

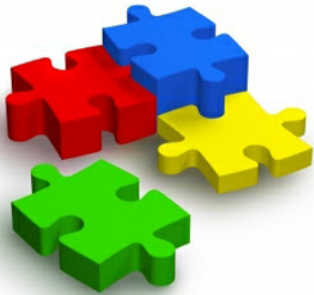
axis of influence series:

Voice[©]

It's all about influence

Who it is for...

People who are a part of, or working with, community groups, community networks, community anchors .. in fact pretty well any type of organisation in the voluntary or community sector wanting to influence public agencies, statutory agencies or partnerships!



You can use **Voice** to look at a part of your work or everything that you do!

What it can do ...

- ✓ prompt discussion and debate – about your aims and structures
- ✓ monitor and evaluate your influence and impact on the decisions made by public agencies
- ✓ identify your organisational capacity to influence
- ✓ identify what is needed in order for you to be more influential
- ✓ identify external factors which affect how influential you are
- ✓ improve skills to campaign, advocate and influence
- ✓ increase motivation and optimism about your capacity to campaign, advocate and influence
- ✓ help you to understand your local political landscape
- ✓ help you to see how your issues link with those of other organisations
- ✓ help you to see the value of building trust and relationships to increase influence
- ✓ help you action plan to increase influence

It's a tool! It's a framework!

It is something that can help you to work out how influential you are and plan how to become more influential!

What people say about it

Voice was brilliant - I adapted it for the group I worked with, but it was really easy to get people talking about influence, what it meant and therefore how influential they felt. Which led brilliantly on to the vertical axis and where the group were on it



I like the flexibility – you can move in any direction, up, down, across – Voice recognises that community groups aren't in a place where they stay

Who is working with it

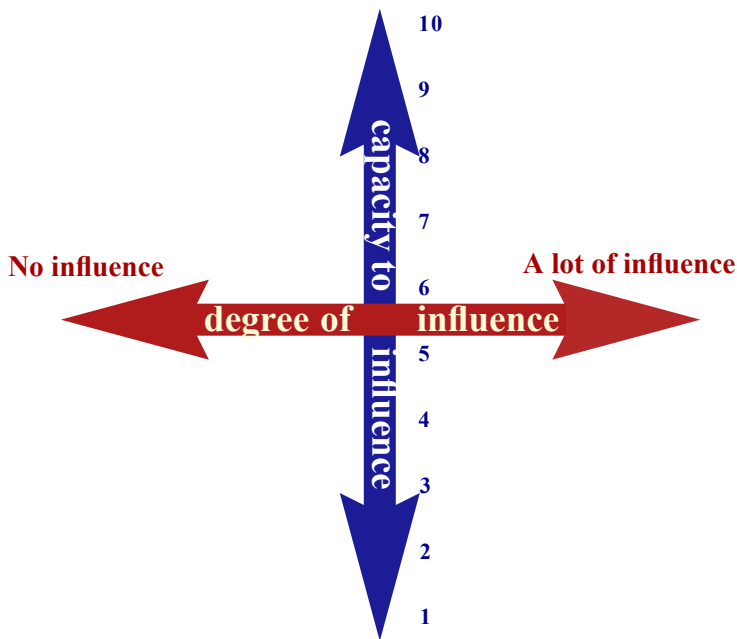
Dudley Community Empowerment Network - members and Board
Wolverhampton Third Sector Partnership
Neighbourhood Managers in Redcar & Cleveland
Refugee networks
Community Anchors - members of bassac and Development Trust Association in Yorkshire, the North East and London
Practitioners in Birmingham
Parish Councillors in Wiltshire (working with both Voice and echo)
Take Part Pathfinders - in the Black Country and nationally
Take Part Regional Champions: Birmingham, Solihull, Shropshire, Tamworth, Warwickshire, Coventry
LINKS

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Check out: www.changesuk.net for more information

for community groups and networks who want to increase their influence

What Voice looks like ...



On the vertical (blue) axis, **Voice** identifies 10 steps to influence - each of which has a title and a set of indicators. Groups explore each step and agree where they think the group is currently positioned in terms of its capacity to influence.

This could be about, for example: the skills of individual members, the way the group is organised and makes decisions, how the group communicates with others, what it does to ensure it does not exclude people from taking part, how the group is represented.

On the red (horizontal) axis, **Voice** encourages people in groups to talk about how influential they feel the group is - and explore why they feel like that: do you feel your group is very influential because it has had a lot of successes? Do you feel it is not very influential because you are not very clear what you are trying to achieve?

Voice then encourages groups to bring all this information together and plot where they think they are. This inevitably involves some discussion about strengths and areas for improvement. If you want to, you can then take this further, and use the information in **Voice** to agree how influential you would like to be and plan some actions to get there!

How you can connect with Voice - *what changes can offer*

The Taster - Voice introduction and overview

This is a half day presentation with participative exercises. It offers a brief outline of Voice for those who :

- May have heard about Voice and want to know more
- Want to 'have a go'
- Want to champion Voice within your own organisation
- Understand how Voice and echo interact



Voice work with groups - Facilitated Voice session/s with groups

Typically this is a full day with members of a community group, community network or voluntary sector organisation. Participants work through Voice together, in facilitated discussion to develop an initial action plan to increase their influence

Voice Facilitator Training

This is a 2-day course where people who already have facilitation skills and who already work with groups learn about Voice and how to deliver it. The 2 day course is complemented by a comprehensive resource pack. Participants are invited to join the 'Voice facilitators group' on the changes networking site and receive invitations to networking events.

Once they start working with Voice, people find all sorts of ways it can help them:

- A trainer has used it to frame a whole programme of course work
- A couple of organisations are working with Voice to help them attain particular 'Standards'
- Different groups are using it to help them work more collaboratively
- Groups are using it as an evaluation tool

At **changes**, we have been finding new ways of working with it as well - for example, using Voice to shape a funding proposal - it helped us to be clear, coherent and systematic about what we were saying. We have also used it consider the training needs of a local voluntary sector Assembly Board