

An evaluation of Local Links

Reviewing a pilot programme to develop active networks in local communities

Icarus Collective

An evaluation of Common Purpose's Local Links programme, which aims to develop active networks in local communities.

This report evaluates a pilot programme that is exploring the potential to develop active networks in local communities. It informs the current debate on neighbourhood governance and builds on JRF research that explores issues of community empowerment, local governance and user participation in local service delivery.

The report evaluates:

- Programme co-ordination and management: clarity about what the programme sought to achieve; whether the correct people participated; management and co-ordination; contextual factors affecting delivery.
- Approach to delivery: sustaining the interest of participants; whether content was fit for purpose; whether the environment was conducive to the delivery of project objectives.
- Impact on participants in terms of: confidence; understanding the local area; networking; skills; motivation; benefit to participants' own projects; activism and employment.
- Impact on the area: new initiatives and opportunities.



**JOSEPH ROWNTREE
FOUNDATION**



**Available in
other formats**

This publication can be provided in other formats, such as large print, Braille and audio. Please contact:
Communications, Joseph Rowntree Foundation,
The Homestead, 40 Water End, York YO30 6WP.
Tel: 01904 615905. Email: info@jrf.org.uk

An evaluation of Local Links

Reviewing a pilot programme to develop active networks in local communities

Icarus Collective



**JOSEPH ROWNTREE
FOUNDATION**

The **Joseph Rowntree Foundation** has supported this project as part of its programme of research and innovative development projects, which it hopes will be of value to policymakers, practitioners and service users. The facts presented and views expressed in this report are, however, those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Foundation.

Joseph Rowntree Foundation
The Homestead
40 Water End
York YO30 6WP
Website: www.jrf.org.uk



© Common Purpose, 2008

First published 2008 by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation

All rights reserved. Reproduction of this report by photocopying or electronic means for non-commercial purposes is permitted. Otherwise, no part of this report may be reproduced, adapted, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, or otherwise without the prior written permission of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

ISBN: 978 1 85935 627 2

A CIP catalogue record for this report is available from the British Library.

Prepared by:
York Publishing Services Ltd
64 Hallfield Road
Layerthorpe
York YO31 7ZQ
Tel: 01904 430033; Fax: 01904 430868; Website: www.yps-publishing.co.uk

Further copies of this report, or any other JRF publication, can be obtained from the JRF website (www.jrf.org.uk/bookshop/).

Contents

1 Introduction	1
About Local Links	1
Structure of the report	2
2 Evaluation methods	3
3 Programme co-ordination and management	4
Was there clarity about what the programme sought to achieve?	4
Did the 'right' people participate on the programme?	6
Was the programme well managed and co-ordinated?	8
Have any contextual factors in any of the areas affected delivery?	11
4 Approach to delivery	13
Did the programme sustain the interest of participants?	13
Was the content and delivery fit for purpose?	15
Was the environment conducive to achieving the programme objectives?	18
Recommending the programme	19
5 Impact on participants	20
Confidence	20
Understanding the local area	20
Networking	22
Skills	23
Motivation	23
Benefit to participants' own projects	23
Activism and employment	25
6 Impact on the area	28
New initiatives and opportunities as a result of participation on the programme	28
Appendix: Evaluation framework	33

1 Introduction

About Local Links

This report, completed by the Icarus Collective, presents the findings of the evaluation of the Local Links action-learning programme delivered by Common Purpose and supported by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF). The report builds on and incorporates the key findings of the interim evaluation report that was presented in June 2006.

Local Links has been piloted in four neighbourhoods in West Yorkshire – Bradford BD5, Shipley, Todmorden and Heckmondwike.

The pilot programmes consist of six sessions lasting around three-and-a-half hours, including refreshments and food. Each programme aims to bring together key workers, activists and community leaders who are working to make a difference in their community, in order to create more effective neighbourhood and community networks.

As such, a curriculum has been designed to represent a ‘journey’ for networking and learning, incorporating a range of activities (group work, panels, conversations, input from external ‘advisers’, task groups and challenge and homework sessions) that aim to:

- build relationships and promote networking within the group;
- widen knowledge of how the area works and what impacts on and influences it;
- identify issues for the area and examine the role of the community ‘voice’;
- encourage the group’s engagement with and action to address those issues;
- widen the networking opportunities and access/influence by local people;
- build awareness, both within the participant group and in organisations and structures in the area of the potential role of informal groups and networks in neighbourhood governance.

It is the intention of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation to draw lessons from the Local Links pilots, in order to inform the current debate about neighbourhood governance. The JRF has a long history of investing in research on neighbourhood renewal, community empowerment and user engagement in services. Through Local Links the Foundation is building on this research and testing out approaches that enable communities to contribute to their local areas.

Structure of the report

The report findings have been themed and are set out in four chapters – Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6. The findings respond directly to the questions that are set out in the evaluation framework developed by Icarus. The evaluation framework was developed at the start of the programme after consultation with JRF, Common Purpose, the Local Links Advisory Group and Todmorden Local Links participants. It was subsequently amended in September 2006 to better guide the research on the impact of the programme. The revised evaluation framework is set out in the Appendix.

- *Chapter 3:* Programme co-ordination and management.
- *Chapter 4:* Approach to delivery.
- *Chapter 5:* Impact on participants.
- *Chapter 6:* Impact on the area.

In each chapter, reporting is structured as follows.

- *Findings:* report on the evaluative data collected.
- *Learning:* summarises significant learning points arising from the findings.
- *Learning into actions:* suggests possible actions in response to the findings and learning points.

The learning into actions are numbered consecutively throughout the report to assist subsequent action planning.

2 Evaluation methods

The evaluation methods were designed to enable Icarus to identify findings in response to the evaluation questions set out in the Local Links evaluation framework.

The specific information-gathering tools used to provide the evidence for the interim and final reports are as follows.

- Desk-based review of:
 - Local Links programme objectives;
 - advisory group reports;
 - Local Links promotional information;
 - end-of-session assessments completed by participants.
- Face-to-face interview with programme co-ordinator and support officer (interim report only).
- Face-to-face interview with programme manager (interim report only).
- Face-to-face interview with the principal policy manager, JRF (interim report only).
- Structured peer interview feedback from 34 Local Links participants (13 from Todmorden, six from Heckmondwike, nine from Bradford, six from Shipley).
- Telephone interviews with a community development worker from Heckmondwike who attended the Local Links programme.
- Face-to-face interview with a manager from Khandaani Dhek Bhal, a Barnardo's project based in Heckmondwike with strong links into the local Pakistani community.
- Focus groups with participants from Heckmondwike, Todmorden and Shipley.
- Phone interviews with participants who could not make the focus groups (four Bradford, four Heckmondwike, four Shipley, five Todmorden).

