

# Black Country Take Part Pathfinder

## Evaluation Report February 2011

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Please note that this report contains hyperlinks to websites. If you are reading a hard copy, please refer to the hyperlinks list in Appendix 1.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Our vision

**People and communities have influence over the decisions that affect their lives and that this influence is shaped by the values of participation, co-operation, social justice, equality and diversity**

## 1.2 Background and local context to the Pathfinder

The [Black Country Take Part Pathfinder](#) was based on 10 years of practice around women's leadership and participation in Wolverhampton and through work around influence with Dudley's Community Empowerment Network (Dosti). Those of us who had been involved in various ways wanted to continue to develop and offer our model to citizens to support active, critical citizenship.

A group of officers from the voluntary, community and faith sector and the statutory sector came together to see how we could continue work around this particular model and find funding to support this work. These agencies all contributed time and funding to buy in facilitation and guidance, through changes, in order to develop a plan to do this. We worked together for about 18 months in all and after some initial challenges, we were invited to put in an expression of interest to Communities and Local Government for the Take Part Pathfinder.

This invitation came because of the successful Active Learning for Active Citizenship initiative that some of us had been involved in about 4 or 5 years ago across the Black Country, led by changes. changes became our delivery partner and knowing the good work that was happening in Dudley around Voice and Echo and that Dudley wanted to run similar programmes of learning as well, we invited Dosti to join us. We had some initial meetings and telephone conversations with Walsall and Sandwell and decided that we would put in for a Black Country initiative.

Our reason for continuing to bring this work to the Black Country was because we have a collective vision of a cultural change about how citizens engage, feel empowered and take up their right to be able to influence the decisions that affect their lives. Those of us who were involved were lucky enough to work within organisations that are empowering and this meant that we could work in innovative ways and spend time exploring and reflecting on ideas and ways of working that otherwise might not happen.



After being awarded Pathfinder status, the initiative took on a life of its own. We were approached by Wolverhampton's New Deal for Communities and Wolverhampton LINK (Local Involvement Network). We had enquiries and requests from other projects in the region and became a Regional Take Part Champion. It has generated some real energy and we feel really privileged to have been a part of it.

The core planning and delivery group comprised of:

- [Wolverhampton Voluntary Sector Council](#) (lead partner)
- [Dosti](#)
- [changes partnership](#)
- [Wolverhampton City Council](#)
- [Wolverhampton Strategic Partnership](#)
- [Wolverhampton Learning Partnership](#)
- [Walsall Council](#)

### 1.3 Pathfinder priorities

The Black Country Take Part Pathfinder used an approach that encourages community empowerment to take place through putting the principles and values of community development into practice. If people in communities and public agencies are empowering and empowered, then it is more likely that we will see *authentic community engagement* taking place in different places and situations.

There were five priorities;

- empowered and empowering citizens
- empowered and empowering communities
- empowered and empowering public agencies
- all leading to authentic community engagement
- embed and sustain the approach of the Pathfinder in individual and organisation work practices so that the approaches are more likely to continue after the funding finishes.



## 2. Working with local communities

There were differing approaches to targeting for each of the priorities.

### 2.1 Empowered and empowering citizens

The work around empowered and empowering citizens was delivered through three critical citizenship learning programmes aimed at women only and one open access mixed gender learning programme.

Learning Programme	Number enrolled	Number completed
Women Take Part Mar 2009 – Dec 2009	20	17
Mixed course Sept 2009 – Apr 2010	17	11
Women Take Part Apr 2010 – Feb 2011	17	13
Women Take Part Sept 2010 – Mar 2011	17	13 expected

In addition using other funding levered in we delivered a learning programme for 18 residents of a [New Deal for Communities area in Wolverhampton](#) (a geographical community, mixed gender) and for 14 members of a learning programme for active members of [Wolverhampton LINK](#) (Local Involvement Network) – a community of interest mixed gender group.

### 2.2 Empowering and empowered communities and public agencies

The work around empowering and empowered communities and public agencies targeted community and voluntary groups who identified that they would like to become more influential. We also targeted people who felt able to make use of the Voice and echo frameworks in their current work context – either paid or unpaid.

### 2.3 Authentic community engagement

The work around authentic community engagement targeted individuals, community groups/organisations and people working in public agencies

### 2.4 Sustaining and embedding the pathfinder approach

The work around sustaining and embedding the pathfinder approach targeted people who could see something useful in the work of the Pathfinder which they could continue to use in the future, including participants of learning programmes.

## 3. Pathfinder delivery

### 3.1 Key activities

The Pathfinder encompassed work with individuals and community-based organisations and networks as well as public sector organisations and agencies.

There were five main delivery strands with defined activities related to them.

#### 1. Empowered and empowering citizens

Learning and support that build skills and confidence, within a community context – this relates to active shared learning leading to community leadership; increased individual and collective voices, action and influence. This involved:

- learning programmes
- support network

#### 2. Empowered and empowering communities

Initiatives for community and voluntary groups and networks around monitoring and increasing their capacity to influence. This involved:

- using the Voice framework with local groups and networks
- trained facilitators using the Voice framework with groups they work or volunteer with

#### 3. Empowered and empowering public agencies

Initiatives for public sector agencies to assess their openness to community influence using Echo. This involved:

- using the echo framework with public agencies
- trained facilitators using the echo framework in their work contexts

#### 4. Authentic community engagement

Joint dialogue across sectors and boroughs on the themes of active critical citizenship, community empowerment, involvement and engagement. This included:

- a buddying scheme for learning programme participants
- research in to opportunities for civic and civil involvement.

#### 5. Sustainability

Developing and supporting a pool of Take Part local facilitators through training, shadowing and provision of materials in relation to:

- the Take Part critical citizenship learning programme
- the Voice framework
- the echo framework
- facilitation skills

### 3.2 What we achieved - outputs

The following tables summarise the outputs for the Pathfinder

Activity/delivery strand	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Management and co-ordination – Delivery Group meetings	7 Delivery Group meetings 8 task and finish group meetings	11 Delivery Group meetings	12 Delivery Group meetings
Events – launch, round tables ...	Launch event, 54 participants	Round table event, 35 participants	Lord Speaker visit, approx 35 participants, Dissemination event to be held 26 March, 40 participants expected, Legacy event to be held 26 March, 60 participants expected
Reference Group	1 meeting, 20 participants	3 meetings	No meetings
Taster sessions for learning programmes	3 tasters, 36 participants		2 tasters, 16 participants
Events for learning providers	1 session, 6 participants from 5 organisations		2 events, 49 participants
Empowered and empowering citizens – learning programmes		2 learning programmes, 15 sessions, 39 participants, 2 residentials, 9 tutorials	2 learning programmes, 27 sessions, 37 participants, 2 residentials, 6 tutorials,
Support network events		2 events, 23 participants 1 session for buddies, 16 buddies	6 buddy sessions 2 EU field trips, 42 participants
Empowered and empowering communities - Voice	5 sessions, 41 participants from 16 organisations	15 sessions, 84 participants from 32 organisations	Ongoing activity in Wolverhampton and Dudley
Empowered and empowering agencies - Echo	1 workshop, 10 agencies	2 events, 45 participants, 14 agencies	Ongoing activity in Wolverhampton and Dudley
Joint dialogue	2 focus group meetings, 18 participants	3 focus groups, 16 participants	1 civic roles session, 8 participants, 1 structured dialogue session, 10 participants



Activity/delivery strand	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Voice and echo facilitator training		1 echo training course, 19 participants	2 Voice training courses, 1 echo training course,
Sustainability – facilitator training and mentoring		15 training sessions, 43 participants 2 mentoring sessions for Voice facilitators	15 training sessions, 48 participants 1 national networking event for Voice and echo facilitators, 40 participants Parliamentary Outreach training sessions

### 3.3 Evidence of impact and evidence of the application of learning

Through the work of our Pathfinder Reference Group and Delivery Group we developed outcomes and indicators for each delivery strand in our programme. These are detailed along with details of how we planned to collect baseline, formative and summative evidence in our [Pathfinder Evaluation Strategy](#). Our outcomes and indicators are based on:

- the five Community Empowerment Dimensions from the [DiCE evaluation and planning framework](#)
- the four Essential Ingredients in the national Take Part Framework for Active Citizenship Learning
- the national Take Part Pathfinder indicators and outputs

For ease of reference our outcomes and indicators are described in this section of the Evaluation Report or provided in appendices.

#### 3.3a Empowered and empowering citizens

We asked applicants to our learning programmes what their reasons were for wanting to join the course, how they anticipated using what they would learn and whether there were any obstacles for them.

The most often cited reasons for wanting to join the course were:

- To develop confidence
- To increase knowledge
- To develop skills
- Self-development
- To become more confident in public speaking
- To understand democracy
- To become involved/active in their communities

Our participants anticipated using their learning in a range of ways including:

- Better and more confident communication
- Working with others – informing, sharing, supporting
- Getting involved in decision-making, being a voice
- Influencing others
- Starting things in their communities
- Changing career

The most frequently cited obstacles (in order from highest frequency) were: childcare, transport, work commitments and illness. Other obstacles were pressure, disability, timing, motivation, using computers and family commitments.



Upon starting the course we asked learners about their hopes and fears, they also completed handouts to describe how they would like to feel during the course, what they want to learn, what they want to be able to do as a result. We also asked them to tell us what might get in the way of participating, what would help them to participate, things that might get in the way of their learning and what would help. All of this information was used by course facilitators to address individual needs and concerns. Summaries of responses to these questions are available on request from the Black Country Take Part Pathfinder Delivery Group.

A huge amount of formative evidence of the impact of the learning programmes has been collected, in the form of session round-ups, feedback sheets, worksheets, facilitator observations, tutorial discussions and outcomes monitoring. For the purposes of this Evaluation Report however we draw primarily on summative evidence comprising:

- Pathfinder evaluation forms based on our outcomes and indicators (see Appendix 2)
- Funder evaluation forms
- External telephone interview write-ups

At the end of February 2011 some of this evidence is unavailable; the table below indicates the evidence used for this report. Our intent is to update this section of this Evaluation Report in April 2011 to provide an analysis using the full set of data.

Evidence type	Available for	Not available for, and reason
Pathfinder evaluation forms	WTP1 MTP	WTP2: course ends 25/02/11 WTP3: course ends 18/03/11
CDF enrolment and evaluation forms	MTP	WTP1: enrolment form were not available at the start of this programme WTP2: course ends 25/02/11 WTP3: course ends 18/03/11
Sample telephone interviews	All courses	

Key:

- WTP1 Women Take Part Mar 2009 – Dec 2009  
MTP Mixed course Sept 2009 – Apr 2010  
WTP2 Women Take Part Apr 2010 – Feb 2011  
WTP3 Women Take Part Sept 2010 – Mar 2011

## Four essential ingredients - Pathfinder evaluation

20 participants from the first women’s course and the mixed course completed Pathfinder evaluation forms. We were interested in finding out what learners felt they had gained in terms of specific skills, knowledge and confidence in relation the 4 essential ingredients, and what they could do as a consequence.



The following tables indicate the proportions of them who feel they have gained specific skills, knowledge and confidence, and can apply their learning in the ways described. It is worth remembering that some learners felt they had some of the skills, knowledge of confidence prior to starting the course, so have only indicated those they felt they had gained. Others may have improved on their starting point, and so indicated that they had gained.

