

*Supporting effective citizenship
at local authority level*

Background research for good practice guidelines,
'Promoting Effective Citizenship and Community
Empowerment'

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May 2006

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Any errors that remain are the responsibility of the authors alone.

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Executive Summary

Research Objectives

- In December 2003, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) commissioned the Centre for Local and Regional Government Research (CLRGR) to investigate what local authorities were doing to promote civic education. Civic education was defined as ‘educational, learning or promotional activities carried out in a local context by or on behalf of local councils, to enable people to become more involved in democratic processes’. As the research evolved, the term ‘effective citizenship’ was felt to better characterise the ODPM’s objectives, though this study still uses Civic Education as shorthand for these practices.
- The main goal of the research was to identify areas where guidance would be useful to local authorities, and to report these – with suitable case study illustrations – in good practice guidance. These guidelines have now been published as ‘*Promoting Effective Citizenship and Community Empowerment: A Guide for Local Authorities on Enhancing Capacity for Public Participation*’, and are available at www.communities.gov.uk/participation. However, the background research which provided the sampling base and initial leads for the guidelines has provided useful insights in its own right, and it is this research that is published here.
- The research set out to address the following questions: What is motivating local authorities to develop civic education activities beyond schools, and what forms of civic education are they providing? Who is providing these activities, either internally within councils, or in collaboration with other actors? What makes for successful civic education and how is success being defined and measured? What are the barriers that local authorities face in delivering effective civic education? And how should good practice be disseminated?
- Given the ‘fuzzy’ and ambiguous nature of civic education, the CLRGR adopted a multi-stranded research strategy: a survey of council websites (Chapter Three); a survey sent to council Chief Executives (Chapter Four and Appendix B); telephone interviews with officers involved in civic education activities (Chapter Five); and case studies of local authorities which seemed to be engaged in particularly interesting, innovative and effective practice in improving citizens’ knowledge, skills and willingness to participate in local decision-making (Chapter Six and Appendix A).
- The research also involved an extensive literature review which is summarised as Chapter Two of this report. The full review and accompanying summary can be obtained at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1137166>

Main results

The main findings of the website survey were as follows:

- Council websites seem to be relatively useful in giving people the essential background information for getting involved in decision-making, especially: information on voting and elections; committee meetings, agendas and minutes,

and sometimes how to contribute; constitutional and organisational structures; forward plans for key decisions; and policy documents, such as community plans. The main emphasis is on communication and consultation.

- The website survey was less useful in tracking down educational or learning-based activities connected to democratic citizenship. Two thirds of authorities appeared to be engaged in delivering training or capacity-building exercises, although the websites themselves rarely gave sufficient information to determine the precise relevance to citizenship issues.
- The main category of relevant educational activities identified on council websites were targeted at young people, and often fell under the auspices of Local Democracy Week.

The main findings of the survey of chief executives are as follows:

- 74% of local authorities that responded to the survey thought that supporting civic education was either important or very important for their authority. In most instances, such activity was driven from the centre.
- Most councils responding to the survey claimed to be supporting effective citizenship in partnership with other public bodies.
- The main barriers councils faced in doing more to support effective citizenship, in descending order of importance, were lack of time and resources, consultation overload, a lack of central government resources and a lack of public interest.
- The main motives for citizenship activity were to improve public services, improve decision-making, raise citizen awareness and increase engagement. Increasing electoral turnout was not a major motive for respondents.
- Most of the councils that put forward the methods that they used to assess the success of citizenship initiatives used pragmatic, quantifiable measures – post-initiative evaluations, numbers of people attending – but relatively few focused on assessing learning or empowerment.
- In terms of the practices councils adopted to deliver civic education, the large majority identified structures or processes of public engagement – panels, forums, consultations, etc. There was relatively little comment on the learning or capacity-building activities which may (or may not) accompany such processes.
- Where specific social groups were being targeted with citizenship initiatives, the main ones were young people (77% of respondents) and Black and Minority Ethnic groups (38%), followed by the elderly (25%) and disabled (19%).
- Most councils have made internal changes to enhance their ability to support citizenship initiatives, the most common being a consultation strategy, guidance or toolkit, followed by improved web support. The dominant emphasis seemed to be on communications, with a strong focus on the public as service users rather than participants in democracy.

The telephone interviews revealed the following patterns:

- More than a third of councils viewed support for citizenship as something specifically targeted to sections of society, and about the same proportion connected it with promoting social inclusion and community cohesion.
- The types of initiatives identified as supporting citizenship included various forums, use of ICT, one-off events, and new ways of publicising council activity. There was a strong emphasis on communications and public participation activities, suggesting perhaps that respondents did not readily see civic education as being a distinctive set of activities. But a few respondents made specific reference to activities that sought to enhance capacity and improve relations between communities, and between communities and the council.
- As with the chief executives' survey, a large proportion of councils were adopting a more coordinated approach to public engagement, often in partnership with other bodies or community representatives. Others had set up units within the council to support community engagement, in some cases hiring community members themselves to deliver the support. Internal training (e.g. of councillors) was also part of the process.
- Over one third of interviewees felt that the policies of the Local Government Modernisation Agenda had generally improved the way they involved the public in decisions; one quarter felt that Local Strategic Partnerships had been influential.

Key points from the case studies

- Among councils that seem to be active in encouraging effective citizenship are those that have been engaged in similar practices for some time, and have been able to learn from long experience. Other councils have been pushed to do better by recent events (civil unrest, aspects of the Local Government Modernisation Agenda, or electoral change) and face a steeper learning curve and more sceptical political environment. Past failings can cast a long shadow.
- Some councils define successful citizenship more broadly than others. In some cases, it is confined mainly to sustaining the legitimacy of elected representatives, whereas others connect it to much broader – but more challenging – programmes of civil renewal. While qualitative research certainly reveals more nuanced measures of success, most councils struggle adequately to assess progress in this area.
- A common outcome of greater attention to democratic citizenship is a more coherent organisational approach to consultation and public participation, which at the very least allows councils to learn more effectively from their experiences. In many instances, training and capacity-building is being delivered successfully through regeneration or service improvement initiatives (such as Sure Start).
- Programmes of decentralisation can increase the opportunities for a wider range of groups to engage in local government decision-making, and reduce the remoteness of political processes, but much depends on the credibility of the actions undertaken and the support provided for other parties to participate.

- More broadly, councils have needed to reconcile the encouragement of effective citizenship with the dilemmas of political scale, with larger councils especially feeling propelled to undertake more extensive, IT and communications-based activities, rather than the more face-to-face approaches possible with smaller population sizes.

Conclusions

- While the majority of councils that participated in this research were putting in place practices that will help to encourage effective citizenship, in many instances progress has been achieved by particular conjunctions of political circumstances, committed officers and project-based resources, all raising questions about long-term sustainability.
- While most councils are comfortable with the language and practices of consultation, even participation, relatively few have reflected deeply on the learning requirements of effective citizenship. Indeed, there was a tendency among respondents to elide learning for effective citizenship with processes and structures for public participation.

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Section 1: Introduction

1.1 Background to the research

In the UK, the disengagement of many citizens from political processes, coupled with increasing anti-social behaviour, has suggested that public support for civic culture and democratic political institutions is deteriorating. To address these problems, policy-makers have taken an increasing interest in encouraging people to re-connect with government and their communities through becoming active citizens.

Since 1997, the government has introduced citizenship education in schools, 'Active Learning for Active Citizenship' through the Home Office's Civil Renewal Unit, and a requirement for local authorities to alert 'young people to the working of social and public life... and the means at their disposal for influencing local policies' as part of councils' wider duty to promote 'effective community engagement'.¹ To assist local authorities in meeting this requirement, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister commissioned a research project, which was to provide good practice guidance on the provision of 'civic education'.

It should be noted that the focus of the study lay outside the schools-based citizenship education programme that is part of the National Curriculum, though council activities that support and extend the curriculum fell within its remit. It also included civic education in relation to all citizens, not just young people.

The importance of an effective, informed and empowered citizenry was underlined in the Government's Ten Year Vision for Local Government.² This vision encourages local authorities to explore innovative ways for involving more people in local democracy and to build the capacity of neighbourhoods to participate in decisions that effect their lives.

1.2 Objectives of the research

The Centre for Local and Regional Government Research at Cardiff University was commissioned by ODPM in December 2003 to carry out this research. For the purposes of this work, 'civic education' was defined as '*educational, learning or promotional activities carried out in a local context by or on behalf of local councils, to enable people to become more involved in democratic processes*'. During the research process, various expert commentators suggested that the term 'civic education' was a poor definition of ODPM's objectives. Since that time, the research team has presented the project as concerned with supporting democratic aspects of citizenship. It was also felt that ODPM's goals were best captured as 'effective citizenship' – helping people to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to get more involved in local decision-making. We retain the term Civic Education in this report as shorthand for these kinds of activities.

¹ Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions, Strong Local Leadership – Quality Public Services, White Paper presented to parliament December 2001, HMSO, London.

² Located at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1137789>

The prime aim of the research was to obtain a broad-based understanding of what local authorities and partner organisations were doing to promote more effective citizenship, as a basis for teasing out ideas, principles and activities that might form a framework of good practice in this arena. Thus the main research output (and to a large extent the conclusions of the work) are contained in these guidelines – *Promoting Effective Citizenship and Community Empowerment: A Guide for Local Authorities on Enhancing Capacity for Public Participation* – which are available at www.communities.gov.uk/participation.

Because of this ultimate objective, the research was designed to sieve local authority experience to identify possible leads towards good practice. It was not the prime goal to produce a comprehensive picture of local authority ‘civic education’ and, indeed, this would be a difficult task given the subject matter, as subsequent chapters explain. Nevertheless, as a by-product of the search for good and interesting practice from which local authorities could learn, it was possible to identify some interesting patterns in the way that local authorities were approaching the promotion of effective citizenship, and it is these that form the basis of this report.

In searching for good practice, the research team gave particular attention to the following questions. These address the questions set by ODPM in the original research specification, as developed in subsequent project steering group meetings:

What is happening and why?

- What is motivating local authorities to develop Civic Education activities beyond schools? What forms of Civic Education are they providing?

Who is doing it?

- What internal capacity do local authorities have to deliver effective Civic Education? Who has responsibility for delivering Civic Education within Councils? To what extent have councils developed and delivered Civic Education programmes jointly with other organisations or, potentially, with the target communities? Can we see effective joined up working between different Civic Education schemes?

What makes for success?

- What constitutes ‘successful’ Civic Education and how are successful outcomes achieved? Is there a set of priorities and performance management measures for assessing success? How has this feedback (or lack of it) affected the development of their programmes?

What are the barriers to the delivery of effective Civic Education?

- Do local authorities feel they have sufficient internal capacity to deliver effective Civic Education? What skills and resources are required? Have councils backed their activities with staff training and/or changes to their communications and service functions?

- What is the relationship in practice between Civic Education and other parts of the local government modernisation agenda? Examples may include moves towards closer partnership working, enhancing public participation, constitutional change and civil renewal.
- To what extent have local authorities been able to improve the credibility of their Civic Education activities by making sure that their own approaches to public participation and consultation are meaningful and effective?
- The research team were also interested in whether some 'barriers' might be traced to more fundamental contradictions in the Civic Education agenda.

How should good practice be disseminated?

- To what extent do local authorities feel that they are delivering good practice and how do local authorities seek and identify good practices to apply? Where do they go for ideas? Are there any special skills, competencies and knowledge that they already have or which they require?
- What means of dissemination would best deliver good practice guidance to local authorities?

1.3 Structure of the research and of this report

The research study had three main stages, and incorporated a range of methods. The first stage sought to specify the definition of 'civic education', and identify initial lines of investigation. It involved the following methods:

- reviewing existing literature, including academic, government and practitioner-based analyses of Civic Education in the UK, as well as relevant international experience;
- an initial expert seminar in February 2004, with invited representatives from academia, government departments and agencies, local authorities and think-tanks, followed by individual interviews with eight national experts;
- creating an internet bulletin board to allow people to suggest and exchange ideas;
- placing articles in the local government press, inviting authorities to send the research team information about their approaches to Civic Education.

An extensive literature review was produced, entitled 'Civic Education and Local Government: A Literature Review'. The full review and accompanying summary can be obtained at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1137166>
Relevant sections of the summary are reproduced in this report as **Chapter Two**.

The data emerging from the first expert seminar, follow up interviews, bulletin board and feedback on articles in the local government press helped to inform the development of good practice guidance, in a range of ways. It helped to identify expert interviewees and, by refining our concept of 'civic education', provided valuable guidance and key words for conducting the website search. Issues of focus

and coverage were also addressed in an additional expert seminar, held in February 2005, and together, the two expert seminars assisted greatly in guiding the research project, highlighting key issues, and validating the interpretations of good practice being put forward.

The second stage of the research involved a broad-based survey, again with the prime objective of identifying potentially interesting practices in the broad field of civic education, which could become the subject of more intensive investigation. The research conducted a survey of 44 local authority websites, the results of which are written up in **Chapter Three**. The research also sent a short questionnaire to all local authorities in England, the results of which are written up in **Chapter Four**.

The third stage of the research was a more intensive investigation, designed to provide more details about specific local authority civic education practices: what councils were doing; how it was being delivered; whether it was effective or not; and the factors behind this level of success. The research team conducted 33 telephone interviews with key practitioners identified through earlier stages of the research, the results of which are written up in **Chapter Five**. The research team also conducted nine case studies, each with a different local authority, and involving interviews with council officers, elected members, officers from other bodies and focus groups with members of the public. A commentary on the case studies is provided in **Chapter Six**, and a full write-up of six of the case studies is given in **Appendix 1**.

As this research project progressed, it was possible to devote more staff resources to attending citizenship learning events – notably attending Active Learning for Active Citizenship conferences – and scale back the ‘blunter’ instruments of website survey. Such events also generated more leads for good practice outwith the survey and telephone interviews, the results of which have fed straight into the Good Practice Guidance.

Some concluding remarks are given in **Chapter Seven**.

Section 2: Literature review summary

2.1 Introduction

The literature review conducted for this research applied available evidence from within and beyond the UK to current British policy debates about citizenship and local decision-making. The full review and accompanying summary can be obtained at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1137166>. This Chapter reproduces relevant sections of the summary.

The review begins by describing the theoretical and policy context surrounding the goal of effective citizenship. Empirical evidence on the purposes, practice and impacts of initiatives to promote citizenship is then explored, before the prospects for civic education and the future support of effective citizenship are hypothesised.

2.2 Key findings

Conceptual debates

Current UK policy debates centre on the ideal of 'active citizenship' which emphasises the need for citizens to fulfil social and political obligations. The content of these obligations remains subject to intense discussion between civic-individualists (helping people to become volunteers and informed consumers), civic-republicans (emphasising direct political participation) and civic-pluralists (building a diverse but cohesive civic culture).

Although civic republicanism is most strongly associated with current government policy, each of these interpretations is relevant to the array of practices through which local government might support civic education.

Knowledge, young people and citizenship activity

The recent introduction of citizenship education in English schools offers pointers to the wider development of civic education by local government. In particular there is an important role for local authorities in supporting school-based learning, by fostering links to council activities, councillors and the wider community. Current research indicates that opportunities for pupils to connect school-based learning with participation in the community are weakly developed at present, and often hampered by adults that are dismissive of the views of children. Youth cabinets and youth parliaments provide just one set of vehicles for strengthening these connections.

Various studies suggest that young people with higher levels of civic knowledge are more confident of participating effectively in politics as adults, more likely to undertake voluntary action, and more willing to vote. These effects are enhanced in learning environments that are democratic themselves, by promoting an open climate for discussing issues and encouraging students to take part in shaping school life. The impacts of increasing *adult* political knowledge appear to vary between countries: in Australia it increased political literacy and competence but not participation, whereas in the Dominican Republic and South Africa, civic education led to people becoming more participatory at local level. But improvements in participation were dependent

on the provision of training that could overcome the resource disparities that exist for political participation, reflecting education, political interest and gender.

Studies that focus on young people suggest that policies to promote effective citizenship must be embedded in people's local concerns, and sensitive to the willingness of citizens to become engaged. The importance of experiential (rather than forced) learning of effective citizenship is well recognised. Here, involvement in the service activities of councils and political events can provide raw material in the form of knowledge, models, and reflective matter.

The social capital connection

Evidence from both sides of the Atlantic suggests that social capital (taken here as comprising obligations and expectations, information channels and social norms) has a positive relationship with political action and civic efficacy. Civic education can help to reinforce this reciprocity. However, perceived opportunities for citizens to influence decisions are at least as important as personal aptitude in encouraging political engagement. Research has suggested that institutional design within local governance can play a large role in shaping the development of communal social capital, notably by improving relationships with the voluntary sector, opportunities for public participation, the responsiveness of decision-making, and arrangements for democratic leadership and social inclusion. Being asked to participate also makes it more likely that people will do so.

A number of analysts have hypothesised connections between aspects of social capital (including levels of trust, civic engagement and volunteering) and government performance. Quantitative studies from the US provide some support for this hypothesis, and research also demonstrates a positive relationship between higher social capital and perceptions of local government. Establishing the direction of cause and effect between performance and citizenship activity is more complex, however, suggesting that policy-makers and practitioners must be sharply attuned to the varying attitudes of different groups of citizens, and the context in which they are working.

Interventions and impacts

There is evidence that public administrators can influence civic culture in various ways. US studies have shown that local government strategies centring on information, participation and reputation can reduce public cynicism about politics and encourage, *inter alia*, citizens to participate in community affairs. Public servants themselves, in the activities they get involved in outside their job, are also important contributors to civic culture. In the UK, supporting public participation initiatives with elements of civic education – including capacity building, developing a civic infrastructure of social groups, enabling citizens to shape the terms of involvement, and providing feedback – has improved social outcomes.

There is evidence that initiatives which empower communities have positive impacts, in terms of fostering solutions to problems which are drawn from local peoples' knowledge and experience, in delivering greater accountability to local citizens, and – in some instances – in helping to revitalise democracy by bringing policymaking closer to the average citizen. Ensuring the sustainability of 'bottom up' initiatives remains a key issue for capacity-building and empowerment activities.

Positive evidence that involving the public in decision-making can have wider impacts on their sense of citizenship is available from analyses of citizens' juries and similar practices. Not only do jurors bring relevant local knowledge and commitment to bear on decision-making that is usually carried out by "experts" but some jurors became more civically active as a result, and all parties gain new skills, knowledge and learning.

Barriers to promoting effective citizenship

Existing research also points to some clear barriers to the extent to which civic education type activities will have the desired result.

The first challenge is to understand the exclusionary processes that may constrain different groups of people from becoming more effective citizens, to ensure that initiatives do not end up reinforcing existing patterns of disadvantage. Thus different methods are necessary to reach different citizen groups, with particular efforts required to empower the resource-poor by building their capacity for civic engagement.

There are also significant resource implications in widening the availability of civic education. For the public, these issues are bound up with practical barriers, such as childcare and transport. For local authorities, such discretionary, cross-sectoral activities often fare poorly in the pursuit of efficiency savings. Furthermore, more fundamental questions will always remain about the desirability and scope of *government* intervention to establish genuine *citizen-centred* government.

2.3 Conclusions

Drawing a more cohesive picture of what makes for successful civic education is hampered by the various ways in which the success of civic education initiatives is interpreted (in terms of knowledge, virtues, behavioural changes etc) and by the way that local context affects the impacts of interventions and initiatives. Nevertheless, the literature review has confirmed the key issues which local authorities seeking to support effective citizenship will have to address:

- *Sustainability* – because too many initiatives tend to be short-term
- *Demand* – because involving local citizens in the design of initiatives can often make them more effective
- *Tailoring* – because different approaches are required to assist different, and especially marginalised communities
- *Best practice participation* – because opportunities for participation that are meaningful and susceptible to public influence provide a vital context for experiential learning about citizenship
- *Joined-up working* – because of the need to overcome the proliferation and *ad hoc* nature of many citizenship-related initiatives
- *Models of democracy* – because civic education activities can push local democracy in more consumerist or public interest directions

- *Evidence* – because the general paucity of evaluation in this field hampers organisational learning.

Overall, the existing evidence base for what delivers success is useful but not extensive, and there is relatively little research that has examined directly the efficacy of civic education delivered by local government outwith the schools curriculum. Nevertheless, local government is well placed to play a full role in supporting effective citizenship and enabling local communities to collectively participate and deliberate in democratic decisions. Although existing research has shown how broad social characteristics significantly influence citizenship activity, it is also true that local institutions can generate increased social capital and civic engagement.

Some of the most useful references are given below; the actual literature review is fully referenced.

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Section 3: Survey of council websites

3.1 Introduction

The survey of council websites was undertaken using a stratified sampling strategy. 20 local authorities were selected from each of the five types of local government: counties, unitaries, metropolitan boroughs, London boroughs and districts. In total this provided an overall sample of 100 local authorities, which is 26% of the local authority base. Websites were then selected proportionately within each type from within this overall sampling framework.

The aim of the website survey was to identify local authority activities in delivering civic education. In order to identify this activity the research team created a list of potential terms that facilitated this search, based on the preliminary definition of civic education and feedback from the first expert seminar referred to in Chapter 1. The aim was to start off by searching on key terms to identify the most productive of these for finding civic education activity. The key terms used for this process were divided into two levels:

Level 1 Bulls-eye search: 'Citizenship' and 'Civic Education'

Level 2 Outer-ring search: 'Democracy'; 'Democratic Renewal'; 'Community Leadership'; 'Turnout'; 'Participation'; 'Involvement'

The researchers then proceeded to search the sample of websites to identify elements of civic education delivered or made available through the local authority website, identifying good practice in processes or initiatives presented.

In the end, 44 websites were searched: 9 county councils; 10 metropolitan boroughs, 9 districts, 7 unitaries and 7 London Boroughs. From these searches it was possible to identify some authorities worth following-up in the telephone interview and case study phase of the research. Nevertheless, the limited value of most council websites for this purpose meant that the initial website survey was scaled down, with the support of the project steering group, in order to refocus on the cross-authority survey (analysed in Chapter 4).

3.2 Key findings

The results of the website survey are as follows. For obvious reasons, council webpages were reasonably effective at picking up communication- and information-based aspects of civic education. It is clear that the majority of local authorities have undertaken some form of information provision on what their council does and how and who provides the services they deliver. This typically includes the following information relevant to effective citizenship:

- Information on voting (especially how to register) and elections
- Committee meetings, agendas and minutes, and sometimes how to contribute e.g. how to make a request to speak/ask questions/make a petition
- Constitutional and organisational structures (e.g. cabinets)

- Plans – Forward Plans for key decisions, Community Strategies, Development Plans
- Policy documents

On a more interactive level, a smaller proportion of councils are providing information on how the public can get involved in the delivery of council services.

Out of the 44 authorities surveyed, 10 had no information on the consultation mechanisms that they might use, be it citizens panels or user forums. Of the remainder, some restricted the availability of information (for example, to tenants). The web-based evidence suggests that the most popular format for involving people in decisions was through postal surveys, e-surveys (a good proportion of which concerned the quality of the website itself) or consultation exercises on particular proposals, though many councils were also engaged in:

- Scrutiny/Resident/Citizens Panels
- Area/Community/Resident discussion forums
- Tenants Committees
- On-line surveys, ‘citizens voice’ web pages

The website search identified that the national event *‘Local Democracy Week’* has been used by many authorities to engage with young people in more accessible ways, and to try to promote more ongoing dialogue.³ The website search also found that Question Sessions with councillors are a relatively commonplace choice (for example Bexley, Camden and Durham), as were visits from/to schools, though the borough-wide conference held by Kensington and Chelsea looking at, *inter alia*, the meaning of citizenship was ambitious in being attended by 560 people. Some authorities with dispersed, rural constituencies, took the message ‘on the road’, for example Cheshire’s ‘Talking Teens Road Show’, the Parish Democracy Programme created by Cumbria, and Stoke-on-Trent’s ‘Future Buzz’.

Overall, almost all council websites inform people about the opportunities for getting involved in decision-making – arguably the first rung of supporting effective citizenship. Two thirds of authorities appeared to be going beyond creating opportunity structures to deliver training or capacity-building exercises, although the websites themselves rarely gave sufficient information to determine the precise relevance to citizenship issues. Most made references to Lifelong Learning or Adult and Community Education, covering subjects from training in ICT for Residents Representatives (Bath and North-East Somerset) through to community leadership training. Two of the more clearly relevant examples are the Millennium Awards for training citizens in community leadership (cited in Durham), and the Public Speaking Training advertised in Chiltern.

³ Local Democracy Week is a key part of an ongoing campaign to get young people (up to the age of 26) more involved in their community and wider democratic processes. It is run by the Local Government Association, UKYouth Parliament, British Youth Council and National Youth Agency.

Young people are the main target group for additional participation/engagement activities, often linked to Youth Services, with other clusters of capacity-building activity around tenants groups, community/voluntary sector leadership and older people. A small proportion of councils (about 15%) indicate on their website that they have conducted internal training to support officers and members in accommodating a more involved citizenry. Most instances involve the development of a consultation strategy, although Durham County Council trained councillors in preparation for setting up and running Area Panels.

The website search failed to identify practices targeted at tackling disaffection between the council and specific social groups, although this may be partly an artefact of the research methodology i.e. most practices can be delivered in ways conducive to addressing cultural barriers, but the extent to which they do this lies in the detail of their delivery and content, which web-based information does not necessarily reveal.

The fact that most websites gave separate telephone contacts for Lifelong Learning, Tenant Participation, Youth Services and 'Democratic Services' points to the difficulties in gaining a cohesive local authority perspective from a single point of contact. Likewise, it highlights problems in grasping the extent to which citizenship work is being coordinated.

Section 4: Survey of Local Authority Chief Executives

4.1 Research design and response rate

To help get an overall grasp of citizenship activities within local government, the research team distributed a questionnaire survey to all English local authority chief executives. The main aim of the survey was to identify leads for more detailed investigation of good practice through other research methods (either a telephone interview or case study), and so the questionnaire was deliberately kept short in order to maximise response rates. For the full questionnaire see Appendix B. Nevertheless, the survey provides an indication of the practices local authorities are carrying out under the broad heading of Civic Education, how they understand the term, and some of the issues they are facing.