Note that renegotiation of the evaluation budget in January 2007 took out the interviews with the Common Purpose team and therefore the Common Purpose perspective that is recorded relates to the data incorporated from the interim reporting stage only.

3 Programme co-ordination and management

Was there clarity about what the programme sought to achieve?

Participant expectations

A large proportion of the respondents from Todmorden and Heckmondwike fed back that they joined the programme in order to meet others working in the area and find out about different groups/organisations. Other expectations were:

- to learn more about how decisions are made – ‘who pulls the strings’;
- personal skill development;
- to develop joint initiatives – ‘positive practical outcomes’;
- to influence the development of the area/influence decision-makers.

Information about the programme

Fliers were sent to potential participants and these were followed up by face-to-face meetings or phone conversations. Promotional events were also held in each area. The Common Purpose team felt confident that the information provided to participants was sufficiently clear.

Of those participants that completed peer interviews, approximately two-thirds were satisfied with the information and one-third said that the information, written and/or verbal, was unclear. A number of people commented that they were confused about the purpose of the programme and what the outcomes would be. One community worker who helped with recruitment and took part in the programme reflected that she found it difficult to explain to others the purpose of the overall programme. She felt that community and voluntary groups in particular found it difficult to understand, as they could not grasp the strategic aspirations.

There was mixed feedback from interviews and focus groups undertaken across Todmorden, Heckmondwike and Shipley programmes about the clarity of the information received before the programmes started. Some participants felt the information was clear but others suggested that they only really got to understand what the programme was about and what it sought to achieve having attended a couple of sessions. Feedback from Bradford in particular suggested that the first session was too long and it did not come over clearly what the programme was trying to achieve. For this and other reasons some participants did not return after this first session.

Learning

- Despite working in the same area, people do not necessarily feel well networked.
- Although the information on the Local Links pack clearly sets out how people will benefit from the programme, and the programme co-ordinator made personal contact with most of the participants in the recruitment phase, there was a lack of understanding among some participants about the purpose of the programme.
- There is a particular need to carefully design the first session, as this will be the first impression that participants get of the programme. It will influence their decision whether to continue with the programme or not.

Learning into action

1. The feedback about participant expectations would suggest that there is a need for initiatives that build relationships between individuals and organisations.
2. It may be valuable to review how the programme is promoted – perhaps headlining the benefits for participants. Short case studies of previous participants might make the programme more ‘real’ for potential recruits who are struggling to understand its purpose.
3. Careful planning of the first session is crucial to clearly demonstrate what is on offer during the rest of the programme, to capture people’s interest and make sure that the programme does not come across as being intimidating to community members/activists. A short session may be appropriate at this introductory stage.

Did the 'right' people participate on the programme?

There has been some feedback that the mix of people/organisations represented could have been wider. In Heckmondwike, in particular, a number of comments related to the lack of participation of the Asian community: 'I was alarmed that the group was essentially white middle class – in a divided town'. It was acknowledged, however, that a lot more groundwork would be required in the lead-up to the programme to enable this issue to be overcome. In Shipley, it was more to do with the balance in sectors, with more people participating from the voluntary sectors than from the private and public sectors. In Bradford, some comment was made regarding the lack of private sector involvement. This is not necessarily a criticism of the recruitment, which was broad based, but could be a reflection on the context and culture of the areas in question.

The experience of recruiting in Todmorden was more straightforward because of good initial contacts and a relatively well networked community. In contrast, it was difficult to recruit in Heckmondwike because of a lack of key contacts and an undeveloped community infrastructure. In both areas, the team were disappointed at the representation from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities, despite efforts to recruit from these communities. Difficulties were also encountered attracting representation from tenants and residents' associations in both areas and from younger people.

When asked to comment about the representation on the programme, two-thirds of participants in Todmorden and one-third of the participants in Heckmondwike felt that the 'right' people were present. A number of gaps were identified by participants. These included the following.

People of ethnic minorities were missing.

There should have been representation from younger and older people.

There were few statutory bodies.

Would have liked to see more small groups attending.

Too many of the usual suspects.

The group does not include the very active 'political' leaders.

A Heckmondwike participant who helped with recruitment felt that the lack of success with the BME community was partly because people who knew a lot about the BME community and existing networks in the town had not undertaken the recruitment. The programme co-ordinator had clearly made efforts to try and enlist the support of local organisations that had knowledge of the community, however new recruits did not materialise. Barnardo's Kirklees Khandaani Dhek Bhal project (KKDB) has identified the timing of the course as a significant barrier to most women within the Pakistani community. Evenings are a very busy time of the day for most women because of family responsibilities. Additional feedback from a local women's group (Khoosh Women) about their reasons for not attending endorses this view.

Feedback suggests that, for individuals or groups who are not well networked, or who are unfamiliar with working alongside 'professionals', or for whom the concept of governance and strategic influence is unfamiliar, the experience of participating in Local Links can be challenging. For example, one person commented there was nobody like herself as a citizen detached from the network – her peer interviewer recorded 'most people already knew each other and the cliquey nature of the people attending has put her off'. Another example was cited of a woman from a tenants and residents' group who came to one session but did not return, saying that she felt out of place and insecure with people like headmasters present. One participant fed back in an end-of-session assessment that 'the exercises are possibly a little intimidating – not everyone is comfy speaking about themselves in a large group of folk they don't know'. A community worker reflected that it is much more difficult to recruit and sustain interest in potential participants, particularly from the community sector, if they do not fully understand the purpose of the programme and how they will benefit. A very strategic emphasis may put some people off.

Learning

- Groups clearly desire a balanced and reflective representation on the programme of the different sectors and different parts of the community who live and work in their area.
- The time needed to recruit the right people onto the programme in the right numbers varies between areas and is clearly dependent on the context.
- The feedback from participants and the team highlights gaps in terms of ethnicity, age range, type of agency/group.
- There are significant challenges associated with recruiting to this kind of programme in neighbourhoods that are characterised by ethnic diversity and a distinct lack of common identity and connection between groups.

