



Take Part final report

By Stephen Miller and Areenay Hatamian



Community Development Foundation

Take Part

Final evaluation report

Stephen Miller and Areenay Hatamian

June 2011

This publication is funded by the Take Part programme, funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government and managed by the Community Development Foundation

© 2011 Community Development Foundation



This work is subject to an 'attribution non-commercial share alike' creative commons licence. For further details see <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/>

Cover photograph by Jonny Dredge

Contents

Contents	3
Executive summary	5
The Take Part programme	5
The evaluation	5
Key findings	5
Recommendations	7
Acknowledgements	8
Acronyms.....	9
I Introduction.....	10
1.1 Context.....	10
1.2 The Take Part programme	11
1.3 The evaluation.....	15
1.4 In this report	15
2 Take Part in practice	16
2.1 Key findings	16
2.2 Principles and approaches of Take Part.....	16
2.3 Characteristics of Take Part learning	22
2.4 Key learning for the future.....	27
2.5 Chapter conclusion	28
3 The difference Take Part makes.....	30
3.1 Key findings.....	30
3.2 Overcoming barriers to participation	31
3.3 Benefits realised: increased confidence, skills and knowledge	31
3.4 Benefits realised: Taking action and making changes	33
3.5 Employability and further learning	36

3.6	Wider impacts of the programme	38
3.7	Impact on VCS organisations	40
3.8	Impact on LAs.....	41
3.9	Chapter conclusion	42
4	Embedding Take Part.....	43
4.1	Key findings	43
4.2	Engaging regional and local partners.....	43
4.3	Networking within Take Part	49
4.4	Support and capacity building	50
4.5	Sustainability.....	54
5	Conclusion and recommendations	56
5.1	Take Part achievements and legacy.....	56
5.2	Lessons for the future and recommendations.....	58
6	Reference list.....	63
	Appendix A – Take Part pathfinders and Regional Take Part Champions.....	65
	Appendix B – Regional Take Part champions and development fund evaluation summary	82
	Key findings.....	82
	Appendix C – Methodology	86
	Scope of the evaluation	86
	Desktop research	87
	Semi-structured interviews with pathfinders.....	87
	Interviews with LAs.....	87
	Longitudinal study of beneficiaries.....	88
	Interviews with programme-management staff	89
	Focus groups	89
	Surveys.....	90
	Additional research.....	90

Executive summary

This report presents the final findings from the evaluation by the Community Development Foundation (CDF) of Take Part, a three-year programme of support for active citizenship and learning funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and managed by CDF.

The Take Part programme

The Take Part programme began in December 2008 and ran until March 2011. There were two key strands to this work: the Take Part pathfinders and a programme of national support.

Pathfinders aimed to support community leadership and active citizenship learning in 19 areas across England. This work was complemented by a programme of national support for pathfinder organisations; CDF worked beside them to promote the Take Part approach to other public agencies and voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations.

The evaluation

The evaluation took place over the course of the Take Part programme. Its findings are based on over 300 interviews, six focus groups and four surveys with a range of audiences, from organisations delivering the programme to individuals benefiting from the programme activities. Pathfinder interim and final evaluations have provided further evidence about the impact of the programme.

Key findings

Take Part helped thousands of people gain the confidence, knowledge and skills to become more actively involved in their communities. Participants in a range of Take Part activities cited increased confidence as the greatest benefit of their involvement in the programme. People felt more able to express their opinion and have their voice heard. Through enhanced knowledge and skills they were more able to identify opportunities for influence and be effective in their participation.

People are more able to influence decision making and take action in their community as a result of the Take Part programme. Beneficiaries are utilising attributes developed through Take Part to take action, becoming more involved in their communities by volunteering and joining community groups. People are also more engaged in civic life, from voting for the first time to becoming magistrates, school governors or councillors. In addition, the programme helped people reflect on their existing involvement, and by utilising the skills they had gained in areas such as negotiation and leadership, beneficiaries were more effective in their roles.

Public agencies reflected on their own practice and became more open to influence. Local authorities (LAs) involved with Take Part felt it had had a positive impact

on their work, increasing the number of empowerment activities developed with and by local people in response to their needs and concerns. Elected officials and LA officers increasingly saw advocacy as part of their roles, ensuring they were aiding public engagement. The programme also allowed participating LAs to be more creative in their approaches to empowerment, engaging across departments to promote Take Part practices.

Learning through experience, reflection and action in supportive environments was critical to the success of the programme. Beneficiaries valued a supportive space, often engendered by the tutors, where they felt comfortable expressing themselves and reflecting on their actions and strengths. Allowing the participants to develop their skills, knowledge and confidence through experience helped to put the learner at the centre of the learning process and ensured the benefits of the programme would endure beyond its lifespan.

Take Part promoted active citizenship and learning through bespoke activities developed with or by local people in response to their own needs and concerns. Pathfinders were responsive to requests from individuals and groups, as well as proactive in identifying gaps in existing provision, to develop a range of activities including accredited and non-accredited learning programmes, workshops, one-off sessions and events.

The Take Part approach reached beyond pathfinder areas. The 'Train the Take Part trainers' programme has helped to create a body of tutors to deliver future active citizenship learning across England. With the assistance of the development fund, regional Take Part champions proved successful in building relationships with a number of LAs, helping to coordinate and contribute to sustainable empowerment activities that will continue beyond the programme.

Sharing common values and having previous experience of empowerment was important for organisations to help them develop local programmes of active citizenship learning. Partnerships of voluntary sector organisations, LAs and academic institutions brought together an array of expertise but all shared the common values of social justice, participation, diversity and equality, and cooperation. These values, along with local knowledge, proved an important cornerstone to partnership, successful delivery and the embedding of Take Part.

Strong partnerships proved essential for embedding the Take Part approach, helping to reduce duplication and improve coordination. Take Part used and strengthened existing networks, as well as creating new networks and partnerships. This enabled pathfinders and regional champions to address existing gaps in local provision and utilise resources to maximise their impact. Furthermore, working in partnership allowed Take Part to enhance the capacity of organisations such as VCS groups to better engage local communities.

Recommendations

The impact of Take Part in encouraging local action and stimulating civil society offers important learning for the Big Society agenda and other future empowerment initiatives. Programmes such as Community Organisers, the National Citizen Service and the Citizens' University can only stand to gain from building on the networks, knowledge base and skill set that Take Part has embedded across England.

No one method is best. A range of learning activities including accreditation should be used to achieve greater civic and civil involvement. A suite of activities that can stand alone or fit together to form clear progression routes to active citizenship is highly recommended for existing and future initiatives.

Support for citizens' engagement practices must be sustained to ensure that the benefits do not begin to diminish. Individuals becoming more involved in civic and civil activities and practices may still require support and opportunities for development to ensure that they can continue to overcome barriers and be effective in their participation. This would suggest that a certain level of support needs to be maintained in order for the benefits of any empowerment initiative not to be lost.

A balance is needed between accountability and freedom for local people to target resources effectively. A key element of the Big Society is the transfer of power from the centre to a local level. This will require striking a balance between holding communities and organisations to account, and giving them the flexibility to focus increasingly scarce resources on bringing about meaningful change.

Meaningful partnerships can enhance active citizenship in times of austerity. Pathfinders have delivered inspiring results, changing citizens' lives and empowering communities on relatively small budgets. An annual investment of £30,000 each from an LA, university and local business would be enough to continue Take Part work in most areas, extending and increasing its already impressive impact.

Sharing administrative resources across partnerships helps where finances are already strained. Empowering communities requires human resources, and in areas where financial resources are scarce, partnerships could use each other's staff to enhance existing, and develop innovative new approaches to empowerment. However risk strategies are essential. Plans and contingencies need to be considered in case partners are unable to fulfil their requirements.

Acknowledgements

This report represents the outcome of over two years' research involving almost 300 interviews, six focus groups and numerous surveys. None of this work would have been possible without the continued guidance and support of Barbra Carlisle, Research Manager and CDF colleagues – Jayne Humm, Claire Morgan, Emma Perry, Helen Animashaun, Jason Nuttall, Mairi Taylor-Gibson, Tania Pells, Thomas Neumark and Valerie Lammie.

We would like to thank Graham Skeggs, Meghan Rainsberry and Natalie Williams for their work and support in the development of this report. We would also like to acknowledge the contribution of Maire Gaffney, and of the research organisations ERS and OPM in collecting evidence for the evaluation, and Carol Goldstone Associates, Dick Ellison, Patrick Marmion and Steve Skinner for supporting pathfinders with their own evaluations and feeding in to the development of this report.

Finally, but most importantly, we would like to thank the LA representatives, community development workers, regional Take Part champions, development fund recipients, and pathfinders and their beneficiaries for participating in the research. We would particularly like to thank the pathfinders for both their assistance with organising interviews and focus groups, and the contribution of their own evidence to the programme evaluation.

Stephen Miller and Areenay Hatamian

Acronyms and abbreviations

ALAC – Active Learning for Active Citizenship

BME – black and minority ethnic

CDF – Community Development Foundation

DCLG – Department for Communities and Local Government

ESOL – English for speakers of other languages

IPAC – Individual Profile in Active Citizenship

LGBT – lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender

LINK – local involvement network

LSP – local strategic partnership

MP – Member of Parliament

MEP – member of the European parliament

NAVCA – National Association for Voluntary and Community Action

NCVO – National Council for Voluntary Organisations

NOCN – National Open College Network

NVQ – National Vocational Qualification

PCT – primary care trust

PTLLS – Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector

REP – regional empowerment partnership

TSEPI – Targeted Support for Empowerment and Participation Improvement

VCS – voluntary and community sector

WEA – Workers' Educational Association

1 Introduction

1.1 Context

Putting power in the hands of citizens

Successive governments' policy commitments have been rooted in a belief that public involvement improves services (Blond, 2009, p. 25) and transform citizens from 'passive recipients...into mutually dependent individuals, as active members of their communities' (Mayo and Annette, 2010, p. 1). This belief has previously been manifest in the requirement for LAs to involve more people in local decision making (DCLG, 2006), and is currently encapsulated in the Big Society agenda.

Citizen empowerment is at the heart of the agenda, and the devolution of power to local neighbourhoods is a key policy priority, embodied primarily through the *Localism Bill* (DCLG, 2010). While guaranteeing citizens adequate rights and powers over their local areas is a crucial first step, ensuring they have the understanding, capacity and the will to take up these rights and opportunities is less straightforward. Learning from Take Part could prove hugely complementary to achieving these aims, as the programme developed a range of approaches and techniques to promote active citizenship and opened public agencies up to community influence.

Challenges to increased participation

New legal rights and powers have been made available for all citizens, although the ability to exercise them is dependent upon skill levels, confidence, and ability to navigate the political landscape. Citizens require relevant skills, knowledge and confidence to increase participation, particularly in disadvantaged communities. Public agencies must also be able to support citizens in taking advantage of these opportunities and ensure they are open to doing so.

Several government initiatives have the potential to empower citizens to become more active in local decision making and community leadership. These include established methods like participatory budgeting and community volunteering projects, to newer ones such as training for community organisers and the establishment of four 'vanguard communities' to test approaches to increasing citizen power. Growing social action has been stressed as a key component of the Big Society, which aims to encourage self help and bring people 'together to solve problems and improve life for themselves and their communities' (The Conservative Party, 2010, p. 53).

A model for success

Programmes of citizenship learning are not new. Following the Active Learning for Active Citizenship programme (ALAC), a national active-citizenship learning framework to stimulate civic and civil activity was developed, with a capacity building element at its core.

ALAC developed and tested effective programmes of citizenship learning for adults through seven regional hubs. These programmes, which were based upon the values of social justice, participation, equality, diversity and cooperation, were not only for members of the community but also for local government officers and elected officials. They addressed local people's priorities and were rooted in their collective experiences.

Following the end of the ALAC programme in 2006, the Take Part Network was established to continue the work and produce a learning framework (DCLG, 2006, p. 31; Take Part Network, 2011). The framework promotes the 'Take Part approach' to adult learning in active citizenship, based on the pedagogy of Paulo Freire (Freire, 1986). This approach advocates learning as a transformative process in which tutors and participants learn from each other. The framework encourages learners to develop critical awareness through reflection and take informed action to bring about change.¹

The 2008 empowerment white paper *Communities in control* (DCLG, 2008, p.39) announced the Take Part programme. It built on the work the Take Part National Network, which took part in seven Active Learning for Active Citizenship (ALAC) pilots funded by the Civil Renewal Unit of the Home Office from 2004 to 2006. The programme has since developed into a successful model for equipping citizens with the skills and confidence to engage in decision making and political life.

1.2 The Take Part programme

The £8.7 million Take Part programme was sponsored by DCLG from 2008 to 2011 and managed by CDF. The programme aimed to support citizens and communities in gaining the skills, knowledge and confidence to have a greater say in what happens in their area and become more involved in local action. There were two key strands to the Take Part programme: **pathfinders** supporting community leadership and active citizenship learning through community-based learning, and a **national support programme** to complement the work of the pathfinders and support the roll-out of the Take Part approach across the country.

Pathfinders

Pathfinders, funded to support community leadership and active citizenship learning, comprised of a mixture of voluntary sector groups, LAs and academic institutions. They worked in partnership with others, including voluntary sector organisations and local strategic partnerships (LSPs). They covered a wide range of geographical areas between them, with some pathfinders covering whole counties and others targeted at ward level. Eight pathfinders joined the Take Part programme in December 2008 (seven of which had previously been involved in the ALAC programme) and a further 10 organisations joined in April 2009. A profile of each pathfinder is included in Appendix A.

¹ The Take Part approach is closely aligned with the key concepts of Paulo Freire's pedagogy. Freire argued that problem-posing education requires authentic dialogue between teachers and students (dialogue) and critical reflection and subsequent action (praxis), which results in 'conscientisation' – the awakening of critical consciousness (Take Part Network, 2011, p. 16).

Table 1: Pathfinders (by area of operation)

Black Country	Bradford and York ²
Brighton and Hove	Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale
Cornwall	Exeter
Hertfordshire	Lincolnshire
Mansfield	Northumberland
Portsmouth	Redcar & Cleveland and Sedgefield borough
Salford	Southwark
South Yorkshire	Stoke-on-Trent
Sutton	Thurrock

Pathfinders ran a range of activities tailored to the identified needs of local communities, including short- and long-term learning programmes, community leadership courses, accreditation options and provision of a variety of information and events. They aimed to:

- build the skills and confidence of local people to enable them to pursue civic activism, community leadership and lay governance roles³ (including that of local councillor)
- support people and organisations in developing an understanding of barriers to participation, and how to overcome them
- raise awareness of routes into lay governance roles, especially those involving members of LSPs
- support people in their progression through those routes, to support improvement against public service agreement (PSA) national indicators.⁴

The methods and approaches employed by pathfinders, and their impact, are discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 respectively.

² Note that the Bradford and York pathfinder is comprised of two organisations working in different locations and sharing funding between them. For the purposes of the evaluation they are referred to as one pathfinder with two projects.

³ DCLG defines civic activism as involvement in ‘direct decision making about local services or issues, or in the actual provision of these services by taking on a role such as a local councillor, school governor or magistrate’ (DCLG, 2010, *Citizenship Survey*, p. 2).

⁴ Take Part supported improvement against national indicators (NI) 3 and 4. NI3 indicated ‘civic participation in the local area – narrowing gaps between groups in order to raise involvement of disadvantaged sections of society’ and NI4 indicated ‘people feeling that they can influence decisions in their locality’. Note that as of August 2010, local authorities were no longer required to report against these NIs.

National support programme

The second key strand of Take Part was the delivery of the national support programme to complement the work of the pathfinders and to support the roll-out of the Take Part approach across sectors and new locations. The main aims of the national support activities were to:

- engage organisations beyond the 18 pathfinders to adopt the practices of the programme
- support organisations to run Take Part programmes
- encourage more local citizens to ‘take part’.

National support activities included:

- **an online resource directory** collating resources and materials, building on approaches to empowerment and active citizenship
- the production of a series of **Take Part resources and case studies** for practitioners to use
- **the ‘Train the Take Part trainers’ programme**, enabling community members to be trained in active citizenship
- the appointment of nine **regional Take Part champions** to distribute a development fund and facilitate new Take Part activities⁵
- **publicity and promotion** to increase awareness of Take Part, including the development of a Take Part website
- **mentoring** support for all those involved in delivering the Take Part approach.

Figure 1 provides an overview of the main aims for each Take Part activity. The impact of the national support programme in promoting active citizenship and embedding the Take Part approach are explored in Chapters 3 and 4.

⁵ The regional Take Part champions offered resources, information and guidance to those delivering empowerment and engagement programmes. They also ran a small grants programme (the development fund) during the course of the Take Part programme, funding local authorities and voluntary and community organisations to deliver new or complement existing community empowerment projects. The key impacts of the regional champions’ work are integrated into this report alongside the impacts of the pathfinders and other activities.

Figure 1: Overview of the aims for each Take Part activity

PATHFINDER STRAND	NATIONAL SUPPORT STRAND					
18 pathfinders	Building on the Take Part framework / the online resource directory	Train the Take Part trainers	Resource portfolio	Regional Take Part champions and development fund	Publicity and promotion of Take Part	Mentoring
Build the skills and confidence of local people so that they can pursue civic activism, community leadership and lay governance roles (including that of local councillor)	Identify and collate existing resources and materials which, together with the learning framework build on approaches to empowerment and active citizenship and can be used to help support the activities of Take Part projects	Develop a national 'Train the Take Part trainers' programme which offers a pathway for new and existing tutor and trainers so that they are well equipped to deliver Take Part-related programmes with a focus on active citizenship	Ensure a comprehensive toolkit of generic resources and materials is available for those undertaking Take Part programmes	Give advice and support on how to develop and run Take Part programmes and activities, including how these can be funded, accreditation options and resources available	Increase awareness of the resources available to support Take Part programmes across the country	Develop informal networking opportunities for pathfinders through the mentoring scheme
Support people and organisations in developing an understanding of barriers to participation, and how to overcome them	Compile a directory of the resources, and guidelines on their use to be made available in an accessible format (print and/or web)	Collaborate with existing pathfinders and partners on developing appropriate courses which are based on best practice so as to harness the expertise that exists within these bodies	Enable practitioners to access this bank of materials through the Take Part website to help in their delivery (e.g. 'how to' guides, tools and methods, handbooks and lesson plans etc.)	Support regional shared learning and the development of Take Part through action learning sets and peer-support programmes	Ensure LAs are aware of and have access to Take Part resources (guidance and materials, trainers, accreditation options, a system for advertising participation opportunities, etc).	Provide information and guidance to pathfinders and stakeholders involved in the programme
Raise awareness of routes into lay governance roles, especially those involving LSP partners		Create a bank of new Take Part trainers who can be accessed and deployed by pathfinders and other organisations interested in developing Take Part methods		Ensure activities are linked in to other relevant programmes including REPs, Take Part pathfinders and Empowerment Fund activities	Encourage people to 'take part' locally, using the resources on offer to them through the Take Part programme	Support pathfinder organisations facing particularly high levels of disengagement within specific regions and pathfinders with other intensive needs
Enable people in their progression through those routes to support improvement against PSA national indicators				Promote and encourage the uptake of Take Part among local authorities and other organisations within their region, in order to generate further demand Manage a development fund for Take Part activities. 6-10 grants are made available to run Take Part activities in each region	Design and produce of a Take Part website which will host the resources and learning materials produced, including news, events case studies and programme contacts	Share information and learning with the Regional Take Part champions as appropriate

1.3 The evaluation

The evaluation of Take Part focused on three main objectives:

- assessing the operational procedures and practices used to deliver the Take Part programme
- investigating the impact of the programme on stakeholders and local communities
- measuring the impact of the national support programme.

The evaluation used a mixed methodology of desktop research, 307 structured and semi-structured interviews, six focus groups and four surveys. A wide range of stakeholders was involved, including all pathfinders, beneficiaries of the programme, civic activists, LAs operating both within and outside pathfinder catchment areas, and agencies delivering national support work. Methodology is detailed in Appendix C.

