

Commission of Inquiry into the future for lifelong learning

Expert seminar on citizenship and belonging

‘Moving on up’: the role of lifelong learning in women’s journeys to active citizenship

This paper pulls together and summarises some of the learning and experiences from...

- Women Take Part: *Closing the Gap*
- Impact! programme: *Women Active in Community and Public Life*
- Take Part: *National Learning Framework for Active Citizenship Learning*

Findings from the Women Take Part research are considered that pertain to women’s journeys to becoming active, critical citizens, and the types and characteristics of the learning, support and development that are available to women on this journey. It notes that much of this leaning, support and development takes place due to women’s passion and commitment in the Voluntary and Community Sectors - and is fragmented, under-funded and vulnerable.

The Impact programme offers a more detailed case study, which was funded through the Active Learning for Active Citizenship initiative. The external evaluation shows the individual and wider impact reported by the participants and demonstrates the value of this type of initiative. The outcomes and benefits relate to civil and civic participation and engagement, as well as increased understanding, friendships and connections between people/women who would not normally mix and get to know each other; an increase in social capital and cohesion

The extracts from the Take Part: *National Learning Framework for Active Citizenship Learning* provide some underpinning theory around citizenship learning and what it means.

1 The current state of play

There has been much research done on the barriers to women’s involvement and participation which has generated a great deal of knowledge, information and practical steps. However, looking at the statistics in terms of women’s involvement, it seems that the situation has not changed that much and that women are still sorely underrepresented in the places where decisions are made and priorities are set. Just before it was subsumed into the Equalities and Human Rights Commission, the Equal Opportunities Commission published ‘The Gender Agenda’¹ suggesting that it will take up to 200 years to ensure the equal representation of women in the British parliament, 20 years to achieve equality in civil service top management, and 40 years to achieve an equal number of senior women in the judiciary. Whilst these are shocking statistics, it is clear that there just aren’t enough women in most areas of public life and for certain groups of women, including Black, Asian and minority ethnic women, their representation is even lower.

There is clearly a **power gap** in our institutions and workplaces. Currently less than 20% of MPs are female. . There are only two ethnic minority women MPs and there has never been an

¹ The Gender Agenda, EOC, July 2007. www.gender-agenda.co.uk

Asian woman MP. Ethnic minority women make up less than one percent of the House of Lords. Only 29% of Local Authority Councillors are women and of them only 3% are BME women. The power gap needs to be closed, with true representation for all groups of women, including ethnic minority women, disabled women, working class women, lesbians, and women of all ages and faiths.

We need to increase the 'pool' of women who see themselves as active citizens; able to take on roles that are constructive, critical, cooperative, confident and challenging in the public domain. Policies and white papers about community empowerment, community engagement and service user power should take this gendered power gap seriously.



There seems to be a relationship between the position of women and the condition of women; the political status of women is mirrored in their relative economic status to men. Whilst the pay gap experienced by women continues to narrow, with the full time pay gap now at 17.2% and the part time pay gap at 35.6%, the underlying causes of the pay gap persist. Undervaluation of women's work, a persistent employment penalty for mothers, occupational gender segregation, and discriminatory treatment in the workplace continue to hamper efforts to further reduce the pay gap.² Women are much less likely than men to reach the top of their professions. Only 10% of directorships of FTSE 100 companies are held by women. In today's workplace requesting flexible working can still spell career death for many women. Instead they often have to 'trade down' when they take on caring roles and then lose out on the top jobs.

Centuries of systemic exclusion (both intended and unintended) mean that many of our organisations and systems of governance were built around the visions and needs of a small group of the population who had the right to vote - middle and upper class white men. It is only 80 years since all women won the right to vote in England and it takes a long time to change norms, cultures, expectations and attitudes. Currently, perhaps in recognition of the fight for universal suffrage for all, and an acknowledgement of the danger of losing the gains already fought for, there seems to be a lot of stocktaking and reflection going on.

As part of The Gender Agenda the EOC produced an 'equality index' that demonstrates the health of the nation in terms of gender equality across all areas of life and indicating what we need to be doing if things are to change significantly. They concluded:

"The index shows that in some instances, we're heading in the right direction -the situation is improving. But more often progress has been painfully slow and there is much more we could do to speed up the pace of change, otherwise our children's children will still be grappling with many of the same challenges. In other areas, the index suggests the agenda has stalled, or worse yet we're actually going backwards. Unless further action is taken, nothing will ever change."

Notions of gender go right to the heart of any culture and society - the expectations, privileges and roles of men and women are different. Being a 'woman' affects your life differently to being a 'man' and this varies through time, space and culture. Much current research on representation and parity, influence, participation, engagement and power, show hierarchies based on ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, and notions of ability and disability, which are often hidden, invisible and not open for discussion. Women are clearly not a homogenous group, but there are enough common experiences to be able to argue for the

² Closing the Gender Pay Gap: An update report for TUC Women's Conference 2008

existence of gendered experiences of the public domain, and to identify the many barriers that are beyond the control of the individual.

Women reading this may recognise the ‘zapper effect’ - feeling excluded, patronised, not good enough, not knowing the rules of the game etc. It’s likely to be the case whatever your class, race, ethnicity, education, sexuality. It is sometimes helpful to see beyond the personal and recognise that gender discrimination exists - that however knowledgeable and confident you are you may well be ‘excluded’ simply because you are a woman



So, as well as encouraging more, and different, women to become more constructive, critical, cooperative, confident and challenging in the public domain, there have to be changes in how organisations and structures work. If this doesn’t happen, even though the pool of women is increased and expanded, women will still experience the ‘zapper effect’.

2 Women Take Part: Closing the Gap

Women Take Part (WTP) research was funded by the Government Equalities Office (2007 - 2008) and looked at the participation of women, in particular under-represented women, in governance and decision making, in both community and public life. Women Take Part collected information about two sides of the story: ‘what works’ in terms of approaches, initiatives and learning models that encourage different groups of women to become more involved, and ‘what needs to happen’ so that structures, policies and organisations work in ways that encourage the recruitment and support of more women.

The Closing the Gap report³ presents a framework which attempts to understand the journeys women can take from being uninvolved to being active, critical citizens; it maps out a journey from the private to the public domain and also includes organisational/agency steps towards more inclusive styles of working. The report considers learning, development and support that are available for women on this journey.

This initiative built on successful work done by some of the Take Part Network (as part of the Home Office funded ‘Active Learning for Active Citizenship’ programme) engaging with and supporting women from all walks of life to get more involved in community and public life.

2.1 Women’s journeys to active, critically engaged citizens

Based on existing research literature and issues that women have reported during our research, ***a model is proposed that outlines the stages of the journey that women may take***. It is, like all models, a simplified analysis that helps us to understand how ‘under-represented’ women may move from being ‘uninvolved’ to being ‘critically engaged’, and informs what is needed to support them along the way. While we appreciate that we are all unique individuals, treading our path and taking different routes, there is some value in drawing out the common experiences that women face. By understanding these, we can see what needs to change for women to make progress, both in terms of personal development and in terms of structures and processes that support or impede progress. Recent evidence highlights the need for organisations and structures to change how they do things if they want different types of people to become involved. The evidence shows that, even if women do ‘get into’ various governance structures, they still often experience the ‘zapper effect’ or the ‘concrete



³ Currently in draft form awaiting Ministerial approval

ceiling: not feeling equal, frustrated by the way 'business' is conducted, feeling knocked back or just not taken into account.

"I am a fairly outspoken person and thought I would be able to change things when I started in a new job. But I was told that I would not get a promotion if I spoke 'like that' in meetings etc".

"You can identify that you are being bullied but you are not always sure or able to prove that this is discrimination. Is it because you are a woman? Is it because you are black? It is not always easy to define or record"

The Steps were sent out to approximately 45 individual women from different organisations across England, some of whom were already involved in the research, with a request for constructive comments and illustration from their own life and journey, as well as being the focus of discussion the research event. **Feedback indicates that the steps are very useful for women in making sense of their own 'journeys' to becoming active critical citizens.**

The journey stages

Journey stages	
Step 3	Staying there
Step 2	Being there
Step 1	Getting there
Step 0	Not there

The stages are presented as steps in a progressive sequence. However, real life is generally more complex than this, with stops, starts, and movement backwards and forwards. Women will take different routes through the steps and we hope the model will be useful to them in making sense of their own journeys and in seeing the path they took or are taking. We are interested in what is required in order for women to move from step to step and stay 'at the table' and be 'critically engaged' – in whatever context they find themselves.

"The steps are accurate and relate to personal experience of many women. I like the way that you have illustrated the indicators in each of the steps, especially step 0 where there are so many women still in that step who do not realise how much influence they can have and how many things there are out there for them to get involved in. I also think Step 0 can have women who are highly educated and maybe in professional jobs but simply do not see that they have a voice"

"I think the steps are absolutely correct and I can identify with them going back to when I felt unable and lost".

"In terms of the stages of the model, over time I have made steady progress from stage 1 to stage 2, although I don't feel that that I have fully met all the indicators within stage 2 that would allow me to move up to the next level."

"Steps can be interlinked or may overlap. Women may move through the sequence of steps, yet their journey is fluid, at one level they may 'want things to be improved for themselves, their families and communities and step outside the private domain', yet they may find they are still partially dominated or held back by the indicators in step 0."

"Insight in how women get on the voluntary/community involvement ladder"

“How many of ‘my’ issues are shared with other women - and their experiences and learning can help me too”

One respondent suggested events act as triggers to a cycle of change, development and learning. For example in Step one there is the indicator...

‘Women start to be involved in things outside the home such as volunteering’

...which could then lead onto the following:

- She is valued for her contributions, including her time, skills, commitment.
- She is engaging with a new group of people.
- She in turn is given a new opportunity to enhance or learn new skills, thus expanding on her existing knowledge base.
- She may wish to develop her skills by undertaking training within her area of interest.
- With her new found knowledge she may look at pursuing other more challenging roles.
- Ultimately, her self confidence, self esteem, sense of worth will be elevated.

Some women commented on how we need to value the role of women in the home and made the point that it is about choice; that ‘being at home’ rather than being out at paid work doesn’t mean that women shouldn’t have any power or be able to take a part in public life.

Other comments relate to different trajectories - including what happens when women decide that participation is a waste of time, either because they find that their situation is not close to where power is, or because it’s a very negative experience. It’s can seem all too time consuming for too little benefit.

Does difference make a difference?

Women’s experiences of both private and public domains provide the basis for the model. Women start their journeys in different places, for different reasons, and with differences, such as ethnicity, religion, disability, class, culture, income, and sexuality. These will have positive or negative impacts on progress. The Steps seeks to encapsulate the experiences of **‘EveryWoman/AnyWoman’** and so we anticipate that individual women will recognise significant aspects of their own journeys within it.

Stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination such as racism, homophobia and discrimination based upon disability, class, background, and culture will all affect women’s journeys. ***The initial findings would seem to indicate that the steps are relevant for a wide variety of women***

What next with the steps?

