practice with practitioners involved in community empowerment across the boroughs, with a remit to identify and sharing good practice and learning. This could be developed by LEP and we also understand that there may be potential for the IDeA Community of Practice platform to support this type of practitioner group.

NI4 Research and analysis

Background

The Campaign Company (TCC) was commissioned to undertake research into determinants of NI4, reflecting the extent to which local people agree that they can influence decisions that affect them in their local area. A number of related regional and national research projects have also explored NI4, including a SW REP-funded study by the University of Plymouth, and a study by Social Regeneration Consultants in the North East. These have tended to focus on public agencies' understanding of and progress towards the target rather than looking at what determines feelings of influence. There have been two important national studies that have looked at key factors associated with feelings of influence. Ipsos MORI conducted a national statistical analysis of national indicators, demographics and associated data from the Place Survey and its predecessors.

A recent and related study published by CDF³ found that there was little or no correlation between NI4 and the national indicators relating to community cohesion, feelings of belonging to one's neighbourhood, satisfaction with one's area as a place to live, and whether conditions are in place for a thriving third sector. This emphasises the need to explore more fully what exactly people really mean and understand by having an influence.

TCC uses the Values Mode approach to segment the population. This approach was developed by Cultural Dynamics with whom TCC works closely. Values Mode divides people into three main segments, each of which subdivides into another four segments. The main segments are:

- Inner directed: pioneers who want to acquire knowledge, learn about themselves and start initiatives
- Outer directed: prospectors who are more motivated by material things, status and being seen in the right places
- Sustenance driven: settlers who tend to have smaller social networks based around family, are uncomfortable with change and respectful of tradition

Learning more about these groups in different boroughs and what drives their perceptions of influence may help LSPs to target their engagement initiatives to attract people from the different groups.

Objective

The project 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. TCC also wished to produce a toolkit in collaboration with all boroughs to define these issues more precisely and suggest possible attitudinal and operational improvements for boroughs.

³ Rachel Newton et al, *Citizens and local decision making: what drives feelings of influence* (CDF,2010)

Process

The first phase of the project consisted of desk-based research to investigate statistical correlations between different Place Survey questions and various socio-demographic factors. This aimed to look at what really does influence feelings of influence. TCC also conducted scoping interviews with interested boroughs to inform the next phase of the research and to help select the boroughs taking part.

In the second phase, TCC worked in four boroughs⁴ representing mainly outer boroughs, with one inner borough as a comparator. The boroughs also contained a mix of ethnicities: ethnically diverse boroughs, one where there is a high proportion of one BME community, and one where there is a majority of white residents. Three discussion groups were held in each borough, one each of pioneers, prospectors and settlers.

The topic guide

The topic guide used in the discussion groups was designed to tease out the dynamics of different conceptions of influence, such as the degree to which people seek to influence a specific problem, or to make changes for the future of their area. It aimed to test out the hypothesis that many methods of community engagement are framed in such a way as to appeal to pioneers. These are likely to agree or disagree strongly with statements and are also likely to believe they can change things. Settlers, on the other hand, are more fatalistic in their attitudes and feel they are powerless to change things; they are therefore less likely to get involved in engagement initiatives. The topic guide sought to see how far people are informed about opportunities for involvement, their experiences of involvement, and their worldview, since these may influence perceptions of influence.

The discussion groups and analysis

The report gives a good description of people's perceptions of influence and factors affecting perceptions. It also looks at experiences of involvement and how this could lead to disempowerment rather than empowerment. These could be key findings for public agencies, and are discussed in more detail below.

Evaluator's reflections on the process

The topic guide and structure of the discussions was very carefully drawn up to elicit the kind of information needed to probe different attitudes to influence and different experiences of engagement. We attended three discussion groups and found them well organised and attended. Discussion was well facilitated and structured in such a way as to make analysis clear.

Findings

Desk research

The first phase desk research drew upon the Ipsos MORI study which concluded that 63% of the variance in NI4 scores between areas can be explained by four factors:

⁴ Barking and Dagenham, Barnet, Hounslow and Tower Hamlets

Evaluation of the Targeted Support for Empowerment and Participation Improvement Programme in London, 2009/2010

- The ethnic diversity of an area
- Levels of international in-migration
- The particular region of England,
- The 'urbanity' of an area (proportion of people living in dense urban areas)

The findings also drew on the CDF study, and in particular the key factors associated with feelings of influence. The study explored the relationship between residents' experience of trying to get a response from a public service and their perception of influence, as well as the relationship between those taking part in local engagement mechanisms such as neighbourhood forums and their perception of influence. This study also found that the strongest factors that impact on perceptions of influence all related to the idea of trust.

Stakeholder interviews

Stakeholders understood that engagement could in fact be seen as disempowering if not properly managed, and recognised the tension between bottom-up and top-down approaches. They also recognised that those who do engage are limited in the decisions they can take, and acknowledged the importance of feedback. Importantly for the community empowerment agenda they recognised that the more direct the influence is the greater the perceptions of influence, which represents a challenge for the third sector which may influence public decisions on behalf of residents, and which can therefore go unnoticed by residents themselves even if they have taken part in discussions with third sector organisations. Stakeholders talked about the various engagement mechanisms they used and it was acknowledged that a key challenge for the future was harnessing the power of grassroots action and active citizens who try to influence the authorities.

Discussion groups

Main points from the discussion groups are:

- The majority of those seeking influence are seeking solutions to personal problems; 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.
- Most participants recognise the importance of getting involved but many said they lacked information and awareness about how to get involved.
- Many participants felt some disillusionment with representative democracy and its ability to influence on their behalf.
- Settlers and Pioneers in particular are sceptical about the ability of individuals to influence and often seek to join others in grassroots action, bypassing formal structures.
- Prospectors are more likely to feel they can influence as individuals and may approach key people that they see as decision makers.
- In general people understand the limitations of public agencies and do not always expect that agencies can always take on board their views in their entirety. However, being heard is very important to them, and negative experiences of

Evaluation of the Targeted Support for Empowerment and Participation Improvement Programme in London, 2009/2010

engagement and/or the feeling that nothing has happened as a result of their input is likely to impact negatively on their perceptions of influence.

