

## **Stronger, wider and deeper: taking forward the Community Development Challenge in the Northwest**

Pick up here and chase the ride  
The river empties to the tide  
All of this is coming your way  
**R.E.M., *Find the River***

A great river need not be a barrier. It's a means of communication and trade; a way to fertilise and nourish the surrounding land; and a source of life for towns and cities.

The story of community development is a bit like a river. There are numerous sources and streams of thinking and action that are coming together. Each has its own unique character. But at their confluence, they become something greater.

The government's Community Development Challenge offers the prospect of joining up many such streams. Community development can be a vehicle for communication between communities and those who serve them, and a fertiliser of ideas and action. But like a river, it needs to be used wisely. This report builds on the work done nationally to examine how the Northwest can make the most of this resource.

### **Introduction and background**

Here is a dilemma. On the one hand, the government wants to give citizens a much bigger say in the services they receive and in the quality of the communities where they live.

On the other hand, traditional means of mass participation, such as trade unions and political parties, have declined. Most people feel they have no influence over what goes on in their locality, especially if they live in a disadvantaged area.

Community development (CD) could resolve this dilemma. CD specialises in encouraging and empowering people to gain control over the conditions in which they live. It is a powerful way of turning alienation into engagement. In the Northwest, its successes range from the nurturing of minority ethnic groups in Stockport to engagement with young people in Cumbria.

But community development is poorly defined and unevenly funded. There is no co-ordinated overview of the work. Much of it is carried out 'behind the scenes' by people who keep a low profile because the very nature of their work is to enable and empower others.

Plans to move from a 'top-down' to a 'bottom-up' approach to tackling inequalities are central to much recent government policy, such as Local Area Agreements and the white paper *Strong and Prosperous Communities*, and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. The government has adopted the slogan 'Together We Can', and an empowerment white paper is due in summer 2008. And last year it published the Community Development Challenge report, which addresses issues such as:

- What does CD do that is not done by any other occupation?
- What are its achievements and why don't more people know about them?
- What obstacles are holding it back?
- What should be done now to give the CD occupation a more powerful role in achieving a participative society?

Its authors were a working party that included members from the Community Development Foundation, the Community Development Exchange and the Federation for Community Development Learning. They emphasise that the report is just the beginning of a long process of change and improvement, and have now moved on to a second stage, addressing some of the challenges identified in the report. Areas they are working on include managing CD, amplifying CD's contribution to democracy, training, learning, and strategic approaches to CD.

In the Northwest, the Together We Can network is working hard to build on the report and raise standards. In particular, it is concerned to improve quality and the way outcomes are measured. It also wants to act urgently on the great need for training. Facilitated through Neighbourhoods NW, this is Phase 1 of a long term project to raise the quality of CD in the region.

This work has been developed through a series of events in autumn 2007 and spring 2008. These included a seminar on the CD Challenge Report, a workshop at the conference, *Inspiring Communities*, in November 2007; and workshops in Liverpool in February 2008; Stockport in March 2008; and Cumbria in April 2008.

## Key messages from the community development challenge report

Community development needs a **strategic approach** operating across each local area with strengthened regional networks and national links.

**Funding** should be enough for a significant change in the level of community strengths and empowerment across the nation, and especially in disadvantaged areas.

CD should be **managed and delivered** to the highest possible standards.

CD should be promoted as a **nationally recognised occupation**.

All practitioners, new and experienced, should have access to **high quality training**.

Talented new entrants should be **recruited** to the CD occupation.

The **evidence base** should be improved, with CD organisations working with government to set up research that builds a picture of the impact and outcomes of CD over extended periods.

## A definition of community development

The report authors urged policymakers and practitioners to commit themselves to a clear definition of CD and its outcomes. They said the definition should combine the following six aspects:

- helping people find common cause on issues that affect them
- helping people work together on issues under their control
- building the strength and independence of community organisations
- building equity, inclusiveness, participation and cohesion among people and their organisations
- empowering people and their organisations to influence and help transform public policies and services
- advising and informing public authorities on community needs and views, and assisting them to work in genuine partnership with them

## What makes community development unique?

The Community Development Challenge report sets out what it considers to be the distinctive contribution of CD – that is, what CD does that other occupations do not do. It identifies six components that follow on from each other, building up a combined effect. Additionally, each stage has useful outcomes of its own. Other community practitioners may adopt one or more components in isolation. Only CD pursues the whole process through its six components (see Table 1).

