

A partnership approach to community engagement

A strategy for Derby

Authors:
Derby Community Safety Partnership/ Derby City Council

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‘A partnership approach to community engagement: a strategy for Derby’ has been formally endorsed by:

- Derby City Partnership Management Group
- Area and Neighbourhood Board
- Communication and Engagement Partner Board

Report produced by Alison Wynn, Community Safety Partnership and Sarah Burkinshaw, Derby City Council.

Introduction

This strategy document outlines the theoretical principle agreed to by key partners and agencies in Derby. It outlines:

- the political and national framework;
- what we mean by community engagement in Derby;
- why and how we engage;
- the benefits of engagement;
- different roles within the process, and;
- some key recommendations for the next steps to a coherent community engagement strategy.

This theoretical document will be supported by a toolkit to allow the practical implementation of the strategy to ensure a shared delivery across partners.

The political/national framework

Over recent years there has been increasing emphasis on the value of engagement, both implicitly and through central government initiatives such as Together We Can (Ipsos MORI, 2006: p4). This has been demonstrated most recently with the publication of the recent Local Government White Paper “Strong and Prosperous Communities” which aims to “...give citizens and communities a bigger say; to enable local partners to respond more flexibly to local needs; and to reduce the amount of top-down control from central government” (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2006: p7).

A key theme of the White Paper is the re-shaping of public services around citizens and communities through involvement/consultation and encouragement/enabling of people to have their say in priority setting and spending of public funds (p17). In addition, the White Paper suggests the devolvement of service delivery or management to communities.

The White Paper also emphasises the need for partnership working with “...*the idea that we should be focusing on improving whole areas rather than just individual services. This means a greater emphasis on working together across service boundaries*”...“*We want all councils to focus more on their citizens and communities. We will encourage councils to develop neighbourhood charters setting out local standards and priorities; to manage service at the level of the neighbourhood; to work more closely with neighbourhood policing teams; and to give councillors small budgets to tackle local issues*” (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2006: p8; p18). In Derby, this is the vision that is being developed through the move to neighbourhood working.

The Lyons Enquiry (National Prosperity, Local Choice and Civic Engagement, May 2006) emphasises that citizens need to influence change. Through their influence, citizens ensure that public services are responsive to local needs and aspirations. Lyons uses the term ‘place shaping’ to describe how community engagement can help to create a distinctive local identity, a sense of well-being, prosperity, social capital, social innovation, community cohesion and environmental well-being. To achieve ‘place shaping’, Lyons says that local authorities must:

- provide leadership;
- consensus about goals and direction;
- support public and community engagement, and;
- make effective use of their powers.

The national emphasis on community engagement suggests a need to increase and develop:

- community involvement in priority-setting and delivery of public services
- community involvement in how public service funds are spent
- ability for local and flexible responses to issues
- community power and decision-making

In addition to a general increased commitment to community engagement, there is a move towards an increased role for elected councillors "...to speak up for their communities and demand an answer when things go wrong" (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2006: p19) individually through 'Community Call for Action' and collectively through Overview and Scrutiny Committees. The role of local councillors is expanding beyond the original local government remit with powers to scrutinise and influence all public services, particularly police and health services.

What is 'community engagement'?

There are a range of definitions of community engagement. At its purest, community engagement is the devolvement of decision-making and of control of public funds to communities. However, in reality, this would only include a very small proportion of the population, with few people either willing or enabled to do so. It is unlikely that this small group of people would be representative of their community or reflect the views of the wider community. For these reasons, locally, we have developed a broad definition: 'Community engagement is the process of including local people in the planning, development and management of services.'

Spectrum of engagement

Most descriptions of community engagement identify a range of levels of engagement from the lowest involvement - non-participation of citizens - up to the highest level of involvement with active participation of citizens in decision-making. The recent Local Government White Paper (p31-32) identifies four levels of involvement:

Inform: through the provision of good, accessible information on access to local services and their performance, for example: newsletters; websites; media; word of mouth through neighbourhood staff

Consult: about the shape of local services and policies, for example: surveys; focus groups; neighbourhood plans

Involve: in the design, delivery and assessment of services, for example: involve a group of young people in the management of a youth centre