- There were distinct differences in the way different people interpret the same experiences and this is a significant message for agencies. Settlers expressed frustration over lack of action resulting from their engagement with local agencies. Prospectors are much more likely to feel they can have an influence and are more likely to seek out someone with influence. Pioneers expressed scepticism about how data and their views would be interpreted and taken into account by agencies.
- Anecdotal evidence and hearing about experiences by word of mouth has the power to increase trust and this in turn may be more likely to increase people's perception of influence.

Outcomes

The main outcome is a greater understanding of what drives perceptions of influence, but the findings have yet to be disseminated and actually taken on board by agencies. There are some points which could be taken on by agencies:

- A recognition that different people may interpret engagement experiences in different ways is a significant finding which should enable agencies to better target their engagement mechanisms.
- There is a mismatch between what the public want to engage in and what opportunities are available. Customer engagement in services does happen, but is not generally planned by the local authority as part of its engagement strategy. There should be a closer alignment of input by citizens in service delivery and engagement mechanisms.
- Related to this is that people's experience of influence is most likely to be positive when it is direct. Many opportunities to engage are somewhat indirect and often happen through a representative from a third sector organisation sitting on, for example, the LSP. It remains a challenge for the third sector to engage people more directly in consultations and to feed back what happens when they sit on decision making boards.
- In a similar way there is a distinct role for councillors to engage local citizens in more than individual surgeries.
- Bottom up grassroots action, lobbying and campaigning is often ignored as a mainstream engagement activity. Councillors may actually have a positive role to play here as there are examples of their taking an active role in residents associations and 'friends' groups. Engagement officers could do well to think how to tap into this rich resource.
- The importance of feedback on any engagement process or survey is paramount since being heard is a key ingredient to a perception of influence. The phrase 'You Said, We Did' is becoming more widespread but it needs to be accompanied by 'And this is what happened as a result'. This is likely to increase the positive nature of the engagement experience and increase trust.

Conclusion

This research has national significance and is complementary to the recent CDF report *Citizens and local decision making*. It took place within a very short timescale and sample sizes were small. Nevertheless the qualitative research yielded very interesting results which should be of use to agencies when revising their engagement strategies.

Where next for the Values Mode analysis?

TCC is planning a conference to disseminate the research findings and explore ways of taking them forward in a practical way. We feel that there are key lessons for agencies but there needs to be a mechanism for taking them forward or else they may be lost. A well designed publication and launch may help in this respect. However, dissemination may only go part way to getting the findings taken on board and embedded into practice. Perhaps a link with the peer review process used by IDeA may help in this respect.

Community Evaluators

Background

The Community Evaluators programme builds on work carried out last year for the London Empowerment Programme. The programme seeks to identify specific improvement needs for Local Strategic Partnerships working on community engagement and empowerment. A training programme was developed in 2007/08 and was piloted in two London boroughs in 2008/09. Although last year the programme was successful in engaging residents and developing an evaluation tool, it was less successful in feeding back potential improvements to the boroughs concerned. This year Micah Gold Associates was commissioned to run the programme in two boroughs, to write a training guide and train other boroughs in the technique.

Objective

The objectives were two-fold. Firstly an objective was to empower local residents to design and conduct their own evaluations for community empowerment activities, and to feed back what worked and what needs to be improved to the LSP. Secondly, the objective was to provide LSPs with important community-led feedback about what makes an activity empowering or disempowering with a view to helping them to improve the effectiveness of their empowerment activities.

Process

The programme trained residents in how to develop an evaluation tool which measures how empowering (or disempowering) a public sector empowerment activity (public meeting, consultation, forum etc) is, from their own perspective. The tool was tested out by the evaluators who feed back the results to the LSP. This year the boroughs piloting the programme were Bexley and Tower Hamlets. The legacy for this programme is in the form of a Guide to Community Evaluation which was informed, not only by the two 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 13 boroughs⁵ to enable them to take on the programme in their own borough.

The Community Evaluations

A small group of residents was recruited from the residents' consultation panels in both Bexley and Tower Hamlets. In Bexley nine residents were involved and in Tower Hamlets ten residents were recruited, with six completing the programme. The training programme for each group consisted of five two-hour training sessions:

1. An introduction to empowerment and involvement
2. Background to monitoring and evaluation
3. Developing the evaluation tool – residents develop their own tool for evaluating empowerment activities, based on what they feel is good practice

⁵ Barking and Dagenham, Barnet, Bexley, Croydon, Enfield, Greenwich, Havering, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Kensington and Chelsea, Redbridge, Richmond, Sutton and Tower Hamlets

Evaluation of the Targeted Support for Empowerment and Participation Improvement Programme in London, 2009/2010

Meanwhile the trainer engaged with the council to find out what engagement and empowerment activities were going on within the timescale (February/March) and the evaluators picked a number to visit, sometimes on their own, sometimes in pairs. Using the tool, they scored any quantitative measures immediately, and then, after reflecting for a few days, wrote notes on their qualitative findings.

4. This was the feedback session where the participants shared their findings
5. Report preparation: the participants drew on their experiences to plan what they wanted to feed back to the LSP

The facilitator helped to draw up a powerpoint presentation and report for the final feedback. A session was held where the evaluators presented their report, which included recommendations and the LSP members gave their own feedback on the findings.