- Refine further and use them to develop a resource tool for women
- Consider how useful they could be for other marginalised groups

Step 0: Not there - Women haven't considered getting involved in the public domain

Indicators: they

- ♦ are occupied by performing traditional family roles in the private & domestic sphere
- ♦ work long hours in low paid jobs
- ♦ are constrained and proscribed by gender expectations and gender roles
- ♦ juggle caring roles and economic roles
- ♦ are unconfident in their own abilities....'I can't do it ...' 'It's not possible ..' 'I haven't got time ..'
- ♦ feel unable to navigate their way in the world
- ♦ don't feel that they can change things
- ♦ don't know what's 'out there'
- ♦ don't see voting as particularly important or something they do
- ♦ are prevented from taking a role or an interest outside the private sphere
- ♦ do not see how the public domain relates to their lives
- ♦ do not question their position in society
- ♦ experience violence, intimidation and domestic abuse

Step 1: Getting there - Women want things to be improved for themselves, their families and communities and step outside the private domain. Indicators: they

- ♦ start to be involved in things outside the home, such as volunteering
- ♦ see the value of association or friendship with other women
- ♦ want to find out more about how the 'external world' works
- ♦ start to value their own skills and knowledge
- ♦ have more personal confidence and self-esteem
- ♦ want to improve their opportunities
- ♦ recognise they have rights to do things for themselves - and still have responsibility for the home, family and caring
- ♦ are encouraged to have interests and roles outside the home as long as family life is not disrupted
- ♦ have more awareness of what voting means for them

Step 2: Being there - Women are involved in public structures and community

Organisations. Indicators: they

- ♦ are involved in local community projects and civic structures
- ♦ know more about how decisions are made
- ♦ know more about the external public world
- ♦ feel they can contribute opinions and ideas and have something useful to say
- ♦ know more about others who are different to them
- ♦ learn the rules of engagement: how meetings work, how to get their voice across, how to read official documents
- ♦ make allies of others
- ♦ feel more confident in their own abilities
- ♦ see the value of networking
- ♦ feel they are 'not good enough'
- ♦ feel that they are not listened to and are undervalued at times
- ♦ are supported by family members
- ♦ wonder if they are doing things right
- ♦ question how they can juggle family expectations, their own expectations and other commitments
- ♦ limit themselves to what they know they can do
- ♦ still find it difficult to break out of traditional caring roles and housework

Step 3: Staying there - Women work with and within structures and organisations to deliver change based upon equality and social justice. Indicators: they

- ♦ know they can make a difference
- ♦ value their own contribution
- ♦ link local concerns to national and global issues
- ♦ feel able to question how things are done
- ♦ know what they want or need
- ♦ know where to go to get what they want
- ♦ understand the complexities around decision making and policy development
- ♦ see how power inequalities operate - for themselves and others
- ♦ understand how gender inequality affects them and other women and how race and class connect with gender inequality
- ♦ have a critical analysis of issues and events and can critically analyse official documents
- ♦ trust their own judgement when things feel wrong
- ♦ feel confident to say I don't understand and feel able to ask 'stupid' questions
- ♦ don't blame themselves when things go wrong
- ♦ see mistakes as opportunities for learning
- ♦ seek out active support from others
- ♦ reflect on and evaluate what they do
- ♦ take risks to get things done
- ♦ understand the value of collective action
- ♦ develop their own networks for support and development
- ♦ act as role models and support other women
- ♦ make demands on others to take a responsibility for maintaining family life and housework
- ♦ feel supported to have the time and energy to be engaged and involved

Pen pictures

Extracts from the responses received from a range of women:

What promoted you to start your journey?

Desperate need to help the lesbian and gay community in the face of profound institutionalised homophobia

Where did you start?

Running a gay group and gay switchboard

What promoted you to start your journey?

Being a 'girl' meant that I was going to be denied access to the boys world which I did not realise was different from mine. When I began Grammar School I also became aware of class divisions as I was plunged into another alien world where the girls were being primed for teaching/medical roles and the boys for positions of power.

Where did you start?

I became increasingly aware that I would never experience an ungendered thought. Society mitigated against it and in many ways I colluded because I was battling to understand myself when my 'self' was being constructed others. I wanted to feel 'safe' as myself but this meant accepting the role that society was imposing on me simply because of my chromosomes!! I was extremely angry but felt powerless and isolated in my struggle. I was always interested in psychology and in the 1960s I joined Woman's Lib where I began to explore 'feminist' issues with like minded women.

What promoted you to start your journey?

Initially my desire to attend a course created by women for women was very appealing given that I had worked predominately with women in the community, on a more personal level I wanted to develop professional relationships with other like minded women who shared a common interest in women's issues. Other key factors may have included my own personal experiences of the daily injustices faced by women, which are largely ignored by wider society, leaving you feeling voiceless about issues that affect you and women around you. This in turn gives way to feelings of frustration as you are unaware of how you can begin to initiate any form of change for yourself or other women.

Where did you start?

On reflection I believe my journey started when I was 16, having made a conscious choice not to remain in a forced marriage to a man who was my first cousin, and who was 15 years my senior. Leaving the marriage, severing all ties with my immediate family, and seeking refuge in a women's hostel, has shaped my life over the years. It was at this point in my life where I began to make the transition from having every aspect of my life controlled, to being able to make my own life choices. This is where a deep seated desire to support women who had suffered similar abuses began. Prior to this stage my life had been contained in stage 0, as I believe this served a purpose, not for me, but for those whose belief systems are based on the subjugation and oppression of women, which results in the indicators listed during stage 0.

During this period of my life I had no inclination assert myself educationally or otherwise, as from a young age the blueprint of my life had already been mapped out by

What promoted you to start your journey?

Getting married and having children changed everything, no time to myself, only able to domestic type jobs to fit around the children. My husband lost his job so we decided that one of us would go to college and retrain. He went and I was devastated, but supported him. He messed around and did not take it seriously, which made me very unhappy. I knew I could do it and gain more qualifications and make a better life for me and the children.

Where did you start?

I got divorced which was the start of my life. I went to college and studied to gain four A levels and several RSA's in IT. A wonderful tutor encouraged me to look at going to University and told me I could do it. Another male tutor and friend told me the way of work was changing and women would be working in higher paid jobs and equal to men. I listened and took his advice. I went to University and got my BA Hons, (I was the first person in our family ever to have a degree) on graduation day I was offered a 1 year research post, which was fantastic, I have never looked back. I have encouraged many more women since to do the same. I worked for the University to promote participation to educate hard to reach groups and the route they could take and the outcomes. My confidence grew, my ability to communicate and be around other people grew. I felt I was able to contribute and actually knew more than I thought I did. I realised I had life skills - I didn't even know what they were before.

Where do you feel you are now?

I lived in a violent marriage for ten years- I was a survivor not a victim!! I think the biggest problem is learning to love and value myself in a society that does not put much value on women- except as a cheap commodity. I am still frustrated at the aspects of me that are described as typically female ie I cry easily, I take on carer roles, am in a 'woman's' job, feel responsible for the success or failure relationships. Perhaps I am more challenging than I need to be???? However, I am now 'old' and 'fat' and 'deaf' - which raises different issues for me to tackle!!

Responses on questions on barriers below:**What are/have been the significant barriers and how have you/do you deal with them?**

Personal experience of childhood sexual abuse and domestic violence in adult life - I survived, I escaped and when I could I gained appropriate support for myself

Personal and professional experience of physical and attitudinal barriers as a disabled woman - worked in the field of disability and for a while became a disability equality trainer, ongoing challenges

Personal and professional experience of attitudinal barriers of being a woman and being a lesbian - on going challenges

The barriers for me has been community leaders (mainly men) who do not want women to get together and work together they are often suspicious because they feel 'they do not have control' how I overcame this is started talking to community leaders and other senior figures on board because even though we know they want to block our work we still want to educate their wives, sisters, children etc... and the only way to do that is by proving a service for them and women so they do not feel excluded. This has worked for the community I work with but has been a struggle and a LONG process. Lucky I was working with some inspirational women who had determination and will power to continue.

My insecurity was a barrier - slowly rebuilt my sense of self (not quite there yet)
 Partners - constant challenge trying to balance 'not being selfish' with fulfilling my 'needs'.
 Children - they have been a barrier but also opened doors. However, there is always a mismatch between their needs and mine and theirs come first mostly, which is what I choose and the way I want it to be, but it is a barrier to me doing things which would get me there faster!

At what point did your aspirations change - when you felt that you wanted to move on or do more?

When it became obvious that life was about either living as a victim or living as a survivor. Chose to be a survivor
 Accessing opportunities either when they came up, or seeking them out - accessing learning and development opportunities at work, becoming a member and subsequent chair of a domestic violence trust.
 When other people showed me they believed in me

What are the things that have most helped you get to where you are now?

My own courage and self determination - growing up as a disabled person whose impairment changes means you either make the most of what you've got or give up. I like to rise to a challenge
 Some family members, friends and present partner
 Seeking and accessing opportunities
 Learning from my mistakes

2.2 Learning, support and development

This 'broad brush' research attempts to map and analyse 'what works' in a fragmented field covering the voluntary and community sectors, higher education and the public sector; a snowball sampling approach was used to send out invitations to participate in the research and 27 organisations and networks were identified which offer learning, support and development to women around becoming more active critical citizens. 18 actually took part in the research and these are mostly located within the community, voluntary and third sectors. The research identified **four general approaches** to working with women to develop skills, knowledge and confidence around becoming, and remaining, active critical citizens³ in the public domain. The focus was on direct learning and support and so most of the qualitative research is about the first two of these categories.

Courses

Structured learning programmes linked to mentoring and support during and afterwards.

Holistic approaches

Women's organisations offer individual and group support and mentoring around specific issues. They support women in taking control of their lives and in starting to see a role for themselves in the public domain.

Networks

Local and national networks with a focus on women's support and development. A source of research, information, support and shared strategies.

Partnership approaches

Alliances of organisations working towards agreed aims led by either the voluntary and community sectors, or the statutory sectors, around 'engagement'

Seven organisations that deliver such publicly advertised women's courses were identified and six were interviewed. Four Holistic approaches were identified and all were interviewed. They often support women in crisis, such as Domestic Abuse. The notions of *created space* and *invited space*⁴ are used to draw attention to the origin and motivation of the initiatives.

'Created spaces' refers to action and thinking within civil society; women's groups, voluntary and community organisations that are often motivated by a passion for women's equality and social justice.

'Invited spaces' refers to action and thinking within government departments and structures; local government, Partnerships, national departments and Quangos, that are motivated by policies designed to increase democratic activity and citizen engagement. In this research, invited space initiatives were motivated by women in key positions who are also passionate about women's equality and social justice.

