



**Dosti's Axis of Influence**  
a discussion-centred evaluation tool  
for community based networks in Dudley Borough

**Handbook**

**May 2007**

Produced for Voluntary and Community Sector Networks in Dudley Borough by  
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## Preface

In September 2005, Dosti commissioned **changes** “to work with networks and Dosti staff to identify the key components of an appropriate framework to monitor and evaluate their influence and impact on the decisions made by partnerships”.

It was agreed that another aspect to the work would be “to investigate how influence occurs - what makes networks influential, what has an impact on partnerships and how community networks can best equip themselves (increase capacity) to maximise on opportunities to influence”.

This first piece of research was followed by a second phase, working with a small group of people from Dudley Borough’s community networks, to design a framework that they could then use to ‘track’ and make visible the influence that they have - and the influence that they don’t have.

The resulting ‘Axis of Influence’ is presented here in its ‘raw’ state. It will, inevitably, grow and develop and there are already plans to develop materials, training and case studies to support it and help community networks to use it to the full.

Additionally - materials will be developed and facilitators trained - to support networks in Dudley Borough who want to work with the axis<sup>1</sup>.

### What people have said so far ...

It is really interesting  
- mapping how influence works and how people can get involved in making change happen.

It is about building and understanding influence at peer level

The axis challenges the notion that nothing is ever going to change - it challenges negativity

How Black & Minority Ethnic communities can influence decision making  
- clarification of the process - helps to develop better interventions

It is useful as a reality check for community aspirations

Useful to think about how my residents can influence me and how I can influence at a policy level

<sup>1</sup> These materials and facilitators are features of the axis specifically developed for community networks in Dudley Borough. They could be modified for use elsewhere - please contact **changes**: [admin@changesuk.net](mailto:admin@changesuk.net)

This handbook draws on, updates and puts into practice the earlier research (gathered in the report: Changing People : Building Relationships, July 2006 - available to download from [www.dosti.org.uk](http://www.dosti.org.uk)) and illustrates how the Axis of Influence can be used to:

- ♪ prompt discussion and debate within community groups and networks, in particular about their aims and structures
- ♪ monitor and evaluate the influence and impact of community networks on the decisions made by partnerships
- ♪ identify community networks' organisational capacity to influence
- ♪ identify what is needed in order for community networks to be more influential
- ♪ identify external factors which affect how influential community networks are

The Axis has other uses too. It could be used:

- ♪ to prompt discussion and debate amongst other partnership members - to explore the strengths and challenges of partnership structures, knowledge and understanding of community networks and the support they offer
- ♪ to instigate discussion and debate between the VCS and the statutory sector - to negotiate and re/explore the purpose of their partnership working, identify strengths and challenges and then action plan to build on their current position
- ♪ as a development tool for people who are supporting community groups and networks to be more influential (e.g. volunteers, staff, managers, facilitators)

### **Dosti: a network of networks**

Dosti is a 'network of networks', seeking to embrace the breadth and diversity of the community and voluntary sector in Dudley Borough, to collectively influence strategic decision making. Overall, it is about having a real, lasting and positive impact on people's lives in Dudley, by working with those who set priorities and make decisions about how resources will be used.

Networks may be based on geographical location, shared identity or common interest. Dosti recognises a network as: *a collective of groups of people (not individuals), who have shared aims and objectives based on a common interest.*

In other words, Dosti's members are networks of groups, for example, a Churches Forum, whose members are churches, a Community Forum with a range of individual community organisations involved or a disability network, bringing together groups and organisations who represent and work with disabled people.

### **Dosti's Axis of Influence**

Dosti's Axis of Influence is a tool to monitor, support and develop collective influence within the community and voluntary sector. However, as the Axis can also apply to individual organisations or groups the handbook contains reference to 'groups' and to 'networks' throughout. Network members using the Axis should take care to consider whether they are responding to indicators in relation to a few active people within the network, or the network in its entirety, that is all of its member groups.

### **Dosti: working in partnership**

Dosti's activities relate particularly to the work of the Dudley Community Partnership (Dudley's Local Strategic Partnership). Thus the Axis has been primarily developed to consider influence in that partnership arena. However, it should also apply to any multi-agency partnership which networks relate to, for example area or neighbourhood partnerships.

To conclude: Dosti aims to support people to gain the skills and power to make a difference to the quality of life of those who live and work in Dudley Borough. It is expected that Dosti's Axis of Influence will play a significant part in working towards this goal. Recent discussions about increasing the wellbeing of people in Dudley have highlighted the importance of including communities in decision-making. The Axis of Influence will undoubtedly contribute positively and provide a practical tool to achieve this.

*Lorna Prescott, Senior Development Officer at Dosti*

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## Section 1 : Why ?

### 1.1 Why influence?

There are many reasons why you, as a Voluntary and Community Sector Network, want to influence - all of them leading to change ....



### 1.2 Why is it difficult to influence?

We asked a group of young people to tell us about some of the things that stop them from being influential

They told us about their own levels of confidence, skills and knowledge and their 'sense of self'

- ☹ Being weak/vulnerable

- ☹ Lack of confidence
- ☹ Lack of information
- ☹ Pride

... about feeling isolated, excluded, discriminated against and powerless

- ☹ Bullying
- ☹ Signs - telling us what we can and can't do
- ☹ People are too "up themselves"
- ☹ Age - voting
- ☹ Law
- ☹ Not being listened to
- ☹ Intimidation from the police

... about the lack of 'strength in numbers'

- ☹ Not enough willing people to help

and about authorities that are bigger than them

- ☹ Death
- ☹ Government

These comments from young people reflect some of the discussions with adults from Dudley Borough's community networks where we asked people to consider the barriers and opportunities for influence. This information helped to inform the development of the Axis.

### 1.3 Why track influence?

Ultimately, the reasons for keeping track of levels of influence are the same as the reasons for wanting to influence in the first place: to know that change has happened - and to understand how it happened.

It is this process for change that is often as important as the change itself - the process which maximises a community network's capacity to influence and the lessons which arise along the way.

*A learning organisation is one that interacts with its environment, and is flexible, open and responsive to change. Community organisations themselves, the agencies that support their work, and the public, voluntary or private sector agencies that provide services to communities, should adopt the characteristics of learning organisations if they are to be effective.  
(Achieving Better Community Development Handbook; Community Development Foundation 2000)*

Influence has both outputs and outcomes - and plotting the progress of these can help you and your community network to keep focused on the things you want to change - to 'untangle the spaghetti'.

Plotting progress can also help you to demonstrate your achievements - to the communities you live and work with, to each other, to the agencies you work with and challenge and to funders, supporters and wider audiences.