Evaluator's reflections on the process: we attended the last session as well as the feedback to the LSP in both Bexley and Tower Hamlets. We talked to the facilitator and the evaluators, as well as one of the council officers. In our view the process worked very well, with the evaluators fully engaged and the feedback sessions with the LSPs being arranged soon after the final session. A particular important part of the evaluation process was that evaluators responded immediately to the event and then reflected for a couple of days which gave them a chance to reflect on their qualitative input. A few issues arose about the process, mainly as a result of the whole programme being organised and completed in three months, an incredibly short time to organise, run and review such a programme:

- The recruitment was done through consultants who managed the residents' panels. As it was a rushed process, the group of residents in both cases did not reflect the age profile of the borough, and in the case of Tower Hamlets, the ethnicity. However, the majority of those recruited did stay the course and were fully engaged. If the programme is run in other boroughs, care should be taken to recruit a cross section of participants, more reflective of the borough profile.
- The range of empowerment activities in both boroughs was narrow, but again this reflected the short timescale over which the programme was run. If an LSP were to take on this programme it would presumably run continuously and the community evaluators would be able to sample a range of activities.
- The facilitator took a major role in helping the evaluators to write the report and prepare their presentation, albeit taking the evaluators' own findings on board. Although they did practice their presentations just before the LSP feedback session, we would recommend that an extra session be scheduled to give evaluators more skills in writing and presenting.

The Guide

Micah Gold Associates has written a short Guide to Community Evaluation which sets out the case for community empowerment and the fundamentals of community-led evaluation. It describes the process involved in Bexley and Tower Hamlets and gives practical details of how to undertake recruitment, training, evaluation and feedback.

The Guide was informed by an 'expert panel' of people from local authorities and those who had experience in community-led evaluation. There was support for the ethos

Evaluation of the Targeted Support for Empowerment and Participation Improvement Programme in London, 2009/2010

behind the Guide since, as one of the boroughs said, there is a need for good practice and a coherent approach to evaluating empowerment. There was an interest in getting accreditation for the training, and hopefully this could be explored at a later date. A key issue to take on board in the Guide would be the importance of collecting evidence that the process actually does help the LSP partners.

Training for boroughs

Ten boroughs attended an interactive training session on Community Evaluation, based on the Guide to Community Evaluation written by Micah Gold Associates. All the boroughs were in the process of, or thinking of, setting up Community Evaluators' programmes and recognised the importance of the evaluator training.

Outcomes

The training

Both sets of participants enjoyed the training and got a lot out of it: "*K [the facilitator] has the ability to put you at your ease and at the same time to bring out the points that you need to do the work.*" They did not feel they were 'being trained' as they felt they helped to set the agenda. They felt that working in a group was very empowering in itself as it enabled different points of view to be discussed, and then they were able to consolidate this into an evaluation tool.

The evaluation tools

The evaluation tools developed by participants in both Bexley and Tower Hamlets were similar in that they both evaluated advance information/event publicity, the venue and welcome, management of the meeting, question and answer session, summary and feedback including next steps. These were formulated so each evaluator could score a series of questions, but they also collected qualitative feedback on each element, and were able to reflect on this a few days after the meeting, and elaborate on their response. The Tower Hamlets tool enabled evaluators to collect qualitative comments about the beginning of the activity (whether they were welcomed positively and informed about the process); the middle of the consultation (whether the purpose and outcome of the event was made clear, the information used was clear, and how well it was chaired); the closing of the event (whether there was a clear explanation of the decision making process and decisions helped people understand what was going to happen after the meeting). This gave Tower Hamlets evaluators a structure to comment on whether the potential outcome of the event was made clear at the beginning and whether this was summarised at the end of the event.

The evaluation

The Bexley evaluators attended a number of events organised by the Met police, including street meetings, open neighbourhood meetings and also panels that were supposed to be open to panel members only. They found the open meetings interesting and felt engaged, and felt that the Police were interested in hearing their views. However, they were unsure from this one meeting how much they were able to influence decisions, and this of course relates to the importance of public agencies finding a way to feedback how far they have been able to take on residents' views. The closed panels

Evaluation of the Targeted Support for Empowerment and Participation Improvement Programme in London, 2009/2010

seemed to be more of a decision making panel, but the evaluators wanted to know the process of selection onto these panels. They had a number of recommendations to the Police on making the events more accessible, such as not holding street meetings on a street corner in the winter. An important recommendation related to the summary and feedback at the end of events, and evaluators felt less clear as to what the next steps were, and how they would be informed of any implementation.

The Tower Hamlets evaluators attended the *You Decide* participatory budgeting events where real budgeting decisions were made for the Local Area Partnerships. They felt that the organisation and management of the *You Decide* initiative was very professional, although there were a number of process improvements they suggested (detailed in the Community Evaluators' programme report). They recognised that professional management was key to a sense of empowerment, contributing to the sense that they were valued: *"The Chair of the meeting was brilliant, taking full control and making us feel our votes counted and that our decisions mattered"*. The outcome was empowering in that attendees had actually decided on priorities for spend. However, one participant queried the 'localness' of the whole process; it did not seem to be strategic: *"Where different LAPs have different preferences, the most efficient and cost effective way of providing these could be prejudiced."* An example given was street lighting which should be uniformly provided throughout the borough rather than decided locally. Another concern arose because the evaluators felt that people had not been party to drawing up the options document, and wondered why those particular activities had been put in the programme, as opposed to others. There was also concern about the potential for lobbying and block voting as it was possible that groups of residents could lobby others to attend and vote for their favoured project.

Feedback to the LSP

Two members of each team fed back to a group of high level officers in their respective boroughs. In our view the presentations were of high quality and the officers attentive. The community evaluators presented the good parts of the process, along with aspects they believed needed to be improved and recommendation.

In Bexley the evaluators presented to the Management Board, senior officers from public partners and chaired by the Chief Executive of the Council. The evaluators believed that the Board showed an interest in the findings, and that a commitment had been made with the Police at a very senior level to have a meeting to discuss the findings. This subsequently took place and was very positive. However, the Management Board was somewhat disappointed that that only the Community Safety Panels were evaluated, although they recognised that this was difficult given the short timescale for the programme.