The majority of provision is located in created spaces which emphasises the importance of the women's Voluntary and Community Sectors as a mainspring for women's civic and civil engagement and involvement. If we accept the premise that we need to increase the **pool of women** available for civic and civil engagement and involvement; then due thought and consideration has to be given to how this is done and who does it.



Characteristics of learning, support and development

Women Only

Recent research by the Women's Resource Centre⁵ highlights the need for women only services and spaces, particularly in the light of increasing pressure on 'women-only' services to justify their existence.

In terms of the learning programmes that we came across, women only courses are viewed as different to mixed gender courses: the group dynamics are different with many women saying that it is important in order to encourage safe spaces for experiential and personal learning. Women speak of bonding, disclosing personal histories and sharing and finding commonalities. They have the opportunity to share understand more about how power operates in terms of gender, race, class, sexuality and other aspects of people's identity and experience

"As a group of women we were able to share the richness of our lives irrespective of socio-economic status, faith, sexual orientation, age, ethnicity, disability, colour, creed, profession etc.

Target groups differ in that for some, courses are targeted at women already involved in organisations and others, at women who have not been involved in things so far.

"We discovered that all the women on the course had suffered the same sort of inequalities and barriers.

⁴ A Cornwall (2002) Making spaces, changing places: situating participation in development. IDS working paper 170

⁵ Why Women Only? The value and benefits of by women, for women services. Women's Resource Centre, October 2007

Rationale

End goals of initiatives are not rigidly specified as women have to be able to choose their own levels and fields of involvement. Outcomes are geared towards more women feeling confident about being in positions where they can make a difference. There was little enthusiasm about numbers for numbers sake in all the interviews undertaken.

It is vitally important that any initiative is clear about the intended and desired outcomes. Our exploration of 'women's journeys' suggests that different 'learning' and support is helpful at different stages, and that it is important to distinguish between short term and long terms outcomes for the women involved. It is also vital to recognise the difference between 'being at the table' and being listened to and taken seriously. Experiences of running IMPACT! courses reinforces the views that have been expressed during this research process, that women may well be in 'key' positions, but still feel marginalised and appreciate ongoing learning, support and development.

I

When establishing an initiative, it is important to be clear if you are....

- 'skilling women up' to be able to fit in with existing structures
- looking for 'numbers' at any level of governance or wishing to see more women in positions of 'power'
- wanting women to feel confident about challenging and changing the status quo
- wanting gender issues to be on the agenda
- wanting women to understand more about gender and how it intersects with race, class

The responses will help to determine the scope and approach of the initiative.

Structure of initiatives

There are a variety of structures available in terms of delivery. There are longer intensive courses (12-15 days) that run over a period of months and shorter courses - one to four days in length. Some courses are about long term personal and group development, as well as equipping women with specific skills and confidence to tackle specific issues.

Residential learning is viewed differently with some courses valuing it as time for women away from other duties and responsibilities, and others see it as a barrier to women taking part.

Courses vary in their scope and focus with some being about specific skill sets and decision making structures, and others have a broader focus on democratic rights, citizenship, power and confidence

The Councillors Commission highlighted the lack of knowledge around 'how things work', the role of councillors and how to become one, and recommended citizenship education, presentation skills and political skills training, in particular for underrepresented group. Our research endorses the value of this, and also suggests that this should recognise of all the **barriers to learning** experienced by particular groups

To accredit or not?

The research came across both accredited and non accredited courses: where they are accredited, it is generally with Open College Network, (OCN), although one new initiative is working with a University on an undergraduate level course.

Issues surrounding accreditation include:

- fitting into an existing structure of units
- increased paperwork; puts some women off yet encourages others

- adequate literacy levels
- increased staff time and costs
- draws down some funding - but at what cost?
- courses may be taken more seriously by women and funders
- increased time commitment for women
- making assessment accessible and creative

A lot of OCN providers use the units within the NOCN Progression Qualifications to make up accredited qualifications for lots of different uses. They can give the course their own title, but the learners gain credits towards a national qualification. This might be suitable for some women but might restrict the development of programmes that have specific outcomes.

While there are pros and cons of accreditation, some courses would not be able to attract funding if they were not accredited. This may also mean that a high percentage of participants will be required to submit assignments as a condition of continued funding.

Working 'where women are at'

A key feature, and one which is central to a community development based approach to learning, support and development, is to work with women 'where they are at'. So, for example, several projects are running sessions that encourage women who have experienced domestic violence, to change how they view themselves and the world, supporting them to understand more about and get involved in the decision making processes that effect their lives

"The impetus for the course (2 day) - this project has existed for 12 years - its one thing supporting women around domestic violence - but then what is there to improve women's lives - they want to make a difference"

Similarities and Differences

There are courses that are aimed at women from similar cultures and backgrounds and there are courses that are aimed at mixed groups of women. It seems that both have particular benefits, depending on the needs of women at the time, the stage in their journey and the desired outcomes.

As one woman put it:

"It's easier for agencies to access white women - for Asian women there is very little support for them to be able to engage - they don't come forward so....the essential ingredients are - language, understanding where they are coming from and the impact of this- recognising different levels of learning -- making connections and validating women's experiences - who they are....trying to understand each other....and where we are at..... enabling Asian women to gain the skills, experiences and confidence to create an 'Asian women's voice' within the local area whenever they can"

This is in the context of valuing women's skills and breaking down barriers, prejudices, assumptions between different women.

".....some Asian women are surprised when they realise that 'liberated' white women go through the same experiences of domestic violence"

In terms of the discussions regarding the need to continually develop a 'pool' of women to

'get involved' the DV project ..'has been going for about 12 years - if we want services to continue we need to be active - we need women to understand that'

Other courses are mixed (in terms of race, ethnicity, faith, class etc) and create opportunities for women to meet other women who are different to themselves and create connections

Funding

Funding is often precarious, short term and fragmented and is the result of particular women's organisations chasing specific funding, or women in key positions in other organisations making it a priority. Organisations report having to 'twist' what they do to fit new priorities for funding purposes. The pressure to always have a **new approach** gets in the way of rolling out successful schemes and initiatives to new groups of women; the pressure to be innovative.

Recruitment

For 'open' initiatives, outreach has been undertaken to reach 'new' women and, some courses ensure that women attending can take the learning back to their organisations. Open recruitment has much to offer in encouraging 'new' women but can lead to some women feeling out of their depth and dropping out as a result. To get over this some course deliverers have a selection process and pre-course interviews. This may appear harsh, but can avoid women dropping out, possibly reinforcing low self esteem, because they didn't have the necessary language, confidence or other prerequisites. Deliverers will try to direct women towards appropriate training - assertiveness, confidence building - if they're available.

Word of mouth is seen as crucial and a major trigger is women being encouraged by someone else or invited to attend. This factor is reflected in the findings outlined in the report on 'organisations' - that for many women, being asked or invited is a powerful motivator.

Some courses have been linked to other activities that encourage women to come along - karaoke, line dancing, and massage - and feel inspired to start the course

Encouragement and Support

Support offered **during** ranges between mentoring, one to one tutorials, learning sets, specific workshops (such as assignment support), email and phone support and group networks

Support offered **after** courses finish varies and is dependant upon the funding available but is more likely to happen when a course is delivered as part of a wider organisational commitment with staff brokering ongoing connections. This has taken the form of a women's local forum, women meeting together informally, and mentoring programmes

One course asked volunteers to support participants during and outside the course. This is more likely to be the case when a course is supported and delivered through an organisation, either statutory or voluntary.

" We set up our 'women and citizenship forum' during the course - runs once a month on set subject - such as Health and Social care issues, Financial Planning, Benefits et. It's an opportunity to discuss various issues, continue supported learning. At the first meeting the month after the course - approx 6-10 women attend. We are trying to devolve organisation of the forum to women themselves - but it's difficult as they often drop out after couple of months. We need more time set aside to support the forum. Women have also set up their own informal network - meet pub, coffee mornings etc."

Dialogue with decision makers

Creating the possibility of dialogue with decision makers is an important aspect and this includes visits and field trips, round tables, visiting speakers, and involves dialogue about specific issues that women are working to change.

Such dialogue and contact can help to break down barriers and misconceptions on both sides. Many women report understanding the pressures and complexities involved in taking a governance position and making personal contact with women in these positions as a motivation and inspiration.

One programme that was developed within a CVS and is also delivered by other CVSs in different areas, has won the Goldstar Award for volunteering. The organisers are clear that involvement in developing and delivering the course has also meant they have:

“...built effective partnerships with the community sector, business sector (women mentors), local authority...”

This clearly has a knock on effect in terms of developing networks to support local women and providing opportunities for women’s voices to be heard.

It could be argued that by running such courses also serves to raise the profile of the debate around ‘women into governance’ and the need for gender issues to be ‘on the agenda’

Delivery issues

- The need for skilled facilitation and being able to manage complex group dynamics, allow them to evolve, conflict resolution skills
- The need for ‘representative’ trainers who relate to the experiences of the women they re working with
- The need for ‘training trainers’, both in terms of increasing the potential pool and providing more ‘representative’ trainers
- Huge range of tutor skills required - experienced and skills facilitators not just tutoring skills - managing conflict and difference
- When opportunity to learn and become familiar with IT skills are offered alongside these courses, women have found them very beneficial to source, understand and interpret information
- A critical aspect is the opportunity to consider and explore the issues around gender, power and personal and institutional barriers to women in the community and public domain
- Provides a safe space to explore gendered roles and feelings about this - cultural norms, family expectations, personal reactions
- Controversial discussions politics, children, religion, sex - lead to heated discussions - cliques and requires needs very careful management and facilitation

Access and practical issues

- Course structure and timings vary with weekends attracting different women to weekdays
- Working with translators require time and money - whether these are spoken language translators or sign language translators
- Venues and environment are viewed as crucial - well lit, warm, comfortable with food offered
- Access is a major consideration - physical, cultural and economic - childcare complex. Resources to do the course and any activities - poverty
- Provision of childcare

- Materials and format - creative, fun, visual, flexible, reflection and feedback, ground rules, participative, jargon free
- Language is a key aspect in that some courses are geared to using a community language and this is generally when targeting women who are starting to consider a public or community role. For other courses, English is viewed as crucial as this is the medium through which public duties are carried out.
- Paying for courses is controversial; some courses are free, others charge and others have a refundable deposit. Each of these have implications for organisations running courses and potential participants.
- Funding is a problem for many reasons: re-interpreting the course and target group to fit into existing funding requirements; always got to be new innovative
- Adaptability of programmes for other marginalised groups
- Course structure and timings vary with weekends attracting different women to weekdays.

Holistic initiatives:

Women's organisations which exist to support individual women through a particular crisis or issue, have developed their work further to support women to challenge the policies and decisions that affect them and other women. Crisis issues include health conditions, poverty, lone parenting, domestic abuse, rape and sexual violence.