(Continued)

- Significant gaps in representation on the programme clearly present challenges to its aspiration of 'bringing together key workers, activists and community leaders who are working to make a difference in their community'.
- The findings highlight the difficulties that are associated with bringing together 'professionals' and 'non-professionals' – and how real or perceived barriers associated with this can impact on representation on this kind of programme.
- The above issues are difficult to tackle without a significant increase in the time and resources for pre-course groundwork.

Learning into action

4. Further examination of the factors that discourage good representation on this kind of programme and how to overcome them would be worthwhile. This could involve research interviews with 'key informants' from a range of agencies/partnerships such as tenant and residents' associations, racial equality councils, community empowerment networks, BME umbrella groups, young people's services, community support services, etc.
5. Further consideration would also be worthwhile of the factors that encourage or discourage both signing up to and continued participation in the programme.
6. There is a need to explore whether an additional investment in pre-programme outreach and contact work would be worthwhile in terms of achieving more representative Local Links groups.

Was the programme well managed and co-ordinated?

There has been generally good feedback about the management of the programme. More mixed feedback was received in relation to the length of the programme. A number of respondents felt that there should be more sessions so that the group could really gel and achieve concrete joint projects, whereas others felt it to be about right. This reflected the divide between those participants who saw the programme as a vehicle for networking and those who would have liked to see more joint working on local projects.

It was thought that a residential session could be a very valuable method of achieving the aims of the programme and certainly very good for developing positive connections between participants but doubt was cast on whether people would be able to take part. Many respondents fed back that work and family commitments would mean that they could not commit to staying away from home. The Shipley group fed back that the break in the programme for the summer holidays did not help the feeling of continuity and should be avoided.

The Common Purpose team have found the programme more resource intensive than expected, in particular at the early stages when investment is needed to network and establish relationships with potential participants. The need for an additional person to support the co-ordinator in the sessions was also identified early on.

The Common Purpose team have reflected that it has been valuable to have:

- access to local Common Purpose programme directors and their advisory groups;
- a network of graduates and supporters of Common Purpose programmes – for delivery of sessions, access to advice and support;
- a manager at ‘arm’s length’ who can act as a critical friend.

Common Purpose and JRF are satisfied with the advisory group for a number of reasons.

- The membership consists of operational people well placed to comment on the programme.
- Reports back from the programme co-ordinator provide opportunities for reflection and discussion.
- Some members of the group have attended sessions and provided valuable contacts.

Learning

- The management of the programme has been of good quality.
- There is no clear feedback about the length of the programme. If group 'projects' are to be attempted, the programme might benefit from being extended by one or two sessions. If networking is the principal goal then the six sessions are adequate.
- It is unlikely a residential session would be successful, as a high proportion of participants would not be able to commit the time.
- It is disruptive to split the programme around holiday periods, as the momentum can be disrupted or lost.
- It is a resource-intensive programme, particularly in the early stages of establishment.
- The advisory group has been a useful resource although attendance has sometimes been variable.

Learning into actions

7. Resources need to be heavily weighted towards the establishment phase, especially in networking and recruitment.
8. Two people are needed to adequately run the sessions.
9. An advisory group can play a valuable role, especially if they have contacts, influence and knowledge of the field.
10. Access to local networks or key stakeholders that have knowledge of the area is crucial. In this case, Common Purpose was fortunate to have these already in place. However, if a Local Links model was run by other organisations, this would need to be addressed.
11. Consideration could be given to the length of the programme. This may need a redefining of the principle purpose of the programme – networking or the establishment of a group who can deliver local projects.

Have any contextual factors in any of the areas affected delivery?

The four areas were chosen because of their different characteristics and the diversity within them.

The local context has been crucial for the approach to delivering the programme in each area. For example, the local context has affected:

- ease of entry, ease of recruitment and access to certain groups;
- the extent to which people are familiar and comfortable with collaborative initiatives;
- the local political/cultural make-up and levels of cohesion;
- willingness to engage in dialogue, discuss difficult issues and plan together;
- content of sessions – responding to the level of knowledge and needs within the group.

It has been necessary for the programme co-ordinator to adapt her approach in response to these contextual factors. For example, in Heckmondwike, where there is a British National Party (BNP) political presence, the session involving the elected councillors required careful advance consideration. Advice has been taken from the Local Links advisory group, meetings have been held with the local press and GP, and support has been accessed from a mentor to ensure the co-ordinator has the appropriate level of skill and understanding to facilitate politically sensitive discussions.

Decisions were also taken to adjust the programme in Todmorden to extend opportunities for people to 'get to know each other' and build understanding and trust before embarking on discussions about the 'big and difficult issues'. At the request of participants, a 'funding road map' session was delivered in order to give the group opportunities to find out more about the current funding available to groups and links to where and how to access it.

Learning

- Every area will have a context and this needs to be recognised and time needs to be allocated to understand this context. This is a very resource-intensive but necessary process – it provides the co-ordinator with valuable information that will influence the approach to delivering the programme.
- Flexibility and adaptability in response to local context/local needs is vital to the success of this kind of programme.
- Where people are unfamiliar with working together, and have not built up a sense of group identity and trust, it is difficult to have profound and honest debates about sensitive issues.

Learning into actions

12. Adequate investment (time and resources) in a contextual review of an area is required for this kind of programme. Crucial to this is a thorough stakeholder analysis and consultation with key informants.
13. Intermediary organisations and individuals can make a vital contribution to this kind of initiative. Stakeholders could be segmented and approached in response to the role they could play, for example:
 - *key partners: fundamental to delivery;*
 - *connectors: provide access to stakeholders that the programme would otherwise find difficult to access;*
 - *influencers: can act as advocates for the initiative;*
 - *leverers: could lever in money, skills, resources;*
 - *key informants: provide expertise that can support the work of the programme;*
 - *customers: potential and existing participants;*
 - *veto holders: those in key positions of power who could potentially undermine the programme if not 'on side';*
 - *opponents: could create problems and undermine the initiative.*

4 Approach to delivery

Did the programme sustain the interest of participants?

In general, the feedback relating to the content and facilitation of the programme sessions has been very positive. People enjoyed the sessions, thought they were well run and commented in particular on Susie's¹ energy and approach to working with people.