In Tower Hamlets the presentation was to a group of officers with a various responsibilities for the borough's community engagement activities: neighbourhood management, local area partnerships, participatory budgeting. The officers received the presentation with enthusiasm and stated that the feedback was extremely useful. Although they had picked up some of the process issues mentioned they felt that it was invaluable obtaining a view from participants who had carefully thought about how empowering participatory budgeting actually is. In response to the fact that not many young people attended the *You Decide* events, they explained that they had done a similar event for young people which was very successful. They asked questions of the

Evaluation of the Targeted Support for Empowerment and Participation Improvement Programme in London, 2009/2010

evaluators which showed they valued their input: for example, they asked how they might get more residents along to the You Decide events and the evaluators suggested a number of local venues to leave the brochures in with a catchy message “It’s your money, help us spend it wisely.” The officers were serious in taking the initiative forward and said that it would be useful for Local Area Partnerships to have the report. We spoke to the evaluators after the presentation and they were pleased with how the meeting went. They felt that the officers listened to them carefully and that they wanted to hear constructive criticism.

In terms of a longer term outcome for both boroughs, the officers showed that they would like to repeat the exercise over a longer period so that different events could be sampled. In Bexley an interest was expressed in organising a ‘buddying’ scheme whereby the trained community evaluators could pass on their skills to new evaluators and so the evaluators’ pool could be expanded. The Tower Hamlets council officers were very interested in retaining the evaluators and plan to set up a residents’ mystery shopping group for Council services which would take this work further on. The evaluators were interested in this and also expressed an interest in becoming involved in the work of Tower Hamlets’ Community Communicators.

Training for boroughs

The vast majority of the boroughs attending the training session on Community Evaluation found it very useful, particularly valuing the question and answer time. They also liked the interactive nature of the course which gave them the chance to develop their own programmes during the day.

Conclusion

The process was successful in terms of organisation, although we would wish the training to be slightly longer to give participants more skills in writing reports. The process of developing an evaluation tool based on residents’ own perspectives was thought to be very powerful. Residents did not just focus on process (publicity, venue, organisation etc.) but developed a tool which assessed the degree to which they believed the audience would feel empowered by the activity. This is very important in the context of the empowerment agenda. In terms of outcomes the participants did feel engaged by the events they observed, but there was a debate about how empowered they actually were. In Tower Hamlets, initially the process does seem very empowering as residents are voting on local expenditure, but there were reservations in terms of how involved residents were at developing initiatives in the first place, something that the Council was already working on. However, both groups of evaluators did feel engaged and listened to and were confident that ideas would be taken on board. As far as longer term outcomes are concerned, both councils were keen to build on the initiative. It seems that the programme acted as a catalyst to look residents’ evaluation initiatives more closely and to use the community evaluators in the future. It was suggested that this methodology could be used for a number of different kinds of initiatives, such as mystery shopping councils’ services.

Where next for Community Evaluation?

The power of this process is that it allows residents to develop their own evaluation tool, from their own perspective of what they feel empowers them. The boroughs made a number of suggestions for the LEP to consider which are included below:

- explore the possibility of introducing the programme regionally so that a pool of evaluators could be developed to work across authorities which could improve the quality and independence of the evaluation
- produce a library of tools on the process and media resources to help with the training
- establish a community of practice to share knowledge between boroughs
- benchmark community evaluators' performance from past programmes with future ones
- set up partnering arrangements for officers and evaluators;
- review and evaluate the Guide after a year
- explore the possibility of accrediting the training

We would add further suggestions to:

- monitor whether in fact Bexley and Tower Hamlets have taken the initiative forward, and that it has not remained as a one-off initiative. This is important since it will encourage other boroughs to take this methodology seriously as it will demonstrate that the boroughs have mainstreamed the approach.
- monitor which boroughs take up the approach and the long term outcomes from it

Strategic Online Engagement Programme

Background

Online engagement with residents has the potential to allow councils to listen, respond and engage with local communities, and then use this opinion data to make better decisions. It's about people talking to each other, allowing residents to voice their opinion, give their views or ask for information – and it allows council members and officers to engage in that conversation as well as giving information and consulting on issues. The results can be measured not only in a quicker response to a tangible problem (www.fixmystreet.com), but also in increased responses to a survey or consultation. Council websites are already becoming more interactive: Bristol City Council, like many other councils, offers an online service allowing residents to buy a service, apply for something, report something, or find out about something (www.bristol.gov.uk/ccm/services). Local residents too are setting up their own methods of online engagement in their neighbourhoods (www.harringayonline.com). And the Electoral Commission's partnership with Facebook contributed to the fact that more voter registration forms were downloaded from the Commission's website than ever before, a testament to the fact that online engagement does raise participation.

Izwe, with its experience in developing social networking tools for local authorities and getting local residents to engage with them, has been commissioned to support four boroughs over two years with new methods of online engagement (and a further four in 2010/11). Izwe will build an online platform to allow local authorities to use social media and engage in a dialogue with its community. This will allow them to listen, respond to, and engage citizens in an interactive and dynamic way. This programme is part funded by Capital Ambition, the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership.

Objective

The programme will support boroughs to increase their effective engagement with local communities, giving residents a voice so that they can respond to and influence public policy.

Process

This programme spans the two years 2009/10 and 2010/11 and izwe will work with eight boroughs in total. In the year 2009/10 izwe worked with Bexley and Hounslow. The first phase of the work was to undertake research in the boroughs to establish their current engagement strategies and activities and to select an issue to pilot, and the second phase was to develop, test and manage the site.

Research

The borough research is an important first phase since it will inform izwe's own evaluation report where they will describe where each borough was at the beginning of the project, where they are at the end, and how things have changed. The first phase of the research has looked at the demography of each borough, performance indicators around citizen involvement and empowerment, the engagement and empowerment initiatives including good practice, and challenges for the borough. Having consulted with borough officers and partners, as well as residents, community leaders and other

Evaluation of the Targeted Support for Empowerment and Participation Improvement Programme in London, 2009/2010

stakeholders, izwe has sought to agree priorities so it could build a site based on an understanding of the needs of both the council and the residents.

Hounslow

Hounslow is a borough with high ethnic diversity, as well as a contrast between affluent and deprived areas. Community cohesion is high on the agenda and there has been action on this by the Council, for example the Council won a beacon award for its work on Cohesive and Resilient Communities in 2009.

