

Review of Evidence

Research



Citizen Engagement

Citizen engagement under New Labour 1997-2010
and the Coalition government May – October 2010

Commissioned by LSIS from Dr Caroline Hudson,
Real Educational Research

Acknowledgements:

'I am very grateful to the Learning and Skills Improvement Service, for their support of this research. I should also like to thank Jo Jamieson, for her contribution to Part A's literature review, and Chris Chilton, for his work in formatting this review.'
Dr Caroline Hudson October 2010

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Executive Summary

Background

- The Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) commissioned Real Educational Research to:
 - Review activity related to citizen engagement, across the public services, during the New Labour government 1997-2010 (completed before the General Election, May 2010)
 - Review the Coalition government's activity related to citizen engagement May – October 2010 (completed prior to the Spending Review, 20.10.10.)
 - Highlight relevant recommendations for the learning and skills sector.

Methodology

- The research methodology consisted of a literature search, using a range of search terms specific to citizen engagement.
- The work of a wide range of government departments was reviewed.
- The literature reviewed consists of policy publications (Acts, Bills, Green Papers, White Papers, Structural Reform Plans, and other policy and strategy documents); and publications by organisations with a remit for public participation (e.g. Involve), think tanks (e.g. Demos), and researchers (e.g. Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) publications).

Terminology

- In existing research studies and policy documentation, there is a range of issues with defining citizen engagement. Issues include:
 - What is meant by citizen engagement is often insufficiently defined.
 - Even in more recent work, where there tends to be a greater focus on defining terms, writers conceptualise citizen participation in different ways (Nicholson et al., 2005).
 - In more recent work, where the term community is defined, what a community consists of varies greatly. For example, writers such as Hawtin and Percy-Smith (2007) and Russell (2008) argue that community can encompass: a group of people who live or work together in the same geographical location; an administrative area; or a group of people with a shared interest or set of characteristics (e.g. women, minority ethnic groups and children).
- This review uses the terms citizen engagement and community engagement interchangeably.
- The definitional and conceptual issues with the term citizen engagement highlight that it is important for LSIS and the learning and skills sector to clarify terminology used.

¹ The learning and skills sector is defined as further education (FE) colleges, adult and community learning providers, sixth form colleges, work-based learning providers, offender learning, Workstep, and Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) funded provision, including employability programmes.

The context of the learning and skills sector

- The learning and skills sector is well placed to play an active part in citizen engagement activities in the coming years, in spite of current constraints, including those related to funding cuts (LSIS, 2010).
- The report on LSIS's policy seminar *Changing public services – Changing professional practices. Understanding the direction of change* (LSIS, 2010) underlines that studies of further education have repeatedly shown that the sector is often very well regarded in its locality.
- The sector has a long history of community involvement.
- LSIS's recently published *Effective Community Development. A strategic framework. Consultation* (LSIS, 2010) specifies in detail a wide ranging strategic approach to community engagement.
- The report on LSIS's second public services seminar, *Empowerment and responsibility* (LSIS, 2010), stresses that the sector has a track record of being responsive to change; this suggests the sector can adapt to the policy developments of the Coalition's Big Society.
- Given the diversity of the learning and skills sector¹, the sector as a whole is well placed to respond to different aspects of the Big Society's policies. Conversely, parts of the sector may need support in focusing on citizen engagement.

New Labour and Coalition policy

- Axiomatically, the concept of citizenship is far from new, dating back to Aristotle at least.
- In England, there was an increasingly explicit focus on the citizen in public policy under the previous New Labour government 1997-2010.
- The previous New Labour government's focus on the citizen was inter-related with New Labour's policy emphasis on:
 - The public sector reform agenda
 - Locality: rebalancing the relationship between the centre and the local
 - Community cohesion
 - Community engagement
 - Community empowerment
 - Voice (e.g. of the learner, the employer and the citizen)
 - Personalisation
 - The consumer, the user
 - Immigration
 - Addressing the terrorist threat.

² The Cabinet Office has a remit for implementing the Big Society agenda across government, whilst CLG has a strong focus on decentralisation. See these departments' Structural Reform Plans and other documentation..

- In many respects, the Coalition government is developing further New Labour's focus on citizen engagement. For example, New Labour's *Putting the Frontline First. Smarter government* (HM Government, 2009) expressed commitments to strengthening the role of citizens and civic society through a range of measures, including streamlining the centre of government; opening up data and public information, to promote transparency; and giving communities more say in shaping services. These are all priorities of the Coalition's Big Society.
- On the one hand, it is probably fair to say that the Coalition government has not acknowledged fully the extent and nature of citizen engagement activity under the previous New Labour government 1997-2010.
- On the other hand, the Coalition's policy on citizen engagement differs from that of New Labour, in a range of ways. These include:
 - The centrality which the Coalition is giving to the theoretical model of the Big Society. Cabinet Office (2010) states that the Big Society consists of five strands: giving communities more powers; encouraging people to take an active role in their communities; transferring power from central to local government; supporting co-operatives, mutuals, charities and social enterprises; and publishing government data. The Big Society is underpinned by the three pillars of freedom, fairness and responsibility (HM Government, 2010)
 - The extent to and ways in which citizen engagement therefore underpins the Big Society
 - The strong focus the Coalition government is giving to citizen engagement across areas of domestic policy, perhaps particularly in the work of the Cabinet Office and the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG)²
 - The explicit focus given to citizen engagement in the Coalition's ministerial speeches
 - The economic context in which citizen engagement is rooted, in terms of the Coalition's focus on cutting the deficit in a shorter time period than the previous New Labour government had planned to.
- In broad terms, there is a high degree of consistency in the Coalition's approach to citizen engagement, across different areas of domestic policy.
- At present, the impact of the Coalition government's focus on citizen engagement is unknown. Given the obvious inevitability of this, this should not deter the sector taking a leading role in shaping citizen engagement activity.

Strengths of existing citizen engagement activity

- There is a wealth of citizen engagement activity for LSIS and the learning and skills sector to draw on, in future citizen engagement activity.
- There is a very wide range of established engagement techniques and mechanisms, including: participatory budgeting; community profiling; citizen surveys; Citizen Panels; Citizens' Juries; Citizens' Summits; deliberative forums; public dialogue; Appreciative Inquiry; focus groups; a Citizens' Day; citizen networks; and online engagement through, for example, e-petitioning, debate through many organisations' websites, and social networking sites.
- Given that there is an explicit focus on citizen engagement across the Coalition government's domestic policy, and given that the learning and skills sector contains a diversity of providers, there are many Big Society initiatives, across policy areas, which the sector could benefit from. For example, there are opportunities for the sector to develop partnerships with Academies, Free Schools, and indeed local authority schools, to provide services such as legal assistance and facilities management.
- Activities the sector participates in which are related to the Big Society are likely to have the support of the Coalition government.

Gaps in the evidence on citizen engagement

- There are gaps in the evidence on previous citizenship engagement activity, in terms of:
 - In particular, the lack of a substantial body of evaluation evidence on the impact of activity
 - An absence of robust evidence on the benefits of citizen engagement, for citizens and for the area of the public services in question. Some existing evidence on the benefits of citizen engagement has been contested
 - A lack of robust quantitative measures to use in evaluating interventions
 - Issues in establishing causal relationships between participating in initiatives and improvements in services
 - An absence of data on costs. There is therefore a lack of evidence on value for money (Price Waterhouse Coopers, 2009)
 - Existing evidence does not give a clear picture of the extent to and ways in which citizens have influenced policy development and implementation in England
 - In some instances, commissioners' failure to prioritise the evaluation of developmental activity on citizen engagement.

Barriers

- There is a range of potential barriers to citizen engagement activity.
- Barriers include:
 - Some evidence on trends towards public disengagement from the state (DCA, 2007), though other evidence (Universities of Manchester and Southampton, 2010) argues that citizen participation can be increased
 - Potential citizen fatigue, through duplication of and poorly co-ordinated activities
 - The limited reach of some citizen engagement activities, including issues with the engagement of hard to reach groups
 - The perceptions of some citizens of the lack of impact of citizen participation, on decision making
 - The resistance of some employees to the involvement of a wider group of citizens in policy development and implementation
 - The potential of some citizen engagement activity to be at odds with democratic principles and processes (Ministry of Justice, 2008), such as in instances where the views of a few, unelected citizens influence policy development
- The extent to which resources are a barrier is perhaps more complex:
 - On the one hand, existing evidence underlines the importance of ensuring that there are appropriate resources to support citizen engagement activity.
 - On the other hand, the Coalition is prioritising spending cuts, in the context of reducing the deficit.
 - At the same time, a strong message emerging from the Coalition government is that spending does not necessarily equate to quality, and that it is feasible to do more for less.
 - There are some funding opportunities, such as through LSIS and new partnerships with other areas of the public services.

Recommendations: opportunities for the learning and skills sector

Overview

- Below are outlined ways in which the sector could maximise its citizen engagement activity, within the Coalition's Big Society.

Definition of citizen engagement

LSIS and the sector should:

- Develop a clear definition of citizen engagement
- Be specific about which communities form the target group(s) for different citizen engagement activities.

Leadership and management

The sector should:

- Target carefully what citizen related activities to engage in, given the volume and range of citizen engagement activity
- Ensure that the governing body sets the college's strategy for community development, thereby:
 - Giving priority to the agenda
 - Facilitating potential strategic connections, through governors, between the college and other local bodies
- Assess the relevance and feasibility of working in partnership with other areas of the public services on the Big Society agenda, using the evidence in this report on the high profile given to the Big Society across areas of domestic policy. As previously cited, one example is collaboration between the learning and skills sector and Academies, Free Schools and local authority schools
- Take a leading role in shaping local citizen networks
- Develop processes to work effectively with Local Enterprise Partnerships
- Assess, on an ongoing basis, the funding opportunities available to support citizen engagement activity, through LSIS (e.g. Flexibility and Innovation Fund) and wider sources, through partnership activity
- With LSIS, develop strategic relationships with government departments beyond the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), and perhaps with the Cabinet Office and the Department for Communities and Local Government in particular.

The third and private sectors

The sector should:

- Take a leading role in enhancing the contribution of the voluntary, charitable and private sectors to the Big Society. This includes collaborating on the design and delivery of services and models, as advocated by Wei (2010), the Government Adviser for the Big Society
- Build on the work of, for example, the pathfinder mutuals, to incorporate models of ownership such as co-operatives and mutuals into the sector
- Ensure greater involvement of volunteers in the delivery of learning and skills
- Become a leader in training volunteers for activity to take forward the Big Society, across the public services and the third and private sectors.

Use of data

Given the Coalition's focus on opening up the data which is available to the public, the sector should:

- Make maximum use of data which are publicly available, to inform its strategic direction in relation to citizen engagement activities
- Develop its understanding of what local communities need, based on analysis of local data, quantitative and qualitative
- Use this understanding of local need, and the new flexibilities, to ensure that its local learning offer responds to local demand and priorities, whilst still reflecting further education's (FE's) mission
- Provide the public with more information about the sector, in line with the transparency agenda
- Find new, more accessible ways to provide information about its services to the public
- Collect data on its citizen engagement activity, particularly on the outcomes of activity, including the contribution of activity to the aims of the Big Society. This is important for the following reasons:
 - The gaps in evidence highlighted above
 - The Coalition's focus on outcomes
 - The coalition's emphasis on the Big Society
 - The scope to use evidence with potential future funders.

Learner and employer engagement

It is self-evident that learners and employers are local citizens. The sector should:

- Assess and, as appropriate, develop further the extent to and ways in which learners and employers shape its services
- Deepen its existing focus on learner and employer voice, including through:
 - Use of the range of engagement techniques highlighted above
 - Assessment of the extent to which the sector wishes to emulate the National Health Service's (NHS') degree of customer and citizen focus, and principles of shared decision making between patient and the NHS, as manifested in, for example, DoH (2010)
- Ensure that the curriculum and wider institutional ethos reflect the principles of the Big Society, so that learners develop as citizens who embody the values and practices of the Big Society in terms of, for instance, social, political and economic engagement in society.

Targeting the range of citizens

The sector should:

- Assess how to involve the public in the governance, design and delivery of learning and skills, as advocated by Wei (2010)
- Balance how to sustain the support of citizens who have a history of community engagement, with engaging hard to reach groups
- In terms of engaging the hard to reach, combine the personalisation agenda with the equalities duties of the Equalities Act 2010, as well as drawing on existing research evidence and the sector's long history in this area.

The sector's assets

- A wide range of learners, from higher education to Pre-Entry level learners, already use the sector's facilities. The sector should maximise its potential in providing spaces to draw communities together.
- Evidence underlines the important role of the Internet in providing a wide range of information about public services to the public, and in enabling citizens to express their views on, and therefore potentially influence the development of, public services. The sector should ensure that the potential of new technologies is exploited fully, in citizen engagement activity.
- As part of the above, the sector should take a leading role in Race Online. Race Online has been endorsed by David Cameron and encourages public, private and charitable organisations to help the 10 million adults in the UK who are uninitiated into the Internet, to go online.

The sector's support needs

- Given the diversity of the learning and skills sector, parts of the sector may need support in realising the opportunities of the Big Society agenda. LSIS and the sector should assess what the support needs of different parts of the sector consist of, and how these needs may be met.
- A wide range of deliberative engagement techniques was highlighted above. LSIS and the sector should consider how to develop staff expertise, in using a range of deliberative approaches, to support citizen engagement activity.
- The Coalition emphasises that citizens have the right to challenge how public services are deployed. As previously stated, existing evidence highlights that employees can feel threatened by citizen engagement in public services. LSIS and the sector should therefore assess what skills staff need, to be confident in responding to challenges from citizens about the sector, and how staff may be equipped with these skills.

Section 1.

Citizen engagement activity under the previous New Labour government 1997-2010

³ The learning and skills sector is defined as further education (FE) colleges, adult and community learning providers, sixth form colleges, work-based learning providers, offender learning, Workstep, and Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) funded provision, including employability programmes.

⁴ In this report, the terms learning and skills sector and further education and skills sector are used interchangeably

1.1 Background

In February 2010, the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) commissioned Real Educational Research (RER) to:

- Conduct a review of activity related to citizen engagement across the public services, beyond the learning and skills sector³, under the New Labour government 1997-2010
- Highlight implications of activity beyond the learning and skills sector, for the learning and skills⁴ sector.

From April 2010, FE colleges have had a duty to promote the economic and social well being of their communities. As LSIS's *Corporate Plan* (LSIS, 2010) highlights, although this duty applies only to colleges, all providers operate in a context where community relations are likely to be critical. LSIS's priority area 8, specified in the *Corporate Plan* and *Operational Plan* (LSIS, 2010), concerns the provision of support for community development and cohesion through, for example, embedding community cohesion in leadership, management and governance activity, and supporting colleges in developing their responsibilities for the social and economic well being of their area. In 2010-11, LSIS is publishing a Community Development Strategy (LSIS, 2010).

1.2 Structure

Section 1 of this report first summarises the methodology used. It then assesses issues with the terminology used to describe citizen engagement. The policy development of citizen engagement, under the New Labour government 1997-2010, is outlined. The report considers different levels of citizen engagement, and presents the wide range of mechanisms for citizen engagement. The strengths of, and issues with, evaluations of citizen engagement are then examined, followed by an exploration of the benefits of, and barriers to, citizen engagement.

Section 2 of this report was commissioned in September 2010. Section 2 updates Section 1, with an analysis of citizen engagement across the public services under the Coalition government May – October 2010. Section 3 consists of conclusions and recommendations from Sections 1 and 2.

⁵ With the exception of particularly relevant work commissioned by the Scottish Executive (e.g. Nicholson et al., 2005) and a small selection of US work (e.g. of the Jefferson Center).

1.3 Methodology of Section 1

The research methodology for Section 1 consisted of a literature search using the following search terms:

- Citizen engagement
- Citizen empowerment
- Citizenship
- Community engagement
- Community empowerment
- Community involvement
- Community
- Community profiling
- Civic participation
- Civil society
- Total Place
- Citizens' Juries
- Citizens' Summits
- Citizens' Panels
- Participatory budgeting
- World class public services.

The following areas of the public services in England were reviewed: HM Treasury; Home Office; Ministry of Justice; Department of Health (DoH); Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM); Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG); Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra); Department For International Development (DFID); Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS); Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF); Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC); Department of Transport; Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS); Cabinet Office; Department of Work and Pensions (DWP); and the Ministry of Defence (MoD).

RER aimed to review UK and international literature in English on citizen engagement. However, at the start of the review, RER had not anticipated the vast scale of the literature on citizen engagement. Because of time constraints, RER therefore limited the review primarily to literature on the public services in England⁵. The literature reviewed consisted of policy documents (Acts, Bills, Green Papers, White Papers, and policy and strategy documents; and publications by organisations with a remit for public participation (e.g. Involve), think tanks (e.g. Demos), and researchers (e.g. Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) publications).

⁶ Area based initiatives are defined as publicly funded initiatives targeted on areas of social or economic disadvantage, which aim to improve the quality of life of the residents through multi-faceted programmes.

There is a wider body of literature, beyond that about England, than has been feasible to incorporate into this review, such as work published through the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and a significant amount of Scottish evidence. RER took detailed notes on the literature on the English public services identified through the search, and incorporated as much as was feasible in the timescale, from notes into this review. RER included in the list of references all the material which RER took notes on. However, there is a significant volume of information from RER's notes which there has not been scope to include explicitly in the main body of the review. Similarly, RER had originally aimed to interview a small number of stakeholders about citizen engagement, but, as discussed, time constraints meant that this was impractical.

1.4 Terminology

1.4.1 Overview

This section illustrates the issues in defining citizen engagement. The following discussion underlines the importance of ensuring that the definition of citizen engagement used in the learning and skills sector is precise, and is made explicit in citizen engagement activity.

1.4.2 Absence of specificity

Across the literature, the terms citizen engagement and community engagement are often used interchangeably. Writing 40 years ago, Stacey (1969) concluded that the term community was not useful, because it was a catch-all phrase, referring to virtually any form of social grouping outside the family. Writing nearly four decades later, Hawtin and Percy-Smith (2007) consider that community is an '*over-used, often hackneyed concept*'. Burton et al. (2004), in their systematic review of the literature on community involvement in area based initiatives (ABIs)⁶, commissioned by the Home Office to provide the evidence base for Civil Renewal, argue that community involvement is often insufficiently defined:

Most studies take involvement as a given, neither defining its meaning nor investigating what informants say it is. The authors' own views can be hard to distinguish from those of informants.

⁷ Output areas are small areas within wards and parishes, used in the Census.

1.4.3 Breadth of definitions

In contrast to Burton et al.'s (2004) criticisms about failure to define terms, it is probably fair to say that, in recent writing on community engagement, more attention has been given to definitional issues. However, even where concepts are defined, this does not mean that the concept is unproblematic. Nicholson (2005), in her literature review on civic participation for the Scottish Executive, comments on the '*spectrum of different definitions, understandings and frameworks*' used by different authors. Burton et al.'s (2004) own definition, which distinguishes between three types of community involvement, reflects a breadth which could cover virtually any activity related to the societal structures below:

- Individuals or representatives of voluntary or community organisations take part in public policy design and implementation
- Participation in voluntary or community organisations
- Informal involvement with family, friends and neighbours.

Writers such as Hawtin and Percy-Smith (2007) and Russell (2008) argue that the term community is very broad, encompassing:

- A group of people who live or work together in the same geographical location
- An administrative area
- A group of people with a shared interest or set of characteristics (e.g. women, a minority ethnic group and children).

Hawtin and Purcell (2007) make the point that it can be misleading to term a group sharing the same set of characteristics a community, in that it ascribes a commonality of interest which may not exist. Diversity and divisions exist within any community. Furthermore, if the community under consideration is a geographic community, there may be administrative boundaries (e.g. output areas⁷, polling districts and statutory services, such as health and education) which cut across the community; this creates complications in terms of using data sets belonging to the administrative community. In turn, if the community under consideration is a community of interest, such as women, this then raises further definitional issues, such as identifying the geographic area within which women will be included in a profiling exercise.

1.4.4 Community empowerment and community engagement

The Communities and Local Government website under the New Labour government both highlighted a distinction and, at the same time, collapsed the distinction between community empowerment and community engagement:

Community empowerment is the process of enabling people to shape and choose the services they use on a personal basis, so that they can influence the way those services are delivered. It is often used in the same context as community engagement, which refers to the practical techniques of involving local people in local decisions and especially reaching out to those who feel distanced from public decisions. <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.communities.gov.uk/communities/communityempowerment/>

This definition suggests that, for CLG under New Labour, community empowerment did not include the third of Burton et al.'s (2004) categories, that of informal interaction with family, friends and neighbours. This is further underlined by the three main benefits which CLG stated can arise through community engagement, and which relate primarily to public roles:

- **Active citizens**, with the motivation, skills and confidence to speak up for their community
- **Strengthened communities**, with the capability and resources to bring people together to work out shared solutions
- **Partnerships** between public bodies and local people.

1.4.5 Individual choice

Hawtin and Purcell (2008), as part of the CLG commissioned process evaluation of community engagement in community strategies, draw heavily on the definition used in Cooper and Hawtin (1998). Their definition has resonances with that of the CLG website, though Hawtin and Purcell (2008) stress the individual's choice, albeit in clumsy wording, in relation to community engagement:

...a civil right by which residents can collectively engage in activities which influence the policy and practice of (public service providers). Residents should be allowed influence to the extent they choose through (those providers).

