

Draft One Barnsley Community Engagement and Empowerment Strategy 2008 - 2011

Introduction

This document outlines how community engagement will be delivered by One Barnsley. Through consultation with partners, community engagement activities have been brought together into one overarching strategy for the borough and as a result, we are aiming to better coordinate how we engage with our citizens and communities – based on our belief that:

- All communities should be involved in decisions that affect them
- All communities deserve high quality public services, shaped around their needs
- One Barnsley policies and strategies should reflect local priorities, requirements and aspirations

This document should be read in conjunction with the implementation plan detailing the actions that will be taken to deliver this strategy and the toolkit which details best practice in engagement methods.

The strategy recognises the diversity of our communities, the importance of community capacity building and the need to provide appropriate opportunities for citizens and communities to participate at whatever level they wish to influence service delivery, decision making and policy development.

The strategy has been developed in the context of the Local Government White Paper 2006 – *Strong and Prosperous Communities*, and local Government Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. It has also been informed by the joint CLG/LGA National Community Empowerment Action Plan – *Building on Success*, associated guidance on producing Community Engagement Strategies, and planned Empowerment White Paper - scheduled for launch in the summer 2008.

One Barnsley's vision

This strategy supports One Barnsley's vision of Barnsley as a

A successful, uniquely distinctive 21st century market town at the centre of a borough that offers prosperity and opportunity for all.

It provides a focus for all community engagement activities, policies and processes to align with one of the key outcomes of the Council and LSP to promote cohesive, enterprising and empowered communities. One Barnsley recognises that the best way forward for the borough is in partnership with the citizens and communities who live and/or work here. Therefore, action needs to be taken to ensure that citizens and communities are partners in making decisions about service delivery and in making this vision a reality.

To do this we have produced a Community Engagement Strategy to help encourage discussion, new ideas and a sense of partnership between the agencies, organisations and the people and communities of Barnsley.

What is the overall aim of the Community Engagement Strategy?

This Community Engagement Strategy aims to support strong, active, empowered and inclusive communities, who are informed and involved in decision-making and enable us to improve public services to enhance quality of life across Barnsley.

By this we mean:

- **Strong communities**, who can form and sustain their own organisations, bringing people together to deal with their common concerns
- **Active and empowered communities**, where people are supported to improve quality of life in their own communities and to have control over their own lives
- **Inclusive communities**, where all sections of the community feel they have opportunities to be involved in decision-making and influence public services

What are our objectives?

The objectives below identify how we can contribute to One Barnsley's vision and ensure that the strategy delivers an effective and coordinated approach to community engagement for the benefit of all citizens and the diverse communities of Barnsley. The objectives are:

- To continue to support the regeneration and renewal of our most deprived neighbourhoods and communities in the borough
- To strengthen, develop and sustain opportunities for local people and groups to influence what happens in their communities
- To provide opportunities for communities to shape and influence the development and delivery of quality services and policies that reflect local needs and priorities
- To manage and coordinate community engagement activities to ensure consistency, quality and partner participation whilst avoiding duplication
- To build community cohesion by enabling communities, especially excluded communities, to influence decision making in the borough and take part in community engagement activities
- To ensure that all children and young people have the opportunity to take part in and influence decision making

Planning good community engagement

Before any community engagement activity is undertaken within the borough all those responsible for conducting the engagement must plan their activities. This is to reduce the amount of over-consultation and engagement fatigue that has occurred in certain areas of the borough and within some groups.

The minimum level of research that should be undertaken covers:

- a. Has the activity been undertaken before? Who with? What was the purpose of the original activity? Are the results of the activity available? Are the results of the original activity still relevant and recent? Can these results be used rather than repeating the engagement exercise?
- b. If a new engagement exercise is needed then who should be included? Have all the potential communities affected by the service or decision been

considered? Have your materials been assessed for readability levels to ensure all the community can access them?

- c. Have all the types of engagement described in the next pages been fully considered and a full range of engagement tools explored to maximise inclusion?

How will we achieve the objectives?

