

**take part**

Active learning for active citizenship

# The national framework for active learning for active citizenship

## Acknowledgements

This framework was a collaborative effort, drawing together the expertise of many skilled practitioners in the fields of community development, community engagement and education. It draws on a wide body of work and decades of practice. We would like to thank everyone who contributed.

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This framework was compiled, written and edited by Jill Bedford, Helen Marsh and Dave Wright.

## Foreword

The Government is determined that local public services should become more responsive to the needs and concerns of citizens and communities. How this will be achieved is set out, in part, in *Strong and prosperous communities*, the recent Local Government White Paper. The empowerment of citizens and communities to have greater influence over policies and services – the Together We Can approach – is an indispensable strand in the process. But we also want to encourage people to take part more actively in all aspects of community life.

So I am delighted to endorse the publication of the Take Part learning framework. It is firmly grounded in the practical experience of the seven Active Learning for Active Citizenship hubs, analysed and evaluated in the report by Goldsmiths College that we published earlier in 2006. It goes a step further, however, in applying the lessons we learned; and it completes the work begun by the Department for Education and Skills in introducing citizenship education into schools and supporting the Post-16 Citizenship Programme for 16 to 19-year-olds.

The Take Part framework is a very practical resource, available for anyone seeking to enable adults to acquire the knowledge, skills and confidence to make a difference in their communities. Moreover, the use of this resource is supported by well-grounded practical experience from the Take Part network, which offers advice and help in the development of learning programmes.

My hope is that funders and policy makers will recognise the importance of investing in learning opportunities for active citizenship, based on the Take Part framework, to help them achieve their wider objectives. And I am confident that voluntary and community organisations and educational institutions will find in the framework all they need to develop good quality learner-centred programmes in active learning for active citizenship, suited to their local circumstances.

**Baroness Andrews of Southover**  
**Parliamentary Under Secretary of State,**  
**Department for Communities and Local**  
**Government**

## Welcome

Welcome to the Take Part learning framework, a manual for practitioners and providers of learning programmes in citizenship skills for adults. Take Part is the result of a two-year pilot programme, Active Learning for Active Citizenship, in which seven hubs in the English regions tried out different approaches to devising and providing citizenship learning, with a diverse range of participants. The good practice they developed during the pilot has informed the advice and ideas presented in this framework, so that others can create their own programmes.

As well as supporting those practitioners who are already involved, we hope that the framework will inspire, inform and offer practical advice for individuals, community groups and organisations wanting to get involved in organising, facilitating and supporting adult education for active citizenship. We hope too that it will encourage policy makers, funding bodies and planners to recognise the value and the impacts of active learning for active citizenship and offer long-term support.

This framework has been put together as a collaborative process, with members of the Take Part hubs (formerly Active Learning for Active Citizenship hubs) working together to explore the themes of active learning and active citizenship, write the case studies and synthesise their experiences. The hubs have formed a network to carry forward the lessons of Take Part and promote it and this framework provides their contact details for support in their regions.

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## 1. Introduction

This section gives the background to Take Part and Active Learning for Active Citizenship – its aims, principles and approaches.

### 1.1 The story of Take Part

The Active Learning for Active Citizenship programme, the forerunner to Take Part, was established in 2004. Funded by the Home Office's Civil Renewal Unit, its purpose was to devise and try out effective programmes of citizenship learning for adults. These programmes would 'work to improve the capacity of individuals and communities to relate to the world around them as active, critical engaged citizens. If we are to have a healthy democracy we need to support each other in identifying the issues that concern us, and develop the confidence and skills to make a difference to the world around us' (Woodward 2004). When the Government's empowerment campaign, Together We Can, was launched in June 2005, the Active Learning for Active Citizenship pilot, or ALAC, was already making a significant contribution to the government-wide drive to enable people to engage with the public realm and help shape public services.

Although empowerment and engagement are increasingly at the heart of Government policy to reform public services, many people still feel they do not have a voice in decisions that affect them. In the 2005 Citizenship Survey, 61 per cent of people felt they could not influence public bodies. With a high proportion of people feeling unable or unsure of how to become active citizens, there is clearly a need for active learning opportunities to help build up their confidence and skills.

When the Department for Communities and Local Government was created in May 2006, the Prime Minister named the empowerment of communities as 'central to achieving our wider objective of democratic renewal'. Ruth Kelly MP, Secretary of State, took up this call, saying: 'I want to see councils with the powers and levers they need to ensure all local services work together to deliver personalised services tailored to meet the needs of communities, individuals and families. That means enabling people to get things done in their neighbourhoods quickly and easily, with more say for local people, more responsive local services and more opportunities for communities to assume greater responsibility for, or even ownership of, community assets.' This aspiration is summed up in the Department's aims of 'community, opportunity, prosperity'.

The publication of the Local Government White Paper takes the theme of empowerment a step further. It places the informed, empowered citizen at the centre of the reform of local government services, creating a dynamic and responsive new relationship between elected councillors and local residents. But to take full advantage of this, many more people will need access to the skills and knowledge that will enable them to exercise their rights and responsibilities as citizens. Take Part – the result of the ALAC pilot – meets this need.

The starting point for the ALAC pilot was a mapping exercise and literature review carried out in 2003/04. Based on its findings, the next step was to bring together a steering group of voluntary and community sector representatives, academics and government policy makers to oversee the development of a programme, which they named Active Learning for Active Citizenship. The steering group rolled out seven regional hubs in England, each of which tried out their own distinctive approaches to active citizenship learning. They used a variety of tools and techniques and targeted a range of diverse individuals, but all worked to a set of shared values: social justice, participation, equality and diversity, and co-operation.

The results were inspiring. In March 2006, the Department for Communities and Local Government published the evaluation by Goldsmiths College of the ALAC programme and it was immediately clear that the hubs had been effective, in diverse ways, in empowering people to become involved in the public realm.

At the level of the individual, outcomes included people finding the confidence to speak up for the first time about what they wanted for their communities and what they thought about public services. In the South West, disabled people and their carers gained the skills to begin shaping the services they use. Women in the Black Country had a taste of political institutions at first hand, through visits to Parliament and Brussels, and were able to overcome the practical and cultural barriers that stood between them and their role in public life; many of them going on to take part in local governance and

other types of democratic engagement. And, in Lincolnshire, migrant workers from Eastern European countries took the first steps towards successful integration in the community, with enhanced understanding of their rights and responsibilities as UK residents.

Participants throughout the seven hubs reported feeling more confident, less isolated and more able to take on issues they could not have tackled before. Many have progressed into governance roles; some have gone on to further education or into employment, or have become involved in volunteering: valuable side benefits to their ALAC experience.

The hubs themselves learned valuable lessons in test driving their approaches to citizenship learning. They reinforced the importance of the learner-centred approach and the dynamic collaborative relationship between 'teacher' and 'pupil'. The hubs' activities were designed to be reflective and participatory. The hubs showed that, in the learning process, the key role was that of facilitator rather than teacher, with the techniques they used to facilitate the learning emerging from the groups' own decisions.

The Take Part network is now taking this work forward. This framework – part manual, part good practice guide – is the next major step in making citizenship learning widely available to adults. It is for anyone who wants to provide citizenship learning for adults, whether through an academic body or in a community context. It is non-prescriptive, but it provides insight, based on sound practical experience, into what works. For those who require a basis in theory

and pedagogy, the framework provides references to Freire and others. For those who require a practical guide and suggestions of elements to include in a learning programme, the hubs' case studies provide stimulating examples.

Ideally, anyone should have access, near them, to the type of learning opportunities recommended in this framework; learning experiences that start from the needs and abilities of their participants. As the Take Part approach to learning is picked up and resourced more widely through the voluntary and community sector (VCS) and learning organisations, we will see more and more people becoming active citizens. As a result, public services will be better able to meet the needs of the communities they serve, by being based on the views and priorities identified by members of those communities.

The Civil Renewal Unit has now joined the Community Empowerment Division in the Department for Communities and Local Government. From here it continues in its work to empower citizens and influence policy makers to create opportunities for community engagement. The Take Part approach to educating adults for citizenship is part of *Strong and prosperous communities*, the Local Government White Paper (DCLG 2006).

With the publication of this framework and the establishment of the Take Part network, we have a major piece of the jigsaw in place which will support the development of more empowered communities, a more vibrant democracy and a growth in equality and social justice at local, national and global levels.

## Introduction | 1.2 Active learning for active citizenship: key messages

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### 1.2 Active learning for active citizenship: key messages

**Active learning for active citizenship is:**

- a flexible approach to personal and community development through experiential learning (learning through experience and reflection) in group settings. It offers proven strategies to build stronger communities through promoting personal effectiveness, social enterprise and lifelong learning;
- shaped by the values of participation, co-operation, social justice and equality with diversity. These values require the work to be: (i) community based, (ii) learner centred, and (iii) developed through active and reflective learning;
- part of Together We Can, the Government's campaign to empower people, as citizens, to have a say in the shaping of public services locally, regionally and nationally;
- the third phase of the Government's strategy to promote education for active citizenship in: (i) school, (ii) college, and (iii) community settings;
- part of a nationwide cross-sector partnership to strengthen participative democracy across communities at every level; and
- where principles and practices of informal adult education meet principles and practices of community development.

**Society needs active learning for active citizenship, and the Take Part approach to it, because:**

- it helps equip individuals and communities with the skills, confidence and experience to

tackle the distinctive political, social and technical challenges and opportunities that confront us in an increasingly global society;

- all individuals are members of communities, and community change emerges from individuals working together; and
- it enables people to gain understanding of how power works and how they can learn to influence decisions and policies.

**Take Part is for:**

- everybody or anybody: many people in positions of authority and power could benefit as much from engaging in active citizenship learning as could those seeking empowerment; and
- people who wish to engage effectively in developing their communities.

**Take Part is delivered:**

- around four essential elements:
  - valuing your own skills and experience;
  - knowing yourself through and with others;
  - knowing how the external world operates; and
  - knowing where to go to get what you need.

This challenges the notion of individualism and competition by bringing people together to reflect upon and analyse the barriers to, and opportunities for, creating change for themselves and others. We suggest that, once people make these connections and see their own concerns

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and limitations reflected in the struggles of others, they can collectively develop strategies around how to overcome the barriers and make positive changes:

- through learning with other people;
- through practice rather than by absorbing theory. Outcomes are unpredictable; this makes some formal educational processes – with preset outcomes – unsuitable. Experiential learning is key;
- with conversation and dialogue as key tools to facilitate learning; true conversation takes place when we are open enough to accept others' points of view as worth our full consideration. Conversation is an opportunity to interrogate our own prejudices;
- by enabling people to gain new skills, insights and understanding through tackling real-life challenges in the community; and
- in a way that recognises success is not just about accreditation; impact on individual perceptions or impact on relationships in communities are as important. Progression does not always equal accreditation.

## 1.3 The background to Take Part

In recent years, citizenship learning has become part of the school curriculum, aiming to encourage children to grow up thinking 'of themselves as active citizens: willing, able and equipped to have an influence in public life' (Department for Education and Skills 1988).

In 2001, citizenship learning for 16 to 19-year-olds became a Government priority with the five-year Post-16 Citizenship Development Programme, and in September 2006, with the Post-16 Citizenship Support Programme (run by the Learning and Skills Network (LSN) on behalf of the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA)). Lessons from the Development Programme were built upon and consolidated in 2005 with the publication by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) of guidance for post-16 citizenship, *Play your part*. The Take Part framework extends this guidance to the context of adult learning.

Local authorities and the voluntary and community sector in the UK have a long tradition of involvement in adult education and, although not often acknowledged explicitly, learning for active citizenship. Learning for participative democracy and informed dissent has a strong history in the UK which cuts across all sectors of society. But, though there are numerous projects and programmes around the country which bring individuals and community groups together to acquire the knowledge and develop the skills to help them increase their influence and effect changes in the world around them, there is usually very little direct connection between them.

In recent years, however, there have been considerable efforts, in different sectors of both national and local government, to encourage citizens to make a difference, particularly in the delivery of public services. In 2005, the Government launched Together We Can, its action plan for civil renewal ([www.togetherwecan.info](http://www.togetherwecan.info)). This has brought together 12 government departments with the aim of empowering people to have more influence over the decisions affecting their communities and to engage with the public realm.

The Active Learning for Active Citizenship pilot was established in 2004 and became part of the Together We Can action plan. The pilot brought together seven regional hubs:

- Black Country
- Greater Manchester
- Lincolnshire, East Midlands
- London
- South West
- South Yorkshire
- Tees Valley.

The hubs' work was based on the underlying **values** of **social justice, participation, equality, diversity** and **co-operation**. The case studies presented in this framework illustrate what the hubs did.

## 1.4 The Take Part vision

The vision underpinning Take Part is not new. It has been explored before in the radical community education movement in the 1970s and in community development work. It suggests a radical reappraisal of the relationships between education, politics and society.

Education is not only about enabling individuals to progress, pass exams and get good jobs, rather it is about:

- enabling society to progress;
- enabling individuals to make critical choices concerning what they want or need to know; and
- enabling us to learn how to change the world.

How we learn is as much a part of the vision as what we learn. From the Take Part perspective, education is an active experience. It is as much about sharing what we know as it is about learning from others.

### **A process of re-engagement**

Politics, for Take Part, is not just something to be observed and understood, it is something to be lived. Take Part aims to create new and better opportunities for people to use their knowledge and capacity to shape their lives and their communities. It is widely acknowledged that many people feel disengaged from the world around them, unable to exert influence on the wider world they live in. They support democracy as a principle but do not see or feel it in action in their everyday lives.

Take Part is all about that process of re-engagement. Rather than taking a top-down approach – prescribing what

potential learners need in order to become ‘active citizens’ – Take Part advocates a bottom-up process, starting with community concerns and then building a programme based on a cycle of reflection and action. Communities can be focused on location, interest or identity.

### **We are all citizens**

This framework does not propose a ‘deficit model’, which suggests that only some isolated and inadequate individuals and communities need to learn how to become ‘active citizens’. Professionals and policy makers also need to be actively learning about active citizenship, helping society to develop strategies to promote social solidarity and social justice, and learning how to listen to those whose voices are less easily heard. Active learning for active citizenship is for all of us.

Learning opportunities should be accessible to all, which means there is a particular need to support those who face power inequalities, structural and institutional barriers, or educational, social and cultural barriers to their participation. Investment of resources is required, both to support the learning process and the learners themselves, and also to train skilled learning facilitators.

Active learning for active citizenship has to be voluntary rather than obligatory and programmes need to be flexible enough to take account of the pressures exerted on people’s time and money. Rather than attempting to prescribe, this learning framework aims to encourage providers and participants to actively design localised learning. Informal education underpins this approach.

**A multi-faceted approach**

There are no quick fixes. Gaining knowledge in itself does not create the power to change the world, either locally or globally. Knowledge needs to be accompanied by understanding, confidence and skills – plus a willingness to critically review and reflect. Some of the ideas and values that we take for granted reflect the status quo and maintain inequalities. If we want a healthy democracy and a fairer society, then we need to encourage the exploration of alternative perspectives as well as political literacy.

## 1.5 What is active citizenship?

For many people, ‘citizenship’ is the embodiment of the rights and responsibilities that they are due, and owe, from living in a particular nation state.

For Take Part though, this is not enough. Firstly, of course, we must add the term active to citizen, with the fundamental implication that citizens should be actively involved in the mechanisms of governance. This active involvement does not stop with voting, or even with volunteering, because both of these activities can be carried out ‘within the rules’, without challenging existing structures to do things differently.

### **Not just understanding, but influencing**

Active citizenship is concerned with more than learning ‘the rules of the game’, and how to participate within existing models and structures. From Take Part’s perspective, active citizenship should be defined more broadly to encompass active learning for political literacy and empowerment, addressing structures and relations of power and working to change these, where necessary, in the pursuit of social inclusion and social justice agendas (Lister 1997). It also relates to how people can promote community cohesion and social solidarity, thereby strengthening civil society as well as empowering individual citizens.

Community development approaches to the promotion of active citizenship are important to consider – it is about ‘working both sides of the equation’ to build ‘a more active and engaged civil society and a more responsive and effective state that can deliver needed public services’ (Gaventa 2004 p27).

It is crucial that people are active in their own communities in all sorts of ways, and equally crucial that statutory bodies are able to open themselves to include people in policy-making processes.

Given political literacy and the necessary skills, people can ‘actively shape social change, promoting social solidarity and social justice within the context of globalisation’ (Mayo and Rooke 2006 p12).

