

**Equality and  
Human Rights  
Commission**

**Scotland**  
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# Good practice in community engagement from an equality perspective

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# Executive summary

This report presents the findings of a review of good practice in community engagement from an equality perspective, carried out for the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) in 2008.

There has been a growing emphasis on ‘community engagement’ in recent years, with a recognition of the need to involve equality groups (those affected by issues relating to race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation and religion or belief) in this. Some legislative and policy developments, along with action in organisations, partnerships and communities, have promoted community engagement in Scotland. These include, for example:

- The advent of the Scottish Executive (now Scottish Government) and the Scottish Parliament.
- The Local Government in Scotland Act (2003); community planning and Best Value, and associated developments within organisations and partnerships.
- The development of Health Scotland’s Directorate of Equalities and Planning (2008), and other organisational developments.
- The overall regeneration and modernisation agenda.
- The work of Communities Scotland (which, from 2001 until April 2008, was a Scottish Government Agency).
- Developments in equalities legislation and duties on public authorities to promote equality, publish Equality Schemes and involve stakeholders in the process.
- The establishment of the Equality and Human Rights Commission in October 2007.
- Changes in other organisations, partnerships and communities to enable and facilitate engagement.

There is now a considerable body of knowledge about good practice in community engagement. This review brings together existing knowledge and current and recent examples of work, to identify some key messages in effective community engagement from an equality perspective. This, along with existing tools and guidance (such as the National Standards for Community Engagement and VOiCE, both of which were commissioned by Communities Scotland) can help to guide work in this area in the future.

# Background and context

There are many organisations, partnerships and others developing community engagement work in Scotland, and the issues raised in this review will be relevant to all of these. The review uses Communities Scotland's definition of community engagement, which is:

“The process of involving communities in the development and management of services such as health, education and housing. It may also involve other issues which concern us all, or it may be about tackling the problems of a neighbourhood, such as crime, drug misuse or lack of play facilities for children.”

Communities Scotland (undated) p4

The process can involve public bodies, voluntary and community organisations and individuals working together in a range of ways.

There are a number of models and mechanisms for community engagement. These range from the provision and receipt of information, through different types of consultation, to partnership and joint working approaches, and community-based organisations having a key role in the development and delivery of services.

Research has identified a number of benefits from community engagement activities. These include: better decision making; better services; improved local skills; and stronger communities. There are additional benefits from including equality groups, such as that: policy and practice reflect the views of **all** relevant community members; there are good relationships between and within communities; groups that may experience exclusion can develop confidence, skills and opportunities; and the promotion of good practice and 'mainstreaming' are consistent with national policy.

Despite progress in the development of community engagement, there can be a range of barriers to this, with evidence suggesting that equality groups remain under-represented. Barriers can relate to social, cultural and financial issues, to the overall approach to engagement, to procedures and to practical arrangements (including specific aspects of this such as the tools used, and the attitudes of those involved). It is important that organisations address these barriers and promote good practice.

This review has identified that there are a number of key elements of good practice that can help to ensure that the barriers are addressed and the engagement is as effective as possible.

# Identifying good practice – the main findings

The review identifies good practice at three main stages of community engagement: planning and preparation; implementation and practice; and monitoring, evaluation and review, and feedback.

## Planning and preparation

At the planning and preparation stage, any organisation or partnership becoming involved in community engagement needs to ensure a clear commitment to effective engagement, good practice and equality. This should be enshrined in policy and reflected in leadership and practice throughout the organisation or partnership.

The purpose, aims and objectives of the engagement, and the broad model to be used, should be identified clearly. While different models can be appropriate for different purposes, the highest possible level of participation for the purpose should be sought.

Community members should be included from the earliest stage, with an equal balance of power and an ongoing commitment to community engagement. Structures and mechanisms need to be put in place, and it is important to ensure that there is appropriate representation of equality groups in any structures developed.

The community to be involved in the engagement should be identified and defined, making sure that this includes everyone with an interest (both existing organisations and other community members). It is also important to be aware of the wider context in which the engagement will take place, to ensure that appropriate links are made with other activities and to avoid duplication. The engagement should focus on those issues that are of real concern to the community whose input is being sought, and issues for specific groups should be explored.

The methods that are chosen will relate to the purpose of the engagement and how much participation is being sought, but it is important to identify whether the relevant participants will be likely and able to respond using the methods proposed. Generally, a range of methods should be used in combination.

Consideration needs to be given to the capacity of groups, individuals and organisations to become involved. Capacity building should be undertaken as required (through, for example, providing guidance and training, as well as other forms of development and support). Adequate resources are also essential.

It is also important to plan how to monitor, evaluate and review and provide feedback on all aspects of the engagement. A clear plan should be developed to guide implementation and practice.

## Implementation and practice

In relation to implementation and practice, the review found that both written methods and face to face techniques can be helpful in some circumstances. It is also important to be aware that these can exclude potential participants, and to take steps to overcome any barriers. There is a need to use a combination of techniques to include a wide range of potential participants.

It is important to use formats in addition to written English to provide information, and to ensure that all information is accessible. Different types of meetings and events should be held, and should be conducted in appropriate ways, again to include a wide range of potential participants. There may also be a need to consider holding specific meetings, sub-groups or events to explore the views of particular groups and to feed these into the wider process.

There are also a range of procedural, practical and support issues that need to be considered. Processes should be as informal and clear as possible, avoiding jargon, 'in-jokes' and unexplained procedures. The views of community participants should be listened to and taken into account, and participants should behave towards each other with mutual trust and respect. Accurate and timely information, reflecting diversity and avoiding stereotypes, should be shared between participants. The need for a timescale appropriate to the engagement is also an important aspect of effective involvement.

Wherever possible, engagement at a local level is preferable. The location and venue should be chosen to ensure accessibility, suitability and safety for all participants. It is important to ensure that: transport is made available, or the costs reimbursed; substitute care for those responsible for the care of dependents is provided, or the costs reimbursed; support and communication requirements are met; meetings are held at appropriate times, and sometimes at a range of different times; and there are no financial barriers to participation.

Throughout the engagement process, it is not sufficient to assume that it is 'open to all' Proactive work can encourage and promote participation, particularly of groups who may experience barriers. The provision of ongoing support to participants is also important.

## **Monitoring, evaluation and review, and feedback**

The review found that monitoring, evaluation and review, and feedback are also vital elements of good practice in community engagement.

The arrangements for monitoring, evaluation and review, and feedback should have been put in place at the planning stage, and there is a need to ensure that information is collected and reviewed on an ongoing basis. The information should be used to identify issues arising and lessons learned from the engagement.

A range of types of quantitative and qualitative information should be included, with participants involved in providing their views and discussing the findings. The information should be reviewed regularly, with any issues arising (such as gaps in participation or capacity) identified, and the engagement process should be developed on the basis of the findings. The findings should be presented in a clear and accessible way, and should be accurate and easy to use.

It is vital to provide feedback to participants not only about the evaluation findings, but also about the issues that emerged from the engagement, the actions taken as a result of the views expressed, and how input affected a decision. It is important that this feedback is given both directly **and** through representative organisations, that it is provided on a regular basis, that it takes account of good practice in the methods used, and that those involved know what to expect, notably when feedback will be provided.

The review suggests that all of these aspects of good practice should help to ensure that the engagement is effective, and that it enables the widest range of participants to be involved. Annex 1 translates these findings into some 'do's and don'ts in community engagement' to help to inform practice.

# Recommendations

As the purpose of the review was to identify good practice in community engagement, the main overarching recommendation is that all organisations and partnerships undertaking community engagement should follow recognised good practice in the work they undertake. The findings presented in the review, and the do's and don'ts (along with other guidance referred to within the review) should form the basis of community engagement work.

A small number of more specific recommendations are made in the review, relating to the overall approach to community engagement, the work of the Commission and wider issues.

## Approaching community engagement

In terms of the overall approach to community engagement, the findings of the review suggest that organisations and partnerships should ensure that community engagement, with a commitment to equality, is promoted as a clear priority. It should also be reflected in policy, practice and ethos, with a need for clear direction and leadership.

There is a need for organisations and partnerships to develop appropriate structures and mechanisms through which to involve community members in all relevant aspects of their work. They should make sure that the structures developed promote the highest possible level of participation and involvement for the purposes of the engagement, and make it easy for community members to be heard and listened to.

Organisations and partnerships need to recognise the need for community engagement to involve all relevant stakeholders, and should take steps to identify and address any potential barriers to participation by equality groups. They should also recognise the implications of a commitment to an inclusive and participative approach in terms of the methods used and the ways these are implemented. They should ensure that there is a widespread understanding of such an approach among all of those involved.

Organisations and partnerships should take a clearly defined and transparent approach to community engagement, following the key stages (planning and preparation; implementation and practice; and monitoring, evaluation and review, and feedback). They should consider all of the relevant decisions required at each

stage and should ensure that all participants are aware of the structures and mechanisms for their input, and the parameters of their involvement.

It is also recommended that organisations and partnerships should promote a proactive approach to identifying and engaging with seldom heard groups. They should raise awareness of the engagement, develop capacity where required, enable and encourage involvement (and ongoing involvement), as suggested within the review. They should also continue to develop new contacts in the community, as well as developing existing relationships.

The review makes a specific recommendation that organisations and partnerships should base all aspects of their community engagement practice upon the National Standards for Community Engagement and other good practice guidance such as VOiCE. Organisations should ensure that their approach to community engagement is consistent with the findings of this review, and follows the ‘do’s and don’ts’ suggested at Annex 1. They should also draw upon other guidance material available (some examples are provided at Annex 4 in the main report).

Organisations and partnerships should ensure that their experiences of community engagement are shared within their own organisation and with other relevant organisations and individuals. Knowledge, skills and practice should continue to develop in accordance with broader developments in community engagement and equality work.

## **The work of the Commission**

In terms of specific aspects of the work of the Commission, the review recommends that the Commission, as with other organisations and partnerships, should ensure that its work is underpinned by the key elements of good practice identified, enabling appropriate community engagement in all aspects of its work.

The Commission should recognise its role in the promotion of effective community engagement, including:

- Working in partnership with other organisations.
- Undertaking effective and inclusive engagement in its own work.
- Building community capacity.
- Encouraging service providers to develop good practice.
- Leading by example.
- Developing information about communities.

- Involving service users.
- Scrutinising approaches taken.
- Promoting mainstreaming.
- Sharing information.

It is recommended that community engagement work should be carried out to help to inform the Commission's role in enforcing the law and influencing the development of law and policy. This can be done through, for example, community members having an input to mechanisms such as:

- Identifying issues for exploration/examination.
- Identifying specific instances where enforcement is needed.
- Identifying priorities.
- Highlighting general and specific organisation practice experiences.
- Disseminating information about aspects of the law.
- Monitoring, reviewing and developing the Commission's practice in relation to this work.

Similarly, it is recommended that community engagement should inform the Commission's policy influencing role, by promoting opportunities for community input to:

- Identifying policy issues, priorities and feasible options.
- Dialogue and partnership in policy planning stages.
- Contributing knowledge and expertise to the development of policy.
- Participating in the monitoring and review of policy.

The actual processes of community engagement undertaken by the Commission, and the ways in which funding is provided, should serve as good practice examples both in community engagement and equality. This should help to foster good relations between the Commission and equality groups, as well as between different groups.

Community engagement should also inform the Commission's role in promoting good practice and good relations, developing change and promoting access to services and resources. Mechanisms for community input might include:

- Identifying instances of good practice and areas for improvement.
- Developing campaigns for change.

- Planning, provision and review of services and funding (both of the Commission and other organisations).
- Disseminating information and promoting services to the wider community.

It is also recommended that the information presented in this review should provide a starting point for the continuing development of good practice in community engagement. The implementation of this should be monitored and reviewed regularly (through engagement with relevant communities) with a view to ongoing improvement.

## Wider issues

A small number of recommendations are also made that relate to wider issues. It is suggested that there should continue to be a clear focus on the value of community engagement in Scotland. There is a need for appropriate national and local structures, supported by appropriate resources through which this can be undertaken. It is recommended that continuing work should be undertaken to build community infrastructure and to develop and support the capacity of local and national community organisations (including equality organisations) to fulfil their increasing role in enabling community engagement.

It is also recommended that:

- Information about relevant national and local organisations should continue to be developed, collated and shared.
- There should be a clear focus on the evaluation of community engagement work and the dissemination of findings.
- Mechanisms should continue to be developed for sharing experiences and practice.

The need for the good practice information and lessons learned from the review to be disseminated widely (including to the organisations and partnerships involved in the research) is also re-emphasised in the recommendations. It is suggested that this can help to encourage other organisations and partnerships to undertake community engagement in accordance with this.

# Section 1: Introduction

This report presents the findings of a review of good practice in community engagement from an equality perspective, carried out for the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) in 2008.

## The purpose and nature of the review

There has been a growing emphasis in recent years on involving groups and individuals in the community in services, issues and decisions affecting them, through ‘community engagement’. There has also been a growing recognition of the need to involve equality groups (that is, those affected by issues relating to race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation and religion or belief). There is now a considerable body of knowledge about good practice in community engagement generally, and about the involvement of equality groups<sup>1</sup>. This review brings together existing knowledge and examples of good practice to identify some key messages about effective community engagement.

The review does not provide a comprehensive ‘how to’ guide to community engagement, nor does it evaluate the nature or extent of current community engagement practice. Instead, it draws on evidence from formal evaluations of community engagement work, other literature and some examples of current practice to help to inform current and future work in this area. References to existing literature have been provided as endnotes rather than throughout the text to help preserve the flow of the review as a usable document.