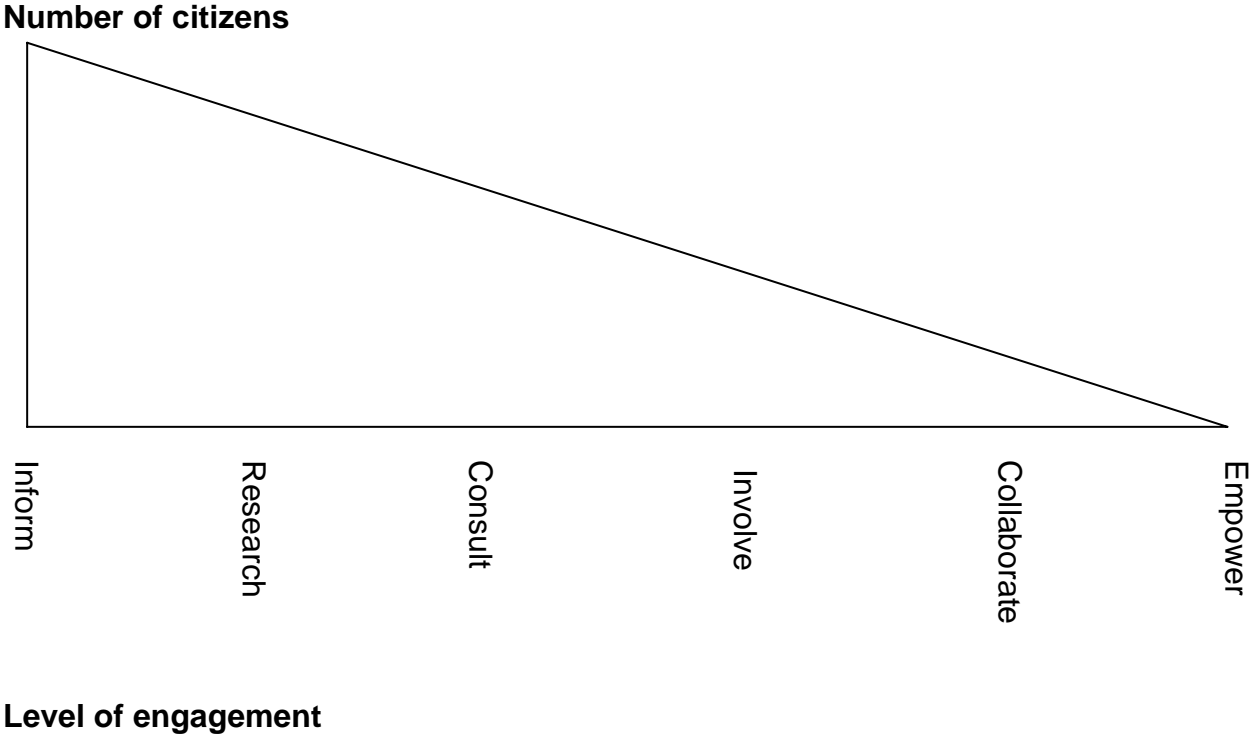
Devolve: responsibility for the delivery of services

However, this misses a number of interim levels. We therefore favour a model including six levels or types of community engagement. It should be noted, however, that one level does not necessarily lead to another and that each type of engagement is valuable and should be utilised to ensure that the widest range of individuals and groups in the spectrum have the opportunity to engage.

- **Inform:** to provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding issues, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions and performance of services.
- **Research:** to seek/gather information and opinion, for example, to assist planning for change or evaluation.
- **Consult:** to provide information and obtain citizens/community feedback, for example, on priority setting; analysis; proposals. People are aware that they can influence an outcome.
- **Involve:** to involve the public throughout the process, for example, involving citizens/communities in the identification of priorities and proposals.
- **Collaborate:** to share the process of identification of issues, options and solutions and, ultimately, share decision-making.
- **Empower:** to devolve (where legally possible and advisable) decision-making to citizens/communities.

The table in Appendix 1 identifies the six levels in greater detail along with the role of the participant and examples of each within the city. Citizens or communities have varying levels of involvement in the engagement process itself and in decision-making. Figure 1, although crude, gives an indication of the number of citizens likely to be 'engaged' at each level. It would be unrealistic to imagine that any level of engagement could reach the whole of any community; however 'informing' will reach the greatest proportion as this requires the least involvement from the citizen. As we progress through the levels, and the expectation of involvement and activity on the part of the citizen increases, the fewer will be reached. The level of 'empowerment' requires the greatest input from citizens and will only include a small and active group of citizens.

Figure 1 Showing the number of citizens reached by the different levels of engagement



Writers such as Sherry Arnstein suggest that 'participation' is often for the benefit of the service provider or organisation so that they can say they are involving people. She equates citizen participation with citizen power – the ultimate being 'citizen control', where residents, for example, govern a programme. Arnstein suggests that levels such as 'informing' and 'consultation' can be tokenistic, and argues that local government should aspire to models where final approval, power and accountability sit with citizens rather than public bodies: "A neighbourhood corporation with no intermediaries between it and the source of funds is the model most frequently advocated" (Arnstein, S R, 1969: p11).

Whilst devolved decision-making can perhaps be described as the ultimate aim of community engagement, it is not always appropriate. Sometimes, centrally-set priorities or professional considerations limit decision-making options or involvement may not even be wanted by citizens. This is why all the levels of engagement have a place, dependent on the purpose of the engagement, to reach and represent as many citizens and communities as possible. As Figure 1 indicates, only a small proportion of a community is likely to participate at the level of empowerment. This small group of

citizens may not be representative in make up of the community nor can they be assumed to reflect the views of the wider community. At its worst, empowerment can mean the engagement of a small group of people who have individual objectives, the loudest voice, and/or the knowledge of how to influence public service decision-making.

