

BETTER COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Development of a learning programme to support and improve practice in engaging with communities

January 2010

This is the second of the Communications Briefs produced to inform a wider audience on the focus and progress of the Better Community Engagement Programme, which is funded by the Scottish Government. The first Communications Brief can be accessed here ([link](#)) or by contacting LWTT who are delivering the programme or Wendy-Louise Smith who is managing it for the Scottish Government (contact details below). The programme is based on the Better Community Engagement Framework (Learning Connections, Communities Scotland, 2007) which sets out a framework of competences designed to enable the planning of learning in community engagement and was developed to build the capacity of practitioners in community engagement.

The aims of this programme are to:

- establish one or more working models of effective learning for community engagement across Scotland
- evidence how structured learning could impact or improve community engagement practice
- provide an evidence base for future development of learning for community engagement

The Programme

The programme is based on developing, implementing and evaluating models and approaches for effectively improving competencies and skills in community engagement. The model for delivery of this project is a national development programme which involves working with 10 local demonstration projects and undertaking a number of activities at a national level to raise awareness and work with a broad range of stakeholders. The national elements of the programme involve establishing an advisory group to support the development of the Better Community Engagement Learning Programme, organising two national events and providing information and updates about the programme to key stakeholders. An overall monitoring and evaluation framework has been developed to ensure that evaluation looks in some depth at the distinctive activities involved and evaluates these within the context of the programme as a whole.

The National Elements of the Programme

The Advisory Group provides an expert sounding board for the development of the programme and the planning and delivery of national engagement in support of that. There are 17 members from a range of public and voluntary sector organisations. These include local authorities, national organisations and Government organisations and cover a range of interests such as health, police, community development, HMIE, equalities, the environment and housing. There are 4 meetings scheduled, the second of which took place in January 2010 where information sharing and discussion covered the monitoring and evaluation framework, an overview of the demonstration projects and the first National Event.

Advisory group members are also keen to meet with people from the local demonstration projects and learn more about the demonstration projects. An additional advisory group meeting is being organised to bring together demonstration project participants and advisory group members to share experience and knowledge. This meeting will take place in March 2010.

The first of the two National events to be organised was discussed by the Advisory Group and it has been agreed that this will take place in late spring. This event is aimed at national stakeholders, including staff from public sector organisations who are involved in strategic developments and decision making around community engagement. The focus of the event will be on sustainability in relation to learning for community engagement and details will follow.

The final element of the national activities is based on raising awareness of the programme activities and what we are learning. The communication briefs are part of that process, alongside discussions with key stakeholders about how best to make sure that their relevant networks and stakeholders are kept informed.

The Local Elements of the Programme

The first Communications Brief gave summary information about the 10 successful demonstration projects that make up the local elements of the Programme. This second briefing paper updates that information to show what has been happening in the projects and some of the activities that are involved.

The Local Demonstration Projects

Each demonstration project has been developing an action plan based on learning needs, setting out local aims and objectives, training resources, identifying targets and scheduling activities. This second briefing paper updates that information to show what has been happening in the projects and some of the activities that are involved.

Angus Council, Community Learning and Development Service:

Communities of Practice in Engagement – Jan/Feb 2010 Angus CPP will advertise within the partnership for Community Engagement (CE) practitioner from partner agencies who want to learn more about and discuss CE. These individuals will be invited to attend the training sessions and have an opportunity to share information and practice with colleagues from other agencies. We anticipate that individuals will sign up to 4 half days over 8 months to discuss their CE activity and learn more about the policy context for CE and processes around CE.

The programme detail:

- 4 Half day sessions run every 2 months for 8 months.
- Managers will be asked to nominate individuals with some CE responsibilities.
- Key partners will be approached to participate including; Police; NHS; CHP; Fire; College; Vol. Sector; Criminal Justice – Offenders Services etc.
- There may be a separate session for Managers run in parallel if there is demand.
- Timescale Feb 2010 until August 2010
- We will review the programme and decide if there is a need for a follow on training.
- After Aug 2010 – we will decide if there information/learning we want to highlight

to strategic managers and collate learning materials for the BCE contract.

Those involved in the training will be encouraged and supported to feedback and support others in their organisation who are involved in CE. They will also have a responsibility to work with other learners within the group.

