



Empowerment skills for all

Analysing gaps and constructing a learning framework

From the Academy, the skills arm of the Homes and Communities Agency



Homes &
Communities
ACADEMY

The HCA Academy is the skills arm of the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), the national housing and regeneration body.

We support the HCA's partners to deliver better places by providing access to practical training and resources. Our work strengthens the HCA's ambitions to create thriving places and affordable homes.

For 2009-2011, our three priorities are:

- Creating the HCA's learning and knowledge hub
- Supporting and improving places
- Leading the skills agenda

Contents

Glossary	4
Foreword	5
Executive summary	6
1 Introduction and scope	8
2 Empowerment through varied occupations	12
3 Specific professions and perspectives	16
4 The challenge of coordination	22
5 Commentary: towards empowerment skills for all	27
6 A generic learning framework for community empowerment	32
Overall Conclusions	42

Appendices

A: Case studies in the empowerment White Paper	44
B: Case studies in the National Community Forum Report	46
C: More detail on empowerment in the training of planners	49
D: Relevant examples of courses in housing	51
E: Example of empowerment included in the training of a local police force	56
F: A possible framework for community development and empowerment learning for the frontline workforce (Alison Gilchrist)	57
G: Consultation responses	60
H: Provisional Summary of National Occupational Standards or Community Development as revised 2009	64

Figures

1 Four main types of factor affecting empowerment	32
2 Twelve components of community empowerment	35
3 More detailed content on the twelve components of community empowerment	36

Glossary of abbreviations

ABCD

Achieving Better Community Development

ACPO

Association of Chief Police Officers

ASC

The Academy for Sustainable Communities – now the HCA Academy

CD

Community development. ‘Working with people to enable them to enjoy a greater degree of influence over the decisions that affect their lives and to come together with others to devise solutions to common problems’ (HCA Academy website)

CE

Community empowerment. Various defined as ‘the giving of confidence, skills and power to communities to shape and influence what public bodies do for or with them’ (Government) and ‘a process where people work together to make change happen in their communities by having more power and influence over what matters to them’ (Scottish government working party)

CDF

Community Development Foundation

CIH

Chartered Institute of Housing

CLG

(Department for) Communities and Local Government

CLP

Community-Led Planning

ESRC

Economic and Social Research Council

FCDL

Federation for Community Development Learning

HCA

Homes and Communities Agency

LGWP

Local Government White Paper

LGPF

Local Government Performance Framework

LLUK

Lifelong Learning UK

NCF

National Community Forum

NI

National Indicators

NI 4

National Indicator 4, on empowerment

NM

Neighbourhood Management

NOS

National Occupational Standards

PA

Planning Aid

PCSO

Police Community Support Officer

PSI

Policy Studies Institute

RCCE

Rural Community Council for Essex

WP

White Paper

Foreword



Empowerment is fundamental to creating truly sustainable communities, as the glue which binds communities together and preserves local democracy. Government has already recognised the policy significance of this, having published a White Paper on empowerment in Summer 2008 – in which it also set out its intentions to work with the Academy for Sustainable

Communities (ASC) – now the HCA Academy, our skills arm. And in April this year, all local authorities gained a legal duty to “inform, consult and involve” citizens in all areas of decision-making.

For the HCA, as a national agency that delivers locally, our place-making vision is as much about creating sustainable communities as creating new homes where people want to and can afford to live. Community engagement and empowerment sit right at the heart of this, and to this end we recently set out our policy framework on community engagement. This outlines how we will work with local authorities and public sector, voluntary and private partners, through our central business process the Single Conversation, to empower local people to become involved in decisions about their housing and the regeneration of their communities.

For community engagement to succeed, however, you need highly skilled people who understand the issues involved with implementing such an approach. And it’s clear that against the backdrop of an extremely challenging economic climate, now more than ever we need to urgently address the skills gaps across the occupations that are crucial to helping sustain communities.

This research report is the first step in our intention to identify these skills gaps and create a skills framework for local empowerment, which will sit alongside our community engagement policy, while also feeding into the wider skills work the Academy is undertaking. It is also well-timed, as the subject is certain to feature as a key topic of political debate in the months ahead, as we prepare for the eventual economic upturn.

Since the HCA began operation last December, we have experienced a real appetite for a local place-based approach, which is very encouraging. But we now need a clear action plan for the future that the HCA, with partners, can develop to up-skill professionals working with communities.

We envisage that this study, and subsequently the Academy’s empowerment skills framework, will help steer a national improvement in empowerment skills, and go a long way to sustaining thriving communities into the future.

Sir Bob Kerlake

Chief Executive
Homes and Communities Agency
September 2009

Executive summary

1. The overall aim of the project, of which this is the first main report, is to achieve a significant increase in the empowerment of local populations attributable to the spread and improvement of empowerment skills amongst a variety of occupations.
2. People need to have greater control over their shared local conditions, to ensure stronger communities, better quality of public services and protection of democracy. These objectives are vital at all times and even more so as a result of the recession. Practice to bring this about is currently known as community empowerment and is now a prominent part of government policy.
3. The HCA Academy (formerly the Academy for Sustainable Communities) has the remit to develop and spread generic skills across all occupations which help to sustain communities. Community engagement has been identified as such a skill, which the Academy takes as an umbrella term to cover community engagement, development and empowerment, whilst acknowledging important differences between these. This report focuses on the Academy's empowerment programme. The relationship between engagement, empowerment and development is clarified in the report.
4. This report:
 - (i) clarifies what is meant by community empowerment
 - (ii) looks at a range of case studies to ground this understanding in practical experience
 - (iii) assesses to what extent empowerment skills are present in a range of occupations
 - (iv) examines the special contribution of community development
 - (v) addresses the question of how the use of such skills by different workers could be coordinated across localities
 - (vi) presents a framework and recommendations to develop and disseminate the necessary skills through a wide range of occupations.
5. The government definition and indicator of empowerment is expressed as giving people power to influence public services. Other definitions stress strengthening the inner capacities of communities. In practice the concept is flexible, and sometimes at risk of being unclear. The official indicator is an essential anchor to identify this policy and its results, but should not be regarded as a boundary.
6. Case studies cited in the empowerment White Paper Communities in Control (CLG, July 2008) are reviewed. These range from straightforward and limited activities such as volunteering to dynamic interactions between community groups and authorities working together to solve a problem or improve a service.
7. Other studies show the relationship between individual and collective empowerment. Many people seeking to influence a public authority do so as individuals at the point of delivery, ie by approaching teachers, nurses, doctors, social workers, police or others with whom they have contact. These encounters need to be recognised as opportunities for community empowerment.
8. Some front-line workers see themselves as advocates for community influence within their own agency or are stimulated by community pressure to take a creative problem-solving approach to issues raised. Agencies should encourage and make space for such responses.
9. The professional ethos and training of five of the most 'empowerment-ready' occupations are reviewed to reveal how far they incorporate community empowerment skills and remits. These are: planning, housing; police; police community support officers; and neighbourhood management. These are pilot studies to test the approach, not a balanced selection of occupations. Health, education, welfare and other occupations will be just as important in the full picture.
10. The question of how community empowerment should be coordinated at neighbourhood or parish level is illustrated by three types of model:
 - (i) a long-term community development project
 - (ii) parish and community-led planning
 - (iii) neighbourhood management arrangements.All need to be drawn on, and entail complex skills.

11. Community development is a key source for empowerment skills but does not necessarily cover the whole scope of empowerment. The scope of community development itself has recently been reviewed and is becoming more inclusive of strategic areas such as guiding public authorities' community engagement strategies and leading overall coordination of empowerment across a locality. At present, however, there are major gaps in many localities.
12. Government has been perceived as hinting that the spreading of empowerment skills to all occupations could make the specific community development occupation redundant. Expanding empowerment, however, demands access to community development as a living stream of experience. Specialist community development provision needs to be consolidated, whilst its own communications and strategic skills are expanded.
13. The necessary skills to maximise empowerment through the combined contributions of all relevant workers in a locality are set out as twelve factors. Four of these are core skills of community development. Others concern strategic levels and top-down contributions from public agencies. The twelve factors are then populated with more detailed content, to provide a map of skills across the empowerment field.
14. It is proposed to use this map, alongside other frameworks such as the revised national occupational standards for community development, as a basis for dialogue with different occupations and for overall implementation of empowerment methods. Elements which are more central to the empowerment framework than to the new National Occupational Standards for Community Development (CD NOS) include: proactive customer relations; facilitating community influence on local public services; facilitating joint working between communities and public agencies; advising local third sector organisations on empowerment; advising varied front-line workers on empowerment; and coordinating empowerment across a locality.
15. It is concluded that all occupations need a common understanding of generic factors such as how communities work and the overall aims of empowerment, and each occupation also needs to identify and refine its specific contribution.
16. The HCA Academy proposes to develop this programme by:
 - (i) agreement with the Department for Communities and Local Government on a joint work stream
 - (ii) dialogue with training organisations across a range of professions
 - (iii) joint discussion with key stakeholders concerned with strengthening local communities
 - (iv) contributing information, ideas and proposals to the HCA Academy's Better Skills for Better Places action plan
 - (v) dialogue with relevant bodies on strengthening the capacity of community development to guide the wide application of empowerment skills.

1: Introduction and scope

Origin and aim

This is the foundation study for the HCA Academy's initiative on extending empowerment skills. The overall aim of the project, of which this is the first main report, is to achieve a significant increase in the empowerment of local populations attributable to the spread and improvement of empowerment skills amongst a variety of occupations. The aim at this stage is to construct a learning framework to guide the growth of community empowerment skills across all occupations relevant to sustainable communities. The HCA Academy (formerly the Academy for Sustainable Communities) has the national remit to develop and spread generic skills across all occupations which help to sustain communities. Community engagement has been identified as such a skill. The Academy takes this an umbrella term to cover community engagement, development and empowerment, whilst acknowledging important differences between these. The present report focuses on the Academy's empowerment programme. The programme seeks to establish who has these skills, who needs them and how they can be spread throughout the relevant occupations. The relationship between engagement and empowerment is discussed below.

The White Paper on empowerment in July 2008, *Communities in Control*, stated the Government's intention to 'work with the Academy for Sustainable Communities to ensure that appropriate training in community development and community empowerment skills is available to relevant public sector officials...'¹ This study forms the Academy's response to the government's proposal.

The work also feeds into the Academy's ongoing programmes and networks, such as Delivering Better Skills for Better Places – a national skills action plan that will accelerate the development of a flexible, knowledgeable and highly skilled workforce.²

Increasing relevance in a changing context

If empowerment is just the icing on the cake of a prosperous society, an optional extra on top of democracy and essential public services, we might expect 2009 to see a suspension of the high priority placed upon it by government in 2007-08. The extraordinary economic events which unfolded nationally and globally towards the end of 2008 leave no room for policy luxuries. If, however, empowerment is crucial to holding society together and protecting both democracy and living conditions at a time of huge uncertainty and potential social turmoil, then it has suddenly become even more crucial in 2009 than it already was.

This study argues firmly in favour of the latter view. Whilst community empowerment is relatively new as an explicit government policy, it is the successor to a long line of community involvement policies and it is unlikely to disappear under any government, though terminology may change.

Empowerment policy has, however, amplified the community involvement stream in far-reaching ways. The predecessors to the government's empowerment policy were mostly conceived as compensatory mechanisms aimed at communities facing exceptional disadvantage in an otherwise increasingly prosperous society. The empowerment policy laid down in 2007-08, however, moved rapidly towards a universal basis, adopting measures based on the whole population, whilst still attributing even greater importance to helping people in disadvantaged areas and situations. It forms part of a cluster of policies known as Public Service Agreement 21 which together aim to produce 'cohesive, empowered and active' communities.³ (PSAs are agreements between the Treasury and other government departments about what they will deliver). There are indeed close connections between community empowerment and cohesion, and the present study should be related to the Academy's parallel work on community cohesion.⁴

1 Communities and Local Government, *Communities in Control, Real People, Real Power*. Norwich:TSO, 2008 (July), Section 2.25

2 *Delivering Better Skills for Better Places*, www.HCAAcademy.co.uk/betterplaces

3 HM Treasury (2007), *PSA Delivery Agreement 21: Build more cohesive, empowered and active communities*

4 See for example *Making Communities More Cohesive: A Procurement Guide for Regeneration Professionals*, the HCA Academy, 2009

The July 2009 empowerment White Paper *Communities in Control* extended the 'Duty to Involve', originally designed for local authorities and a few others, to a wide range of additional agencies, together with a duty to promote democracy, and financial support for a number of initiatives to support active citizenship. At the same time, on the question of who was to deliver empowerment, the White Paper suggested a widening out of empowerment skills to all front-line occupations.

In 2009 and beyond, the issues which empowerment was originally designed to address have become more acute and are likely to affect far more people. It is therefore urgent to address the implementation gaps.

Definition and scope

Although the term community empowerment has long been in use as part of the general rhetoric surrounding progressive social objectives, it has only been a subject of specific government policy since 2006. There is already copious literature arising from this.⁵ It is not a purpose of this report to review that literature but because the term can be ambiguous it is necessary to make clear the scope of community empowerment as addressed in this report.

The government defines empowerment as:

the giving of confidence, skills and power to communities to shape and influence what public bodies do for or with them

coupled with this definition of community engagement:

the process whereby public bodies reach out to communities to create empowerment opportunities⁶

5 For example the Community Development Foundation has produced an annotated catalogue of 67 short studies, booklets and toolkits produced by the National Empowerment Partnership in its first two years, mostly from its nine regional bodies across England. (*National Empowerment Partnership Resources Catalogue 2008-9*. London: CDF, 2009).

6 CLG / LGA (2007), *An Action Plan for Empowerment: Building on Success*. Wetherby: CLG Publications, p12

A new Scottish community empowerment action plan⁷ takes a different line, saying 'Empowerment cannot be given to communities by others. Communities must decide the level of empowerment they want and how to get there themselves.' The Scottish working party defines community empowerment as:

a process where people work together to make change happen in their communities by having more power and influence over what matters to them.

The Scottish definition could be said to emphasise the 'bottom-up' element, the Westminster definition the 'top-down'. For the purposes of this study it seems necessary to balance the two, and we will look at the implications for skills and professions from both perspectives.

Engagement and empowerment

The discipline most associated with empowerment is community development (CD), and we examine this connection more fully in chapters four and five. CD usually distinguishes itself from community engagement by stressing that engagement is a top-down activity by public agencies whereas CD bases itself in the needs and aspirations of communities themselves.⁸ An overall empowerment strategy, however, needs to employ both perspectives. A strategic approach to CD may also move in this direction.

7 Scottish Government and COSLA (2009) *Community Empowerment Action Plan*, www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/03/20155113/5 (March)

8 The 2009 National Occupational Standards for Community Development, summarised in chapter six below, defines community development as 'a long-term, value-based process which aims to address imbalances in power and bring about change founded on social justice, equality and inclusion. The process enables people to organise and work together to:

- identify their own needs and aspirations
- take action to exert influence on the decisions which affect their lives
- improve the quality of their own lives, the communities in which they live and societies of which they are a part.

Dialogue about community engagement and development sometimes falls into seemingly rival positions and ideologies, but from the point of view of achieving empowerment, the two practices are complementary, and all agencies need to draw on both. But this does not mean that top-down and bottom-up activity is simply the same. On the contrary, it is important to keep a clear distinction so that the two spheres of activity can be clearly combined to produce an overall empowering impact.

There are three factors by which community development and community engagement can be distinguished:

- (i) community engagement starts with the agenda of the public service in question and seeks residents' involvement, whilst community development starts with people's concerns and works to enable people to improve their own conditions, including by influencing public agencies.
- (ii) community development is a discipline in its own right, with specialist workers operating with national occupational standards, and has a culture and tradition of collective empowerment. Community engagement is the name given to the efforts of different public and corporate agencies to attract the interest, involvement and cooperation of their users or customers.
- (iii) community engagement therefore tends to attract most easily those who are most articulate and confident whilst community development focuses especially on disadvantaged groups and those who are most excluded.

These differences of perspective apply whether the workers concerned are in public agencies or voluntary or community organisations. Most public service workers are in public bodies but a good number are also found in private and voluntary sector organisations which carry out contracts commissioned by public bodies. The bulk of community development workers are believed to be about equally distributed between public and voluntary/community sector bodies but in either case they are likely to adhere to the CD principle of working from the viewpoint of the community and its independent groups. In discussing the spread of empowerment skills to other occupations this report has in mind workers in all three sectors.

Government indicators

An important way to maintain the consistent use of a term is to examine how it is measured. Government measures empowerment by the fourth indicator in the local government performance framework (NI 4). This ascertains whether, in a large-scale local statistical survey, people feel they can influence what goes on their locality. Closely associated indicators point to cohesion, civic participation, volunteering, sense of belonging to a neighbourhood and having a thriving third sector. Arguably these additional indicators should be, or in practice are, included in what most people understand to be the scope of empowerment activity.⁹

Equally, empowerment is linked with the Duty to Involve¹⁰, on the assumption that involvement increases influence, but also in practice to help achieve a wide range of other objectives such as improving public services, strengthening the third sector and improving local governance. We conclude that an operational definition of empowerment must include NI 4 (influence) but also be combined with other outcomes.

Empowerment through a variety of occupations

Chapter two reviews a number of studies highlighting the extent to which empowerment skills, including community development, are practised or needed by front line workers in a variety of occupations. Chapter three then looks at how empowerment features in the role and training of other professions, illustrated at this stage by planners, housing workers, police, police community support officers and neighbourhood managers.