### **Types of citizenship**

There are several models used in current thinking about citizenship and its relation to the individual, state and society. The Take Part hubs drew on some of these models when devising their programmes and planning their outcomes. Over the course of the Take Part pilot, the hubs shared their ideas of citizenship in relation to work with individuals and communities.

One of the models that hubs considered is the typology developed by Westheimer and Kahne (2004). This identifies three separate models of citizenship and citizenship education:

- the ‘personally responsible citizen’, for whom citizenship education increases their awareness of individual rights and responsibilities;
- the ‘participatory citizen’, for whom citizenship education also enhances their knowledge of participatory structures and rights; and
- the ‘justice-orientated citizen’ for whom citizenship education also adds a high level of awareness of collective rights, more widely, and a high level of collective political and social responsibility, including

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responsibilities to engage with issues of social justice and equality (Westheimer and Kahne 2004).

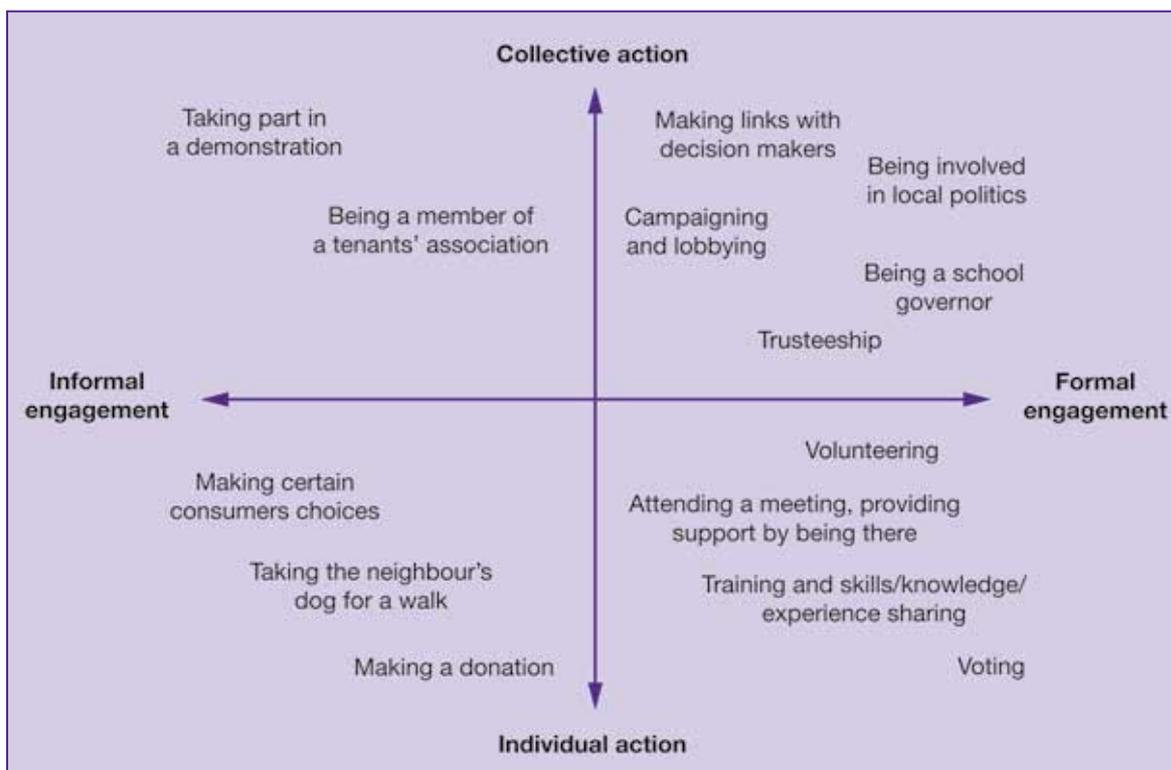
While this approach stimulated useful discussions, the hubs also raised a number of reservations with regard to how far these models were useful when considering the work done through Take Part. Through their discussions, the hubs decided that, in terms of Take Part, there is some merit in the notion of a typology consisting of three differing definitions of 'citizenship' and 'active citizenship':

- the citizen as a 'voter' and 'volunteer';
- the citizen as an individual within a group(s), actively participating in existing structures, taking up opportunities for participation, including participation in the planning and delivery of services; and

- the citizen as an individual who also participates within group(s), actively challenging unequal relations of power, promoting social solidarity and social justice, both locally and beyond, taking account of the global context.

The diagram below illustrates a different type of citizenship framework, showing the connections between individual and collective actions, and formal and informal engagement (NCVO 2005).

Take Part recognises that, while an individual may be active through formal engagement methods such as volunteering, they may still require support in participating on the collective level, for instance by taking part in a community group (formal engagement) or getting involved with organisations campaigning on human rights (informal engagement).



People are likely to be engaged on different levels at the same time. It is important to recognise this when devising Take Part learning programmes to suit the individual. Active learning for active citizenship needs to be conceptualised as a process. So, for example, individuals may become active as volunteers, but this in no way suggests that individuals may not be supported to engage as members of community groups, actively participating in governance structures (such as school governing bodies or local strategic partnerships, for example), or as active members of organisations campaigning on human rights, the environment and social justice issues. Equally, people are likely to be active at different levels at the same time.

## **Introduction | 1.6 Civil renewal and active citizenship – defining our terms**

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### **1.6 Civil renewal and active citizenship – defining our terms**

There are many theories and approaches to understanding and defining civil society, civil renewal, civil engagement and civic engagement and their links to active citizenship. The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) published *Civil renewal and active citizenship: a guide to the debate* in 2005 to outline and pull together the many diverse views on the topic. Even so, these remain contested concepts with continued debate on their meaning and application. The following attempts to outline a broad interpretation for these commonly used terms.

**Civil society** can be viewed as people voluntarily organising themselves and where (uncoerced) human association (Hodgson 2004) takes place. It has also been identified as ‘all organisations operating in the space between the state and the market’ (Wilding 2004).

Edwards (2005) summarised ideas surrounding civil society as being:

- about social, economic and political progress;
- that part of society composed of voluntary associations and organisations, which provide

opportunities for people to act together and an environment where civic values and skills are developed; and

- a space or forum for argument and deliberation, in which people can express their different viewpoints and negotiate a sense of common interest.

**Civil participation** is people getting involved with each other to pursue their own goals and interests. It includes participation in residents associations, sports clubs, faith groups etc (NCVO 2005).

**Civil engagement** is people connecting with, and contributing to, the development of policies and governance; where citizens/people, policy makers, service deliverers and politicians engage in the process of governance. This could be through user panels, citizens’ juries, citizen governors, non-executive board members, advisory groups, etc.

‘**Civic engagement** involves public participation in the process of governance, and the development of active and empowered communities which facilitate policy-making’ (Whiteley 2004).

#### **Another view on civil participation**

‘... civil participation, even for fun, is socially valuable in its own right. It contributes to wider goals of social inclusion and solidarity, whether or not it leads to political engagement. It is through voluntary associations

in civil society that social capital is generated and mobilised, strengthening relationships between citizens, developing a sense of connectedness and fostering norms of trust and reciprocity.’ (NCVO 2005)

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# Introduction | 1.6 Civil renewal and active citizenship – defining our terms

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## Civil renewal – a two-way street

**Civil renewal** can be viewed as the revitalisation of civil society, including both civic engagement and civil participation. Recent political interest in civil renewal stems from a focus upon revitalising governance and democratic structures.

### Other views of civil renewal

‘Civil renewal is about people and government working together to make life better. It involves more people being able to influence decisions about their communities, and more people taking responsibility for tackling local problems, rather than expecting others to. The idea is that government can’t solve everything by itself, and nor can the community: it’s better when we work together. There are three key ingredients to civil renewal:

1. **Active citizens:** people with the motivation, skills and groups with the capability and resources to bring people together to work out shared solutions.
2. **Strengthened communities:** community groups with the capability and resources to bring people together to work out shared solutions.

3. **Partnership with public bodies:** public bodies willing and able to work as partners with local people.’

(Department for Communities and Local Government, [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk))

‘A broad agenda for civil renewal is needed, which recognises the autonomy of civil society and highlights the importance of building connections within and between communities as well as with government: strengthening civil society must be an end in itself as well as a means of achieving other ends.’

(NCVO 2005)

## 1.7 Take Part values in action

Our core values of:

- social justice
- participation
- diversity and equality, and
- co-operation

are delivered in accordance with the following principles:

- learner centred
- active and reflective, and
- community based.

The concept of social justice highlights barriers to full citizenship through inequality: restricted access to employment, goods and services; under-representation in political, economic and community decision making; marginalisation in society; segregation; direct discrimination; harassment, intimidation and violence.<sup>3</sup>

### **Social justice**

Social justice is about changing systems and shaping cultures in a way that will guarantee full citizenship, creating ‘a just and fair society with freedom and equal opportunities for all in terms of: liberty, opportunity, income, wealth and self-respect’.<sup>1</sup>

It is about enabling people to claim their human rights: legal, political, civil, social, economic and environmental, to meet their needs and have greater control over the decision-making processes which affect their lives.<sup>2</sup>

#### **Social justice: the Lincolnshire, East Midlands hub experience**

##### **Making it easier for migrant workers to access their rights**

One example of social justice in action comes from the work the Lincolnshire, East Midlands hub has done with migrant worker communities. These communities have a range of rights under European law, including rights to education and even, given sufficient length of residency, the right to vote in

local elections. However, there have been numerous barriers, including social exclusion, language problems and insufficient access to information. By linking up with local service providers and creating a space for dialogue as part of the Take Part programme, the hub has helped to ensure that these rights have a real meaning and a real impact on people’s daily lives.

1. Extracted and adapted from: Rawls, 1971

2. *The Strategic Framework for Community Development*, [www.cdx.org.uk](http://www.cdx.org.uk)

3. [www.scvo.org.uk](http://www.scvo.org.uk)

**Participation**

People participate through:

- identifying their own learning needs and citizenship outcomes;
- being involved in decision making throughout the course;
- sharing their own expertise and experiences with others;
- supporting other learners;
- evaluating the success of the programme; and
- identifying further learning needs and desired outcomes.

**Participation: the South West hub experience**

**Shared learning creates new opportunities**

The Speaking Up programme focused on people in danger of being excluded from participation because of mental health issues and severe learning disabilities. Initially, the programme was conceived to build self-confidence among this group of learners and to empower them to ‘speak up’ about their needs in relation to the provision of health and welfare services. The programme was successful, with learners regularly participating in local service users’ forums.

One of the outcomes of this process was the identification of other learning needs, in particular those of carers and of local service providers who needed to learn how to listen and how to respond. As a result of the gaps revealed, carers were trained to deliver awareness-raising workshops for service providers. The programme has continued to evolve out of the needs of the participants and out of the local contexts, with participants drawing on their own experiences and expertise to create new educational opportunities.

**Participation: the Greater Manchester hub experience**

**Thinking outside the box**

“The content of our programmes included discussion of how the participants can enable people in their community to ‘have a voice’, and how best to access them.

“For example, a group of women carrying out an evaluation of the impact of a regeneration partnership on local community groups made sure that they talked to groups across the whole

geographical area and that they worked with all groups of people in the area, for example reaching people of different ages, and involving people in different activities.

“They also used their local knowledge to identify and to talk with people who had been involved with running groups which had folded, to find out why and what could have prevented this.”

**Participation: the Black Country hub experience**

**Encouraging participation in running the programme**

As part of the learning programme, the Black Country hub organised field visits to the European Parliament in Brussels. The learners were given information about the budget and timescale and

were asked to reach a decision about the type of transport they would use – taking into account individual preferences and fears. This example of democratic decision making was then critically reviewed.

**Diversity and equality**

The Take Part approach is underpinned by the recognition that our society is not equal in terms of money, capital, education, prospects, environments, employment, health and so on. As well as these tangible aspects of inequality, there exists a range of stereotypes and prejudices that result in discrimination of individuals, groups and communities, which further limit their share of the country's resources and which can have a negative effect on people's self-esteem, confidence and general well-being. Such discrimination can be about race, colour, gender, disability, appearance, religion/beliefs, sexuality, and poverty, for example.

- supporting people to challenge attitudes and behaviour of individuals, and practices of institutions that discriminate against and marginalise people;
- making sure that barriers to attending and taking part are reduced as much as possible – so that learning opportunities are open and inclusive to those who want to take part; and
- bringing diverse groups of people together and facilitating authentic dialogue around differences and commonalities to try to reduce the perceived barriers between them.

The Take Part hubs have approached these issues in the following ways:

**Diversity and equality: the London hub experience**

**Making understanding a priority**

The London hub worked with a very diverse range of participants, including black and minority ethnic groups, people belonging to faith communities, members of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities and older

people. By taking the time to reach out to a variety of different groups and by encouraging participants to share experiences, to respect differences and to focus instead on commonalities, the hub put these principles into practice throughout the programmes.

**“It has blown out some of the myths I had about people who are older. Before then I hadn’t come across people who were active after a certain age. You can be 16 or 60 and still be active. Listening to people’s personal experiences was mind blowing to hear. Now I try not to have preconceptions – now I think let’s just see**

**what this person is about and I realise that you can’t instantly recognise who you have things in common with.”**

Participant in a Black Country hub programme

#### **Diversity and equality: the Greater Manchester hub experience**

##### **Addressing different areas of exclusion**

Each programme of work involved initial ground rules to establish what would best help people contribute and learn, and to enable people to feel safe. Some groups have chosen to undertake projects to challenge particular areas of exclusion or discrimination, for example producing a Refugee Charter to help service providers work more effectively

with refugees and asylum seekers. The Gender and Community Engagement (GEM) project looked at the factors that prevent people, particularly women and women from some ethnic minority communities, being involved in decision making in different forums. The project made recommendations of how to enable access and has influenced the development of the Greater Manchester Community Engagement guidelines.

### **Co-operation**

Co-operation refers to people and organisations working together with commonly agreed goals and methods, instead of working separately in competition.

This is multi-faceted, with:

- organisations working in partnership to deliver Take Part programmes;
- facilitators working in a spirit of co-operation with learners;
- learners working co-operatively together; and
- people as citizens sharing experiences and knowledge.

**Co-operation: the Black Country hub experience**

**Celebrating the many routes to active citizenship**

The Black Country hub is a partnership between:

- Wolverhampton Asian Women and Diabetes Group – the lead organisation;
- Changes (formerly Working for Change) – independent facilitators and trainers;
- Fircroft College – independent residential further education college;
- Inspire – formerly Black Country Women’s Development Network; and

- Gate Wolverhampton – an education advice and guidance initiative.

The hub called its programme of training and support Impact! The first participants formed an independent group called Impact Plus, and they have co-operated in planning a flagship Arts Council England-funded art exhibition with Wolverhampton Art Gallery, which illustrates their individual and collective journeys through active learning to active citizenship.

**Co-operation: the South West hub experience**

**Involving patients and carers in the design of services**

Exeter Council Voluntary Service (CVS) was the hub for the South West. They worked with local health and social care providers over two years, to develop an effective partnership approach to involving patients, carers and other users of services in the design of those services. Exeter CVS provides a range of learning and development opportunities, and these helped create the partnerships. For example, a course run for Age Concern helped members of its newly appointed Senior Voice Panel to work together as a group and to

represent the needs of older people at key strategic consultative meetings and forums.

Two conferences for administrative and clerical staff of Devon mental health services included interactive workshops run by carers and service users, with the support and management of Exeter CVS. By working with groups of carers and service users to provide specific learning opportunities for public sector staff, an opportunity is being provided for a meaningful and professional approach to learning and working together.

**Co-operation: the Lincolnshire, East Midlands hub experience**

**Sharing experiences and best practice**

In Lincolnshire, the East Midlands hub brought together a Citizenship Network to share experiences and best practice. This has continued beyond the official end of the programme. The network is a partnership of voluntary and statutory sector organisations: the Mental Health

User and Carer Involvement and Development Project; CALL Advocacy in Lincolnshire; Value Added Lincolnshire; Rutland Learning Partnership; Compact Lincolnshire; Local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP); local education authorities; Boston College and the Church of England.

**Co-operation: Young Partners**

**A kit for creating lively partnerships with youth organisations**

ALAC Young Partners is designed as a platform on which to build effective partnerships between Take Part and the other movements towards active citizenship in schools, colleges and youth organisations. The Institute for Global Ethics UK Trust worked with the hubs in Greater Manchester, Lincolnshire, East Midlands and London.

The Young Partners Toolkit encourages adults and young people to work as partners, to tackle shared concerns, strengthen democratic participation and benefit local and wider communities in ways that enrich learning, develop skills and build stronger communities.