1.4 In this report

This report details the final findings of CDF's evaluation of the Take Part programme (from 2009 to 2011).⁶ The report does not assess each of the activities detailed in Figure 1 individually. Instead it highlights the key themes and trends that characterised Take Part, taking a holistic approach that encompasses evaluation of both the pathfinder and national support strands. Each thematic chapter begins within an overview of the key findings, followed by a detailed analysis of how various aspects of Take Part combined and complemented one another.

Chapter 2 details the key similarities and differences between Take Part approaches, examining specific activities undertaken by pathfinders and regional Take Part champions and their spectrum of impacts. Chapter 3 explores the measurable difference various Take Part activities made for a variety of stakeholders and local communities, while Chapter 4 examines how Take Part was embedded and promoted across England through the pathfinder and national support strands. The report concludes by reflecting on the key findings from the evaluation, and makes recommendations for the legacy of Take Part and the continuation of the approach.

⁶ This report does not include an evaluation of the first year of the programme. The programme was signed off by DCLG in December 2008, with delivery covering just the last three months of the first year.

2 Take Part in practice

Take Part delivered a variety of work aimed at strengthening local democracy. The evaluation assessed the operational procedures and practices used to deliver the programme, and this chapter details key practice used by pathfinders, regional Take Part champions and the 'Train the Take Part trainers' programme. Evidence was gathered from interviews and surveys with these groups as well as from LAs, civic activists, community development workers and beneficiaries of a sample of Take Part activities.

2.1 Key findings

Findings show that the programme promoted active citizenship and learning through:

- bespoke activities developed with or by local people in response to their own needs and concerns, such as accredited and non-accredited learning programmes, workshops, one-off sessions and events
- an emphasis on learning through experience, reflection and action
- providing supportive environments for people to discuss and critically reflect upon social and political issues, network, and learn from one another
- empowering local people to have an influence once they have engaged with official structures
- delivering Take Part work in partnership with VCS organisations, as well as enhancing the capacity of these organisations to engage local communities
- helping public agencies reflect on their own practice, making them more open to citizen and community influence.

These findings are explored in this chapter.

2.2 Principles and approaches of Take Part

Take Part has provided the tools and practical guidance to enable people to influence local decision making and actively contribute to their communities. Participating organisations were distinguished by their community development skills and knowledge, with each developing bespoke activities to achieve the programme's aim of creating community empowerment outcomes.

Positioning learners at the centre

Bespoke empowerment activities were developed in dialogue with, and in response to the needs of, local communities and individual citizens. As well as developing new activities, pathfinders also refined their existing work to address gaps in empowerment and engagement activities. Real-time evaluation and constructive discourse with their advisory

groups and partners further ensured that pathfinders succeeded in addressing local learning needs and putting learners at the centre:

‘[Take Part] starts with the people, trying to identify with them “what is it you need to address? What are the issues? What do you want to be doing about it?” and then facilitating that process.’

Pathfinder

Pathfinders engaged with communities and individuals that they may not have previously worked with, including communities of identity or interest, and also worked across different geographical areas. Moreover, pathfinders were able to access individuals and groups who were operating on the margins or who were less confident in their participation. They were also able to reach individuals who were already engaged in their communities to some extent, including LA officers and elected officials.

CDF’s evaluation found the majority of sampled beneficiaries involved with both pathfinders and the ‘Train the Take Part trainers’ programme were females, who typically tend to be under-represented within formal political activities although they volunteer more (Pathways through Participation, 2010; National Council for Voluntary Organisations, 2011). The evaluation also found the majority of Take Part beneficiaries to be educated to degree level or equivalent although typically out of work; whether this is in full-time education or training, retirement, unemployment or an unpaid voluntary role. The ‘Train the Take Part trainers’ programme was particularly successful, however, in engaging people with low levels of previous educational attainment.

Common motivations people stated as reasons for getting involved with Take Part included:

- wanting to develop or acquire particular skills, such as communication or leadership
- improving knowledge about a certain issue or policy area
- wanting to benefit a community organisation they already volunteered or worked for.

In many cases pathfinders delivered similar materials and subjects to different groups, but tailored them in relation to learners’ interests and where they were in terms of their personal development.

Take Part’s funding enabled pathfinders to reach out into communities with limited levels of active citizenship. This was particularly true of pathfinders operating in rural areas, where communities face additional barriers to participation in terms of access and location. Funding for venue hire and participants’ travel costs aided pathfinders working in different community settings. This helped to engage people with previously low levels of involvement, and also brought people from different backgrounds together.

Fruitilicious Community Veg Store

The Bradford pathfinder undertook extensive outreach work to develop a local community project with residents on an estate with traditionally low levels of participation. Based in a local community centre, a community development worker drew local residents together to discuss their needs and concerns, and what might be done to address these. The residents identified a need to access affordable fresh produce locally, and they subsequently established their own cooperative, the Fruitilicious Community Veg Store.

They decided upon the food cooperative themselves in order not only to offer healthy, affordable food locally, but also to increase local volunteering opportunities as well as possible employment for local people if the venture proved successful.

In addition to addressing these specific local needs, the cooperative was successful in engaging others within the local community and bringing residents – some of whom had little to no previous experience of civil participation – together, both as customers and as volunteers. The cooperative was also able to establish links with other community organisations and public services, such as the local NHS Healthy Options team.⁷

Reaching new areas

Pathfinders promoted Take Part through their established community networks and relationships. Using the email contacts of community groups to promote their Take Part work proved a successful way of recruiting people to activities and this approach proved key to developing and maintaining participants' trust. This was particularly true where people had previous bad experiences of learning or engagement.

As such, many Take Part participants were already members of the community group through which they were recruited. However, the programme – often complemented by a range of other approaches – still proved to be an effective method for reaching those less engaged. To reach the least engaged, pathfinders and regional Take Part champions often worked and liaised with VCS organisations and community development workers, who in turn used traditional engagement techniques such as community events and outreach.

School of Participation for people with learning disabilities

People with disabilities face a number of barriers to increased participation in community life. Those living independently can still require support to ensure they have equal access and influence over services and decisions affecting their lives.

The VCS partner in the Salford Pathfinder, the local Community Pride Unit, worked with the LA, three different care providers and four housing providers to identify properties

⁷ The NHS Options team in Bradford provides healthy-lifestyle programmes for adults and children who are inactive and/or overweight. For more information, see: www.bradford.ac.uk/unique/media/SportsCentreUnique/Generic_Leaflet_A5.pdf. Accessed 30 March 2011.

where people with learning disabilities were living. They then spent several months visiting those properties, building up trust and rapport, before developing bespoke activities with these residents to influence service provision through their 'schools of participation' methodology.⁸ They ensured they provided lunch and transport, and that the meeting venue was practically accessible. One member of the school is now applying for a job and others are looking for volunteering opportunities.

The report was taken to the Care and Housing Providers' Forum which is facilitated by Salford City Council. It was very well received and as a result of the forum's interest, a group of providers agreed to arrange further meetings. The Salford Pathfinder has since been facilitating work with this group for the setting up of four annual networking events to enable staff and clients to address issues of common concern.

Take Part also delivered a variety of informal community-based learning activities, such as workshops, one-off sessions and events aimed at engaging those with low levels of participation. Pathfinders also produced a series of bespoke 'how to' guides, offering a range of information on civic roles and opportunities to influence, such as 'How to influence policing in your area', 'How to set a community group' and 'How to become a magistrate'.

These were all seen as having the potential to encourage people to get involved in new activities or participate intensively in existing ones. CDF's evaluation found that many of the participants who were interviewed had got involved with Take Part via these types of activity.

Day conferences

The 'Train the Take Part trainers' programme offered a pathway for new and existing tutors and trainers to learn about delivering Take Part-related programmes with a focus on active citizenship. One of the key learning methods used to do this was a series of day conferences run by either the Workers Educational Association (WEA) or the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA), which altogether were attended by 552 people across England.

The NAVCA day conferences built upon the work of the Take Part programme to explore civic structures and local decision making procedures. These one-day conferences provided an overview of how both VCS and local public decision making structures work, highlighting how community members could get involved and influence policy making.

The 'Strengthening democracy' day conferences were delivered by WEA. These conferences covered a range of political and campaigning issues including climate change, e-democracy, and racism and voting.

These one-day events employed similar engagement methods to the rest of the programme,

⁸ For more information, see www.takepartsalford.org.uk. Accessed 30 March 2011.

with e-bulletins proving an effective way of promotion. The events were particularly successful in engaging people with limited experience of civil activity, as over three-quarters of surveyed attendees had never attended an empowerment event before.

All surveyed attendees felt the events were personally beneficial to them, with 80 percent planning to attend another empowerment event, empowerment course or education programme in the future. A third also planned to volunteer or get involved with a local community group.

Social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, and online advertising on pathfinders' and others' websites proved the least effective way to recruit participants, with the evaluation finding very few participants were recruited to Take Part via this route. Traditional forms of media, including newspapers and radio, proved more effective for recruiting participants, particularly those with low levels of participation. Marketing and advertising through traditional types of media proved a cost-effective method for reaching large numbers of people.

Democracy in 2010: Is it working for you?

The Northumberland pathfinder organised a free event where a panel of local politicians discussed the state of democracy in the area. The event was advertised in three local newspapers and as a result over 100 people attended; most had never been involved in similar events before.

Elsewhere, pathfinders promoted Take Part at externally funded events, while word of mouth proved effective for recruiting new participants to a degree. Some pathfinders also supported participants to become 'local champions' for the programme and encourage their local community to get more involved.

The engagement of grassroots VCS organisations extended beyond recruitment, with many also involved in delivering learning activities. In particular, pathfinders led by LAs commented on the value of having civil society organisations involved, arguing that they appeared more approachable to the public and less officious.

In areas where VCS organisations delivered learning activities, learning was more likely to be tailored to people's needs through consultation with community groups. This often also meant that a space for participants to meet and reflect on their activity was readily available.

Can Do Net.Works Refugee group

Building on the work of the Can Do Net.Works initiative,⁹ the Brighton and Hove pathfinder conducted a monthly action learning set¹⁰ with a refugee women's community group over a period of six months. The women had identified unemployment and having English as a second or other language as key obstacles to their increased participation in the local community.

The content of the sessions was developed by participants, drawing upon the skills, knowledge and experience they brought to the group. Through action learning they helped each other find solutions to their problems, developing their communication and interpersonal skills as well as the confidence to speak up.

As a result of this work the women's group and its members were able to increase their involvement in the community, organising events and securing funding for different community activities.

Working with public agencies

Both pathfinders and regional Take Part champions worked to establish and maintain partnerships between the VCS and the public sector. Each pathfinder, for instance, had an LA directly involved with their project, either as a delivery partner or sitting on a project advisory board. Through the development fund, regional champions also encouraged LAs to develop and run Take Part activities. The benefits of partnership working which were identified included enabling enhanced coordination of Take Part activities with other local initiatives, and increased access to a wealth of experience and knowledge.

Many pathfinders undertook mapping exercises both at the start of the programme and during delivery to obtain an overview of the different empowerment activities happening in each area and how these might be coordinated. This reduced duplication and reinforced existing structures, such as community forums and LSPs, which pathfinders themselves then used to extend their reach into new communities and areas. Pathfinders were subsequently better placed to tailor their activity to meet the learning needs of particular groups, with these partnerships increasing the pool of opportunities for participants to pursue civic activism, community leadership and lay governance roles. Learning was often anchored into a community setting and linked to local issues.

⁹ Can Do Net.Works are run by Novas Scarman. They 'allow communities, groups and individuals to create their own learning agenda through action learning and responsive creativity workshops'. For more information see: www.novascarman.org/community-development/south-east/can-do-networks.153.IN.html. Accessed 30 March 2011.

¹⁰ Action learning is a process which involves using skilled questioning to access the knowledge and skills of a small group of people to deal with specific challenges and issues and produce fresh ideas. An action learning set is a group of people who meet regularly with an action learning facilitator to undertake this process. For more information see: www.actionlearningassociates.co.uk/actionlearning.html. Accessed 30 March 2011.

The importance of flexibility

Developing bespoke learning activities in dialogue with, and in response to, the needs of local communities and individual citizens had a positive impact on participants' confidence and their subsequent application of the skills they developed through these activities. There is real value in pathfinders and regional champions being open to influence themselves, and tailoring activities to the needs of participants. Many pathfinders refined their final-year activities by:

- reviewing what had worked well and not so well the year before
- responding to requests from individuals and groups
- identifying gaps in provision through their advisory groups and their own evaluations.

Accessing existing learning and community networks enabled pathfinders and regional champions to maximise the knowledge available to improve the quality of learning. Networks also extended to a national level, with a series of national quarterly meetings bringing pathfinders and champions together on a regular basis to network, share learning about best practice and exchange resources.

The ability and willingness of pathfinders and partners to respond to need, reflect on past experience, review existing activities and develop new activities throughout the life of the Take Part programme is one of the keys to its success. For this reason there were naturally some tensions between this approach and the requirement on the pathfinders to work to an action plan (agreed between CDF, DCLG and each pathfinder). The rigidity in the programme structure was acknowledged by some pathfinders, with the monitoring and evaluation requirements, for example, seen as disproportionate to the level of delivery taking place. While upholding this criticism, many pathfinders also commented on how the flexibility and responsiveness of CDF on programme management and evaluation issues had supported their self-learning, allowing them to develop new skills that helped enable them to reflect upon and refine their Take Part activities in the last year of the programme.

2.3 Characteristics of Take Part learning

Take Part used a variety of learning activities to promote active citizenship. This included learning through experience and reflection, as well as providing tutors and supportive environments in which a critical dialogue about social and political issues could take place.

Learning for active citizenship

Each of the pathfinders ran a combination of long and shorter activities, and this proved successful for engaging different audiences. Learning activities ranged from hour-long informal 'taster' sessions to year-long accredited courses. Commonly, activities covered:

- how local and national democracy works
- entry into various civic roles (such as councillors, magistrates and school governors)

- presentation and communication skills
- community leadership.

Where the content of an activity was not directly negotiated with participants at the start, efforts were made during the course to make it as bespoke as possible for the attendees.

How your council works

The Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale pathfinder developed a successful 'How your council works' course that was unique to each area it was delivered in. The content was adapted to include information about local governance structures, identifying and understanding the remit of the local parish council if there was one. It also covered who the local councillors were at parish, district and county level, as well as information regarding local MPs and MEPs. These multiple layers of governance were then explored in more detail, grounded in the context of local community issues.

A key success factor of Take Part activities was the skill of the tutors and facilitators. Participants commented that tutors improved their learning experience, and tutors were often seen as central to building confidence. Tailoring topics to make them relevant to participants' own concerns and interests, as well as making the content accessible by gradually introducing official jargon, also improved the learning experience.

'And the way [the tutor] delivers, she's very patient, she wants you to learn so she doesn't just push you, she's ready to take questions as long as you don't understand. She involved everybody, she doesn't leave anybody out. She makes jokes. When she gives us demonstrations she doesn't just talk...she makes the class quite interesting.'

Pathfinder beneficiary

Learning activities acted as a catalyst sparking interest in politics and civil society, as well as in civic roles, for a number of participants. Personalised face-to-face support was important in helping people become more involved. Tutors identified progression routes into civic roles for individual participants and provided one-to-one post-learning activity support. Participants were also supported in applying their learning through action, with tutors encouraging them to contact decision-makers, such as their local services or elected members, to raise issues concerning them. For instance:

'I've actually done something about the kids in the park. I spoke to [the tutor] about it and she said 'Get involved then'. So I actually got in touch with a local councillor and I got in touch with a police officer about anti-social behaviour in the park, and he now phones me on a regular basis...he said 'if people don't complain, we don't know', and asked me to report how often they're over there.'

Pathfinder beneficiary

Learning through experience

Take Part offered participants the opportunity to visit public institutions and listen to, and speak with, people in civic and civil roles. Pathfinders took participants out of the classroom and into magistrates' courts, council chambers, local forums and even the Houses of Parliament. This experiential learning was offered as a standalone activity as well as often being incorporated into the longer-running learning activities. Participants highly valued the visits and active interaction with local democratic actors and structures. These activities enabled participants to position their own experience and knowledge within the wider political context, while pathfinders felt that, though resource intensive, they were an effective way of engaging local people with the topics covered during learning sessions.

Take Part learning activities also incorporated presentations and question-and-answer sessions from people already in civic roles, such as local councillors and members of the police service, magistrates, school governors and community forum representatives, for example local involvement networks (LINks). These presentations had the most impact when they were participatory, with attendees actively discussing and challenging ideas with the presenters:

'We had somebody from the PCT [primary care trust] there and we were kind of like giving them our ideas and telling them what we'd learnt from the active citizenship, so we do feel it could really help us in moving forward.'

'Train the Take Part trainers' beneficiary

In some areas councillors spoke at learning sessions, which gave participants the opportunity to put a face to a name. Some participants stated that this increased their confidence in approaching councillors to discuss local issues. It also helped councillors get out into the community more. In some cases pathfinders established councillor shadowing schemes with LA partners. This further enhanced participant access to councillors (both during the sessions or afterwards), and helped overcome some members' scepticism about the value of empowerment programmes like Take Part.

Councillors who were interviewed spoke about their enjoyment in both promoting the role and value of being a councillor, and in being able to talk about politics in a friendly environment:

'It's trying to get that message across that actually anyone can be a councillor and represent people.'

Councillor

In addition to presentations and talks about local politics, nearly all pathfinders worked with the Parliamentary Outreach team,¹¹ with officers presenting at Take Part events. While

¹¹ For more information on the Parliamentary Outreach programme, visit: www.parliament.uk/get-involved/outreach-and-training. Accessed 30 March 2011.

participants reported finding the talks interesting and informative, several pathfinders also organised visits to the Houses of Parliament; a new experience for many participants, some of whom had never been to the capital before. These visits helped learners to better understand national politics and reinforced the value and relevance of their participation at a local level.

‘Take the lead’ community leadership programme

The Redcar & Cleveland and Sedgefield borough pathfinder delivered a programme to help both existing and potential community leaders reflect on their own qualities and skills and develop these further. The programme used guest speakers and field visits to complement this learning, encouraging participants to explore how local, regional and national governance interlink, and the different ways they could engage with and influence each level. This included discussions on civic roles (such as magistrates and councillors) and what they entail, as well as the role and function of parliament. A visit to the Houses of Parliament was also arranged.

The impact of the programme on participants ranged from increasing their general interest in politics to more formal engagement, with two participants subsequently becoming magistrates. To support personal development, the pathfinder hoped to run a similar course for elected members in the future.

Learning through action and reflection

Participants were encouraged to reflect on how they fit into the wider picture politically, as well as how they could help others get more involved. Action learning and community leadership courses proved most effective for this, with community leadership courses seen as particularly useful for participants who had some level of involvement in the community prior to Take Part.

Participants tended to get involved with community leadership courses through the VCS organisations they volunteered or worked for. Tutors and facilitators played an important role in managing participants’ preconceptions of how civil society operated, and Take Part provided forums for people to discuss and reflect upon political and social issues in a non-critical and supportive environment.

Participants were actively encouraged to give presentations in front of their peers on a subject matter of their choice, and where presentation training was provided it proved useful for giving people the skills and confidence to speak at public events and meetings. This also contributed to the respect learners had for one another and enhanced listening skills. Through dialogue and listening, participants were encouraged to reflect on their experiences and leadership styles, and how they related to the wider political context:

‘It was always good to have the opportunity to say my own thinking and then learn from other people, and also know that whatever I said didn’t have to be the last word on the subject, it was just my contribution.’

Pathfinder beneficiary

Participants felt such environments were conducive to their learning and provided safe, supportive spaces in which to learn. There were also reports of participant networking and the development of personal friendships.

Evidence from the evaluation shows that participants felt more empowered to lead within their communities and express their opinions in public as a result of attending a community leadership course. Those already active in the community also developed the listening skills required to empower others, reflecting on their leadership style and opening themselves up to influence.

Recognition through accreditation

Take Part offered routes to accreditation for citizenship learning and skills development, and pathfinders were committed to providing participants with recognition for the time they committed to learning activities and their civil activity. Such recognition included:

- qualifications from universities
- City and Guilds awards
- other accredited learning models, such as recognition from the National Open College Network (NOCN).