Building women's' confidence and trust is a long term process and some of the characteristics and issues raised through the research are:

- Work with women to get beyond prejudice and assumptions and encourage women see the experiences they have in common
- Act as brokers to create opportunities for women to meet and have dialogue with policy makers, service planners and providers
- Develop relationships with key local agencies and people
- Open door policy for 'new' women to contact and gain support from the organisation in the form of one to one support, advocacy, counselling, advice, group meetings, information
- Encourage and support women receiving services to get more involved in the work and life of the organisation. Increase the pool of women willing and able to continue the work of the organisation in the future
- Set up local groups to network around ongoing support and shared experiences
- Encourage and support women around increasing self esteem, self belief and expectations
- Encourage and support women to look outside their immediate circumstances and concerns and make connections with other women
- Encourage and support women to have a voice around gender and decision making
- Recognise that women have different needs which have to be met in different ways
- Bring women together in order to have a greater voice in decision making and lobbying
- Deliver training, women only events, seminars, meeting facilitation, networking events, peer mentoring
- Provide volunteering opportunities for women
- Some initiatives are restricted to particular women in particular circumstances and provide appropriate support and encouragement; this can be about language, images, validating common experiences
- Encourage women to learn English - this is a crucial part of their empowerment
- Encourage women to make a difference to their own lives and create a sense of personal agency
- Encourage and support women to progress beyond what is familiar and comfortable in safe way
- Support women to see how they can be an inspiration to others; women who understand barriers faced by women in different circumstances

- Acknowledge women's skills and how they are transferable to different contexts

Does difference make a difference?

What are the benefits to *organising on the basis of difference*, and what are benefits to *organising on the basis of similarity*? It seems that both have particular benefits, depending on the needs of women at the time and the desired outcomes.

When women's courses are **mixed** they create opportunities for women to create connections to women who are different from themselves and understand the common issues and experiences we have as women and share strategies for change. There is the opportunity to share and understand more about how power operates in terms of gender, race, class, sexuality and other aspects of people's identity and experience

"As a group of women we were able to share the richness of our lives irrespective of socio-economic status, faith, sexual orientation, age, ethnicity, disability, colour, creed, profession etc.

"We discovered that all the women on the course had suffered the same sort of inequalities and barriers.

".....some Asian women are surprised when they realise that 'liberated' white women go through the same experiences of domestic violence"

Differences between women are crucial when stereotypes and prejudice lead to discrimination and careful skilled facilitation is needed to create safe spaces for difficult conversations and discussions.

When courses are for **similar** women they create opportunities for women to share specific common experiences and gain support for themselves and lobby together for change.

...for Asian women there is very little support for them to be able to engage - they don't come forward so....the essential ingredients are - language, understanding where they are coming from and the impact of this - recognising different levels of learning - making connections and validating women's experiences - who they are....trying to understand each other.....and where we are at..... enabling Asian women to gain the skills, experiences and confidence to create an 'Asian women's voice' within the local area whenever they can'

Specific groups of women experience discrimination and subsequently demand and carve out safe spaces for support and sharing strategies for survival and development. These are important sources of support, learning and development.

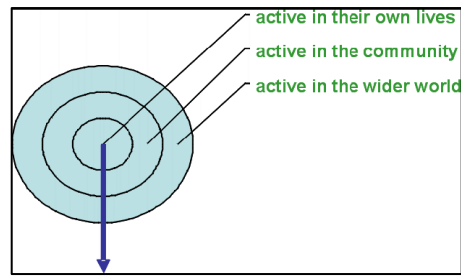
The Learning, Support and Development Research Report contains brief details of and contact information for initiatives that are included in the research.

2.3 Journeys and learning; the links

"I feel it would be useful to indicate what has occurred or is happening that has assisted the women to progress through each of the steps - what has happened for the women at step 0 which assisted them to progress onto the next stage of the model.."

Women are generally active in the public domain when they are active in their own lives. Women are active in different spheres at different times:

- ✓ active in their own lives
- ✓ active in the community
- ✓ active in the wider world



Exploring the tensions and contradictions involved in ‘citizenship and gender’ lead us to recognise inequalities in the structures, processes and cultures of governance. If we want to change these, then we have to challenge ourselves and others to become active critical citizens.

To provide the relevant learning experiences to achieve such active critical women citizens, delivery methods should be rooted in a learner centred, participative and informal educational approaches within an explicit vision in relation to gender, race, equality and social justice.

“The course has enabled me to develop my own voice, challenge gender stereotypes, to focus on my strengths rather than my weaknesses, whilst accessing opportunities to assist me to mature and grow.”

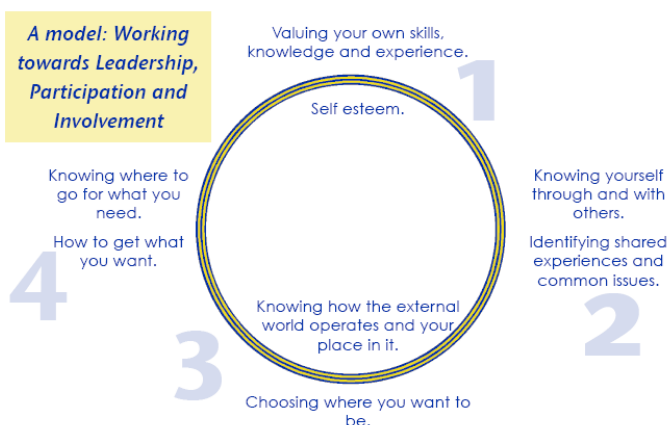
“The continued support of the course facilitators and other women has enabled me to begin working on other initiatives that I hope will inspire, encourage, and move women to be more active in their own lives, and within their communities”

“...lack of confidence is the biggest barrier to females being powerful and vocal. Remedies: Information, support, learning and finding common ground. Knowing what barriers you face and finding ways of overcoming and solving them”

The ‘**Four Essential Ingredients**’ used in the Take Part Learning Framework was tested to see how useful it is in different contexts with different women. It seems to have relevance for learning, development and support around ‘under-represented’ women being active in both community and public life. In order to provide opportunities for women to start to recognise their potential for leadership and participation, **the Four Essential Ingredients suggest specific learning outcomes, which combine to create the conditions for women to be confident and active in the public domain.**

1. Value your own skills

- The focus is on work with individuals, whether in terms of confidence building, validating life experiences or practical skills development
- Presentation skills, public speaking, chairing meetings, budgeting, planning, dealing with difficult situations, being more assertive



- These can be the building blocks towards increased self esteem and an acceptance of one’s own value and experience

2. Know yourself through and with others

- Provides the opportunity to make sense of the factors that shape your

life, for example, education, religion, family, motherhood, sexuality, class, race, economic dependence

- While we have many experiences in common, we are all products of our particular and diverse cultures, backgrounds and traditions
- If we can learn how to value ourselves and communicate with others in a genuine way, we are in a better position to develop a network of support, deal with inevitable conflicts and work together to make positive changes.

“I believe that my life experiences have acted as the trigger for me to strive to create a greater awareness of issues that impact upon women’s lives, and in the knowledge that women can affect change if they can develop a deeper insight into their own experiences, and that of others. Only then can you begin the process of change on a personal level, before you can begin to work on the process of change on a much wider scale.”

3. Know how the external world operates and choosing where you want to be

- To make changes and get our voices heard women need to know how the system operates: how decision-making structures are set up, how these structures work, who is involved, how accountable they are, who holds power in any given situation
- This means knowing about the local, national and international structures that impact upon our lives
- If we are clear about our place within the system; as a voter, a constituent, a consumer, a citizen, we start to have a clearer understanding about our rights, and responsibilities
- Once we have this knowledge we can make choices about where we want to be and the roles we want to play, for example, an elected member, a school governor, an MP, a magistrate, on a Citizen’s Panel.

4. Know where to go to get what you want

- In order to make changes women have to make their voices heard, ask people for information and know how to get what they want from individuals and organisations
- This can involve negotiating, campaigning, lobbying - or simply being more assertive!

“The course sessions were delivered in a non threatening way, which made me feel safe and not judged as a group member, which was made up of a diverse group of women. This in itself broke down our feelings of isolation as we were mutually supportive of each other, our experiences were validated, and our overriding desire to take collective action inspired us to stride forth. I keep in contact with a number of the women from the course on a regular basis with whom I have developed friendships...”

Approaches for delivering learning, support and development need to be geared to the aspirations and situations of the women in question. Although it would be wrong to prescribe particular approaches for specific stages, it would seem that the Holistic approach (women’s organisations offer support and mentoring around specific issues for women to take control of their lives and start to see a role for themselves in the public domain) seems very appropriate for women at levels 0 and 1.

Journey stages		Approaches for delivering learning, support and development
Level 3	↑ Staying there	
Level 2		<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Networks</div> <div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Partnership approaches</div> </div>
Level 1	Getting there	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin: 0 auto; width: 80%;">Courses</div>
Level 0	↓ Not there	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin: 0 auto; width: 80%;">Holistic approaches</div>

2.4 Organisation's journeys

This section focuses on research around values, cultures, attitudes and actions of organisations and structures which act to block or encourage women's active critical involvement and participation in the public spheres of civil and civic engagement. It combines the views of women, representatives from organisations and structures, contemporary research and other commentary to construct and inform a framework of organisational journeys towards a genuine willingness to change, take risks and do things differently.

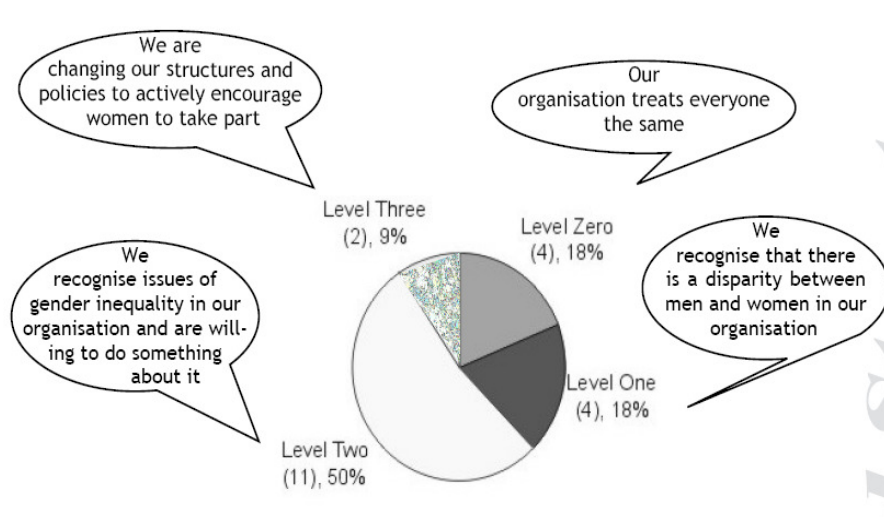
When we refer to organisation's cultures we mean the expectations, attitudes, the values and the spoken and unspoken rules of acceptable behaviour. When we refer to organisation's structures we mean the different parts and processes that make it work - the roles people have, systems within which they work, where authority is located, and how meetings are organised and used.

