

DRAFT ONLY

Community Empowerment Framework for Newcastle

A Partnership Approach

draft

The Newcastle Partnership

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1. What is the Framework and who is it for?

What is the Framework

The Comprehensive Community Empowerment Framework (CEF) sets out the way forward for the Newcastle Partnership, its member agencies and communities in the city in relation to community engagement and empowerment.

The purposes of the Framework are:

- To confirm their commitment to Community Empowerment
- To set out immediate actions
- To set out ways to co-ordinate the use of resources, share best practice and drive up standards

The document contains definitions of these complex subjects. It then goes on to explain why we need a framework at this point in time. It explains what we mean by a framework – it is not a single strategy or detailed action plan but a context in which the work and the plans of many partners can be brought together and developed.

The framework document then goes on to identify key challenges for partners to work on together:

- It asks partners to agree common definitions of the key terms involved.
- It sets out statements of principles and minimum standards of practice to which all partners will adhere.
- It makes suggestions as to how we can work together to tackle some of the key empowerment challenges for the city such as:
 - What agencies have to do to become truly empowering
 - How communities by location and communities of interest and identity can all be empowered
 - How empowerment and engagement can be developed across all neighbourhoods in the city.

The remaining sections set out in more detail what is planned on empowerment and how this can be managed under the auspices of the Newcastle Partnership. Issues like how we measure empowerment and how we resource it are covered.

This Community Empowerment Framework applies to all mechanisms and processes used by LSP partner agencies to inform, involve and consult communities.

We accept that partner bodies within the LSP will have (and retain) their own structures, standards and safeguards relating to engagement and empowerment which will complement this cross-LSP framework.

Who is the Framework for?

The Framework is for **all agencies in the partnership and for all the communities of Newcastle**. Communities are represented and involved in the Newcastle Partnership in a wide variety of ways which are explained later in this document.

The **Newcastle Partnership** is the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) for Newcastle and brings together, at a local level, a range of public, private, community and voluntary sector groups; allowing different initiatives and services to support one another so that they can work together more effectively.

The Partnership is responsible for producing and delivering Newcastle's **Local Area Agreement and Sustainable Communities Strategy**. The Partnership exists to set out a vision for Newcastle and to coordinate and drive the delivery of local services leading to improved outcomes that go beyond the remit of any one partner.

As a Partnership, we are committed to a single vision for empowerment. Our vision is to build and support strong, active and inclusive communities in Newcastle and to encourage people to take an active part in making decisions, delivering and influencing services across the city.

2. What does community empowerment mean?

Some key definitions

Communities and customers

Before explaining engagement and empowerment we need to be clear about what we mean by communities. It is generally accepted in Britain that there are three types of community:

- **Communities of place** or geography – that is people who live, work or undertake other activities in a certain area
- **Communities of identity** – that is people who self identify themselves as belonging to a certain group
- **Communities of interest** – that is people who share an interest, be it in arts or culture, a sport, a pastime or the use of a particular facility or service.

We also recognize that for agencies there are differences between **customers** or **service users** and wider communities. For many agencies, their main interest is in certain designated groups of customers or service users: this Framework still concerns them because those customers or service users are themselves a community of interest, and customer empowerment is a key concept for any public or private service organization.

Community Empowerment

The Government defines it as '**the giving of confidence, skills and powers to communities to shape and influence what public bodies do for or with them**'.

The Government believes Community Empowerment can contribute to a number of outcomes:

- The improved quality of services, projects and programmes;
- Greater community cohesion and social inclusion;
- A thriving democracy; and
- Enhanced community capacity and learning.

Community Engagement

Community engagement is an aspect of community empowerment, but engagement can happen without empowerment. (E.g. an agency can engage with a community to tell them what it is going to do – but not giving them any say in the issue).

The Government defines **Community Engagement** as **‘the process whereby public bodies reach out to communities to create empowerment opportunities’**.

Many LSP partner agencies run public engagement activities and recognize the need to go beyond traditional consultation, and to consider how communities can shape the places where they live and the services provided to them. In particular, they see the need:

- To fulfill the new duty to inform, consult and involve the public and other stakeholders
- To foster a sense of community by making it simpler for citizens and stakeholders to have a say in decision-making
- To address key social and economic issues in a holistic way and making the most efficient use of resources
- To coordinate and improve communication and consultation etc so as to avoid duplication and minimize ‘participation/consultation fatigue’.