Several pathfinders developed courses with local universities, which offered participants the opportunity to gain an academic qualification while providing universities with an opportunity to reach into communities and promote academic enterprise. Not all pathfinders had positive experiences of working with universities, however, with a few experiencing difficulty getting universities to comply with the monitoring requirements and schedule of the wider Take Part programme.

Qualifications from a university

The Stoke-on-Trent pathfinder developed and delivered two accredited community leadership courses in conjunction with Staffordshire University:

- the ‘Speaking up’ course – providing skills and confidence for aspiring active citizens
- the ‘Taking part’ course – providing skills for active citizens who are aspiring community leaders.

These community leadership courses were successful in engaging a diverse range of participants, several of whom faced barriers to their learning, such as learning and physical

disabilities, or English as a second or other language. In addition to the accreditation, the courses successfully built participants' confidence and stimulated networks and friendships. For many participants the qualification they gained from the university was their first ever educational qualification.

In addition to this, the pathfinder was able to deliver the City and Guilds award in Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (PTLLS)¹² for free through the university in partnership with WEA. This is an accredited qualification which covers the essentials for teaching in continuing and adult education.

All pathfinders offering accredited training managed to recruit participants, with higher enrolment levels in some areas than expected and low dropout rates. PTLLS proved a popular accredited programme among pathfinders and learners alike and in some pathfinder areas it was used to train trainers in the Take Part approach. The PTLLS course was also offered as part of the 'Train the Take Part trainers' programme, and participants appreciated the relatively flexible approach of this course compared to their experiences of other accredited learning.

A number of pathfinders offered the City and Guilds Individual Profile in Active Citizenship (IPAC),¹³ with a minority experiencing difficulties recruiting. The reason was seen to be linked to the time commitment required by learners and the absence of a qualification widely recognised by employers.

Some pathfinders developed their own learning courses and had them accredited by NOCN¹⁴ and two pathfinders were awarded learning-centre status for the duration of the programme.

While accreditation had benefits for both pathfinders and beneficiaries (see Chapter 3), there were limitations on the extent to which pathfinders could shape the training, and this had implications for the needs-led approach of the programme. Furthermore, establishing accredited programmes required considerable lead-in time in terms of identifying and securing trainers and tutors, as well as additional staff time and effort, diverting resources from day-to-day delivery.

2.4 Key learning for the future

Accessing existing community networks is a valuable tool when promoting empowerment activities. Pathfinders demonstrated that to reach disadvantaged and excluded community members, time, effort and financial resources are needed, as promotion of opportunities has

¹² For more information on the PTLLS course, visit: www.cityandguilds.com/45858.html. Accessed 30 March 2011.

¹³ For more information on the IPAC course, visit: www.cityandguilds.com/3822.html. Accessed 30 March 2011.

¹⁴ For more information on the NOCN, see: www.nocn.org.uk/Homepage. Accessed 30 March 2011.

to go beyond accessing existing networks. These networks have value however, and links between Take Part organisations and LAs have demonstrated the impact these relationships can have, not only in terms of improving coordination and reinforcing existing civic structures, but also in terms of changing the way these structures and public agencies work to make them even more empowering. This is examined in more detail in Chapters 3 and 4.

Practical considerations

CDF's evaluation identified key practical considerations that influenced the perceived success of learning activities. These included:

- **accessibility:** holding learning sessions in venues that are accessible in terms of location and physical access. Some popular Take Part activities were delivered in local community centres or village halls at the heart of local communities
- **affordability:** minimising the financial cost of participating by delivering free training and providing practical support, like meeting transport and childcare costs
- **timing:** holding activities at times that suit the learners. For example, some pathfinders successfully engaged with young mothers by running activities during the day and parallel to the academic calendar, avoiding potential timetable clashes with the school run or holidays (Miller and Hatamian, 2010, p. 25)
- **human resource:** good-quality tutors and committed staff involved in developing and promoting activities were key requirements for making learning work.

Staff spent considerable time and effort building links and developing levels of trust with individuals and groups. CDF's interim evaluation of Take Part highlighted that not only were more staff working on Take Part activities than were directly funded by it, but staff were also spending more time on the programme than they were contracted to (Miller and Hatamian, 2010). This situation improved during the remainder of the programme, partly due to the adoption of a more flexible programme-management structure but mostly due to pathfinders having established their methods and approaches and not having to deal with set-up issues as in 2009/10. Those pathfinders not led by an LA also received funding towards management costs for the administrative requirements of the programme, although many also felt these requirements occasionally diverted resources away from delivery.

2.5 Chapter conclusion

Grounding learning in experience proved an effective way for Take Part to engage people with active citizenship and politics in general, and the use of guest speakers and visits to public institutions proved especially popular and influential. As part of its commitment to this, Take Part encouraged participants to reflect upon their own position in the wider political context, and take action as a result. Take Part provided safe, supportive environments for people to discuss political and social issues critically, as well as to develop their own skills and the confidence to exert influence in the wider community.

Central to this impact was the emphasis on creating bespoke learning opportunities, developed with or by local people in response to their own needs and concerns. Flexibility was also extended to a number of practical considerations, which increased the accessibility and affordability of Take Part activities. Using established networks and relationships with VCS organisations was integral to developing and maintaining participants' trust, while offering a variety of activities proved key to engaging those with low levels of participation.

Take Part stresses the importance of opening up public agencies to influence. Many LAs increased the number of their own empowerment activities developed in response to demand as a result of the programme. LA involvement with Take Part was also seen to improve coordination of empowerment work locally, reduce duplication, and reinforce and add value to existing structures such as LSPs and community forums.

3 The difference Take Part makes

Take Part aimed to build the skills and confidence of local people to allow them to get more involved in both civic and civil activities and help them overcome barriers to participation. The evaluation investigated the extent to which the programme achieved these aims through research with pathfinders, regional Take Part champions, LAs, the ‘Train the Take Part trainers’ programme and beneficiaries. This includes a longitudinal study with a group of beneficiaries to examine their long-term progression (see Appendix C for the full methodology used). The programme had an extensive reach, with thousands benefiting from accredited and non-accredited learning programmes, community leadership courses, workshops, one-off sessions, pathfinder events and local ‘train the trainers’ courses:

- 6,569 people benefited from the pathfinders’ work in 2009/10
- 11,616 people benefited from the pathfinders’ work in 2010/11¹⁵
- 967 learning opportunities were created by ‘Train the Take Part trainers’ activities across the duration of the programme.

This chapter details the impact these and other Take Part activities, including those of the regional Take Part champions, had on the individuals and organisations involved.

3.1 Key findings

- The vast majority of beneficiaries gained more confidence, knowledge and skills as a result of taking part in the programme.
- Beneficiaries are increasing their civic and civil activity and are becoming more effective in their involvement. Many are also taking up further learning opportunities.
- LAs that have been involved with Take Part are reflecting on their engagement practices and are becoming more open to influence.
- Networks and partnerships have been established as a result of the Take Part programme.

These findings are explored in this chapter.

¹⁵ It should be noted that an individual’s participation in Take Part could span across both years, and thus there is a possibility of double counting between years. As such the sum of the first and final years of the programme combined does not accurately represent the total number of people who participated, and should be treated as two separate figures.

3.2 Overcoming barriers to participation

The Take Part programme aimed to help participants to identify and overcome barriers to participation and influence. The evaluation gathered evidence from pathfinders and beneficiaries about the most common obstacles for participation. Common practical barriers included:

- not having the time to commit to greater involvement due to family, work or education obligations
- childcare issues
- accessibility issues and distance to venues
- lack of knowledge about how to get involved and what opportunities were available for people to participate in the community and local decision making.

Beyond practical difficulties, beneficiaries and pathfinders felt that the greatest barriers were lack of confidence and knowledge, and scepticism about the willingness of political institutions to genuinely allow people to influence decision making.

The evaluation found that beneficiaries of the programme are learning to overcome these barriers by increasing their confidence, knowledge and skills as a direct result of pathfinders' Take Part activities.

3.3 Benefits realised: increased confidence, skills and knowledge

Confidence

The most frequently cited benefit of involvement was an increase in confidence. While learning activities often included an element of confidence building, there were a number of courses focusing solely on building personal confidence. Beneficiaries stated that they felt they had gained confidence simply by realising what they were capable of. Many felt more able to express themselves and have their voice heard. Those who described themselves as confident before being involved in Take Part felt they had become more self-assured as a result of the programme.

‘And it has allowed me not to be fearful of having my say, whether everyone else agrees with it or not, it doesn't matter. At least, you know, it gives you the sort of impetus to be able to say I don't either agree with that, or I think this is best because...’

Pathfinder beneficiary

Learning activities that included an element of participant presentations were seen to be particularly effective in raising confidence levels (see case study below and Section 2.3).

Participants found that presentations often took them outside their comfort zone, but were rewarding due to the communications skills they developed and the resulting sense of accomplishment.

Knowledge

Confidence was also gained from developing knowledge. Even participants who had a level of civil and/or civic involvement prior to Take Part felt their lack of knowledge of local governance limited their involvement and effectiveness. Their participation in Take Part gave them greater knowledge about local governance and the opportunities to influence decisions.

'If I didn't participate in this Take Part pathfinder programme, I wouldn't be able to know the channel to use to influence decisions, such as a [Local] Strategic Partnership, so I wouldn't know how it works...it really gave me the channel you use to influence decisions.'

Pathfinder beneficiary

Knowledge about the structure and processes of local and national decision making helped participants identify where information could be obtained, how to use the information to augment their influence, and where and when the most appropriate opportunities to make their contribution were.

In addition to the information gathered through the learning activity, participants' knowledge grew as they undertook their own research as part of their learning and visited places such as Parliament, law courts, and council chambers (see Section 2.3: Learning through experience).

Skills

Skills that participants felt they had developed thanks to their involvement in the learning activities included:

- **communication:** public speaking and understanding how to effectively articulate opinions
- **Listening:** considering and understanding other people's points of view
- **Negotiation:** persuading others of their opinions and ideas and accepting other perspectives
- **Team working and interpersonal:** building support and working with others to achieve a common goal
- **Leadership:** taking responsibility and directing campaigns or community groups
- **IT:** including internet research and PowerPoint presentations

- **Organisational:** to organise events and manage campaigns.

Beneficiaries on learning courses often attributed the development of skills in part to the group dynamics. Participants frequently noted the diverse nature of the groups in which they were learning. While this was at times also considered a challenge, beneficiaries felt that being in groups of people with a variety of experiences and perspectives helped them to gain negotiation, listening and communication skills.

Tutors played a vital role in nurturing the behaviour of the groups and creating a safe and comfortable environment. Tutors were often central to learners' positive experiences and for a number of participants continued to play a supportive role after the learning activity (see Section 2.3).

'It was an exceptional group for that because apart from the actual learning from the course, people enjoyed the fellowship and people learned as much from each other as well as the tutors and that was the way that it was presented, that the tutors structured all the courses and the activities but that we sort of learned from each other as well.'

Pathfinder beneficiary

3.4 Benefits realised: Taking action and making changes

Civic activity and civic roles

There is evidence that beneficiaries are utilising the skills they have gained from Take Part and are becoming more involved in their communities and taking action to influence decision makers. This is demonstrated by a longitudinal study where the evaluation tracked the progress of a sample of beneficiaries, asking them what their civic activity was during or shortly after the Take Part activity and then again six months later. The results indicate that their civic activity is increasing.

Figure 2: Civic activity of Cohort I

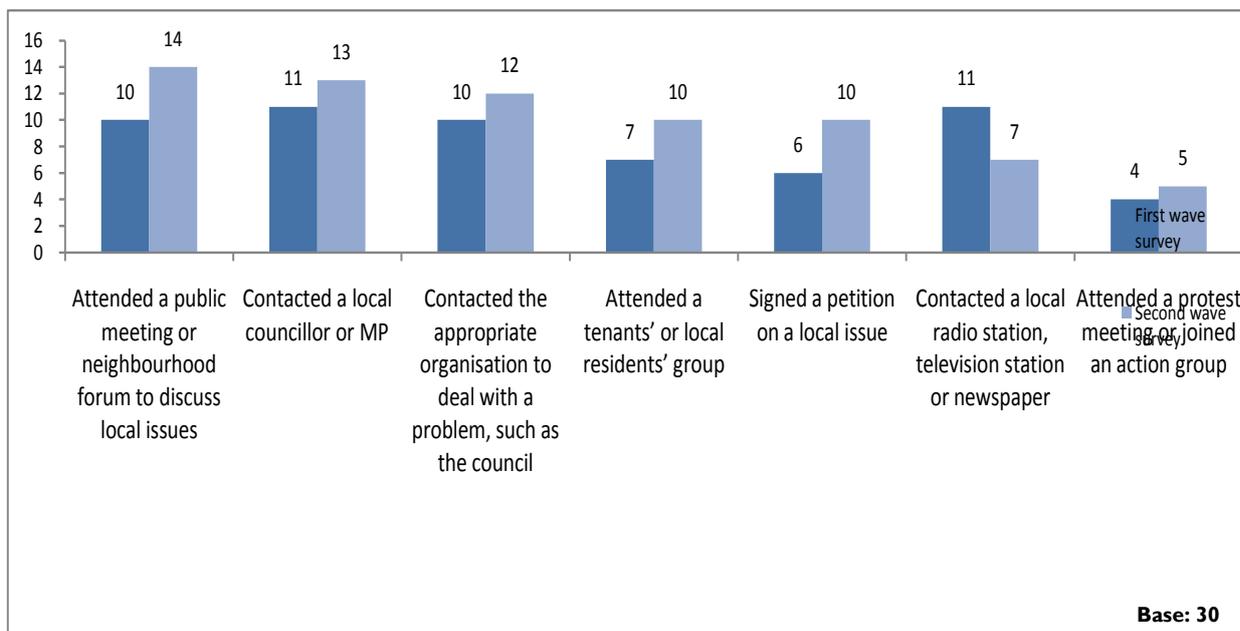


Figure 2: Civic activity of Cohort 1 shows that, post-learning, activity beneficiaries were more likely for example to attend a public meeting, to contact a local councillor and to make direct contact with points of influence to deal with a problem they experienced. Interestingly, they were less likely to contact the local media after the learning activity. This suggests that beneficiaries have the confidence to address an issue directly with the appropriate point of influence, rather than trying to go through a third party like a local radio station, with an increased understanding of which contact will have the most impact.

Through interviews with participants it is evident that they are engaging with local and national issues in a number of ways, for example:

- voting for the first time
- researching parish council voting records
- organising a petition around local issues, such as management of a local nature reserve
- getting involved in their student council and campaigning on student issues such as the abolition of the Education Maintenance Allowance
- working with agencies and organisations, such as local transport companies, on issues identified by local black and minority ethnic (BME) groups
- liaising with the council to create an outside play area for children.

In addition, the evaluation found evidence of beneficiaries:

- becoming school governors
- planning to stand as councillors at the next local or parish council election
- applying to become magistrates
- applying to become volunteer special constables or lay members of the police authority
- becoming members of area action partnerships
- taking positions as trustees or treasurers of charities.

While the actual numbers pursuing active civic roles within the lifetime of the programme constituted a small proportion of all those engaged in Take Part activities, evidence like this helps to demonstrate the potential of a programme like Take Part and the possible progression routes it creates. In a small number of cases, participants were reconsidering their decision to pursue or perform a civic role because their greater involvement in the community had led to increasing time pressures.

Civil activity

There is also evidence to demonstrate greater involvement in civil activity as a result of the programme. For example, the first wave survey of the longitudinal study found that over one-fifth of participants were not involved in any civil activity before their involvement with Take Part. The second wave survey captured behaviour six months later and found that over half of the respondents had participated in new civil activities as a result of Take Part. Furthermore, one-third of the sample had increased their level of participation. Involvement in local community or neighbourhood groups, groups for children or young people, and health, disability and welfare groups had the greatest net increase.

‘It’s quite a major thing, and I’ve become a volunteer there now. In fact, I’ve got a session this afternoon and we’re going to do the gardens with a set of volunteers, get those totally organised for them, so that some of those people can run things for themselves.’

Pathfinder beneficiary

Interviews with beneficiaries and pathfinders also showed an increase in volunteering after completion of the learning activity. Examples of this included increases in volunteering for local charities, fundraising for causes and people joining community groups.

Reflecting on participation

Research on civic activists found councillors generally progressing to their roles after varied experience of both civic and civil participation (ERS, 2010). A proportion of school governors and councillors, 65 percent and 70 percent respectively, had been a member of a voluntary or community group prior to taking on their current civic role. The Take Part evaluation indicates that the path to civic roles begins with less formal positions within the community and builds towards a greater level of individual commitment and responsibility.

Participants directly attributed their greater involvement, particularly in civic activity, to Take Part and the confidence, knowledge and skills they gained. The programme was also important in helping people to reflect on their activity and behaviour, helping them to identify strengths and consider how to realign their practice in light of what they had learned on the course. They were more conscious of how to be inclusive and help others to contribute and have an influence, but were also able to take a lead in others’ involvement.

‘I tend to want to take more of a lead and direct people, rather than before where I would just sort of say, “yeah okay if that’s what you want to do”.’

Pathfinder beneficiary

Beneficiaries felt Take Part also helped them to know where to start and helped them to consider a plan of action.

‘We felt that the leaflets that accompanied the letter regarding screening tests were full of jargon and not easy to understand and that could possibly be a barrier to women in stopping them from going, so we came up with who we would target, what they could do it about it and things like that...we went through the process theoretically of how we would go about getting that leaflet changed.’

‘Train the Take Part trainers’ beneficiary

Those who had less involvement prior to participating with the programme felt it had given them an impetus to move from ideas into taking action. The motivation came either from being asked to be involved with a Take Part activity, as a result of assignments within the courses, or simply by being stimulated by their involvement in the programme.

The longitudinal study found that time became a greater barrier for participants as a result of their increasing involvement. A small number had to decrease their civil or civic activity in one area in order to make a greater commitment in another. The data also suggested that a small number of participants were becoming disheartened by their lack of progress and were still facing barriers such as bureaucracy and resistant councils when trying to influence decisions or take action forward.

3.5 Employability and further learning

For a small number of participants there was evidence that the programme helped them to gain employment. Three participants in our longitudinal study (all of whom are now working within the charitable and community sector) all felt Take Part played a significant role in helping them gain employment and was helping them to perform in their role. A direct example of this is the ‘Train the Take Part trainers’ programme, where participants trained to become active citizenship tutors and helped deliver Take Part with some pathfinders.

Take Part broadened the horizons of a number of participants; with several saying it had given them a sense of direction in their lives. The learning courses were a positive experience for many, some of whom previously felt that they were ‘not very academic’. The structured but informal learning style helped to put participants at ease and gave them the flexibility to explore a range of topics. The majority of participants stated they would go on to further learning after the programme and the longitudinal survey of a sample of beneficiaries confirmed this. Further learning examples included:

- further Take Part courses, including bid writing, raising awareness of the police authority, how your council works, and mental-health first aid
- the Homes and Communities Agency foundation degree in sustainable communities
- the NVQ3 in management
- the Prime Minister’s Global Fellowship.

Participants either fully attributed their participation in these courses to Take Part or felt that Take Part contributed in either helping to make the decision, gaining access to the new programme of learning or preparing them to undertake it. Participants were keen to progress and further learning was a means to do this. The range of Take Part activities offered a clear route of progression for some of the people involved.

One pathfinder beneficiary's Take Part journey

The beneficiary initially heard about a community leadership course through a charity she was volunteering for. She had previously been working as an office manager and felt the course would enhance her leadership skills.

Group working and skills

The course was delivered once a week over ten weeks. Initially she found the most challenging aspect to be the diversity of the group and the range and variety of opinions this brought. However, as the course developed she began to view the group as a 'little community' and this became the most enjoyable part for her. She felt the course helped her improve her communication skills, largely thanks to the group interactions and the delivery of a presentation.

'Just communicating what you want to a varied range of people, you have to consider...how people can accept what you're communicating really.'