### Aim and methodology

The overall aim of the review was identified as being:

“To identify and highlight examples of good community engagement practice which may be useful to the Commission in its future consultation and involvement work.”

Two main methods were used in the review:

- A search of key sources of research literature, involving an internet search; the examination of relevant websites; and exploration of library material.
- The inclusion of some key organisations and partnerships in identifying examples of good practice. These included: some umbrella equality organisations; key public bodies; partnerships; and umbrella voluntary sector organisations (recognising that larger national and local organisations and networks may, in turn, be aware of information from other local organisations).

The focus was upon the identification of:

- General principles and good practice in community engagement, and models of community engagement.
- Good practice in the involvement of equality groups, and the implications of different models of community engagement.
- Examples of good practice (from different sectors), and evidence of the impact of community engagement.
- Factors that impact upon the effectiveness of involvement of equality groups and the effectiveness of community engagement.

Many examples of community engagement in practice were identified in the course of this research, and it is impossible to detail more than a small number of these in the review. It is also recognised that a range of other work is taking place in Scotland that is not highlighted in the review, and that this work continues to develop<sup>2</sup>. The research was not intended to be an audit of community engagement work in Scotland. The examples have been used only to illustrate some of the types of work and aspects of practice identified at each stage of community engagement<sup>3</sup>.

The majority of examples are drawn from material submitted to this review, while some are also drawn from the literature. Almost all of the examples provided relate to work taking place in Scotland, unless otherwise specified. They include work taking place at both a national and a local level, as well as work by different organisations, partnerships and communities, in different types of services and in different sectors.

Many other examples of practice and case studies using a variety techniques and structures for community engagement are available from other sources<sup>4</sup>.

Further details of the methodology are presented in Annex 2.

## The report

This section sets the review in context. The next three sections focus on identifying good practice at key stages in community engagement, including: planning and preparation (Section 2); implementation and practice (Section 3); and monitoring, evaluation and review and feedback (Section 4). A short summary is provided in Section 5. Annex 1 outlines a number of 'do's and don'ts in community engagement'. Annex 2 outlines the methodology, and Annexes 3 and 4 provide the bibliography and details of some of the guidance available.

# The development of community engagement

A range of legislative and policy developments, along with action by organisations, partnerships and communities, have promoted community engagement in Scotland.

A key principle of the Scottish Parliament is that it should be ‘accessible, open, responsive and [should] develop procedures that make possible a participative approach to the development, consideration and scrutiny of policy and legislation’. The Scottish Executive identified community engagement as being ‘at the heart of Community Planning’<sup>5</sup>, and public participation is a key element of the regeneration and modernisation agenda.

The Local Government in Scotland Act (2003) imposed duties on local authorities to involve local people in public service planning and delivery. This is also reflected in the Best Value system as well as in policy areas such as health, regeneration, policing, education, housing, planning and community planning<sup>6</sup>. Community Planning Partnerships, in common with other organisations and partnerships, have carried out considerable work to promote community engagement.

The need to involve equality groups and to ‘mainstream’ equality (by making sure that this is central to all policy and practice) has also been recognised by the Scottish Government, the Scottish Parliament and local authorities, as well as by other organisations. One example of this is the establishment of a Directorate of Equalities and Planning within Health Scotland in April 2008, placing an emphasis on developing a person-centred NHS, with equality at its core.

The need for public bodies at all levels to work closely with community groups in developing policy and practice, and to remove barriers to engagement, is specified in the National Standards for Community Engagement. The National Standards were commissioned by Communities Scotland (then a Scottish Government Agency<sup>7</sup>), with the Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC) as the delivery agent<sup>8</sup>. From 2001 until its abolition in April 2008, Communities Scotland undertook a range of work to develop and promote good practice in community engagement.

A number of developments to equalities legislation have also helped to promote community engagement. The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, the

Disability Discrimination Act (2005) and the Equality Act (2006) each created duties on public authorities to promote equality. Public bodies have specific duties to publish Equality Schemes, and they must involve stakeholders in the process.

The establishment of the Commission in October 2007 also brought a clear commitment to community engagement. The responsibilities of the previous Commissions (covering race, gender and disability equality) were extended to include issues affecting older and younger people, LGBT people and religious/faith groups.

Changes have also taken place in other organisations, partnerships and communities to enable and facilitate engagement. All of these developments have increased the focus on choice and control by community members, and on community engagement.

## The nature of community engagement

Communities Scotland defines community engagement as<sup>9</sup>:

“The process of involving communities in the development and management of services such as health, education and housing. It may also involve other issues which concern us all, or it may be about tackling the problems of a neighbourhood, such as crime, drug misuse or lack of play facilities for children.”

The process can involve public bodies, voluntary and community organisations and individuals working together in a range of ways.

### Models and mechanisms for community engagement

There are a number of models and mechanisms for community engagement, involving varying levels of community involvement. This can range from providing basic information to members of a community, through to their extensive involvement in decision making. In 1994, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation identified 5 rungs on a ‘ladder of participation’, reflecting different levels of involvement<sup>10</sup> as follows:

- Providing information (that is, telling people what will happen).
- Consultation (that is, offering options and receiving feedback).
- Deciding together (that is, opportunities for ideas/joint decisions).

- Acting together (that is, taking joint decisions forward in partnership).
- Supporting independent community interests (that is, providing support to organisations to develop their agenda).

Other authors have identified similar approaches based upon different levels of involvement<sup>11</sup>. Some identify different approaches by how ‘passive’ or ‘proactive’ they are, while some classify them by the length of dialogue with the community. Others focus on the locus of power or control (for example, from a process driven primarily by service providers, through to community-based organisations having responsibility for service design, delivery and review)<sup>12</sup>.

Within these broad approaches, a range of further models have been identified. These might involve, for example, models which:

- Elicit community views (for example, public participation/consultation).
- Maximise community control (for example, housing associations, development trusts etc).
- Extend local democracy (for example, representative councils).
- Provide a ‘voice’ for communities (for example, disability organisations).
- Build skills and enable employment and personal development (for example, learning-led models).
- Develop services (for example, credit unions, community transport).
- Organise communities.
- Develop networks.

They may also involve types of work such as: devolved budgeting; local scrutiny of services and devolved decision making<sup>13</sup>.

It has been recognised that models often overlap in practice and that there are not always clear distinctions between them. There is, however, a spectrum of increasing involvement, and the **level** of participation being promoted has implications for the process of engagement.

A number of mechanisms and structures have also developed to involve community members in decision making and to implement the models, including:

- Channels for providing information.
- Links between service providers and community organisations.
- Staff with a remit for community engagement.

- Working groups, panels and advisory bodies where community members can give their views.
- Representation from community members on existing groups and partnerships.
- Community learning and development structures.
- Other mechanisms for direct input to services by community organisations.

## Methods of community engagement

Within different models and mechanisms, community engagement takes a range of forms, from simple information or consultation through to more complex partnership working and community representation. A range of methods can be used (both written and face to face techniques) such as:

- Newsletters; letters; other documents; and internet information.
- Questionnaires; surveys; graffiti walls; response cards; circulation of documents; and other written techniques.
- Public meetings; conferences; roadshows; fairs; and other events.
- Issue-based meetings; forums and partnerships; focus and working groups; seminars; juries; and panels.
- Interviews; drama; role play; storytelling; and other face to face techniques.
- Capacity building initiatives; peer research; action research; community animators; local involvement in service provision and development; and other work to develop groups and organisations.

Although these methods do not ‘map’ directly to particular models, some involve greater levels of participation than others. For example, larger scale techniques (such as newsletters or questionnaires) or methods with limited ongoing input (such as panels, issue-based meetings, one-off events, public meetings etc) are less participative. More detailed face to face techniques (such as joint meetings and partnership discussions, capacity building techniques and community development work) generally involve greater participation. However, these are not strict distinctions, and a combination of different methods is likely to be used. The way they are implemented is also vital, and these issues are discussed in Section 3.

## The benefits of community engagement

Although the purpose of this research was to focus on good practice in community engagement from an equality perspective, it is important to note that there is considerable evidence (and many case studies) that serve to demonstrate

the impact of community engagement. Although these are not examined in detail in the review, it is worth noting that a number of benefits of community engagement have been identified. These include <sup>14</sup>:

- Improved information and evidence, better decision making and performance.
- Improved services.
- Improved organisational culture and employment.
- Better communication, understanding, trust and relations between service providers and service users.
- Increased satisfaction and ownership of service provision.
- More transparency and accountability.
- Development of local skills, a strong community sector and a local voice.
- Community cohesion and civil renewal.

Additional benefits of the inclusion of equality groups include <sup>15</sup>:

- Policy and practice reflecting the views of all relevant community members.
- Good relationships between and within communities.
- Development of confidence, skills and opportunities among groups that may experience exclusion.
- The promotion of good practice, removal of barriers and 'mainstreaming', consistent with national policy.

## Barriers to engagement

Despite progress in the development of community engagement, evidence suggests that equality groups can remain under-represented. Barriers can relate to social, cultural and financial issues, to the overall approach to engagement or the procedures used. Barriers can exist in the tools used, physical arrangements and the attitudes of those involved. The nature of the community engagement process will affect whether these barriers are addressed, and whether all community members can be heard <sup>16</sup>. It is important that organisations and partnerships address these barriers and promote good practice.

National Standards for Community Engagement have been published, with a 'Users' Guide' to accompany these <sup>17</sup>. A database planning and recording tool (VOiCE) has also recently been launched that will assist individuals and

organisations in designing and delivering effective community engagement<sup>18</sup>. It builds upon the National Standards and has been developed as a user-friendly way of providing a common system for analysing, planning, monitoring, evaluating and recording community engagement. This should help to promote consistency in practice and understanding.

The tools identified above (the National Standards and VOiCE) along with additional available material (see Annex 4) can provide more detailed guidance on the practical development of initiatives.

## The next section

The remainder of this report draws on evidence from existing research and current work in Scotland to highlight some key elements of good practice in community engagement at different stages in the process. The first stage, covered in Section 2, is planning and preparation.

It should be borne in mind that it was not intended that this should be a 'how to' guide, but that it should provide a broad overview of some of the key issues, drawn from existing research and examples of practice.



# Section 2: Planning and preparation

The first stage in community engagement involves planning and preparation, whatever the model or methods used.

## The overall context

Any organisation or partnership<sup>19</sup> undertaking community engagement needs a clear commitment to effective engagement, good practice and equality from the highest level. This should also be reflected in policy, strategy and practice throughout the organisation or partnership<sup>20</sup>. It has been found that a strong overall commitment and leadership can impact upon the effectiveness of the process and can promote an enabling and positive approach to community engagement<sup>21</sup>. It can also avoid an approach based simply on a legal obligation, or a 'tokenistic' approach.

It is important that community engagement is a core activity in organisations and partnerships<sup>22</sup>. They need to make their support for equality clear, and promote 'a culture of partnership and engagement'<sup>23</sup>. There needs to be an understanding throughout of the benefits of community engagement and equality issues, and for a positive approach to this, as negative attitudes can be a barrier to inclusive community engagement<sup>24</sup>. An overall commitment to the National Standards can also provide a basis for the promotion of good practice.

A general commitment to community engagement also needs to be translated into meaningful practice, and should be part of the role of all staff and/or members. Although the use of specialist staff can help to focus on community engagement and/or equality issues, and promote a corporate approach, it is important that this takes place alongside an overall 'mainstreaming' approach, where this is embedded in the work of all staff and/or members. Specialist input should support, rather than replace, wider involvement, as engagement can also be undertaken by others with appropriate training and support<sup>25</sup>.

The review found examples of organisations and partnerships making a commitment to community engagement with, for example:

- The adoption of community engagement as a specific objective.
- The development of community engagement policies and strategies (some relating specifically to engagement with particular groups).
- The identification of staff with a remit to promote community engagement work.

Examples identified included:

- Some organisations have carried out work to develop community engagement strategies.
- Groups with a focus on developing community engagement were identified, including some being developed by local authorities to facilitate community engagement specifically in relation to the Single Outcome Agreement process.
- One of the eight strategic objectives of the ACPOS Public Reassurance Strategy is directly about engaging with local communities. Other objectives also relate to involving the local community.
- A public body identified that it has community engagement enshrined in its corporate management plan.
- One police force has developed a community engagement policy and standard operating procedures. Another has a strategy in draft.
- Some strategies relate to engagement with specific groups. One community planning partnership has the engagement of children and young people as a specific priority and is developing an action plan. Examples of other similar developments were provided.
- One community planning partnership has established a network of 'champions' (of which there are 40+ at practitioner level) to promote good practice in community engagement and to encourage the adoption of the National Standards. The practitioners are supported by two senior management level 'champions'.
- One public sector service provider has a number of staff working at a strategic and operational level to support community development approaches, facilitate community initiatives and support good practice.
- Some organisations and partnerships have adopted the National Standards, or have incorporated these into their procedures and policy development.
- One organisation has built a focus on engagement and community 'empowerment' into the overall culture of the organisation, with equality as a core element of this.

# Identifying the purpose and approach

Community engagement needs to have a clear and agreed purpose. The aims and objectives need to be identified and specified, and participants need to be aware of these<sup>26</sup>. It is also important to identify the **level** of community involvement that will be sought<sup>27</sup>, the stage at which community members will be involved, and the structures and mechanisms required.

## The level of community involvement

As noted in Section 1, the level of community involvement in community engagement can range from providing basic information through to the extensive involvement of community members in decision making.

It is now widely recognised that different levels of involvement can be appropriate for different purposes<sup>28</sup>. Overall, however, promoting the highest level of participation for the purpose has been identified as the best way to achieve meaningful input and equality and to give the outcome of the process more credibility.