At this stage of the project, the research team were still wrestling with terminology that adequately captured the subject matter, but which would also be clearly understood by respondents. It was decided to stick with ‘civic education’ – the phrase used in the brief from ODPM – but to offer respondents a definition in the covering letter, *viz.*:

“local authority initiatives to provide the public with the knowledge, ability and willingness to get involved in local decision-making. This may include the following types of activities:

- *initiatives that inform local people how to participate in decision-making*
- *initiatives that tackle the practical, economic and skills-based barriers which many different groups have to overcome in order to participate effectively*
- *initiatives that address the disaffection that many people feel towards local government”*

This definition received substantial support at the expert seminar February 2004 (as discussed in Chapter 1). The covering letter also explicitly excluded school-based teaching within ‘the classroom’, and emphasized what local councils were doing by way of ‘citizenship-related education ... with its citizenry in general, and especially marginalised social groups’.

The questionnaire was distributed electronically on 29th April 2004. Follow up reminders were distributed on 17th May, 24th June and finally on July 12th. Of the 389 local authorities in England, fifteen indicated they were unable or unwilling to participate, leaving a sample population of 374 authorities. From this sample, 173 authorities responded (five authorities submitted two forms but only the centrally returned form has been used for the purposes of this survey) producing an overall response rate of 44%. 97 responding authorities indicated a willingness to be involved further, allowing the research team to follow up a selection of these authorities either through telephone interviews (see **Chapter 4**) or through more detailed case study visits (see **Chapter 5**).

Although the survey was sent to Chief Executives, it was recognised that the survey would probably be completed by other officers within the council.

4.2 Key findings

The organisation of citizenship activities [Q1, Q7, Q8, Personal Details]

Overall, 74% of respondents saw supporting civic education as either very important or important within their local authority (on a 5-point Likert scale).

This is echoed by the finding that most authorities were ‘driving’ citizenship issues from the centre, either from the policy department or the chief executive’s office (97%).

Other departments identified as being involved were:

- Community Development (29%)
- Democratic/Electoral Services (19%)
- Education Services/Schools (18%)
- Other front-line services (16%)

Clearly, these results may be an artefact of the way that the survey was executed – it was sent to chief executives – whereas in practice, a wider array of departments may be playing an important role (such as the Youth Service). What one can say, however, is that most of the councils who responded claimed a central interest in citizenship issues, and almost half had departments/teams with a democratic or community development remit.

Looking beyond the council, 125 respondents (72%) confirmed that they worked in collaboration with other agencies to support citizenship, distributed as set out in Table 1, below.

Table 1: Partnership working supporting citizenship

Main partners	Percentage of respondents working with them
police	42
local health trusts	42
local voluntary sector	32
Local Strategic Partnership	26
county council	23
local parish, town or community councils	11
Connexions (info and advice service for 13-19 year olds)	10
district councils	8
Youth Service	7
Fire Brigade	7
Local Colleges	7
Learning and Skills Council	6
local business groups	6
race equality groups	5
faith-based groups	5
Responses do not add up to 100% because respondents could list more than one partner	

In general, these patterns of collaboration reflect well-established local partnership arrangements, being dominated numerically by the main public sector bodies (police, local health trusts), the voluntary sector, and other tiers of local government. This begs questions about whether respondents were thinking specifically about civic education activities in answering this question, or simply identifying civic education as a cross-cutting issue, and locating broad responsibility for it in strategic partnership working. It is also possible that respondents viewed 'supporting effective citizenship' in broader terms than the definition in the covering letter.

One can detect patterns of collaborative working which may be helping councils to target particular social groups for citizenship activity (as discussed below). The reference to Connexions probably reflects the importance attached to drawing young people into greater civic engagement, as does collaboration with the Youth Service. Overall, organisations concerned with young people and the education sector would be regarded as significant players by many local authorities, albeit that they were mentioned by fewer than 25% of respondents. Involvement with the Learning and Skills Council and local colleges is indicative of work with local educational providers. A small percentage of councils also work with race equality and faith-based groups specifically on issues around cohesion, though they may also be using the voluntary sector – addressed above in aggregate – to engage particular communities.

A large number of groups were identified by only a small number of respondents:

- *Education bodies* – universities, adult learning networks, Local Education Authorities, School Headteachers Associations, schools
- *Young people's organisations* – local youth groups, Save the Children, Barnardos, the Children's Fund/Society, National Youth Agency, UK Youth Parliament
- *Other tiers of government* – ODPM, Regional Government Office
- *The media* – BBC, local media
- *Environmental and rural bodies* – Environment Agency, wildlife protection groups, rural action groups
- *Housing organisations* – Registered Social Landlords, Guinness Trust
- *Local government bodies* – Local Government Association, Improvement and Development Agency
- *Other* – social services, Age Concern, anti-poverty groups, diversity groups, Job Centre Plus, regeneration projects, Citizen's Advice Bureau

Other areas of potential joint-working, such as around environmental dimensions of citizenship (including Local Agenda 21, with its strong participatory ethos), seemed on the evidence of this survey to be almost non-existent. This may again be an artefact of the survey methodology.

Barriers and motives [Q2, Q6]

Respondents were presented with a range of potential barriers that their local authority might face in supporting effective citizenship. The following were regarded as the most significant barriers (strongly agree, or agree, on a 5-point Likert scale):

- 83% cited lack of time and resources
- 70% suggested consultation overload
- 68% pointed to a lack of central government resources
- 54% suggested a lack of public interest

A large proportion of authorities *disagreed* that lack of public interest, lack of member support or lack of clear benefits to their authority were barriers to further progress.

Other barriers were suggested by only a small number of respondents, and they can be grouped as follows:

- *Issues with schools* – lack of support from schools; low priority of citizenship education in the school curriculum; lack of opportunities for young people’s citizenship
- *Issues of coordination* – complex funding arrangements; confusion between different tiers in local government; coordination difficulties; complex governance arrangements
- *Issues of prioritisation and leadership* – poor central government leadership, poor managerial leadership
- *Issues of context and culture* – decline of the public service ethos; the time available for residents to be involved; local demographic characteristics; lack of imagination; anti-political culture; taxpayer issues.

The main aims given for undertaking activities to support effective citizenship are (% that agree or strongly agree on a 5-point Likert scale):

- 97% to improve services
- 95% to increase public confidence
- 92% to improve decision making
- 91% to raise citizen awareness
- 91% to increase citizen engagement
- 90% to meet corporate objectives
- 86% to increase citizen understanding

- 72% to reduce disaffection
- 70% to increase electoral turnout

Responses to this question give some indication of how councils define a ‘successful’ outcome for civic education activity, an issue returned to below. Overall, one would say that local authorities accept and support the general merits of cultivating an informed and engaged citizenry, and take a much wider view of its objectives than simply increasing electoral turnout. However, support in principle for the citizenship agenda may not necessarily translate into effective practice, because of a range of perceived barriers.

Specific practices [Q3]

Respondents were asked to name the three most important ‘citizenship-related’ activities that their local authority was engaged in, and rate their success (on a 5-point Likert scale). The responses of the 171 authorities that proffered replies are set out in Table 2, and are illuminating for understanding how citizenship and citizenship-related activities are conceptualised within local government.

Table 2: Successful citizenship-related activities in local government

Type of activity	% of respondents undertaking it	% of these regarding it as successful or very successful
citizen’s or neighbourhood panels	30	78
coordinated a youth forum, council or parliament	25	79
conducted area forums or committees	22	63
liaised with schools	15	80
conducted consultations	14	61
engaged with Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups or young people	14	70
involved in Local Democracy Week	11	63
promoted citizenship through community or neighbourhood planning	11	47
coordinated specific forums for old people or tenants	10	53
held council-wide ‘state of the area’ debates	8	77
coordinated area partnerships	6	82
promoted villages, towns or parishes	6	82

These replies immediately reveal the close interconnection in respondents’ minds between *educational activities* around democratic citizenship and *structures/processes for involving the public* or particular social groups in decision-making. Whether this is because the two concepts have been conflated, or because respondents see actual participatory processes as key vehicles for delivering civic education, is difficult to deduce. Of the main categories of response, only participation in Local Democracy Week could be said automatically to presume a strong, explicit educational component.

Strands of information provision, capacity building and learning were mentioned by respondents, but less frequently, especially:

- 9% produced a newsletter (87% successful or very successful)
- 8% were involved in community development work (36% successful or very successful)
- 6% held open days (30% successful or very successful)
- 5% engaged in specific projects (e.g. environment, leisure, civic pride, trust development) (100% successful or very successful), had developed engagement strategies (56% successful or very successful), or carried out special events (e.g. youth conferences; promoting being a councillor) (88% successful or very successful)
- 5% cited involvement in 'civil renewal', presumably in the sense of initiatives to promote greater social cohesion within communities (56% successful or very successful)

Councils also referred to efforts to promote particular aspects of *democratic* citizenship:

- 9% of responding authorities were involved in a drive to increase electoral turnout (53% successful or very successful),
- 9% encouraged more participation at council meetings (56% successful or very successful).
- 8% saw Local Strategic Partnerships as sites for promoting citizenship (62% successful or very successful)
- 5% had developed engagement strategies (56% successful or very successful)

In general, initiatives targeted at particular social groups (such as young people), particular projects, or non-dialogic forms of communication tended to be seen as the more successful than rather generalised efforts to increase engagement, or set up new area-based forums. Only a small majority of respondents were prepared to claim that their efforts to promote such democratic citizenship had been successful.

Other items were listed as civic education activities by just a small number of respondents, but they highlight further the vast network of practices with which citizenship is connected:

- *Work with the voluntary sector* – voluntary sector compacts; promoting volunteering and capacity building exercises
- *Aspects of local government modernisation* – internal restructuring; scrutiny reviews; Best Value Reviews (e.g. democratic engagement); Public Service Agreements
- *Ceremonies* – citizenship awards; citizenship ceremonies;

- *Other consultation/participation activities* – focus groups; surveys; increasing involvement in the Local Development Framework; specific partnerships (e.g. crime);

Measures of success [Q3]

Altogether, 412 citizenship-related activities were listed by survey respondents and, for each, activity they were required to indicate how they measured 'success'. The breakdown of success measures is as follows:

- For 31% of activities, success was measured using the attendance rate;
- For 25%, using feedback from participants;
- For 12% using questionnaires or surveys;
- For 10% using the extent of participation;
- For 8% using the initial response rate to a proposed activity;
- For 7% through an evaluation process;
- For 5% by assessing the engagement of participants;
- For 5% using action plans or formal monitoring and review processes.

Altogether, response patterns showed that most councils use a range of practical, readily quantifiable measures, focusing on attendance rates and formal evaluations. It is far from clear (though perhaps unlikely) whether many of these techniques explore the extent to which people are learning or developing their capacity for further engagement.

It is possible to identify instances where councils do seem to be judging the effectiveness of their citizenship activities according to the empowerment of citizens, but this only applies to a small percentage of activities (i.e. less than 5% fall into each of the following five categories):

- *Citizenship outcomes* – the activity rate within group and project support initiatives; resulting influence on decision-making; increased awareness of issues among participants; attitudinal changes; new links developed; the enthusiasm and willingness to be involved; funding take-up rates; skills audit; representativeness of the participants; changes made to services as a result; group membership numbers; successful grant bids; the types of organisations involved; service take-up;
- *Outcome quality* – responsiveness of initiative; sustainability or longevity of activities; the impact or outcomes; quality of life; efficiency savings;
- *Democratic legitimacy* – support for decision-making; satisfaction levels; increased electoral turnout;

- *External markers* – extent to which targets were met; publicity; inspection; best practice awards; Comprehensive Performance Assessment; performance indicators;
- *Other* – website hits; research; local demands; focus groups; the range of issues covered;

Targeting [Q4]

The majority of respondents claimed that their local authority made special efforts to deliver support for citizenship to marginalised social groups (based on age, gender, ethnicity, or other specific groups), and in particular:

- 79% are taking steps to breaking down barriers between council and citizens
- 72% have provided information on how to participate in local decision-making
- 53% purported to be undertaking citizenship education or training

Respondents were also asked which social groups they had targeted with citizenship initiatives, which yielded the following results:

- Young People (77% of local authorities)
- Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups (38%)
- Elderly (25%)
- Disabled (19%)
- A more general response, the socially excluded (13%)

As one can see, young people are overwhelmingly the main social group receiving particular attention, while less than half of councils have sought to deliver civic education activities to each of the other groups.

Respondents were asked about the specific actions they had taken for marginalised social groups: 142 could identify specific actions, with the pattern of results set out in Table 3.

Table 3: Citizenship activities for reaching marginalised social groups

Main activities	Percentage of respondents undertaking each activity
coordinated forums or panels for specific groups	39
coordinated networks for specific groups	26
engaged with young people	16
carried out special events	15
carried out specific projects	11
supported marginalised groups through Local Strategic Partnership work	11
consulted with marginalised groups	10
produced targeted leaflets	10
provided training	9
promoted voting awareness	9
produced a newsletter	9
had a translation strategy or service	8
used Local Democracy Week	7
engaged in 'hard to reach activity'	7
provided targeted information	7
liaised with schools	7
publicity campaign	7
had a community development team or officer working with marginalised groups	6
produced consultation guidance	5
coordinated a community empowerment network	5
ran specific partnerships (e.g. hate crime)	5
involved marginalised groups in community planning	5
Responses do not add up to 100% because respondents could list more than one activity	

Again, the dominant responses connect civic *education* with participatory or representative *structures*. The exceptions include targeted information of various sorts, references to training, targeted voting awareness campaigns, with some councils operating a community development service or a community empowerment network. Generally speaking, explicit capacity-building type activities were only carried out by a small proportion of councils. Of course, it is likely that information provision, capacity-building and training will have been provided in conjunction with many of the forums, networks, panels and consultation events, but the survey data is insufficiently detailed to pick this up.

Activities identified by only a tiny proportion of respondents are as disparate as those identified in earlier questions, ranging from targeted participation strategies and capacity-building exercises through to advocate/advice groups, a sign language service and litter schemes.

Organisational changes [Q5]

Respondents were asked about whether their council had introduced any internal working practices to enhance their ability to support citizenship initiatives. Of the 148 authorities who gave answers to this question:

- 25% introduced a consultation strategy, guidance or toolkit;
- 20% improved web access and support;
- 18% set up contact centres or one-stop shops;
- 16% introduced a customer care policy or complaints procedure;
- 15% introduced a communications strategy or manager
- 9% provided equalities training or guidance
- 8% provided citizenship or customer training
- 7% introduced citizens' panels, clear communication guidelines or increased public speaking rights
- 6% introduced targeted performance management and improvement planning, community development or participation plan
- 5% introduced a community development/democracy team

Again, councils delivering capacity building around citizenship appear to be in the minority, although a small proportion highlighted community development or the introduction of democracy teams. Most respondents flagged up instead their communications, website activities, customer care, or strategy for consultation. It seems that many councils connect citizenship with issues of service provision, and regard the public more as consumers of these services rather than democratic citizens. Communication and service improvement initiatives may help to facilitate internal learning around engaging the public.

While 6% referred to increased public speaking rights, only one other respondent made explicit reference to voting issues (more postal voting).

The minority responses throw up some interesting additional areas of activity:

- *Staffing structures, services and training* – a consultation team; community leadership training; neighbourhood coordinators; member training; participation officers; a youth champion; a councillors champion section; a children's rights support service; a Black and Minority Ethnic workers group
- *Planning and review exercises* – Best Value Reviews (Equalities); improvement planning; neighbourhood planning
- *Work with the voluntary sector* – an employee volunteering scheme; promoting volunteering; a compact with the voluntary sector

- *Scrutiny opportunities* – community scrutiny; ‘Councillor Question Time’
- *Standards* – a young person’s charter; service standards agreements

Requirements for good practice [Q8]

Councils were asked whether they already used good practice guidance in developing their civic education activities (as defined in the questionnaire and covering letter). 64 responded that they did – about one third, suggesting that using guidance is a minority activity. Turning to the types of guidance:

- 30% used IDeA or LGA documents;
- 22% used in-house guidance;
- 20% used examples from other councils;
- 19% used *Hear By Right*;
- 16% used Audit Commission guidance;
- 11% used ODPM/DETR documents;
- 9% used Home Office or Department for Education and Skills documents
- 6% used guidance provided by universities
- 5% used Commission for Racial Equality guidance

Looking across the survey as a whole, this is the question which most clearly attracted answers that specifically reflect civic education activities. Local government representative bodies and central government departments are among the major sources, though learning from other authorities is also important (and council-based examples may come from of other guidance, too). Guidance tailored more to young people (*Hear by Right*, DFES) seems to be used more widely than guidance designed to reach other marginalised social groups.

Other guidance used included items from the Electoral Commission, Cabinet Office, CIPFA, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Community Development Foundation, Carnegie Young People Initiative, Standing Conference on Community Development, journals and the UN Charter for Children’s Rights.

Significantly for this project, 123 respondents identified areas where good practice guidance would be welcomed by their council, specifying the following:

- 20% wanted guidance on all aspects of promoting citizenship;
- 12% wanted guidance on engaging young people;
- 10% engaging BME groups.

- 9% increasing turnout and participation
- 8% engaging hard to reach groups
- 7% on social inclusion, engaging rural groups or developing partnership with schools and Local Education Authorities
- 6% on involvement in decision-making
- 5% on member involvement or understanding democracy

The answers echo the patterns of previous questions – citizenship is about increasing public participation in local government, or social inclusion, with a particular concern to engage young people and BME groups. Electoral turnout is not the dominant concern *per se*, though addressing the training needs of elected members did crop up. The results as a whole imply that the things councils currently associate with civic education – consultation, forums, networks, events and leaflets – are not seen as sufficient.

Other areas where guidance was welcomed, but which attracted less than 5% of the responses, can be grouped as follows:

- *Reaching other disadvantaged social groups* – engaging disabled people, rural proofing, engaging faith groups, engaging old people, engaging women
- *Issues of local government structure* – involving political parties, service improvement, scrutiny involvement, internal working practices, e-government
- *Generic issues of involvement* – consultation, engagement, partnership (e.g. health trusts), communications
- *Knowledge and resources* – measurement, cost-effectiveness, case studies, funding access, research and development

4.3 Concluding remarks

Even with a tightly structured survey, the results confirmed fears about the diffuse nature of ‘civic education’, and the difficulty of separating it from the provision of consultative, participatory or partnership mechanisms. It is difficult to deduce from the survey responses whether respondents were referring to the informal learning that people might gain from engaging in decision-making mechanisms, or conflating civic education with public involvement in general.

Aside from this, there seems to be broad support from the councils who responded for the citizenship agenda, and a desire to improve their approach. Of course, these are easy wishes to express through a survey. Real barriers were acknowledged by respondents, and the 56% of councils that did not respond might be less enthusiastic about this whole agenda.

Young people are by far the main social group targeted for particular attention, followed by Black and Minority Ethnic groups. This is reflected in explicit answers about targeting, but also in the patterns of collaborative working, and the areas where more guidance would be welcomed.

Section 5.0: Telephone interviews

5.1 Introduction

The following section describes the findings of telephone interviews conducted in 33 local authorities in England. The interviewees were individuals with particular responsibility for, or interest in improving democratic engagement of local publics, and most were identified through the questionnaire survey. A handful are officers from outside local councils, but who nevertheless are responsible for delivering citizenship-related projects in partnership with the local authority.

As discussed in the introduction, the main task for the telephone interviews was to establish more details about interesting examples of good practice in promoting democratic citizenship, the fruits of which are in the good practice guidance. It was not designed to elicit wider patterns. Nevertheless, it is possible to tease out some more general features of the responses, and these are presented here under the following headings: approaches to supporting citizenship; activities supporting citizenship; recognised good practice; enablers and barriers, and indicators of support for citizenship.

All quotations are from the interviewees, unless indicated otherwise. Since the responses may not represent the views of all in the authority, individual councils have not been named.

5.2 Approaches to supporting citizenship

The research identified a range of general approaches in which support for citizenship was delivered in the authorities surveyed. In fact, many councils adopted more than one of these approaches to encourage various activities supporting citizenship.

More than a third of councils viewed support for citizenship as specifically targeted at different communities of interest. Typically these groups included young people, Black and Minority Ethnic communities, disabled people and elderly people. Some also target single mothers, alcohol and drug dependents and the homeless. Two interviewees said that their councils had targeted single mothers, with some of these people 'now key members of the community', while another focused additional attention on the business community and visitors to the area. Other targeted groups identified by our interviewees included young people with learning disabilities, young people in rural areas, and parish councils.

About a third of the interviewees regarded supporting citizenship as about encouraging social inclusion and community cohesion. One council supplement their targeted work with a broader approach aimed at everyone, adopting what is essentially a 'Belonging Campaign'. Another has attempted to widen the citizenship debate away from simply equality and diversity to address sharing community resources and living harmoniously together. The Community Involvement Unit in one council did not target particular groups but the whole geographical area. They aim to 'create better neighbourhoods and confident communities'. By contrast, one commentator did not believe in having a dedicated citizenship unit: 'the worst thing that could happen would be to have a separate unit for citizenship. It would

marginalise citizenship. We all work with citizens of the borough – it is our day job. It would allow everyone to say ‘it’s not our job now we have a specific unit to do citizenship’.

A small number of councils viewed support for citizenship as primarily concerned with promoting democracy. The Improvement Programme in one London Borough focused on increasing voter turnout, raising ‘public awareness of council services’ and encouraging people to exercise their right to get involved. One metropolitan council has been focusing on engaging young people with democratic processes, with its Youth Council recognised as one of the most successful in the country.

Other approaches adopted by councils include: a focus on service improvement; whole-council procedures (e.g. an ‘Embracing Change Programme’); a consultation focus; a communication focus; and a community empowerment focus. This was a key activity in one urban council, where support for citizenship is directed towards empowering local people to run their own community development networks).

5.3 Activities supporting citizenship

The local authorities surveyed were involved in a vast range of activities to support citizenship. In some cases, individual councils coordinated an array of projects, networks and partnerships promoting local democracy, community development and citizenship.

Communication and consultation

Assessing and enhancing the accessibility of council documents was important in some authorities. One used brainstorming sessions, another had a programme of Jargon Busting and one interview referred to the establishment of a Reader’s Group to do this.

A number of councils coordinate consultation forums which are used to test public opinion on local issues. Interviewees referred to the following:

- the use of external consultants to assist local people with a visioning exercise;
- the development of a People Bank of 75 local people on whom it can draw to test local opinion on policy proposals;
- efforts to support this type of activity through the provision of computers and e-consultation training (Blackburn);
- being involved as a pilot for a DfES initiative ‘ICT Test Bed’ aimed at ensuring that every family with a schoolchild has access to a computer
- experimenting with web-based initiatives, such as one council running ‘how to access the council website’ workshops.

Some councils have organised events to support citizenship:

- coordinating a Community Conference following the riots in the town;
- organising a ‘Big Day Out’ which celebrated diversity in the area, with stalls, music and food stands showcasing different cultures;

- holding a Community Engagement Day with the heads of all the local schools;
- using summer shows as part of a drive to improve electoral sign-on.

Health education activities have been organised by a number of councils, usually with a view to encouraging yet-to-be-reached groups to improve their well-being and access available services, but with possible spin-offs for citizenship education.

Many councils have sought to publicise their work and the types of service available. One was involved in a documentary shadowing local councillors and has coordinated an Executive Road Show. Another has also produced a cabinet roadshow. One London Borough has developed posters, leaflets and articles on the right to get involved. They have also printed election results on poll cards. In one county council, young people have been involved in the production of 'Debate' magazine (circulation 20,000), which chronicles local issues for young people. School visits are also a popular way to communicate the work of councils.

Our interviewees described a range of small and large projects which improve communication between the council and local people including: Kick Racism Out of Football; junior citizenship visits; drop-in centres; I'm a Councillor Get Me Out of Here; '101 Ways to become more powerful'; road safety, bullying, literacy, filming and research.

Capacity-building and Cultural Change

Specific projects which have enhanced the capacity of local people to be effective citizens include: a *Youth Summit – Education, Health and Remaking (the town)*; *Community Development North West Conference* – with workshops and training; *Youth Conference*; *Young Mayor*; *Street Warden Initiative* in schools; Artwork, democratic map and a local democracy game; *Youth Action* – re-engaging excluded pupils through drama, music and art; *Agenda for Action* – 250 young people got together to discuss local issues.

A range of approaches have been developed to improve relations within communities, and between communities and local councils. Arms Length Management Organisations have been established in some authorities to assist in developing a local civic culture. In one council, the housing organisation now has tenants sitting on its management as a result of council involvement in developing local decision-making processes.

Projects that claimed to contribute to the development of local civic culture – in the sense of an identification, and willingness to engage with local government institutions – were less frequently encountered than those focussing on communication and capacity, the few exceptions being a women's network; a community limited company, and a men's group.

Area Forums

Area panels are a common source of support for citizenship, but often take very different forms and purposes in different authorities. In one council, area forums are led by equal numbers of councillors and local community representatives (6 of each).

In another, forums are coordinated by councillors alone (approximately 2-3 in each) and are attended on average by 30 local citizens. These have ‘real participation’, and have been sold under the banner ‘your money, your say’. In one county council, community representatives on the forums also represent their areas on the Local Strategic Partnerships.

Forums in the councils interviewed have focused on specific groups of citizens and service users, and more broadly on community cohesion.

- Interviewees referred to ‘Speakout-speakeasy’ panels with young people to encourage them to express their views.
- A third of interviewees referred to specific Youth forums run by their council.
- Other citizen’s panels have included: tenants (3 interviewees); disability (2); environment (1) equalities (1); faith (1); parents and toddlers (1); and race (1).
- Three councils had organised community cohesion forums.
- Three others have all coordinated town committees. One county council has implemented user’s forums to evaluate service quality.
- One rural district has conducted village appraisals.
- Some councils have sought to develop links between the work of their scrutiny committees and local people.

