

# **Making community participation meaningful**

**A handbook for development and assessment**

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# SECTION 1

## Introduction

This publication is a companion handbook to *What works in assessing community participation*, which describes and analyses the way in which two assessment frameworks for benchmarking community involvement in regeneration were road tested.

The two frameworks are:

- COGS (2000) *Active partners: Benchmarking community participation in regeneration*, Yorkshire: Yorkshire Forward.
- Burns, D. and Taylor, M. (2000) *Auditing community participation: An assessment handbook*, Bristol: The Policy Press.

The aim of the process was to find out if the assessment frameworks were useful, to assess what worked most effectively, to refine the frameworks and if possible to amalgamate them on the basis of what we learned from the road-testing process. As a result of our work we have produced this combined framework which can be used as a resource for the development and assessment of community participation.

## What is the purpose of such a detailed framework?

When we constructed the first versions of these tools we were clear that we needed a process which was as detailed as a management or a financial audit. Institutions have to go through months of inspections to show that their management and financial systems work effectively, but if they can show that they have a statement which supports community participation, that is usually taken to mean that they are doing it – and the truth is they rarely are. Our aim was to produce a tool which could properly hold institutions to account for the delivery of meaningful community participation.

## What is community participation?

To some it may sound obvious, but we do need to spell it out. Community participation concerns the engagement of individuals and communities in decisions about things that affect their lives. Sometimes people do not want to be involved in decision making, but it is our view that everyone should have the opportunity to do so.

Community participation is not the same as consultation. Many organisations say that they have a community participation strategy when they mean that they have a consultation strategy. One of the reasons for this audit is to expose issues like this. Community participation means that communities are playing an active part and have a significant degree of power and influence.

## Why is community participation essential?

The following are some of the key reasons:

- Active participation of local residents is essential to improved democratic and service accountability.
- It enhances social cohesion because communities recognise the value of working in partnership with each other and with statutory agencies.
- It enhances effectiveness as communities bring understanding, knowledge and experience essential to the regeneration process. Community definitions of need, problems and solutions are different from those put forward by service planners and providers.
- It enables policy to be relevant to local communities.
- It adds economic value both through the mobilisation of voluntary contributions to deliver regeneration and through skill development, which enhances the opportunities for employment and an increase in community wealth.

- It gives residents the opportunity to develop the skills and networks that are needed to address social exclusion.
- It promotes sustainability because community members have ownership of their communities and can develop the confidence and skills to sustain developments once the 'extra' resources have gone.

## **Key principles which have underpinned our work**

The starting point for our work has been a recognition of the diverse and elaborate nature of communities and the need for an approach which allows us to assess progress from very different starting points. Community participation is both a process and an outcome. Change must be seen to be taking place and benefits must be felt, but for this change to be long lasting it has to be underpinned with learning and commitment. The following are issues which we felt we needed to be aware of in constructing this framework:

- An understanding of the composition, needs, priorities, tensions, strengths and existing networks of communities.
- The need for partnership working and resourcing of participation at all stages of the regeneration process.
- Sensitivity around accountability and representative structures – building effective structures and infrastructures which strengthen communities rather than divide them.
- The need for a range of wider (formal and informal) ways in which people can participate in debate and discussion, creating some local ownership and control.
- The need for clarity and recognition of influence – evidence that communities have been heard, that decisions have been informed by communities.
- Recognition that people participate from a variety of different starting points and cultural experience and that this has implications for how people learn and contribute.

## **What these frameworks can be used for**

Since the assessment frameworks were first conceived we were aware that they would have multiple uses. The road testing re-enforced that view and from our work we have identified at least 10 different ways in which they have been used:

### **Opening up dialogues which can lead to genuine partnership working**

Both sets of materials were designed to provide a framework for dialogue, debate and development rather than simply a set of indicators by which to measure effectiveness. The tools and techniques have helped to break down myths that people have about different sectors. They have also helped to open up dialogues between stakeholders with very different perspectives.

### **A simple vehicle for raising awareness about community participation**

The very fact of getting people to talk about the issues highlights their importance. They have also helped to develop a recognition of the complexity of community participation and to acknowledge that participation takes time to develop.

### **Aiding transparency**

Within a regeneration context, there can be conflicts of interest. Often these are hidden, especially when members of partnership boards wear many hats.

### **Strategy development**

The tools provide a strategic framework for developing a community participation strategy, providing reminders of the key issues that need to be thought through and taken into account.

### **A resource for holding partnerships and other agencies to account**

The tools give communities something tangible with which to hold institutions to account and a basis on which to demand involvement.

### **Assessment**

Funding bids can be assessed according to the extent to which bidders take community participation seriously, and have built it into their process. As Local Strategic Partnerships develop, the tools might prove to be of direct use to accreditors. The Audit Commission has recently sent out to consultation a basket of indicators for community participation based on *Auditing community participation*. If used in a way which builds on the lessons of this road-testing process, they could have a powerful role in assessment across a wide range of initiatives.

### **Measuring progress**

The tools offer a way for people to check the 'distance they have travelled' and, where it is helpful, to compare their own progress with that of others. The knowledge gained from this process can be used both by those managing the initiative centrally and to help community partners understand their experience. This is the closest to the straight audit concept. Benchmarks can be seen as a procedure through which standards are set, and against which progress can be measured by comparison with similar work elsewhere. However, the context of community regeneration work is so important and varied that comparison alone is not appropriate. So the benchmarking process is best seen as a process for measuring the distance that you have travelled and learning from that in order to progress further. Comparison with others can still be useful for sharing and developing good practice but cannot alone be a basis for judgement.



**Capacity building**

As a tool for public and private sector capacity building and educating people in statutory agencies, it promotes understanding and awareness of the regeneration process, and identifies developmental needs for community involvement.

**Initiating evaluation**

The tools assume a continuous evaluation and monitoring process, and help it to develop.

**Making changes**

The tools have helped to facilitate the change process. By ringing alarm bells and unblocking sticking points, they can force new ideas and provide an outline for action. They help to question methods of working and whether community participation really happens.

## **Key lessons from the road testing of the original frameworks**

As already mentioned, both of the original tools went through an extensive process of road testing. What we learned from that is written up in detail in the companion report to this document. In this section we have selected a few of the key lessons which are directly relevant to using this framework.

**A process for assessing community participation**

In the original audit tool we outlined an *order* for working through the tools. In practice we found this to be unhelpful and unworkable. The Yorkshire Benchmarks did not originally outline any process but evolved the following steps as a result of work on the ground. We think that this is a more helpful staged process within which to consider the frameworks and tools and exercises that follow.

## Five steps to considering and improving community participation

### *Step 1: Develop a shared understanding of community participation*

Communities are made up of people with a variety of interests and identities. Each will have a different understanding of what community participation is. It is important to share and discuss these different perspectives.

### *Step 2: Establish the current position*

A baseline position can be ascertained by identifying where your community is now in relation to the framework.

### *Step 3: Identify issues and needs to be addressed*

Establishing the current position should help to highlight issues that need to be addressed. You can now begin to identify the different activities that will help to develop greater and more meaningful community participation.

### *Step 4: Agree an action plan*

It is important to be realistic about what is achievable within any given timescale and the level of resources available. You will probably need to agree priorities and identify other groups and agencies that will lend their support.

### *Step 5: Review progress*

Community participation strategies should be reviewed in the light of progress made and outstanding needs. This is not just about what processes and procedures are in place but how effective these are.

We refer to this framework in more detail on page 13.

### **Engaging communities and institutions in the assessment process**

The biggest difficulty we faced in trying to use the tools was how to gain and sustain engagement with and commitment to the process. Once communities and institutions were committed, the tools worked. Nevertheless there was always a great struggle for time. This sort of work does not fit well in small time slots that are part of a longer agenda. Considerable time needs to be spent at an early stage building networks and establishing how access will be gained to groups.

### **Should the tools be compulsory or voluntary?**

One of the issues that was raised was whether the assessment process should be compulsory. We are clear that greater attention needs to be paid both to incentives and sanctions – carrots and sticks. Making the assessment process compulsory will not *secure* compliance because groups are used to weighing up priorities and deciding which of the many compulsory things that they have to do they will focus on. However, a degree of compulsion is necessary, and if it is linked to sanctions and rewards, the process has a better chance of succeeding. Having a framework which was strongly institutionally supported enabled the researchers in Yorkshire to gain much better access than they might have had if the process was not compulsory. It is our view that *institutions* and *partnerships* should have to go through an audit of community participation by government which is as rigorous as their management, financial and governance audits, and they should be held accountable for the outcome. Partnerships and community organisations should be required to show that they are engaged in developmental learning activities and to demonstrate how these have enhanced community participation.