Tracking and planning are intrinsically linked, so plotting progress as it happens can also help you to think about what needs to happen next and plan for the future.

## 1.4 Why a 'community development' approach

*If we do what we have always done ...  
we will get what we have always got*

Community development is about ensuring a collective approach which considers what we achieve and the way we work with others to get there. It involves:

- ♪ recognising that groups and networks are made up of individuals - each of whom can be powerful
- ♪ seeking to include - not exclude - challenging inequality, understanding other people's priorities and learning from them
- ♪ working with others around common issues and concerns in ways which are open, democratic and accountable
- ♪ building positive relationships across different groups and networks
- ♪ encouraging each other to take part and influence decisions, services and activities

Community development is about **communities** becoming involved in priority setting. The development of networks begins with individuals but if it remains with them then:

- ♪ it is vulnerable to an individual person moving or withdrawing
- ♪ decisions are unlikely to address the issues of the communities on which they impact
- ♪ public bodies and partnerships don't realise community empowerment - they might get people's views represented and change happening but it is not about communities being empowered
- ♪ it is not community development and will not achieve community development outcomes around community empowerment and well-being

The notion of 'community' is multi layered and may be understood as:

- ♪ a group of people who live in a specific locality, neighbourhood - **communities of place** or geographic communities, with shared experience and/or shared concerns
- ♪ a group of people who have a shared identity, shared history, belief or perspective - **communities of identity**
- ♪ interests or occupations that people have in common - **communities of interest**

Everybody can be a member of a community; that is, of place, identity and/or interest; people can belong to more than one community at a time; people may move in and out of communities, depending on a range of factors including time, motivation and need.

Not everybody may identify as being part of a community. Some people may be excluded from communities because of discrimination, or may choose to exclude themselves. 'Community' can be presumed, chosen or imposed.

## Section 2 : What?

### 2.1 What is influence?

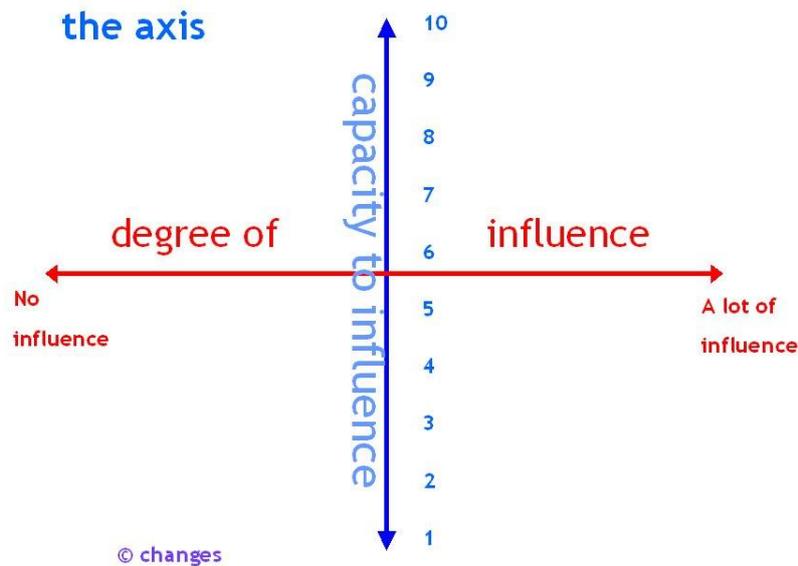
*Influence - "To use own power to change a situation"*

Throughout the research we had lots of conversations with people about the word 'influence'. The table below illustrates how 'influence' can be interpreted - and understood differently - at different times, in different contexts and by different people.

<p><b>Outcome</b> <i>What happens as a result of influence</i></p>	<p>make things better - make a difference - get someone to do something for you - have an effect - make someone do something they may not want to do at the beginning - being heard - find out what's happening - change things - have a voice - more people join - people have power over us</p>
<p><b>Qualities</b> <i>What helps us to influence</i></p>	<p>authority - power - charisma - pzzazz!- respect - reputation - if you are 'experienced' you are more influential - be a ring leader - get something going - start something off - be a catalyst, make something happen, like a chemical reaction - magnetism</p>
<p><b>Method/approach</b> <i>Ways we influence</i></p>	<p>guide - enable - empower - power - encourage - coax - set an example - catalyse - instigate - demonstrate - have connections - make them listen to what you are saying - pressurize - physical, verbal, mental, controlling bullying - tell them how to do it - not giving them a choice - negotiate - bargain - enforce - persuade, be polite - coerce - direct</p>

### 2.2 What is the Axis of Influence?

The axis plots the organisational capacity of community networks to influence. It suggests there are 10 steps to influence which are set against a continuum representing the degree of influence they feel they have.



It has been designed specifically for community networks but can be used with/by community groups as well.

### Introduction to the vertical axis : capacity to influence

The vertical axis considers the capacity of community networks to influence. It identifies 10 steps to influence which you can discuss and debate in turn, agreeing your position. Each step has indicators which help you to determine where you are situated on the vertical axis. These indicators reflect the experiences of groups, networks and Partnerships in Dudley Borough.

The process of working through these steps in a systematic and structured way can empower members of the group/network by:

- ♪ exploring attitudes
- ♪ giving groups more power
- ♪ going from individual to group mission
- ♪ knowing what you want, where you are going and having an idea of how to get there
- ♪ building group relationships
- ♪ tapping into everyone's knowledge and ideas - the whole is greater than the sum of the parts
- ♪ recognising ways we can listen and hear better and conversely ways that might unwittingly stifle each others voices and creativity thereby wasting resources and talent
- ♪ creating possibilities for people to ask questions, clarify purpose, draw out issues, take stock, reflect and review.

It is about showing that it is possible to change things. If, for example, we are stuck - not getting anywhere and not feeling influential the axis provides us with a systematic way of finding out why.

## Introduction to the horizontal axis : degree of influence

The horizontal axis is quite simply a continuum representing the degree of influence that you feel you have. This could range from 'no influence' to 'a lot of influence'.