An initial action plan is attached at annex 1, which sets out activities to help meet our key objectives and complement the Government's National Community Empowerment Action Plan. The action plan will be continually monitored and reviewed to ensure it is a flexible and evolving plan that responds to the changing needs of our communities and community engagement activities.

Our initial priorities include:

- Improving **coordination** and governance of community engagement activities, by the development of protocols, toolkits and a performance management framework
- Completing the reviewing of our **neighbourhood governance arrangements**, in consultation with the public
- Rolling out **neighbourhood management**, as appropriate, within our new neighbourhood arrangements
- Developing more **enhanced, more accessible and inclusive** area arrangements
- An option to develop **Neighbourhood Agreements or Charters** in our most deprived neighbourhoods
- The continuing **development of Area Boards** to operate as mini- LSPs coordinating and managing effective neighbourhood plans
- Developing and enhancing **skills and expertise** in effective community engagement practice through cross sector development programmes
- **Developing expertise** in finding the views and opinions of people and groups who are often missed out of community engagement activities
- Improving coordination with **partners** on community engagement activities through the 'Locality Planning Framework'
- Raising awareness of **volunteering** opportunities in the borough and delivering the Third Sector Infrastructure plan
- Participating in the **National Empowerment Partnership and Regional Empowerment Partnerships for Yorkshire & Humber**, and continue to lead the sub-regional community engagement improvement partnership
- Rolling out the **community engagement standards** tool kit to key staff involved in community engagement activities

What has been achieved so far?

A One Barnsley Community Development Strategy was produced in 2002 and there has been plenty of changes, challenges and achievements since then. Recognising the importance and value of community development in supporting effective community engagement and empowerment, the Government produced the *Community Development Challenge* report in 2006, complementing the key messages in the LGWP.

This strategy builds on the many good examples of community engagement activity from across the borough. Some of these are mentioned below:

- Neighbourhood Renewal Community Chests - Managed by Voluntary Action Barnsley and these community panels made up of local residents, working with Elected Members, have distributed funds for projects complementing local priorities
- The Barnsley Learning Curve – our Local Learning Plan for Neighbourhood Renewal was recognised as good practice by GOYH who funded a substantial training programme to improve community engagement in neighbourhood renewal
- New neighbourhood governance arrangements. We are committed to strengthening our area arrangements to allow more people to become engaged in local activities, devolved decision making and influencing service delivery
- Community development. Barnsley has a long history of community development support and the work of the Community Partnerships has provided a pioneering model to engage residents in community regeneration and the renewal of their neighbourhoods
- Neighbourhood Management. Our neighbourhood management pathfinder programmes in Kendray and New Lodge / Athersley continue to provide exemplar examples of effectively engaging the community in improving quality of life and shaping the future of their neighbourhoods.
- The Childrens and Young Peoples’ Strategic Partnership see participation as a key priority and have developed a unique model to engage communities on childrens’ issues through Local Well Being Partnership teams. Our wider work with young people, supporting them to engage in local democracy, continues to receive national recognition.
- BBEMI continue to facilitate the BME’s community’s involvement in the community planning processes and have held two successful One Barnsley/BBEMI Forums bringing service providers together with BME community leaders to discuss needs.

What do we mean by community engagement?

We define community engagement in the context of the local community planning process as:

*‘Developing and sustaining a **working relationship** between one or more public body and one or more community group, to help them **both to understand and act on the needs and issues that the community experiences**’*

Complementary to our own definition, the government in the CLG Community Empowerment Action Plan have suggested definitions of Community Engagement and Empowerment, as follows:

‘Community Engagement’ is the process whereby public bodies reach out to communities to create empowerment opportunities

‘Community Empowerment’ is the giving of confidence, skills and power to communities to shape and influence what public bodies do for or with them

The action plan recognises that over the last few years, much of central and local government has become better at engaging with communities through better information, consultation processes and user feedback on services. Whilst this is important, real empowerment needs to go beyond the process of engagement, in that, it must make people feel differently about themselves and the power to influence. For example, local people may become less concerned about proposals for new housing when they have more information about housing type, timetables for development, housing type and any plans for new transport, schools and associated environment improvements.