As not all citizens or communities have the willingness, capacity, confidence or knowledge to engage at the most active and participatory level - **empowerment** - it may be necessary for some communities to start their engagement at lower levels and aspire to greater engagement over time.

Enabling engagement

The levels and tools of engagement described above suggest a readiness for direct and purposeful activity. However, local authorities also need to support 'indirect' activities to 'enable' or prepare for engagement. Such activities include, for example, the provision of childcare facilities and transport; 'buddying' – where citizens are accompanied and/or supported to meetings.

Community development can enable the engagement process by creating and strengthening relationships and networks within communities. Good communications and information services and the provision of easy and accessible mechanisms for reporting problems are also essential.

Tools

A range of tools is available to assist in the delivery of the different levels of engagement. These tools include, for example, publicity and marketing; surveys; focus groups; customer services; interviews; exhibitions; meetings; groups and forums. A toolkit outlining some of these tools and how to implement this strategy will be produced to support this document.

What is a 'community'?

Use of the terms 'community' and 'community engagement' slip off the tongue easily as if there is a shared understanding. However, there is no one single definition of 'community'. A community may be defined as:

Geographical communities – people who live in an area that defines itself as a community.

Communities of interest – a group defined by a shared interest, experience or social characteristic. These groups could be organised into established voluntary or commercial organisations or they might be informal collective activity, for example:

- a shared interest or issue – faith; environment; business
- a shared social characteristic - gender; age; ethnicity
- a shared experience - victim of anti-social behaviour; school closure.

The strength of these 'communities' will vary. This will be dependent on a number of factors, for example:

- how long the community has been established
- the number of shared factors or experiences: a geographical community may share not only neighbourhood, but also friendships, history, experiences, problems
- the strength of feeling for an issue.

Communities also change their membership over time and need this 'evolution' in order to be sustainable and representative. Some communities are short-lived, being informal groups drawn together to resolve or celebrate a particular thing.

Why do we engage communities?

To find out what citizens want

Perhaps the most obvious reason for engaging citizens is to find out what their priorities are and how they want services to be delivered in their community. Citizens are recognised as having a particular expertise based on experience.

Citizens want a say

The recent Local Government White Paper says that "Citizens and communities want a bigger say in the services they receive and in shaping the places where they live" (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2006: p7). This may be the case for some citizens and communities; however, people who feel that their services are already being delivered to their satisfaction; people who are disillusioned and people without the skills or confidence to have 'a bigger say' are less likely to be included.

It is a requirement

Often, engagement is a requirement, for example, the Police Authority has a statutory requirement to conduct consultation. The White Paper, "...will back this by a stronger framework to require local authorities and other best value authorities to secure the participation of local citizens and communities" (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2006: p8).

How to engage?

Community engagement occurs in a number of ways. On any issue, engagement will happen at different levels and with different communities. Engagement can be with different communities and by different agencies:

By specific interest or agency

Some forms of engagement centre around a particular interest, for example, health or crime. Others are through a particular agency: for example, Police with Police Community Consultation Groups; health with Citizen's Jury and Patient Liaison Groups; education with School Governors Groups.

This type of engagement provides a clearly-defined area so there is unlikely to be any confusion on the part of the citizen over what can be raised. It is possible that

participants may only be interested in being engaged in that particular area of interest. This may limit the long-term sustainability of the engagement, once the issue has been resolved. For example, it has been suggested that the establishment of Police Community Consultation Groups had had a mixed level of success. These were found to work well as forums for identifying urgent local issues but not for strategic planning (Rogers & Robinson, 2004: p16). It may also make it difficult for people to engage, for example, in a different way such as through neighbourhoods. However, involvement at this level may lead people to wider engagement.

By group, 'community of interest'

Rather than engagement by a theme or issue, engagement may take place with a particular group of people. This could be a community of interest as described above, for example, by age – young people; faith groups; minority ethnic group. So called 'hard to reach groups' or vulnerable groups, may not be groups at all for example, people whose first language is not English. Particular efforts at engagement may be necessary to reach these people and groups.

Where engagement is happening with neighbourhoods and communities of interest, 'leaders' have, at the same time to be aware that the group may be wider than the neighbourhood. The internal dynamics of both groups and their different motivations have to be considered in the planning process.

By geography

The White Paper, "Strong and Prosperous Communities", proposes a strong neighbourhood focus. Often, community engagement occurs at a neighbourhood or geographical level, for example, through Neighbourhood Forums. Whilst this overcomes some of the issues described above, there could be problems if only this method is used. Many residents or groups may not identify themselves as being part of that neighbourhood, or other issues or factors are more meaningful or important to them.