Taking action and making changes

Shortly after completing the course this beneficiary became a member of a parent-teacher association and has taken on the responsibility of organising charitable meet-ups, both of which she relates to the attributes she gained from the course.

'It's once every couple of months when we invite all the members to get together and that's really because of the confidence and the skills that I gained from the course that I went on.'

New directions and employment

As part of the evaluation the beneficiary was interviewed six months later to find what impact the course was still having. She felt the course had inspired her to take a new direction in her life. She had begun working as a community fundraiser in a hospital and was putting her skills into practice.

'I picked up loads of skills, my communication skills developed immensely during the eleven-week course, which I put into practice every day during my job. I'm speaking publicly now as well, I do public speaking for the charity; the course helped me with that, just because of presenting in front of a group and the encouragement I got from the tutors.'

She was also thinking about setting up a social enterprise working with teenagers and had

recently contacted the pathfinder to find out about further courses that could help her in this. Reflecting back on her experience, she said:

‘I can't express the change of direction in my life that was initiated by the Take Part course ...I just changed direction completely and I don't think it would have been possible without the skills and the confidence and the people that I met and experienced on the course.’

3.6 Wider impacts of the programme

Networking and social connections and cohesion

Networking with other community members and local organisations was a commonly identified benefit of the Take Part programme. Participants enjoyed the social element of learning, with many participants keeping in touch with each other and becoming friends. The opportunity to mix with a variety of people, including meetings with councillors and MPs, was highly valued.

The benefits of using networking included signposting to funding opportunities, information about further learning opportunities and scope to collaborate on projects, as the following case study demonstrates.

Collaborative working

On one learning course an individual had received funding for an existing park project but had no one to help them do the work, while another had a group of people looking to do community work but had no project for them to work on. As a result of meeting on the Take Part course the two people collaborated and the park project went ahead.

The mix of experiences, ages, ethnicity, and ability helped participants to appreciate barriers others may face when trying to engage in local decision making, and to understand a variety of perspectives among community members.

‘You sat there and age groups from teenagers, well I think 20 was the youngest, up to about 80 and they have such a wide variety of knowledge and ideas that, like “I'd never thought of that myself.” It was really interesting.’

Pathfinder beneficiary

There is further evidence to demonstrate that Take Part successfully involved people from a diverse range of communities. The ‘Train the Take Part trainers’ evaluation (WEA, 2011)

found that the project successfully engaged with participants from marginalised groups, particularly women, disabled people and BME groups. Of the 826 learners surveyed, the majority (71 percent) were women and over a quarter of all the learners (27 percent) were from BME communities. Furthermore, there was a noticeable level of involvement by disabled people, with 14 percent of participants having a physical disability and six percent having a learning disability.

Cascading benefits

Beneficiaries were acting as ambassadors for the programme and promoting the programme to others. Evidence indicates that they were also trying to build the capacity of people who were not involved in the programme, such as their neighbours, families and other community members, by sharing what they had learnt from the activities they had attended, as demonstrated in the case study below. Examples of encouraging civic and civil involvement cited by beneficiaries included encouraging a friend to become a magistrate and involving children in a volunteering day.

Building the capacity of others

Gaining skills

An IT tutor interested in active citizenship completed an IPAC with a pathfinder. After completing the course, the beneficiary was delivering an IT course to a group living in a residential home for people with neurological conditions. He felt there was potential to do something with a community and political focus and approached the pathfinder about offering the IPAC. Nine of the residents, several of whom had never received a qualification before, completed the course. An awards ceremony was held to celebrate their achievement.

Sharing knowledge

An LA worker felt she needed to gain knowledge about how people could take issues to the council. She felt that this would aid her in her role and help advise people on how to take their issues forward. She attended a course on 'How your council works' with a Take Part pathfinder and felt she gained a lot of knowledge as a result. She and her husband had also previously started an adult-education group in a deprived area. The focus of their group then became 'smarter government'. They were hoping to help people learn how to report a problem, how to interact with government online at a local or national level and how to lobby people. As a result, members of the group have applied online to speak at local council meetings. In their professional capacity, she and her colleagues have promoted the programme and other staff have subsequently gone on the course.

'So that's resulted in us booking I think 12 staff on one day. They are all using this information to help them to do their jobs better, which is about being able to give a person the right information, this is how you complain...this is how you do that, stand up for yourself...we can now tell them to go and do that for themselves so you're

empowering that person to stand up for their own rights.’

Pathfinder beneficiary

The evaluation found that while a proportion of beneficiaries had a low level of engagement, many were already involved in some community activity and a small proportion were reasonably highly involved in civic and civil activities because they had previously been involved in campaigns or held civic roles. This is in part due to the nature of the programme and that a common engagement method used is to connect with voluntary- and community-group networks. There is evidence to suggest that those who are already involved are more likely to want to share this learning in their current capacity and may help to engage those who have previously had lower levels of engagement.

3.7 Impact on VCS organisations

Pathfinders, and the regional Take Part champions’ engagement and work directly with community groups, have helped to build organisations’ capacity. The regional champion evaluation found that the capacity of organisations was built up with the help of education and training, and the provision of Take Part resources and materials, as well as networking opportunities allowing good practice to be shared.

Individual beneficiaries of the programme have also benefited their community organisations by becoming more effective in their roles through the skills and knowledge they have gained, and also by passing on these attributes to other members of their group. Furthermore, the increase in volunteering from Take Part participants will potentially benefit local VCS organisations.

Pathfinders and champions felt that participating community groups had been given the opportunity to reflect on their practices and how they as a community organisation are positioned to help their community have influence.

‘Because Take Part’s about democracy and about decision making it really had raised that and it’s made people look at how their activity actually contributes to that.’

Pathfinder

Pathfinders led by the VCS identified the following benefits for their organisations in being involved in Take Part:

- wider and stronger links with other community organisations
- closer working with LAs
- increasing awareness by others of their empowerment work
- enhanced reputation

- a larger source of volunteers, some of whom went on to help with the Take Part programme.

A short legacy survey conducted by the CDF programme team in autumn 2010 found that over 90 percent of the pathfinders and champions were planning to continue Take Part-style activities beyond March 2011. Organisations were hoping to meet the costs of this, at least initially, through their core funding and/or by embedding the activities into other projects. A small number have already gone on to win work partly as a result of the types of activity they developed within the Take Part programme.

3.8 Impact on LAs

LAs believed their involvement with Take Part had positively affected the way they delivered their own work, including increasing the number of empowerment activities they themselves developed in response to demand. Take Part has enabled discussions between local stakeholders, opening up public agencies to influence and strengthen accountability.

Changing how LAs work externally

In Thurrock the pathfinder's peer-to-peer research project helped illustrate the impact that ward profiles can have. This led to an overview and scrutiny task and finish group looking at how engagement practices in the district could be improved. As a result of this, a cross-party group of councillors successfully presented a paper on community engagement to the cabinet, securing a four-phase strategic approach which included the reintroduction of neighbourhood profiles, a method the council had previously used. Through Take Part, the team at Thurrock were able to demonstrate that such an approach can work in the local area, and this is just one example of the impact and recognition Take Part had at senior levels of local decision making.

Elected officials and LA officers were also learning-activity participants, benefiting through skills development and confidence building. Take Part was seen to have helped them fulfil their role, particularly in ensuring they were aiding the engagement of the public. This mirrors evidence from the civic activist research, which showed that those in civic roles, including councillors, felt that they had become more effective in their position as a result of the programme (ERS, 2010). Many councillors and LA officers who had been involved in Take Part, or were aware of its impact, had since become advocates of the programme and its approach and were helping to promote it to others.

'Take Part courses helped me learn how to take a step back and break down issues in order to address them one step at a time.'

School governor

Benefits identified for LAs as a result of their involvement with Take Part included:

- the opportunity to reflect on their own engagement methods and strategies
- the opportunity to be more creative and innovative in their approaches as the funding for their activities would not be in competition with other services
- greater links with the VCS mostly – although not exclusively – due to the partnership organisations helping with the delivery of the programme
- cross-departmental engagement in the programme for LA-led pathfinders, helping to promote the approach and to embed Take Part practices.

While some pathfinders felt the programme had helped them to work with LAs, some highlighted the fact that engaging with LAs was difficult at times, mostly as a result of the increasing pressure and restructures occurring in some LAs during the lifetime of the programme.

3.9 Chapter conclusion

As a result of their greater sense of confidence, increased knowledge and improved skills, beneficiaries have become more assertive, empowered and have started to participate or become more deeply involved in both civic and civil activities. Participants have also gone on to further learning, in large part due to their participation in the programme, and a small number have gained employment. LAs and community groups have also benefited from the programme, which has encouraged greater engagement from both sides.

4 Embedding Take Part

Take Part sought to foster the adoption of the practices being rolled out across the programme by organisations in new sectors and locations. Both the pathfinders and the national support programme were positioned to support organisations in running Take Part initiatives and encouraging more local citizens to take part. The evaluation investigated the impact of Take Part in achieving these aims through research with pathfinders, regional Take Part champions, LAs, civic activists, community development workers, organisations delivering national support activities and beneficiaries.

4.1 Key findings

- The programme was promoted across a variety of organisations within and beyond the 19 Take Part pathfinder areas.
- Sharing common values and having previous experience of empowerment proved important for organisations developing local programmes of active citizenship learning.
- Strong partnerships proved essential for embedding the Take Part approach, helping to reduce duplication and improve coordination.
- The regional champions work and the ‘Train the Take Part trainers’ programme helped ensure the Take Part-approach was taken up by non-pathfinder organisations.

These findings are explored in more depth in the remainder of this chapter.

4.2 Engaging regional and local partners

Take Part proved a distinctive approach to understanding community empowerment, increasing both the number of opportunities for people to influence decision making, and supporting public agencies and structures in making increased participation meaningful and strengthening accountability. Take Part achieved this by delivering activities through partnerships of voluntary-sector organisations, LAs and academic institutions, all bringing with them their own expertise but sharing the common values of social justice, participation, diversity, equality, and cooperation. These values proved an important cornerstone for the successful delivery and embedding of Take Part activities. Only a handful of pathfinders, champions and development fund recipients (namely those that were previously ALAC hubs – see Appendix A) had previous experience of specifically delivering Take Part work. However, sharing a set of common values and having previous experience of delivering active citizenship or empowerment activity more generally proved an important foundation to both partnership working and successful delivery of the Take Part programme’s main aims and objectives.

Networking and relationship building proved pivotal to embedding the Take Part approach and ethos into the work of participating organisations and in embedding their work into the

existing community-empowerment landscape. Development-fund activity in particular benefited from pre-existing relationships between champions and recipients (OPM, 2010, p. 15). Take Part enabled organisations to address existing gaps in local provision, through both the approach and the associated resources available. As detailed in Chapter 2, pathfinders were able, for instance, to take their work to rural areas. The additional financial resources available enabled both pathfinders and in particular development-fund recipients to create and test innovative new approaches to community engagement and empowerment. This was especially true for those pathfinders and development-fund recipients that were LAs.

Developing new approaches

The York pathfinder was led by the Neighbourhood Management Unit of City of York Council, which tried to involve more children and young people with its Take Part activities. This target group is outside their normal field of operation and it emerged as a result of an extensive consultation that identified gaps in opportunities for children and young people to influence policy. York was the only Take Part pathfinder working exclusively with children and young people.

The York pathfinder successfully established an influential youth council as well as promoting active citizenship generally, offering 2,360 children and young people robust and sustainable opportunities to contribute to the work of local services. The pathfinder developed a number of creative and innovative ways to do this, for example using voting buttons with children to help them identify the issues that affect them within the area they live and what provision they would like to see within their area (see Miller, 2010).

The programme was more than just about developing new work, however. For many pathfinders, champions and development-fund recipients, Take Part also offered an opportunity to build on existing work they had developed prior to the programme, either adding value to it or expanding it. This approach proved central to many of the partnerships in the programme.

Embedding Take Part in public agencies and structures

Chapter 2 highlighted how pathfinders and champions all had relationships with an LA, although the extent and success of these relationships varied considerably across the programme. LAs operating within pathfinder catchment areas were found to either sit on pathfinders' project advisory boards, or to be directly involved with the delivery of Take Part activities.

South Yorkshire pathfinder partners

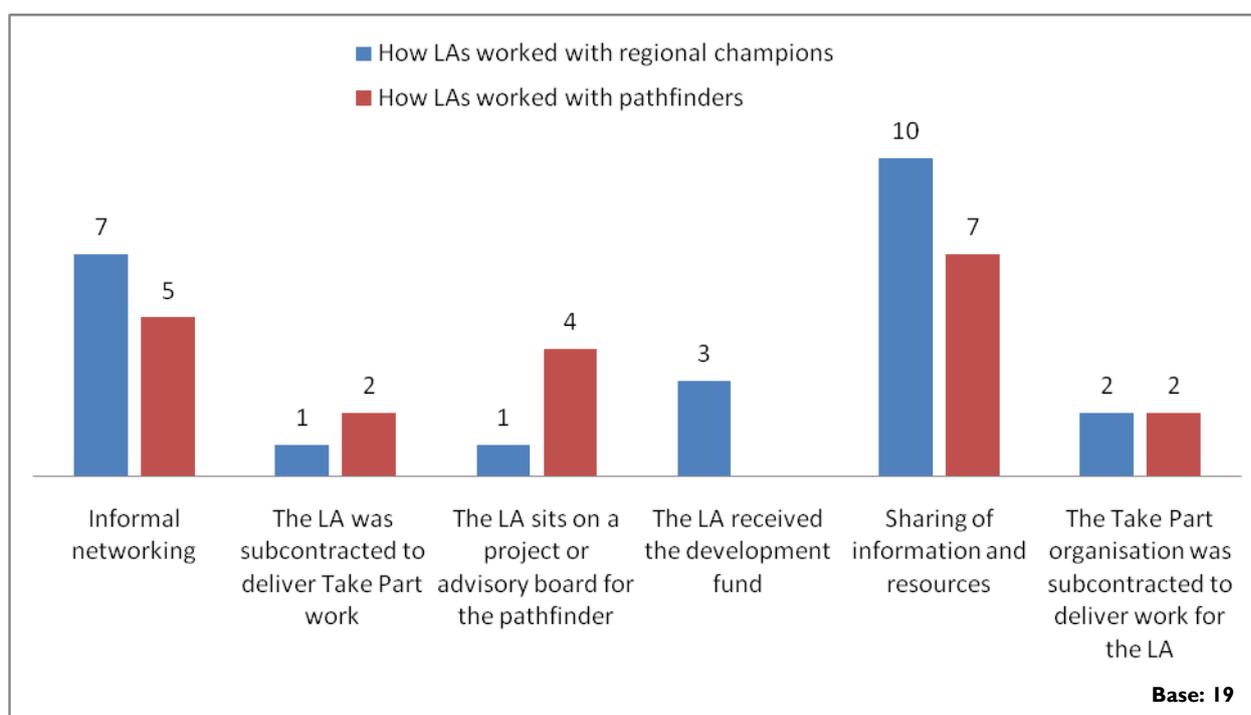
The South Yorkshire pathfinder was led by WEA (Yorkshire and Humber region), and included three LA partners on the steering group – Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham Metropolitan borough councils. These councils joined Take Part to address the low numbers of people in each area who felt they could influence local decision making processes.

The pathfinder was able to coordinate Take Part activities with other empowerment work happening locally through the scope offered by the steering group. The Take Part work itself was managed through regular steering-group meetings and via partnership agreements coordinating activities, resources and outputs.

This arrangement enabled the partners to successfully collaborate on additional joint funding applications, securing grants from the Tackling Race Inequalities Fund and Learning for Community Involvement. It also enabled LA workers to attend learning courses and study visits, improving both their links with local communities and citizens, and their own understanding of politics and active citizenship.

Surveys found that other common ways in which LAs were involved with Take Part included sharing information and resources with pathfinders and champions, as well as informally networking with them. Figure 3 provides an illustration of this, and shows that regional champions were especially successful in making contact with LAs:

Figure 3: How LAs worked with Take Part



One of the more notable benefits of these partnerships was the coordination of Take Part activities with other initiatives aimed at strengthening local democracy. Pathfinderers felt this impact was especially relevant given the economic and political climate in which Take Part operated:

‘I think what the local authority realised is there’s too many people trying to do similar things...[moving forward] there will be more clarity about who’s supposed to be doing what, because there’s less resources to go around.’

Pathfinder

LAs which were directly involved with delivering Take Part activities saw the benefits of these partnerships as aiding coordination and contributing to the sustainability of activities, in that existing structures could incorporate and continue Take Part work post-2011. There were examples of LAs changing the way they operate forums and their communications as a result, and pathfinders felt they had also been able to give officers in particular increased confidence to question these structures.

There was also evidence of Take Part breaking down ‘departmental silos’, particularly within the LA departments hosting a pathfinder, which were able to link up with and influence the work of other departments, especially in terms of their consultative exercises.

Changing how LAs work internally

The Portsmouth pathfinder worked closely with the council’s neighbourhood management team to create stronger links between active citizenship and community cohesion. The pathfinder also encouraged adult and family learning services to train their staff through Take Part courses, so that they could continue to deliver these courses and promote the Take Part approach following the end of the programme. Participation in Take Part also gave the council the impetus to look more closely at how it was using community resources such as libraries in its work, and departments have developed closer relationships as a result, cross-promoting each other’s activities.

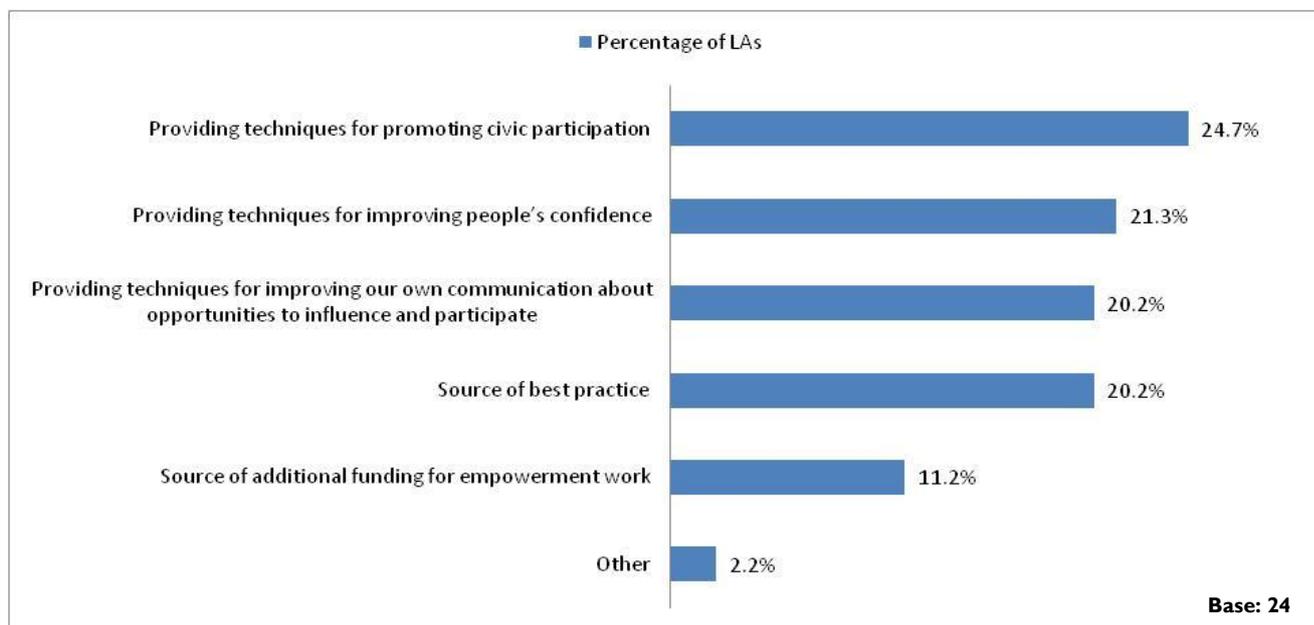
Within some LAs there had been scepticism of the Take Part approach, with several pathfinders initially experiencing difficulties in selling the concept of active citizenship. Concerns were also raised with regard to the focus upon participative and informal learning methods, and in particular around whether Take Part would prove more effective for meeting their targets than more traditional models of empowerment. As the example of Thurrock Council in Chapter 3 illustrates, pathfinders were able to provide plenty of evidence demonstrating the impact of their work through their own research and evaluations. The flexibility of the Take Part approach and the financial resources associated with the programme also proved useful selling points to LAs.