9 The case for using this group of indicators together to measure empowerment, rather than NI 4 on its own, is made more fully in G. Chanan, *Evaluating Empowerment: Reconciling Indicators with Local Experience*, Bishop Sutton, Somerset: South West Foundation, on behalf of Creating Excellence, 2009, www.creatingexcellence.org.uk/mod-downloads-index-req-viewdownloaddetails-lid-315.html

10 CLG (2008), *Communities in Control*, sections 1.49 and 4.38

The foremost occupation dealing with empowerment is community development (CD) and the two concepts are coupled together in the empowerment White Paper (section 2.25). CD can include unpaid work but there is a community development profession which was estimated, in 2005, as consisting of approximately 20,000 workers across the UK.¹¹ The number is likely to have declined since then as many of these posts were time-limited contracts, and some of the main employing schemes, such as Neighbourhood Renewal and New Deal for Communities, have been drawing to a close. The report therefore asks what are the implications of spreading community empowerment skills for the relationship between community development and the other professions?

The aim of spreading empowerment skills through many professions also raises the question of whether each of these professions can effectively exercise these skills in isolation. Does there need to be coordination across localities to achieve combined effect and what form should that take? This is considered in Chapter four.

Drawing on all these sources, Chapter five proposes a generic learning framework for community empowerment skills in the form of 12 key areas, and suggests how they might be populated with specific content; whilst Chapter six offers a commentary on the findings, leading to conclusions and recommendations.

¹¹ Peter Taylor and Gabriel Chanan, *Who Are the Capacity Builders?*, London: Community Development Foundation, 2006

2. Empowerment through varied occupations

Use of community development by other occupations

To what extent do workers in various professions, other than community development, already use empowerment skills and could they do so more widely and effectively? In this chapter we review a number of studies which provide information about the extent of the actual and potential community empowerment role of a variety of occupations. We conclude by drawing out implications about some of the additional empowerment skills that would be most useful across the professional landscape.

Research by the HCA Academy¹² provides a broad initial picture. It shows that elements of community development practice can be found in a number of other occupations. It also shows gaps where a stronger element of CD might be most beneficial. And it implicitly shows the danger of appearing to spread CD by diluting it too thinly.

70-80% of a sample of 404 respondents from seven broad occupational streams which contribute to sustainable communities¹³ reckoned that their work incorporated a significant element of community development. Only 8% of the sample were community development workers by name. For about half the sample the CD element was reckoned as being more than 25% of their work, and half of these again (a quarter of the sample) reckoned it to be more than half of their work.

Some of the community development work may have been in rather a weak form. Whilst two thirds of all respondents expected the need for CD within their jobs to increase in the future, 50% did not think they needed to be trained in it, though only 15% had been. However, about 33% rated themselves as not being very good at these skills and did want further training. Empowerment was less familiar and less practised amongst built environment occupations than social occupations.

Taking these figures together suggests that what many of the respondents understood by community development was an aspect of their work which was steadily becoming more important, but which could largely be improvised and did not necessarily need specific training. In reality, however, community development is a skilled and complex occupation, as can be seen particularly in chapter four. The complexity of the practice can be masked by the fact that it takes place in everyday, low-profile situations and uses an inclusive, non-threatening style to involve people.

Variety of empowerment initiatives

Whilst the HCA Academy study reported findings in response to a definition of CD, it is useful to look also at specific case studies and typical situations that arise in communities in order to see how the desire or need for empowerment arises and how it affects workers from different professions.

Case studies in the empowerment White Paper *Communities in Control* illustrate a wide range of such situations (see Appendix A). These were drawn from a database of over 250 case studies assembled by CLG during 2008 from existing sources – probably the largest single collection of such case studies in this field. It must be borne in mind, however, that CLG sought short case study reports, and as used in the White Paper they are further shortened, so each represents only a glimpse of an often more complex situation.

What does this ‘scoop’ of case studies show? Firstly that in practice empowerment is understood both by government and most stakeholders to cover a broad and flexible field. About a third of the 27 illustrations are simply about volunteering, cleaning up the local environment, job creation or an improvement in a public service, without any indication that local people would thereby have gained any greater influence over their conditions. Arguably these would be very marginal examples of empowerment as they seem unlikely to make any impact on whether people feel they can influence their locality (National Indicator 4).

12 WM Enterprise (2009), *Spreading Community Development*. Leeds: the HCA Academy. www.HCAacademy.co.uk/community_development

13 i.e. the main ‘Egan’ categories: (i) decision-makers; (ii) built environment occupations; (iii) environmental occupations; (iv) social occupations; (v) economic occupations; (vi) community occupations; (vii) cross-cutting occupations (see first paragraph in Chapter 3).

More concentrated examples of empowerment activity include: young people's participatory budgeting in Newcastle (illustration 14); youth mayor and deputy mayors in Tower Hamlets (19); imaginative ways to attract new councillors in Leicester (23); interactive national websites to enable users to raise issues with local or national decision-makers (9); a 'community pride' contract between residents and agencies in Staffordshire Moorlands (21); and relatively well-known older examples such as Planning for Real (as in the Isle of Sheppey, 17) and community enterprise (Coin Street, Westminster, 26). All these show results which strongly include, but are not limited to, people having more influence over their locality.

Apart from community development workers, the kinds of professionals and roles evidently involved in the types of initiative described in the White Paper, include: information workers; health and social care workers; church workers; local arts workers; police; broadcasters; youth workers; teachers; judges; planners; housing workers; councillors; council administrative staff; school governors; and social enterprise workers.

'Everyday' situations requiring empowerment skills

Situations requiring empowerment skills do not, however, only arise from the kinds of special initiatives illustrated in the White Paper. They also arise from everyday situations in communities, though this is not always recognised by the professionals concerned.

Situations of this kind are illustrated in a report of the National Community Forum called *Powering Up Communities*.¹⁴ This gives 21 testimonies of local residents about situations in which they sought help in overcoming a problem from front-line workers or services. These are summarised in Appendix B. Most of the experiences concern difficulties and obstacles encountered. Out of the 21 experiences, 12 are about individuals, such as understanding the benefits system or obtaining suitable accommodation for people with disabilities. Nine are about collective situations such as saving local amenities, improving green spaces or monitoring the quality of public housing or community buildings.

Some of the reported situations have the potential for empowerment on a wide scale, often missed because of a lack of an inclusive, problem-solving response. A group in a disadvantaged neighbourhood in receipt of a government grant, seeking collaboration with service providers, found that officials 'wouldn't invest from their mainstream budgets but came to the meeting with their hands out for the little bit of funding we had... and didn't engage because we wouldn't spend on what they wanted us to'. The group felt that service providers needed to be trained to see residents not as a pool of supplementary resources but as a source of vital intelligence on how to maximise the impact of the public services themselves: 'Where service providers did engage with us, we had very positive feedback from them that we helped their delivery.'

Another example of a missed opportunity concerned antisocial behaviour of young people in a village. Police held consultations with local residents but not with the young people themselves, though many of these recognised the problem and wanted to do something about it. The young people set up their own initiative, and got support from the village partnership, parish and district councils but not initially from the police or (county) youth service, and the local media were hostile. When the young people's proposal for a youth centre and drop-in centre was progressed, the county and police took a more positive attitude and wanted to become involved. The witness was apprehensive that the current change to unitary status across the county would make cooperation around such local situations more difficult.

Apart from community development workers, the professions involved included: housing allocation officer; benefits officer; parish councillor; youth worker; tenant participation officer; planner/environment officer; police; PCT officials; officer dealing with council tax; officer dealing with refuse bins; neighbourhood manager; teacher; community warden; social services officer; occupational therapist; and planning and highways officer.

¹⁴ National Community Forum (2008), *Powering Up Communities*, CLG.

The viewpoint of front-line staff

The *Powering up Communities* report is limited, however, to the testimonies of residents. How are such situations experienced by the front line professional staff themselves? Insights on community involvement from the viewpoint of front-line staff are the subject of a recent study by the Policy Studies Institute in the London Borough of Haringey.¹⁵

Most of the officials in the PSI study had positive views about engagement but some were unconfident about putting it into practice. They saw their ability to undertake engagement or empowerment as depending on senior management support and being given time, remit and incentives to do so. Staff spoke of a lack of coordination between neighbourhood level involvement and input to strategic service planning. Some staff, especially in the health service, perceived conflicts between the demands of local communities and the pressure to meet central performance targets.

These findings reinforce impressions from the HCA Academy study on spreading community development,¹⁶ which found that many workers who had some level of community development function but were not community development workers tended to lack a number of relevant skills, such as inclusive visioning, working with communities, stakeholder management and developing community groups, and also needed training in partnership working, leadership, identifying the needs of the community and communication.

Useful implications for empowerment training can be found in the range of views of front-line staff in the PSI study about their own relationship to the communities they were serving. Some saw themselves as part of the local community or as advocating for it within their agencies. Others stressed the boundaries of their professional responsibility. There was some unease about the status of community spokespeople, and a preference for seeing participants as skilled stakeholders or partners rather than representatives.

The PSI study implies that initiatives for empowering activities may sometimes come from front-line workers responding to local residents and becoming advocates for them within their agencies. People who initiate community development projects are often women from the local community who have had some experience of working for a public agency, hence have a foot in both the professional world and the local community. Many imaginative initiatives emerge neither from the community nor an agency alone but from close interconnections between the two, started by individuals with this dual perspective.

From individual to community empowerment

The importance for community empowerment of individual encounters between residents and professionals is reinforced by what is claimed to be the most extensive analysis of participation ever carried out in Britain, a study produced by the ESRC between 1998 and 2003.¹⁷ This was also the main source for an unpublished study produced by Professor Paul Whiteley for the Home Office¹⁸ in connection with policy on civil renewal (the immediate predecessor to empowerment policy).

The study shows that when individuals seek influence over a state agency it is often not through local committees or negotiating machinery but through the front line workers whom they encounter at the point of delivery of the service – teachers, doctors, nurses, care-workers, social workers etc.

Many of the residents who raise these issues may well be active in their community as volunteers though other mechanisms but would not necessarily see the voluntary or community sector as a natural vehicle to channel their concern with a public service.

¹⁵ Kathryn Ray et al (2008), *Public Officials and Community Involvement in Local Services*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation

¹⁶ WM Enterprise (2009), *Spreading Community Development*. Leeds: the HCA Academy, p6

¹⁷ C.Pattie et al, *Citizenship in Britain: Values, Participation and Democracy*, Cambridge University Press, 2004.

¹⁸ Paul Whiteley, *Civil Renewal and Participation in Britain*, unpublished study for the Home Office, 2003

The Whiteley study divides participation into:

- (i) individual actions (e.g. voting, signing a petition, boycotting products on the ground of values)
- (ii) collective actions (e.g. attending political meeting, taking part in demonstration or taking part in a strike)
- (iii) contact actions (e.g. contacting a public official, politician, lawyer or organisation in order to influence public decision)
- (iv) membership of organisations
- (v) membership of informal networks.

In the extensive survey 28% of people had taken individual action within the past year, 5% had taken collective action and 13% had taken contact action. Poorer people, manual workers and those with lower educational qualifications, had taken fewer actions of all three types than better-off people, professional workers and people with higher educational qualifications. There were no major divergences on the basis of gender, religion or ethnicity.

31% of people were members of a voluntary organisation or trade union (not necessarily local and excluding motoring organisations). Of these, one in three participated actively (said they often attended meetings or participated in decisions), and one in four socialised with other members. Thus about 10-15% of people could be described as active members of a voluntary organisation. These ranged from tenants' and residents' associations to sports and cultural, professional, religious and campaigning organisations.

About 20% of people belonged to a friendship network or community group which was informal but met regularly, such as a pub quiz team, reading group, parent/toddler group or child care group. About half of these participants were not members of any formal organisation.

33% of people said they did informal volunteering (help friends or neighbours other than family and not through an organisation). 60% of people said they did either some informal volunteering or formal participation at least once a month. 40% did neither.

People's attempts to influence public services, however, were largely through their personal contact with professional staff – doctors, nurses, teachers, police, care-workers – rather than through formal mechanisms or the public service institutions as such. One in four with children at school had tried to change the way their education was provided; one in ten who had sought medical treatment had tried to change the way the treatment was provided, and half of people in paid employment had tried to improve their working conditions. Those who tried to change things were more often those who were dissatisfied, but over half who had taken action felt that their intervention had had some effect.

Conclusions

Case studies of empowerment initiatives and of everyday situations demanding or offering opportunities for empowerment show that in a loose sense the necessary awareness and skills are spread through a number of occupations but that effective empowerment activity is more rare. A loose understanding of empowerment allows the inclusion of weak examples but more concentrated examples show that workers from many different front-line occupations need to play a part. Many front line staff in different occupations, however, miss opportunities to empower residents or are slow to respond to residents' attempts to enlist their help in solving problems. Others however are committed, and see themselves as champions for community empowerment in their own agencies. A neglected empowerment skill potentially of wide use across a range of occupations is the ability to recognise and treat a collective issue arising through an individual approach.

3. Specific professions and perspectives

Choice of pilot professions

The present study now sought to establish to what extent community empowerment is already part of the ethos and training in different occupations. This initiative is ultimately concerned with all professions which contribute to the sustainability of communities. The Egan report of 2004 identifies scores of relevant occupations grouped in a number of ways.¹⁹ There are seven categories in the main classification:

- (i) implementers and decision-makers
- (ii) built environment occupations
- (iii) environmental occupations
- (iv) social occupations
- (v) economic occupations
- (vi) community occupations
- (vii) cross-cutting occupations.

In each of these categories there are some examples, and then a further number of associated occupations are mentioned under the seven headings, followed by a 'wider public' group of which some categories, such as 'community members' and 'volunteers' are still inevitably very general. 63 categories are mentioned in all, but clearly some of these are themselves headings for a whole group of more specific occupations.

It was clearly not possible to investigate in detail more than a fraction of the relevant occupations. It was decided that at this stage it would be best to start by looking at a few of the occupations known to have an explicit commitment to community empowerment in some form, spread across several of the Egan main categories. However, the initial focus on the following five specific occupations should not be taken as in any way implying that these are necessarily more important for sustainability or empowerment than others.

Planning is mentioned specifically in the empowerment White Paper as needing to link with community empowerment.²⁰ **Housing** seemed an obvious choice as the general area with most long-term community-involvement tradition and central to the work of the Homes and Communities Agency; **Policing** is of particular interest as an occupation which has undergone a major reorientation to communities over the past decade, including the creation of **Police Community Support Officers**; and **Neighbourhood Management**, though small and recent as a profession, was of interest as being a point of coordination for community engagement by a number of other occupations (which we discuss separately in chapter four).

All agencies and occupations are now under injunctions to engage with their users but each is starting from a different position. Our aims in investigating these five occupations were:

- (i) to provide an initial impression of their respective approaches to community empowerment, both positive points and gaps
- (ii) to provide a basis for possible dialogue with training providers and others in the profession that might amplify the community empowerment element
- (iii) to begin the development of a method that could be applied to other occupations
- (iv) to gather information that would help in the possible development of generic training material or courses that could serve a variety of different occupations.

The group includes an occupation from four of the seven overall Egan categories.

¹⁹ Sir John Egan (2004), *Skills for Sustainable Communities*, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Appendix C

²⁰ 'It is important for planners to develop stronger skills in communicating the purpose behind local and regional plans, and how and when communities can influence them' – *Communities in Control*, section 4.55. See also www.communityplanning.net

Planning

The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) is a chartered institute and plays the key role in developing and maintaining professional standards, practice and training in England and Wales. This includes defining the core curriculum for the training and learning (qualification and post qualification) of planners and accrediting universities and other providers in the delivery of the training.

Planners have worked with local communities for many years, and some have used extensive community involvement, particularly through the voluntary organisation Planning Aid, but it is only comparatively recently that a more systematic and coherent approach has been laid down that involves local communities in the planning process. Local Development Frameworks have to include a 'Statement of Community Involvement' showing how effective community involvement will be achieved.²¹

The development of spatial planning as a central focus encourages a less technocratic approach to training, recognising that being an effective planner requires skills in management, project planning, leadership and working with a wide variety of other professionals and stakeholders, particularly local communities.

The spatial planning concept recognises that local environments are often contested places facing competing demands from a variety of interests amongst local communities, business, transport, manufacture and housing policy. Since the Barker review of housing supply in 2004,²² there has been increased pressure on certain locations to accept substantial new housing settlements: a government ambition of building three million new houses over the next fifteen years remains in place despite slow-downs due to the recession. Local communities are often resistant to having major new settlements on their doorstep, but planners are expected to find ways to involve them and to prepare the ground for involving incoming residents as well.

Through key policy statements such as the 2006 Local Government White Paper, the Planning Act of 2008 and the Empowerment White Paper of 2008, planners are increasingly required to provide evidence of community involvement in the planning system. There is controversy over whether the Planning Act of 2008 makes community involvement easier or harder. RTPI judges on balance that it will promote better involvement only if it is followed up with secondary legislation and guidance to this effect: 'Questions of the adequacy of democratic accountability and community involvement remain critical.'²³

To some extent the government is backing up these changes by providing resources to encourage the development of more inclusive and open decision-making systems in local authorities, better training for would-be and existing planners and increased support for Planning Aid.

However, there is evidently some lag between these changes and the training being provided by the many planning learning centres. At present it is difficult to gauge the extent and the quality of the training being provided for planners in terms of community empowerment skills and knowledge. More detail is provided at Appendix C.

Housing

Housing is a field in which there is a longstanding concern with resident involvement, to the extent that in many local authorities the housing department is the one likeliest to employ community development workers by name, or tenant participation officers. In some cases the housing sector is leading the way on partnership working and empowerment initiatives.

Qualifying and post qualifying core curricula in housing are developed and reviewed by the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH). CIH also organises a number of short courses. Training and learning is developed through their Education and Careers Unit, and CIH employs an Education Development Officer who has responsibility for coordinating the development and review of coursework.