## Value your own skills

Gained – skills, knowledge and confidence	% of learners
Value your skills, knowledge and confidence	85%
Know where to go to get what you need	75%
Increase your communication skills, lobbying skills, negotiation skills	85%
Feel able to have a voice	70%
Recognise and develop skills in critical thinking	75%

What people can do as a consequence	% of learners
Identify and articulate your own issues and problems	75%
Take leadership roles in your community and in civic life	55%
Voice their concerns, contribute and ask questions in a public forum	70%
Prepared to challenge decisions constructively	55%
Want to, and feel capable of, having a responsible role in democratic structures and civic roles	50%
Feel able influence decisions	60%

The pathfinder evaluation forms invited feedback in relation to the above – here is what two participants told us:

*“Taking part on this course has helped my confidence as before I suppose being a career mom you don't feel valued as an individual – you're just someone's mom. Not that you don't value your role bit it's how society treats you as if you have nothing else to give or talk about. But on this course you're valued for the skills you have as well as being a mom and having a career.”*

*“I feel that as a result of the course, I am much more prepared to articulate an opinion (even a different one to everyone else!) at the professional meetings I attend to work and the political meetings I attend in a voluntary capacity. Recently I went to a partnership meeting to shape priorities for a 3 year cultural strategy for Dudley and was able to articulate a clear argument for an objective I felt was missing. I would not have had the confidence to do this previously.”*

## Know yourself through and with others

Gained – skills, knowledge and confidence	% of learners
Recognise that social exclusion is the responsibility of all	80%
Understand how their behaviour affects others	90%
Know the basis of inequality and how power operates	80%
Understand more about people who are different to themselves	85%
Know the importance of networking for influencing change	75%
Understand more about collective working and why it's important	75%

What people can do as a consequence	% of learners
Encourage fair and democratic decision making	70%
Connect to people different to themselves	80%
Take action against prejudice and discrimination	75%
Recognise that they may exclude people, knowingly or unknowingly	75%
Try to be fair	75%

Qualitative feedback from learners:

*"Prior to joining the course my knowledge was limited regarding inequality, and discrimination, although I knew it existed all around, the attitude was more of 'it doesn't/never affected me' however learning from the course shows how it affects individuals or a group of people, how their lives are impacted."*

*"The group consisted of women from different backgrounds, ages and ethnicities. Finding out more about women from different cultures and with different ideas to me helped my understanding of the concerns and issues and improved my understanding of inclusion, equality and diversity and the different problems women may face."*

*"I have learnt how to respect people's thoughts different to mine, and to prevent undermining them. I have learnt to appreciate sometimes I have undermined people knowingly and unknowingly, I have learnt how to deal with the situation in a more conservative way. I have learnt how to listen and understand others and to deal with situations in a more fairer way rather than what I think is right or wrong."*

*"I know that at times I have excluded others and as I know how it feels I will try to make a concerted effort not to exclude others."*

*"I am seeing a broader picture thanks to the course. It's made me think things through. Remembering others have different views and ideals. It's been great for making me go down avenues of thought I'd never done before."*

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

Gained – skills, knowledge and confidence	% of learners
Understand how groups/ networks work	55%
Understand how to encourage, support and develop volunteers	55%
Know how the external world operates	70%
Understand your current democratic position and the opportunities for change	60%
Understand the rules of engagement	50%
Know how meetings work	55%

What people can do as a consequence	% of learners
Take leadership roles in their community and in civic life	65%
Want to, and feel capable of, having a responsible role in democratic structures and civic roles	45%
Encourage fair and democratic decision making	60%
Take an active role at a neighbourhood / community level	60%

A sample of feedback from learners:

*“An important part of this topic has been the recognition of how power and decisions can be exerted away from the public arena, so being aware can highlight and expose it.”*

*“I work with volunteers and learnt to motivate them and keep them interested at work by offering them support and necessary training. I have joined a community cohesion group where relevant organisations meet up every 2 months and share interests, ideas and problems they have in the local community and update on activities.”*

*“Since the course, I have written to my MP and received a response based on her taking my enquiry to the foreign minister. I do not generally engage through such structures so this was a positive experience for me.”*

*“I am already a school governor and have had a desire to become a magistrate for many years. I now think this is something I will apply to do in the next couple of years.”*

*“I believe the increase in confidence from the benefit of learning and studying undertaken has put me in a good position to take a more responsible role in my voluntary work. The knowledge gained and practical experience gained has helped me to take a more responsible role within my work and this has resulted in greater trust and greater responsibilities passed on.”*

## Know where to go to get what you want

Gained – skills, knowledge and confidence	% of learners
Recognise how to influence policy and practice at a European, national, regional or local level	70%
Understand the barriers to participation	95%

What people can do as a consequence	% of learners
Voice concerns, contribute and ask questions in a public forum	60%
Prepared to challenge decisions constructively	50%
Overcome barriers to participation	75%

What learners said:

*"I feel I have so much to learn but I do now listen and take more interest of what is going on in the political world."*

*"I feel I have overcome some barriers and can ask questions in public and this is a big step for me."*

*"I have learnt what are the restraints and barriers of people participating in trivial and more complex situations. Getting people on board and past the initial nervous and lack of confidence stage. It's important to get people open to get involved and be more proactive."*

*"I believe I have the ability and confidence to get involved in a debate or discussion and give my opinions about issues and decisions. I have learnt the benefits and knowledge that can be gained from participating in team work or discussions, and how a more active involvement can affect the final outcome. I believe I have the belief and confidence to campaign on issues and concerns that are important to me and things that can make a change in a person's life."*

An analysis of quantitative data collected around delivery of the 4 essential ingredients highlights that all learners gained in each area, with different learners feeling they had gained different specific skills, knowledge and confidence. All felt more able to do things as a consequence of their learning. It appears from the data above that the course was incredibly effective in relation to learners understanding the barriers to participation, and understanding how their behaviour affects others. Learning around essential ingredient 3 – knowing how the external world operates and choosing where you want to be in it – had slightly less impact than learning around other essential ingredients, this may be looked at in future courses. It may also be easier to address if all learners are relate to the same local authority, for example, as specific detail could then be used.

The following two learner case studies are from phone interviews carried out as part of the Pathfinder evaluation.

## **Learner 1: What I learned whilst on the Pathfinder course**

I have benefited a lot [from the Women Take Part course]. When I started I did not have much idea of what it would involve. My problem was lack of confidence and experience in public speaking. But the course included sessions on assertiveness, team work and public speaking, and all of this was very useful. I learnt a lot from the two sessions about different behaviours, including the use of body language, and that was great.

Although I did not have much experience of working with others before attending the course, other people on the course had experience of different projects, and I learned a lot from them. We were given exercises where we had to talk about how they would deal with certain situations, and other participants were able to give examples from their own experience, which I found very useful.

I have learned about assertiveness, and about different methods of presentation. I was given different ideas about how to arrange meetings with the public and with different organisations. We had to give some presentations and to begin with I thought that I would not be able to do it, but by the time it got to me having to do it, I felt quite confident.

Most of what I learned was about local structures. That is my concern, rather than national issues. Many women locally are not involved in anything at all, and get no encouragement to do so, and my interest is to start from that and encourage them to get involved in courses, and help their children in the longer term. I would like ultimately to get them involved in issues with the council, but right now it is about getting them to be involved in their local community.

Before the course started I wanted to start a small women's group in my community, but did not know how to go about it – who to approach. The course introduced me to a number of projects and processes, such as how to bring people together, and this helped me a lot. I have almost organised the group and have organised a few events in the last few months. I organised a meeting with the Asian Women's Centre in Dudley – I would not have been able to do that if I had not attended the course. I have been able to prepare for the meeting, identifying what she wants from them.

**“I will strongly recommend this course to others”**

**“The whole course was very inspirational  
and informative”**

Quotes from learners

## Learner 2: What I learned whilst on the Pathfinder course

Looking at our own communities and how we can become involved, standing up for them and making them better for everyone. This helped me to identify my own self in the community and how I can play a part in influencing the decision making process to my area a better place to live. Also how important citizenship is, how we are all part of 'it' and identifying what we are in our community (and country) and what role we have to play. This made me realise that I didn't want to be an individual or active citizen, but a critical citizen, I feel that I want to stand up and make my voice heard and to play a part, collectively, in the decision making process.

I now know how important human rights legislation is and how it is able to stand up for everybody, regardless of who they are. How different charters of rights can be so different and also similar.

The course helped me to become a better communicator – realising where my weaknesses were and working on them and turning them into strengths. I said at the beginning of the course (I think even at the taster session) that I felt uncomfortable being a communicator, although I did identify my weakness of being too self-critical – always thinking that people listening to me were trying to find fault when really they were just listening. I believe that my communication skills have improved as the course progressed.

In group working I felt more confident as the course went on, being part of a group made me realise that each member is equal and we should encourage others to get involved and recognise and accept each others' point of view. This became more apparent at the residential when we did a lot of work as small groups, identifying leadership and making group decisions, and how to work together. The 'fantasy island' exercise was a good example. Although this was great fun it had a serious side as it taught us how we would need to produce outcomes with limited resources by making collective decisions.

I know and understand more about becoming involved in making decisions and, in this session I identified two local organisations who I felt fitted into the examples given to us. The ....Overview and Scrutiny Committee I considered was 'The Clique'; and the ....Partnership was the 'Silent Consensus' as I am a member of the .... Partnership, I now know that I have my part to play in making this group more influential and more forward thinking!

I am more aware of the structures of accountability in decision making (although some of those structures have already been abolished by the coalition government). I was surprised at how many levels there were and, at the bottom, what a long way up you have to go to influence more. One way of doing this effectively was by lobbying which I learned during the session on parliament. It was during this session when we watched live on TV at the case involving MPs and Lords being investigated for expense claims. I also found very interesting

the relationship with the Houses of Commons and Lords and the Monarch – how this relationship had developed over time and how they are involved in the law-making process.

I also learned about leadership skills, what makes a good leader, how to be effective in leading a team, treating the group with respect and gaining respect in the process. This made me realise that being a leader isn't about giving out orders but more about a leader of a group encouraging consensus, formulating decision making and standing by the decisions made and being supportive of the group.

I have appreciated during the course the importance of equality and equal rights. I have covered in my work this subject fairly well, but again this is something that I hadn't asked myself about before and has made me realise how important this topic is within my community and beyond.

I believe, therefore, that I have become better equipped to enable me to be a better citizen. I have more understanding since I began the course and I have appreciated the way I have been encouraged to consider how I fit within the big picture that has become my community, country and the world.

The residential sessions and field trips to the Houses of Parliament in London and to the European Parliament in Brussels had significant impact on learners.



## European Parliament Field Trips

41 of our learning programme participants had the opportunity to visit European Parliament in Brussels and meet officers from committees, lobbies and forums. Both visits took place in October 2010. The first visit was all women, and in their 3 day trip they:

- Visited the European Parliament building, received a talk about the European Parliament and observed discussions in the debating chamber
- Met Liz Lynne MEP and asked her questions about being an MEP
- Visited the European Economic and Social Committee and heard about their work
- Received presentations from the European Women’s Lobby and the European Disability Forum
- Visited the offices of the European Youth Forum and heard about their work
- The second visit, a mixed gender group also engaged in all of the above, except they met Philip Bradbourn MEP and his staff, instead of Liz Lynne.

Liz Lynne MEP posted a [news item about the visit](#) on her website.

**“So much is achieved and discussed there that really matters and very little seems to filter back to the UK”**

Participant’s feedback on her visit to European Parliament

Feedback from learning programme participants in relation to the trip highlighted the value of the European dimension in the learning programme.

*“The trip has challenged me to be more interested in what is happening beyond UK borders and how it will ultimately affect us and my local community”*

*“The joint sharing of this experience has inspired many insights and conversations about how as a group and individuals we can move forward out of poverty and social exclusion and take gender issues forward – working in a cooperative not competitive way under the threat of national and local cuts”*

*“It is a great feeling to be able to have a chance to go to Brussels and see for my own eyes what is happening behind the scenes and how important it makes your vote”*

As a result of these visits the representative from the European Disability Forum has been asked by Wolverhampton Voluntary Sector Council to share their experiences with equality groups the Black Country around joint lobbying with the other pan European equality forums in the form of the European Social Platform. The approach modelled by the European Social Platform could have significant relevance to local campaigning and influence.