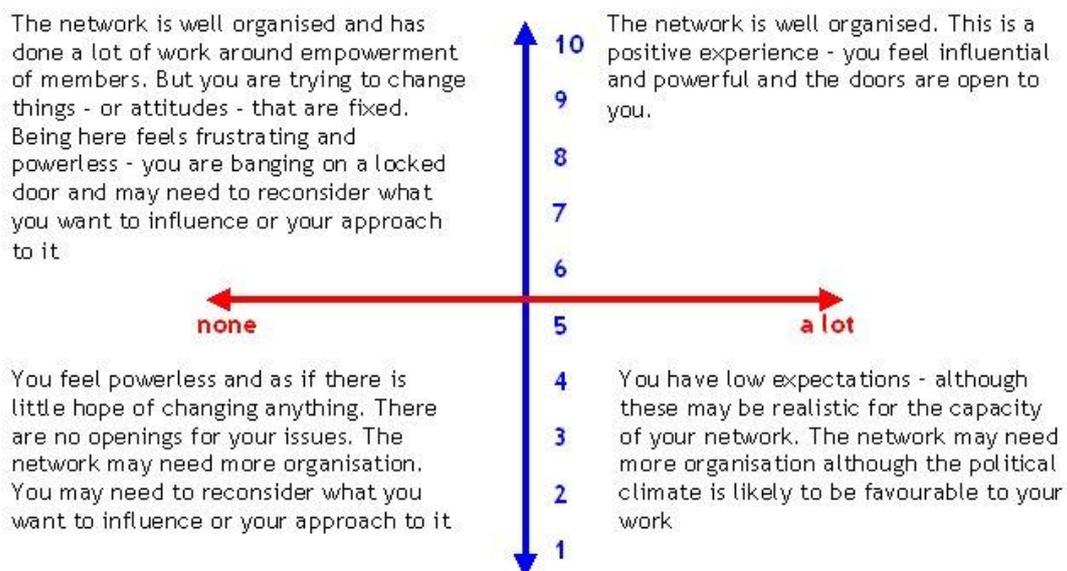
The horizontal axis provides a systematic way of thinking about the things that can stop you being influential no matter how organised you are - the context you are working in - the political landscape, the 'real world' stuff. You will need to take these aspects into account alongside your own network purpose, vision and aims.

Exploring the horizontal axis is useful because it can help you to:

- ♪ focus on relevant opportunities
- ♪ recognise why there are blocks and barriers
- ♪ see what those blocks are
- ♪ identify appropriate strategies and tactics

It also means that you are more informed about how things work - systems and structures - and so are more powerful.

## The axis as a whole



The vertical and the horizontal together provide 4 distinct quadrants - each expressing different experiences of power and influence.

### 2.3 What is a community development approach?

Community development is about working collectively in ways which aim to **empower communities** and increase **community well being**.

*“... building active and sustainable communities based on social justice and mutual respect.*

*... changing power structures to remove the barriers that prevent people from participating in the issues that affect their lives”.*

*Community Development Exchange, Working Statement on Community Development, 2000*

**Community development is based on values of:**

**Social Justice** - enabling people to claim their human rights, meet their needs and have greater control over the decision-making processes which affect their lives.

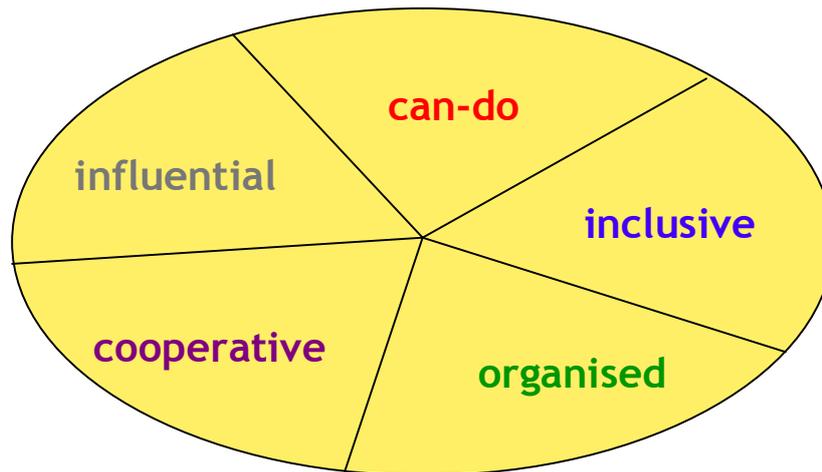
**Participation** - facilitating democratic involvement by people in the issues which affect their lives based on full citizenship, autonomy, and shared power, skills, knowledge and experience.

**Equality** - challenging the attitudes of individuals, and the practices of institutions and society, which discriminate against and marginalise people.

**Learning** - recognising the skills, knowledge and expertise that people contribute and develop by taking action to tackle social, economic, political and environmental problems.

**Co-operation** - working together to identify and implement action, based on mutual respect of diverse cultures and contributions.

The whole point of community development is that communities are empowered - this means working in ways which empower people - ways which mean that people ‘**can-do**’, that they - and the groups they are involved in are **inclusive** and **organised**, that networks are formed, are **cooperative** and support each other and - ultimately - are **influential**.



**can-do** △

working in a way which increases peoples skills, knowledge and confidence - and instils a belief that they can make a difference

**inclusive** ∞

working in a way which recognises that discrimination exists, promotes equality of opportunity and good relations between groups, challenging inequality and exclusion

**organised** ©

working in a way which brings people together around common issues and concerns in organisations and groups that are open, democratic and accountable

**cooperative** ≈

working a way which builds positive relationships across groups, identifies common messages, develops and maintains links to national bodies and promotes partnership working

**Influential** >

working in a way which encourages and equips communities to take part and influence decisions, services and activities

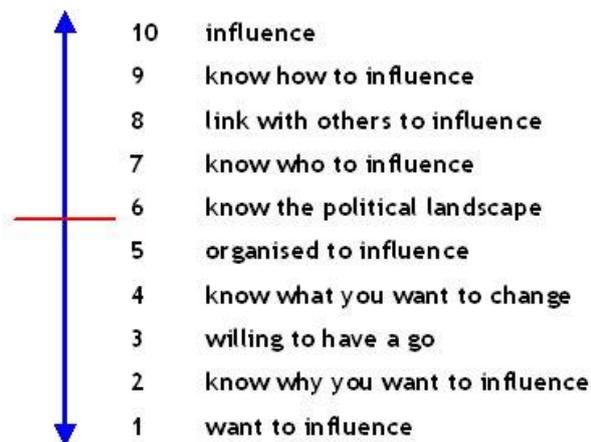
**These are the 5 Community Empowerment Dimensions:**

- Can-do** △
- Inclusive** ∞
- Organised** ©
- Cooperative** ≈
- Influential** >

## Section 3 : Axis of Influence

### 3.1 Vertical axis - what is it?

#### the vertical axis - organisational capacity to influence



#### What it is about - overview

The vertical axis consists of 10 sequential steps on the journey to influence. They start at the point where people realise that they 'want to influence' (Step 1) and move upwards.

The axis recognises that groups and networks are made up of individuals - you all start the journey with our own thoughts and concerns. The focus then needs to change from individuals to groups and networks as we go up the vertical axis.

It is a progressive journey.....