To date, there has been found to be more limited development of ‘active participation’ than the provision of information or opportunities for consultation on policy proposals<sup>29</sup>. The importance, however, of fuller ‘involvement’ or greater ‘empowerment’ rather than ‘consultation’ has been identified<sup>30</sup>. More participative approaches (such as partnership working and community-based initiatives) are likely to be most appropriate when there is an opportunity for community members to have a greater stake in decisions, or where there is a clear commitment to enabling individuals or groups to develop community action.

It has also been identified that skills such as leadership and confidence can be developed through more participative approaches and through community-based organisations. These can lead to other benefits, such as employment, stimulating local democracy or enabling communities to develop a ‘vision’ for their own future<sup>31</sup>.

The most participative approaches may not always be suitable for the purpose. It has also been suggested that there can be a place for other forms of engagement, such as straightforward information provision or consultation (which may also be used alongside other forms of engagement). Approaches with a lower level of involvement can lead to participants’ involvement in other forms of community action<sup>32</sup>, and there are many ways in which the actual means of implementation

can also affect the outcome. The key is to ensure the use of the right level of engagement for the purpose<sup>33</sup>.

## The stage of community involvement

Community members may be involved at different stages in the process. It is widely agreed that good practice requires community members to be included from the earliest stage, and for a commitment to exist to a long term engagement<sup>34</sup>. The use of methods that allow relationships to be established over time has been found to be particularly important for equality groups. These can help build trust, change perceptions, or enable people to influence the agenda for change.

Overall, models of engagement with higher levels of participation are more likely to involve community members in identifying key issues and setting the agenda from the start. They are also more likely to enable ongoing involvement through the discussion, decision and follow-up processes (although there are also examples of community members in other models being involved, at least to some extent, in agenda-setting or continuing consultation).

## Structures and mechanisms

There is also a need for appropriate structures and mechanisms through which engagement can take place, and for links to be made between structures<sup>35</sup>. These structures and mechanisms will also link to the level of community engagement sought and to the nature of the involvement. There may be a need to develop new structures and mechanisms, or to build upon existing structures. There may be a need, for example, for:

- Gathering and collating information about organisations.
- Establishing links between organisations.
- Developing or involving groups, forums and advisory bodies.
- Including community members in appropriate partnerships or existing decision structures.
- Developing devolved decision making mechanisms.
- Developing mechanisms for community organisations' involvement in services.

It is important that participants in the process have real power and influence. Concern has been expressed that community engagement can sometimes take place without 'any major transfer of power and decision making from agencies to communities'<sup>36</sup>. Some forms of community engagement have been seen to involve

a ‘tick box’ exercise or a ‘top-down’ process, and it has been suggested that even more participative methods can sometimes involve pressure to respond to ‘official’ agendas. This, in turn, can lead to disillusion among community representatives. Structures involving joint decision making, and enabling communities to develop their own agendas are (at least at a theoretical level) more likely to enable a more equal balance of power between participants.

There is also a need to ensure that there is appropriate representation of equality groups in any structures that develop, on an equal basis with other participants. Without this, equality groups’ views may be under-represented in decision making, left out of important stages, or not given the same weight as other community views<sup>37</sup>.

The review found examples of a range of different approaches to community engagement, involving participants at different levels and at different stages of the process, and using different structures and mechanisms.

Examples identified included:

- Many organisations provide information through newsletters, community magazines and similar documents, and some use websites (sometimes targeting specific groups) and other media to provide information. These are sometimes part of a range of other measures to promote engagement, and sometimes provide the opportunity for feedback.
- There are numerous examples of public bodies (national and local) and other organisations and partnerships exploring community views through consultation (using, for example, surveys and other forms of written consultation; people’s panels and other representative groups; focus groups; workshops; events; and other means) with varying levels of involvement and participation.
- One local authority has developed older people’s user panels, while another noted that it has refreshed its sample of citizens’ panel participants, and was seeking to boost under-represented sections of the community. One local authority is extending its people’s panel to 10–15 year olds.
- Some organisations and partnerships have developed working groups, forums and other structures (with varying levels of devolved power and joint working) or have included community members in existing groups and partnerships. In some cases there is specific representation from communities of interest (for example, service user groups or particular equality groups).

- A number of organisations have developed a youth forum as part of their approach to engagement. There is an ACPOS LGBT reference group, bringing together police and LGBT community members, with some examples of similar local links. There were several examples of other groups and forums for other equality groups.
- Community-led organisations have developed in some areas to provide opportunities to involve a wide range of local people. Some of these have a specific focus on equality issues.
- There are examples of community members being involved in planning, developing and evaluating services and carrying out research. There is not always a clear delineation between such developments and forum/working group developments (highlighted above).
- One local authority noted the development of an organisation of local women to have a role in the running and development of a service to women and children affected by violence. One reported the establishment of a 'minority ethnic communities association', to involve community members in reviews of health and mental health services.
- A pilot project in one area involved a 'collaborative action inquiry', with ethnic minority residents and officers from statutory organisations working together to encourage participation in the community planning process by ethnic minority people.
- One local authority employed people from ethnic minorities to carry out a needs assessment survey. In another area, young people were trained and supported to carry out research to inform service development. Another initiative has involved a system of 'peer educators', through which educators and learners have been encouraged to look at wider community activity in the area.
- Other structures and networks have been developed. An example is the 'Community Voices Network', funded by the Scottish Government to help people from disadvantaged communities to play a bigger role in decision making. The Dialogue Youth Initiative also exists to ensure that the views of young people are heard.
- The Scottish Parliament has a number of means of encouraging a high level of participation by community members. The Children's Parliament and the Scottish Youth Parliament exist to provide a voice for children and young people nationally.
- One organisation identified the development of a framework to provide advice and guidance to enable the establishment of local issue-based alliances between statutory, voluntary and community representatives.

# Defining the engagement and choosing the methods

It is also important in planning and preparing for community engagement to identify and define the actual engagement, and this requires:

- Defining the community that will be involved.
- Identifying the relevant issues that will be explored.
- Choosing the methods.
- Identifying the means of monitoring, evaluation and review and feedback.

## Defining the community

It is vital to make sure that everyone with an interest in the issue that is to be focus of the engagement is identified and involved<sup>38</sup>. There have been criticisms of some processes where key interests feel that they have not been represented, or where processes always involve the same people and organisations ('the usual suspects') who may not be truly representative of the wider community, or who may act as 'gatekeepers' to prevent wider involvement.

In some cases, a relatively large population should be included, while in others it would be a more limited 'community'<sup>39</sup>. While there is no need to involve everyone all of the time, good practice requires recognition that:

- Those who are appropriate to the process should have the opportunity to take part.
- Equality groups should be represented adequately, and seldom heard groups **within** equality groups should be included.
- Existing representative organisations should be included.
- There may be opportunities to develop new organisations, as there are some communities in which there is no strong voice or 'champion'.
- There should be genuine 'grassroots' involvement.
- Individuals and groups should not be excluded because they are not part of recognised networks, or have not been involved in participation before.

Where representative organisations are involved, it is important that they:

- Are truly representative.
- Are transparent and accountable in their decision making.
- Engage with, and work in partnership with equality groups.

- Have authority and credibility with those they represent.
- Meet recognised standards of governance and operation.

Ensuring that the appropriate participants have the opportunity to be involved will require work to identify the nature of the community and groups within it. This stage should involve members of the community<sup>40</sup>. A combination of methods can be helpful in this, including examining information about population and service use, as well as other local information. It is important not to base the decision about whether or not to include community members on numbers alone, and the limitations of statistical information should be recognised. It is also important to examine information from local networks, organisations and community leaders. There will also be a need for proactive work to target those less likely to be involved, and this is discussed in Section 3.

The wider context in which the engagement will take place is also important. There is a need to ensure that appropriate links are made to other activities, and to avoid duplication. It is useful to identify whether any other organisations have engaged with the same community, or on the same issue<sup>41</sup>. It has been found, for example, that cross-sectoral partnerships between public sector agencies, with people from the community involved as equal partners, can be effective<sup>42</sup>.

The links **between** local organisations are also crucial (particularly in smaller areas) and it is important to be aware of existing relationships between key participants, variations in levels of experience of this work and any potential barriers to participation<sup>43</sup>.

Community members have many demands upon their time, and the arrangements should not require an unreasonable or unrealistic level of commitment.

## Identifying the relevant issues

It is also important to ensure that the issues covered in the engagement process are those that are of real concern and relevance to the community<sup>44</sup>.

There should be an opportunity for issues that are important to specific groups to be explored as part of this. It has been suggested that equality issues are not always considered or recognised, and that equality groups are sometimes consulted only on a narrow range of issues<sup>45</sup>. One of the issues that emerged in seminars held to develop advice on equality in community engagement was that it is important to ‘find out what their agenda is before introducing your own’<sup>46</sup>. It is also important to recognise that there are many ‘sub-groups’ of equality groups. Members of equality groups also have an interest in other issues as members of the wider community or other communities of interest.

Models that involve community members in setting the agenda, or that have a less clearly defined set of options, are more likely to focus on the issues of most relevance to community members. Any policy issues that are likely to impact upon the engagement should also be explained to participants<sup>47</sup>.

## Choosing the methods

Once the community that is to be the focus of the engagement has been defined, it is important to consider the methods that will be used. These will link to:

- The purpose of the engagement and the agenda.
- The level of participation sought and the community to be engaged.
- The types of information required.
- The length of the process.
- The resources available.

Some methods will be more appropriate for some participants than others, and some will work better in some geographical areas than others. It is important to choose the methods which best meet the purposes of the engagement. For example, providing information on a large scale may not encourage many community members to input to decision making processes, but can help to inform them. Using questionnaire surveys or citizens' panels may not deliver wider engagement and empowerment, but can provide an indication of public views on policy options. Including community members on decision making bodies and developing forums may not necessarily provide wider empowerment, but may provide a stronger voice for the community and a catalyst for further development. Undertaking community capacity building, developing community groups and involving them in services may not provide large scale quantitative information about public opinion, but may enable greater participation and promote greater 'ownership' of the process and outcomes.

At a practical level, it is important to identify whether relevant participants will be likely and able to respond using the methods proposed. It is important that participants themselves understand the different methods, and that they are involved in choosing them. The methods must be inclusive and barrier-free. It is also important to ensure that the methods include 'hidden sub-groups', and the use of innovative methods has been identified as beneficial in promoting engagement with some groups. Good practice suggests using a range of methods rather than a 'one size fits all' approach. An engagement strategy is likely to require a range of approaches to be effective<sup>48</sup>. Some of the implications of different choices are discussed in Section 3.

The review found some examples of organisations assessing the makeup of the local population, identifying groups to take part in community engagement, developing relevant issues to explore, and choosing the methods to be used.

Examples identified included:

- One Community Health Partnership noted that it was in the early stages of assessing the makeup of its local population in relation to specific groups, in order that engagement work could be more targeted.
- One police force has developed a 'sample consultation and engagement matrix' as part of its draft consultation and engagement strategy, providing examples of partners, agencies and community groups that divisions and the force as a whole should be engaging with.
- Some organisations and partnerships were found to be working to link with staff working in equality areas or with local representative groups, in order to improve contact with seldom heard groups.
- One organisation involved an umbrella equality organisation in the planning and delivery of a consultation strategy for the development of a new service. In another case, a piece of research was carried out with people with sensory loss, to explore their views and experiences of previous engagement prior to undertaking two pilot consultations.
- Examples were also found of the development of databases, either to identify other work being undertaken or to identify relevant organisations. For example, one local authority identified developing an 'Equalities Network' which, in its basic form, involves a database with details of all groups in the local area with an interest in equality issues that can be called upon for consultation/involvement.
- Some organisations were found to be working in collaboration to focus on specific issues. In one area, a partnership group of local authorities and the NHS is working together to engage with ethnic minority community members.
- There were examples of the involvement of participants in priority setting and in identifying the key issues for them through the use of methods such as, for example, 'open space' events and 'planning for real' as well as by involving them at the agenda-setting stage in the process.
- Numerous organisations and partnerships were found to use a range of methods in combination in their community engagement processes. Some specific examples are provided in Section 3.

## Monitoring, evaluation and review and feedback

At the planning stage, it is also important to plan how to monitor, evaluate and review the engagement to ensure that it is meeting its objectives and to allow feedback to be provided to community members. This requires the purpose, aims and objectives to be specified, as well as the nature of the process and the outputs and outcomes that are desired.

There is also a need to identify the information that will demonstrate achievements, and to establish the ways in which the information will be gathered. Participants should agree:

- The information that will be collected.
- How, and by whom it will be collected.
- The use that will be made of the data.
- The arrangements for feedback<sup>49</sup>.

Mechanisms should be put in place from the outset to collect all necessary information, and to assess the nature and effectiveness of the engagement as it is implemented.

These issues (with examples) are discussed in more detail in Section 4, but need to be built in from the start<sup>50</sup>.

## Developing capacity

A further aspect of planning and preparing for community engagement is to consider the capacity of groups, individuals and organisations to become involved. It is also important to identify any learning and development needs they may have, as well as potential sources of support<sup>51</sup>.

It has been identified that capacity building, or increasing skills (where necessary), is a key aspect of effective community engagement. It can have wider knock-on benefits for the individuals and organisations concerned. It is important to stress that this is a learning process between **all** partners, and does not imply that ‘the community’ lacks skills. Rather, it suggests that everyone involved (agencies and community members) should develop their capacity and skills in engaging with each other. It is also important to ensure that the methods used reflect diverse needs and are appropriate for their purpose<sup>52</sup>.