It contains sections on:

- useful organisations and resources;
- practical models of working; and
- case studies describing young people's initiatives in schools, colleges and youth organisations.

The activities in which participants are involved are grouped under four headings:

- citizenship and democracy;
- health and sustainability;
- regeneration and cohesion; and
- safety and justice.

These categories help identify the engagement of relevant departments and agencies as well as offering a basis for developing policy and conducting research.

The ability to create and capitalise on lively partnerships between young people and enterprising organisations across and beyond their local communities is fundamental to active learning in the community. The toolkit offers some guidelines and examples on approaches that work well.

The toolkit is produced as an interactive compact disc and is available from [tedhartley@mac.com](mailto:tedhartley@mac.com)

**Take Part**

The national framework for active learning for active citizenship

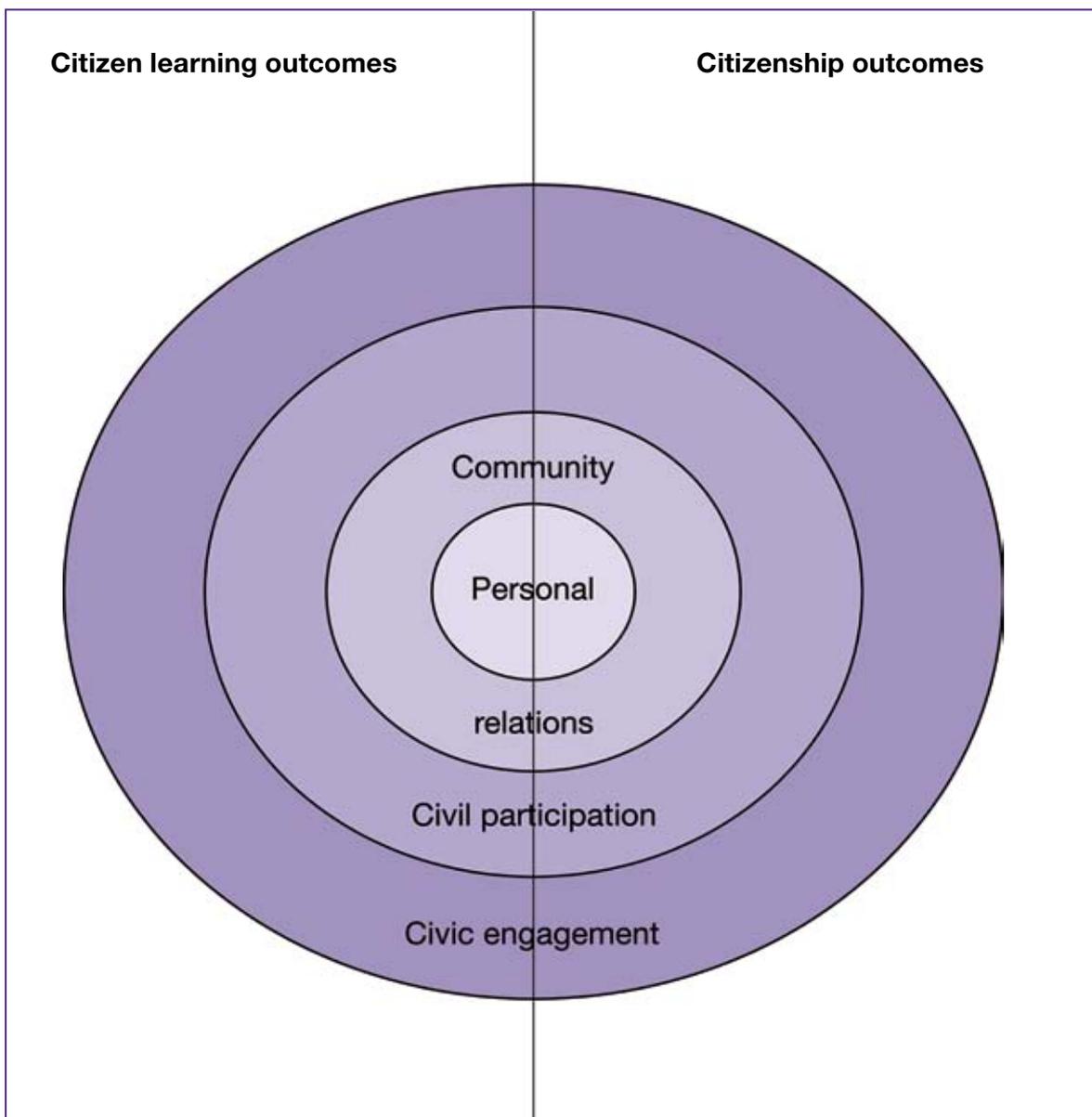
**Introduction | 1.8 The outcomes of active citizenship**

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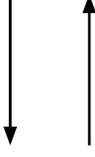
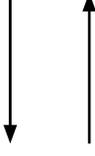
## 1.8 The outcomes of active citizenship

Active citizenship learning programmes have resulted in **citizen learning outcomes** for individuals and **citizenship outcomes** for wider society. The diagram below shows the different aspects in which active citizenship learning can have

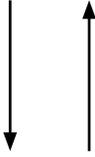
an effect – starting with personal change and spreading outwards. The matrix which follows shows some examples of both types of outcomes in these different aspects. The concept of civil renewal underpins active citizenship.



**Introduction | 1.8 The outcomes of active citizenship**

<b>Aspects of active citizenship</b>	<b>Citizen learning outcomes</b>  I feel able to... I know more about... I know how to...  <b>Examples are:</b>	<b>Citizenship outcomes</b>  Local, national, European and global dimensions  Lead to  <b>Examples are:</b>
<i>Personal</i>  	Value own skills, knowledge and confidence  Know where to go to get what you need  Communication skills, lobbying skills, negotiation skills  Feel able to have a voice	People identify and articulate their own issues and problems  People take leadership roles in their community  People have the power and will to make choices about their life  People voice their concerns
<i>Community relations</i>  	Recognise that social exclusion is the responsibility of all  Understand how their behaviour affects others  Know the basis of inequality and how power operates  Understand more about people who are different to themselves  Feel more confident in asking questions and talking to people different to themselves	Improved relations between diverse groups of people  Community projects are inclusive of people with different backgrounds  Increased points of contact between different communities  Increased networking between communities
<i>Civil participation</i>  	Understand how groups and networks work  Know how to encourage fair and democratic decision making  Understand how to encourage, support and develop volunteers  Know the importance of networking for influencing change  Chairing, facilitation skills  Negotiation, campaigning	More voluntary and community sector active in community-led service provision  Well run democratic community groups  Increased informal community organising  Increased networking between community and voluntary organisations  Public bodies have more groups to consult with  Increased volunteering opportunities

**Introduction | 1.8 The outcomes of active citizenship**

<b>Types of active citizenship</b>	<b>Citizen learning outcomes</b>  I feel able to... I know more about... I know how to... <b>Examples are:</b>	<b>Citizenship outcomes</b>  Local, national, European and global dimensions <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">Lead to</div> <b>Examples are:</b>
<p><i>Civic engagement</i></p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div>	<p>Knowing how the external world operates</p> <p>Understand your current democratic position and the opportunities for change</p> <p>Understand the rules of engagement</p> <p>Know how meetings work</p> <p>Feel able to contribute and ask questions in a public forum</p> <p>Recognise how to influence policy and practice at a European, national, regional or local level</p>	<p>More people want to and feel capable of having a responsible role in formal democratic structures</p> <p>More people take an active role at a neighbourhood/community level</p> <p>Citizens work with public bodies to set and achieve common goals</p> <p>Improved relations between citizens and statutory agencies</p> <p>More people take part in dialogue with decision makers</p> <p>People lobby for change to the way forums and other structures operate</p>

Citizen learning outcomes lead to wider citizenship outcomes at local, national, European and global levels. If people change, grow and develop, it is to be expected that society will change as a consequence.

we do, but also how we do it), and the means by which both individual and wider outcomes are achieved. The four active citizenship aspects are described below as process and outcomes.

It is important to recognise that ‘active citizenship’ is both a process (not just what

<b>Process – actions that take place to direct inputs towards intended outcomes (what we do and how we do it)</b>	<b>Outcome – things that happen in the longer term as a result of processes (the end result of our activities)</b>
<b>Personal</b> – the ways in which people gain the knowledge, skill and confidence they need to take action on the things that matter to them	<b>Personal</b> – people are more confident, have the skills, understand, and feel able to do things

**Take Part**

The national framework for active learning for active citizenship

**Introduction | 1.8 The outcomes of active citizenship**

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<b>Community relations</b> – actions that bring people together to recognise and challenge inequality and exclusion	<b>Community relations</b> – people accept the principles of social justice and opportunities for all
<b>Civil participation</b> – actions that support and strengthen the range and quality of organisation in communities	<b>Civil participation</b> – thriving community groups and networks in which people are active and involved
<b>Civic engagement</b> – ways in which people and communities interact with the outside world to achieve change	<b>Civic engagement</b> – strong, democratic, effective community organisations, responsive services and governance structures

## 2. Planning

This section outlines some of the practical considerations and forward planning involved in organising and delivering active citizenship learning programmes.

### 2.1 Deciding on your aims

The overall aim of Take Part is to contribute towards a participative democracy and support individuals and communities in developing the knowledge and skills to become active agents for change.

A first step is to be more specific about why you are undertaking this work and what you hope to achieve. Here are some examples.

#### Deciding aims: different hubs' experience

The Speaking Up programme, set up by the **South West hub**, started with the very specific purpose of giving a voice to marginalised groups. In particular, the project set out to work with people with mental health issues, with learners with severe learning disabilities and with carers, to build their confidence so that they could participate and speak up in local service user forums.

The **Black Country hub** focused exclusively on women as a community of identity and interest, with the clear purpose of increasing women's influence in public and community decision making. Thirty years on from the Sex Discrimination Act, women still face significant barriers to equal participation in many aspects of public and political life in Britain.

The **London hub**, a partnership between London Civic Forum and Birkbeck College, University of London, set out to bring together people from different communities across the capital.

The aims were to support learning about different aspects of civic leadership, including how governance and policy initiatives impact on community development, and to encourage cross-community networking.

The **Greater Manchester hub** involved 12 separate projects across six boroughs. Each project had its own aims, ranging from evaluating services to identifying needs, or reducing conflict and intercommunity tensions. The overall linked themes were: a commitment to high levels of community participation, based on self-identified needs and knowledge; and working in facilitated groups for support, critical reflection and learning.

**Planning | 2.1 Deciding on your aims**

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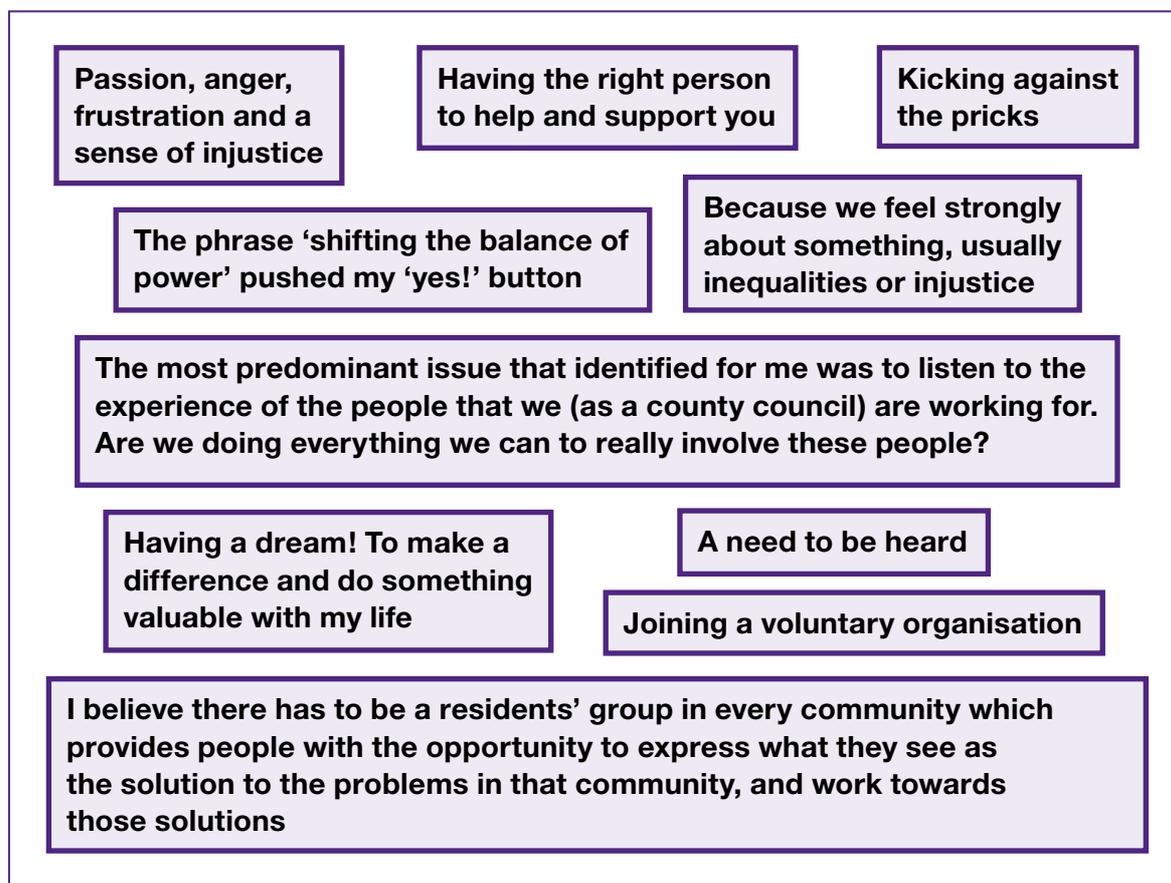
Once you are clear about the purpose of your programme, it is possible to identify specific outcomes.

The active citizenship outcomes show potential individual and wider societal outcomes resulting from active citizenship learning programmes. Some helpful questions to ask are:

- What is going to be gained by the participants, for example skills, knowledge, understanding and confidence?
- What effect will the programme have in the local community?
- Will public services be changed or improved in any way?
- Will other organisations be affected?

It is also useful to consider why people choose to become Take Part participants.

At a Take Part conference at Buckfast Abbey in Devon, May 2006, participants were asked to jot down on post-it notes some of the things that got them involved with active citizenship learning. Some of the responses are personal and emotional, others more analytical and goal-orientated; some motives emerge out of the community, other reasons are accidents of circumstance. Here is a selection of the responses:



## Take Part

The national framework for active learning for active citizenship

### Planning | 2.1 Deciding on your aims

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As the Take Part process is open ended and emerges out of the participation of the learners, not all of the outcomes will be expected or anticipated. For example, as a result of taking part in Take Part learning, women reported the following unexpected impact on their families:

**“My husband is doing more volunteering and my grandchildren have more awareness of the world around them and the other people in it.”**

**“My daughter wants to be a politician!”**

**“It has brought new life and interest to family life – the family now debates and discusses these issues.”**

**“I want to take my family to Brussels to share the same experience that I had and, in particular, to visit the European Parliament.”**

## 2.2 Creating your programme

### **Programme content**

A course or programme is likely to include the following:

- straightforward information, for example the process of passing a law in Parliament, how to become a magistrate, how the local authority works or how local decision making works;
- skills development, for example how to communicate assertively with others and decision-making skills; and
- knowledge around issues, ideas and concepts, for example issues around human rights, globalisation, conflict and so on.

It is useful to have an idea of what people know already. Sometimes the only time to do this is at the start of a new learning activity or programme or, in other situations, it is possible to ask people beforehand.

**Programme content: the Black Country hub experience****The four essentials**

The Black Country hub identified four ingredients as essential components of becoming an active citizen.

**1. Valuing skills**

This aspect focuses on the individual, whether in terms of confidence building, validating life experiences and existing skills or practical skills development; for example, presentation skills, public speaking, chairing meetings, budgeting, planning, dealing with difficult situations, being more assertive. These can be the building blocks towards increased self-esteem and self-belief.

**2. Knowing yourself through and with others**

This aspect is about reflecting upon our own situation within the context of other people's experiences. It is important to provide opportunities to make sense of the things that shape our lives; for example, education, religion, family, motherhood, sexuality, class, race or economic dependence. It is often at this point that people realise that, while they have many experiences in common, we are all products of our particular and diverse cultures, backgrounds and traditions. If we can learn how to value ourselves and communicate with others in a genuine way, we are in a better position to develop a network of support, deal with inevitable conflicts and work together to make positive changes.