Susie was brilliant, enthusiastic – liked her approach. She seemed to genuinely take on board what people were saying and had a personal interest, not just being there because she had a job to do. (*Todmorden participant*)

There were some comments to suggest that some community members/activists may have dropped out of the programme as they found it intimidating. It was suggested that one way to actively sustain the involvement of community members, who had little experience of this way of working, would be to operate a 'buddy' system where a more experienced person would offer to come with them to the session. They would offer support and mentor them through the programme to help build the confidence to stick with it, participate and maximise their benefit. There is feedback from Todmorden and Heckmondwike to suggest that more community members needed to be recruited to the programme in the first place.

There was near universal feedback that the programme had been good value for the time invested.

A variety of views were expressed relating to the accreditation of the programme. The Shipley group thought it would be a bad idea (except for young people), as it would create a more formal appearance to the programme and so provide an additional barrier to involvement. The Heckmondwike group, however, thought both community members and workers/professionals would respond well to the opportunity to achieve accreditation – the former to improve their CV and employment prospects, and the latter to validate what they had achieved.

1. Susie Hay – project co-ordinator/facilitator, Common Purpose.

There was complete agreement across all groups, however, that charging for the course would be bad and would discourage those who would benefit most from participating.

Statistical information about attendance indicates that overall around three-quarters of those starting the programmes were regular attendees (see Table 1).

Table 1 Attendance data

	Number that started	Number that finished	Core attendees – approx. no.
Todmorden	27	26	20
Heckmondwike	17	16	12
ShIPLEY	18	16	16
Bradford	20	15	14

Learning

- The content and facilitation of the programme session has been appropriate and of a high quality.
- Some community members/activists found the introductory sessions challenging and this may account for some drop-off from this sector in this early stage of each programme.
- Those who completed the programme felt it had been very good value for the time they had invested.
- There is mixed feedback as to the desirability and take-up of accreditation for the completion of the programme. There is stronger consensus that this may be valuable for young people.
- Charging for attendance on the programme would not work and would be a substantial disincentive to participation, especially among those who would most benefit from attending.

Learning into action

14. In subsequent programmes, consideration should be given to establishing a 'buddy' system to encourage the participation of community members/activists.
15. Should accreditation be pursued, this would best be offered on an optional basis to avoid acting as a disincentive to participation.

Was the content and delivery fit for purpose?

In terms of the quality of delivery and content of the sessions, a number of positive comments were made in the peer interviews. These refer to:

- a well organised approach;
- keen and enthusiastic facilitator – 'the leader is very enthusiastic and keen, good at making you feel wanted';
- allowing ideas and discussion to grow;
- 'pulling together the mix of the group';
- good guest speakers;
- 'constant follow-up information and contact from the co-ordinator helped maintain interest'.

The end-of-session assessments also contain a wide range of positive reflections and the participant scores in response to questions about 'value for time', 'representation of different viewpoints' and 'levels of participation' are, on the whole, very high. Comments include the following.

Good fun again.

Another excellent and interactive meeting.

Excellent to have full-bodied discussions and get some 'arguments' going.

An open and accepting culture has been forming for the group.

However, participants also mentioned some weaknesses in the approach. These include:

- limited local knowledge of the co-ordinator;
- lack of cohesion and continuity in the delivery;
- lack of ability to bring out shyer people – ‘a lot of the participants didn’t speak’;
- not enough small-group work – to enable all the skills and knowledge in the room to be sampled; limited opportunities for interaction between people on the course;
- very challenging first session;
- lack of clarity of purpose – ‘I need to have a clear idea of what the outcome of the programme was intended to be’;
- missed opportunities for the group as a whole to agree and commit to specific actions about the town;
- panels and speakers restricted opportunities for participant interaction – ‘the panels were a bad idea from my point of view – I don’t think they worked’; ‘participating in activities raised energy levels and interest. Listening to lectures tended to make me lose momentum’;
- there was a split between professionals and non-professionals and ‘for the non-professional people it was like they got forgotten’;
- a need for more structured homework involving interactions between participants;
- problems with individuals ‘hogging precious time’;
- insufficient time to listen to and engage with speakers and panel members – ‘the panel of guest speakers was interesting and I would have liked to have heard them speak in more detail’;
- contributions from people ‘who don’t live in the area and will not be involved’ after the programme.

Interestingly, most of the more critical comments came from the Todmorden participants, while Heckmondwike, Bradford and Shipley participants were, on the whole, more positive about the approach.

The co-ordinator has reflected that there were constraints on participation – mainly because of the limited time that was available for each session, especially when speakers were also involved. The speakers were considered to be appropriately skilled and in positions of influence and power. However, as a result of time constraints, the co-ordinator has reflected that there ‘wasn’t sufficient time to take on the big issues, debate them and formulate a response’ after presentations from speakers.

It has been suggested that ‘keynote speakers’ may be useful in terms of providing more factual information.

Learning

- Excellent facilitation skills are essential to the success of this kind of programme in order to ensure that there is a clear set of objectives for the programme and these are communicated effectively; the opportunity to participate and interact is maximised; and the facilitator conveys a positive and enthusiastic approach.
- There is a potential conflict between (a) the time and interaction needed to establish relationships and develop a network and (b) the use of ‘speakers’ or ‘panels’ to provide valuable information to individuals.
- Six sessions of 3.5 hours appear to be a relatively short time period to achieve the objectives of the programme. Feedback suggests that, while a large number of participants were satisfied with the content of the sessions, time constraints have placed limitations on the opportunities of participants to engage with and respond to the speakers/presenters. Lack of time also seems to have compromised opportunities for interaction between participants, particularly when participants are unfamiliar with each other.

Learning into actions

16. Review the balance of group interaction/speaker input to ensure that the group has the opportunity to become an effective network.
17. Ensure that the objectives for the programme are achievable in the time that the programme has available.

Was the environment conducive to achieving the programme objectives?

On the whole, participants commented favourably on the timing of the programme, catering and mix of venues. A number of people remarked on the 'excellent' quality of the food and positive comments were made about the use of different venues in the area. About a third of the people in Todmorden said the timing did not work for them. One participant commented after one session that, 'I feel many people in the group were tired this evening and I found it hard to maintain concentration'.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the timing of the sessions in the evening appears to have been a barrier for some members of the BME community, in particular women.

Learning

- It is clearly very difficult to satisfy everyone when deciding on the timing of sessions. The majority of those who attended the sessions were happy with the timing. However it is difficult to know to what extent the timing of sessions in the evening acted as a barrier to other potential participants.
- The use of different venues in the area can provide opportunities to visit other organisations and extend participants' knowledge of who is working in their area.