## Guidance and training

The development of understanding helps to embed community engagement within organisations and partnerships. The development of skills, knowledge and confidence helps to make this engagement effective. Guidance and training can help to develop understanding, skills, knowledge and confidence, and promote good practice.

There is a considerable body of guidance currently available about community engagement, and about equality in community engagement (see Annex 4). Some professional bodies, umbrella and advisory organisations also provide advice to local organisations and groups on community engagement, equality issues or other aspects of their functions.

Access to training can be important for those involved in community engagement (whether practitioners, organisers and other community members) and there has been found to be value in joint education<sup>53</sup>. This is equally true of both introductory and refresher training. Overall, it has been suggested that engagement can, as a result of training, be more robust. The impact of this has been highlighted in a number of studies<sup>54</sup>.

Training can include some practical aspects of community engagement such as committee skills, strategic planning and management, as well as personal issues, such as confidence building. Training can also focus on more theoretical issues. It can be provided, for example, to user-led organisations involved in tendering and procurement, to enable them to compete for relevant work. It can also include equality training as well as a range of other issues.

## Development and other support

Other forms of capacity building work can also help enable involvement by communities. The provision of support (financial or other), can help to:

- Establish new groups (if required).
- Sustain existing groups.
- Strengthen communities' input to engagement processes.
- Enable organisations to become organised to participate in community engagement, develop further and represent their own views effectively.
- Encourage community involvement.
- Develop opportunities.
- Ensure that organisations themselves promote good practice.
- Develop a sustainable infrastructure in the community.

- Enable organisations to support the involvement of seldom heard groups.
- Address the needs of particular groups to enable them to participate effectively.

Such support can be provided by staff with a remit for this, or by other community organisations. A review of one umbrella equality organisation, for example, identified their role in developing the capacity of local projects to enable them to become self-sustaining. The national standard for support also identifies the need for access to specialist professional advice, for example, relating to legal and financial issues. This can help local participants to overcome some of the additional barriers that they may face. It has been found that, as communities become aware of their achievements, their confidence grows<sup>55</sup>.

Networking between staff, organisations and groups to share experiences and information, as well as the dissemination of good practice examples, can also help to build capacity, reduce isolation and ‘showcase’ what works. ‘Buddying’ and similar work can also develop skills, knowledge or capacity in organisations and communities<sup>56</sup>.

## Resources

The provision of adequate resources, both for service providers and community members, is a critical issue. A lack of resources can constrain the overall process and the ways that organisations and partnerships can become involved. The provision of appropriate resources, however, can help to ensure that a process is effective<sup>57</sup>. The level of resources often impacts on engagement with the voluntary and community sector.

As with other aspects of planning, it is important to identify the level of resources available and the overall costs of enabling community engagement. There is a need for sufficient funding, staffing (including administrative support) and equipment to cover all aspects of the engagement<sup>58</sup>. This should include, for example, resources for:

- Innovative ways of working with local communities and engagement with those who are seldom heard.
- Training.
- Start-up and development support.
- Information requirements.
- Expenses
- Access to independent advice.

The review found many examples of capacity building work taking various forms. These included: guidance and training; development and other support; and the provision of resources.

Examples identified included:

- Some organisations have developed guidance for staff or community members to enable them to participate in community engagement.
- One local authority has published a handbook for those involved in community consultation and engagement. A police force has developed a community engagement toolkit to provide guidance to staff, with information, guidance and case studies.
- There are examples of community planning partnerships producing material to support community representatives on partnerships.
- A number of public bodies have been involved in training, sometimes on specific aspects of community engagement. Three local authorities and a health board have been involved in joint training on a range of issues relating to community engagement.
- Some staff in community planning partnerships have received training relating to the National Standards for Community Engagement.
- Training has also been provided to community participants. One organisation offered free training events for practitioners, volunteers and community activists to enable them to improve the ways in which they represent community needs to policy makers.
- Other examples of training for community participants funded were identified, for example, through the Community Voices Programme.
- Work has been carried out to develop local support structures for community engagement (for example, of the types described earlier).
- Some equality organisations are involved in the provision of education and training, as well as other forms of capacity building to other organisations.
- One area-based Community Empowerment Project supports local people to become more involved in decision making through a range of forms of training, support and networking.
- One umbrella equality organisation has developed a range of capacity building work (including academic capacity building initiatives) to develop and strengthen the ethnic minority sector.
- A Local Enterprise Company is working to build local community capacity in one area. This will increase opportunities and manage resources in the community, with examples of community members being supported in a range of ways (for example, through access to funding, guidance relating to law and policy) to work together to develop local initiatives.

- There are examples of funding being provided to enable community organisations to develop activities to benefit community members. In this context, the Community Voices Programme was noted earlier.
- The Scottish Community Action Research Fund has given community groups support to improve their skills and confidence to carry out their own research. Examples were also given of funding being provided from various sources for aspects of community engagement.
- Some work has been undertaken to try to make funding easier to obtain and accessible. For example, one partnership identified support being provided to assist groups with applications for funding, along with the production of a ‘funding toolkit’.

## Specification of a plan

Much of the good practice guidance suggests that, once all of these aspects of the intended engagement are clear, they can then be specified in a project plan that can guide the next stages. At this point, it is important for all participants to be clear about:

- The purpose, aims and objectives of the engagement.
- The structure and mechanisms.
- The process, methods and level of engagement.
- The outputs, outcomes and overall expectations.
- **Who** will be involved.
- How they will communicate.
- The roles and responsibilities of participants.
- The resources to be made available to the process.
- How views will be taken into account and used, including whether they will be made widely available.
- The processes for monitoring, evaluation and review and feedback.

It is vital that the planned engagement is ‘transparent’, that expectations are realistic and that there are no hidden agendas. The greater the involvement of participants at all stages, the more likely it is that this will be the case.

All of the aspects of good practice in the planning and preparation of community engagement described in this section should help to ensure that the engagement that is undertaken is effective and appropriate.

# **Section 3: Implementation and practice**

Whatever the overall approach taken and the level of involvement sought, there are a number of ways that good practice can be promoted in the implementation and practice of community engagement<sup>59</sup>, making it more effective and inclusive.

## The methods used

It is important that the methods used are ‘fit for purpose’. The key to good practice is to consider the implications of different methods, taking account of the purpose of the engagement, the nature of the community and all of the potential barriers to participation. The methods should enable everyone with an interest to participate, and there is a need to identify, involve and support excluded groups. The methods that are most appropriate for the task and that participants will be comfortable with should be used<sup>60</sup>. The need to use a range of methods in combination was identified in the previous section. Within both written and face to face methods, different techniques and approaches can enable engagement or create barriers. Although this review is not intended to provide a detailed guide to these, some of the broad considerations are explored below.

### Written methods

Written materials are often used extensively in providing information (for example, newsletters, letters, reports etc), and as part of consultation processes (for example, questionnaire surveys, response cards, consultation documents etc). There has also been an increasing focus on the use of information technology and email in community engagement.

Written methods can be helpful in providing information to, or getting views from, a large number of people. They can also be helpful in giving those who are unable to participate in face to face discussions, or who are not directly involved in dialogue, a chance to provide their views. Information also plays an essential part in some participative models of engagement, and can keep community members up to date with relevant initiatives.

The ways in which written materials are used can impact on the effectiveness of the engagement. For example, some written methods can encourage specific groups to give their views. It has been suggested that technology ‘if used appropriately’, can involve people across geographical and cultural boundaries. Some internet-based approaches have been used with young people and it has been suggested that technology can help to engage with people with hidden conditions. Techniques such as the use of drawings, post-it notes, art, graffiti walls and competitions have also been found to help engage with some groups<sup>61</sup>.

Conversely, however, some written material can exclude potential participants. People with impairments affecting reading, writing, concentration or memory may be unable to participate in this way. Some people from ethnic minority communities may be excluded where written information is provided only in English. Not all community members have access to the internet, nor the skills required. This may be a particular issue for some older people, disabled people and people on low incomes.

For these reasons, it is important to use other formats to provide written material, whatever the purpose of this. This might include, for example:

- Braille.
- Easy read.
- Large print.
- Audio material.
- Visual material.
- Information in languages other than English.

The Scottish Accessible Information Forum produces standards and guidelines for accessible information (see Annex 4). It is also important, however, to use face to face methods alongside written material, wherever possible (even where the sole purpose is information provision), to ensure that anyone for whom written material is inappropriate can be involved in other ways.

The review found many examples of the use of written methods, including newsletters and magazines; surveys; uses of other technology; and other visual methods.

Examples identified included:

- Many organisations and partnerships provide newsletters, magazines and other written information to communities (often in different formats), giving information about service developments and sometimes seeking views.
- There are many examples of organisations and partnerships making newsletters available in formats such as braille and audio, and developing information in large print.
- Many organisations and partnerships undertake large scale surveys, and many are using these methods to identify public views on particular issues.

- Many organisations have made different uses of technology to enable community members to submit their views, with examples of the use of dedicated websites for seeking feedback and to provide opportunities to discuss views and experiences.
- One police force used interactive handsets (along with a laptop computer), to allow participants to select anonymously from a list of answers and press a corresponding letter on their handset.
- A local authority in a rural area uses an ‘armchair group’ that allows people who cannot attend public or user groups to contribute their views from their own homes.
- A number of services are, or are considering, providing website information with ‘Browsealoud’ or similar systems, that read web pages aloud.
- One organisation used a tactile copier to enable visually impaired people to consider housing plans.
- Some organisations use visual methods such as art to enable engagement. For example, a project in one area has used artists to engage with local communities and to encourage participation in the way community facilities and open spaces are designed and used.

## Face to face methods

Face to face methods, such as meetings of various forms and sizes, in depth interviews and group discussions of various types, are used across different models of community engagement. They are used to provide information and as part of consultation processes through, for example:

- Public meetings.
- Interviews.
- Conferences and seminars.
- Roadshows and events.
- Meetings.
- Working or focus groups, panels and forums.

Face to face methods are also a key element of the most participative models through, for example:

- The inclusion of community members in specific groups and partnerships.
- The development and operation of community organisations.
- Work to develop capacity.

Overall, face to face methods usually provide opportunities for greater involvement than written methods, and enable two way dialogue (to varying degrees) and the exchange of qualitative information.

Some face to face methods involve a higher level of participation and empowerment than others. For example, genuine 'partnership' meetings, local community development work and local meetings involving community members in decision making (as well as some working groups and forums) can provide opportunities for a very high level of involvement (which, as noted previously, is desirable). Some, such as public meetings, while providing contact, are unlikely to produce detailed debate, but can at least allow some exchange of information.

As with written methods, there can be barriers in the use of face to face methods<sup>62</sup>. For example:

- Some people find formal meetings, 'business' arrangements, conferences and large events intimidating.
- Some lack confidence to participate in meetings.
- Some may be excluded by a requirement for regular attendance.
- Some find methods such as role play or 'thought showers' difficult.
- Some issues may be unsuitable for discussion in a group (or in a mixed sex or mixed community group).
- Some meetings can be dominated by a small number of participants.
- Some groups and individuals do not have resources to attend meetings.
- Some may prefer to be involved through other means.
- Practical arrangements can compound barriers.

A number of ways of addressing some of the barriers have been identified<sup>63</sup>, and these include:

- Ensuring that different types of meetings and events are held.
- Using small group discussions within meetings to enable those who lack confidence to take part, with their views being fed back to larger groups.
- Using 'rotating chairpersons' and effective chairing techniques to ensure that different representatives have an equal voice.
- Taking a flexible approach to the conduct of meetings, allowing for breaks and enabling people to make points at different times.

- Facilitating discussions in an appropriate way.
- Offering a confidential, one to one meeting to back up discussion of sensitive issues.
- Using methods such as video conferencing to reach areas that are geographically isolated.
- Using particular methods with specific groups, such as, for example, reminiscence work with older people, or drama with young people.
- Using methods such as storytelling and personal testimonies to provide detailed information about personal experiences.
- Ensuring that any methods used in meetings, such as role play, do not require actions that might exclude some people.

There may also be a need to consider holding specific meetings, sub-groups or events to explore the views of particular groups, or to examine specific issues with them. Targeted groups can help to elicit the views of ‘seldom heard from’ groups<sup>64</sup>. Where specific meetings or forums are held, however, this should be as an **additional** means of participation to overcome barriers, as part of a mainstreaming approach that recognises the role of all participants in addressing wider issues. There should be clear mechanisms to feed into the wider process

Overall, it is vital to ensure that all of the potential barriers are identified and addressed, and appropriate arrangements made. It is also important to combine face to face methods with other opportunities for participation, to enable the widest choice of involvement, to allow a broader range of input to be captured and to increase opportunities for participation by equality groups.

The review found many examples of the use of face to face methods to provide information, explore the views of community members, work jointly with them and develop local community initiatives. There were also examples of the use of face to face techniques to overcome barriers in other forms of engagement and to enable participation.

Examples identified included:

- One organisation offered the option, in large scale consultations, of expanding on written information at meetings or briefings, if required.
- Instead of relying on newsletters to provide information, one organisation gave members the option of a regular telephone update.

- A housing association applied for a grant for IT equipment to enable people who could not attend meetings to engage via a webcam. Some local authorities covering remote communities were found to use video conferencing and other methods to exchange views.
- Some meetings, events or forums focus on particular groups to identify issues of relevance to them. One police force, for example, held a faith conference to identify how to work together to tackle some local issues. One local authority held a migrant workers' conference.
- One organisation established a number of women's forums, offering participants a chance to identify areas of concern. Similar examples with other equality groups were also identified.
- One NHS body provided 'safe space' workshops in the preparation of a Disability Equality Scheme, to enable input from groups whose voices were considered 'harder to hear'. It was suggested that this had helped to identify the experiences of people who might otherwise have been excluded.
- There was also some evidence of the use of particular face to face methods (such as drama, reminiscence or storytelling) to gather the views of seldom heard groups. One police force, for example, facilitated a storytelling workshop on transgender issues as part of a conference.