**3. Knowing how the external world operates**

This aspect focuses on how the system operates; how decision-making structures are set up, how these structures work, who is involved, how accountable they are, the power dynamics in any given situation and knowing about local, national and international structures that impact upon our lives. If we are clear about our place within the system – as a voter, a constituent, a consumer or a citizen – we start to have a clearer understanding of our rights and responsibilities. Once we have this knowledge, we can make choices about where we want to be, for example an elected member, a school governor, an MP, a magistrate or a member of a citizens' panel.

**4. Knowing where to go to get what you need**

This aspect focuses on making our voices heard, asking people for information and knowing how to get what we want from individuals and organisations. This can involve negotiating, campaigning, lobbying – or simply being more assertive!

This model challenges the notion of individualism and competition by bringing people together in association, to collectively reflect upon and analyse the barriers to and opportunities for creating change for themselves and others. Once people make these connections and see their own concerns and limitations reflected in the struggles of others, they can collectively develop strategies around how to overcome the barriers and make positive changes.

**Programme content: the Greater Manchester hub experience**

**Understanding the issues, acquiring the skills**

The content of the various courses depended on the focus of the work. All, however, explored the following:

- ethics and confidentiality;
- issues of exclusion and social justice;
- how decisions are made and power used;
- mapping of resources, groups or needs;
- different approaches; and
- thinking about why!

These were coupled with practical skills such as:

- effective interpersonal communication;
- finding out information through different research methods;
- analysing and understanding findings;
- carrying out presentations; and
- report writing.

**Recognition and accreditation**

It is necessary to consider how participation and achievement are to be recognised and celebrated. See section 2.5 Progression routes.

**Recognition and accreditation: the Greater Manchester and Black Country hubs' experience**

**Two approaches to recognising achievement**

In Greater Manchester, participants obtained:

- joint Greater Manchester Metropolitan University and partner agency certification or accreditation for the work undertaken; and

- copies of any reports they had been involved with, acknowledging their part in the work.

The Black Country hub offered Open College Network accreditation at levels one, two and three.

**Recruitment**

Questions to consider are:

- Who might want to be involved?
- Who do you want to be involved and why?
- Can you approach them directly?
- Do you need to produce some publicity?
- If so, what type is most suited to the people?
- Are there any organisations – community groups, colleges, service providers – that might be able to help you contact people?
- Do you have a network of contacts already or are you going to have to develop one?

Written publicity may:

- be less suitable for people who are not familiar or comfortable with writing;
- exclude people whose first language is not English;
- exclude people with a visual impairment or those who find text difficult to read; and
- exclude people with literacy problems and those with learning disabilities.

It is important to be aware of the barriers to taking part and be clear about what you are offering to people to encourage them to join in.

When identifying the publicity you will use ask:

- Where are they likely to see/hear/receive information?
- What forms of publicity are likely to be available to/used by the community?
- Are they likely to have access to the publicity provided or are there other media that can be used?

Use a variety of means, including:

- local newspapers and community newsheets
- newsletters
- leaflets
- community radio.

Any promotional material which is developed should identify a contact person who can provide appropriate information in an accessible way.

**Recruitment: the London hub experience**

**Using established networks to reach potential participants**

London Civic Forum recruited participants through its organisational networks. It has around 1,300 member organisations, including those working for black and minority ethnic communities, faith groups, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and the disabled. Having worked for five years with these organisations and their members to support democratic engagement, London Civic Forum was able to identify recruitment possibilities in the organisations' 'word-of-mouth' networks, e-bulletins and newsletters. Where useful, one-to-one meetings were held with workers in these organisations to explain how the London Take Part

programme would be of benefit and to find out how learning could be tailored to incorporate the needs of different communities.

London Civic Forum also promoted the programme through community empowerment networks and community support initiatives such as the Scarman Trust's Community Champions. As a result, a diverse range of people was recruited, with different pre-existing levels of knowledge and experience of civic engagement. Participants were able to learn about the personal or civic experience of those from communities different to their own, with some people taking on a mentoring role.

**Recruitment: the Lincolnshire, East Midlands hub experience**

**Working with community representatives**

The Lincolnshire, East Midlands hub has engaged communities by working with community project managers, who have been encouraged to share local concerns, experiences, stories, expectations and good practice.

These people represent a wide cross section of organisations and groups which, in various ways, help to build active citizenship in the region. Each of them assists people who, in a specific way, are hard to reach in mainstream formal education.

**Recruitment: the Greater Manchester hub experience**

**Reaching people through the most appropriate routes**

Recruitment depended on the nature of the different projects:

- All the Healthy Living Network volunteers were invited to participate.
- All community organisers in Salford took part.

- Geographical areas were targeted through mail shots, publicity in local mailings or outreach work.
- The School for Participation in Longsight visited each community and voluntary group to explain the purpose and benefits of the project and recruit participants.

**Facilitators, tutors and trainers**

Facilitators, tutors and trainers can come from a variety of backgrounds, providing they understand and practise informal, participative and experiential methods. They could be:

- independent workers
- trainees who co-work with more experienced people

- university lecturers
- development workers in the voluntary and community sector
- project managers
- Basic Skills tutors
- adult education tutors.

**Facilitators, tutors and trainers: the Black Country hub experience**

The Black Country hub had a clear policy of co-training and, where possible, team training, as this models the values of participation, equality

and co-operation. It takes more time to plan and costs more, but the learner generally gets a better experience and more personalised attention.

**Venue**

There are many issues to take account of when selecting venues for learning:

- Cost – are you prepared to pay more for a pleasant environment?
- Local or central – it is often said that people prefer local venues which require less travel time, but there is a lot to recommend encouraging people to move away from their

familiar spaces and to make contact with people with whom they would not normally get the chance to engage.

- Location – near to a bus stop or train station may not equate with plenty of parking – whose needs are prioritised and why?
- Size – large room or smaller room – participative learning takes space.

## **Planning | 2.2 Creating your programme**

- Safety – make sure that meeting places are well lit and that you have safety guidelines for staff and volunteers – for example, emergency procedures, telephone contact numbers, working in pairs, first aid and an accident book.

Points to bear in mind:

- Use appropriate and accessible locations.
- Make sure that events and activities are held in venues that are physically accessible and at times and locations that are appropriate to the community members taking part. Locations and venues should be neutral and acceptable to the people you want to include; for example, schools may

hold negative associations for people and places of worship can be seen as ‘owned’ by particular groups.

- There should be reserved, accessible parking.
- Provide clear maps, directions and building plans or access routes.
- Provide local transport information.

### **Duration, frequency and timing**

How long is the course, how often does it happen and when does it take place?

These are crucial concerns for potential participants as life has to happen around the learning – life being work, children, caring commitments, other courses and learning, holidays, shopping, cleaning, family commitments and days out.

### **Duration, frequency and timing: the Black Country hub experience**

#### **Taking family responsibilities into account**

The Black Country hub offered two courses at the same time of year: Wednesdays in Sandwell and Saturdays in Wolverhampton.

The majority of women who responded to the publicity chose Saturdays as fewer of them worked at the weekends and fathers or other family members would be available to look after the children.

### **Duration, frequency and timing: the London hub experience**

#### **Allowing time for reflection**

The London hub held day-long learning sessions once a month. This allowed participants, who all worked within their communities either in a voluntary or paid capacity, enough time between sessions

to use and reflect on what they had learnt. They were provided with a log to encourage this reflection and details from people’s logs were shared at each session.

**Duration, frequency and timing: the Greater Manchester hub experience****Agreeing timings and building in flexibility**

In Greater Manchester, the length of the projects was negotiated with the participants and partner agency. For the undertaking of the accredited modules, each had a set amount of sessions to be undertaken (ten plus the activity); however, these could be taken in full days (for example, a full day a month

for six months as was the case in Hattersley, Tameside and Healthy Living Network), whereas for others, it worked better to meet weekly for a morning or evening. The activity took place between the sessions and was supported by the partner agency, who acted as co-facilitators.

**Learner support**

Supporting people through the learning process is central to the Take Part approach. As a consequence of taking part, people often make changes in their lives which can be tricky and have implications for people around them.

They may:

- become more confident;
- extend their horizons;
- be more critical about what they see going on in their family or community;
- spend more time doing things outside the home;
- meet new people; and
- think differently about things.

Support can be provided through:

- one-to-one tutorials and reflection;
- email or phone contact with tutors and group members; and
- learning sets within the group.

**And last, but certainly not least – CELEBRATION!**

Celebration events were either:

- specially organised;
- presentations added to other related events, such as day conferences or annual meetings; or
- parties where participants brought food to share.

For more ideas, see 'Celebrating participation' in section 2.5 Progression routes.

## 2.3 Resources for Take Part programmes

### **Central and local government**

The Active Learning for Active Citizenship pilot programme was supported by the Civil Renewal Unit in the Home Office. Its successor unit, the Community Empowerment Division in the Department for Communities and Local Government, continues to fund the Take Part network, to enable it to promote and disseminate the Take Part framework and advise on its local implementation. This is part of the Government's broader commitment to community empowerment through the Together We Can programme. Members of the network may be in a position to advise learning providers on the funding options available in their area.

Active citizenship and community empowerment are essential contributors to the Government's policies for the modernisation of local public services and the reform of local government, as set out in the Local Government White Paper (DCLG 2006). In considering how to implement the proposals set out in the White Paper, and enable citizens and communities to take advantage of the greater opportunities for engagement, local authorities and their statutory partners (for instance health bodies, the police, the criminal justice system) will need to review the availability of appropriate local learning opportunities for citizens and community groups, and for their own officials, in community engagement and active citizenship.

The Take Part framework is an invaluable resource in informing the development of such learning provision, and provides a sound basis for the necessary investment of funds to support it. Possible sources of funds could include the Safer and Stronger Communities Fund (administered through the Local Area Agreement in upper tier and unitary authorities from April 2007), local authorities' own learning and capacity-building budgets and the funds controlled by other public services.

### **The Learning and Skills Council**

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) has recognised the importance of active citizenship in its Annual Statement of Priorities. There are opportunities for funding Take Part learning through a number of LSC funding streams, depending on the particular nature of the learning programmes being offered, and further advice is expected from the LSC on the possibilities. In particular, funds could become available from the Personal and Community Development Learning Fund, which will be subject to a new distribution process from autumn 2007, likely to be based on policies developed by local learning partnerships or similar mechanisms.

**The health sector**

Recent developments in the health sector have placed equal importance on participation by service users in a wide range of structures. It is possible that training budgets allocated to support participation could also support Take Part activities.

**Regeneration initiatives**

Similarly, within regeneration initiatives, there are training budgets for participants, staff and improved governance, and these could be used for supporting Take Part programmes. Examples include initiatives such as Sure Start, New Deal for Communities, Guide Neighbourhoods and kindred Area-Based Initiatives (ABIs) and projects.

**The education sector**

It may be possible to access resources through providers in further and higher education (HE), as well as the Workers’

Educational Association (WEA), which is the largest voluntary sector provider of adult learning and a body with a long and distinguished commitment to supporting citizenship. Approaches should be made to local providers.

**Non-government sources**

The Big Lottery Fund is committed to supporting schemes that strengthen democracy and participation. Other trusts and charities are also committed to this area of work, and using the learning framework to support the development of projects could strengthen bids that contain programmes of work designed to widen, broaden and deepen participation in local schemes.

Partnership working encourages the shared use of resources, as in the Greater Manchester hub example on the next page.

**Resources: the South West hub experience**

**How funding for one programme element led to more**

The South West hub covered some of the costs of their Speaking Up programme by drawing down money through the LSC for the embedded Basic Skills element of their courses. This covered the cost of the tutors/ facilitators, paid for the venue and met

some of the expenses. The costs of developing the course were met initially by the Home Office as part of the Active Learning for Active Citizenship pilot. Future funding to expand the programme has been offered by Devon County Council.

**Resources: the Greater Manchester hub experience**

**Spreading costs, sharing facilities**

The Greater Manchester hub worked with partner agencies that shared the costs. Sometimes they were approached by groups who wanted work carried out and who paid for most of the facilitator time: for example, Hattersley Neighbourhood Partnership impact evaluation.

In other instances, a partner agency provided the room and any hire fee and supported volunteer participation. For example:

- The Healthy Living Network evaluation involved support to

attend training sessions, any child care, travel expenses and meals. The NHS, which supported the domestic violence community audit, met the costs of report production.

- The Jabez Group, which wanted to undertake a community-based identification of the possible uses for their church hall, funded facilitation/training, volunteers' expenses and report production through a grant from the Community Learning Chest.

## 2.4 Planning for equal access

Take Part puts 'equal' and 'inclusive' at the heart of learning. Some groups and communities are often classed as 'hard to reach' or 'excluded', which generally means that organisations are not experienced in working with and communicating with people other than those they have always worked with. There is no reason why such 'hard to reach' groups have to remain so.

It is important to carry out Take Part in ways that seek to include people rather than exclude and move beyond the terminology of 'hard to reach'.

### Written materials

#### *Text style and format*

- Fonts should be easily readable with clearly defined letters and clear spacing between the letters; for example, sans serif fonts such as Verdana, Arial and Helvetica.
- Text should, as a rule, be no smaller than 12 point.
- Underlining of large volumes of text should be avoided.
- Text written in all capitals is difficult to read and may be distracting to the reader.
- Avoid the use of italics and consider making text bold instead.

#### *Colour and contrast*

- There should be a good contrast between the font colour and background colour. Using cream paper rather than white can increase the readability of a printed document as the glare is reduced.
- If the document is to have a coloured background, use a single solid colour

rather than textured or patterned.

- White text on a black background will appear thinner than the same weight of font in black on a lighter background. Designers may wish to use a heavier font to compensate for this.
- White text on a dark blue background is particularly legible for many people.
- Use of pink, red or green paper should be avoided. If coloured paper is required, use pastel blue or yellow. For example, a dyslexic user may prefer black or dark blue print on a pale blue or yellow background.

#### *Layout and structure*

- Text should be left aligned on the page.
- Paragraphs should not be centred or justified as uneven spacing between words could lead to 'rivers of white space' being formed in the text, reducing legibility.
- Avoid using long blocks of continuous text; break it up with smaller paragraphs and headings. This will also help the reader navigate the text.
- Where appropriate, use bullet points and lists instead of large volumes of text.
- URLs in a printed document should not be hyperlinked, as this will result in them being underlined and will reduce readability.
- Short, concise sentences of less than 20 words are more readable.
- Single-idea sentences improve clarity.
- Where applicable, include the main idea in the first sentence of the paragraph. Use the following sentences to expand the main point.

**Language**

- Use clear language and keep text as concise and straightforward as possible.
- It is important that jargon and acronyms are avoided.
- Avoid using too many words and overly long or complex words.
- Use concepts and terminology consistently throughout the document.
- Avoid using slashed constructions such as 'a and/or b', instead use 'a or b or both'.
- Consider putting consultation documents through the Plain English process.

**Translation**

- Always check whether it would be useful to provide materials translated into community languages or Braille.
- Check what form or style of community language would work best in that particular context.
- Check whether people require signers to be present.

For more advice, see the Plain English Campaign's free online guides to writing plain English at:  
[www.plainenglish.co.uk/guides.htm](http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/guides.htm)

**Other practicalities to bear in mind**

Provide expenses for community members' involvement; think about whether community members will be out of pocket due to their involvement and how you can reimburse people with the minimum of red tape.

**Physical access**

Make sure that:

- layouts are navigable for people who use wheelchairs;
- furniture is moveable;
- table heights are appropriate;
- seating is available for buffet-style refreshments;
- serving points are accessible;
- menu information is accessible; and
- an induction loop is available.

**Food and drink**

Make sure that:

- food choices are accessible;
- dishes for special dietary requirements are labelled and presented separately; and
- a range of beverages is offered.

**Emergency evacuation**

- Clarify arrangements and make sure that people know what to do.

**Equal access: the Greater Manchester hub experience****Removing barriers to participation**

The Greater Manchester hub ensured that all the activities they undertook were free and were based in the participants' communities, using local venues. They covered expenses for travel, child care and any materials and refreshments. The participants chose

the most appropriate time for activities (resulting in one programme having to be run concurrently, once in the day and once on a Saturday evening to enable different groups of people to Take Part!).

All activities were open to everyone, regardless of ability or experience.

## 2.5 Progression routes

This section of the framework looks at some of the different ways of recognising and valuing participation and achievement.

### The issues

Learning programmes often develop in response to local needs, so there is no single accreditation route that will suit all programmes or all participants, and sometimes accreditation is not appropriate. Sometimes learners want informal recognition of their participation and achievement.