### **Developing capacity within institutions for community participation**

One of the fears expressed about the use of these tools was that communities would not understand them; that they were too complex and too detailed. The reality was that communities had a much stronger conceptual grasp of the issues raised by the tools than many professionals. Supporting learning opportunities for professionals around these issues must be seen as of the highest priority. As a result of the road testing we became aware that large-scale community-based initiatives of the type that we were working with need a far higher level of core infrastructure support. There is a need for far greater investment in administrative time, dedicated managerial support, and sustainable community development resources.

### **Institutional leadership**

Institutional leadership and commitment is vital to the success of the assessment process. A strong observation from the road tests was that the leadership from the lead agency (the Regional Development Agency in both Yorkshire and the South West) gave the appearance of falling away as economic priorities began to take root. This had the effect of making people in localities question whether to make the tools a priority when they did not believe community participation was a priority in the Regional Development Agency.

### How to get the best out of the frameworks

It is often not what is recorded in the first instance that is important in the evaluation process. Rather it is the conversations that it opens up. The level of detail which both tools offer is necessary in order to hold institutions to account and to be 'meaningful'. But in order to engage with this level of detail the work may need to be carried out in chunks. This means that it needs to be part of an on-going developmental process. All of this requires a process which is facilitated, which in turn requires that support be given to the development of skilled community practitioners (either professionals or activists). There may be some merit in exploring how possible it is to set up a facilitators unit which could provide support to practitioners carrying out this work. Further, the most effective outcomes are achieved where the tools are not used on their own, but are part of a wider process which involves observation, action research, political advocacy and intervention, interviews, and so on.

Building on the learning from the road tests we have constructed a framework for assessment which we feel will be robust enough for most circumstances as long as it is used flexibly. This is outlined in the next section.

## The structure of the framework

There are 11 key considerations outlined in the framework. Evidence needs to be collected in relation to each of these. In Section 2 we outline these considerations and a range of *indicators* against which progress can be assessed.

In Section 3 we have laid out 14 reflective questions, the answers to which will help you to judge how well you are meeting the key indicators of success.

In Section 4 we offer a selection of tools and exercises which we hope will help you to answer these questions.

# SECTION 2

## A new framework

Through the road-testing process we have attempted to distil the most essential questions that need to be asked in order to properly assess the effectiveness of participation strategies. The framework is structured around the key dimensions. These are not identical to the *Active partners* dimensions of influence, capacity building, inclusivity and communication, but have been largely based on them. We have broadened two of these. To influence we have added power, and to communication we have added learning. This is because our road-testing work exposed the serious implications for participation of not having a learning strategy. Inclusivity is now embedded into all of the sections. We were also concerned that influence could be interpreted to mean that communities should be able to have an impact on issues but not control them. So we added a category which concerns impacts and outcomes. This recognises the fact that it is not enough to be able to demonstrate participation; we also have to demonstrate that participation has made a difference.

Under each of these dimensions the framework provides:

- In column 1 – the key considerations that partnerships should be focusing on in both reviewing progress to date and planning for the future.
- In column 2 – some key indicators. Evidence should be collected in relation to all of these relevant to your partnership.
- In column 3 – references to the reflective questions which will help you address these considerations (see Section 3).
- In column 4 – references to suggested tools and exercises to support you in carrying out the above (see Section 4).

KEY CONSIDERATIONS	INDICATORS	QUESTIONS (Section 3)	TOOLS (Section 4)
<b>(1) Influence and power</b>			
Are <i>all</i> local communities able to participate in decision making?	Evidence that effective action has been taken to ensure inclusion	<b>1</b>	<b>C</b>
Who has determined the rules and priorities of key strategic partnerships and managing boards? And what is the balance of power?	Evidence that the majority of board members are community based	<b>2, 3, 4, 14</b>	
	Evidence that community-initiated decisions have been taken and acted on		<b>J</b>
	Evidence that communities have as much power and influence as other key stakeholders on strategic partnerships and management boards		<b>G K J</b>
Do communities have access to <i>all</i> decision-making processes?	Evidence that communities can influence <i>all</i> aspects of programme development and delivery	<b>4, 14</b>	<b>G J</b>
Is community <i>control of assets</i> and resources being enhanced?	Evidence of a sustainable transfer of resources to community ownership and control	<b>4, 5</b>	<b>K E</b>
<b>(2) Capacity building</b>			
Do communities and institutions have the <i>capacity</i> to develop and sustain community-based programmes?	Evidence of strong leadership, community development capacity, management and administrative resources devoted to community practice	<b>5, 6, 10, 11</b>	
	Evidence of the range and level of local community activity	<b>5</b>	

KEY CONSIDERATIONS	INDICATORS	QUESTIONS (Section 3)	TOOLS (Section 4)
	Evidence that organisations and partnerships have the baseline information necessary to build an effective community participation strategy including comprehensive <i>information</i> on the different communities and community groups in their area?	1, 12	
Is the community involvement process <i>effectively resourced</i> ?	Evidence of investment. More than 5% of a programme budget is committed to resourcing the community involvement process	5	
Do <i>organisational structures</i> , and ways of working, reflect a commitment to community participation?	Evidence that partner organisations can be locally responsive, joined up in the way that they work, organisationally aligned with community decision making	5,7,8,9	A
	Evidence that institutional and community barriers to participation have been identified and steps have been taken to overcome them	13	B
<b>(3) Communication and learning</b>			
Is there a coordinated approach to <i>communication</i> between partnerships, funding bodies and communities?	Evidence of mechanisms for informing communities about regeneration and for communities to inform partnerships and organisations	12	A
	Evidence that these are effective		
Is there a coordinated approach to <i>learning</i> between partnerships, funding bodies and communities?	Evidence of participatory learning, peer learning and network learning strategies	13	A
	Evidence that these are effective		
<b>(4) Impacts and outcomes</b>			
<i>What difference</i> does participation make?	Evidence that real differences have resulted from community participation	14	G
Are the outcomes of participation <i>inclusive</i> ?	Evidence that the benefits of community participation are felt by <i>all</i> communities, not just a few	1, 3, 4, 10, 14	

## Health warning

This publication brings together a wide range of frameworks and tools and exercises that we have found useful. There is a lot to work with here, and we are keen to ensure that this does not deter you. With this in mind, we would like to make the following points.

First, we would not expect you to work through every aspect of this process at the same time. The work can be done in stages and adapted to your own context. For some purposes you may only need to use a small part of the framework.

Second, this is not an exercise to be done once and then forgotten. It is part of a long-term process in which skills and expertise are built up over time. Users will find that with repeated use it is surprising how quickly they will find their way around it.

Finally, as mentioned earlier, the whole point of this is to be comprehensive. If participation is to be taken as seriously as financial probity, then the equivalent investment of time and infrastructure support needs to be put into it as would go into setting up robust financial systems.

## Applying the framework

The purpose of the framework is to give a structure to the evidence that you need to collect. As we indicated earlier, this can be used in a number of different ways:

- To gain some understanding about the real reasons why participation is not happening in your area.
- To compare your area with other areas.
- To compare your own strategy over time.
- To compare the different views of different stakeholders on these issues.
- To assess whether baseline benchmarks have been met.

We would advise you to be as creative as you can in getting this information. As we show in our tools and exercises section (E, Section 4), pictures can be as powerful an evaluation tool as statistics. However, you may find it useful when you are making comparisons to use the same approach each time. For example, you might want to compare pictures that were drawn last year with pictures that were drawn this year. You might want to compare speedos (A, Section 4) done last year with those done this year.



We recommend that, in applying the framework, each of the five steps recommended in Section 1 is considered. Below we remind you of these steps and suggest how you could use the framework and tools and exercises at each stage of the process.

### *Step 1: Develop a shared understanding of community participation*

The framework itself as well as some of the tools and exercises provided can be used in facilitating dialogue and discussion between key stakeholders to develop agreement and understanding. For example, you could hold a workshop for board members which could include:

- sharing and listing what are seen as key benefits of community participation in relation to your own programme;
- working on the 'different communities' question (1, p 18) to identify all communities of relevance to your own programme;
- using the 'level of participation scale' (G, p 60) to begin to consider what levels of community participation are relevant to your own programme/partnership;
- discussion of the 11 key considerations to check if everyone understands their meaning and to agree any ways of slightly changing wording to relate them directly to your own programme and context.

### *Step 2: Establish the current position*

A baseline position can be ascertained by identifying where your community is now in relation to the framework. The 11 key considerations should help you to focus on the most important issues. Use 'speedos' and 'steps and barriers' exercises (A, p 50 and B, p 53) to log individual views of key stakeholders and open up discussion about where you are now and which key questions need further 'unpacking'. This should also help you to identify the questions you may need to ask of the wider community to both fully assess progress and to further explore issues and ways of addressing them.

### *Step 3: Identify issues and needs to be addressed*

Establishing the current position in relation to the key considerations should begin to help highlight current areas of practice and issues that may need to be prioritised. Select and use checklists and tools from Section 4 that you think will be most useful in exploring these questions in more detail. If your initial work shows that there is a major leadership vacuum, or that participation is only reaching out to one or two minority ethnic communities, then you will need to build solutions to these in your action plans.