*So...I want to influence, I feel that there's something wrong, something unjust, I know I want something to change....things just aren't right...I want someone to listen to me...I want to have a moan. I find myself doing this a lot and hearing others too. I begin to realise that it's not necessarily what I'm doing that is affecting my life....its things that others are doing.....that I don't seem to have any control over....but, I'm beginning to think I should have a say and do something about it. When I realise others are concerned about the same sort of things I wonder if we could make a connection....I wonder if I can get together with them, and see if I can play a part in changing things.....but it's got to be something that can benefit us all in some way, so others can see a*

*connection, we can then agree and set ourselves a target, a joint target. That feels great...it's more than just me. Mind you, now we will need to work as a group, be more organised. We need some understanding about what we can do, what we need to do, where we want to go, how we can get there. We must listen to each other and have a responsibility towards each other and others who might be affected by what we are working on. We need to see how we can support each other, welcome new people in and encourage them to take part. We need proper structures. We are not a random group anymore so we need to be clear about how we make decisions so we can all contribute. But what if someone is disruptive....we'll need to find ways of dealing with that constructively - just because someone's got different opinions they're not necessarily wrong. We need to be able to share, explore and move forward as a group. So we have spent a lot of time looking inwards.....we're very capable but, now we've got to do something - now we're ready to look over the parapet, out of our safe territory - what are those people making the decisions doing? what's their world like? their constraints? what are their priorities? what drives them? what stops them? what are our 'ins' and who should we be trying to influence? - narrowing it down to individuals and organisations. We need to pinpoint and target the right people for the right decisions and know how their systems work the jargon, the language. We will need to have constructive arguments to put - some strategies and ways of dealing with them.....now we are feeling more in control - know who to target, so join the party!!!!!!!!!!!!!! But we can do more if we look around for other networks to come on board and get bigger and stronger, help each other but not lose ourselves and our own identity ...once we've got that, a good communication strategy and strategic plans we can move further forward, knowing what we're talking about, drawing on national policy, talking in ways that people understand....then, we are influential - we have credibility, a good reputation. People come to ask us what we think - we are leading agendas, challenging and changing things....*

Each of the 10 steps has a series of indicators which provide bite-sized chunks to help you to make an assessment of your capacity to influence. The indicators have been drawn from the experience of community networks, groups and Partnerships in Dudley Borough. They are not static and you may be able to think of others.

For example, the first step '**Want to influence**' has 7 indicators

**People:**

- feel that things aren't right
- feel they have a right to state their views
- feel dissatisfied with what is happening around them
- have a sense of social justice
- want their own views to be heard
- talk to others about their concerns and ideas
- feel that others share their views

The indicators in the 10 steps have been colour coded to link them to the appropriate community empowerment dimensions (see pag13). Each dimension is also represented by a symbol:

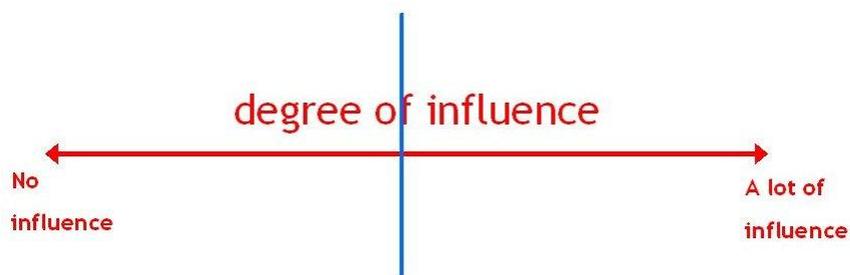
Can-do	△
Inclusive	∞
Organised	⊙
Cooperative	≈
Influential	➤

People:		
<input type="checkbox"/>	feel that things aren't right	△
<input type="checkbox"/>	feel they have a right to state their views	△
<input type="checkbox"/>	feel dissatisfied with what is happening around them	∞
<input type="checkbox"/>	have a sense of social justice	∞
<input type="checkbox"/>	want their own views to be heard	∞
<input type="checkbox"/>	talk to others about their concerns and ideas	≈
<input type="checkbox"/>	feel that others share their views	≈

You might not have all these indicators at this stage but - if you have a good representation of the colours / symbols under each Step then you are more likely to become influential.

Section 4 provides worksheets for each of the 10 Steps.

### 3.2 Horizontal axis - what is it?



#### What it is about - overview

The horizontal axis is a continuum from no influence to a lot of influence. It is the degree of influence you feel you have as a network in relation to the external world - the context that you are working with and within.

While the horizontal axis is crucial between Steps 5 and 6 on the vertical axis - at the point where you are organising as a group or network - not as an individual, it can be useful at any stage to stop and reflect.

The external context is flexible and can change - rapidly or over time - affecting the degree of influence you feel you have.

Examples:

*A community group moves towards feeling more influential around their focus of living with diabetes once there is a recognition at national level that something needs to be done and a national service framework developed for diabetes care*



*A local environmental network suddenly finds itself very popular with statutory agencies and is asked for information and advice in recent contexts of climate change and concern about environmental issues. The network feels more influential.*



*For many years hunting was legal and the pro-hunting lobby felt very influential. With changes and adaptations to the law this feeling has changed and the pro-hunting lobby are in opposition. Their position on the continuum has changed.*



## Section 4 : Using the vertical axis

### 4.1 Introduction

Working through the axis using the worksheets may take a while, and we would suggest that you start off with a quick look at the 10 steps to grab people's attention and get a feel for your organisational capacity to influence. You will notice that you are initially asked how 'people' (individuals) are getting on and this later changes to groups/networks as you progress up the vertical axis and collective working develops.

Each worksheet in this Section has discussion points which you might find useful to help you along your journey to influence. They are suggestions and you may well decide you want to discuss other aspects to help you to see whether or not you have achieved the indicator.

### 4.2 The process: as a group/network:

- ♪ starting at Step 1 - identify the indicators you agree on
- ♪ carry on up the vertical axis (Steps 2, 3 ...) until you start to have lots of gaps or can go no further
- ♪ make a note of the last Step where you felt your group/network were at - feeling real strength in terms of the indicators you could tick
- ♪ at this point you might want to go back and consider some of the discussion topics from the worksheets, to look in more detail about what is working for you and what you might need to do - as an individual, group or network to become more influential
  - make a note of which indicators you could not tick on your journey
  - make a note of any particular colours of indicator that you could not tick
  - discuss how these missing indicators affect your capacity to influence
  - discuss how you could achieve these indicators

You might find, that as you use the vertical axis and come across blocks and barriers to influence, you come back to Step 3 - 'willing to have a go' ... or other Steps. It can be a bit like snakes and ladders - you can go back down, revisit and climb up again!!!