Community partnerships have been established in a number of areas.

- One county council coordinated Community Boards in association with the Boundary Commission.
- One urban council set up 5 district partnerships.
- In one rural district, a ‘Community Action’ programme has been involved in 4 community based partnership located in 4 market towns.
- Neighbourhood partnerships have been established in one small city council between councillors, residents and local agencies, and in a metropolitan council where the Neighbourhood Management Team has appointed a Neighbourhood Cohesion Officer.
- Community planning workshops have also been introduced in some areas, often using Planning for Real (four interviewees).

A number of local authorities have helped to set up and sustain a range of democratic forums for specific groups – in one case, establishing an interfaith council.

In three councils, interviewees referred to the setting up of Schools councils; for one of which, the impact is being evaluated by Save the Children. Youth Councils have been developed in a larger number of authorities. In one of the best examples, the Youth Council has yearly elections for 18 area-based representatives. One county

council has a Youth Parliament and is establishing a Children's Parliament. In another county, 8000 young people recently voted in elections to 'Assembly Youth'.

Electoral initiatives

A range of voting initiatives has been introduced to promote turnout in our surveyed authorities. One district council has tested e-voting on local issues. A county has engaged in a young voter registration drive as part of its local PSA, while a district coordinated a 'Who wants to be a millionaire' style vote on councillors performance at a participation event. A London Borough conducted youth question time during Local Democracy Week; two other councils have also held question time events in schools. Voting initiatives have also been used to make local decisions. One London Borough has coordinated voting on specific issues, such as the availability and timing of adult education courses and preferences for the age stratification of housing allocations. Elsewhere, interviewees made reference to conducting a referendum on the implementation of a regional assembly.

5.4 Good practice in supporting citizenship

Progress through coordination

Many local authorities are coordinating initiatives, programmes and processes which one might identify as good practice in supporting effective citizenship. In some cases, the value of this practice has been given explicit recognition by government and voluntary sector bodies.

Action plans to promote democracy have been agreed in two authorities. In one metropolitan council, the Young People and Democratic Engagement Policy Workshop agreed ten recommendations which comprised targets for the Youth Service to achieve in their work engaging young people. In one of the London Boroughs, the council department for democratic services have developed recommendations to be implemented to improve electoral turnout.

A number of councils have developed Involvement Advisory Panels or Groups, including:

- establishing 'fortnightly tasking groups' to address local issues comprising councillors and resident groups;
- allowing every citizen to apply for a seat on similar tasking groups;
- creating a Central Policy and Partnership Unit that organises citizenship initiatives;
- putting together a Public Involvement Group which includes representatives from eight service areas, members from all political groups and the Portfolio holder for communication.

In some councils, this type of work has been supplemented with a diary of public involvement and consultation. For instance, interviewees in two councils referred to on-going calendars of events. Another referred to their council publicising local meetings at different times and in different locations, finding that crèche provision is an important issue for authorities hoping to engage with single mothers.

Some councils have developed consultation and engagement strategies which help focus their efforts to support and encourage citizenship. In particular, one London Borough has produced a Community Development Framework and Plan that seeks to join up citizenship roles across the authority to ensure that all departments are supporting the same agenda. Some councils have found it helpful to construct databases of relevant community groups to facilitate consultation and community engagement. One rural district contributes to a countywide consultation finder – a web-based device for locating current consultations – while a city-based council has constructed a database of contacts and on-going activities.

Other authorities have developed Engagement Charters' to codify the principles behind their work in supporting citizenship, including:

- a charter on good practice for school councils;
- a voluntary/community group compact to guide partnership working;
- a Youth Concordat to guide local decision-making pertaining to young people;
- a tenant's compact;
- a Statement of Community Involvement, and
- a Young People's volunteering COMPACT.

Community engagement networks have been important means for councils to coordinate a range of activities supporting citizenship. One council's Community Development Unit has helped to set up a Community Engagement Network which enables local groups to develop and share expertise in supporting citizenship. Here, the Community Liaison Group has also been instrumental in coordinating local initiatives, especially through the local football club. In one London Borough, the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit's Community Empowerment Fund has been used to set up a Community Network, which operates as an opt-in network. They invited all groups to join, starting with ten groups at the opening meeting and now have 350 groups (100 of which are active members).

Supporting people and communities

The role of dedicated people in coordinating community engagement is also critical, and was referred to by many of our interviewees. This included:

- using community facilitators to help local groups deliver projects (London Borough);
- playing an important role in promoting the interests of the voluntary sector (metropolitan);
- establishing a Participation Worker's network with voluntary sector organisations, the police and the county council (county)

In other councils specific teams have been established to carry out citizenship-related activities, including:

- a Resident Participation Unit;
- Community Development, Forum and Liveability Officers and a Make a Difference Team;
- a Community Safety Team;
- Children’s Rights Officers.

Recognising the importance of people also means acknowledging that they may require specific skills to carry out citizenship work. To this end many of the councils surveyed engaged in external or internal training programmes; a sample of these is presented in Table 4 below.

Some councils have viewed research as an essential part of the process of understanding the needs of the community. In particular, the Research and Engagement Task Group in one council has sought to target citizenship work more effectively. In one of the counties, a Voice and Influence Group has been set up to assess and model engagement across the area.

Table 4: External and internal training for citizenship work

External training	Youth councillors advocacy training
	Tenant groups; Trafford Hall for volunteers
	Community group training on representation
	Workshops with political parties; tenants engagement
	Community Development Toolkit;
	Advice and training for community groups
	English lessons for asylum seekers
	Workshops – Experts shared learning
	Representing young people; argument and debating skills
	NVQ in service assessment – inspecting relevant services
Internal training	Citizenship awards
	Members training; officer’s training
	Embracing Change; leadership, equality and diversity
	Courses on chairing meetings, taking minutes etc
	Training Development Programme (community activists)
	Young managers initiative run by Youth Service
	IDeA leadership programme

Post hoc, the use of progress reports and feedback can help inform future decision-making on the involvement of local people. Neighbourhood Improvement Fund (NIF) projects in one London Borough generated follow-up progress reports to help decision-makers and local people understand the impact of projects. Some councils

have also been involved in work to create performance indicators for involvement, engagement and accountability. One is developing probity indicators, while another is working with a group of academics to identify relevant indicators for engagement.

Resources play an important part in facilitating support for citizenship, *viz.*:

- NIF funding in one London Borough has proved to be a particularly innovative means for encouraging community development – and has been recommended by ODPM as a model of good practice in distributing local grants. This council has also successfully established a Local Network Development Fund.
- In a rural district, six schools have received community activity funding from the council and the establishment of a Children’s fund has impacted on the lives of young people across the county. In addition to financial resources, interviewees for two further councils referred to the supply of schools packs to educate young people about their council and local democracy.
- One district has been testing SIMALTO software to assist budget decisions on engagement issues, highlighting that research and modelling has an important role to play at every level.

Overall, it is important that good practice is recognised and publicised. This may also lead to the development of standards of good practice. Some of the councils surveyed achieved recognised standards in support for citizenship-related activities. The Team Leader for engaging young people in one council was recently awarded the ‘Raising the Standard – Front-Line Worker Award’, while the council represented by another interviewee had been awarded Civic Pioneer status, by the Home Office. In one case, the authority developed its own Standards of Good Practice. In another, the council underwent a peer challenge process to test the effectiveness and quality of its work.

5.5 Enablers of support for citizenship

Many of the councils surveyed felt that specific government initiatives or statutory requirements had provided substantial impetus to citizenship work. These structural enablers of support for citizenship were also accompanied by long-established operational enablers of this type of work, such as committed personnel or dedicated resources.

Over a third of the interviewees felt that the *Local Government Modernisation Agenda* had generally improved the way they made decisions, particularly in terms of ensuring that local communities were now involved in those decisions. In one council, community voice is now said to be ‘high on the agenda’ as a result, with the perceptions of officers having changed in the past five years. Another revamped its polling stations in response to the focus on improving turnout in the modernisation agenda. The establishment of *Cabinet Portfolios* was also felt to be an important driver of change, while elsewhere the *new scrutiny functions* made a positive impact on citizenship work.

About a quarter of councils felt that *Local Strategic Partnerships* had been influential in giving support for citizenship a high profile in their locality.

- In one council area the LSP now represents 120 organisations and has helped sustain and embed locality planning in the area, securing Beacon status for its work in the process.
- In another, the LSP has community representatives across the city and has set up five district partnerships to deliver local solutions to local problems.
- One unitary council held joint-awareness raising sessions before LSP meetings.
- In another unitary, the LSP developed a Best Value Review framework and created a 'Talking Shop' to discuss ideas about community involvement.

A number of other government initiatives were also identified as making a significant contribution to the success of citizenship-related activities. *Connecting with Communities* helped around 60 community groups become involved in local decision-making in one London Borough. The *Connexions* service had played a part in council-led work with young people in some areas. An interviewee from a county council mentioned that the *Local Public Service Agreement* had set measurable targets for raising youth turnout across the county – targets which were successfully met. The *Neighbourhood Renewal Unit* had made important contributions to the work of many councils, while an emphasis on service improvement and the rigours of the *CPA* were deemed influential in some contexts.

Some rural authorities felt that specifically rural initiatives made a major impact on their efforts to deliver support for citizenship. In particular, the *Vital Villages* campaign run by the Countryside Agency was felt to be a positive force for change. The *White Paper on Market Towns* helped one district plan for the future development of communities within four market towns, with the *Local and Market Towns Initiative* providing vital Rural Agency funding for development work.

Funding was accessed from a variety of external sources by the councils surveyed, making use of:

- *Neighbourhood Renewal Unit* funds (two respondents).
- *Strategic Regeneration Budget funding* (two respondents, one of which also made use of), *Building Communities* resources.
- Both *Sure Start* and *Liveability* funds (one respondent).

In some cases, internal funding mechanisms were established by local authorities. One county council created a well-being fund and used members initiative funds to support citizenship. One of the London Boroughs had developed a *Community Empowerment Fund* and a *Stronger and Safer Communities Fund* to make their citizenship work sustainable in the long-run. The *Youth Democracy team* in another county council has introduced grants in schools 'to get their own thing up and happening'. Some councils were pleased to be able to draw on the resources of local groups to facilitate their work. In one instance, the football club provided free use of

their facilities for some community groups, while in another city voluntary groups helped restore run-down buildings to hold local meetings.

Committed personnel have been especially important in some areas. In one district council, local ‘boundary spanners’ – individuals that work to bring different organisations and networks together – have worked long hours sustaining citizenship-related activities, while in another, a vicar has played a central role in listening to, empathising with and representing the grievances of one local community. Many schools in one authority area were felt to have been especially helpful in coordinating *Youth Council* voting ‘which is brilliant and what we want in all schools’, and school interest in the work of another unitary council was also greatly appreciated by the interviewee.

5.6 Barriers to supporting citizenship

Only a small number of councils identified specific barriers to the organisation of citizenship-related activities. These typically centred on political or resource issues.

- Political tensions surrounding support for citizenship ranged from local rivalries to the distraction from community development work caused by the imposition of resource-intensive government initiatives, such as CPA.
- Territorialism between communities in one area was a significant barrier to generating local commitment to involvement in decision-making.
- The growth of quangos at regional level was also feared to be making decisions affecting local communities less accountable to those communities.
- For two district council respondents, the two-tier structure of county and district level organisation hampered efforts to generate political will for citizenship work, sidelining the strategic importance of community engagement. ‘What the community wants has to fit in with someone else’s agenda’, but the ‘community doesn’t always fit in with strategic plans’ (Locality Forum coordinator).
- Councillors’ lack of interest was also cited as a problem.
- In two cases, the culture clash between different partners involved in supporting citizenship often proved to be a substantial barrier to effective joint-working. Differences between the ideological views and approaches of education departments and the youth service were most often thought to be a stumbling block to effective cooperation.
- In some councils, the lack of involvement from schools also made it difficult to develop projects for young people.

Resource issues hampering support for citizenship focused mainly on the availability and continuation of funding for citizenship work. In one council, staff retention and a lack of appropriate training had led to the curtailment of many citizenship activities. In another, it was felt that a restricted advertising budget made it especially difficult to attract the attention of the most difficult to reach groups in the area.

5.7 Indicators of support for citizenship

It was generally recognised by all our interviewees that it was very difficult to develop useful or accurate indicators of the outcomes of their work supporting citizenship. Nevertheless – in line with the survey responses in **Chapter 4**, above – many councils used fairly simple throughput measures and some used or were developing more sophisticated outcome measures of support for citizenship amongst local people.

Outputs from work supporting citizenship included:

- numbers voting in youth council elections;
- the number of youth council polling stations in local schools;
- numbers attending or participating in consultations;
- the participation rate in activities;
- the number of new groups involved in activities;
- the number of successful funding applications;
- election turnout;
- take-up of training programmes;
- partnership meeting attendance;
- conference attendance.

Some authorities used existing Best Value Performance Indicators to measure the success of their work, with one council in particular making use of the community safety performance indicators. Other authorities used feedback from participants involved in their citizenship work to assess how well they had done – in one instance, positive feedback from evaluation forms completed by the young people who attended their Youth Summit. One county council utilised service surveys and an internet feedback form on the quality of their community engagement work. Elsewhere, community development workers met with the local police who fed back that their work had improved social relations in previously troubled areas. In one district council, teachers in schools where Youth Action was operating reported back that the attendance, attainment and attitudes of the target pupils had improved – ‘you can see a difference in the attitudes of the kids... they are more confident, have more self-esteem, they seem to walk differently’. These positive outcomes were also confirmed in a subsequent Ofsted report. In another council, public opinion of the council’s performance as a whole was improved amongst 65% of those responding to a survey, after a documentary about the ‘good work’ of the council was broadcast by Granada.

5.8 Connections to the good practice guidance

A number of instances of good practice identified through the telephone interviews were used in the good practice guidance as summarised in Table 5, below.

Table 5: Cases of good practice from the telephone interviews

Local authority	Good practice example(s)
Blackburn	Documentary
Burnley	Staff training
Durham	CPA enabler of citizenship work
Ealing	Ealing Community Network
Hillingdon	Voting promotion campaigns
Ipswich	Make A Difference Team; staff training; projects to improve civic culture in South-East Ipswich
Lambeth	Community Development Framework and Plan brokering citizenship roles; Staff training
Lewisham	Central Policy and Partnership Unit
Tewkesbury	Outcomes of Youth Action
Wiltshire	PSA enabler of support for citizenship

5.9 Concluding remarks

Unsurprisingly, the telephone interviews revealed a similar pattern of responses to the survey. ‘Civic education’ in local government was associated with a wide range of practices, from partnership to consultation to communications. Councils are taking particular steps to reach marginalised social groups involving mainly, but not exclusively, young people. A number have adapted their internal working practices to better focus on their democratic responsibilities, often in tandem with parts of the wider Local Government Modernisation Agenda.

By telephone interview, it was possible to probe in greater detail exactly how certain initiatives helped cultivate effective citizenship. Improving communications was a key educational tool but so, too, were elements of capacity building and efforts to revitalise civil society and civic culture.

It was also possible to gauge other key enabling factors for improving the delivery of citizenship activity, with the better performing councils often pulling together government initiatives, external funding and committed personnel. Sustaining initiatives based on these ingredients is clearly a key issue.

Section 6: Case studies

Individual local authority case studies were a key part of the research strategy, and represented the main opportunity to triangulate data about the effectiveness of the actions local authorities were pursuing to facilitate learning about democratic citizenship. They also presented a key opportunity to probe beyond the public involvement activities that councils were undertaking, to grapple with the kinds of learning processes going on.

Each case study involved interviews with council officers, elected members, officers from other bodies and focus groups with members of the public (where possible). This was supported by documentary material, and information from the council website.

Case study selection was purposive – the research team went to visit local authorities where the information emerging from the broad-based survey suggested that interesting practices were taking place, or where expert panellists, interviews and the literature review had provided recommendations. Some were also identified as leaders through government initiatives, either as nominated ‘Civic Pioneers’, key partners in Active Learning for Active Citizenship learning hubs, or because they were Community Cohesion Pathfinders. Alert to the potential impacts of geography, structure and resources, the selection of case studies also sought to include representatives from each category of local authority (district, unitary, metropolitan, London Borough and county), and those serving rural as well as urban constituencies.

As with the telephone interviews, the main rationale for the case studies was to produce detailed vignettes of good practice to inform the good practice guide. The most important ‘findings’ are therefore contained in these guidelines – *Promoting Effective Citizenship and Community Empowerment: A Guide for Local Authorities on Enhancing Capacity for Public Participation* – which are available through www.communities.gov.uk/participation.

However, there is a value in seeing citizenship practices within the wider context of council management and politics. This shows that in some cases, improved practices in engaging the public and providing learning opportunities (internal and external) can be linked to other organisational changes. For this reason, six full case study write-ups are included in this report, in Appendix 1. A further two are included in summary form, the reason being that although the data gathered from these cases was very valuable, it was considered less suitable for producing a comprehensive picture. In the case of the ninth case study, the research revealed insufficient evidence of good practice to form a case study, and so it has not been written up.

Each case study write-up follows a standard format. It begins with the selection rationale, then gives an overview of citizenship-related activity under the three main headings of ‘communication’, ‘capacity-building’ and ‘culture’. These categories had been identified earlier in the research as reflecting the three main types of practices local authorities could undertake to help people learn to be more effective citizens. This is followed by a summary of the ideas extracted and used in the good practice guidance. Finally, each case provides a summary table of the research conducted.

As a signpost to the case study material, Table 1, below, summarises the main activities highlighted as good practice from each case study.

Table 6: Good practice illustrations from the case studies

Case Study	Area of interesting practice
Bradford Metropolitan Borough Council	<i>An area where the council and, especially, the independent Local Strategic Partnership have been active and imaginative in empowering communities to take a greater role in decision-making, and in reducing social tensions.</i>
	Community-level Neighbourhood Action Planning and Neighbourhood Forums
	Improving the learning of those in citizens governance roles (from school governors to members of regeneration partnerships)
	'Culture Cards' to increase young people's knowledge of Bradford's diverse cultures
	The role of further education through the Intercultural Leadership School and Bradford's International Centre for Participation Studies, as well as research with BME councillors
	'Women's Days' focusing on the positive role of women across a range of cultures
London Borough of Camden	<i>Camden has been active in seeking to widen the pool of people involved in decision-making, increasing electoral turnout and reaching out to a range of social and ethnic communities. The 'Camden Central Partnership', Electoral Commission and Building Stronger Communities teams have all been important players.</i>
	Improving the accessibility of the council's decision-making procedures
	Developing local trust through faith communities activities, and partnership working, especially with the police, and using Camden Central Partnership to deliver capacity-building for citizenship
	Developing inclusive and pluralistic forums
	Coordinating communications from a range of public bodies through the Camden Talks citizens panel and its newsletter
	Initiatives to increase electoral turnout, especially among young people
	A Youth Empowerment Project, provided as a facet of youth work
Gravesham District Council	<i>The council sees efforts to promote effective citizenship as part of its overall strategy for modernisation and regeneration, and there are close links with agendas for community cohesion. Many relevant activities are attached to mainstream services.</i>
	Accessible, one-stop-shop community facilities, making careful use of council assets
	The development of a Youth Concordat, as a partnership exercise, to develop a working relationship between young people, the police and the council
	Activities targeted on different social groups, including introducing older people to the internet
	Connecting community cohesion events with civic engagement
	Establishing a club to encourage young people to get involved in community projects
Lancashire County Council	<i>The council was jolted into action by a survey showing that most people saw the council as a remote organisation. Strategies for encouraging public involvement have been connected to wider moves towards devolution, but also the need to address the large population and area of the county.</i>
	Innovative communications techniques including webcasting council meetings, and a 'Mobile Unit' initiative

	Delivering information on council activities to schools through a CD-ROM rather than councillor-school visits
	Informal, 'Cabinet in the Community' exercise, with debates held in public
Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council	<i>Rochdale has been able to build upon a lengthy history of successful, decentralised ways of working, in which meaningful devolution and pluralisation of decision-making has been achieved through township-based area committees.</i>
	Bringing together the consultation activities of a range of partners in a comprehensive listing
	Novel ways of gaining feedback from consultation exercises
	Using the arts in public involvement (such as consultation using beer mats)
	An 'accountability clause', requiring the council to respond within 28 days when youth representatives produce a piece of work on an issue
	Multi-group forums (i.e. combining tenants, BME networks and the voluntary sector)
	Participatory appraisal – giving community members a key role in identifying needs and issues
Worcestershire County Council	<i>In Worcestershire, a key focus has been on supporting the role of elected members in their democratic and representative role. This has been achieved through an Area Democracy Team, which also assist with participatory initiatives more widely across the county.</i>
	Empowering young people to decide for themselves when to be involved in partnership or other activities
	Informing staff of the impact of their involvement in internal consultations
	Connecting citizens panellists with the elected members and officers of the council
	Illustration of the slow, painstaking process of building up the confidence of the socially marginalised to get involved in local decision-making

Section 7: Key conclusions

7.1 Main results

The main findings of the website survey were as follows:

- Council websites seem to be relatively useful in giving people the essential background information for getting involved in decision-making, especially: information on voting and elections; committee meetings, agendas and minutes, and sometimes how to contribute; constitutional and organisational structures; Forward Plans for key decisions; and policy documents, such as community plans. The main emphasis is on communication and consultation.
- The website survey was less useful in tracking down educational or learning-based activities connected to democratic citizenship. Two thirds of authorities appeared to engaged in delivering training or capacity-building exercises, although the websites themselves rarely gave sufficient information to determine the precise relevance to citizenship issues.
- The main category of relevant educational activities identified on council websites were targeted at young people, and often fell under the auspices of Local Democracy Week.

The main findings of the survey of chief executives are as follows:

- 74% of local authorities that responded to the survey thought that supporting civic education was either important or very important for their authority. In most instances, such activity was driven from the centre.
- Most councils responding to the survey claimed to be delivering civic education activity in partnership with other public bodies.
- The main barriers councils face in doing more to support effective citizenship, in descending order of importance, were lack of time and resources, consultation overload, a lack of central government resources and a lack of public interest.
- The main motives for citizenship activity were to improve public services, improve decision-making, raise citizen awareness and increase engagement. Increasing electoral turnout was not the major motive for respondents.
- Most of the councils that put forward the methods that they used to assess the success of citizenship initiatives used pragmatic, quantifiable measures – post-initiative evaluations, numbers of people attending – but relatively few focused on assessing learning or empowerment.
- In terms of the practices councils adopted to deliver civic education, the large majority identified structures or processes of public engagement – panels, forums, consultations, etc. There was relatively little comment on the learning or capacity-building activities which may (or may not) accompany such processes.
- The main social groups being targeted with citizenship initiatives were young people (77% of respondents) and Black and Minority Ethnic groups (38%), followed by the elderly (25%) and disabled (19%).

- Most councils have made internal changes to enhance their ability to support citizenship initiatives, the most common being a consultation strategy, guidance or toolkit, followed by improved web support. The dominant emphasis seemed to be on communications, with a strong focus on the public as service users rather than participants in democracy.

The telephone interviews revealed the following patterns:

- More than a third of councils viewed support for citizenship as something specifically targeted to sections of society, and about the same proportion connected it with promoting social inclusion and community cohesion.
- The types of initiatives identified as supporting citizenship included various forums, use of ICT, one-off events, and new ways of publicising council activity. There was a strong emphasis on communications and public participation activities, suggesting perhaps that respondents did not readily see civic education as being a distinctive set of activities. But a few respondents made specific reference to activities that sought to enhance capacity and improve relations between communities, and between communities and the council.
- As with the chief executives' survey, a large proportion of councils were adopting a more coordinated approach to public engagement, often in partnership with other bodies or community representatives. Others had set up units within the council to support community engagement, in some cases hiring community members themselves to deliver the support. Internal training (e.g. of councillors) was also part of the process.
- Over one third of interviewees felt that the policies of the Local Government Modernisation Agenda had generally improved the way they involved the public in decisions; one quarter felt that Local Strategic Partnerships had been influential.

Key points from the case studies

- Among councils that seem to be active in encouraging effective citizenship are those that have been engaged in similar practices for some time, and have been able to learn from long experience. Other councils have been pushed to do better by recent events (civil unrest, aspects of the Local Government Modernisation Agenda, or electoral change) and face a steeper learning curve and more sceptical political environment. Past failings can cast a long shadow.
- Some councils define successful citizenship more broadly than others. In some cases, it is confined mainly to sustaining the legitimacy of elected representatives, whereas others connect it to much broader – but more challenging – programmes of civil renewal. While qualitative research certainly reveals more nuanced measures of success, most councils struggle adequately to assess progress in this area.
- A common outcome of greater attention to democratic citizenship is a more coherent organisational approach to consultation and public participation, which at the very least allows councils to learn more effectively from their experiences. In many instances, training and capacity-building is being delivered successfully through regeneration or service improvement initiatives (such as Sure Start).

- Programmes of decentralisation can increase the opportunities for a wider range of groups to engage in local government decision-making, and reduce the remoteness of political processes, but much depends on the credibility of the actions undertaken, and the support provided for other parties to participate.
- More broadly, councils have needed to reconcile the encouragement of effective citizenship with the dilemmas of political scale, with larger councils especially feeling propelled to undertake more extensive, IT and communications-based activities, rather than the more face-to-face approaches possible with smaller population sizes.

7.2 Overall conclusions

Our analysis found a good deal of local authority support for the idea of helping the public become more effective citizens, motivated as much by an agenda of (service) improvement as increased electoral turnout. The majority of the councils that participated in this research are also putting in place processes – internal and external – that will assist citizenship agendas, often in tandem with communications strategies, decentralisation, various local forums, and youth involvement. Some at least are targeting the needs of particular social groups, and adopting appropriate, collaborative approaches.