### 3.3b Empowered and empowering communities

The vision for this strand of work was for community and community groups feel more influential. Voice is a framework which helps groups to assess how influential they feel and how they can develop their capacity to be more influential. The delivery of this strand of work in the Pathfinder shifted from delivering Voice sessions to community groups and networks, to providing Voice facilitation training to people who are in a position to deliver Voice to community groups and networks as part of their paid or unpaid work. Evaluation of Voice facilitator training is in section 3.3e - Sustaining and embedding the pathfinder approach.

In years one and two of the Pathfinder there were 14 Voice sessions undertaken with community and voluntary groups and networks in Dudley and Wolverhampton. Our Interim Evaluation Report (May 2010) contained evaluative information for this work. Because our Pathfinder is built on existing practice and activity we have embraced ongoing work across Dudley borough, where Voice was already in use, but has been used further thanks to the Pathfinder, and new activity in Wolverhampton, where Voice hadn't been used until the Pathfinder began. In year three of the Pathfinder, Voice sessions were facilitated by Voice facilitators newly trained through the Pathfinder: In total over the life of the Pathfinder 24 groups and networks have been supported to use Voice. They are listed here:

#### Wolverhampton

- Wolverhampton Third Sector Partnership
- Wolverhampton Community Forum
- Wolverhampton Voluntary Sector Forum
- Experts by Experience in Wolverhampton
- Two school governing boards
- Two Local Neighbourhood Partnership Boards

#### Dudley

- engAGING (network of older people's groups in Dudley)
- Action for Disabled People and Carers
- Shell Corner Partnership (a neighbourhood partnership)
- Dosti Executive
- Children, Young People and Families Network
- Community Associations
- Dudley Council for Voluntary Service
- Lye and Wollescote Partnership
- Dudley networks: Introductory Voice Session (3 networks and 1 group)
- Dudley Healthcare Forum
- Wychbury GP Patients Panel
- Beacon and Castle Cluster Patients Panel
- Emergency Care Forum

## Voice in practice

Wolverhampton Voluntary Sector Forum liked the systematic approach Voice offers for analysing where you are, identifying gaps and challenging assumptions. They recognised that Voice gets people, to open up and think differently – and to ask questions differently.

### **“The session was inspiring, I learnt a lot”**

Shell Corner Partnership found the sessions useful in valuing their capacity as a network which surprised them and made them feel more enthusiastic. All the networks who have worked with Voice have found it useful in taking time out to reflect on how they function and what they are trying to achieve. Many have used Voice as a springboard to action planning.

### **“Voice acknowledges positives”**

It has been interesting to discover through using Voice how many groups have never discussed their common aims and this has been recurrent in the Black Country. There are lots of instances when some people are very clear about vision, mission and/or aims and others just aren't at all – it has shocked some of the individuals we have worked with who have consequently made efforts to amend this. It raises the question – how can there be joint ownership if no-one has the same understanding of what they own?

### **“Voice is helpful because it helps you to work out where to pitch your energy”**

Voice has also helped networks to think about celebrating their success more. Voice helps them to recognise what they have achieved.

### **“It provides motivation to make change and a difference”**

A developmental process which was not directly funded through the Pathfinder is instructive in relation to outcomes when using Voice. Voice was used with Wolverhampton Voluntary Sector Forum and Wolverhampton Community Sector Forum in order to help both networks plan how to become more influential. The development gaps that were identified through this led to the recognition that they had to work together more effectively and, as a consequence, they have formed a new infrastructural platform – the Wolverhampton Third Sector Partnership, which has made use of Voice as an initial development tool and continues to use Voice as a development tool. Networks in Dudley also use Voice as a development tool, for some it is written in to their plans and they make time for review and reflection using Voice.



### **3.3c Empowered and empowering agencies**

The vision for this strand of work was for public agencies to be more open to community influence. echo is the sister framework to Voice and has its roots in the action research and collaboration which lead to Voice. As such it was at an earlier developmental stage than Voice when we started Pathfinder activity, and could not be rolled out in the same way.

We took opportunities to add to and develop our work around this strand and utilise other funding available to further develop ideas and action. Discussions around echo, sparked by the Pathfinder, together with the echo development work supported through the West Midlands Improvement and Efficiency Partnership led to Wolverhampton Partnership committing funding to develop echo facilitator training, resources and support. Evaluation of echo facilitator training is in section 3.3e - Sustaining and embedding the pathfinder approach.

An echo workshop was held in Dudley in May 2009, attended by over 40 officers from a range of public and voluntary sector organisations. This was funded by Dosti. Following this, Dudley Children's Trust piloted Echo with their Participation Board in November 2009 and part of the cost of this was funded by the Pathfinder. Following echo facilitator training through the Pathfinder, two officers from Dudley delivered an echo session with Dudley PCT commissioners, in November 2010.

Pathfinder funding was used to host an Echo event in January 2010 to 38 officers from 10 public agencies in Wolverhampton. Subsequently, scoping was carried out with regard to a Pathfinder echo implementation site in the city. The echo pilot became the Commissioning Board for Housing Support and Social Inclusion with links to Experts by Experience. (See echo in practice – Wolverhampton below)

## Echo in practice – Dudley Children’s Trust

Dudley Children’s Trust is the key strategic partnership that co-ordinates the delivery of services to children and young people across Dudley Borough. For many years there has been a Participation sub-group meeting as part of the Trust. Officers involved in this sub-group volunteered to pilot echo with the group. The echo session in Dudley was facilitated by changes. A number of participants made comments with regards to the need for good facilitation. The facilitator needs to be skilled and confident enough to run the session in an exploratory way and allow the group to take the direction it needs to go in.

Five members of the Participation Board attended including the chair. They wanted to use echo as a discussion tool to review and evaluate whether group was working to its full potential and engaging in an empowering way and to identify its effectiveness. echo was also used to explore the advantages and disadvantages in restructuring and revisiting the groups aims and to set future objectives.

On the whole the majority of participants felt that echo was easy to understand and easy to apply however, some of the wording was a bit unwieldy. echo provided a framework to direct people’s thoughts and reflections and ‘allow’ people to say things which they may not have otherwise said. It encouraged a wider view on things and allowed everyone involved to have a say. echo helped participants consider a whole range of risks – obvious ones such as funding and resources, the structure of the board etc. as well as less obvious ones such as different understandings of concepts and terminology, poor communications mechanisms, and lack of strong leadership. The main risk identified was that unless there is strong leadership, the Board will become marginalised and isolated because individuals and agencies won’t feel it is effective.

echo gave a foundation and starting point from which to begin to overcome the issues of effectiveness. It identified a number of key issues through discussions. The framework helped people to be honest and frank about the current position and to suggest issues which need to be addressed. Also, by discussing factors identified in the echo framework it helped to highlight other fundamental issues which need to be addressed.

*“echo is a very positive model and has a way of getting an organisation to have a good look at itself – how it works and doesn’t – then to come through with strengths and opportunities.”*

All participants said they would use echo in the future. They felt it could be used for a range of things with a range of groups e.g. to think about how open to influence their particular programmes of work are or team is. It could also be used to measure the impact of participation and to analyse consultation.

## Echo in practice – Wolverhampton

The Commissioning Board for Housing Support and Social Inclusion participated in an echo workshop in June 2010. At this session Board members explored the following:

- why community influence matters to their Board
- what influence means for the Board
- what 'community' means for the Board
- their current potential as a Board to respond to community influence
- the factors which impact on their potential to respond to community influence
- how open to community should the Board be
- how open to community influence they are currently

The rationale for using echo at this session was to review the Terms of Reference for the Board and to consider how they might need to change to elicit further community involvement and influence. In the end, the Board decided that they needed to connect with Experts by Experience to hear from them how influential they felt and why. Consequently a Voice workshop was offered to Experts by Experience.

### Conclusions from the day

The Commissioning Board needs to build on the things that they already do, and do them better:

- develop the potential/capacity of the experts panel, including the service users 'behind the panel'
- develop the position of the expert panel in the influence structure, considering processes and routes to influence
- maximise on people who are new to the Board – have an induction/introduction process where members of the Board meet the experts
- work on how to evidence community influence – especially to the communities themselves
- plan much further ahead – 5 years in line with the strategy – to give people optimum time to research the subjects

### What members of the Board said about echo

*"really useful to consciously think"*

*"the [echo] model made sense to me"*

*"made me think about influence and how importance it is and how it needs to be managed"*

*"useful to spend time with Board members and find out we are roughly on the same page"*

### 3.3d Authentic community engagement

The Pathfinder has developed several initiatives to bring the different 'sides' together to inform debate and discussion around the barriers, support and drivers to greater communication, engagement, influence and democratic accountability. These included a Reference Group, Joint Dialogue sessions, civic roles work and a buddying scheme for learners. Each is evaluated below.

#### Reference Group

This was set up for stakeholders with interest in being involved in the Take Part Pathfinder from both the public sector and voluntary, community and faith sector organisations. [Reference Group Terms of Reference and meeting notes](#) are available on the Pathfinder website.

The group met four times in the first 12 months of the Pathfinder.

- The first session used DICE as a tool to begin to develop the Pathfinder's evaluation framework. Key priorities were agreed and some initial indicators discussed.
- At the second meeting some further work was done on developing indicators. Participants also had an opportunity to input their ideas about the buddying scheme.
- The third session explored if structured dialogue could be an appropriate method to develop the joint dialogue sessions.
- The final session in December focussed on the theme of 'recruitment' to civic roles, buddying and the Voice and Echo training.

The composition of the reference group was very fluid from meeting to meeting, meaning that participants had different levels of understanding. This was mitigated by ensuring that the basics of the Take Part approach and programme were covered in each meeting. Attendance at the meetings have been reasonably consistent with 14 at the first, 10 at the second, 11 at the third and 7 at the fourth, with Dudley members being in the majority for all but the final meeting.

On the third and fourth sessions, members of the Joint Dialogue group were invited to attend the meetings whilst the future of Joint Dialogue was resolved. This brought a different dynamic to the meeting as the majority of Joint Dialogue attendees were community activists who had a strong interest in sharing their frustrations about engagement.

The reference group was a great way to share practice and learning about the Take Part Pathfinder in the initial 12 months. However, we agreed to dissolve the Reference Group and consequently developed a targeted communications strategy to raise awareness of the Pathfinder across organisations in the Black Country.



## Joint Dialogue meetings

This programme of meetings was formed with the intention of bringing together participants from the community, voluntary and faith sector and the public sector with a view to sharing understanding and awareness about what is working and the blocks and barriers to community engagement.

In March 2009 two joint dialogue sessions were hosted, one in Dudley and one in Wolverhampton. [Notes are available on the Pathfinder website](#). The key messages arising from the first joint dialogue sessions were that, whilst activists remained passionate about the work they did, they experienced profound frustration due to the barriers that they faced in making a real difference for their communities.

In year three of the Pathfinder we explored the possibility of using a 'structured dialogue' methodology with the joint dialogue group. Links were made with the Chamberlain Forum in Birmingham who was keen to pilot the technique in the Black Country. However, the funding they had anticipated receiving did not materialise.

After fairly lively first sessions we were unable to progress joint dialogue with the resulting risks of raising participants' expectations and failing to deliver. We may have been guilty of putting all of our efforts into a methodology over which we ultimately had no control so, when the Chamberlain Forum experienced funding difficulties, we were unable to progress further. We hadn't anticipated this risk or put any contingencies in place, a clear lesson for the future.