However, there is a lack of coordination around engagement and empowerment with no overall strategy. There is a recognised lack of information sharing or common standards for engagement across the Council. The Council is well aware of this and is taking on board a recent IDeA report on its engagement activities; empowerment has senior buy-in and direction. It recognises that there have been good engagement activities, but that it is 'ad hoc', and there is a need now to take a more strategic look at initiatives across departments and partners. The Council is keen to use new and improved techniques and to introduce a programme of training for officers, councillors, and potentially residents. A group of officers involved in engagement has started to meet and discuss issues by email, but the group does not include everyone with a remit for resident engagement.

Through its interviews izwe has identified a willingness to use online tools for engagement, both by residents and council staff and partner organisations. Efficiency savings could result from this sort of engagement – for example by using online surveys which the Council and partners might otherwise commission externally. Hounslow has agreed that it will pilot a site on the subject of Safer Neighbourhoods and Community Safety, using the newly established Neighbourhood Community Safety coordinators. Additionally this will include a general focus on community cohesion. Izwe is now working to develop relationships with the community safety coordinators and with residents on how they might use a social networking site. There should be scope to broaden the remit beyond community safety to use this as a platform for discussing broader neighbourhood concerns. Currently izwe is at the point of developing information to population the site which should be ready to launch very soon.

Bexley

Bexley has an older population than the London average. There is a high reliance on public sector jobs, including jobs with Bexley Council itself. Although not a particularly deprived borough compared to others, it does have pockets of deprivation. There is a low proportion of residents who feel they can influence local decisions, although a much greater proportion would like to be involved in decision making. There appears to be a mistrust of the Council and a negative perception of public services in general. There is a mistrust of crime statistics even though there is less crime compared to other London boroughs.

There is a well developed network of traditional consultation channels, including Engage Space, the Council's consultation site, an Older People's Forum, quarterly Have Your Say events in each ward looking at community safety issues, a Talkback Panel. There are also various one-off, time limited activities, which offer good practice e.g. a knife

Evaluation of the Targeted Support for Empowerment and Participation Improvement Programme in London, 2009/2010

crime education programme, a Planning Team drop-in event for Erith Gateway. However there is no strategic plan for consultation, engagement and empowerment.

Officers at a high level are committed to the empowerment agenda and to having a more strategic approach. They are keen to improve their engagement activities, and social networking is one way of doing that. If successful they may be able to convince some of the more sceptical councillors who have had some bad experience of residents' blogs and remain unconvinced of the value of social networking.

Izwe hopes to open up a conversation between the council and the residents. It will be focusing on delivering a project asking people to what extent they would like to be involved in the Council issues, how they would like to be involved, and what in what issues. For example it might be that residents want to get involved in a discussion about the council budget over the next year.

The site

The sites for Bexley and Hounslow are developing. When one first logs on to the Hounslow Beta (test) site one gets to the Community Page which gives a background on community engagement, including a definition, some of the ways citizens can get involved, key drivers for the Council's engagement, a statement of the Council's commitment to engage, methods of engagement. Once live, engagement events and consultations will be placed here.

The site will give residents the opportunity to have 'conversations' of different types:

- Take part in a *Quick Poll*: usually a 1 minute single question poll on a topical issue, to get people involved and to lead them to deeper parts of the site
- Undertake a more lengthy *Survey*. This can range from a quick 5 minute survey to a full-scale detailed consultation. In its first iteration, this survey function will be kept relatively brief, to avoid survey fatigue
- Initiate or comment on 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. This is the most highly deliberative function on the site.
- Join a *Forum* on a particular issue: this can be used by residents and council members and officers alike. This will allow for a more open dialogue between the council and residents.

This part of the site is 'top down', set up by the Council but the site can also act as a 'bottom up' social network in that people will be able to create their own user groups.

The Council will be able to analyse data from the quick polls and surveys immediately and data can be downloaded into other software formats e.g. excel, SPSS for more detailed analysis (e.g. comparing responses by age, ethnicity etc.)

Evaluator's reflections on the process:

We have spoken to officers in both Bexley and Hounslow who show commitment and enthusiasm for the site so far, although there may be more work to be done to gain members' enthusiasm. One observation we would make is about the importance of

Evaluation of the Targeted Support for Empowerment and Participation Improvement Programme in London, 2009/2010

selling this tool to both members and officers who may not be familiar with it. It is important to undertake the ground work in the council to make the local business case and to use examples in the context of that particular council. It is also important to be able to allay concerns about the same few people using forums and to be able to give examples where local forums do in fact attract a wide range of people.

That said, both councils believe it offers them the opportunity to test something out that they might not otherwise have done. Both have agreed to dedicate a staff member's time for half a day a week to moderate the site which demonstrates commitment to getting the site working.

Outcomes

The project is very much at an initial stage but an immediate outcome is the commitment of the Councils concerned that this is an important method of engaging residents.

Izwe recognises the importance of evaluation, and is developing a methodology to evaluate the project, seeking to demonstrate improvements in four key goals:

- empowerment;
- community cohesion;
- better decision making; and
- efficiency savings.

Developing this framework will enable izwe to plot over the time of the project things like: changes in statistics related to empowerment, use of the site, as well as qualitative aspects such as changes in perception of Steering Group members, case studies of how people are using the site etc. Setting up this framework now will produce a strong evidence base to measure the success of the project.

Conclusion

The programme has the potential to engage large numbers of residents in a meaningful way to help the council with its decision making. Better engagement should lead to better decision making. It can also produce efficiency savings, such as developing and analysing in-house surveys which would otherwise be contracted out.

Where next for Strategic Online Engagement?

This project has the potential to radically change the way councils engage with their residents. Collecting a solid evidence base during the project will help measure success for the final evaluation of the project. It will be essential to compare the evidence from all eight boroughs at the end of the project to record any differences in engagement, community cohesion, decision making and efficiency, and what factors contributed to those differences. The final evaluation will help to build a case for this kind of strategic online engagement for other boroughs.