However, this does not mean that a fundamental shift in approach to government-society relations is fully embedded at local level. In many instances, progress has been achieved by particular conjunctions of political circumstances, committed officers and project-based resources. While attention has been given to mainstreaming the gains achieved for long-term sustainability, there is no guarantee yet that the public will see these initiatives as marking a lasting change, capable of displacing older, perhaps more negative attitudes towards involvement in local decision-making processes.

Moreover, while our research has found councils eminently comfortable with the language and practices of consultation, even participation, reflecting on the *learning potential* – and needs – of effective citizenship, has not been so closely considered.

7.3 Reflections on the research

As noted in the introduction, the main rationale for conducting the survey of chief executives (and the website survey as well) was to provide a overview of local government activities, and a sampling base for more detailed investigation by telephone interview and through the case studies. In this sense it was successful. It also helped identify areas where guidance would be welcomed, and these have been picked up in the good practice guide (from general issues like engaging young people to specific issues like training members and brokering links between schools and councils).

However, the adopted methodology also showed the limitations of researching such a diffuse subject as ‘civic education’, which is subject to competing interpretations, though a survey. This risk was always recognised by the research team, hence the adoption of a multi-method research strategy to seek out instances of good practice. Care was also taken to define what was meant by ‘civic education’, as the term itself

is clearly problematic in a number of respects. This also means that the findings of the survey should be treated with a degree of caution.

It is clear from the findings that most local authority officers instantly connect activities to support citizenship with the provision of *structures* and *processes* for *participation*. This had implications for the research, in that the investigators had to press further, in the more detailed case study part of the research, to explore learning and capacity building dimensions. It also has implications for the good practice guidance: delivering opportunities for people to learn from their actual experiences of public participation will probably be a major means by which local authorities can support citizenship learning.

It also suggests directions for future research in this area. In contrast to the time when this project was conceived, there are now a number of web-based networks collating good practice in the field of active citizenship – the Active Citizenship Centre is a prime example. In future, therefore, researchers may be able to take a more orchestrated snowballing approach to research of this nature, at least where the identification of good practice is the aim. Indeed, as this research project progressed, it was possible to devote more staff resources to attending citizenship learning events – notably attending Active Learning for Active Citizenship conferences – and scale back the ‘blunter’ instruments of website survey.

Nevertheless, there will remain a need to understand, in general, how the local government sector is performing with respect to their duty to promote ‘effective community engagement’,⁴ and especially the educational and capacity building dimensions. This is no easy matter, but future researchers might benefit from turning to the good practice guidance, and the kind of measures that it identifies as helpful, to frame any future research design.

The guidelines – *Promoting Effective Citizenship and Community Empowerment: A Guide for Local Authorities on Enhancing Capacity for Public Participation* – are available through www.communities.gov.uk/participation.

4 DTLR (2001) Strong Local Leadership – Quality Public Services, London, The Stationery Office.

Appendix A: Case studies

Each of the following case studies follows a standard format. They begin with the selection rationale, then give an overview of citizenship-related activity under the three main headings of ‘communication’, ‘capacity-building’ and ‘culture’. These categories had been identified earlier in the research as reflecting the three main types of practices local authorities could undertake to help people learn to be more effective citizens. This is followed by a summary of the ideas extracted and identified for possible use in the good practice guidance. Approximately 75% of these ideas were so used. Finally, each case provides a summary table of the research conducted.

Bradford Metropolitan Borough Council and Local Strategic Partnership, 1st-2nd February 2005

Selection rationale

- Recommended by participants at ALAC and research project workshops
- Website survey
- Features in government documents (e.g. *Firm Foundations*, Home Office 2004)

Overview

Bradford has suffered from social tensions in recent years – for evidence one can point to the race riots in 2002 and continued pressures from the BNP. It was suggested by one interviewee that the local authority tended in the past to want to keep the lid on those tensions or to find ways of making deals with communities so as to avoid the real issues coming out into the open. *“I think it’s still basically a local authority that looks towards control rather than participation” (Interview)*. While a number of interviewees described an incredible vitality amongst communities and the voluntary sector, one suggested that the ability of this sector to influence the local authority, in the past at least, had been relatively limited and uneven between social groups. There is, though, evidence of change:

“Bradford is interesting, very interesting, fascinating but it’s not yet an example of good practice, it’s an example of a struggle to turn a very poor part of this country into a region where more people could have a say in transforming the district into something, you know a place that’s genuinely integrated.” (Interview).

Geographically, Bradford Council has needed to deal with a big urban/rural divide. 66% of the district is rural, yet the majority of the population live in the urban 33%.

Some interviewees suggested that there are tensions between the vision of the local authority and that of the voluntary and community sector. One such concern is that the local authority thinks participation will deliver active citizenship, understood as local people engaging politely with, and on the terms set by, public bodies. However, in this situation, interviewees suggest that those people participating do not feel they can genuinely have a say and challenge the paradigms set by the people with power. To address this the Council has, *inter alia*, taken steps to improve the way that it uses consultation.

Bradford Vision (BV) is the local strategic partnership which is independent from the council. Interviewees suggested that this independence makes a big difference because people tend to get disillusioned with 'the council' (and not just in Bradford). Moreover, BV's strategy clearly recognises a wider citizenship agenda: "*people who play a proactive part in shaping the future, rather than being shaped by it, gain confidence*" and "*well informed citizens drive up standards of public service organisations*" (Interview). The neighbourhood action planning process presents alternative ways of becoming involved beyond the traditional ballot box, and places great emphasis on encouraging a sense of efficacy: "*The more we try to enlighten people about how they can make a difference then the stronger democracy is going to be*" (Interview).

There is said to be tension between BV and the local authority, with the latter constraining how fast BV can move forward. It was also suggested that there are still gaps in terms of how BV manages to be perceived by the community and voluntary sector and the political reality.

Communication

Various consultation mechanisms are used throughout the authority, including citizen panels, youth parliaments, on-line consultation, area committees and neighbourhood forums. The council carries out large-scale consultation exercises but acknowledges that they tend to miss certain groups of the population. The council supplements these exercises by conducting focus groups with key sectors such as BME groups (especially Asian women), young people, gay and lesbian communities and asylum seekers. It also conducts 'speak outs' which involves asking questions such as: 'Have things improved in terms of relationships with your neighbours' and 'Do you feel there is less tension in the area?' It also organises specific events to consult with people on particular issues e.g. a Crime and Disorder Audit.

The council has a Consultation Improvement Plan. This includes a training programme and incorporates the Health Authority and BV. The CPA highlighted problems in translating the results of consultation into actual implementation. The authority is now trying to address this problem, by asking themselves where the intelligence gathered from various participation mechanisms – such as Bradford's neighbourhood forums (see below) – was being fed into the decision-making process.

The council are in the process of setting up an on-line consultation programme. Kirklees Council designed the software which they are now developing for their own use. It will be council wide initially and then they are hoping to spread it out to being district-wide. It will cover: who to consult?; methods; the aims of the consultation, and a report of output (with a web link so the output is used effectively). The goal is to collect this basic information to improve the co-ordination of consultation across the council. There will be a 'light touch' process in place to approve the consultation (if it is deemed necessary).

BV uses a variety of different methods to disseminate information about their work. These include events, community cohesion conferences, roadshows, leaflets and a magazine which highlights issues, activities and events and is sent out to the community. The council has its own magazine as well.

BV has adopted an idea called ‘Culture Cards’ used in Liverpool at the time of the Capital of Culture bid. This is a project which is *“based on the idea of kids loving to collect cards”* (Interview). There are 24 culture cards in a pack and each card has either a place of interest or something cultural on the front. On the back there are questions, which tie into the school curriculum on heritage and citizenship. Not only are the cards meant to be good fun but they increase the children’s knowledge of the diverse cultures there are in Bradford.

The council established area committees and neighbourhood forums in 1981 with four main aims:

- To listen to people
- To engage people in planning for their own communities
- To empower people to take action on their own behalf
- To ask citizens for their views on plans for their community or the district

Membership of the 5 area committees reflects the political balance of the six wards in each area. They meet 8-12 times per year. The area committees are a part of the formal council structure with delegated budgets.

The 132 neighbourhood forums are based on geographical communities. The officers responsible argue that people vote with their feet and attend: where this is the case, they seem to be successful. It is reported that there have been 73,995 recorded forum attendances since their launch; 1,728 organisations have been involved in the consultation, and there are 18,575 people on their mailing lists. Elected members attend these as members of the audience and they are chaired by officers. They have no decision-making powers but act as a catalyst for neighbourhood development. They give people the opportunity to raise important local issues, involve people in decisions about their community and improve partnership working. The forums also help to empower people by putting them in contact with people who may be able to help.

The research identified some ambivalence about the inclusiveness of neighbourhood forums, and whether they function equally well across the borough:

“I think a lot of people feel consulted to death and don’t always think that the forums are genuine participation. The same people tend to turn up, those are the sorts of stories you hear. Some of the forums are said to be more useful and relevant than others” (Interview).

“The forums do not provide the views of all; what do the silent majority think?”
(Interview)

Capacity – knowledge and skills

Some of the activities discussed above under ‘communications’ – notably neighbourhood forums – are also intended to provide a sense of empowerment, but there are other activities within Bradford tailored more specifically to this task.

- The Community Development Unit has run a survey of the community and voluntary sector about their participation and attitudes towards participating in the different sort of structures that are on offer but, at the time of the research, this data had yet to be analysed.
- Bradford University have embarked on a project with newly elected councillors in the district. There has been quite a large turnover of members in the most recent elections. The council currently has 20 Black and Minority Ethnic councillors out of the total of 90 – a higher proportion than of the general population. This project examines the attitude of the new councillors towards working in the local authority structure, their background (i.e. do they have a voluntary community sector background), what encouraged them to stand for election and how are they responding to being in the elected position. This project is funded by the local authority.
- Bradford has a Youth Parliament. Almost 9,000 votes were cast in the most recent election (January 2005). There are a lot of young people described as being '*on the periphery*' (Interview) who are becoming involved. The council is focusing their efforts on the Bradford Youth Development Partnership, which uses young people to get more young people involved. Again, they are aiming to reach not just the people already involved but those who are 'hard to reach'. Bradford also operates a system of school councils, within the education system.
- Bradford Vision (BV) has a project through the Bradford Action for Refugees that works with asylum seekers and refugees using a system of befriending. Volunteers go into families that have moved into the area and help them with their local needs and in integrating them into the community.
- BV also support events such as 'Women's days' – which focus on the positive role of women across all cultures. A group called 'Mum's Army' got together following the riots and was funded by BV in the first two years. The group looks at issues such as personal safety, cleaning up certain areas, fixing street lighting etc. Members of the group train local people – "*it's like 'train the trainer'*" (Interview). So they will train people in local areas about personal safety with the hope that those skills will be left in the community.

While there is a range of activities under way, respondents did not necessarily feel that this amounted yet to a coherent programme of enhancing the capacity of all disadvantaged and excluded communities, though at least this issue is now on the Council's agenda. In one particular respect, however – Neighbourhood Action Plans – Bradford has developed what is now widely regarded as a leading model for promoting more effective citizenship.

Neighbourhood Action Plans (NAP)

The background to NAP in Bradford comes from a piece of work that has evolved over fifteen years. It arose out of an understanding that the poorest communities were the poorest served by the public sector and also that they had little involvement in official processes for engagement i.e. representation through councillors and being part of the system. Part of the understanding about what needed to change was that people needed to find a voice for themselves. The churches in the City did a piece of

work called 'Powerful Whispers' which involved a couple of people who now work in Bradford Vision. A series of five hearings in the poorest communities were held to try and bridge the gap between strategic decision makers and their knowledge and experience of poverty and what the people in those communities understood about the same issue. There were a series of hearings where the strategic decision makers were not allowed to speak. This was a really novel concept at the time; that the 'key players' were not there to answer but to receive something. Part of the model for NAP's have come from the developing world where they found that these top down approaches didn't work because practitioners did not understand how the world looked from a different perspective.

When the Neighbourhood Renewal programme came along, they wanted to look at the idea of working at three levels at once – neighbourhood, area and strategic levels. They realised that they had to do something to help the community to take a more overall view of what was impacting on their lives. So they came up with this concept of neighbourhood action planning. The notion is that the local people and those frontline workers who are committed to the area are offered small amounts of money, £5,000, to do with what they liked. The people develop a plan of priorities for their area and were allowed to do it in the way that fitted with their community. They started from the point of view that there is an awful lot that was good in their area that no one was noticing. Then they asked the local people, what sort of services would best sit with what you have already got? People used a range of very creative methods to engage with their local community from structured mechanisms, like focus groups, to disco's where people got free tickets if they filled in a form.

A first stage plan is produced to identify what was already there, where the gaps were and who they thought should fill the gaps and to what timescale. The authors of the action plan are then given more money (£20,000) (known as the dowry) to help them negotiate with agencies to achieve their goals. As of January 2005, there are 66 action plans, 58 of which are geographically based and eight are 'communities of interest' (those who were not visible in large enough numbers to show up in a neighbourhood for their concerns to be heard, and those who experience stigma in raising their voice).

"To give an example, in one area there is an alleyway between houses that nobody wanted to do anything about. The local authority own the pathway and the Housing Trust own the wall and the residents' gardens back onto this area. The residents came first to the local authority and said we will clear it and we will look after it and once we have kept it clean, will you repair it, so they said yes they would repair it. The Housing Trust said well if you are going to do that, we will sort the wall out and we will also make the warden help keep it clean. So it is lots of little joined up actions on the ground that are making life a lot better for these people rather than huge regeneration projects that can often disrupt the community" (Interview).

Those involved in NAP say that a key lesson arising from this work in Bradford is flexibility: every neighbourhood is different, what works in one does not work in another. It is not the case that a community has got all the answers, the community can identify what it can contribute and then there needs to be flexibility for others to say, *'this is what I can do at this level, this is what is appropriate to happen at neighbourhood level and this is what is needed at the strategic level'* (Interview).

Neighbourhood action planning is seen as hugely successful: *“I definitely think the neighbourhood action planning is a genuine, real effort to try to innovate in terms of people’s capacity to influence decisions”* (Interview).

The Conservative-run council has suggested that some areas which are relatively wealthy would also benefit from the neighbourhood action planning process. Bradford Vision agreed that the same process could apply but they would need to consider how it was funded. As a result, there is now neighbourhood action planning, urban village planning (see below) and Parish Council planning. The idea is to cover the whole district with this participatory process that should strengthen and underpin vibrant local democracy, and ensure that the whole area is taken into account.

An additional motive for extending the NAP initiative is the recognition, as elsewhere in the country, that the area-focused financing of regeneration and renewal can divide communities and create huge resentment. Urban villages also seek to extend a vision of urban regeneration that embraces social revitalisation and not just economic revitalisation:

“It is not simply a matter of throwing money at problems. Citizenship is much more about how everybody in the district behaves. NRU money is there to bring up the lowest to the average, but if your average is very low, you need to be working with people who are average” (Interview).

A further motive is that while voter turnout in the city centre wards is pretty good – indeed there are some instances of wards having very high turnouts – there are much lower levels of turnout in the outskirts of the district. These are mostly working class white areas, which are completely disengaged with decision-making processes. The urban village programme is an attempt to increase and improve the engagement from these areas.

After extensive research, the authority has concluded that there are seven areas on the outskirts of the district which may be regarded as urban villages. These are areas which are in danger of decline, but because they are not the most deprived wards, they are ineligible for Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) or NRU funding. The council is using the neighbourhood action plan process to work in these areas and attempt to bring communities, businesses and public agencies together to work out a plan to improve those areas.

Bradford Vision have brought people involved in neighbourhood action planning and the decision makers and the delivery agents, the middle managers etc. together and taken them on walkabouts of the area to investigate the issue of air quality. An action plan was written for changing the neighbourhood environment and they got the strategic partnership to allocate £750,000 of its NRF allocation to participatory budgeting with those neighbourhoods.

Active Citizenship Framework

An Active Citizenship Framework has been produced to identify the development needs of active citizens. Research by the authority has shown that there are a large number of courses and opportunities for people who are on a ‘learning path’, to study diversity or social cohesion or citizenship through college and university. There are, however, not many opportunities for ‘Mr and Mrs Bradford’ who are not on a

learning pathway. Bradford has calculated that they need something like 3,000 people to service their decision making bodies.

Bradford Vision used an active citizenship survey to examine the key roles organisations play when engaging active citizens who contribute towards decision-making. This survey focused on recruitment, training, support and retention methods used by public service organisations. The aim was to use a systematic approach to providing active citizens with support and training so they can develop along the active citizenship continuum. The framework will help the authority to track people coming on different courses, like the Inter-cultural Leadership School (see below) to try and ensure that the learning gained from these courses continues to be used, i.e. *“you’ve got a lot to offer the district, would you like to become an elected member or a school governor or a magistrate?”* (Interview).

The council set up a group to look at the meaning of active citizenship. This group concluded that active citizenship was not just about the 3,000 plus volunteers on the statutory bodies but that there is a continuum of people from somebody helping their neighbour, through to volunteering, through to becoming a representative. The group are considering how they can re-engage people with the representative system. They have posed the following questions: Why are people willing to act on the public good generally yet they do not feel the political system offers them a means to deliver what they would like to have delivered? How can we understand the gap between active participation at community level and representation and democracy at council level and above?

Culture

Many respondents see that a significant cultural barrier to improving services, and restoring faith in local democracy, is the need to get confidence back in the public agencies and overturn the image of Bradford to the outside world. They feel a need to get people to move on from the riots of 2002. Another barrier is the fact that there are different speeds of progress in communities, and expecting communities to turn round as quickly as the Government needs them to, for the agencies to prove that they have been effective, is difficult.

“If I look at the best practice in the private sector some of the innovative ways that companies are developing involve getting the most from the people inside their organisation. We are a very forward thinking organisation and it’s not as easy for those people sat in the statutory sector. Some of those organisations are very cumbersome, very laden with practices and behaviours that don’t encourage you to be innovative and certainly don’t encourage you to stick your head up because you can get yourself in all sorts of deep water. I think they recognise that but it is still very hard for them to change” (Interview).

A number of activities have influenced the council’s cultural attitude towards community engagement. A participatory budgeting day was held in November 2004. This was described as an opportunity for real, genuine voices from communities which would never have had an impact or ability to influence the decision on any sort of council budgeting in the past, to show their capacity to put forward projects and proposals that were clear and well thought through. An interviewee suggested that the event had an influence on some of the councillors and local authority officers

who began to get a little bit more faith in people's ability to make decisions and identify budgeting priorities.

Bradford Vision's community cohesion strategy is not predominantly based on race, it is based on the whole ambit of community regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, where you live, your postcode etc. However, the information they provide does target deprived areas and these areas are mostly ethnic minority community areas. Officers at BV believe that their approach seems to work as they know that they are quite well represented in ethnic minority terms, though less so among ethnic minority women.

There is a district wide faith forum which has not existed in Bradford before. It is early days and it is a sensitive issue, but they have started the process of getting people together to talk about what they want a Faith Forum for and the sorts of issues they want to be able to deal with. Initial meetings have been hugely productive. An event was held in December 2004 to launch it and there were over 400 people attending.

Social cohesion has also been delivered through activities in schools. There is an innovative scheme which links up pairs of primary schools across the district that are different, whether it is because of their geographical or demographic situation. They are linked up for a year and do activities every week around culture, diversity and citizenship. The project has helped to break down barriers for the children, mixing with different type of children but it also helped to break down the barriers for the parents as it creates a better understanding of different cultures. This project will be rolled out in 2005 to secondary schools.

An enhanced citizenship curriculum is operated by Education Bradford which builds upon the mandatory citizenship curriculum but 'Bradfordises' it. So it focuses on the heritage of Bradford, how everybody got here and why there is a cultural mix. It is localised but also examines the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

Identifying Good Practice and Measuring success

The authority has a full set of performance indicators and there are indicators to measure community cohesion (e.g. employment, educational attainment, regeneration). Bradford also has PSA targets around increasing participation (voting rates, attendance at neighbourhood forums, turnout for youth parliament) and improving the representativeness of the district's key decision making bodies.

Council respondents feel that the government encourages local authorities to count heads as a way of measuring success and there is little emphasis on qualitative measures. That said, the research interviews revealed wider understanding of a range of alternative, qualitative measures. Focus group or interviews with people involved in the process are seen as one way of assessing perceptions and understandings of their ability to change decisions. One might also measure people's own understanding of themselves as active citizens: *"for instance, how did you see yourself as a citizen in the past and what did you do to exercise citizenship? Was it just the voting moment? Were you part of a voluntary group or a community group? Has being part of this neighbourhood action planning given you a sense of active citizenship beyond what you used to do and how would you understand that? Does this self understanding of citizenship lead people to have more confidence in the political structures?"* (Interview).

The neighbourhood forums use feedback sheets to see how things have progressed on an issue. Thus far it has proved impossible to keep statistics on the issues raised in the forums and the outcomes as there are so many to keep track of. There is tangible evidence of success from neighbourhood action plans, however, where participants fill in a book which records different sorts of evidence, what has happened and how has it happened. Interviewees noted the difficulty of understanding why some things happen in the neighbourhood when there are usually a range of contributory factors. Difficult issues include measuring improvement in self esteem, valuing where you live, respecting where you live, contributing to your area and participating in society.

Candidate Good Practice Illustrations

The practices and quotations listed below have been extracted from the full case study text, above, and represent a series of items which were considered for inclusion within the Good Practice Guidance. For further discussion of the case studies, please see **Chapter Six**.

Neighbourhood Action Planning (NAP)

- Bradford's concept of Neighbourhood Action Planning emerged from a recognition that the poorest communities were disconnected from official processes of engagement, and often needed to find a voice for themselves. At the same time, strategic decision makers needed to listen to people's knowledge and experience of poverty. Neighbourhood Renewal Funding enabled the Local Strategic Partnership (Bradford Vision) to offer neighbourhoods, communities and front-line workers small amounts of money to address their priorities for their area, and tackle it in a way that fitted with them. Each community can receive up to £25,000: £5,000 to help devise their plan and a further £20,000 to begin to put it into action. They can use their funding to buy expertise from public service staff that help to draw up or implement their plan. By January 2005, there were 66 action plans in operation across Bradford. The key is flexibility, to respond to the diversity of community situations, and the ways in which strategic bodies can assist. The support team has worked hard to create a support structure to help these groups to work effectively. They held a series of action learning events at which groups could learn how to produce their action plans. Eight experienced community development workers have been contracted and a further ten are being trained from disadvantaged areas. The latest phase seeks to extend the neighbourhood renewal process to areas beyond those eligible for NRF resources. A discussion paper on local action planning is available on www.active-citizen.org.

Novel routes to engagement

- People involved in Neighbourhood Action Planning in Bradford used a range of very creative methods to engage with their local community, from structured mechanisms like focus groups, to offering incentives like free tickets to disco's where people fill in a form.

Engagement and sustainable communities

- *“Bradford's Neighbourhood Action Planning initiative provides many illustrations of connections between active citizenship and sustainable communities. In one area there was an alleyway between houses that nobody wanted to do anything about. The local authority own the pathway and the Housing Trust own the wall and the residents' gardens back onto this area. The residents came first to the local*

authority and said we will clear it and we will look after it and once we have kept it clean, will you repair it, so they said yes they would repair it. The Housing Trust said well if you are going to do that, we will sort the wall out and we will also make the warden help keep it clean. So it is lots of little joined up actions on the ground that are making life a lot better for these people rather than huge regeneration projects that can often disrupt the community” (Interview).

Active Citizens – ‘individuals who take responsibility and contribute to the common good’

- There are approximately 3,500 citizens’ governance roles within the city of Bradford, including everything from school governors and magistrates to board members of health bodies and regeneration partnership members. Yet despite the large number of courses and opportunities for people who are on a ‘learning path’ to study diversity or citizenship, there is little to bring ‘Mr and Mrs Bradford’ onto such pathways. To address this, an Active Citizenship Framework was set up. The City Council is working with Bradford Vision (the Local Strategic Partnership), health bodies, the University and other agencies, to explore ways of better co-ordinating and improving the recruitment, training, support and retention of the city’s active citizens. They are developing a common approach to training and recruitment, auditing current practice to share what works best, and beginning to consider how to re-engage people with representative democracy.

Education initiatives

- To widen participation in the Youth Parliament, the council is focusing their efforts on the Bradford Youth Development Partnership, which uses young people to get more young people involved. They are aiming to reach not just the people with the voices being engaged anyway but those people who are ‘hard to reach’.

Efficacy

- *“One thing I would be looking for in ten years time is that people know where best to place their energies in order for something to happen. Now that might be at a neighbourhood level, at an area level, at strategic level, national, regional and that’s whether you’re citizens or a citizen and a worker...there (needs to be) a mechanism for people to feel they can have an impact on the world around them and contribute to it and challenge it sometimes” (Interview).*

Culture Cards

- Bradford Vision has adopted an idea called ‘Culture Cards’ used in Liverpool at the time of the Capital of Culture bid. This is a project which is based on the idea of kids loving to collect things. There are 24 culture cards in a pack and each card has either a place of interest or something cultural on the front. On the back there are questions, which tie into the school curriculum on heritage and citizenship. Not only are the cards meant to be good fun but to increase the children’s knowledge of Bradford’s diverse cultures.

Intercultural Leadership School

- Bradford University’s Intercultural Leadership School is run through the Active Faith Community and is looking to develop the leaders of the future. It is a residential course that looks at cultural issues, the heritage of the district and educates people into civic life. The Local Strategic Partnership supports this school with funding.

The International Centre for Participation Studies

- Bradford's International Centre for Participation Studies was set up in 2003 to link some of the democratisation discussions that are taking place out in the wider world to processes going on locally and regionally. The centre is funded by the Higher Education Innovation Fund. The centre runs short courses and workshops with local organisations, including the community and voluntary sector, around participatory methodologies. They are trying to understand what inhibits participation, what facilitates participation and working on both sides of the equation from the people who want to push for greater participation and the institutions that want to open up to more participation. The centre is also in the process of setting up a Foundation degree in Active Citizenship and Participation to start in October 2005. They are working with local employers who are interested in seeking to understand and promote participatory practice to develop a curriculum.