Some LAs commented that they sometimes found it difficult encouraging local people to engage with them, arguing that many people see their local council as an ‘enforcer’. It was thus common for LAs to deliver certain aspects of Take Part work through, and in partnership with, local VCS organisations. These can appear less officious and often already have strong links with various communities at grassroots level, particularly with hard-to-reach groups and sections of society requiring intensive support in their participation.

How LAs got involved with Take Part

LAs thought that the Take Part approach to promoting active citizenship supported their own work in a variety of ways. Where organisations such as LAs, regional empowerment partnerships (REPs) and VCS organisations had a relationship with a pathfinder or a regional champion they were more likely to take up Take Part methods and resources. LAs surveyed felt that Take Part particularly supported their own work by providing techniques for promoting civic participation and for developing people’s understanding of and confidence to take on civic roles. The Take Part approach was seen as an attractive alternative where such issues were not central features of the authority’s own empowerment work. Another cited benefit of Take Part was its capacity to help LAs to improve their own communication about opportunities to influence and participate, via the extensive partnerships and methods developed through the programme. The full range of benefits as captured through the national survey of LAs is illustrated in figure 4:

Figure 4: How LAs felt Take Part supported work in their area



Six of these LAs were directly involved with pathfinders, and the remainder had encountered Take Part as a result of national support activity, primarily through the work of the regional champions.

Influencing other public agencies

Take Part developed a series of additional local and regional networks with programmes and initiatives bespoke to each area. Pathfinders developed good relationships with their respective LSPs, often informing the work of the ‘Stronger communities’ strand.¹⁶

Pathfinders felt they were able to keep abreast of developments in their area through these links with their LSP, and many were confident that these relationships had the potential for both long-term influence and sustaining the Take Part approach locally.

LSPs and Take Part

In Mansfield the LSP coordinator sat on the steering group for the local pathfinder. The pathfinder lead organisation was able to draw on their knowledge and promote Take Part through the LSP as a result. By keeping abreast with local developments the lead organisation also brokered a meeting between the LSP coordinator and the REP, which was planning a workshop for elected members on the empowerment agenda. This not only reduced possible duplication but also enhanced the sharing of learning and best practice.

Connecting with regional and national programmes

A number of pathfinders successfully linked into their respective REP, which enabled them to keep abreast of developments within their region and share resources and learning. This often took the form of attending REP management-group meetings, and a number of REPs were initially involved in the process of identifying pathfinders to join the second year of the programme. These relationships were particularly positive where the regional champion was also the REP.

Pathfinders were also able to make links with other government-sponsored programmes that ran alongside the Take Part programme. Several pathfinders received help from the Learning Revolution Transformation Fund for instance, and many felt they were able to attract this funding as a result of their Take Part work. Elsewhere, one pathfinder made links between Take Part and the Personal and Community Development Learning Fund.¹⁷ The evaluation also found evidence of some strong links between Take Part and the Empowerment Fund, which supported national VCS organisations to help local communities turn proposals into practical action (DCLG, 2008, p. 29).

¹⁶ The ‘Stronger communities’ strand of an LSP typically dealt with ensuring effective delivery of the local area agreement (LAA), which committed an LSP to meeting a series of targets linked to government funding. For more information visit: www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=10. Accessed 30 March 2011.

¹⁷ Sponsored by the then Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS), this was a safeguarded fund to support uncertified or non-formal adult learning. It was administered by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Across the country, local learning partnerships were to be established or identified to set the future priorities for the fund.

The Empowerment Fund and Take Part

The Sheila McKechnie Foundation (SMK) promoted and encouraged local campaigners through its Empowerment Fund work, raising awareness across England of the importance of local action. The foundation aimed to increase local opportunities for skills and knowledge development. It also promoted increased networking, and knowledge and resource sharing among local campaigners through its Campaign Central website.

There was perceived to be crossover with Take Part work on local campaigning. SMK's Empowerment Fund work also demonstrated similar outcomes to Take Part, such as campaigners developing networks and connections with each other through attending workshops. The evaluation found that SMK had been sharing and receiving information and resources with the South East regional champion, WEA Southern region, and one of the pathfinders, Exeter CVS.

Champions were likewise adept at developing and facilitating local and regional partnerships and networks. They supported development-fund recipients in establishing new partnerships and sharing best practice. This enabled recipients to build capacity within the community by strengthening and concentrating their work on existing activity. Development-fund recipients also linked into a variety of other work being delivered regionally (OPM, 2010, pp. 26-7), which included:

- community asset transfer
- community learning champions
- REPs
- Targeted Support for Empowerment and Participation and Improvement (TSEPI).

The majority of recipients felt that their work with the regional champions had added value to these other initiatives. Furthermore, recipients reported feeling part of both the wider Take Part programme and networks as a result of these relationships, which helped them successfully navigate an otherwise cluttered community-empowerment landscape (OPM, 2010, p. 25).

4.3 Networking within Take Part

The external partnerships and relationships developed by Take Part organisations were complemented by the development of internal networks within the programme, with pathfinders and champions developing strong links. During the course of the programme pathfinders developed stronger relationships with one another, with many highlighting the quarterly meetings facilitated by CDF as a catalyst for these relationships. The Communities of Practice website¹⁸ was also mentioned as a useful tool for cross-fertilising ideas, sharing best practice and exchanging resources. The development of these relationships

¹⁸ For more information, see: www.communities.idea.gov.uk/c/2174858/home.do. Accessed 30 March 2011.

represented a significant improvement from the beginning of the programme, when a gap analysis found little evidence of learning being shared between pathfinders, with some pathfinders feeling they were working in isolation and had little strategic focus (Ekosgen and iCoCo, 2009, pp. 40 and 55). The support and resources provided by CDF proved influential in rectifying this situation, while the regional champions were also important in helping pathfinders link in to regional networks.

This occurred in two ways. Principally, the appointment of six pathfinders as regional champions enabled them to take more of a strategic focus and make links into existing regional structures. Secondly, champions were able to facilitate new partnerships and promote the sharing of good practice between pathfinders as a result of their regional and strategic scope. The evaluation found that there were some benefits to having both the pathfinder leads and the champion as part of the same organisation. This allowed for learning to be fed both ways – communicating best practice from across each region down to the local level, and also promoting local learning and the value of Take Part from pathfinders up to regional level.

Some pathfinders that were not champions reported that they sometimes had difficulty identifying in what capacity they were meeting with the champions, and this was particularly true where an organisation had another role within Take Part. As Appendix A demonstrates, some organisations were not only pathfinders and champions, but also mentors at the same time as delivering various aspects of the national support work, such as the ‘Train the Take Part trainers’ programme and the resource portfolio work. There was also little evidence that the mentoring programme had much impact on developing networks between pathfinders, although the entangled roles of certain pathfinders may partly explain this (mentoring is discussed in more detail the next section). Generally, it was felt that having a pathfinder as a champion worked well. This meant that the organisation was in a good position to embed the Take Part approach through their enhanced experience of it and the programme. As the evaluation of the regional champions demonstrated, most champions proved successful in embedding the Take Part approach in their region, regardless of whether they were a pathfinder or not (OPM, 2010).

4.4 Support and capacity building

In addition to the networks and partnerships formed across Take Part, the national support programme delivered a variety of work aimed at supporting and building the capacity of organisations to run Take Part initiatives and engage communities in democratic processes more effectively. The evaluation found that the pathfinder and national support strands of the programme were largely successful in achieving these aims, with some aspects of national support working more effectively than others.

Providing training

Regional champions offered training directly to development-fund recipients as well as signposting them to pathfinders. There was training for LAs and tutors in the Take Part approach, and pathfinders also provided training in their own approaches and methods.

The Echo framework

The Black Country pathfinder has two LAs on its delivery group, Walsall Council and Wolverhampton City Council, with the latter having embedded the Voice and Echo frameworks in its local community-engagement strategy.¹⁹

The pathfinder sought to embed these frameworks into the work of other public agencies, using the Echo tool to help it be more open to community influence. The partners ran a workshop using Echo with over 40 officers from various public- and voluntary-sector organisations, which resulted in the Dudley Children's Trust piloting the approach with their participation board.

The Dudley Children's Trust coordinates the delivery of services for children and young people across the borough, and the participation board used Echo to review and evaluate how effective the Trust was being in its engagement with the community. The tool enabled them to reflect upon their current approach and suggest issues to be addressed. As a result the board proposed rolling out the Echo framework across the Trust to ensure their various programmes and teams were more open to community influence, as well as using it to measure the impact of their consultations.

Providing resources and materials

At a local level, pathfinders developed a range of how-to guides, describing how to enter into various civic roles or influence local decision making. Some developed and promoted resources from their learning courses, which were distributed via champions, an online Take Part resource directory and the resource portfolio work. The directory and portfolio work are now available on the Take Part website,²⁰ which formed part of the publicity and promotion strand of the national support programme. The website is a key element to the legacy of Take Part, despite this work being affected by government communication freezes.

In addition to the development of the Take Part website, the publicity and promotion strand of the national support programme also sought to increase awareness of the Take Part

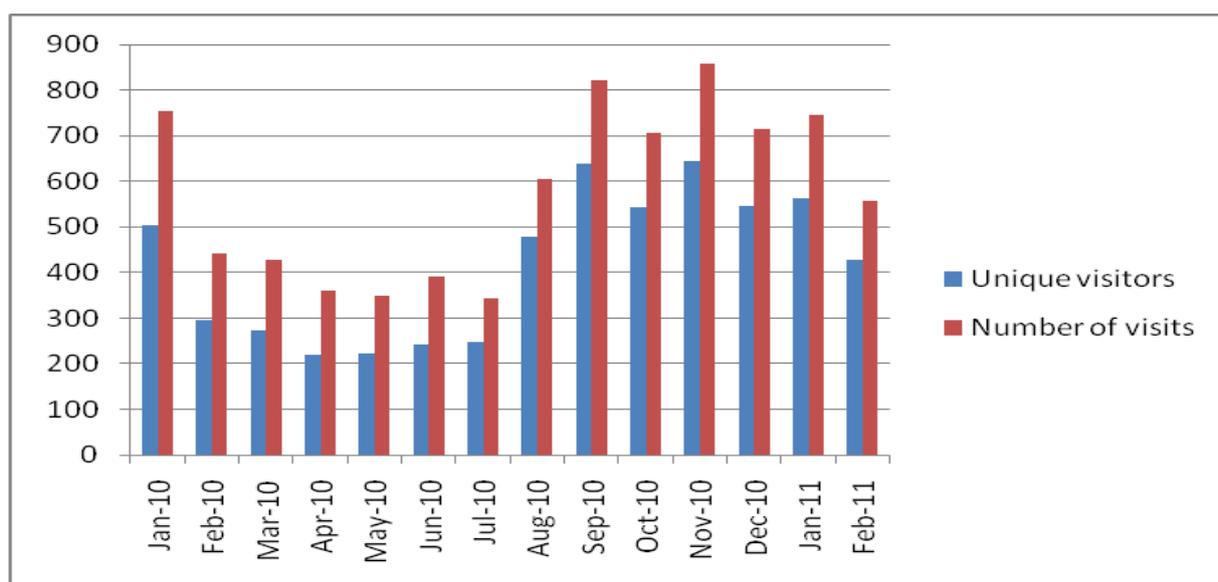
¹⁹ Voice is a tool designed to allow community groups and networks to assess and improve the influence they have on agencies and partnerships. The Echo tool is used by public agencies to help them consider how open they are to influence in relation to their potential to respond to that influence. For more information on these tools visit: changesuk.net/resources/axis-of-influence-series-voice-and-echo. Accessed 30 March 2011.

²⁰ The Take Part website is available at www.takepart.org. Accessed 30 March 2011.

programme and resources through a national campaign. As evidenced earlier in this report, knowledge of Take Part approaches and resources went beyond those directly funded by the programme, although the communication freezes before and after the 2010 general election prevented any significant promotion of Take Part nationally. These restrictions also contributed to delay in the brand refresh, which resulted in a new logo being introduced for the programme late in the final year. Consequently few pathfinders employed it, with many reluctant to replace materials and resources already produced.

Other aspects of the national support programme were similarly affected, for example the online resource directory, which as a result was not widely promoted. However, there was still a noticeable increase in both the number of unique visitors and the number of visits to the directory over the course of the programme. This may correlate with the increase in the number of organisations which participated in Take Part between the second and final years.

Figure 5: Number of unique visitors and visits to the online resource directory by calendar month



The national survey of LAs and REPs found that a number of organisations were aware of the online resource directory, and this awareness is likely to have come as a result of links with pathfinders and champions. The extent to which visitors to the online directory found the site useful is debateable. For example, the majority of visits lasted 30 seconds or less, which, accompanied with feedback from qualitative interviews, suggests the directory was either hard to navigate or didn't have the information visitors sought.

Pathfinders stated a preference for going to each other's websites to locate resources, which helped increase the circulation of resources across the programme. This is an improvement from the gap analysis conducted at the beginning of the programme, which suggested the bespoke nature of pathfinders' materials limited their use across the

programme (Ekosgen and iCoCo, 2009), although there remained isolated examples of this issue occurring. The following example of a community leadership course illustrates this:

‘The course corresponds to the individual participant’s needs. So you start a 12-week course with 16 people and you know that you’re going to be covering things like managing stress, influencing for change, democratic structures, things like managing successful meetings...but what actually emerges is entirely dependent on the individual contributions of those 16 people at that time.’

Pathfinder

The bespoke nature of Take Part meant that several pathfinders felt they weren’t always able to contribute to the online resource directory and the resource portfolio work as well as they hoped to. This situation was further complicated by some pathfinders developing materials funded by several sources, not just Take Part. Nonetheless, the collection processes were criticised for not acknowledging the nature of Take Part better, which then impacted on the context in which resources were created.

Many of the national support programme activities were developed after the pathfinder strand had begun, due to delays in sign-off and the recruitment of project-management staff. This meant that submitting resources for national support work was excluded from pathfinders’ action plans at the beginning of the programme. However, the staggered introduction of national support activities throughout the programme enabled them to be responsive to developments within Take Part, meaning that many were beneficial in terms of supporting pathfinder delivery. For some pathfinders, however, this made the support difficult to navigate and access properly, and it also contributed to a disjointed approach to resource harvesting nationally. Pathfinders were sometimes asked to submit different resources for the online resource directory, the resource portfolio work, general programme monitoring and the evaluation. Sharing resources therefore made a small but significant addition to pathfinders’ workloads.

Mentoring

Take Part provided opportunities for participating organisations to share good practice, reflect on their own work and learn different approaches. For example, one of the aims of the mentoring programme was to promote the approach to those within Take Part, and this typically resulted in the pathfinders who joined the programme in the first year supporting those who joined in the second year. The evaluation found that demand and take-up of this support was low in some areas, with several pathfinders declining the offer due to other constraints on their time and resources. Some pathfinder interviewees were not able to work out the capacity in which they had received support from another pathfinder, be it as a champion or a mentor, and this may partly explain this finding. As outlined earlier, many pathfinders developed informal relationships with each other, and so while they may not have been formally engaged in the mentoring scheme, they still exchanged support and advice. This does, however, highlight an issue with how the local coordination of various

Take Part activities made it difficult for some organisations to fully comprehend the offer of the national support strand and which activities were and weren't applicable to them.

In cases where formal mentoring was offered and taken up, this had a positive impact on pathfinders' understanding and incorporation of both an active citizenship element and the Take Part approach to their work. The type of support offered varied by area, but typically included:

- information about the Take Part approach
- Take Part methods of engagement
- advice on improving working relationships with various organisations
- Take Part approaches and methodologies
- support with monitoring and evaluation.

In one area a mentored pathfinder planned to incorporate the Take Part approach into their work after March 2011 as a direct result of this mentoring support.

In addition to the mentoring scheme, the evaluation found that regional champions successfully supported development-fund recipients to adopt the Take Part approach. They achieved this by providing recipients with knowledge and expertise on the Take Part approach, supporting them in understanding how their work fitted with the approach, and providing advice around the feasibility of new types of work (OPM, 2010). The champions proved a successful element of the national support work in terms of promoting and integrating the Take Part approach into the work of other organisations.

4.5 Sustainability

The majority of Take Part organisations endeavoured to make their work sustainable, and many were concerned about the implications of building up people's confidence and trust only to have to remove their services after March 2011. Linking to other initiatives was just one of a number of ways in which Take Part organisations made their work more sustainable, and in many areas this has had the additional impact of embedding the Take Part approach into the work of other organisations.

Embedding Take Part regionally

The London regional champion has managed to embed Take Part learning and practice across the city through:

- leading presentations and discussions at meetings for all REP partners
- a flexible offer of Take Part training, consultancy and resources to all partners,

successfully delivering this to several LAs and equalities organisations

- supporting development-fund activity by means of a community leadership legacy programme, run through CVSs and reaching individuals and organisations across 15 London boroughs
- collaborating with the ‘Train the Take Part trainers’ programme to deliver accredited training to partners.

Several pathfinders had a local ‘train the trainers’ programme, supporting and developing local people to become tutors in active citizenship and the Take Part approach. This was additional to the ‘Train the Take Part trainers’ work delivered as part of the national support programme, which also created a pool of trainers able to deliver active citizenship learning in the future, establishing a database of over 300 local people with skills and knowledge in active citizenship training. Trainers have often gone on to provide active citizenship learning based around a specific activity or issue, and this is an approach that has been mirrored elsewhere in the programme to enhance the sustainability of and further embed the Take Part approach. Several pathfinders have incorporated an active citizenship element into a number of their other courses, such as training in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). In some areas pathfinder staff themselves attended ‘Train the Take Part trainers’, while the scheme also provided a good progression route for some learners involved with pathfinders’ activities. These factors potentially all ensure that Take Part work continues to operate at a local level.

The sustainability of Take Part is further enhanced by the number of existing structures and organisations involved which will continue to operate past the end of the programme, and which have successfully adopted Take Part approaches and embedded them in their work. The links between Take Part and LAs have already been extensively discussed in this chapter, and it is worth noting that many have incorporated Take Part approaches into their work and tailored the way they work with communities. Through their additional funding, for example, pathfinders led by LAs were able to develop innovative approaches to empowerment work, free from the normal restrictions associated with local-level funding. This also meant that other departments were more inclined to get involved with Take Part activities, as they knew there would be few, if any, direct costs associated with their participation, but significant added benefits. Pathfinders subsequently reported noting changes in both the culture of various departments and the attitudes of individual officers towards engagement and empowerment, increasing their openness to influence (as detailed in Chapter 3). The majority of LA interviewees, not just those hosting a pathfinder, also reported an enhanced quality in the way they interacted with different groups in the local community, increasingly seeing advocacy as part of their role.

5 Conclusion and recommendations

The impact of Take Part in encouraging local action and stimulating civil society offers important learning for the Big Society agenda and other future empowerment initiatives. Programmes such as Community Organisers, National Citizen Service²¹ and the Citizens' University can only stand to gain from building on the networks, knowledge base and skill set that Take Part has embedded across England. More importantly, future programmes will inherit the passion and enthusiasm of a new generation of active citizens.

As a modern example of Freirian teaching in action (see Section 2.3), the Take Part programme has helped pave the way for new policy agendas seeking to devolve power to the most local levels. Big Society programmes like Community Organisers will directly benefit from the learning of Take Part, as the new programme is founded on the same Freirian principles Take Part has so successfully brought to life. Other government initiatives such as the localism bill will also benefit from the foundations laid by Take Part. The bill includes new rights and powers for citizens to take a greater role in public-service decision making and delivery. It also includes responsibilities for public- and private-sector organisations to involve local citizens and recognise their collective voice. The Take Part programme has not only primed participants to take up these rights by enhancing the confidence, knowledge and skills they need to do so, but it has opened public agencies up to increased citizen and community influence. In addition Take Part's focus on building capacity and confidence in disadvantaged neighbourhoods will help ensure that some previously marginalised groups are less likely to feel excluded from taking up new rights and powers.