In an ideal world you would work through the vertical axis as a group but realistically that may not be possible. The axis could also be used by one or two members of a group - to keep an eye on the potential influence that the group may have in the future.

### 4.3 Worksheets

#### Step 1: Want to influence

*This is about individuals who have started to come together - they know they want things to change but have not yet clearly identified what those things are*

It is likely that you will be able to tick all these but it is a good idea to talk about the indicators and share your experiences - it will warm you up for the rest of the axis!

Discussion topics:

- ★ what does social justice means to you?
- ★ why do you have a right to state your views?
- ★ what views do you share?

In order to be on your road to influence, you should be able to tick a mixture of red  $\triangle$ , blue  $\infty$  and purple  $\approx$  indicators.

Indicators - people:

<input type="checkbox"/> feel that things aren't right	$\triangle$
<input type="checkbox"/> feel they have a right to state their views	$\triangle$
<input type="checkbox"/> feel dissatisfied with what is happening around them	$\infty$
<input type="checkbox"/> have a sense of social justice	$\infty$
<input type="checkbox"/> want their own views to be heard	$\infty$
<input type="checkbox"/> talk to others about their concerns and ideas	$\approx$
<input type="checkbox"/> feel that others share their views	$\approx$

If you can't tick each indicator - don't worry - make a note of it and any implications you can think of. Decide what you need to do to make it happen.

Indicators we haven't got	Implications	What we will do to make it happen

**Can-do**  $\triangle$ ; **Inclusive**  $\infty$ ; **Organised**  $\textcircled{C}$ ; **Cooperative**  $\approx$ ; **Influential**  $>$

## 2: Know why you want to influence

*This is about making connections and finding common ground with other people; more ordered and collective thinking*

These indicators are not the sorts of things that people usually have the time to sit down and talk about, to share their ideas and thoughts. Now's your chance to discuss how they relate to you.

Discussion topics:

- ★ who makes the decisions which affect your lives?
- ★ what sort of decisions are they making?
- ★ can you think of examples of when things have changed because people have forced the issue - Trade Unions, Women having votes ....?
- ★ who else might be affected by the things that bother you? How might they be affected?
- ★ what would you like the world to look like - what is your ideal?

In order to continue on your road to influence, you should be able to tick a mixture of red  $\triangle$  and blue  $\infty$ .

Indicators - people:

<input type="checkbox"/> recognise that decisions made by others have an impact on their lives	$\triangle$
<input type="checkbox"/> recognise that things won't change unless they take some responsibility	$\triangle$
<input type="checkbox"/> understand that the issues and decisions affecting them also affect others	$\infty$
<input type="checkbox"/> share a common goal with other people	$\infty$

If you can't tick each indicator - don't worry - make a note of it and any implications you can think of. Decide what you need to do to make it happen.

Indicators we haven't got	Implications	What we will do to make it happen

Can-do  $\triangle$ ; Inclusive  $\infty$ ; Organised  $\textcircled{C}$ ; Cooperative  $\approx$ ; Influential  $>$

### 3. Willing to have a go

*This is about believing that it is worth having a go, that change is possible and that you, as a group, can do something about it*

People who don't have any belief that change is possible bring negative and unhelpful feelings - or distractions - to discussions. It is important to have conversations which encourage people to share their feelings.

Discussion topics:

- ★ what do you understand by 'risks'?
- ★ what sort of risks have you taken?
- ★ how does taking risks make you feel?
- ★ how might a group change things more effectively than an individual?
- ★ can you think of any examples of when groups have changed things?
- ★ what have you succeeded in doing so far? Have you acknowledged it in any way?

In order to continue on your road to influence, you should be able to tick a mixture of red △, blue ∞ and green ⊙.

Indicators - people:

<input type="checkbox"/> have the confidence to question	△
<input type="checkbox"/> feel able to take risks	△
<input type="checkbox"/> contribute to discussions and feel listened to	∞
<input type="checkbox"/> feel that - as a group - they can change things	⊙
<input type="checkbox"/> recognise and celebrate achievements	⊙

If you can't tick each indicator - don't worry - make a note of it and any implications you can think of. Decide what you need to do to make it happen.

Indicators we haven't got	Implications	What we will do to make it happen

**Can-do** △; **Inclusive** ∞; **Organised** ⊙; **Cooperative** ≈; **Influential** >

#### 4. Know what you want to change

*This is about having a clear and specific focus. It should have clear links with Step 2: why you want to influence.*

This is often the first sticking point for people - because it is asking you to make sure that you are clear about what you want to change - and to have discussed and agreed this as a group

Discussion topics:

- ★ who is doing all the work - is it spread evenly across the group/network?
- ★ what is your purpose - what is your vision?
- ★ what are your aims and how do you think you will achieve them?
- ★ who might be affected by what you do and how will they be affected?
- ★ what do people get from being part of the group/network?

In order to continue on your road to influence, you should be able to tick a mixture of red  $\Delta$ , blue  $\infty$ , green  $\odot$  and purple  $\approx$  indicators.

Indicators - people:

<input type="checkbox"/> have motivation & commitment to the idea	$\Delta$
<input type="checkbox"/> are able to explain the viewpoint of the group/network	$\Delta$
<input type="checkbox"/> understand the ways that aims and activities will impact on other people	$\infty$
<input type="checkbox"/> understand and agree the purpose and vision	$\odot$
<input type="checkbox"/> understand how personal issues are addressed by being part of the group/network	$\approx$

If you can't tick each indicator - don't worry - make a note of it and any implications you can think of. Decide what you need to do to make it happen.

Indicators we haven't got	Implications	What we will do to make it happen

**Can-do**  $\Delta$ ; **Inclusive**  $\infty$ ; **Organised**  $\odot$ ; **Cooperative**  $\approx$ ; **Influential**  $\triangleright$

## 5. Organised to influence

*This is a very practical step. It is about preparing to get your message across, in the outside world*

This is a crucial point in your journey. It is the time when you, as a group/network, should revisit steps 1 - 4 to see how you are doing in terms of your planned actions.

You should dedicate some time to this step, there are a lot of indicators and you should aim to have a good spread of colours: red  $\Delta$ , blue  $\infty$  and green  $\odot$ .

The discussion topics are divided into sections relating to their colour (symbol) - you should aim to have at least one discussion from each section, preferably more.

Discussion topics - red  $\Delta$

- ★ what can you do to help your meetings to run better?
- ★ what is going well for the group and what may need to be improved?
- ★ what are the three most significant things you could do to consider each other more?