Empowerment and engagement are complicated subjects that generate many different views. We recognize that while we have agreed to use the key definitions above in this Framework, we welcome and actively encourage debate on all the issues and challenges of the empowerment agenda.

3. Why do we want to empower communities?

We want to empower communities more because:

- Public services are shown to improve if people are involved in their planning and design.
- Communities can be more cohesive and have less tensions if people are engaged and empowered

- Communities and neighborhoods are more sustainable and stronger if we invest in the skills and potential of the people in them.
- Both individuals and society as a whole benefit from the increased opportunities that come with empowerment – gaining confidence and skills and opportunities for volunteering and for paid employment
- Democracy is healthier and more vibrant if people from all communities are enabled to play a part in democratic systems.

There are also a number of national policies urging us to do better on empowerment. For a more detailed explanation of legislation and context see appendix 1. Here are some of the key influences:

- The Local Government and Public involvement in Health Act 2007 introduced a new ‘Duty to inform, consult and involve local people’ to apply to a range of public organisations
- Department of Health guidance on the 2006 NHS Act, the Duty to Involve and Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNA).
- The Local Government White Paper 2006 – “Strong and Prosperous Communities” talks about creating strong, prosperous communities and delivering better public services through a rebalancing of the relationship between central government, local government and local people.
- The Green Paper “Governance of Britain” 2007 talks about how local democracy can be better developed.
- The Sustainable Communities Act of 2007 - in its place-shaping guidance says ‘services will only be improved and communities strengthened if local people are effectively engaged and empowered.
- The move towards the personalization of public services (e.g. Direct Payments in Social Care) is clearly linked to the empowerment agenda.

- The Operational Guidance for Local Area Agreements urges greater and more effective involvement of communities in the work of the Partnerships.

4. What are we doing already?

We are not starting from scratch. Agencies in Newcastle are already doing a lot to engage communities and less, but still a range of things, to empower them. Some examples are outlined below and a fuller description given in the appendix of how Newcastle is at the forefront of empowerment. This is illustrated by the fact that Government has asked us to be part of a Network of Empowering Authorities to help develop national policies and share good practice. However, current practice has its limitations and we know that there are challenges and better ways of doing things – hence this framework.

- The Local Authority has contracted with Newcastle Council for Voluntary Services Community Action on Health for them to provide a LINKs service.
- The Council has a significant community development team. Their 30 or more staff worked with over 40,000 people in Newcastle in 2007/8 on a wide variety of projects.
- In the Newcastle Partnership itself the Newcastle CVS and Healthy City have been funded to support and develop the involvement of a wide range of community representatives in the work of the Partnership.

5. What are the key challenges we face?

We have identified five key challenges that the Framework will need to tackle:

1. The varied nature of the participants and the activities

The framework covers a wide range of different groups and agencies which relate in different ways to different communities. Partners also have different legal drivers and responsibilities. The challenge is to find a way to honour these differences and work constructively with them, not to reduce empowerment to a “one size fits all” approach.

2. Coordination

The sheer amount of relevant activity and number of players makes this a challenge – but also makes it an area where great benefits could be found. The challenge is to:

- develop processes to share information in a practical and safe way
- plan activity so as to avoid duplication and identify opportunities for joint working.

3. Resources

Both a challenge and an opportunity: Some of the funding sources have reduced but between all the partners there is still a significant resource available.

4. Ward committees and communities of interest

These are seen as the essential building blocks in establishing a wide level of participation and between them should offer a balanced and inclusive choice of approaches for people. The challenges are to get the two approaches to work together rather than compete with each other and to broaden the approach of Council ward committees to relate to all the aspects of life and services in their given area. This is now underway with the new approach to Neighbourhood Management and ward planning.

5. Measurement

Measuring progress on empowerment is more difficult than measuring progress on engagement because to an even greater degree it is subjective i.e. it's about whether people feel empowered. The challenge is to come up with a range of measures that make sense to both communities and agencies.