There are also a range of procedural, practical and support issues that need to be considered in community engagement, many of which apply to both written and face to face methods.

## Procedures

Within different models and methods of community engagement, the nature of the procedures used can have an impact on their effectiveness, and on the extent and nature of participation.

### Formality and clarity

The formality and clarity of written material and face to face methods can have an impact on engagement. A high level of formality can create barriers to participation, particularly for members of the community who are not used to such processes, including some members of equality groups.

It has been identified that 'red tape' can be among the barriers to effective engagement. Young people have been highlighted as a group that may not respond to formal techniques. While formal approaches are perhaps less likely in more participative models, they can be introduced into any model (for example, through the means of operation of partnerships and joint meetings).

It has been suggested that processes should be as informal as possible, to enable those who are not organised to participate in formal processes to give their views<sup>65</sup>. Such methods have been found to attract a wider range of participants, and to work best with groups such as ethnic minority communities, older and young people and other groups. The value of activities being 'fun' rather than involving 'death by committee' has been identified. It is generally considered good practice to include more informal procedures and structures, even alongside other more formal processes.

Related to this, there is a need to ensure that people are not excluded or put off by jargon, 'in-jokes', inappropriate language or messages, or unexplained procedures<sup>66</sup>. These may have a particular impact on those who already feel that community engagement is 'not for them'.

There is a need for clear procedures that enable participants to work together (and work with others) effectively and efficiently<sup>67</sup>. The ways in which participants can raise issues need to be well-understood. It has been found that preparatory work to explain processes to community members prior to engagement can lead to a greater understanding and involvement. Similarly, it has been suggested that agencies promoting transparency can be more successful in encouraging service users to become involved in service planning<sup>68</sup>.

## **Relationships and behaviour**

The nature of relationships is also an important aspect of community engagement. Equal relationships should be promoted that value the contribution of all of those involved. There is a need to listen to, and include consideration of, the views of community participants. Participants need to know that their views will be taken into account and that the process will result in change (which, in turn, can make them more willing and confident to take on additional responsibility)<sup>69</sup>.

It was suggested previously that the most participative approaches provide the greatest opportunity to lead to change. Again, however, this depends on the ways in which models are implemented. Although there are clearly examples of

community initiatives that have led to change, there can be reluctance on the part of agencies to share power or to hand over control to communities, even in these approaches.

There can also be opportunities for change through other models. For example, an evaluation of people's juries found that these could impact on decision making and lead to action. There are examples of ways in which community members have influenced action through working groups, forums etc, even where there has not been full partnership working<sup>70</sup>.

One aspect of the promotion of equal relationships is that all of those involved need access to all of the information required, as part of a two way process. It is also important, however, not to overwhelm community members with excessive amounts of irrelevant information. Information should be accurate, timely, accessible, in plain language and in appropriate formats (as discussed in relation to written methods)<sup>71</sup>. Support should be made available to communicate information to participants, if required, through interpreters or advocates. Information should be communicated both on paper and using face to face methods.

Information should promote positive images of all population groups, reflecting diversity, and avoiding the stereotypes and negative public images that can exclude some equality groups. Good practice in community engagement challenges prejudices, and the materials used should reflect this<sup>72</sup>. It should also be borne in mind that different groups may require different information, such as women and men; young people and older people etc<sup>73</sup>.

The behaviour of all participants is also important, with a general need to 'behave towards one another in a positive, respectful and non-discriminatory manner'<sup>74</sup>. Some people may be concerned that they will be victimised, or identified, and there is a need for mutual trust, an atmosphere in which people are comfortable to express their views, and respect for confidentiality. Participants should be able to challenge negative stereotypes or discriminatory behaviour, and organisations need to be 'open, accessible and approachable'<sup>75</sup>.

The review found a number of examples of organisations and partnerships using 'safe' settings and appropriate processes to promote informality and clarity, and to develop relationships based on trust.

Examples identified included:

- One organisation held a consultative day for mental health service users and carers in a walled garden with a barbecue, offering a peaceful and relaxed environment.
- There were examples of the use of ‘listening lunches’ and similar events. In one area, for example, ‘diversity lunches’ were held, involving service providers and community members.
- One public body held ‘breakfasts’ with Gypsy/Travellers before more formal meetings. A police force held evening events with LGBT people.
- Some organisations, in preparing Disability Equality Schemes, used informal processes and believed that these had enabled ‘seldom heard’ groups to be involved.
- There were also examples of work being carried out to explain community engagement processes and procedures to participants (either verbally or through the production of written materials).
- One public body undertook to explain their procedures to all participants prior to undertaking engagement.
- A Community Action Team developed a handbook to improve understanding of the structures and methods of engagement used, with a condensed version providing a quick guide for community participants.
- One NHS body identified that it had helped to build trust by telling participants why they were asking the questions that were explored, what would happen to the information, and the arrangements for confidentiality.

## Timescales

The need for an appropriate timescale for community engagement is a further important aspect of effective involvement<sup>76</sup>. Inappropriate timescales can make community engagement less effective<sup>77</sup>. Community members need to have sufficient time to give full consideration to issues. There needs to be time to undertake preparatory work, to obtain materials in other formats and languages, and to share, disseminate and consider information. Approaches involving in-depth engagement and capacity building are likely to have particular time implications, and this needs to be taken into account.

# Practical arrangements

Practical arrangements can also impact on community engagement, and it is important to make and publicise appropriate arrangements.

## The location/venue for engagement

A number of reports identify the need to undertake community engagement in places where people live and work<sup>78</sup>. Some suggest that this can increase the effectiveness of the engagement and help to attract a wider group of participants. The choice of location can be important in working with equality groups (and it has been suggested, for example, that promoting involvement with young people, LGBT people and older people in appropriate community-based settings can be effective)<sup>79</sup>.

People need to be comfortable with the venue, and it is important to ensure that it is:

- Suitable to the audience.
- Physically accessible.
- Appropriate for use by people with mobility impairments including wheelchair users.
- Provided with appropriate parking and toilet facilities.
- Laid out appropriately, in terms of furniture, communication support etc.
- Able to meet participants' requirements (which should be identified).
- Chosen with safety, security and transport accessibility in mind.

Some premises (for example, those with religious or political affiliations) may be unsuitable for some participants, and there may be a need to provide a suitable room for prayer. Any requirements for food and refreshments should also be identified and taken into account. As with other aspects of community engagement, it is vital not to take a 'one size fits all' approach. Seeking expert advice can ensure that a lack of access, or a venue's unsuitability in other ways does not constrain participation.

## Other practical considerations

Other practical issues can present barriers to participation. These can include the following:

- A lack of transport can present a barrier to participation in face to face methods of engagement and can have a particular impact on people in rural areas, older people and disabled people.
- Some participants are responsible for the care of dependents (children or adults) and this can constrain participation. Women's role as primary carers has an impact on when and how they can participate in engagement. A lack of childcare can be a significant barrier to involvement for parents, and a lack of support to women and men caring for other dependents can also exclude them.
- Some participants may need personal support to enable them to be involved on an equal basis.
- People may experience barriers because of hearing or visual impairments, where English is not their main language, or where they have other communication support needs.
- The timing of events can exclude potential participants. Early morning meetings will be inappropriate for some (for example, some disabled people and those with caring responsibilities). Others may not be able to participate in the evenings (for example, those with small children), or at particular times during the day (for example, those who are working). Some community members will be unable to attend on public holidays and religious festivals.
- Financial barriers (for example, if people are out of pocket or if there are significant demands on the resources of small organisations) can exclude individuals and groups from participation.

In terms of addressing these barriers, it is important to ensure that:

- Transport is made available, if required, to take people to community engagement events, or the costs of transport are reimbursed.
- Substitute care is provided (for example, crèche or other provision) or the costs of this are met.
- Support persons or carers can attend events.
- A range of communication methods is made available and independent advocates are involved where appropriate.
- Participants have access to any equipment that they require.

- Meetings are held at appropriate times, and sometimes at a range of different times (including, for example, twilight and weekend meetings). The use of other methods to complement meetings is also important.
- Financial recognition or in kind support is provided, including, for example: expenses; carer allowances; offsetting any loss of earnings incurred; providing incentives in some circumstances; making a fee payment for aspects of work for that a public authority might normally be expected to pay, or where specific work is commissioned from community members.

The review found a range of examples of practical arrangements, including consideration of the location/venue and other practical arrangements.

Examples identified included:

- Some organisations sought community members' views in different parts of their own areas, or different parts of Scotland. One public body held a series of meetings across its area to provide people with opportunities to give their views on major local issues.
- Many organisations and partnerships indicated that they were aware of the need to consider physical accessibility issues in their practical arrangements, and many examples were provided of ways in which they did this.
- Some organisations were found to make transport available to enable participants to attend meetings or events, or reimburse transport costs.
- One public body stated that it automatically books personal assistants for all events and considers a range of access and communication issues, rather than waiting for participants to identify their own requirements.
- One local organisation has produced information about how to engage with people with sensory loss and BSL users.
- One organisation asked an advocacy group to help disabled tenants to give their views during a consultation. Participants had red and green cards to help them to identify if the meeting was going too fast, or if they needed more explanation.
- One organisation alternated their meeting times between day and evening to enable more people to take part in at least every other meeting.

# Links and support

The nature of links that are made with organisations and members of the community, and the support that is provided to them can also have an impact on the effectiveness of community engagement.

## Proactive work

There is a need for proactive work to continue throughout the community engagement process<sup>80</sup>, to seek out the views of community members (including equality groups and others who may be ‘seldom heard’) and to ensure that their views and expertise are not excluded. Good practice suggests that it is not sufficient to assume that a process is ‘open to all’, but requires encouraging and promoting participation, particularly of groups who may experience barriers<sup>81</sup>. A proactive approach, reaching beyond ‘the usual suspects’ has been found to increase the likelihood of some members of the community giving their views.

This can involve, for example:

- Raising awareness among sections of the community through targeted publicity.
- The use of local media.
- Neighbourhood work to identify, engage with and encourage people to participate.
- Making links with specific local organisations and individuals.
- Arranging particular events and meetings.
- Helping to develop new groups where required.

Existing local groups and organisations (particularly equality organisations, but also other community-based groups) can be valuable partners in this and can help to seek the views of other community members. This can be an effective way of reaching those who may not traditionally participate. It can also help to build the capacity of organisations. Proactive work can take place as part of an overall ‘mainstreaming’ approach highlighted earlier. Many respondents in this review identified examples of developing and building local contacts.

Examples identified included:

- Some organisations and partnerships noted that they had carried out specific proactive work to encourage participation and involvement in community engagement.
- A number of examples were identified of specific work by organisations and partnerships to make links with local equality organisations.
- A number of Tenant Participation Officers in one area tried to generate interest by writing to and visiting disabled tenants, raising awareness of the tenant participation process.
- Some housing providers tried to make links with local equality groups to encourage them to give their views on housing issues.
- A community organisation sought funding for an accessible bus to undertake outreach work in rural communities.
- A pilot project to enhance participation by ethnic minority people based on a 'collaborative inquiry' process, used word of mouth networks and local organisations to try to reach beyond 'the usual suspects'.
- As noted previously, some organisations and partnerships were developing database information about local groups.
- One organisation was found to keep a database of people's preferred communication formats.

## Access to ongoing support

Capacity building work and the provision of ongoing support to participants should also continue throughout community engagement. Some methods of engagement (particularly where these involve empowering community organisations) are closely linked to building the capacity of communities. It is also important to continue to review and evaluate the learning needs of participants, and a range of forms of support can be useful<sup>82</sup>.

Studies have found that the following can be helpful<sup>83</sup>:

- Continuous 'light touch' support.
- More intensive community development support where there is a history of disadvantage, a fragmented community or major change at community level.
- Independent advice and objective support.
- Ongoing learning and training.
- Peer support and networking.

- Information.
- Access to ongoing expertise.
- Specialist direction and specific staff.
- Local and national support networks.

Some examples of the provision of ongoing support during community engagement were identified in the review.

Examples identified included:

- Workers provided support to assist organisations and groups to enable local community members and organisations to develop their engagement.
- Some specialist staff (in community engagement and/or equality) were identified as providing ongoing support to community engagement.
- Support is provided to participants in the community planning forum in one area by officers from the Community Action Team, through briefing and debriefing sessions.
- One Local Enterprise Company provided staff support to a local community organisation to assist them with funding, professional advice and meetings, to enable them to lead the development of measures to reverse decline in a local area.
- In one initiative, where community-led action research took place through community groups, the groups were provided with a mentor who worked with them to support the design and delivery of their research projects.
- In some cases, staff were identified with specific responsibility for liaison with, or provision of support to particular groups (including, in some cases, equality groups).
- Some police forces identified officers with responsibility for liaison with particular groups.
- Community Learning and Development work has been undertaken to support and promote community engagement. Workers in one area were identified as having a key role in supporting young people to engage with community planning.

This section has highlighted some of the key considerations in the implementation and practice of community engagement. These should help to enable the most effective involvement of the widest range of community members, whatever the model used.

# **Section 4: Monitoring, evaluation and review, and feedback**

Monitoring, evaluation and review, and feedback are also vital elements of good practice in community engagement<sup>84</sup>. This section provides a brief overview of the key elements of good practice in this. More detailed guidance is available in the National Standards for Community Engagement (along with the supporting material) and through VOICE.