1.4.6 International community engagement

The Department for International Development defines community engagement, not in terms of national policy, but in terms of the international community engaging with developing countries.

1.4.7 *Classic versus contemporary conceptions*

In his review of citizenship, Lord Goldsmith (Goldsmith, 2008) distinguishes between a classic and contemporary conception of citizenship, arguing that citizenship has changed greatly over the last century. Goldsmith argues that citizenship was the basic form of connection between individuals and the state, through which the citizen offers loyalty in exchange for protection from external threat, and, increasingly, from other citizens. It did not extend to systematic provision of welfare. Over the last century, argues Goldsmith, the relationship between the state and the citizen has deepened. The state offers many more protections, including healthcare, housing and financial protection. Furthermore, citizenship has now become a basis for connection, not just between individuals and the state, but also between citizens. Goldsmith (2008) analyses the legal rights and responsibilities of contemporary citizenship, in terms of:

- Right of abode and free movement
- Right of protection and duty of allegiance
- Civic rights
- Social and economic rights.

1.4.8 *Rights and responsibilities, and active citizenship*

The discussion above of Lord Goldsmith's review (2008) points to the importance of the balance between rights and responsibilities, in some of the literature on citizen engagement. A number of New Labour publications on public service reform, such as *Building on progress. Public Services* (Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, 2007) and *Rights and responsibilities, developing our constitutional framework* (Ministry of Justice, 2009) explore the balance between rights and responsibilities. Ministry of Justice (2009) raises questions about how rights and responsibilities may be best respected, suggesting approaches ranging from a symbolic statement to legally enforceable rights and responsibilities. In turn, the term active citizenship is frequently used in discussions of citizens' responsibilities, as in New Labour's summary of consultation responses to the 2009 green paper *Rights and responsibilities* (Ministry of Justice, 2010).

1.4.9 *Citizens, and users and consumers*

To some extent, the literature contrasts citizens with users and consumers of services. For example, the discussion paper *A national framework for citizen engagement* (Ministry of Justice, 2008) considers citizenship in the context of involvement in national policy making, one important aspect of which is voting in elections. This political conception of the citizen is contrasted with members of the public as consumers. The paper argues that greater prosperity has put the public increasingly in the role of consumers who view it as their right to receive redress from public services where appropriate.

However, where the term citizen is used in an all-embracing way, distinctions between the terms citizen, consumer and user necessarily become blurred. For example, in *Building on progress. Public services* (Cabinet Office, 2007), the term citizen covers participating in deliberative forums on policy issues, and being empowered users of health, education and criminal justice services. Furthermore, where the term citizen is used in conjunction with the rights strand of rights and responsibilities, it could be argued that citizen becomes interchangeable with user or consumer.

1.4.10 Vertical and horizontal citizenship

The Future of Citizenship (DCA, 2007) distinguishes between two different aspects of citizenship:

- Horizontal citizenship: citizen-citizen based dimensions
- Vertical citizenship: citizen-governance based dimensions.

DCA (2007) found that there was a range of issues in relation to the public's views on the term citizenship:

- The term citizenship lacks resonance and clarity.
- The idea of citizenship has many different connotations and can be interpreted in disconnected ways.
- Most citizens do not have a view on citizenship per se. Rather, they take views on separate issues that might constitute citizenship. These views can be volatile, highly subjective and likely to change.

1.4.11 Legal and broader definitions

The Citizenship Foundation defines citizenship in its framework for a Citizens' Day (Citizenship Foundation, 2007), distinguishing between a legal and a broader definition:

Citizenship is a term generally used in one of two ways.

In strictly legal terms it refers to a person's membership of a state or nation, and the legal rights and responsibilities that this brings. In a wider sense it describes the process through which individuals engage and participate in society and how they exercise their rights and responsibilities.

The Citizenship Foundation (2007) also makes explicit the relationships between citizenship and community cohesion:

Cohesion is about how individuals and groups share citizenship and the extent to which they maintain a commitment to shared citizenship.

1.4.12 Citizenship education pre and post-16

Whilst the remit of this review is citizen engagement in areas of the public services beyond the learning and skills sector, it is, nevertheless, important to include in this work the definitions used of citizenship within the sector. The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) guidance for post-16 citizenship draws together the different aspects of citizenship outlined in the discussion above:

Citizenship aims to equip all young people with the knowledge, understanding and skills to participate effectively in society working together as informed, critical, socially and morally responsible citizens, convinced they can have influence and make a difference in their communities (locally, nationally, globally). (QCA, 2004)

The QCA guidance (QCA, 2004) also distinguishes between a narrow and broad conception of citizenship:

In the narrow sense, citizenship means being a legal member of a political community or state... It involves having certain rights, responsibilities and duties – legal, social and moral. In a broader sense, citizenship means being a responsible and active citizen – showing an interest in issues that concern the community or state and acting with others.

The LSIS website states that post-16 citizenship should aim to:

develop young adults' ability to apply political knowledge and understanding to issues that concern them as well as developing skills of enquiry, communication, participation and responsible action.

The LSIS website highlights that key citizenship concepts include:

- Rights and responsibilities
- Governments and democracies
- Identities and communities.

In LSIS's *Citizenship News* (October, 2009), Chris Rowe, an FE college manager, made the point that many staff in his college find it difficult to define citizenship precisely, though they have a remit for teaching citizenship. This underlines the importance of defining terminology precisely, in work on community engagement within the sector. The citizenship curriculum is considered in Section 1.8.2.

⁸ with the writers' punctuation.

1.4.13 Use of language

DCA (2007) recommended that government should invest in finding the right vocabulary to communicate with the public, about vertical engagement with the state. DCA (2007) found that the term citizenship does not communicate effectively about vertical engagement, though citizenship, as a word, resonates strongly with the public in relation to household and community relationships (horizontal engagement).

The Local Government Association (LGA) publishes an annual list of words which it advises that the public sector should not use in communicating with the public. Words on the 2010 list relevant to this review are:

- Citizen empowerment
- Citizen touchpoints
- Cohesive communities
- Community engagement
- Dialogue
- Engaging users
- Engagement
- Participatory
- Stakeholder
- Sustainable communities.

<http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=17636724>
as at February, 2010

This list has produced many comments, mainly critical, from website users. Two comments are cited below⁸:

am just wondering if some of these words shouldn't be used, for example. client, customer or service user, what are you meant to use instead????

There are a lot of perfectly good words on the list from a rich english language - so use them, but use them meaningfully and correctly. Don't invent words that can be misunderstood or are just plain silly. However, neither should we assume the public don't understand plain english terminology used in its correct context.

Much of the selection from the Local Government Association's list cited above are commonly used by government, including in documentation which the public can access. On the one hand, it could be argued that the list represents an attempt to avoid jargon. Overall, however, it is probably fair to say that this list highlights a lack of clear thinking; an inconsistency in language use; and a questionable attitude towards the public's capabilities, on the part of the Local Government Association.

1.5 Policy under New Labour

Axiomatically, the concept of citizenship is far from new. Citizenship dates back to Aristotle at least, as the quotation from Aristotle at the beginning of the *Communities in Control* (CLG, 2008) White Paper signals.

If liberty and equality, as is thought by some, are chiefly to be found in democracy, they will be best attained when all persons alike share in the government to the utmost.

Citizen Power in Recession (Burrall and Carr-West, 2009) argues that the Empowerment Agenda is a relatively recent political label, but that its history is far older.

In England, there was an increasingly explicit focus on the citizen in public policy, under the New Labour government 1997-2010. This focus on citizenship was deeply interlinked with New Labour's policy emphasis on:

- The public sector reform agenda
- Locality: rebalancing the relationship between the centre and the local
- Community cohesion
- Community engagement
- Community empowerment
- Voice (e.g. of the learner, the employer and the citizen)
- Personalisation
- The consumer, the user
- Immigration
- Addressing the terrorist threat.

Nicholson, in her literature review for the Scottish Executive of civic participation in public policy making (Nicholson, 2005), argues that local government had been to the fore in extending citizen participation in public policy making. Hawtin and Percy-Smith (2007) argue that, since the late 1990s, a number of policy initiatives have aimed to devolve more decision making about the public sector to communities. It is unsurprising that, in England, the Department for Communities and Local Government has had a particularly strong focus on community engagement. Health and crime and justice are examples of other areas of the public services where there has been a marked emphasis on citizen engagement.

In terms of policy documents which are generic to the public services, citizen empowerment is central to *Excellence and Fairness* (Cabinet Office, 2008).

The focus on the citizen in *Excellence and Fairness* (Cabinet Office, 2008) is strengthened in subsequent documents, such as *Power in People's Hands* (Cabinet Office and HM Treasury, 2009), *Working Together* (HM Government, 2009) and *Putting the Frontline First. Smarter government* (HM Government, 2009).

Table 1 illustrates some of the key Acts, Green and White Papers, and policy and strategy documents which reflect the increased focus on citizen engagement under New Labour, across the public services. Table 1 is illustrative, not comprehensive.

Date	Acts, White and Green papers, policy documents	Detail
1999	Local Government Act	Introduced the best value regime with wide ranging provisions to consult generally.
2000	Local Government Act	Made changes to the decision making structures and processes of local authorities and government, to promote greater openness, involvement and accountability. Placed duty on local authorities to prepare community strategies. A guiding principle was to engage and involve local communities.
2001	Health and Social Care Act	The National Health Service (NHS) has a statutory duty to engage with patients and public in service planning and operation.
2001	Social Exclusion Unit, <i>A New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal. National Strategy Action Plan</i>	Lists 105 commitments, across government departments. Idea of Local Strategic Partnerships expressed. Community Empowerment Fund highlighted.
2002	National Community Forum	Advisory non-departmental public body which brings local voices into government.
2002	Cabinet Office, <i>In the service of democracy. Green Paper</i>	New media can help to restructure the relationship between citizens and state, in line with proposed constitutional refinements, enabling individuals to become active participants rather than passive consumers.
2004	Home Office, <i>Building Communities. Beating Crime. White Paper</i>	Every community to benefit from an accessible, responsive neighbourhood policing approach by 2008. Effective community engagement central to neighbourhood policing.
2004	Civil Renewal Unit, <i>Firm Foundations. The Government's Strategy for Community Building</i>	Government's framework for community capacity building. Follows the Building Civil Renewal review and consultation. Outlines steps to enable more communities to help themselves and engage effectively with public bodies. Importance of long term resourcing highlighted.

2005	ODPM and Home Office, Citizen Engagement and Public Services: Why Neighbourhoods Matter	Aims to support greater involvement of citizens in policies and service improvement.
2005	Civil Renewal Unit, Together We Can Action Plan	Aims to support greater involvement of citizens in policies and service improvement.
2006	Communities and Local Government, <i>Strong and Prosperous Communities</i> . White Paper	States government's commitment to empowering citizens and communities, by devolving power locally, and facilitating increased choice, influence and redress, for the public.
2007	Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, Building on Progress. Public Services	Focus on personalising services, empowering citizens, and balancing rights and responsibilities.
2007	Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act	Replaced patient forums with LINKs: Local Involvement Networks (implemented 2008). Strengthened NHS duty to involve public.
2007	NHS World Class Commissioning Competencies	Competency number 3 is concerned with public and patient engagement.
2007	Ministry of Justice, <i>The Governance of Britain</i> . Green Paper	Government aims to engage people in a discussion of citizenship and British values, and to conduct a series of events around UK to get public input. Government to conduct a review of British citizenship (see Lord Goldsmith's Review, 2008, below), and launch Youth Citizenship, looking at citizen education, ceremonies, voting age, etc.
2007	Lyons Inquiry	Inquiry into the future of local government, particularly local government finance. Greater scope for local government to place shape, with less control from the centre.
2008	Communities and Local Government, <i>Communities in Control</i> . White Paper	Signalled more intensive stage of public sector reform in shifting power from centre to local communities. Sets out government agenda for enhancing rights of citizens and making institutions more accountable, through empowering communities and citizens, and ensuring that power is more evenly distributed across society. Empowerment Fund: for third sector organisations in their role of giving local communities power. Community Builders Fund: strengthens community based organisations through finance and advisory support Comprehensive Area Assessment to include evaluation of the quality of public engagement.

2008	Cabinet Office, Excellence and Fairness	<p>Highlights developments needed in public services, to progress from good to great.</p> <p>Citizen empowerment is central, and is related, in turn, to two other main tenets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the ‘new professionalism’ across the workforce • strategic leadership from central government.
2008	Ministry of Justice, National Framework for Greater Citizen Engagement	States citizens’ expectations of better, more interactive public services.
2008	Home Office, From the neighbourhood to the national: policing our communities together. Green Paper	Includes giving public more say about, and action on, local crime.
2008	Lord Goldsmith, Review of Citizenship	<p>Focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • legal rights and responsibilities • role of citizens in civic society • the social bond of citizenship.
2008	Casey, L., Engaging Communities in Fighting Crime. Cross-departmental review	<p>With the right services in place, individual citizens can play part in tackling crime.</p> <p>Radical change is needed, to get the public more engaged in tackling crime, and to halt the erosion of community spirit.</p> <p>Government should ensure that community engagement activities are rationalised, by different agencies collaborating.</p>
2008	Communities and Local Government, Place Matters. The Location Strategy for the United Kingdom	Aims to empower communities and individuals by involving them in the design and delivery of local public services, and other measures designed to promote local democracy and larger numbers of active citizens.
2008	Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit, <i>Realising Britain’s Potential</i>	<p>Analysis of major challenges facing Britain.</p> <p>Highlights the importance of personalising public services.</p> <p>Greater focus on user responsiveness, and on collaboration between users and providers.</p>
2009	HM Government, Community Empowerment, Housing and Economic Regeneration Bill	<p>Includes empowering communities and individuals by involving them in the design and delivery of local public services and measures to promote local democracy.</p> <p>Larger numbers of active citizens.</p>

2009	Ministry of Justice, Rights and Responsibilities: developing our constitutional framework. Green Paper	<p>Relationship between citizen and state at heart of paper.</p> <p>Explores potential for a Bill of Rights and Responsibilities.</p> <p>Paper has particular focus on responsibilities.</p> <p>Covers merits of giving constitutional recognition to responsibilities; and possible recognition at a constitutional level of rights relating to criminal justice, equality, good administration, social justice, and welfare state, healthcare, children and living within environmental limits.</p>
2009		<p>Local authorities have duty to inform, consult and involve local people in services. Have duty to promote democracy.</p>
2009	Communities and Local Government, <i>Connecting Communities</i>	<p>£12 million plan to reinvigorate 100 local communities.</p> <p>One strand of plan: to give local people a much stronger voice.</p>
2009	Ministry of Justice, Engaging Communities in Criminal Justice. Green Paper	<p>Aims to give communities more say in the way justice is delivered in their neighbourhoods.</p>
2009	HM Government, Putting the Frontline First. Smarter government	<p>Three main strands:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strengthening the role of citizens and civic society • freeing up public services by recasting the relationship between the centre and the frontline • streamlining the centre of government and therefore saving money through sharper delivery. <p>Strengthening the role of citizens and civic society focuses on citizens as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • giving people guarantees to high quality public services • accelerating the move to digitalised public services that are personalised, flexible, efficient and save time • radically opening up data and public information, to promote transparent, effective government and social innovation <p>Will increasingly be for local areas to decide how to respond to citizens' expectations, and for frontline services to deliver on this.</p>
2009	HM Government, Working together. Public services on your side	<p>Information revolution.</p> <p>Outlines how parents, patients and citizens will be able to share information and experiences on the performance of schools, hospitals and police forces, through publication of local performance maps.</p>

2009	Cabinet Office and HM Treasury, Power in People's Hands. Learning from World Class Public Services	Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using entitlements to put power in the hands of service users • increasing the accountability of services through publication of local information, often digitally • creating incentives for personalised services which citizens can shape.
2009	Cabinet Office, Listening to the Front Line	Emphasises that policy making in Whitehall must be informed by front line public servants and citizens.
2009	Health Act	Sets out rights and responsibilities of patients and staff. Information on the quality of health services to be published in a Quality Account.
2009	Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act	Act includes a duty on local authorities to promote democracy, measures to boost the role of petitions in local democracy, and an extended duty on public authorities to secure the involvement of persons in their functions.
2010	HM Government, An Agenda for Youth Engagement	Government's response to the Youth Citizenship Commission. Importance of making young people aware of citizenship opportunities. Outlines range of opportunities for young people, and the government's plans, in relation to young people's citizenship.
2010	FE colleges' duty	From April 2010, FE colleges have new duty to promote economic and social well being of the communities they serve.
2010	NHS legal duty	From April 2010, the NHS has a legal duty to report on consultations; to explain how it acted on patient and public feedback; and to explain how consultations have influenced commissioning.
2010	Conservative Party (2010); Labour Party (2010); Liberal Democrat Party (2010)	Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democratic manifestos for the 2010 General Election all underline the importance of community engagement.

1.6 Levels of citizen engagement

1.6.1 Overview

This section outlines different levels of citizen engagement, which some writers have developed into typologies. The examples of different levels of engagement highlight the importance of the learning and skills sector being clear about the level of engagement appropriate for different initiatives.

1.6.2 From information to service control

CLG's evaluation framework (CLG, 2009) (see Section 1.9.2) includes a typology for citizen responsibility. This typology consists of a spectrum of increasing responsibilities, which relate to the type of engagement used:

- Giving information (facilitating communication between service providers and citizens)
- Consultative (use of more formal mechanisms)
- Responsible accountability (service providers are obliged to consult with, and take account of, democratic and representative groups)
- Collective choice (e.g. choosing between service providers on behalf of a community)
- Service control (empowerment to control service delivery. This is usually over very local services).

As Table 1 indicated, since April 2010, the NHS has had a legal duty to report on consultations. NHS (2009) defines consultation as asking for views on an issue at a formative stage, before a decision is taken.

1.6.3 Hawtin and Purcell's categories

Hawtin and Purcell (2008), in evaluating public engagement in the development of community strategies, develop four categories for type of engagement:

- One off or ongoing/regular methods of engagement
- Whether engagement aims to be representative of the entire population or focused on specific groups (for instance, hard to reach, communities of interest or geographic areas)
- Whether the consultation is about a limited range of options, or is more open
- The extent to which the consultation engages residents in making decisions or discussing options.

1.6.4 Extractive and discursive engagement

Burrall and Carr-West (2009) distinguish between extractive and discursive engagement. Extractive engagement is presented as a one way channel, through which councils can extract information from local people. Burrall and Carr-West (2009) present an ideal of more meaningful, discursive conversations, in which local people are partners in a two way dialogue.

1.6.5 One off or over time

Brook Lyndhurst (2006), in its interim evaluation of Defra's Environmental Action Fund projects, distinguishes between light touch (one off) and deeper (a number of interventions) approaches to engagement.

1.6.6 Evidence on giving information

Under the New Labour government, Local Criminal Justice Boards (LCJBs) were required to improve public confidence in the Criminal Justice System (CJS), by engaging effectively with staff and the community. Providing information to the public formed a key part of this work. *Inform, persuade and remind* (Singer and Cooper, 2008) presents Ministry of Justice commissioned research which aimed to test if providing the public with information about bringing offenders to justice would improve confidence in the criminal justice system. Through a randomised control trial with just under 3,000 participants, Singer and Cooper (2008) found that:

- Providing the public with facts about crime rates in a professionally designed booklet made the public more confident that the CJS is effective in bringing offenders to justice
- The way in which the information is presented to the public impacted on whether they would read the booklet, and on public confidence in the CJS. It was more likely that the public would read the booklet, and that they would perceive the CJS was effective, if someone handed the publication personally to them, rather than receiving the booklet through the post.

1.6.7 Citizens' preferences

Russell (2008), in research on the New Deal for Communities, recognises that members of a community will want to be involved in different ways. Whilst some will be happy just to receive information, others want more active involvement. It should perhaps also be highlighted that some may wish not to be involved in any way.

1.7 Mechanisms for citizen engagement

1.7.1 Overview

Sections 1.7.2 – 1.7.7 outline the wide range of mechanisms used to promote citizen engagement, across the public services. Section 1.7.8 highlights some findings about the frequency with which different engagement mechanisms are used. Section 1.7.9 discusses the ways in which different studies have categorised types of community engagement.

1.7.2 Funding Participatory Budgeting

The Department for Communities and Local Government, in conjunction with the Participatory Budgeting Unit, offers the following definition of Participatory Budgeting (as at February, 2010) (CLG, 2008):

Participatory budgeting directly involves local people in making decisions on the spending priorities for a defined public budget. This means engaging residents and community groups representative of all parts of the community to discuss spending priorities, making spending proposals and vote on them, as well as giving local people a role in the scrutiny and monitoring of the process.

However, SQW et al. (2010), in their interim report on the national evaluation of Participatory Budgeting, note that the concept has been defined in a variety of ways, and is therefore open to interpretation.