Hazel Blears MP and Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government states in her foreword to the CLG Community Empowerment Action Plan that

‘There isn’t a single service or development in Britain which hasn’t been improved by actively involving local people’

The Action Plan sets out Government’s work towards three key outcomes:

- Greater participation, collective action and engagement in democracy
- Changes in attitudes towards community empowerment
- Improved performance of public services and quality of life

It also sets out activities in three key areas:

- Widening and deepening empowerment opportunities locally
- Supporting and enabling people to take up empowerment opportunities
- Strengthening local representative democracy

Our action plan at annex 1 complements these 3 key areas

The new ‘duty to involve’

The Government are currently consulting on draft guidance regarding the new ‘duty to involve’. However the duty will be a key part of the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) in April 2009, when it is scheduled to come into force through legislation. Referenced in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act the duty is intended to build on current best practice and give people greater opportunities to have their say and get involved in the issues that affect their local area.

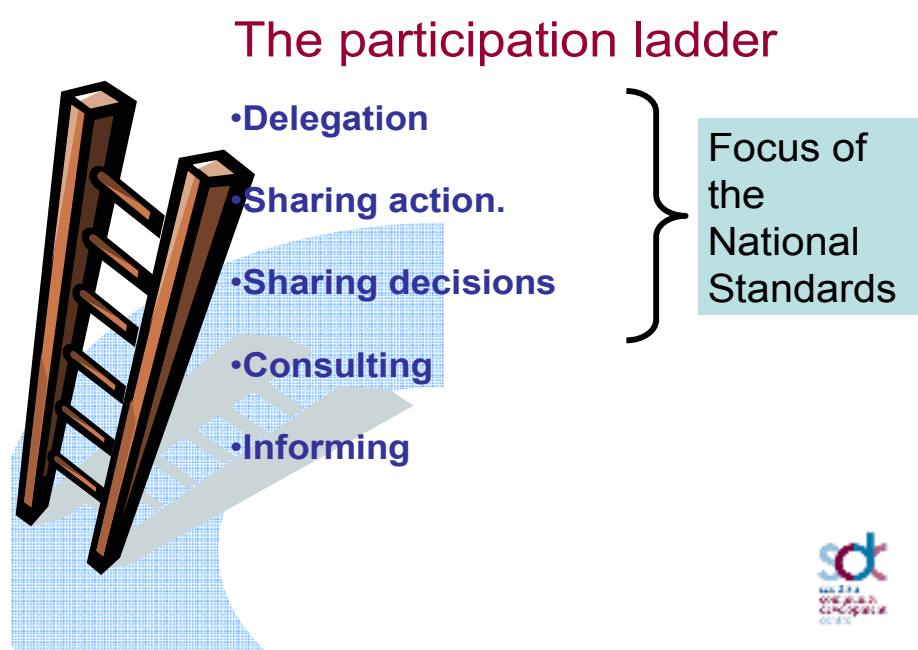
*The duty will require local authorities, where they consider it appropriate to **inform, consult and involve** “representatives of local persons” as appropriate in the exercise of authority functions.*

Whilst it will be for local authorities to determine when and how such representatives should be involved, we welcome the new duty, and hope it will continue to support the delivery of our good practice in community engagement. The development of

Neighbourhood Agreements or Charters as developed in the Kendray Initiative and Stronger Neighbourhoods Initiative in New Lodge & Athersley are an excellent example of meeting the duty to involve, through effectively engaging citizens in shaping local service delivery and holding service providers to account.

Therefore, it is fair to say that, community engagement can mean different things to different people, different communities and different services and situations. The level of engagement also needs to be proportionate to the activity or issue. We have therefore designed our strategy to ensure that we can provide the most appropriate means for communities and citizens to be involved and give feedback.