Learning into action

18. It is worth considering whether timing a session during a particular part of the day is going to present barriers to a whole section of the community. If this is the case then the diversity of representation on the programme could be severely compromised.

Recommending the programme

The majority of respondents from all programmes would recommend the programme to others. The reasons/key selling points cited include:

- an opportunity to network effectively;
- it's not what you know but who you know;
- sell it as partnership development;
- helps you to break in and make contact with the movers and shakers;
- find out what's happening on your patch;
- come and get connected in your community;
- get knowledge of your own community and learn how different sectors work.

A range of feedback across all the programmes suggests that Local Links has been particularly useful to people who are new to the areas or new in post in a job within the area – 'It helps you break in and to make contact with the movers and shakers'.

Learning

- The majority of participants would recommend it to others.
- The key selling point is around networking, knowing how a local area works and having a connection to local decision-makers/decision-making structures.
- The programme is particularly valuable to people who are new to the area or new to a job where local knowledge and networking is important.

Learning into action

19. Focus pre-programme information and marketing around the benefits in terms of networking, knowing how a local area works and having a connection to local decision-makers/decision-making structures.

5 Impact on participants

It is still an early stage to fully measure impact both on participants and on the area, as the programmes have finished only recently. There is, however, a range of evidence now available to draw out with confidence some initial learning and possible future actions if the Local Links model were to be repeated.

Confidence

There has been consistent feedback from a range of individuals across all the programme areas that participating in the programme has increased their confidence in speaking in groups. They cite being more able to ask questions of people in the group and to contact people who they would not have contacted normally outside the group sessions. This feedback came predominantly from people who had less experience in group working/networking situations. There were also more experienced people who stated that their confidence in group situations had not been enhanced, as they already felt comfortable in these sorts of situations.

Understanding the local area

There is a great deal of consensus around the benefit of improved understanding and knowledge of the local area and how it works. Seeing the 'big picture' was mentioned a number of times, as was feeling more connected to the local area. Respondents cited the benefit of being 'better informed' and 'better connected' to what was going on, who was making decisions and what the key issues were in their local area.

In Shipley the tour round the town centre with the Town Centre Manager was cited as one of the highlights in terms of getting to know the area better. Another participant from Shipley commented that the programme has 'turned my attitude to the town full circle' and has now decided to locate her business in the town.

Common feedback related to a realisation (through the programme) of just how much activity was already happening at a local level:

We've realised just how many organisations there are in Shipley. (*Focus group, Shipley*)

We've been able to make links to issues not necessarily on our own radar.
(Focus group, Shipley)

The programme was particularly valuable to recent arrivals in the area:

Being a relative newcomer in Todmorden, this six-month event has enabled me to understand the town so much better and I have no doubt that it will help me to do my Todmorden-based work much better.

The peer interview feedback indicates that, for some people, this aspect of the programme has been significant, while others report no change in their knowledge of the area. Just over half of the respondents from Todmorden said that they had gained new knowledge and information from the programme. Comments included:

... know more about how Calderdale Council works.

... learned more about how many organisations there are beavering away in Todmorden.

... much more aware of the local area and people and brief history of recent changes.

All respondents in Heckmondwike identified ways in which they had gained information and knowledge from the programme. Comments include:

... knowledge about the history and development of the area.

New knowledge of youth drug worker.

Impact of BNP and the role of politicians in the area.

Met people not known to me before.

... learnt a bit more about the commercial side of Heckmondwike.

There are a few comments to suggest some frustration with the part of the programme where representatives from external organisations were invited to discuss issues with the group.

- One participant commented 'it perhaps would have been better not to have them, as expectations were raised that could not be fulfilled'.

- Another fed back that ‘this session reinforced my view that officials live in a different world where words have totally different meanings’.
- A participant reported that ‘the councillors told us that we haven’t any influence at all – and neither have they’.

Networking

Networking was certainly enhanced across all the programmes. It was stated many times that being better networked was a key benefit of participating personally in the programme. For many people this was the single most important benefit – meeting people, knowing what they did and working out common points of view or where collaboration might be possible. ‘I see it as a list of people that I could call upon as and when I need to – it’s a bit like the old school network’ (Heckmondwike participant).

There was some disappointment, especially in the earlier programmes of Todmorden and Heckmondwike, that the contacts and networks had not been sustained as formally as some people would have wanted. ‘We all said at the end of the programme that we must stay in touch but we haven’t – I hope it keeps going but I haven’t had any time to offer to organise things’ (Todmorden participant).

A number of participants fed back that there appeared to be a difference in the ability of paid workers and volunteers to participate in the programme. Some comments suggested that the programme could potentially be intimidating for volunteers without much experience of this type of work (Heckmondwike), while other respondents suggested that volunteers would be the people who would get most out of it, as there was an emphasis on introducing people to teamwork and ways to co-operate. ‘I think I’d have to say that there was a bit of a mismatch between the full-time paid staff and part-time unpaid organisations’ (Todmorden participant). The barriers that volunteers were perceived to experience included the ability to participate, take the most out of the programme and having the time to attend.

Other comments related to the mix of different sectors. Feedback from some Shipley participants expressed disappointment that the group was dominated by the voluntary sector. Similar feedback from Bradford was that there was an expectation that there would be representatives from across all sectors. However, the private sector had proved difficult to access and keep within the group.

A number of people who were new in the different areas said how useful the programme had been in 'kick-starting' their involvement and knowledge of the areas. 'I've now got a much better understanding of the town, the history, the people and their views. This has really helped me feel at home in Todmorden' (Todmorden participant).

Skills

Feedback has suggested that few new skills were developed. The programmes have been much more focused on the relationship between people, their confidence in networking and influencing, and their knowledge of the area. People generally comment that they feel more effective, not that they have developed new skills.

There were a few comments from different people that they had picked up some group facilitation techniques from observing the way Common Purpose staff ran the sessions. Some people had tried these out elsewhere: 'I've got more confidence in facilitating groups having seen Susie do it. I've learned so many techniques just watching her' (Todmorden participant).

Motivation

A number of respondents across all the programmes fed back that the experience of participating had motivated them to get more involved locally in community activities/activism. One Shipley group member said that the programme had 'reduced my isolation and elevated my energy levels' and another that the programme had forged a stronger appreciation of the role and work of the voluntary sector.

Benefit to participants' own projects

A number of participants have reported benefits from their participation in the programme through being able to recruit more volunteers to their own projects. For example, in Shipley, the young people's housing initiative and the Work Aid scheme (sewing machines to Africa) have recruited new volunteers to these projects.