Community Council Training – The aim is to provide specific awareness raising of CE for community representatives and the Local Community Planning staff who support the Community Councils. This training will raise the Community Councils' awareness of their responsibilities in engaging with their communities and what to expect when they are being engaged with by other agencies. The priority is to strengthen Community Councils' ability to gather and represent the views of communities and be aware of the tools available to support them to engage.

Specific training on CE will be provided to Local Community Planning (LCP) teams so that they can support Community Councils and Local Area Partnerships – in practice, helping them to learn by doing - this is thought to be a sustainable model. LCP staff will deliver support on the back of these awareness raising sessions with support initially from SCDC and other agency partners. Following training LCP teams could also support other agencies in community engagement activities.

We initially anticipated that this training would take place before Dec 2009 but it was apparent that more time was needed to speak to partners and LCP teams and prepare local representatives. We expect work with Community Councils to begin in March 2010.

Argyll and Bute, Community Planning Partnership: Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partnership (CPP) aimed to develop learning resources that would support community engagement at a number of different levels in the Community Planning process. This included looking at effective consultation, keeping elected members informed and aware of developments, developing training on providing feedback and ways of demonstrating the how community engagement had been heard and acted upon.

The first stage in the project has been to develop a community engagement route map based on the structures and expectations identified by the CPP. This highlights different ways in which communities might be organised, with communities of place covering a wide range of geographical interests, for instance villages or the whole of Argyll and Bute, and communities of interest focused on particular priorities. The range of views, priorities and interests that might be identified in these communities can relate to different aspects of Community Planning and different ways in which people might influence or become involved in the process.

The focus is to develop training and learning resources around communication, which is at heart of community engagement in the community planning process. The initial resources will be based on the National Standards for Community Engagement and will focus on the foundation elements of the Better Community Engagement Framework. These resources will help to co-ordinate and develop information sharing within the CPP, show different approaches that can be used to make sure that communication can be effective within and across the different levels, test how different stakeholders might be kept in the loop and look at different and innovative ways that can be used to engage, communicate and give feedback to those involved in the CE activities. The resources are being developed over the next few weeks and will then be discussed and expanded at a conference in March. These will then be tested in more depth within different community engagement settings over the following three months.

Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar: The context for the project is one where a number of traditional approaches are taken to engage with the community. There are also exemplars of more innovative and creative practice but they are in the minority. There is a need to take stock of current practice and develop local solutions to ensure effective sustainable engagement.

Training needs have been completed in the past mainly linked to the introduction of new approaches to community engagement. Sessions have been organised and delivered on the National Standards for Community Engagement and the Better Community Engagement Framework. One of the issues identified during discussions with partners was the varied nature of understanding these approaches and tools and their use. This is the starting point for the current project.

The Plan is in spring 2010 to deliver a 1 day event to; raise awareness of the importance of community engagement and the Better Community Engagement Project, to map current practice and refresh the identification of training needs and to refresh knowledge and understanding of the National Standards for Community Engagement and the Better Community Engagement Framework This will be followed by the delivery of a number of training events for officers and for community and voluntary sector representatives and to discuss and develop a plan for future community engagement. We aim to build the confidence and capability of communities to effectively engage in decision making, service delivery and strategic and operational planning.

East Renfrewshire Council: The initial focus for the BCE programme in East Renfrewshire is to work with Council staff currently responsible for carrying out community engagement processes and activities to improve their practice and share learning. Surveys are being carried out with a range of staff across departments and with community members to identify priorities for improving community engagement practice and a number of focus groups and targeted interviews will form part of this process. Once priorities have been agreed the programme will look at widening the range of tools and techniques used for community engagement in relation to priority areas, and an active learning approach to conducting engagement processes will facilitate the establishment of an evidence base of good practice.

The Council have recently undertaken reviews of community capacity building and community engagement across the authority which provides valuable information to inform the programme priorities. This is a key focus for the core group in East Renfrewshire, and the end outcome of the work will be a corporate training programme for community engagement within the Council. There are plans to cascade the good practice materials and training to other Community Planning Partners.