Community Engagement and the ladder of participation



The strategy recognises the various means of community engagement as outlined in the ‘ladder of participation’:

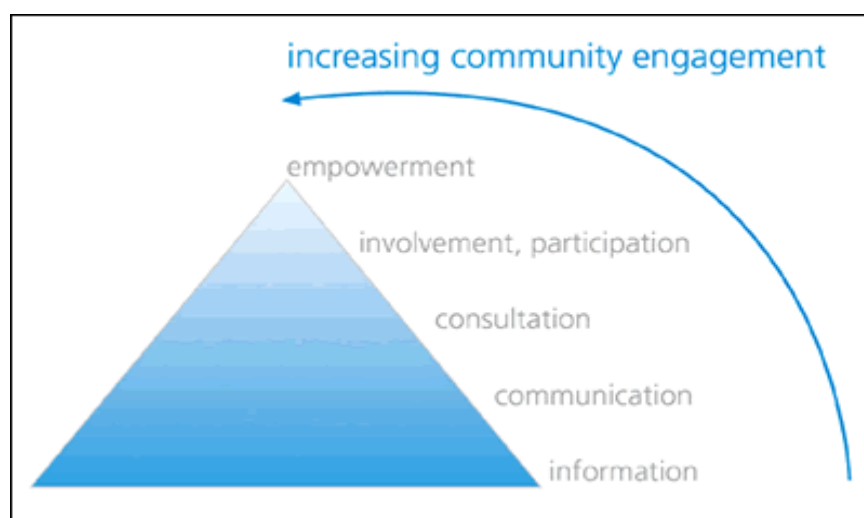
- **Information** supports all types of community engagement and keeps people informed about such things as decisions, services and local events. For example the Council’s free newspaper Barnsley Matters is packed with lively stories and useful information. The Council website also provides local information on each ward in the borough and neighbourhood arrangements.
- **Consultation** can be used when there is a decision to make about something or when there are a number of choices about the details. For example consultation has taken place with the public on reviewing our neighbourhood governance arrangements including Area Forums and Area Conferences. This consultation process has included a questionnaire of a representative sample of local people alongside focus groups
- **Sharing decisions.** This is when local people are involved in deciding which options to choose, but it is often LPS partners that will act on the decisions.

For example the development of the New Lodge master plan is involving local residents working with Bernslai Homes and the Neighbourhood Management team to design the new layout of estate and type of houses to be built.

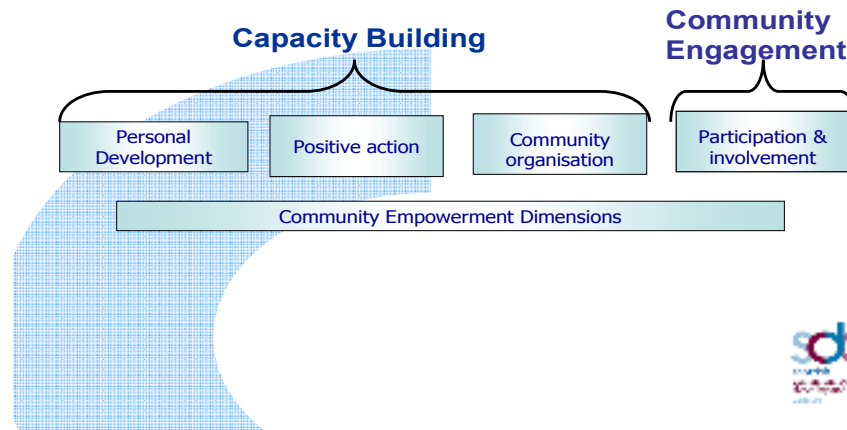
- **Sharing action.** This is when decisions are made by partnerships between local people or agencies and the Council. The people involved in making the decisions also take part in carrying them out. For example residents working with service providers have developed the ‘Keeping Kendray Clean and Tidy Neighbourhood Agreement’ where residents take greater responsibility for maintaining the local environment and service providers deliver high quality services to meet local priorities and needs.
- **Delegation and devolved responsibility.** This is builds upon the acting together method but also includes a responsibility for the community to deliver the activities, actions and services agreed by the decision making body. This method therefore requires the greatest amount of input from the community and is sometimes know as community or asset management or ownership. Examples include where groups often in the Third sector have taken on the responsibility for management of buildings, as is the case with some Community Partnerships in the borough.