The following section summarises the learning from the Take Part programme, and makes several recommendations as to how future programmes and policies can leverage the programme's success.

5.1 Take Part achievements and legacy

Building the foundations for empowerment

Take Part has facilitated change at a local level in terms of how LAs, VCS organisations and community members interact. Existing networks were used and strengthened, and new networks created, all of which spread the reach of the programme, enabling it to engage with a wide range of people in a locally coordinated approach. Participating organisations were able to respond to the needs of local community members and provide learning activities to meet their needs. The Take Part Pathfinder activities aimed to:

²¹ For more information on the National Citizen Service, visit: www.catch-22.org.uk/NCS?utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_content=ncs&utm_campaign=campaigns. Accessed 30 March 2011.

- build the skills and confidence of local people so that they can pursue civic activism, community leadership and lay governance roles (including that of local councillor)
- support people and organisations in developing an understanding of barriers to participation, and how to overcome them
- raise awareness of routes into lay governance roles, especially those involving members of LSPs
- support people in their progression through those routes to support improvement against PSA national indicators.

The value of activities was the opportunity for beneficiaries to develop skills, knowledge and confidence. The success factors identified by beneficiaries were:

- the opportunity for experiential learning
- trained supportive tutors who facilitated an encouraging environment
- group interaction and mutual support.

The results of Take Part activities have had, and continue to have, a positive impact on the individuals and organisations involved. Participants clearly felt that they had benefited from getting involved in Take Part in that it has encouraged them seek out further learning opportunities and a small number have gained employment. Beneficiaries felt empowered and are taking up more opportunities to participate in civil and civic activities. People are becoming more effective in their involvement by taking a greater lead and using their knowledge to further their groups' interests. The capacity building among both individuals and community groups has helped them reflect and recognise the role they play in aiding community empowerment.

The programme has been an opportunity for LAs in pathfinder areas to reflect on their empowerment practices and strategies and for councillors and staff to fulfil their roles effectively. For LA-led pathfinders there has been the opportunity to forge links with the VCS. Take Part therefore does not conform to a purely deficit model of citizenship, which suggests low levels of participation stem solely from a dearth of knowledge, skills and confidence among citizens, but also stresses the importance of opening up public agencies to influence too.

Sustaining the impact for the future

Sustainability has always been a consideration for Take Part organisations, influencing their initial approach to the delivery and design of activities. They were mindful not to create activities that would leave beneficiaries stranded when the programme ended, conducting capacity-building work with community groups and embedding the Take Part approach to ensure the programme's legacy continues and citizens are supported.

The programme has involved organisations and individuals from both sides of the engagement and empowerment equation. It has helped the public and community sectors

engage with statutory organisations, helping organisations (particularly LAs) to become more open to influence. Partnerships have been a key success factor in encouraging this, enhancing coordination of Take Part activities with other local initiatives, sharing experience and knowledge between partners and embedding and enhancing the sustainability of Take Part in and through existing structures.

Yet challenges still remain. While the impacts have been maintained over the course of the evaluation, evidence suggests that without continued support beneficiaries can still struggle to overcome barriers and can become disheartened about their attempts to influence. The evaluation also found that restructures in a number of LAs affected their own level of engagement with the programme, and with increasing strain on public-sector budgets, work needs to continue with public agencies if they are to fully engage with the Big Society and Localism agendas.

One of the greatest measures of success for the programme is the number of advocates and ambassadors it has gained over its lifetime. Among beneficiaries participating in the evaluation there was a significant level of enthusiasm for other people to be given the opportunity to be involved in Take Part. Beneficiaries and organisations involved were taking the work forward and spreading the message. The momentum of the work gathered pace in the last year of its delivery and many pathfinders and regional champions found that people were approaching them with future opportunities to deliver Take Part activities.

The organisations and individuals involved in the delivery of the Take Part programme are committed to continuing their engagement and empowerment work beyond March 2011 and plan to embed active citizenship elements in the other projects they deliver. A small number have already won work to continue Take Part-related activities beyond March 2011. Many feel the Take Part approach fits strongly into the Big Society and Localism agendas and many intend to use Take Part activities to help achieve these objectives in the future.

5.2 Lessons for the future and recommendations

Investing adequate time and resources

The interim evaluation found that the first year of the programme required more staff time and resources than anticipated (Miller and Hatamian, 2010). Reflecting on this in the final year, some pathfinders felt they should have set more realistic goals. However, the evidence confirms that finding the time and resources to set up and deliver Take Part was challenging across the programme, in areas such as:

- setting up partnerships
- building trust with potential participants
- promoting and recruiting people to Take Part activities
- establishing accredited courses.

The effort required for all of this is considerable and can detract from, or at the very least put greater pressure on, the delivery of the programme. To engage disadvantaged and

marginalised people takes a considerable amount of time and resources, yet once they are engaged the results can be life-changing. This is key learning for any future empowerment initiatives such as the Community Organisers programme. Investment in the set-up of the programmes is vital to their overall success and pressure to deliver can result in targeting groups that are easier to recruit.

Recommendations

- **Impact is enhanced through careful set-up.** In its enthusiasm to get new programmes up and running as soon as possible, government should be careful not to rush through the set-up stages. Adequate time, planning and resourcing in setting up programmes maximises their impact, reduces risk and improves value for money.
- **Devolving power requires resources.** Empowering all local people requires human resources, time and finance. For future initiatives to be truly equitable, funders and commissioners seeking to engage the most marginalised groups must be prepared for the investment of time and resources to be even greater for these groups. While these initiatives may not initially offer delivery at the lowest cost, they offer a high potential for social returns.

The pros and cons of monitoring and evaluation

Flexible approaches such as Take Part require conditions in which innovative ways of working can be tested and put into practice. There was a natural tension between this flexibility and the emphasis on financial accountability in the programme-management structure, which required participating organisations to monitor their activity and expenditure of public money, as well as to evaluate impact. For a handful of Take Part organisations, monitoring and evaluation presented an initial learning curve, although as our evaluation has highlighted many staff and organisations have themselves expanded their skill sets and refined their own practices as a result. Evaluation became an increasingly common method through which organisations responded to community needs for instance, while the accompanying financial resources enabled organisations, particularly LAs, to be more innovative and flexible in their work than usual.

The support and resources provided by CDF went some way to alleviating these pressures, and by encouraging formal and informal partnerships this support reduced feelings of isolation and improved strategic focus for participating organisations. Various elements of the national support programme, such as the regional Take Part champions and the mentoring scheme, also encouraged regional and national networking among participating organisations and their benefit could have been increased further still had they been in place at the very start of the programme.

Recommendations

- **A balance is needed between accountability and freedom for local people to target resources effectively.** A key element of the Big Society is the transfer of power from the centre to a local level. This will require striking a balance between holding communities and organisations to account, and giving them the flexibility to focus increasingly scarce resources on bringing about meaningful change.
- **Cutting red tape should not ignore the benefits of reflective monitoring.** While any monitoring and evaluation requirements must be reasonable and manageable for the size and capabilities of organisations and community groups involved, the benefits of this form of reflective practice for local groups and projects should not be underrated.
- **Having structures and systems in place enables stakeholders to better navigate and use the support available** to them, increasing its effectiveness, improving value for money and freeing delivery agents to create and embed innovative approaches to community empowerment.

Achieving more through partnership

The evaluation has found that partnerships were a key success factor for the programme. They brought together community groups and LAs and strengthened networks across statutory and community and voluntary sectors. They encouraged formal education providers such as universities to provide opportunities for community-based citizenship learning, opening them up to all sections of the community. The challenges of partnership working, however, include greater resourcing needs, the requirement for time to develop relationships and the difficulty of coordinating monitoring. Partnerships focused around delivery have also had to consider the risk of partner organisations being unable to meet their requirements due to internal changes. Yet the challenges and risks of partnership working are far outweighed by the benefits. It helps to build trust with potential communities, resulting in more open and coordinated approaches to engagement.

Recommendations

- **Coordination across localities and regions** with other programmes should be encouraged to avoid duplication, with key partnerships formed of statutory, voluntary and academic organisations.
- **Networks should be actively fostered.** Strategies need to be developed and put in place to ensure networks; partnerships and connections are encouraged and maintained between organisations and between beneficiaries, both locally and nationally.
- **Meaningful partnerships can enhance active citizenship in times of austerity.** Pathfinders have delivered inspiring results, changing citizens' lives and empowering communities on relatively small budgets. An annual investment

of £30,000 each from an LA, university and local business would be enough to continue Take Part work in most areas, extending and increasing its impact.

- **Sharing administrative resources across partnerships helps where finances are already strained.** Empowering communities requires human resources, and in areas where financial resources are scarce, partnerships could use each other's staff to enhance existing and develop innovative new approaches to empowerment. However risk strategies are essential and these should relate to engaging with partners to deliver a programme like Take Part. Plans and contingencies need to be considered in case partners are unable to fulfil their requirements.

Empowering citizens

For participation to be meaningful and authentic it must be fair and open to all. Take Part was successful, for example, in reaching the seldom-heard through intensive outreach work and working with VCS organisations to develop community leaders. The programme promoted active citizenship and learning through bespoke activities developed with or by local people in response to their own needs and concerns. This grounded learning in a community context, and combined with the emphasis on experience, reflection and action, meant that Take Part encouraged participants to take ownership of the issues affecting them and their communities. This is key learning for initiatives such as the National Citizen Service and the Big Society vanguard areas, as there are huge benefits for stimulating active citizenship in bringing people from different backgrounds together, but learning is most effective when it begins from citizens' own needs and concerns.

Beneficiaries gained enhanced knowledge of opportunities to get involved in their community and local decision making as a result of Take Part, as well as the confidence to pursue these opportunities and the skills to make their participation meaningful. An informal yet structured group environment was central to promoting this. Likewise the work of pathfinders and regional champions with LAs and other public agencies ensured they were open to influence and willing to engage purposefully with communities. Attention to practical considerations around the timing of activities, accessibility and support such as transportation and childcare is also vital to help engender a sense of openness and ensure that a variety of individuals and groups benefit.

Accreditation is an important means to acknowledge participants' journeys and achievements, but should not be the only means of stimulating greater engagement through learning. It is costly for organisations and can be time-consuming for participants. Accredited active citizenship courses are best when they are part of a wider range of learning and empowerment opportunities. Activities should be designed so they can be standalone or coordinated to provide a clear progression route for beneficiaries. Both the overview document of the Citizens' University programme²² and the winning Community Organiser

²² See page 13 in [Creating a Citizens' University on every high street](#) (The Young Foundation, 2010).

proposal²³ suggest these learning programmes will offer some form of accreditation. As these programmes scope out and design accreditation processes, they should consider incorporating sufficient flexibility in the progression routes for their learners.

Recommendations

- **No one method is best.** A range of learning activities including accreditation should be used to achieve greater civic and civil involvement. A suite of activities that can stand alone or fit together to form clear progression routes to active citizenship is highly recommended for existing and future initiatives.
- **Accreditation for informal and adult learning needs to be flexible** to achieve maximum benefits. For this reason, accredited learning needs to be delivered by experienced and trained tutors who work in partnership with learners.
- **Support for citizens' engagement practices must be sustained** to ensure that the benefits do not begin to diminish. Individuals becoming more involved in civic and civil activities and practices may still require support and opportunities for development to ensure that they can continue to overcome barriers and be effective in their participation. This would suggest that a certain level of support needs to be maintained in order for the benefits of any empowerment initiative not to be lost.

²³ See page 10 in [Tender to provide a National Partner for the Community Organisers Programme](#) (Locality, 2010).

6 Reference list

Blond, P. (2009) *The ownership state*. London: National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts.

The Conservative Party (2010) *Building a Big Society*. [Online] Available at: www.conservatives.com/~media/Files/Downloadable%20Files/Building-a-Big-Society.ashx?dl=true [Accessed 30 March 2011].

Department for Communities and Local Government (2006) *Strong and prosperous communities*. London: DCLG.

Department for Communities and Local Government (2007) *Motivations and barriers to citizen governance*. London: DCLG.

Department for Communities and Local Government (2008) *Communities in control: Real people, real power*. London: DCLG.

Department for Communities and Local Government (2009) *National evaluation of participatory budgeting in England*. DCLG: London.

Department for Communities and Local Government (2010) *Citizenship Survey: 2009-10*. [Online] Available at: www.communities.gov.uk/documents/statistics/pdf/164191.pdf [Accessed 30 March 2011].

Department for Communities and Local Government (2010) *The localism bill*. [Online] Available at: www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmbills/126/11126.i-v.html [Accessed 30 March 2011].

Ekosgen and iCoCo (2009) *Building on the Take Part framework*. [internal report].

ERS (2010) *Civic activists mapping research*. [Online] Available at: www.cdf.org.uk/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=87c1792c-63e5-496a-ab06-f529c390baba&groupId=10128 [Accessed 30 March 2011].

Freire, P. (1986) *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum.

Humm, J., Jones, K. and Chanan, G. (2005) *Testing indicators of community involvement*. CDF: London.

Mayo, M. and Annette, J. (2010) *Taking part? Active learning for active citizenship, and beyond*. Leicester: National Institute of Adult Continuing Education.

Mayo, M. and Rooke, A. (2006) *Active learning for active citizenship*. [Online] Available at: www.cdf.org.uk/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=f123dde1-cc6a-4faf-89d6-ab46e800034f&groupId=10128 [Accessed 30 March 2011].

Miller, S. (2010) *The Take Part programme: interim evaluation findings*. [Online] Available at: [www.gold.ac.uk/media/Take%20Part%20interim%20findings%20\(Taking%20Part%20conference\)%20FINAL.pdf](http://www.gold.ac.uk/media/Take%20Part%20interim%20findings%20(Taking%20Part%20conference)%20FINAL.pdf) [Accessed 30 March 2011].

Miller, S. and Hatamian, A. (2010) *Take Part interim report: Second-year evaluation of the Take Part programme*. [Online] Available at: www.cdf.org.uk/web/guest/take-part [Accessed 30 March 2011].

National Council for Voluntary Organisations (2011) *Participation: trends, facts and figures*. [Online] Available at: www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/sites/default/files/UploadedFiles/participation_trends_facts_figures.pdf [Accessed 30 March 2011].

OPM (2010) *Evaluation of the regional Take Part champions*. London: CDF.

Pathways through Participation (2010) *Strengthening participation: Learning from participants*. [Online] Available at: pathwaysthroughparticipation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/Strengthening-participation-final.pdf [Accessed 30 March 2011].

Take Part Network (2011) *Take Part learning framework*. [unpublished].

Workers' Educational Association (2011) *Train the Take Part trainer project: Final report*. [Unpublished].

Appendix A – Take Part pathfinders and Regional Take Part Champions

The individual profiles below provide a brief overview of the work of the Take Part pathfinders. Each pathfinder had a designated lead organisation that worked with a number of key partners, who shared responsibility for strategy and delivery. Pathfinders also worked with a variety of groups and communities, with some targeting specific demographics while others focused on geographical areas.

Pathfinders delivered their Take Part activities to different timescales depending on when they were recruited, with a few beginning their work as early as January 2009 while others did not start delivery until September 2009. These factors make comparisons between pathfinders difficult, so the profiles should not be used as indicators of performance.

The following key provides a quick guide to each pathfinder's various roles within the Take Part programme. The symbols indicate which aspects of the programme (or its predecessor, ALAC) the lead organisation or a partner has been involved with:

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
|  ALAC hub |  Mentor |  Pathfinder |
|  Regional Take Part champion |  Take Part Network |  Train the Take Part trainers |

Black Country pathfinder and West Midlands Regional Take Part Champion



The Black Country pathfinder was a partnership led by the Wolverhampton Voluntary Sector Council with two other VCS organisations, two LAs, an LSP and a learning partnership. The pathfinder worked in Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton. It had a particular focus on working with women, delivering three citizenship learning programmes aimed at women only, alongside an open access, mixed-gender learning programme. The partners also delivered learning programmes for a geographical community (Wolverhampton LINK).

The pathfinder used the Voice framework with local VCS groups to increase their capacity to influence, and the Echo framework with public agencies to assess their openness to community influence. Finally, it sought to improve the sustainability of its work by developing a pool of local Take Part facilitators through training, shadowing and provision of materials.

The West Midlands Regional Take Part Champion was also managed by the Wolverhampton Voluntary Sector Council in partnership with the Black Country Empowerment Group (see Appendix B; figure 6 for details of development fund recipients).

Influencing health services

The pathfinder delivered a mixed-gender learning programme with the Wolverhampton LiNk focused around shared experiences of health services and barriers to change. The programme involved a number of different sessions twice a month, including a trip to parliament and a residential. One participant interviewed for our evaluation reported increased confidence in their role within the LiNk and when dealing with public agencies, feeling they were able to put what they had learnt into practice, particularly their enhanced negotiation skills.

The Black Country pathfinder evaluation report is available at <http://www.blackcountrypathfinder.co.uk/images/pages/Black%20Country%20Final%20Evaluation%20Report%202011.pdf>

Bradford pathfinder

The Bradford pathfinder was led by CNet, the Bradford and District Community Empowerment Network, and run in partnership with Bradford Council's Neighbourhood Support service. Funded as part of a regional project, the pathfinder also linked up with the York pathfinder to share information and learning. It worked primarily within two deprived neighbourhoods in Bradford – one with a predominantly Pakistani community and the other predominantly white. Both areas had recently welcomed new immigrants.

The pathfinder had a strong focus on engaging people with little or no previous experience of participation. Using action learning, the pathfinder brought local people together to identify issues affecting their community and explore how these could be addressed. In addition to regular action learning groups across both years, the pathfinder also developed support programmes, delivered sessions on civic roles and ran non-accredited workshops.

Working with the police

The pathfinder delivered a series of weekly sessions with a South Asian elders' group, building on their learning needs as identified through action learning. These sessions included discussions on local and national governance, health and immigration, as well as a number of guest speakers from the council, parliamentary outreach, the police and elected officials. Members of the group initially identified crime as a main issue locally, and as a result of the Take Part work, many became more involved with their local Neighbourhood Forums, lobbying councillors to take action. The police also started to hold monthly surgeries with the group too.

Brighton and Hove pathfinder

The Brighton and Hove pathfinder was a partnership between WEA (Southern region) and the Working Together Project, working with Brighton and Hove City Council. The partners targeted disadvantaged areas in Brighton and Hove with low levels of engagement, as well as communities of interest, which were traditionally under-represented in local civic activity, such as BME groups.

The pathfinder aimed to meet identified needs and provide added value to existing activity. The programme was delivered locally by a range of partners who were funded to run leadership activities alongside the Working Together Project's accredited leadership and mentoring course as well as a range of one-off activities.

Accrediting community leadership

The pathfinder ran two NOCN-accredited 'Community leadership' programmes with local volunteers focusing on enhancing communication skills, running effective meetings, managing conflict and influencing and engaging others. These courses had a number of impacts, including encouraging participants to get even more involved in their communities, for example by taking up trustee roles, doing further training or even setting up new community groups.

The Brighton and Hove pathfinder evaluation report is available at <http://www.workingtogetherproject.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/wtp/Brighton-Hove-Take-Part-Final-Evaluation-Rprt.pdf>

Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale pathfinder

The Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale pathfinder was led by Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale Council for Voluntary Services (BPRCVS) with a range of statutory and VCS partners. Working across Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale, their primary communities of interest were disabled people, older people, local VCS and faith groups, and BME groups, particularly women from South Asian communities and Eastern European migrant communities.

The pathfinder delivered a variety of accredited and non-accredited learning programmes and workshops, developing 'individual learning plans' which both enabled them to tailor their activities to local needs and concerns and helped learners keep track of their progress.

Opening universities to all

Working in partnership with the University of Central Lancashire, the pathfinder enabled those working part-time within a community setting to undertake the Foundation Degree in Community Leadership and Volunteering (or modules of it). The pathfinder also ran a number of 'taster sessions' for those interested in the course, and this strand of activity not only developed participants' community-leadership skills and confidence but also enhanced the university's links to the local community.