Participatory Budgeting began in Brazil in the 1980s, and is now used in over 140 Brazilian cities (SQW et al., 2010). The Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, previously a division of ODPM, formally began to examine Participatory Budgeting in 2002. In 2004, the ODPM special grants programme set up the Participatory Budgeting Unit, to examine how Participatory Budgeting would work in 10 pilot areas in England. By the end of 2008, there were 34 Participatory Budgeting pilot areas across England. The Ministry of Justice's discussion paper *A national framework for greater citizen engagement* (Ministry of Justice, 2008) highlights the New Labour government's aim that Participatory Budgeting would be used in all local authority areas in England by 2012.

SQW et al. (2010) focuses on Participatory Budgeting in eight case study areas. SQW et al. (2010) is chiefly a process evaluation, and states that the final evaluation report, scheduled for 2011, will focus on the impact of Participatory Budgeting. SQW et al. (2010) found that most activity in case study areas focused on the allocation of small, discretionary grants to local projects. Between 2005-06 and 2009-10, just over two fifths (43%) of projects were small (£1-£1,000), whilst over half (55%) were in the £1,001-£10,000 band.

The average project grant was £2,195. Grants were for the following projects:

- Maintenance of public spaces (33%)
- Highways improvements (28%)
- Street cleaning and refuse collection (9%)
- Voluntary and community activity (12%)
- Youth work (7%).

The evaluation indicated that Participatory Budgeting often complemented other community empowerment initiatives. Participatory Budgeting operated in different ways in different areas.

There were some reported benefits of Participatory Budgeting. A few consultees referred to benefits in terms of efficiency and service improvements. Consultees agreed that Participatory Budgeting:

- Enables communities to play an improved role in local decision making processes
- Improves relationships within and between communities
- Uses local knowledge to ensure resources are spent on what matters to local people
- Will enhance community empowerment.

Issues with Participatory Budgeting included that of time. In general, it took 6-12 months to set up the Participatory Budgeting process and hold the first decision taking event. Limited staff resources also constrained the speed at which Participatory Budgeting was rolled out. Overall, SQW et al. (2010) suggests that Participatory Budgeting is at a relatively early stage of development in England.

Total Place approach

HM Government and CLG (2010), in their report on the 13 Total Place pilots, state that the Total Place approach starts from the citizen's viewpoint, to promote joined up work in local areas, across organisations. The Total Place approach was developed through the work of 63 local authorities, 34 Primary Care Trusts, 12 fire authorities, 13 police authorities, and a wide range of third sector organisations and service delivery bodies. The 13 pilots, which ran from 2009-10, served a combined population of more than 11 million people. Furthermore, more than 70 other local areas have been engaged in similar work (HM Treasury and CLG, 2010).

The reported advantages of the Total Place approach include:

- Support across the political spectrum (Clifton and Keohane, 2010)
- Significant opportunities for improved service, by reducing duplication and increasing the alignment of services (HM Government and CLG, 2010)
- Significant opportunities for efficiency savings, of up to 10% (HM Government and CLG, 2010; Clifton and Keohane, 2010)
- Localities can develop innovative service models, trialling locality-based cost-benefit tools, without waiting for central government action (Clifton and Keohane, 2010).

Reported issues with the Total Place approach include:

- The risk of loss of momentum (Clifton and Keohane, 2010)
- The success of the Total Place approach is contingent upon the level of engagement of local citizens, politicians and partner organisations (Clifton and Keohane, 2010)
- Councils cannot adopt a Total Place approach with some funding sources, which are ring-fenced, particularly in Ministry of Justice, Department of Transport and Department for Education grants (Leslie, 2010)
- Some of the reported Total Place figures are disputed (Guardian, The, 2010)
- Much of the emphasis is on early intervention. This can be problematic, given the national focus on efficiency savings (Guardian, The, 2010)
- There has been little consultation on workforce issues (Guardian, The, 2010). One of the four local authority interviewees in IDeA's (2010) think piece *Stepping up to the mark: the workforce implications of Total Place* highlighted that Total Place potentially means that there is a single public service workforce which operates across organisations. This, in turn, carries major implications for human resources (HR)
- If Total Place is to be successful, there needs to be an overhaul of the relationships between central and local government (Keohane and Smith, 2010).

HM Treasury and CLG (2010) highlight that it was New Labour's intention to roll out the Total Place approach across England. By April 2010, follow up from the pilots included an invitation for high performing authorities to bid for a Single Offer, where they would receive additional freedoms, budget and responsibilities for their area (Clifton and Keohane, 2010; HM Treasury and CLG, 2010). HM Treasury and CLG (2010) highlighted that the Innovative Policy Offer would devolve responsibility to places within an agreed theme. HM Treasury and CLG (2010) states that, from April 2011, local authorities and Children's Trusts will be able to trial a multi-agency Children's and Young People's grant. This will include funding for youth activities, school improvement, Sure Start, support for families and disabled children, and money for children and young people previously ring-fenced within the Area Based Grant.

HM Treasury and CLG (2010) outline that other plans to build on the Total Place pilots include:

- Extended trials of innovative approaches highlighted by the pilots, e.g. to tackle alcohol misuse
- Co-designing approaches to worklessness
- 11 Total Capital and Asset Pathfinders, to improve the value of capital investments

- Developing new approaches to cost-benefit analysis tools
- Trialling social impact bonds, to facilitate areas investing in long-term initiatives
- Innovative procurement, to facilitate economic growth and inclusion
- Invest to Save pathfinders
- Reduction of data and reporting requirements at local level.

Empowerment Fund

It is worth noting that the Empowerment Fund, which started in October 2009, runs until 2012. This fund gives grants to third sector organisations which can help government deliver on the key themes of the White Paper *Communities in Control* (Communities and Local Government, 2008). There may be funds available which are relevant to the learning and skills sector.

1.7.3 Profiling and use of data

Community profiling

Overview of resources

There is a range of practical resources on community profiling, which would be useful to the learning and skills sector. Much of the key UK work on community profiling has been conducted by Leeds Metropolitan University, by Hawtin, Percy-Smith and Purcell. This section draws principally on Hawtin and Percy-Smith (2007), which is a helpfully clear, concise text. There is further, more detailed information in Hawtin and Percy-Smith (2007), beyond that which is included in this section, which may be relevant to LSIS. There are also resources available on the Internet, such as:

- <http://www.barnardos.org.uk/communityprofiling.pdf>
- http://www.infed.org/community/community_profiling.htm
- <http://www.esds.ac.uk/themes/health/case2.asp>
(Economic and Social Data Service).

Overall, however, Hawtin and Percy-Smith (2007) cover the points made in the Internet resources above.

Policy emphasis on community profiling

According to Hawtin and Percy-Smith (2007), since 1997, community profiling has moved from a marginal to mainstream activity. They attribute this to two main reasons:

- New Labour's reform of public services. Aspects of public service reform which relate to the current focus on community profiling include the emphasis on:
 - Public participation, to make services more accountable
 - Social exclusion as a multi-faceted issue. This has supported the use of approaches which build a comprehensive picture of a community

- Evidence based policy and practice, including collecting baseline data against which to measure future progress
- (Related to points above) a statutory duty to conduct research, in some parts of the public services
- Identifying and responding more effectively to local needs
- Using local knowledge in service planning
- Technological advances, which mean that a wide range of secondary data is readily available, and that data collected for a community profile can be analysed with relative ease.

Commissioners

Community profiles are carried out by different agencies for different purposes:

- Statutory agencies may be required by central government to address local needs, and may use community profiles to collect data for the policy process
- Voluntary or community organisations may undertake a community profile to demonstrate the extent of unmet need, and to provide benchmarking data to assess future development
- As part of a broader community development strategy.

(Hawtin and Percy-Smith, 2007)

Scope of community profiling

Hawtin and Percy-Smith (2007) argue that, whilst community profiling shares common features with needs assessment, community consultation and social audit, there are important differences. In clarifying this distinction, Hawtin and Percy-Smith (2007) define community profiling as follows:

*A **comprehensive** description of the **needs** of a population that is defined, or defines itself, as a **community**, and the **resources** that exist within that community, carried out with the **active involvement of the community** itself, for the purpose of developing an **action plan** or other means of improving the quality of life of the community. (Authors' emphasis)*

What is, in their view, distinctive about community profiling is the extent to which the community is involved. Community profiles differ from needs assessment because community profiles focus on:

- Resources as well as needs
- A participative approach
- Action orientation, which ultimately improves the quality of life for the community. (Hawtin and Percy-Smith, 2007)

Community consultations, unlike community profiles, typically take place in relation to a set of proposals put forward by one or more agencies, or to assess satisfaction with a service. Social auditing takes account of an organisation’s social and ethical impact, in assessing the organisation’s performance.

Christakopoulou et al. (2001) argue that a comprehensive community profile should address the area as:

- A place to live
- A social community
- An economic community
- A political community
- Personal space
- Part of its city.

Stages of community profiling

Hawtin and Percy-Smith (2007) list the component parts of community profiling, under the following main headings:

- Preparing the ground (i.e. initial planning, including of management structures)
- Setting aims and objectives
- Identifying methods
- Fieldwork
- Reporting
- Action (including monitoring and evaluation).

Methods

A wide range of research methods can be used in community profiling. Hawtin and Percy-Smith (2007) categorise methods in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Primary and secondary data collection (Hawtin and Percy-Smith, 2007)

	Quantitative	Qualitative
Primary	Survey data	Focus group discussions; case stories; observations; photographs
Secondary	Census data; health, crime, housing, education statistics	Newspaper articles; photographs

Whilst the authors do not make the point explicitly, it is worth highlighting that the methods listed above are merely illustrative, and that there is a wealth of potential research methods to use in community profiling. Further research methods include, for example, interviews, structured, semi-structured or unstructured; diaries; blogs; and minutes of meetings. It is self-evident that it will usually be appropriate to use a range of data sources and methods of data collection in conducting a community profile. Hawtin and Percy-Smith (2007) stress the importance of:

- Matching carefully data collection methods to purpose
- Careful targeting of existing secondary data, to use resources effectively and to avoid duplication.

Targeting of existing secondary data includes clarifying:

- Which relevant community profiles may already exist, such as those held by the Council for Voluntary Services
- Which of the wide range of quantitative secondary data available on the Internet are relevant to the profile in question. A wide range of secondary data is listed in Hawtin and Percy-Smith (2007).

Place Survey

Findings from the Place Survey can give useful profiling information. The Audit Commission's website (as at February 2010: <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/localgov/audit/nis/pages/placesurvey.aspx>) states that the National Indicator Set, launched by the government in April 2008, contains 25 indicators which are informed by citizens' views. To minimise the number of surveys that local authorities need to undertake, 18 of these indicators are collected through a single Place Survey administered by each local authority. The Place Survey aims to provide data on how well the government's priorities, as set out in the Comprehensive Spending Review, are being implemented at local level. There is a manual which sets out standards for data collection and analysis, to help ensure consistent quality across local authorities (Communities and Local Government, 2009 (revised)).

The Place Survey is carried out every two years. Whilst results are intended primarily for use at local level, they are also aggregated to provide regional and national benchmarking data. The results from the 2008 survey were published in 2009 (Communities and Local Government, 2009). These survey findings may be useful for the learning and skills sector.

Citizenship Survey

The Citizenship Survey is a household survey of adults (aged 16 and over) in England and Wales, which started in 2001. Each wave surveys 10,000 adults, with an additional boost sample of 5,000 people from minority ethnic groups. The most recent wave was for 2008-09. Findings from the Citizenship Survey are published in a range of reports <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/corporate/statistics/citizenshipsurvey200809empower>, as at February 2010

The Citizenship Survey asks for views on a range of topics:

- Participation in formal voluntary activity (through a group, club or organisation)
- Participation in more informal voluntary activity (helping an individual, who is not a close relative)
- Charitable giving: identifying whether people have given to charity recently, how much and through which mechanisms
- Views about the local area
- Participation in local decision making
- Feelings of trust and influence
- Perceptions of racial and religious prejudice.

(Archived information from Cabinet Office website. Accessed 13th May 2010).

Citizens' Panels

Surveys are the research method most frequently used by Citizens' Panels.

People and Participation <http://www.peopleandparticipation.net> is a public participation resource. According to People and Participation, Citizens' Panels have evolved from Opinion Polls in market research. Citizens' Panels are typically used by statutory agencies, particularly local authorities and their partners, to identify local priorities, and to consult service users and non-users on specific issues. The Scottish government website <http://www.scotland.gov.uk> outlines that Citizens' Panels involve a representative sample of the local population, who have agreed to take part in consultation activity. People and Participation argues that, in reality, Panels are rarely demographically representative, and very few ensure that members represent a cross-section of political or social attitudes.

Potential participants are generally recruited through random sampling of the electoral roll or postcode address file (PAF) (People and Participation). Postal recruitment tends to be a popular method, given its wide reach and relatively low cost. However, a number of Panel members are recruited by other means, to ensure recruitment of socially excluded and hard to reach groups (People and Participation). People tend to be Panel members for two to three years (People and Participation). Incentives, such as a prize draw, are sometimes used, to encourage participation in a Panel. It is important to be clear at the recruitment stage about expectations of Panel members (People and Participation); this should help to reduce Panel attrition.

Panel members, either the whole Panel, or a sub-sample, are typically asked to complete surveys on a regular basis. Citizens' Panels can be set up jointly, for example, by Community Planning partners. This means that surveys can explore a range of different issues, and consultation takes place in a co-ordinated way <http://www.scotland.gov.uk>. Where appropriate, some Panel members are asked to participate in further, in-depth research, such as focus groups and workshops. Not all members will be invited to take part in all Panel activities (People and Participation).

People and Participation underlines that there are considerable costs and work involved in running a Panel, in terms of staff time, skills and money. According to People and Participation, running a Panel can cost between £5,000 to over £30,000 a year. Costs depend on:

- The size of the Panel
- The methods used to consult Panel members
- The frequency of consultation
- How often membership is renewed.

For example, staff time is needed to keep the Panel database up to date; recruit new participants; and run, analyse and provide feedback on consultations. Panels are not always cheaper than one-off surveys.

If the Panel is shared with partner organisations, costs can be reduced. However, if sharing the Panel with other organisations, it is important to agree at the outset on the rolling programme of research, to avoid respondent fatigue (People and Participation).

People and Participation also emphasises the importance of disseminating findings from consultations. For Panel members, this often takes the form of a newsletter, and for the wider public, online communications.

Strengths

People and Participation summarises the benefits of Citizens' Panels. Citizens' Panels can:

- Allow a dialogue to be developed with local residents over time
- Allow policy impact to be assessed, through changes in Panel members' views over time
- Be sponsored and used by a partnership of local agencies
- Allow specific groups to be targeted, if the Panel is large enough
- Allow surveys or other research to be conducted at short notice (once the Panel is established)
- Track changes in views over time
- Be more cost effective than commissioning ad hoc research, once Panels have been established and used several times.

Issues

People and Participation summarises the issues with Citizens' Panels, as follows:

- Panels require considerable staff support, to establish and maintain them.
- Socially excluded groups, including residents with English as a second language, tend to be excluded from Panels.
- Panels reflect the sponsor's agenda, rather than the community's.
- The database of names and addresses requires constant updating.
- There can be Panel attrition, particularly among young people.
- There is a risk of 'conditioning' Panel members, so that they become so atypical that they do not reflect the community's views.

The website search suggested that a substantial number of local authorities have more than one Citizen's Panel.

Use of national and local survey data

Some areas of the public services use both nationally and locally conducted surveys, in policy development and implementation. Within the NHS, for example, there is a National Patient Survey Programme and surveys are also conducted, as part of community engagement, at local level. For instance, at local level, the Care Quality Commission funded Ealing LINKs (see Section 1.7.4 for a discussion of LINKs) to conduct a survey on local views on hygiene <http://www.ealinglink.org.uk>. An independent consultant worked with LINKs members, to conduct the survey and develop a report. No information was given on how the survey report impacted on policy and practice.

Postcard survey

As part of its six month consultation process to review its Community Strategy, Haringey conducted a postcard survey (Hawtin and Purcell, 2008). This asked four clearly worded questions:

- What are the good things about living in Haringey?
- What three things do you think would make Haringey an even better place to live?
- What should Haringey be like in 10 years time?
- What concerns do you have about living in Haringey?

Postcards were:

- Mailed to over 650 voluntary and community groups in the borough. Groups were encouraged to distribute the cards to their members
- Disseminated at a wide range of events around the borough over the summer, starting with the Tottenham carnival
- Distributed through shopping centres and libraries
- Disseminated through the local newsletter
- Disseminated through the Local Strategic Partnership website.

Around 1,200 responses were received, analysed and used to inform the redevelopment of the Plan.

This example indicates the scope for combining an innovative but straightforward approach to a survey, with careful marketing and targeting.

Technology

Technology is one important means of maximising responses to surveys. The role of technology in community engagement is discussed in Section 1.7.5.

Performance data

Putting the Frontline First (HM Government, 2009) states the New Labour government's commitment to publishing public performance data online by 2011, as part of citizen empowerment.

1.7.4 Face to face methods

Overview

This section outlines the wide range of face to face methods used in citizen engagement. It is axiomatic that individual face to face methods can be combined with each other, and with other forms of citizen engagement, such as surveys and community involvement through use of technology.

Deliberative forums

Nicholson (2005), in her literature review for the Scottish Executive, argues that deliberative techniques are seen as making participants more amenable to change, than other methods of citizen engagement.

According to the briefing paper *A national framework for greater citizen engagement* (Ministry of Justice, 2008), deliberative forums bring together a range of people to discuss public policy issues. Briefing papers are provided in advance to participants and are also made public. Participants asked for their views. Evidence suggests that views expressed in deliberative forums often broadly replicate the views of the wider public (Stanford University, 2001, <http://cdd.stanford.edu/polls/docs/summary/>).

The quality of the deliberative forum is contingent on the:

- Integrity of the process
- Quality of the agenda and briefing materials
- Representativeness of the sample
- Sample size (larger samples are more reliable, but with diminishing returns)
- Robustness of the facilitation.

According to Ministry of Justice (2008), there are two types of deliberative forum: Citizens' Juries and Citizens' Summits.

Citizens' Juries

A Citizens' Jury is a mechanism of participatory action research (PAR) that draws on the symbolism, and some of the practices, of a legal trial by jury. The term Citizens' Jury was created in the late 1980s by the Jefferson Center in the USA <http://www.jefferson-center.org>. The Jefferson Center initiated the process in 1974 as a Citizens' Committee. The Center then decided to create the new name and trademark it, to protect the process from commercialisation. This means that the practice of Citizens' Juries has been tightly regulated in the US. The Jefferson Center has developed a handbook on Citizens' Juries (Jefferson Center, 2004).

Citizens' Juries generally include three main elements:

- The jury is made up of people who are usually selected at random from a local or national population. This selection process is usually open to outside scrutiny.

- The jurors cross question expert witnesses: specialists who have been called to provide different perspectives on the topic in question. The jurors collectively produce a summary of their conclusions, typically in a short report.
- The whole process is supervised by an oversight or advisory panel, composed of a range of people with relevant knowledge and a possible interest in the outcome. They take no direct part in facilitating the Citizens' Jury. Members of the advisory group subsequently decide whether to respond to, or act on, elements of the report.

In July 2007, Gordon Brown announced that Citizens' Juries were his new government's 'big idea' for allowing citizens to exercise their right to influence policy. The *Action Plan for Community Empowerment* (Communities and Local Government, 2007) highlighted the aim of establishing more Citizens' Juries. In the UK, Citizens' Juries have taken a variety of forms and sizes. For example, Ministry of Justice (2008) described national Citizens' Juries which met over one or two days, with 50 – 100 members of the public involved, in different areas. In broad terms, whilst Citizens' Juries should be as democratically representative as possible, in some instances (as in the example below) membership may need tailoring, to address effectively the issues under discussion (Defra, 2007).

Articulating public values in environmental policy development. Report on the Citizens' Jury on Air Quality (Defra, 2007) presents findings on a pilot of a Citizens' Jury to support policy development. On behalf of Defra, People, Science and Policy Ltd (PSP) designed, managed and delivered a process centring on a Citizens' Jury. The jury had an advisory committee, which met twice, at the start and at the end of the project, and worked mainly by email. The Jury consisted of 22 people local to Sutton Coldfield. They were recruited by telephone as a cross-section of the public, but it was ensured that the Jury included those with illnesses which previous research had shown were related to air quality, e.g. people with asthma.

The charge proposed by Defra officials for the Jury to consider was, 'What improvements, if any, would people like to see in air quality and how should these be achieved?' However, the Jury was uncomfortable with answering a charge, and preferred instead a series of questions:

- Is there a continuing problem with air pollution?
- If so, what kind of problem is it?
- What actions would be preferable?
- At which level should decisions on actions be taken?
- At what level should actions be taken?

The Jury met three times. At the first hearing, a scientist gave a presentation. Expert witnesses gave evidence at the second hearing, and were then questioned by the Jury. The third hearing consisted of a discussion and conclusions. After the Jury, some jurors met with policy officials. The advisory committee wrote the report, which Defra (2007) argues represented the views of the Jury. In this, according to Defra (2007), the process was not a classic Citizens' Jury, where the Jury develops the report.