Supporting councillors as community leaders

Background

Involve, a registered charity working to promote high quality processes in public participation, has developed a new resource to support elected members in their community leadership role. The LEP commissioned Involve to work with officers responsible for councillor induction and support to:

- understand the issues in training/supporting councillors in their community leader role
- review the materials officers currently use for this purpose
- identify gaps in those materials
- decide whether to target the new resource on officers or members
- specify the types of materials and the nature of the content for the new resource

The resource, *Councillor in the Community*, is a website that provides links to other materials, organised thematically. In addition to looking at community leadership generally, the themes reflect the key policy and service areas which councillors might seek to influence locally without having a direct responsibility for them – health and crime/policing. The materials are specifically aimed at councillors and include a range of reflective pieces, case studies and links to other websites. In the case of health and crime/policing, the collection of resources starts with a newly written overview explaining the structure and governance arrangements for these services. Contact book templates are provided for individual users to complete for themselves.

Objective

The website aims to provide a resource for councillors in London. It is intended to promote their capacity to influence services provided within their borough by statutory agencies responsible for health and crime/policing as well as to understand the needs of their ward residents, work in an empowering way with them and make a positive impact for them. The website specifically seeks to support councillors' understanding of:

- the community leadership role
- how statutory agencies other than the council providing health and policing services work

Process

The project started with a facilitated half day workshop for officers working in democratic services, member support and community engagement roles. The workshop was intended as a scoping exercise to enable Involve to understand:

- the challenges officers faced in supporting councillors in their role as community leaders
- what resources they currently use and what resources they would like but have not found
- whether the website should be targeted at councillors or officers

Evaluation of the Targeted Support for Empowerment and Participation Improvement Programme in London, 2009/2010

Eight officers attended, representing six different boroughs. The officers had a range of roles from primarily strategic (head of democratic services) to hands on support (member development officer). Participants were keen to reflect on the challenges of supporting councillors in this role. Although the boroughs they represented are diverse and the range of their own job roles broad, there was a high degree of consensus about the issues. In particular, there was unanimity about:

- nothing of this nature already existed
- targeting the website at councillors not officers. Participants recognised that materials targeted at councillors would additionally be valuable and acceptable to officers but the reverse might not be the case. There was also a clear view that the website should be publicly accessible.
- not setting up a forum or similar arrangement

Participants were invited to draw up a 'wish list' of materials. They then voted on the list, resulting in a 'top three' topics of:

- understanding stakeholder decision making processes
- a flowchart for using information
- 'meet and greet' materials (who are the movers and shakers in a ward; why is it important to meet them and how do you go about doing it?)

The workshop itself usefully identified a number of barriers to providing effective support to councillors in their role as community leader. These included:

- the range of life/professional experience councillors bring to their role
- the distinction between what councillors want to know and what they need to know
- the problem of councillors' own self confidence in the presence of senior officials whom they see as more 'professional' and experienced
- the distinction between the skills needed to be an effective councillor and the skills needed to be an effective community leader
- the recognition that teaching councillors how to be effective community leaders makes work for council officers

The workshop also gave a clear indication of the practical barriers to providing support and training to councillors. These included:

- the need for concrete examples – case studies and similar – illustrating how information and tools can be used in 'real' situations
- the need to demonstrate the potential impact of being an effective community leader
- the need for flexible and, where possible, experiential, forms of learning to engage members
- the importance of developing skills - e.g. facilitation, partnership working, communication - alongside knowledge

Following the workshop, Involve spoke to key organisations involved in supporting councillors, especially the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) and London

Evaluation of the Targeted Support for Empowerment and Participation Improvement Programme in London, 2009/2010

Councils. Involve collated material from a range of sources to meet the identified needs and wrote new material where necessary. Involve then tested the new set of materials with potential users before launching the new website. These materials have been developed to be:

- accessible in terms of language
- available on the internet but also as pdf documents for councillors who do not use the internet
- linked to a template which can be customised (by officers if appropriate) to provide local information

Involve's reflections on the workshop

Involve was pleased with the level of engagement with the workshop. It had been concerned that there would have been too much diversity of opinion or that participants would have been unable to articulate how the issues they had identified should be addressed. In fact the high level of consensus and participants' ability to identify practical approaches to addressing the knowledge and skills deficit were very helpful. Furthermore, it was satisfying to discover that this resource would fill a very real gap.

Outcomes

The primary outcome has been the launch of a new website collating a range of existing materials linked with new contextual information. The website materials reflect the wish list developed at the workshop. The first section 'Community Leadership Resources' is a compendium of existing material drawn from IDeA, LGA, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, London Councils, LGIU and the Leadership Centre for Local Government. These materials comprise a mix of 'think pieces' reflecting on research into the role of councillors as community leaders; case studies giving specific examples of how councillors have translated that theory into practice and 'how to' guides such as the LGIU's guide for councillors on 'Making an impact'.

Although all these materials are already available on publicly accessible websites, *Councillor in the Community* has performed the invaluable role of selecting material with specific relevance for the target audience (councillors, especially newly elected councillors) and bringing it together in one place. The list of materials within this section makes clear what it is (i.e. think piece, guide etc.) and briefly what it offers.

The two thematic guides – health and crime/policing include newly developed material describing the governance structures for each of these service areas within any borough and across London. These charts indicate the channels of direct influence and indirect scrutiny. The 'at a glance' flow charts are supplemented with more detailed references to the roles of different bodies and links to their websites. These sections also include a list of sources of statistical data for these issues with a description of what they offer (for example, the section on health includes PCTs and the London Health Observatory). There is also a list of organisations to refer citizens to for more detailed help. The 'contact book' templates allow individual councillors or boroughs to supplement this London wide information with specific information for the ward/borough.