### *Step 4: Agree an action plan*

After gathering together and analysing the information and ideas collected through the previous steps, you will need to develop an action plan that addresses priority issues but is realistic in terms of your capacity. Analysis of findings and key issues to be addressed can be related to the framework dimensions. The 'objectives exercise' (D, p 57) provides one technique that could be used to involve key stakeholders in collectively agreeing priority objectives to be included in the forward action plan, say, for one year. It is recommended that the action plan includes the indicators that are going to be used for assessing progress in relation to each objective. You may want to use indicators provided in the framework and/or add to these.

### *Step 5: Review progress*

Reviewing progress can both refer to regular ongoing review throughout the period of a one-year action plan, or a more thorough review towards the end of the year in embarking again on steps 2–5 in developing a new action plan. In either case, your existing action plan, hopefully related to the framework dimensions and including selected indicators, will now act as your reference point for such a review. In undertaking this review you may want to repeat exercises and methods you have previously used for gathering views and information to help measure change over the period, or to try out new ones from Section 4. It is also important to re-explore any key considerations that were not prioritised in your existing action plan but may highlight continuing issues that still need to be addressed or new emerging issues.

## **Additional advice**

Successful completion of the above five steps involves time, commitment, resources and creativity. While these are all important, they have to be related to your existing capacity. So when people ask us 'How much time does the process take?', it is very difficult to give a straight answer. In our road-testing research we came across a range of examples of application. This included a Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) scheme with dedicated community participation workers which went through the above process over many months, involving a wide range of stakeholders and culminating in a very comprehensive report of findings and a clear forward action plan. It also included a smaller community partnership which followed a similar process but with a more select range of key stakeholders over a two-month period. While this process may not have been as rigorous or as wide ranging as the SRB scheme, the process still worked in opening up a dialogue about community participation and identifying key areas of practice that needed to be addressed.

However, given that the amount of time and resources that can be committed to the process may vary considerably, there are a number of other factors which are critical:

### *1 Commitment from key stakeholders*

As we have stressed earlier, this process cannot be carried out just by a paid officer hidden away in an office somewhere. It requires the involvement of all key stakeholders giving up at least some time away from the day-to-day business of the partnership/programme. It requires time for sharing of views, discussion and debate that cannot easily be covered as just an additional item on already full agendas of business meetings. In our experience such a commitment is often not easily forthcoming at the beginning but grows as the process develops and the usefulness of the exercise becomes apparent.

### *2 Involvement of the wider community*

While we are not suggesting that the wider community needs to be involved at every stage, the process will itself open up questions about the effectiveness of existing community engagement activities and possible barriers to participation which can only be answered by gathering the views of local communities. This will need to include both those who have already been involved in some way and those who have not.

### *3 Creativity and skilled facilitation*

Creativity is needed to ensure that people stay engaged. Evaluation processes such as the drawing of pictures help people to identify what they feel about issues and to see what is most important. Creativity is also an essential part of an action research process which generates meaningful activity in response to review. All this needs to be supported by someone who is an experienced action researcher, negotiator and community development group worker. Consideration needs to be given to how this support can be developed, nurtured and provided at an early stage.

# SECTION 3

## Reflective questions for addressing key considerations

This section asks you to answer a series of questions in as much detail as possible. Answers to reflective questions provide the evidence of where you are. By reflection we mean that you have had a chance to think about the issues and to discuss them with others. You should test out your views and those of others with probing questions to see how robust they are. You should record both agreements and disagreements about where you are as an institution or as a group.

There are 14 reflective questions, as follows:

- 1 What different communities exist within your locality?
- 2 Who or what has determined the rules in your partnership or for your initiative?
- 3 What is the balance of power within the partnership/initiative?
- 4 In what ways, and to what extent, are communities involved?
- 5 What level of investment is there in community participation?
- 6 Is there strong leadership to support community participation?
- 7 Do decision-making structures allow for local diversity?
- 8 Are you able to work in a joined-up way?
- 9 Are service structures compatible with community participation?
- 10 Is your group able to run in an effective and inclusive way?
- 11 How does your group or organisation ensure that its representatives on committees and boards are accountable?
- 12 How effective is your information and communication?
- 13 Do you have an effective approach to community and organisational learning?
- 14 Has participation made any difference?

# 1 What different communities exist within your locality?

Too often we talk about 'the community' as if we are all the same. There are usually many communities within an area. Jot down examples of the types of different community that exist in your area. Note the communities that are particularly important in your area. Every community has older people but yours may have a much higher proportion than most. Every area has people who are poor, but your area might have a particularly high proportion of people who are poor (for example because they are single parents). These will represent some of the different types of people you will need to engage. Once you have identified who your community is made up of, think about which communities are most involved in decision making, and why some are more involved than others. You should also pay attention to the different sections of communities who might have different needs and different views. Women within a community, for example, may have very different views and needs to men.

You may want to mark those who are more involved and those who are less involved or not involved at all.

Category	Examples
<p><b>Users of services</b> For example, school parents, housing tenants, residents of care homes</p>	
<p><b>Minority ethnic/religious communities</b> Note the different communities within your locality</p>	
<p><b>Economic communities</b> Are some neighbourhoods much poorer than others?</p>	
<p><b>Age-based groups</b> Are there particular problems faced by children, teenagers, parents or older people?</p>	

Category	Examples
<p><b>Geographical communities</b></p> <p>What are the different neighbourhoods within the area?</p>	
<p><b>Communities of interest</b></p> <p>For example, dog owners</p>	
<p><b>Workplace communities</b></p> <p>For example, local businesses</p>	
<p><b>'Outcast' communities</b></p> <p>For example, ex-offenders, Travellers, those who live in hostels</p>	
<p><b>Temporary communities (people who are in the area for a short time)</b></p> <p>For example, students, tourists, Travellers</p>	
<p><b>Other kinds of community</b></p> <p>For example, communities of identity such as gay people</p>	

## Are some communities less involved in decision making than others?

### What are some of the barriers to their involvement?

You may wish to use the spider's web tool (F, p 59) here.



## What steps have been taken to ensure that these communities can be involved?

Please list the steps taken and assess their success where 0 = very little success and 9 = a great deal of success.

Steps taken to include communities	Degree of success Rank 0-9	Comment
	<input type="text"/>	
	<input type="text"/>	
	<input type="text"/>	
	<input type="text"/>	
	<input type="text"/>	
	<input type="text"/>	

## 2 Who or what has determined the rules in your partnership or for your initiative?

The table below identifies how the partnership was set up and, in particular, who the key players were in structuring it. The way in which the decision-making process is constructed at the outset will have a huge impact on who has power and how it is used. For all the rhetoric of community involvement, communities are often the last to be considered when plans are being developed. They need to be involved from the start rather than halfway through the process and they need to be involved in determining all of the structures, processes and outcomes identified below.

Jot down who you think has made the key decisions in deciding the following things. If possible give examples of stories or incidents which show this.

### Who has determined ...

... the structure of the partnership initiative?

... who is represented on the main decision-making body?

... the structure and proceedings of meetings?

**Who has determined ...**

**... the strategic agenda?**

**... targets, monitoring  
and performance  
criteria?**

**... community needs?**

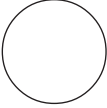
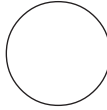
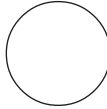
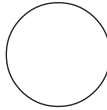
**... the geographical area  
covered by the  
partnership/initiative?**

### 3 What is the balance of power within the partnership/initiative?

It is important to identify where real power lies. For example, in some areas political parties are the dominant force, in others it will be key professionals, occasionally it will be members of local communities. Decisions may be made before they even reach the partnership board. Consideration will need to be given to how the balance of power can be equalised over the long term in the context of the above. Remember, having equal representation on a board rarely means having equal power, and some community representatives will have more power than others.

List below all the groups or key players involved in the partnership, including your group. When the list is complete, please rank each of these different players in terms of power on a scale of 1-9. This list of possible people is endless. In some situations it might include funders, councillors, political parties, local consultants, community representatives, local businesses, masons, key professionals, and so on (you may wish to include names of individuals if they are particularly powerful). Give a 9 for those people who are very powerful, and a 1 to those people or organisations who do not have power. Evidence or examples should be offered to support the views expressed. If a group is doing this exercise, individuals should list their own ideas on who the key players are before discussing this as a group. The group then agrees to a complete list. Individuals then do a ranking on their own, before the group discussion where they then try to agree.

You may also wish to use the stakeholder cards (C, p 55) to help you in this work.

Name of group or key player	Rank in power 1-9	Evidence or example of relative power or weakness
		
		
		
		

Name of group or key player	Rank in power 1-9	Evidence or example of relative power or weakness
	<input type="text"/>	
	<input type="text"/>	
	<input type="text"/>	
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## 4 In what ways, and to what extent, are communities involved?