21 See CLG (2008) *Planning Policy Statement 12: Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities through Local Spatial Planning*, Section 4.26. www.tsoshop.co.uk

22 Kate Barker (2004) *Delivering Stability: Securing our Future Housing Needs*, HM Treasury: www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/barker_review_of_housing_supply

23 www.rtpi.org.uk/cgi-bin/item.cgi?id=1423

There is a strong commitment to ensuring empowerment and community development issues and theory are included in all training for housing officers. CIH has also developed a number of specialist courses relating to community action and tenant participation. The organisation is in the process of reviewing the content of some of its courses to meet the changing demands of new legislation.

CIH organises a series of certificates at different levels: Level 2 is basic, the equivalent of GCSE grades A-C or NVQ level 2; Level 3 is the entry level certificate for people wanting to develop a career in housing. This is the equivalent of a modern apprenticeship. There are also a large number of foundation degree courses available in housing-related matters, including some related to communities and regeneration.

CIH also organises two certificates specifically on tenant participation and community involvement: Level 2: Community Action in Housing; and Level 3: Tenant Participation and Neighbourhood Renewal. More detail on some of the most relevant courses is provided in Appendix D.

Policing

The training and delivery of police services has gone through a number of significant changes in recent years, with an increasingly strong emphasis on neighbourhood and community policing. A review of the training of probationary police officers in 2002 said that police were often poorly trained in skills related to working with local communities. This had an impact on the reorganisation of police training.²⁴ Subsequently the Home Office took the decision to give responsibility for police probationer training to individual forces, to focus more on the needs of local communities. The Initial Police Learning and Development Programme (IPLDP) guides the development of the local training schemes.

The 2004 White Paper, *Building Communities, Beating Crime* identified neighbourhood policing as a key element in police reform, saying that police must become more responsive, 'citizen focused' and locally accountable.²⁵

More recently the Flanagan report²⁶ added further emphasis on neighbourhood and community policing, and identified neighbourhood management as playing a central role in helping the police develop their neighbourhood role, acting as a vehicle to encourage more effective joint working and problem solving with other services and the community. In this way 'those who build effective partnerships have the opportunity from the outset to develop their knowledge and understanding with their future colleagues.'

Police training in community and neighbourhood skills, says the Flanagan report, should include skills around:

- involving local people
- greater freedom to determine local priorities
- local people having more direct say
- citizen-focused policing
- strong customer service approach
- informing all areas of policing
- understanding the complex nature of communities and their needs.

Since each police force is now responsible for training its own staff, guided by a report produced in 2002 called 'Training Matters', we asked one force, Sussex Police, how community engagement was integrated into their training, and obtained information included, with thanks, in Appendix E.

24 HMIC (2002), *Training Matters*, Home Office

25 Home Office (2004), *Building Communities, Beating Crime – A better police service for the 21st century*, HMSO

26 Sir Ronnie Flanagan (2008), *The Review of Policing: final report*, Home Office

Police community support officers

The first police community support officers (PCSOs) were deployed in Westminster in 2002. There are now 16,000 employed throughout England and Wales.²⁷ From the outset the role of the PCSO was to 'help bridge a gap between public demand for reassurance and contact provided by uniformed police officers patrolling on foot in light of increasing demands placed upon the service generally' and to 'increase the police services' ability to engage with local communities' where there is 'an emphasis on engagement as opposed to enforcement'.²⁸

PCSOs should not be confused with neighbourhood wardens, another highly relevant occupation with marked community empowerment potential, from whom information was also collected but has not been sufficiently processed to include at this stage. Broadly, community wardens are employed by local authorities and are not tied to the policing agenda, so have a freer range to take up whatever issues arise in the community. Wardens only exist in some local authorities but there is a national network and there are currently moves to develop the role further in a community empowerment direction.

The detailed deployment and local role of PCSOs is at the discretion of the chief officer of the relevant local police force. However, they can help partners as well as police, for example, by arranging for the prompt repair of street lighting or referring truants to an education agency.

The Home Office sees PCSOs as having three main responsibilities:²⁹

1. reduce crime, the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour by being highly visible within the community where their presence would deter anti-social behaviour and other offences
2. deal with minor offences using the powers given by the local force's chief constable. Such intervention is intended to deter people from committing offences and stop minor problems getting worse

3. support front-line policing by carrying out duties such as house-to-house enquiries, guarding crime scenes or providing crime prevention advice

These functions may in practice include:

- building links with employers and business and community leaders
- dealing with nuisance offences such as street drinking or begging
- going on highly visible, uniformed foot patrols
- supporting community beat officers and community action teams in solving local problems
- working with community watch, neighbourhood watch, business watch, pub watch, farm watch and horse watch schemes
- engaging with young people and interacting with schools

In 2005 the Home Office advised on what a PCSO training programme might contain, based on the Metropolitan Police Service and the Probationer Training Programme. Much of the coursework relates to practical/technical information, skills and knowledge such as arrest powers, questioning people, health and safety, evidence gathering, statement taking, crime scene management and so on. Only one section (Section 7) entitled 'equal opportunities and community and race relations and the grievance procedure' seems to be concerned with broader community issues and activities, and this element of the training programme is little more than half a day.

The role and training of PCSOs was reviewed in the Neighbourhood Policing Programme in 2008.³⁰ The report recommends that joint training opportunities should be pursued within Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships and Community Safety Partnerships; and in particular that 'forces seek to develop the skills of PCSOs in engagement and problem solving.' PCSOs are likely to benefit if they are part of a wider, local multi agency team, such as a Neighbourhood Management Team.

²⁷ HMIC (2002), *Training Matters*, Home Office

²⁸ Association of Chief Police Officers of England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2002 revised 2005), *Guidance on Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs)*, ACPO

²⁹ Home Office (2006), *The PCSO Brochure*, Home Office and COI

³⁰ National Policing Improvement Agency (2008), *Neighbourhood Policing Programme, PCSO Review*, July

Thus PCSOs have an explicit role in working in local communities but very limited training in the skills and knowledge required to work effectively with local communities and community groups. The recommendations of the 2008 Neighbourhood Policing Programme Review should help improve the situation.

Neighbourhood managers

Neighbourhood management (NM) is intended to reinvigorate local services and democracy and to ensure that government is more responsive to local needs.³¹ A key objective is that communities and local agencies work together to improve services at neighbourhood level. Neighbourhood management seeks to do this by joining up practitioners with different roles and skills and from different services and departments to create a neighbourhood-based team led by a neighbourhood manager. NM is seen by its proponents as a key mechanism for change at a local level, as 'a process not a project' and as 'the best mechanism for community and service provider engagement'.³²

The NM pathfinder programme, funded by central government, is nearing completion. Consequently the number of neighbourhood management schemes has shrunk. The pathfinder evaluation report estimates that something like 30% of the NM pathfinder schemes were still operating in 2008.³³ However, a number of other local authorities have adopted the NM model.

The composition of neighbourhood management teams varies according to local resources, the extent of local public service buy-in and the availability of appropriate staff, but the Rough Guide provides a useful example of a NM team:

Directly employed:

- neighbourhood manager
- admin worker
- monitoring officer
- community development worker

Plus, seconded into the team from other agencies:

- health worker
- youth worker
- police officer/PCSOs/wardens

The role of the neighbourhood manager is described in the evaluation report as:

- coordinating activities at a local level with the authority for service development
- encouraging and negotiating change at local and strategic levels in services and service delivery
- facilitating services and residents in coordination and decision making
- playing a strategic role in empowering communities through facilitating community engagement 'particularly where those service providers lack the expertise to do it themselves'
- acting as an innovator and change agent and supporting cultural change in service providing organisations
- acting as a community catalyst in which the engagement processes often play a wider community development role
- managing a multiagency team.³⁴

31 Aston Business School (2001), *Devolved Approaches to Local Governance: policy and practice in neighbourhood management*, Joseph Rowntree Trust

32 SQW Ltd (no date given): *A Rough Guide to Neighbourhood Management: making the business case for neighbourhood management*, CLG

33 SQW Consulting (2008): *Neighbourhood Management – Beyond the Pathfinders: Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders National Evaluation*, CLG

34 Ibid

A newsletter on the national NM network³⁵ identifies skills required of an effective NM team but does not explicitly include empowerment or community development skills, and the Pathfinder evaluation report does not seem to cover issues relating to skills gaps. A recent evaluation of a neighbourhood management scheme in the north-west indicated that NM team members felt they would benefit from being provided with the opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of community development skills and knowledge.³⁶

There are or have been a number of formal training opportunities that directly relate to neighbourhood management. These include several Further and Higher Education qualifications but community empowerment does not tend to feature prominently in them.

Conclusions

All occupations which contribute to the sustainability of communities need empowerment skills. Different occupations are at different starting points and have different specific contributions to make but there is substantial common ground which could be addressed by generic training. Initial assessment of the 'empowerment readiness' of five of the likeliest occupations shows considerable contrasts, for example between longstanding community involvement in housing and recent reorientation in spatial planning, progressive waves of reform in policing and the emergence of the relatively new profession of neighbourhood management. However, even amongst this group of the more community-focused occupations, training in understanding how communities work and how to further empower them is by no means fully developed. It is likely that most other occupations are considerably less empowerment-ready than these.

³⁵ NM News: the newsletter of the National Neighbourhood Management Network, Issue 13, September/October 2007, Shared Intelligence

³⁶ Colin Miller and Associates (2008), *An Evaluation of the Grosvenor Neighbourhood Management Scheme*, on behalf Crewe and Nantwich Council

4. The challenge of coordination

Co-operation not central direction

The notion of spreading empowerment skills across all relevant professions raises the question not only of skill gaps in each profession but of an overall gap in coordination of empowerment efforts by different local agencies and their front-line staff and the even wider variety that will exist as the 'spreading' agenda develops. To generate empowerment activity within the separate sphere of each occupation would be a major advance. The larger prize, however, would be to achieve synergy between these efforts, avoiding duplication and competing demands on residents, and producing cumulative results. Our concern with skills therefore needs to extend to the question of what extra skills are needed to coordinate empowerment across localities, and who might take the lead in exercising them.

The question of coordination can sensibly be addressed at the four spatial levels that most local authorities and their partners recognise and use:

- (i) across the whole authority (up to around 300,000 people for a principal local authority)
- (ii) across a district or former district (around 100,000)
- (iii) across an 'area' (usually around 25,000 people)
- (iv) across a neighbourhood, estate, small town, parish or village (which can be from as little as a few hundred people up to about 10 or 12,000).

Different types of coordination are likely to work best at different levels. Attempts to direct empowerment activity from one centre might be unlikely to work, and arguably contrary to the empowerment ethos. It would be more profitable to find ways, through agreed strategies, networking and cooperation, to maximize symbiosis, avoid wasteful duplication and avoid incompatible or confusing demands being made on communities from different agencies.

At the macro level of the large local authorities, the Local Strategic Partnership or one of its subgroups is likely to be the most appropriate vehicle. The role of coordination here would be to maintain an overview of the contributions of different agencies, establish an agreed overall strategy, secure optimum commitments and resources and ensure positive signals and remits coming down to front-line staff from senior management. At the medium level, district or 'area' there may be community forums or partnerships

which can focus on shared priorities and initiatives. But coordination of practical action is most crucial at the neighbourhood, ward or village level which is the natural scale for interaction between people on a daily face-to-face basis and where there is most direct interaction between public services and local communities. The following section therefore looks more closely at this very local level.

Three models at the neighbourhood/parish level

There are several types of arrangement which are relevant to the coordination of inputs to empowerment from different agencies impacting on the same neighbourhood, parish or other small area. Local action planning can be led from a number of different vantage points or organisations, either in the community, such as a parish council or a major local community organisation, or in a public agency. Here we focus on three types of arrangement, each of which has a special contribution to make. These are:

- (i) substantial community development projects
- (ii) parish and community-led planning and
- (iii) neighbourhood management.

These are not mutually exclusive, but they have emerged from different traditions and programmes and tend to be found in different places. Each has particular strengths and a new model should draw on them all.

(i) An in-depth community development project

Many substantial, individually-designed community development projects, often involving teams of workers over periods of three to five years, were pioneered in the 1970s and 80s by the Community Development Foundation, in partnership with local authorities and local voluntary and community organisations. Others have been developed by a variety of public bodies, national voluntary organisations, local voluntary and community sector umbrella or anchor organisations or dedicated individuals within the community. At their best such projects galvanize wide local involvement, simultaneously boosting social capital and community influence, and achieving significant improvements for disadvantaged areas.

The example we select here is of a five year development on the Beacon and Old Hill estate in Falmouth.³⁷ This is an exceptional but not unique example of how a chronically disadvantaged and even dysfunctional estate of 6000 people, with high crime, poor health and low employment, was 'turned around' to become a very much better place to live in in every way. The development took place between 1996 and 2000. Indicators of improvement over the four to five years included a 50% reduction in crime, 70% reduction in post-natal depression, dramatic improvements in education and reductions in unemployment.

Our interest here is in identifying the skills that went into this transformation. The process would undoubtedly be recognised by many CD workers as a prime (and particularly successful) example of their occupation, though it was in fact initiated and driven by two health visitors. They were well placed to understand the situation through their mainstream work and familiarity with numerous tenants and their problems, but went well beyond the call of duty in their dedication to helping the residents. But what were the skills they used and mobilised in others?

As so often with CD workers themselves, the key skills are hard to pinpoint, precisely because, paradoxically, they entail the workers empowering others and therefore focusing on the role of others rather than themselves. Nevertheless one can infer a good deal from a good description of what took place. Clearly the main effort, including mobilising other residents, was that of the residents themselves, and the skills involved both by the residents and the workers must have included:

ability to communicate with residents on their own terms

ability to see the commonality of problems across many residents despite each having their own personal stories

identifying residents capable of taking up issues in a public-spirited way despite very difficult conditions

vision of the potential for wide improvement despite a multiplicity of mutually aggravating problems

confidence that increasing numbers of people would be able to contribute to a growing momentum of estate improvement even though very few could be identified at the start

understanding of the need to pursue seemingly marginal or low-profile issues in order to build confidence and momentum towards an expanding agenda (for example a majority of tenants later identified improvement in the provision of dog waste bins as a turning point in the whole development process)

ability to help frame initial small-scale projects on single issues without losing sight of the multiple outcome objective

ability to collect and make use of local statistics and surveys, and move focus flexibly to and fro between the large objective picture and details and personal experiences

ability to convince sceptical public agency staff who had virtually written off the estate of the value of cooperating with residents and giving the resident-led partnership control of a development budget

The case study analysis captures an elusive but crucial point in identifying the relationship between developments among the residents themselves and relationships with the public agencies:

'Not only was the community isolated from the statutory agencies, it was also isolated from and within itself... the success of the residents' associations and then the partnership consisted first and foremost in enabling relations to be formed amongst the members of the community, for people to begin to talk to each other again. As a consequence, vandalism and crime were no longer seen as other people's problems – rather they were problems confronting the community as a whole. In turn, the formation of these relationships enabled relationships to begin to form with the authorities, such that chains of communication began to form with the authorities. As trust spread throughout the community, so the community began to be trusted by the authorities, and the community in turn began to trust the agencies. On the basis of the formation of such relations, we can talk of a co-evolution of trust between the community and its environment.'

³⁷ Robin Durie, Katrina Wyatt and Hazel Stuteley (2006). *Community Regeneration and Complexity*, www.healthcomplexity.net
By kind permission of Hazel Stuteley.

Here in a nutshell, and rarely better expressed, is the core community development insight, the explanation of the emphasis on collective activity and the neighbourhood or small area basis; and, not coincidentally, the explanation of the fundamental connection between the health of the local community sector and the ability to influence authorities which, in government policy, appear as the two separate worlds of NI 4 and NI 7.

(ii) Community-led planning

Community-led planning (CLP) is the generic term for a method which began, and continues, as parish planning but which is now also being advanced into urban (non-parished) areas. The transition to urban areas raises some questions about the universality of the model but there is no question that since its genesis in 2000 it has spread rapidly in rural areas, with over four thousand plans now in various stages of implementation. Key national partners are Action for Communities in Rural England (ACRE), The Rural Community Action Network, the National Association of Local Councils and Action for Market Towns.³⁸

For example, 15 parish plans were completed between 2002 and 2007 in Braintree district, Essex. The population sizes ranged from a few hundred to over 22,000. Of 204 completed actions, 107 were done by the community themselves and 95 with the support of the Council and other public service providers such as officers in housing, planning, youth service, transport, police, education and health. Common subjects of actions included refurbishment of housing, new-build projects, expanding affordable housing, planning decisions, youth projects, highways, traffic, footpaths, parking, road improvements, wildlife, conservation, recycling, flooding, drainage, policing, local amenities, local jobs, websites, museums, adult education, health, neighbourhood watch and support for volunteers. Average community input was estimated as 4,660 hours' volunteering per parish. Coordination is effected by a partnership of local residents and public agency staff.³⁹

CLP is in a sense the realisation of community development principles in a systematic way in rural settings, but it also adds some principles of its own. The significance of CLP is that it brings together, in a coherent and sustained way, components of community engagement, empowerment and development which elsewhere are often isolated or spasmodic. It is therefore able to achieve a cumulative growth of local improvement and empowerment which is definitively owned by local residents. This forms a marked contrast to many other empowerment initiatives, which frequently find themselves reinventing the wheel, frustrated by short term funding and policy shifts or unable to embed themselves lastingly in communities.