Evaluation of the Targeted Support for Empowerment and Participation Improvement Programme in London, 2009/2010

Evaluator's reflections

We attended the workshop as an observer. The disparate nature of the participants was a potential barrier to achieving a useful debate but this was swiftly overcome. It became apparent that participants were keen to share the challenges they faced with member support and training in this and other areas and had thoughtful contributions to make. For this particular project, the tight timescales may have been something of a benefit. The timescale gave the development process a very tight focus. Participants appreciated this and the fact that the workshop remained very task oriented. Involve's need to capture specific information from this workshop did not prevent participants' contributions from being thoughtful and insightful. The points they made could usefully be fed into a wider collaborative process to develop member induction, training and support and to share experience, good practice and resources.

The website is a potentially very useful resource – not only for councillors but also for the officers who support them and for other stakeholders including, for example, voluntary and community organisations and individual citizens. The materials provide a very clear introduction to their subject and the further references and links are clearly signposted and described. The relative brevity of the website avoids the need to search for relevant materials and points the user very directly at useful materials without overwhelming them. The role of organisations such as IDeA is clearly explained, allowing the user to pursue more detailed research there if they wish.

Participants' reflections

We spoke to two participants in the workshop who felt that the workshop itself had been a useful event. They had benefited from the opportunity to share experience with others in similar roles. They felt that the website had fulfilled its brief and that Involve had produced both useful collections of existing resources and helpful new information on governance structures for policing and health which were not available elsewhere. They were expecting to use the website with their new councillors after the election.

Impact

Feedback from the principle stakeholders in the process indicates that the website is welcomed and that it has fulfilled its remit to fill the gaps in training and development materials in this area. The clear remit – the need to provide a set of materials for councillors rather than for officers – should strengthen its impact. Its launch in March 2010 means that the first real opportunity to test its practical value will not come until mid May.

Conclusion

This project has met a real need and generated a set of easily accessible materials. Its real test will come in the next months as officers support a new set of members in understanding the subtleties of this complex role.

Next steps in supporting councillors in their community leadership role

Two key points emerged from this process:

- The complexity of the community leadership role which potentially demands significantly more of councillors than the traditional council member role. The needs analysis which emerged from the workshop covered a wide range of knowledge and skills from facilitation to the interpretation of statistical data. It was clear that there are few established materials either for members or for the officers who support them and that much time and effort is spent in each authority researching or developing such materials. There is a clear role for the ongoing maintenance and development of a collection of such materials. Involvement acknowledges that, whilst health and crime, are issues of high concern to many councillors, they are not the only partnership issues. There is scope to develop the website with further materials of a similar nature on other topics.
- Participants in the project clearly valued the opportunity to talk about the approaches they have taken to supporting members in these areas and the challenges they face in doing so. Whilst there are always time constraints around networking events, forums and similar arrangements, we would suggest that there would be value in occasional, very focused pan-London events to look at how officers can support the evolving role of members more effectively.

Community Leadership Legacy Programme

Background

The Community Leadership Legacy Programme, managed by the London Voluntary Services Council (LVSC), provides a unique opportunity to create a legacy for the empowerment agenda in London by investing in a cross-sector programme of Community Leadership activity. The programme will consolidate and build on the Community Leadership activity that local authorities and CVSs have been delivering at the local level. The programme will cut across three CLG-funded empowerment programmes: the Regional Empowerment Partnership, Connecting Communities and Take Part, ensuring improved coordination and maximisation of resources.

Objective

The programme, which will coordinate community leadership activity at a sub-regional level across the capital, will enable the sharing of good practice, support the continuation of existing local community leadership activity and work with identified community leaders to increase engagement at a local level.

Process

This programme spans the two years 2009/10 and 2010/11. In the year 2009/10 LVSC has supported the design of cross-sector sub-regional action plans for community leadership activity to sit within CVSs. The sub-regions are grouped as follows:

- Outer East (Barking and Dagenham, Havering and Redbridge) hosted by Barking and Dagenham CVS
- Southern (Bromley, Croydon, Richmond and Sutton) hosted by Croydon CVS
- Inner East (Bexley, Greenwich and Tower Hamlets) hosted by Newham CVS via the East London Network
- West Central (Hillingdon, Hounslow and Kensington and Chelsea) hosted by Hounslow CVS
- North (Barnet and Enfield) hosted by Enfield CVS

The host CVSs are in the process of recruiting sub-regional coordinators for the year 2010/11 whose role will be to develop, commission and deliver a range of community leadership and/or advocacy training and community development support in accordance with the sub-regional action plan.

So far, LVSC has coordinated the development of action plans for each of the 15 boroughs and produced a template to help CVSs to draft them. This includes:

- A summary of community leadership activity that took place in 2009/10 local authority under the Connecting Communities programme
- The CVS's own community leadership activity
- Emerging need
- Plan of activities for the coming year 2010/11 describing the key areas to address, milestones and outcomes

Evaluation of the Targeted Support for Empowerment and Participation Improvement Programme in London, 2009/2010

Most of the borough action plans have been produced, albeit most are at a developmental stage. Many are rather scanty and lack detail on how the plan will link existing local authority activity with their own activity. Some do talk about how they wish to link the activities across both sectors, for example Bexley wishes to link the new Community Communicators' programme run by The Campaign Company with its own representation work. Sutton wishes to coordinate existing resident structures and link them to other community engagement activities and opportunities. The emerging needs analyses are not particularly rigorous, but some plans do focus on a particular emerging issue they think is important. For example, Barking and Dagenham has identified that it would like to continue to develop its work with Community Associations that manage community halls in the borough, and also help to capacity build Tenants and Residents Associations. Redbridge has identified a need to work in Hainault to help build the capacity of local people through working specifically with the Hainault Community Project.

In spite of the scant nature of many of the plans a start has been made with a range of community leadership activities identified. These typically cover the following:

- Outreach to map existing groups and individuals so as to better signpost them to community leadership opportunities
- Training on community representation and leadership
- Workshops and Action Learning Sets to look at specific themes
- Area based activity focusing on capacity building potential leaders within a deprived area
- Resources and new learning materials, customised for local use
- Research into the LSP and its engagement structures
- Governance training e.g. shadow councillor scheme, trustee training
- Capacity building small community organisations to develop community leadership potential

The basic funding for this programme will cover the coordinator's salary and a contribution to the host CVS for management. Each of the 15 boroughs will also get a small delivery grant, separate from the host CVS, enabling each borough individually to spend on part of its action plan. In addition it is anticipated that local authorities will get Connecting Communities funding for another year and thus action plans should be including the local authority activities. Additionally there is £25,000 of regional Take Part funding which will be held centrally by LVSC and which is supposed to act as a lever for additional resources. It will cover activities such as room hire, expenses, learning materials and costs associated with expanding tested approaches in new areas and with new under represented communities across equalities strands.