The report recommends that practice should only be recognised as community development if it meets this comprehensive definition.

<b>Table 1. The distinctive contribution of community development</b>	
<b>Role</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
1. Help people see that they have common concerns about local or other public issues that they could benefit from working on together, under their own control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reduction of isolation and alienation</li> <li>▪ Increase in social capital and co-operation</li> </ul>
2. Help people to work together on those issues, often by forming or developing an independent community group, supporting them to plan and take actions, and encouraging evaluation and reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Creation or improvement of community groups</li> <li>▪ More opportunities for activity in the community</li> <li>▪ More effective community activity</li> </ul>
3. Support and develop independent groups across the community sector in a non-directive way, but within an ethical framework, and increase networking between groups	<p>Increase in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Community sector</li> <li>▪ Volunteering</li> <li>▪ Mutual aid and autonomous services</li> <li>▪ Learning between groups</li> <li>▪ Improvement in conditions in the locality</li> </ul>
4. Promote values of equity, inclusiveness, participation and co-operation throughout this work	<p>Increase in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Participation</li> <li>▪ Social capital</li> <li>▪ Co-operation</li> <li>▪ Community cohesion</li> </ul>
5. Empower people and their organisations to influence and transform public policies and services and all factors affecting the conditions of their lives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Community engagement and influence</li> </ul> <p>Improvement in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Dialogue between community and authorities</li> <li>▪ Coherence and effectiveness of public policies</li> </ul>
6. Advise and inform public authorities on community perspectives and assist them to strengthen communities and work in genuine partnership with them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increased capacity of agencies, authorities and professions to engage with communities</li> <li>▪ Improvement in delivery of public services</li> <li>▪ Increased resources for the community sector</li> </ul>

## **The story so far in the Northwest**

When it comes to community engagement, the Northwest has a strong reputation for innovation and for promoting active citizenship. But there is still plenty to do if community empowerment is to improve in the region.

### **Strengths** include:

- three local authorities, Liverpool, Manchester and Rochdale, have been named Civic Pioneers because of their commitment to community participation. More than 15 local authorities have pioneered different forms of community engagement through a range of government schemes;
- more than 10 regional voluntary sector agencies focusing on community development;
- a strong CD regional network;
- expertise in delivering successful participative sports, arts and cultural programmes, including the 2002 Commonwealth Games and the European Capital of Culture in Liverpool this year;
- a strong record of research into community engagement, especially at Manchester Metropolitan and Lancaster universities;
- CD training offered at universities.

### **Challenges** include:

- high levels of deprivation in many urban and rural areas;
- areas where there is significant polarisation between different ethnic groups;
- large rural areas with dwindling populations;
- low voting patterns

Further feedback on the strengths and challenges facing the NW can be found in the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Strategy.

## **Neighbourhoods NW**

Neighbourhoods NW is the newly established gateway for access to information, training and support for all those active in neighbourhood improvement in the Northwest. Working collaboratively with strategic partners, Neighbourhoods NW commissioned and co-ordinated a series of workshops to explore the CD Challenge report and how things can be taken forward in the Northwest.

### **CDX Seminar on the CD Challenge report**

This seminar, organised by Community Development Exchange (CDX), took place in October 2007 and was hosted by Manchester Metropolitan University's youth and community work course.

Its aim was to seek initial responses to the CD Challenge report and identify any missing elements.

Most delegates welcomed the chance to discuss the report and were glad to see a government department endorsing the publication, and acknowledging that top-down processes don't always work. Most saw it as the first attempt at a co-ordinated approach and a good starting point for further action.

The role of community development workers was recognised as important and integral, reaffirming what CD workers have been saying for many years. Some also felt the report could be used as a good practice guide by local strategic partnerships.