Partnerships may offer communities different levels of participation in different decision-making arenas. These need to be benchmarked. Question 2 will have established who set the rules at the outset. This exercise will audit ongoing decision making in the partnership.

The items listed below should be ranked on a scale of 1-9, where 1 indicates a low level of participation and 9 a high level. You may want to use the level of participation scale (G, p 60) to help you with this. In your comments you should also note what the level of formal engagement is. For example, you might put 'there is almost no influence on policy making, even though half the committee are community members.'

Decision-making arena	Level of community participation	Comments and examples
Policy making	<input type="text"/>	
Strategic planning	<input type="text"/>	
Deciding who and what gets funded	<input type="text"/>	
Control of budgets	<input type="text"/>	
Managing partnership staff	<input type="text"/>	
Recruitment and disciplinary matters	<input type="text"/>	

Decision-making arena	Level of community participation	Comments and examples
Monitoring, scrutiny and evaluation	<input type="radio"/>	
Choosing performance indicators and targets and setting the evaluation criteria	<input type="radio"/>	
Collecting the information	<input type="radio"/>	
Validating evaluation findings	<input type="radio"/>	
Planning individual projects	<input type="radio"/>	
Managing individual projects	<input type="radio"/>	
Determining local priorities and inputting into local delivery plans	<input type="radio"/>	
Other (please specify)	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	

## 5 What level of investment is there in community participation?

Community participation does not just happen – it needs a strategy, resources, commitment, time and a planned approach. It also requires attention to capacity building in partner agencies as well as communities.

Indicators of investment	Comments
<p><b>Is there a strategy for community participation?</b> Is there evidence that it has been implemented?</p>	
<p><b>What proportion of the budget is allocated to participation?</b></p>	
<p><b>Do formal procedures (eg funding procedures) facilitate community participation rather than act as a barrier?</b> Give examples of any problems</p>	
<p><b>Is there investment in capacity building within partner organisations?</b> Is there core funding for community development workers?</p>	
<p>Have project and funding officers and senior decision makers in partnership agencies taken up learning opportunities specifically related to working with communities?</p>	
<p>Have organisations and partnerships provided the necessary staff infrastructure to support community-based initiatives?</p>	



Indicators of investment	Comments
<p><b>Is there any investment in infrastructure to support community activity? For example:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• community centres</li> <li>• other community facilities</li> <li>• newsletters</li> <li>• new technology</li> </ul> <p>Please specify any investments that have taken place since the last audit</p>	
<p><b>To what extent and in what ways is support provided for:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• unpaid community activists</li> <li>• voluntary and community groups eg tenants' associations</li> <li>• community umbrella groups</li> <li>• community networks</li> <li>• community learning opportunities</li> <li>• self-help and mutual aid schemes such as credit unions and LETS</li> <li>• community control of assets</li> </ul> <p><i>Note the level so that you can compare how this changes over time</i></p>	

## 6 Is there strong leadership to support community participation?

Many community participation strategies have collapsed because they have not had sustained political leadership. When more pressing priorities come around the corner, programmes are frequently diverted away from a community focus. Please note evidence for this in the comments box. You may wish to put comments under more than one box. You may wish to use the speedos (A, p 50) to help you in this exercise.

Type of leadership	Comments
<p><b>No leadership</b></p>	
<p><b>Token leadership</b> Institutions claim to be leading but are actually doing very little</p>	
<p><b>Reluctant leadership</b> People who have no track record of sympathy towards community participation are put in place to lead it</p>	

Type of leadership	Comments
<p><b>Tick-box leadership</b></p> <p>Community participation is supported but only because it benefits the institution (eg it gives them access to funding) or because they have been told to do so</p>	
<p><b>Committed but marginalised leadership</b></p> <p>Committed individuals are strongly supportive of community participation but they don't have a lot of power in their own organisations</p>	
<p><b>Short-term leadership</b></p> <p>There is strong leadership from the centre of power but it is not sustained as soon as new priorities come along</p>	
<p><b>Long-term leadership</b></p> <p>There is committed long-term support for community participation</p>	

## 7 Do decision-making structures allow for local diversity?

The extent to which institutions are prepared to allow diversity is a strong indicator of the extent to which local participation is real. If communities are able to construct their own plans and identify their own priorities, these will inevitably be different from area to area.

Using the scale below, an assessment should be made of the degree to which diversity is allowed by each partner organisation. Mark the position of your organisation and the partnership as a whole. Write in examples which illustrate why you have put the organisation where you have. You may also want to use the speedos exercise to help map this (A, p 50). Are there examples when you have tried to do something locally which has been blocked by the centre?

Position on scale	Comments/examples
<p><b>Centrally determined policy and practice</b> One uniform product (one meal for all)</p>	
<p><b>Limited choice</b> Different areas may make different choices, but they have the same options available to them (you can select from a pre-set menu)</p>	
<p><b>Limited local power</b> Some local variation is possible but strict limits from centre ensure an appearance of equity (you can ask for peas instead of carrots with your meal)</p>	

Position on scale	Comments/examples
<p><b>Approval for local variations</b></p> <p>Innovation is allowed, but has to be centrally approved. This is most likely in pilot situations (local menus are approved by centre)</p>	
<p><b>Local flexibility</b></p> <p>Localities/projects are allowed to depart from the norm (local menus)</p>	
<p><b>Local diversity</b></p> <p>Diversity is encouraged and a culture of difference is supported (any meal can be asked for)</p>	

## 8 Are you able to work in a joined-up way?

Community problems are almost always joined up. If the potential solutions to them are not joined up, then community participation can be almost meaningless.

Service delivery agencies and partnerships should map on the scale below the extent to which they think that their services are joined up. Community members should give examples of where they have received a joined-up service and where they have been frustrated because services are not joined up. You may find it helpful to use the speedos exercise (A, p 50). You may wish to map different relationships at different points on this scale.

Level of 'joined-upness'	Examples
<p><b>Hostility to contact</b> Other departments and agencies are seen as a threat</p>	
<p><b>Non-cooperation</b> Agencies often have tunnel vision and see themselves as the centre of the universe. They cannot see the benefits of cooperation</p>	
<p><b>Information exchange</b> Information is exchanged but 'sanitised'</p>	
<p><b>Coordination</b> Avoids duplication or clashes but involves little more</p>	

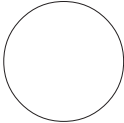
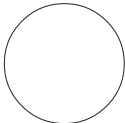
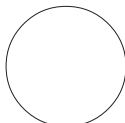
Level of 'joined-upness'	Examples
<p><b>Cooperation</b> Contributing to one another's projects</p>	
<p><b>Collaboration</b> Partnerships, working with others; coordinating plans</p>	
<p><b>Joint project working</b> Single team leader, co-location of staff</p>	
<p><b>Joint planning</b> Cross-boundary planning where the plan is generated together rather than institutions trying to bolt their own plans together</p>	
<p><b>Integrated services</b> Pooled budgets and resources</p>	

## 9 Are service structures compatible with community participation?

One of the most common weaknesses of participation strategies is the lack of administrative coordination that underpins them. Please rank this on a scale of 1-9 in the circles below, where 1 indicates that there is a serious problem and 9 that it is working well.

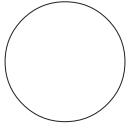
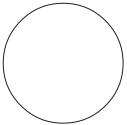
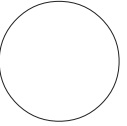
Degree of compatibility with community participation	Give examples of where any of these are problems
<p><b>Do structures allow community decisions to connect easily to formal decision-making committees?</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">○</p>	
<p><b>Is there a constructive relationship between community forums and elected councillors or board members?</b></p> <p>Sometimes councillors and other board members can be actively opposed to community participation. What steps have been taken to resolve this? Have you evidence or examples of this?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">○</p>	

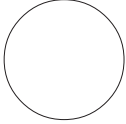
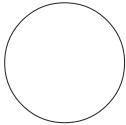
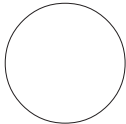
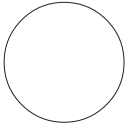


<b>Degree of compatibility with community participation</b>	<b>Give examples of where any of these are problems</b>
<p><b>How streamlined is the strategic decision-making process?</b></p> <p>Are there too many participation structures for either activists or professionals to attend?</p> <p>How many decision-making forums is your organisation trying to be involved in? Which does it prioritise and why?</p> 	
<p><b>Are organisations' decision-making timetables synchronised with community decision-making timetables?</b></p> <p>If this is not organised from the beginning, consultation is often meaningless because it cannot influence decisions. How well are timetables synchronised?</p> 	
<p><b>Are geographical boundaries the same for all services?</b></p> <p>This is not always possible, but without this it is very difficult for communities to get accurate information to assess and monitor services and budgets for their area. How well are boundaries aligned?</p> 	

## 10 Is your group able to run in an effective and inclusive way?

You may wish to use the meetings tool (K, p 69), the meetings checklist (H, p 61), and the learning tool (13, p 44) to help you to answer this. After having done this exercise, please rank in the circles below on a scale of 1-9, where 1 is very poor and 9 is very good, how well you think your group is doing.