Key lessons learnt from the process included the importance of:

- Allowing sufficient time to recruit and establish the Advisory Committee
- Including junior people on the advisory committee
- Allowing sufficient time and budget to ensure that witnesses can take part
- Ensuring that resources are available to support witnesses, so that they pitch their talk at the right level
- Allowing time to finalise witnesses. This is feasible if, for example, there is a 'fairly long gap' (exact length undefined) between the first and second hearing
- Scheduling the final hearing 'quite soon' (undefined) after the second, to maintain momentum
- A 'technical friend', to increase the jurors' confidence in asking questions, and to help jurors to articulate their questions for the witnesses
- Breaking the group into smaller groups for discussion. This aims to help less confident jurors to voice their opinions and ask questions
- Allowing adequate time for jurors to deliberate and reach their conclusions.

The report stated that, of the 18 jurors who went through the whole jury process, none felt excluded or unable to understand the information presented. However, only six thought that Defra would take their views very seriously. Eight thought that Defra would take their views fairly seriously, and three felt that Defra would not take their views very seriously. Some jurors mentioned that they had changed their behaviour, as well as their attitudes, as a result of taking part in the jury.

Citizens' Summits

According to Ministry of Justice (2008), Citizens' Summits are much larger than Citizens' Juries. Citizens' Summits consist of between 500 and 1,000 people. Summits debate issues face to face or online. Summits should be broadly representative of the general population, and filtered to ensure that they are demographically representative.

Summits should only be used sparingly, where there is a compelling case for submitting a national policy issue for large scale deliberation, such as a major constitutional change (Ministry of Justice, 2008). Recommendations made by Summits should be put forward to the government. Funding to undertake Summits should be sought from the relevant government department (Ministry of Justice, 2008).

Focus groups

Ministry of Justice (2008) highlights that focus groups were an important mechanism to collect the views of disabled people, to inform the development of the Disability Equality Scheme 2008-11. Each focus group consisted of nine to 12 people with disabilities. A budget was allocated, to cover travel expenses and reasonable adjustments for attendees. A palantypist was also available for each of the three focus group sessions. Overall, this publication underlines the importance of not underestimating the costs involved in citizen engagement.

Citizens' Day

The Citizenship Foundation (2007), in collaboration with the Department for Communities and Local Government, developed a framework for a Citizens' Day. A Citizens' Day was piloted by Birmingham, Hull, Southwark and Stoke-on-Trent local authorities. A Citizens' Day is an event or series of activities involving local individuals, groups, communities, and public bodies. It can be held either on a single day or over a longer period of time, typically a week or weekend, and is co-ordinated by the local authority. A Citizens' Day aims to:

- Celebrate local achievements
- Build and renew community cohesion
- Develop greater local engagement.

A Citizens' Day might also mark the anniversary of a local event, a specific change in the community, or the launch of a change programme in the community (Citizenship Foundation, 2007).

Citizen networks

Citizen networks: LINKs

LINKs (Local Involvement Networks) were introduced in the NHS in 2008, replacing patient forums. According to Communities in Control (CLG, 2008), the purposes of LINKs were to give everyone in the community, including individuals and voluntary groups, the opportunity to:

- Say what they think about local health and social care services
- Check how services are planned and run
- Feed back on services, so that they can be improved.

LINKs have various aspects to their infrastructure:

- Each health authority has a number of LINKs members, with responsibility for implementing LINKs in health and social care. These LINKs members may be volunteers or from voluntary organisations.
- There is a LINKs exchange on the NHS website (www.lx.nhs.uk, as at February 2010). This provides a toolkit, report template, good practice examples, leaflets about LINKs tailored to different audiences (public and NHS staff), other resources and reports, and mechanisms for a forum. The website appears to be at a relatively early stage of development. For example, there are no forum entries as yet.
- The LINKs team is working with Fosters, the PR agency.
- There is a LINKs Facebook group.

LINKs' powers include the right to:

- Receive a response within a set time to reports and recommendations prepared by LINKs
- Receive responses to requests for information within a set time
- Assess the nature and quality of services in some types of health and social care premises
- Receive a response to issues referred by LINKs to a local Overview and Scrutiny Committee (CLG, 2008) .

Strengths

- Some evidence suggests that some LINKs have fulfilled part of their purpose. For example, one case study on the LINKs website illustrates that LINKs helped NHS Tees to develop an understanding of what local people wanted from the NHS. Tees LINKs influenced the provision of information on screening services in large print and Braille, and also highlighted the unmet health needs of migrant communities.

Issues

- One report (Kings Fund, 2010) found that:
 - There is variation in the level of involvement of LINKs members on Primary Care Trust (PCT) Boards. For instance, not all Boards allow LINKs members the full right to speak at Board meetings.
 - There is varying practice in the extent to and ways in which LINKs members engage with PCTs.
- Section 2 outlines how LINKs will be phased out, under the Coalition government.

Public dialogue

The use of public dialogue has been significant in developing UK policy on science and technology.

Definitions

There is a range of definitions of public dialogue.

The Sciencewise Expert Resource Centre for Public Dialogue in Science and Innovation (Sciencewise-ERC), funded by BIS, provides assistance to policy makers to carry out public dialogue, to inform their decision making on science and technology <http://www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk>. Sciencewise's definition of public dialogue specifies what dialogue is and is not:

Public dialogue is:

- Talking with the public about ethical and societal issues
- About the instigators of the dialogue being prepared to change their minds
- About getting public and different perspectives to help explore issues, aspirations and concerns when shaping policy
- Gathering public experience in science and technology issues.

Public dialogue is **not**:

- One-way communication or 'information gathering' techniques such as surveys, focus groups, polls, or some Citizens' Panels
- Representative - participants do not formally represent their geographic area or discipline
- A talking shop with no policy purpose
- About the public actually making decisions - these are ultimately the responsibility of elected government ministers
- About simply supporting or seeking acceptance for preconceived policies.

(The Government's Approach to Public Dialogue on Science and Technology (Sciencewise-ERC, undated))

In research commissioned by Sciencewise-ERC, Chilvers (2009) takes a broader view of public dialogue in science and technology than in Sciencewise-ERC's guiding principles. Chilvers' (2009) conception of public dialogue encompasses:

- 'Invited' micro public dialogue. Members of the public are invited to participate in highly managed dialogue organised by a host decision-making institution. This is the most common form of dialogue
- 'Invited' macro/informal public engagement. This is open, unstructured engagement that occurs in wider public arenas, beyond formal decision-making institutions, but which is initiated by the decision making institutions

- ‘Uninvited’ public engagement. This is organic, spontaneous forms of public engagement initiated and organised by citizens, rather than by decision making institutions.

Development of public dialogue

Chilvers (2009) argues that public dialogue in science and technology has developed over the first decade of the twenty first century, becoming more institutionalised and widespread. Chilvers relates this development to the increasing professionalisation and commercialisation of public engagement. Chilvers also highlights that some conceptions of who counts as an expert on public dialogue include non-professionals. In Chilvers’ (2009) view, there is a tension between the increasing professionalism and the democratisation of the field; some regard an increased focus on professionalism as essential, and some regard it as elitist.

Absence of learning

Chilvers (2009) found that the potential of public dialogue to inform policy is not being maximised, for two main reasons:

- Scientific and policy organisations do not make significant changes in their approach to science and technology, following public dialogue.
- There is insufficient critical reflection on the process of public dialogue.

Appreciative Inquiry

Hawtin and Purcell (2008) report that Ryedale District Council and their Local Strategic Partnership, when consulting on the original draft of the community strategy, used Imagine to assure local citizens that decisions would be made in line with a shared vision of what people had agreed that they wanted for the area. Imagine is a community participation method based on an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) approach. This builds a vision for the future by using questions, to focus people’s attention on success. Using external facilitators, a core group of local activists and officials were trained in the use of AI. They used semi-structured interviews, based around questions designed at two workshops, to encourage people to tell stories from their own experience of what works. Large numbers of members of the community were involved in these ‘conversations’, which were held at venues across the district. Hawtin and Purcell (2008) report that many participants found that AI is a ‘fresh, fun and inspirational’ form of participation.

The core group then identified recurring issues from these discussions and used these to draft a number of ‘provocative propositions’, based around six emerging themes:

- Vibrant communities
- Strong, safe communities
- Access and communication

- Health and well being
- Landscape and environment
- Developing opportunities.

These '*provocative propositions*' were presented back to participants, at workshops and meetings with different stakeholder groups. The purposes of this were to:

- Test the feasibility and desirability of propositions
- Identify whether they duplicated any existing activity.

The final workshops were used to refine statements, which were then adopted as the community strategy's vision.

1.7.5 Use of technology in citizen engagement

Overview

A range of publications stress the importance of technology in community empowerment (e.g. The Action Plan for Community Empowerment (Communities and Local Government, 2007); Digital Dialogues (Miller and Williamson, 2008)). The discussion below illustrates the wide range of ways in which the scope of technology can be utilised as a vehicle for citizen engagement.

Digital Dialogues

Digital Dialogues was an independent review, commissioned by the Ministry of Justice and conducted by the Hansard Society (Miller and Williamson, 2008). It reported on ways in which central government can use new technologies to promote public engagement and democratic renewal. The third phase of Digital Dialogues (Miller and Williamson, 2008) focused on multi-platform approaches to online engagement, and sustained approaches to computer mediated deliberation. Case studies were conducted of seven government departments and organisations directly related to government (e.g. Office of the Children's Commissioner). Platforms used included social networking sites, blogs, file sharing channels, wiki, a forum, debate mapping technology, and a panel. Across the case studies, the engagement styles used spanned one or a combination of the following:

- Listening
- Informing
- Networking
- Deliberating
- Developing a community of practice.

Miller and Williamson's (2008) findings include:

- Online engagement exercises with clear objectives were more successful than those with undefined goals.
- Websites that combine careful planning and appropriate marketing with the development of reflexive engagement strategies have a greater chance of success than those which do not.
- As is often the case, many visitors to the government engagement sites did not contribute directly to discussions. Instead, they preferred to read other people's posts. Because of this, site moderators were not required to manage as large a volume of traffic as had initially been feared. Facilitation was an important part of Site Moderators' roles, by providing content, encouraging posts, managing responses and giving feedback about the policy process.
- Timely interventions, such as summaries and debate triggers, are valuable in keeping discussion flowing.
- Explaining how user comments are being processed, or how the public can take part in the policy process, is related to high levels of user satisfaction.
- Members of the public visited the Digital Dialogues websites for a range of reasons, from general interest in online engagement, to a strong interest in the policy matters being discussed. Many had previously not engaged in political processes; even when they had, most were initially critical of government. Distrust tended to be overcome when moderators facilitated open discussion and provided information to website users.
- Some websites received few repeat visits because users did not believe that anyone was listening or responding to their perspectives. In these instances, departments were paralysed by a perception of risk, and failed to harness the range of engagement opportunities at their disposal. Instead, they responded only on 'safe' topics.
- Some online engagement exercises which are not designed to have a policy impact can, in effect, influence policy. In one case, a blog set up to inform the public stimulated a policy review, because there was a relatively high level of ministerial and policy team involvement in this engagement process.
- Websites which were disconnected from their policy or ministerial brief, or constrained by a long chain of command, had less user satisfaction (in terms of the satisfaction of participants and government officials running the exercise).
- Departments which connect their online and offline engagement processes are more likely to have an effective approach to policy. Disengagement is less of a risk than in departments which lack a joined up approach.

E-petitioning

Popularity

The Citizenship Survey found that petitions are the most popular form of civic participation (cited in CLG, 2010).

National e-petitions

The national e-Petitions service (<http://petitions.number10.gov.uk>, as at February 2010) was introduced by the New Labour government in November 2006 (Ministry of Justice, 2008). Petitions that attract 200 signatures and satisfy the guidelines which exempt subjects for a number of reasons (e.g. offensiveness, libel or being party political) are passed to the relevant government department for consideration and response. The number 10 petitions facility is a popular mechanism for submitting views to government. However, it does not feed formally into parliament (Ministry of Justice, 2008).

Local authorities

The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 places a duty on local authorities to publish their petition schemes electronically, and to make e-petitions available for the public. <http://limehousesoftware.co.uk> is an example of an organisation which provides e-petition software to enable local authorities to meet this requirement.

Social networking sites

In LSIS's *Citizenship News* (LSIS, 2009), Rowe emphasises the value of social networking sites in engaging young people in political issues. Rowe cites the example of the Home Office initiative 'It Doesn't Have to Happen', a campaign designed by young people to reduce knife crime. Whilst the main website provided information about the initiative, the social networking site Bebo facilitated engagement with an audience of young people. About 11,000 Internet users have networked with the campaign via Bebo. Rowe underlines the extent of participation feasible in this campaign. For instance, campaign friends could upload homemade anti-knife rap videos, become site guest editors, download guides or leave messages of support.

There is a range of information about government on Facebook, Youtube and Twitter. Visual images are also on Flickr. For instance, the Ministry of Justice has used Twitter to engage an online community in the debate about constitutional reform in relation to rights and responsibilities (Ministry of Justice, 2010). Ministry of Justice (2010) argues that this online community would not usually engage in debate about constitutional change.

It is likely that there is considerable scope for utilising the potential of social networking sites, in relation to citizen engagement activity facilitated by the learning and skills sector.

⁹ On 13.08.10., the Coalition government announced that the Audit Commission would be abolished at <http://www.parliament.uk/briefingpapers/commons/lib/research/briefings/snpc-05681.pdf>

Technology, and rights and responsibilities

Putting the Frontline First. Smarter government (HM Government, 2009) highlights that New Labour planned to strengthen the role of citizens and civic society, by accelerating the development of digitalised public services, and by publishing performance and public data online. The *Communities in Control* (CLG, 2008) White Paper makes the point that websites such as Directgov and Consumer Direct are important in providing the public with information and making public services more accessible, whilst the Audit Commission⁹ and the Local Government Ombudsman provide advice on how to complain about poor services. Websites therefore have the potential to contribute to both the rights and responsibilities dimensions of citizenship.

Collecting feedback

Technology can be used to collect feedback. For example, the Heart of England NHS Trust uses hand held devices and the intranet accessed through ward laptops to collect patient feedback (DoH, 2009).

Website builder

One website, <http://e-voice.org.uk>, states that it offers a free website builder service for community and voluntary organisations, to promote community involvement. The website claims that a number of local authorities have used its services.

1.7.6 Management infrastructure

Overview

It is unsurprising that different aspects of management are important mechanisms for facilitating citizen engagement. This section covers standards and frameworks; the role of senior management; planning; use of existing management structures; and use of national and local groups. Leadership and management as a critical engagement factor is considered further in Section 1.10.

10 National Standards for Community Engagement, Scotland

Communities Scotland commissioned the 10 National Standards for Community Engagement (for Scotland) <http://www.scdc.org.uk/national-standards-community-engagement/10-national-standards>. These were published in 2005, with endorsement from the Scottish Executive and many other public bodies. The 10 Standards cover:

- Involvement
- Support
- Planning
- Methods
- Working together

- Sharing information
- Working with others
- Improvement
- Feedback
- Monitoring and evaluation.

Inclusion of community engagement in standards and frameworks

In England, increasingly, different areas of the public services include community engagement in standards and frameworks. For example, the NHS *World Class Commissioning Competencies* (DoH, 2007) has as its third competency patient and public engagement (PPE). DoH (2007) is explicit that PCTs need to be proactive in their PPE activity, particularly with those least able to act as advocates for themselves. DoH (2007) specifies different components of successful PPE:

- Proactive listening and communication skills, including use of third sector and community partners in PPE
- Patient and public relations skills
- Presentation and influencing skills.

Section 1.7.3 and 1.7.4 discussed LINKs, one strand of PPE. Defra has a Community Engagement Standard which includes how Defra engages with:

- Individuals and groups
- Those citizens whom Defra has not reached previously
- Independent advisory groups.

Senior management

A number of studies stress the importance of senior management commitment to citizen engagement. Farrell (2004), for instance, highlights the importance of including public involvement in strategic planning at Board level.

Planning

It is unsurprising that the literature on citizen engagement tends to underline the importance of planning.

For example, the DoH has developed a feedback cycle which highlights the importance of different stages in maximising community engagement; all necessitate careful planning:

- Planning (eg assessing what is being measured, how, etc.)
- Data analysis
- Evaluation
- Use of feedback to improve services.

Burton et al. (2004), in their systematic review of community involvement in area based initiatives (ABIs), underline the value of planning, through their findings on its absence. Many authors concluded that ABIs could have planned more effectively in relation to project approach, structures, roles, processes, methods and resources, in order to maximize community engagement (Burton et al., 2004).

Use of existing management structures

A community justice initiative in Salford (Brown and Payne, 2007), which aimed to promote two way communication between the criminal justice system and local people, used existing neighbourhood management structures to communicate with the public. Whilst this used staff time and other resources well, it limited project impact, as the initiative only reached those members of the community who were already engaged.

Use of national and local groups

Overview

There is a range of national and local management and advisory groups to promote citizen engagement, as the examples below illustrate.

NHS national advisory group

The NHS has a national advisory group, called INVOLVE, funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), to promote active public involvement in the NHS and health and social care research (INVOLVE, 2009).

National Community Forum

The National Community Forum (NCF) is an advisory, non-departmental public body established in 2002. The NCF consists of 25 individuals from deprived communities. The NCF aims to bring a grass roots, community perspective into government.

Local Strategic Partnerships

Hawtin and Purcell (2008) report that many Local Strategic Partnerships have engagement sub-groups.

1.7.7 Innovative engagement mechanisms

Overview

In Hawtin and Purcell's (2008) view, at the time of writing, there was relatively little innovative activity on the part of local authorities, to involve citizens in the development of community strategies. This section considers innovation in terms of project interaction and promotional methods.

Innovation and project interaction

Content

A health and transport project in London, run in 2002-03, aimed to develop an innovative methodology for a community-driven analysis of transport and health problems and solutions (Stephens et al., 2003). The project aimed to change the normal flow of questions, information and understanding between communities, researchers and government, by allowing communities to:

- Set their own questions
- Drive the analysis
- Interpret answers.

The project aimed to work with those most excluded from this type of role. The project was in three stages:

- **Stage one.** Four boroughs to work in were selected. Two community groups or schools were selected in each borough. Questions were set
- **Stage two.** Analysis and extra data collection, where available, took place
- **Stage three.** A series of workshops took place, to feed back findings to communities and schools, and to discuss follow up ideas.

Strengths

- This project demonstrated two of its hypotheses: first, that communities and local citizens often have unanswered questions, and second, that government and scientists often ask the wrong questions, in terms of what matters locally.
- The project led young people on a very deprived estate to construe science and their communities differently.

Issues

- There was a relative absence of feasible quick wins, in terms of follow up action. Relevant follow up could have included a mentoring or development programme, or a project participant acting as an expert advisor. These, however, would have required funding (Stephens et al., 2003).

Promotional engagement mechanisms

In engaging the public in the consultation process to re-develop the Haringey Plan, promotional materials, such as a colourful logo, balloons and paper hats, were designed (Hawtin and Purcell, 2008). This example raises the question of how far citizen engagement should be taken; the activities could be compared to a child's party.

In turn, Brook Lyndhurst (2009), in evaluating Defra's Environmental Action Fund, found that projects which engaged people through a combination of door-knocking, advice giving and providing goods and services (including free gifts), were effective in reaching large numbers for short-term engagement. Brook Lyndhurst also found that using pledges, which communicate to people what they should be doing, was sometimes related to behaviour change, and that rewards can be effective in reinforcing a sense of achievement.

1.7.8 Most commonly used forms of engagement

Hawtin and Purcell (2008) synthesise some findings from the 2004 survey of local authorities. They report that mechanisms for involving residents in the development of community strategies varied widely. The most common included public meetings, focus groups, Citizens' Panels and household surveys. Approaches to engagement varied according to type of authority. For instance, unitary and lower tier authorities were more likely to adopt methods such as public meetings. Lower tier authorities were less likely to adopt methods such as focus groups and Citizens' Panels, possibly because of resourcing. Hawtin and Purcell (2008) found that consultation tended to be the form of community engagement most frequently used.

1.7.9 Combination of engagement mechanisms

Unsurprisingly, many initiatives use a combination of mechanisms to engage communities, as has, to some extent, already been indicated in Section 1 (e.g. as with the discussion above of Brook Lyndhurst (2009)).

For example, a community justice initiative in Salford (Brown and Payne, 2007) aimed to promote two way communication between the criminal justice system and local people, by making the workings of the court more transparent to the community, and by giving local people the opportunity to be aware of crime concerns and to identify suitable programmes for offenders doing unpaid work. Strategies used to increase two way communication included:

- The local media
- Court open days
- Newsletters
- Court staff and magistrates attending local events and community meetings
- Posters
- Information on a community justice website.

Whilst there were issues with the impact of this initiative (see Section 1.9.3), the more effective community engagement strategies were court visits, attendance at community meetings and local media. Brown and Payne (2007) state that newsletters were less effective.

¹⁰ On 13.08.10., the Coalition government announced that the Audit Commission would be abolished at <http://www.parliament.uk/briefingpapers/commons/lib/research/briefings/snpc-05681.pdf>

A second community justice initiative aimed to increase the communication with, and engagement of, the community in decisions about the local Criminal Justice Centre¹⁰ (McKenna, 2007), through:

- Newsletters
- The local press
- Meetings with the judge who was attached to the Criminal Justice Centre
- Outreach
- Working with local community groups
- Networking with other local organisations
- The Criminal Justice Centre's involvement at local events, e.g. a football tournament and tea dances
- Membership of a Community Reference group.