In response to a crisis

Often, community members wish to be involved when there is a 'crisis', for example, cuts in services; school/hospital closures, a recent example in Derby was the closure of a sports centre. Such engagement mobilises many who wish to be involved in decision-making. Police Community Consultation Groups were found to work well as forums for identifying urgent local issues and only those meetings held in response to 'local crises' were well attended (Rogers & Robinson, 2004: p16). However, this type of engagement, whilst intense is often short-lived often dissolving once the 'crisis' has reached a conclusion. The citizens involved may only have this issue in common; but, it demonstrates how quickly and to a high level that people will engage.

By activity

In some areas, engagement is achieved through activity, for example, 'community builders' and community banks. This is already evident in Derby, for example, the establishment of the 'time-bank' in Derwent. In Salford, the 'New Barracks Tenants' Management Co-operative' was established where residents are able to earn points for activity, for example, attending meetings but also 'deeds' or activities considered to be for the betterment of the community such as improving the appearance of the estate by

hanging baskets. Rewards include security lighting and home/garden improvements (Rogers & Robinson, 2004).

The benefits of community engagement

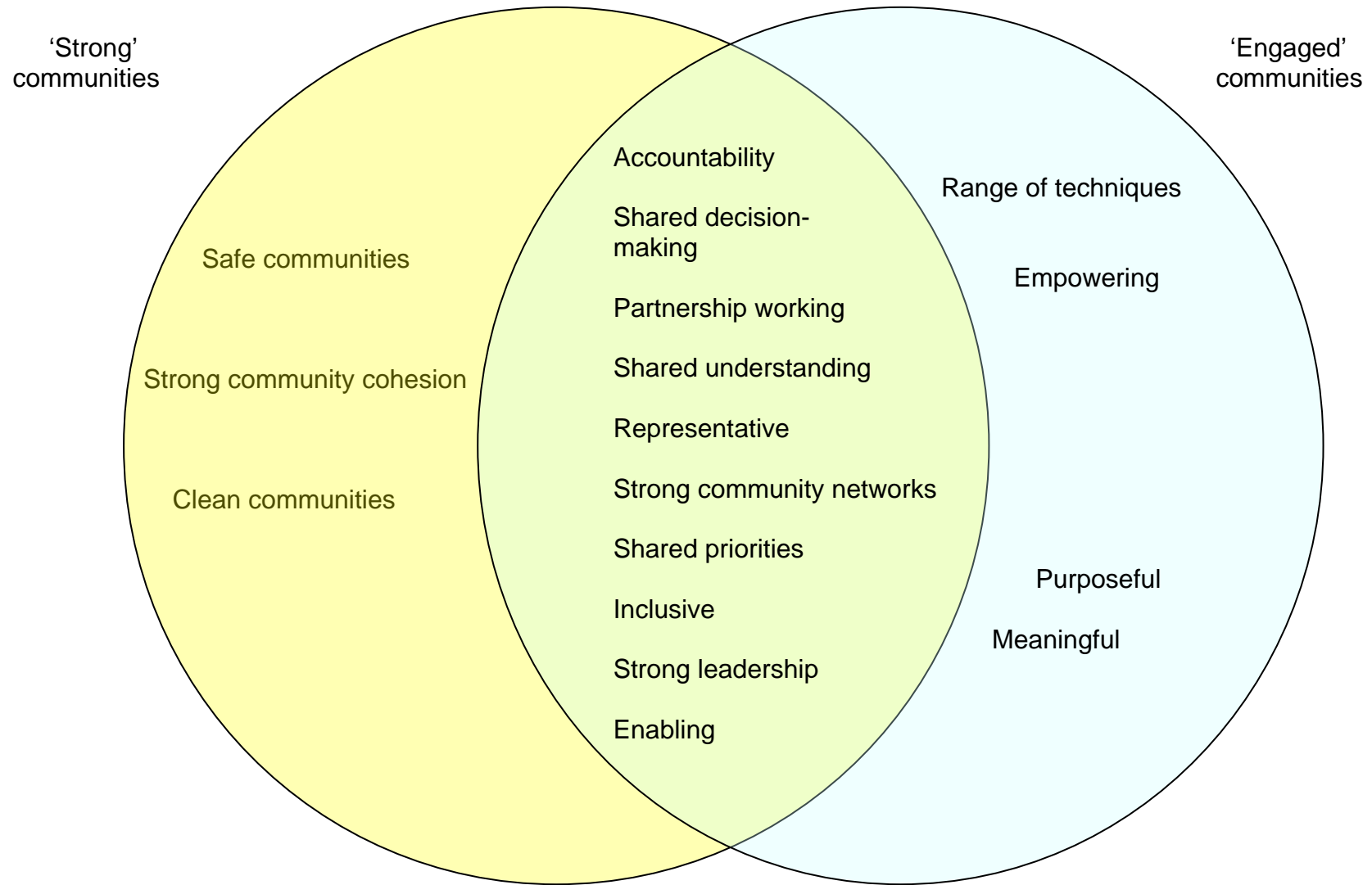
Empowerment

“The evidence clearly indicates that, at its best, community engagement can empower citizens; make a significant difference to the way services are designed and run and secure widely valued policy outcomes. It evidently also works best when communities are engaged across a range of services – strongly suggesting a need for governments to develop a strategic, across-the-board approach” (Rogers & Robinson, 2004: p7). Empowerment and decision-making are likely to lead to local people taking a greater awareness of what is happening, alternatives and outcomes of different courses of action, which should ultimately lead to increased pride and social responsibility.