More information about the Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale pathfinder is available at http://www.bprcvs.co.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=69&Itemid=14

Cornwall pathfinder

The Cornwall pathfinder was led by the Cornwall Voluntary Sector Forum, in partnership with six other VCS organisations. These partnerships enabled the pathfinder to engage with a variety of communities across this predominantly rural county. Specific communities of interest included younger people, older people, residents' groups, parish councils and remote rural communities.

The pathfinder delivered a number of workshops, learning programmes (including accredited learning), and information events for different geographical communities and communities of interest. It also developed a range of resources providing information and supporting the learning programmes.

Skills for involvement in the future

The Cornwall pathfinder tailored its 'How your area works' course to focus on recent changes in the NHS. The subsequent 'Skills for involvement in the future' workshop included activities around how to read newspaper health stories critically and find research evidence about the issues raised in them. It used an example where chocolate was claimed to be 'healthier than fruit'. Participants were very enthusiastic, and the workshop gave them a sound knowledge base to inform their future interactions with the NHS. Some of the activities from the workshop were subsequently used as engagement tools at a number of other events, including the Devon County Show.

More Cornwall pathfinder case studies are available at <http://takepart.cornwallvsf.org/category/casestudies/>

East of England Regional Take Part Champion

The East of England Regional Take Part Champion was delivered by Inspire East. The champion worked with a range of beneficiaries from youth offenders to isolated deaf adults although there was a strong youth element in their development fund work (see Appendix B; figure 6 for details of development fund recipients).

All the champions' development fund work had substantial volunteer components and while the majority worked with local authority community oriented teams the majority were delivered with VCS partners. This enabled community members and workers across disciplines such as youth and community work, policy, neighbourhood management, education and the local authority including councillors to come together to achieve change in their community.

Engaging young people

The development fund Take Part project in Basildon was developed and delivered by the Council's Community Development Team, with assistance from local schools, colleges, council members, council officers and the Parliamentary Education Service.

Ten schools and colleges were approached to form teams to propose a community project which would be subject to a public vote with the winning idea awarded £5,000 of community chest funding to carry out their idea. The participants were provided with training sessions and were then supported through the process of developing their manifestos and held a public debate on the key issues. As part of the campaigning process the participants made a DVD with party political broadcasts about their manifestos. This was shown in assemblies and posted on YouTube, generating more than 2000 hits. The process of creating and publicising the manifestos in a variety of ways increased the confidence and the communication skills of the young people involved and generated considerable debate in their peer group.

Fifteen manifestos were put forward to the vote with over 2,500 votes were cast and the winning project was to bring school councils together across the borough and run fundraising events. The project helped to create a pool of motivated and enthusiastic young people for the local youth council and regional youth assembly. A stronger relationship has developed between the community development team and local schools. The winning project has resulted in fundraising events for local charities across the borough run by young people and further opportunities for involvement and skills development.

More information about the East of England Regional Take Part Champion in the is available at <http://www.inspire-east.org.uk/regionaltakepartchampions.aspx?Area=NETWORK6>

Exeter pathfinder and South West Regional Take Part Champion



The Exeter pathfinder was led by Exeter CVS with two LA partners. The pathfinder had a broad outlook to its work, delivering Take Part activities across Exeter with a variety of groups and communities.

The pathfinder aimed to build on both the approaches it had developed as part of the ALAC programme and the delivery partners' existing areas of work. This involved a variety of marketing and publicity work as well as information on opportunities for involvement, such as 'how to' guides and an online directory of over 75 opportunities for people to get more involved within the community or civic life. The pathfinder also developed and delivered a variety of accredited and non-accredited active citizenship learning programmes.

The South West Regional Take Part Champion was also managed by Exeter CVS (see Appendix B; figure 6 for details of development fund recipients).

Speaking up

The pathfinder engaged a group of mothers with few or no qualifications, delivering a three-term accredited active citizenship course called 'Speaking up' at a Sure Start children's centre. The course improved participants' confidence and enhanced a number of their skills, such as assertiveness and decision making as well as speaking and listening. The course also resulted in a number of tangible benefits for participants, with many voting for the first time or speaking up at public events and three long-term unemployed learners gaining employment.

More information about the Exeter pathfinder in the is available at <http://www.takepartexeter.org/home>

Hertfordshire pathfinder

The Hertfordshire pathfinder was led by Hertfordshire County Council with a range of statutory and VCS partners. The pathfinder delivered two 'empowerment academies' – one working with BME groups in the borough of Stevenage and another targeted at an electoral ward in Borehamwood. As a result of this focus the pathfinder also worked with children and young people aged between 18 and 25, older people, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people, women and people with mental-health problems and disabilities.

The empowerment academies provided outreach sessions, promotional events, skills development training, confidence and community leadership courses plus a number of visits to civic institutions. These were supported by two part-time community development workers who undertook outreach work in each of the target areas, encouraging local people to identify barriers to their participation and developing solutions.

Empowering people with mental-health problems and disabilities

The pathfinder delivered a confidence-building course with a group of people with mental health problems and disabilities. The group helped shape the content of the course so it was relevant to their needs and interests, with four participants subsequently becoming community leaders, feeding back concerns or ideas from other service users through the relevant service structures. Participants have also since got involved with running a social enterprise providing catering locally, with several also now working with the local borough council to ensure that written material is accessible to those with learning difficulties.

The Hertfordshire pathfinder evaluation report is available at <http://e-voice.org.uk/takepartherts/assets/documents/final-report>

Lincolnshire pathfinder and East Midlands Regional Take Part Champion



The Lincolnshire pathfinder was led by the University of Lincoln, in partnership with the Lincolnshire Assembly. It brought together every LA in the county plus a range of VCS organisations. The pathfinder worked across the county, working predominantly with rural communities but also in urban areas and with communities of new migrants.

The pathfinder predominantly used an approach called ‘Constructed conversations’, organising a series of community-based learning events across Lincolnshire with statutory and VCS organisations to discuss effective community engagement. The pathfinder also established a permanent ‘speakers’ corner’, as well as contributing to the development of two short courses delivered at the university. These followed an informal learning approach and were offered as either credit-bearing or non-credit-bearing.

The East Midlands Regional Take Part Champion was also led by the University of Lincoln (see Appendix B; figure 6 for details of development fund recipients).

Empowering community forums

Members of a city-wide community forum were encouraged to reflect on the role of the forum and their position within it. The group took part in a number of learning exercises and visits, including one to their local council chamber. Take Part helped the community forum members reflect upon their existing knowledge and expertise, with the pathfinder supporting them to share these reflections at a county-wide event and make suggestions for change and review.

More information about East Midlands Take Part Champion in the is available at <http://www.takeparteastmidlandschampions.org.uk/beta/index.html>

London Regional Take Part Champion



The London regional Take Part champion was managed by the London Civic Forum. Most of the development fund recipient projects aimed to meet the individual needs of a group of people identified by a geographic area and occasionally by gender or age. Only one project did not have a specific target group, the project lead admitted this would be strongly reconsidered if the programme were to run again. Findings from the regional champion’s self evaluation found that the majority of development fund recipients were women and there was a higher than average representation of Bangladeshi, Nepalese and White European people.

The champion approach was to allocate part of the development fund to the Community Leadership Legacy Programme (CLLP) a London Empowerment Partnership project working across fifteen London boroughs and funded through Connecting Communities. Through the CLLP coordinators, the project aimed to bring together community leadership at a sub

regional level. The development fund was used to fill in gaps in leadership activity and to get community leadership activity embedded into the work of both local authorities and CVSs. CLLP coordinators helped to deliver development fund projects, such as the delivery of communications skills training to local residents, support for volunteers with tenants and residents associations, and support for local residents to engage with the Big Local Trust.

‘We Can Make a Difference’

With the support of London Civic Forum, Account3, a not-for-profit training and development company and Carmel Bridge, a social enterprise, created a Take Part programme called ‘We Can Make a Difference’. The programme consisted of a residential course based on ‘Women Be Heard’ materials from the WEA. There were weekly support sessions, including communications learning and ESOL sessions, focusing on local participation for 48 unemployed Tower Hamlets residents. The aim was to empower and support female tenants living in social housing in the borough and provide them with the skills and confidence to engage with local housing and residents’ services.

As a result of the course, all learners said their confidence and communication skills had improved and 15 learners now regularly take part in local decision making forums. Furthermore, 13 learners are now employed in the newly created tenant liaison roles and two have found employment with other agencies. The learners have also established a new BME Women Tenants Panel, which is regularly consulted by local housing associations.

The London Regional Take Part Champion evaluation report is available at <http://www.londoncivicforum.org.uk/london-take-part-champion-programme-evaluation-report-available/>

Mansfield pathfinder

The Mansfield pathfinder was a partnership between Mansfield CVS and WEA (East Midlands region). It also had strong links with a range of other strategic local partners. The pathfinder worked across the Mansfield district with a variety of communities and target groups, including women, parents and carers, older people, people with disabilities, BME groups, and Eastern European migrant communities. The pathfinder also targeted the most disadvantaged wards in Mansfield.

The partners delivered a range of accredited and non-accredited active citizenship learning opportunities, such as short courses, one-off workshops and other informal activities. Learning included, ‘train the trainers’ and the IPAC accreditation, with a number of community events and visits too.

Stimulating volunteering

The pathfinder ran a number of informal coffee mornings called 'learning circles', which encouraged local people to meet with other volunteers and VCS organisations. The learning circles led not only to local people progressing on to other Take Part learning opportunities but also to an increased take-up for volunteering opportunities locally. For example, one volunteer (newly arrived from Eastern Europe) went on to complete the accredited IPAC course before becoming a volunteer translator for a local children's centre.

More information about the Mansfield pathfinder is available at <http://www.takepartmansfield.org.uk/>

Northumberland pathfinder

The Northumberland pathfinder was led by WEA (North Eastern region) with Northumberland Community Development Network delivering the youth element of the project. The pathfinder focused delivery in north Northumberland, working predominantly with rural communities. Through this work, and the additional youth element of the project, the pathfinder worked with social housing tenants, migrant workers and young adults, including LGBT young people and others with specific disabilities.

The pathfinder ran a series of accredited and non-accredited learning programmes, as well as a range of one-off activities and events. The partners worked with local people to identify barriers to their increased participation, and supported them in applying learning and forming new groups. Among the outcomes were the establishment of a youth forum and a community music festival, which will continue as an annual event.

Promoting the role of parish councils

The pathfinder found many participants were interested in or concerned with parish councils. Through their work with the pathfinder, many Take Part participants in the area have started regularly attending local parish council meetings, asking questions, raising issues and requesting that action be taken. Elsewhere, young people have been involved with creating an action research project examining how parish councils engage with young people. Several Take Part participants stated their intention to become Parish councillors at the next elections in 2013.

North West Regional Take Part Champion

The North West Regional Take Part Champion was managed by the WEA (North West region). The champion developed a strong partnership with the Salford pathfinder organisation Community Pride Unit and Manchester Metropolitan University. The champion organised a number of events to bring together the development fund recipients to hear

about other projects in the region. They learnt more about the national Take Part programme and how the Salford pathfinder developed and delivered its work.

The development fund projects dealt with a variety of issues, including participatory budgeting, neighbourhood boards, women's representation in democracy and village hall management. The second round of funding had a specific emphasis on 'seldom heard' groups.

Encouraging community activity

The champion worked with development fund recipient Ellesmere Port and Neston Association of Voluntary and Community Organisations providing a series of information giving sessions in the seven most deprived neighbourhoods. The sessions were designed to increase levels of community activity and to encourage residents to engage more with decision-makers. The sessions led to the creation of five sustainable community groups in areas of significant deprivation, including one 'Fun for All' group dedicated to improving grassroots activities for children and young people in that area.

Portsmouth pathfinder

The Portsmouth pathfinder was led by Portsmouth City Council. The pathfinder worked across the city, although it had a particular focus on engaging under-represented groups, such as BME communities, young people and people with disabilities.

In its first year, the pathfinder mainly targeted those not engaged at any level, primarily through an extensive marketing campaign that included improving the council's web pages, developing its presence on social media and running an extensive bus advertising campaign encouraging people to register to vote. The pathfinder also conducted an audit of existing learning and development opportunities for active citizenship within the city, which resulted in a Take Part newspaper being circulated to households. It also informed the development of the pathfinder's own learning and development programmes. These included the 'Take the lead' community leadership programme.

The 'X-why factor' course

Through its audit of learning opportunities, the pathfinder identified a local need for basic training about local democratic processes, such as how to register to vote and ways to get involved. The council subsequently developed the 'X-why factor' course, with 150 people attending and various VCS organisations participating. Participants reported an increased appetite for volunteering as a result, and the course has been adapted onto DVD so that it is accessible to groups with learning disabilities.

More information about the Portsmouth pathfinder is available at <http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/yourcouncil/17236.html>

Redcar & Cleveland and Sedgefield borough pathfinder and North East Regional Take Part Champion



The Redcar & Cleveland and Sedgefield borough pathfinder was led by SkillShare North East Ltd, in local partnership with various VCS organisations and the LA in each delivery area. The pathfinder had a wide target audience, although it made a commitment that no fewer than 40 percent of its participants would be women, young people and members of BME groups. It also worked extensively with elected members and public agencies.

The pathfinder's programme included a series of one-off workshops, online resources, 'How to' guides, and two accredited courses – the 'Take the lead' programme in community leadership and a course in managing VCS organisations. The pathfinder was also made exchange visits to other pathfinders to share learning and train others in the delivery of their community leadership course.

The North East Regional Take Part Champion was also managed by Skillshare North East Limited (see Appendix B; figure 6 for details of development fund recipients).

The 'North-East voices' conference

The pathfinder hosted a regional conference in conjunction with the North East REP, the Parliamentary Outreach Service and the regional Take Part champions' programme. The conference identified ways for local people to influence decision making, with key speakers, a 'question time' event and a number of workshops tackling issues such as campaigning and lobbying, e-participation and voting. Following the conference, the majority of delegates reported feeling more able to influence decision making.

More information about the Redcar & Cleveland and Sedgefield pathfinder is available at <http://www.skillsharene.co.uk/brochure.php?node=490>

Salford pathfinder



The Salford pathfinder was a partnership between the local Community Pride Unit and Manchester Metropolitan University, with additional input from the LA and other VCS organisations. While the university was the lead body for the pathfinder, the majority of programme activities were delivered by Community Pride Unit. The pathfinder worked across Salford with people from a variety of different communities, including those living in disadvantaged areas, BME communities, refugees and people seeking asylum, Asian women, people with learning disabilities and people with physical or sensory disabilities.

The pathfinder delivered several 'schools of participation' with a number of different communities, as well as civic and civil leadership programmes, accredited and non-accredited training, events and participatory budgeting sessions. A school of participation is based on the work of the Brazilian educationalist Paulo Freire and the methodology has been adapted for the UK context.

School of participation with Asian women

A participant trained in active citizenship through Take Part subsequently formed an Asian women's group, which was supported by the pathfinder, using their school of participation model. Women were recruited to the group through extensive outreach work, since many were isolated and did not speak English as their first language. The school of participation created a space for women to discuss their personal and collective issues and concerns. As a result of the school, the Asha group was formed, enabling participants to work with other women to take up ESOL classes and a range of training opportunities. One of the women now has a job and two more are attending work participation workshops. The Asha group is ongoing and continuing to develop and reach out to more women.

The Salford pathfinder evaluation report is available at <http://www.ioe.mmu.ac.uk/caec/>

Southwark pathfinder

The Southwark pathfinder was led by Volunteer Centre Southwark. The pathfinder adopted an area-based approach, working in various parts of the London borough of Southwark, and also worked with particular BME groups, including Latin American, Polish, Sierra Leonean and Traveller communities.

Social and traditional media proved to be important tools for engaging people with Take Part activities in Southwark, and the pathfinder delivered a number of active citizenship training courses covering subjects such as civic roles, local governance and community leadership. The pathfinder also worked with Southwark Borough Council to support them in developing community champions.

'Train the Take Part trainers' in Southwark

The pathfinder worked with WEA to deliver a four-week 'Train the Take Part trainers' course in Southwark, aimed at enabling people to promote active citizenship within their communities. The course attracted a variety of people, and participants subsequently progressed on to accredited training and one-off short courses.

More information about the Southwark pathfinder is available at http://www.volunteercentres.org.uk/take_part_pathfinder.htm

South East Regional Take Part Champion

The South East Regional Take Part Champion was managed by WEA (Southern region). The champion delivered most activities in partnership or collaboration with other organisations such as children's centres, voluntary organisations and local authorities. An extensive and

diverse range of activities were delivered including roadshows, one day events, accredited active citizenship courses and tailored training.

Empowering women

Two one day 'Women be heard' sessions were conducted last year to introduce learners to their local councillors, giving them the opportunity to meet them and ask questions. The participants also learnt about national and local government and the role of a school governor. As a result of the women's interest in the topics, there were five further sessions which concentrated on local community issues they saw in their neighbourhood and how they could help. Since the sessions, five women have put their names forward to volunteer for a women's organisation called Jeena.

Some of the women travelled to the Houses of Parliament after writing a letter to their MP about the threatened cuts to ESOL provision. They also took part in a 'Women on the bridge' demonstration against ESOL funding cuts on International Women's Day.

More information about the South East Regional Take Part Champion is available at <http://southern.wea.org.uk/index.asp?m=27&c=173>

South Yorkshire pathfinder and Yorkshire and Humber Regional Take Part Champion



The South Yorkshire pathfinder was led by WEA (Yorkshire and Humber region) with a range of partners including LAs, education providers and regional organisations. Its work targeted white working-class communities, women, LGBT and BME people, gypsies, travellers and new migrants.

The pathfinder's learning programmes covered topics such as local governance and public speaking and presentation skills. There were two additional accredited courses, one exploring opportunities to influence decisions at local, regional and national levels and the other being the IPAC course. The pathfinder also undertook a number of workshops and events aimed at promoting community leadership and civic roles, as well as a range of publicity and promotion work.

The Yorkshire and Humber Regional Take Part Champion was also managed by the WEA (Yorkshire and Humber region) (see Appendix B; figure 6 for details of development fund recipients).

The Individual Profile in Active Citizenship (IPAC) award

The IPAC course was delivered to people with complex disabilities and neurological disorders who live in a Sue Ryder residential care home in Doncaster. A total of 15 people enrolled on the course. Sessions were held on Mondays – one in the morning and one in the afternoon. All participants contributed to a blog of each session and worked on individual projects and pieces of work relating to their interests while compiling a portfolio for accreditation. They also used a range of media to record their learning journey.

More information about the South Yorkshire pathfinder is available at <http://www.takepartpathfinderyh.org/>

Stoke-on-Trent pathfinder

The Stoke-on-Trent pathfinder was led by the Sustainable Communities Team at Stoke-on-Trent City Council, with key partners including the Citizens Advice Bureau, the LGBT Network and Staffordshire University. Across both years, the pathfinder worked with a variety of groups and communities, including BME groups, older people, gypsies, travellers, LGBT people, residents' groups, disabled people and young people.

The pathfinder began with an evaluation framework exercise, which drew local VCS organisations together to identify what training was needed and what support could be provided. The pathfinder then developed a range of activities, including a community leadership programme, outreach support and the development of an 'involvement directory' promoting opportunities for people to influence local decision making. The pathfinder also worked with schools to develop young people's awareness of and ties with their community, and introduced a range of initiatives for public agency staff, such as an engagement competency pack and an extranet website (for 'registered users'), which created a centralised information point for partners.

High school congress

The pathfinder led a series of 'High school congress' events involving 99 young people attending institutions which included two special schools. These events also formed part of a consultation process, which enabled young people to contribute to the council's children and young people's plan. As a result of these events, a citizen action group was established, led by local Year 10 students. The group subsequently organised a trip to London to raise cultural and political awareness among young people there.