CLP throws some distinctive light on how empowerment training should be mainstreamed. Aspects on which CLP has a special 'take' include:

- (a) **priority to community strengthening.**
Empowerment policy is often ambiguous as to whether it is about strengthening communities or just about using them to help improve public service delivery. Assisting public services is one valid outcome in CLP but it is secondary to increases in the internal strengths of the community
- (b) **cumulative effect not scattergun initiatives.**
Many initiatives on empowerment are single projects or issues with no clear link to a cumulative effect. Community development often speaks of needing a long process in an open-ended way but in practice continuity is often lost, and projects repeat the work of previous CD in the same area. CLP establishes a cumulative process with milestones over a specific period.
- (c) **documented accountability to the community.**
Focus on key activists sometimes leads to lack of clarity about their relationship to the formal democratic structure. CLP uses a clearly defined geographical territory and a systematic local survey of residents' priorities, therefore has a clear numerical record of who is meant by 'the community' and what percentage of the population have been reached and involved.

³⁸ Details can be found at www.communityledplanning.com and www.acre.org.uk/communityledplanning_news.html

³⁹ Drawn with thanks from: *Parish Plans Completed in Braintree District 2002-2007*, Rural Community Council of Essex/Braintree District Council, 2008

The neighbourhood management approach

Neighbourhood Management (NM) is both a government 'pathfinder' programme, now coming to an end except where it has been taken up longer term by the host local authority, and a model adopted in a number of other local areas. One of the aims of NM is to help empower the local community to press local public services to develop cultures more responsive to community needs and wishes. The role of the neighbourhood manager has already been described in the last chapter.

Compared with the original aim of the New Deal for Communities scheme, of 'putting the community in the driving seat', the NM model is frankly top-down in the sense of bringing together a number of staff from different social policy areas under a manager in order to improve local conditions with residents' involvement, rather than putting control directly into residents' hands. However, with its commitment to the coordination of different professional inputs at a concentrated local level, NM has a substantially better potential for mobilising lasting empowerment than one-off or short-term initiatives.

Given the original New Labour aim of 'joined up government' it is regrettable that NM has featured only as one experimental initiative amongst others, and may be allowed to expire without being mainstreamed. It also needs to be linked to principles and lessons from community development and community-led planning, both of which offer a larger degree of community control.

Developing coordination skills

Wherever it is based, coordination requires special expertise. Community development, with its natural basis in an integrated view of local issues and communities, is often best positioned to provide the right concepts to developing a coordinated approach to empowerment across a locality. However, coordination of different empowerment inputs across a neighbourhood or locality is a gap even within CD training, only now entering into the new National Occupational Standards. These will hopefully generate new training opportunities but the majority of existing CD training is in running individual projects rather than linking changes across communities and mainstream systems.

Coordination requires an overview and mapping of the components to be coordinated. CD literature provides a number of models offering integrated vision and principles but these are not practical frameworks for cooperation between local service structures. Probably the best known of these in the UK is Achieving Better Community Development (ABCD).⁴⁰ The ABCD model helps CD workers to think about other issues. It is too 'CD-centred' however to stand as a ready model for coordinating contributions to empowerment from the variety of agencies. It depicts community development as a set of foundation stones for a good society but can tend to convey an impression that everything else flows from and should be built around community development.

Part of the empowerment message is that communities are unified fields in which all issues mingle. But it is also necessary to work from the administrative structures of the different public service silos. Empowerment (or CD) is best understood as an intervention from a pivotal point between communities and public agencies to facilitate both community strengthening and a more dynamic relationship between public services and their users. The job of empowerment coordination is to find leverage points both within communities and agencies and enable them to work together.

Commentators on the draft of this report (see Appendix G) had much to say about coordination. Most agreed that it was badly needed: 'co-ordination would produce better results'; 'it needs a coordinated strategy so we all work to core principles'; 'there is strong benefit to having a core group of occupational community empowerment skills which different occupations can sign up to and accredit staff against'.

⁴⁰ Alan Barr and Stuart Hashagen, *Achieving Better Community Development series*, London; Community Development Foundation 2001

Better coordination was also seen as likely to produce a more effective relationship with the community: 'coordination is needed to orchestrate local initiatives and to show public agencies and communities that they have shared goals... Brokering these relationships forms an important step in the drive to pool resources within a squeezed fiscal environment'; 'coordination is the challenge'. There are some pockets of excellent practice but they are disconnected and patchily distributed... 'if there is a multi-agency focus on co-creating enabling conditions for residents to lead change for themselves... so-called ordinary people become extraordinary local leaders via the release of their latent skills'. The boundaries between occupations can become extremely blurred at local level... Shared objectives and work plans would provide more focused, effective and efficient support for communities'.

There were however some accompanying warnings: 'we need to be sure we don't set up a bureaucratic beast'; 'not sure... are relevant empowerment skills similar enough across a range of professions and roles?'; 'coordination of different empowerment activities is important but should not distract CD workers from their core role, which is spending time with a community and helping it to solve its problems'.

Conclusions

The question of how contributions to empowerment from different occupations and agencies should be coordinated in local communities points to the importance of different models for combining local inputs. Three models are reviewed: substantial community development projects; community-led planning; and neighbourhood management. Each has particular strengths, and all should be drawn on in future arrangements. Coordination requires skills of a high order and insights into the complex interactions which underlie successful community empowerment. The community development tradition provides some of the right principles for carrying out local coordination, but little of its existing training material is geared to this wider challenge, and new forms of training are likely to be needed to meet it.

5. Commentary: towards empowerment skills for all

This chapter provides further comment on issues raised in the foregoing findings, highlights some of the recommendations in reports reviewed earlier and concludes with steps by which the HCA Academy, with partners, intends to develop this issue.

Policy context: universalising empowerment

Community involvement is too important to be a political football, especially in the unprecedented conditions of 2009. A democratic society is based on empowering its members not in some partisan or sectional sense but as a fundamental of the way it operates. Special efforts in disadvantaged areas are needed to ensure cohesion of society as a whole and that all parts of society need empowering against the dangers of impoverishment, crime, terror, climate change, overly bureaucratic control and poor quality services. Skills forged to address problems of disadvantaged areas within an otherwise prosperous society need to be mobilised and reconfigured for use across society in periods of widespread uncertainty, even whilst being redoubled for the hardest-hit localities and sections of the population. And this demands some changes not only in occupations that must newly exercise those skills but also in the way the skills are used by those already familiar with them.

The government's empowerment policy since 1997 has moved vigorously in the direction of universalisation, even at some risk to the proportionate needs of disadvantaged areas. Empowerment measured by local government performance indicators at principal local authority level (around 300,000 people) gives an overall picture but masks the fact that the most acute differences in empowerment, as in wealth, poverty and life expectancy, are between neighbourhoods and small areas within single authorities and cities.

Drawing out policy implications

Ironically, the justified requirement that all services and agencies engage with their users has led to some loss of 'joining up' as each service develops its own form of engagement. The integration of empowerment needs to happen particularly at neighbourhood and parish level.

What looked like a clear neighbourhood focus in public policy on community involvement in 2005⁴¹ had weakened by the time of the local government White Paper of 2007; and the empowerment White Paper of 2008, whilst making numerous positive advances, could be seen as more of a list of separate projects than an integrated strategy.

However, one of the clauses in the 2008 White Paper, from which the present initiative derives, affirmed the need to spread empowerment skills across all sectors and services, and this had been anticipated by the HCA Academy's recognition of engagement as a generic skill, needed by all occupations which contribute to sustaining communities.

The White Paper injunction to spread empowerment skills poses a number of dilemmas which this study has begun to address. If empowerment is a generic skill, does this mean that it can be disseminated to all occupations in the same way? Where are the skills now to be found and who is to teach them to new cohorts of staff? How are the various inputs to empowerment intended to join up when they impact on the same communities? How can they have a cumulative effect? How should they be coordinated across a locality?

Common and distinct contributions of different occupations

What can be deduced from this study about the kinds of empowerment skills that would be most useful to the range of professionals working in and impacting on communities?

All occupations would benefit by a better awareness of the overall aims and techniques of empowerment, common principles and objectives and where their particular role can contribute best. One way of establishing this common awareness might be the production of generic courses or modules that could be common material for all professions, and also for civil servants and councillors.

⁴¹ See for example ODPM (now CLG), *Why Neighbourhoods Matter*, 2005

Beyond that, different professions have different contributions to make to empowerment and are in very different states of readiness to do so. This suggests that a second stage of activity should be dialogue with trainers in a range of professions encouraging the development of the empowerment component in those professions. As well as planning, housing, policing and others we have mentioned, health, education and employment should be major targets.

Differential 'empowerment readiness' of different occupations

From these pilot investigations, as well as background literature and informal inquiries, it seems clear that there is a different level of 'empowerment-readiness' in different occupations. Relevant professions tend to fall into types presenting different types of challenge, for example:

- (i) those with a 'natural' empowerment function and history of empowerment activity, such as housing, neighbourhood management, community wardens and community development
- (ii) those without a strong historic or 'natural' empowerment function but with a strong formal requirement or recent history of special innovations of varying success, such as planning, regeneration, policing and health
- (iii) those without a strong history of empowerment and no obvious empowerment role but possibly with empowerment potential, such as the built environment industries
- (iv) those rightly or wrongly associated with controlling and therefore disempowering functions, such as benefits staff, prison staff and social workers

It seems likely that all professions could benefit from the development of a core set of basic community empowerment and engagement knowledge and skills but given different starting points and professional cultures, more specific needs and potential may need to be tailored to each occupation.

Recommendations of studies reviewed

*Spreading Community Development*⁴² recommends a suite of actions both in community development education and in other occupations:

- raising awareness and understanding about community development *per se*
- better recognition for the role of specialist community development workers
- strengthening of regional CD networks
- promotion and dissemination of the (revised) national occupational standards
- facilitating closer working between CD workers and other workers with a CD connection
- other professions to be urged to include CD components in continuing professional development
- working towards a national accreditation scheme for both core and variant CD.

Recommendations of the PSI study⁴³ for local authorities and their partners include:

- building community engagement into staff performance frameworks
- holding learning events which bring together officials and residents across a range of service sectors
- ensuring effective accountability mechanisms between third sector representatives and the wider community
- that government should provide new funding for community development since central funding for Community Empowerment Networks, which have played a key role in empowerment, has ended.

⁴² See Chapter 2, note 12

⁴³ See Chapter 2, note 12

This implicitly raises the question of what cultural changes in organisations are needed in order to enable front line workers to acquire and use more focused empowerment skills. In drawing up involvement action plans, agencies need to consider changes in staff ethos and methods, which might involve some retraining and specific additional responsibilities. Agencies should also analyse which aspects of their responsibilities are genuinely open to modification by community influence and whether some of their objectives require the appointment of expert community development staff.

In the case of the testimonies from residents in the 'Powering Up' study,⁴⁴ some of the problems could have been solved simply by agency workers having a greater ability to put themselves in residents' shoes. Beyond that, in several of the cases real improvements in the service or support were clearly possible as they were ultimately obtained, but only by exceptional persistence on the part of the residents. A clear implication is that citizens who would not have been able to deploy exceptional persistence or status would often have been left disempowered. In most cases even those who ultimately succeeded in getting the service they needed would not have felt empowered by the experience as they felt as if they had had to fight against the grain to get it.

An implication that could be drawn from this and the Whiteley study⁴⁵ is that all front-line workers need to have both the ability and the scope to:

- receive community approaches as positive opportunities to improve the service
- support residents who may want to get together to take action
- channel resident influence to appropriate decision-making levels if the front-line worker does not have the scope to solve the problem themselves.

Their scope for such action is affected by their role, by the objectives of their agency and by the attitude taken by their agency to the challenges that confront them. Empowerment skills should include creative thinking amongst high level and middle managers, to widen scope for positive cooperation with communities at the frontline.

Even workers whose roles entail a degree of control or perceived threat towards people, such as social workers, landlords and benefits workers, can to some degree be more empowering, or at least less disempowering, by being more empathetic, by seeing guidance and support as replacing control wherever possible and by proactively looking for ways to link individually raised issues with collective outcomes.

Overcoming gaps in local co-ordination

This report has also reviewed three ways in which different services and the empowerment contributions of different occupations can be linked across a neighbourhood or locality over a long-term perspective. Sustained community development projects can sometimes 'turn around' a neighbourhood or estate from dire problems to multifaceted improvement. Neighbourhood management can create a combined and cumulative effect from a variety of agencies and professionals but is only available in a small minority of neighbourhoods and, as a national programme or local authority commitment, is vulnerable in current conditions. Community-led planning has a coordinating function in, so far, about 25% of rural areas and a small growing number of urban localities. Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) potentially have a coordinating function across large localities and many have established a cascade of area, neighbourhood and thematic partnerships to link them to communities. But so far much empowerment activity remains largely fragmented and short-term.

What seems to evaporate repeatedly from public policy, despite being equally frequently rediscovered, is that any integrated approach to empowerment entails by definition a concept such as neighbourhood (or parish/town/estate) management under one label or another. In other words, the principle of coordinating different service inputs at a small population level, and coordinating them all with a higher level of resident involvement across the range of local public issues, is not an experimental idea but a pre-requisite of any enduring community empowerment policy.

⁴⁴ See Chapter 2, note 14

⁴⁵ See Chapter 2, note 18

Upgrading community development

The most concentrated source of empowerment skills is the community development (CD) occupation. In many occupations terms like community engagement and empowerment appear to be equated with relatively limited forms of involvement such as consultation or one-off participation initiatives. Underlying these events there is often a loose assumption that 'community' means simply 'local population' and is some sort of unified entity which can be encountered through dialogue with a small number of 'typical' residents.

It is because community development goes deeper into the dynamic which turns people from simply a number of residents into a cooperating community with shared aims and pooled powers that it is a fundamental source for empowerment skills. There needs to be support for local residents to take a collective rather than individual approach, since persistent effort as an individual is so much more difficult to sustain. But becoming part of a collective approach entails learning, compromise and development for residents as well as public agencies, and this is what community development engenders.

The in-depth case study of community development in Falmouth⁴⁶ shows that at the heart of empowerment complex skills are involved, entailing changes both in how people relate to each other in their communities and how public authorities relate to them, and how these internal and external developments are intertwined. It also shows the vital role of community groups and organisations in overcoming isolation, crystallising shared issues and formulating cooperative action. This illustrates the fundamental link between a thriving third sector and influence on authorities, which are treated somewhat separately in public policy.

As well as being of theoretical importance, as discussed in the last chapter, CD is important because it is a living occupation with several thousand specialist workers. It also has national, regional and in some places local structures and networks of communication. This does not mean that this cohort of people can simply be deployed to lead a major expansion of community empowerment activity among many occupations and agencies but it does mean that there are living channels of communication and influence which can be addressed, and experienced workers who may be able to take up innovations. It has to be added, however, that room for manoeuvre amongst CD workers is often limited by poor and insecure employment conditions.

Government has been perceived as hinting that the spreading of empowerment skills to all front line workers could make the specialist CD occupation redundant, but the report's findings would suggest that this would be a dangerous misreading of the situation. Allowing the CD profession to decline whilst attributing CD skills to other occupations, which can only be used in an auxiliary role, could merely conceal an overall loss of these complex skills.

However, existing CD training is not necessarily well framed to engage other occupations, and CD workers are not necessarily well positioned to spread their skills to other occupations. There is a substantial gap between the typical approach or paradigm used by CD workers and those used by mainstream service providers. There is not much CD material which addresses and appeals to the viewpoint of service deliverers rather than community members or community development workers. CD is usually described from the viewpoint of the CD activist or fieldworker, and often takes on the viewpoint of the indignant resident in order to show whose side it is on, rather than establishing a bridging point of view to other front-line staff.

A change of orientation is required within the CD occupation and in the way that public agencies deploy CD staff, in order to provide capacity, skills and attitudes for empowerment leadership, strategy and coordination. The transmission of CD skills to other occupations entails both investment in CD expertise and changes in CD itself: its existing ethos and learning materials are largely moulded to running small scale projects and to one-off interventions in larger systems. The principles and experience need refashioning for universal and mainstream roles and the strategic levels such as coordination of CD across localities.

⁴⁶ See Chapter 4

The recent review of National Occupational Standards for community development has moved some way towards recognition of more strategic functions. This means that a certain proportion of an empowerment framework would be likely to be covered by community development, albeit with the caveats already indicated. The extent of this convergence is discussed in the course of introducing the proposed empowerment framework arising from the present study, in the following chapter.

Conclusion: developing the agenda

Different occupations are at different starting points in relation to empowerment. Progressing empowerment across occupations is likely to require both generic training materials which can apply to all occupations and the development of specific aspects according to differential roles.

Lasting change requires not just the training of workers but cultural change in agencies. Workers also need to have the remit and ability not only to contribute to special empowerment initiatives but to recognise and capitalise on empowerment demands and opportunities that arise in their ordinary interactions with service users. Some form of coordination and cooperation on empowerment by different workers and agencies at neighbourhood and parish level is fundamental, not an experimental option, and should be put on a permanent footing, combining the best features which are currently characteristic of different programmes.

The HCA Academy proposes to develop a programme to spread community empowerment skills, building on this study, and calls on government and all relevant agencies to commit themselves to help implement this agenda in the interests of more effective achievement of their own specialisms as well as the joint strengthening of communities. This programme is likely to include these five components:

- (i) agreement with the Department for Communities and Local Government on a joint stream of work on spreading community empowerment skills through all relevant professions. CLG could consider using its good offices with other programmes and departments to help create receptivity to the spread of empowerment skills in other policy areas, whilst the HCA Academy works to the same end through professional institutes
- (ii) opening of dialogue with the key learning and development organisations and training providers in a balanced range of occupations, both those most 'empowerment ready', some of which have been described in this report, and those less ready, about establishing or strengthening the role of community empowerment within their professions. Professional institutes will be encouraged to develop material to boost the empowerment skills of front-line workers and the empowerment ethos and systems thinking of the local delivery agencies, whilst the Academy proposes to commission a generic course to be a foundation-stone for all these
- (iii) roundtable seminars with representatives of varied occupations to compare actual and potential contributions to empowerment, clarify benefits for the contributors as well as for communities, and guide the design and dissemination of generic or specific training materials
- (iv) contributing information, ideas and proposals to the HCA Academy's *Delivering Better Skills for Better Places* – the national skills action plan that will accelerate the development of a flexible, knowledgeable and highly skilled workforce.
- (v) dialogue with community development bodies and those experienced in neighbourhood management and community led planning on strengthening the capacity of these occupations to guide empowerment learning in other occupations and play a local coordinating role. Simultaneously CLG could consider supporting the development of more comprehensive and strategic forms of community development practice, building on the Community Development Challenge report and the revised National Occupational Standards for CD.