The Women Take Part Typology, or model, of organisations' journeys was developed and tested. It was drawn from the following sources:

- a typology of citizenship
- the Take Part Network National Framework for Active Citizenship Learning

Organisational journeys: a typology

- Our organisation treats everyone the same
Level Zero
- We recognise that there is a disparity between men and women in our organisation
Level One
- We recognise issues of gender inequality in our organisation and are willing to do something about it
Level Two
- We are changing our structures and policies to actively encourage women to take part
Level Three



The WTP research aimed to test out the typology, using an initial survey and a sample of follow up interviews; the ***purpose of the initial survey*** was to gain a snapshot of those organisations' positions on gender and women's participation. It examined whether they recognise issues around gender, how seriously

they take these issues and whether they are doing anything to increase women's participation, including that of under-represented women, both within their organisations and in their external work. It was emailed to a cross section of 30 civic/civil/government and non-government/local, regional and national organisations, eliciting 22 responses.

Survey respondents were asked which of four statements best describe their organisation's approach to gender equalities and women's participation in their organisations. (*One organisation did not respond to this question, figures for the remaining 21 are given in brackets.*)

The ***purpose of the interviews*** was to interrogate the responses to the survey and gain more qualitative and in depth information for the four steps of the typology, based on people's experiences. 17 of the original 22 civic/civil/government and non-government organisations were approached for in depth interviews and 12 responded.

It clarifies the relationships between organisational values, culture, attitudes and action on gender equalities. The research has generated a set of characteristics which can help break down the four steps of the typology/journey. We are mindful of potential contradictions between some of the characteristics, as they have emerged from organisations self selecting the appropriate step of the typology and then providing their own rationale for their selection. It is clear that more work needs to be carried out to refine the characteristics further, as well as to investigate its relevance for other equality groups. It could form the basis for planning around organisational change.

The typology appears to have merit in relation to understanding and making sense of the varied approaches different organisations take to gender equality.

The characteristics of the four levels are outlined below:

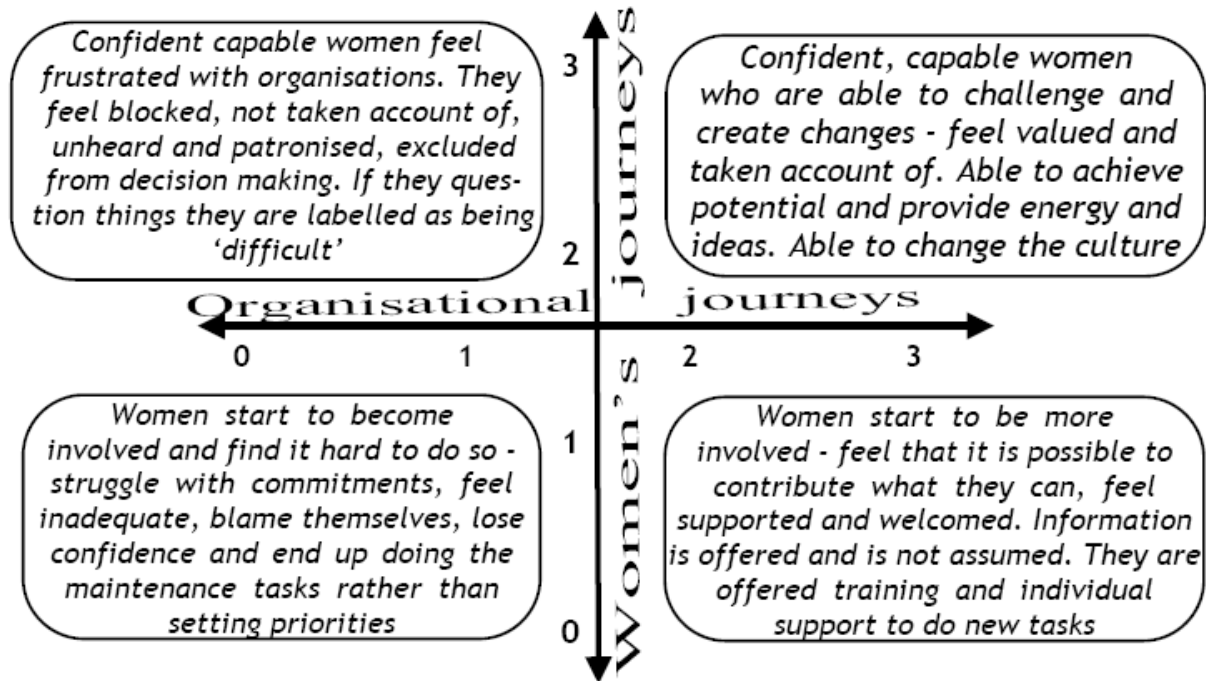
Organisational self-assessment within Women Take Part typology

Level Zero Our organisation treats everyone the same	<p>Organisations :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Involve women but their role in the organisation is incidental and not seen as an issue ◆ Recognise women's unequal position in governance structures generally, but resist taking positive action to address it ◆ Misinterpret the legal position on positive action ◆ Accept gender stereotyped roles ◆ Take an individual rather than a targeted approach ◆ Lack knowledge about why women occupy unequal positions and tend to make assumptions, particularly about black and minority ethnic women ◆ Involve women at lower levels of the organisation
Level One Our organisation recognises there is a disparity between men and women in our organisation	<p>Organisations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Do not encourage debate and challenge around gender issues ◆ Recognise that particular styles of working can benefit women ◆ Offer limited concessions for women, mainly when additional resources can be secured ◆ Operate subtle sexism and women often feel isolated ◆ Lack of disaggregated information and do not track women's participation in the organisation; ◆ Do not understand why there is a disparity between men and women in the organisation ◆ Do not have an organisational stance on gender
Level Two Our organisation recognises issues of gender inequality and we are willing to do something about it	<p>Inward looking - organisations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Work to increase women's employment in the organisation ◆ Work to increase women's participation in their governance ◆ Work to involve black and minority ethnic women in employment and governance ◆ Recognise 'gender' as a key strand of equalities ◆ Recognise the significance of role models <p>Outward looking - organisations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Work to ensure that women are represented ◆ Develop and disseminate good practice ◆ Support and develop women's networks and forums ◆ Monitor and research women's participation ◆ Collaborate with women's sector organisations ◆ Target funding ◆ Work specifically to increase black and minority ethnic women's participation <p>However:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ There is lack of knowledge specific to black and minority ethnic women's participation ◆ Measures taken to increase women's participation are not far reaching enough, there is not enough effective targeting and the approaches are not systematic within organisations ◆ Organisations in this category tend to take a generic approach and it is left to individual women to pursue equality ◆ Demand for delivery is prioritised above developing equalities structures
Level Three Our organisation is changing its structures and policies to actively encourage women to take part	<p>Organisations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Recognise and understand wider agendas that exclude black and minority ethnic women ◆ Are aware of gaps in data and knowledge and take action to address this ◆ Know the religious and cultural context of particular groups of women and take action ◆ Understand women's position and have a pro-active commitment to changing structures, policies and cultures to address this ◆ Encourage positive action to improve women's position such as spaces and resources specifically for women's development ◆ Set targets, monitor and improve their performance in involving women in management and governance ◆ Have outreach strategies in place to target particular groups of women ◆ Encourage role models of black and minority ethnic women in senior management and governance positions ◆ Encourage women, including black and minority ethnic women, to participate at every level and influence decisions <p>However:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Women who get involved are still faced with adversity, stemming from male dominance and bureaucracy, and it takes a lot of ongoing support to keep them there

Organisations and Structures

2.5 Women Take Part Framework: making sense of women's experiences in the public domain

These two journey are brought together to form a framework which illustrates the relationship between women's development and organisational change. It provides a simple way to understand and articulate women's experiences of the public domain.



- The vertical axis represents women's journeys from step 0 to step 3
- The horizontal axis represents organisational journeys from step 0 to step 3
- Each quadrant shows the relationship between these and illustrates how women's experiences of engagement in the public domain are directly linked to the culture and practices of structures and organisations
- The quadrants help to understand why women decide that participation is a waste of time, when it's all too time consuming for too little benefit

The research indicates that **women's experience of public life is generally contained within the top and bottom left hand quadrants - that is, within structures and organisations that do not actively encourage or support women's involvement**

"I can relate to what I have heard and the impact of gender discrimination direct from a transgender perspective, my change of gender from male to female and the difference to life/voice as a woman. Going from an executive male position where I had power and a voice that was heard to direct experience of the subtle ways of gender discrimination"

"Public office is being made very difficult - even schools governors now have mountains of work to do and complicated reports to read. Barriers are going up all the time. Responsibility is being made more rather than less onerous"

"Surprises - the speaker confirmed that public appointments can't happen if you haven't got board experience - how will younger women get public appointments if this is the case?"

"The numbers of women on bodies such as NHS boards are falling - because they're looking for people with business backgrounds fewer women now meet the specification and their skills and expertise are under-valued"

Focus groups with women in governance roles offer the following observations:

- Women's ideas are often ignored in meetings and only acknowledged, minuted and discussed when they are repeated by a man
"Often the straightforward ways are not open to them so they will seek to influence 'sideways e.g., make a suggestion that the men pick up on. The suggestion will be given no value when it is coming from the women. This way of working means that there is no credit for women."
- No family friendly organisational commitments - timings, time commitment unclear
"They also expect me to do what they do as if I had the same freedom and time available - which as a single mother, I don't"
- Cultures and 'normal' styles of operating - explicitly unwelcoming or just not welcoming. Women experiences include the following: adversarial, competitive, put down, macho bullying and personal abuse, discrimination and racism, negative attitudes and behaviours
"One woman was recently appointed to a quango and there is a fixed allowance of £60 flat rate for childcare and the actual const of the nursery for two children is £100"
- Sometimes negative behaviour towards women is perceived as active/intentional, and sometimes as passive/unintentional. However, it's about the impact such behaviour has and the attitudes that underpin it, whether intentional and unconscious; women are not seen as serious or as skilled as men, roles and expectations of women are often predefined into the 'caring' roles
"A box is created for women in which they are expected to fit and that box is - non aggressive, compliant - it is a role that is constructed for us and we slot into it whether it is what we want or not."
- Women report resistance to change where they are seen as a threat and a challenge to how things have always been done. Exclusive cliques and men's networks are cited as mechanisms to exclude women, where discussions and decisions are made before meetings
"Don't give you information - you have to find it yourself. They have their own meetings and don't tell me about it. They arrange things and you don't really know about it."
"You are a threat when you start climbing - they let you come to there (a level), but once you start going higher, they don't like that...Men will do what they can, not in an awful way, but in their own way, to stop you from getting up there"
- Women feel they have to be more effective and work harder than men to be taken seriously
- Jargon and acronyms often make it difficult to understand and comment
- Men speak longer in meetings and tend to take up more time
- Bullying behaviour is common in the public sector as well as the voluntary and community sectors
"...feeling excluded, patronised, bullied by decision makers....felt this was particularly true for older women"
- Women report that motivation for being in governance roles is often different for men and women
"Wherever there is a pile, men want to be on top of it, whatever the pile is..."