Sutton pathfinder

Sutton CVS was the lead organisation for the Sutton pathfinder, delivering activities in partnership with Sutton Racial Equality Council, London Borough of Sutton and Sutton Volunteer Centre. The project was open to all residents in Sutton, although specific targeted activity was conducted to engage women and people from BME backgrounds.

In addition to informal, formal and accredited learning programmes, the pathfinder also offered a social-media training programme, a councillor shadowing scheme and a number of one-off events such as community road shows.

Building the foundations for the Big Society

The pathfinder was successful in raising awareness of active citizenship opportunities. It supported several people in taking on civic roles, with many more pursuing such roles as well as taking up local volunteering opportunities. As part of the programme's legacy, the pathfinder has begun making links with the Big Society vanguard work promoting volunteering and active citizenship in the area. Sutton is a pilot site for the Citizens' University programme, and the pathfinder is also embedding Take Part into this work by maintaining and developing the training aspects of the programme.

More information about the Sutton pathfinder is available at <http://www.suttontakepart.org.uk/>

Thurrock pathfinder

The Thurrock pathfinder was led by Thurrock Council, with work developed and delivered in partnership with the Community Involvement Board, comprising three key voluntary sector organisations – Thurrock CVS, Ngage and Thurrock Racial Unity Support Task group (TRUST).

The pathfinder delivered a variety of geographically focused activities, which resulted in work with a development trust, a residents' group, a community forum and a community association. The pathfinder also worked with a number of communities of interest, including young people, BME groups, LGBT people, women and people with disabilities. Take Part activities in Thurrock included peer-to-peer research, the development of a credit union, one-off events and learning programmes including effective campaigning and PTLLS.

Promoting social enterprise

As part of the pathfinder's work, the One Community Development Trust was supported to conduct a range of active citizenship work, including establishing Thurrock's first credit union.²⁴ The development trust's work was targeted at three electoral wards, and through the credit union it was able to get people more involved in their local community and promote more sustainable lifestyles. The credit union initially provided 11 people, some with little previous involvement in their local community, with volunteering opportunities. Another 14 people were due to be trained in March 2011, and the credit union has also attracted 45 savers.

The Thurrock pathfinder evaluation report is available at <http://www.tcen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/TP-201011evaluation-Final.pdf>

York pathfinder

The York pathfinder was led by the Neighbourhood Management Unit of City of York Council, in partnership with a range of other service providers (including young people's services, the street environment team, and ward councillors). This was the only Take Part pathfinder working exclusively with children and young people. The York pathfinder has rolled out a programme of work with young people to further promote active citizenship and offer robust and sustainable opportunities to contribute to the work of local services.

The work of the York pathfinder focused on ward committee process and commissioned services, developing school councils and the establishment of a youth council. Young people were involved with Take Part in a number of creative and innovative ways, such as using voting buttons to identify the issues that affect them where they live and what provision they would like to see in their area. York Youth Council members also produced a DVD to help recruit new members, as well as designing and uploading information on to the Take Part York website.

²⁴ A credit union is a financial institution that is owned and controlled by its members, encouraging saving and providing credit at reasonable rates. For more information about credit unions visit: www.woccu.org/about/creditunion. Accessed 30 March 2011.

Lessons for the National Citizens Service

As part of their Take Part work, City of York Council developed a youth council linked to the UK Youth Parliament. The youth council held its regular meetings in the main council chambers, which made it feel part of the decision-making process in the city and gave it credibility. The pathfinder also established successful links between the youth council and city council members.

In addition to this, the York pathfinder is delivering active citizenship work in primary schools alongside a range of partners including parish councils, street environment services, the police, councillors and the Children's Trust. Children commented on how they have a reduced fear of the police and an increased interest in contacting their local councillor. There was also evidence that the children were passing on their knowledge and information they collected to their families.

The York pathfinder evaluation report is available at <http://takepartyork.org/files/2011/03/Take-Part-York-Report-final-version1.pdf>

Appendix B – Regional Take Part champions and development fund evaluation summary

During October and November 2010 CDF commissioned OPM to evaluate the role of the regional Take Part champions. It involved interviews eight regional Take Part champions and 26 development-fund recipients.

Champions and recipients felt that their Take Part activity had been a success and had led to strong community empowerment outcomes (see case study below). Development-fund recipients were pleased with, and often surprised by, the ‘added value’ offered by the champions as part of the broader Take Part offer. The role of the champion is very important in bringing together the different elements of the Take Part programme. When done well, the champion approach enables activity and adds value beyond the financial worth of the development fund.

Key findings

The development fund was a key motivation for many recipients to apply to Take Part. Recipients were primarily motivated to apply to Take Part because of the possibility of funding through the development fund. There were other reasons for their interest in Take Part, including a sense of shared values with the Take Part approach and desire to build up existing community empowerment work, but the funding itself was key to initial participation.

Champion support was valued more by those with less experience in community-empowerment work. Development-fund recipients had a variety of community-empowerment experience. More experienced recipients were more confident in delivering their activities alone whereas those with less experience highly valued the support and advice of the champion, in particular when it came to the embedding of the Take Part approach and the ongoing monitoring of outcomes and objectives.

LA engagement happened mainly through development-fund work. Overall, the main contact with LAs happened in their capacity as development-fund recipients. In these instances champions worked to ensure community-empowerment outcomes by providing the LAs with tailored support, such as adapting national resources into locally relevant material which could be offered to all development fund recipients. Some LA recipients felt that the Take Part grant gave them additional credibility when working with community groups as it was seen ‘independent’ funding. However, there were examples of profile-raising activity and consultancy-type activity that occurred with LAs separate to the development fund.

Champions increased the value of the development-fund activity beyond the actual financial value of the grant. Despite the fund being a key motivation for recipients to apply to Take Part, most recipients felt their activities had delivered beyond the promise of the initial development fund. Those with less experience in community-empowerment activities felt their activities had benefited from the particular support of the champions. These recipients highlighted the way the champions had helped to tailor their development-fund activities according to the needs of each individual recipient and to maximise the impact of their work within the communities by helping to plan delivery according to the Take Part approach.

Champions developed recipients' understanding of the Take Part approach over the course of the project. Some recipients felt that they were already following the Take Part approach as a process, if not by name, before they joined the Take Part programme. For other recipients, the impact of the champion on their understanding of the Take Part approach was significant. Champions were credited for their support when people were applying to the development fund, particularly in ensuring that proposed activities led to strong community-empowerment outcomes. They also supported recipients over the course of the work by offering advice or tailoring resources to specific needs. In this way, recipients' understanding of the Take Part approach grew over time as they delivered their projects.

The champions have embedded the Take Part approach within the development-fund activities. From the point of applying to the development fund, champions offered recipients support in writing their project plan and, in particular, in breaking down their proposed activity according to the Take Part approach. By linking projects across networks and capitalising on existing relationships, champions raised the profile of Take Part in their projects and beyond. Recipients talked of strategies to make their work sustainable, both in terms of continuing their activities or carrying out follow-on projects. The majority of recipients felt that the champion had been highly valuable in supporting these approaches by helping to establish partnerships and opening up opportunities for recipients to continue their work.

The Take Part development funding activities will enable future work. For a few recipients the value of the development fund was felt to extend far beyond the activities directly paid for; it was believed to have acted as a springboard for future community-empowerment work, either by providing an opportunity to demonstrate the impact of specific approaches, or by giving recipients momentum in an area of work that may not otherwise have happened.

The legacy of the Take Part brand is in the process of the approach. The majority of champions and some recipients, by virtue of being existing community-empowerment 'experts,' felt they already practised the Take Part approach before understanding the concept as a brand. Several likened this to a chicken-and-egg situation. Nonetheless, champions and recipients alike commented on how the Take Part approach mirrored their own approach to community engagement and how they shared the same values. Champions

and recipients were confident that they would continue the Take Part approach in their future empowerment activities, although they debated whether this would happen under the Take Part brand. In this way, the process will be sustained in principle, if not in name.

Regional Take Part Champion case study: Champion support for development-fund recipient approaches to community engagement and capacity building

One of the recipients ran a young people's parliament project, working in partnership with of the local secondary schools and the colleges in the area, and with the Parliament Education Service.

Champion influence and support

The recipient felt that the champion had influenced their approaches by **giving them opportunities to share practice** with partners and by **giving clear guidance** on what the objectives of the work should be at the bid stage. The champion **reinforced the importance of training** as an approach to capacity building in the community. They also stated that training was one way to **ensure the sustainability** of the development-fund work.

Recipient capacity building and engaging the community group

The recipient met with the various partners and they collaboratively designed an **interactive training session** for young people from across a range of schools (both private schools and state schools from more disadvantaged areas).

The training got young people to think about politics and about what they would do if they were elected. It gave them the opportunity to form their own political parties and debate policy ideas. The parties were then asked to **create their own political broadcasts**, to be sent out to all the schools as interactive DVDs, and posted on YouTube and social-networking sites.

The recipient has also worked with a local theatre to stage a **'big debate'** at which the political parties stood up in front of an audience of young people to discuss their views. Follow-on work is planned (not through the development fund) for mock elections, with money to allow the young people to implement some of their policies. The young people have also been taken on a visit to Parliament.

Impacts on the community group as a result of the development-fund activity

The recipient commented how the activity had surpassed his expectations and led to improved relationships across schools. It also **raised awareness of political structures** and the right to **political participation**. Furthermore it **broadened the horizons** and **improved the confidence** of the young people involved.

Figure 6: Summary of regional Take Part champions and development-fund recipients

Region	Lead organisation	Development fund recipients 2009/2010	Development fund recipients 2011/2010
East	Inspire East	N/A	Basildon District Council
			Cambridgeshire County Council
			Breckland District Council
			Great Yarmouth Borough Council
			Braintree District Council
			Royal Association of Deaf People
North East	Skillshare	South Tyneside Council	
		VODA (North Tyneside CVS)	
		Sunderland City Council	
		Stockton Residents and Community Groups Association	
		Durham County Council	
		Ashington Community Development Trust	
			Northumberland County Council
Yorkshire and Humber	WEA Yorkshire and Humber	North East Lincolnshire Council	East Riding of Yorkshire Council
		North Lincolnshire Council	Leeds Initiative
		One Hull VCS Forum	Voluntary Action Leeds
		Calderdale MBC	Scarborough Borough Council
		Voluntary Action Calderdale	
		Kirklees Council/Voluntary Action Kirklees	
		Voluntary Action Wakefield District	
			VOX
North West	WEA North West	Sefton CVS	
		Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council	Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council / Blackburn with Darwen CVS Community Network
		Liverpool City Council	Ellesmere Port and Neston Association of Voluntary and Community Organisations
		Rochdale MBC	Council for Voluntary Service Blackpool Wyre and Fylde
		Cheshire East	Home Group
		Manchester LSEN	Community Network for Manchester
			George House Trust
			RAPAR
			Training & Support 4 Services & Exiles (TS4SE) Cooperative Groundwork Lancashire West & Wigan
London	London Civic Forum	Tower Hamlets (London Borough of Tower Hamlets, Account3, Carmel Bridge)	
		Greenwich (London Borough of Greenwich Safer Neighbourhoods Team, Mango Communities Ltd.)	
		Hounslow (London Borough of Hounslow, Hounslow CVS, WEA)	
		Lewisham (London Borough of Lewisham, Local VSC Organisation)	
		Newham (London Borough of newham, ward councillors, LA Community Teams, Conflict and Change VCS Organisation)	
			Haringey
West Midlands	Wolverhampton VSC	Shropshire Partnership LSP	
		Tamworth CVS	
		Birmingham City Council	
		Warwickshire CVS	
		Solihull Sustain (CVS)	
		Coventry City Council	
South West	Exeter CVS	TTVS Devon	
		Voluntary Action Swindon - Wiltshire	
		VOSCUR – Bristol	
		Black Development Agency – Bristol	
		GAVCA – Gloucestershire	
		Voluntary Action North Somerset – North Somerset	
		Poole CVS – Dorset	
		Cornwall VSF	
			Equality South West - Regional
East Midlands	Lincoln University	Rutland	
		Derbyshire Dales	
		Bassetlaw	
		Bolsover	
		Amber Valley	
			Newark and Sherwood
South East	WEA Southern	Lewis Woodward - Gosport Borough Council	
		Slough CVS	
		Oxfordshire County Council	
		Reading Borough Council	
		Tandridge District Council	Hastings Borough Council
		Mole Valley District Council	Surrey County Council

Appendix C – Methodology

Scope of the evaluation

CDF developed a comprehensive evaluation framework following consultation with relevant stakeholders, including CDF, DCLG and all pathfinders. The framework also reflected a number of other approaches to evaluating empowerment initiatives (Humm et al., 2005, Mayo and Rooke 2006, DCLG, 2009).

CDF's evaluation framework was guided by three overarching objectives:

- to assess the operational procedures and practices used to deliver the Take Part programme
- to investigate the impact of the programme on stakeholders and local communities
- to measure the impact of the national support programme.

The evaluation used a mixed methodology of:

- desktop research
- 307 structured and semi-structured interviews
- six focus groups
- four surveys

A wide range of stakeholders was involved, including:

- all pathfinders
- beneficiaries of the programme
- civic activists
- Las
- REPs
- regional Take Part champions
- development fund recipients
- project management staff within CDF
- organisations delivering national support work.

Desktop research

Extensive desktop research was undertaken using a variety of relevant secondary data (see 'Reference list') as well as text resources produced as part of the Take Part programme. These included work reports produced as part of the building on the 'Take Part framework' strand, as well as the 'Train the Take Part trainers', resource portfolio and publicity and promotion strands. We also used data reports from the online resource directory, highlighting which resources were used and for how long.

Data was also gathered from pathfinders' interim and final evaluation reports, and from their quarterly activity monitoring reports. These provided programme-level information on both the work being conducted and its reach in terms of numbers of people passing through the programme.

Semi-structured interviews with pathfinders

All pathfinders were interviewed face-to-face in both the second and third years of the programme. Each was asked a variety of questions relating to their work – the processes they used to deliver it, their successes and any obstacles they faced. Interviews in the second year of the programme collected data about the main in-kind and financial inputs to the programme, such as time commitment and financial cost for pathfinders in setting up this work. In the final year of the programme pathfinders were asked more specifically about the legacy of their work both locally and for them as organisations.

Where the pathfinder was led by the LA, additional questions were asked regarding the rest of the authority's approach to empowerment and the extent to which Take Part had had any influence. These claims were triangulated using:

- semi-structured interviews with community development workers in three areas in the second year of the programme
- an online survey sent to all LAs and REPs in England in the final year of the programme (detailed later in this chapter).

While the community development worker interviews were generally informative, the bias associated with snowball sampling, where participants and contacts are used to recruit further recipients, was much more evident among this sample. For this reason, these were not repeated in the final year of the evaluation, and any information used from these interviews has been carefully vetted.

Interviews with LAs

In the second year of the programme 38 structured and semi-structured interviews were conducted with LAs. In the final year, all LAs were surveyed instead.

Semi-structured interviews

In the second year 19 face-to-face interviews were conducted with LAs in pathfinder catchment areas. Topics of discussion centred on their current empowerment practice and

the extent to which it made reference to Take Part principles, practices and resources. Thus this aspect of the evaluation also collected data about the relationships established between pathfinders and LAs.

Snowball sampling was used to identify LA contacts for this element of the evaluation. Where a pathfinder dealt with more than one LA, the authority to be interviewed was randomly selected and a contact requested.

Structured interviews

In the second year, structured telephone interviews were also conducted with 19 LAs outside pathfinder catchment areas. LAs were asked about their current practice with regard to empowerment, their knowledge of Take Part pathfinders and their experience of the work that had happened so far as part of the national support programme. These were top-tier LAs, chosen at random from within each pathfinder's government-office region.

Longitudinal study of beneficiaries

The evaluation interviewed two groups of beneficiaries:

- cohort one: 41 beneficiaries who participated in Take Part activities in 2009/10
- cohort two: 38 beneficiaries who participated in Take Part activities in 2010/11.

Through their own evaluations pathfinders asked beneficiaries if they were willing to participate in interviews for the national evaluation. Where for some reason this approach hadn't been taken or proved unfruitful, pathfinders provided their own lists of possible interviewees. Two beneficiaries for each pathfinder area were then randomly selected from these wider samples.

These interviews aimed to create a picture of the immediate destination of those who had participated in the Take Part programme and its longer-term impact on them.

Cohort one

Using a mixed methodology our evaluation tracked the progress of a small group of beneficiaries over an 8-month period. The sample for this cohort of 41 beneficiaries was selected from people who had participated in Take Part activities before the end of May 2010. A minimum of 2 beneficiaries from each of the pathfinder areas were interviewed, although in some areas this was exceeded (for example, where participants had carers involved with Take Part).

Prior to each interview beneficiaries were asked to complete a short, structured questionnaire providing basic information regarding their current levels of civic and civil participation, feelings of influence, voting patterns, barriers to influence and their demographics. Their answers to these questions were explored in more detail during face-to-face interviews, along with their motivations for getting involved with their respective Take Part activities, the benefits and challenges they had experienced and their future plans.

These interviews were followed up with a second survey five months later asking similar questions to the first. Despite efforts to minimise sample attrition, the overall sample for this cohort was reduced to 21. A final wave of telephone interviews was conducted with this reduced sample 2 to 3 months after this survey, examining the legacy of Take Part for these individuals and their future plans.

Cohort two

38 beneficiaries who commenced a Take Part activity before the end of December 2010 participated in structured telephone interviews. These interviews were intended to complement those for cohort one and used a similar sampling strategy. Interviews explored beneficiaries' motivations for getting involved with their respective Take Part activities, the benefits and challenges they had experienced and their future plans. They were also asked about their current levels of civic and civil participation and Take Part's influence on these, as well as their feelings of influence, voting patterns, barriers to influence and their demographics.

Interviews with programme-management staff

Programme management staff within CDF were interviewed to find out about their experiences of Take Part and to provide context for the programme's development. Four telephone interviews were also conducted with project managers delivering the building on the 'Take Part framework', mentoring, resource portfolio and 'Train the Take Part trainers' strands. These interviews collected their feedback about the processes involved in undertaking national support work and any barriers encountered.

Focus groups

Four focus groups were conducted in the second year with beneficiaries of pathfinders' work. Focus groups coincided with learning activities and participatory methods were employed. These focus groups captured feedback from beneficiaries on their experience of the Take Part programme and their views on civic roles. They were also asked about what barriers they perceived to increased participation and what support they would like to increase their participation.

In the final year of the programme two focus groups were conducted with beneficiaries who had taken part in the 'Train the Take Part trainers' work. One group was solely studying for the City and Guilds 7303 PTLLS course, and the other was a mix of people from the PTLLS course and the 'introduction to active citizenship' course. The focus groups discussed participants' motivations for getting involved in each of these courses and their respective values, as well as their knowledge of the wider Take Part programme.

Surveys

Three online surveys were conducted with a variety of stakeholders and organisations.

- A survey of 274 participants who attended the NAVCA day conferences and ‘Strengthening democracy’ day conferences delivered as part of the ‘Train the Take Part trainers’ work. 21 people completed the survey.
- A survey of the 21 organisations which received an Empowerment Fund grant. The principle aims of this survey were to gain external feedback on the impact of the Take Part programme, and demonstrate link-up with other empowerment activities. 9 organisations completed the survey.
- A survey of all 354 LAs in England and the nine REPs. The survey collected information related to the evaluations of Take Part, the National Empowerment Programme and TSEPI. The survey was answered by 91 LAs and 3 REPs.

Additional research

CDF commissioned two additional pieces of research to complement the evaluation of Take Part.

- 114 interviews with people in a variety of civic and lay governance roles in all pathfinder areas. This research mapped the characteristics of civic activists in each pathfinder area and made particular reference to those already in lay governance roles who had been involved with Take Part activities. More information on the methodology used in this piece of research is available in the research report (ERS, 2010).
- A separate evaluation of the regional Take Part champions’ work was also conducted, with eight champions and a sample of 26 development fund recipients interviewed. This research examined the methods used by regional champions and their work with development fund recipients, particularly LAs. Particular attention was given to the embedding of the Take Part approach at local and regional levels. More information on the methodology used is available in the research report (OPM, 2010).