## Monitoring

The collection of monitoring information focuses on assessing the effectiveness of community engagement. The aims and objectives of the engagement will have been identified at the planning and preparation stage (as discussed in Section 2), as will the nature and expectations of the process. Baseline information should be in place about the relevant community and their level of involvement at the outset. It should also be clear how 'success' will be measured, what sort of information will be needed to demonstrate this and how this will be gathered (with mechanisms established through which to do so).

The monitoring information gathered should link to issues such as the nature and extent of involvement of community members (including who has participated, and any gaps in participation), the effectiveness of the methods used and progress against the objectives. This will require the collection of regular quantitative information about the level and nature of participation (including by equality groups). It will also require qualitative information from participants about their experiences and perceptions of progress, the impact of the engagement and their views of the effectiveness of the methods used<sup>85</sup>.

It is also considered important to use the monitoring information to identify and address any problems. The evaluation and review processes can help to ensure that this is done.

## Evaluation and review

Along with the collection of monitoring information, there is a need for the regular evaluation and review of community engagement<sup>86</sup>. This applies both to processes that are time-limited or have a focus on a specific issue for a defined period (for example, a one-off consultation) and to those that are ongoing (for example, the inclusion of community members in groups or partnership working). It is also suggested that short and longer term evaluations should be carried out<sup>87</sup>.

The evaluation of community engagement has, in the past, been one of the less well-developed aspects of the process. One of the findings of this review was that, although there were many examples of different models and methods of engagement, there were relatively few examples of these being formally evaluated, or of their impact being assessed and evidenced. Where evaluation and review has taken place, the findings are rarely published.

This is increasingly recognised as an important strand of good practice, and is an area in which those undertaking community engagement are being encouraged to develop their practice.

## Purpose

The processes of evaluation and review should be linked to the monitoring process, and involve:

- Drawing together, at regular intervals, the information that has been collected.
- Gathering other information, as necessary, using a range of appropriate research methods.
- Considering the findings.

The review process should consider all aspects of the community engagement process in the light of the information that has been gathered. This allows evaluation of the community engagement overall. In that way, monitoring information provides the basis of evaluation and review, with a view to learning lessons for the future.

Evaluation and review should provide an opportunity for continuous learning and development. It should be an ongoing process rather than a one-off event. The lessons learned should be used to inform planning, and should form the basis of any actions to amend or develop the processes. This makes the process similar to 'action research' methods, whereby any changes that are required to the process can be made as these are identified.

The process requires regular collection and consideration of information, which can be supplemented by a very detailed assessment of the engagement at particular stages.

The focus of evaluation and review should be upon the process, outputs and outcomes. Although it is recognised that it is often difficult to measure the impact

of community engagement in a definitive way, it is important to explore:

- Whether the community engagement has done (or is doing) what it set out to do.
- Those aspects that worked well (and the successes).
- Those that worked less well.
- Changes over time, and possible longer term benefits.
- Any impacts on those who took part.
- Lessons that can be learned for future work.

It is also important to review the capacity of those involved to play their roles, with all participants looking at their own learning and development needs and considering these together<sup>88</sup>. Skills in presenting and using evidence can also be developed<sup>89</sup>.

## Methods of evaluation and review

The 'ABCD' programme<sup>90</sup> and 'Learning Evaluation and Planning' (LEAP) are example of techniques that can be used to help evaluate community engagement<sup>91</sup>. As with monitoring, it is important to include both qualitative and quantitative data and to recognise the value of a range of different types of evidence<sup>92</sup>, including the use of 'soft' indicators to identify the impact of community engagement work.

There may also be a need to gather additional information at some stages in order to supplement the monitoring information gathered over the life of the engagement. A range of data sources and methods that can be used have been identified. These include, for example:

- Documentary evidence.
- Participation data.
- Interviews and/or focus groups.
- Specific research (using a range of complementary methods).
- Case studies.
- Links to auditing processes.

As with the collection of monitoring information, it is important that evaluation and review involve all participants in providing their views and discussing the findings. As with other aspects of community engagement, it is important that this includes equality groups<sup>93</sup>.

The review identified some examples of organisations collecting monitoring information or carrying out evaluations.

Examples identified included:

- A number of organisations and partnerships were found to have used a range of monitoring and evaluation methods.
- One police force identified that, as part of its public consultation programme, the demographics of participants in consultation events and respondents to questionnaires were monitored. This led to further action where gaps in representation were identified.
- A community planning partnership carried out an assessment of the community structures and methods of engagement it used. The scoring and assessment was carried out by a panel of community participants and partner organisations.
- Evaluation work has been used to demonstrate the effectiveness of specific engagement processes, identify the impact of initiatives, highlight lessons learned, point to the way forward for the future and share good practice.
- A jury on drugs in one area was evaluated to identify the appropriateness and usefulness of the process. Data was collected immediately after the process and at a six-months follow-up.
- A project to engage with the local community to reduce the amount of waste produced was independently monitored and evaluated. This enabled the project to describe the work undertaken and demonstrate its achievements.
- An independent evaluation was carried out by a public body of structural arrangements for one aspect of engagement to identify improvements that could be made to the process.
- A number of pilot youth forums in one area were evaluated using documentary evidence, interviews and focus groups to identify whether the objectives were met and whether further groups should be developed.
- One organisation carried out research with community members to explore whether the National Standards had been achieved in engagement with them.
- One public body noted that a number of reviews had been carried out corporately by the organisation, along with annual equality reviews.
- An evaluation resource for community organisations was developed by an organisation that had funded a range of community-based initiatives. The resource was produced on the basis of evaluation findings and piloted with a number of initiatives before being made widely available.

- VOiCE has also been developed and is likely to have a key role in helping to guide work in this area in the future.
- Many descriptive case studies and other information/guidance have been made available to assist organisations and partnerships in taking forward community engagement work.

## Feedback and presentation

It is also important to consider how to disseminate findings most effectively. It is vital to provide feedback to participants (including the wider community and the agencies affected)<sup>94</sup>. This should include not only the findings, but also the issues that emerged, the actions taken as a result of the views expressed and how input affected any decisions made. It can also be useful to share experiences of practice and lessons learned with other organisations<sup>95</sup>.

It has been found that feedback has a number of benefits<sup>96</sup>, including that it:

- Is an important element of the promotion of equal relationships that recognise and value the contribution of those involved.
- Can help to maintain a commitment to involvement in further community engagement.
- Can demonstrate that community involvement has been influential, rather than tokenistic.
- Can help to demonstrate how organisations are accountable to particular community groups.

It has also been suggested that some groups (such as young people) may expect feedback at an early stage, to identify the impact of their involvement and to see progress.

### Arrangements for feedback

Whether or not the engagement is likely to continue, it is important, in providing feedback, to use a range of methods and to follow the good practice identified in Section 3. Both formal and informal methods can be used, and the feedback should be presented in a clear and accessible way, and should be accurate and usable<sup>97</sup>. Feedback should be provided at an appropriate and agreed time (as it is often made available a long time after the community engagement, making

it largely meaningless). Where engagement takes place over a long period, feedback should be provided regularly.

In terms of the actual arrangements for feedback, this should be provided to all of those who are affected by the community engagement, including those who are involved in direct input and those whose views are represented by organisations. It is important that this feedback is given both directly **and** through representative organisations, that it is provided on a regular basis, and that those involved know what to expect and when it will be provided<sup>98</sup>.

There are many ways of providing feedback, mirroring some of the methods of engagement described previously (for example, written information through newsletters and reports, and face to face methods such as meetings etc). Information can also be cascaded via specific organisations to their members, and more widely.

In some forms of engagement (for example, some of the more participative models), there may be continuing dialogue, through which the findings can be fed into ongoing discussions. Community members who participate directly in this can provide feedback to others who are less closely involved.

## The nature of feedback

The nature of feedback depends on the engagement process and its content, but it is important that the feedback should:

- Make contributions to the process visible and include the experiences of **all** of the participants<sup>99</sup>.
- Inform participants of the outcome, including any options considered, actions agreed, changes planned or implemented and the reasons.
- Detail the ways in which the information will be used.
- Describe the actions that will follow and plans for the future, including continuing community engagement.

Participants should also have the opportunity to comment on decisions, rather than simply being 'passive recipients'<sup>100</sup>.

The review found some examples of organisations or partnerships providing feedback.

Examples identified included:

- Some organisations and partnerships believed that they had provided very detailed and clear feedback to those involved on how the views that had been expressed had been taken into account and how actions had been taken in response to the comments (or explanation of why actions had not been taken).
- The Scottish Partnership on Domestic Abuse prepared a specific report detailing how views expressed as part of a consultation on the draft National Strategy to Address Domestic Abuse in Scotland had been taken into account in the next draft of the document.
- One local authority undertook a ‘we asked ... you said ... we did’ campaign, that raised awareness of the ways in which they listened and responded to residents<sup>101</sup>.
- In a community engagement demonstration project, one organisation provided clear feedback on the actions that they took between meetings to address the priorities that had been identified. Where action had not been possible, they explained the reasons fully<sup>102</sup>.
- There were some examples of the use of a range of methods to disseminate findings to members of the community and external stakeholders.
- There were some examples of the use of the intranet in some organisations to provide feedback to members of staff.

This section has summarised some of the key elements of good practice in monitoring, evaluation and review and feedback. As noted previously, where good practice has been adopted in planning and preparation, and in the implementation and practice of community engagement, participants will understand the basis of their participation, will know how the information will be used and will be aware of the actions that will be taken.

The processes of monitoring, evaluation and review will identify the nature and effectiveness of the process and help to plan for the future. The provision of feedback should, in turn, help to share information, and to ensure that all contributions are acknowledged, respected and valued.

# Section 5: Summary and recommendations

This final section provides a brief summary of the key findings of the review, and makes a small number of recommendations for the Commission and more generally in relation to good practice in community engagement from an equality perspective.

## Summary of key findings

There are many organisations and partnerships developing community engagement work in Scotland, using different models, mechanisms and methods. These have different purposes, and deliver varying levels of participation and empowerment. There is wide variation in the way that community engagement is undertaken, in the effectiveness of the process and in the level of inclusion and participation of community members. There are, however, a number of key elements of good practice that can help to ensure that the engagement is as effective as possible.

At the planning and preparation stage, there is a need for:

- A clear commitment to effective engagement, good practice and equality enshrined in policy and reflected in appropriate leadership and practice throughout the organisation or partnership.
- The identification of the purpose, aims and objectives and benefits of the engagement, and the model to be followed.
- The promotion of the highest possible level of participation for the purpose.
- The involvement of community members from the earliest stage, an equal balance of power and an ongoing commitment to engagement.
- The development of structures and mechanisms with appropriate representation of equality groups.
- The definition of the community to be involved, making sure that this includes everyone with an interest.
- Awareness of the wider context in which the engagement will take place, to ensure that appropriate links are made with other activities and that duplication is avoided.
- A focus on those issues that are of real concern to the community whose input is being sought, including issues for specific groups within that community.
- Consideration of whether the relevant participants will be likely and able to respond using the methods proposed.

- Consideration of the use of a range of methods in combination.
- Consideration of the capacity of groups, individuals and organisations to become involved, with capacity building support provided as required. The provision of adequate resources.
- Identification of how to monitor, evaluate and review and feed back all aspects of the engagement.
- The production of a clear plan to guide implementation and practice.

At the implementation stage, there is a need for:

- The use of a combination of written information and face to face techniques, to include a wide range of potential participants.
- The use of other formats in addition to written English to provide information and to ensure that this is accessible.
- A combination of different types of meetings and events, conducted in appropriate ways.
- The inclusion of specific meetings, sub-groups or events to explore the views of particular groups, that can be fed into the wider process.
- Consideration of a range of procedural, practical and support issues.
- The use of informal and clear procedures.
- The avoidance of jargon, 'in-jokes' and unexplained procedures.
- Ensuring that the views of community participants are listened to and taken into account in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect.
- Accurate and timely information reflecting diversity and avoiding stereotypes.
- A timescale appropriate to the engagement.
- Engagement at a local level wherever possible, using locations and venues chosen to ensure accessibility, suitability and safety for all participants.
- Transport to be made available, or the costs reimbursed.
- Substitute care to be provided for those responsible for the care of dependents, or the costs reimbursed.
- Support and communication requirements to be met.
- Meetings to be held at appropriate times, and at a range of different times to suit the needs of those participating.
- Any financial barriers to participation to be addressed.

- Links to be developed with, and support provided to organisations and community members, through proactive work to encourage and promote participation, particularly with groups that may experience barriers.
- Ongoing support to be provided to participants.

At the stage of monitoring, evaluation and review, and feedback, there is a need for:

- Clarity of the purpose, aims, objectives and outcomes expected from the engagement.
- Clarity about the information that will be collected and reviewed on an ongoing basis, and about how it will be used to identify issues arising and lessons learned.
- Mechanisms to be in place for the collection of monitoring and other types of quantitative and qualitative information.
- Involving participants in providing their views and discussing the findings.
- Regular reviews of the information gathered, with the identification of issues arising and lessons learned, and for this to inform any ongoing processes.
- The presentation and dissemination of accurate and easy to use findings in a clear and accessible way.
- The provision of feedback to participants, not only about the evaluation findings, but also about the issues that emerged, the actions taken as a result of the views expressed, and how their input affected a decision.
- The use of a range of methods for feedback, both directly **and** through representative organisations, taking account of good practice in dissemination of information.

All of these aspects of good practice should help to ensure that community engagement is effective and that it enables the widest range of participants to be involved. These elements of good practice can be used as the basis of the identification of a series of 'do's and don'ts in community engagement', which are presented at Annex 1.