1.8 Targeting hard to reach groups

1.8.1 Overview

The literature pays considerable attention to targeting hard to reach groups. For example, Hawtin and Purcell (2008) found that, in developing community strategies, the voices of the following groups remained relatively unheard: black and minority ethnic (BME) communities; lesbian, bisexual, gay and transgender (LGBT) people; migrant communities (including travellers, asylum seekers and newly arriving immigrants, especially those from Eastern Europe); people with mental health problems and mental disabilities; young people on the borders of criminality; and people in rural areas. Local Strategic Partnerships viewed engaging marginalised groups as a major challenge (Hawtin and Purcell, 2008).

Burton et al. (2004), in their systematic review of community involvement in area based initiatives, have some findings which are broadly similar to Hawtin and Purcell's (2008). In some area based initiatives, the following groups tended to be excluded: the working class, disabled, young people, women, homeless, and ethnic minorities. Burton et al. (2004) report that a recurring issue is whether to integrate or separate particular groups, to increase engagement.

This section focuses on mechanisms to increase young people's engagement as citizens. The section then briefly considers minority ethnic groups, women, and people with disabilities.

1.8.2 Young people

Targeting engagement methods

Research reveals that it is important to target engagement methods carefully, in increasing young people's participation as citizens. For example, a YouGov poll of just under 4,000 young people aged 14-24, conducted for the Citizenship Foundation (Citizenship Foundation, 2009) found that:

- 64 per cent of young people intend to vote when they are eligible
- The recession, wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and MPs' expenses scandal are issues that have increased young people's interest in politics
- Young people are most likely to learn about politics online, rather than at school or college, or from their families
- Young people want more school time spent on politics, economics and the law.

The Youth Citizenship Commission was created in 2008, to:

- Define what citizenship means to young people
- Consider how to increase young people's participation in politics and promote active citizenship, reflecting the communication preferences of young people
- Lead a consultation on whether the voting age should be lowered to 16.

Whilst the Commission's remit focused on young people aged 11-19, in effect its work included young people up to 25 (Youth Citizenship Commission, 2009).

The Youth Citizenship Commission (2009) argues that, whilst young people are not apathetic, the majority are not engaged with what the Commission terms '*traditional politics*'. The Youth Citizenship Commission highlights a range of reasons for this. In the Commission's judgement, young people:

- Do not feel empowered to engage in politics
- Do not have the relevant information, e.g. about how to engage, or about how government works
- Do not believe that they can make a difference
- Have different communication habits, spaces and social networking preferences to adults. Young people can be put off by formal processes and language.

The curriculum

One way of increasing young people's engagement as citizens is through the curriculum. Section 1.4.12 cited definitions of citizenship which are used in the Post-16 Citizenship Support Programme. Citizenship has been a statutory requirement in the National Curriculum at key stages 3 and 4 (11-16 year olds) since September 2002. Ofsted's recent review of citizenship education (Ofsted, 2010) found that, overall, citizenship education is improving, though issues remain. For example, not all schools ensure that all students have opportunities to engage in active citizenship, or that appropriate attention is paid to lower attaining students in citizenship lessons. The Citizenship Commission (2009) recommended that citizenship education should have a greater focus on political literacy.

The LSIS Post-16 Citizenship Support Programme <http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=246134> contains information about the wide range of resources and opportunities available to promote post-compulsory learners' citizen involvement, such as:

- A citizenship photography competition
- An election photography project
- A young investigators' team for a project examining political life in Britain
- A opportunity for 25 young black people to shadow MPs
- The Take Part Directory. This is an online resource of resources and opportunities to promote community involvement.

The recommendations of Lord Goldsmith's review of citizenship (Goldsmith, 2008), in relation to education, include that:

- Schools should prepare citizenship manifestos, i.e. agreements with community stakeholders, through which students have opportunities for active community participation
- Students should prepare portfolios of their citizenship work
- Government should consider whether there should be a compulsory primary citizenship curriculum.

Wider national, international and local opportunities

Overview

The Youth Citizenship Commission found that there is significant amount of activity, funding and opportunities to promote young people's citizenship. The Commission recommended that opportunities should be:

- Better co-ordinated through stronger, more focused governance arrangements, at national and local level, in order to deliver better value
- More clearly communicated to young people, with young people involved in the design of citizenship opportunities, to reach a wider range of young people.

(Youth Citizenship Commission, 2009)

An Agenda for Youth Engagement (HM Government, 2009) was New Labour's response to the Commission's proposals.

This section illustrates mechanisms which aim to promote young people's citizen engagement, at national, international and local level.

National

There is a UK Youth Parliament. This has 600 MYPs (Members of Youth Parliament) aged 11-18, elected in annual youth elections throughout the UK. MYPs organise events and projects, run campaigns, and work to influence decision makers on the issues which matter to young people. All MYPs meet once a year at the UK Youth Parliament Annual Sitting.

As part of the 2010 election campaign, the British Youth Council (BYC) developed an Election Manifesto, focusing on five campaigns (BYC, 2010).

International

One BYC representative attended the European Youth Forum in April 2010, to promote making the voting age 16, across Europe. Three BYC members represented the UK at the European Union Youth Conference on youth employment and social inclusion, in April 2010.

Local

The British Youth Council defines a local Youth Council as:

... a democratic organisation created, run and developed by young people for young people... They exist to represent the views of young people at a local level giving young people the opportunity to have a voice, to discuss relevant issues, engage with decision-makers and contribute to improving the lives of young people within their community.

HM Government (2009) states that there are over 400 Youth Councils, supported by local authorities and the British Youth Council. The British Youth Council website contains a map of local youth councils at http://www.byc.org.uk/view.php?parent_id=154&content_id=295

Youth4U – Young Inspectors is one example of an initiative where young people have the opportunity to evaluate services which affect them. Youth4U – Young Inspectors aims to give young people the opportunity to assess services in their area and to feed back their views to those in charge. The initiative is run by the Look Listen Change consortium (National Children's Bureau working with the British Youth Council and KIDS). This programme targets 13 to 19 year olds (or disabled young people up to the age of 25) who, because of their background, have not had their views heard. The services which Young Inspectors are trained to assess potentially span information, advice and guidance (IAG) in schools and colleges; transport; health; sport and leisure; and youth and community <http://www.byc.org.uk/About-The-Programme>.

Some areas also have a Youth Mayor, elected by young people locally (CLG, 2008).

1.8.3 Gender

Defra's *Gender Equality Scheme 2007-2010* (Defra, 2008) is an example of a publication which focuses on targeting women. Defra (2008) highlights that, since April 2007, public authorities have had a duty to have a Gender Equality Scheme, and considers gender issues in relation to community engagement. For example, Defra (2008) underlines the importance of relationships which allow women from 'seldom heard' communities, and transgender people to engage with Defra.

1.8.4 Ethnicity

Similarly, Defra's *Race Equality Scheme 2007-2010* (Defra, 2008) highlights the importance of increasing Defra's engagement with minority ethnic groups, in both rural and urban areas. To encourage participation, Defra (2008) states that, where feasible, choices should be given to potential participants about, for instance, venue and the time for and type of meeting.

1.8.5 Disability

The *Disability Equality Scheme 2008-11* (Ministry of Justice, 2008) is an example of a publication focusing on the involvement of those who are disabled, in the development of policies for the disabled. Ministry of Justice (2008) cites the example of the Electoral Policy Division of the Constitution Directorate, based in the Ministry of Justice. The Policy Division carries out extensive consultation and engagement exercises when developing policy. The Division invites disability organisations, such as Scope, Royal National Institute for Blind People (RNIB) and Pollen Shops, as well as smaller community based groups, to be involved. One stated result is that voting systems which are more accessible for the electorate have been developed.

1.9 Evaluating community engagement

1.9.1 Overview

This section discusses the strengths of, and issues with, evaluation evidence on community engagement.

1.9.2 Strengths

Overview

The emphasis on evaluating community engagement is increasing, not least in evaluating the impact of interventions.

The empowerment research programme

New Labour's Communities and Local Government's empowerment research programme had three main strands:

- **Measuring empowerment.** This covers assessment of the prevalence of, and appetite for, empowerment, and how this varies amongst different groups and over time. The CLG website, as at February 2010, stated that several empowerment indicators had been embedded in the Citizenship Survey and the Place Survey (see Section 1.7.3)

- **Understanding the drivers of and barriers to empowerment.** This covers collecting evidence on the factors which motivate and barriers to citizen engagement, and the factors which determine whether citizens feel able to influence local decisions
- **Improving the design and implementation of empowerment interventions.** This covers collecting evidence on how the quality of programmes can be increased, to increase empowerment. i.e. this strand focuses on what works, in what circumstances, for which groups of people, why, and who delivers it.

Evaluation framework

Citizen Engagement and Public Services: Why Neighbourhoods Matter (ODPM and Home Office, 2005) highlights the aim of developing mechanisms to measure impact which are consistent across different types of community engagement (CLG, 2009).

An evaluation framework was developed for evaluating community empowerment interventions which is based on the framework used for the evaluation of Participatory Budgeting (CLG, 2009). CLG (2009) aims to promote consistency of quality across empowerment evaluations, without being prescriptive.

The evaluation framework sets out a very clear structure for evaluating empowerment initiatives, based on evidence on:

- Context
- Objectives
- Inputs
- Activities and processes
- Outputs, outcomes and impacts.

The evaluation framework refers users who want more detailed guidance on conducting evaluations to other texts, such as:

- Improvement and Development Agency (2009) *Framework for an ideal empowering authority*. <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/aio/10008993>
- Warburton, D., Wilson, R. and Rainbow, E. (2006) *Making a difference: A guide to evaluating public participation in central government* (London, Involve) <http://www.involve.org.uk/assets/Uploads/Making-a-Difference-.pdf>
- Del Tufo, K.S., Herrmann, T. and Wilson, M. (2009) *Measuring empowerment and community development – what does good look like? Mapping of quality assurance and evaluation frameworks and methodologies*
- Community Development Foundation (2009) *National Empowerment Partnership Framework*. http://www.cdf.org.uk/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=a79da57e-3feb-4bb4-83b5-5ec8826b3315&groupId=10128

1.9.3 Issues in evaluating citizen engagement

Overview

Studies have identified a range of issues in evaluating citizen engagement in public policy.

Lack of robust evidence

Nicholson (2005) argues that, at the time of writing, there was relatively little literature on civic participation which was grounded in evidence and which adopted a critical approach. In Nicholson's (2005) judgement, the merits of public participation in policy making were hard to assess, as there was a lack of robust, as opposed to highly subjective, evidence on the effectiveness of participation. Instead, there were many guides to good practice (Nicholson, 2005). Burton et al. (2004), in their systematic review of community involvement in area based initiatives, reported that few authors provided a rigorous discussion of how far the implementation of the ABI in question had met the project aims. In some cases, there did not seem to be a clear evidence base for conclusions drawn by authors. Brook Lyndhurst (2006), in evaluating Environmental Action Fund (EAF) projects, found that generating robust evaluation evidence was beyond the resources of most EAF projects, particularly those focusing on community engagement.

Measures of engagement

Burton et al. (2004) state that few projects attempted to develop quantifiable measures of impact. Rogers and Robertson (2004) see the problems of establishing a reliable, meaningful measure of community engagement as one reason for the lack of evidence on the outcomes of participation.

Establishing causation

Albest and Passmore (2008), in their literature review of public participation for the Scottish Executive, underline the complexities of establishing a causal chain from participation in initiatives to improvement in services.

Cost-benefit analysis

Burton et al. (2004) found that, whilst projects argued that the project costs should be recognised, the large majority of projects did not provide data on costs. Only one project reported on the balance between costs and benefits. Brook Lyndhurst (2009), in the evaluation of Defra's Environmental Action Fund, found that there was not a straightforward relationship between project costs and impact. For instance, some of the projects with the smallest grants produced strongest evidence of community influence.

Range of issues

Nicholson (2005) outlines the following difficulties in assessing the impact of citizen engagement in public policy process:

- The longer term impacts of some activities make shorter term attempts at evaluation difficult.
- It can be difficult to isolate the impact of one element of input into the policy process.
- Commissioners can tend to go by subjective measures of effectiveness and see no need for formal evaluations.
- Public participation exercises are likely to have potentially competing goals and inherent trade offs (for example, Citizens' Juries may compromise on representation, but have other benefits which offset this).
- Direct comparisons between different methods are very difficult, because of different contextual factors.
- There may be differences in opinion over what constitutes a 'good' exercise or activity. This can be a major challenge for those responsible for designing and carrying out public participation processes.
- There may be confusion over the purpose of the activity.

1.10 Critical success factors

1.10.1 Overview

The literature covers a very large number of success factors. In many instances, these success factors are in the form of lists, which are insufficiently categorised. In effect, critical success factors tend to relate primarily to effective management processes at all stages of an initiative, though this point is often not made explicit in the literature. When the length of different lists of success factors is set against the commonsense nature of many of the points made, often with a lack of supporting evidence, it is fair to suggest that some of the critical success factors are asserted truisms, rather than convincingly argued points.

1.10.2 Nicholson (2005)

Nicholson (2005) is relatively unusual in categorising success factors. According to Nicholson (2005), the success of citizen engagement initiatives is contingent upon the:

- **Appropriateness** of the engagement mechanism selected
- **Skill** within which the engagement process is conducted
- **Context** within which engagement takes place.

1.10.3 Citizen engagement in the national policy process

The discussion paper A national framework for citizen engagement (Ministry of Justice, 2008) puts forward success factors for citizen engagement in the national policy process. In the view of Ministry of Justice (2008), engagement processes should be:

- **Seen as a positive experience.** Participants should feel better informed as a result
- **Broadly representative,** involving a broad spread of the population and ensuring that a good cross section of relevant audiences is engaged
- **Credible.** People must believe that their engagement matters. Robust objective standards must be in place for how engagement mechanisms should be applied to the national policy issue and effectively delivered. There must be feedback to participants and commitment to appropriate levels of evaluation
- **Open and transparent.** Participants should be aware of the degree of influence they might have and the way that government will consider their conclusions
- **Systematic and embedded** in the policy making process
- **Consistent** with the fundamental principles of representative democracy. Systems should complement, not challenge, representative democracy.

1.10.4 New Deal for Communities: success factors

In a study of community engagement in the New Deal for Communities, Russell (2008) identified the following success factors:

- Starting the engagement process early
- Formal governance roles and clear structures, including accountability structures
- A coherent action plan, setting out responsibilities, accountabilities and who will be engaged
- A strong, appropriate leadership style
- A range of involvement opportunities
- Good promotion and communications
- High profile community events
- Dedicated, skilled staff involved
- Visible results
- Quick wins, to help generate positive messages
- Establishing a culture of engagement
- Recognising the contribution of community participants
- Developing training, including training materials

- Developing effective partnerships, including defining organisations' distinctive roles
- Developing resources to support the needs of diverse communities
- Developing materials for mainstream organisations to use
- Mechanisms in place to review progress.

Russell (2008) outlined that the following staff skills are needed to maximise the success of community engagement:

- Project management
- Process mapping
- Facilitation
- Managing meetings
- Listening skills
- Working with groups
- Working with individuals
- Language skills
- Questionnaire design and analysis
- Imaginative thinking
- Communication with diverse audiences
- Presentation skills
- Writing skills
- Creating and using databases
- Policy development and review.

It seems reasonable to question whether there are any staff skills which Russell (2008) has not included in the list above.

Russell (2008) also developed a checklist of questions to ask when developing a community engagement strategy, to maximise success. This checklist helps to clarify further Russell's view of factors important to the success of community engagement.

- Is there a shared understanding of community participation and engagement?
- Is there clarity about the aims of engagement?
- Have key issues and needs been identified?
- Has a baseline been developed of community engagement?
- Is it clear who will be engaged and why?
- Have key groups and individuals been identified?
- What methods will be employed with different groups and activities?

1.10.5 Digital Dialogues

Digital Dialogues (Miller and Williamson, 2008) was discussed in Section 1.7.5. Miller and Williamson's (2008) success factors for technology based citizen engagement also apply to forms of engagement beyond those which are specifically technology based:

- Methods chosen for engagement must reflect the needs of the groups consulted
- Engagement must be embedded in organisational processes and culture, not just an afterthought or on the periphery of the organisation
- The choice of engagement tool should be driven by need, not the technology
- Engagement works where organisations are prepared to listen. Risk aversion and fear of exposing the organisation are the biggest inhibitors to good listening and successful online engagement
- Reflexivity is vital to success
- Organisations need to be adaptable.

Like Russell (2008), Miller and Williamson (2008) developed a checklist of questions for successful engagement. Again, these questions are relevant to forms of engagement which are not technology-based. The clarification in parentheses is provided by Miller and Williamson (2008):

- Who is your audience (e.g. age)?
- Is the planned engagement deep or shallow (i.e. few people and a lot of detail, or a lot of people and little detail)?
- How structured do you want the engagement to be (more structured is easier to manage, but can stifle open discussion and innovative ideas)?
- How managed will the engagement be (controlled, or participants drive how engagement develops)?
- What tools will enhance your engagement (multimedia and multiplatform will add benefit)?
- At what stage do you want to engage (e.g. as part of a consultation or before the development of a Green Paper)?
- What are you trying to do (inform, enquire or consult)?

1.10.6 Defra: Environmental Action Fund

Brook Lyndhurst (2009), in their evaluation of Defra's Environmental Action Fund, identified both critical success factors, and more secondary factors in projects' success. These are listed below:

Critical success factors

- Face to face contact (applicable to all audiences)
- Hand-holding (e.g. through facilitation and providing people with the personalised tools to overcome barriers)
- Repeated contact (e.g. through follow up contact, to remind participants about the initiative, and to show interest in participants)
- Providing visible representation of any changes made (e.g. through auditing or measuring change).

Secondary factors

- Knowing the audience well (e.g. this helped projects to start from the perspective of their audience)
- Pitching information specifically to the audience
- Finding audience hooks (e.g. using financial arguments as drivers in communities particularly sensitive to cost; linking projects to positive aspirations, such as health and quality of life; and targeting moments of change in people's lives)
- Normalising green behaviours (e.g. showing people who are taking action that they are not isolated)
- Making action convenient for participants, to counter the perception that making changes is difficult and/or time consuming
- Getting participants to take small steps and provide early, tangible results
- Using specific tools such as pledges, freebies, gadgets and rewards
- Auditing or measuring participants' use of resources
- Exemplifying new behaviours
- Re-freezing good behaviours (e.g. through adopting processes so that a behaviour is made routine, and training or teaching people to manage themselves).

1.10.7 Patient and Public Involvement

Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) was the NHS forerunner to LINKs (established 2008 and discussed in Sections 1.7.3 and 1.7.4). The six standards for PPI are useful success factors for community engagement:

- Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined
- An explicit statutory framework makes the organisation's commitment to PPI clear
- Structures are in place at all levels, to facilitate dialogue and communication with patients, carers, and the wider community

- Processes are in place to enable patients, carers and the wider public to influence effectively commissioning, planning, delivery, development, review and decision making about changes to healthcare
- There are clearly defined structures and processes to enable effective dialogue with partner organisations, at local and regional level
- Systems are in place to monitor activity and evaluate effectiveness and impact.

(Source: NHS Centre for Involvement website. Inactive since August 2009).

1.10.8 Catalytic individuals

Brook Lyndhurst (2009), in evaluating Defra's Environmental Action Fund, used the term catalytic individuals to describe a small number of individuals who often played a key part in how projects developed. It was stated that catalytic individuals operated at all levels of seniority. According to Brook Lyndhurst (2009), their enthusiasm, commitment, knowledge and personality persuaded people to take part. Catalytic individuals often displayed considerable entrepreneurial capacity. Projects' success was often as much attributable to these catalytic individuals, as to the engagement models used. This is important in considering project replicability.

1.10.9 Time off work

The Communities in Control (CLG, 2008) White Paper outlines that time off work is sometimes feasible for some community activities, such as being a magistrate or school governor. Whilst time off work to fulfil community responsibilities may not be a critical success factor, it is reasonable to suggest that it will make participating in community activities more feasible for those in employment.

1.11 Benefits of citizen engagement

1.11.1 Overview

The literature has not tended to focus on presenting evidence on the benefits of citizen engagement. Furthermore, where there has been attention to benefits, there has been more emphasis on benefits for citizens, rather than benefits for government.

1.11.2 Benefits for citizens

A number of studies, across the public services, have found that engagement in public services has benefits for citizens. For instance, Farrell (2004), reporting on 12 *Health in Partnership* projects, found that patient involvement increases patient satisfaction and confidence, and helps to build better, more trusting relationships with NHS professionals.

Nicholson (2005) found that engagement in the policy process can bring citizens satisfaction, political efficacy, confidence, self-esteem, understanding, trust, enjoyment, and an increased sense of health and well being. ODPM (2005), in a study of the role of community involvement in improving mainstream services in deprived areas, found that community involvement could also reduce fear of crime. Hawtin and Purcell (2008) found that local people involved in the development of community strategies enjoyed participating in the policy process.

The extent to which the benefits highlighted above justify public expenditure, particularly during a period of financial constraints, is questionable.