Indicators - members:

<input type="checkbox"/> know how to contribute to effective meetings	$\Delta$
<input type="checkbox"/> feel that they communicate effectively	$\Delta$
<input type="checkbox"/> feel able to offer an opinion on how the group is doing	$\Delta$
<input type="checkbox"/> behave in a way which considers other people	$\Delta$

Discussion topics - blue  $\infty$

- ★ how do you find out the views of the people that your network is focusing on?
- ★ what makes people feel welcome?
- ★ what does discrimination mean, who experiences it, when have you discriminated / been discriminated against?
- ★ is it ever OK to discriminate?
- ★ who defines the what the issues are?

Indicators - members:

<input type="checkbox"/> understand the views of the people they are talking about	$\infty$
<input type="checkbox"/> sign up and commit to an equalities statement	$\infty$
<input type="checkbox"/> share and learn from the experiences of others	$\infty$
<input type="checkbox"/> challenge stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination	$\infty$

<input type="checkbox"/> welcome others	∞
<input type="checkbox"/> recognise that there are competing perspectives on issues	∞

Discussion topics - green ◎

- ★ who is missing from our group? Does it matter?
- ★ who has an active role?
- ★ what is a democratic decision?
- ★ what makes communication effective?
- ★ what does it feel like to 'belong'?

Indicators - the network:

<input type="checkbox"/> has a clear plan which is reviewed and evaluated	◎
<input type="checkbox"/> has democratic decision-making structures	◎
<input type="checkbox"/> communicates effectively with members	◎
<input type="checkbox"/> composition reflects agreed priorities	◎
<input type="checkbox"/> has active and engaged members who feel they belong	◎
<input type="checkbox"/> is able to recognise and deal with conflict	◎

In order to continue on your road to influence, you should be able to tick a mixture of red △, blue ∞ and green indicators.

If you can't tick each indicator - don't worry - make a note of it and any implications you can think of. Decide what you need to do to make it happen.

Indicators we haven't got	Implications	What we will do to make it happen

Can-do △; Inclusive ∞; Organised ◎; Cooperative ≈; Influential >

## 6. Know the political landscape

*This step is about finding out what's going on out there in the external world that will affect what it is that you are trying to do - this could be at local, regional, national or even global level!*

At this stage, network members need to be sharing their own expertise and knowledge with the rest of the group as well as finding out new information pertinent to their issues.

Discussion topics:

What are the barriers and assists for your network in terms of:

- ★ Individual behaviour and attitudes of people in organisations?
- ★ Culture / ethos of organisations?
- ★ Organisational structures and processes?
- ★ Legal parameters and policy drivers?
- ★ Financial constraints and drivers?

In order to continue on your road to influence you should be able to tick most of the indicators.

Indicators - the network:

<input type="checkbox"/>	understands that different aspects of the external environment will affect what it is trying to do	⊙
<input type="checkbox"/>	is clear about what works for and against it in the external environment	⊙
<input type="checkbox"/>	maps the external environment and knows the potential for influence i.e. knows where it sits on the horizontal axis	⊙
<input type="checkbox"/>	has an agreed view of its potential to influence (position on the horizontal axis)	⊙

If you can't tick each indicator - don't worry - make a note of it and any implications you can think of. Decide what you need to do to make it happen.

Indicators we haven't got	Implications	What we will do to make it happen

Can-do △; Inclusive ∞; Organised ⊙; Cooperative ≈; Influential >

## 7. Know who to influence

*This is about making sure that you know the detail of the specific organisations/agencies and people you need to make contact with: names of people in particular organisations or particular structures and why you might need to get them on your side.*

This is about making contact and building relationships with people who you need to get on your side and who are likely to have a range of competing demands from other networks, groups, organisations and agencies.

You need to be clear about what you want from them and, in turn, what you can offer them.

Discussion topics:

- ★ how do others see you?
- ★ who is interested in you - and why?
- ★ who are you interested in - and why?

In order to continue on your road to influence, you should be able to tick a mixture of blue ∞ and green ©.

Indicators - the network:

<input type="checkbox"/>	knows how it is viewed by those it wants to influence	∞
<input type="checkbox"/>	has a plan for dealing with people who may have a negative influence or negative attitudes	©
<input type="checkbox"/>	has effective and useful contact with key people in useful positions in specific organisations	©
<input type="checkbox"/>	approaches people at appropriate times to maximise positive outcomes (pick your moment)	©
<input type="checkbox"/>	knows where the authority lies for making decisions	©

If you can't tick each indicator - don't worry - make a note of it and any implications you can think of. Decide what you need to do to make it happen.

Indicators we haven't got	Implications	What we will do to make it happen

Can-do △; Inclusive ∞; Organised ©; Cooperative ≈; Influential >

## 8. Link with others to influence

*This is about building capacity for influence by linking and making alliances with other organisations and networks who want similar changes*

You have already recognised that issues affecting you also affect others. This might be the point where you want to work with others to change the terms of the debate - to challenge and seek bigger solutions that are beyond the scope of your issues alone, identifying allies - others who can benefit from your work and from whom you can also benefit.

Discussion topics:

- ★ what is a ‘strategic relationship’?
- ★ what characterises ‘good relations between groups / networks’?
- ★ what is your ‘Unique Selling Point’?
- ★ what are the pros and cons of having links to national bodies?

In order to continue on your road to influence, you should be able to tick a mixture of blue ∞, green © and purple ≈ indicators.

Indicators - the network:

<input type="checkbox"/>	makes contact and builds strategic relationships with organisations working around similar issues from different perspectives	∞
<input type="checkbox"/>	promotes good relations between groups / networks	∞
<input type="checkbox"/>	brings own distinctive voice to an alliance	©
<input type="checkbox"/>	links with other networks - identifies common concerns, agrees common strategies and knows the issues they are working with	≈
<input type="checkbox"/>	develops and maintains links to national bodies	≈

If you can’t tick each indicator - don’t worry - make a note of it and any implications you can think of. Decide what you need to do to make it happen.

Indicators we haven’t got	Implications	What we will do to make it happen

Can-do △; Inclusive ∞; Organised ©; Cooperative ≈; Influential >

## 9. Know how to influence

*This is about negotiating once you are at the table*

This step - like Step 5 - has an internal focus - it is a regrouping before the final push to Step 10 - 'Influence'. It is much more strategic than Step 5 - and at this stage your network will be much more focused.

Discussion topics:

- ★ reviewing the list of indicators below - what are your strengths?
- ★ when is compromise a good thing?
- ★ how can you challenge constructively?
- ★ what is a realistic expectation?

In order to continue on your road to influence you should be able to tick most of the indicators.