However, it was felt the report lacked continuity and succession planning, as there was no mention of resources for follow-up work. Some felt more should be done to promote and raise awareness of the report, and they were glad CDX had provided space to discuss it at regional events.

Participants were asked to look at the report's priorities and recommendations to improve CD. No single recommendation was regarded as having overriding importance, although long term funding was seen as critical to CD's success.

Participants also had an opportunity to hear what is happening within the region – the importance of active learning for active citizenship; its relevance and contribution to the CD Challenge; and the actions needed to take forward the CD Challenge at local, regional and national levels.

Nationally, it was felt the three main national CD organisations should form a united front to make the case for community development's contribution to policy.

Regionally, there is a need for more regular meetings to raise awareness and discuss ideas, and for focus groups to generate ideas, actions and partnerships. Participants felt the CD Challenge should be used to influence management work and practice, especially with elected councillors.

## **Inspiring Communities conference**

In November 2007 the regional community development network, Communities Northwest, organised a conference entitled *Inspiring Communities*. The aim of the day was to discuss a wide variety of issues of relevance to community groups and community workers in the region. One workshop looked at the CD Challenge report and ways of building on it.

This event drew out some important themes about the state of community development in the Northwest and helpful suggestions for future action.

First, it was clear that CD needed greater recognition as a profession. Workers often felt they were not valued, or that there was little commitment to CD at senior levels in public services. Local authorities should work towards developing a CD strategy where they don't have one, and should raise the profile of local community development networks.

'We need councils to work together,' one delegate noted. 'Politics gets in the way – councillors see the value in community work but want to own it themselves.'

Second, funding arrangements need to improve. Short-term funding, projects and contracts militate against the need for long-term, sustainable change.

Third, greater training and understanding is a priority. As one delegate reported, 'People don't understand what community development is and how it differs from "top down" and tokenistic approaches practised by other providers.' There was strong support for professional qualifications at every level, and in-work training for practitioners. Delegates recognised, too, that it was important to find ways to measure the work they do in order to demonstrate its value.

One recently appointed worker commented: 'Training is essential. A lack of training – "you are now a community development worker: off you go" - is disastrous. I was given a leaflet to read. This is the first event I have attended which has enabled me to talk to other CD workers.'

The fourth theme was the importance of local support for CD practitioners. Training and conferences had to be available locally, where practitioners could access them.

## **Why quality matters**

Community development is a bit like yeast. Good yeast, used appropriately, has a dramatic and transforming effect on a mixture of basic ingredients. When yeast is doing its job, it is invisible. Someone ignorant of the mechanics of bread making might even conclude that dough can rise by itself.

In a similar way, effective CD brings about transformations. It actively tackles the divisions, social exclusion and discrimination that deter some people from participating in activities and decision-making. For much of the time, it is almost invisible. The CD ethos is an

enabling and empowering one that builds up the skills and confidence of others and deliberately avoids the limelight itself. To the casual observer, it can seem as though community achievements that have been skillfully nurtured over a long period have popped up spontaneously.

This gives us two reasons why CD needs to be of high quality.

First, just as poor quality yeast results in a loaf that is uneven or even inedible, so poor quality CD can have, at best, only a limited effect. At the heart of CD practice is a set of values about collective working, equality and justice, learning and reflecting, participation, political awareness and sustainable change. It is this combination of roles, values, responsibilities and spheres of operation that gives community development its distinctive character.

But in many places only one or two of these aspects are present, which weakens the impact and contributes to confusion about what community development is.

A way of illustrating this is to think about what a place looks like if there is no CD, or if the CD is of very poor quality. In such a situation, it is likely that:

- there are few community groups, and those that do exist may be small and exclusive. Many people do not realise the issues that concern them are shared by others and can be affected by joint action.
- the most disadvantaged people receive poor quality public services, yet are least confident and skilled at representing their needs to authorities. Sections of the local population are unable to participate in activities that are intended for the whole community because prejudices, assumptions and cultural differences are not tackled.
- community leaders and representatives are not properly selected and held accountable, and may struggle or be ineffective on partnership boards
- public agencies and departments that need to engage with local communities are unaware of each other's efforts, lack insight into how communities work and have few channels for dialogue with them.