Strong communities

‘Strong’ communities, those with good social networks; high levels of trust are more prevalent in low crime areas than high crime areas which tend to be more ‘disorganised’ (Rogers & Robinson, 2004). When authorities deliver on providing clean and safe streets, “Communities become stronger and more confident” (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2006: p25). More confident communities are more likely to engage – and more engaged communities are more likely to be confident and networked. However, which comes first? Rather than ‘strong’ communities leading to ‘engaged’ communities or vice versa, it is likely strength in either will have a positive impact on the other and be circular rather than linear. Figure 2 shows the overlap between strong and engaged communities – success in either will significantly develop the other.

Figure 2 Showing the inter-relationship between 'strong' and 'engaged' communities



Strong citizens

Successful community engagement can create stronger more assertive and confident residents that can lead to improved mental health and job opportunities. Additionally, successful engagement can lead to citizens who have aspirations.

'Social capital' refers to connections among individuals (Putnam, Robert D 2000) – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. Developing community engagement in an area would clearly contribute to such social networks. Social capital has been linked to a number of positive outcomes:

- improvements in children's behaviour and development
- public spaces are cleaner, people are friendlier, and the streets are safer
- individuals, firms, and neighbourhoods prosper economically
- better health.

Community cohesion

Community cohesion is a further potential positive outcome of community engagement. Key to engagement, as described above are 'strong' communities – communities that have strong networks, understanding and relationships between citizens and communities. These are all likely to be in place when engagement is successful. However, like strong communities, the relationship between community engagement and community cohesion is more cyclical than linear – as one develops so will the other.

Civic participation

One of the key outcomes of successful community engagement is the likely increased participation of citizens in local governance. If citizens feel that they are informed and have a good understanding of what is going on both locally and nationally and feel that their opinion is valid and wanted, they are more likely to engage through exercising their right to vote.

'Place shaping'

The voice of local people can identify issues and aspirations. Sir Michael Lyons argues that only this local identification of 'place' can unlock its particular individuality and competitive edge.

Accountability

Making local services accountable to local people is a key benefit of successful engagement. "Local participation should be key to accountability" (National Association of Local Councils, 2006: p3). The Local Government White Paper suggests that, currently, the performance framework is too focused around councils reporting to central government rather than to local people. Successful engagement makes public organisations accountable for what and how public services are delivered and how public funds are spent. Additionally, if citizens are fully involved in decision-making and expenditure of funds, then they too become accountable.

Tailored services

Involving citizens fully in setting priorities and making decisions on the delivery of public services should inevitably lead to services being delivered in more tailored and effective ways – being bespoke to the community rather than prescribed from above. If done well, this should ensure that services are delivered to meet local need.

Happy and confident citizens

An outcome of successful community engagement should be citizens who are happy with their area and the way services are delivered. Further, engagement should increase the confidence of citizens to participate more fully.

How to enable successful community engagement?

Stable and strong communities

As described above, strong communities are not only an outcome of successful engagement but also a deliverer of successful engagement. Strong, well developed communities with good relationships between citizens and communities are more likely to engage and engage successfully. Strong communities are likely to be cohesive communities, and so good community cohesion is likely to enable successful engagement.

Shared understanding

Success in engagement will require a shared vision between public bodies, citizens and communities of the purpose of engagement and outcomes. However, alongside this there must be a shared understanding of ‘community’. If organisations have a definition of a community that does not coincide with the citizen view, it is likely to fail. Before starting engagement, there should be a good understanding of the community to be engaged and preferably involved in deciding the process of engagement.

Purposeful

To be successful, community engagement must have a clear purpose. Without this, there will be no clear direction and citizens and communities will not have an understanding of why they are being asked to be involved and will see no tangible benefit for it. If citizens and communities see no clear purpose, they will not engage, or be dissatisfied with the outcomes and then will be more difficult to engage in the future.

Meaningful engagement

Engagement must be meaningful and well intentioned. If community engagement is to be successful, it cannot be done just because it is a requirement or a tick box exercise. This will not be sustainable and is likely to prove negative in the longer term with citizens becoming cynical and disillusioned. Organisations should only attempt community engagement if they truly believe in it, that they will value it, and will take heed of what is said, as, “...participation without redistribution of power is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless. It allows the powerholders to claim that all sides were considered, but makes it possible for only some of those sides to benefit” (Arnstein, 1969: p2).

To be successful, community engagement requires:

- citizens willing and able to get involved
- public organisations and services willing and able to make best use of active citizens.