6. A generic learning framework for community empowerment

The functions of a learning framework

A learning framework is a map of components of the field to be studied. It lies between a general description or scoping of the field and a detailed curriculum, and can provide headings and pointers for the construction of specific curricula and courses.

It is debateable how detailed and prescriptive such a framework should be in the field of community empowerment. Trainers and agencies will have their own perspectives and audiences to adapt for. The present project may help to stimulate and guide the production of courses or materials at several different levels for several different audiences, from planners and construction companies to social professions, from front line workers to managers and policy-makers, and to a generic course for use with numerous audiences.

However, this report has only begun to open up what should become an extensive field of activity, with many avenues yet to be explored, especially on major occupational groupings such as health and education. This chapter seeks to provide a platform for development, firstly in the form of a simplified framework consisting of twelve essential components of community empowerment (Figure 2); and secondly by showing how those components might be populated with specific content (Figure 3).

Other sources that should be consulted include the revised (2009) National Occupational Standards, discussed below, and an alternative model produced by Alison Gilchrist for the Community Development Challenge group and attached, with her kind permission, at Appendix F.

Types of gap

The preceding chapters show that gaps in community empowerment learning and training exist at several different levels:

- an overall gap in the sense of lack of a framework for the whole empowerment field, including but beyond the present scope of community development. A framework is proposed in figure 2
- limitations of empowerment practice in professions already using some aspects of empowerment. Five such occupations are discussed in chapter 3
- lack of empowerment skills among professions less familiar with the concept and practice of empowerment, such as the built environment professions. These have not been investigated in this report but the gaps are likely to be large
- gaps of coordination and symbiosis between the contributions of different occupations impacting on the same community. Coordination is discussed in chapter 4 above
- gaps in the remit or capacity of community development workers to lead and develop overall empowerment.

Four contributory factors

In drawing up a framework to identify general areas of skills for empowerment it is necessary to glance back at scope. It has been affirmed earlier that community empowerment is brought about by a mixture of 'bottom up' processes of community action and 'top down' factors which assist communities to become more empowered, such as the ability of local public agencies to respond to community initiatives or to involve residents in dialogue and collaboration, generally called community engagement. Empowerment is also affected by factors which cannot be directly affected by policy or professional practice – on one hand the situation and inclinations of individuals, and on the other socio-economic factors like levels of wealth and poverty, advantage and disadvantage.

The overall scope of empowerment can therefore be summarised as four interacting types of factor, as in figure 1.

Figure 1: Four main types of factor affecting empowerment

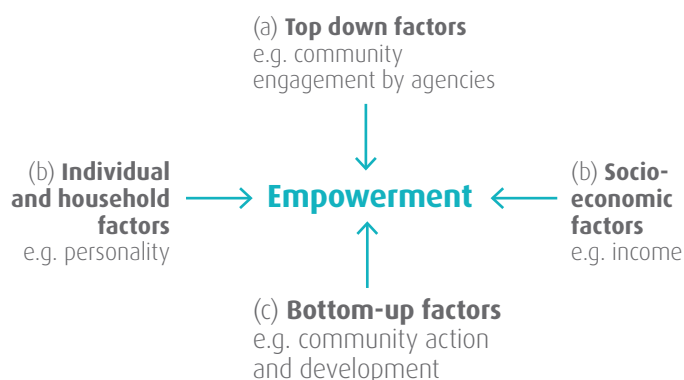


Figure 2 on page 35 proposes an outline framework for the whole field of community empowerment and figure 3 on page 36 populates the headings with suggestions of more detailed content.

There are a number of existing learning frameworks for community development and it might be claimed that in principle these would serve to cover the whole of empowerment as well. This might be valid in some interpretations of CD but this study shows that in practice CD is primarily identified with bottom-up activity within community groups whilst an overall empowerment strategy needs to clearly include top-down engagement activity as well, and marry up the two. Most comments from people who reviewed the draft of this report tended to confirm the view that CD does not in practice cover the whole of empowerment. Our framework therefore shows a central place for CD and a number of other components around it. Components in this framework which are absent or unclear in existing CD frameworks include:

- (i) facilitating community influence on local public services
- (ii) proactive customer relations of front line workers
- (iii) advising third sector organisations on empowerment
- (iv) management of empowerment workers
- (v) advising varied front line workers on empowerment
- (vi) coordinating empowerment across a locality.

We acknowledge, however, that CD could see itself as naturally reaching out into surrounding areas, and indeed we would urge it to do so, particularly into managerial and strategic levels. This study has been carried out during the period in which the National Occupational Standards for Community Development (CD NOS) has been reviewed by Lifelong Learning UK, the government agency responsible for establishing standards in occupations which do not otherwise have a formal professional infrastructure.⁴⁷ Input to the NOS review process has been made by the present project on behalf of the HCA Academy. The new version of the CD NOS, created for LLUK for the Federation for Community Development Learning (FCDL), does contain some new strategic elements – see Appendix H. These remain to be taken up in new training and development.

⁴⁷ See www.lluk.org/community-development-work-nos-consultation.htm

Strategic functions underdeveloped

Traditionally, the formulation of community development frameworks, including the CD NOS, has been strongly ‘practice-led’ – it mainly reflects the viewpoint of front-line practitioners, with little content about management or strategy. This ethos has been reflected in the bulk of national CD literature over the past two decades, up to the production of the Community Development Challenge report and the related series of booklets on management, strategy and democratisation.⁴⁸ Many CD workers would find little guidance in this literature for operating at a strategic level, for example in a major local public body.

Some sophisticated CD strategy and management frameworks do exist in the working documents of those organisations which have significant CD establishments: some local authorities, neighbourhood renewal or neighbourhood management-type schemes and local umbrella organisations for the voluntary and community sector. But most of these documents are, for practical purposes, not in the public domain, and although local authorities and others exchange information with each other in an ad hoc way, this type of discourse on the strategic level of CD has been largely overlooked in national literature and training, and in the national survey of community development workers in 2003. Much CD literature has tended to depict the CD worker as a lone agent. CD teams exist within certain local authorities and occasional other bodies but the issues posed by management of CD teams has only recently begun to be drawn together in a comparative framework.⁴⁹

The proposed learning framework

The rationale for the 12 components is as follows:

First, the four shaded boxes A, B, C and D correspond to the central function of community development, work with community groups. Increase in empowerment is seen as a development from left to right in the central row that is from individual action to linking up with others, then participation in community activity and groups, then cooperation between groups, then interaction between groups and authorities.

⁴⁸ The Community Development Challenge series, Community Development Foundation, 2008

⁴⁹ Colin Miller, *The Community Development Challenge: Management*, CDF 2008

Secondly, the surrounding, unshaded boxes concern other areas contributing to empowerment. These in turn divide firstly into:

- individual customer relations (E)
- relations with local third sector organisations (F)
- management of empowerment or CD workers (G)
- advising front-line workers across any or all professions (H).

Thirdly the boxes extend into:

- the ways public agencies engage with communities (I)
- the ways communities work with public agencies (J)

Finally the key strategic areas of:

- helping senior managers develop their organisation's responsiveness to communities (K)
- coordinating empowerment of all kinds across a locality (L).

The layout of figure 2 also aims to suggest a way of understanding the relationship between individual and collective empowerment. Broadly, purposive increase in empowerment is seen as a development from left to right in the central row, that is from individual action to linking up with others, then participation in community activity and groups, then cooperation between groups, then interaction between groups and authorities (boxes A>B>C>D).

In theory, community development could and perhaps should extend into most of the areas in figure 2. Exceptional CD practice does so and it remains to be seen how far CD will expand into this territory over coming years.

Figure 2: Twelve components of community empowerment

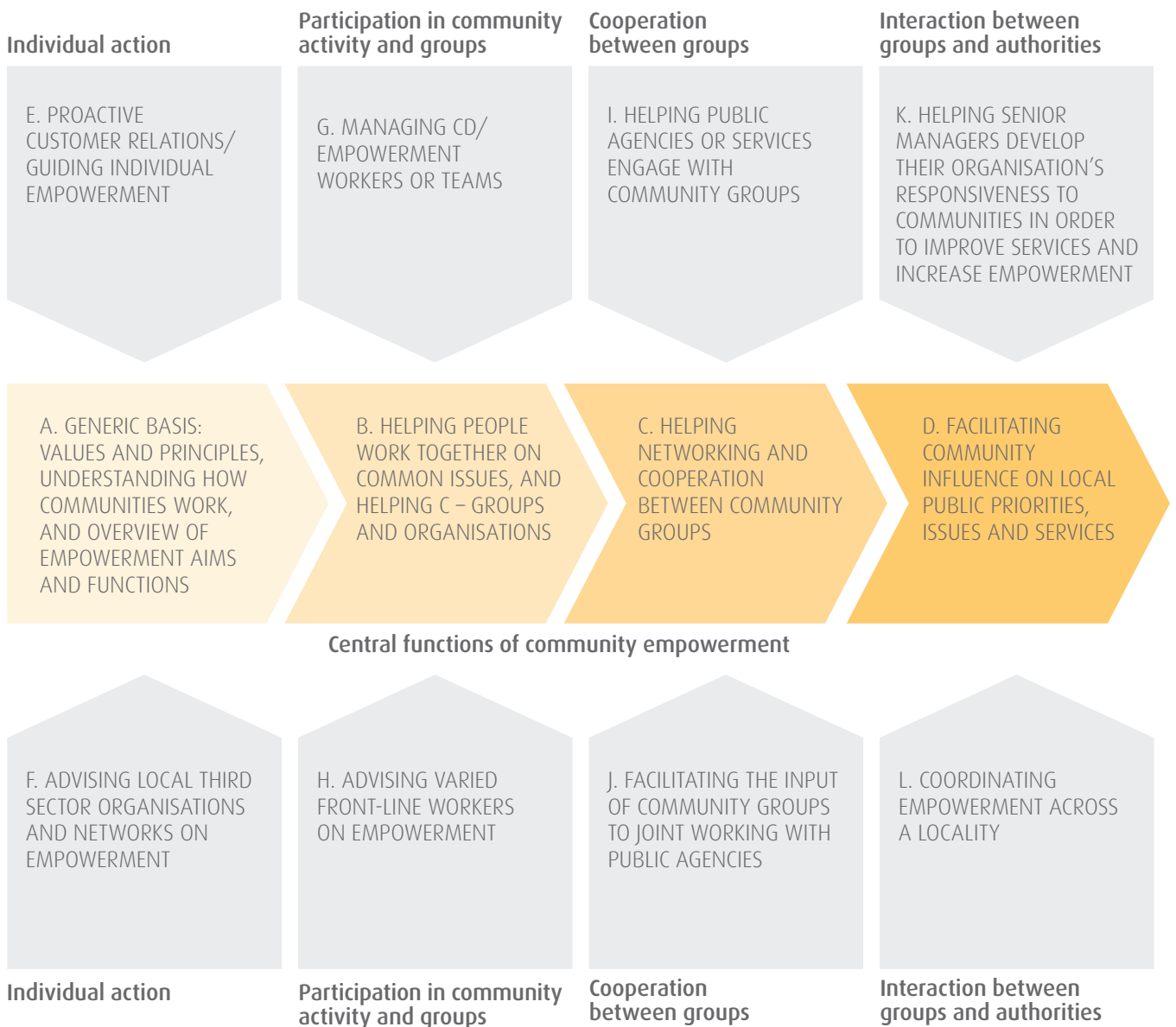


Figure 3: More detailed content on the twelve components of community empowerment

Activity area	Issues and knowledge	Skills and activities
<p>A. Generic Basis for empowerment work</p>	<p>Understanding the distribution of power and advantage in a locality</p> <p>Understanding community development principles and values</p> <p>Understanding the role of community groups and the community sector</p> <p>Understanding community cohesion and relationships between different sections of the local population, e.g. by ethnicity, age, culture, ability, gender, sexuality.</p> <p>Understanding individuals' positions in communities in terms of ethnicity, culture, class and income</p> <p>Understanding the support needs of people lacking confidence to participate in community activity or facing obstacles of poverty, poor education, personal or family challenges</p>	<p>Ability to empathise and communicate with people in different situations and roles and with people from different backgrounds, cultures and beliefs.</p> <p>Ability to help individuals co-operate and where appropriate coalesce into a group or set up an organisation</p> <p>Ability to work cooperatively with community groups</p> <p>Ability to see the commonality of issues and problems across individuals' situations and concerns</p> <p>Ability to identify residents capable of taking up issues positively and encouraging others</p> <p>Ability to envision wide local improvements in the long term despite a multiplicity of existing problems</p>
<p>B. Helping people work together on common issues and helping community groups and organisations and</p> <p>C. Helping networking and cooperation between community groups</p>	<p>Understanding what attracts people to community activity and what puts them off</p> <p>Knowledge of legal structures and models for independent voluntary and community organisations</p> <p>Charity law and organisational models</p> <p>Fundraising/accessing resources such as government/local government/public sector grant aid; lottery; European funding; independent philanthropic funding</p> <p>Understanding how groups can raise money directly through trading, hiring out premises, providing services</p> <p>Knowing where groups can access further support, training and information</p>	<p>Acting as a mentor to key community activists</p> <p>Providing information and advice to enable groups to form, function and grow</p> <p>Helping to deal with conflict within and between groups</p> <p>Helping people identify shared issues, strategies and solutions</p> <p>Assisting groups to develop</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● vision ● aims ● objectives ● targets ● cooperative working methods ● understanding of individuals' and groups' learning needs

Figure 3: More detailed content on the twelve components of community empowerment continued

Activity area	Issues and knowledge	Skills and activities
<p>D. Facilitating community influence on local public services and affairs</p>	<p>Understanding the responsibilities of different public agencies and services.</p> <p>Understanding how partnerships work, their advantages and limitations</p> <p>Understanding professional cultures and boundaries</p> <p>Understanding issues about power in organisations</p> <p>Understanding government indicators and statistics</p> <p>Understanding theory of organisational development and change</p>	<p>Supporting community groups to play roles in planning, development and change in local services such as schools, housing, community safety, traffic, planning etc</p> <p>Helping activists and groups develop effective relationships with elected members, operational managers, head teachers, police, GPs etc</p> <p>Linking into Local Strategic Partnerships and Local Area Agreements</p> <p>Making best use of official indicators</p> <p>Reconciling official indicators with local evaluation and intelligence</p> <p>Helping organisations to develop confident voice at strategic level</p> <p>Supporting community representatives or advocates on Local Strategic Partnerships and other fora</p>
<p>E. Proactive customer relations</p>	<p>Understanding the ways in which public services impact on users</p> <p>Understanding the ways in which people are motivated to take up issues at the natural point of contact with front line workers</p> <p>Assisting front-line workers to see how the impact of their service is felt by residents</p>	<p>Responding positively to issues raised by service users</p> <p>Advocating customer and community interests within the employing agency and other service partners</p> <p>Drawing out the collective implications of issues raised by service users</p> <p>Referring customers where appropriate to community groups and organisations</p> <p>Empowering people with special needs</p>

Figure 3: More detailed content on the twelve components of community empowerment continued

Activity area	Issues and knowledge	Skills and activities
<p>F. Advising local third sector organisations and networks on empowerment</p>	<p>Understanding the spectrum of distinctions between voluntary and community organisations</p> <p>Understanding local voluntary and community sector infrastructure</p> <p>Understanding the environment of the community sector</p> <p>Identifying nature and needs of organisations' members or service users</p>	<p>Showing how anchor organisations and other local umbrella bodies can help community groups develop.</p> <p>Showing how larger voluntary organisations can work alongside community groups and organisations to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● develop projects ● obtain grants and contracts ● attract and retain volunteers ● deal with legal issues ● deal with conflict <p>Helping organisations empower their members and users</p> <p>Ensuring that large voluntary organisations do not dominate smaller ones in networks</p> <p>Evaluating internal systems re empowerment/user involvement and accountability</p> <p>Helping organisations develop empowering workforce strategies</p>
<p>G. Managing community development or empowerment workers and teams</p>	<p>Understanding the role of the different public, private and voluntary agencies</p> <p>Understanding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● the work of the team ● the employing organisation ● relevant government policies ● community development ● qualifications, ● shadowing ● mentoring <p>Understanding performance management systems, plans and evaluations</p>	<p>Establishing objectives and indicators</p> <p>Establishing strategies and frameworks</p> <p>Establishing action plans and locating each workers' individual roles within them</p> <p>Transmitting empowerment and community development theory and practice</p> <p>Helping workers, teams and managers develop an understanding of their own work and practice and that of other professionals, and policy and organisational context</p> <p>Helping workers develop own empowerment skills and knowledge</p> <p>Helping organisations, teams and individuals develop training and learning strategies</p>

Figure 3: More detailed content on the twelve components of community empowerment continued