1.11.3 Benefits for government

Democratic renewal

Nicholson (2005) found that citizen engagement in the policy process could have a positive impact on democratic renewal, as citizens became more community oriented and more sophisticated consumers of policy. However, the point was also made that this social capital was sometimes invested in informal social and neighbourhood activity, rather than in local government.

Cost effectiveness

A seminar called *Empowerment and Economy*, designed by Involve and the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU), and supported by the Department for Communities and Local Government, was held in 2009 to explore how the worsening economic climate would impact on the empowerment and engagement agenda (Burrall and Carr-West, 2009). Some participants argued that community engagement could help efficiency. According to Burrall and Carr-West's report (2009), devolving control over decisions to citizens and communities can:

- Make local labour markets more resilient
- Make local people more able to meet the challenges of recession
- Build the internal capacity of councils to work more effectively.

Neighbourhood renewal

ODPM (2005), in a study of the role of community involvement in improving mainstream services in deprived areas, found that community involvement could:

- Improve service delivery
- Reduce unit costs.

Housing

Rogers and Robinson (2004) found that community involvement in housing policy increased tenant satisfaction, increased trust in the management of housing estates, and improved service performance, according to objective measures of performance. Cole (2008), however, argues that these findings are difficult to validate.

1.12 Barriers to citizen engagement

1.12.1 Overall

The Engagement Ethic (Innovation Unit, 2009) argued that the biggest challenge faced by public services is that of engaging citizens and service users, and harnessing their energy and creativity. Whilst this statement is distorted, in, for instance, its underestimation of the impact of the economic downturn on the public services, at the same time, the statement serves to underline that effective citizen engagement is challenging.

1.12.2 Resources

Potential cutbacks

Some participants in the seminar on the impact of the deteriorating economic climate on the empowerment and engagement agenda (Burrall and Carr-West, 2009) expressed reservations that citizen engagement would be a relatively easy area for local authorities to make cutbacks in.

Lack of cost data

Section 1.9.3 highlighted that there is frequently an absence of data on costs in the literature. Similarly, a Department of Health commissioned review of customer experience information (Price Waterhouse Coopers, 2009) found that there was a lack of clarity on costs and value for money.

Resourcing to support participation

The Future of Citizenship (DCA, 2007) recommended that there should be greater emphasis on the quality of experience when people engage with government and public services, especially in a voluntary capacity. DCA (2007) suggests that this could include childcare provision for witnesses and jurors, and better management of their time and energy.

Transport

Brook Lyndhurst (2009), in evaluating Defra's Environmental Action Fund, found that lack of transport in rural areas was a barrier to community engagement.

1.12.3 Lack of research evidence

The lack of robust research evidence on citizen engagement has been discussed in Section 1.9.3.

1.12.4 Disengagement

The Future of Citizenship (DCA, 2007) argued that citizenship is changing. DCA (2007) expresses most concern about reduced democratic engagement, particularly in terms of voting in elections. DCA (2007) presents the view that, within the medium term, it is unlikely that the British population will significantly reengage with the state, in terms of voting and broader involvement in public services. DCA (2007) foresees a longer term trend of increasing disengagement, though it also suggests that a significant change in the external environment could increase engagement. According to DCA (2007), engagement could be increased by, for instance, a subtle shift in the public perception of economic risk, or what DCA (2007) terms a 'tipping point' in attitudes towards climate change. Through qualitative research, DCA (2007) found that, overall, the public do not equate being a good citizen with engaging with the state.

1.12.5 Fatigue, duplication and co-ordination

The volume of citizen engagement activity, discussed in Section 1.6, contributes to risks of citizen fatigue on the one hand, and wastage of resources, through duplication, on the other hand. These points underline the importance of co-ordinating activity across strands of the public services.

Casey (2008), in her review of engaging communities in tackling crime, underlined that government should ensure that different agencies, such as the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and magistrates, work together, to rationalise community engagement activities, and so to prevent overloading the public.

Hawtin and Purcell (2008) report that it is estimated that, in Haringey, there are about 180 consultations per annum, excluding land planning consultations. Hawtin and Purcell (2008) comment on the dangers of:

- Citizen fatigue, through being over-burdened with community engagement
- Duplication of activity.

To some extent, duplication can be avoided, as the following examples from Hawtin and Purcell (2008) suggest:

- In Haringey, where feasible, one consultation serves a number of purposes
- In Nottinghamshire, the Local Strategic Partnership Consultation Practitioners Forum addresses consultation across a number of public service areas. This aims to increase co-ordination across partners and strategies, and to avoid duplication
- Croydon has a Community Involvement Strategy Group. This brings together representatives of the main statutory agencies with responsibility for community involvement in decision making, with the voluntary sector. The group helps to plan consultation and involvement, co-ordinate consultation exercises, develop models of good practice, and identify groups and organisations to be consulted.

1.12.6 Reach

Many studies have found that community engagement initiatives have limited reach. For instance, Farrell (2004) makes the point that, at the time of writing, public awareness of opportunities to participate in NHS policy and practice was limited. This underlies the importance of ensuring that there is appropriate awareness raising about opportunities to participate in citizen engagement activities.

In the community justice initiative in Salford (Brown and Payne, 2007), discussed in Section 1.7.6, those members of the public who were already involved in aspects of public policy were engaged successfully in the community justice initiative. However, there was only limited success in engaging members of the public who had not previously been engaged. Brown and Payne (2007) found that this group had an appetite for more information on the community justice initiative, but that they developed little understanding of the initiative during the project. Similarly, the criminal justice initiative aimed at increasing communication with, and engagement of the community in, decisions about the local Criminal Justice Centre (McKenna, 2007), discussed in Section 1.7.9, largely engaged those community members who were already active in the community.

Russell (2008) found that:

- There is a risk that community engagement becomes the preserve of a small group of insiders who have privileged access (N.B. it is assumed that Russell means access to the initiative) and who become distanced from others
- There can be tensions in incorporating new participants, such as asylum seekers, into community engagement activities. Issues related to racism and discrimination can need addressing.

Interviewees in Hawtin and Purcell's (2008) study perceived that some consultation processes are more inclusive than others. In developing community strategies, the voices of many marginalised groups tended to remain relatively unheard. Targeting hard to reach groups was discussed in Section 1.1.8.

1.12.7 Unrealistic expectations

Where community members have unrealistic expectations of the outcomes of community engagement, unsurprisingly, this can create issues (Ministry of Justice, 2008).

1.12.8 Lack of impact on decision making

Nicholson (2005), in her literature review for the Scottish Executive of civic participation in public policy making, found that, across many different contexts, there was concern that civic participation appeared not to have made a significant impact on decision making.

For example, Sections 1.7.9 and 1.12.6 discussed the criminal justice initiative which aimed to increase communication with, and the engagement of, the community in decisions about the local Criminal Justice Centre (McKenna, 2007). Similar to Nicholson (2005), McKenna (2007), found that work to inform the community had more impact than work to involve the community in influencing the direction of aspects of the local Criminal Justice Centre. The Department of Health commissioned review of customer experience information (Price Waterhouse Coopers, 2009) found that there was great variation in the extent to which customer experience information was embedded in organisational practice.

Nicholson (2005) also highlighted that some individuals who participated in civic engagement activities were unconvinced that their contribution had been listened to. Section 1.6 presented Burrall and Carr-West's (2009) distinction between extractive and discursive engagement (extracting information from the public, as opposed to a meaningful, two way dialogue). According to Burrall and Carr-West (2009), extractive approaches to public engagement are over-concerned with structures, at the expense of the people who take part in them. All too often, it is argued, structures developed to enhance the voice of local people are ineffective, because they fail to get beyond immediate, knee-jerk responses.

1.12.9 Elected officials' perceptions of participative democracy

Participants in the seminar on citizen power in recession (Burrall and Carr-West, 2009) commented on the potential for tensions between elected members and officers conducting public engagement. There was considerable discussion of councillors' defensiveness over initiatives to promote citizen engagement, and comments about a '*culture of fear*' among local officials. This, in turn, was linked to failure to innovate in community engagement.

Similarly, Hawtin and Purcell (2008) found that community engagement in the development of community strategies was politically sensitive in most Local Strategic Partnerships, particularly in relation to the role of local elected members within Local Strategic Partnerships. For example, many respondents indicated that:

- Community participation in Local Strategic Partnership structures, traditionally the role of elected representatives, is seen as a potential cause of tensions and apparent conflicts of interest
- Some councillors perceive that community engagement in strategy development is threatening, with the potential to undermine councillors' representative role.

Hawtin and Purcell (2008) found that New Labour's increasing emphasis on community involvement in local decision making, and within Local Strategic Partnerships and community strategies in particular, was exacerbating these tensions between elected members (particularly backbench councillors) and those from the community participating in work on community strategies. In particular, councillors and other stakeholders questioned the accountability of community participants for their contribution to decisions.

1.12.10 Balance between public involvement and government accountability

Ministry of Justice (2008) underlines the importance of attaining a balance between increasing the public's participation in the policy process and maintaining government accountability. It is likely that this balance could, on occasions, prove elusive. Some participants in the seminar on citizen power in recession (Burrell and Carr-West (2010) perceived that community engagement can present politicians with a get out clause; politicians can abnegate their own responsibility, arguing that members of the public support a particular policy issue.

1.12.11 Countering democratic processes

It may be reasonable to suggest that one risk of citizen engagement activity is that, paradoxically, it can challenge, rather than contribute to, the democratic conduct of government (Ministry of Justice, 2008). If a small number of unelected people, who do not represent the relevant population or indeed the British population as a whole, influence policy, whether at national, regional or local level, then it could be argued that this is inequalitarian.

1.12.2 Timing of involvement

Hawtin and Purcell (2008), in their evaluation of community engagement in community strategies, found that community engagement was usually strongest at the beginning of the policy process, in developing priorities for the strategy. Community involvement in implementing community strategies was limited (Hawtin and Purcell, 2008). Case study research highlighted that, following the initial development of the strategy, community engagement in its implementation (including action planning, monitoring and performance management) was largely undertaken through Local Strategic Partnership structures. Whilst interviewees tended not to think that this was inappropriate, there may be scope for greater community involvement in strategy implementation. There tended to be a re-emphasis on community engagement at specific points, such as when strategies were refreshed. This underlines the importance of making explicit to involved community members the rationale for varying patterns of engagement at different time points.

1.12.3 Barriers to NHS progress with World Class Commissioning

This section outlines multiple barriers highlighted by one study. As Table 1 illustrates and Section 1.7.6 discusses, the 2007 NHS World Class Commissioning Framework has as its third competency public and patient engagement. The Picker Institute conducted its second survey of the impact of the World Class Commissioning Framework on PCTs in 2009 (Picker Institute, 2009). 60 out of 152 PCTs responded (40%). The survey found that there are perceptions of significant barriers to patient and public engagement (PPE). Barriers included, in order of frequency of response:

- Difficulty ensuring that information from PPE work is available early enough in the decision making processes (53%)
- Lack of resources for patient and public engagement (42%)
- Lack of communications capacity (40%)
- Difficulty reconciling patient and public views and priorities, with stated NHS priorities (38%)
- Lack of PPE knowledge and skills (32%)
- Difficulty reconciling conflicting patient and public views, and NHS priorities (27%)
- Executive level culture: the view that patient and public engagement is not really supported or taken seriously (17%).

Other reported barriers included:

- The impact of the economic downturn
- Engaging the hard to reach in health issues
- Engaging the young
- Lack of an effective system to track PPE activities.

The Picker Institute (2009) concluded that PCTs are not yet in a position to demonstrate whether and how patient and public engagement influences commissioners' decisions, or to measure the impact of engagement on health outcomes. According to the Picker Institute (June, 2009), there is an urgent need to:

- Translate executive level support into executive level action, to ensure that patient and public engagement is integrated effectively into commissioning cycles and schedules, and is available early enough in decision making processes
- Develop the decision making elements of engagement, so that PCTs' capacity to respond to what local people say keeps pace with advances in information gathering
- Develop metrics that will allow PCTs to measure and monitor the outcomes of engagement in shaping decisions and services
- Develop information sharing mechanisms about 'what works' in patient and public engagement that are based on real (not virtual) networks, and are supported by web based sources of information and resources.

Section 2.

Citizen engagement and the Coalition government May – October 2010

2.1 Overview

Section 2 of this report was commissioned by LSIS in September 2010, to update Section 1's analysis of citizen engagement under the previous New Labour government 1997-2010, with relevant policy developments after the General Election, May 2010. Section 2 assesses citizen engagement under the Coalition government, from its election to the Conservative party conference, October 2010. It should therefore be noted that Section 2 was developed before the outcomes of the Spending Review 2010 were published (20.10.10).

Section 2 examines first, the concept of the Big Society, and second, specific areas of Coalition policy which are relevant to citizen engagement. Section 2 should be read in conjunction with Section 1, so that the reader can:

- Compare the Coalition's policy on citizen engagement, and its implications for learning and skills, with that of the previous New Labour government
- Use findings presented in Section 1 on the strengths of and issues with evaluation evidence, and success factors and barriers to citizen engagement, to inform understanding of the Coalition's policies on citizen engagement.

Evidence drawn on in Section 2 consists of policy documents; website material; ministerial speeches; and, given the immediacy of many developments discussed, a limited amount of media commentary.

2.2 The Big Society

2.2.1 The theoretical model of the Big Society

Citizen engagement is central to the Big Society. A former speech writer to David Cameron, Ian Birrell (Birrell, 2010), argues that the theoretical model of the Big Society is central to David Cameron's political vision. Philip Blond (2010) goes further, claiming that the Big Society is the new centre ground of British politics. David Cameron made the Big Society an important part of his election campaign. There is also explicit reference to the Big Society in *The Coalition: our programme for government* (HM Government, 2010), which set out the Coalition's reform plans at the start of government. The Coalition has appointed a government adviser for the Big Society, Lord Wei. In David Cameron's speech at the Conservative conference (06.10.10), he devoted considerable attention to the Big Society.

Lord Wei argues, in a presentation used with government departments and published on the Internet (Wei, 2010), that the Big Society is being developed in a *three-fold context*:

- A lack of trust in politics
- Longstanding social problems
- An unprecedented challenge to public finances.

¹¹ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/newsstories/newsroom/1652536>

Building the Big Society, published on the Cabinet Office website (Cabinet Office, 2010), outlines that the Coalition's plans for the Big Society rest on families, networks, neighbourhoods and communities becoming *bigger and stronger than ever before*. The Big Society consists of five strands:

- Giving communities more powers
- Encouraging people to take an active role in their communities
- Transferring power from central to local government
- Supporting co-operatives, mutuals, charities and social enterprises
- Publishing government data. (Cabinet Office, 2010)

In line with the above, on 27.07.10, the Coalition's Minister for Decentralisation stated that *three key actions* are fundamental to building the Big Society:

- **The right to know**, as part of an era of transparency and accountability
- **The right to challenge** how public services are deployed
- **Turning Government on its head**, so that it works for communities, not just ministers¹¹.

CLG's Structural Reform Plan (CLG, 2010) defines the Big Society in terms of:

Where family and social responsibility plus civil liberties create a stronger society. A rebalanced and smaller state will improve people's lives, encouraging innovation to flourish and draw people together in civic pride.

According to Lord Wei (Wei, 2010), the Big Society is made up of a three level *ecosystem*, in which no one player dominates another:

- **Citizens and neighbourhood groups** participating more effectively in the governance, design and delivery of services in their communities
- **Social, private and public providers** collaborating in the design and delivery of services and initiatives, using a range of models, including innovative models
- **Government** protecting the vulnerable, ensuring essential services and facilitating the design and delivery of other services with service partners.

Wei (2010) argues that the main advantages of the Big Society, in terms of citizen engagement, are that people are more:

- Involved in their communities
- Able to contribute more effectively to solving local problems through a stronger social sector
- Able to shape government policy and delivery.

¹² Nick Clegg speech http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/newsroom/news_releases/2010/100818-socialmobility.aspx

According to Wei (2010), the approach to engaging citizens should be shaped by:

- The nature of the policy
- The relative capabilities and resources of the parties involved
- Prior learning
- Economic constraints
- Urgency of delivery.

Central to the Big Society are the three pillars of freedom, fairness and responsibility (Wei, 2010). According to the Coalition (HM Government, 2010), a free, fair and responsible society can only come from a shift from:

(C)entralisation and top down power to disperse power more widely in Britain today, ...to councils, communities and homes across the nation.

In his speech at the Conservative party conference on 06.10.10., David Cameron argued that Britain needs a new approach to what fairness means, defining fairness not in terms of egalitarianism:

Fairness means giving people what they deserve – and what people deserve can depend on how they behave.

The Coalition also interprets fairness in terms of:

- Improving social mobility¹²
- Supporting the most vulnerable in society, alleviating poverty and supporting responsible behaviour (DWP, 2010)
- Fairness between different groups of benefit recipients, and between benefit recipients and the tax payer (DWP, 2010).

2.2.2 Strengths of the Big Society

The discussion above, and the outline of different policy areas below, illustrate that there is a coherence to the theoretical model of the Big Society, though this is not as yet apparent to the public as a whole.

Blond (2010) argues that, at its best, the Big Society can address the problems created by the 1980s failed left-right orthodoxies which *bequeathed a broken society and economy*. In Blond's view, this is because the Big Society has the potential to:

- Redistribute power in the state and economy
- Create *multiple centres of wealth, innovation and ownership*
- Revive civil society
- Address market failure.

Blond (2010) also argues that there are international examples of the Big Society, thereby illustrating that the Coalition's concept of the Big Society does not exist in global isolation.

¹³http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/8297060.stm

2.2.3 Issues with the Big Society

According to various media reports (e.g. The Times Leader 04.10.10; The Guardian, 07.10.10 and 06.10.10), a range of criticisms has been expressed about the Big Society, as:

- Too elusive a concept
- A concept which has been insufficiently developed
- (M)eaningless waffle
- Unfamiliar to the majority of the public. For example, an Ipsos Mori poll found that 55% of those polled had not heard of the Big Society
- Unsuccessful in the election campaign 2010. Rawnsley (2010) states that some Tory MPs found the concept of the Big Society difficult to explain to voters
- A return to Victorian philanthropy
- A cover for spending cuts.

The latter was refuted by David Cameron in his speech at the Conservative party conference on 06.10.10:

The Big Society is not about creating cover for cuts but an attempt to create a citizenship that is not simply a transaction in which you put your taxes in and get your services out¹³.

However, it is fair to say that the cuts have at the very least added to the complexities of implementing the Big Society. For instance, in October 2010, a series of town hall meetings across the country, which aimed to kickstart the Big Society, were abandoned, because of attendees' anger over cuts (Brindle, 2010). Blond (2010), who overall appears to be positive about the Big Society, highlights that the Treasury is making some cuts, without planning how austerity measures can run alongside the renewal the Big Society offers. This emphasises the importance of coherent planning across government departments for the implementation of the Big Society.

Claims for the Big Society have been made across the political spectrum. In his leader's speech at the Labour conference, Ed Miliband claimed that the Big Society is New Labour's legacy, rebranding it as the 'good society' (cited in Blond, 2010).

Birrell (2010) argues that it does not matter if people do not understand the Big Society, or if it was unsuccessful in the election campaign 2010; rather, what matters is whether David Cameron delivers on the Big Society, so that, for Britain, it becomes a transformational philosophy. According to a Leader in The Times (04.10.10), delivery in part entails being explicit about the Big Society, not least given the background of spending cuts. This Leader emphasises that David Cameron needs to make clear his positive vision of the Big Society, and not let his government be defined by addressing the legacy of debt.

¹⁴ NB the Coalition describes Structural Reform Plans as the key tool for implementing the Coalition's reform programme set out in the Coalition Agreement (e.g. DWP, 2010).

¹⁵ <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/latest-news/2010/08/pm-and-dpm-open-letter-to-cabinet-54208>

2.3 Citizen engagement and policy areas

2.3.1 Overview

This section uses as its basis relevant policy areas, as specified in *The Coalition: our programme for government* (HM Government 2010), developed at the start of the coalition government. 'Relevant' means where policies include aspects of citizen engagement, and/or reflect aspects of the Coalition's approach to citizens. The sub-headings in Section 3 have largely been taken from HM Government (2010), with a small number of exceptions:

- Some of HM Government's headings (2010) have been combined, e.g. Crime and Justice, and Policing
- There are a small number of additional headings, to reflect this report's focus on citizen engagement. For example, as HM Government (2010) has a section on Government transparency, it is logical to include here a section on reducing bureaucracy, as this is an important aspect of the Big Society
- Policy specific to learning and skills is not focused on in Section 2; it is assumed that readers are familiar with this policy.

Each sub-section in Section 2 outlines relevant points from HM Government (2010), and then supplements these, where appropriate, with further information from each department's *Structural Reform Plan* (SRP)¹⁴, and other policy documents, speeches and announcements.

The policy areas outlined in Section 3.3 are all aspects of domestic policy. To date, a focus on citizen engagement has not been identifiable in the Coalition's foreign policy.

Areas of domestic policy which, in HM Government (2010), have least detail on citizen engagement are covered briefly, at the end of Section 2.

This section does not detail the ways in which the learning and skills sector can utilise the Big Society focus of each policy area. Rather, readers are invited to assess the extent to and ways in which the Coalition's focus on citizens, in each of the policy areas outlined below, may be drawn upon by the learning and skills sector.