## Civic roles

The core of the Take Part programme is about helping people to develop into 'critical citizens', to be able to constructively challenge in a variety of situations in order influence decision-making cross the Black Country. Policy directives at that time from Government supported this direction of travel with the introduction of the Duty to Involve, Duty to Promote Democracy, and National Indicator 4 – the percentage of people who feel able to influence decisions in their area.

In order to address this issue and make civic engagement opportunities more accessible, the Pathfinder Delivery Group agreed that they would map opportunities for civic engagement. This work was completed in 2009 with the intention of producing a printed guide for residents on the various civic and civil engagement opportunities available.

Once work began on this initiative a number of issues began to emerge:

- It would be very difficult to take account of issues of power and the so-called 'zapper' effect in any printed documentation – a central theme of the Pathfinder programme. To

omit this dimension could be in conflict with the rest of the programme and could lead directly to the disempowerment of any individuals recruited via this route.

- Any printed documentation would quickly be out of date as new opportunities emerge or existing ones change.
- Emerging research on volunteer recruitment shows that sending the message out to as broad an audience as possible is far less effective than targeted recruitment and using people already connected to the organisation in some way.

A link was established with the Volunteer Centres in Dudley and Wolverhampton with a view to having the 'guides' lodged with the volunteer centres in a loose leaf format. These would be inexpensive to produce and could be easily updated. In addition the Volunteer Centres would be in a position to promote these opportunities as part of the work that they deliver.

Subsequently, representatives of the Volunteer Centres in Walsall and Sandwell expressed an interest in the project and a meeting was convened on the 27<sup>th</sup> January 2010. In attendance were coordinators from three volunteer centres and representatives from West Midlands Police. A number of useful suggestions were made at the meeting, mostly pertaining to support for volunteers including extending the newly emerging Pathfinder buddying scheme to support civic role volunteers. It was also agreed to prepare contact lists of civic role opportunities in each locality and find out if they have vacancies for volunteers.

In the meantime work commissioned by Wolverhampton Partnership was developed. A local social enterprise, Strategies for Social Inclusion (SfSI), undertook to research what works best in recruiting and supporting people into civic roles, with a particular emphasis on the African-Caribbean community. The focus was on the African Caribbean community.

The civic roles which SfSI concentrated on were magistrates, school governors and the board of the local college. They conducted their research between September and November 2010. They interviewed staff and volunteers from school governing bodies, the magistrates court and Wolverhampton College.

The research found that volunteers had a number of negative perceptions about entering civic roles, many of which are incorrect. A common perception about becoming a magistrate, for instance, is that a law degree is mandatory. This resulted in a lack of confidence that people could actually take up these roles. There also appeared to be a lack of trust that taking up the roles made a difference and made a positive contribution. The accessibility of civic role opportunities was an issue for some volunteers e.g. the timing of some opportunities could clash with childcare arrangements or language could be a barrier. There was some evidence that there was a lack of encouragement to take up or continue to undertake civic roles. Some volunteers were deterred by what they perceived to be bureaucratic routes to becoming a volunteer. The process for doing so did not appear open or transparent to them.

Recruiters to civic roles appeared to have little understanding of the broader Wolverhampton communities or the makeup of the City. There was also little awareness of the various groups and networks that would enable them to access communities of geography, interest or identity. Previously Wolverhampton Race Equality Council (WREC) had provided a function in signposting BME residents to civic role opportunities. Since the closure of WREC, no-one had fulfilled this role. The percentage of BME residents in civic roles appears extremely low. For instance, just 8% of school governors are from a BME background. There is some evidence to suggest that of those people from BME backgrounds, who are active in civic roles, most come from a business setting.

There was a feeling amongst some recruiters (and communities) that there was more of culture of volunteering within BME communities e.g. within the Temple than within civic roles. This assertion was by no means universal. Recruiters felt that the jargon attached to many civic roles was off-putting to potential volunteers. They also felt that civic roles were not valued in Wolverhampton.

Recruiters would like to see more ongoing support for volunteers, possibly through a buddying or mentoring system. There was broad agreement that greater coordination amongst recruiters would be beneficial, who could share a recruitment programme and share communications functions.

The following recommendations have arisen out of the research:

1. Recruiters are more explicit about what is required and, through the provision of information and the opportunity for discussion, enable potential volunteers to assess if the opportunity is suitable for them.
2. The profile of civic role opportunities should be raised across the city. Improved publicity should be developed and the opportunities for people to discuss the opportunities with no obligation face to face.
3. There is support for people considering and undertaking civic role opportunities on an ongoing basis. Induction and one to one sessions should be conducted as a matter of course
4. That the civic role providers involved in this research are brought together to discuss their willingness to pilot an approach that would coordinate role descriptions, training programmes, publicity and recruitment.

Work has now been completed to identify the barriers to people taking up and staying in civic roles and a Civic Roles Framework has been developed. The findings were presented to a group of Black Country stakeholders in November 2010. At this meeting it was determined to pilot the framework with a group of providers, and a meeting has been arranged for March 2011 to discuss recruitment, training and development of volunteers, utilising the expertise of the Volunteer Centre. Following the pilot, it is hoped to roll out the programme to the rest of the Black Country.



## Buddying

It took six months to make the buddying idea a reality. Initially we began by focusing on a peer buddy system, developing a buddy pool from amongst learning programme participants. After speaking with participants, we changed to develop a buddy pool of people from different sectors and positions who could offer specific information and support to participants on learning programmes.

Numbers involved:

- Numbers of buddies: 24
- Numbers of people wanting buddies (individuals on learning programmes): 16
- Number of buddy pairings made: 16

The buddying initiative was evaluated through external anonymous interviews with three buddy pairs and written feedback sheets circulated to all buddies and people who wanted buddies. Given the very short timescale, only four of these forms were returned.

Through this we have learned that

- For some the initial pairing process was fine, others wanted more support at this stage
- Buddies meet in different ways to suit their pair, in person or over the phone, for one to two hours
- The buddying contract developed with buddies has been useful and easy to use
- Overall the buddy relationship is excellent and buddies have gained something for themselves by being involved
- Generally buddies feel it is time well spent and consequently carve out space in a busy schedule for these meetings
- One buddy noted that they had not agreed an end date and doesn't know when it will stop
- One buddy has devised a form to capture what had been discussed and what needs to be the next focus – space for both to give opinions
- For one buddy there are tensions around boundaries as she is unable to advocate on behalf of service users of her own organisation.

Here's what some buddies said:

*"She's said things that make me realise I haven't considered something enough. It's easy sometimes to hear the public sector agenda, and it's been a really good opportunity to be reminded of the challenges facing the voluntary and community sector"*

*"The other thing for me is having the opportunity to just reflect on what you are doing. This has been a really good chance to think, and compare the theory with the practice. It's given me a chance to get something that I wasn't getting from other relationships around here. It's having the time, and spending it with someone with strong views!"*

*"I work amongst partnerships and if I have any power it's the power to influence and persuade, so it's been really useful to reflect on some of this and do things differently at times. I've been able to be challenged, and re-think how I do things."*

*"If it had been mentoring someone in a managerial position, it would have been different. It's been fine, but different from what I expected. The person I'm with is very open and able to express herself, and we recognise in each other that humanity that was needed to deal with her issues. In that way it was a very good match, and I don't know whether that was by chance or by design."*

One buddy is paired with a member of her organisation's governance group

*...which is the voice of our service users, in terms of how we deliver our services and how the programme is implemented. So that has its advantages and disadvantages. It means that I can help her with understanding the role of the group and what her role within that can be and the different things that she can do.*

*When we discussed the buddying contract, one of the things she wanted to do was to work on her role on governance – of our organisation and that of another organisation. And we have been able to do that. We've worked on how she can be influential, and on regional and national issues. So she is more clear on what the group is needed for and the decision making process. External interview*

Those who volunteered to be buddies wanted:

- An informal relationship where I could share my knowledge and experience
- To gain knowing someone else was also gaining
- To support someone else
- To be closer to the Take Part project and find someone who would like to be involved in their organisation
- to be challenged and to gain insight into the VCS in their area

They felt that want they wanted had been delivered through the process, as well as things they didn't expect:

- Buddies had to know what they were talking about and explain things – it increased their own understanding of policies and drivers – they went through things together to make sense
- The personal support aspect surprised one buddy and she honed her coaching skills
- One buddy was challenged and reflected then and changed what they do
- It built ongoing relationship across sectors

Learners paired with buddies feedback the following:



- Appreciation of their buddy's time, energy and commitment – and accommodation of their needs
- One learner reported that ideas and reading materials are circulated between the buddy pair in advance for discussion at the next meeting

*"I felt we were on a very equal footing, the first meeting XX said she would learn as much from me as I would learn from her. So I started with an equal relationship and felt very comfortable. It wasn't hierarchical and it shouldn't be."*

*"The formal budding sessions may cease then however the working relationship we have built has provided opportunities for further communication"*

Learners wanted the following from the matching:

- Confidence to talk in public and conduct myself in formal situations
- Understanding the work culture and structure of another organisation – the way things work
- Support for self in managing a health condition and to share and bounce ideas with

All feel they have got what they wanted, and in addition told us that it was more helpful than they first thought it could be.

*"It benefits me to know that my Buddy has also gained from the experience ."*

### **3.3e Sustaining and embedding the pathfinder approach**

Originally this aspect of the Pathfinder focused on the development of facilitators who could facilitate the learning programme. However, given changes to our delivery plan around empowered and empowering communities and public agencies, the training and support of Voice and echo facilitators can be considered under this heading. In this way, we can consider how our model of change can be sustained after the Pathfinder.

This strand of work was evaluated through:

- Application forms
- End of sessions feedback
- Trainer feedback
- Feedback at end of course
- Trainer feedback
- Evaluation forms

Facilitator training and support was delivered to support strands of work linked to our model of change. Delivery of sessions and workshops was supplemented by materials and resources – hard copies and electronic, which were available on the Pathfinder website. In addition, virtual networking space was organised was offered for Voice and echo facilitators upon completion of the training.

#### **Facilitators - empowered and empowering citizens**

We delivered learning and support that would build skills and confidence in others to deliver aspects of the learning programmes within a community context. The Learning Programme Facilitator Module was a series of four day workshops in which previous learning programme participants used the Four Essential Ingredients framework to reflect on their own experience of the programme in terms of outcomes and process. They then considered issues around their facilitation and delivery. This reflective and experiential process generated much rich evaluative information.

The first course, delivered in year 2, attracted 9 facilitators (3 from Wolverhampton, 3 from Dudley and 3 from Birmingham).

The second course, in year 3, also attracted 9 facilitators (3 from Wolverhampton, 2 from Dudley 3 from 3 Birmingham through Regional Take Part Champions and 1 from Derbyshire)

A total of four evaluation forms were completed from first cohort. We will send out evaluation forms to year three cohort two months after the end of the course. The following is feedback with regard to the specific aims of the Learning Programme Module.

(a) Recognise the value of the Four Essential Ingredients (4EIs) in developing critical citizenship for themselves and others they will work with. Feedback suggests that participants achieved this:

*I think the 4EIs was a really valuable way of understanding and developing critical citizenship. As an approach, it made sense to me and seemed to be a useful model for sharing and working with others*

*They form the foundation of good learning and human interaction, knowing and valuing yourself, knowing yourself in relation to others, understanding your environment and how to work within it and the routes you need to take to get what you want*

*I think this was covered incredibly well and thoughtfully, and in writing about 'my learning journey' for the Pathfinder event on 27 January it was very clear how each of the ingredients had led to learning for me, and how all of my learning on the course related back to the essential ingredients. I am aware that in thinking about rolling out Take part in Dudley that I am probably not paying enough attention to the essential ingredients, as it is so easy to look at the course content and simply chunk it up. This reflection is useful and should help me to consider the value of the essential ingredients in my plans for Dudley.*

(b) Feel confident in their ability, levels of knowledge and awareness to deliver this approach. Feedback suggests that this is a complex area; the more you know, the more you feel that don't know. The course has done its utmost to prepare facilitators and the acid test is delivering it to the standard you set yourself.