Activity area	Issues and knowledge	Skills and activities
<p>H. Advising varied front line workers on empowerment</p>	<p>Understanding the perspectives of the different professions and occupations</p> <p>Understanding the scope and potential for incorporating empowerment functions into the work of different occupations</p> <p>Understanding the threats that may be felt by workers asked to move outside their accustomed comfort zones</p> <p>Understanding how communities work and the interconnected way in which they experience and respond to public issues</p>	<p>Providing overall mapping of the empowerment landscape and assisting workers to locate their specific empowerment contribution within it</p> <p>Assisting workers to identify trade-offs and mutual gains between the aims of empowerment and their departmental objectives</p> <p>Assisting workers to see the community development potential in issues raised with them by residents</p>
<p>I. Helping public agencies or services engage with community groups</p>	<p>Understanding systems, networks and structures to enable engagement and empowerment to take place</p> <p>Understanding what public sector organisations need in terms of skills, resources and strategies to enable empowerment to take place</p> <p>Understanding how agencies can work with different types of community e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● communities of place ● communities of need, e.g. specific service users ● communities of interest ● communities of identity e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – ethnicity – sexuality – gender – faith – age 	<p>Establish what community organisations need in order to participate, in terms of: recognition, capacity, knowledge, skills and resources.</p> <p>Working understanding of the benefits to public agencies of thriving community groups and sector</p> <p>Ability to work with communities presenting particular communications challenges, e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● sign language ● children and young people ● people with learning difficulties ● newly arrived residents ● new economic migrants ● refugees ● asylum seekers <p>Supporting elected members in role as community champions</p>

Figure 3: More detailed content on the twelve components of community empowerment continued

Activity area	Issues and knowledge	Skills and activities
<p>J. Facilitating input of community groups to joint working with public agencies</p>	<p>Understanding the different cultures and complementary roles of community organisations and public agencies</p> <p>Understanding of alternative economic paradigms which reveal the economic value of unpaid work</p> <p>Understanding of the concept of co-production</p>	<p>Negotiating cooperative projects between community groups and public agencies</p> <p>Establishing common or complementary objectives or trade-offs</p> <p>Facilitating equitable sense of ownership and commitment by community participants and public organisations</p>
<p>K. Helping senior managers develop their organisations' responsiveness to communities in order to improve services and increase empowerment</p>	<p>Understanding the benefit of community empowerment to the achievement of public organisations' objectives.</p> <p>Understanding the scope for communities to influence organisations' decisions, programmes and methods</p> <p>Understanding how professional cultures can inadvertently present barriers to community participation</p>	<p>Facilitating the openness of the organisation to the influence of communities</p> <p>Encouragement and mechanisms for staff to transmit issues and learning from communities into agency decision-making and improvement</p> <p>Developing participative planning and decision-making mechanisms</p> <p>Developing an internal culture of empowerment amongst managers and staff</p> <p>Reviewing and evaluating the effectiveness of the organisation's empowerment methods</p> <p>Championing empowerment in partnerships and networks</p>

Figure 3: More detailed content on the twelve components of community empowerment continued

Activity area	Issues and knowledge	Skills and activities
<p>L. Coordinating empowerment across a locality</p>	<p>Understanding of different approaches to coordination e.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Long term community development projects ● Parish and community-led planning ● New Deal for Communities ● Neighbourhood renewal ● Neighbourhood management ● Anchor organisations <p>Understanding of sustainable community strategies and the strategies of the individual LSP partners</p>	<p>Capacity to think and work at both operational and strategic levels</p> <p>Ability to take a holistic view of local development</p> <p>Ability to relate this to details and to particular agencies and programmes</p> <p>Ability to transmit vision and motivate different partners</p> <p>Ability to help agencies develop complementary policies and strategies to increase levels of empowerment through</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● own organisation ● networks and partnerships ● networks of community and voluntary organisations <p>Ability to work with senior managers and politicians</p> <p>Ability to negotiate in an empowering way with community activists and others from a wide range of communities and cultures</p>

Overall conclusions

- The aim of empowering people requires the spreading of certain skills throughout all occupations which interact with local and other communities.
- The need for empowerment skills is not limited to special initiatives but occurs in everyday encounters between people and public services. Some staff respond creatively but in many cases empowerment potential is not realised or optimised.
- Society relies increasingly on the empowerment of local communities to build social capital, influence the improvement of public services and help strengthen democracy by reinvigorated forms of participation. The government policy of community empowerment is dedicated to these aims.
- A scan of typical case studies of empowerment initiatives shows that they involve a wide variety of front-line workers, in spheres such as community development, health and social care, housing, police, arts, teaching, youth work, workers in religious institutions, administrators, broadcasters, social enterprise and many others. Voluntary roles such as councillors, community activists and school governors may be strongly involved.
- Community development workers specialise in empowerment activity and are an important source for many of the key skills in this field.
- Community development methods are also used by a variety of other workers but sometimes in a weak way. Some workers see themselves as empowerment champions within their agencies, whilst others are not confident of contributing to empowerment even though they may share the general objective.
- Different occupations are at different starting points in relation to empowerment and have different specific contributions to make but there is substantial common ground which could be addressed by generic training.
- Initial assessment of 'empowerment readiness' in five of the likeliest occupations shows considerable contrasts of situation, for example between longstanding community involvement in housing and recent reorientation in spatial planning, progressive waves of reform in policing and the emergence of the relatively new profession of neighbourhood management.
- However, even amongst the more community-focused occupations learning provision in understanding how communities work and how to further empower them is by no means fully developed, and it is likely that most other occupations are considerably less empowerment-ready than these.
- The aim that all appropriate occupations should contribute to empowerment raises the question of how to coordinate different contributions affecting the same community.
- Coordination of different empowerment activities requires additional skills. Important models for local coordination include substantial community development projects, community led planning and neighbourhood management. Each of these has particular strengths, which should be combined in future arrangements.
- Community development is in principle the key source for training in empowerment and for coordinating the input of different occupations, but in many cases would need upgrading of its own skills and occupational position to perform these roles.
- Key skills necessary for community empowerment are set out as a framework of 12 complementary elements, as a starting point for dialogue with different occupations, public services and all levels of government, and for devising and disseminating new learning materials.
- This framework should be used alongside the National Occupational Standards for community development, which have been revised during the same period as the production of the present report. Elements which are more central to the empowerment framework than to the new CD NOS include: proactive customer relations; facilitating community influence on local public services; facilitating joint working between communities and public agencies; advising local third sector organisations on empowerment; advising varied front-line workers on empowerment; and coordinating empowerment across a locality.
- The HCA Academy proposes to develop a programme to spread community empowerment skills, building on this study, and calls on government and all relevant agencies to commit themselves to help implement this agenda in the interests of more effective achievement of their own specialisms as well as the joint strengthening of communities.

Proposed recommendations

- (i) agreement with the Department for Communities and Local Government on a joint stream of work to develop the agenda. CLG could consider using its good offices with other programmes and departments to help create receptivity to the spread of empowerment skills in other policy areas, whilst the HCA Academy works to the same end through professional institutes
- (ii) opening up of dialogue with the key professional bodies and training providers in a balanced range of occupations, both those most 'empowerment ready', some of which have been described in this report, and those less ready, about establishing or strengthening the role of community empowerment within their professions. Professional institutes and training organisations will be encouraged to develop material to boost the empowerment skills of front-line workers and the empowerment ethos and systems thinking of the local delivery agencies, whilst the Academy proposes to commission a generic course to be a foundation-stone for all these
- (iii) round-table seminars with representatives of varied occupations to compare actual and potential contributions to empowerment, clarify benefits for the contributors as well as for communities and guide the design and dissemination of generic or specific learning materials
- (iv) contributing information, ideas and proposals to the HCA Academy's *Delivering Better Skills for Better Places* – the national skills action plan that will accelerate the development of a flexible, knowledgeable and highly skilled workforce
- (v) dialogue with community development bodies and those experienced in neighbourhood management and community led planning on strengthening the capacity of these occupations to guide empowerment learning in other occupations and play a local coordinating role simultaneously CLG could consider supporting the development of more comprehensive and strategic forms of community development practice building on the Community Development Challenge report and the revised National Occupational Standards for CD

Appendix A: Case studies in the empowerment White Paper

(Communities in Control, CLG, 2008)

1. (WP p27) Southwark active citizens hub. A service enabling local residents to understand local public issues and get involved in volunteering, civic roles or campaigning to influence planning or other issues. Around 6,500 people a year benefit. Professionally run (18 staff) and supported by Southwark Council. Initiative and control: agencies. NI 4: may have quite wide impact.
2. (p35) Shotley and Erbarton Good Neighbour Scheme, Suffolk. Example of the kind of help provided to residents in need by mobilising a rota of volunteer helpers for elderly person in a family emergency. Initiative and control: residents. NI 4: no clear connection
3. (p38) REACH programme of fostering role models for young black men. Initiative and Control: not clear. NI 4: no clear connection.
4. (p40). Devon 'Speaking Up' course organised by SW 'Take Part' group. Enables users of health and social care services to say what they feel about them, and uses this to train social services staff to respond better to carers' needs, input to social work training and take part in forums. Initiative and control: voluntary sector agency. NI 4: strong connection. Also major outcome for health.
5. (p45) Lozells Community Clean Up (Birmingham). On the initiative of a group of churches and with support from authorities 70 volunteers cleaned up the area, and similar periodic activity is planned. Initiative and control: voluntary sector agencies. NI 4: weak connection.
6. (p46). Lewisham People's Day. Long running annual festival featuring wide diversity of arts and cultures involving 1,750 participants and 30,000 visitors. Initiative and control: local voluntary agencies. NI 4 no clear connection but may be wide indirect effect.
7. (p50) Redbridge customer friendly website. Innovative personalised website enabling residents to see information about the locality from their own location, and was used to obtain 2,500 responses to consultation on service priorities and trade-offs. Initiative and control: council. NI 4: strong connection.
8. (p52) Freeing up public sector information. Examples of four councils making it easier to access and re-use public information. Initiative and control: Public agencies. NI 4: very indirect.
9. (p53) Three easy-access websites for people to raise issues with decision-makers and track MPs' parliamentary activity. Initiative and control: professional agencies. NI 4: strong connection.
10. (p57) How the American public is informed about crime. The effects of police databases made available to residents. Initiative/control: Public agency. NI 4: indirect.
11. (p58) Screenreader.net – a free facility enabling blind and part-sighted people without financial resources to get their computers to talk to them and carry out their instructions. 100,000 have accessed it. Initiative/ control: professional agency. NI 4: Indirect but potentially large.
12. (p60) Mobilising volunteers to respond to summer floods. An example of the work of Community Service Volunteers' Action Desk Network linked to the BBC. Initiative/ control: voluntary and public agencies. NI 4: indirect but potentially very large.
13. (p62) Refugee Ben broadcasts to Bradford. Individual volunteer broadcasts regularly to 'give voice to my community' as well as his personal experiences as a refugee from Congo. Initiative/control: voluntary agency and individual. NI 4: strong connection
14. (p69) Newcastle youngsters decide what they want to fund. 4000 young people involved in participatory budgeting scheme deciding how to spend £110,000 of Neighbourhood Renewal money over 4 years, and method taken up by Council for much larger Children's Fund decisions. Initiative/ control: Council; NI 4: strong connection.
15. (p74) School e-admissions – London Borough of Hackney. Scheme to get applications for secondary school places done online with schools' help. Had 85% success. Initiative/control: Council/schools; NI4: weak.

16. (p77) Justice seen to be done, north Liverpool. Area cleared of prostitutes and kerb crawlers through action by popular local judge responding to residents' representations. Initiative/ control: residents/ judiciary; NI 4: relevant but limited.
17. (p79) Planning for Real, Isle of Sheppey. A Planning for Real event about the development of a brownfield site elicited 5000 responses from residents and led to the setting up of a long-term community group monitoring and inputting to the long term process and communicating with residents by website and newsletter. Initiative/control: voluntary organisation + residents; NI 4: strong connection.
18. (p83) Tenants improve tower block, Plymouth. Reopening of community room in tower block. Experienced activist connected with the local NDC revived a residents' group and campaigned successfully for reopening of a community room serving the residents of a tower block and leading to new activities. Initiative/control: residents; NI 4: relevant.
19. (p87) Young Mayor in Tower Hamlets. The London Borough of TH holds an annual election for a youth mayor and two deputies who bring the views of young people to the Council, take part in Cabinet decision making on matters affecting young people, and allocate a budget of £30,000 in consultation with young people. There is a high turnout at the youth mayoral elections from young people in the borough. Initiative/control: Council ad youth electorate. NI 4: Strong.
20. (p93) Hull PCT membership scheme. The PCT is creating a membership scheme with positions for patients, public, staff and the voluntary sector, with differing interacting roles such as identifying local health priorities. Initiative/control: public agency. NI 4; not clear.
21. (p99) Community pride in Staffordshire. The local LSP responded to residents' concerns in the East Biddulph ward of Staffordshire Moorlands (population 2,700 households) by drawing up a 'community pride' charter of agreed responsibilities and actions between residents and agencies. NI 4: potentially strong.
22. (p101). Raglan Housing Association has introduced a system of financial compensation for poor service, alongside a customer charter. Control: HA. NI 4: weak.
23. (p106). Leicester attracts new councillors. Leicester City took imaginative measures to attract new councillors from amongst people who would not normally have put themselves forward, from posters and articles to open evenings and mailings to community groups. 15 previously inexperienced people came forward and seven were elected. NI 4: potentially strong connection.
24. (p108). Bristol Councillor shadowing scheme. Run by Operation Black Vote with the City Council, the scheme organises shadowing of councillors by people from underrepresented black and minority ethnic communities, who then go on to fulfil key civic roles. NI 4: potentially strong connection.
25. (p112). School governor in Manchester. Simply an individual story of what a school governor gets out of the role. NI 4: limited.
26. (p121). Community builders on London's South Bank. 25-year history of the Coin Street development trust and social enterprise. Famous and longstanding resident-led social enterprise endowed with key site by the then Greater London Council. NI 4 strong.
27. (p124). Fifteen Cornwall. Social enterprise employing 100 young people and backed by strong combination of public and private sources. NI 4: weak.

Appendix B: Case Studies in the National Community Forum report, *Powering Up Communities*, CLG 2008

The report gives 21 'empowerment snapshots' - testimonies of people or local groups who tried to engage with service providers, to influence them, overcome a problem or get redress. The commentary tends to suggest that the services were uniformly unresponsive and disempowering, but a few were readily empowering and most of the others were eventually responsive after persistent effort.

The conclusion of the analysis that service providers all need to be taught community development is not wholly warranted by the experiences. The evidence is rather more about the need for good top-down community engagement and customer relations, not surprisingly since the theme is engagement with service providers. However, provision of community development help to the service users could have both speeded up the beneficial outcomes and spread them more widely. There are likely to have been community development officers supporting some of the resident groups but this is characteristically invisible in the descriptions.

The main implication for empowerment training is that services would be better if staff were trained - and themselves empowered by their managers and remits - to be proactively responsive to the views of users rather than eventually responsive after much pressure. The case studies are as follows.

1. NDC worker on the Aylesbury estate, Southwark, explains that the NDC arranges training for doctors and teachers from abroad so they can practice in the UK - a service that 'would take much longer through mainstream channels'.
2. Resident testimony: an ill person was offered a maisonette by a LA housing department only if she could take it up within two days. She asked for 5-7 days, was refused and was told she was making herself intentionally homeless. She challenged the housing service, and her letter was passed to a senior person who apologised and offered compensation, arranged alternative accommodation and took up her suggestion that the staff should be trained to deal better with such cases. She concludes that 'the system is designed to wear you down unless you fight back'. But the response to her 'fight back' shows that it can then respond in a very positive way. Her point is that the system should be designed to respond readily in the first place, and that it is disempowering for people less assertive than herself. A positive solution was clearly possible - the housing allocation workers should have been trained to look for it proactively.
3. A citizen testifies re a friend who broke his wrist, lost his job and when he went on benefits was treated as if he was 'ripping off the system'. 'The system made him feel rubbish and worthless... There is a clear need for help from specialist advisers based in the community'. The speaker helped as a personal (informal) volunteer and believes the friend would have been severely at risk if she hadn't done so. Implications for training might be that benefits officers should be able to empathise with beneficiaries and have scope to mobilise positive help.
4. A resident who had moved to a (1960s) new town was shocked by the poor quality of the public housing and joined with other people to set up tenants/residents association to try and tackle it. She subsequently became a parish councillor and chair of a local community centre, and was involved in setting up a football team, reactivating an arts space and planning to get a youth centre built. All these initiatives were very popular but in her view 'the local agencies were not supportive - they never got back to us. They just ticked boxes for engagement ... They seemed complacent but it was because they were demoralised. Our success reflects what the agencies are not doing and they feel awkward. They get paid but don't live here... we need more money for small groups and a specialist worker to give us pointers on how to develop. Agencies need to be more accountable and owned by the community'. However, the achievements are unlikely to have been possible without some help from agencies, so this may again be an illustration support gained through persistence.
5. A worker in a third sector youth project describes how she brought a struggling family to the attention of the social services, and assisted the services to understand and communicate with the family in a non threatening way. The implication is that a third sector partner can be vital in identifying and meeting social need. An implication for training of social services staff might be how to value and engage with the role of local third sector organisations.
6. Tenant participation got a problem of painting doors the wrong colour put right. 'The council's tenant participation (officer) was very active and responsive.'
7. The Chair of NDC describes progress on getting a disused community room at bottom of a council tower block opened up again for community use despite council 'stonewalling'. He concludes it takes a lot of skill, experience and persistence to do this.