The second reason why quality matters is that the government's increasing emphasis on community empowerment means CD will grow in importance. It is important that what the government and the public see is a clear picture of an approach that is of high quality and can rise to the exciting yet demanding challenges ahead.

High quality, effective practice is the best advertisement for community development. People share their views and understanding of community development as much through informal conversations as by other means, and this is the most powerful form of communication. While conversation cannot be controlled, good quality work can and this will be talked about.

As part of the follow-up work to the CD Challenge document, the Community Development Foundation is publishing a report, focusing on managing CD.

Its author, CD consultant and lecturer Colin Miller, believes high quality management is essential in taking CD forward, and the development of good relationships with many senior managers and politicians is critically important for both managers and practitioners.

Many senior managers and politicians seem antagonistic towards community development, not because they don't like the principles, but because they have come across poor practice in the past. 'The best communications in the world won't help if practice is poor,' Colin Miller explains. 'If individual practitioners appear hostile towards people in authority, if they are lazy and do not develop their skills or reflect on their practice, then the whole CD field will be tarnished. This leaves a lasting legacy that is very difficult to overcome'.

## **Improving the management of community development**

The CD Challenge report says community development should be managed 'to the highest standards'. But these standards have never been properly defined, because so little has been written about management of CD. The report mentioned above is thus a first. Alongside the report, NW Together We Can organised two workshops on the issue, in Liverpool and Cumbria.

The Liverpool workshop, in February 2008, offered managers and practitioners an opportunity to explore the issues and share best practice in managing CD. A consistent message was the importance of developing effective communication – both in supporting practitioners, and in making the case for CD to those who commission services and to the wider public.

This is about explaining not just what CD is, but the impact it has in local communities. It is important to describe this work in a language and style that suits the recipient, not the practitioner or manager.

As one person attending the workshop said: *'We have succeeded in ensuring CD is at the centre of things in our authority because of our communications strategy. This is not a terribly fancy strategy but it is consistent. We recognise that there are no overnight conversions to the cause, but rather getting the message across requires a long term, drip by drip process. It's about constantly informing key people such as senior managers and politicians about what we are doing, why we are doing it, and the impact we are having, in a language and style they that means something to them.'*

Colin Miller, who facilitated the workshop with Yvonne Rivers, describes the event and its key themes:

*'We had an extended conversation a mix of practitioners and managers from across the Northwest.'*

*There were managers of CD units with a lot of experience, through to volunteer activists and new students. A few of them had read the Community Development Challenge document, but not very many.*

*It was quite clear there were a number of key issues and concerns and problems which echoed some of the key issues and concerns in the report.*

*Communications is a key issue. PR, marketing and promoting what CD is and what CD practice and teams are doing is an absolutely critical issue, and is key to the success of CD. People were saying they're not good at it and need to get good at it. But they need to recognise they have an obligation to communicate what teams are doing and why, and how they're doing it and what they're achieving. A communications strategy geared to the information needs of the key stakeholders.*

*Another key concern for both practitioners and managers is supervision and team meetings. Some people had experienced really poor practice: for example, some had received little or no line management and got no supervision or one-to-ones.*

*Effective CD is dependent on good quality management support and supervision. At the moment there's still too much reliance on individual commitment and interest of managers and not enough on it being embedded in organisational cultures.*

*An important conclusion by those participating is that it's essential that practitioners as well as managers think in a strategic way. At the same time there needs to be a sense of clarity from employing and commissioning organisations, local authorities and local strategic partnerships. What do they mean and what outcomes do they want? There needs to be a dialogue.*

*Existing training for CD practice can be very weak. For example, there's very little training on fundamentals like organisational theory and development, understanding complex systems and whole systems. This sort of stuff should be core to what CD workers are engaged with on a daily basis. Community workers need that sort of training if they're to do their work properly.*

*The most successful CD organisations embed learning in the way they do everything: they're constantly reflecting and learning. While formal training is important, it's not worth that much unless teams develop a culture of learning – embedding learning in practice, by constantly reflecting on the feedback you get from your evaluation.'*

Some of these key messages were reinforced in a further workshop in April, organised for community development staff in Cumbria. This event was designed to build on the achievements of an existing team.