In summary, we aim:

- To empower not just engage
- To maintain the trust of communities
- To encourage genuine partnership working between agencies

6. What do we plan to do?

Summary

We plan to develop empowerment in neighbourhoods and communities of interest and identity across Newcastle and across all service areas which come together under the LSP. Through this framework, we are collectively committing to:

1. Improving our practice in engagement and empowerment
2. Agreeing key principles and basic standards for LSP agencies and sectors
3. Developing a structure for coordinating community engagement and empowerment and sharing best practice through the LSP
4. Sharing information about resources to promote empowerment and identify where joint working brings benefits.
5. Agreeing performance measures and standards which make sense to both agencies and communities and show progress on empowerment
6. Reinvigorating the democratic process by using both representative and participative methods

Key Objectives

Alongside the above commitments, we would put forward the following as immediate empowerment actions:

Each LSP partner agency will nominate a named empowerment champion with a seat at the senior governance level of their organization;

The Newcastle Partnership for Children and Young People will work to establish a properly resourced Newcastle Youth Council to represent the views of Children and Young People across the city across all policy areas and to priorities defined by its members;

We will support local groups to influence central government and pursue their priorities for sustainability and well-being within their neighbourhoods, by responding positively to the Sustainable Communities Act;

We will build the Council's ward committees into the fora through which all agencies come together at the local level to improve services in partnership with residents and community organizations;

We will build on newly established LINKs partnership to ensure the voice of the patient is heard across all Health services in Newcastle;

We will take forward the City Council's approach to Participatory Budgeting across the Partnership and with mainstream resources, particularly in Policing and Health;

We will advance plans for Neighbourhood Policing across Newcastle using the SNAPS process and will replicate models that ensure Community Safety resources are genuinely shaped by local people;

We will establish a programme with LSP partners and other organizations, to support the transfer of publicly owned assets to local communities and third sector bodies. In this we will work with partners like the Development Trusts Association and build upon the experience and expertise of others such as the West Newcastle New Deal for Communities, the West End Women & Girls Centre and the development of the West Road Fire Station site;

We will support local groups to influence central government and pursue their priorities for sustainability and well-being within their neighbourhoods, by responding positively to the Sustainable Communities Act;

Partner agencies will review their ICT policies to enable citizen to fully share service information and commit to service re-design where this proves necessary;

We will develop fully comprehensive and accessible web based information systems at ward and neighbourhood levels covering all aspects of life in that area;

We will look at new ways of refreshing local democratic participation at a time where voter turnout remains relatively low and the profile of local people is not matched by their political representation. We will consider all models (including the widest use of new technologies) and learn from our own New Deal for Communities model of empowerment/engagement;

We will improve the mechanisms through which the voices of all communities of interest and identity groups in Newcastle are articulated and heard. For example, we have worked with the Quality of Life Partnership on older people's issues and will support them to deliver the outcomes within the Everyone's Tomorrow strategy;

We will regularly test whether service users feel genuinely empowered to design local services in the fields of transport, crime, health, local government, and the private sector by seeking examples of changes in practice as a result of citizen empowerment;

We will build Newcastle as a centre of good practice both regionally and nationally through our involvement with the National Empowerment Network and by hosting visits from leading empowerment practitioners. Building Social Capital is an essential part of empowerment in Newcastle. We commit to this development of social capital (means though which peoples and communities come together) both in localities, though communities of interest and identity, and importantly, within our own organizations;

All sectors have an important role to play. We will look to private sector groupings to promote empowerment among their members. We will support new arrangements for the Third Sector to support the empowerment process, in particularly though the new Standing Assembly of community and voluntary organizations;

We will use the resources of the local media to improve empowerment opportunities for local people, and in particular as a means of testing and responding to local views and opinions.

Shared information and good practice

Information sharing and communication

- In depth and up to date knowledge of our communities and ‘what matters to them. We recognize that communities evolve and change quite rapidly.
- A data base of public consultation engagement to be held centrally and shared by all partners.
- Targets for engagement for communities of identity and geographical communities.
- Means of identifying emerging issues and initiatives which will impact on individual communities.
- Consolidated reporting of community engagement and empowerment to provide a regular overview of the nature, volume and impact of different activities.
- A possible Annual Report to Residents. A single over-arching report on the nature, scale and outcomes from public engagement during the previous twelve months.
- A comprehensive database of stakeholders: To complement lists assembled by the individual partner organisations. There may be the possibility of building a stakeholder portal so that community bodies can channel their communications and find documents and facilities easier.