Indicators - the network:

<input type="checkbox"/> understands different ways to influence	◎
<input type="checkbox"/> has a promotional and communication strategy	◎
<input type="checkbox"/> has position statements on issues relevant to aims	◎
<input type="checkbox"/> has up to date information on local, regional, national and global policy contexts	◎
<input type="checkbox"/> communicates effectively to a diverse range of people and organisations	◎
<input type="checkbox"/> understands the competing perspectives on the issues	◎
<input type="checkbox"/> has realistic expectations	◎
<input type="checkbox"/> knows the degree to which it is willing and able to compromise	◎
<input type="checkbox"/> understands where, by whom and how decisions are made	◎
<input type="checkbox"/> advocates on behalf of its members	◎
<input type="checkbox"/> challenges - in a constructive way	◎
<input type="checkbox"/> has plans which recognise the priorities of statutory agencies	◎
<input type="checkbox"/> operates independently of the statutory sector	◎

If you can't tick each indicator - don't worry - make a note of it and any implications you can think of. Decide what you need to do to make it happen.

Indicators we haven't got	Implications	What we will do to make it happen

Can-do △; Inclusive ∞; Organised ◎; Cooperative ≈; Influential >

## 10. Influence

*This is about networks having done all in their control to be influential - it is not a stand-alone step. In order to be influential as a network you should be able to complete steps 2 - 9 as well!*

At this point you have credibility and influence as a network - it is not just about a few influential members! You should be able to identify and provide evidence for the indicators below.

We suggest that you use each of the indicators as a spring board for discussion:

- ★ is this something you do?
- ★ is it something you want to do?
- ★ is this relevant for your network at this time?
- ★ what else suggests that you are influential?

Indicators - the network:

<input type="checkbox"/> is consulted and asked opinions	>
<input type="checkbox"/> takes part in joint decision making	>
<input type="checkbox"/> has a formal place on relevant Boards / Partnerships etc.	>
<input type="checkbox"/> is involved in the process of shaping priorities	>
<input type="checkbox"/> can identify its contribution	>
<input type="checkbox"/> is invited to chair/facilitate partnership meetings	>
<input type="checkbox"/> is encouraged and supported to take part (by other partners)	>
<input type="checkbox"/> instigates joint discussions about power, boundaries, roles, function of the partnership etc	>
<input type="checkbox"/> provides feedback which is sought and valued	>
<input type="checkbox"/> sees desired changes arising from its challenges	>

If you can't tick each indicator - don't worry - make a note of it and any implications you can think of. Decide what you need to do to make it happen.

Indicators we haven't got	Implications	What we will do to make it happen

Can-do △; Inclusive ∞; Organised ©; Cooperative ≈; Influential >

## Section 5 : Using the horizontal axis

### 5.1 Introduction

The horizontal axis represents the potential degree of influence that you - as a community network - feel you have. It is a snapshot of your position at any one time around any given issue or focus.

It is a subjective judgement that can be based on existing knowledge, experience, instinct, or a clear appraisal of the external environment. Such judgements can ebb and flow as you learn more about the external context and how it impacts on the level of influence you feel you have.

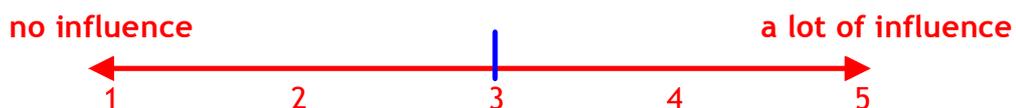
Between Step 1 and Step 5 this judgement is likely to be based on the existing knowledge or instinct of individuals in the group. There may well be many different views within the group/network ranging across the continuum - some people might feel that the network has a great potential for influence and others might disagree. It is really important for everyone to share their views and opinions.

Having systematically worked through the vertical axis and come to a joint agreement about your organisational capacity, it is now time to consider other factors which might affect your potential for influence.

At Step 6 you research the external environment/political landscape and are in a position to make a more informed and collective judgment about your potential influence in relation to what you are working on. The intention is to encourage group discussion and agreement - this may be a lot more optimistic than you anticipated - or could spin you in the opposite direction altogether!

Once you have reached Step 6 each member should be encouraged to express their view on the potential of the network to influence - and plot this on the horizontal axis.

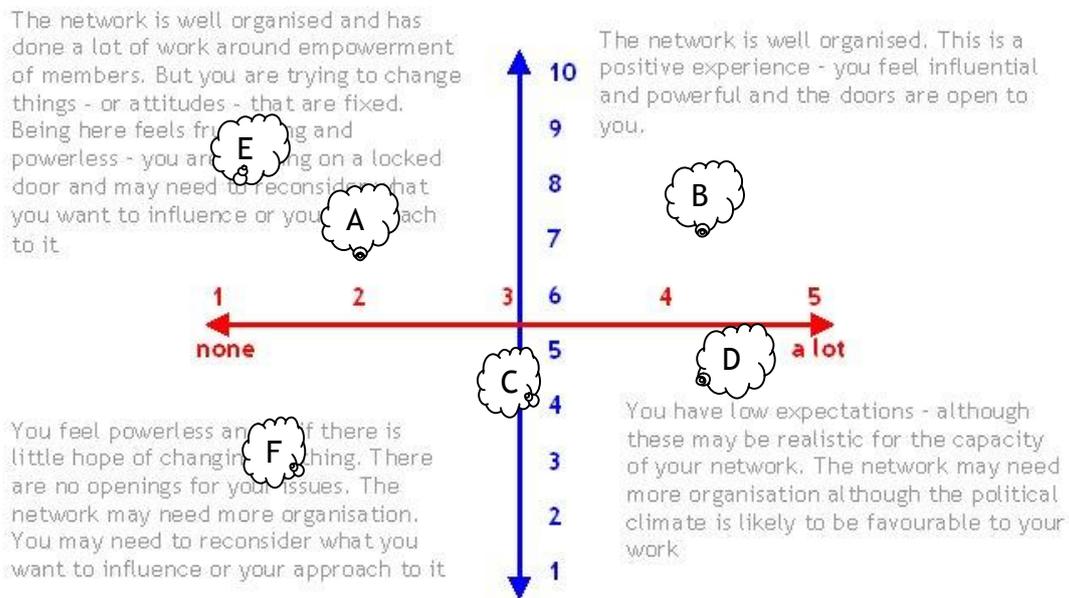
If it helps, you could think of the horizontal axis being broken into graded sections:



## Section 6 : Plotting influence

### Example 1:

A relatively new network (or member) could use the axis to explore where each person thinks the network is placed in terms of both capacity to influence and potential to influence - they may end up with an axis that looks like this:



A thinks that the network is pretty well organised, has got good information and collective knowledge about the external environment and is clear about who to influence. However, A thinks the network is being blocked on this issue.