The Cumbria workshop highlighted how successful communication could win credibility for community development across a local authority.

Colin Miller explains: *'The team had an extremely good relationship with elected members and they have a good relationship with the local community. In some ways they have achieved something many community development teams haven't. There's an obvious deep commitment to managers' development and learning.*

*One factor in this continued success is the way the team is committed to working very closely with elected members. This relationship was a key factor in helping the council respond to the horrors of the foot and mouth disease outbreak in 2001, where the team worked closely with local communities and other parts of the council.'*

Out of this workshop has come an agreement to examine further how the ABCD approach (Achieving Better Community Development – see below) can be used to evaluate the success of the team’s work and ensure practitioners are working to agreed standards and values. Many of the team are already engaged in advanced learning, including MBA courses, and there are plans to look at how this learning can be used to benefit the whole team.

## **How practice can be improved**

At the end of the Community Development Challenge report, the authors set out a vision for delivering CD more effectively. This has six sections, and the vision for management and practice is that ‘community development should be managed and delivered to the highest standards’.

They believe a further six steps are needed to achieve this part of the vision.

### **1. A definition of community development**

The report authors urge policymakers and practitioners to commit themselves to a clear definition of CD and its outcomes. The definition should combine the six aspects referred to in the introduction. That definition is expanded in the second section of this report, ***What makes community development unique?***

In the working party’s opinion, models for practice should cover all these components and make use of the **national occupational standards**. These standards outline the skills, values and practice principles required for community development work, and provide a reference point for best practice.

The standards have been developed by the Federation for Community Development Learning – see [www.fcdl.org.uk](http://www.fcdl.org.uk)

### **2 and 3. Management and management training**

The report says that ‘a management guide to community development should be developed, taking account of the varied contexts in which CD workers are employed, including situations where there is little CD management expertise’. It also urges the development of management training modules for CD team leaders within local authorities, housing associations, the voluntary and community sector, and other agencies and projects.

A detailed report on managing CD is now available (see **Next Steps**, below).

### **4. Improving the evidence base**

Measuring the effectiveness of CD has always been a thorny issue. While funders require specified outcomes, practitioners have traditionally insisted that the point of CD is ‘process not product’. This impasse is one reason why a great deal of funding for CD has been short-term and experimental, despite general agreement that CD is a long-term process that can change the whole of society for the better.

The CD Challenge report suggests the introduction of relevant indicators will pave the way for a much more positive relationship between funders and practitioners. By taking a strategic view of a whole neighbourhood or locality one can say, without compromising communities’ own choices, that measurable improvements can be achieved by investing CD work in a community over a specified period.

Some of the national indicators published by the Department for Communities and Local Government in October 2007 are particularly pertinent. A clutch of indicators aim to measure local authorities’ success in building stronger communities through local area agreements, including:

- the percentage of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area
- the percentage of people who feel they belong to their neighbourhood
- civic participation
- the percentage of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality
- participation in regular volunteering

While headline indicators will never capture the full complexity of CD, they can at least demonstrate whether things are moving in the right direction. The report’s authors urge practitioners to talk about CD in a way that supports the indicators:

*‘We must learn to talk of process and product. We must learn to qualify “it’s a long-term process” by adding “but there are measurable milestones along the way”... we must link up across localities to present the outcomes of successful practice in these quantifiable terms as well as in descriptive terms. And – perhaps hardest of all – we must be willing to question and change practice if it turns out not to be producing effects that advance our declared values.’*