The representative from Bradford Motor Education Project fed back that being on the programme and the connections they have made have significantly increased the

profile of the project and attracted the interest of British Waterways for the project's canal-based activities. Links made through the programme have also resulted in grant aid going to Windhill Furniture Store.

The representative from Sunrise Radio in Bradford related that she had profiled a number of the projects in her group on the radio, which had been a big resource for the representatives of groups in the Bradford programme.

Some comments from participants who had businesses within the Local Links areas indicated that they felt it had been useful in better connecting their businesses with the local community. For example, a pub/restaurant owner in Heckmondwike who is keen to have the facility used more by community groups and another person who runs the community relations activity for a chemicals company and co-ordinates company giving to community groups feels that she now has a much better database of community activity in Heckmondwike.

A women's group in Todmorden gained more members through their involvement:

It helped me promote the women's group to more people. For example, the CAB [*Citizens Advice Bureau*] now refers people to the women's group. We've got more members now so it has had a big effect.

It has also made me think about linking the women's group to other groups. For example, we have made a link to 'walkabout' (short walks for all abilities).

A scout leader cited benefits of collaboration:

... we developed a better understanding of each other and realised that there was a lot more potential for us to work together than we originally thought – for example, the scouts and the library made a connection and the scouts are now regular users of the library. (*Heckmondwike participant*)

Another participant who leads dance classes in Heckmondwike is also involved in using the library space.

The United Reformed Church in Heckmondwike feels that Local Links has allowed the church to become more visible and more accessible for community activities. It provided the impetus to go ahead with some redevelopment work so that the church could better provide for community activities. It is also getting bookings from the Asian community for the first time. One of the new activities inspired by Local Links

that uses the church as a meeting point is a women's group. Women from different cultures meet to sew and socialise. Another initiative that uses the church is a girls' support group. Nine young people have met regularly to do gym and dance sessions. Having access to the venue was critical for this group to develop and sustain itself. Another Local Links participant who works as a community worker for the council has supported the group in applying for grants.

A Bradford housing association representative has forged links with a youth organisation, Margaret McMillan Adventure Playground Association (MAPA), to partner on a foreign youth trip and to trade housing advice.

Activism and employment

A Todmorden participant fed back that her partner (who didn't come on the programme) had benefited:

There was a direct result for my partner – he's become a scout leader. I met someone on the programme who talked a lot about scouts and said he was looking for leaders. I told my partner and he got involved.

The programme had a big impact on one Todmorden participant:

Halfway through the programme I realised I wanted to be a community worker. I was doing voluntary work already but the programme gave me the insight and realisation that I could make a career out of community work. People on the programme supported me and having Local Links on my CV helped me get an admin job with a community development project in Halifax.

A Bradford participant commented that the programme had inspired her to put her name forward to join the local primary care trust board and to become a member of the committee for its local community group. She had realised the great need for focused voluntary action through the activities and work undertaken on the programme.

The representative from Sunrise Radio in Bradford stated that it had changed the way she approached her reporting. She now knew a lot more about how the city works, regeneration issues and the role of gatekeepers. It has helped her give a voice on the radio to other people involved in local decision-making and activism, not just the usual suspects.

Learning

- The programme can be particularly beneficial for and have the greatest impact on those people who have less experience of group working/ networking and for those new to living and working in the area.
- To enable less experienced people to participate effectively (in a mixed group of agency/organisational representatives and volunteers) there is a need to provide good support so they feel confident enough to stick with and enjoy the Local Links experience.
- The networking benefit to the group appears to be enhanced when there is a good balance of sectors and communities represented, i.e. not dominated by, for example, the voluntary sector or communities with similar characteristics (age, ethnic origin, class, etc.).
- The programme is successful in increasing participants' understanding of the local area – who is doing what, who makes key decisions and what the important local issues are.
- Personal networking is a key personal benefit to many participants and is often cited as a reason in itself for participating in the programme.
- There is divided opinion among participants of the benefit of formal contact and continued networking after the Local Links programme. There is common agreement, however, on the benefit of having an extended contact network of people and organisations.
- The programmes have been more successful at developing personal relationships, and the confidence and knowledge to influence than specific skills.
- Participation in the programme had a good motivational effect on many people, giving them more impetus and energy to get involved in local activities for community benefit.
- The contacts and relationships developed through the programme do provide clear benefits for the groups and organisations that are willing to seek out and discuss how there can be mutually beneficial collaboration and sharing of resources.
- The programme can enable voluntary/community organisations to recruit more volunteers to support their activities. New contacts can also enable community/voluntary sector organisations to attract new funding/support to their organisations.

(Continued)

- The programmes can provide real insights for participants into the needs of the local area and have the ability to energise and motivate them to take on more voluntary activity at a local level, or even support them in refocusing their paid employment.

Learning into actions

20. Ensure that those who have less confidence in group situations are well supported. Explore the possibility of providing buddy/mentoring support to those volunteers/community representatives who would benefit from additional support. (See also action point 14 in Chapter 4.)
21. Aim to recruit balanced representation from all sectors locally.
22. Highlight the networking benefit to people who are new to living or working in an area.
23. Networking, making connections and meeting people is key. Maintain and enhance the format of the programme to ensure this outcome is maximised.
24. There is not necessarily a benefit in designing the programme to seek common group projects. The programme should be open to the possibility of the group wishing to take on a project and if this happens the initiative can be embraced and supported within the resources and capacity of the programme. If a common project does not emerge then it is not necessarily to the detriment of the programme, as evidence suggests that networking and improved connections have been the main goals of many participants. The same approach can be applied to sustaining the Local Links group after the formal programme finishes.

6 Impact on the area

New initiatives and opportunities as a result of participation on the programme

Similar to the feedback in relation to the benefits of sustaining Local Links as a formal network, there are differences of opinion about the desirability for new initiatives to emerge directly from the programmes. Some respondents felt strongly that they would have liked to have worked on 'concrete' projects as a group to benefit their local area. They felt this would bind the group together and make it more sustainable. Others, however, fed back that the networking and knowledge of other people/organisations was enough in itself and it should be left to individuals to decide whether they wanted to collaborate or develop new initiatives rather than it being built into the programme.

In Todmorden, Bradford and Heckmondwike, although there have been a number of examples of collaboration and beneficial relationships outside the programme, no new initiatives have emerged to date under the Local Links banner. In Shipley, however, community benefit projects have been taken on by the group and branded as Local Links.