People generally feel more affinity to particular aspects of the learning programme. There was discussion about teaming up with someone else to deliver and plug the gaps.

*I am not sure that I will ever feel 100% confident about delivering the learning programme. I have tried to identify why that is. I am not sure whether it is to do with my own confidence, or whether it is to do with knowledge and skills. My experience of delivering this programme so far is that I am often underprepared and I think that doesn't help my levels of any of the above. I really believe in this learning programme, but I do feel that the facilitators need a particular essence. I am not sure whether I have that. I really think the only way to find out is to deliver a whole course from beginning to end and then see how participants feel. If I don't give them the 'service' that we have come to expect from this learning programme, then I will know the answer.*

*To a certain extent it has made me less confident as I am concerned about not doing a good job. But I think when I do facilitate a learning programme again, I think I will be better for having done the course and my confidence will grow and be stronger because of it.*

*I feel more confident in relation to some content than to some other parts, however in relation to the approach I feel reasonably confident. I am more comfortable facilitating than formally training, my concern is around the sorts of issues that may arise or be discussed and my lack of experience of working with those issues. I would benefit from a greater awareness of equalities issues, so I will endeavour to read more and listen to people more in the hope of learning more and becoming more aware. I hope that some of this will develop with time and by locating myself in the right sort of work activities and groups.*

(c) Understand the approach is a non linear process – it spirals out and builds on issues as the course progresses. Feedback suggests that participants have grasped this idea and understood the implication regarding delivery.

*I grasped the concept of this and found it a very powerful way to work. It felt like a holistic approach as opposed to a traditional educational approach. This makes it more difficult to quantify but I think in many ways fits much better with the way people/adults learn as it makes links to people's own experiences and those of the other participants.*

*I completely understand this – and the learning doesn't stop when the course does! Also, for me, as much if not more of the building on issues was taking place outside the learning programme as was during the sessions.*

*Much of my learning on this course has taken me through Kolb's learning cycle over and over again, as I have tried out different things, for example around behaving assertively. The recommended books really helped, as they are something to help you plan action, motivate you take action and return to when you need support again. (I have used the assertiveness book a lot, and the presentation skills book a couple of times.)*

(d) Become familiar with the resources used in the learning programmes and feel able to adapt them to suit particular groups. Feedback suggests that this has been achieved with some re-organisation and re-interpretation on the part of participants. They would have come across the handouts during their own participation in the learning programme.

*Yes to some extent – I could do with really going through them and putting them in a file with the key points to get out of the day and exercises etc. This is happening and it will do so even more, I think, when I am delivering a course.*

*I already felt quite familiar with the resources, and do a little more so following the facilitator training. I still have background reading to do (e.g. Lukes) to fully understand and feel confident explaining some resources. I feel more than happy about adapting resources, my primary adaptations would be to add some questions to help participants use resources for critical thinking.*

## Applying the learning

Four of the year two facilitators delivered learning programmes in year three: two women delivered courses for women as part of Birmingham Take Part and two others co delivered one Pathfinder year three learning programme.

The year three course has just ended and participants plan to deliver aspects of the learning programme in Birmingham, Dudley, and Wolverhampton - and possibly in Derbyshire. The current environment, triggered by the spending cuts, is limiting opportunities for putting this into practice.

### **Facilitators - empowered and empowering communities:**

We delivered learning and support that built capacity and confidence to work with the Voice framework with groups. This strand of work consisted of a pre course induction to the Pathfinder approach, two day sequential workshop with a follow up session. Participants had to complete an application form to ascertain their understanding around community engagement and their facilitation skills and experience. People were asked to specify how they would use Voice, and with which groups in advance of the module delivery. Online networking support was offered to graduates of the training.

Year two: the two days took place in November 2009, with a follow up in January 2010 and an evaluation follow up session in March 2010. A pre course meeting to induct participants into the Pathfinder approach took place in September 2009. 15 facilitators participated, 8 from Wolverhampton, 3 from Dudley, 2 from Sandwell, 1 from Walsall and 1 from Birmingham.

Year three: the two days took place in June 2010 with a follow up in September 2010. Previous Voice facilitators were also invited to the follow up (This was a national Voice and echo facilitator networking meeting) A pre course meeting to induct participants into the Pathfinder approach took place in May 2010. 20 facilitators participated: 12 from Wolverhampton, 2 from Dudley, 1 from Walsall, 4 from Solihull and 1 from Coventry, with the latter 5 through Regional Take Part Champions.

An external impact analysis evaluation was carried out between December 2010 and Feb 2011 and all those who participated in Pathfinder Voice facilitation were contacted and followed up. The following is from the evaluation.

(a) How Voice has been used

Voice facilitators have shared experiences relating to them using voice in practice with groups in 24 settings, with 12 people offering their reflections as people who have been trained in Voice but have never used it with groups. Of those facilitators who had used voice with groups (a total of 24), they have used it as follows:

Use of Voice	Number of instances
At an away day	1
As part of an evaluation	1
As a taster session	1
Not known	1
In workshop sessions –using the whole voice framework	10
In workshop sessions – using part of the voice framework	10

(b) What was voice used to do?

Of the 24 settings where voice has been used with groups, all were related to raising awareness of voice and of influence and reviewing the group/organisation and structures in some way, so as to enable it to enhance its ability to influence. The tables below provide an overview of the key reasons why people used voice and a summary of those reasons:

Reason	Number of instances
To raise awareness of voice and explore influence	5
To map the influence people / groups have	5
To increase organisational capacity to influence	5
To help to measure the thriving third sector	3
To better understand the organisations aims and objectives / direction	3
To encourage commitment from group members	1
To evaluate activity/group	1
To scan where you fit in with the external world	1

Summary of reasons	Number of instances
Development of the organisation	9
Assessment and planning for influence	7
Exploring influence	5
Evaluation and review	2
External scanning	1

(c) Themes related to the impact of voice

The Take Part Pathfinder participants provided a range of information relating to the impact of voice and the challenges they have faced using the framework. The analysis breaks this down as it relates to the facilitator, the group and the groups beneficiaries. However, the following table provides an overview of the most frequently occurring types of issues raised throughout those contributions (there were many more raised once each).

Theme	Occurrence
Action/development planning/ organisational development	7
The importance of confidence	6
Needing opportunities to work with group with voice	6
The opportunities for reflecting	4
The importance of networking	4
Promoting collective working	4
Promoting visioning	3
Recognising the need for support from others	3
Promoting joint working / partnership working	3
Using voice for training needs analysis / skill development	3
Recognising the importance of co facilitation	2
The importance of communicating	2
The role of voice in prioritisation	2
Promoting voice as a useful tool	2
Helping to understand the group	2
Not known	2
Using voice to guide development days	2

(d) Impact on facilitators

Respondents reported that the impact of being a voice facilitator and working with voice was:

- They gained knowledge during the training and more confidence to work with groups
- It helps to empower individual workers supporting groups
- It offers a flexible framework and a useful tool
- It helps to encourage people to reflect
- That it is a framework that is capable of bringing about change
- But:
- It was difficult to get buy in to use it
- The facilitator needs the confidence to be able to challenge



(e) Impact on practice.

Respondents indicated that Voice has been used to inform their practice by:

- Acting as an analytical tool and informing business planning, work prioritisation, and training needs analysis
- Helping to back up emotional responses and to step outside of the emotion
- Writing it into their organisations support tool box
- Using it to inform the development of a protocol for a board
- Establishing a strategy group to monitor the usage of voice

(f) Impact on the organisation using Voice

Respondents reported a number of immediate impacts on the organisations they were using voice with.

From an internal/organisational perspective these included

- Recognising the need to network and connect with others to increase influence
- Enabling actions to be embedded in the work of the organisation as voice is used as an annual planning tool & having better planning processes overall
- Enabling a better understanding of the group and individual needs
- Helping to see how to work better with public sector bodies
- Realising that a robust vision/aim was not in place & helped redefine mission and vision & for the organisation to see where is meant to be going..!
- Helped with decision making and prioritisation
- Helped to identify good practice and achievements to date
- Enabled people to reflect and see where they are
- Encouraged people to stay involved with the group

And in relation to external activity it has:

- Helped to hold public authorities to account
- Been used to underpin funding bids

(g) Barriers to working with voice

Respondents were asked to share the barriers they experience in being able to work with voice with groups and organisations. The barriers identified were: lack of capacity and time; changes in the external and work context; difficulty in arranging a sessions; lack of own confidence to use voice & no opportunities to use/unable to identify suitable groups.



(h) Support to work with voice

Respondents were asked to indicate what support, if any, they required to be able to start or indeed continue working with voice. People suggested that they needed: a refresher around voice to build confidence; a network to keep in touch with people and the continued support of colleagues; the opportunity to co-facilitate; access to appropriate groups to use voice with (including through networking and peer to peer support).

(i) Future work with voice

Respondents were asked to provide any ideas or plans they have for working with voice in the future and the responses show that voice is seen to be relevant when: working with elected members; as part of development days / planning sessions for networks/groups; when developing protocols; as a key tool in the organisational support package available to groups; working with a range of children and young people focused strategic forums; working with residents and women's groups

As well as the above it has been suggested that a network for voice facilitators will be established (within a particularly locality).

## **Facilitators - Empowered and empowering public agencies**

We provided learning and support that built capacity and confidence to work with the echo framework with groups. Participants had to complete an application form to ascertain their understanding around community engagement, their facilitation skills and experience. This strand of work consisted of a two day sequential workshop with a follow up session. People were asked to specify how they would use echo in advance of the module delivery. Online networking support was offered to graduates of the training.

Year two: the two days took place in March 2010 with a follow up in September 2010. (This was a national Voice and echo facilitator networking meeting). 19 facilitators were trained: 10 from Wolverhampton; 4 from Sandwell; 1 from Walsall; 2 from Solihull; 1 from Tamworth and 1 from Birmingham (the last 3 area being Regional Take part Champions).

Year three: the two days took place in November 2010 with no follow up as yet provided. 18 facilitators were trained, 7 from Wolverhampton; 2 from Dudley; 2 from Solihull; 1 from Birmingham; 1 from Tamworth; 2 from Warwickshire; 1 from Tameside; 1 from Derbyshire; and 1 from Somerset .

An external impact analysis evaluation was carried out between December 2010 and February 2011 and all those who participated in Pathfinder echo facilitation were contacted and followed up.



(a) How echo has been used

Echo facilitators have shared experiences relating to echo in practice, with groups in 7 settings, with 15 people offering their reflections as people who have been trained in echo but have never used it with agencies/organisations.

Of those facilitators who have used echo with groups (a total of 7), only on 1 occasion has the whole echo framework been used with an agency and organisation, whereas on 4 occasions part of the framework has been explored and on 2 occasions a presentation on echo has been delivered.

(b) What was echo used to do?