Women's Days

- Bradford Vision support events such as 'Women's days' – which places a focus on the positive role of women across all cultures. A group called 'Mum's Army' got together following the riots and was funded by the Local Strategic Partnership in the first two years. The group looks at issues such as personal safety, cleaning up certain areas, fixing street lighting etc. Members of the group train local people – *"it's like 'train the trainer'"*. So they will train people in local areas about personal safety with the hope that those skills will be left in the community.

Reflective evidence

- There are some very tangible examples of successful citizenship outcomes arising from neighbourhood action plans. To share this knowledge, participants fill in a book which records different sorts of evidence, what has happened and how has it happened.

Research Methods Note

Method	Personnel (number of people)	Initiative/activity
Interview	Policy & Executive Support, BMBC (1)	Communication Education initiatives
Interview	Community Cohesion, Bradford Vision (2)	Education initiatives
Interview	Neighbourhood Renewal, Bradford Vision (1)	Neighbourhood Action Plans
Interview	Community Development Unit, BMBC (2)	Active Citizenship Framework
Interview	Neighbourhood Support Service, BMBC (1)	Area committees and neighbourhood forums
Interview	Department of Peace Studies, University (1)	Active Citizenship Framework Education initiatives
Interview	Research and Consultation, BMBC (1)	Communication
Interview	Councillor, BMBC (1)	Communication
	Total Interviews = 8	Total Interviewees = 10

Interviews were supported by documents supplied by interviewees and a search of the council's website.

London Borough of Camden: 10th August 2004/21st October 2004

Selection rationale

- Positive response to questionnaire and telephone interview;
- Represents a London council
- Civic Pioneer
- Large ethnic and social class diversity

Overview

The case study centred upon a variety of citizenship-related activities being conducted by the London Borough of Camden (LBC). Camden is composed of a diverse collection of *“village communities”* reflected in very distinct geographical needs within the borough which are often *“overwhelmed by outside forces”* (Interview). This has led to greater pressure on the council to deal with a range of social issues, in particular, the extensive re-housing which has accompanied building regeneration and increased immigration. Although the tension between local communities and wider socio-economic or political forces has impacted on the different types of projects introduced by the council, the area is well-used to such demanding circumstances. Social housing was pioneered in Somers Town and St. Pancras in the nineteenth century and a host of voluntary and community groups have been active in the locality for many years.

Camden is serious about citizenship and related activities. ‘Building stronger communities’ is a key aim in the community strategy, other strategies (such as for children and young people) have strong links to citizenship, and there is an Executive member for community engagement. This has led the council to become one of the Home Office’s ‘Civic Pioneers’: a council which places community engagement at its heart. As an authority, Camden is generally viewed as an organisation which takes *“new initiatives forward”*, often being *“a little bit ahead of the game”* (Interview). This capacity for improvement is confirmed in the excellent Comprehensive Performance Assessment scores given the council by the Audit Commission. Responding to diversity, tackling community cohesion and boosting electoral turnout are now increasingly important dimensions to the work of the council and Local Strategic Partnerships are also involved in the citizenship field. Other areas of interesting work concern the efforts within the council to develop more opportunities for engagement with local decision-making, regenerating deprived areas and supporting community group activities.

Communication

A number of approaches have been used in Camden to widen the pool of people involved in decision-making and policy-making, and to access marginalised groups. In particular, the decline in electoral turnout which occurred *“very quickly”* during the past few decades has generated a focus on young people (Interview). Initiatives coordinated by the Voter Turnout Working Party are listed below:

- Attempts to promote election turnout have been carried out using beer mats in pubs, in a specific effort to reach 18-35 year old males – a very difficult group for public bodies to reach. Cinema advertisements were also used to reach young people.
- Prior to the 2002 council elections experiments were conducted with different voting methods, including e-voting, before the council decided to promote early voting in some wards. Projects have also been run highlighting the difference that voting can make.
- Events where electoral candidates, MPs and other political representatives speak to young people and answer their questions. There is also a programme of councillor visits into schools.
- A ‘Thinking about and becoming a councillor’ initiative has been run at recruitment fairs to encourage more people from diverse backgrounds (especially young people) to become local councillors.
- The ‘Opening up the town hall’ initiative introduced by the mayor has sought to establish better communication with different social groups by encouraging them to meet with and discuss issues with the mayor. In 2004 the focus was on young people; in 2005 it was on elderly people and with mental health service users. Following the introduction of the scrutiny committees there has also been a larger number of public meetings.
- Publications produced by the council detailing opportunities for citizens to be involved in decision-making include ‘Putting Forward Your Views’ and ‘How are decisions made in Camden?’

The following Faith Communities work relating to communication has been undertaken:

- Multi-faith events to encourage wider participation in shared social issues across the borough.
- ‘Islamic Awareness Week’ led by the Equalities team.
- Publication of a ‘Neighbours’ directory of faith communities in Camden, distributed throughout the council and publicly available also supports the building of citizenship capacity amongst local citizens and council officers.

The Families in Focus neighbourhood regeneration initiative has used newsletters and leaflets to advertise drop-in mornings and the successes of the project to date. Camden Central Partnership coordinates the publication of a range of newsletters and briefings such as ‘Umbrella Talk’.

Camden Talks is a consultative panel of nearly 2000 residents coordinated by the council which *“gives local people a chance to have their say about life in the borough and about local public services”* (Interview). It consists of a series of panel discussions, workshops and focus groups, and a Camden Talks website enabling the council to consult and involve panel members in on-line discussion and debate. The

website is linked to the Practical e-Democracy in London (PeDiL) project which aims to develop an ‘e-democracy’ tool-kit, providing a range of facilities to enable local authorities and community bodies to consult on-line with citizens on policy development and service planning; and to provide associated support to elected members.

“The things that we identified we wanted to do differently were have a panel that was more inclusive and was more linked to other consultation and engagement activities, and that was more inclusive in terms of the types of people in the group that were involved” (Interview).

“What we’re trying to do with the panel is get to the people who don’t normally get involved... We need to hear what the usual suspects are saying, but in the long term we need to minimise the involvement of those sorts of people at the expense of some of the other people who’ve never taken part in any of these things” (Interview).

The ‘Camden New Journal’ and the ‘Ham and High’ covered the launch of Camden Talks. There was also an article in October’s ‘Camden Living’ and BBC London radio presenter, Robert Elms introduced the event, generating further publicity. Consultations relevant to the citizenship agenda so far have included:

- Community Cohesion
- Mystery shopping receptions using disabled panel members
- Community Safety.

Relevant future consultations include:

- Awareness of and priorities for Trading Standards
- Camden Living newspaper
- Scoping the next community strategy

There is also a Citizen’s Panel Newsletter which contains updates and progress reports and two years ago, ‘Young Voices’, a good practice guide for reaching young people was produced for the council and partner organisations. *“First of all there was the potential for it to go a bit awry with abusive language and comments and stuff, and that actually didn’t happen. It was very carefully moderated and I think that helped”* (Interview).

More broadly, the council coordinates a range of communication activities which can enable citizens to engage more effectively with local decision-making. These include:

- a language service for people whose main language is not English
- a plain English initiative for all council publications and communication with the public
- a Jargon Buster guide of terms commonly used in local government
- funding for a range of community newsletters.

Capacity – knowledge and skills

This is an area where young people have been targeted for additional support. Since 1995, LBC have been operating a Youth Empowerment Project. It is provided as a facet of youth work, supporting the development of young people, and has fostered their inclusion in three main ways:

- The ‘Rhyl School Project’ – Year 6 pupils (aged 10-11) were brought into the council to vote on whether they would prefer a tree or a bench in the school yard.
- Sixth-formers student poll clerks initiative – this initiative led students from a wide range of backgrounds and disciplines to reflect on the importance of formal democratic procedures, thereby comprising an “*opportunity for political education as well*” as civic engagement.
- Youth Question Time events have been run as part of Local Democracy Week, along with visits to the Houses of Parliament and Lords.

Community work in the borough has developed in many interesting ways, in particular, the Families in Focus initiative has concentrated attention on the development of ‘child-friendly neighbourhoods’. This has led to support for the efforts of local community groups and activists to organise community activities, some of these include:

- Keep-fit classes, language classes, family days-out, NVQ courses.
- Workshops in Health, Crime and Community Involvement at least once a year.
- Peer mediation (LEAP) activities

The initiative has also encouraged a range of research activities with community representatives, estate residents, or families using Sure Start or involved in Families in Focus, learning to conduct surveys, discussions and workshops themselves.

Faith Communities initiatives are being developed as an aspect of the equality and diversity agenda “*to see what direction it should go*” (Officer interview). The ‘Camden Faith Communities Partnership’ is evolving into a self-sustaining network with 10 core faith leaders working on a ‘statement of common public values’. Discussions about this have taken place “*independently of the council*” (Officer interview). Capacity-building issues in this area of citizenship work would be assisted in the borough by the establishment of a multi-faith centre.

Camden Talks seeks to enhance the internal capacity of the council and its departments by integrating strategic cross-cutting and service-specific consultations within one engagement framework. There are also briefings, seminars and workshops to facilitate internal training about consultation more generally. Training was provided for panel members who engaged in mystery shopper activities. Partnership working has required the council to play a broader educative role amongst local institutions:

“We want the PCT and the police to get this idea that it’s not just about surveys and research and that they can use it too to get people involved and engaged in developing their services, but that’s going to be an ongoing challenge” (Interview).

The PeDiL project has led to the development of a ‘Councillor’s Tool-Kit’ which enables elected members to have their own web presence and interact with their constituents and local groups. Community Groups are also provided with a free, fully interactive website to engage with their users and other interested people at www.camdenet.org.uk/.

The council coordinates a range of liaison groups for service users with particular needs. These are chaired by councillors and cover: Physical disabilities and sensory impairment, Learning disabilities, Elderly persons, Mental health, Children and families, HIV/AIDS and Alcohol services. Agendas are set ‘bottom up’ by attendees. The outcomes are fed into the decision making of those who commission local services. Changes driven by the liaison groups include the introduction of disabled swimming facilities and a club for recovering alcohol abusers. Tenant and Leaseholder forums are also important routes for citizens to become involved in the production of services.

Camden Central Partnership has been instrumental in providing “*skills, capacity and the position*” to facilitate a wide range of citizenship activities. Consultants report that “real progress has been made in terms of *community capacity*” (Interview), in particular, through the establishment of the Camden Central Community Umbrella (CCCU) and the Community Buildings Network (CBN). The CCCU comprises the core management and support staff of the partnership, approving and coordinating the development of new projects.

“We needed people to organize meetings so we ended up getting a person in to run the CCCU which acts as the forum to bring people together. Once we had the CCCU which organized credits, minutes, leaflets, reports we became clearer and clearer on what the people wanted us to do, so then projects were set up and local people quite strongly said “and we don’t want the council to do this project, we want to run this project”. So the CCCU became not just a mechanism for holding forums, it became an employer of project workers and a team of project workers working together” (Interview).

Culture

The prominent position afforded to community cohesion in Faith Communities initiatives has been borne out in the self-sustaining growth of a civic culture in local neighbourhoods. One Bangladeshi community group secured a lease for a council building and gained NRF grant funding to establish that building as a place of worship and a community meeting-place.

Relationships with the voluntary sector vary widely ranging from the involvement of the Camden Civic Society in the delivery of many Electoral Commission funded initiatives to a reluctance to involve faith communities where it exerts “*a monopoly on the community voice*” (Interview). The varying degrees of community cohesion make the community leadership role of the council especially important.

The Building Stronger Communities Team “*has an overview of what the council are doing*” to support effective citizenship and is “*looking to promote a more corporate approach*” to civic engagement (Interview). This is also evident in the establishment of the Executive Portfolio for Community Engagement. Although one important aspect of the work of the council in this area is “*about helping young people to the avenues*

into decision-making” (Interview), it has far wider implications and application. This is highlighted in some of the developments listed below:

- There are 45 school councils across the borough.
- All-party *ad hoc* scrutiny panels have been introduced to encourage greater public interest in local decision-making. The council and other local institutions work together to enable local citizens to give evidence on important local issues. For instance, the closure of local Post Offices was recently addressed by such a panel. Up to six of these panels may be running at any one time lasting between 3-12 weeks.
- ‘Executive Question Time’ is conducted 4-5 times a year with 30-50 people tabling questions at or before a public meeting. The council responds to and follows-up these queries and the outcomes *“influence the way members think”*.
- Conservation Area Committees and Amenities Societies dealing with local environmental debates seek to educate citizens about planning decisions.
- Overall, these initiatives highlight that the council seeks to encourage *“deputations from people out there to put their views forward”*.

Perceptual and political difficulties remain in other areas. Some young people view politicians poorly, partly because they are *“not terribly good at talking to young people”*, but perhaps also because they *“aren’t so good at giving straight answers”* (Interview). There were also concerns about the growing information gap between the education-related activities that were once the province of political parties and the greater demands being placed on local authorities. In the future, the council will be looking into providing more extensive training for councillors, including increased focus on dealing with difficult-to-reach people. The importance of a good relationship with local schools was also recognised – *“a lot depends on the citizenship coordinators in schools”* (Interview). Related to this, the democratic services section is has applied for funding specifically for a citizenship post.

The Camden Central Partnership was set up in response to the perceived failings of the council at that time. Residents felt that services were poor and that providers were not talking to local people. *“The thing that got off the ground was, in essence, local residents being fed up with the services provided. It wasn’t as if you were all sitting around with a notion of citizenship – how should I get involved, should I get involved – it was because people were pissed off”* (Interview). There were also issues with the attitude of the police at a time when racism was a real problem in the area. The work of the partnership has addressed these concerns and led to the development of a more inclusive approach to local regeneration with partners now *“looking out for each other”*. In particular, *“the attitudes in the police seem to have changed quite radically”* (Interview).

Measuring success

A study of social capital in the area was carried out to develop a baseline for assessing neighbourhood renewal and guiding the first Community Plan. This project highlighted that the use of research to involve and engage people is a valuable tool. A repeat of this study has been proposed, to guide the second Community Plan.

The council is participating in the Audit Commission's Area Profiles Project which aims to develop quality of life information about local authority areas. The council also uses consultation and survey findings to carefully moderate proposals for work relating to citizenship and community engagement.

Camden Central Partnership (CCP) used a consultation company to find out local people's concerns. It also benefited from an extensive period of planning before bidding for SRB 6 funds. The CCP was 'very conservative' about its outcomes and outputs in the SRB 6 bidding process. This made it possible to deliver on specifiable targets. Its overarching objectives were also defined in very broad terms making it more straightforward for projects to have a close strategic fit with them. In turn, this made it easier to show how activities and initiatives would contribute to the overall quality of life for local citizens. Moreover, local people need to sign up to this. *"It wasn't just more money, it was money spent in the right way... where the community had a real impact on what the projects were and how they were carried out, because we felt without that it just wouldn't work and it wouldn't work in its aim of lowering deprivation"*.

Candidate Good Practice Illustrations

The practices and quotations listed below have been extracted from the full case study text, above, and represent a series of items which were considered for inclusion within the Good Practice Guidance. For further discussion of the case studies, please see **Chapter Six**.

Access to Decision-Making Procedures

- The importance of citizen involvement in decisions is well-recognised. In particular, 'Camden Talks' and related activities are based on the goal of ensuring that citizens have a 'strategic influence' by engaging them in 'setting the agenda'.
- The user-friendliness of council chambers and procedures was identified as a key issue to address when attempting to encourage public involvement in decision-making. This also applies to voting where one turnout project carefully explained the different ballot papers for different elections.

Developing Local Trust

- Faith Communities activities became increasingly important post-9/11. Following a meeting of local community groups, the leader visited each group individually, while the FC Policy Officer met 40 different groups to make *"a plan for the work based on what I heard"*. After further consultation with local Mosque Committees and Bangladeshi groups a community police officer was seconded to the council and the council financed extra policing in areas where community tension was greatest. These activities *"created trust"* and greater cooperation between the local Muslim community and the council.
- The Camden Central Partnership has coordinated and contributed to a growing culture of trust between local people and public service providers, especially the police, such that *"a completely different atmosphere has arrived"* (Interview). The neighbourhood manager's role in this is crucial. Also, diverting money to the local people to spend has been found to be an effective way of developing trust between them and the council.

Inclusive/Plural Forums

- The Camden Talks panel is broadly representative of Camden's population in terms of age, ethnicity, disability and area: *"300 from BME communities, 200 younger people and 300 from 3 specific wards where the police are doing a community policing initiative and wanted to try and effect change and involve more people in those areas, and then 100 people with disabilities."*
- Camden Central Partnership has become increasingly inclusive as more minority ethnic people have come on board. Local meetings are now *"really reflecting the people living in the area"* (Officer interview). It has been stressed in meetings that *"everyone shares the same problems no matter what their background"*. Care has also been taken to avoid problems of tokenism and co-option.

Social Education

- Broad-based community development activities are an excellent opportunity to promote wider social education, for instance, the Families in Focus initiative enabled children and families to learn new skills, participate in worthwhile activities and to know their neighbours.
- Camden Central Partnership coordinated a wide range of projects including the St Pancras and Somers Town Arts (START) project which organises summer and winter festivals involving school children and other members of the local community.

Local ownership

- The Camden Central Partnership was commended by a consultancy as *"one of the most community-driven programmes"* they had been involved in. This underpinned its success in bidding for SRB 6 funding. Tenant leaders formed a district management committee which looked to coordinate the input of a wide range of groups into local regeneration issues, especially community safety. They also rejected proposals to establish an ALMO to drive regeneration and agreed to consultation only if they could lead it. Overall, having control over the use of meaningful resources brought the partnership members together.

Early Targeted Intervention

- The Families in Focus initiative concentrated on the prevention of harm by targeting intervention towards the families of 8-14 year olds.
- The targeted involvement of the relevant council department, such as the Housing department in area regeneration, enabled resources to be directed efficiently and effectively towards achieving success. This has included diverting resources to enhance groups that are beginning to struggle with their remit and in one case withdrawing support altogether.
- Outreach work coordinated by the Camden Central Community Umbrella has enabled Camden Central Partnership to become more diverse and representative.

Sustainable Community Development

- The importance of developing and embedding the capacity for self-organisation is integral to both the Faith Communities work and the Families in Focus project. Good resources for consultation-based risk-taking are essential to support this. Self-organised consultation procedures were particularly effective in encouraging the growth of community development capacity.
- Camden Central Partnership operates a Community Chest small grants programme which supports local voluntary and community groups.
- The Camden Talks members will be refreshed every six months. If residents are interested in joining, they will be sent a recruitment questionnaire to complete and return. Their details will be kept on file for possible inclusion in future panels.
- The Council acts as a banker for many citizenship-related activities, often providing benefits in kind for community groups. This was particularly important for Camden Central Partnership, because SRB funding is paid in arrears.

Focus on Specific Target Groups

- The Camden Talks Project has used Mystery Shopper exercises to “*test our customer services*” by coordinating panellist visits “*to our reception points and assessing how they were treated by staff*”. So far this has concentrated on members identifying themselves as disabled, with a long-term limiting illness or caring for someone who fits this description.
- Camden Central Partnership has sought to ensure that its meetings, activities and decisions all provide something useful for its diverse range of partners.

“Having some money, having some power over that money over the type of projects taken out, did actually bring people together. Obviously, there can always be all kinds of frictions, but there was a completely different atmosphere arrived and also one in which the DMC (District Management Committee) now has a far greater variety of ethnic minority people sitting on it in a kind of natural way – they’re there because of their tenants’ association” (Interview).

Effective Partnership Working and Project Coordination

- Camden Central Partnership has involved a number of diverse public sector and voluntary sector organisations working in partnership, including the Housing department, the Police Authority, the Primary Care Trust, the Youth Service, and local community groups such as Disability in Camden. Its success overall has also been attributed to its use of thematic Steering Groups and the coordination of different projects. For instance, the Youth Initiatives Project and the Addressing Health Needs project have taken advantage of the Community Buildings Network. There has also been good coordination between the SRB 6 scheme and the local Neighbourhood Renewal Fund Strategy.
- Camden Talks is funded by the Council, the Police and the Primary Care Trust and is a resource made available for the shared and distinct consultation and communication needs of these organisations.

Research Methods Note

Method (no.)	Personnel (no.)	Initiative/activity
Interview (1)	Policy Officer (Faith Communities) (1)	Faith Communities Projects
Interview (1)	Community Development Officer (1)	Families in Focus
Group Interview (1)	Deputy Leader/Cabinet Member for Community Engagement Elections Manager Head of Democratic Services Member of Camden Civic Society (4)	Voter Turnout/ Councillor Recruitment
Interview (1)	Corporate Policy and Projects Manager (1)	Camden Talks
Focus group/interview (1)	Chair of partnership Vice-chair of partnership Neighbourhood Regeneration Manager (3)	Camden Central Partnership
	Total Interviews = 5	Total Interviewees = 10

Interviews were supported by documents supplied by the council, the interviewees and the council's website.

Gravesham District Council, 5th October 2004

Selection rationale

- Positive response to questionnaire and telephone interview;
- Represents a district council;
- Beacon council for regeneration;
- Large ethnic and social class diversity.

Overview

The case study centred upon citizenship-related activities being conducted by Gravesham Borough Council (GBC). Gravesham is committed to these activities as part of its overall commitment to wider processes of local government modernisation. Its corporate plan highlights that it seeks to 'encourage participation in the civic life of the borough, fostering a unique sense of place where there is 'an appreciation of the responsibilities of citizenship'. As a council, it has principally sought to achieve these goals, by positioning itself at the forefront of regeneration. This focus on linking environmental improvement with economic advancement is confirmed in the award of Beacon status and the improved Comprehensive Performance Assessment scores given the council by the Audit Commission in 2003. Responding to diversity, tackling community cohesion and reducing anti-social behaviour are now increasingly important dimensions to the work of the council as it seeks to include citizenship within its drive for regeneration. Other areas of interesting work concern efforts to promote youth engagement and healthy living, and support for community group activities.

Communication

A community resource and information centre has opened in Gravesend town centre to offer housing, personal and marital advice to local residents. The Advice and Resource Centre, is home to the Citizens Advice Bureau and relationship counselling service, Relate. The building also accommodates the council's housing advice service, including the homelessness team.

A Race Equality Commission event on diversity and a 'Big Day Out' event introduced people throughout the borough to a wide range of diverse cultural experiences. The 'Big Day Out' was coordinated by the Community Cohesion Group and comprised a variety of music and entertainment acts and food stalls, representative of local ethnic diversity. At the heart of the event site, the council set up a stall with a customer contact centre and registration details for the People Bank consultation forum.

The council established the 'People Bank' to give local citizens an opportunity to voice their opinions on service provision and other local matters. Members of the bank are then asked to take part in satisfaction surveys, focus groups and regular meetings, with participants financially rewarded for their troubles. Other initiatives to collect or provide information locally have included:

- A Youth Concordat signed in Committee Room 2 in the House of Commons by all the partners involved. The young people who came along were then given a guided tour of the Houses of Parliament.
- The Westcourt social audit to find out what services and facilities the local community most wanted to see provided at a Community Centre.
- An Asian Women's Health Initiative Programme which provides information on various health issues for Asian women. A translator was made available for each of the health talks given during a ten week period.

Community services has budgeted £30,000 for community consultation. This is usually conducted with small groups of local citizens by consultants, with officers participating as and when necessary. Tenant consultations involve residents, staff and members all at the same table. Cabinet Advisory Panels have also been set up to challenge local service standards.

The first ever Gravesham Civic Awards were held in May 2005 to recognise outstanding contributions to community life in the borough.

Capacity – knowledge and skills

Young people have been targeted for additional support through the Youth Forum's involvement in the Youth Concordat. Youth Conferences have supported the development of young people, concentrating on community safety and healthy living. Most recently, workshops were conducted by and about the police and the local Healthy Living Centre, with others focusing on bullying and peer mentoring, and keep fit and obesity issues.

The GRAND Project is a Healthy Living Centre established by the local health regeneration partnership (Health Action Gravesham) using a New Opportunities Fund (NOF) grant. The GRAND Project addresses the social determinants of health in six key wards in the borough and with four population groups.

The Healthy Living Centre has developed local capacity for citizenship-related work by appointing a Sports Development Worker and a range of outreach workers. It also comprises a number of core staff, including a nurse and some IT specialists. Community work carried out by the GRAND Project has developed in many interesting ways, some of which include:

- *“Don't Sit – Get Fit!”*
- SOS (Street Outreach Service)
- Positive Activities for Young People (PAYP)

A young people's club, 'Kids dot go', was created by the Residents Association on Kings Farm to encourage young people living on the estate to get involved in community projects. Young people earn points for taking part in local events that they can then use to go on trips. The club has enabled the young people to take pride in the area. They also decide how they are going to earn their points, what trips they are going to spend them on and whether sanctions should be applied to those who break the rules.

A peer mentoring service has been established in the Healthy Living Centre which is run by young people for young people who want to access advice, support and information. Training is provided for the mentors, with the service being provided every weekday evening.

Planning for Real has been used to educate local people about forthcoming changes in the built environment. This has been an educational 'bottom up' process involved a wide range of people who live and work in an area likely to be affected by changes. A Reader's Group has also been established to assess the clarity of internal documents on housing.

The director of community services places a great deal of emphasis on educating and informing members about the nature and cost of citizenship-related work.

Culture

The Youth Concordat has provided an opportunity for the council to contribute to the development of a vibrant civic culture in a variety of ways. In particular, it has led the work of the Youth Forum to expand and develop towards the establishment of the Youth Council. The council intends to coordinate youth council elections in schools and youth clubs across the area.

Outreach work by the Healthy Living Centre has been conducted in partnership with schools in ways which have been linked to the Citizenship aspects of the curriculum. This work has led to greater cooperation between Gravesham and the county council. The work of the Community Cohesion Group has also led to more collaboration and understanding between the various community groups within the borough.