Local context and the relatively random nature of who is in the group appears to have a significant part to play in the way the groups have developed and chosen to explore joint projects or not. Respondents in Todmorden were often already fairly well networked in an active community sector and so felt no great need to establish another network on a long-term basis. In Heckmondwike the opposite was true, with poor links, knowledge and activity existing between participants and what was cited as an unsupportive local political culture with little encouragement from councillors for a group that would promote community-led activity. In both these localities there was no real critical mass of people within the Local Links group or strong co-ordination available for the group to be able to take on projects as a group.

The selection of participants and those who chose to participate has also determined the character and aspirations of each group. This is partly down to chance but can also be influenced to an extent in the way recruitment is undertaken. A person who has a passionate cause and is also well connected in that field (like the young people's housing initiative in Shipley or Sunrise Radio in Bradford) can make a huge difference to the projects and causes that a group chooses to support. The way groups develop will also be influenced by the sectors people come from. There

may have been more of a commonality of experience in Shipley, as many of the participants came from the voluntary sector.

New activity and collaboration have emerged from all of the programmes (see Chapter 5). However it is only in Shipley that the group has taken on a project as Local Links. The programmes have worked well as a catalyst for mutually beneficial collaboration between people and projects. This has largely been self-generated but has been assisted greatly by the focus of the sessions on enabling people to get to know each other and to seek ways in which they could work well together.

Greater engagement of communities in local affairs

There is not a great deal of evidence at this stage that the programmes have had a significant impact on engagement in local affairs. Some individuals have been inspired by the programme to do more community-based work and there have been a number of examples of beneficial collaboration between projects but most of the benefits accrued have been with the participants themselves rather than the wider community. The Shipley group's housing campaign may have a significant impact. It is involving young people in the project as well as the Local Links participants. At this stage it is still too early to comprehensively evaluate impact on local affairs.

Influence

At an individual level there were a number of comments across all programmes that people felt more confidence in speaking their views, as they were now better informed.

Feedback from Bradford and Shipley participants indicates that they have used newly acquired links with the press and radio to further the cause of their own projects or, in the case of Shipley, to support the petition to parliament relating to the campaign to improve young people's housing.

Although there was some connection with the Renaissance Market Town (RMT) initiative in Todmorden, there was some disappointment expressed that there was not more contact/influence exerted on the regeneration and public participation initiative.

The meeting with councillors in Heckmondwike was generally felt not to have maximised the impact it could have had. Feedback indicated that participants felt

uncomfortable in challenging the councillors on their views (in particular the BNP councillor). A number of participants were council employees and therefore unable to be overtly political in this forum. They felt a little uncomfortable at times in having to explain/account for council decisions and the actions of local elected members. More preparation was suggested for a session such as this where questions could perhaps be prepared beforehand and asked anonymously. It also highlighted the lack of people in the group who would describe themselves as 'community activists'. It was felt that it would have been useful in the Heckmondwike group to have more representation from volunteers, as this voice was lacking to some extent.

Sustaining Local Links groups

As noted in Chapter 5, there are differences of opinion about the desirability of sustaining the groups into the future as Local Links. Those respondents who felt that they would like the groups to continue all cited the need for basic co-ordination to enable the group to be effective. If no one could be found to keep the members in touch with one another, arrange meetings, book rooms, organise activities, etc., then there would be little chance of keeping the group going over a period of time.

One Todmorden participant fed back that they felt there would be more likelihood of the connection continuing between people if a 'themed' approach had been adopted with smaller groups focusing on key themes within which they could develop local projects:

I think it's important to set up a core of people for a time period who would commit to co-ordinating activity after the programme has finished. But it would have to be structured around themes rather than just a get together.

Although there has been some collective Local Links activity after the programme in Todmorden, Heckmondwike and potentially in Bradford (the programme has only just finished), it is in Shipley where there has been the greatest post-programme Local Links activity to date. Significantly, Shipley is also the only group that has had the offer of focused co-ordination through one of the group members (a local authority officer) who has incorporated the co-ordination of the Local Links group into her job:

In Shipley the local authority are happy to support, as they feel that it is the only broad-based networking group that exists outside the political process.

It was felt by one group that the post-programme co-ordination should be put in place before the programme was run and that Common Purpose should be able to play a larger role in 'moving the group on'.

Learning

- The desirability and capacity of a Local Links group to sustain itself after the programme finishes is dependent on local circumstances and context.
- There is a divide between participants who would like to sustain Local Links formally/work on common post-programme projects and those who see it as just a good networking opportunity. The latter group feel the main benefit to be a range of new contacts and opportunities that they can develop individually or through their own organisation. The aspiration of the programme to 'develop self-sustaining, energised networking structures for neighbourhood-based decision-makers and a more holistic approach to neighbourhood governance' is over-optimistic given the duration and level of investment in the programme.
- Where there is more of a desire among participants to sustain the group formally (ShIPLEY), there is a need for more formal co-ordination. Incorporating this role into the job of a local authority officer, as has happened in ShIPLEY, is a good solution.
- Good access to the media (radio, newspapers) can help community and voluntary organisations get their message across more widely and more accurately. This has been seen as a major benefit in the two programmes where this was achieved.
- There has not been significant influence brought to bear on or connections made with other local participation/governance structures such as Neighbourhood Renewal, Area Committees, Community Forums and Renaissance Market Town initiatives. The ShIPLEY programme could be the exception with the campaigning work that has been undertaken by the group in relation to young people's housing. It is however too early to fully evaluate this initiative.
- There is some dissatisfaction with the contact that participants have in some areas with local elected members.
- Individual participants who have leadership skills and a passion for developing a project can have a significant influence on the direction of a group like Local Links.

(Continued)

- Evidence to date suggests that individual benefit and beneficial collaboration between individual organisations is the main legacy of the programmes. It is too early to evaluate the longer-term impact on local affairs.

Learning into actions

25. As mentioned above, there is not necessarily a benefit in designing the programme to continue after the formal element finishes. The programme needs to be open to the possibility of the participants wishing to sustain the group and this can be discussed as the programme progresses. If the willingness is there Common Purpose can support this to the extent to which resources allow.
26. If the group wishes to sustain itself then it is likely that formal long-term co-ordination will be required in accordance with the Shipley model. The possibility of such an arrangement needs to be explored.
27. The marketing of the programme should emphasise the networking and local knowledge benefits more than the impact on local governance.
28. More connection with other local participation/governance structures could be sought, which might better contextualise and inform decisions about the longer-term role/need for Local Links (beyond an informal networking forum).
29. The contact with local elected members and other representatives of local political structures needs to be well prepared for, with both the Local Links participants and the local politicians.