(Rogers & Robinson, 2004: p7)

“By creating genuine and deliberative consultation structures, local authorities can help citizens of all backgrounds gain the necessary confidence and political literacy to participate fully in the democratic process. By acting on and listening upon their recommendations, they can restore faith in the institutions of local governance” (Rogers & Robinson, 2004: p49).

Representative and inclusive

To be truly successful, engagement must be inclusive – that all citizens and communities have the same opportunity for involvement, recognising that some citizens and communities will have a greater knowledge, expertise and willingness to become involved. Some individuals and communities are marginalised and often excluded. We must therefore “...ensure that services evolve to reflect their needs as well as those of more vocal citizens” (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2006: p26). It should be recognised that not all citizens and communities will have the same desire, confidence or opportunity for engagement. Those involved in community engagement should recognise who is engaging, assess how representative they are of their community, and make particular effort to engage ‘hard to reach’ groups.

Efforts have to be made to remain inclusive and expansive. To sustain the creative and beneficial effect of community engagement, the process must not be taken over and ‘owned’ by a small number of participants.

Flexibility

To ensure representativeness and inclusiveness, a varied and flexible approach to community engagement is required to ensure success. Attempting to engage across the spectrum (from informing to empowering through a variety of methods) allows greater reach into communities enabling citizens to engage at a level they want and are confident with.

Enabling

To ensure community engagement is successful, citizens and communities will need to be enabled to be involved. This may need considerable time and effort for some to develop interest and confidence. Beyond enabling by flexibility of methods, it may be necessary to assist in the development of community networks and relationships, supporting individuals and communities, for example, through coffee mornings, childcare and ‘buddying’ relationships.

Capacity and resources

Delivering a range of levels and methods of engagement is likely to raise issues of capacity and resources – both in personnel and cost. It may be necessary to

become involved in strengthening and developing communities as pre-cursors or initial steps of engagement. It should be recognised that to establish the most involved level of engagement – empowerment - could take many years to achieve and, once in place this should be an ongoing process which will require continuing support and finance.

Time

As stated above, successful engagement can potentially take a significant length of time to establish. Although there may be occasions when engagement is already in place or quick to set up, it cannot be assumed that this will be the case. Time and patience should be given to community engagement to ensure its success.

Citizen-led

One way to deliver successful engagement is to allow local residents to take the lead. Many communities will already have successful engagement in place, for example, resident action groups and so on. As highlighted by Derwent, New Deal for Communities representatives, "...if a resident turns up, they are always there for a reason...". In Derwent, one of the reasons for success was identified as recognising what this reason was and working with the resident on this through support and signposting – as well as trying to engage them. Further, engagement is often a 'top-down' approach, with public bodies deciding they need to engage and then deciding how they will do it. Greater opportunities should be developed to allow residents to initiate the engagement processes and communication.

Access and responsiveness

Developing ways for local people and communities to have greater access to public services should be a priority for encouraging successful engagement. If residents are unaware or find it confusing or difficult to access public services, this is likely to result in a lack of confidence in these services and subsequently a reluctance or cynicism of engagement. Reporting problems or issues is one of the first steps in engagement. The most disengaged and excluded citizens and communities will not report problems or issues that they have as they will either have no knowledge of how to do this or have low expectations that any activity will occur as a result. To enable residents to feel able and willing to report and identify issues requires simple and publicised access alongside demonstrable activity and outcomes in response – for example, quick removal of graffiti.

Strong organisations

'Reactionary' and 'conflict-ridden' institutions (Lowndes V, Stoker, G & Pratchett L 2002 cited in Rogers & Robinson, 2004: p48) are unlikely to successfully engage citizens and communities. To engage successfully, organisations need to be viewed positively by citizens and communities. Further, conflict-ridden organisations are unlikely to agree on a clear purpose for engagement and willingness to conduct meaningful engagement. Strong organisations – both individually and collectively - have an advantage in terms of successfully engaging citizens. Cross-partnership working can lead to rationalised, meaningful and responsive engagement. Strong organisations have to be learning, adaptive organisations willing to embrace change. The impact of leadership by citizens on public services is that organisations have to adapt to citizens' ideas and visions and this implies a cultural attitude that embraces responsiveness and learning.

Whilst all the factors listed above can enable the successful delivery of community engagement, the lack of any or their poor delivery would certainly act as a barrier to successful engagement.

Roles within community engagement

Role of public services

Organisations delivering public services have a role and responsibility to involve local people in how and when services are delivered. This will obviously require a level of community engagement. To do this, the organisation should have a clear purpose for engagement; it must be meaningful and relative to the needs of the community or range of communities. Organisations should work to ensure an enabling environment to maximise engagement with as many citizens who would like to participate. Additionally, organisations and agencies should work together where appropriate to deliver joined-up delivery of services and engagement and to avoid 'over-consultation' and the potential dilution of citizens' ability to engage due to the wide range of agencies attempting to engage.