<p><b>How accessible are local meetings?</b></p> <p>Use the meetings checklist tool (K, p 69)</p> <p></p>	
<p><b>Is the group able to retain the participation of those who come to meetings?</b></p> <p>Have you monitored how many people come to one or two meetings and don't come back? Have you asked them why?</p> <p></p>	
<p><b>Does the group have the right mix of skills to work effectively?</b></p> <p>Find out what skills and backgrounds exist in your group. The 'hats' tool may also be useful here (I, p 62)</p> <p></p>	

<p><b>Does the group have the diversity to represent different communities?</b></p> <p></p>	
<p><b>Is the group able to deal effectively with negative behaviour?</b></p> <p>Are there mechanisms for ensuring turnover and bringing in new people?</p> <p></p>	
<p><b>Does the group know whether it is being successful?</b></p> <p>How does it evaluate success? (Question 13, p 44)</p> <p></p>	
<p><b>Are there opportunities to look beyond the immediate pressing day-to-day agenda?</b></p> <p>Question 13 (p 44) and the meetings checklist H (p 61). How often does the group have strategic discussions which are not led by prepared agendas?</p> <p></p>	

## 11 How does your group or organisation ensure that its representatives on committees and boards are accountable?

First do this exercise for your own partnership. But if the partnership or steering group sends representatives to any other forum (eg Town, District, County Council, Local Strategic Partnership, Primary Care Trust, and so on) repeat the exercise for them. When you record your views remember to write below which organisation you are referring to.

### ORGANISATION NAME:

How are representatives selected?

Who do representatives report to?

What information do they make available to those to whom they are accountable?

**Are your representatives briefed and mandated?  
Do they have the authority to make autonomous decisions?**

**Can groups get any independent information about the quality of their representatives?**

**What provision is there to ensure a turnover of representatives?**

**Can you give examples of when and how representatives have acted unaccountably?**

## 12 How effective is your information and communication?

What are the ways in which you get information? What are the ways in which you give information? What kind of information do you actually read? Is information provided in plain English, and in relevant languages and in a variety of formats? You may want to use the speedos exercise (A, p 50) for this exercise. Please rank on a scale of 1-9, where 1 is very poor and 9 is very good.

	Effectiveness of communication	Can you say why and give examples?
<p><b>Is the information that you provide clear and accessible?</b></p>	<input type="radio"/>	
<p><b>Is the information that you receive clear and accessible?</b></p> <p>List organisations below</p>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	
<p><b>Does information reach communities in time for it to be acted upon?</b></p>	<input type="radio"/>	

	Effectiveness of communication	Can you say why and give examples?
<p><b>Is the information provided the information that you feel that you need?</b></p>	<input type="radio"/>	
<p><b>How well are those involved in organisations informed about the communities with whom they are working?</b></p>	<input type="radio"/>	
<p><b>Is basic information provided about who is responsible for what, for example, a directory of community groups and professionals?</b></p>	<input type="radio"/>	
<p><b>Are you using a variety of communication mechanisms?</b>                      Word-of-mouth, electronic communication, newsletters and so on</p>	<input type="radio"/>	
<p><b>Overall, do you think your communication strategy is effective?</b></p>	<input type="radio"/>	

## 13 Do you have an effective approach to community and organisational learning?

Often groups and organisations do not see learning as high priority, but it is vital to any participation process, in particular where issues are complex and controversial. If people are asked their views on things without having explored the issues with other people, or without really knowing what the alternatives or opportunities are, then they can only participate in a limited way. Very often we have found that the professionals who are given the job of working with communities have never had any community development experience. Organisations need to ask: How are you ensuring that all partners (including people from the public and private sectors) are developing the understanding, knowledge and skills to work in partnership and engage with communities? What training is provided and who is participating in both the delivery and the learning?

<b>Activity</b>	<b>In what ways have these supported the participation process?</b> Please give real examples of how these have helped participation
<p><b>Action learning sets/ action inquiry groups/ learning networks</b></p> <p>These allow people to get to the bottom of issues over an extended period of time</p>	
<p><b>Use of assessment frameworks (like this one)</b></p> <p>These allow you to compare information over time, between groups, against targets etc</p>	
<p><b>Use of e-learning</b></p> <p>This can be particularly useful for the exchange of ideas</p>	
<p><b>Exchange visits</b></p> <p>These can open up people's eyes to what is possible. This could also involve senior officers visiting local communities</p>	



Activity	In what ways have these supported the participation process? Please give real examples of how these have helped participation
<p><b>Mentoring</b></p> <p>For many people, one-to-one support is the most effective way to learn. Sometimes people are able to be more honest with themselves in a one-to-one</p>	
<p><b>Links to local colleges</b></p>	
<p><b>Apprenticeships</b></p> <p>People learn most effectively on the job</p>	
<p><b>Workshops and away days</b></p> <p>You need time out from the pressures of everyday life and work to understand issues and make important decisions about them. The more partners meet together the more they are likely to understand each other</p>	
<p><b>Bringing in research evidence</b></p> <p>What external evidence have you brought in to support your work?</p>	
<p><b>Secondments</b></p> <p>These can be a good way for officers to learn about communities and community participation</p>	
<p><b>Other</b></p>	

## 14 Has participation made any difference?

**What real differences  
have resulted from  
community  
participation?**

**Who has benefited?  
Have some communities  
benefited more than  
others?**

**Can you give examples of problems that have resulted from the community not being listened to?**

**Have there been any negative impacts of participation?**



# SECTION 4

## Tools and exercises

We offer here a number of different tools and exercises to help you answer the 14 questions in Section 3. We do not claim authorship of these. They are just things that we have picked up along the way and found useful when working on community participation. You should not feel restricted to these tools; there are many others, which you may have used already, which will be just as good.

## A: SPEEDOs

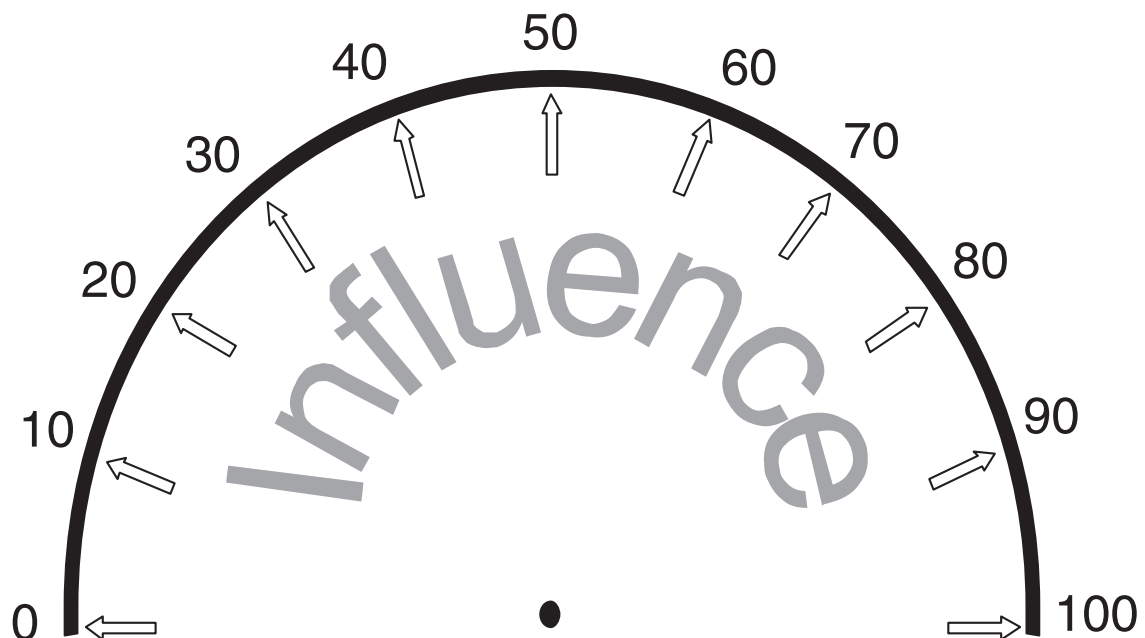
**Purpose:** Speedos (speedometers) provide a very quick gauge of views about performance.

**Numbers:** This exercise can work with any number of people.

**Time needed:** About two minutes per 'speedo'.

**Description of tool:** Draw speedometers onto large sheets of paper with a relevant statement underneath that helps to judge the effectiveness of something, for example, a statement in relation to a key consideration. See the example opposite.