Whilst informing and consulting communities are a part of the ‘participation ladder’, in the context of our definition and the national standards, sharing decisions, sharing action and delegation are clear examples of community engagement. Although every type of involvement is important in the community engagement process and different methods will be used depending on the activity and circumstances, sometimes it may appropriate to inform and consult on some activities, while at other times we will seek to involve communities and individuals in much greater depth.

As the diagram below shows, there are a range of ways local people can get involved, from simply obtaining information, through to being ‘empowered’ to significantly ‘influence’ the delivery of services (source: Improvement Network) – no one type should be seen as ‘better’ than any other. The diagram also shows how the proportion of a population gradually, and naturally, falls away the ‘higher’ you get to those wishing to, or able to, be fully engaged/empowered



Engagement requires capacity!



Our strategy also reflects that communities are more able and likely to engage in democratic processes and the shaping of their communities if capacity building support is available, as reflected in the above diagram. These capacity building and community engagement processes are also recognised as dimensions of community empowerment.

Support for the delivery of the Engagement Strategy

Support for the third sector

Much community engagement activity is delivered by the third sector, often on behalf of the council or other statutory sector partners. The capacity building of voluntary and community organisations is promoted within the Compact and is further supported by the Government's strategy for community capacity building *Firm Foundations*.

Training and development programmes

Our approach to training and development very much builds on the ethos of the Barnsley Learning Curve; to support stakeholders to build their knowledge, skills and to change behaviours to help deliver successful neighbourhood renewal. Training for officers and workers on the strategy, the implementation plan and toolkit will be made available through Community Planning. We will also be able to access significant learning and development opportunities through the National Empowerment Partnership and Regional Empowerment Partnership for Yorkshire and Humber. Some of these activities will include:

- Practice exchange workshops & learning seminars
- Action learning sets around topical agendas, issues & challenges
- Sharing examples of “what works” and good practice
- Access to free one to one ‘mentoring’ support
- Action research studies to explore models of neighbourhood governance and ‘youth voice’
- Regional networking around empowerment practice through conferences and events

- New website devoted to empowerment activity at www.yhep.org.uk

Standards that underpin our work

This strategy promotes the use of ALL the methods of engaging with communities demonstrated in this document, In order to ensure we are working towards the best quality community engagement possible, standards of practice have been developed that support the strategy.

The standards MUST be used by all partners as a planning tool before community consultation happens, as a checklist during activities and as an evaluation tool after consultation has taken place

What are our community engagement standards?

Building on the good practice developed in Scotland regarding this strategy proposes the use of the National Standards for Community Engagement, whilst considering how they can be localised to the Yorkshire and Humber context. Work is taking place with the Regional Empowerment Partnership to support this process

The standards for community engagement set out 10 statements of commitment that can be used to develop and support better working relationships between communities and agencies and public services. They are underpinned by principles of good practice, to promote equality and fairness.

Each standard has a series of indicators that can be collected in order to assess performance. The standards can also be used to ensure good practice and hold communities to account.

In all our community engagement activities we will:

- **Involvement** – We will identify and involve people and organisations who have an interest in the focus of engagement
- **Support** – We will identify and overcome any barriers to involvement
- **Planning** – We will gather evidence of the needs and available resources and use his evidence to agree the purpose, scope and timescale of the engagement and the actions to be taken
- **Methods** – We will agree and use methods of engagement that are fit for purpose
- **Working Together** – We will agree and use clear procedures that enable the participants to work with one another effectively and efficiently
- **Sharing Information** – We will ensure that necessary informationis communicated between the participants
- **Working with Others** – We will work effectively with others with an interest in the engagement
- **Improvement** – We will develop actively the skills, knowledge and confidence of all the participants
- **Feedback** – We will feedback the results of the engagement to the wider community and agencies affected

- **Monitoring and Evaluation** – We will monitor and evaluate whether the engagement achieves its purposes and meets the national standards for community engagement

What are they for?