Role of local people

All citizens should have an opportunity to be engaged and be enabled to participate in community engagement. Community engagement should encourage social responsibility and have a role in setting priorities and in the delivery of public services and spending of public funds. Citizens and communities also have a role in initiating, directing and determining how community engagement is delivered to ensure a 'bottom-up' approach rather than under the direction of public services.

Role of local councillors

The White Paper recommends that "Stronger local leadership, greater resident participation in decisions and an enhanced role for community groups can help all local areas to promote community cohesion" (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2006: p12). It proposes new powers for local councillors, where they will be able to demand answers through 'Community Calls for Action'. It also states that local councillors, "...have a key role in ensuring local people's voices are heard" (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2006: p52). However, it recognises that their role can be unclear. Locally, councillors are often 'trouble-shooters' who are reactive to the issues raised by local people. By being committed and being seen to be making a difference, councillors can have a key role in community engagement. However, greater forward planning needs to be incorporated into the role to enhance their skills as community leaders and the possible impact of political allegiance further investigated.

Role of other organisations, for example, voluntary organisations

Other organisations, such as voluntary groups and businesses, should also be involved in community engagement as they can have a key role in communities, both in delivering services and shaping community.

Their role is structural as well as representational. Community engagement with 'communities of interest' will include organisations, but these organisations also have an expertise in working with local people and can be part of the process of maximising engagement with citizens. Organisations are also often involved in formal consultative processes and can be service providers in their own right.

How do we measure successful engagement?

A framework for the delivery of successful community engagement should include how to measure it. Rogers & Robinson, 2004 outline four key areas for measurement:

- impact on decision-making or policy
- increased public understanding
- satisfaction with outcomes
- sustainability.

(Agreement from case study research by DETR in 1998, cited in Rogers & Robinson, 2004: p44).

Impact assessment should incorporate a range of measures, for example:

- the range of levels of engagement being achieved
- the range of citizens involved
- the level of citizens involved in decision-making
- citizens' perception of their role in decision-making
- issues raised being dealt with
- satisfaction surveys.

However, measurement of community engagement is not straightforward and a robust framework should be developed and updated over time.

Discussion

Clearly, community engagement is high on the national agenda and local authorities are expected to develop local frameworks for the delivery of community engagement. There is also a clear expectation that this happens in partnership with other agencies. There is strong commitment locally to achieve this and with good reason as the benefits to engagement are many and wide ranging. At its best, it assists in making strong, cohesive and confident communities who are actively involved in local decision-making about service delivery.

Although the spectrum of engagement listed gives a general framework for the delivery of community engagement, it suggests that community engagement is perhaps simple and more discrete than it is in reality. Whilst in some cases participation or success at one level may lead on to the next level, this is certainly not necessarily the case. Community engagement is much more complex than this. Some citizens and communities may only participate at one or two levels and never achieve, or want to achieve, empowerment and decision-making. A range of levels of engagement is possible at any one time within any one community. It should also be remembered that communities are not homogenous. Whilst members of the community will have something in common, such as living in the same neighbourhood, they may have more points of difference than commonality. Individuals are not necessarily consistent. With changing experiences and knowledge, people's views, opinions and priorities change over time as will their desire and ability to participate.

Sustaining engagement can also be difficult and should be considered. This is more likely to be the case if engagement is by theme or issue as, once resolved, those individuals may no longer have a reason to engage. Getting the disillusioned or those who think everything is fine can also be a dilemma and may need specific work to engage and keep engaged. However, we perhaps cannot expect the same people to be engaged long-term: most people will be engaged at different points in time as long as opportunities and access to do this are available, then sustainability should be maintained.

Managing expectations is crucial to the delivery of effective community engagement and to build trust. There will be some decisions that local people will not be able to make as they have already been made at a national or regional level or there are insufficient funds to meet all the priorities identified by local people. For engagement to have meaning, there should be transparency of the real level of input expected; what is possible; and what will take place following the raising of issues. If people feel that their involvement is not valued or acted upon or they continue to be disappointed, it is likely that they will disengage.

Recommendations

To deliver successful community engagement in Derby, we recommend a number of next steps. We need:

1. **A clear vision** of what we aim to achieve through community engagement at city-wide and community level.
2. **Partnership**: endorse a cross-partnership strategy with all sectors, to deliver community engagement across all its levels.
3. **Mapping** of engagement that is currently occurring across the city by different groups and agencies.
4. **Evaluation of need**: as we have identified, community engagement should be flexible and non-prescriptive. However, to determine how to take engagement forward, we need to determine what is needed for each community.
5. **Tailored**, community-specific engagement plans to include a clear understanding of the community; the current level of engagement and who is engaged; the purpose of engagement; the methods to be used – particularly for those groups not engaged; outcomes and how success will be measured; and timescales for delivery – recognising that this may be over many years. These plans should be reviewed regularly.
6. **Clearly-defined roles**. Although we have briefly outlined the roles within this report, it is important to agree and define, across partners, what we expect within different roles in the engagement process. This is particularly important with the roles of residents and local councillors - both these groups are likely to require support to achieve these roles.
7. **Transparency and review** are both important in themselves and in enabling the engagement process. Being transparent about the purpose of engagement and honest in what will be delivered are key in developing trust and confidence which will increase the likelihood of involvement. Review is important to monitor progress and identify need for change so we are responsive to need rather than pressing along an engagement route in a prescriptive manner.
8. **Shared learning** is essential. We must share the successful engagement within different agencies or groups so that we do not start from scratch and can build on the existing skills and successes already in the city.