In part, this means looking at the range of accreditation options that are currently available. The gaining of a qualification can provide motivation and empowerment as well as opening up progression routes into employment or HE. There are a variety of qualifications currently available which incorporate elements of active citizenship learning.

However, the gaining of qualifications is not the primary purpose of active citizenship learning. Take Part aims to promote a more active society, not just a better qualified society. A lot of the activities and programmes highlighted in the case studies – even where there is some form of accreditation attached – celebrate the value of informal, reflective learning which builds on real issues rather than clearly predicted outcomes imposed by a formal learning framework.

While it is important for some to obtain certification and work towards establishing more coherent and transparent progression routes, we also want to make sure that the active and informal elements of learning are not marginalised by an over-emphasis on qualifications.

**“... if citizenship were to be formally assessed there would be an inevitable drive to focus on teaching for the formal tests and therefore a marginalisation of the active element of learning. A fear that has often been expressed is that we may end up valuing what we can easily assess – the facts, over and above that which offers more of a challenge – the affective elements of citizenship and the skills.”**

(Jerome 2002)

### Non-accredited learning and progression

Individuals can become increasingly proficient in the personal skills involved in being an ‘active citizen’. Taking each of the four citizenship domains, it is possible to highlight key citizen learning outcomes for individuals. See the outcomes chart in section 1.8.

**Personal Learning Plans**

A Personal Learning Plan (PLP) can be effective in guiding and measuring an individual's progression. It may also be referred to as a learning contract, learning agreement or personal development plan. It represents a way in which the learner identifies:

- what needs to be learned;
- why it is necessary to learn it;
- how learning will take place;
- evidence for learning;
- the time frame for learning; and
- links to past and future learning.

PLPs aim to:

- put the learner at the centre of the learning process;
- develop learner autonomy;
- aid integration of theory and practice;
- enhance motivation to learn; and
- facilitate renegotiation of learning as needs change.

They can be useful in different ways, including:

- to benchmark where the individual feels they are at the beginning of the learning process;
- to set goals in areas where they would like to improve;
- to lay out a specific project plan or course of action that develops their learning; and
- to catalogue the knowledge, skills and networks that they would like to, or are in the process of, developing for themselves.

Progression need not be linear; it is often a process of growth or transformation.

An individual can:

- go on to further training;
- use their learning for career development;
- start a new career/job;
- become more active as a volunteer;
- become a trainer themselves;
- increase their activity within civil society;
- take part in the networks, organisations and associations that make up social, cultural and economic life; and
- become more engaged at a civic level, with the networks, organisations and associations that shape, influence and determine the government of society.

**“I work for Neasden temple [Hindu], where we teach the young people about not taking drugs or getting into trouble. [The Active Learning for Active Citizenship programme] has given me a lot more confidence and now I want to be a magistrate – I’ve signed up for a magistrate shadowing scheme.”**

**Participant in a London hub programme**

The Take Part experience has shown that, as well as progression on an individual level, citizenship learning also has a clear impact on communities and civil society within which the individual learner operates. The fuel for this is the individual spreading their new knowledge and skills within their family, among their circles of friends and associates, and both within and external to their organisations, groups and networks.

**“I work for a Latin American women’s organisation, providing information. Now I will use the information I learnt on the programme when I give people advice when they come to us.”**

#### **Participant in a London hub programme**

Community and organisational progression can take place on a number of different levels. Community structures can:

- develop capacity to support the citizenship learning of their members;
- forge new, or stronger, links with other networks, organisations and associations; and
- engage with governance mechanisms.

Taking each of the four types of active citizenship, it is possible to highlight key outcomes for citizenship beyond the individual or personal level. See the outcomes chart at section 1.8.

#### **Celebrating participation**

It is important to take time to celebrate. Participants should be involved from the outset, not just in being made aware of any certificates that they are working towards but also in the planning of celebratory events.

Celebration can be a simple matter of setting aside a session in the learning programme for participants to share their achievements. Alternatively, you might want to make it a more memorable occasion. Here are a few ideas, drawn from the experiences of the hubs, for celebrating in style.

- Provide food and drink – this doesn’t have to involve a lot of expense. If you’re short of funds, ask each participant to bring in a dish. If you’ve got the money to spend, consider booking a restaurant or bringing in caterers. Be wary of including alcohol unless you agree this with the group.
- Invite a VIP to say a few words and to hand out certificates. A member of the local council, someone from the local college or university or a representative from the local radio station might well be delighted to be asked.
- Take photos. Make sure everybody knows what you are doing and what will happen to the photographs, and stress that you won’t photograph anyone who doesn’t want their picture taken. If you’re not good with a camera, contact your local college and see if you can borrow a photography student.
- If you feel like going one step further, invite the local press. Or put together your own press release and send it to a local newspaper.
- Organise a day out as a celebration of achievement.

#### **Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement (RARPA)**

The knowledge and skills necessary for people to become active citizens come through engaging in local contexts; through doing something and critically reflecting on the process rather than by sitting down and studying ‘facts’ about citizenship. Active citizenship learning is often, therefore, very different from many more formal kinds of learning.

It is often feared that without the discipline of working towards a particular qualification and without the evidence of achievement offered by that qualification, a non-accredited course will be less robust and will struggle to provide clear evidence of achievement. This need not be the case, however. Research from the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) has identified some of the common features of good practice in running non-accredited learning programmes:

- initial identification of learning objectives;
- initial assessment of learners;
- negotiation of learning objectives with learners;

- learning self-assessment;
- ongoing formative assessment;
- progression advice and guidance;
- a record of achievement;
- moderation of assessment; and
- celebration of achievement.

These aspects of good practice have been synthesised into a five-step process known as RARPA. This has been developed by NIACE and the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA), and is recognised by the LSC. RARPA can be used by any organisation delivering non-accredited learning and has been endorsed by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA).

*Outline of the RARPA five-step process*

Stage	Questions for action
1. Aims and purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What would we like to achieve in this programme?</li> <li>• Which citizen learning objectives are we going to cover?</li> <li>• What contexts and activities are we going to use?</li> </ul>
2. Starting points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What citizenship knowledge, understanding and skills do we already have?</li> </ul>
3. Learning objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which learning objectives are we aiming at here?</li> <li>• What are the underpinning knowledge, understanding and skills required for each of these objectives?</li> <li>• How are we going to develop that knowledge, understanding and skills?</li> </ul>
4. Checking on progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will we identify what we have learnt during the activity?</li> <li>• Should we record progress; if so, how?</li> <li>• What form of assessment for learning would be appropriate for this activity?</li> <li>• What sort of evidence of learning might be generated?</li> </ul>
5. Recognition of learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can we celebrate achievement?</li> </ul>

**Accreditation and qualifications: from Basic Skills to higher education**

**“As well as learning for its own sake, many participants in the hubs will wish some recognition for their educational achievements. Whilst accreditation is not necessarily needed for the work to have an impact on levels of community involvement and capacity, students often welcome the recognition that learning accreditation provides.”**

*Active Learning for Active Citizenship evaluation report, 2006*

**Basic Skills**

The South West hub chose to offer accreditation in the form of Basic Skills qualifications in their Speaking Up programme. Basic Skills offers potentially useful qualifications and a progression route for any learner with low-level language and/or numeracy skills. Linking the outcomes of a programme to a Basic Skills qualification can also be an effective way of drawing down funding.

Basic Skills, sometimes known as Essential Skills, refers to literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). Together, these three subjects comprise the Government’s Skills for Life strategy, which aims to get as many adults as possible who left school without sufficient literacy, language or maths skills, back into education. For each of the three subject areas, the Basic Skills Agency has developed a core curriculum that offers descriptors of core skills from Entry level up to Level 2 (the equivalent

of GCSE grade A–C), and a number of examination boards provide QCA-recognised certification of skills at each level.

Certainly, literacy should not be seen as just being concerned with basic reading and writing competencies. Literacy is much more than that, as it can enable us to understand the relationships between language and power and can thus empower us to use language to help shape our lives. Acquiring literacy can itself be a form of active citizenship learning, not a mechanical process.

Basic Skills outcomes can be embedded into other subject areas, including citizenship. Some of the exam boards, the National Open College Network (NOCN) for example, offer a range of certified courses mapped to one of the core curricula.

The Foundation Learning Tier, a QCA and LSC initiative, is currently being trialled. This aims to develop personalised learning programmes (at Entry and Level 1) combining key and basic skills such as literacy with vocational and subject-based learning and personal and social development.

**National Open College Network qualifications**

NOCN has centrally approved units which combine to make progression qualifications at four different levels – entry through to level three. It is possible to map approved units across progression qualification requirements and create a citizenship qualification suited to your target group. Progression qualifications are eligible for LSC funding.

An organisation needs to be an approved centre to make use of these units and qualifications; it is possible to work in partnership with agencies holding this status or work towards centre approval status.

See the NOCN website ([www.nocn.org.uk](http://www.nocn.org.uk)). This site is now open to all by clicking on 'info for members' and completing the box as shown. It would be advisable to contact a development officer in your NOCN region to discuss how to make best use of their system.

### ***Citizenship qualifications***

Since 2002, students in schools have been required to study citizenship as part of the national curriculum. Various exam

boards, including the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) and Edexcel, now offer qualifications at GCSE and AS level. Some of these qualifications include a strong experiential element in response to the Crick report's recommendations that 'citizenship education is education for citizenship, behaving and acting as a citizen, therefore it is not just knowledge of citizenship and civil society; it also implies developing values, skills and understanding' (Crick 1998 paragraph 3.1).

### **GCSE qualifications**

The examples here are aimed primarily at students in schools but are often available through local further education colleges.

#### **AQA GCSE (Short Course) Citizenship Studies (3107)**

This qualification aims to encourage candidates to get involved in 'discussion, participation in school and community-based activities, and reflection upon the roles and contributions of others'. (AQA GCSE curriculum)

- **Written paper (1½ hrs) 60% of total marks**

The paper consists of four sections and involves short answer type questions and essay writing.

- **Coursework (internal assessment) 40% of total marks**

Candidates are required to produce a written report of 1,500–2,000 words on the school-based or community-based citizenship activity in which they have been engaged.

### Sample questions from Edexcel GCSE (Short Course) paper

#### SECTION A

#### Answer ALL parts of this question

1. Briefly describe the **citizenship** activity in which you took part.
2. Briefly explain **one** way in which your **citizenship** activity helped other people in your school or community.
3. Outline the part played in the **citizenship** activity by you and at least one other person.

#### Higher level qualifications

There are some higher level qualifications available, such as AQA's AS level in Social Science: Citizenship (5101). This does not contain a substantial experiential element but the QCA are currently trialling a new Level 3 qualification, **Active Citizenship Studies**, which is designed around candidates 'preparing for, taking action on and evaluating a citizenship issue, problem or theme'. This qualification requires some 40–60 guided learning hours and is initially aimed at the 15–19 year age range.

#### City and Guilds

City and Guilds offers a citizenship qualification which has been trialled in Salford by Proud City social enterprise. The Individual Profile in Active Citizenship is a 'distance-travelled' model, allowing for personal choice when selecting from the wide range of citizenship activities. The profile is divided into five themes, with each theme containing a number of units. Learners can complete any number of units within the profile to receive the Certificate of Unit Credit. To achieve their full Individual Profile in Active Citizenship certificate from City and Guilds, the learner completes a total of ten units, including a personal choice unit from the action

learning list in Theme 2, with their distance travelled being assessed through a City and Guilds approved centre. An outline of the units available is in section 3.3 Overview of activity by type.

To explore some of the different citizenship qualifications that are available, you can go to the QCA's website at:

[www.openquals.org.uk/openquals](http://www.openquals.org.uk/openquals).

This enables you to search for details of qualifications and exam boards by using a keyword search engine.

#### HE qualifications

Access programmes are designed to prepare adult learners from non-traditional backgrounds and under-represented groups for admission to the workplace and/or into university education. Usually available on a full-time basis over one year, or part time over two years, they offer credits at Access Levels 2 and 3. Some courses have predetermined routes onto undergraduate programmes. A search for Access courses in your area can be carried out at:

[www.ucas.com/access](http://www.ucas.com/access)

The Greater Manchester and London hubs incorporated HE credits into their learning programmes.

**HE qualifications: the London hub experience**

Active citizenship courses at Birkbeck College, London offer learners the opportunity to get involved in the policy and decision-making processes of the London Civic Forum. Alongside this activity-based approach, learners gain recognised HE credits and the

option of progressing onto a range of courses within the college. Combined with credits from other courses such as community leadership, these credits can also be put towards a degree.

**HE qualifications: the Greater Manchester hub experience**

Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) offers modules with associated practical action in community audit, conflict resolution, training the trainers, and community-based active learning. All participants are registered with MMU and offered both certificates of participation and HE credits for attendance and participation in the

particular programme/module. These can, if wished, be used for credit on university courses, particularly the professionally qualifying courses in youth and community work. The students work together in mixed-ability groups. The level of course to be taken, if using the credit at HE level, is assessed on admission.

Some universities offer modules in citizenship as components of social studies courses. There are some, such as the University of Bradford, which offer full degrees in active citizenship. Bradford's Foundation Degree in Active Citizenship and Participation is designed for those involved in local government and in community and voluntary organisations, who are seeking to encourage more people to become active within their communities and to promote participatory practice. It is also intended for active citizens themselves, be they volunteers, community activists or local politicians, as well as professionals working in this field.

Key employers involved in neighbourhood renewal, community regeneration and active citizenship programmes are also contributing to the course, and practical work-based learning will complement the theoretical modules.

## **3. Putting it into practice**

This section gives you a picture of the breadth and depth of Take Part activities being undertaken, and shows you where to find further information on the principles underpinning them.

### **3.1 Theory into practice**

Particular characteristics emerge through putting Take Part's four values (see section 1.7) into practice:

- **Vision-led**

Active citizenship is visionary; it's about people wanting and feeling able to change the world they live in.

- **Community-based**

People start to identify themselves in terms of community – this might be neighbourhood, identity, interest.

- **Problem-posing**

Understanding and analysing problems is the first step in devising shared solutions.

- **Learning together in groups**

Understanding yourself through and with others – creating connections and dialogue.

- **Learning through experience, action and reflection**

Learning, doing and taking time to reflect helps to embed new ideas, skills and awareness.

- **Critical dialogue**

Fostering the techniques and confidence to critically analyse ideas and issues is crucial to deep understanding.

- **Voluntary**

When learning is done through choice, the greatest benefits accrue.

The following boxes offer snapshots of some key theories or concepts that underpin the Take Part hubs' approaches to learning. Follow the individual links to find out more on particular topics.

**Paulo Freire** and his view of education as a process of transformation and change are central to the Take Part vision:

'Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate the integration of people into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes the "practice of freedom", the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of the world' (Shaul *et al.* 1972 p14).

This approach was crucial for the hub programmes, as their aims were to

enable participants to:

- increase levels of confidence, understanding and critical analysis; and
- tackle issues, structures and decisions that affect their lives and that of their families and communities.

**Find out more in section 5.**

See this theory in practice in the Black Country hub's case study in section 4.

The notion of **reflective practice**, a process of learning that can support active citizenship, is derived from theories of experiential learning. These state that learning is based in experience, and that to find solutions to problems or to change behaviour, this learning cannot take place without a process of reflection.

**Find out more in section 5.**

See this theory in practice in the London hub's case study in section 4.

'**Community development** is about building active and sustainable communities based on social justice and mutual respect. It is about changing power structures to remove the barriers that prevent people from participating in the issues that affect their lives.'

(Community Development Exchange – CDX)

**Find out more in section 5.**

See this theory in practice in the South West hub's case study in section 4.

‘The development and sustaining of working relationships between public bodies and community groups to assist both of them to understand and address the needs and issues experienced by particular communities.’

As a ‘relationship’, **community engagement** is also about communities understanding the needs and issues, priorities, targets and constraints of agencies.

**Find out more in section 5.**

See this theory in practice in the Tees Valley hub’s case study in section 4.

The idea that **lifelong learning** is for everybody lies at the heart of the Take Part vision. When we think of learning, we tend to think of schools and colleges, exams and qualifications, but most learning takes place outside the classroom.

We learn by doing things, by trying to shape our lives in response to the world around us; we are educated and shaped by our day-to-day experiences.

**Find out more in section 5.**

See this theory in practice in the Greater Manchester and South Yorkshire hubs’ case studies in section 4.