8. A resident describes how he was overruled when trying to protect land and trees from development because the council had decided to build a leisure centre on the site. A few years later he was pleasantly surprised by a positive approach from the council about how to upgrade the remaining land. 'I went in with all guns blazing but that was because of how it had been before, it wasn't really needed this time.... It was a really nice surprise to be listened to... I've been asked to be part of the steering group of the project... I'm thoroughly enjoying it'.
9. A resident pressed the council to organise a clean up of litter. The council responded to the pressure but failed to communicate with the resident, who only found out by a roundabout route that his proposal had been taken up.
10. A resident contacted services about several aspects of local conditions – rubbish, lighting, cleaning and policing. He found the automated response systems alienating and got no feedback from most services but 'the police have been most positive'.
11. The Chair of a street association took up a number of local issues such as poor dental service provision. Local dentists were part-privatising, and residents were only being kept on the NHS list if receiving benefits. Eventually got good results but had to be exceptionally persistent. 'None of the different departments knew what the others were doing. It all costs time and money on the phone. I believe I have made a difference ... We have a marvellous housing officer, wardens and police service.'
12. A person with visual impairment tried to get information about council tax benefits but the officer on the phone was 'dismissive and hostile'. She heard that , neighbours had had similar experiences and concluded 'They are not interested in how to make the system easier for claimants. They seem to want o make us feel small. They need better systems, staff training and attitudes'.
13. A residents' association were rebuffed when they asked the council to replace vandalised bins, but the bins were replaced later when a neighbourhood manager was appointed. It was never explained why they had changed their mind.
14. A parent tried comment to teachers on a new pupil antisocial behaviour policy introduced at school without consultation but 'They didn't want to hear our views. Teachers need to learn how to listen to us a bit more'.
15. A community warden describes how wardens and residents campaigned for cleaner streets and environment. 'We have shown councillors how it can be done effectively without too much cost... We're not paid to do this but we think it's important to make people feel better, reduce crime and give people a better community ethos... Some people on the council feel we are trying to undermine them and take over. However new councillors can see that we enhance the services they provide. Given patience you can make a difference.'
16. A disabled person describes lack of coordination between the housing service and social services about the provision of an adapted bathroom and shower. The tenants' association and council occupational therapist sorted it out together with the council's occupational therapist. 'Why couldn't housing and social services have worked together from the beginning?'
17. Residents on a small estate of new houses were concerned that the builder of their properties had not met regulations on safety and environment re street lighting, drainage and security. The Council suddenly stopped the development. The residents petitioned to have it completed. They got varying levels of help from different departments. Planning and highways were initially unresponsive but eventually, with support from councillors, had the roads completed, the street cleaned and the builder forced to remove debris. However, the uncompleted part was still an eyesore and a security risk. The residents felt that their partial success was due to being organised and persistent and 'the energy and contacts of the Chair'.
18. A resident seeking help to understand the allocation of working family tax credit, and worried he might have to give some money back, was told he would have to put in an appeal in order to get an explanation. 'This seemed expensive and difficult... Even their own staff don't understand how it's worked out – it just comes out of a machine'.

19. A resident testifies to the experience of a residents' group in an area designated as deprived. The group was allocated a government grant for improvement and arranged a meeting with service providers to organise collaboration. The officials 'wouldn't invest from their mainstream budgets but came to the meeting with their hands out for the little bit of funding we had... Service providers need to see residents as a source of vital intelligence on how to maximise the impact of their spend, not as a milk cow for national government funds. And central government need to make it easier to monitor spending by small community groups with no paid workers'. Some services 'didn't engage because we wouldn't spend on what they wanted us to... Where service providers did engage with us we have had very positive feedback from them that we have helped their delivery.'
20. Following trouble in a village involving young people's antisocial behaviour over the course of a summer a series of consultations were held between police and local residents about the problems, but excluded the young people themselves. Young people set up their own youth council but received no support from police or the county youth service, and got hostile media coverage. The village partnership, however, and the parish and district council were supportive. The young people's proposal for a youth centre and drop-in centre was progressed, at which point the county and police changed their tune and wanted to become involved. The witness is apprehensive that the current change to unitary status across the county would make lack of cooperation around such local situations worse.
21. A parish councillor phoned round and obtained a place for a homeless person who had previously been refused a place when he himself applied to the housing department and local shelter. 'Why couldn't one of those people he had seen before, who were being paid to help, have done that?'

Appendix C: More detail on training of planners

Planning manifestly plays a key role in relation to decisions on built environment, including housing, transport, roads, retail and manufacturing sites. The decisions that planners are engaged in inevitably have high impact on communities, the economy and the environment. Planners are one of the few professions that are legally required to involve communities, and plans and submissions must contain a 'statement of community involvement' in the proposals.

Planning involves twin activities – the management of the competing uses for space, and the making of places that are valued and have identity. These activities focus on the location and quality of social, economic and environmental change.⁵⁰

The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) describes Planners as being involved in:

- Managing development and helping to create affordable housing
- Playing a role in regenerating socially-deprived areas and creating new jobs
- Designing towns and cities to include attractive buildings, vibrant public spaces and bustling shopping centres
- Working to protect countryside, trees, hedgerows, forests, grasslands, waterways, rivers and shorelines
- Helping to bring back historic buildings into sympathetic use
- Creating policies for managing traffic and providing sustainable solutions to transport needs
- Improving energy efficiency and cutting carbon emissions in homes, factories and businesses
- Engaging communities to have a say in how their living space is developed and protected to improve their quality of life.

During 2003/04 RPTI undertook a review of its training programme and produced a series of policy statements. A statement on Initial Planning Education recognised a new diversity of practices impacting on planning. These include regeneration, community planning and an increasing desire of communities to be included in the planning system. In response, planning has begun to change its theoretical base with a stronger emphasis on what it calls 'spatial planning', defined as 'the making of place and the mediation of space'. This includes dealing with competing claims to spaces, helping communities achieve cohesion and social inclusion, and the impact of planning and environmental change on cultural identity.⁵¹

The voluntary organisation Planning Aid (PA) plays an important role in working with communities around planning and related matters. Planning Aid is organised on a regional basis and was established by the RTPI in 1973. Drawing on some 800 volunteers from the planning profession, PA provides free, independent professional advice and support to communities and individuals who cannot afford to pay planning consultancy fees. It complements the work of local planning authorities but is wholly independent of them. The role of Planning Aid continues to develop, and it receives funding from CLG. Planning Aid helps people to:

- Understand and use the planning system
- Participate in preparing plans
- Prepare their own plans for the future of their community
- Comment on planning applications
- Apply for planning permission or appeal against refusal of permission
- Represent themselves at public inquiries.⁵²

Planning is experiencing a period of change in terms of the theoretical basis and practice. Part of this is an increasing requirement that the planning system and planners become better at involving individuals and communities in the planning system. The shift away from what is termed 'development control-led planning' towards 'spatial planning' requires a range of new managerial and other generic skills.

⁵⁰ Royal Town Planning Institute website (2009) www.rtpi.org.uk/what_planning_does/

⁵¹ Royal Town Planning Institute (2004); Policy Statement On Initial Planning Education, RTPI website www.rtpi.org.uk/education_and_careers/

⁵² Planning Aid web site (2009) www.planningaid.rtpi.org.uk

An important section in the empowerment White Paper is entitled Empowering People in the Planning System.⁵³ This reinforces proposals contained in the local government White Paper published in 2007⁵⁴ with the aim of making it easier for people to get involved with plan preparation. Proposals in the empowerment White Paper include:

- Section 4.50 and 4.51: The current planning obligations system (section 106) where developers are required to contribute to local facilities will continue. Part of the system will be managed through a new regime called the Community Infrastructure Levy to provide more opportunities than currently available for local communities to get involved in decisions about how monies might be spent.
- Section 4.53: more support to individuals and communities by providing £3.2 million in 2008/09 to increase support for Planning Aid and a further £1.5 million over three years to the new empowerment fund aimed at organisations involved in community engagement in planning.
- Section 4.54: £4 million over three year allocated to local planning authorities in England to promote community participation and planning
- Section 4.55: to develop skills in community engagement with planners it is proposed that work will be undertaken with the Royal Town Planning Institute to develop community planning content of their education and lifelong learning programmes. The government will also work with the planning and advisory service to ensure professionals have access to good practice and information on community planning.
- Finally the White Paper proposes to extend the planning bursary scheme by a further £1m between 2009 and 2011 to bring a further 45 planners a year into the system and help ease staffing pressures in order that 'more time can be spent working more directly and proactively with communities'.

Approximately 20 university and higher education institutes provide courses, at foundation degree, graduate and postgraduate levels. There is also a wide variety of other training and learning opportunities available to planners.

There are also often a wide range of course options within the universities. The University of the West of England, for example, provides the following:

- Foundation Degree (FdA) in Development Management and Planning Practice
- BA (Hons) in Town and Country Planning with Master of Planning
- BA (Hons) in Planning with Transport with Master of Planning
- BA (Hons) in Property Development and Planning with Master of Planning
- BA (Hons) Geography and Planning with Master of Planning
- BA (Hons) in Planning and Communities with Master of Planning Architecture
- MA in Town and Country Planning
- Diploma in Town and Country Planning
- MA in Spatial Planning
- MA in Town and Country Planning (Distance Learning).

Most such courses now include elements of community involvement, sometimes prominently. Planning Aid also organises a range of training and learning opportunities aimed at both planners and community members, in particular courses and events aimed at supporting and developing their volunteers. This includes an induction programme providing skills and tools for working with communities. PA also organises training events focusing on specific issues such as Planning with Gypsies and Travellers and Planning with BME Communities.

⁵³ Department of Communities and Local Government (2008), *Communities in Control*, TSO Information and Publishing, Sections 4.48 to 4.56

⁵⁴ Department of Communities and Local Government (2006), *Strong and Prosperous Communities*, Local Government White Paper, TSO Information and Publishing

Appendix D: Relevant examples of courses in housing

Course Title	Who for	Content re Empowerment	'Gaps' and potential re Empowerment	Notes
Level 2 Award In Community Action In Housing	Mostly tenants and residents	Aims to provide basic grounding in issues. Understanding the community, services, groups etc	Not clear what level of practical skills the course provides	This is a very basic course (at NVQ 2 or GCSE A to C. It is aimed at tenants etc rather than housing practitioners
Level 2 certificate in housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People interested in working in housing • Housing workers' initial qualification • Tenants 	Discusses the role of tenants re managing housing	Course seems very limited re role of HO in helping empower tenants	This is a generic qualification
Level 3 Cert: Tenant Participation and Neighbourhood Renewal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenants 	Broad overview of policy, issues and background, nature of communities and role of organisations	Course appears to be largely theoretical	Course being reviewed in Jan 09, re new legislation and White Paper
Level 3 Certificate in Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People working in housing • Tenants • Front line staff • Specialist staff 	<p>Appears reasonable comprehensive. Compulsory elements include involving housing service users.</p> <p>A number of the 'pathways' (elective or specialist elements) include empowerment, community development or neighbourhood management</p>	Community empowerment more prominent in some pathways than others, e.g. not included in pathway re older people. The empowerment element in the compulsory element is limited	<p>Course being reviewed in Jan 09.</p> <p>This seems to be the most important of the courses as far as initial training is concerned</p>
Foundation Degrees	Whoever wants to do it, mostly people wanting to get into housing work or people requiring formal qualification			There are a considerable number of housing related foundation degrees, some directly relating to empowerment. It is important to review content of more generic courses

CIH level 2 Award in Community Action In Housing, October 2008

Who for	Overall aim	Empowerment content	Theoretical and value base	Practical skills	Notes
<p>Tenants and residents to enhance involvement and understanding re housing contribution recognised through accredited qualification.</p> <p>People wanting initial qualification</p>	<p>Provide learners with basic understanding of housing and community action</p> <p>recognise skills and knowledge necessarily to participate in housing and community activities.</p> <p>prepare learners for further study or employment</p>	<p>Virtually the whole course</p> <p>Course blocks</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Participating in community activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> understanding activities in community participate in community activity recognise skills and knowledge required to the participate in community Understanding the diversity of communities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> diversity of people in places where you live appreciate the range needs of groups of people and individuals promote diversity Services available for communities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> range of services housing organs provide range of services community and voluntary groups provide for communities, way housing organs work with them different agencies involved in community and how they link with housing 	<p>Seems to provide a good foundation for understanding in the context of communities and services, including role of activists and nature of diverse communities</p>	<p>General impression is that this award intends to focus on theoretical basis for participants</p>	<p>Basic 'entry level' course</p> <p>Level two broad equivalent to level of study for GCSE grade A-C or NVQ level 2</p>

Level 2 Certificate in Housing

Who for	Overall aim	Empowerment content	Theoretical and value base	Practical skills	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● People interested in housing as career ● Tenants/residents, enhance involvement and understanding ● Front-line workers to improve general awareness ● Housing workers for initial qualification 	Provides basic understanding, skills and knowledge necessarily to participate in housing paid or voluntary	Some listing of need to work with other organisations including VCS and mention of the potential role in that tenants and residents can play in management of housing	Includes diverse nature of communities, and need to meet diverse needs, but otherwise little in relation to empowerment in the course	Course provides broad theoretical underpinning of basic issues, ideas and nature of housing organisations	Generic qualification based on skills needs of housing workers. Can be contextualised to deliver to specific groups of learners. Used with tenants and residents in relation to mystery shopping and tenant audit

Level 3 Certificate: Tenant Participation and Neighbourhood Renewal

Who for	Overall aim	Empowerment content	Theoretical and value base	Practical skills	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tenants and residents to participate in development and management of housing in community ● Tenants, residents and activists involved in management of estates and development of communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Knowledge, skills re contributing to management of housing and development of communities ● Knowledge of tenant participation ● Plan and implement participation and community action strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Policy framework for tenant participation and neighbourhood renewal ● Tenant participation in housing ● Housing management and development ● Community action in neighbourhood renewal 	Course aims to provide thorough underpinning. Appears largely theoretical and dealing with policy issues with some historical perspective	Some practical skills e.g. chairing and organising meetings	

Level 3 Certificate in Housing

Who for	Overall aim	Empowerment content	Theoretical and value base
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● People working in housing ● Tenants wanting to get involved in delivery of housing services ● Front line development skills ● Modern apprenticeships in housing ● Workers in specialist areas of housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Development of key skills and knowledge necessary to participate in housing practice ● Provide learners with understanding of specialist areas of housing practice ● Provide series of specialist pathways includes ● community and neighbourhood wardens ● regeneration ● resident and service user involvement ● traveller site management 	<p>Social factors affecting housing.</p> <p>Managing housing services, including involving housing service users.</p> <p>Pathway 4 – community and neighbourhood wardens</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Managing disputes ● Neighbourhood and community wardens services <p>Pathway 6 – regeneration, renewal and sustainability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Planning construction and development, sustainable communities, housing regeneration and renewal <p>Pathway 7 – resident and service user involvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Involving housing service users ● Community development ● UK neighbourhood management 	<p>Compulsory element</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● generic skills e.g. communications, working in diverse communities ● statutory and policy context of service user involvement ● strategies for developing long-term user involvement <p>Voluntary elements</p> <p>Neighbourhood and community warden services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● principles of successful community engagement ● resources and agencies re supporting community engagement <p>Sustainable communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● what is community ● role of partnerships <p>Community development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● different approaches to CD ● current issues re CD ● skills and resources for CD <p>Neighbourhood management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● approaches to neighbourhood management ● involvement of tenants etc in NM ● role of service users in NM inc identifying how tenants can engage in NM ● skills and resources required for effective service user engagement <p>Regeneration and renewal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● framework re regeneration ● key players in regeneration ● ways that communities can be involved and developed through regeneration

Other courses

Foundation Degrees

There are a wide selection of foundation degrees for housing, including elements concerned with working in communities, and community development. A number of universities also provide specialist courses, eg:

De Montfort University

Foundation Degree in Professional Housing Studies

Blackburn College

Foundation Degree in Housing, Communities and Regeneration

Foundation Degree in Housing Studies

London Southbank University

Foundation degree in Urban Regeneration

Also the **HCA Academy** sponsors a Foundation Degree in Sustainable Communities at Sheffield Hallam, University of Salford, London Metropolitan University and Northumbria, described as follows: 'The new Foundation Degree in Sustainable Communities is part of the Academy's...work to tackle recruitment problems in the sector while equipping professionals with a broad mix of skills for improving community-based projects. ... Research showed that there are foundation degrees covering the built environment and housing but nothing that cuts across social, economic and environmental issues to give students the widest possible perspective. The course has been designed and structured to enable students to recognise diverse approaches to achieving sustainable communities and the different contexts within which they will be active in their careers.' (*Amanda Lane, the HCA Academy*). The course is for

- professionals beginning careers in occupations such as housing, transport, planning, environmental management, urban and landscape design, and regeneration
- experienced professionals who want to further their studies and gain a recognised qualification
- people working in the voluntary sector or community activists keen to progress and benefit their local neighbourhoods.

Appendix E: Example of how empowerment is included in the training of a local police force

(from www.sussex.police.uk, with thanks)

As with the rest of England and Wales the probationer constable training programme lasts two years. The training consists of a combination of classwork, placements and practical work. Along with training in traditional police work such as investigation of crime and traffic and patrol duties, the course requires trainees to undertake a six week module on 'Community, Conflict and Communication'.

The relevant strands are Community Placements, Community Oriented Problem Solving and a 'real world' assignment which student officers must complete. These are supported by a thread of Equality and Diversity which runs through the whole programme as well as having specific content.

Placements play an important role in the course and are aimed at providing experience in working with voluntary of local authority organisations and services in order to give students a better understanding of different communities and the types of issues they face.

In late 2008 there were 198 community placements available across the county, in such areas as young offenders support, drugs rehabilitation, traveller liaison, religious groups, gay support networks, disability support organisations and homeless support charities. The majority were voluntary/charitable groups with a few based in criminal justice or local government organisations. The remit for the officers is to engage with the staff and client group of the organisation and that they gain an understanding of the issues facing them both generally and in respect to the police. This has a two way effect in that the clients learn about the police as well. Before the placement the students research the organisation and at the end they report on what they have learned. This is fed back to the providers, who also give feedback on the students' contribution whilst with them.