Developing better practice

- A system for maximizing the potential of any engagement activity: i.e. asking ‘could this be done in co-ordination with an existing initiative? Could this be done working with partners who have a similar agenda?’
- Developing cyclical engagement activity by reporting back to those communities who have engaged. This will ensure scrutiny, and sustained engagement and reduce frustration caused by engagement activities which residents might feel had no or very little impact.

- A manual of Good Practice to establish clear standards for effective engagement: This could encompass and consolidate guidance produced by all partner bodies, and encourage more uniform best practice standards.
- Training and skills development: training and the establishment of a network of professionals who can share information and work together across organisational boundaries.
- Investing in e-consultation and e-participation tools: Recognising that new technology will increasingly be used by citizens and businesses to make contact with partner organisations. Investing in appropriate software / hardware and the skills to make effective use of ICT tools (including e-survey, e-voting etc)
- A shared “centre of excellence” bank of good practice information, training, consultancy and skills development:

Key principles and basic standards for empowerment

The City Council already has a **Community Engagement Strategy** which provides basic standards in relation to community engagement. We suggest that partner agencies work together to see if they can all agree to adopt the Council’s standards as a basis for the establishment of minimum standards on community engagement. More details are in appendix 4.

When it comes to empowerment, as yet there is no one set of standards covering both empowerment and engagement in England so we have looked at both the **Community Development Exchange** work on empowerment and the **Scottish National Standards** for Community Engagement. They are a practical tool to help improve the experience of all participants involved in community engagement, to achieve the highest quality of process and results and to develop better working relationships between communities and agencies delivering services.

We see the standards as a fundamental part of community planning. The principles underpinning the standards help create a common set of ground rules that should be applied to ‘both sides’ of the engagement process. Those principles are -

- Fairness, equality and inclusion must underpin all aspects of community engagement, and should be reflected in both

community engagement policies and the way that everyone involved participates.

- Community engagement should have clear and agreed purposes, and methods that achieve these purposes.
- Improving the quality of community engagement requires commitment to learning from experience.
- Skill must be exercised in order to build communities, to ensure practice of equalities principles, to share ownership of the agenda, and to enable all viewpoints to be reflected.
- As all parties to community engagement possess knowledge based on study, experience, observation and reflection, effective engagement processes will share and use that knowledge.
- All participants should be given the opportunity to build on their knowledge and skills.
- Accurate, timely information is crucial for effective engagement.

Our standards in Community Empowerment will focus on the following:

INVOLVEMENT: we will identify and involve the people and organisations who have an interest in the focus of the engagement

SUPPORT: we will identify and overcome or reduce the impact of any barriers to involvement

PLANNING: we will gather evidence of the needs and available resources and use this evidence to agree the purpose, scope and timescale of the engagement and the actions to be taken

METHODS: we will agree and use methods of engagement that we believe best match the objectives of the engagement activity.

WORKING TOGETHER: We will agree and use clear procedures that enable the participants to work with one another effectively and efficiently alongside communities

SHARING INFORMATION: we will ensure that necessary information is communicated between the participants

WORKING WITH OTHERS: we will work effectively with others with an interest in engagement

IMPROVEMENT: we will develop actively the skills, knowledge and confidence of all participants

FEEDBACK: we will feed back the results of the engagement to the wider community and agencies affected

MONITORING AND EVALUATION: we will monitor and evaluate whether the engagement achieves its purposes and meets the (Scottish national) standards for community engagement

Resources

We are aware that partners are already committing human and financial resources in their efforts to engage and empower communities. We are gathering more details about this.

We see the challenge of this Community Empowerment Framework in relation to resources as having three elements or phases.

- To develop shared understanding of existing and potential resources deployed in Newcastle in relation to community empowerment.
- To influence the short term [2009/ 2010] deployment of resources in relation to community empowerment.
- To influence the medium to longer term deployment of resources, with a particular emphasis on improving cost effectiveness.

Our audit is beginning to identify the different resources that public sector bodies and voluntary and community sector bodies currently devote to community empowerment. (see appendix 3). There is pressure on these resources - for example, Newcastle City Council has reduced spending on Community Development and ward co-ordination and has less money coming into neighbourhoods through Area Based Grants than previously through Neighbourhood Renewal Funding.

With regard to the short term deployment of resources, there are decisions to be made in relation to:

- Sums within the £275k allocation of Area Based Grant [ABG] to support community engagement with the LSP.
- The Council's current review of Community Related Resources.
- Transformation Plans within the Council
- Use of ABG in relation to the LINKs programme.