## **5. How are we doing?**

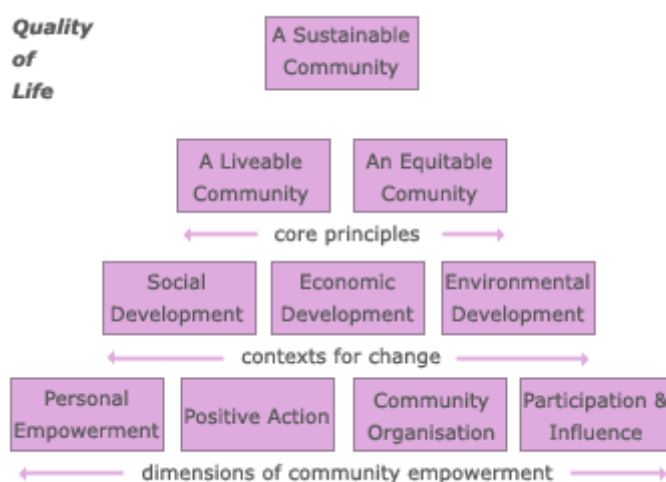
The report urges the widest possible use of visioning, benchmarking and self evaluation systems such as Achieving Better Community Development (ABCD) and Learning, Evaluation, Action and Planning (LEAP).

### **Achieving Better Community Development (ABCD)**

ABCD is a tool for planning, evaluating and learning from community development work. It encourages everyone involved in CD – from managers and policymakers to volunteers and community members – to be clear about what they want to achieve and how they should go about it. It is not prescriptive but sets out a broad framework.

## Key principles of the ABCD framework

- Everyone should take part;
- Evaluation is key: it should continuously inform planning and action, and it should be conducted with the communities themselves;
- It is crucial to evaluate the empowerment of communities and changes in the quality of life in those communities;
- Community life should become more satisfying, sustainable and equitable.



**Figure 1: The ABCD pyramid**  
source: [www.proveandimprove.org](http://www.proveandimprove.org)

Figure 1 sets out the key relationships in the ABCD model. The bottom row shows the four dimensions of community empowerment that should be built into any CD activity:

**Personal empowerment** – individual learning, knowledge, confidence and skill

**Positive action** – challenging established power structures and involving groups excluded by poverty, race, gender or disability

**Community organisation** – i.e., the range, quality and effectiveness of community groups and the nature and quality of their relationships with each other and with the wider world

**Participation and influence** – the means of changing community life

The next row shows the different types of context in which change takes place – social, economic and environmental – and the row above shows the desirable outcomes of CD. So central and local government agencies, as well as parts of the private or voluntary sectors that are responsible for service delivery, need to work collaboratively with communities to achieve these results.

The model provides a general framework within which organisations can think about what CD means to them. The practical measures for involving stakeholders are up to the organisations themselves.

Detailed information is available in the ABCD Handbook from the Community Development Foundation, [www.cdf.org.uk](http://www.cdf.org.uk)

### **Making ABCD effective in the Northwest**

One of the three workshops on the Community Development Challenge in the Northwest focused on the use of ABCD as a means of raising the quality of practice within the region.

The workshop was facilitated by Nick Beddow, community development team leader at Stockport MBC, who describes how the model can help provide an evidence base for CD work:

*'Some older workers and activists had tried to use ABCD ten years ago and had stopped using it because it had become too technical and confusing. No-one could work out how to use the materials with community groups without overburdening them with the jargon and the sheer scale of the ABCD process. But given that we have to prove evidence of our results and we want to do it on CD principles, how can ABCD help us plan and evaluate our work?*

*We found its basic strength was in analysing the next steps for CD work. We have a questionnaire which groups together the key challenges facing community groups within the four dimensions of community empowerment – Personal empowerment, Positive Action, Organisation and Influence.*

*Under each challenging issue the workers consider whether communities are strong, developing or struggling. Where we find aspects in which communities are struggling, we can then ask what the worker can do in the next phase of CD work to support the community group's increasing empowerment. We can also ask how the worker can develop their own skills in relevant aspects, or draw on the community group's skills or other agencies' specialist skills and knowledge.*

*This process leads to a CD action plan based on the group's unmet development needs, and also generates a relevant personal development plan for workers. The challenge to consider possible inputs from other agencies also encourages a stakeholder-based approach – it pushes CD workers away from becoming territorial.*

*Within the training session, participants created a profile of an imaginary community and looked at its strengths and weaknesses using the ABCD analysis form. The feedback was extremely positive: people could see and imagine how they could use it in their practice to guide their next steps in supporting the community.*