The internal culture of the council is being reshaped to reflect a range of citizenship-related work, in particular, the Community Cohesion Group is reviewing the extent to which service functions are embracing the provision of Race Relations (Amendment) Act. This led the group to conduct a special joint session addressing minority ethnic recruitment with the local Fire and Rescue Services. In another session, the Group coordinated a meeting between tenant associations and minority ethnic groups which generated greater understanding and awareness of how each group worked, eventually leading to the launch of joint tenant and minority ethnic groups.

Identifying good practice and measuring success

Turning to measurements of success for the council, the major objective for the Youth Concordat exercise was to organise a Youth Conference. This was successfully accomplished and this has led to the principle of a Youth Council being accepted within the council. Another important outcome was the production of a statement of what young people in the area believe in.

Many of the GRAND projects have taken a 'cognitive approach' by focusing on the 'hidden' impact of initiatives on attitudes and values. These are not easily measured, but nonetheless reflect the importance of the experience of contributors and participants within individual projects.

Candidate Good Practice Illustrations

The practices and quotations listed below have been extracted from the full case study text, above, and represent a series of items which were considered for inclusion within the Good Practice Guidance. For further discussion of the case studies, please see **Chapter Six**.

Access to facilities

- The GRAND project is located within a minute's walking distance of Gravesend Bus station making it easily accessible to young and old people.
- The Advice and Resource Centre offers a range of community services under one roof, meaning that residents can benefit from a 'one stop shop' easily accessible in the town centre. The centre also has a community room for local groups managed by the North West Kent Racial Equality Council.

Developing Local Trust

- The Youth Concordat has encouraged the growth of a working relationship between young people, the police and the council.
- The Healthy Living Centre contributes to local trust and community cohesion by integrating young and old people within the same environment.
- The involvement of a facilitator from the Race Equality Council in the Community Cohesion Group helped to develop trust and break down barriers between the diverse ethnic and religious groups involved.

Fund seeking

- The director of community services seeks funding for community development activities from a wide range of sources, including the council executive, Europe, English Heritage and the ODPM. Section 106 agreements have also been used to secure additional funds.
- The GRAND Project has benefited from additional funds being sought and obtained from European Regional Development Funds (URBAN II), Kent Children's Fund and the Home Office.

Asset management

- The council's asset management services have worked with a variety of outside agencies to help restore the building which houses the Advice and Resource Centre.

Focus on Specific Target Groups

- The Youth Council has talked to young people in rural areas and skateboarding facilities have now been provided in some villages as a result of their findings. In another area, a Teen Shelter has been built for young people to 'hang-out' in.
- The GRAND Project has concentrated attention on a range of specific groups. For instance, its Speakeasy programme empowers young parents to talk about health issues with their children. The programme educates both trainers and parents in sexual health issues. A Silver Surfer scheme has introduced older people in the area to using the internet in a safe supportive environment.

Effective Partnership Working and Project Coordination

- The Youth Concordat has been developed with the help of a range of local partners. Kent County Council, the police, the Race Equality Council, the Primary Care Trust and local community groups have all signed the concordat and have played a role in coordinating various initiatives.
- The Community Cohesion group works with North West Kent Race Equality Council to facilitate the airing of local issues for minority ethnic communities. It also works with Dartford District Borough Council on a wide range of relevant infrastructure issues and is part of a wider Community Cohesion Group coordinated by the Government South East Office.

Responsiveness to local needs and demands

- The GRAND Project is able to be responsive to local demands: if local people ask for a service then the Project manager can arrange to provide it.

Research Methods Note

Method	Personnel (no.)	Initiative/activity
Interview	Executive Director (Community Services) (1)	Youth concordat
Interview	Head of IT Services and Chair Community Cohesion Group (2)	Community Cohesion Group
Interview	Project manager Youth project worker (2)	The GRAND Project
	Total Interviews = 3	Total Interviewees = 5

Interviews were supported by documents downloaded from www.gravesham.gov.uk.

Lancashire County Council, 2nd-3rd August 2004

Selection Rationale

- Positive commendation by other telephone interviewees and expert panel.
- Large county – useful to compare with smaller counties/districts in what can be achieved with greater resources

Overview

Lancashire is a large County Council and this confers a series of advantages and disadvantages in terms of delivering effective citizenship. On the positive side of the equation, Lancashire's size means that it has significant resources to deploy – it takes 85% of the council tax. On the negative side, the wide geographical area that the county covers forces it to deal with dispersed but diverse population centres. With a population of one million, not everyone can attend or participate in events or initiatives. This situation requires a wide range of initiatives to meet the democratic needs of all, but also compounds the sense of detachment from the public often experienced by higher tier councils.

Devolution has been a major driving force in recent years, reshaping how Lancashire delivers its services. The council has restructured and committed resources and policies to fostering better corporate working, and to reposition a previously centralist body closer to the community. It is doing this both physically – by taking members and officers into the districts and working with district councils – but also virtually, through the employment of technology. Citizens can now access information and observe their elected members and officer representatives via web casts, electronic access points or CD-ROMs. As with the other county case study, Worcestershire, the citizenship agenda in Lancashire places elected members at centre stage.

Communication

“You need to have an ongoing relationship with the public. Not in terms of just consulting. It's about really educating people about what they can expect of their council, and what their council can and cannot provide for them” (Councillor)

A key challenge was thrown down to the County from their first ever survey of the populace, conducted by MORI in 2000, which indicated that the public wanted to see more of their councillors. Panellists saw councillors as the people who could solve their problems but were also described as remote. More broadly, the council was viewed as traditional, separatist and out of touch with the people: *“some sort of strange building stuck in the middle of Preston and nobody actually knows what goes on”* (Councillor). A number of responses emerged – some of them rather basic, some of them more innovative.

In the past, Lancashire had done relatively little to support its elected representatives, nor had it ever produced public information on the councillors. So, the Council produced the first leaflet informing the public about what councillors do for all 12 districts.

Communication is not seen as a passive exercise, nor is it seen as sufficient in tackling the poor visibility or accessibility of councillors. Lancashire has embraced the idea that the starting point for good citizenship is sending out the 'right messages' but also in gaining and responding to citizen feedback. Part and parcel of this is recognising the value in alternative means of expressing the message, to reach different audiences:

"...to be honest, I mean if I didn't work in local government, I would probably spend little time interacting with these local governments, we've got busy lives and you know, Monday night's Coronation Street and ... people would probably rather watch Coronation Street than come to a meeting. So I think there's – there's something about us going to places at times and in the right places and in ways which are attractive to the citizens, so the cabinet in the community using the TV presenter and doing that in a format that is something they are familiar with in their everyday lives..." (Senior Officer)

Lancashire developed the 'Mobile Unit initiative' to raise the profile of the council and help remote or otherwise detached geographical populations to see more of their councillors. The unit is, in effect, a corporate branded trailer which can take councillors into areas where the public feel councillors are never seen, and which also enables citizens to engage with councillors in locations familiar to them.

"The branding of the authority is clear and the mobile unit takes this brand into the local area. It is equipped with plasma screens, compilation CDs and computers with access to Internet and intranet. We also carry promotional literature and rely on volunteers in the authority to help run it." (Senior Officer)

There is always a councillor present though it is acknowledged that not all councillors adapt naturally to face to face conversation with the public.

The Mobile Unit has been located in places like Burnley town centre where people "literally bumped into the unit", and over the year visits summer fetes, supermarkets and pub car parks to maximise footfall. The MORI survey and Citizens Panel were useful in identifying areas where there were high levels of disaffection, or high demand for this kind of contact. In the months up to July 2004 they had interacted with over 7,000 people, but the costs of running the unit, wear and tear, and the more significant moves towards devolution (below) indicate a need to rethink this kind of outreach.

Lancashire have used virtual mechanisms for bringing the council and its decision making processes closer to the public. There is the hope that citizens may become better informed, and that e-government can modernise engagement processes and widen the audience. Starting with an LGA project, 'Designs on Democracy', Lancashire has been running Web casts of council meetings. Interviewees were positive about this initiative, which has received limited but supportive feedback from 'users'. They were *"not too bothered by low audiences"* as they see the tool as being more about transparency, with attracting viewers a bonus in these early stages. Average viewing figures are 300 a month, rising to 1,000 in some months, but this should be put in the context of minuscule numbers of people attending council and cabinet meetings in person. There is a strong suspicion that the majority of the audience is media related but as local news rooms also help communicate what is going on in the council, this is no bad thing. Interestingly, most people (80%) watch the archived material; this

allows people to refute or verify for themselves stories run in the local media, as well as to watch meetings at a time that suits them. The council has also web cast one-off debates and youth council meetings – especially valuable in overcoming young people's limited mobility. During Local Democracy Week, a debate on lowering the voting age enabled 3,000 school pupils to tune in.

Interviewees feel that there is a drive and a desire for engagement in the authority, and a sustained interest in innovative, IT-based approaches. Lancashire has tried on-line polls with the budget and receives as many as 40,000 visitors a month to their website. As an indicator of high level support, leading members and officers have been able to overcome initial resistance within the council to webcasting development control decision making, and got it through the council's committees.

Another IT-based project developed with the LGA is for all Lancashire councillors to have individual websites meeting IEG requirements by 2005. By August 2004, 48 members out of 78 had live websites, and these 48 sites were receiving about 2000 visitors per calendar month. This received a mixed response from members – though age *per se* does not seem to have been the barrier – with some initial enthusiasm requiring further injections of officer support to sustain momentum. At present, the potential is felt to be rather underused.

Lancashire tried to use Local Democracy Week as a launchpad for widening democratic engagement among young people. But with 78 councillors and 600 schools, Lancashire County Council found it difficult to meet all the requests from schools for councillors to visit and give talks in support of the citizenship education. In Local Democracy week October 2004, the council launched an interactive CD-ROM targeted at young people aged 10-13, as an alternative means of energising the curriculum. The CD provides information on what is going on in their council, who is who, and what the money is spent on, all in a language younger people can identify with. The inclusion of interactive games also helps pupils build up an understanding of what councils are all about. Interviewees feel this has been a difficult but positive process.

Lancashire also communicate with the populace through the traditional council newspaper, 'Vision', which has also been used as a way of widening citizenship engagement. This has been attempted by placing adverts for opportunities to get involved, and responses to Vision have helped target groups with specific issues, interests or attitudes. It is used as a communications tool alongside local newspapers, local radio, schools and libraries.

"Whether people would see all that as being citizenship education or just publicity is a different matter. I see it as being both. For some people, it just raises the profile of the county council; and for other people, they will actually learn things and find out things they didn't know before" (Councillor)

The Youth Council is developing its work with the council: meeting with the Cabinet 3-4 times a year, and developing topic groups working with officers and members around particular subjects.

Lancashire's Citizens Panel, Life in Lancashire, was another product of the first MORI survey. It has 1,700 members receiving four questionnaires per annum. The Council also undertakes external consultations, including 3 to 4 MORI polls each year, which

include face to face interviews. These techniques have provided useful data for targeting specific issues, such as groups feeling particular disaffection with the council.

Overall, Lancashire's approach to communications is becoming more tailored to different target audiences: *"making it as easy and unthreatening as we can for them to be able to engage and interact with us"* (senior officer). Many citizens, notably young people, are perceived to be easier to reach via emerging forms of communication utilising SMS surveys and text messaging. Lancashire has engaged in a number of e-government initiatives, including: People's Network; their Democratic Information System (improving website information on forward plans and elected members); one-stop-shop Contact Centres, and the national 'What Now?' SMS text and email service offering advice and guidance to young people. Meanwhile, traditional citizens panels seem more appropriate to older age groups and those more likely to, or having more time to, commit to consultative exercises.

Respondents felt that Lancashire is not only embracing the goals of the modernisation agenda but is also prepared to try new means or mechanisms to tackle the democratic deficit. Technology has been used extensively to deliver communication closer to the busy lives that people lead. Some interviewees have impressive ambitions for making the council closer to the public:

"In the future we want to be able to enable citizens to email questions to the chair of a meeting from anywhere within the county as the meeting is ongoing."
(Councillor)

Capacity – modernisation and devolution

Lancashire's attempts to involve and engage citizens does not mean simply consulting them, but also seeking to educate them about what is achievable, and dispelling the perception that decisions are made without their consent. To progress this, however, interviewees felt that they needed to engage a polarised public, in that there are some who are always engaged and willing to participate and there are those who are never involved and will never want to be either. In between are all the others who only dip in at times of crises or when circumstances conspire or dictate.

Traditionally Lancashire saw its failure to engage with the public as a self-inflicted problem resulting from failings in publicity and communications, but also a failure (or reluctance) to work in partnership with the district authorities. This has now been challenged through the restructuring of the authority, and there are two, related areas in which the County's internal capacity to engaged more effectively with the citizenry has been transformed – corporate restructuring, and devolution.

On corporate restructuring, there is no doubt that Lancashire feel that the Local Government Modernisation Agenda has come at an appropriate time to support the capacity development goals they are aiming for:

"...because you've now got cabinet members with individual responsibility, everything that happens round this table when cabinet members meet then goes back into their directorate with a very clear view – more so than under the old committee. I think it's probably been easier because you actually had somebody who had, you know, an office in a directorate. Sitting round this table we have

informal meetings as cabinet members. And we're talking about ... we need to do more of this". (Council Leader)

Prior to 2000, the County had little history of corporate working, no Policy Unit and a tradition, as some put it, of *"fine words but little action"*, somewhat confirmed by the poor perceptions expressed by the public in the first ever survey of Lancastrians (above).

The election in 2001 of a Leader and Deputy committed to change was a turning point, along with an influx of new staff at corporate/policy level. To this extent, the Local Government Modernisation Agenda was a factor in driving a shift towards a more people-focused council.

Devolution is integral to this wider picture, and to the 'Locality Focus' initiative to take County Hall into the districts. Lancashire has recruited 12 District Partnership Officers (DPOs) – one for each district and district-level LSP – to ensure collaboration with the district councils takes place and to deliver more seamless public services. The idea is that these posts will help to deliver more devolved ways of working, bringing together corporate initiatives that operate through the districts, and working together across tiers rather than imposing ideas.

"The motive behind this agenda has been a tiredness from district councils at the division between county and district in tackling service issues that face the citizenry. We, most of us who have a history of being district members, wanted to overcome this opposition and deliver a more cooperative public service. It is not about whose responsibility it is to deliver but about delivering it correctly and dealing with it together. We wanted to open up local government and to challenge the views held by the people." (Councillor)

Rather than teach the one million inhabitants of Lancashire how the tiers of local government are organised, the councils themselves join things up from the users' point of view.

Political will made a great difference – Councillors decided that they wanted to end the division between districts and councils and committed themselves to work together to achieve this goal. The DPOs are based within the districts, talk directly with Chief Executives at district level, and provide a point of contact for all LCC services. It also helped that the individuals filling the DPO posts were recruited carefully, and that a number of them have been very enthusiastic about their roles and have even converted cynical members:

"We now have a better relationship with districts thanks to DPOs – previously we had no direct dialogue with districts". (Senior Officer)

Progressing devolution has meant negotiating people's past experiences of decentralised working within the county. Interviewees explained how a poorly developed, supported and administered Area Committee agenda in the 1990s is still used by some to resist the new ideas.

"The attempted area committees in the past didn't work ... because the areas defined were three massive areas covering the whole of Lancashire. Districts cover three wards so 12 areas is much better and more local". (Councillor)

Evidence from interviewees suggests that Lancashire is succeeding in building collaborative capacity because it is avoiding past mistakes and learning from them. Comprehensive Performance Assessment is forcing all districts to consider carefully the benefits of collaborating with Lancashire's devolution agenda, and this is also helping to overcome local resistance.

Among the twelve areas are four districts selected to pilot ways of devolving decision making powers to local people. Each one is different, and this reflects the fact that the district councils selected the issues that they wanted devolved. By focusing first on pilots in the more cooperative districts it is hoped that the positive evidence of improvement will help sell it to those still smarting from the 'broken promises' of the past. Going further, to involve local people rather than joint members from the county and district, is recognised politically as important but also as more difficult, requiring careful attention to incentivising people to get involved at this scale.

The County is also reviewing and improving the way that it supports its local community and voluntary sector, through developing a COMPACT. This corporate perspective is felt by officers to be a big step forward – *“the big picture has always been missing before”*. A database has been pulled together, containing the details of 600 organisations, enabling the tracking of grant applications from the sector.

Lancashire's ability to be innovative in developing its structures, and finding new ways of engaging with the public, have been aided by circumstances:

“We are lucky that we can use the economies of scale as a county to employ the right staff and develop proper networks. Additional duties are not just tagged onto existing job descriptions.” (Councillor)

To give one illustration, Lancashire employs 130 IT staff, compared to a district that might employ around 10.

Culture

Internal cultural changes, affecting how the council is managed, have had a major impact on how issues of citizenship are viewed within the County. In essence, members committed Lancashire to a citizenship agenda, though this began from a communication agenda, supporting devolution, and gives a prominent position to quality of life:

“Many of these ideas are coming from members who are driving a better communities agenda rather than a better services agenda. We want to improve the quality of life of our citizens which in turn will help them become better citizens. To this end the corporate objectives reflect this way of thinking.” (Councillor)

This view was consistently supported by officers, who also made reference to the new 'acceptable risk' or 'okay to make mistakes' management style, supported by members, which fostered innovation:

“The ideas for these initiatives have come from within and a desire by colleagues to see things improve. Cracking the mainstreaming of the general public is next. A lot of the initiatives are directed at young people because they are the citizens of the future and we are even aiming at primary schools. To do this it is vital that senior political and officer support is provided – failure is acceptable”. (Senior Officer)

Such a culture was also greatly enhanced by having new staff from variety of backgrounds to challenge and introduce new ideas and initiatives.

An integral part of the devolution agenda within Lancashire is to accommodate the diversity of the population throughout the county; from rural, farming communities to declining industrial cities. In terms of its relationship with the district councils, Lancashire is less concerned with who runs the service now. Meeting citizens' demands is far more important in the new progressive approach:

"The policy focus is on LCC being supportive and helpful even if the service complaint does not relate to one of our services. ... Originally some services were alone in seeing the electorate as customers but this now applies to the centre as well. A sea-change has meant that citizens matter. Appointment of Head of Policy heralded the Locality Focus and the dinosaur that was LCC has awoken to the demands of the 21st Century. The aim is to be creative and respond to feedback – that is critical". (Officer)

There are important and serious issues to be tackled at the district level, including deprivation, economic decline and lack of community cohesion, but these are seen as partnership issues.

Much of this form of working has yet to be full formalised in Lancashire as a whole but is part of the future for the authority. Changing the internal culture within the authority has been the starting point, beginning with a restructuring of the central policy area educating both officers and members about their responsibility to the public. In some areas it was clear that members were are still resistant to some of the innovative approaches to their job.

Lancashire recognises that simply putting structures in place will not build a more citizen focused culture within the authority, so it is seeking to promote a citizen led approach to service delivery throughout the council:

"I think – some of this is about terminology in a sense isn't it, but I think – I mean in terms of the business – the leadership saying this is all about service delivery, I mean that is a – I wouldn't go as far as to say if you go down to the tips of the fingers in the individual directorates that people would have that as a mantra, but certainly in the management board it is a constant refrain in a sense that everything that we do is about services to people and engaging with people and making our services responsive to people and finding ways for people to give us feedback on those services, to influence the way they're shaped and delivered." (Senior Officer)

One area in which progress seems to be being made is in the greater attention being given to ensure high profile council officers and cabinet members attend public meetings, not least at local level, and to be seen talking to people, *"not only when we want to do something to the people"* (Councillor). Interviewees talked positively about a meeting on a local waste management facility, where the considerable consensus was achieved on the options on which cabinet members should consult the public. What seemed different is that *"people in the locality actually heard councillors talking about it, took part in the discussion and heard a recommendation come out of that meeting ... we had senior officers who were prepared to talk and listen to them without actually saying, 'we've come to tell you we're going to do this'"* (Councillor).

A further element of the Locality Focus is the successful Cabinet in the Community initiative. To open themselves up to wider dialogue, and break down perceived detachment from the general public, Lancashire have used local radio media personalities to host a television-style 'Question Time' session with the leader and four councillors. This is regarded as using *"a format that is something the public are familiar with in their everyday lives, from what they watch on television"*, whereas *"a committee meeting, to most normal citizens, is a fairly artificial way of doing things"*. This is held locally, around the county, and presented to an invited audience of citizens who have expressed a willingness to be involved – some by completing an invitation form in the Vision newspaper or from the Citizens Panel – but who may nonetheless be sceptics. The Leader and member will take virtually any question from the floor, demonstrating that the council is committed to meaningful scrutiny. Food and refreshments are provided afterwards and usually about 50 people attend.

Identifying good practice and measuring success

Although it is rather early to evaluate Lancashire's experience – the Council had no central policy unit as recently as 2000 – the case study indicates the potential for action in large, well-resourced councils starting from a relatively low base. Not uniquely, Lancashire has few measures for evaluating 'success' in the citizenship field, beyond simple totals of public contacts and queries, levels of PC use in libraries, including the number of hits on webpages related to decision-making.

Certainly, the agenda for devolving contact through District Partnership Offices is beginning to have an impact. The focus group conducted for this study indicates a growing awareness of councillors in their areas, which may be a testimony to Lancashire's improvements in this regard.

More widely, the focus group sensed that their potential contribution was insufficiently valued, and that they could be involved in more focused debates. The few that had also attended Cabinet in the Community meetings enjoyed them, but generally do not feel well informed about what 'the agenda' is, perhaps because the agenda for these encounters is so open-ended. Participants were also uncertain about whether Cabinet in the Community was for an invited audience only.

Candidate Good Practice Illustrations

The practices and quotations listed below have been extracted from the full case study text, above, and represent a series of items which were considered for inclusion within the Good Practice Guidance. For further discussion of the case studies, please see **Chapter Six**.

Innovative communication techniques

- Lancashire County Council have used virtual mechanisms for bringing the council and its decision making processes closer to the public, to inform them, to reach groups with poor mobility, and thus to widen their audience. Under the auspices of an LGA project, 'Designs on Democracy', Lancashire has run Web casts of council meetings, as well as youth council meetings and one-off debates. Officers feel that they are achieving a positive response. Average viewing figures are 300 a month, rising to 1,000 in some months, but this belies a suspicion that the media constitutes an important part of the audience – which then communicates events

more widely. Web-casting may also be having unexpected benefits for transparency. Most people (80%) watch the archived rather than the live material, which allows them to refute or verify for themselves stories run in the local media.

- With 78 councillors and 600 schools, Lancashire County Council found it difficult to meet all the requests from schools for councillors to visit and give talks in support of the citizenship education. As an alternative means of energising the curriculum, in Local Democracy week October 2004, the council launched an interactive CD-ROM targeted at young people aged 13. The CD provides information on what is going on in their council, who is who, and what the money is spent on, all in a language younger people can identify with. The inclusion of interactive games also helps pupils build up an understanding of what councils are all about.

Taking the council to its citizens – Cabinet in the Community

- To open themselves up to wider dialogue, and break down perceived detachment from the general public, Lancashire developed the successful ‘Cabinet in the Community’ initiative. This involves a local radio media personality hosting a television style ‘Question Time’ session with the leader and four councillors. This is held locally and presented to an invited audience of citizens who have expressed a willingness to be involved, but who may nonetheless be sceptical and take some convincing.

Research methods note

Method (no.)	Personnel (no.)	Initiative/activity
Interview	Leader of Council (1)	Leading democratic engagement
Interview	Executive support team leader (1)	Designs on democracy
Interview	Councillors (2)	Cabinet in the community
Interview	Members Comm. and Info Officer (1)	Citizens Panel
Interview	Head of Policy Unit (1)	Locality Focus Strategy
Interview	Policy Officers (2)	E-government, Citizens Panel
Interview	ICT Manager (1)	E-government
Interview	Data analyst (1)	Citizens Panel
Focus Group	Citizens Panel members (5)	
	Total Interviews = 8 Total Focus Groups = 1	Total Interviewees = 15

Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council, 3-4th August 2004

Selection rationale

- positive response to questionnaire and telephone interview;
- positively commended, especially on youth work, children's empowerment and diversity issues;
- Civic Pioneer, Community Cohesion Pathfinder, Beacon on Community Cohesion, pilot for 'Getting Involved 2' (NIACE and NYA)
- represents a metropolitan council

Overview

While the case study centred upon the activities of Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC), many initiatives intersect with the local authority's Township structure. This builds upon distinct geographical communities within the borough, pre-1974 political structures and previous experiments with service decentralisation. Since 1992 Rochdale has operated four Township Committees – in Rochdale itself, Middleton, Pennines and Heywood. These are full Standing Committees with extensive delegated executive, regulatory and financial powers. This structure allows a significant degree of political pluralism, by giving all elected members an executive role at Township level, and creating an array of opportunities for the public to raise concerns and participate. It also enjoys cross-party support.

This history of devolved local government, coupled with a radical political tradition going back to the pioneers of the co-op movement, is deemed to underpin Rochdale's rise to prominence in contemporary citizenship agendas. Rochdale is a Community Cohesion Pathfinder, and a number of initiatives are underway to empower young people and promote their inclusion in decision-making. It is also a designated Civic Pioneer: the openness of the political structure to the views of residents is believed to be one factor why Rochdale has not suffered the civil disturbances or support for extremist parties encountered in neighbouring towns with similar social make-up. Tackling community cohesion and boosting levels of social capital are important dimensions to the work of Rochdale MBC and the Local Strategic Partnership. The other area of interesting work concerns the efforts within the council to systematise its treatment of consultation, by pooling knowledge and expertise.

Communication

A number of approaches have been used in Rochdale to widen the pool of people involved in decision-making and policy-making, and to engage marginalised groups:

- Run from Children's Services, the 'Big Listen' launch event (September 2004) was targeted at children aged 5-13. The aim was to learn their views about a range of international, local and personal issues through a supportive and fun environment. There are precursors here in the use of arts to explore children's concerns (for example about safety), and similar approaches have been developed in association with Sure Start. The Big Listen will innovate in the way that its proposed feedback/talk back component will use different media (e.g. through the medium of rap).