In the medium to longer term, we need to consider the use of ABGs and other Council and other partner funds in relation to community empowerment. We also need to consider external funding opportunities such as the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (RIEP).

Human resource are as much an issue as finance. Our engagement audit (see appendix 2) needs to expand to:

- Examine where strategies may coincide/ overlap
- Consider omissions to provision – whether they be by target group, subject area or geography

Performance measures

Measuring our performance on community empowerment is vital and we will use a variety of methods, including headline National Indicators. However, it is important to go beyond the somewhat narrow National Indicator set and look at other measures that may assess our progress and give us both qualitative and quantitative evidence.

The biennial LSP Places/Quality of Life survey measures key quality of life issues contributing towards the achievement of our LAA targets. Newcastle City Council also carries out Residents surveys, and produces service plans which detail engagement activity and which can often be analyzed at ward levels.

To increase the percentage of residents who feel that they can influence decisions affecting their local area (National Indicator 4)

An important part of an empowered community is feeling that as a citizen one can influence local decisions. Effects of actions by Local Authorities to meet their new 'duty to involve' local people, and other new

mechanisms such as the Community Call for Action, asset transfer to community organizations and parish powers of well-being are all expected to link well with this indicator.

To increase the percentage of residents who feel that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds can get on well together (National Indicator 2)

Central to cohesive communities are good relations between people from different backgrounds. This indicator will focus efforts upon building and maintaining these good relations.

These indicators measure individual empowerment : we also need to consider whether *organizations* feel empowered as a result of our joint actions.

Other appropriate National Indicators could include:

NI3 Civic participation in the local area
NI6 Participation in regular volunteering

The Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) will include an independent assessment of the prospects of local areas and the quality of life of people living there. The CAA 'will put the experience of citizens (especially the vulnerable), service users and taxpayers at the centre of the new assessment framework'.

The CAA looks at the risks to delivering the LAA and SCS targets in local areas. Risk assessment will include:

Does the LSP understand and assess the needs of its communities now and in the future and does it use this understanding to inform its priorities?

Does the LSP adequately engage and empower local citizens and service users?

The Audit Commission uses Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE) which are detailed questions that inform inspection judgments. Of relevance here could be the Access to Services – reaching all parts of the community KLOEs which includes looking at appropriate arrangements for consulting, engaging and communicating with users and non-users.

Developing the structure

Community engagement with agencies

The first element is developing and mapping the structure through which communities can engage with agencies and in doing so become more empowered. Appendix 2 starts to capture some of this information and the picture will become fuller and the structures more effective as sharing information and best practice increase.

In terms of communities of geography there is a focus on developing ward structures – but there will remain the need to reach down to smaller areas than this, and to expand to larger areas, perhaps with the citizens / standing assemblies.

In terms of communities of identity there are a number of existing networks – BME, older persons and others – and it would be useful to provide a structure that supports their development. This potentially gives a better opportunity than area based approaches for “hard to hear” groups.

Structure for accountability to the LSP

Innovation Group has overseen the development of the framework and should retain that responsibility until the end of the consultation period around April 2009.

From then in terms of detailed development and monitoring it is proposed to expand the remit and membership of the current ICE sub group (Inclusion, Cohesion and Equalities) to include empowerment. This group would report on progress to the Delivery Board.

There needs to be recognition of the unequal relationship between the Community and Voluntary Sector and other partners in terms of powers and resources. To do this there needs to be a review process to pick up grievances and tackle problems that operates similarly to the city councils compact with the sector This suggestion is already incorporated in the revised LSP handbook that is going out to consultation.

7. What happens next?

Implementation model – please see Appendix 5 for a diagram of this model.

The introduction of the Framework will fall into two phases, a development phase and an implementation phase.

The first phase will involve a series of steps to build shared understanding and confidence that the framework will be capable of delivering against expectations. The steps may include:

- further definition of the purpose of the framework and the roles of the partners.
- mapping of communities and empowerment aspirations
- exploration of existing practice, gap analysis and an identification of good practice.
- the production of a delivery model, working towards sharing intelligence, resources and learning, with processes to jointly coordinate empowerment activity and measure achievement.

The implementation phase will require partners to adopt, and work within the spirit and guidelines of the framework. It will require 'plan - do - review' steps to be followed so the partnership can monitor progress.