Does difference make a difference?

Women in the WTP focus groups made the following comments around difference - mainly with regard to racism, sexism and prejudice based on stereotypes:

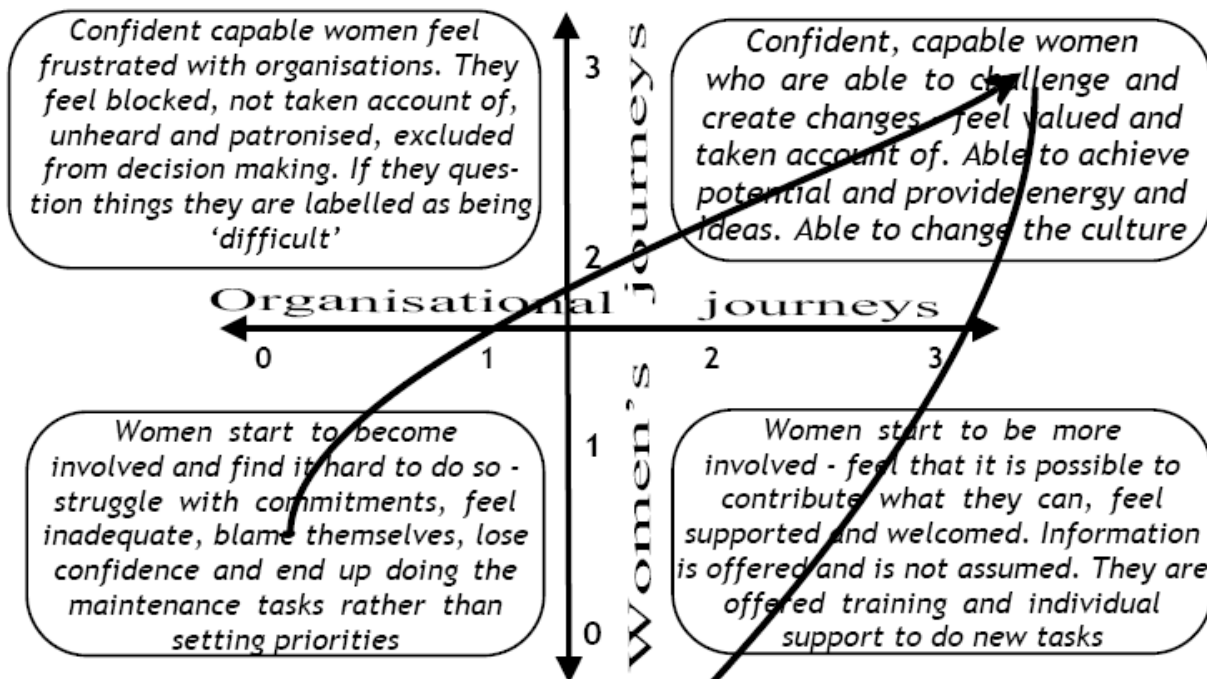
- Asian women are often viewed as passive, submissive, compliant, are undervalued and not taken seriously and, are not seen to have strong opinions
- Black women are often seen as demanding and over powering
- Many Black and Asian women feel that they have got to try harder than their white or male counterparts

“You have to work that much harder to be equal as a brown face, because what they see is the brown face...”

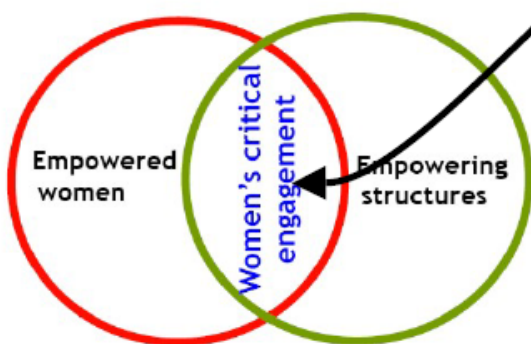
These comments reflect some of the many generalisations and stereotypes that exist about minority ethnic women which underpin the everyday discrimination and racism that they face.

2.6 Women Take Part Framework: moving on up

If we aim to increase and sustain the numbers of under-represented women in public life then the direction of movement has to be towards to the top right quadrant of the framework. In order for this to occur action needs to be identified to encourage both ‘under-represented’ women and structures/organisations to develop further.



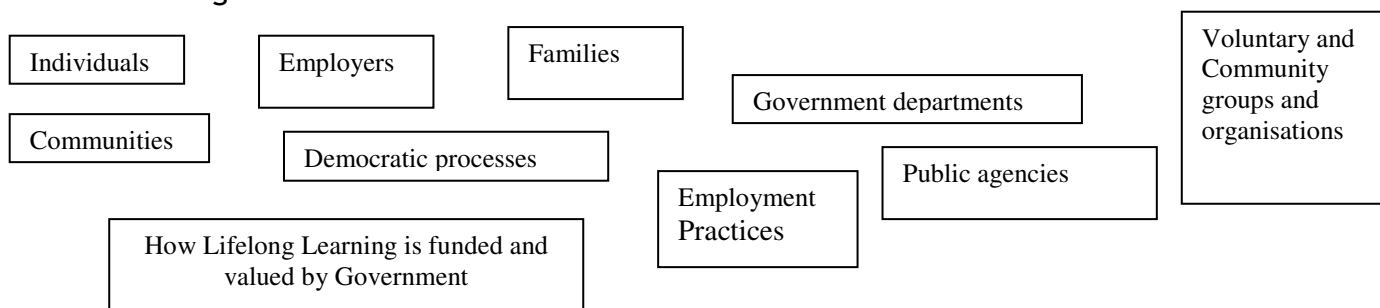
To summarise, increasing the number of 'empowered' women and 'empowering' organisations and structures; is more likely lead to *an increase in women's critical engagement in the public domain.*



It is not enough to 'capacity build' women or to see women as deficient in some wayif only they were more confident, knowledgeable, skilled..... Ely and Myerson¹¹ state that we need to go further than the traditional approaches of 'fix the women; create equal opportunity; and celebrate the feminine', acknowledge that 'gender' is a central organising feature of social life and that we can 'take risks, learn new ways, experiment and.....invent a different kind of organisation'.

Areas for consideration and future action

In order to really change the current gender dynamics in community and public life, there has to be changes to....



There is a long list of things which need consideration, amongst which are:

- Care - who does it for whom? (Childcare and elder care)
- The pay gap between men and women
- Working conditions

- Funding of informal learning and Lifelong Learning opportunities
- Domestic responsibilities
- Violence against women
- Media portrayal of women
- Stereotypes and attitudes towards women
- The hidden costs of childbearing and childrearing
- The pensions gap between men and women

3 Impact! programme: Women Active in Community and Public Life

IMPACT! is a flexible learning programme which spans 6 - 12 months. It explores issues around power, participation and leadership. It is about ...

“... being a citizen - looking at your own life and other people’s lives - trying to make life better for everyone and understanding the rights and responsibilities of being a citizen.

“... getting out there and doing something in the community

IMPACT! isn’t just a training course - it offers *women* the opportunity to be part of a network that can offer encouragement, skill-sharing, information and support to each other.

“Everyone boosted each others confidence by telling their own experiences and listening to each other

IMPACT! grew out of a women’s health project when the focus moved from running workshops on ‘dealing with the menopause’ and ‘how to be mother and stay sane’ to working out how we, as women, can influence the decisions that affect our lives. It evolved from a series of workshops around women and leadership which by 1998 had expanded to include a programme of training, practical support and mentoring. The first accredited ‘course’ of this type began in January 2000 and it focused on women’s own experiences and opinions whilst setting out to explore local, national and European decision making structures.

Vision, excitement and commitment were needed more than ever to encourage and motivate ourselves and other women to organise to make a difference around ‘women’ and gender and to cut across the fragmentation, competition and individualism we saw operating in many women’s organisations and initiatives at the time. We gained funding from a variety of sources - Health Action Zones, National Lottery, Barrow Cadbury Trust - to develop our ideas around women becoming more active in community and public life - through using a community development approach which counters the notion of elevating a few women as community leaders to talk on behalf of others and engage with civic structures as a token voice for women.

The success of the pilot courses led to further developments around the main topics of citizenship, democracy, leadership and participation and to an invitation by the Home Office *Active Learning for Active Citizenship (ALAC) programme* to showcase the IMPACT! approach as a creative learning initiative (2004-6).

The consistent work done over the past 10 years is due to a passion for women’s development and, at times, felt like ‘swimming against the tide’; funding for this type of work is hard to attract as it is long term and this resulted in using a patchwork of different funding opportunities which were generally short term and target driven - with different grants requiring different reporting mechanisms. The Barrow Cadbury Trust was an exception as they

gave a three year grant which was very flexible and was used to develop the work on an ongoing and progressive basis. This was crucial. (See 'Women, Leadership, Participation and Involvement Report' at www.bct.org.uk)

Having continuity of funding and support opens up what is possible. So far, here in England, we have patchy, fragmented and uncertain funding which immediately limits how we can start to structure and sustain initiatives. Women we have worked with in this initiative expressed interest in receiving training for themselves to do this work and carry on promoting the empowerment of women in different areas and communities, but we have been reluctant to progress this without some clarity around how to support them financially in the medium to longer term.

Why women?

“Women are influential members of family and community life

“We have the same kind of issues no matter what our background or culture.

“We discovered that all the women on the course had suffered the same sort of inequalities and barriers

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Lack of self confidence ⇒ Lack of qualifications ⇒ Not being listened to ⇒ Male dominated meetings ⇒ Lack of transport and inaccessibility of venues ⇒ People assuming things about women because of their culture ⇒ Not being taken seriously ⇒ Lack of support from employers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Caring responsibilities ⇒ Cost involved ⇒ Financial dependence on others ⇒ Doing things for everyone else and not for myself ⇒ Not being able to articulate properly ⇒ Depression ⇒ Isolation ⇒ Lack of knowledge and opportunity ⇒ Childcare issues
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It is predicted that it will take:

- **20 years** to achieve equality in civil service top management
- **40 years** to achieve an equal number of senior women in the judiciary
- **Up to 200 years** - another 40 elections - to achieve an equal number of women in Parliament

(Equal Opportunities Commission 2006 survey of women's representation in positions of

Women come to IMPACT! from all walks of life. This is essential to an approach which is about sharing experiences and challenging each others' assumptions. Some women haven't been out of their own homes for years because of illness, disability or a lack of personal confidence. Others have just left College or University, have retired from paid employment, were local Councillors, volunteers, carers ...

“As a group of women we were able to share the richness of our lives irrespective of socio-economic status, faith, sexual orientation, age, ethnicity, disability, colour, creed, profession etc.