The standards aim to transform the quality of community engagement by providing measurable performance statements that can be used by everyone involved to achieve highest quality process and results.

The goal is community engagement that is:

- Effective in achievement of the shared purposes of the participants
- Efficient by being well-informed, rationale, considered and focused on purpose; and
- Equitable by giving a fair voice to all communities and tackling any barriers that may exclude them

And what are they not for?

There is scepticism about the standards because they are frequently misused. The standards for community engagement are not about:

- Public relations – giving an impression of performance that is not reflected in practice
- Standardisation – making the same response irrespective of the circumstances
- Lowest common denominators – accepting the minimal acceptable performance
- Unachievable ambition – suspending reality and promising what cannot be delivered
- Compulsion or punishment – using power to require others to behave in ways that we do not demonstrate ourselves

Are there any support tools?

Yes there are. Learning from the experience of developing the standards in Scotland, an Engagement Toolkit has been developed as a resource for all staff involved in community engagement activities. Other simple tools that can be used to apply the standards are available at www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk and are linked to the community engagement ‘how to’ guide.

In addition a Standards for Community Engagement reference manual has been prepared and is available from BMBC’s Community Planning Department. The manual considers issues that may need to be addressed in applying each standard and its associated indicators.

Further training and development programmes will also be developed for practitioners via the south yorkshire community engagement improvement partnership and National Empowerment Partnership In Yorkshire and the Humber (see action plan)

Our Partners

To deliver effective community engagement and empowerment, we must recognise the partners involved in delivering this strategy

- **Citizens, people and communities** – All the residents, service users and workers of Barnsley
- **Councillors** – The people elected by the communities across Barnsley to represent them.
- **Area Boards** – Partnerships of local people, councillors and partner agencies who meet to identify the priorities that affect their area and ensure these are addressed. Each of Barnsley's 9 Area Forums has an Area Board. These hold regular meetings, and are responsible for coordinating the local community planning process for their areas.
- **Third Sector** – Those voluntary and community organisations and social enterprises that work and support the various communities of identity and interest across the city
- **One Barnsley Partners** – Including representatives from the public, private, voluntary community and faith sectors across the borough

How will we measure our achievements?

This strategy will underpin all our community engagement activities. As with the Community Cohesion and Integration strategy, it forms a key strand of the One Barnsley Social Inclusion Framework. Monitoring the delivery of this strategy will be the responsibility of One Barnsley through its performance management arrangements associated with the LAA. The management of the strategy will be overseen by EDIP on behalf of One Barnsley. All organisations **signing up** to the LSP, will be required to adopt this strategy and to use the different types of engagement activities to ensure the best possible opportunity for citizens, people and communities to influence their decision making processes.

An implementation plan for this strategy is available detailing timeframes, milestones, actions and indicators for success. Progress on the strategy will be monitored and reviewed annually. We will use a variety of methods to measure our progress and improved practice, this will include:

- Using our Think Local survey and the bi-annual 'place shaping survey' to measure our key community engagement, empowerment and cohesion improvement targets within the LAA:
 - to increase the % of people who feel that they can influence decisions in their local area
 - to increase the % of people who feel that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds can get on well together
 - environment for a thriving third sector - will measure the contribution that local government and its partners make to the environment in which third sector organisations can operate successfully
- Measuring progress against other local related targets

- to increase the % of people from equality target groups who feel that they can influence Council decisions, local decision making process and service delivery
- Monitoring the take up and use of the community engagement standards and performance on indicators at a neighbourhood level for communities of interest and geography
- Sharing experience and progress through the Regional and National Empowerment Partnerships
- Acting on feedback from our inspections and external assessments of performance including the C.A.A. in 2009

This strategy will be reviewed annually and a summary of progress and achievements will be published on the website. The strategy will be fully revised again in 2011.