- The event is part of a Children's Empowerment Project (CEP), which has been working with a range of groups (including travellers, disabled children, young carers, CRE) to facilitate the involvement of children in issues that affect their lives, and to promote cultural change in the way services are delivered to and engage with children, young people and their families. It supports a range of statutory and volunteer sector organisations to consult and empower children who use their services, by offering training, assisting them with direct work with children, and providing specialist workers to facilitate engagement. The co-ordinator's post has been made permanent. To highlight just one achievement, children and young people were actively involved in planning the 2004 Children's Conference using, for example, peer mentors from the Anti-bullying Project.
- Rochdale has also seen numerous projects that utilise the arts as mechanisms for consultation – from visual arts and participatory appraisal to circus and performance – and efforts have been made to pull together expertise, guidance and contacts. The 2001 *Creative Consultation Pilot Project Resource Pack* is one product of this. This pack explains the merits of using the arts to involve people in decision-making, including its relevance to a range of target groups including, but not exclusive to, those groups that are difficult to reach using conventional techniques, like young people and those with learning disabilities. It can appeal to those that do not want to attend meetings or fill in questionnaires. Literacy and confidence in public are not pre-requisites. Using the arts also gives participants something back, such as new skills, and the product can have wider value, as a reward for participants and in catching the attention of decision-makers. Courses in creative consultation have been run.
- One prominent example took place in Heywood, where consultation was carried out using beer mats in pubs, in a specific effort to reach 18-35 year old males – a very difficult group for public bodies to communicate with. Beer mats were used both for arts-based engagement (portraits) and written feedback. 650 people were involved.
- A 'meat and potato pie' event was used to engage older people, in connection with Neighbourhood Renewal work in Rochdale.
- With the Citizens Panel (1200 residents), there is a newsletter that provides feedback to panellists on findings and actions taken (not untypical in itself) but which also provides wider information on how to access decision-making processes and pursue particular issues. Panellists have also been able to select topics that they would be interested in discussing.

All in all, officers report that members are happy for them to be innovative; it is all about extending the pool of people that are engaged. Measuring success was recognised as more difficult, though work currently underway on measures of community cohesion will help (see below). One key ambiguity in any effort at evaluation is interpreting the significance of non-involvement. People may quite legitimately not want to be involved but they still want to be kept inside the loop (a further distinction between active and effective citizenship).

One set of initiatives bridge 'communication' and 'capacity' in their objective of coordinating consultation activities within the council. Prompted by concerns about the impact, quality, proliferation and duplication of consultation activities, RMBC has

drawn up a Corporate Consultation Action Plan 2004-7, which is prioritising the following:

- *'Consultation Forum'*: A fully comprehensive listings and database of consultations coming up, the methods involved, contact details, as well as archive materials from previous years, available through the Internet. Efforts are underway to embrace 'involvement mechanisms' in the widest sense, not just consultation, and to make this a partnership activity, extending the scope for public information, coordination and organisational learning beyond the council. Consultations are publicised widely through a range of newsletters.
- *Consultation Guide and Toolkit/Consultation Pack*: These are used to advise internal audiences, and good consultation practice is built into staff and member induction. The guide is available on council Webpages and addresses the purpose of consultation, who to consult and when, barriers (including equal opportunities), follow up action and methods and principles. Supporting this, there have been events on consultation for councillors and heads of departments and agencies, but organised as a 'market place' rather than as a series of speeches.
- *Self-assessment checklist, Consultation Resource Point*: These are used to pool available experience and expertise in consultation, and integrate evaluation into everyday work.
- *Indicators*: A cross-authority project (involving Oldham, East Lancashire and other adjacent councils) to develop community cohesion indicators is starting to inform the management of involvement.

Capacity – knowledge and skills

Young people have been targeted for additional support. Since 1999, RMBC have been operating a Youth Empowerment Project. It is led by Youth Services, which supports the development of young people, and fosters their inclusion through three stages of a natural progression:

- Making contact with individual young people, identifying their needs, before looking at initiatives they might like to get involved in. The Council have been looking beyond the naturally articulate, to draw in young people that are excluded by using mentors/personal advisors, mentoring in schools, and children that come through Youth Services (e.g. young carers). When young people face problems, the idea of doing something about it can be introduced: *"many young people like the idea of being listened to and taken seriously, instead of forever being seen as the scourge of the nation"* (Interview).
- Youth Services work with the police and health authority to create 'safe and supportive environments' in which young people can meet, recognise and practice their skills i.e. where young people set the rules, where they will not be ridiculed, where they can talk openly, and which offer a safe place to meet.
- When they have got the confidence of young people, officers look into involvement in Youth Forums and Youth Committees. Developing Youth Forums in each of the Townships has been a consistent goal of the project. A key principle is that the council has steered away from having a single, showpiece 'youth forum',

in favour of having a plurality of forums across the borough, some linked to township structures, and some more focused on specific initiatives. This helps “*reach all corners of the borough*”, and keeps access at pedestrian scale (Interview).

“What we haven’t done is go for just for the kind of showpiece bit, which is, ‘We will have one nice big shiny youth forum in Rochdale that everyone can point at’. What we try to do is to build methods of consultation in the involvement of young people right across the board, It is a constant challenge to maintain a youth forum in each of the four townships and then below that in more local levels. So, if it is a specific issue in a specific area, then we will try and work in some form of organised consultation with young people. And I think we have perhaps been recognised for that, because if it is something like we want to do a skate park in this particular part of the borough, there will be a mechanism to get us involved and try and do something structured with young people. There is a recognition that this kind of organised consultation now can go on in all kinds of ways, in all kinds of corners of the borough, you know?”. (Interview)

The project is deemed to give young people a real and working insight into the running and decision-making processes of local bodies, and achievements are measured *inter alia*, through young people’s facilitation of conference workshops, taking roles as key speakers, involvement in panels, becoming volunteer Peer Educators, and being part of consultation processes (e.g. on the development of Connexions). They have been able to involve a wide range of young people, not just those from affluent backgrounds. Young people are now involved, with youth workers, in setting up a local Youth Council, formed from borough-wide proportional representation of young people. A Youth Panel – young person’s equivalent to the Citizens Panel – has also been proposed. A key achievement is that young people themselves are starting to realise how high profile their involvement has become, that they are enjoying it, and through this connections can be made to political processes. Interviewees feel that this unforced progression better sustains their interest. The MYP member (age 13) launched the local community strategy, ‘Pride of Place’, fielding questions on a panel alongside MPs and the police. Subsequent stages of the Youth Empowerment Project have involved peripatetic work using roadshows to access, schools, colleges, youth groups, etc. Making events fun helps with this progression, too, though “*if they feel that there has been genuine space for them and their ideas and issues, that keeps them far more than any reward process*” (Interview).

Youth Services have also been looking at accreditation for young people’s involvement and achievements. The course ‘Youth Work and Transferable Skills’ helps to enhance the status of young people’s involvement, while offering a basic introduction to Youth Work. By 2002, four courses had been completed and 30 certificates issued. Young people from Rochdale and the YEP also participated in the NYA’s ‘Getting Involved and Influential (2) Pilot Project’, which involved bringing together a group of young people and developing a curriculum framework around youth participation.

Demand for young people to be involved in various initiatives is increasing across Rochdale, and Youth Service officers promote the view that young people have rights to be involved in forums or initiatives that affect them (after Article 12, Hear by Right), rather than being conferred a favour. To foster this sense of accountability to young people, RMBC operates a ‘28 day accountability clause’ – when the member of

Youth parliament or youth forums produce a piece of work on an issue, say a consultation response, officers/members must write back with a response within 28 days on any progress that has been made. Officers feel that across RMBC and its partner agencies, young people are being taken more seriously, and this clause is beginning to be more widely honoured. The young people's response to 'Every Child Matters' is a successful example, where the officer acknowledged each child individually.

The success that RMBC feel they have achieved in engaging Asian communities was deemed to stem from a number of factors. Some are historical and cultural: Rochdale has a rich history of engaging its Asian residents, and Asian young men do not drift off into pub culture and other activities as they pass through their teens. Recruiting and nurturing good (Asian and white) youth service staff is critical, as are demonstrating the results of involvement (e.g. a new youth group building). So too is the very local focus, as the Asian community is very disparate and residents do not want a single 'Asian Forum'. Similarly, there are separate Asian women's groups and youth forum, which have taken advantage of lots of training, including Youth Work and Transferable Skills – a good illustration of the importance of creating safe and supportive environments. New routes will need to be found to engage with young, white males, perhaps by going through local gyms or pool halls.

Best practice youth work is at the centre of many of these initiatives in Rochdale, to ensure that young people are properly supported and that participants derive the best possible learning experience:

"I think, for us, as a service, because of the experience we have gathered, it is important for us to ensure that we don't just kind of jump on their bandwagon and set them up to fail, or set them up for encounters that they can't possibly win. That we, you know, we immediately try and kind of help them to think that process through and about what's achievable and what's not achievable, and look for kind of, you know, if you are going to set yourself outcomes, that they are possible outcomes, and they are not impossible schemes. And I think that comes with experience as much as anything else." (Interview)

A range of capacity-building exercises is underway in New Deal for Communities areas. One initiative, which has helped local people to guide the form of participation, was the use of participatory appraisal in Heywood around the issue of food poverty (connected with the NDC project). Such approaches engage people in setting the questions, and train people in the consultative techniques required to carry out the appraisal. Also going on under the auspices of the NDC, six local people are to be given training to NVQ level in community work, though finding appropriate training courses locally has proved difficult, so students have had to travel to other boroughs. NDC officers stressed the importance of helping to facilitate support for local community engagement but not to an extent that they become dependent on external advice. An important means by which they hope to improve community involvement is to target existing projects (such as in housing) which have not involved residents in project delivery, monitoring and evaluation as much as they might, but that might do more in future. Training a wider range of stakeholders in skills of appraisal is also to be prioritised. So too is the development of initiatives in social entrepreneurship (borrowed from Bradford LSP), in which groups can get small amounts of funding for a project idea or plan, one condition of which is that they sign up for relevant training.

Culture

The prominent position afforded to community cohesion in RMBC, demonstrates that tackling cultural barriers to participation, and sustaining confidence in democratic processes, has been seen as a key element of citizenship practice. To quote the community strategy (p.6): *“high levels of participation in local democracy and in community activities will help to resolve conflicts and sustain community cohesion ... (c)reating trust and confidence through dialogue”*.

While the links are strong, understanding precisely how the community cohesion and democratic citizenship agendas have informed each other was more difficult. To some interviewees, the wide range of opportunities for involvement created by RMBC's political structure, commitment to open agenda-setting, and the great efforts to be responsive to citizens' demands, were major elements in sustaining this cohesion, by fostering identity and dissipating disaffection. The council put great effort into demonstrating to people that their involvement had been effective. It was also felt that community cohesion did not require *new* attention to democratic practices within the borough: their responsive political structures were already effective in this regard. The long-standing attention to race relations, and growing proportion of staff from ethnic minorities, has also assisted.

Most of the projects under the Community Cohesion Pathfinder focused on *civil* society aspects of citizenship – *“the chemistry rather than the physics”* of citizenship. Fostering links between different social groups through schools is one example (the 'Linking Schools: Linking Communities' initiative). Community Mediation Workshops have also been held. The 'Who Put the T(ea) in Britain' event (inviting people for a cup of Fair Trade tea) was also intended to encourage people to talk to each other, in schools and community centres; an event in which broad-based participation was encouraged by Rochdale's first Asian mayor being in place. This event has at least encouraged people to find out more about the lives of Rochdale's diverse social groups and look beyond extremist propaganda. The main area where civil and civic aspects of citizenship have been brought together is around young people. The 'Big Listen' is one example; another is 'Taking Youth Seriously' (October 2003), an event to demonstrate and celebrate young people's achievement in promoting youth inclusion.

While the Township Committees offer a wider range of participatory opportunities, the research sought to assess how far they had addressed cultural barriers to effective citizenship. The following appear relevant:

- The style and conduct of the meetings has changed, from being dominated by councillors and an agreed agenda, to starting meetings with an Open Forum, and a process where anybody present can speak, without asking for prior permission. People can also have questions asked on their behalf.
- Demonstrating to the public that their involvement is effective – *“showing that people are the originator of change”* – is a key dimension of Township practice and local politics more generally (Interview). There is an expectation that Senior Service Officers attend Township meetings, so that the public can have their questions answered promptly. Local police are regular attendees, and have tied their beat structures to link with the townships, with the Primary Care Trusts attending more occasionally. Concerns expressed by the public are followed up, to

ensure that a response is provided and action taken where necessary. This can mean steering people through the inevitable time lags between inputs and results.

- This desire that the council is not seen as remote is signified by having the Township Committees travel around their area, meeting in different venues. Thus people are “*able to address their own councillors on their own territory*” (Interview). Particular groups, such as young people, have also given presentations to Township Committee.
- Having four Townships also means that the council can experiment with different approaches to public involvement, without necessarily bringing in untested ideas from outside. In Heywood, effective use is made of topic-based working parties, on housing, environment, etc, which help encourage and assist community input into the Township Committee.
- The number and diversity of people attending, and the length of time now spent addressing issues arising from open forum, are seen as evidence of the active involvement achieved (rather than electoral turnout, which was 31% for local elections in 2002). Finally, the fact that RMBC’s structure is robust enough to have survived political change, to attract a growing stream of visitors from other authorities, and is now in tune with ‘new localist’ rhetorics, mark it out as a sustainable success.

Problems remain, of course. It was reckoned that direct community involvement was being achieved more readily in the three smaller townships (30-45,000 each) than in the larger Rochdale township (96,000) where there was more reliance on networks of activists. While Townships resonate with local identities, it is also a continuous task to persuade people that they need sometimes to act in concert with the borough. While the council’s Township structure is widely appreciated, the decision to create Township area partnerships under the LSP has attracted some ambivalence, not least for the added layer of complexity. Creation of an NDC Board for part of Heywood Township has also muddied governance structures.

In Heywood, efforts have been taken to set up systems and structures which keep the relationship between involvement and response as simple as possible from participants’ point of view. This includes careful tracking of all minutes, actions and decisions, and making township meetings something of a ‘one stop shop’ for queries and concerns. Thereafter, responses to queries and questions from the public are also seen as an opportunity for tacit education about where best to go to resolve certain kinds of problems so that, over time, not everything passes through intermediaries like the Township manager.

One area where perceptual and political difficulties remain is that some councillors are still seen as viewing young people as a problem for their constituents and something that needs sorting. Involving councillors with an array of young people helps to address this situation. The Children’s Empowerment Project (CEP) offers training for elected members, lead officers and agencies working with children on ‘Involving children in decision-making processes’.

Activities stemming from the Rochdale Centre of Diversity (former Race Equality Council) are also having an impact. The Asian Director of the RCD currently chairs the local LSP – “*a vote of confidence*” – and they are an important actor for instituting

concern for diversity and equality in local governance arrangements. One thing they have been keen to promote is joint initiatives and projects between social networks (BMEs, voluntary sector, tenants groups). This approach was applied to the community strategy, where the RCD sought events with mixed audiences, “*unique to Rochdale*”, rather than involving each sector separately. This is seen as “*mainstreaming community cohesion*”. They also deliver workshops on governance structures, and have promoted their role by going to places where they think people will be: mosques, community centres and cultural events.

But there are emergent barriers here. In a social climate very sensitive to perceptions that preferential treatment is being given to certain social groups, this raises concerns about how to ensure that the BME community can continue to access tailored services without others questioning their entitlement to do so.

Identifying good practice and measuring success

In identifying components of good practice, it has been necessary to use interviewee evaluations as measures of success. Although interviews were conducted with a range of officers, and some were quite critical of aspects of council practice, less information was obtained from ‘external’ audiences. Nevertheless, there was a high degree of convergence between interviewees about what was good in Rochdale, and thus some corroboration of the practices that the research team have highlighted.

RMBC are conducting surveys of residents’ perceptions of diversity and community cohesion in areas prioritised for neighbourhood renewal: these include elements of social capital, such as whether people understand how to get involved in decision-making, and whether they feel they exert any influence. This is a valuable activity in its own right, and one that may provide a better baseline for assessing effectiveness in future.

A group of local authorities including Rochdale are developing indicators of community cohesion, including some which are highly pertinent to dimensions of effective citizenship.

Candidate Good Practice Illustrations

The practices and quotations listed below have been extracted from the full case study text, above, and represent a series of items which were considered for inclusion within the Good Practice Guidance. For further discussion of the case studies, please see **Chapter Six**.

Meaningful devolution of decision-making

- RMBC provides positive evidence of the benefits that devolved structures offer in creating a sense of efficacy for its citizens. The pluralism afforded reduces the scope for disenfranchisement, and keeps elected members involved. Having Township-based area committees driven by open forums rather than prescribed agendas fosters responsiveness, as does the careful attention to showing participants the effects of their involvement. This has included real efforts to negotiate the more complex relationship between citizen input and service output created by partnership-working and area-based initiatives.

Consultation Forum

- While many local authorities are developing comprehensive listings of recent and up-coming consultation exercises, accessible through the Internet, RMBC are being more ambitious in seeking to go beyond consultation events to include all aspects of involvement, and to include activities being run by partner agencies. In a real sense, this is information for involvement in local *governance*, not just *government*.

Novel forms of feedback

- Giving feedback on the messages received through consultation is conventional good practice, but the formats used are often unimaginative. For Rochdale's 'Big Listen' launch event (targeted at children from 5 to 13 years old) it was proposed that the feedback/talk back component will use different media (e.g. the medium of rap).

Arts and involvement

- Rochdale's experience demonstrates the benefits of art-based consultation in reaching wider audiences, overcoming traditional barriers to participation, and in developing people's skills and confidence as citizens.

Beer mat Consultation

- As a particular illustration, a novel programme in Heywood made use of beer mats and artists to get local people involved in the New Deal for Communities programme, and especially to reach parts of the populace that had not previously been engaged (18-35 year old males). The process involved employing locally known artists to make drawings of residents and interview them about their aspirations for the NDC programme; the resulting portraits and comments made by residents were then transferred onto 5400 beer mats and displayed in local pubs. NDC workers used these beer mats as a tool to help encourage other local people to get involved.

28 day accountability clause

- When young people produce a piece of work on an issue, say a consultation response, officers/members must write back with a response within 28 days.

Quotation on the 'bad old days' of youth engagement

- *"Young people attending a council meeting where they get a packet of crisps, a can of Pepsi and a friendly smile, is no longer acceptable. That is what happened in the early days – it is patronising and it was a pat on the head".* (Interview)

Plural forums

- One perhaps unrecognised barrier to widening participation is the institutional reflex of having one single forum to represent each sector of society. In Rochdale, efforts have been made with the Community Strategy to mainstream community cohesion by bringing together Black and Minority Ethnic networks, tenants groups and the voluntary sector. Diverse Asian communities have resisted being lumped together into a single forum. For young people, too, a plurality of youth forums has worked better than relying solely on a single institution, not least in making engagement opportunities physically more accessible in transport terms.

Physical representation of diversity

- Research shows that having representatives from different sectors of society in prominent decision-making positions can encourage people from those sectors to get more involved in decision-making. This is true of women voters, but also seems to be true of BMEs since the inauguration of Rochdale’s first Asian mayor.

Participatory Appraisal

- This is an increasingly well-known technique for giving community members a central role in identifying needs and issues in area-based regeneration, combining consultation with capacity building. It forms the basis of Manchester’s selection as an Active Learning for Active Citizenship learning hub (Participatory Appraisal being developed by Manchester Metropolitan University). It was used in Heywood, Rochdale, in a food poverty project.

Research methods note

Method (no.)	Personnel (no.)	Initiative/activity
Interview (2)	RMBC Director, Community Services (1)	Involvement through township structure
Interview (1)	RMBC Youth Officers (2)	Youth Empowerment Project
Interview (1)	External Community, RCD/Chair of LSP (1)	Diversity and equality issues
Interview (1)	RMBC Officers, Consultation (2)	Coordinating consultation, staff training
Interview (1)	RMBC Officer, Township Manager (1)	Involvement through townships, Heywood example
Interview (1)	RMBC Councillor (1)	Involvement through townships, Heywood example
Interview (1)	NDC Community Involvement Manager (1)	Involvement in NDC project, Heywood example
	Total Interviews = 8	Total Interviewees = 9

Worcestershire County Council, 15th-16th June 2004

Selection rationale

- Participant/listed case study for Local Democracy Week 2003;
- positive response to research seminar, questionnaire survey and telephone interview;
- positively commended, especially on youth work;
- represents a county authority with sizeable rural area

Overview

The case study was centred upon the activities of Worcestershire County Council (WCC), but many of the initiatives incorporated individuals and activities at district and parish level. Worcestershire is engaging with the wider Local Government Modernisation Agenda and many of its initiatives, including increasing citizen involvement, are seen as integral to improving the council's CPA rating from good to excellent. Interviewees suggest that electoral turn-out "is an issue" for the council, but not one that was overriding: positive column inches for the council and numbers of people engaging with their councillors were regarded as important, too.

The driving goal for citizenship within Worcestershire appears to be democratic engagement, achieved primarily through the 'gateway role' of the three Area Democracy Team (ADT) officers, based in the Chief Executive's Unit. Interviewees believe that the availability of ADT officers has helped the council reach marginalised groups and improved the visibility and accountability of the council. Councillors' roles are at the heart of Worcestershire's citizenship agenda, with much effort going into raising their profile and supporting them in engaging with communities via formal and informal mechanisms.

Communication

Many of the initiatives that we learned about from WCC were primarily concerned with communication. This included:

- 'Skills on Show', an annual open day held by the council. This included the 'Sad, Mad, or Glad' consultation wall, on which people could register their views on a given topic. It will, in future, offer demonstrations of voting technology.
- Raising the public awareness of the council in general and individual councillors through the work of the ADT. In their own words, the officers see "*every opportunity get councillors in there*". They can help provide them with stands ('Do you know your councillor?'), information material and leaflets (the 'People like me helping people like you' toolkit) and Neighbourhood Statistics. The team also assist with events and surgeries, supporting county councillors in their involvement in community-based meetings.

- A number of awareness-raising events organised by the Area Democracy Team took place in conjunction with Local Democracy Week 2003. This included the conference event 'Voting: Why Bother?', targeted at school sixth formers, in which three MPs and three Youth Parliament members were among the panellists. The Youth Services' E-voting equipment was used to foster interaction during the day. Feedback/surveys suggest that participants are now more aware of local democracy and the role it plays. An evening event 'What Does Democracy Mean to You' was organised and run by Redditch Youth Forum – a group of 13-19 year olds elected to represent the views of their peers locally. This brought together 40 young people along with county and borough councillors, the local police and health service representatives, and included activities explaining which organisations provided certain services.

We also learned about the various consultative exercises that WCC was engaged in, including a number of forums:

- Redditch Forum, bringing together 14 neighbourhood groups from across Redditch, linking them to elected members and to the Primary Care Trust
- New forums in rural areas, e.g. Hartlebury
- Three mini LSPs/Market Town Partnerships
- 'Engaging Worcestershire' Steering Group – helping the voluntary sector to become better represented in LSPs
- Eight Independent District Forums for Older People, spread across the county, linked to Age Concern, the Health Trusts and local authorities
- 'Youthink' multi-media consultation events for young people delivered as a rolling programme in each district of the county by the Youth Service.
- Youth Parliament Members, Youth Council and Youth Cabinet.
- 'Wicked Issues' training programme, seeking to develop staff's sense of responsibility as employees and as residents, mostly for environmental sustainability issues

The extent to which these initiatives widen or deepen the public's propensity to get involved in decision-making remains uncertain: *"it's very hard to measure the impact, of course"* (Interview). For example, evidence suggests that WCC's 3% non-white population is under-represented in the Citizens Panel, although it reaches rural populations very well. While the forums offer an opportunity structure for involvement, it was also unclear whether they were accompanied with specific initiatives to raise the capacity of different groups to get involved.

What one can say about these communication/consultation initiatives is that well-known issues of institutional design, about getting the right venue, and utilising mechanisms appropriate for various sections of the citizenry, are recognised by the ADT officers and others. No one medium or message fits all: utilising lower tiers of governance such as parish councils may work in some rural areas but local

community umbrella organisations, where they exist, may be more pertinent in urban areas. Having three ADT officers on hand, each with detailed experience of and responsibility for different parts of the county, is very helpful in developing an adaptive approach, and it is considered vital that the ADT officers have the flexibility to be creative and adaptive.

Adaptability was also important given that the multiple tiers of government in WCC (parish, district, county and region) made it increasingly difficult for citizens to work out who was responsible for what. Rather than always simply putting out information to the citizenry, putting the onus on the citizen to learn about structures, WCC has increasingly joined together the county, district and parish in their participatory arrangements e.g. 'Joint councillor surgeries', facilitated by ADT officers. The presence of all tiers of elected representative at local forums is another case in point; meaning that the public can have their question answered by the most relevant person, without needing to know *a priori* who this is. This also hints at the ongoing debates about exactly what kind of civic knowledge citizens should hold. While political efficacy suggests people basing their votes on clear knowledge, in WCC and elsewhere service-based engagement is moving increasingly towards one-stop-shop type arrangements.

In terms of citizenship education, these initiatives are best categorised as having information/communication roles but, insofar as awareness raising is also an important component, then they may also help to break down cultural barriers between the council and the citizens. A good example is the annual Citizens Panel Festive Event in which a sample of panellists (60 of the 2000) are invited to a gathering in which they can meet the council face-to-face. Such events feature e-voting, focus groups and prizes, and members and Chief officers come along to provide direct feedback. Surveys of participants suggest that the *"vast majority said that their view of the council had improved because of the event"*. The views expressed by participants at these events are reported back to individual services.

The staff focus group suggested that the council was not good at telling the public about all their successes.