2.3.2 Deficit reduction

As previously highlighted, the coalition government is implementing the Big Society in the context of large scale spending cuts. After the election in May 2010, it was announced that the government would make £6.2 billion savings to non-frontline services during the financial year 2010-2011 (LSIS, 2011). In an open letter to the Cabinet¹⁵ on 03.08.10, David Cameron and Nick Clegg underlined how, in their view, spending cuts and the government's reform plans are inter-related, not mutually exclusive.

¹⁶ <http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/spendingchallenge.htm>. This website has now closed for new suggestions.

¹⁷ http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/newsroom/news_releases/2010/100813-green.aspx

¹⁸ Institute for Government (2010) highlights that there are over 900 ALBs, whilst the Number 10 website states that, as at 31.03.09, there were 766.

The letter makes explicit that Cameron's and Clegg's vision of government reform centres on different aspects of citizen engagement, not solely on deficit reduction, highlighting the importance of:

- Redistributing power from government to communities and people
- Taking a long-term approach to government, safeguarding the environment and restoring political transparency and accountability.

The emergency budget on 22.06.10 (HM Treasury, 2010) indicated that, except for commitments to real increases for the NHS, and to international aid obligations, other departments will face an average real cut of approximately 25% over the next four years (LSIS, 2010). Slightly beyond the timescale of this report, the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) on 20.10.10 will present more detailed information on forthcoming cuts. There is a range of evidence that the Spending Review aims to take into account the Coalition's focus on citizens:

- *The Spending Review framework* (HM Treasury, 2010) states that the Spending Review will be conducted according to the three principles of the Big Society, freedom, fairness and responsibility, in order to *demonstrate that we are all in this together*.
- The Spending Review aims to protect frontline services.
- As part of the Spending Review, the government consulted with the private sector, voluntary and charitable organisations and the general public, as well as experts.
- Spending Challenge was launched, a website for citizens to share their ideas on how efficiency savings could be made¹⁶. According to HM Treasury's website, over 100,000 suggestions, including more than 44,000 ideas from the public, were received.

Other examples of the current focus on efficiency savings are that an Efficiency and Reform group has been set up in central government, to drive reform and improve the efficiency of central government (LSIS, 2010) and that the Coalition has commissioned an Efficiency Review into government spending led by Sir Philip Green (announcement 22.08.10)¹⁷.

HM Government (2010) states that one strand of deficit reduction is cutting the number of Arms Length Bodies (ALBs) (or quangos). This also reflects the Coalition's focus on decentralisation and cutting bureaucracy. Whilst there is some variation in figures cited for the total number of ALBs¹⁸, it is clear that there are a large number of ALBs. According to Institute for Government (2010), ALBs account for over 13% of government spending, excluding NHS spending and social security payments. The Number 10 website states that ALBs spend over £46 billion a year and employ over 110,000 people. A range of concerns has been highlighted about ALBs, such as inefficiency, expense and political patronage (Institute for Government, 2010).

In the emergency budget (22.06.10), a significant reduction in the number of ALBs, saving up to £500 million, was announced. The Queen's Speech, 25th May 2010, announced that the Public Bodies (Reform) Bill would ensure greater accountability, transparency and efficiency in government, by reducing the number and cost of public bodies, and by reviewing their function every three years. The Cabinet Office's Structural Reform Plan (Cabinet Office, 2010) includes a commitment to abolish or bring into departments the majority of ALBs which do not meet one of three tests (technical, transparency or impartiality).

Whilst there has been considerable concern about the cuts, one example of a more positive response is that of Bill Emmott, writing in *The Times* (04.10.10). Emmott argues that it is important to implement a tough financial policy, and that, with a five year austerity plan, if the economy demonstrates considerable growth, then cuts can be altered. Furthermore, as for instance the report on LSIS's second public services seminar, *Empowerment and responsibility* (LSIS, 2010) stresses, it is feasible to improve services with less money, through developing new forms of delivery and careful prioritising of services.

2.3.3 Government transparency

Greater transparency across Government is at the heart of our shared commitment to enable the public to hold politicians and public bodies to account; to reduce the deficit and deliver better value for money in public spending; and to realise significant economic benefits by enabling businesses and non-profit organisations to build innovative applications and websites using public data. (David Cameron, 2010)

The Coalition has continued to extend the public's access to data, largely through the Internet (HM Government, 2010). HM Government (2010) states that the Coalition will:

- Require public bodies to publish online the job titles of all staff, and the salaries and expenses of senior officials paid more than Band 1 of the Senior Civil Service
- Open up government procurement
- Create a 'right to data' so that government held datasets can be requested and used by the public, and published regularly
- Require all councils to publish meeting minutes and local service and performance data
- Require all councils to publish details online of their spending over £500
- Ensure that all data published by public bodies is done so in a standardised format which can be readily used by third parties.

¹⁹ <http://www.number10.gov.uk/other/2010/07/structural-reform-plans-53023>

²⁰ <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/latest-news/2010/09/september-srp-progress-reports-published-55328>

²¹ <http://www.wired-gov.net/wg/wg-news-1.nsf/Ifi/DNWA-883JS6>

²² <http://www.number10.gov.uk/other/2010/07/structural-reform-plans-53023>

The Cabinet Office's *Structural Reform Plan*¹⁹ includes:

- Driving the transparency agenda in government
- Facilitating the immediate release of data sets
- Introducing blanket use of open data standards.

The publication of each department's Structural Reform Plan and monthly progress update helps to promote transparency and accountability, the Number 10 website states²⁰.

As part of the transparency agenda, the Cabinet Office is developing a government wide strategy on digital engagement and enablement (Cabinet Office, 2010).

There is a new Public Sector Transparency Board at the Cabinet Office, responsible for setting open data standards across government and developing the Legal Right to Data. Transparency agenda data are available at <http://data.gov.uk> though it is worth noting that this website started under the previous New Labour government. The Transparency Board requested the public to specify which additional data sets they would like to have access to, beyond those originally published. However, perhaps unsurprisingly, departments have not responded consistently to the focus on publishing data; minutes of the Transparency Board meeting (15.09.10) note that whilst some departments regularly add data to data.gov.uk, not all do.

On 30.09.10, the government launched a new, more open licence, developed by the National Archives, under which people can use government information and data free of charge. On 06.08.10, the government announced that, from April 2011, the Public Sector Mapping Agreement will give councils and mapping bodies free access to national mapping data²¹. This will replace costly, inefficient contracts that many parts of the public sector have with Ordnance Survey and triple the number of bodies with access to the mapping data.

On 13.07.10., David Cameron announced his support for the Race Online 2012 campaign. The campaign, set up by Martha Lane Fox, encourages public, private and charitable organisations to sign up to help the 10 million adults in the UK who are uninitiated into the Internet to go online. Greater technological expertise should facilitate greater citizen engagement with government, including with government data.

2.3.4 Reducing bureaucracy

A range of policy developments reflect the focus on reducing bureaucracy, to increase transparency and accountability, and to promote citizen engagement in policy. For example:

- The Coalition has abolished Public Sector Agreement (PSA) targets. These have been replaced by each department's *Structural Reform Plan* (e.g. DfE, 2010; DWP, 2010) and monthly implementation updates, published on the Prime Minister's Office website²².

²³ <http://nds.coi.gov.uk/content/detail.aspx?NewsAreaId=2&ReleaseID=414183&SubjectId=2>

²⁴ <http://www.education.gov.uk/inthenews/pressnotices/a0064895/education-secretary-michael-gove-sets-out-the-next-stage-in-a-programme-of-reducing-bureaucracy>

- There is a Reducing Regulation Committee, which aims to cut *the red tape that is strangling enterprise* (Vince Cable, Committee Chair²³).
- Michael Gove, the Secretary of State for Education, announced on 23.09.10 that, from September 2011, schools would no longer be required to complete the Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) for Ofsted²⁴.
- The Coalition's policy on Children's Trusts also reflects their emphasis on freeing up schools from regulation and bureaucracy. The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 placed a duty to co-operate on schools, colleges and Jobcentre Plus, and required all local areas to establish a Children's Trust Board. The Board had to publish a jointly owned Children and Young People's Plan by April 2011. The Secretary of State for Education intends to remove the requirements for Children's Trusts and the Children and Young People's Plan, and the duty on schools to co-operate through Children's Trusts (LSIS, 2010).

2.3.5 Social action

The creation of national appointments and committees reflects the Coalition's focus on social action. There is, for example:

- A Minister for Civil Society (Nick Hurd), responsible for charities, social enterprises and voluntary organisations
- As discussed earlier, a Government Adviser (Lord Wei) for the Big Society
- A planned Select Committee for Civil Society, scheduled to start from November 2010. (Cabinet Office, 2010)

HM Government (2010) states the coalition's commitment to:

- Supporting the creation and expansion of mutuals, co-operatives, charities and social enterprises
- Giving the above greater involvement in running public services
- Giving public sector workers the right to form employee-owned co-operatives and bid to take over the services they deliver
- Training community organisers
- Supporting the development of neighbourhood groups
- Encouraging charitable giving and philanthropy
- Introducing a National Citizen Service
- Creating a Big Society Bank
- Launching a national day to celebrate social action.

The Cabinet Office's *Structural Reform Plan* (Cabinet Office, 2010) highlights that the Cabinet Office has a responsibility for a number of the areas above:

- Identifying opportunities for further private and voluntary sector involvement in service delivery

²⁵ http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/newsroom/news_releases/2010/100722-citizenservice.aspx

²⁶ <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/speeches-and-transcripts/2010/07/big-society-speech-53572>

- Identifying opportunities for developing mutualism
- Making it easier to run a charity, social enterprise or voluntary organisation
- Getting more resources into the sector (by the sector, Cabinet Office (2010) means voluntary providers, neighbourhood groups, etc.)
- Making it easier for sector organisations to work with the state
- Developing a social norms agenda to encourage volunteering and social action
- Developing a National Citizen Service.

In relation to the proposed National Citizen Service, on 22.07.10²⁵, David Cameron announced National Citizen Service pilots for 16 year olds, identified through a competitive commissioning process, and scheduled to take place in summer 2011. At the Conservative Party Conference (06.10.10), Cameron announced that an International Citizen Service would be set up, modelled on America's Peace Corps.

David Cameron spoke about the Big Society Bank, highlighted in HM Government (2010), at the first of a series of public events on the Big Society, on 21.07.10. Cameron stated that the Big Society Bank, created through dormant bank and building society accounts, will be used to finance social enterprises, charities and voluntary groups²⁶. It is planned that the first funds from dormant bank accounts will be available in April 2011 (Cabinet Office, 2010).

In August 2010, the coalition announced the creation of The Big Society De-regulation Taskforce, to make it easier to run charities, voluntary groups and social enterprises (LSIS, 2010). There is a range of examples of the expansion of co-operatives and other social enterprises. On 19.07.10, a long existing Co-operative, the Co-op, following consultation with its members on what the Co-op should support, announced that the Co-op will:

- Take on 2,000 apprenticeships over two years
- Invest £9 million in an Apprenticeship Academy
- Invest £1 million to support the expansion of Co-Operative Trust Schools, which are Academies. (LSIS, 2010).

On 12.08.10, the Cabinet Office announced 12 pathfinder mutuals. These aim to establish the support and structures needed for the development of employee-led mutuals on an ongoing basis. The pathfinders are supported by successful businesses in employee ownership models. Two of the pathfinders are specific to the learning and skills sector:

- Teachers and administrative staff setting up a Trust to run Newton Rigg Agricultural College, Cumbria
- The 157 group working to set up a qualification body.

²⁷ <http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/corporate/docs/b/10-1086-bis-draft-structural-reform-plan>

²⁸ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/statements/newsroom/regionalgovernment>

The full list of pathfinders, and further information about the initiative, is at <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/newsroom/news-releases/2010/100812-pathfinder-mutuals.aspx>

The *BIS Structural Reform Plan*²⁷, published on 26.07.10, includes a commitment to reforming adult and community learning by involving more voluntary organisations, charities and social enterprises as providers, to increase community involvement and encourage joint working across local services and groups.

Strengths

Research by the Universities of Manchester and Southampton, 2010 has found that it is feasible to increase citizen participation in social action, to create the Big Society. This three year project used a range of techniques, to encourage people to give to charities, recycle, volunteer and discuss controversial topics online. For instance, providing tailored information about organ donation resulted in a 17% increase in registered donors.

Issues

Issues have been highlighted about the Coalition's approach to social action. These include:

- Some services should not be dependent on organised good will, e.g. hospitals, social services and police stations (Bennett, 2010)
- A civic core of the educated middle class supplies about two thirds of the country's volunteers. This core is unlikely to live near localities where volunteering is needed (Bennett, 2010)
- Ofsted (2010) found that local authorities had made only limited progress in getting voluntary, community and private groups involved in providing services for young people. This suggests that partnerships between the state and the third sector can be slow to develop.

2.3.6 Communities and local government

CLG's *Structural Reform Plan* (CLG, 2010) states that all CLG's priorities are about advancing the Big Society and localism. HM Government (2010) states that the Coalition will:

- Devolve power and financial autonomy to local government and community groups
- Abolish Regional Spatial Strategies and return decision making on housing and planning to local councils
- In the longer term, give neighbourhoods greater capacity to place shape where their inhabitants live
- Protect green areas important to local communities
- Abolish the Government Office for London and consider abolishing other government offices. The decision in principle to abolish all government offices was announced on 22.07.10²⁸ subject to the Autumn CSR

²⁹ <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/SiteCollectionDocuments/Downloads/GarethDaviesLetterToLSPs.pdf>

³⁰ <http://www.number10.gov.uk/queens-speech/2010/05/queens-speech-decentralisation-and-localism-bill-50673>

³¹ <http://www.parliament.uk/briefingpapers/commons/lib/research/briefings/snpc-05681.pdf>

- Promote shared ownership schemes
- Create trusts, to make it easier for communities to provide homes locally
- Phase out the ring fencing of grants to local government
- Create directly elected mayors in 12 cities
- Introduce powers to help communities save local services, and the right to bid to take over local services
- Implement the Sustainable Communities Act, to increase citizen awareness of, and control over, how money is spent
- Cut local government inspection
- End the Comprehensive Area Inspection (CAA), as part of moving from local government reporting to central government, to local government reporting to the people. On 28.05.10, the Audit Commission wrote²⁹ to local strategic partnerships and other local bodies to let them know how it is proposed to bring work on CAAs to an end.

CLG's five priorities in its *Structural Reform Plan* (CLG, 2010) are explicitly related to the Big Society and localism:

Make localism and the Big Society part of everyday life by

- *decentralising power as far as possible*
- *meeting people's housing aspirations*
- *putting communities in charge of planning*
- *increasing accountability*
- *letting people see how their money is being spent.*

Further examples of decentralisation include:

- The Decentralisation and Localism Bill, announced in the Queen's Speech³⁰ on 25.05.10
- On 13.08.10, the CLG Secretary of State, Eric Pickles, announced that the Audit Commission would be disbanded³¹. The Coalition perceives that the Commission has become increasingly less focused on accountability to citizens. The CLG Secretary stated that a decentralised audit regime will be established, applicable to local government, police and local health bodies
- The National Association for Local Councils (NALC) launched a toolkit *Power to the People* (NALC, 2010) on 21.06.10, to help more communities to set up community and parish councils to represent local interests.

³² <http://www.number10.gov.uk/queens-speech/2010/05/queens-speech-education-and-children%E2%80%99s-bill-50848>

³³ <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/academies/a0061222/academies-act-2010>

³⁴ Announced 2nd September
<http://www.wired-gov.net/wg/wg-news-1.nsf/lfi/DNWA-88WFHH>

³⁵ <http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/l/letter%20from%20the%20secretary%20of%20state%20to%20las%20introducing%20free%20schools.pdf>

³⁶ <http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/f/written%20ministerial%20statement%20relating%20to%20new%20free%20school%20proposals.pdf>

³⁷ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/newsstories/newsroom/1652707>

2.3.7 Schools

HM Government (2010) states the coalition's aim of:

- Enabling parents, teachers, charities and local communities to set up new schools
- Simplifying regulations
- Publishing performance data on educational providers
- Improving the quality of vocational education, including through increased flexibility for those aged 14-19, and the establishment of Technical Academies. At the Conservative Party conference, David Cameron announced plans to create a generation of technical schools
- Ensuring that Academies use an inclusive admissions policy
- Funding a pupil premium for the most disadvantaged. This will start in 2011 (DfE, 2010).

The DfE *Structural Reform Plan* (DfE, 2010), published in July 2010, reiterates the educational reforms above. The Queen's Speech on 25th May 2010³² announced that, through the Education and Children's Bill, there will be greater freedoms for schools in terms of, for instance, the curriculum, tackling pupil bad behaviour and a reduction in bureaucracy.

It is, perhaps, the Coalition's policies on Academies and Free Schools which have attracted most controversy. Academies are schools which are free from local authority control; receive their funding direct from central government; and enjoy greater freedoms than state maintained schools, such as freedom from National Curriculum requirements. Under the previous New Labour government, Academies aimed to raise educational standards in areas where schools were underperforming. Under the Coalition, the Academies Bill, enabling all schools to apply to become Academies, received Royal Assent on 27.07.10. Schools rated outstanding by Ofsted are pre-approved³³. By 2nd September 2010³⁴, 142 schools had applied to convert to Academy status. 32 schools opened as Academies in September 2010, and the plans of a further 110 were on track for conversion. Academies have a requirement to promote community cohesion (LSIS, 2010).

In a letter of 18.06.10 to local authorities³⁵, Michael Gove announced the government's plans for Free Schools, all ability state schools set up in response to parental demand, and run as Academies. In September 2010, Michael Gove announced that that the first 16 Free School proposals were ready to develop a business plan and that the first were scheduled to open in September 2011³⁶. In a speech on 18.06.10, Gove outlined the government's commitment to making it easier to secure sites for new schools (LSIS, 2010). The coalition has published new planning principles for councils in deciding planning applications for school developments³⁷. Local planning authorities are expected to attach very significant weight to planning applications by local people for new schools.

³⁸ http://nds.coi.gov.uk/content/Detail.aspx?ReleaseID=414110&NewsAreaID=2&utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+bis-news+%28BIS+News%29

2.3.8 Business

Aspects of HM Government's (2010) section on Business which are particularly relevant to citizen engagement are the Coalition's plans to:

- Abolish Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) and support the development of Local Enterprise Partnerships. Local Enterprise Partnerships are joint local authority – business bodies; the closing date for submitting proposals for Local Enterprise Partnerships was 06.09.10.
- Give the public the right to challenge what is described as *the worst regulations*
- Enabling local councils to take competition issues into account when developing local plans
- Making it easier for the public to set up new businesses.

Other BIS developments relevant to citizen engagement include:

- Local Enterprise Partnerships will play an important role, with other partners, in bringing together bids for the Regional Growth Fund (LSIS, 2010). The Regional Growth Fund of £1 billion was announced in the Emergency Budget (22.06.10), and launched by the Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg, on 29.06.10. This fund will be used in 2011-12 and 2012-13, to support projects which encourage economic growth and the creation of private sector jobs, in communities most dependent on public sector jobs³⁸
- The BIS *Structural Reform Plan* (BIS, 2010) includes a commitment to reform adult and community learning, by involving more voluntary organisations, charities and social organisations as providers
- In a speech on 03.06.10, Vince Cable, BIS Secretary, announced that 13 of the 74 BIS ALBs existing in 2009 were, at the time of his speech, being closed, merged, or having funding cut, and that there were plans to close a further 20
- The consultation document for the future direction of policy on skills, *Skills for Sustainable Growth* (BIS, 2010) specifies a number of principles relevant to citizen engagement:
 - To create the Big Society, communities need to be empowered to develop the informal lifelong learning activities they want to participate in
 - To be effective customers in a marketplace, learners need high quality information
 - There should be an emphasis on developing the 'right' relationship between service provider and user, including accountability.

³⁹ <http://www.number10.gov.uk/queens-speech/2010/05/queens-speech-welfare-reform-bill-50598>

2.3.9 Welfare

In its section on Welfare, *The Coalition: our programme for government* (HM Government, 2010) states that the government will:

- Create a single welfare to work programme
- Ensure that Jobseekers' Allowance (JSA) claimants are referred to the welfare to work programme immediately, not after 12 months as is currently the case
- Realign contracts with welfare to work providers, to reflect providers' success in getting learners into work
- Ensure that benefits for those able to work are conditional upon a willingness to work
- Support would be entrepreneurs through Work for Yourself. It is stated that Work for Yourself is a programme giving the unemployed access to business mentors and loans
- Support the establishment of Service Academies to offer pre-employment training and work placements
- Develop local Work Clubs
- Simplify the benefit system.

The Queen's Speech announced a Welfare Reform Bill, to simplify the benefit system and get more people into work³⁹. The Welfare Reform Bill is planned for January 2011 (DWP, 2011). *21st Century Welfare* (DWP, 2010), a command paper, considers the issues with the benefits system and options for reform. The DWP's *Structural Reform Plan* (DWP, 2010) has six core priorities:

- To get people into work
- Welfare reform
- Tackling poverty
- To get Britain saving
- To achieve disability equality
- To ensure that DWP exemplifies effective customer service.