The Edinburgh Partnership: The Edinburgh Partnership community engagement strategy developed by the Community Planning Partners in Edinburgh City aims to improve on building a partnership approach to improving community engagement activity and practice in Edinburgh. The overall aim of partners is to see changes to how services are delivered as a result of community engagement activity and by promoting information sharing and networking; providing opportunities for learning, development and knowledge management and improving engagement in equalities activities they hope to achieve this.

- Some learning opportunities have already been delivered and evaluated positively. There is still a need to build capacity across all partners which is why a learning programme, based on identified need, has been developed but which they now wish to build and improve on. The aim is to build more management

information of who attends the seminars which agencies this and make them as sustainable as possible.

- A number of activities have been are being undertaken. These include:
- Preparation of an evaluation survey for the series of community engagement seminars that start on 27th October and follow up calls to ask how this has impacted on practice
- Developing a TNA survey. This will be trialled in early November and finalised so that the survey can be undertaken after the final community engagement seminar in December
- Development of a Learning Provider Resource Pack for those who are unused to delivering training
- Development of Management information regarding who attends the seminars, which services, level of staff, what their training needs continue to inform future marketing and promotion of seminars
- Evaluative information on seminars analysed to help improve seminar delivery
- Development of other trainers' able to deliver seminars
- Potential involvement in facilitating a session with a CE Coordinator Peer Support Network to establish a common understanding of its aims, values, principles, method of operation and potential future training and support needs
- Planning of an Edinburgh Partnership in Conference (EPIC) on the theme of Community Empowerment
- Create a resource bank of materials relating to the seminars accessible to all and for future use by others.

Falkirk Council: A training needs and resources survey of officers has been conducted and has provided valuable insight into priorities and levels of commitment to community engagement itself and engaging with the BCEF project. Three focus groups have been conducted, with the multi-agency steering group, a corporate group of Council officers responsible for conducting community engagement, and with community learning and development/local community planning officers. The BCEF has been discussed with the corporate management team. Approval to involve elected members has been reached with the Chief Executive and a meeting has taken place with the Leader of the Council.

The assessment of learning needs has highlighted key themes for the programme including: effective communication, conflict resolution, partnership working and co-ordination, resource sharing and signposting, and effective methods appropriate for different purposes and levels of engagement. The steering group is now focusing on the form of the learning programme. Specific proposals have been made for a workshop/seminar for elected members and a 'show and tell' event enabling illustration and exchange relating to community engagement that has been conducted in Falkirk. Consideration will be given to how this can be used to develop peer learning networks, resource sharing and signposting.

Faith in the Community (Scotland): Faith in the Community (Scotland): Faith in Community Scotland (FICS) is an anti poverty organisation which aims to resource and encourage faith communities who are involved, or would like to become involved, in social action within their community. The Transformation Team, an initiative of FICS works with faith communities to enable them to establish or continue good practice initiatives within their communities and to accompany and facilitate them as they become more active or involved in local community planning and regeneration. The FICS involvement in the BCE programme, in the main, is being coordinated through the Transformation Team.

The main focus for activity within the Faith in Community Scotland (FiCS) site is to

increase the 'religious literacy' of agency and partnership representatives across a range of sectors, mainly within local government, community planning, funding bodies and the civil service. Broadly, this means to;

- increase awareness and understanding across a range of sectors of the contribution faith based groups can make to regeneration initiatives, social action and anti-poverty work in some of Scotland's most disadvantaged communities
- to address the fear barrier of engaging with faith based groups; and
- overcome cultural, religious and language barriers which undermine a commitment to equalities

A programme of resource materials development and testing is currently being informed by desk research, the results of an electronic survey of the identified target groups and by in depth focus groups and interviews with agency staff and practitioners and faith group representatives. The preliminary research will identify what resources are currently available to support the engagement of faith communities within decision making processes and what materials require to be developed to enable the application of principles of good practice in effective engagement.

Fife Council, Performance and Organisational Support: The work being taken forward in Fife within the BCE Programme is further developing the inter-disciplinary and inter-agency Champions Network that was established in 2006. Individual champions from across Fife Partnership agencies work together to share their experience of community engagement, learn more about different ways of engaging with people, identify opportunities for working together across services and agencies and help other staff to listen to communities. They also identify ways of raising awareness of the National Standards for Community Engagement.