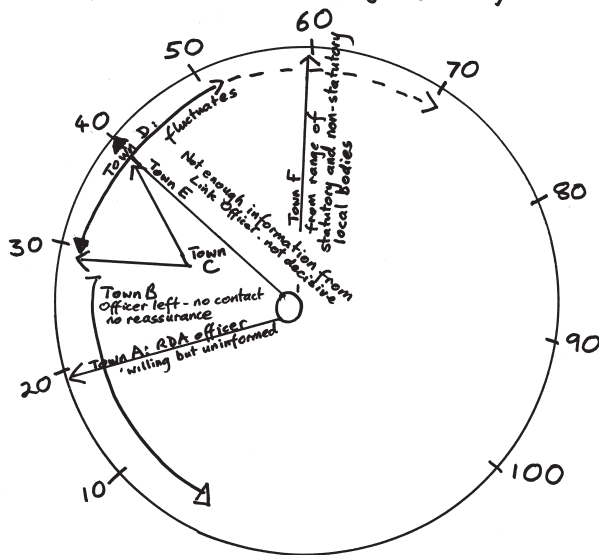
**Process:** Ask participants to mark a line onto the speedometers between 0 and 100 kph at the point where they feel they are. For example, with the speedometer 'there is a coordinated approach to communication between partnerships and communities' community members may judge that there has been very little in which case they are likely to drag the speedometer line between 0 and 20, but they may feel they are really moving in which case they would draw their mark between 70 and 100. Once everyone has participated there can be a discussion about the judgements that have been made. The speedometers can also be used to help to develop strategies, for example, if this is where we are now, what needs to happen to move faster? Or if we are doing well, what has helped and can it be replicated? Participants can then stick their ideas onto post-it notes on the 'speedo' sheets which will form the basis of an action plan.



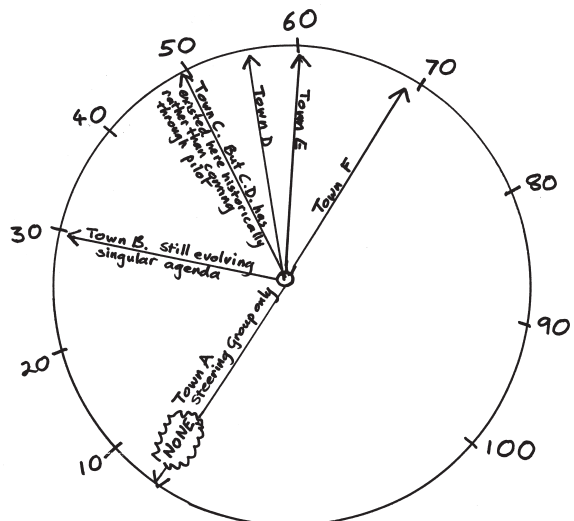
An example of application

The speedos were used in a variety of situations during the initial implementation of *Active partners* (including community events and workshops). Participants were asked to individually 'score' their regeneration partnership/scheme in relation to each benchmark by drawing a speedo indicator on the dial anywhere between 0 = 'not doing anything to achieve aim' to 100 = 'fully achieved aim'. Participants were then asked how they could 'gather speed' – what kinds of action are needed to improve the current situation, or make the current situation sustainable. This exercise provided a very quick route to identifying areas for further dialogue and discussion. It flags up both where there is consensus either about a high level of achievement (cause for celebration) or lower level of achievement (cause for discussing what steps to take to further progress) but also where there are different perspectives and views which need to be the focus for further dialogue and debate.

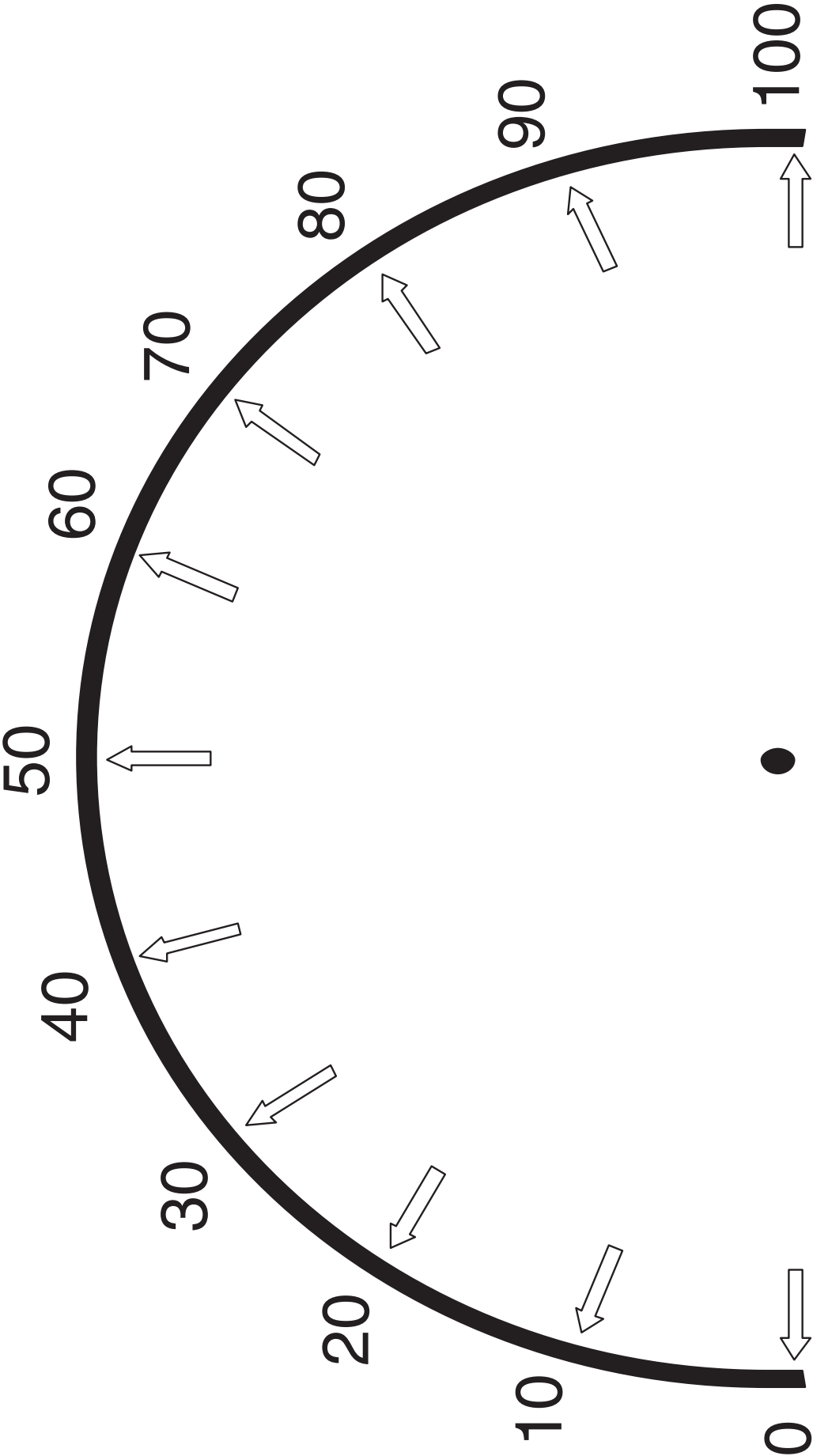
Effective Officer Support  
(from RDA or other organizations)



Effective Community Development Support



A blank speedo is reproduced overleaf for you to photocopy





## B: STEPS AND BARRIERS

**Purpose:** This planning exercise is designed to help people think about a baseline – what has already been achieved and what is getting in the way of progress.

**Numbers:** This can work with any number of people although people may need to work in pairs or small groups.

**Time needed:** The group will need anything from 20 minutes onwards for this exercise.

**Space needed:** There needs to be enough space for at least one 'road' (approximately 2' x 6') to be laid out on the floor per group of up to six people.

**Materials:** The group will need pens, footstep shapes, wall shapes.

**Description of tool:** A roll of paper is used to represent a road onto which the following can be placed:

- *footstep cards* – to record what has been achieved;
- *wall cards* – to record known difficulties/barriers.

**Process:** Roads are laid down on the floor – each one could relate to the key themes of the assessment framework, for example, communication and learning or capacity building. The facilitator should ask participants to discuss what has been achieved and to record their thoughts onto different footstep cards – they then place them on the road. They are also asked to consider the barriers/difficulties they are facing and to record these onto 'walls' and place them on the road. If there are several roads then participants need to move around them in order to comment on all. Alternatively, people could opt to work on one particular theme. Once all the roads are complete, the participants can consider future steps that will need to be taken to address the barriers. As part of this they may wish to identify training and support needs, resources requirements, potential partners, and so on. There will need to be time at the end to bring together the different ideas into one agreed plan.