Appendix: Evaluation framework

Table A1 Revised framework for Common Purpose Local Links programme (September 2006)

Broad questions	Supplementary questions
<i>Impact on participants</i>	
1. What have people gained from the programme?	1.1 Why did participants attend the programme? 1.2 What expectations/aspirations did participants have at the start? Did it fulfil these? 1.3 What skills and knowledge have people gained from the programme? 1.4 Do people feel they have gained confidence from the programme? 1.5 Do people 'feel' different about their work/ area where they live as a result of their involvement in the programme? 1.6 Were there differences between the impact on paid workers and on volunteers/activists and, if so, why and in what ways? 1.7 Have any individuals emerged as 'leaders' on the programme or 'catalysts for change'? What qualities do they bring?
2. How has this affected their work/activism/ influence (paid or voluntary) in their area?	2.1 Are people doing anything new or differently as a result of their involvement in the programme? If so, what was it about Local Links that made this possible? 2.2 What have participants found out about other organisations? How have they used this information? 2.3 What have participants learnt about the issues affecting the locality and the way the area works? Have they used this information in any way? 2.4 Do participants know more about <i>how</i> to have influence in local affairs as a result of Local Links? If so, what have they learned? 2.5 Has Local Links enabled participants to have a stronger voice/influence within local governance structures? If so, how and why? What has been the significance of this for you and the area? 2.6 What factors have inhibited involvement in local governance? How could these be addressed? 2.7 What did participants gain from the experience of meeting people 'with influence'? What more do participants think could be done to increase the accessibility of such people?

(Continued)

Table A1 Revised framework for Common Purpose Local Links programme (September 2006) (Continued)

Broad questions	Supplementary questions
	2.8 Have participants been able to access new resources as a result of the programme? Why and how? 2.9 Does the size of the area matter? Would the programme be effective on a different scale (smaller or larger)?
3. Have useful links been established?	3.1 Have any 'new' relationships been formed – i.e. they would not have been established without Local Links? 3.2 How have these relationships been used? What are the implications of 'knowing' more people that are active in the area? 3.3 What factors have helped and hindered participants to draw on the relationships that they have established on the programme in their day-to-day activities? What aspects of the programme have fostered good interpersonal communication between participants? 3.4 What personal skills and qualities are required to facilitate good relationship building? What personal skills and qualities do participants need in order to develop good relationships? 3.5 To what extent have differences in gender/ethnicity/class/age given rise to barriers to participation? How has the facilitator responded to these? 3.6 To what extent have existing conflicts within the community given rise to barriers to participation? How have these been addressed or their significance undermined? 3.7 What has been learned about how and why people make connections across 'prejudices'?
4. Have the links continued/strengthened after completion of the programme?	4.1 Have an enduring set of relationships been established? If so, what are they and how are people using them? 4.2 If not, why not? What would assist the continuation of links/relationships beyond the programme? 4.3 How strong and active were the links: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • one month after completion; • three months after completion; • six months after completion?
<i>Impact on the area</i>	
5. Have new initiatives been developed or opportunities arisen as a result of participation on the programme?	5.1 What new initiatives have developed? 5.2 How did these develop? 5.3 What has been the impact on the area?

(Continued)

Table A1 Revised framework for Common Purpose Local Links programme (September 2006) (Continued)

Broad questions	Supplementary questions
6. Have new 'network(s)' emerged as a result of Local Links?	6.1 If so, what are these networks and what impact are they having?
7. Is there any evidence that Local Links has contributed to a greater engagement of communities in local affairs?	7.1 Has Local Links contributed towards a greater engagement of communities in local affairs? If so, how?
<i>Programme co-ordination and management</i>	
8. Did the 'right' people participate on the programme?	8.1 Who was on the programme? 8.2 How were people identified? 8.3 Were there any barriers to attendance and participation? 8.4 Who should have been there but wasn't/ weren't? 8.5 What difference did their absence make (positive and/or negative)? 8.6 Was a diversity of views represented? 8.7 How do participants think accreditation would impact on participation on the programme?
9. Was there clarity about what the programme sought to achieve in each area and overall?	9.1 What information were participants given about the programme and how clear was this? 9.2 How would participants think Local Links should be promoted to others?
10. Was the programme well managed and co-ordinated?	10.1 Did the participants get the right information at the right time? 10.2 Were the resources adequate to deliver the programme? Was the length of the programme adequate – i.e. the number of sessions and length of sessions? Do participants think a residential session would be valuable? 10.3 What has been the role of the advisory group? Were the right people on the group? What impact has it made on the management of the programme?
11. Why were the four areas identified for the programme?	11.1 How and why were the four areas identified?
12. Are there any contextual factors in any of the four areas that have affected the delivery of the programme?	12.1 Was the Local Links programme affected by unanticipated contextual factors in any of the four areas? 12.2 How did it respond to these?
13. What was the cost of running the programme?	13.1 What was the cost of the overall programme? 13.2 What was the 'per head' cost of the programme? 13.3 What lessons have been learnt about the resource needs of a programme such as this?

(Continued)

Table A1 Revised framework for Common Purpose Local Links programme (September 2006) (Continued)

Broad questions	Supplementary questions
<i>Approach to delivery</i>	
14. Did the programme sustain the interest of participants?	14.1 How many people started and finished? 14.2 Would they recommend it to anyone else? 14.3 If people dropped out, why did they do so? 14.4 Was the programme good value for their time? 14.5 How, if at all, would charging a fee have affected attendance on the programme?
15. Has the programme been sufficiently flexible to enable the content to respond to the aspirations of the participants and the needs of that particular town?	15.1 What were the aspirations/expectations of participants? 15.2 How did the programme respond to these? 15.3 Was a diversity of views represented? 15.4 How have decisions been made about the content of the sessions and the external speakers/contributors?
16. Was the content and delivery 'fit for purpose'?	16.1 Did the programme 'deliverers' have the right skills/knowledge? 16.2 Was the content appropriate to the purpose (this needs to be defined before this question can be answered)? 16.3 Was the environment conducive to achieving the programme objectives? 16.4 Did the participants have sufficient opportunity to participate?