# Recommendations

The main overarching recommendation from this review is that all organisations undertaking community engagement should follow recognised good practice in the work that they undertake.

A small number of more specific recommendations are detailed below.

## Approaching community engagement

In terms of the overall approach to community engagement, organisations and partnerships should:

- Ensure that community engagement with a clear commitment to equality is promoted as a priority and is reflected in policy, practice, ethos, direction and leadership.
- Develop appropriate structures and mechanisms for the involvement of community members in all relevant aspects of their work, ensuring that these promote the highest possible level of participation and involvement for the purposes of the engagement and make it easy for community members to be heard and listened to.
- Recognise the need for the engagement to involve all relevant stakeholders, and identify and address any potential barriers to participation by equality groups.
- Recognise the implications of the commitment to an inclusive and participative approach for the methods used and the means of implementation, and ensure a widespread understanding of this among all of those involved.
- Take a clearly defined and transparent approach to the engagement, following the key stages, considering all of the relevant decisions required and ensuring that all participants are aware of the structures and mechanisms for their input, as well as the parameters of their involvement.
- Promote a proactive approach to identifying and engaging with seldom heard groups, raising awareness of the engagement, developing capacity where required, and enabling and encouraging involvement (and ongoing involvement), as suggested within the report.
- Continue to develop new contacts in the community and develop existing relationships.

- Base all aspects of community engagement practice upon the National Standards for Community Engagement and other good practice guidance such as VOiCE and other material available (see Annex 4).
- Carry out work that is consistent with the findings of this review, and follow the ‘do’s and don’ts’ suggested at Annex 1.
- Ensure that experiences are shared within the organisation or partnership and with other relevant organisations and individuals, and that knowledge, skills and practice continue to develop in accordance with broader developments in community engagement and equality work.

## The work of the Commission

In terms of specific aspects of the work of the Commission, it is also recommended that:

- The Commission should ensure that its work is underpinned by the key elements of good practice identified, enabling appropriate community engagement in all aspects of its work.
- The Commission should recognise its role in the promotion of effective community engagement through, for example:
  - working in partnership with other organisations,
  - undertaking effective and inclusive engagement in its own work,
  - building community capacity,
  - encouraging service providers to develop good practice,
  - leading by example,
  - developing information about communities,
  - involving service users,
  - scrutinising approaches taken,
  - promoting mainstreaming,
  - sharing information.
- Community engagement should inform the Commission’s role in enforcing the law and influencing the development of law and policy through, for example, mechanisms for community input to:
  - identifying issues for exploration/examination,
  - Identifying specific instances where enforcement is needed,
  - identifying priorities,
  - highlighting general and specific organisational practice experiences,
  - disseminating information about aspects of the law,
  - monitoring, reviewing and developing the Commission’s practice in relation to this work.

- Community engagement should inform the Commission's policy influencing role by promoting opportunities for community input to:
  - identifying policy issues, priorities and feasible options,
  - dialogue and partnership in policy planning stages,
  - contributing knowledge and expertise to the development of policy,
  - participating in the monitoring and review of policy.
- The actual processes of engagement undertaken by the Commission, and the ways in which funding is provided, should serve as good practice examples both in community engagement and equality, and help to foster good relations between the Commission and equality groups, as well as between different groups.
- Community engagement should inform the Commission's role in promoting good practice and good relations, developing change and promoting access to services and resources. Mechanisms for community input might include:
  - identifying instances of good practice and areas for improvement,
  - developing campaigns for change,
  - planning, provision and review of services and funding (both of the Commission and other organisations),
  - disseminating information and promoting services to the wider community.
- The information presented here should provide a starting point for the continuing development of good practice in community engagement, with the implementation of this monitored and reviewed regularly (through engagement with the relevant community) with a view to ongoing improvement.

## Wider issues

In terms of wider issues, it is recommended that:

- There should continue to be a clear focus on the value of community engagement in Scotland, with appropriate national and local structures, supported by appropriate resources through which this can be undertaken.
- Continuing work should be undertaken to build community infrastructure and to develop and support the capacity of local and national community organisations (including equality organisations) to fulfil their increasing role in enabling community engagement.
- Information about relevant national and local organisations should continue to be developed, collated and shared.
- There should be a clear focus on the evaluation of community engagement work and the dissemination of findings.

- Mechanisms should continue to be developed for sharing experiences and practice.
- The good practice information and the lessons learned from the review should be disseminated widely (including to the organisations and partnerships involved in the research), in order to encourage other organisations and partnerships to undertake community engagement in accordance with this.

# References/Notes

- 1 Scottish Executive (2002); Communities Scotland (2005a).
- 2 It is likely that there have been further developments to community engagement since the review was undertaken.
- 3 The inclusion of the examples should not be taken to indicate that they have been independently assessed as constituting good practice, but they serve to illustrate some of the issues raised in the report.
- 4 Particularly the Community Engagement How to Guide by Communities Scotland ([www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk](http://www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk)).
- 5 Scottish Executive (2004).
- 6 CoSLA (2002); Communities Scotland (2007b).
- 7 Communities Scotland was abolished on 1 April 2008 and most of its non-regulatory functions were transferred to the Scottish Government's Housing and Regeneration directorate.
- 8 Communities Scotland (2005a). These are sometimes referred to in this report as 'the National Standards'.
- 9 Definition from Community Engagement How to Guide: [www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk](http://www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk)
- 10 The concept of the 'ladder of participation' was originally identified by Arnstein in 1969, with the assumption that the highest degree of 'citizen power' was the most desirable.
- 11 EIU (2001); Hashagen (2002); IAP2 (2003); TIS (2004).
- 12 ODPM (2005b).
- 13 Hashagen (2002); Community Voices Network (2007).
- 14 EIU (2001); IDeA (2006); OPM (2007); EOC (2007); Communities Scotland (2007b).
- 15 Scottish Executive (2002); OPM (2007); EOC (2007); RHA (2007).
- 16 Oxfam (undated); Communities Scotland (undated); Scottish Executive (2002); RHA (2007).
- 17 Communities Scotland (2005a) and Communities Scotland (Undated)
- 18 <http://www.scdc.org.uk/voice/>
- 19 Although the term 'organisation or partnership' is used predominantly in the report, the issues raised should be taken to apply to public, voluntary and community organisations, partnerships and groups of all types, and others undertaking community engagement.
- 20 Equality Network (2005); OPM (2007).
- 21 Myhill and Rudat (undated).
- 22 EIU (2001); OECD (2001).
- 23 Ridley and Jones (2002); The Equality Network (2005).
- 24 Communities Scotland (2005b; 2006); RHA (2007).
- 25 Myhill and Rudat (undated).
- 26 EIU (2001); Communities Scotland (2005a); Equality Network (2005); FSIC (2005); SCDC (2008).
- 27 ODPM (2005b).
- 28 Audit Commission (1999); IAP2 (2003).
- 29 OECD (2001).
- 30 Anastacio et al (2000); Hashagen (2002); Communities Scotland (2006); DRC (2006) and OPM (2007).
- 31 EIU (2001); IDeA (2006); Centre for Human Ecology (2007).
- 32 Scottish Executive (2001); Communities Scotland (2007b).
- 33 SCDC (2008).

- 34 Anastacio et al (2000); Scottish Executive (2002); National Audit Office (2004); Communities Scotland (2005a); Equality Network (2005); Eventus (2005); DRC (2006); EOC (2007); OPM (2007).
- 35 Communities Scotland (2006; 2007a).
- 36 Communities Scotland (2006).
- 37 RHA (2007); Communities Scotland (undated; 2006; 2007a).
- 38 IAP2; EOC (2007); Communities Scotland (2005a); SCDC (2008).
- 39 The Effective Interventions Unit (undated) notes that ‘community’ can refer to people in a geographical area, people who share certain similar characteristics (for example, age, gender), or groups coming together with a common interest. A ‘community’ can consist of a number of communities with different requirements and Hashagen (2002) noted that it is important to recognise that people will be involved in a mix of ‘communities’, depending on their own circumstances.
- 40 EIU (2001).
- 41 Involve (2005); OPM (2007); Improvement Network (undated).
- 42 BEMIS (2007a).
- 43 Communities Scotland (2006).
- 44 EIU (2001); Blakey and Richardson (2004).
- 45 Communities Scotland (undated); International Youth Foundation (2002); Scottish Executive (2004); EOC (2007).
- 46 These seminars were held to enable Communities Scotland to develop advice on equality in community engagement.
- 47 Communities Scotland (2005a).
- 48 Communities Scotland (undated); EIU (2001); Hashagen (2002); Scottish Executive (2002; 2004); Equality Network (2005); IDeA (2006); OPM (2007); EOC (2007).
- 49 Communities Scotland (2005a).
- 50 Involve (2005); GDA (2007); SCDC (2008).
- 51 Hashagen (2002); EOC (2007). Hashagen suggests that guidelines in LEAP and ABCD can assist with this (see notes 84 and 85).
- 52 Communities Scotland (2005a; 2005c; 2007b).
- 53 EIU (2001); Scottish Executive (2004); Communities Scotland (2007b).
- 54 Anastacio et al (2000); IDeA (2006).
- 55 Highlands and Islands Enterprise (2005).
- 56 Scottish Executive (2002); Equality Network (2005); BEMIS (2007c).
- 57 Ridley and Jones (2002); Eventus (2005); RHA (2007).
- 58 Communities Scotland (2005a); SCDC (2008).
- 59 While this section provides an overview, further detailed information on all of these issues is provided in existing guidance documents.
- 60 Communities Scotland (2005a); EOC (2007).
- 61 IYF (2002); DRC (2006); IDeA (2006); Communities Scotland (2006).
- 62 Scottish Executive (2002); DRC (2006).
- 63 Communities Scotland (undated); Oxfam (undated); Scottish Executive (2002); DRC (2006); IDeA (2006); EOC (2007); GDA (2007).
- 64 DRC (2006); EOC (2007).
- 65 Oxfam (undated); IDeA (undated); Scottish Executive (2004); Communities Scotland (2006).
- 66 Communities Scotland (undated); Scottish Executive (2002); RHA (2007).

- 67 Communities Scotland (2005a).
- 68 BEMIS (2007a).
- 69 Burgess et al (2001); Scottish Executive (2004).
- 70 Scottish Executive (2001); IDeA (2006).
- 71 IAP2; Communities Scotland (2005a; 2005b; 2008); DRC (2006); GDA (2007).
- 72 Scottish Executive (2002); Communities Scotland (2005a); EOC (2007).
- 73 Oxfam (undated).
- 74 Communities Scotland (2005a).
- 75 EIU (2001); Scottish Executive (2002; 2006b); OPM (2007).
- 76 Ridley and Jones (2002); Scottish Executive (2002); Scottish Executive (2004).
- 77 Anastacio et al (2000); Communities Scotland (2006).
- 78 Myhill and Rudat (undated); Eventus (2005); OPM (2007).
- 79 IYF (2002); Scottish Executive (2002); Equality Network (2005); IDeA (2006).
- 80 EIU (2001).
- 81 Oxfam (undated); Scottish Executive (2002); TIS (2004); Communities Scotland, (2005a; 2005b); RHA (2007).
- 82 Communities Scotland (undated)
- 83 Myhill and Rudat (undated); EIU (2001); Highlands and Islands Enterprise (2005); Eventus (2005); Communities Scotland (2005c; 2007a; 2008); Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2007).
- 84 Communities Scotland (2005a).
- 85 DRC (2006).
- 86 EIU (2001).
- 87 GDA (2007).
- 88 Communities Scotland (2005a).
- 89 The Regional Forum (2006).
- 90 The 'Achieving Better Community Development' Programme, which was developed by the Scottish Community Development Centre provides a framework for planning and learning from community development initiatives.
- 91 LEAP is a framework for evaluation and planning adapted for use in community learning and development, community health and volunteering which was developed by the Scottish Community Development Centre and recognises the contribution of all stakeholders (Communities Scotland, 2007b).
- 92 Involve (2005); The Regional Forum (2006).
- 93 Communities Scotland (undated); Scottish Executive (2002); Involve (2005).
- 94 Audit Commission (1999); IAP2; Scottish Executive (2002); Communities Scotland (2005a); DRC (2006).
- 95 Anastacio et al (2000).
- 96 Audit Commission (1999); Equality Network (2005); Communities Scotland (2005b); DRC (2006).
- 97 Communities Scotland (2005a).
- 98 GDA (2007).
- 99 GDA, 2007.
- 100 Communities Scotland (undated).
- 101 This example was not from Scotland.
- 102 As above.

# Annexes

# Annex 1: Do's and don'ts in community engagement

## In terms of planning and preparation for community engagement:

### Do ....

- Make sure there is clear leadership and a commitment throughout your organisation or partnership to engaging with the community, to following the National Standards and to promoting equality in engagement.
- Identify the purpose, aims and objectives of engagement, and the potential benefits to all of those involved.
- Identify the level of involvement that you want to promote, and choose the model that promotes the highest level of involvement possible for your purposes and within your remit, resources and timescale. Where possible, establish a long term dialogue on the basis of an equal partnership.
- Identify an appropriate structure and mechanisms to implement this, bearing in mind the other demands on community members' time.
- Involve the community from the earliest stage in planning the engagement and choosing the methods, and make sure that they are clear about all aspects of the engagement.
- Identify the groups that may have an interest in the engagement and need to be represented, making sure that equality groups (that is, those affected by issues relating to race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation and religion or belief) are well-represented.
- Identify how to make contact with those who need to be involved, including 'seldom heard' groups.
- Identify the issues to be explored, making sure that issues of relevance to specific groups are included.
- Plan the methods you will use, choosing a range of different methods to enable people to participate in different ways.
- Ensure that you identify any skills and other resources that participants will need to enable them to take part on a full and equal basis, and ensure that arrangements are put in place to provide these.