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Appendix 1

Showing levels of engagement, purpose, direction of information flow, the role of the participant and associated tools, techniques and structures

Level of engagement	Purpose of engagement	Direction of information	Role of participant	Tools, techniques and structures
Inform	Providing the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding issues, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions and performance of services	One-way: service provider/organisation to citizen/community	To receive information	Newsletters/magazines, for example, Your Derby; Safer Derby Leaflets Media links Websites Communications Strategy Communicating with people for whom English is a second language Communicating with disabled people
Research	Seeking/gathering information and opinion (to assist planning for change or evaluation)	One-way: citizen/community to service provider/organisation	To provide information	Questionnaires and surveys Mystery shopper Complaints and compliments Customer surveys and feedback Interviews Focus groups
Consult	To provide information and obtain citizens/community feedback on priority setting; analysis; proposals. People are aware that they can influence an outcome	Two-way: service provider/organisation to citizen/community and back	To receive information and provide feedback. Potential implicit involvement in decision-making	Citizens' Panel Focus groups Public meetings/exhibitions Citizens' juries Interviews Questionnaires

Level of engagement	Purpose of engagement	Direction of information	Role of participant	Tools, techniques and structures
Involve	To involve the public throughout the process involving citizens/communities in the identification of priorities and proposals	Two way: provider/organisation to citizen/ community	To provide and receive information and opinion Potentially more explicit involvement in shaping decisions	Formal consultative bodies such as: diversity forums Derby Seniors' Forum Neighbourhood Forums Working links with representative bodies, for example, Racial Equality Council, DMN, School Governors' Liaison Group Youth Forum Shadow Board
Collaborate	To share the process of identification of issues, options and solutions and ultimately shared decision-making	Two way: provider/organisation to citizen/community	To provide and receive information and opinion. More explicit involvement in decision-making – but likely that final decision-making power sits with provider/organisation	Neighbourhood Forums Collaboration with voluntary sector organisations Derby Association of Community Partners Adult Social Services Partnership Planning and Commissioning groups
Empower	To devolve (where legally possible and advisable) decision-making to citizens/ communities	Two way: provider/organisation to citizen/community	To provide and receive information and opinion and make decisions based on this	New Deal for communities Neighbourhood Boards

Appendix 2

Indicating some of the engagement currently happening in Derby

Level of engagement	Community Safety Partnership	Derby City Council	Derby City Partnership	Primary Care Trust	Police
Inform	Safer Derby Leaflets Website Media	Communications Strategy: Your Derby Leaflets Media links Website Communicating with people for whom English is a second language Communicating with disabled people	Communications Strategy	Communications Strategy	Signposting at local stations Accessible information about neighbourhood teams Local media Panel to consider how best to communicate Website
Research	Derby 'Place' Survey – city and neighbourhoods Focus groups	Questionnaires and Surveys, for example, Best Value General Survey Mystery shopper Complaints and compliments Customer surveys and feedback Pointer Panel		Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) – customer satisfaction	Derby Pointer Panel Customer satisfaction surveys

Level of engagement	Community Safety Partnership	Derby City Council	Derby City Partnership	Primary Care Trust	Police
Consult	Expert group Focus groups Feedback forms	Derby Seniors' Forum Derby Youth Forum Minority Community Diversity Forum Gender Diversity Forum Disabled People Diversity Forum Focus groups Public meetings/ exhibitions Interviews Questionnaires		Health Panels Community Engagement Diversity Group	Consultative Group meetings Diversity Advisory Group Business and young people's consultation in development
Involve	Neighbourhood Forums	Adult Social Services Partnership Planning and commissioning groups Children and Young People Planning Partnership Derby Association of Community Partnerships		Public and Patient Involvement Forums to be replaced by LINKs	

Level of engagement	Community Safety Partnership	Derby City Council	Derby City Partnership	Primary Care Trust	Police
Collaborate	Neighbourhood Forums Community Champions	Collaboration with voluntary sector organisations Community development work Disability Equality Duty	Derby Community Network Disability Equality Duty	Links with voluntary sector, for example, Health and Social Care Forum Expert Patients Disability Equality Duty	Disability Equality Duty Safer Neighbourhood Teams Community expert advisors on investigation of serious offences Development of Community Champions
Empower	Neighbourhood Forums Community Champions	New Deal for Communities			