“Irrelevant of our backgrounds - every single woman had some sort of inspiration in life - some sort of goal

The Impact programme and the years of work preceding it acknowledged the differences between women and worked across ‘difference’ within a symmetry of similarity; responding to the community cohesion agenda before this particular terminology and associated policy drivers surfaced. If we focus solely on what separates women from each other then we lose the power that comes from the recognition of shared experiences around ‘gender’.

Whilst we appreciate the many differences between women and recognise that some women have less power than others, we reject the term ‘disadvantage’ as a ‘cover all’ label. Women are discriminated against and negative stereotypes exist and persist within, and between, communities and population groups.

We have worked in different ways to create *safe spaces* where we encourage a ‘respectful discourse’; where we can get beyond assumptions around education, work, marriage, sex, tradition, faith, class, age, culture, housework, children, politics and power - where we can ‘hear the hurt’. These are spaces for difficult discussions and joint celebrations, spaces to explore what shapes and shaped us and what we want to do about this.

The organisation accountable for Impact in the ALAC programme was the Wolverhampton Asian Women and Diabetes Group - a small community based charitable company with a commitment to working across cultures to achieve better healthcare for Asian women around living with diabetes. It was important for a Black women’s organisation to take a lead and to be visible as this led to many Asian women taking part in the Impact programme. But unfortunately this could have had a part to play in the small numbers of African Caribbean women taking part. It could be said that the colonialist legacy of complex relations between Asian and African Caribbean communities is still being played out in an English context.

In the Impact programme, assumptions that race and culture would be the significant differential factor for participants were challenged when the evaluation revealed age as the most significant difference. This was a space where, coincidentally, young Asian women met and shared ideas and experiences with older white women. They learned about the similarities of their lives, the broader experiences of older women and the ‘modern’ interpretations of younger women. All the participants recognised that this would not have happened in ordinary life as people generally live within their comfort zones - work, friends and family - and often have little opportunity to meet and talk with people outside of their everyday silos. In discussions around the impact of the course, the overarching themes were of respect and enduring friendship between very different women.

The Impact programme

IMPACT! was a participative training course nested within a network offering encouragement, skill-sharing, information and support. It was a place and a space for women to meet, share, learn, grow, get involved and, hopefully, to encourage other women to get involved. It was ‘women only’ as the dynamics and interaction within a ‘women only’ space are very different from the dynamics when there are men present. This ‘women only’ space offered an opportunity to move beyond the usual gender dynamics

People wanted to share and it was just women - you can't be that open, especially in front of men that you don't know. It was a bit of a risk to be that open but people did take risks

IMPACT! challenges the notions of individualism and competition by bringing women together in association, to collectively reflect upon and analyse the barriers to and opportunities for creating change for themselves and others. We suggest that once women make these connections, and see their own concerns and limitations reflected in the struggles of others, they can collectively develop strategies around how to overcome the barriers and make positive changes.

Our approach to creating a safe space for learning requires that we always start with and from the experiences and knowledge of the individual learner, thereby involving the learner as a participant in the learning process. We then share this in the group context, creating a collective pool of knowledge and experiences. At this point it is often useful to provide further information and concepts / theories to aid further reflection, understanding and analysis.

The trainer role is more of a facilitator role; creating and maintaining healthy group dynamics to enable people to validate their own knowledge, skills and experiences, as well as to provide relevant information and theory to allow deeper understanding and critical reflection.

Everyone boosted each others confidence by telling their own experiences and listening to each other. There was lots of group work, lots of discussion

You were constantly asked for your input - being given that allowance of time and choice to participate and not make a fool of myself. It was about consideration of what people needed - the time, where they were sat, who they were sat with ... Where we shared as a group, (the trainers) shared with us - it was about equality

Equality issues were central to the programme and so childcare expenses, and respite care expenses were offered alongside travel costs when they were needed.

Taxis were arranged for me - I hadn't gone out of the house by myself for 10 years - I got back to (me) as a person - it was a big, big confidence boost

Co-training

There was a clear policy around co-training and, where possible, team training as this models the values of participation, equality and cooperation. It takes more time to plan and costs more, but the learner generally gets a better experience and more personalised attention.

..the trainers made a real point of respecting each other and each others opinions - even if you didn't agree with them. They developed ground rules which were crucial so people know to respect and the ground rules were owned by the group

The Impact courses were delivered using a team training approach where two experienced trainers worked with two learner trainers who had each been involved in some of the previous work with women prior to the Impact programme. Planning sessions then became teaching sessions with critical reflection and learning structured into them.

Accreditation

The course was accredited with the Open College Network with four units:

- * Participation and leadership
- * Citizenship and human rights
- * Introduction to democracy and decision making
- * Assertiveness

There was also the option of a 'taster unit', which was a separate unit for those who had to miss out parts of the course. This unit covered elements of the four units above but with less detail.

All the units were available at level 1, 2 and 3 and the assignments could be written or spoken - taped. We provided paper or electronic versions of the worksheets and questions and guidelines on what was needed in order to achieve the various levels.

There was the option of having tutorials and we offered two tutorials per participant. They were also asked to keep a course diary.

Delivering the programme

The programme was a mix of workshops, residential events, field visits, events and support sessions running over a 6-9 month period, depending upon the nature of the group. The Impact sessions ran on Saturdays as this was preferred by the participants - other courses in the past have run on weekdays. There were two field visits; to the English parliament and to the European parliament. In previous years we have held what is called 'round table' events, where women who are active in public and community life come to share their stories with other women. There were two weekend residential events where woman were encouraged not to bring children but were given childcare costs instead.



	Saturday sessions	Weekend residential	Events & field trips	Assignments & support
Assistance with childcare & transport, accessible venues, small group work, support, safe environment for discussion and sharing. Encouraging a wide diversity of women to attend - with this mix being essential to sharing experiences and recognising common issues. There are between 2 and 4 tutors at all times to allow for small group and individual support.	<p>Why participate? What does citizenship mean for us?</p> <p>Human Rights Power & powerlessness</p> <p>Presentation skills</p> <p>Democracy & decision making How laws are made in the UK</p> <p>How to influence decisions Consultation tools & techniques</p> <p>Politics & everyday life Meetings - how to make sure they work for you Networking</p> <p>Politics in Europe</p> <p>Action planning</p>	<p>Citizenship Decision making Assertive communication Capturing confidence</p> <p>Diversity, difference & citizenship Leadership - skills & qualities</p>	<p><i>Participants are encouraged and supported to attend appropriate and relevant events taking place nationally. Wherever possible they are provided with opportunities to speak to influential people - politicians, Ministers etc.</i></p> <p>Visit to the House of Parliament - arrangements to meet women MPs</p> <p>Visit to Brussels - European parliament - arrangements to meet women MEPs</p>	<p><i>Tutorials, assignment support, option for accreditation are offered. Women keep diary sheets.</i></p> <p>Assignment: Citizenship & Human Rights</p> <p>Assignment: Democracy & decision making</p>

What women, communities and public life have gained

"I believe I can change things"

Participants now have increased levels of confidence, skills and knowledge

Women are more knowledgeable and politically aware

"I have a thirst for knowledge now and the desire to do further research"

"it raised questions about democracy and the current voting system and arguments around 'first past the post' and 'proportional representation' systems"

"the residential and the trip to Brussels gave us a chance to break down barriers and get rid of preconceptions of women from other cultures"

"I was amazed that a woman of my age (73) can be of use to others"

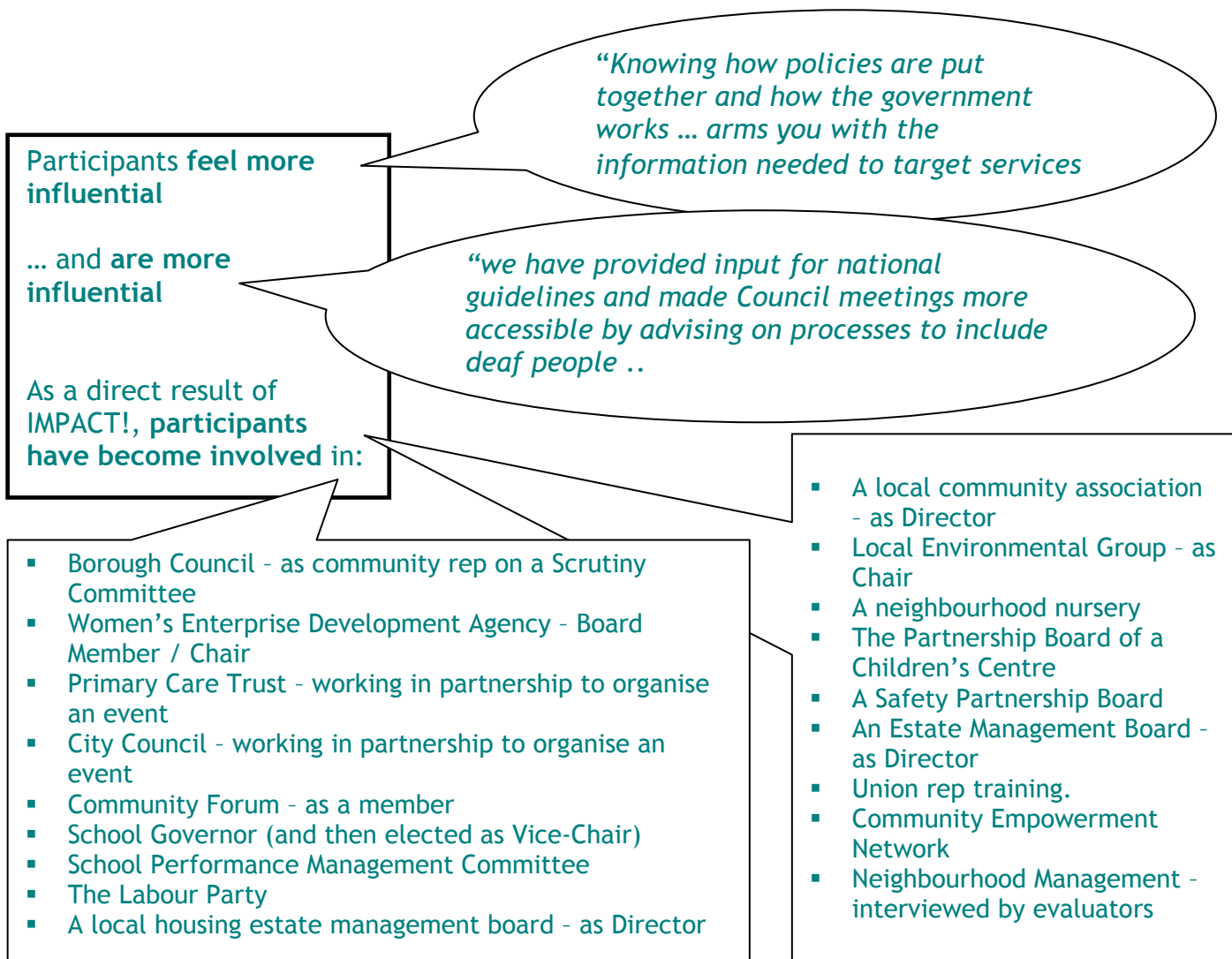
"it made me think about how some groups cannot access normal rights"

Participants have learned more about themselves, their differences and collective experiences

... they have surprised themselves and challenged the barriers of discrimination

... they have a better understanding of others

"I am no longer frightened to ask questions of others on subjects I would have tip-toed around before e.g. culture, religion, family"



And, in terms of wider Impact!:

“my friends are really proud of me

“none of my children have stopped on

“My husband is doing more volunteering and my grandchildren have more awareness of the world around them and the other people in it

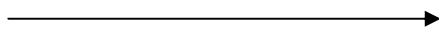
“I want to take my family to Brussels to share the same experience that I had and - in particular - to visit the European Parliament

“My daughter wants to be a politician!