Capacity – knowledge and skills

While WCC are engaged in aspects of citizenship education through their adult learning provisions, our case study programme focused on two particular aspects of capacity-building for effective citizenship.

The first was the work of the Youth Service in developing *informal* learning opportunities for young people that supports but also goes beyond formal, schools-based citizenship education. *"Informal education is actually giving young people real experiences of making things happen in their own communities and understanding the processes that you need to go through – to assess need; to identify the key players; to develop communication channels with them; to have a strategy; and to cope with the fact that you might not always succeed"* (Interview). This usually means incorporating a citizenship element into projects with other objectives.

There is a large number of lessons to be taken from their approach:

- Youth Service officers were very careful to ensure the young people that they worked with were able to reflect on what they felt they got out of the various forums and initiatives in which they had been involved. A cautionary example is their work with a group of young people in a rural part of the county to push for a couple of hard play areas that met their needs. Video was used to make their case, but the image used to depict ‘the problem’, *“one of the guys kicking a football against the doors of the village hall”*, left one councillor too angry to see the wider argument. Youth services were able to address a potentially deflating experience: *“you didn’t get what you wanted, but how could you appraise where you’re at to take another route? These are the citizenship learning outcomes”* (Interview).
- Many engagement activities now use ICT – from radio stations, the internet to text messaging – and officers are investigating the citizenship potential of each of them. Text messaging is felt to work well in pulling in young people in rural areas and, because it really does elicit a response, it is easier to understand how well the message is being disseminated. Within particular projects, they also used keypad technology as a means of consulting on multiple choice options – but for options that young people in the area concerned had generated (the Youth Service ‘Youthink’ project).
- Youth Services were becoming increasingly wary of initiatives which simply involved a ‘token young person’ to symbolise representativeness, and it was a sign of young people’s increasing capacity that they were becoming confident to decline invitations that offered them very little. This also illustrates perfectly why ‘effective’ citizenship may not always mean being ‘active’. *“Some people see the youth cabinet as a ready-made youth involvement group that can be hoicked along to attend every event. It’s just about ‘let’s get the boxes ticked’. Part of our job is to enable young people to be confident enough to say no sometimes when they don’t feel that their presence is an equal one...”* (Interview).
- One of the most successful connections to mainstream decision-making is their effort to *“work with a group of young people to enable them to become assessors of youth work for us and with us. Young people have actually developed their own tools for the observation of youth work; they go out and visit youth centres; and their feedback actually contributed to the OFSTED inspection. And they’re now launching off on a rolling programme of quality assurance visits to youth centres. That’s involved equipping them with the skills and the knowledge – the essential training”* (Interview).
- As with much of their work, trying to engage marginalised young people entailed a combination of best practice youth work, bringing together the front line youth worker with Connexions, linking to user groups that are excluded/at risk of exclusion. They have allowed young people to make a video of a subject they have identified – ‘Vox Pops’ – *“because sometimes people will speak on camera when they won’t in a group”* (Interview). Using voting technology in meetings also gives a voice to those less confident in registering their views in other ways. Sensitive geographical targeting also helps. For example, the Youth Service had been successful in piggybacking Young Farmers’ Club meetings in pubs for some constituencies.

- Overall, youth work officers felt that the post-16 citizenship initiative had been very positive for them, in providing funding for new initiatives, adding depth to their work, in fostering a shared language of citizenship with the formal FE and HE sector, and in giving a platform for informal education approaches.

Of course there are also problems here.

- Like many others across the country, there was concern that the Youth Cabinet in Worcestershire existed *“in a bubble”* (interview). More widely, there was a need to increase the access of young people to real decision making in relation to resource allocation outside of youth-specific issues, and efforts were underway to make these connections. There was a concern that *“school councils are set up and make rather bland decisions, such as the colour of the loo roll, when young people are animated over issues like Iraq”* (interview).
- Formal involvement in the LSP does not always sit easily with the voluntary nature of Youth democracy and representation.
- Much work is needed in educating the educators and others about active young citizens. *“Just having young people present in an adult environment isn’t enough – it’s about changing the ways you work, the times you work, the language you use, all to treat young people as equals in decision-making structures, rather than as tokens”* (Interview). *“I had a telephone call from a school saying that they didn’t think one of the young people that had been elected to the youth cabinet was the right sort of person. Previously, representatives had been head boy, head girl and this you person was definitely not that kind of material. We had to address the school’s preconceptions about what these young people are really for, and why they are there”*. (Interview)
- The growing use of virtual, anonymous contacts with young people through ICT proved tricky to rationalise with concepts of contact hours used in OFSTED’s audit and inspection regime.
- It was also made clear that budget shortages in the service were problematic: this emphasised the need for proper resources to undertake more effective citizenship engagement. Officers felt they were fighting battles to prevent all the post-16 initiatives money going into the formal FE and HE sector, leaving informal citizenship education work out in the cold. The sustainability of initiatives currently funded as post-16 pilots was thus a worry. (Better Government for Older People representatives also felt that they could reach more groups with more resources).

The second aspect of capacity-building for effective citizenship charts the efforts of a former social worker in her role as manager of a Sure Start Centre project in a relatively disadvantaged part of Droitwich Spa. The young parents that she worked with had many reasons to lack confidence in their efficacy to change the conditions of their lives but, by applying the evaluation skills of 25 years in social work assessment, the manager was able to animate a sense of self-belief. This meant not going in *“too fast, too deep”* – confidence takes time to develop among those that feel they have been let down many times before. But it could involve challenging the client group, in a sensitive way. Wheeling in ‘government initiatives’ and statutory agencies can alienate the local community and adds to the sense of negativity.

What this example shows is that genuine efforts to lift the capacity of the most marginalised has no quick fix and can take a lot of hard work. It took months to get parents to a situation where they were sufficiently confident to organise a Christmas Fair event, but taking issues one at the time is more effective than seeking to resolve a whole series of problems in one go. From steps such as these, some parents are now getting more involved in working with local schools, sitting as representatives on boards otherwise dominated by professionals, and a few have considered becoming local councillors.

As noted above, Area Forums in Worcestershire have been run in ways to try and overcome some of the more obvious barriers to involvement (created by timing, etc). Efforts have also been made to re-think the earlier, less-successful formats. Area Committees were regarded as too formal, *“traditional, stuck in the past”*: the new forum format is more informal and achieves better partnership buy-in. A semi-circular seating arrangement creates a better atmosphere of interaction rather than structured seating with fixed agendas: *“feedback suggests that people enjoy it”*. Beyond this, our interviewees gave little evidence that WCC was trying to develop the capacity of different social groups to get involved in these forums, raising the risk that they tend to be dominated by the more confident and articulate. Making sure that council decision-makers, in the various services, made better use of the forums – and the ADT – was also an ongoing task.

WCC was also developing its internal capacity to improve the standard of consultation. There is the Public Consultation Strategy but also an internal ‘toolkit’ on how to plan and organise consultation, *“getting them to think it through”* (interview). This responded to the felt need for experiences within the council to be better shared, and to make better use of their 31 existing consultative networks. WCC had also built on best practice around the country to develop an idea from Bristol City Council – the ‘Ask Me! Consultation and Involvement Planner and Finder’: a web-based device which enables officers to search and join up their consultation activities, and helps the public to search for relevant consultation exercises and register their interest. A database of consultation activity has been put together, and WCC officers have offered it to other partners, with the police and one local PCT already signed up. It was launched first on the Intranet and is now on www.worcestershire.gov.uk/consultation.

Culture

WCC’s approach to citizenship placed considerable emphasis on establishing councillors as community leaders – based on the corporate objective of ‘Listening to what people say’. Thus it is important to reflect on how their capacity to support effective citizenship has been developed. It is also important given the comment that from a young persons perspective, one of the key cultural barriers was educating ‘the educators’ – this was endorsed by the older-people’s representative and community activists interviewed for this research.

Councillors clearly face practical barriers in engaging more effectively with communities, not least the pressures of time. Hence fewer young people had become councillors at WCC level. But while there is good support for the work of the ADT, the research also highlighted cultural divergences between councillors’ conceptions of effective citizenship and the objectives of this research. While councillors attend local schools to deliver work to support citizenship elements of the national curriculum,

there is a recognition that this ought not be done in a paternalistic way: work is underway with councillors to ensure they use these opportunities effectively through ‘Guidelines to Councillors on School Work and Citizenship’.

There was certainly resistance to notions of active citizenship from some councillors who saw it as *their* democratic right and responsibility to represent their communities. Some councillors recognised the value of the need to better engage and listen to the needs of the electorate while others resisted and even ignored such changes. The view persists among some councillors that it is often the vociferous minority that attend area forums whereas the general populace are largely disinterested. Some councillors doubted that the citizenry wanted to engage with political machinery unless specific issues grabbed their attention. And while most of the councillors were supportive of the ADT’s work, and the resources made available to them to keep the public informed, some thought that the toolkit approaches were patronising and refused to make use of them, while others suspected members were using it to further their re-election prospects. There is an interesting question here about whether there is a need to educate and train the citizen-led councillor of the future.

While tapping into appropriate local networks is one way of enhancing involvement, that is not to imply that parish councils are always geared up to the demands of encouraging wider involvement. Some interviewees understood the issue in terms of “*knowing the main players*”, construed as farmers and landowners. Some parish councils need encouraging to “*look beyond their AGM*”. This suggests barriers in explaining to certain parishes why anything needs to change in terms of the political aspects of citizenship.

Identifying good practice and measuring success

The research teams’ experiences at WCC exemplified more pervasive difficulties in identifying good practice. The first problem is that only for the operation of the Area Democracy Team were interviewees able to form comparative judgements between councils about the merits of their approach. Otherwise the interviews suggested that there is relatively little inter-authority reflection and comparison in this area. Within Worcestershire, this issue is being addressed through the new ‘good/bad practice’ area on the intranet site for the consultation strategy, which is designed to encourage officers to share experiences of consultation and engagement with each other. The second problem is that the feedback received from the small number of external representatives and interviewees was mostly negative. This is a credit to WCC who did not present a false picture, but may illustrate wider tendencies for people not to believe their council is making much headway in this field, a tendency shared by a good portion of officers. It was not always easy to prompt interviewees to be reflective about the specific aspects of citizenship that the research team found interesting. Thus finding corroborative evidence of effects and effectiveness to underscore our identification of ‘good practice’ proved difficult.

Candidate Good Practice Illustrations

The practices and quotations listed below have been extracted from the full case study text, above, and represent a series of items which were considered for inclusion within the Good Practice Guidance. For further discussion of the case studies, please see **Chapter Six**.

Area Democracy Team

- A key feature of Worcestershire County Council's approach to engaging the public is its team of dedicated officers, linked to the central administrative and political functions of the council. This Area Democracy Team was deemed to be very helpful in supporting elected representatives and in assisting other participatory processes. Officers felt that the greater flexibility they enjoyed in their remit, compared to officers in similar posts in other local authorities that they had spoken to, made them more effective.

"I'm a Councillor – Get Me Out of Here"

- This is an educational, interactive web-based computer game designed to connect young people with their elected representatives. It was used during Local Democracy Week 2003 and is not exclusive to WCC.

The capacity to influence one's level of involvement

- An important facet of the Youth Services' work with young people was to build up their confidence to a point where they felt they could make discriminating choices about when they got involved and when not. This is important because although opportunities for young people to be represented in governance arrangements have increased, many offer little scope for them to actually influence decisions.

Feedback to staff

- It is a widely accepted aspect of good practice that the public should receive feedback about the outcome of the participation and consultation exercises they have been involved in, and what the impact of their input turned out to be. It seems that this principle is not always so well observed for the council's own staff, suggesting missed opportunities to develop their confidence in getting involved in decision-making, both within the council and in their wider lives.

Culture of contentment?

- Discussions with those involved in dealing with older people's issues revealed that one of the main barriers to getting senior residents/tenants involved in decision-making, for example at service level, is their unwillingness to complain because they are fearful of *"losing what they have got"* (Interview). There are cultural barriers to be overcome at this most basic level – having the confidence to raise a contrary opinion. Ensuring that council services listen is then crucially important.

From consultation to contact

- WCC are deploying a range of methods to help connect councillors and the public. Perhaps the most interesting of these is the annual festive event to which a sample of the Citizen's Panel is invited. What makes this interesting is that it tackles criticisms that citizens panels foster a detached, consumerist model of democracy, and instead seeks to foster some connection and identity with the elected member and officers.

The difficulties of empowering the voiceless

- The difficulties of getting parents/residents in marginalised areas to become more effective citizens, and the slow careful process of building up their confidence, is amply illustrated by the Wands Sure Start project in Droitwich Spa.

Research Methods Note

Method (no. held)	Personnel (no. attended)	Initiative/activity
Interview (2)	WCC Area Democracy Officers (1)	Work of the Area Democracy Team
Interview (4)	Councillors (1)	Democratic engagement in WCC
Interview (1)	WCC Youth Service Officers (2)	Work of the Youth Service supporting citizenship
Interview (1)	WCC Citizens Panel Coordinators (2)	Role and operation of the Citizens Panel
Interview (1)	WCC Staff Training Coordinators (2)	'Wicked Issues' training programme
Interview (1)	Centre Manager/Community Activist (1)	Sure Start Centre, parental involvement
Focus Group (1)	External Community(2)/WCC Officers (2)	Better Government for Older People, Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder
Focus Group (1)	WCC Officers from Chief Exec's Unit (4)	Local democracy, council priorities
Focus Group (1)	WCC Officers (5)	'Wicked Issues' training programme, personal responsibility
	Total Interviews = 10	Total Focus Groups = 3

Interviews and focus groups were supported by documents supplied by WCC and the interviewees, and by the summary of WCC's activities in the Local Democracy Week webpages.

Case study summary: Gloucester City Council 19th November 2004

The data gathered on Gloucester City Council is presented in summary form because, although the information gathered was very valuable, it was considered less suitable for producing a comprehensive picture. For this reason, the write-up concentrates on the key areas. The practices and quotations listed below represent a series of items which were considered for inclusion within the Good Practice Guidance. For further discussion of the case studies, please see **Chapter Six**.

Candidate Good Practice Illustrations

Neighbourhood Partnerships

- Have been effective in Gloucester, engaging large numbers of people, through an approach that is resident and multi-agency led.

“The neighbourhood partnership agenda arose from the modernising local government agenda. The Deputy Leader of the Council at that time looked at practice elsewhere and embarked on a series of meetings around the City, inviting interest in piloting the new approach in order what we could evaluate how to take it forward”. (Officer)

Locality Planning Teams

- Collaborative working between agencies in delivering services to particular parts of the city – enabled Gloucester to be ahead of the game in delivering authority and multi-agency initiatives into the community. The Gloucester LPT was later adapted into the Gloucester Partnership (a local strategic partnership). Early recognition of failings in citizenship contact have led to the creation of a devolved team working in one neighbourhood of the city as a pilot arrangement.

Utilising funding

- Gloucester has made progress in embedding citizenship objectives into funded programmes. The council has been successful in developing community cohesion through SRB (Single Regeneration Budget) funding. Receipt of £10K for a Building Communities project from the Regional Development Agency was also used to fund closer working in the community, through a neighbourhood partnership.

Forums

- Are seen as useful mechanisms for getting to the people. Currently the council operate a number of forums – including Disability, Race, Tenants and Environment – and they are looking to add to these over the next few years. Gloucester has invested heavily in these long-standing forums but feels the outcomes are all based on an open approach to working with people, which leads to success. However even here Gloucester has found that it does not know enough about certain specific communities, and so organised a meeting with all invited Black and Minority Ethnic community groups in December 2004 to discuss citizenship and democracy issues. This resulted in equality targets being drawn up to improve BME participation in democracy and engaging with marginalised groups.

Use already established initiatives

- Gloucester rarely starts from scratch. Because it is a small authority with limited funding and resources it often finds it fruitful to look at ideas elsewhere and adapt them for their own area. For example, they started their Neighbourhood Partnerships by looking at what Norwich was doing. Council officers also recognise there is a need to address the gap represented by not having a Citizens Panel (which they perceive as costly for Gloucester's circumstances, and not very scientific) and to some extent feel they have overcome this through their Neighbourhood Partnerships and special interest forums.

Managing the interface

- Too many authorities set up forums and meetings and other face-to-face mechanisms with the citizenry without considering the dynamics of how these will work out. They are not an easy option. Gloucester has learned that these forums need to be managed carefully in order to maximise credibility with citizens, to ensure that Councillors and officers can participate on an equal basis, and to deal sensitively with inappropriate criticisms. Having a Cabinet member take on a lead role in each forum gives these arenas a direct link to Cabinet policy-making.

'Representation Day'

- Involves the authority in educating young people, in specific schools, about democratic processes. At first this initiative was based in one school but it has since spread through its success to others. The Mayor, Sheriff and electoral services staff combine to run a mock election, as the authority would do, and discuss citizenship issues with the pupils. Pupils take on the political and democratic roles and electoral services staff help to administer the process.

Citizenship Day

- Is a spin off from feedback from the Representation Day (RD). Because RD was so successful at a local senior school, and Gloucester realised they did not have the resources to replicate it at all the schools in the authority they devised a day to be held at the local leisure centre. Here pupils invited from several senior schools attend and debate issues, along with the Mayor, the local MP, City and County Councillors and officers. Council interviewees were pleased at the level of debate, which challenged assumptions held that young people were not interested in serious matters (in 2004 the issues included in the manifesto ranged from cannabis smoking, lowering the legal age for sex and drinking). Most of these issues were topical and being covered in the media at the time so also challenged another assumption that young people did not take interest in newspapers or news programmes. In addition to the election the pupils also participate in a disaster scenario (for instance a bomb explosion at a major airport). The pupils have to cope with all this: the scenario constantly changes and it gives them an idea of what government has to do. The Citizenship Day event has been run jointly between Gloucester's electoral services team, the senior schools themselves, and the education and learning in partnership group. Future plans are in hand to extend the event, with schools and adjoining local authority areas, with support from the Electoral Commission.

Case study summary: Stoke-on-Trent City Council 19th November 2004

The data gathered on Stoke-on-Trent City Council is presented in summary form because, although the information gathered was very valuable, it was considered less suitable for producing a comprehensive picture. For this reason, the write-up concentrates on the key areas. The practices and quotations listed below represent a series of items which were considered for inclusion within the Good Practice Guidance. For further discussion of the case studies, please see **Chapter Six**.

Candidate Good Practice Illustrations

Designing structures that are right for the circumstances

- In Stoke City, a Young People's Local Strategic Partnership was set up as a more inclusive approach to young people's representation, rather than working only with schools. This also allowed better links to the renewal and cohesion agendas, and to members of the Local Strategic Partnership.

Celebration and cohesion

- The 'Sanity Fair' project in Stoke has helped people use festivals to promote cooperation between religious and ethnic communities which, in the best cases, have helped to create a local sense of unity, local empowerment and connection with the City Council, as well as bringing forward new community leaders.

Peer learning, outreach and support

- Peer learning, outreach and support can be powerful tools for encouraging people to learn about local decision-making, because *"it's the existing learners who are the most effective ambassadors"* (Interview). In Stoke-on-Trent peer support was used to get 18-25 year olds involved. 12 young people were recruited from Stoke's diverse communities, receiving proper financial support and training.

Giving voice through technology

- Technologies can be useful for giving experience of decision-making processes to individuals who might otherwise be reluctant to put themselves forward. In Stoke-on-Trent, the 'Speak Out' initiative used video recordings to enable 60 homeless people to articulate their needs to the council.

Area structures

- In September 2002 Stoke City Council created ten Community Forums to promote more citizen-focused services. Each represents two wards (roughly 25,000 people), involving the six ward councillors and a wider array of neighbourhood representatives. They have been institutionalised in the council's constitution. Developing more citizen-focused services has been a key objective, hence one component of the community forums has been to connect input from local residents with service providers at the area level: housing managers, local police, social landlords, Sure Start, representatives from health and the voluntary sector, which form an area partnership (the Area Facilitation Team). The idea is that communities can get a response to their concerns, through officers linked to the community forum areas, which in turn are able to engage communities and resolve service-related problems. The Forums also have a broader development

role. Council has allocated each Forum £10,000 per annum to spend on local projects. There is the hope that the forums will widen the basis of local leadership beyond the party political, to people with stronger community connections who are more engaged with the local citizenry.

Appendix B: Questionnaire Survey

The following pages set out the questionnaire sent to chief executives in the spring/summer of 2004, to gauge what local authorities were doing by way of encouraging effective citizenship. The rationale is explained in more detail in Section 4, above.

The covering letter, explaining our working definition of 'civic education' is given first, followed by the questionnaire.

Dear Chief Executive,

NEW RESEARCH ON SUPPORTING EFFECTIVE CITIZENSHIP

The Centre for Local and Regional Government Research at Cardiff University has been commissioned by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister to produce good practice guidance on how local authorities can **support effective citizenship**.

The usefulness of the guidance will depend on the quality of examples that we can highlight. Therefore, we are very keen to hear interesting examples of how your council is educating, training or supporting people to be active citizens. In this survey, we are investigating local authority initiatives to provide the public with the knowledge, ability and willingness to get involved in local decision-making. This may include the following types of activities:

- initiatives that inform local people how to participate in decision-making
- initiatives that tackle the practical, economic and skills-based barriers which many different groups have to overcome in order to participate effectively
- initiatives that address the disaffection that many people feel towards local government

A great deal of citizenship-related education is focused on schools and FE colleges, but this research is concerned with the activities that local authorities may be involved in beyond the classroom, with its citizenry in general, and especially with marginalised groups.

We have attached a short questionnaire, and we would be grateful if you could arrange for its completion by the **most appropriate person** in your council and return to us. It should take no more than 15 minutes to complete and *all information provided will be treated confidentially*. If you would prefer to complete a paper version of this questionnaire please print-off and once completed return to Dave Turner at the address at the end of the questionnaire.

If you have any queries about the research, there is more information available on our website at www.clrgr.cf.ac.uk/research/civiceducation1.html, or you can contact

Dr Dave Turner directly via turnerdn@cardiff.ac.uk.

We are very grateful for your time and assistance.

Yours faithfully, etc.

SUPPORTING EFFECTIVE CITIZENSHIP

The aim of this study is to produce good practice guidance on how local authorities can support **effective citizenship**. In this survey, we are investigating local authority initiatives to provide the public with the knowledge, ability and willingness to get involved in local decision-making. This may include the following types of activities:

- *initiatives that inform local people how to participate in decision-making*
- *initiatives that tackle the practical, economic and skills-based barriers which many different groups have to overcome in order to participate effectively*
- *initiatives that address the disaffection that many people feel towards local government*

A great deal of citizenship-related education is focused on schools and FE colleges, but **this research is concerned with the activities that local authorities may be involved in beyond the classroom**, with its citizenry in general, and especially with marginalised groups.

Please provide details about you and your authority below:

Authority: _____ Name: _____

Position: _____ Telephone: _____ Email: _____

1. How important would you say supporting **citizenship** is within your local authority? Please check the appropriate box in the following questions by clicking in the appropriate square.

Important					Unimportant	Don't know
1	2	3	4	5	6	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. This question lists some potential barriers that local authorities might face in supporting effective **citizenship**. Please check the relevant box to indicate how important you think these barriers are in your local authority:

Barriers	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't Know
Lack of central government resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Insufficient time and resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of public interest	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of officer support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of member support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Responsibilities fall between departments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consultation overload	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of clear benefits to the authority	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other – please state	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other – please state	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other – please state	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. What are the **three** most important **citizenship-related** activities that your local authority is engaged in? (See covering letter for a definition)

Activity:						
To what extent would you say that this activity has been successful?						
Very Successful					Very Unsuccessful	Don't Know
1	2	3	4	5	6	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How did you measure the success of this activity?						
<hr/>						
Activity:						
To what extent would you say that this activity has been successful?						
Very Successful					Very Unsuccessful	Don't Know
1	2	3	4	5	6	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How did you measure the success of this activity?						
<hr/>						
Activity:						
To what extent would you say that this activity has been successful?						
Very Successful					Very Unsuccessful	Don't Know
1	2	3	4	5	6	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How did you measure the success of this activity?						

4a. Has your local authority made any special efforts to deliver support for **citizenship** to marginalised groups (based on age, gender, ethnicity or other specific groups) by

	Yes	No
Providing information on how to participate in local decision-making	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Undertaking citizenship education or training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Taking steps to break down barriers between the council and its citizens	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If you answered No to all the questions in 4a please go to Q5.		

4b. What actions has your authority taken and which groups have been involved?

Actions	Groups

5. Has your local authority introduced any **internal working practices** to make it more responsive and open to its citizens?

	Yes	No
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		(Go to Q6)
Working practices addressed:		
(i)		
(ii)		
(iii)		

6. What do you think your authority's efforts to support effective **citizenship** aim to achieve?

Aim is to	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't Know
Improve decision making	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improve services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increase public confidence in the council	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Raise citizens' awareness about how local government works	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increase citizens' engagement in the governance of their community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improve citizens' understanding of democracy and citizenship	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduce disaffection	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increase electoral turnout	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Meet corporate objectives – eg promoting social inclusion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other – please state	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other – please state	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Is your authority working on schemes to support effective citizenship in collaboration with other local agencies?

Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If yes please list those agencies most supportive of your work:	

8a. Do you already use Good Practice guidance to assist you in developing your **citizenship** initiatives?

Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8b. Please specify what Good Practice guidance you have been drawing upon

--

8c. In what areas of developing **citizenship-related** initiatives would you welcome good practice guidance?

--

8. Which department(s) has responsibility for **citizenship activities** within your local authority?

Name	Department	Tel/E-mail

9. The next stage of our research involves selecting 50 local authorities as examples of good practice. Would you be interested in taking part in further research in this area:

	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
--	---------------------------------	--------------------------------

MANY THANKS FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE. PLEASE RETURN

BY E-MAIL TO turnerdn@cardiff.ac.uk

OR BY POST TO:

Dave Turner,
Centre for Local and Regional Government Research,
Cardiff Business School,
Cardiff University,
Aberconway Building,
Colum Drive,
Cardiff
CF10 3EU