Of the 6 settings where echo has been shared and talked about, the purpose fell into the following areas:

- To assess openness/responsiveness to influence and agree actions/interventions to remove barriers
- To raise awareness of echo and seek commitment for its future use
- To encourage agencies/organisations to think creatively about community engagement

(c) Themes addressed by echo

As part of the exploration of impact, the themes or issues that echo relates to or is able to work with or respond to is as follows:

Theme	Occurrence
Getting buy in from agencies	7
Using echo to support challenges	4
Having the opportunity to use echo	4
Exploring the context	3
Offering a chance for reflection	3
The importance of co-facilitating	2
The need for commitment	2
The lack of spare time	2
The confidence to use echo	2
Exploring cultural change	1
Promotion of echo	1
Exploring the way forward	1
Refresh for facilitator	1
Promoting partnership working	1
Echo as a Quick fix!	1
Sharing different perceptions	1
Considering equalities	1
Using echo to evaluate	1
Using echo to work with Members	1

(d) Impact on facilitator:

Respondents reported that the impact of being an echo facilitator and working with echo was that it was perhaps difficult to get buy in and it can be challenging to challenge the group but at the same time feeling more skilled and able to challenge.

(e) Impact on practice:

Respondents indicated that echo has been used to inform their practice by:

- Helping with partnership and engagement work
- Enabling equalities issues to be raised

(f) Impact on agencies/organisations using echo

Respondents reported that for those organisations who are familiar with or are using it, echo:

- Has enabled them to see a way forward for the organisation
- Provided a useful platform within which to have a conversation about where we are at and whether what we want to do is possible
- Helped to see how much change within the agency is needed

And for others echo (and its application):

- Didn't appear to have much impact as the agency/organisation already felt quite highly of themselves and whilst the agency felt good about their current practice the facilitators had a very different view!
- Did not provide discrete tools for engagement (quick fix) that the agency wanted
- Lead some people to feel marginalised due to the fact that their perceptions differed from other peoples

(g) Barriers to working with echo

Respondents were asked to share the barriers they have experienced in being able to promote and work with echo. They included: the agency not being committed in the current climate; the agency not being prepared to see that skills and knowledge need to be built; lack of capacity due to other commitments; inability to make contact with a co-facilitator to get support; the fact that the organisation is going through restructure and changes in the external environment; a lack of opportunities available for using echo and lack of time.

(h) Support to work with echo

Respondents were asked to indicate what support, if any, they needed to work with echo. Support required related to: the need for positive stories/testimonials around the use of echo; wishing to watch another colleague to be able to refresh; agreement by colleagues to attend echo facilitator training; access to co-facilitator/work with others; colleagues arranging sessions within their own settings; a short presentation on echo to sell it; and promotion of echo to senior staff.

(i) Future work with echo

Respondents were asked to provide any ideas or plans they have for using echo in the future and responses suggested they could see it being used with: commissioning boards; to evaluate how services are being delivered; young people's decision making forums e.g. school councils; elected members; strategic partnerships/LSP's as well as developing hybrid of voice and echo with members

## Facilitators - generic facilitation skills course

Training on generic facilitation skills was offered to all participants who took part in Voice, echo and Learning Programme facilitator courses. In year two this took the form of six sequential day workshops attended by 14 participants and in year three it became five sequential day workshops attended by 17 participants. A total of 19 evaluation forms were completed. The following is feedback with regard to the specific aims of the course.

(a) To equip participants with the knowledge, skills and expertise to enable them to plan, deliver and evaluate training courses and workshops. Feedback suggests that this aim has been met.

*The course certainly made me consider all of the above more and made me aware of the importance of setting aside time to plan and evaluate as I all too often just have to rush in and deliver things without the time to prepare etc.*

*I have learnt about participatory style of facilitation, different learning theories, learning process, group dynamics, facilitation tools and how to improve my existing skills, use, importance and style of evaluation*

*This aspect of the course was brilliant. I feel so much more confident in planning, delivering and evaluating sessions.*

(b) To raise participants awareness of their own level of personal development. Feedback suggests that this aim has been met.

*I have learnt that things will go wrong and that its common to be nervous (some just hide it better than others) It is also important not to beat yourself up if things go wrong – just learn from them and move on (these lessons have been really valuable to me and helped me become more confident)*

*I have to say this was a real pleasure for me and I do believe that I can now facilitate to a high standard. I believe in myself more because I feel up-skilled and that is reflected in both my confidence and enjoyment*

*The course made me much more aware of areas that I need to develop in order to become a more effective facilitator.*

*The course has confirmed how much I already know and how much I already do to ensure I am a good facilitator, which is great because it has given me more confidence in myself. It also has revealed my weak points and areas that I can improve on – I have lots of pointers about where to go for that information because of the useful handouts etc.*

(c) To extend understanding of equal opportunities, equalities and diversity issues and how these impact on group work and course delivery. Feedback suggest this aim has been met

*Definitely helps to increase and remind of the importance of working in a way which promotes equality and celebrates diversity. It is a tricky subject when working with groups as it goes to the heart of people's, communities' identity. So it really helps to think how you can push the boundaries of your own and others prejudices and stereotypes within a safe and challenging environment. Quite scary, but crucial work.*

*I found the following discussions particularly helpful:*

*Ways that prejudice, stereotyping, inequalities and discrimination can and do arise in a training context and how these can be addressed and the skills needed to challenge.*

*I understand more of the issues that may arise and appreciate methods that can be utilised to try and ensure that all participants can participate in a meaningful way.*

*This was a really interesting session where I learnt the importance of making timely challenges and the importance of decision-making in this. The motive of the person you are challenging is the key to understanding whether or not you should challenge. Sometimes it is ok to let things go. As a facilitator you can't be constantly challenging participant's comments. This can be destructive to the group process and to your relationship with the group. However, if the comment is motivated by a desire to hurt or damage someone else, it is the facilitator's responsibility to intervene.*

*The session on equality and diversity was approached differently to most other sessions I have been to on the same subject – we looked at what stereotypes and judgements people sometimes do make in instead of looking at what you should not do. This was a good session because it raised my awareness of how I needed to treat some issues more sensitively, and it looked at the realistic situation instead of shying away from it.*

*As a facilitator, it was also useful to think about when and how to challenge participants who make comments which make the rest of the group uncomfortable.*

*Take Part has given me the confidence to integrate critical equalities thinking into my work. This has always been a strand of what I do, but I have often felt disillusioned by the lack of depth in understanding of these issues. Take Part trainers were excellent role models in showing how critical awareness of these issues can be integrated into facilitation practice.*

(d) Understand the relationship between learning process and learning outcomes and the role of the Take Part facilitator in making this happen. Feedback suggests this aim has been met although this learning outcome is more subtle than the others and inevitably awareness is a product of reflection and discussion.

*The facilitation training really helped me to think more deeply about participants' experience of learning. How each exercise, handout, the way you welcome people, how everything is set up. It is something that I know, but the training helped to really bring it home in a more concrete way.*

*This I have found very useful. Typically I did not always appreciate the process and was sighted towards outcomes but now I feel confident to use my understanding of process to achieve desired outcomes.*

## Applying the learning

There is overwhelming evidence that participants are putting their learning into practice in different ways and in different contexts.

*As a recent example, I was able to put the training to good use in planning and delivering a session on Voice to LNP staff. I utilised the session-planning methodology in order to plan the session and found this really useful in terms of interpreting the material and keeping myself on track.*

*I have been so 'turned on' to evaluation as a result of doing this course that I have now offered to lead the evaluation of the Council's Service Planning process.*

*The training has helped to improve my mental ticklist of things I need to take into account when planning and delivering a session. For example, I now ensure that I have design activities with learning styles and group dynamic theories in mind. I ensure I have alternatives or that a mixture of activities is used – whereas I used to deliver session more based on how I personally would learn. It has made me much more comfortable with facilitating discussion and allowing some of the timed activities to go off track if it is benefitting the session.*

*I have improved the opportunities I give participants to evaluate the sessions by ensuring I have more than one method of feedback available.*

*I have utilised a number of the elements. The same things like ground rules can make such a difference. Recognition of the Drama Triangle was also fantastic, because I can see that as a facilitator I've gotten drawn into that Triangle*

*I have considered more what I say as a facilitator and how this affects the group, as well as how disclosure of my own thoughts or experiences can affect things.*

*Will be running some training for volunteers very soon so will implement all the skills gained in that training.*

*Have also tried to put myself out there more, e.g. put my name forward to be chair of staffing committee in my role as a school governor as I thought it would be good experience*

*I now have back up questions so that if I have extra time I can fill it and think of things I can rush if timing is short. I often practise summarising as this is such an important skill to develop. I refer to my notes quite often and always consider learning styles and group dynamics and the roles within groups.*

*I used meta-planning to tackle an aspect of the service planning process with a group.*

*I have become more disciplined about using session plans to plan activities, using the same format as that used on the course e.g. in planning the Voice session*

*I am more likely to anticipate potential problems, rather than optimistically hoping for the best, as I would have done previously, something I want to build on still further.*

## Applying the learning: 12 months on...

Recent feedback from a year two participant twelve months on from the completion of the course:

*I can say that doing the facilitators course has had a massive impact on me personally and professionally. Following the course, I identified my aspiration to develop my skills further as a facilitator as part of my EPRS (Employee Performance Review Scheme). Using the course materials and learning I tried to develop my skills further as part of my day to day work. I also read some supporting texts.*

*A huge break through for me was the opportunity to co-facilitate on the facilitators training programme. Working with Sue and Jill was an amazing experience and I probably learnt more delivering the training than I did as a participant. I'd always done a lot of facilitation but I was concerned that I didn't always think on my feet very well. The input we covered on summing up has been invaluable to me and feels like the 'missing link' from my facilitators practice. I have also learnt to relax more and let go of the need to slavishly follow the timetable – it really doesn't matter as long as the learning outcomes are achieved. This was quite a revelation to me and I have since applied it in more than one session. Co-working with Jill and Sue as experienced facilitators enabled me to 'let go' a bit more than I usually would and I'll feel much more confident to go with the flow in future.*

*I feel that my skills as a facilitator are becoming more recognised now. For instance, I am the support for Council Teams developing their service plans and a couple of people have mentioned to me (positively!) about my skills as a facilitator*

## 4. Key reflections

### 4.1 Accreditation

In April 2009 WVSC was awarded 'recognised centre' status with OCN and the Pathfinder learning programme accreditation was decided as Award in Progression at levels: Entry level 3, and levels 1, 2 and 3. We took the decision to reduce the number of options in the units menu for participants and to not offer entry level 3 for courses starting after September 2009. Feedback from participants showed that too wide a range of units is confusing and people found it hard to distinguish between level 3 and entry level 3 when making their choices. Evidence workbooks were provided for each unit and these are available for participants on the website.

We suspected that many people who registered for units would not actually complete the accreditation as it demands time to complete the evidence requirements. We thought that initial enthusiasm would fade with the reality of compiling evidence. Disappointing responses from those people registered for accreditation has made us think twice about the value of offering this to future participants. People have generally not taken up the support that was offered to them and have withdrawn from accreditation – and this has used a great deal of time, energy and resources for little gain. Those who did not complete their evidence felt that they had failed – no matter that they had 'bitten off more than they could chew' in their personal circumstances – it was not an empowering experience.

One of the consequences for facilitators is the pressure to get through the programme and topics with the consequent cutting short of discussions. An interesting phenomenon is that those people who are doing accreditation use their tutorials to discuss evidence and information, whereas others use tutorial time to reflect upon their own learning and development.

We withdrew accreditation for our learning programmes from September 2010.

Accreditation in relation to facilitator training proved to be somewhat difficult to pin down. We had talks with several providers of PTLLS (including the WEA) and decided in the end to work with the Adult Education Service in Wolverhampton to offer PTLLS to those core facilitation module participants who would find it useful.

City and Guild's fairly rigid approach to curriculum and assessment together with the AES initial assessment and enrolment process did put some people off and eventually we could not guarantee the 10 places that AES needed to run the course. This avenue of work was discontinued. The national Take Part Training Trainers programme led to a competitive context to the development of a local accreditation pathway and local links to the WEA were stopped in their tracks.