**Constructed conversation** is an approach to engaging people in a learning process through conversations for action.

Conversations are essential to our daily communications. The challenge is to align them to democratic principles that give fair opportunities to all concerned. It makes sense to structure these conversations so that all relevant viewpoints are represented, and so that they avoid the conflation of different levels of meaningful interaction and

minimise the dominance of some at the expense of others, often the less powerful and less articulate. These are all structural considerations affecting conversations, that need ‘constructing’ in order to make them more relevant and socially valuable.

**Find out more in section 5.**

See this theory in practice in the Lincolnshire, East Midlands hub’s case study in section 4.

## 3.2 Overview of activity by hub

The seven Take Part hubs operated independently in their own areas, building on work already in place. Consequently, a wide variety of activities, approaches and provision emerged during the two-year action research pilot. The following overview provides a flavour of this range.

### **Black Country hub**

Activities included:

- an impact programme – Women Active in Community and Public Life – accredited training and support around power, participation and leadership;
- website development training;
- ongoing support to new groups;
- study circles;
- networking events;
- field visits to the European Parliament, Women’s European Lobby and West Midlands in Europe; and
- an art exhibition ‘Inside – Outside’: mixed-media artwork reflecting the emotional, intellectual and social journeys of women new to public life.

### **Greater Manchester hub**

Activities included:

- a community audit and evaluation module (Manchester Metropolitan University), delivered in the community, for example with Salford Community Organisers and Groundwork;
- a gender and community engagement research project;
- Schools for Participation – theme and area – based leading to an accredited module in Community Based Active Learning;
- a Healthy Living Network evaluation;
- conflict resolution training and a women’s action group;
- participatory audit of facilities for those experiencing domestic violence;
- production of reports and a toolkit;
- a web package to accompany training in participatory audit and evaluation;
- a hub newsletter;
- regular hub meetings of participants and trainers; and
- trainers’ meetings and the development of a Training the Trainer module/course.

**Lincolnshire, East Midlands hub**

Work with migrant workers:

- music workshops helping them to express their concerns through less formal activities such as writing songs;
- workshops using IT and language teaching facilities as part of ESOL courses;
- workshops on the process of learning to be citizens and how to relate to others;
- intercultural meetings and workshops;
- broadcasting training, for example Portuguese and Polish groups trained by Lincolnshire community radio to produce programmes in their own language;
- occasional ‘teach – contact’ sessions with the group of migrant workers attending the ESOL course in Boston College; and
- cross-sector work bringing together service providers and migrant workers.

Community engagement:

- workshops with community project managers to identify concerns, expectations, good practice, networking opportunities and partnership, and identify their own good practice guides in active citizenship learning;

- workshops with a community network around community engagement;
- action research and county-wide consultation process of good practice in active citizenship;
- networking events with community groups and project workers;
- workshops supporting project managers’ activities at community level, building bridges between communities and the statutory sector;
- community-based conversations between carers and users included in mental health project; and
- workshops with projects to help people to know their rights and find their voice.

Intergenerational work:

- celebration events promoting understanding between people of different generations;
- theatre and music workshops to identify conversation topics, for example children and adults in Grantham in a theatre workshop defining the issues they wished to talk about around crime prevention. The R’U Listening project, where a local artist designed new litter bins with children; and
- five citizen partnerships established at borough level.

**London hub**

Activities included:

- programmes of learning for community leaders covering policy and governance in London;
- developing cross-community partnerships and networking opportunities;
- participants sharing stories, ideas and best practice on the Take Part London website; and
- 'go-see' trip to City Hall to find out about the London Assembly.

**South Yorkshire hub**

Activities included:

- weekly 'teach ins' at the Northern College on issues that matter, such as Palestine, AIDS, asylum, Liberia, the Middle East and Roma in Europe;
- residential events including combating racism, living in the UK and black Britons;
- workshops on *Why vote?*;
- courses on becoming a UK citizen;
- ESOL courses with a citizenship core agenda;
- international adult education seminar for practitioners and activists;
- six-month programme on migration and Europe – 'Home is where the heart is' – with EU study visits;
- work with Gypsy and Traveller communities around Roma issues in Europe;
- work with local Muslims on being a Muslim in Britain, with trips and visits to other communities, other countries and conferences;
- programmes and projects around e-citizenship and building a website – see [www.alacsy.org.uk](http://www.alacsy.org.uk) and [www.racatel.net](http://www.racatel.net);
- action research and campaigning programme with the Somali community in Sheffield;
- confidence and media work with groups; and
- production of training materials and DVD resources on training and volunteering.

**South West hub**

Activities included:

- Speaking Up course for people with learning disabilities, physical disabilities and mental health issues;
- Making Your Voice Heard course for carers;
- work in partnership with Devon social services, primary care trusts and Royal Devon and Exeter NHS Foundation Trust to develop service user involvement;
- contributions to professional training in health and social care and police; and
- mentoring and supporting asylum seekers and refugees.

**Tees Valley hub**

Activities included:

- work in neighbourhoods around citizenship skills; and
- work with carers using IT to increase involvement in decision making.

## 3.3 Overview of activity by type

In this section, you will find both outlines and details of how different hubs deliver Take Part activities and methods, through:

1. Courses
2. Field trips
3. Dialogue

More detailed toolkits and guidance notes will be available from members of the Take Part network (see section 7).

### 1. Courses

#### *London hub: developing a sense of community in the capital*

The programme of learning covered these areas:

- civil renewal and other key policy areas
- leadership
- project management
- governance structures: local, regional and national
- diversity practice
- community media.

#### *Tees Valley hub: focusing on lifelong learning*

The programme was designed to address the skills and understanding needed to become effective participants on three levels:

- Adults develop an understanding of themselves as learners and improve their knowledge of how to engage with their children's school and local community.
- To increase adults' understanding of how to support their child as a learner through developing coaching skills and effective learning strategies.

- To identify opportunities available in the local community and support engagement with the voluntary sector and other community organisations.

The programme was carried out in partnership with Clavering Primary School, which had identified engagement with parents as part of its school improvement plan. The two-hour Take Part sessions were delivered over four weeks at the primary school and attended by a group of nine parents and the deputy head teacher.

Community and voluntary organisations supported the programme in order to raise the group's awareness of the opportunities and support available. Organisations and individuals who supported the programme included:

- Police Community Support Officers
- school governors
- Clavering Primary deputy head teacher
- Neighbourhood Watch
- Hartlepool Voluntary Development Agency
- adult education
- Clavering and Hart Station Residents' Association
- Sports Leader Co-ordinator.

The course content included a mixture of theory, activity, discussion and presentations from outside speakers.

<p><b>Session one:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adults develop an understanding of themselves as learners and improve their knowledge of how to engage with their children’s school and local community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Setting the ground rules for the Take Part programme and getting to know the group.</li> <li>What makes a good citizen?</li> <li>Why should we get involved in the community? Group discussion linking to community police officer contribution.</li> <li>Understanding myself and my child as a learner: introduction to learning styles. Introduce participants to and discuss different learning styles. VAK (visual, auditory, kinaesthetic) identification and group discussion.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Session two:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To increase adults’ understanding of how to support their child as a learner through developing coaching skills and effective learning strategies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brain facts: understanding the functions of the brain in relation to learning.</li> <li>Introduction to brain gym: understanding the principles behind brain gym and trying out some strategies.</li> <li>Coaching learners to successful outcomes: what are the qualities of an effective tutor?</li> <li>Participants experience the roles of tutor, observer and learner in a problem-solving exercise. Group discussion about useful feedback and what a tutor needs to do to encourage success.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Session three:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To increase adults’ understanding of how to support their child as a learner</li> <li>Adults develop an understanding of themselves as learners and improve their knowledge of how to engage with their children’s school and local community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduction to multiple intelligence theory and analysis of own learning profile. Participants explore different perceptions of intelligence and widen their perceptions of intelligent behaviours.</li> <li>Learning strategies for adults and their children: mind mapping.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Session four:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To identify opportunities available in the local community and support engagement with the voluntary sector and other community groups</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Deputy head teacher: overview of the school and how parents can become more involved.</li><li>• Clavering and Hart Station Residents' Association: overview of the recent work of the association and how parents can join the association.</li><li>• Sports Leaders Programme: overview of adult Sports Leaders Programme in Hartlepool.</li><li>• Neighbourhood Watch: overview of aims of Neighbourhood Watch scheme and discussion based on crime in the local community and what people can do to tackle these issues.</li><li>• Adult education: overview of the opportunities available in Hartlepool to become involved in adult education programmes. Overview of the organisation's information, advice and guidance service.</li><li>• Hartlepool Voluntary Development Agency: overview of volunteering opportunities available through the agency and the areas that parents can get involved in. Voluntary placements that could assist with a change in career.</li></ul>
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***Black Country hub: a comprehensive course extending into Europe***

For more details about this programme, see section 4.2 Case studies.

The Impact! course in the Black Country hub begins with a taster session where tutors and past participants offer a flavour of the content and style of the programme. Assistance with childcare, transport, accessible venues, small group work, support, safe environment for discussion and sharing. Encouraging a wide diversity of women to attend – with this mix being essential to sharing experiences and recognising common issues. There are between two and four tutors at all times to allow for small group and individual support. The six-month programme offers:

<b>Saturday sessions</b>	<b>Weekend residentials</b>	<b>Events and field trips</b>	<b>Assignments and support</b>
Why participate?	Citizenship	<i>Participants are encouraged and supported to attend appropriate and relevant events taking place nationally. Wherever possible, they are provided with opportunities to speak to influential people – politicians, Ministers and so on</i>	<i>Tutorials, assignment support, option for accreditation are offered. Women keep diary sheets</i>
What does citizenship mean for us?	Decision making		
Human rights	Assertive communication		
Power and powerlessness	Capturing confidence		
Presentation skills	Diversity, difference and citizenship		
Democracy and decision making	Leadership – skills and qualities		
How laws are made in the UK			
How to influence decisions			
Consultation tools and techniques			
Politics and everyday life			
Meetings – how to make sure they work for you			
Networking			
Politics in Europe			
Action planning			

***Black Country hub: reflective learning***

The opportunity for reflective learning arose from an exploration of ‘power’ and ‘power relations’:

- Individuals explore when they have felt both ‘powerful’ and ‘powerless’.
- This is shared in small groups and key themes and points confidentially reflected back to the main group.
- A concept of power is shared and discussed with the group in relation to their own experiences.
- This concept is used to critically explore notions of ‘powerful’ and ‘powerless’ in the external world.
- Different types of power are explored in different contexts.

***Proud City: Individual profiles***

A separate initiative by Proud City, funded by the Home Office’s Active Communities Unit, was piloted in Salford from 2002. This developed as a partnership between City and Guilds and Proud City and involved 160 learners between the ages of 15 and 82. These learners included those who felt excluded from the formal education process. Proud City researched, piloted and drafted the City and Guilds Individual Profile in Active Citizenship. This is a learners’ guide designed to encourage participation and increase confidence, and to challenge and question in a reasoned and democratic way.

Programmes are based around the priorities of the learners and include a reflective process. In communities where a team approach is preferred, the new award scheme allows for group participation. The activities carried out through the programme range from volunteering at universities to taking action to gain a safer local environment.

**Theme 1: Your community**

- Your community – past and present
- Your community – your experience
- Thinking about change – recognising challenges
- Discovering themes and groups.

**Theme 2: Taking up a challenge**

- Public health
- Community safety and security
- Improving the environment
- Learning and employment
- Encouraging sustainable development
- Live the action (local initiative)
- Navigating through the challenge
- Communicating effectively.

**Theme 3: Celebrating difference**

- Bridging the gap between generations
- Respecting diversity, beliefs and cultures
- Disability and society
- Exploring alternative lifestyles.

**Theme 4: Participating in a responsible society**

- Discovering the decision makers
- Participating in organisations
- Understanding local governance
- Developing co-operation and trust.

**Theme 5: Heart and mind decisions**

- Rights and responsibilities
- Extending social inclusion
- Building better relationships
- Making a difference.

## 2. Field trips

### *South Yorkshire hub: exploring citizenship with Roma citizens in Hungary*

The South Yorkshire hub's study trip to Hungary was based on previous work with Gypsies and Travellers carried out by Northern College, a residential space for learning in a safe environment. The organisers of this trip had worked in Hungary over the last decade and assisted with the foundation of the Civil College in Kumbabony. They had built, over the years, a network of many Hungarian colleagues and organisations, some of whom had visited Northern College.

In 2004, the organisers had visited Ozd in northern Hungary and had met Roma who had told them about their social and economic situation and their plans for the future. The trip had established a good opportunity for a British study trip, which could explore similarities and differences and citizenship across Europe. Twelve people travelled to Hungary with UK and Hungarian tutors and an interpreter.

The trip offered study visits around the Civil College in Kumbabony, 70km from Budapest, and visits and investigation in the north east of Hungary (beside the Slovak boarder), where large numbers of Roma remain. The group also looked at Roma issues in the capital of Budapest, in Ferencsvaros where the Civil College's sister organisation, the Association of Community Development, was working. The study visit's aims were to investigate Roma citizenship in Hungary and the EU and to compare the situation of Hungarian Roma with Gypsy and Traveller experiences in the UK. We wanted to see Hungarian conditions from a Roma point of view. The group met a whole range of Roma and visited their organisations and

projects. The visit highlighted the efforts Roma organisations had made to mobilise communities and educational resources to face the enormous challenges of life in the 'new' Hungary. The study visit also made participants aware of the different citizen organisations, which had been developed in Hungary to represent and campaign for Roma rights.

We built the opportunity for joint reflection into the programme at the end of each day and social activities structured around discussions and reflections with Hungarian colleagues.

A final reflection workshop was held at Northern College on our return. Many of the participants had given presentations to their colleagues in an endeavour to spread their learning and experience. Some of the participants have since reported that they have been able to inform their own work practice through their study trip to Hungary.

### 3. Dialogue

#### *Lincolnshire, East Midlands hub: 'constructed conversations' on active citizenship*

Constructed conversations work on the principle that citizens have the potential competence to identify issues and injustices in their communities. For this to happen efficiently, they need support. These conversations, mostly informal, are structured and facilitated to enable people to:

- establish and build relationships with people they would not normally connect with;
- explore themes as they arise in the dialogue. Participants have the freedom to develop the conversational topics as a collaborative process;
- develop self-awareness and confidence to engage with people and organisations;
- see connections between observation and action, and recognise links between actions and consequences;
- look beyond themselves and their own issues; and
- produce not only expected but also unexpected outcomes which work towards strengthening the community at large.

The Lincolnshire hub uses constructed conversations to enable groups to learn through discussion. Well-designed conversations help get the best from the participants. They can enable a group to be self-organised, enhance the autonomy of the participants and create opportunities to produce collective outcomes that would otherwise be difficult to achieve.

Groups have been provided with spaces to reflect and act collectively, where participants have:

- shared their collective knowledge with the support of facts, information, experiences, stories and other forms of evidence;
- had opportunities to learn how to explore issues and engage in processes;
- identified pivotal players in the community;
- observed each other; and
- defined good practices.

## 3.4 The role of the take part educator

There are two practical steps that educators can take to facilitate this approach to active learning.

### 1. Make safe spaces

We all know, from our everyday lives, how difficult it is to make any positive changes unless we create some space to stand back and reflect – space to find new perspectives and potential solutions to the problems we face.

The Take Part approach provides space for individual reflection, and space to bring people together to share their experiences and debate their views of the world. This critical dialogue has been a common feature of the work of the hubs: for example, women developing the ability to speak out and engage in decision-making structures in the West Midlands; community groups debating local issues and agreeing priorities for action in Greater Manchester; and the establishment of constructed conversations between migrant workers, employers and service providers in the agricultural areas of Lincolnshire.

#### *Practical considerations*

The practicalities are crucial in order for learners to feel comfortable and present in body, mind and spirit. Clearly childcare and carer respite costs are central to this and need to be administered flexibly to match the requirements of the situation. For instance, the Black Country hub provided childcare costs and actively discouraged women from bringing children to two residential workshops. Women reported that they would not have gained so much from these events if their children had been there.

Safe space results from a combination of factors:

- explicitly recognising potential barriers to both attending and taking part, including physical access, transport, financial access, timing, literacy and language, and pitch;
- ground rules being discussed, revised and used;
- being supportive – encouraging group members to support each other, and trainers offering one-to-one support and out-of-course contact;
- being welcoming to all – venue feeling good, smiles, taking time to build relationships with people, being genuine;
- clarity about roles and responsibilities; and
- providing interesting and relevant information.