“ .. nothing is impossible and if we try really hard we can attain any height!”

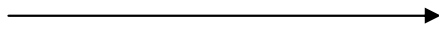
A flavour of what women hoped for

To get to know more people and to get out of the house



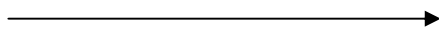
I have influence on how my kids are looked after in school
I feel confident that I can get people involved - to challenge and change structures

To learn more and become a better representative on the (Primary Care Trust) Forum



I have the skills, understanding and confidence to feel that I can help people and have a new lease of life in retirement. Family life is much richer

To meet other women and learn a little more about politics



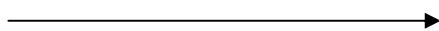
I am confident in the knowledge that I can make a valuable contribution and make a difference. I feel far more in control

To get out of the house after 10 years of not leaving the house alone following an accident. I wanted to be involved in something



I now help others to build their confidence and realise their potential.
I am planning to set up a Women's Enterprise Development Agency

To get confident as the 'powers that be' made me feel worthless, patronised - with no respect



I have the self confidence to enable change in my own life - to stand on my own two feet

and what they got ...

4 Take Part: National Learning Framework for Active Citizenship Learning

The words ‘citizen’ and ‘citizenship’ can mean different things to different people. We find the *National Learning Framework for Active Citizenship Learning* helpful in clarifying this. (www.takepart.org) For many people, ‘citizenship’ is the embodiment of the rights and responsibilities that they are due, and owe, from living in a particular nation state. For Take Part though, this is not enough. Firstly, of course, we must add the term ‘active’ to ‘citizen’, with the fundamental implication that citizens should be actively involved in the mechanisms of governance. This active involvement does not stop with voting, or even with volunteering, because both of these activities can be carried out ‘within the rules’, without challenging existing structures to do things differently.

Not just understanding, but influencing.

Active citizenship is concerned with more than learning ‘the rules of the game’, and how to participate within existing models and structures. From Take Part’s perspective, active citizenship should be defined more broadly to encompass active learning for political literacy and empowerment, addressing structures and relations of power and working to change these, where necessary, in the pursuit of social inclusion and social justice agendas (Lister 1997). It also relates to how people can promote community cohesion and social solidarity, thereby strengthening civil society as well as empowering individual citizens. Community development approaches to the promotion of active citizenship are important to consider - it is about ‘working both sides of the equation’ to build ‘a more active and engaged civil society and a more responsive and effective state that can deliver needed public services’ (Gaventa 2004 p27). It is crucial that people are active in their own communities in all sorts of ways, and equally crucial that statutory bodies are able to open themselves to include people in policy-making processes. Given political literacy and the necessary skills, people can ‘actively shape social change, promoting social solidarity and social justice within the context of globalisation’ (Mayo and Rooke 2006).

Types of citizenship

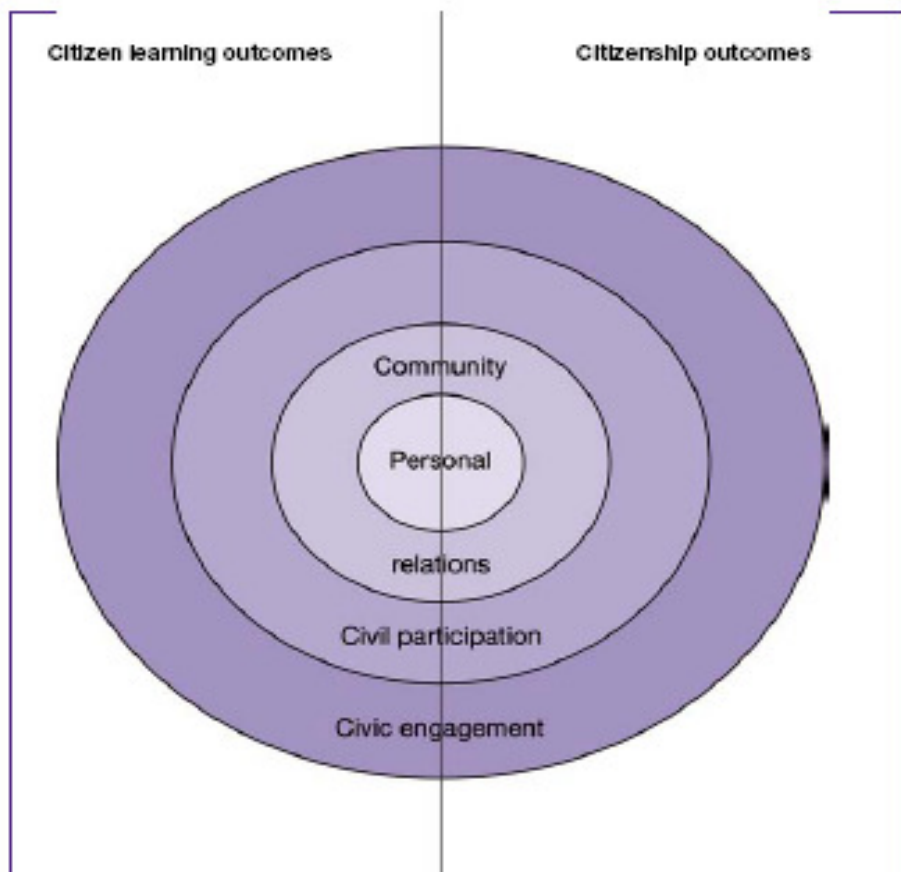
There are several models used in current thinking about citizenship and its relation to the individual, state and society. One of these is the typology developed by Westheimer and Kahne (2004)⁶ which identifies three separate models of citizenship and, consequently, of citizenship education:

- the ‘*personally responsible citizen*’, for whom citizenship education increases their awareness of individual rights and responsibilities; the citizen as a ‘voter’ and ‘volunteer’
- the ‘*participatory citizen*’, for whom citizenship education also enhances their knowledge of participatory structures and rights; the citizen as an individual within a group(s), actively participating in existing structures, taking up opportunities for participation, including participation in the planning and delivery of services
- the ‘*justice-orientated citizen*’ for whom citizenship education also adds a high level of awareness of collective rights and a high level of collective political and social responsibility, including responsibilities to engage with issues of social justice and equality; the citizen as an individual who also participates within group(s), actively challenging unequal relations of power, promoting social solidarity and social justice, both locally and beyond, taking account of the global context

⁶ Westheimer, J. and Kahne, J. (2004) What kind of citizen? The politics of educating for democracy, *American Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 41, No. 2, pp. 237-269s

People are likely to be engaged on different levels at the same time. It is important to recognise this when devising informal learning. Active learning for active citizenship needs to be conceptualised as a process. So, for example, individuals may become active as volunteers, but this in no way suggests that individuals may not be supported to engage as members of community groups, actively participating in governance structures (such as school governing bodies or local strategic partnerships, for example), or as active members of organisations campaigning on human rights, the environment and social justice issues.

Citizenship outcomes



Active citizenship learning programmes result in **citizen learning outcomes** for individuals and **citizenship outcomes** for wider society.

The diagram⁷ shows the different aspects in which active citizenship learning can have an effect - starting with personal change and spreading outwards.

The matrix which follows shows some examples of both types of outcomes in these different aspects.

⁷ Taken from the Take Part Network *National Learning Framework for Active Citizenship Learning* www.takepart.org (Formerly Active Learning for Active Citizenship)

Aspects of active citizenship	Citizen learning outcomes: I feel able to... I know more about... I know how to... <i>examples are:</i>	Citizenship outcomes: Local, national, European and global dimensions <i>examples are:</i>
<i>Personal</i>	Value own skills, knowledge and confidence Know where to go to get what you need Communication skills, lobbying skills, negotiation skills Feel able to have a voice	People identify and articulate their own issues and problems People take leadership roles in their community People have the power and will to make choices about their life People voice their concerns
<i>Community relations</i>	Recognise that social exclusion is the responsibility of all Understand how their behaviour affects others Know the basis of inequality and how power operates Understand more about people who are different to themselves Feel more confident in asking questions and talking to people different to themselves	Improved relations between diverse groups of people Community projects are inclusive of people with different backgrounds Increased points of contact between different communities Increased networking between communities
<i>Civil Society</i>	Understand how groups/ networks work Know how to encourage fair and democratic decision making Understand how to encourage, support and develop volunteers Know the importance of networking for influencing change Chairing, facilitation skills Negotiation, campaigning	More VCS active in community led service provision Well run democratic community groups Increased informal community organising Increased networking between community and voluntary organisations Public bodies have more groups to consult with Increased volunteering opportunities

<p><i>Civic engagement</i></p>	<p>Knowing how the external world operates</p> <p>Understand your current democratic position and the opportunities for change</p> <p>Understand the rules of engagement</p> <p>Know how meetings work</p> <p>Feel able to contribute and ask questions in a public forum</p> <p>Recognise how to influence policy and practice at a European, national, regional or local level</p>	<p>More people want to and feel capable of having a responsible role in formal democratic structures</p> <p>More people take an active role at a neighbourhood / community level</p> <p>Citizens work with public bodies to set and achieve common goals</p> <p>Improved relations between citizens and statutory agencies</p> <p>More people take part in dialogue with decision makers</p> <p>People lobby for change to the way forums and other structures operate</p>
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Values into practice

Take Part's four values are:

- social justice
- participation
- diversity and equality
- co-operation

These lead to the following characteristics of lifelong learning that encourages *people* to become *active, critical, awkward* citizens.....

Vision-led: Active citizenship is visionary; it's about people wanting and feeling able to change the world they live in

Community-based: People start to identify themselves in terms of community - this might be neighbourhood, identity, interest, place and space

Problem-posing: Understanding and analysing problems is the first step in devising shared solutions

Learning together in groups: Understanding yourself through and with others - creating connections and dialogue with others

Learning through experience, action and reflection: Learning, doing and taking time to reflect helps to embed new ideas, skills and awareness

Critical dialogue: Fostering the techniques and confidence to critically analyse ideas and issues is crucial to deep understanding

Voluntary: When learning is done through choice, the greatest benefits accrue