Accreditation is the process that individuals go through to validate their learning in an objective and measurable manner so that the extent and level of their learning can be easily recognisable within the broader context of national qualifications. The Take Part Learning Programme is about individual self realisation within the context of collective development and action. The outcomes for individuals are very much to do with their own learning but that *individual* learning cannot be divorced for the *collective* experience. The collective dynamic of the course means that in order to demonstrate individual learning outcomes learners have to jump through some externally constructed hoops. To some extent this is true of any course but because Take Part is so much about collective learning the interrogation of an individual's achievement in isolation does not fit well.

Accreditation is really useful for individuals in progressing through formal learning and within employment and it also provides objective feedback to the learner. Many people involved in courses like Take Part have not been involved in formal learning for some time and feel the need to have their learning recognised although the majority of those opting for accreditation in Wolverhampton have been people who already have qualifications.

There is a fundamental difference of opinion between those who feel that accreditation is almost a right that learners are entitled to and those that view accreditation as an unnecessary external interference that re-defines the learning experience in its own terms i.e. as a marketable commodity. This contradiction has dogged community learning throughout its history.

Courses such as Take Part which involve individuals learning about themselves through collective learning experience are central to this argument; accreditation may suit individuals in quantifying their achievements but those achievements are part of collective effort. A solution might be to provide group accreditation but in an individualistic consumer economy collective validation of learning carries little weight.

Individual accreditation can present difficulties for community development and community educators; it emphasises individual experience as separate from collective action. It sets out external milestones to learning which can detract from community based aims and objectives resulting in learners having to 'prove themselves' in terms which are not necessarily related to community development.

Our experience has been that learners wanting accreditation have mostly been those who have previous experience of accreditation and perhaps need it least, in terms of their own careers. The work of matching existing Open College network units to Take Part modules and ensuring the rigour of internal verification for areas of work that are in many ways peripheral to the main programme appears to outweigh the benefits felt by learners.

## 4.2 Targeting specific groups

We saw the Pathfinder as an opportunity to deliver our learning programme with a mixed gender group. All our delivery since 1998 had been with women and we were interested to explore the difference a mixed gender setting could make for both the experience of facilitators and participants.

The course was developed with women in mind – a space to share common concerns and barriers and develop shared strategies. The ethos and pedagogical approach is based on recognition of structural power differentials and experiential learning. The learning is intensely personal and combines facts and ideas with personal histories and participation. Participants are invited to bring their experiences to the table and develop connections with others.

During the Pathfinder we had the opportunity to deliver three mixed gender programmes. These three mixed courses were:

- Open recruitment across the Black Country (Pathfinder)
- Open recruitment within a small area in Wolverhampton (NDC)
- Open recruitment within Wolverhampton LINK membership

Each of these courses presented a different experience with the NDC course and LINK courses providing a shared frame of reference for the participants in each course. This common ground provided a rallying point and generated shared discussion around issues to do with power and choices in life. The NDC course focused upon race, racism, poverty, housing, and shared experiences of the local democratic structures. The LINK course focused upon identity linked to health, shared experiences of health services and the barriers to creating change.

The Pathfinder funded course – open recruitment across the Black Country – provided no rallying point to catalyse group understanding. The participants worked hard to understand and appreciate the varied experiences and perspectives within the group, and this is to their credit – but a collective shared analysis and understanding eluded them. Our three main findings around the difference a mixed gender setting bring are:

1. Reduced personal sharing and disclosure
2. Reduced level of analysis in discussions
3. Reduced speaking time for women

Discussions with some participants have led to an interest in trialling this approach with disabled people who want to create change.

Importance of women only space for women



We have worked to create 'safe spaces' for women where we encourage respectful discourse; getting beyond assumptions around education, class, work, marriage, sexual choice, tradition, faith, age – where we can 'hear the hurt'. Spaces for difficult conversations and for shared celebrations; spaces to explore what shapes and shaped us and what we want to do about it. Our experience during the Pathfinder underpins our commitment to creating women only spaces.

### **4.3 Vision led**

The heart of our work is community empowerment. We embrace and work with the values of community development. This is visionary, vision led. We reject the notion of 'needs led' as potentially narrow and limiting as need is often linked to minimal requirements

Our approach is to extend experience, ask new questions, try new ways. It would be fair to say that our work is vision led – delivery and methods rooted in a learner centred, participative and informal educational pedagogy within an explicit vision in relation to equality and social justice

### **4.4 Partnership working**

Some of the approaches and activities which the Black Country Take Part Pathfinder built on and enhanced were already beginning to be embedded in partnership work across Wolverhampton and across Dudley. Due to the involvement of officers who lead partnership work Pathfinder activities developed and grew along with local activities and became part of local approaches and offers. Over time there was less distinction between Pathfinder and other local work, other than of course information about funding, use of logos and so on. Funding from the Pathfinder was matched with other funding to achieve wider impact. We see this as a sign of success with the Pathfinder acting as a catalyst in partnership.

### **4.5 Delivery**

Our original idea was to develop the Pathfinder across the four Black Country boroughs. We started with an alliance between Wolverhampton and Dudley partners and entered into discussion with agencies and organisations in Sandwell and Walsall.

Some aspects of the Pathfinder model of change were introduced into both areas – Voice and learning programme participants. A Walsall council representative joined the core delivery group and contributed to the management of the initiative. However, due to local situations it was not possible for the work to be taken forward in these two boroughs in the way that was envisaged.

## 5. Legacy

Our fifth key priority was to embed and sustain the values, principles and approaches used in our Take Part Pathfinder so that when the funding is finished there would be a legacy left behind. Our initial thinking about how to do this was through training and supporting a pool of local facilitators to take the work forward in their different work and community contexts. Legacy is so much more than this - complex and multi layered: individual, organisational and area wide; longer term to short term; and, linked to different pathfinder priorities.

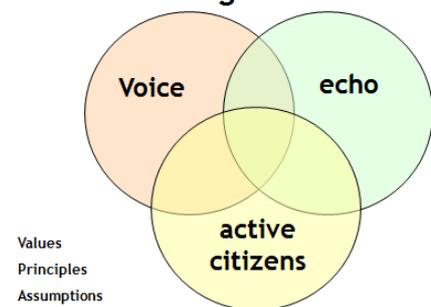
We consider legacy in three ways:

- As impact
- As infrastructure development
- As building a movement – critical mass

### 5.1 Impact as legacy

The Black Country Pathfinder was an opportunity to test out our model of change; to find out if authentic community engagement is more likely when we encourage empowered and empowering citizens, communities and public agencies. By working with all three aspects we consciously moved away from a deficit approach to engagement – where effort is directed at only reforming, skilling and developing citizens and communities. It is hard work and long term – we have had just over two years to trial our approach. So is it working in the short term?

model of change



In Wolverhampton

Feedback from recent outcomes survey undertaken by WVSC with service users shows that partnership working has improved and, although this was asked in relation to the Compact, our influence work is done in partnership with the Pathfinder and we use Voice and Echo as tools to support partnership working. This is interesting news.

The Experts by Experience Panel was set up in Wolverhampton in 2008. The Panel is made up of potential, former or current housing related support service users. They meet monthly to ensure the voices of service users are heard, influence decisions and shape the way that services are provided. In July 2010, Expert Panel members took part in a Voice workshop.

The Commissioning Board for Housing Support and Social Inclusion is a multi-agency board that determines recommendations to Cabinet regarding housing support and social inclusion services. In June 2010 Board members took part in an Echo workshop.

The Commissioning Board and the Experts by Experience Panel are working together to develop an action plan to move forward the areas that were highlighted through the two separate workshops. This is with a view to enhancing the ability of the Experts by Experience Panel to influence decision making and the Commissioning Board being more open to community influence. Some the actions that emerged from the workshops to improve influence are already being taken forward. Indeed the name of the joint working group is called 'Voice and Echo sub group'. This is real progress. The box below shows topics which the joint sub group are tackling and for which they have identified concrete ways forward.

Evidencing Feedback; seeking evidence that people have an influence

Representation on the Experts Panel: widening the perspective

Understanding Policy Drivers/Contexts: understanding of the external environment and the potential for influence

Developing the Potential and Capacity of Expert Panel Members: develop the potential and the capacity of the Experts Panel, including the service users 'behind the panel'.

Developing the Board/Panel Relationship: maximise on the people who are new to the Board with an induction/introduction process where members of the Board meet the Experts.

Protocol on Influence: develop a working protocol around influence, discussing what it means to both parties and agreeing it together. The protocol would be a statement on our commitment to influence, outlining:

- What influence means
- What the Experts Panel commit to do
- What the Commission Board commit to do
- Any restrictions

In Dudley

The following is an extract from one core delivery group member's evaluation of the Pathfinder in terms of individual, organisational and area wide benefits.

*Being central to the delivery of the Pathfinder has greatly influenced my work, and approaches which Dosti now takes and will take in the future. Significant within this is:*

- *What I get from cross-borough working: before the Pathfinder I invited colleagues from other areas on training courses and networking events which we ran, and I participated in training and networking opportunities made available in areas outside Dudley. And while*

*before I would meet up with peers from other areas it would often be to learn about what they were delivering so that I could bring ideas back to Dudley. Since being involved in the Pathfinder, my relationships are much more strategically focused, so that as well as the what, I'm seeking to discover how they are delivering, and I have gained a perspective on the wider context in which they are working.*

- *My understanding of influence and critical citizenship – our model of change: this wasn't instant, over a number of months it really started to seep in to the extent that now I can't imagine planning activity which doesn't take in to account the 3 parts of our model.*
- *Responding to shifts in policy at national level: being part of a programme of work funded under the Labour Government, and with nearly half of the activity being delivered with a new government in power has been fascinating, and I am so proud that what we are delivering has such integrity of itself that it has something to offer no matter what, and didn't head off down a cul-de-sac due to responding to what one government said. This has consolidated and provided evidence for my feelings about community development approaches – they can support some of what policy makers are looking for, but the approaches are not wedded to a political direction or ideology. I feel that our engagement work in Dudley successfully evades what could become restricting links to policy etc., and I will take the experience of the Pathfinder as a reminder of how to do this well.*

## 5.2 Infrastructure development as legacy

Strategic work in Dudley and Wolverhampton to implement Voice and echo within the two boroughs is ongoing and a multi-agency group is taking the work forward. The Wolverhampton Voice and echo Strategy Group and Dudley's Community Engagement Working Group hope to continue to share practice across the two boroughs and where appropriate support the rest of the Black Country to take up the approach. The frameworks are now written into several strategic plans in both areas.

Voice and echo are being embedded into Compact work in Wolverhampton so that the frameworks will have a place to 'sit' following the end of the Pathfinder project.

Dosti has been working with Dudley PCT, Dosti volunteers and now Dudley & Walsall Mental Health Trust to develop a Take Part approach in relation to an objective in Dudley PCT's Communication and Engagement Strategy about involving patients and public in strategic decision making. The PCT has undertaken research about what strategic decisions are made, where and to what extent patients and the public are or could be involved. Some Voice and echo work has been delivered and a learning programme is still being discussed. However the impact of the NHS White Paper and the Public Health White Paper have resulted in Dosti looking more widely for partners in a Take Part approach. In Dudley such activity is located very much within the Local Strategic Partnership's work around community engagement and also Our Society, Dudley's response to the Big Society.

### 5.3 Building a movement, a critical mass

One participant commented that being involved in the Pathfinder felt like finding a new family – finding a group of people working to a similar value base and working to make a difference. This aspect is crucial to create a legacy for our Pathfinder’s approach. It’s about critical mass, joined up networking and a coherent and consistent model of change.

An emerging theme is the importance of shared understanding, common language and landmarks in encouraging conversations and dialogue around community empowerment and change. Indeed we have heard of people enquiring if groups have been ‘voiced’ and if agencies have been ‘echoed’. Not that we advocate the use of such new words and the potential exclusion they represent.