### *An example of application*

The 'steps and barriers' exercise involved displaying each of the 12 *Active partners* benchmarks on separate flip charts with the key considerations also displayed to help people's thinking. Both the benchmarks and key considerations were sometimes slightly reworded to relate them to the specific context they were being applied to. Alongside each flip chart, two sets of symbols were provided – feet (for steps) and walls (for barriers). Participants were asked to think about each benchmark in turn and to log their own views about:

1. what the regeneration scheme in question had already achieved in relation to the benchmark (written onto feet and placed on the flipchart); and
2. what barriers – difficulties and issues – still needed to be addressed (written onto walls).

This proved an effective way of sharing more detailed views than the speedo exercise. One way of building on this initial sharing was to then work in four groups focusing on the four dimensions of the benchmarks to consider further steps that could be taken to address the identified 'walls', and begin to develop proposals for a future action plan.

## C: STAKEHOLDER CARDS

**Purpose:** To:

- 1 collectively identify stakeholders and begin to assess their contributions and significance;
- 2 identify stakeholders and start to examine power and powerlessness (real and perceived).

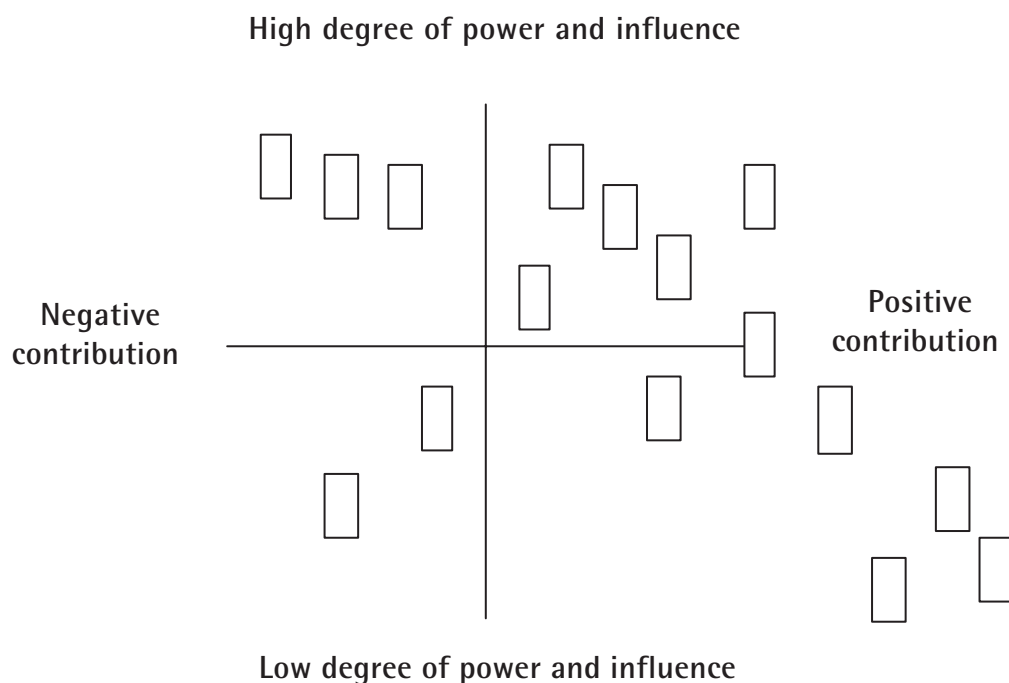
**Numbers:** Minimum of six people.

**Time needed:** Around 45 minutes depending on the exercise undertaken.

**Space needed:** A large table area or floor area is needed.

**Materials:** Pens are needed for writing on cards, tape for the grid.

**Description of tool:** You can either use pre-written cards for the more usual stakeholders such as the local council, paid officials, community facilitator, funder, non-governmental organisation, community group, youth club, and so on, or blank cards so that participants can identify specific stakeholders. A grid is also required which, when placed on the floor, illustrates a matrix with powerful and powerless on one axis, and positive and negative on the other (long pieces of tape will do the trick!).



**Process:** The stakeholder cards are randomly dealt to everyone in the group. The participants are then asked to place these cards at the point that they feel is appropriate on the matrix. The participants should not enter into discussion at this point.

Once the participants have placed their cards, the whole group then stands back and looks at the picture presented. Individuals can then ask for blank cards on which they write their own stakeholders and place them on the matrix.

Each participant can question the placing of up to two cards and a discussion may ensue. After 20 minutes, each participant is allowed to move one card if he or she wishes. The new picture is assessed and the facilitator encourages a discussion based on this picture which will illustrate who has or is perceived to have power, and who does not. It will also illustrate who is felt to be sympathetic and supportive and who is not. If you have access to a digital camera, this can be helpful in capturing how the picture changes over time.

The role of the facilitator is to get the group to focus on how to reduce the level of power of some stakeholders and increase the power of others and to shift those stakeholders who are thought to be negative. If a copy of this map is made, the group can repeat the exercise every six months to see how much progress is being made. The facilitator should keep the discussion open but should try to direct the group to think positively about how this picture can be changed for the better. This is likely to involve some action planning.

## D: OBJECTIVES EXERCISE

Using the work you have carried out in establishing your baseline position and identifying issues (see Section 2), this exercise can help to develop group discussion and consensus in setting objectives.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this exercise is to build a quick general consensus as to which objectives members of an organisation or partnership can agree on and which they cannot.

**Numbers:** This can work with groups of between five and 30 people.

**Time needed:** The exercise will need between 10 and 30 minutes, depending on the size of the group and the number of objectives that need to be discussed.

**Process:** Split into groups (related to the different framework themes or to programme activity). Each group should propose strategic activities/objectives and write them onto blank cards. Lay all the cards with suggested objectives onto a table and ask everyone to consider the objectives put forward. Next, without any discussion or talking, the whole group circles around the table and reads the ideas written on the cards. They are then asked to turn over any they do not agree with. Once everyone has had the chance to turn over as many cards as they want, there will be several cards that have not been turned over. These cards become the unanimously agreed objectives because nobody has disagreed with them. This will help you to quickly identify those objectives that everyone agrees with (face-up cards) and those that require further discussion (those turned over).

When you have a set of agreed objectives you will need to discuss priorities. For example, you may want to agree priority activities for the next three months, the next 12 months and subsequent years. You could begin to do this by placing your agreed objectives onto one of three flip charts representing the three timescales. An action plan can then be developed which includes milestones that can be used as indicators of progress. It is important to involve all key stakeholders in this exercise and to produce the resulting strategy (or at least a summary of it) for further consultation and refinement.

## E: DRAWINGS AND PICTURES

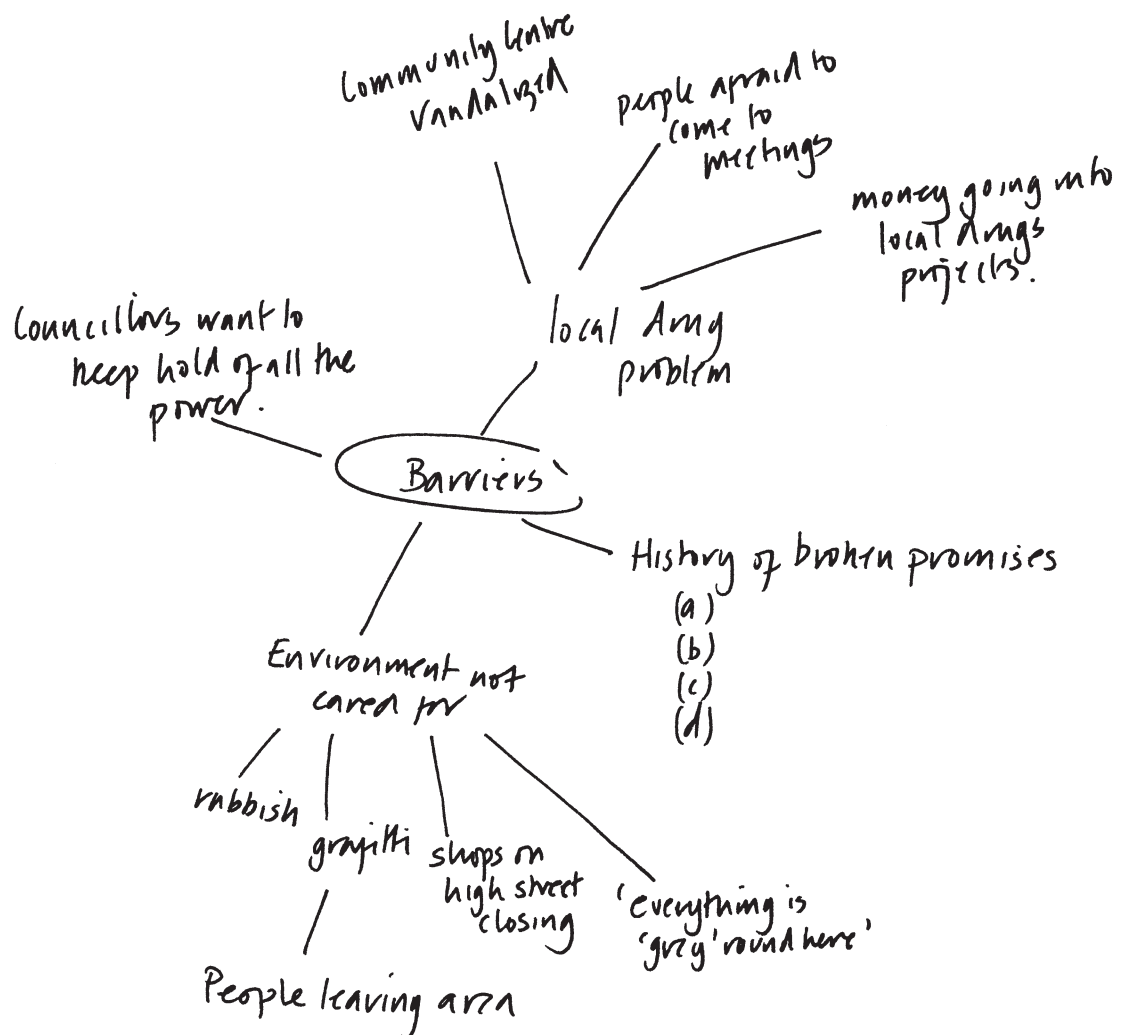
We have found that pictures can be a very powerful way of capturing how people feel about what is going on at a particular moment in time. In the examples below, drawings describing the relationship between individual projects and a central initiative (also a project funder) were done around a year apart. People talked about their drawings and explained what they meant. There was a considerable difference in the drawings from one period to another. Drawings can be used to describe most sorts of relationships people have. People could be asked, for example, to draw their perception of 'leadership' or to draw how the community (for example, Muslim community) experiences participation. Alternatively they might be asked to draw the whole organisation system. It is very important, however, to ask people specifically not to draw structure diagrams. They should draw pictures which represent what they feel, and if they want to add words, these should be added later. They are also a good way of sharing perceptions across the language and cultural divide. Drawings are particularly good at capturing feelings. These pictures do not require any drawing skill.