B also thinks that the network is pretty well organised, has got good information and collective knowledge about the external environment and is clear about who to influence. B is optimistic and feels positive and can see lots of opportunities to take advantage of.

C thinks that the network is united in knowing what it wants to change, is starting to be more organised, but still has things to work on as a group. C feels unsure about the challenges and opportunities that may be out there.

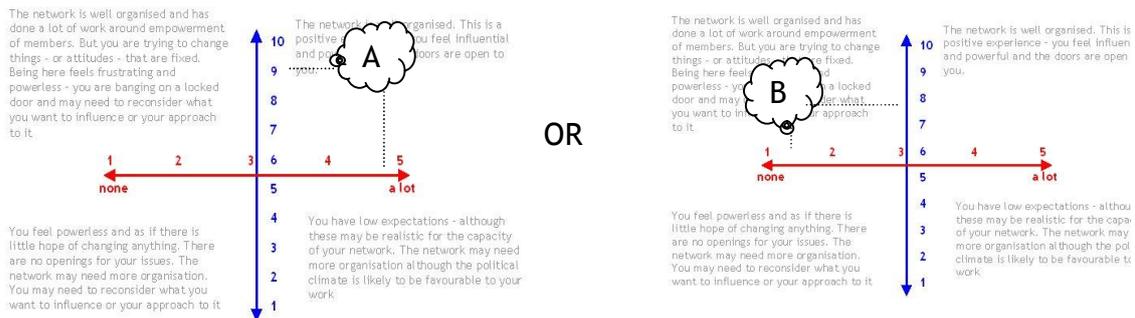
D also thinks that the network is united in knowing what it wants to change, is starting to be more organised, but still has things to work on as a group. D feels very optimistic and can see lots of opportunities.

E thinks the network is very well organised, has collective knowledge and can achieve things if it tackles the 'right' issue, however E feels it is banging on a locked door at the moment.

F is willing to have a go to change things but feels this is going to take a lot of hard work - and maybe a lot of time. F has a lot to do to get organised and become effective and, at the moment, does not feel influential over this particular issue.

**Example 2:**

An established network should be plotting their influence having gone through Steps 1 - 6 and agreed their position on the vertical axis. This means that members will have shared experiences, information and knowledge - and further research about - the external environment. They should then be in a position to make a collective judgement of the network’s potential to influence. You should end up with an axis that looks like:



A thinks the network is well organised, has organisational strategies to deal with issues, communicate and promote itself. The network challenges and advocates on behalf of its members, knows the degree to which it is willing and able to compromise. It is dealing with popular issues on the policy agenda and feels very influential.

B thinks the network is linking with others, building relationships with other organisations, brings its own distinctive voice to alliances, knows where to go to get information and understands decision making structures. However, the network is focusing on unpopular issues and is experiencing blocks and barriers to progress; banging on a locked door.

## **Section 7 : Appendix - who has taken part in the research**

Interviews were undertaken with community networks, statutory partners and individuals, culminating in a presentation and report 'Changing People, Building Relationships' in Summer 2006, which illustrated the emerging 'tool' to help community networks to plot the influence they feel they have

A further piece of work was commissioned by Dosti "to develop an evaluation framework". This involved four half-day sessions between September 2006 and January 2007 with a small group to work up and develop the axis. The 'final presentation' of the Axis was given in February 2007 and the Dudley engAGING network contributed the following day. The information gathered throughout the research is incorporated in this report on the Axis of Influence.

### **engAGING network (Feb 2007)**

Claire Argyle, Age Concern Brierley Hill  
Gurdev Singh Bal, Help The Aged  
Mushtaq Choudhary, Asian Elderly Halesowen  
Phil Cook, Amblecote Christian Centre  
Kate Coxon, Age Concern Dudley  
Christine Cox, Amblecote Christian Centre  
Ann Evett, Poklington Centre  
Sally Huband, Age Concern Dudley  
Mike Mason, Age Concern Brierley Hill  
Tony Mills, Community Transport  
Helen Neville, Zion Christian Centre  
Elaine Panchal, Age Concern Brierley Hill  
Lorna Prescott, Dosti  
Razia Sattar, Dosti  
Val Williams, Zion Christian Centre

### **Building Capacity, Engaging Communities: 'final presentation' (Feb 2007)**

Tony Sidaway, DMBC  
Mushtaq Chaudry, Asian Elderly Halesowen  
Lynda Jenkins, Dudley CVS  
Tremaine Herbert, DMBC  
Sue Priest, Wolverhampton Network Consortium  
Sally Huband, Age Concern Dudley  
Vincent Bailey, All Saints Action Network Ltd  
Ken McCylmont, Action for Disabled People and Carers  
Owen McFarlane, Centre for Equality and Diversity  
Mike Mason, Dosti  
Lorna Prescott, Dosti  
Razia Sattar, Dosti  
Josie Anisiobi, Age Concern

### **Dudley Central Youth Forum (Feb - March 2007)**

### **The Working Group Sept 2006 - (Jan 2007)**

Jane Clarke  
Sally Huband  
Gail Mattocks  
Owen McFarlane  
Mike Mason  
Lorna Prescott  
Steve Sparrow

### **Changing People, Building relationships: 'first' presentation (June 2006)**

Shahnaz Akhtar, Dudley MIND  
Stuart Chapman, Brierley Hill Community Forum  
Sean Coughlan, Dudley MBC  
Malcolm Davis, Dudley MBC  
Karen Fielder, Pathfinders Community Mentoring  
Kate Green, Dudley Council for Voluntary Service  
Michelle Hartlebury, Priory Community Association  
Tremaine Herbert, Dudley MBC  
Lynda Jenkins, Dudley Council for Voluntary Service  
Sally Johnson, Priory Community Association  
Geoff Johnston, Castle and Priory Area Regeneration Board  
Pam Levy, Dudley MBC  
Glenys Plant, Aquarius Dudley Community Alcohol Team  
Lorna Prescott, Dosti  
Razia Sattar, Dosti  
Sue Solly, Soroptimists  
Angela Walsh, Neighbourhood Management

### **Interviews - first contract:**

The research involved talking to people from:  
Dosti  
Dudley North Neighbourhood Watch Association  
Brierley Hill Community Forum  
Dudley Borough Interfaith network  
Dudley Race Equality Council  
Dudley Muslim Forum  
Dudley Voluntary Youth Organisations  
Castle & Priory Area Regeneration Board  
Dudley Community Partnership  
Children & Young People's Partnership  
Strategic Housing & Environment Partnership  
Safe & Sound (Community Safety Partnership)  
Dudley Council for Voluntary Service  
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council (Chief Executive)  
Dudley Community Partnership (Director)  
Economic Development & Regeneration Partnership