*By making ABCD a practical tool, it has a lot of value for showing other professionals what we mean when we talk about empowerment. It talks about community strengths in very practical ways, but carries within it the values of community empowerment.*

*By the end of the workshop people were saying they would like to come back together in a few months, having tried it out, and get some mentoring from each other.*

*We also briefly highlighted the golden thread between day to day CD work and the highest outcomes our employers want us to contribute towards. The ABCD outcomes pyramid shows how practical small steps lead up to the high level abstractions, such as community cohesion. This will need a workshop in its own right, but for now we can show our contribution and illustrate how CD can make sense of higher outcomes by proceeding step by step.'*

## **Learning, Evaluation, Action and Planning (LEAP)**

The LEAP framework is a toolkit that aims to support a partnership approach to community development. It outlines a five-step planning and evaluation cycle that can be used to implement this approach.

LEAP is based on four principles:

- We should plan and act according to need;
- We should be clear about what we hope to achieve and about whether we've achieved it;
- Planning, action and evaluation should involve communities as key stakeholders;
- We should be committed to learning from what we do, and from each other, and applying this learning to improve our effectiveness and efficiency.

The LEAP planning and evaluation cycle is based on seven simple questions (see Figure 2):

- What is the need we are trying to address?
- What specifically needs to change?
- How will we know if change has taken place?
- What will we actually do?
- How will we make sure we're doing it as planned?
- How successful have we been and what have we learned?



**Figure 2.** Source: <http://leap.scdc.org.uk/leap-framework/>

## A word about training

Clearly training has a key role to play in any attempt to improve practice. If we use the rounded definition of CD set out at the beginning of this report, then there is very little CD training available. There is a great deal of training and education in separate skills and techniques for working with communities, but most of it lacks depth, according to the CD Challenge report. The authors call for a major overhaul of CD training, including the following:

- employers should draw up job descriptions and person specifications for recruitment, and these should require new recruits to demonstrate understanding of both the theory and practice underpinning CD;
- national umbrella organisations, regional CD networks and training and education providers should refresh and further promote the national occupational standards. Quality-assured training should be developed at a variety of levels from ‘taster’ to postgraduate;
- all CD practitioners should have access to properly funded, relevant training;
- schools, universities and careers advisers should be able to promote CD as a worthwhile career.

Given the chronic lack of quality CD trainers and educators, it will be important to set up progression routes so that people – and especially people in marginalised communities – can gain these skills.

## Next steps

This report is the culmination of Phase 1 of the work to build on the CD Challenge in the Northwest. Phase 2 will be a partnership between members of the North West Together We Can (NWTWC) network, including Communities Northwest, Neighbourhoods NW, Manchester Metropolitan University and three national CD organisations, FCDL, CDX and CDF.

Planned actions include:

- A seminar to feed back on Phase 1 for the Region and to launch Phase 2
- Phase 2: a community of interest to take forward the recommendations of the CD challenge and the findings of this research project
- The national follow-up reports to the CD Challenge will be disseminated through a partnership of NWTWC, CDX, FCDL and CDF. The publications are:

*Colin Miller (2008): Community Development Challenge: Management. Towards high standards in community development, London: CDF*

*Melanie Bowles (2008): Community Development Challenge: Democracy. The contribution of community development to local governance and democracy, London: CDF*

*Beth Longstaff (2008): Community Development Challenge: Strategies. Local strategic approaches to community development, London: CDF*

*Beth Longstaff (2008) Community Development Challenge: Evaluation. Establishing an outcomes and evidence base, London: CDF*

All four reports have recently been published and are available on the CDF website.

NWTWC is conducting a baseline study of all northwest local authorities' approaches to community empowerment, and two sub-regional case studies on community empowerment; and the results of this research will be shared widely

NWTWC and Neighbourhoods NW will work with the five sub-regional partnerships of the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership, to contribute to improved neighbourhood delivery and community empowerment in the Northwest. For details visit [www.nwiep.org.uk](http://www.nwiep.org.uk) Further details will be available on the NWTWC and Neighbourhoods NW websites.