- Identify the financial and other resources that will be needed to make the engagement work, and make sure that these are in place.
- Identify how you will monitor, evaluate and review and feed back the engagement, and make sure that arrangements are in place for this.
- Develop a plan of what the engagement will involve, detailing the purpose, aims and objectives, structures, methods, outputs and outcomes, roles and responsibilities, resources, timescales and processes for monitoring, evaluation and review and feedback.

### Don't ....

- Approach engagement as a chore that is likely to lead to extra work or criticism.
- Wait until a decision has been made and ask community members what they think as an 'afterthought'.
- Consult a few organisations well known to you, or only those that you know will ratify your decision.
- Ignore groups that may be seldom heard, or assume that organisations are necessarily representative.
- Wait for people with an interest to come to you, or expect them to take steps to find out about the engagement.
- Exclude community members from the structures where the key decisions are made.

## In terms of implementation and practice:

### Do ...

- Use a combination of written and face to face methods, taking account of innovative or specific methods that might enable you to reach equality groups, and other seldom heard groups.
- Where written methods are used, provide these in a range of formats
- Where face to face discussions are held, try to use a range of different means of undertaking these.
- Arrange separate discussions to explore specific issues, if necessary, but make sure that these feed into the overall process.

- Keep procedures clear and transparent and as informal as possible.
- Ensure that all participants behave towards each other with mutual trust and respect.
- Make sure that you provide all of the information that is needed, make it available in a range of formats, make sure that it promotes a positive approach to equality, and keep it jargon-free.
- Work to an appropriate timescale that takes account of the work that is required to enable full participation by everyone.
- Continue to undertake proactive work to reach participants who may be excluded, targeting particular groups if required.
- Use guidance that is available and make practical arrangements to ensure that: venues are local, appropriate and accessible; transport arrangements are made; care arrangements are made; support and communication requirements are met; the timing of events is appropriate; and participants are not out of pocket.
- Continue to seek out hidden voices, make links with relevant organisations, and ensure that continuing support is available.

### **Don't ...**

- Choose one method and assume that everyone will be able to use it.
- Use jargon, terminology, in-jokes and other behaviour that will exclude participants.
- Insist on unnecessary procedures or formal behaviour.
- Pursue hidden agendas, or exclude participants from some of the information and decision making.
- Expect people to be able to respond immediately or within the timescale that you need.
- Swamp community members with unnecessary material.
- Make any arrangements without thinking about the implications for equality groups.

## In terms of monitoring, evaluation and review and feedback:

### Do ...

- Make sure that you are clear about the purpose, aims and objectives and outcomes you want from the engagement.
- Identify the information you will need to demonstrate this, and compile baseline information at the start.
- Put processes in place from the start to gather the information that you will need to demonstrate whether the engagement has achieved its purpose, aims and objectives and outcomes.
- Collect regular information, in the form of statistics and qualitative material from participants.
- Compile, evaluate and review the information regularly, and identify issues arising and lessons learned.
- Identify any gaps in participation, and explore the capacity of participants to carry out their roles.
- Take any actions needed to address issues emerging.
- Disseminate your findings widely in a range of ways, taking account of good practice in the methods used.
- Make sure that regular, timely and appropriate feedback is given to participants about the issues that emerge in the engagement, the actions that are taken as a result of the views that are expressed, and how participants' involvement affected decision making.

### Don't ...

- Leave thinking about the need to evaluate the engagement until late in the work, and discover that you lack baseline and monitoring information.
- Design a process that will take more time than implementing the work and make substantial demands on participants.
- Carry out monitoring, evaluation and review without involving community members.
- End the process without considering the implications of all findings and taking the action needed.
- Forget to provide feedback, provide it to a very limited number of participants, or provide it long after the engagement process has concluded.

# Annex 2: Methodology

The methodology used to undertake this review is outlined briefly below.

## Aims and objectives

The overall aim of the review was:

“To identify and highlight examples of good community engagement practice which may be useful to the Commission in its future consultation and involvement work.”

The related objectives were to:

- Identify organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors that are recognised as having developed good practice in community engagement.
- Identify the extent to which these models of community engagement recognise the different barriers and interests of different equality groups.
- Examine recent research evidence on good practice in community engagement.
- Review relevant evaluations of practice on key websites.
- Summarise examples of good practice and, where possible, the impact that community engagement has had.
- Make recommendations to the Commission regarding how it should approach community engagement generally.
- Make specific recommendations as to how the Commission should seek to engage particular hard to reach groups, for example young people.

## The review

These objectives were addressed through a review using two main methods:

- A search of key sources of research literature.
- The inclusion of some key organisations in identifying examples of good practice.

### Desk review of research/literature

The identification of research literature involved:

- An internet search covering recent research in Scotland, the UK/GB, and international material.
- Examination of relevant websites.
- Exploration of library material.

This provided material on community engagement generally and the involvement of equality groups, and all equality areas were included.

The examination of the literature focused on the following issues:

- General principles and good practice in community engagement, and models of community engagement.
- Good practice in the involvement of equality groups, and the implications of different models of community engagement.
- Examples of good practice (from different sectors), and evidence of the impact of community engagement.
- Factors that impact upon the effectiveness of involvement of equality groups and the effectiveness of community engagement.

### **Contact with key organisations and partnerships**

The second strand of the review involved a number of key organisations and partnerships in Scotland in providing information about their own practice, and examples of ‘what works’ in community engagement. Although it was recognised that this project was a research review rather than primary research to identify their experiences and perceptions, it was also considered important to draw upon their expertise, as they were seen to be likely to be aware of further information or examples.

It was suggested in the research proposal that contact would be made with: some umbrella equality organisations; key public bodies; partnerships; and umbrella voluntary sector organisations. There was some discussion at the commissioning meeting of the key organisations that might be included in this aspect of the work. It was agreed that this should focus on larger national and local organisations and networks, that may, in turn, be aware of information from other local organisations.

RHA submitted a draft list of contacts to the Commission, and a number of additional suggestions were made. The email addresses were gathered, and a request was circulated to a large number of contacts in Scotland in early February 2008, as follows:

- Scottish Government (Civic Participation Unit; Social Inclusion and Voluntary Issues Unit; Local Government Team; and the social justice/equalities staff).
- Scottish Parliament (Equal Opportunities Committee; and the Scottish Parliament Information Centre).

- Communities Scotland.
- Audit Scotland.
- Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA).
- Local authority equality contacts (via CoSLA).
- Community Safety Partnerships (via CoSLA).
- Community Planning Partnerships (via CoSLA).
- Violence Against Women Partnerships (by letter).
- Community Health Partnerships.
- Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland (with an initial approach for permission, which was granted) and individual police forces.
- Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) and individual Councils of Voluntary Service (CsVS).
- Scottish Enterprise.
- Scottish Arts Council.
- Scottish Natural Heritage.
- Historic Scotland.
- sportscotland.
- Some umbrella national equality organisations (Engender; Scottish Women's Convention; Scottish Disability Equality Forum; Inclusion Scotland; Black and Ethnic Minority Infrastructure in Scotland [BEMIS]; Council of Ethnic Minority Voluntary Organisations [CEMVO]; Scottish Gypsy Traveller Association; Scottish Interfaith Council; Equality Network; Stonewall; Age Concern Scotland; Help the Aged; Youthlink Scotland; Save the Children Scotland; and the Scottish Youth Parliament).
- Scottish Community Development Network.
- Community Development Alliance Scotland.
- Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC).
- Sus it out.
- Community Health Exchange (CHEX).
- Scottish Civic Forum.
- Sense Scotland.
- The Scottish Association for Mental Health (SAMH).
- The Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance.

- Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living and Lothian Centre for Integrated Living.
- Enable.
- Capability Scotland.

The request explained the purpose of the research and sought material for inclusion, or examples of local good practice, in order to explore issues similar to those identified in the examination of literature. It also invited recipients to make other local contacts aware of the work, and some respondents noted that they had become aware of the study in this way. It was not anticipated that this would generate a high level of response, but it was considered important to ensure that these organisations were provided with the opportunity to highlight any key issues.

In fact, however, a considerable number of organisations highlighted relevant work in Scotland, and a considerable amount of material was gathered in this way. Four organisations (BEMIS, The Scottish Parliament, Action on Smoking and Health [ASH] and SCVO) suggested face to face meetings to discuss their work. These were held in February and early March 2008, and generated a very large amount of useful information, as well as providing information about other work taking place, and enabling access to additional websites and written material.

Some other respondents suggested telephone discussions that were also held (for example, with some individual police forces, multi agency violence against women partnerships and individual workers in specific organisations). Many respondents also prepared and sent written information about their own work, or work in their local area. In some cases, they provided a summary of the range of work that they had been involved in, or the key elements, in their view, of successful community engagement work. Some sent existing reports, or links to documents describing local practice or initiatives in community engagement.

The unanticipated volume of material generated by this element of the work proved valuable in the identification of good practice. Although, as with the more formal research review, there was limited evidence of actual evaluation work, there was a large amount of information about the experiences of those involved in the actual practice of community engagement.

This methodology enabled the identification of key issues and the development of recommendations about community engagement (including with seldom heard groups), that are presented in the review.

# Annex 3: Bibliography

In addition to the bibliography below, a large amount of unpublished material at a local level was submitted and included, although this clearly cannot be referenced in this way.

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- Scottish Executive (2002). *Good Practice Guidance: Consultation with Equalities Groups*. Edinburgh: Scottish Executive.
- Scottish Executive (2004). *Involving Older People: Lessons for Community Planning*. Edinburgh: Scottish Executive.
- Scottish Executive (2006a). *Report of the Disability Working Group*. Edinburgh: Scottish Executive.
- Scottish Executive (2006b). *Engaging children and young people in community planning: Community Planning Advice Note*. Edinburgh: Scottish Executive.
- Scottish Executive (2007). *Community Engagement Planning with People: Planning Advice Note*. Edinburgh: Scottish Executive.
- Tenants Information Service (2004). *A Good Practice Framework for Tenant Participation in Scotland*. Edinburgh: Communities Scotland.
- The Scottish Government (2007). *Working with Hard to Reach Young People – A Practical Guide*. Edinburgh: The Scottish Government.
- The Scottish Parliament (2006). *Removing Barriers and Creating Opportunities*. Edinburgh: The Scottish Parliament.

# Annex 4: Guidance on community engagement/equality

It should be noted that this is not an exhaustive resource list, but provides a starting point for identifying good practice advice in community engagement and includes good practice guidance, toolkits etc.

It should be noted that there is also a range of service-specific guidance available (which is not identified here).

## General good practice

Audit Commission (1999). *Listen Up! Effective Community Consultation*. London: Audit Commission.

Communities Scotland (2005a). *National Standards for Community Engagement*. Edinburgh: Communities Scotland.

Communities Scotland. *National Standards for Community Engagement Users' Guide*. Edinburgh: Communities Scotland.

Communities Scotland. *National Standards for Community Engagement Reference Manual*. Edinburgh: Communities Scotland.

Communities Scotland. *Community Engagement How to Guide*. [www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk](http://www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk).

CoSLA (2002). *Focusing on citizens: A guide to approaches and methods*. Online version, via internet.

Effective Interventions Unit (2001). *Effective Engagement: A Guide to Principles and Practice*. Via internet.

Involve (2005). *People and Participation – How to put citizens at the heart of decision making*. London: Involve.

Scottish Community Development Centre (2008). *Visioning Outcomes in Community Engagement*. [www.scdc.org.uk/voice](http://www.scdc.org.uk/voice).

Sus it out (undated) *Online learning and networking resource*. [www.susitout.org.uk](http://www.susitout.org.uk).

## Equality issues

Communities Scotland (undated). *Community Engagement How to Guide*. [www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk](http://www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk)

Communities Scotland (undated). *Don't treat us all the same: equalities and the National Standards for Community Engagement*. [www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk](http://www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk)

Create Scotland. *Re:action Consultation Toolkit*. [www.create-Scotland.co.uk](http://www.create-Scotland.co.uk).

- Disability Rights Commission (2006). *The Disability Equality Duty and Involvement: Guidance for Public Authorities on how to Effectively Involve Disabled People*. London: Disability Rights Commission.
- Equality Network (2005). *Outside the Lines: Making Community Planning Real*. Edinburgh: Equality Network.
- Equal Opportunities Commission (2007). *Consulting Stakeholders on Gender Equality: Guidance for GB Public Authorities*. Manchester: Equal Opportunities Commission.
- Glasgow Disability Alliance (2007). *Are We Being Served? Top Tips Guide to involving Disabled People*. [www.gdaonline.co.uk](http://www.gdaonline.co.uk)
- Save the Children (2001): *Re:Action Consultation Toolkit*. [www.create-scotland.co.uk](http://www.create-scotland.co.uk)
- Scottish Accessible Information Forum: [www.saifscotland.org.uk](http://www.saifscotland.org.uk)
- Scottish Executive (2002). *Good Practice Guidance: Consultation with Equalities Groups*. Edinburgh: Scottish Executive.
- Scottish Executive (2004). *Involving Older People: Lessons for Community Planning*. Edinburgh: Scottish Executive.
- Scottish Executive (2006). *Engaging children and young people in community planning: Community Planning Advice Note*. Edinburgh: Scottish Executive.
- The Scottish Government (undated): *Same Difference: Guidance on community learning and development activity with equalities groups*. [www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk)

# Contact us

You can find out more or get in touch with us via our website at:

**[www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)**

or by contacting one of our helplines below:

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