In addition to areas of policy covered in *The Coalition: our programme for government* (HM Government, 2010), DWP's *Structural Reform Plan* includes:

- Developing options for Work Together, a programme connecting people with volunteering opportunities in their neighbourhood
- Supporting lone parents into work
- Running Right to Control in eight areas, from December 2010 - November 2012. Right to Control will give disabled people the right to commission public services in their area or to take a cash payment to buy services.

In terms of benefit reform, at the Conservative Party conference (04.10.10), George Osborne announced a benefits cap, calculated at the level of median earnings after tax for working households; the introduction of a Universal Credit; and also the withdrawal of child benefit from all households containing at least one higher rate tax payer.

Strengths

- Whilst the Coalition's welfare reforms have attracted considerable controversy, it could be argued that the reforms reflect a consistent approach to citizens, and the principles of the Big Society, particularly in terms of responsibility and fairness, the latter as defined earlier in Section 2
- Some of the reforms, such as Work Clubs, Work for Yourself, and Service Academies, present opportunities for the learning and skills sector.

Issues

Criticisms of the Coalition's welfare reform programme include:

- It may be impeded by a lack of jobs (*The Sunday Times*, 03.10.10)
- The Coalition may have under-estimated the costs of implementing the reforms (*The Sunday Times*, 03.10.10).

2.3.10 Health and social care

Section 1 illustrated that health policy has been to the forefront of policy areas in its approach to citizen engagement. In its sections on health and social care, *The Coalition: our programme for government* (HM Government, 2010) states the Coalition's aim of:

- Ending top-down reorganisations of the NHS, reducing duplication, reducing administration costs, and diverting resources back to the front line
- Cutting the number of health ALBs
- Strengthening the powers of GPs, including financial powers
- Ensuring that people have a stronger voice locally than has previously been the case, in part through representation by a directly elected individual on each Board
- Ensuring that the local PCT (see below re the future of PCTs) works with the local authority and other local organisations to improve public health for local people
- Giving communities greater control over public health budgets
- Extending the roll out of personal budgets, to give patients and carers more control and purchasing power
- Giving patients the right to choose which GP they register with
- Giving patients the right to choose a healthcare provider, provided that the provider meets NHS standards. This would strengthen the role of the voluntary and community sector

⁴⁰ http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/MediaCentre/Pressreleases/DH_117040

- Enabling patients to rate hospitals and doctors
- Publishing online data on the performance of healthcare providers
- Giving patients control of decisions about their care.

On 22.06.10, the Health Secretary, Andrew Lansley, underlined that the NHS will be very much accountable to patients and to the public, rather than to ministers or the Department (LSIS, 2010). The Health White Paper, *Equity and Excellence* (DoH, 2010), published on 07.07.10., sets out NHS reforms to devolve power from the centre to patients and professionals, and to streamline services. DoH (2010) is very explicit that patients are at the heart of the NHS, as is evident through the White Paper's commitment to, for instance:

- Shared decision making being the norm. The paper cites the slogan-like statement, *No decision about me, without me*
- Giving patients access to information, so patients can make informed choices about care
- Enabling patients to rate hospitals and clinical departments, according to care received
- Strengthening the collective voice of patients and the public, through a new consumer champion, HealthWatch England, located in the Care Quality Commission, and to be launched in April 2012 (DoH, 2010). HealthWatch will replace Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) (DoH, 2010).

The DoH's *Structural Reform Plan* (DoH, 2010) states that, to improve outcome-focused accountability to patients and the public:

- Strategic Health Authorities (SHAs) will be abolished by April 2013
- PCTs will be abolished from April 2013
- NHS Trusts will be converted to Foundation Trust status, by 2013-14.

On 28.06.10, the first direct payment scheme to allow patients more control over their healthcare was launched⁴⁰. In this pilot, eight PCTs are giving the funding for an individual's healthcare directly to the individual. Direct payments can be made in a range of ways, such as monthly payments or a one off payment for a piece of equipment.

At the Conservative party conference (05.10.10), Andrew Lansley outlined plans for groups of GPs to control 80% of all NHS spending and commission services, following the abolition of PCTs, from 2013. Lansley emphasised the Coalition's aim of turning the NHS into *the largest social enterprise in the world*.

The degree of patient and citizen engagement in the NHS, as illustrated above, provides rich material for the learning and skills sector to reflect on, to assess the likely impact on learning and skills of broadly similar forms of learner and citizen involvement.

2.3.11 Crime, justice and policing

In its sections on Crime and Policing, and Justice, *The Coalition: our programme for government* (HM Government, 2010) states that the Coalition will:

- Create a directly elected official to oversee the police locally, to increase police accountability. The first election of Police and Crime Commissioners will take place in May 2012 (Home Office, 2010)
- Require the police to publish detailed local crime statistics on a monthly basis
- Require the police to hold regular beat meetings with the public
- Use forms of restorative justice such as Neighbourhood Justice Panels to address anti-social behaviour and low level crime.

Nick Herbert, the Minister of State for policing, writing in *The Sunday Times* (03.10.10), outlines that plans for law and order include:

- Incorporating the following into Commissioners' remit: setting local strategic priorities; ensuring community safety; tackling drugs; and working with local authorities and other agencies
- Paying private and voluntary sector organisations by results, in terms of reducing reoffending
- Publication of street level crime maps
- Giving local agencies the appropriate tools (N.B. the tools are unspecified) to deal with anti-social behaviour.

Herbert (2010) is forthright in dismissing claims that reductions in costs entail reductions in the quality of services; in his view, it is fallacious to claim that reducing the costs of policing would result in an increase in crime.

2.3.12 Parliamentary reform

In its section on Parliamentary reform, *The Coalition: our programme for government* (HM Government, 2010) states that the Coalition will:

- Cut the perks and bureaucracy associated with parliament
- Introduce a power of recall to allow voters to force a by-election where an MP has engaged in serious wrongdoing
- Ensure that any petition securing at least 100,000 signatures is eligible for formal debate in parliament
- Introduce a public reading stage, at which the public can comment online on proposed legislation
- Give residents the power to instigate local referendums.

⁴¹ http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/newsroom/news_releases/2010/100722-boundaries.aspx?rss=yes

The Coalition has stated that two parliamentary reform bills⁴¹ empower citizens in two respects:

- Voters decide how to elect MPs (Parliamentary Voting Systems and Constituencies Bill 2010)
- The government cannot choose the date of a general election (Fixed-Term Parliaments Bill 2010).

2.3.13 Civil liberties

In its section on Civil Liberties, *The Coalition: our programme for government* (HM Government, 2010) states that the Coalition will:

- Extend the Freedom of Information Act, to provide greater transparency
- Introduce a Freedom Bill
- Abolish ID cards
- Abolish the National Identity Register
- Abolish the ContactPoint database
- Further regulate CCTV.

2.3.14 Equalities

In its section on Equalities, *The Coalition: our programme for government* (HM Government, 2010) states that the Coalition will:

- Promote equal pay and measures to end workplace discrimination
- Extend flexible working
- Conduct a fair pay review in the public sector
- Improve community relations and opportunities for Black, Asian and Minority (BAME) groups
- Support gay rights.

N.B. The Equalities Act 2010 received royal assent on 08.04.10, under the previous New Labour government, though its provisions did not come into effect until 01.10.10 (when 90% of its provisions were implemented).

2.3.15 Consumer protection

In its section on Consumer protection, *The Coalition: our programme for government* (HM Government, 2010) states that the Coalition will:

- Introduce stronger consumer protections, by e.g. obliging credit card companies to provide better information to customers, in a unified, electronic format
- Enhance customer service, by e.g. introducing an Ombudsman into the Office of Fair Trading.

⁴² <http://www.wired-gov.net/wg/wg-news-1.nsf/lfi/DNWA-883JS6>

2.3.16 Families and children

In its section on families, *The Coalition: our programme for government* (HM Government, 2010) states that the Coalition will:

- Extend the right to flexible working
- Reform the system of tax credits
- Publish serious case reviews
- Review criminal records and vetting and barring processes, and ensure that these are based on common-sense.

2.3.17 Transport

In its section on Transport, *The Coalition: our programme for government* (HM Government, 2010) states a commitment to making:

- Network Rail more accountable to customers
- The rail regulator into a passenger champion.

2.3.18 Energy and climate change

In its section on Energy and climate change, *The Coalition: our programme for government* (HM Government, 2010) states that the Coalition will encourage community-owned renewable energy schemes.

2.3.19 Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport

In its section on Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport, *The Coalition: our programme for government* (HM Government, 2010) states that the Coalition will:

- Facilitate partnerships between local newspapers, radio and television, to strengthen local media
- Introduce measures to facilitate the rapid roll out of super-fast broadband. Axiomatically, this will be important in facilitating public access to information.

The Future Libraries programme, announced on 17.08.10, aims to ensure that libraries play a *central role for communities in the Big Society* (Culture Minister⁴²). The programme consists of a partnership between central and local government, and is driven by councils. The vision is that library services should have greater connection with other local services, and for library services to be designed around public need.

2.3.20 International development

In its section on International development, *The Coalition: our programme for government* (HM Government, 2010) states that the Coalition will:

- Create mechanisms for British people to have a voice in how the aid budget is spent
- Publish details of all UK aid spending online.

Section 3.

Conclusions and recommendations

3.1 Overview

Section 3 synthesises the conclusions of and recommendations from Sections 1 and 2.

3.2 Conclusions

3.2.1 Terminology

- In existing research studies and policy documentation, there is a range of issues with defining citizen engagement. Issues include:
 - What is meant by citizen engagement is often insufficiently defined
 - Even in more recent work, where there tends to be a greater focus on defining terms, writers conceptualise citizen participation in different ways (Nicholson et al., 2005)
 - In more recent work, where the term community is defined, what a community consists of varies greatly, spanning, for instance, a group of people who live or work together in the same geographical location; an administrative area; or a group of people with a shared interest or set of characteristics (e.g. women, minority ethnic groups and children).

3.2.2 The context of the learning and skills sector

- The learning and skills sector is well placed to play an active part in citizen engagement activities in the coming years, in spite of current constraints, including those related to funding cuts (LSIS, 2010)
- The report on LSIS's policy seminar *Changing public services – Changing professional practices. Understanding the direction of change* (LSIS, 2010) underlines that studies of further education have repeatedly shown that the sector is often very well regarded in its locality
- The sector has a long history of community involvement
- LSIS's recently published *Effective Community Development. A strategic framework. Consultation* (LSIS, 2010) specifies in detail a wide ranging strategic approach to community engagement
- The report on LSIS's second public services seminar, *Empowerment and responsibility* (LSIS, 2010), stresses that the sector has a track record of being responsive to change; this suggests the sector can adapt to the policy developments of the Coalition's Big Society
- Given the diversity of the learning and skills sector, the sector as a whole is well placed to respond to different aspects of the Big Society's policies. Conversely, parts of the sector may need support in focusing on citizen engagement.

3.2.3 *New Labour and Coalition policy*

- Axiomatically, the concept of citizenship is far from new, dating back to Aristotle at least.
- As Section 1 demonstrates, in England, there was an increasingly explicit focus on the citizen in public policy under the previous New Labour government 1997-2010.
- The previous New Labour government's focus on the citizen was inter-related with New Labour's policy emphasis on:
 - The public sector reform agenda
 - Locality: rebalancing the relationship between the centre and the local
 - Community cohesion
 - Community engagement
 - Community empowerment
 - Voice (e.g. of the learner, the employer and the citizen)
 - Personalisation
 - The consumer, the user
 - Immigration
 - Addressing the terrorist threat.
- Findings illustrate that, in many respects, the Coalition government is developing further New Labour's focus on citizen engagement. For example, as discussed in Section 1, New Labour's *Putting the Frontline First. Smarter government* (HM Government, 2009) expressed a commitment to strengthening the role of citizens and civic society through a range of measures, including streamlining the centre of government; opening up data and public information, to promote transparency; and giving communities more say in shaping services. As Section 2 illustrates, these are all priorities of the Coalition's Big Society.
- On the one hand, it is probably fair to say that the Coalition has not acknowledged fully the extent and nature of citizen engagement activity under the New Labour government 1997-2010.
- On the other hand, the Coalition's policy on citizen engagement differs from that of New Labour, in a range of ways. These include:
 - The centrality which the Coalition is giving to the theoretical model of the Big Society
 - The extent to and ways in which citizen engagement underpins the Big Society
 - The explicit focus given to citizen engagement across areas of domestic policy, and perhaps in the work of the Cabinet Office and the Department for Communities and Local Government in particular

- The explicit focus given to citizen engagement in the Coalition’s ministerial speeches
- The particular emphasis given to specific aspects of the Big Society, such as freedom, fairness and responsibility; volunteering; and the creation of mutuals and co-operatives
- The economic context in which citizen engagement is rooted, in terms of the Coalition’s focus on cutting the deficit in a shorter time period than the New Labour government had planned to.
- Section 2 illustrates that, in broad terms, there is a high degree of consistency in the Coalition’s approach to citizen engagement, across different areas of domestic policy.
- At present, the impact of the Coalition government’s focus on citizen engagement is unknown. Given the obvious inevitability of this, this should not deter the sector from taking a leading role in shaping citizen engagement activity.

3.2.4 Strengths of existing citizen engagement activity

- Sections 1 and 2 illustrate that there is a wealth of citizen engagement activity for LSIS and the learning and skills sector to draw on, in future citizen engagement activity
- These include, as discussed in Section 1, a very wide range of established engagement techniques and mechanisms, including: participatory budgeting; community profiling; citizen surveys; Citizen Panels; Citizens’ Juries; Citizens’ Summits; deliberative forums; public dialogue; Appreciative Inquiry; focus groups; a Citizens’ Day; citizen networks; and online engagement through, for example, e-petitioning, debate through many organisations’ websites, and social networking sites
- Given that there is an explicit focus on citizen engagement across the Coalition government’s domestic policy, and given that the learning and skills sector contains a diversity of providers, there are many Big Society initiatives, across policy areas, which the sector could benefit from. For example, there are opportunities for the sector to develop partnerships with Academies, Free Schools, and indeed local authority schools, to provide services such as legal assistance and facilities management
- Activities the sector participates in which are related to the Big Society are likely to have the support of the Coalition government.

3.2.5 Gaps in the evidence on citizen engagement

- Section 1 illustrates that there are gaps in the evidence on previous citizenship engagement activity, in terms of:
 - In particular, the lack of a substantial body of evaluation evidence on the impact of activity

- An absence of robust evidence on the benefits of citizen engagement, for citizens and for the area of the public services in question. Some existing evidence on the benefits of citizen engagement has been contested
- A lack of robust quantitative measures to use in evaluating interventions
- Issues in establishing causal relationships between participating in initiatives and improvements in services
- An absence of data on costs. There is therefore a lack of evidence on value for money (Price Waterhouse Coopers, 2009)
- Existing evidence does not give a clear picture of the extent to and ways in which citizens have influenced policy development and implementation in England
- In some instances, commissioners' failure to prioritise the evaluation of developmental activity on citizen engagement.

3.2.6 Barriers

- Section 1 outlined a range of potential barriers to citizen engagement activity.
- Barriers include:
 - Some evidence (DCA, 2007) on trends towards public disengagement from the state, though other evidence (Universities of Manchester and Southampton, 2010) argues that citizen participation can be increased
 - Potential citizen fatigue through duplication of and poorly co-ordinated activities
 - The limited reach of activities, including issues with the engagement of hard to reach groups
 - The perceptions of some citizens of the lack of impact of citizen participation, on decision making
 - The resistance of some employees to the involvement of a wider group of citizens in policy development and implementation
 - The potential of some citizen engagement activity to be at odds with democratic principles and processes (Ministry of Justice, 2008), such as in instances where the views of a few, unelected citizens influence policy development.
- The extent to which resources are a barrier is perhaps more complex:
 - On the one hand, as Section 1 illustrates, existing evidence underlines the importance of ensuring that there are appropriate resources to support citizen engagement activity
 - On the other hand, as Section 2 has discussed, the Coalition is prioritising spending cuts, in the context of reducing the deficit

- At the same time, a strong message emerging from the Coalition government is that spending does not necessarily equate quality, and that it is feasible to do more for less
- There are some funding opportunities, such as through LSIS and new partnerships with other areas of the public services.

3.3 Recommendations: opportunities for the learning and skills sector

3.3.1 Overview

- Below are outlined ways in which the sector could maximise its citizen engagement activity, within the Coalition's Big Society.

3.3.2 Definition of citizen engagement

LSIS and the sector should:

- Develop a clear definition of citizen engagement
- Be specific about which communities form the target group(s) for different citizen engagement activities.

3.3.3 Leadership and management

The sector should:

- Target carefully which citizen related activities to engage in, given the volume and range of citizen engagement activity discussed in Sections 1 and 2
- Ensure that the governing body sets the college's strategy for community development, thereby:
 - Giving priority to the agenda
 - Facilitating potential strategic connections, through governors, between the college and other local bodies
- Assess the relevance and feasibility of working in strategic partnership with other areas of the public services on the Big Society agenda, using the evidence in Section 2 on the high profile given to the Big Society across areas of domestic policy. As previously cited, one example is collaboration between the learning and skills sector and Academies, Free Schools and local authority schools
- Take a leading role in shaping local citizen networks
- Develop processes to work effectively with Local Enterprise Partnerships
- Assess, on an ongoing basis, the funding opportunities available to support citizen engagement activity, through LSIS (e.g. Flexibility and Innovation Fund) and wider sources, through partnership activity
- With LSIS, develop strategic relationships with government departments beyond BIS, and perhaps with the Cabinet Office and the Department for Communities and Local Government in particular, given the emphasis attached to Big Society activity in these departments' *Strategic Reform Plans* and other documentation.

3.3.4 The third and private sectors

The sector should:

- Take a leading role in enhancing the contribution of the voluntary, charitable and private sectors to the Big Society. This includes collaborating on the design and delivery of services and models, as advocated by Wei (2010), the Government Adviser for the Big Society
- Build on the work of, for example, the pathfinder mutuals, to incorporate models of ownership such as co-operatives and mutuals into the sector
- Ensure greater involvement of volunteers in the delivery of learning and skills
- Become a leader in training volunteers for activity to take forward the Big Society, across the public services, and the third and private sectors.

3.3.5 Use of data

Given the Coalition's focus on opening up the data which is available to the public, the sector should:

- Make maximum use of data which are publicly available, to inform its strategic direction in relation to citizen engagement activities
- Develop its understanding of what local communities need, based on analysis of local data, quantitative and qualitative
- Use this understanding of local need, and the new flexibilities, to ensure that its local learning offer responds to local demand and priorities, whilst still reflecting FE's mission
- Provide the public with more information about the sector, in line with the transparency agenda
- Find new, more accessible ways to provide information about its services to the public
- Collect data on its citizen engagement activity, particularly on the outcomes of activity, including the contribution of activity to the aims of the Big Society.

This is important for the following reasons:

- The gaps in evidence highlighted above
- The Coalition's focus on outcomes
- The coalition's emphasis on the Big Society
- The scope to use data collected with potential future funders.

3.3.6 Learner and employer engagement

It is self-evident that learners and employers are local citizens. The sector should:

- Assess and, as appropriate, develop further the extent to and ways in which learners and employers shape its services
- Deepen its existing focus on learner and employer voice, including through:
 - Use of the range of deliberative techniques discussed in Section 1
 - Assessment of the extent to which the sector wishes to emulate the NHS' degree of customer and citizen focus, outlined in Section 2
- Ensure that the curriculum and wider institutional ethos reflect the principles of the Big Society, so that learners develop as citizens who embody the values and practices of the Big Society in terms of, for instance, social, political and economic engagement in society.

3.3.7 Targeting the range of citizens

The sector should:

- Assess how to involve the public in the governance, design and delivery of learning and skills, as advocated by Wei (2010) and outlined in Section 2
- Balance how to sustain the support of citizens who have a history of community engagement, with engaging hard to reach groups
- In terms of engaging the hard to reach, combine the personalisation agenda with the equalities duties of the Equalities Act 2010, as well as drawing on existing research evidence and the sector's long history in this area.

3.3.8 The sector's assets

- A wide range of learners, from higher education to Pre-Entry level learners, already use the sector's facilities. The sector should ensure that it maximises its potential in providing spaces to draw communities together
- Sections 1 and 2 underline the important role of the Internet in providing a wide range of information about public services to the public, and in enabling citizens to express their views on, and therefore potentially influence the development of, public services. The sector should ensure that the potential of new technologies is exploited fully, in citizen engagement activity
- The sector should take a leading role in Race Online, as highlighted in Section 2.

3.3.9 The sector's support needs

- Given the diversity of the learning and skills sector, parts of the sector may need support in realising the opportunities of the Big Society agenda. LSIS and the sector should assess what the support needs of different parts of the sector consist of, and how these needs may be met
- As above, Section 1 revealed the wide range of deliberative techniques used in citizen engagement. LSIS and the sector should consider how to develop staff expertise in using a range of deliberative approaches to support citizen engagement activity
- As Section 2 illustrates, the Coalition emphasises that citizens have the right to challenge how public services are deployed. As discussed in Section 1, existing evidence highlights that employees can feel threatened by citizen engagement in public services. LSIS and the sector should assess what skills staff need, to be confident in responding to challenges from citizens about the sector, and how staff may be equipped with these skills.

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