

The Business Case for Empowerment in the Economic Downturn

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East of England
Empowerment Learning Event
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Sticks and carrots



Laws
Inspection
Sanctions
Media pressure

Cost-effective
It works
Popular
Culture change

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Key legal/policy drivers

- 2007 Local Government & Public Involvement in Health (LGPiH) Act - duty to inform, consult & involve
- Sustainable Communities Act (2007)
- Participatory Budgeting Strategy (2008)
- Comprehensive Area Assessment proposals (2009), Place Survey & NIS
- Local Democracy, Economic Development & Construction (LDED) Act (2009) – extended duty to involve, petitions, promotion of democracy



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Why citizen involvement now ?

- Most centralised system of running local services in West
- Successive Governments responsible !
- Reached limits of effectiveness and... it's bureaucratic and expensive !
- "Bottom-up" accountability ... replaces "top down" micro-management
- Evidence that involving citizens works
- Rise of consumerism & explosion of information through internet
- Individual & collective voice & choice



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Benefits of involvement

"growing evidence, from UK and abroad, of benefits in involving citizens in local decision making and service provision"

Local Government & Public Involvement in Health Bill guidance:

- strengthening democratic legitimacy of government & civic life of community
- more efficient & effective services that better reflect needs of users and have higher levels of customer satisfaction
- safer communities & more attractive built environment
- strengthening community cohesion



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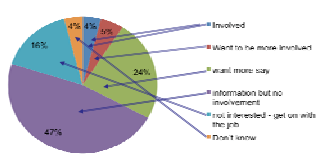
Or to put it more simply.....

- Better services
- Better outcomes
- Strengthens democracy
- Strengthens social capital
- Strengthens community cohesion

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Do people want to be involved?

MORI August 2009



Response	Percentage
Involved	4%
Want to be more involved	4%
Want more say	26%
Interested but no involvement	47%
Not interested - get on with their job	19%


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Why don't people get involved?

Power Inquiry (2006): "citizens do not feel that the processes of formal democracy offer them enough influence over political decisions"

"Citizens often believe that the official mind is already made up, or that it will not listen to the results of participation exercises" (Lowndes et al 2001)

Audit Commission 2005 survey of 'best practice' authorities found that three-quarters failed to link the results of consultation with decision-making processes



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Better services in an economic crisis

Empowerment is not a luxury – it can save money!



- Involvement leads to better targeting of services
- Co-ordinated engagement can save money

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Better outcomes

- Use of "local knowledge" to improve operational matters*
- Correlation of satisfaction with local council and ability to influence local decisions
- Behaviour change programmes
- Correlation of happiness with ability to influence

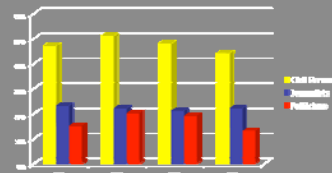


* Maguire & Truscott study of community involvement in LSPs, 2006

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Trust in politicians

MORI Poll – Do you generally trust these groups to tell the truth or not?

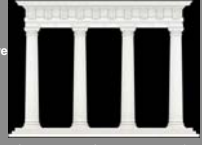


Group	Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Category 4
Civil Servants	85	90	85	80
Responsibility	45	45	45	45
Politicians	35	45	40	35

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Strengthening democracy

Representative Democracy



Participatory Democracy

- Participatory democracy can boost representative democracy
- Restore people's faith in process in discredited politics

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Strengthening social capital

Increasing satisfaction with area as a place to live

- Increased feelings of community/neighbourliness: More likely to feel people in area friendly and neighbours look out for each other. Less likely to have problems with neighbour.
- More likely to feel can influence local decisions
- Increased feelings of safety/security: Feel safer walking alone after dark. Less likely to think vandalism/graffiti, crowds/gangs, teenagers hanging around and being attacked/harassed a problem.

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Strengthening community cohesion



- Divisions within and between communities
- Economic scarcity makes it worse
- Transparency in decision-making
- Blackburn with Darwen 2004 – pre-Total Place money tracker work re BNP

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Total Place programme

- Budget Reports – Sir Michael Bichard Efficiency Report
- Recession: marginal savings not enough – restructure local services
- Counting Cumbria project - 13 national pilots & other areas
- "Watchword" for rethinking future local services
- Involving people in process/money will be next step



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Questions

- 1) What are the biggest obstacles to arguing for more citizen involvement?
- 2) What would make it easier to argue the case for more citizen involvement?
- 3) What examples do you have of where citizen involvement has worked?

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