September 2001

## F: SPIDER'S WEB MAPS

Spider's web maps help you to think through what the real cause of a problem is, and whether you are evaluating the right thing. Start at the centre and write down what the problem is in a bubble. Then draw some lines out from the bubble and write inside new bubbles what you think the causes of those problems are. Then draw lines out from your new bubbles and write down what you think the causes of those causes are. And so on. This can help you to understand where action really needs to take place if a problem is to be resolved.



## G: LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION SCALE

It is important to be clear about what level of participation is offered in each decision-making arena. This does not mean that 'control' is better than 'limited delegation' but it may be. It is important to recognise, for example, that control and limited delegation have quite different implications for participation. This tool has been adapted from Sherry Arnstein's 'ladder of participation'.

This scale should be used whenever it is suggested that levels of participation be benchmarked.

Position on scale		Explanation
Ownership	9	Communities have ownership of all assets – there are no conditions which have to be met
Control	8	Communities have control over all activities, but only within conditions laid out in contractual arrangements
Substantial delegation	7	Partner organisations give substantial control over decision making to communities
Limited delegation	6	Partner organisations give limited control over decision making to communities
Advisory input	5	Communities have a formal advisory role
Genuine consultation	4	Communities are properly and genuinely consulted
High quality information	3	Communities are given high quality information
Consultation controlled by decision makers	2	Communities are consulted, but only on options which have been carefully constructed by those with the power
Lip-service only	1	Despite the rhetoric, participation amounts to nothing



## H: MEETINGS CHECKLIST

For each meeting you might want to check the following:

**Adequate notice of meetings**

People need time to arrange childcare to read information and sometimes to consult others

**Childcare available**

Childcare allowances, creches, and so on

**Warm meeting rooms**

**Accessible buildings**

Consideration should be given to siting meetings on bus routes. Good disabled access should be ensured, and so on

**Meetings on community territory**

More people are likely to come to meetings if the meeting feels as if it is 'theirs'

**Refreshments**

**Varied meeting times**

**Meetings arranged in a circle**

Traditional-style meetings with a top table do not encourage discussion about issues

**Interpretation, translation and technical aids where necessary**

**Simple information and accessible language**

50-page agendas in complicated language are still very common

**Meetings without agendas**

It is important for communities and organisations to have time to explore what is important to them. Too often, discussion is driven by what has to be done by next week

**Separate complaint sessions**

Meetings often get clogged up by complaints. Separate time needs to be allowed for these

**Agendas constructed by tenants and residents**

Too often tenants and residents are there simply to comment on reports and issues presented by councils or partnership officers

**Expenses for attendance**

**Provision of transport where necessary**

## I: THE 'HATS' FORM

This form was devised to help groups be more aware of the various different and multiple roles in the community played by group members, and of what groups they represented by their presence.

Filling the form in causes participants to reflect on their own multiple roles and the value they bring to the table. An analysis of the (anonymous) forms is quick and easy to do. It will show quickly the balance between, for example, councillors, council officers, paid workers of voluntary groups and community members who have none of these roles. It will also show whether there is a representative presence of parents and other carers, and of people with a business commitment to the area. If the analysis shows the group to be very unbalanced, action may be taken to redress this.

Please tick all the boxes that apply and add any others you think should be there. You may prefer to start using the blank form opposite.

Local resident	<input type="checkbox"/>
Councillor (specify which type)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Council employee	<input type="checkbox"/>
School governor	<input type="checkbox"/>
Member of management committee of any other official body with paid employees	<input type="checkbox"/>
Member of management committee (specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>
Member of community or voluntary organisation (specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Owner/partner/shareholder of local business with other employees	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local employee (specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Volunteer worker	<input type="checkbox"/>
Owner of land locally, other than your home	<input type="checkbox"/>
Member of political party (specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Member of campaigning group etc (specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Involved in any government-supported initiatives/programmes (specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parent of child(ren) under 20	<input type="checkbox"/>
Carer	<input type="checkbox"/>
Others _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>

**What different hats do we wear?**

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## J: THE DECISION TRAIL

In order to gain evidence of how power works in organisations and partnerships it is necessary to track proposals put forward (and decisions made) by communities to see if they are waylaid (when, how and by whom). You can record discussions that you make and keep track of them using the forms on the next page.

Think about what happened to an objective on its way to implementation? Was it changed? Was it delayed? Was it taken off the agenda? As the initiative proceeds, please keep a track of what happens to this objective, describing:

- steps taken (example: 'planning permission sought', or 'application to district council for funding');
- any good outcome (example: 'council offers part funding');
- any obstacle encountered (example: 'apply to charity for match funding, six-month delay before rejected; council funding lost because of new financial year');
- any problems resulting (example: 'volunteers lose heart');
- next steps taken to overcome the blockage;
- outcomes of next steps.

Continue with this exercise until the objective is either achieved, compromised or abandoned. The blank decision trail form overleaf has nine steps, but you may only need one or two. At the end of the process you should reflect on what was achieved (or not) and why (or why not).

Example of application

Step 1	EXAMPLE
Action agreed	Agreed to seek planning permission for the development of a local skate park on the piece of waste ground by the park
Outcome	Advised by local official not to pursue it
Obstacles/problems	Discovered local business had applied for outline planning permission for a car park on the site which had the support of local councillors
Step 2	
Action agreed	Agreed to lobby two local councillors [and so on] ...

## Decision trail form

### Step 1

Action agreed

Obstacles/problems

Outcome

### Step 2

Next action agreed

Obstacles/problems

Outcome

### Step 3

Next action agreed

Obstacles/problems

Outcome

**Step 4**

Next action agreed

Obstacles/problems

Outcome

**Step 5**

Next action agreed

Obstacles/problems

Outcome

**Step 6**

Next action agreed

Obstacles/problems

Outcome

**Step 7**

Next action agreed

Obstacles/problems

Outcome

**Step 8**

Next action agreed

Obstacles/problems

Outcome

**Step 9**

Next action agreed

Obstacles/problems

Outcome

Ongoing and concluding views

A large, empty rectangular box with rounded corners, intended for taking notes or recording views. It is currently blank.



## K: RECORDING MEETINGS

(to be used in conjunction with official agenda and minutes)

Question	Answer	Comment
Name of group		
Date of meeting		
Main purposes of meeting		
Meeting chaired by?		
Agenda drawn up by?		
How long did the meeting last?		
Did the agenda fit the needs of the meeting?		
Had promised tasks necessary to the meeting been completed?		
Did either notice given for meetings or the time and place prevent anyone from coming? Were there any consequences of this?		
Who took the minutes? (to be recorded once minutes received) Were there any notable items missing from the minutes? Were they recorded accurately?		



Did the meeting actually further the purposes of the meeting as listed above?

Can you think of changes that would help to make future meetings more effective?

Any other issues

Name of person making this record \_\_\_\_\_

Position \_\_\_\_\_