Here are some views from participants on various hub programmes:

**“The trainers made a real point of the need to respect each other and each other’s opinions – even if you didn’t agree with them. They developed ground rules which were crucial so people know to respect and the ground rules were owned by the group.”**

**“[The trainer] picked up on my lack of confidence – she talked about throwing my voice, that everyone was as nervous as me, about assertiveness and being in control.”**

**“You were constantly asked for your input – being given that allowance of time and choice to participate and not make a fool of myself. It was about consideration of what people needed – the time, where they were sat, who they were sat with ... Where we shared as a group [the trainers] shared with us – it was about equality.”**

**“Taxis were arranged for me – I hadn’t gone out of the house by myself for 10 years. I got back to [me] as a person – it was a big, big confidence boost.”**

### *Space to challenge and be challenged*

Facilitators have a key role in enabling critical explorations of power and facilitating constructive challenges between people. As educators our role is to recognise difference and particular requirements and to take action on a rights-based approach. This means that we may work as allies with individuals and groups whose experience we do not share though we may share their perspective; and we should encourage challenges as well as engagement in critical dialogue.

## **2. Shared responsibility for learning**

People are responsible for their own learning – and for sharing knowledge, experience and expertise with others. The Take Part educator has a responsibility:

- to provide a safe space (see above);
- to provide a positive learning environment;
- to provide a structure for learning;
- to provide relevant information; and
- above all, to facilitate and encourage interaction. This is the mechanism by which people engage and share with others on an adult-to-adult basis.

Most approaches to learning and teaching assume that there is a highly knowledgeable teacher and a relatively less well-informed student or pupil. All the movement seems one way – ‘top down’ – and this tends to disempower the learner. Fortunately there is a wide range of well-established practices in adult learning in Britain and the wider world which recognise much more of a partnership approach. Here, expert knowledge, where it exists, can be made available according to the current perceived needs of groups, allowing for different starting points of individual learners and recognising their personal learning styles.

### *Sharing knowledge*

This approach will immediately suggest itself to community-based groups of people who get together to address a common issue or a shared problem. They will have a strong sense of the nature of what brings them together and may feel that they know who or what is responsible for the present state of affairs. Group activities which involve sharing ‘who knows what’, and encourage the quieter voices, are valuable. They call for a special level of expertise which may come from within or outside the group.

***Receiving knowledge***

Where totally new ideas and information are needed by the group there may be no alternative to these being provided by the 'expert' on their terms; this may be by means of a talk or lecture, and could include handouts and suggested reading, practical exercises and so on. If this is the case those planning the event should always try to make sure there is plenty of time for questions.

***A mutual commitment***

Learning with others, learning from experience, and learning and doing all require commitment on the part of the learner. The more we move away from the 'banking' approach to education where the educator 'deposits' information in the mind of the learner, the more the locus of control is placed in the hands and minds of the learners – and the educator's task is then to structure and encourage the learning process.

The learners have freedom to undertake activities and to exercise some control over the choice of activities. Educators or facilitators must have the ability to act independently, rather than reflecting organisational agendas.

A facilitator can be a:

- visionary: sharing a vision of what can be achieved, particularly in the early stages of any Take Part programme;
- motivator: inspiring learners to get involved and to stay involved; or
- catalyst: enabling learners to discover what it is they want to explore and to help them decide what they might need for that exploration.

In practice, this results in:

- participants being encouraged to reflect on their actions;
- the skills and knowledge of the participants being valued and built upon;
- individuals working and learning within groups;
- participants having a voice and being listened to;
- discussion, inclusion and reflection being encouraged;
- all participants' contributions being valued;
- ethical principles being discussed and applied;
- dynamics of power and exclusion being explored and ways forward identified; and
- reflection being encouraged by individuals, groups and communities.

## 4. Case studies

This section illustrates the range of approaches undertaken by the hubs during the two-year Take Part action research project.

### 4.1 Overview of Take Part hubs

The seven Take Part hubs have taken distinctive approaches to the interpretation and practice of Take Part. Here we give an overview of their background and particular focus. You can also look at individual case studies (see section 4.2) in greater depth.

#### **Black Country**

This hub was called 'Impact! Women active in community and public life'. It provided learning opportunities for women to explore issues around power, citizenship and leadership. The Impact! experience began in 1999 as a series of workshops which soon expanded to include a programme of training, practical support and mentoring for women. The first accredited course began in January 2000. It focused on women's own experiences and opinions while setting out to explore local, national and European decision-making structures. Take Part provided further opportunity and resources for IMPACT! to develop.

#### **Greater Manchester**

The Greater Manchester hub started with the delivery of an accredited Manchester Metropolitan University module in community auditing with members of community-based groups, to enable them to undertake participatory research or evaluation. This has involved groups such as Groundwork, who hosted a team of

volunteers to research the requirements for effective volunteering alongside finding out what volunteers and members of community groups would like from the University. Two other programmes have looked at health-related areas with a view to improving local services. The work was in most cases not carried out with people from specific communities and most of the groups discussing particular issues were mixed.

#### **Lincolnshire, East Midlands**

This hub is based in the Lincolnshire Citizenship Network hosted by the University of Lincoln. It works in partnership with a diversity of voluntary sector project managers and with Integration Lincolnshire, local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP), Local Education Authorities, Boston College and the Church of England. In addition to building citizenship capacity through workshops and seminars and supporting learning related to crime prevention by bringing generations together, the hub has developed expertise in working with migrant agricultural workers, an extremely vulnerable group, with particular barriers arising out of language issues and shift working.

**London**

The London hub is hosted by London Civic Forum, which was set up in 2000 to facilitate London-wide civic engagement. Together with Birkbeck College, University of London, the hub provided programmes of learning covering:

- skills and knowledge required to engage successfully in the democratic process, through contact both with governance bodies and with networks in civil society;
- communication, influencing and project management;
- overview of London's governance structures; and
- central and local government policy and how this affects the voluntary and community sectors.

**South West**

The South West hub is led by Exeter Council for Voluntary Service and is run in partnership with local carers' groups, mental health advocacy groups and Devon Learning Disability Team. Its target group is people with learning disabilities and mental health issues, and their carers. Since September 2004, 151 people with learning disabilities have been trained to speak up about their service provision. The learning has primarily taken place through Speaking Up courses for people with learning disabilities and through an associated course for carers. There were 189 learners in total, from Devon and Plymouth.

**South Yorkshire**

The South Yorkshire hub believes in a learner-centred approach to active citizenship. Initially, this means talking to people to find out what they need to get active, and then supporting them to achieve their goals. A prime example of this is the work the hub has been involved in with members of Sheffield's Somali community who, with the hub's help, have been investigating the reasons for high crime rates and low educational achievement among Somali youth. The Workers' Education Association (WEA) is the lead organisation in this hub.

**Tees Valley**

The Tees Valley hub is a partnership of various voluntary and community sector organisations, the local Learning and Skills Council and the borough councils of Darlington, Redcar, Hartlepool and Cleveland. The lead partner in this collaboration is SkillShare, a well-established community-based training organisation in Hartlepool. One particular area of focus for the partnership has been helping isolated individuals and groups to participate more fully in the community and in local decision-making processes. A prime example is the work the hub has done with carers, helping them to acquire the skills and knowledge they need to end their isolation and enable them to participate more effectively in the life and development of the local community. In total, 356 people have directly benefited from the work of the hub.

## 4.2 Case studies

### **BLACK COUNTRY**

#### **Women active in community and public life**

**“It was like opening a new book and as each page opened it was more interesting than the last.”**

**A participant in a Black Country hub programme**

#### **Context**

The hub provided learning opportunities for women to explore issues around power, citizenship and leadership.

**“It is about being a citizen – looking at your own life and other people’s lives – trying to make life better for everyone and understanding the rights and responsibilities of being a citizen and ... getting out there and doing something in the community.”**

**Hub participant**

The Impact! experience began in 1999 as a series of workshops which soon expanded to include a programme of training, practical support and mentoring for women. The first accredited ‘course’ of this type began in January 2000. It focused on women’s own experiences and opinions while setting out to explore local, national and European decision-making structures. Take Part provided further opportunity and resources for Impact! to be developed and delivered by a partnership comprising Fircroft College, Wolverhampton Asian Women and Diabetes Group, Inspire Black Country, GATE and Working for Change (now operating as Changes). Women were recruited via existing contacts and networks, as well as from general publicity circulated in the four Black Country areas: Wolverhampton, Dudley, Walsall and Sandwell. Several women had not been out of their own homes for years because of illness, disability or a lack of personal confidence.

#### **Impact! Women active in community and public life**

It is predicted that it will take:

- **20 years** for women to achieve equality in civil service top management;
- **40 years** to achieve an equal number of women in senior posts in the judiciary; and
- **up to 200 years** – another 40 general elections – to achieve an equal number of women in Parliament.

(Equal Opportunities Commission 2006)

More women than men live in poverty on deprived estates, and women in general have lower incomes than men.

While women are the majority in community groups, they are under-represented when it comes to being in decision-making positions.

Women are the biggest client group within the social rented housing sector. (Oxfam 1996)

Others had just left university, had retired from paid employment, or were newly elected local Councillors, volunteers, carers and others. Women came to Impact! from all walks of life.

### **Approaches and methods**

Impact! is not just a training course – it is about offering women the opportunity to be part of a network that can offer encouragement, skill-sharing, information and support to each other.

Impact! believes that there are four essential ingredients which combine to create the conditions for women (and other marginalised groups) to be confident and active in the public domain. These four ingredients are:

- valuing your own skills;
- knowing yourself through and with others;
- knowing how the external world operates; and
- knowing where to go to get what you need.

This approach challenges the notions of individualism and competition by bringing women together in association, collectively to reflect upon and analyse the barriers to and opportunities for creating change for themselves and others. Impact! suggests that once women make these connections and see their own concerns reflected in the struggles of others, they can collectively develop strategies around how to overcome the barriers and make positive changes.

The Impact! approach to creating a safe space for learning requires that they always start with the experience and knowledge of the individual learner, thereby involving the learner as a

participant in the learning process. This is then shared in a group context, creating a collective pool of knowledge and experience. At this point it is often useful to provide further information and concepts or theories to aid further reflection, understanding and analysis.

Impact! has been delivered in many different ways. The table in section 3.3 gives an outline of how it was delivered through the Take Part programme.

The role of the facilitator/trainer is to create and maintain healthy group dynamics to enable people to validate their own knowledge, skills and experiences, as well as to provide relevant information and theory to allow deeper understanding and critical reflection.

**“ Everyone boosted each other’s confidence by telling their own experiences and listening to each other. There was lots of group work, lots of discussion.”**

### **Outcomes**

#### *Individual*

Participants:

- increased levels of confidence, skills and knowledge – none of which is static; and
- became more politically aware.

**“ It is up to me to make myself heard ... I used to be nobody but now I can do what interests me.”**

**“ [The course] has made me feel alive again. It has opened up arenas that I quite possibly never thought I’d be able to sit in – let alone speak in.”**

### *Community relations*

Participants:

- learned more about themselves, their differences and collective experiences;
- surprised themselves in ways which have had significant impact on their lives; and
- gained a better understanding of others.

**“It has blown out some of the myths I had about people who are older. Before then I hadn’t come across people who were active after a certain age. You can be 16 or 60 and still be active.”**

**“It made me think about how some groups cannot access normal rights.”**

**“I am no longer frightened to ask questions of others on subjects I would have tiptoed around before – such as culture, religion and family.”**

### *Civil society*

Participants encouraged others to get involved in groups and forums and have more discussions with friends and family.

**“The family now debates and discusses these issues – it has brought new life and interest to family life.”**

**“I have been able to take my interests forward in housing, health, education, crime and neighbourhood safety, social welfare...”**

As a direct result of Impact!, participants started organising their political lives and have become involved in:

- environmental groups
- local networks
- community newsletters
- disability networks.

**“I have more interest in Europe and political structures.”**

**“I went on to join the council. I became the rep for disabled people in the community and started getting involved in decisions affecting disabled people. I got involved with another rep and his organisation – it has made a real difference and helped me to know someone else doing something similar and we have supported each other.”**

### *Civic engagement*

Participants reported feeling more influential.

**“Knowing how policies are put together and how the government works ... arms you with the information needed to target services.”**

Participants provided input for national guidelines, such as the National Institute for Clinical Excellence, and made council meetings more accessible by advising on processes to include deaf people.

As a direct result of Impact!, participants became involved in:

- a borough council – as community representative on a scrutiny committee;

- Women's Enterprise Development Agency – as board member or chair;
- a primary care trust – working in partnership to organise an event;
- a city council – working in partnership to organise an event;
- a community forum – as a member;
- a school board of governors – as a governor, and then elected as vice-chair;
- a school performance management committee;
- the Labour Party;
- a local community association – as a Director;
- a local environmental group – as chair;
- a neighbourhood nursery;
- the partnership board of a children's centre;
- a safety partnership board;
- an estate management board – as a director;
- union representative training;
- a Community Empowerment Network; and
- neighbourhood management.

**“It's opened doors about influencing. Something like the Community Empowerment Network where I had only ever thought of observing – I am now actually on the panel.”**

**“I have learned how to tap in at different levels – school, locally, regionally, nationally and at European level. It has made me realise that it is a facility that is open to everyone – even though it is not easy or you might not be heard, it is there to access. The more people who know that the better.”**

### **Valuing achievement**

The Impact! course had previously been accredited with the NOCN, and the Take Part funding enabled a rethink and the addition of a fourth unit. Eleven women in year one and 12 women in year two attained NOCN accreditation.

Accreditation is always viewed as optional, and for some women formal NOCN accreditation is not important. One woman chose not to gain NOCN recognition but instead enrolled directly onto a foundation degree course. For others, progression is to do with becoming more confident and more active in community and public life.

## **GREATER MANCHESTER**

### **Community auditing**

#### **Context**

The Greater Manchester hub started with the delivery of an accredited Manchester Metropolitan University module in community auditing with members of community-based groups, to enable them to undertake participatory research or evaluation. This involved groups such as Groundwork, who hosted a team of volunteers to research the requirements for effective volunteering alongside finding out what volunteers and members of community groups would like from the University.

Two other programmes have looked at health-related issues with a view to improving local services. The hub also developed work with groups who came together around particular themes, using the model of Schools for Participation, drawing on collective discussion of their individual experiences and linking them to theories and strategies for action. The

process facilitated their journey through the following elements and drew out links and relationships between them:

- The individuals' experience and context
- The group and community
- The wider regional and national structures
- The global situation.

This content now forms a further accredited module in community-based active learning.

The South Manchester Healthy Living Network's Take Part programme involved the recruitment of volunteers from a group already working as volunteers and peer health educators. These sessions were run at the Healthy Living Network offices in the hospital.

The NHS Domestic Violence Unit worked jointly with the Women's Aid network and the Pankhurst Women's Centre. Their team was recruited from women who had experienced domestic violence; several were volunteers in the refuges, or at the Pankhurst Centre where the programme was run.

In all, 170 participants benefited directly from the hub's activities.

### **Approaches and methods**

Although the programmes were working to the framework of an accredited module, there were high levels of participation and the courses were community-based – in line with the principles of informal education. The focus for both programmes was identified by the community-based organisations, and participants were openly recruited through their networks.

The participants in the Healthy Living Network and NHS domestic violence programmes were familiar with the focus and had experience as volunteers or activists. The teams were diverse in relation to age, ethnicity, sexuality, class, geographical spread and levels of academic experience and educational ability.

The focus of each programme was loosely identified and teams were enabled to confirm for themselves what was to be done and how. This involved the participants in planning their evaluations, identifying who should be involved and how; furthermore, in line with the principle of high levels of participation, they undertook the information-gathering, analysis, report writing, feedback and dissemination.

Sessions were a combination of theory and practice around ethics, information-gathering techniques, predicting and avoiding blocks and barriers, and inclusive working; and planning and discussing of participants' evaluations as they progressed.

The Healthy Living Network group first evaluated the role and effectiveness of its volunteer Discovery Team, through postal questionnaires to team members. It then evaluated the impact of the Healthy Living Network on the projects, by carrying out interviews with project workers and running focus groups with participants.

The team involved in the domestic violence project visited a range of NHS facilities and undertook environmental observations, as well as interviewing key staff.

The facilitator from Manchester Metropolitan University worked alongside a partner from the agency, who carried out the support and link work with the individual team members while they undertook information-gathering. In both cases the partner agency provided additional support with regard to child care and financial requirements.

The role of the facilitator was to facilitate the group process and ensure inclusion of all group members. A range of participatory methods was used to enable:

- the group to share experiences;
- best use of existing skills and knowledge; and
- networking.