As part of our external evaluation of the Voice and echo facilitator impact we asked for feedback on how far people felt being part of the Take Part Pathfinder had benefited them (or not)

*‘it has had a phenomenal impact in both a personal and professional capacity – the manner in which the programme was delivered, content and opportunities provided you with a holistic package of learning that in turns develops your abilities’*

*‘I have enjoyed all experiences and feel much better equipped in my working life and in my personal life – my understanding of influence, politics and facilitation has improved immensely’*

On the 24 March 2011 the Black Country Take part Pathfinder will consider in more detail what the legacy of the programme is, and how the Take Part Approach can be used. Two events are taking place:

- A briefing session to share how strategic approaches to community engagement adopted in Wolverhampton, Dudley and Birmingham are equipping us to respond in empowering ways to the latest Government policy, including measures outlined in the Localism Bill.
- A celebration event bringing together around a hundred people from across the West Midlands who have taken up opportunities offered through the Black Country Take Part Pathfinder and Regional Take Part Champions work in the region. This event will bring them together to share and celebrate achievements and contribute to the legacy of this work.

This Evaluation Report will be updated in April 2011 to reflect outcomes from the events.

## Appendix 1: Hyperlinks list

The following is a list of all hyperlinks in this report, organised by page number.

- Page 3: Black Country Take Part Pathfinder  
<http://www.blackcountrypathfinder.co.uk>
- Page 4: Wolverhampton Voluntary Sector Council <http://www.wolverhamptonvsc.org.uk>  
Dosti <http://www.dosti.org.uk>  
changes partnership <http://www.changesuk.net>  
Wolverhampton City Council <http://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk>  
Wolverhampton Strategic Partnership <http://www.wton-partnership.org.uk>  
Wolverhampton Learning Partnership <http://www.wlpukonline.co.uk>  
Walsall Council <http://www.walsall.gov.uk>
- Page 5: New Deal for Communities area in Wolverhampton  
<http://www.abcd-ndc.org.uk>  
Wolverhampton LINK <http://www.wolverhamptonlink.co.uk>
- Page 8: Pathfinder Evaluation Strategy:  
[http://www.blackcountrypathfinder.co.uk/pathfinder\\_evaluation.php](http://www.blackcountrypathfinder.co.uk/pathfinder_evaluation.php)  
DiCE planning and evaluation framework <http://changesuk.net/resources/dice>
- Page 18: Liz Lynne MEP news item about Women take Part visit  
<http://www.lizlynne.org.uk/en/article/2010/035151/black-country-womens-group-welcomed-by-liz-lynne-mep-in-visit-to-european-parliament>
- Page 24: Reference Group Terms of Reference and meeting notes  
[http://www.blackcountrypathfinder.co.uk/reference\\_group.php](http://www.blackcountrypathfinder.co.uk/reference_group.php)
- Page 25 : Joint dialogue session notes  
[http://www.blackcountrypathfinder.co.uk/joint\\_dialogue.php](http://www.blackcountrypathfinder.co.uk/joint_dialogue.php)

## Appendix 2: Empowered and empowering citizens outcomes and indicators

The following are the outcomes and indicators we developed for this strand of our work. The words in blue signal one of the five community empowerment dimensions.

### 1. Value your own skills

Gained – skills, knowledge and confidence

- 1a Value your skills, knowledge and confidence
- 1b Know where to go to get what you need
- 1c Increase your communication skills, lobbying skills, negotiation skills
- 1d Feel able to have a voice
- 1e Recognise and develop skills in critical thinking

What people can do as a consequence?

- 1f Identify and articulate your own issues and problems (confident)
- 1g Take leadership roles in your community and in civic life (confident)
- 1h Voice their concerns, contribute and ask questions in a public forum (confident)
- 1i Prepared to challenge decisions constructively (confident)
- 1j Want to, and feel capable of, having a responsible role in democratic structures and civic roles (confident and influential)
- 1j Feel able influence decisions (influential)

### 2. Know yourself through and with others

Gained – skills, knowledge and confidence

- 2a Recognise that social exclusion is the responsibility of all -
- 2b Understand how their behaviour affects others
- 2c Know the basis of inequality and how power operates
- 2d Understand more about people who are different to themselves
- 2e Know the importance of networking for influencing change
- 2f Understand more about collective working and why it's important

What people can do as a consequence?

- 2g Encourage fair and democratic decision making (inclusive and organised)
- 2h Connect to people different to themselves (inclusive and cooperative)
- 2i Take action against prejudice and discrimination (inclusive)
- 2j Recognise that they may exclude' people, knowingly or unknowingly (inclusive)
- 2k Try to be fair (inclusive)

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

Gained – skills, knowledge and confidence

- 3a Understand how groups/ networks work
- 3b Understand how to encourage, support and develop volunteers
- 3c Know how the external world operates
- 3d Understand your current democratic position and the opportunities for change
- 3e Understand the rules of engagement
- 3f Know how meetings work

What people can do as a consequence?

- 3g *Take leadership roles in their community and in civic life (confident)*
- 3h *Want to, and feel capable of, having a responsible role in democratic structures and civic roles (confident and influential)*
- 3i *Encourage fair and democratic decision making (inclusive and organised)*
- 3j *Take an active role at a neighbourhood / community level (influential)*

### 4. Know where to go to get what you want

Gained – skills, knowledge and confidence

- 4a Recognise how to influence policy and practice at a European, national, regional or local level
- 4b Understand the barriers to participation

What people can do as a consequence

- 4c Voice concerns, contribute and ask questions in a public forum (confident)
- 4d Prepared to challenge decisions constructively (confident)
- 4e Overcome barriers to participation (influence)
- 4f lobby and campaign in issues that are important to them

## Appendix 3: Voice and echo training for facilitators Participant demographics

PERSONAL DETAILS	VOICE 25 & 26 November 2009	VOICE 10 & 11 June 2010	VOICE 9 & 10 February 2011	ECHO 24 & 25 March 2010	ECHO 3rd & 4 November 2010
1. SEX					
MALE	2	3	1	2	5
FEMALE	9	10	4	11	9
2. AGE					
15 AND UNDER	0	0	0	0	0
16-24 YRS	0	0	0	0	0
25-34 YRS	2	3	2	2	4
35-49 YRS	6	7	2	8	7
50-64 YRS	3	3	1	3	3
65 - 74 YRS	0	0	0	0	0
OVER 75 YRS	0	0	0	0	0
I'd rather not say	0	0	0	0	0
3. ETHNICITY					
White					
White - British	8	7	2	10	7
White - Irish	0	0	0	0	0
Any Other White background, please detail	1	0	0	0	0
English Swedish		1	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British					
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	1	0	1	1
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	1	0	1	0	2
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	0	0	0	0	0
Any other Asian background,	0	0	0	0	0



please detail					
Mixed					
White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0	0	1
White and Black African	0	0	0	0	0
White and Asian	0	0	0	0	0
Any other Mixed background, please detail	0	0	1	0	1
Black or Black British					
Black or Black British - Caribbean	1	3	1	2	2
Black or Black British - African	0	1	0	0	0
Any other Black/Black British background, please detail	0	0	0	0	0
Chinese or other ethnic group					
Chinease	0	0	0	0	0
Any other, please detail	0	0	0	0	0
4. FAITH					
Bha'i	0	0	0	0	0
Buddhist	0	0	0	0	0
Christian	3	7	4	7	6
Hindu	0	0	0	0	0
Muslim	1	1	1	0	2
Jain	0	0	0	0	0
Jewish	0	0	0	0	0
Sikh	0	0	0	0	0
Zoroastrian	0	0	0	0	0
Pagan	0	0	0	0	1
Other	1	1	0	0	1
None	5	4	0	2	4
Rather not say	1	0	0	4	0
5. Do you consider yourself to have a disability?					
Yes	2	1	2	0	1
No	9	12	3	13	13

6. Level of highest qualification					
No qualification	0	0	0	0	0
Entry Level	0	0	0	0	0
GSCSE (less than 5 A* - C)	0	0	0	0	0
GCSE (more than 5 A*-C)	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ (level 1 and 2)	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ (level 3)	0	1	0	2	2
A-level (2 or more)	1	1	0	0	1
First degree or HND/HNC	3	6	2	3	3
Higher degree or equivalent	6	2	2	8	4
Other qualification	0	0	0	0	1
NVQ Management + DIP SW	1	0	0	0	0
Post Graduate	0	0	1	0	1
First degree or HND/HNC - PGCE	0	1	0	0	0
NVQ Level 4 Certificate	0	1	0	0	1
Registered Mental Nurse	0	1	0	0	0
L4 CertEd HE:FE	0	0	0	0	1
7. Employment Status					
In full time employment	10	11	3	11	11
Self employed	0	0	0	1	2
Unemployed	0	0	2	1	1
In part time employment	1	2	0	0	0
Retired	0	0	0	0	0
In education or training	0	0	0	0	0
Unpaid/voluntary role	0	0	0	0	0
Other status:	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONSES	11	13	5	13	14
TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS ON COURSE	17	20	13	20	18

## Appendix 4: Take Part priorities and research questions

Take Part priorities and research questions		Evaluation information
Learning programmes: building skills and confidence within a community context	1. Have the skills and confidence of beneficiaries improved as a result of the Pathfinders work (so that they can pursue civic activism, community leadership and lay governance roles (including those of local councillors))?	Yes
	2. Has there been an increase in the number of Take Part beneficiaries who feel they can influence local decision-making?	Yes
Community leadership: offering tailored support into civic activism and/or lay governance roles	3. Has there been increased take up of lay governance roles among beneficiaries as a result of your Take Part work?	We know that some people have given up such roles due to realising they are being used to rubber stamp decisions. Others say they carry out their roles better now.
	4. Has your work supported beneficiaries and organisations in developing an understanding of barriers to participation?	Yes
	5. How have beneficiaries since overcome any of these barriers?	Yes
	6. Have statutory organisations changed to remove barriers?	Yes
Information on influence: Making available information about the availability of opportunities for influence and lay governance	7. Has there been any movement of beneficiaries between civic/lay governance roles as a result of Take Part?	We know that some people have given up such roles due to realising they are being used to rubber stamp decisions. Others say they carry out their roles better now.
	8. What motivates local people to become involved in the Take Part programme?	Varied – see section 3.3a
Accreditation: Providing access to accreditation for citizenship learning and skills	9. What has been the take-up of accredited citizenship training?	19 people registered with OCN 9 submitted evidence and achieved accreditation
	10. Has the number of people pursuing civic activism,	No

development where it is required	community leadership and lay governance roles (including those of local councillors) increased as a direct result of accredited training?	
	11. What are levels of unemployment like among Take Part beneficiaries?	We did not ask this question for WTP1. Across MTP and WTP2 they were 64% employed, 21 unemployed/unpaid/volunteer and 14% retired. See Appendix 3 for voice and echo facilitators.
NI3: Supporting people who do not normally engage in civic activity and are at a disadvantage to do so – such as BME, younger, older people, men and women in different roles, LGBT communities, disabilities, religious or faith-based communities	12. How has the involvement of disadvantaged groups in civic activities changed?	Yes
	13. How does the current level of involvement for these groups compare to previous levels?	Hard to say - disaggregated information is not collected anywhere around civic involvement and all these groups
	14. Has there been an increase in their skills and confidence?	Yes
	15. How does the current level of involvement for these groups compare to other groups?	Hard to say – disaggregated information is not collected anywhere around civic involvement and all these groups
NI4: Supporting people to influence local decision-making	16. Has there been an increase in the number of Take Part beneficiaries who feel they can influence local decision-making?	Yes