The project is being overseen by Fife Partnership's Community Engagement Management Group which involves people from the different community planning partner agencies, such as the Council, NHS and the police service. As a starting point a training needs analysis was undertaken in October of last year. This used an online survey to gather views from the members on what they felt the most important training needs were and the priorities they felt the Network should focus on over the next two years. This was followed up with feedback to a Network meeting and discussion about the priorities identified through the survey and additional priorities that participants wanted to see taken forward. As a result the management group is now considering two particular sets of learning resources to support the Network members

The first of these is based on developing welcome resources for new members to define a champion's role, introduce the National Standards and give examples of how these have been used. The second piece of work is the possibility of developing and testing resources that can support champions to take on mentoring roles in local community planning developments.

Moray Council: The infrastructure for the development of the programme in Moray is now fully developed with a local Steering Group (comprising a range of community representatives as well as Moray Council staff and elected member) overseeing the development of the programme action plan. This Steering Group links directly to the Community Engagement Strategy Group of Moray Community Planning Partnership and an Information Pack about the programme has been produced and disseminated to elected members and other partners at a local level.

The programme itself will revolve around delivery of an action learning programme for

frontline staff of Community Planning Partners and community representatives who will take forward local community engagement pilot projects, and share their learning and learn about engagement processes and methods at a series of shared learning events throughout the year. We are currently at the stage of establishing what the local pilot projects will be and are inviting interest from local agencies/organisations about participation in the programme.

West Lothian Council Communities Team: Locality planning in West Lothian promotes active partnership working between the community and community planning partners. Within Craigshill, Livingston the capacity of certain sections of the community has been raised over the past few years. Agencies are working better with each other and the community is starting to participate in the decision making processes.

Currently within Craigshill there are a number of new community organisations such as the community council, gala committee, Daisy Drop In (Under5's/ parenting project), Friends of Letham Park and youth projects. There is a need assist these groups engage in the process of developing an delivering an effective community regeneration strategy for the area. Investment has been set aside in the council's capital programme budget to develop community facilities in Craigshill. There is opportunity therefore for local organisations and individuals in the community to shape facilities and have a strong sense of ownership.

The project is being driven by an inter-departmental team with community planning, community learning and development and arts and leisure representation. Already there has been a very successful event for senior officers, launching the project and exploring current practice and training needs in engaging more effectively with communities. From this 2 training sessions have been organised for spring 2010 on improving engagement with partnerships and involving communities in decision making. A 3 day residential event is also being planned over Easter for community and voluntary sector representatives.

Monitoring and Evaluation of the Programme

The evaluation framework is based on LEAP (learning, evaluation and planning). This is an approach that is outcomes focused, participatory and learning based (SCDC, 2007: 1). The framework breaks the activities involved in the BCE programme down to make sure that we learn as many lessons as possible. It looks at:

- What differences do we want to make? What will we need to do now? (*outcomes*)
- How will we know whether we made the difference? (*outcome indicators*)
- What resources will we use? (*inputs*)
- What methods will we use? (*processes*)
- How will we use the resources and methods? (*outputs*)
- How are we making sure that it is happening? (*output monitoring*)
- Did we make the difference, what have we learned? (*evaluation*)

Monitoring and evaluating what is being done at the local level within each of the demonstration sites is one area of investigation. This covers the kind of learning/ training that is being developed, how it is being done, who is investing in the process, the training resources being produced and outcomes (expected and unexpected) result. The national activities have a different role in the programme and the evaluation will provide another set of lessons about what the programme has achieved, how this was done and what difference

it made. The final piece of the jigsaw is to assess how the pieces fit together and what the outcomes and lessons from the programme look like.

To do this the Programme framework clarifies and identifies the inputs and how these are being measured. It then identifies the processes and how these relate to the Better Community Engagement competency framework and how they meet the National Standards for Community Engagement. Finally the outputs from the local and from the national parts of the programme and related outcomes are identified. The outcomes and indicators for the local activities are based on an analysis of the different outcomes sought from the demonstration projects. The framework can be found here ([link](#)) or through the contacts below.

Further Information

Policy

Wendy-Louise Smith
Scottish Government
Email: WendyLouise.Smith@scotland.gsi.gov.uk
Tel: 0141 305 4186

BCE Programme

Fiona Craig
LWTT
Email: fcraig@lwtt.org.uk
Tel: 01324 489666