Evaluator's reflections:

It is recognised that this programme required a great deal of coordination in terms of getting the boroughs on board, getting the host CVSs to take on the sub-regional coordination. There are a number of issues that we identified:

- The action plans need more work on the specifics. In many it is unclear who will be delivering what and from what funding stream. It was initially envisaged that the

Evaluation of the Targeted Support for Empowerment and Participation Improvement Programme in London, 2009/2010

plans were cross sector, linking up both public sector and third sector community leadership activity.

- We fear that coordination across several boroughs with different plans will stretch the sub-regional coordinator too much. We note that one of the sub-regional coordinator's role will be to deliver activities but find this hard to envisage in addition to the coordination role.
- There are no sub-regional action plans as yet. There is some synergy across some of the borough plans, but many are individually tailored to the identified needs within the borough. It was envisaged that the plans would allow for some individual borough delivery, but that there should be potential for sub-regional delivery which could avoid duplication.

Outcomes

As the project is at an initial stage it is hard to ascribe outcomes as yet. However, one outcome would be that CVSs in the boroughs will have made contact with their respective local authorities and some relationship building and common understanding of the potential of community leadership will have resulted.

A future outcome of the programme will be that the relationship between the local authority and the CVS will have strengthened so that in future community leadership activity will be more strategic in nature, meeting identified need and avoiding duplication. The ultimate impact is that community leaders will develop their potential to influence public sector decisions as well as doing things for their community as activists and leaders.

Conclusion

The programme has the potential to bring community leadership activity into a more strategic plan. However, the funding for each sub-region is relatively small and the coordination task enormous. The work has only just got off the ground. We would like to see how the boroughs' individual action plans fit together into a sub-regional plan and we would also like to see much more on the different funding streams and how these fit together across each sub-region.

Where next for the Community Leadership Legacy Programme?

Last year's work got the management and planning off the ground and this year 2010/11 is the year of delivery. The following is recommended:

- Action plans need to be far more specific, especially regarding details of funding streams and management of each activity
- Sub-regional action plans will need to differentiate borough level activity and sub-regional activity.
- The respective roles of the sub-regional coordinator and CVS/public sector workers who are responsible for community leadership activities needs to be clarified. We recommend that the role of the sub-regional coordinator is to coordinate activities across the sub-region, working with the community leadership workers to recruit for sub-regional programmes.

Evaluation of the Targeted Support for Empowerment and Participation Improvement Programme in London, 2009/2010

- Specifically it needs to be made clear who is responsible for implementing the borough action plans and how these relate to the sub-regional plan. We would recommend that the boroughs are responsible for implementing and monitoring their plans but the sub-regional coordinator should have an evaluation role.

BAME Participation Programme

Background

This project, undertaken by Operation Black Vote, builds on its successful *Who Runs?* Guides which give local people information on their local authority and how to get engaged and involved. There are three key elements to the programme:

- Development of a bespoke civic and political guide and directory which builds on OBV's successful *Who Runs?* guide. The guide will provide comprehensive information about the governance arrangements in each borough, including information on elected representatives, officers and other statutory agencies that form part of civic life. Through the *Who Runs?* programme OBV will explain the relevance of bodies and how best individuals can engage with them. The main resource will be online but the guides will also be printed.
- A series of community seminars and discussions will be used to promote the *Who Runs?* programme at local level in each authority. The sessions will explain the relevance of the bodies identified and how individuals can best engage with them. Discussion will aim to empower local advocates and community leaders to maintain the legacy of the guide which will be disseminated throughout the community.
- Conversations will be brokered between OBV staff, local community leaders, senior public sector officers and members, to share learning and expertise on engagement with BAME communities. The discussions will explore the potential application of OBV engagement models to communities that traditional communication channels do not reach. This will enable local authorities and their partners to learn about the different approaches to working with disengaged and marginalised communities and will have particular relevance for the Connecting Communities work delivered by local authorities.

Objective

The programme will inform and engage BAME residents about local democratic procedures in their area and encourage them to participate. It will also increase the understanding of public agencies in how to engage BAME residents.

Process

This programme spans the two years 2009/10 and 2010/11 and OBV has produced the *Who Runs?* Guides for five boroughs in 2009/10. The Guides will be finalised and put on OBV's website in June 2010 to take account of new councillors and new administrations. This programme has been delayed because of the local elections as it made sense to put off finalising the Guides until after the elections. Thus the bulk of this programme will be delivered in 2010/11.

Outcomes

As a result of this work, OBV has been engaged to deliver further BAME activity including workshops on BAME engagement around the elections. This has shown that the programme is addressing the appropriate support needs in localities.

A noticeable impact of the work has been that OBV has been approached by Councils for Voluntary Services to extend their activity more widely. For example, it has been approached by Barking and Dagenham CVS to produce anti-discrimination posters encouraging BAME communities to use their voice and their vote; leaflets about voter registration and civic engagement. OBV has also been asked to organise a workshop on how to mobilise communities to vote, the purpose of the workshop being to support third sector organisations in mobilising the communities they serve to register to vote and to participate in local, general and European elections.

Conclusion

The programme has the potential to engage BAME communities and to give them an influential voice in local civic affairs.

Where next for the BAME Participation Programme?

The programme will develop in 2010/11 leading to conversations between local BAME community leaders and public sector officers and members to raise the awareness of the public sector of the best methods to engage BAME communities in civic affairs. This should lead to more effective methods of working with disengaged and marginalised communities leading the development of a more influential voice for BAME communities.