Appendix F: A possible framework for community development and empowerment learning for the frontline workforce

Alison Gilchrist, Feb 2009

This informal paper was provided for the Community Development Challenge Group to assist it in prioritising issues to take forward in parallel with the HCA Academy's project on extending empowerment skills. It presents a three-part framework of priority objectives linking these parallel areas. It is included by kind permission of Alison Gilchrist.

Module/level	Outcomes	Activities and attitudes
Do no harm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid disempowering and alienating community members • Understand community perspectives • Acknowledge differences and dynamics within communities • Contact between community members and service providers is responsive and positive • Community representatives on partnerships are treated with respect and their expertise/experience is acknowledged at all stages of decision-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect different interests and experiences • Users and customers' views are listened to and feedback is given • Complaints and queries are followed through to the customer's satisfaction • Stakeholders (those affected by potential decisions and plans) are identified and involved from an early stage • Consultation and engagement methods are inclusive and participatory • Feedback is given

Module/level	Outcomes	Activities and attitudes
Create the conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Information available in accessible formats and via media suitable to communities ● The culture, procedures and structures of agencies and partnerships facilitate communication and co-operation with communities ● Frontline workers have relative freedom and flexibility to act with discretion and sensitivity to community members ● Frontline workers have relative freedom and flexibility to act with discretion and sensitivity to community members ● Communities understand how public authorities and partnerships operate ● Clarity and transparency about decision-making and service delivery responsibilities, inc. budget and legal parameters ● Barriers to participation and power differentials are recognised and pro-actively addressed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Requests for clarification, elaboration and explanation are readily responded to ● A range of communication channels are used (newsletters, websites, word of mouth, mainstream media, etc) ● Relationships between key players, groups and organisations are based on trust, empathy and mutual respect ● Regular and accessible opportunities for dialogue and collaboration between community members and public sector officials ● Elected members, managers and policy makers understand CD and how it contributes to empowerment ● Joint training/experiential learning/discussions involving public officials, politicians and community members on what empowerment means in practice ● Knowledge about relevant sources of expertise and support is available to all parties, or signposting can take place ● There is a 'growing' pool of potential representatives with diverse backgrounds and interests ● The existence and activities of independent community sector groups are supported by intermediary voluntary organisations and local authorities

Module/level	Outcomes	Activities and attitudes
Build capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The workforce (managers, officers and lay representatives) of state institutions and partnerships are able to collaborate with communities, including those who have been excluded by discriminatory practices and poverty ● Institutions, partnerships and agencies have procedures in place for inclusive and sustainable engagement ● Communities have the infrastructure and capability to select their representatives/leaders and to hold them to account ● There is scope and commitment for managing debate and dissent ● Conflicts of interest are acknowledged and resolved through discussion, mediation and negotiation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Community development is well resourced and deployed strategically across areas and agencies ● Frontline staff and their managers understand the complexity and diversity of the communities they work with ● Staff have the resources, skills and knowledge to engage effectively and appropriately with all members of relevant communities ● Networks and cross-sectoral forums encourage interaction and debate ● There are ample opportunities for reflection, experiential learning and CPD (continuing professional development) ● Evaluation takes place on an on-going basis with lessons learnt carried forward into future practice and policies

Appendix G:

Consultation responses

Twenty detailed responses to a draft of this report were obtained through an invited consultation process. These responses have no statistical validity but were extremely helpful in checking and developing some of the points in the argument, and we summarise here their responses on 16 key points.

Respondents were:

- 1 Senior Rural Housing Enabler from a Rural Community Council
- 2 Team leader, Community Development Team, urban local authority
- 3 Chair, NHS Alliance Community Participation Group
- 4 Professor of Urban Regeneration
- 5 Community Regeneration Manager, housing association
- 6 Consultant, University Health Department
- 7 Local Authority Officer (not clear which Dept)
- 8 Convenor, Regional Community Development Network
- 9 Neighbourhood manager
- 10 Head of community unit, County local authority
- 11 ACRE
- 12 CDF
- 13 IDeA
- 14 Community development manager, Unitary council (urban-rural)
- 15 National Association for Neighbourhood Management
- 16 Team leader, Planning Directorate, CLG
- 17 Independent consultant and writer on community development
- 18 CIH
- 19 CDX
- 20 RTPI

Nearly all respondents agreed either fully or with qualifications that **improving the empowerment skills of front-line professionals was vital to the successful creation of sustainable communities**. *'Yes, we need frontline professionals to be personally empowered and to have the skills to ensure that those they engage with are also empowered'; 'Yes, as suggested in the report people rely on and use front-line professionals to gain influence over their locality and so improving empowerment skills of these professionals is important'; 'Yes but with certain reservations...e.g. that the skills should be accompanied by a value base and that they and their employers understand the distinctive roles – engagement, empowerment, development'. Two however, dissented: 'It is unclear what is being referred to as "empowerment skills" as opposed to community development skills... it is the specialist community development worker's role to facilitate engagement'.*

Most respondents (13/20) **did not think it was sufficient for empowerment and community development skills to spread 'organically'** through various professions but that there needed to be specific action to make it happen. *'There is a vital need for specific and accredited CD training and community engagement training'; 'Empowerment... is not something we can allow to develop at its own pace but through a programme of activities... there needs to be a managed code of practice'; 'A structured approach will be needed to create the right conditions for more "organic" spread'. But some warned:*

'Specific top-down instructions about how to operate would seem inappropriately centrist'; 'A top down plan would not be very effective. Organisations should develop their own procedures'.

15/20 respondents felt that **community empowerment skills should include both the empowerment of individuals and collective issues**. *'The collective is more powerful at expressing ideas... in housing management we empower the individual... but also provide a wider framework for that individual to express their views so we are accountable to all our residents'; 'The challenge is for frontline officers to be able to understand when issues raised by individuals have the potential to be collective issues'; 'The skills and knowledge sets are intertwined, and without individual empowerment collective empowerment can be more difficult to achieve'.*

14/20 respondents agreed that **empowerment needed to be applied both through specific initiatives and in response to everyday situations** encountered by front-line workers: *'Yes otherwise it's artificial if it's projects alone, which are often agency-led and short termist – the everyday is where disempowerment is experienced and barriers felt'; 'It is the frontline workers, the people who have contacts with the community, who need to understand how empowering the people they have daily contact with will enhance their life chances'; 'Marketing an initiative as being about empowerment seems at best to have a very institutional feel and at worst be as dull as dishwasher ...better to slip it into everyday transactions and interactions'.*

In response to the question of **whether there are adequate empowerment skills in particular fields** responses were too scattered to add up numerically – some people responded to all five of the occupations the report discusses (planners, housing officers, police, police community support officers and neighbourhood managers), most to one or a few, and many made suggestions about other occupations not covered in the report.

This section elicited a large amount of spontaneous comment. Overall there was a clear feeling that **most occupations were weaker than they need to be on empowerment**. Examples were: *'Planning has increased its level of community engagement in recent years... however the emphasis is on the consultation end of the spectrum rather than empowerment'; 'Although planners have worked with local communities for a long time, skills... could be improved (including) training other professionals in the regeneration field on the impacts of planning and how communities can get involved'; '(In housing) there are some strong skills but variable'; 'Choice-based lettings systems are empowering. Many housing repair teams are disempowering'; 'There are significant obstacles... (but) housing is uniquely placed to mainstream empowerment skills in communities'; '(Empowerment in policing is) a mixed bag'; 'No, but there are examples of good practice in neighbourhood policing teams'; '(PCSOs) need more support to handle the dilemma of being seen as spy/friend within the community'.*

Fewer respondents commented on **neighbourhood managers** (no doubt because they are a fairly recent profession and far from being found everywhere) but those that did saw it as particularly important: *'Better than other areas'; 'One of the most important groups of workers to target'; 'Usually have good skills sets but the discipline is youthful and isolated'; 'Good neighbourhood management is immensely empowering but... empowerment in the activities of NM teams is rarely seen as a distinct activity – it is built into the way the team operates'; 'Need more CD training to look beyond their master-plans and respond to current local residents' issues'.*

In response to nominating **other occupations**, almost every respondent had something to add: *'Community development and the voluntary sector are key to this'; 'Health CD workers'; 'There are many others working across policy boundaries, e.g. in chief executives' departments and LSPs, urban regeneration. Also elected members'; 'Community centres, CVSs, education, community-based organisations and trusts, health'; 'Community wardens ... do more for the empowerment agenda than most other front line staff'; 'Fire fighters'; 'Highways engineers'; 'Regeneration, housing, planning, construction, economic development, architecture, urban design, construction, economic development, architecture, landscape architecture, local government, property surveying, civil engineering and sustainability'; 'LINKs workers – a new breed but their skills need considerable development'; 'Area partnership coordinators ... something of a cross between an LSP coordinator and a neighbourhood manager'; 'VCS staff involved in volunteer organising, funding advice, community-led planning, health and wellbeing'.*

Nearly all respondents said yes to the **need for coordination**. Many added comments: *'It needs a coordinated strategy so we all work to core principles'; 'Government departments should link arms over this'; 'LSPs are the key to coordination'; 'Coordination is the challenge. There are some pockets of excellent practice but they are disconnected and patchily distributed'; 'Strongly agree that efforts to promote community empowerment need to be coordinated at local level, and pleased to see Community Led Planning referenced as an example of how this can be achieved'; 'Coordination is needed to orchestrate local initiatives and to show public agencies and communities that they have shared goals... brokering these relationships forms an important step in the drive to pool resources within a squeezed fiscal environment'; 'Knowledge sharing and extrapolating a core skills set is invaluable'. But there were also warnings: 'Need to be sure we don't set up a bureaucratic beast'; 'Not sure... are relevant empowerment skills similar enough across a range of professions and roles?'; 'Coordination of different empowerment activities is important but should not distract a CD worker from their core role, which is spending time with a community and helping it to solve its problems'.*

The most common suggestion as to **what sort of agency or unit should coordinate empowerment** across a neighbourhood or locality was an LSP. Some suggested neighbourhood managers but important roles at other levels were seen for the HCA, the HCA Academy, the national community development organisations and many other bodies. *'It needs several mechanisms at different levels, including performance indicators of some kind which require officials (largely) to give this serious attention'.*

Most respondents agreed that **some empowerment skills are generic and could be learned across all occupations and others are occupation-specific**. A large variety of suggestions was made as to what sorts of cultural and organisational change in agencies are likely to be needed to enable staff to be more empowering of local communities: *'Most agencies are hierarchical bureaucracies often with rigid top down models of accountability. In these, staff are less likely to be empowered. Staff empowerment goes hand in glove with community empowerment'.* Two or three responses were particularly concerned that the report should explicitly recognise the role of CD workers employed by third sector organisations.

On the question of **whether community development covers the whole scope of empowerment** and should try to do so just over half the respondents answered no, three said yes and the remainder were ambivalent or didn't answer. The overall tenor was that CD might ideally cover the whole field but in practice did not do so for various reasons: *'It probably attempts to but more effort could be focused on empowering agencies as well as communities'; 'It is a mistake to think that community empowerment belongs to one profession'; 'In theory yes but CD needs to be integrated into wider functions and vice versa'; 'At present it doesn't... it could not cover the whole field'; 'Some CD workers are able to effectively bridge local communities and strategic organisations, and engage with a wide range of other occupations (but) this is not true across the whole occupation...(there is) danger of allowing the CD profession to decline, not recognising the depth of knowledge and skills...(there is a need) to invest in and develop the skills of CD workers in addition to other occupations'; 'Yes, I'd say CD covers all, albeit to varying degrees, some in partnership with other occupational roles'; 'We are concerned by the relabeling of community development work as empowerment work'.*

Asked whether they **agreed with the recommendations and conclusions** of the report (Q 11), 9 respondents replied with a clear yes, 6 more with a qualified yes, 3 didn't answer and two disagreed. Comments included: *'The conclusions are excellent'; 'Yes, most of the conclusions seem to have merit'; 'In general terms the conclusions and recommendations seem appropriate'; 'Yes and particularly the reference to cultural change. What's also needed is a strategy for spreading skills via the regional bodies'; 'Agree broadly but would argue that neighbourhood management plays a unique role'; 'Cautious welcome for recommendations but concerned about the potential for duplication and overlap between the many agencies involved'; 'Yes although more interested in the application. There is a lot of good theory and analysis – now is the time to give clear guidance with a programme to deliver'; 'What is missing is the need for a business case to underpin'; 'We feel that a training-only approach is not the answer... there need to be the right structures and processes in place... empowering citizens also means winning internal buy-in from senior managers... and providing mechanisms for communities to exert their influence'.*

A wide range of bodies was suggested for **taking forward the recommendations**, from government, HCA, the HCA Academy and national training bodies to local authorities, RIEPs and national community development organisations: *'Partnership between all sectors led by government'; 'The Academy can provide oversight and support but should not be seen to be imposing solutions'.*

On the question of whether the report's summary of the areas of skill needed for empowerment (in Figure 2) **covered the necessary ground**, half of respondents thought it did, whilst several others suggested additions or wanted more explicit reference to other existing frameworks: *'Figure 2 seems to cover all the requisite skills'; 'Looks pretty thorough'; 'Comprehensive'; 'This is a very useful summary but the development of skills should start with an understanding of power in organisations and between stakeholders'; 'Add systems thinking as a core skill for all'; 'Communication'; 'Identification of allies'; 'Advocacy on behalf of communities'; 'Skills in partnership working, and working as part of a cross-sector team'; 'Researching and targeting hard to reach groups'; 'Raising community awareness of how civic and civil institutions work, how power is distributed across society'; 'Should be more strongly based on existing resources and approaches, for example the Framework for an Ideal Empowering Authority...and the Practical Guide to Developing Your Comprehensive Community Engagement Strategy'.*

Most respondents agreed that there were risks in attempting to spread empowerment skills, such as dilution of skills and understanding, tokenism or raising unrealistic expectations.

There were numerous suggestions in answer to whether there were **additional aspects of empowerment** that should be addressed: *'Money'; 'The organisational aspects of a theory of change'; 'There should be more about community wardens'; 'The role of councillors'; 'Enterprises... understanding CD career development... recognition of the value of informal groups... understanding the principles of co-production... ability to coordinate empowerment at the level of LSP areas'; 'The role of community engagement and empowerment in public service improvement, co-production and the deepening of democracy'; 'We must stress the need to make explicit reference to the role that the third sector already plays in supporting community empowerment. Any coordinated approach to community empowerment should ensure that the community development expertise of third sector organisations and their reach into local communities is fully utilised'.*

Overall, **most judgements on the report were favourable**, whilst many would also have liked additional points made. Two respondents made fundamental criticisms: *'The document seems to be very top down... there is no feel of give and take... the definition needs to include some discussion about power... the end result of people becoming empowered is not predictable'; 'It is unclear what is being referred to as empowerment skills as opposed to community development skills... our experience is that community development workers are doing most of the components'.* Positive endorsements and additional suggestions were more typical: *'The report is very comprehensive and really captures what needs to happen... It flags up the need for fresh thinking and a complete culture change by policy makers and the statutory agencies re service delivery and ways of working with communities'; 'In the end this is going to have to be owned by many players...this initiative could become a Trojan horse which helps eventually to open up this space'.*

Appendix H: Community Development National Occupational Standards 2009 version (provisional summary)

The five key values are: (i) equality and anti-discrimination; (ii) social justice; (iii) collective action; (iv) community empowerment; (v) Working and learning together. (Each of these is explained more fully).

The list of standards (which form the structure of the document) are:

Key Area One (Core): Understand and Practise Community Development

- S1 Integrate and use the values and process of Community Development
- S2 Work with the tensions inherent in Community Development practice
- S3 Relate to different communities
- S4 Demonstrate competence and integrity as a practitioner
- S5 Maintain Community Development practice within own organisation

Key Area Two: Understand and Engage with Communities

- S6 Get to know a community
- S7 Facilitate community research and consultations
- S8 Analyse and disseminate findings

Key Area Three: Take a Community Development Approach to Group Work and Collective Action

- S9 Support inclusive and collective working
- S10 Organise community events and activities
- S11 Respond to community conflict
- S12 Support communities to campaign for change

Key Area Four: Promote and Support a Community Development Approach to Collaborative and Cross-sector Working

- S13 Promote and support effective relationships between communities and public bodies
- S14 Encourage and support public bodies to build effective relationships with communities
- S15 Use a Community Development approach to support collaborative and partnership work
- S16 Co-ordinate strategic approaches to networks and partnerships

Key Area Five: Support Community Learning from Shared Experiences

- S17 Promote and develop opportunities of learning from practice
- S18 Facilitate community learning for social and political development

Key Area Six: Provide Community Development Support to Organisations

- S19 Advise on organisational structures
- S20 Plan and gain resources and funding for sustainability
- S21 Strengthen groups
- S22 Set up new projects and partnerships
- S23 Use a Community Development approach to monitoring and evaluation

Key Area Seven: Manage and Develop Community Development Practice

- S24 Supervise Community Development practitioners
- S25 Manage internal organisational development and external relationships to support effective Community Development practice.

The HCA Academy is able to provide literature in alternative formats including large print, braille and audio.

Please contact us on 0300 1234 500 or by email at enquiries@HCAacademy.co.uk for further information.

Leading

Delivering

Understanding

HCA Academy

Lateral House, 8 City Walk
Leeds, LS11 9AT

T 0300 1234 500

E enquiries@HCAacademy.co.uk

www.HCAacademy.co.uk

Stay in touch with the Academy
by signing up to our bulletin at
www.HCAacademy.co.uk/bulletin

Better Skills for Better Places