If you would like to be involved in taking forward the CD Challenge in the Northwest, email NWTWC or Neighbourhoods NW – see contact details below.

## Who's who in CD?

Essential contacts in the Northwest and nationally.

### Neighbourhoods NW

Neighbourhoods NW is the gateway for access to information, training and support for all those active in neighbourhood improvement in the Northwest.

Formed in response to a government request to maximise the regional reach and added value of neighbourhood resource services, the gateway aims to develop collaborative approaches to delivering improvement and excellence in neighbourhoods.

Its strategic partners are North West Together We Can, with support from Government Office for the North West (GONW), the North West Improvement Network and the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership. The gateway aims to work collaboratively with other partners, agencies and local authorities.

Neighbourhoods NW operates regionally and sub-regionally, with bespoke programmes addressing the specific learning needs of particular parts of the region. It is also part of a National Neighbourhoods Training & Resource Centre Alliance, sharing knowledge and best practice nationally.

Contact:

#### Neighbourhoods NW

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### North West Together We Can

NWTWC aims to support the development of collaborative learning, practice and research concerning community empowerment and engagement across the region. NWTWC is supported by the Regional Improvement and Efficiency partnership and CLG as a regional improvement partnership for improving community engagement and empowerment in the

North West. NWTWC co-ordinates activities, shares learning and develops knowledge, and explores the best way to fill gaps.

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<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/communitydevelopment>

Diagrams have been sourced from Prove and Improve (Figure 1) and LEAP (figure 2)

*This report was prepared for Neighbourhoods NW by NS+ - [www.nsplus.co.uk](http://www.nsplus.co.uk)*

## **Appendix:**

### **North West Together We Can**

In March 2006 the North West Together We Can (NWTWC) network was formally established. This is a regional 'learning network' for local authority practitioners and policymakers who want to explore issues of community engagement and active citizenship. It operates between all sectors and across the whole Northwest region.

NWTWC has the following goals:

- to increase the number of residents who feel they can influence decisions affecting their local area;
- to increase the proportion of public services delivered through the voluntary and community sectors;
- to facilitate shared learning and practice between different agencies and so effect changes in policy and practice;
- to ensure that the Northwest is innovative and influential in the national push to empower communities;
- to widen the membership of the network across statutory and voluntary partners.

NWTWC also contributes to other regional strategies, such as the regional learning plan and the Northwest regional economic strategy.

There are four broad themes to its work: active citizenship; local engagement and participation; local leadership and accountability; and 'cross-cutting activity' (this last theme involves ensuring that work is co-ordinated between different organisations and across different sectors). It divides its activity into five different types, namely: learning and training; events; research; resources, and networks.

Some examples of its activities are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. Examples of NWTWC activities**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Activity</b>
Active citizenship	<p>The North West Forum on Faiths plans a project to share learning about the engagement of faith communities in active citizenship.</p> <p>The NW Take Part network will co-ordinate a programme of active citizenship learning, including a training programme for community members and a training-the-trainers course for local partners.</p> <p>The Gender and Participation Unit at Manchester Metropolitan University will run gender awareness workshops for public agencies.</p>
Local engagement and participation	<p>NWTWC has researched a series of case studies that examine good practice among network members.</p> <p>One North West, the regional network for the black and minority ethnic voluntary and community sector in northwest England, is preparing a new programme of work to increase the engagement of black and minority ethnic communities.</p>
Local leadership and accountability	<p>Several organisations are developing programmes to improve the role of local councillors in relation to community leadership and engagement. The Elected Member Development Gateway provides councillors with a single access point for training and development. For details visit: <a href="http://www.nweo.org.uk/member_gateway/devt_opportunities/">http://www.nweo.org.uk/member_gateway/devt_opportunities/</a></p> <p>NWTWC is in the process of identifying regional partners involved in youth work so it can focus on different ways of involving young people in their communities during 2008.</p>
Cross-cutting activity	<p>NWTWC has appointed a programme manager, Eve Davidson, to work at the Centre for Local Governance at Manchester University. Among other things, she will be responsible for ensuring that knowledge is shared and activities are co-ordinated throughout the NWTWC network.</p>