The facilitator also ensured that the contents of the Manchester Metropolitan University module were being covered, which enabled the teams to make informed choices about how best to carry out their research tasks. They also assisted team members in their analysis, conclusions and recommendations.

## **Outcomes**

### ***Individual***

Individuals developed a range of skills including research methods and communication (video recording), and built their confidence enough to apply for courses and employment and to take action within their communities. They learnt about policies, funding and strategies for service delivery, and about how different agencies work, how to work with them and how to access information and participate in decision-making.

**“It gives us ideas – we go back and continue discussing issues for a couple of days ... or the rest of the week.”**

**“Multiple perspectives ... thought-provoking.”**

**“Very educational and controversial.”**

### **Participants in Greater Manchester hub programmes**

#### ***Community relations***

Participants worked as diverse teams, learning about each other and about the wider community and world. They formed new contacts and networked for the benefit of their group and their own community. In addition to learning within groups, the participants in the hub teams met regularly in Manchester-wide meetings to share the work they were doing, and discuss what was being achieved and learnt. The groups also took action on local issues – for example a group of women in East Manchester who were focusing on conflict resolution identified hostility to new residents in their communities. They arranged a series of workshop sessions between groups of women who were new to the community and long-term local residents, to share their concerns and experiences, and develop understanding for all concerned.

One participant commented:

**“I had a chance to rethink the imbalance and address how to deal with gender inequality in the future – especially in my work as a secondary school teacher.”**

Another said:

**“We have all dealt with certain issues within the community, and learning mediation skills has helped us to resolve issues in the community, eg violence between people. We are now able to take a step back from a situation and look at things from different perspectives – being non-judgemental, staying calm and using positive body language.”**

#### *Civil participation*

Idea-sharing enabled the development of community groups, and networking allowed participants to share common concerns and find ideas for action. The Schools for Participation work around the theme of discussion and agreed action resulted in the production of the refugee charter launched at a Manchester-wide conference, raising the profile of campaigns to support refugees' and asylum seekers' rights, and raising levels of awareness at community and agency level.

#### *Civic engagement*

The work had a direct effect on the delivery of services, by showing gaps in provision and the need for greater inclusion: for example, making NHS services more responsive to women experiencing domestic violence. The work and findings of this group were launched at a conference of 100 health practitioners. A checklist of actions to be taken is being circulated to all health settings to make sure that domestic violence is considered as part of routine enquiries, that settings are welcoming, that

translators are available and so on. In the case of the Healthy Living Network work, services became more responsive through the valuing and developing of the work of the Network and, particularly, through the contribution of volunteers and peer educators.

#### **Valuing achievement**

It was important that participants could decide for themselves how much they wanted to be involved and what they wanted to get out of the programme. It was also important that those looking for some form of accreditation should be able to work towards something with both value and meaning.

For this reason, all participants in the teams were encouraged to register with Manchester Metropolitan University. At the end of a piece of work it was agreed through discussion with the participant, the agency partner and the facilitator whether the participant had undertaken the required module content and practice. The participant could then be awarded a certificate of accreditation for undertaking the university module. Those who had not been as fully involved received certificates of participation. Awards were presented at large events to which everyone was invited and where the reports of the work were launched and findings discussed.

The award of HE credits was an important means of opening up progression routes and emphasising that a university education should and could be accessible to all learners.

**LINCOLNSHIRE, EAST MIDLANDS****Overcoming barriers to community engagement**

**“ I came to England in February  
I lose somewhere my vocabulary  
I’ve been here nearly a year  
And in my soul I have no fear  
The dream was a better life  
To send money to my kids and wife  
I have to work day and night  
But I’m not always informed of  
my rights.”**

**Verse of immigrants’ song in Boston**

This song was written collectively by immigrants participating in a number of Take Part’s community music workshop.

**Context**

This hub is based in the Lincolnshire Citizenship Network hosted by the University of Lincoln. It works in partnership with a range of voluntary sector project managers and organisations such as Integration Lincolnshire, CDRPs, Local Education Authorities, Boston College and the Church of England. The hub builds citizenship capacity by supporting a range of informal learning activities and more formalised learning such as workshops and seminars. It does this in contexts including CDRPs, people who use mental health services, carer groups and migrant worker communities.

**Approaches and methods**

The hub’s aim has been to encourage the growth of both individual and organisational capacity to influence and change society. Effort has been given to building networks of learners and

providers with varied opportunities to interact. An important concept in the design of the project has been that the facilitators are not the ‘experts’. When it comes to understanding local situations, participants’ knowledge has to be valued and critically reinforced in such a way that it emerges and change can be made possible. In this sense, much of the success of the project has been through creating opportunities for citizens to meet and reflect and to interact in new ways. This process has led to surprises and the creation of new possibilities for participants.

*Example 1: migrant worker communities*

The hub has supported a space for informal learning for adults recently arrived in the UK for work and also for those providing employment and services to this new workforce. From the perspective of citizenship, those arriving in the UK have a complex identity: legal seasonal and migrant workers are eligible to vote in local elections provided a period of residency can be proved, but there are barriers to creating such a democratic identity – including challenges in accessing accommodation, financial services and interpretation and in connecting with the UK establishment. Beyond legal eligibility, there are gaps in community education about rights and responsibilities, within both new and established communities, which can be addressed in whole or in part by structured informal learning processes.

If people are to become active citizens there is a need to tackle the wider issues of social exclusion through learning. Barriers to engagement need to be overcome, for example by connecting people and showing that participation can improve their experience of life in the UK.

Issues of importance identified include:

- housing and employment
- access to health and other services
- understanding English law
- relationships with the authorities/institutions
- relationships with indigenous communities.

The hub has worked with groups of providers and migrant workers to increase their understanding of these issues and to help them get better at communicating their needs and engaging more actively in shaping their civil environments. This has been a practical, sustained engagement focusing on providing participants with space to reflect and to reorganise themselves and their activities.

The hub provided an exciting learning environment for a group of migrant workers at Boston College and the University of Lincoln. There they meet college tutors (including music tutors) and university facilitators to improve their own ability to articulate and influence their social experience. Meetings covered:

- issues of citizenship
- experiences of being migrant workers
- access to local provision and services
- ways to strengthen communities and community provision
- aspirations for the future.

Some members of the group have serious language barriers, something that has hindered basic communication,

let alone debate and development of active citizenship. It was in response to this problem that language tuition was organised at Boston College and that music was used to facilitate reflective learning in citizenship workshops. These two activities have also proved to be powerful vehicles to engage with service providers and other members of the community.

Transport has been provided and the timing chosen to help shift workers, but the demands of seasonal and shift work have meant that it is a challenge for participants to come to each session. Despite this, enthusiasm has been high and participants have asked if it is possible to bring along other friends in similar circumstances.

*Example 2: user and carer Involvement and Development Mental Health Project*

Another of the projects working with the hub is the Involvement and Development (ID) Mental Health Project, which is funded by the Lincolnshire Partnership Trust and based at the Community Council of Lincolnshire. The ID Project supports people who have had mental health treatment, people in recovery, their families and supporters, and members of the wider community in being more involved in local service delivery. The project's facilitators link people to mental health services within the county and across the wider region. Service users and carers in Lincolnshire can now get involved in a variety of ways: one way is to join a local service user and carer-run mental health forum, while another is to talk about their views, experiences and ideas on an interactive website, [www.linkingvoices.org.uk](http://www.linkingvoices.org.uk)<sup>4</sup>

4. 8,000 hits and 1,000 regular users in its first four months of operation.

**“ Involvement with Take Part means that local mental health service users and carers will be getting a more meaningful service from the ID Project which is beneficial not only to them but also to the project’s funders and key stakeholders.”**

**Rebecca Dray, Project Manager**

By giving them the confidence, knowledge and structure to have a voice, the ID Project has created a dialogue between the local health trust and its users.

The project has created a sustainable communication process, so that even after the involvement of the project is complete, service users can continue to influence their service provider’s policies in a constructive way.

### ***Constructed conversations***

The hub used the idea of ‘constructed conversations’ – a systematic process of engaging with local groups and individuals who have already demonstrated an interest in citizenship issues, encouraging them to reflect on activities, concerns and resources, and so helping them to resolve community problems.

Conversations that are structurally constrained and well-designed make collective knowledge visible with the support of facts, experiences, stories and other forms of evidence. They have an informal but stable structure and they are facilitated and monitored. Constructed dialogues are exchanges of views about decision-making issues, participants’ actions, and collective participation. Take Part has offered participants the opportunity to learn how to explore issues, engage in processes, identify pivotal players in the community, observe

themselves and define good practices. This has helped them learn to see the connections between observation and action.

Behind each of these conversations lie numerous one-to-one and small group reflective learning sessions, explorations of local experiences and global concepts. In addition to these, the hub started to weave individuals’ experiences together through cross-over meetings, with learners sharing ideas with each other across different projects.

In the early stages, this was intentionally a very informal learning process, working on a one-to-one basis with potential participants, and exploring Take Part’s ideas of active citizenship as they might relate to the participants’ experiences. The process was learner-centred: engagement with participants was designed to make them feel comfortable and the learning was developed in co-operation with them, taking aspects of and concepts from citizenship and seeing how they might relate to their activities and reinforce them. The role of the facilitator or tutor was one of a ‘critical friend’, challenging participants to reflect further on their actions and to explore side-effects and new possibilities.

As the hub developed and participants became more involved in its activities, these one-to-one sessions were complemented by a series of workshops, events, encounters, wider meetings, celebrations, conferences and more formalised courses. In this way, the overall design started with learners and their experiences and then developed reflective learning opportunities that progressively engage learners with wider citizenship concerns.

**Outcomes**

The hub has worked closely with several pilot projects in the county with wider recognition. Defra's Rural Community Programme and Lincolnshire Enterprise have included Take Part Lincolnshire among their funded projects for 2006–08. The Lincolnshire Citizenship Network will carry out a countywide project, based on Take Part national and local learning processes, to produce a best practice guide to active learning for active citizenship in the county.

**Individual**

Several 'activators' from the Lincolnshire Citizenship Network emerged as key champions for the Take Part project. They invested much time and effort to collaboratively shape the form that the Take Part project took in Lincolnshire.

These groups include:

- the Community Project Managers' group
- the migrant workers' group
- the 'R U Listening?' co-ordinators.

**Community relations**

New connections between individuals and organisations were developed as a result of the Take Part work. A group of Portuguese migrant workers produced a radio programme in collaboration with a community radio station. The R U Listening project involved young people between the ages of nine and 13 in conversation with adults from both community panels and the local authority. Recommendations were made around crime prevention initiatives in the local area, including what the young people would like in order to ensure a safer and more secure park. Initiatives taken from this included those that were safety-related and those that

improved the appearance of the park – such as animal-shaped bins.

**Civil society**

Civil society has been strengthened through projects, whose project managers joined the Take Part programme. These participants have built bridges between individual learners and community groups and organisations. As well as the immigrants' work on the community radio station and the conversations between younger and older people on the R U Listening project, a citizenship network of all the different groups involved in the Take Part programme (migrant workers, mental health service users and carers, statutory officials and young people) has been established to share experiences and best practice after the official end of the Take Part programme.

**Civic engagement**

Through the participation of the project managers in the Take Part programme, individuals and groups were empowered to interact with the decision-making process. In the process they assisted vulnerable and unrepresented groups to have a voice in the community. The Take Part programme looked directly at how the statutory sector could be engaged in the work of the groups represented by the project managers. As a result of the project managers taking their learning back to their groups, their work was strengthened – for instance, CALL Advocacy in Lincolnshire, which supports individuals in learning how to achieve their rights, speak up for themselves and challenge social exclusion at grassroots level, further developed its organisational expertise in engaging the statutory sector. As well as the R U Listening project, which supported young people in having a direct

say in local public service delivery, the mental health user and carer ID Project improved its capacity to involve carers and service users in the development and implementation of new policy initiatives in mental health.

### **Valuing achievement**

An awards ceremony was held to present certificates to participants. At this ceremony, several people spoke about how the Take Part programme had supported the work they were doing and enabled them to make new connections, both with other groups and with statutory agencies.

## **LONDON**

### **Diversity and engagement with the democratic process**

#### **Context**

The hub provided programmes of learning for 128 people from a range of community organisations and groups, including black and minority ethnic groups, faith communities, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities and older people. The hub offered accreditation: those successfully completing the programme exercises (which included a reflective learning log) received 30 credits towards an HE certificate. In all, 74 chose to have their work assessed and received accreditation through this method. Through Birkbeck College, learners were also offered the opportunity to access HE programmes directly related to their learning on the Take Part programme.

### **Approaches and methods**

There were two sessions of learning; one ran from April to July 2005, and the other (a repeat session, with a different group of learners) from October 2005 to January 2006. Each session featured four learning days held at Birkbeck College, with about a month in between each day. The sessions covered the skills as well as the knowledge required to engage successfully in the democratic process, through contact both with governance bodies and with networks of community organisations. The skills that were practised over the course of the sessions included communication, influencing and project management. The programme of learning also covered London's governance structures and how institutions work for Londoners, as well as how central and local government policy affects the voluntary and community sectors. The emphasis throughout was to draw on participants' existing knowledge and experience to create an active learning programme, while highlighting the wider governance structures in which this work is situated. Participants were taught methods of reflective practice (see section 5.2) so that they could apply what they had learnt in their community activities, and strengthen their learning through drawing on their knowledge and experience.

Although participants were already engaged in community activities, their levels of experience varied widely. The London hub got around this difficulty by involving participants themselves in the shaping of the programme. Over the course of the first sessions, critical feedback and reflection captured the views of the participants and these were incorporated into the learning programme as it was evolving. A similar process

shaped the second round of sessions, with the addition of the involvement of participants from the first sessions, who helped to design learning activities and acted as facilitators.

Another challenge in creating a learning programme for such a diverse range of individuals was to ensure sessions addressed any potential tensions or differences between communities. There was a clear focus on diversity practice, with people sharing experiences in a safe space, where respect for difference was constantly emphasised. In addition, people were encouraged to share examples of good practice that people from other communities could apply to their own situations. These shared examples encouraged people to focus on what they had in common rather than on their differences.

London Civic Forum hosted complementary active learning sessions at locations around the capital for participants and governance officials (including elected representatives) to engage with each other. Examples included a visit to City Hall to meet the chair of the London Assembly to find out about the role of an Assembly Member. Networks, skills and contacts gained by participants were used to benefit their wider communities, and to increase levels of engagement with local, regional and national governance, including decision-making.

## **Outcomes**

### *Individual*

Participants reported greater levels of confidence and understanding, both about other communities, and about the wider context in which they operate.

**“On the programme I found it interesting to talk to people from communities that I hadn’t encountered before. I felt that there weren’t any problems or difficulties because of the fact that I’m trans. I felt comfortable enough to be open, and people seemed happy to ask me questions – I think they learnt something from this. I used to be involved with FtM London [support group for female-to-male trans people], but haven’t been active for a while. As a result of coming on the programme I’ve felt in a better position to go back to the group and offer my services as a volunteer.”**

**“I work for a Latin American women’s organisation, providing information. Now I will use the information I learnt on the programme when I give people advice when they come to us.”**

**“I am chair of Camden’s Somali community organisation. I have learnt a lot about government in London and I will be taking back that information to my community.”**

### *Community relations*

As a result of learning with people from different communities and networking both formally and informally, the participants achieved cross-community understanding.

**“Meeting different people on the course was really useful. For me as a Ghanaian, I think we should get more involved in events by other communities. For instance I saw notices about a party for Eid. Anyone could go [the participant was not a Muslim], but I wasn’t sure about going. But after going on the course I thought I would try it and I went and had a great time, even though there weren’t many people there. I think it’s something that more Africans should join in with – there’s a lot of singing and dancing, which we enjoy.”**

### *Civil society*

Nine participants on the programme were elected to London Civic Forum’s Council (the organisation’s policy-making body) in the 2005 elections.

### *Civic engagement*

Participants gained greater confidence in engagement with governance structures.

**“I work for Neasden temple, where we teach the young people about not taking drugs or getting into trouble, and also for the Greater London Authority. Coming on the course has given me a lot more confidence and now I want to be a magistrate – I’ve signed up for the magistrate shadowing scheme.”**

As part of its activities, London Civic Forum held participatory consultation sessions on the Commission on London Governance (reassessing the powers of the Mayor and the boroughs) and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister’s consultation on the same subject. The outcomes of these sessions fed into the regional and national government consultations, and as part of the experiential content of their learning programme, Take Part participants were invited to these events.

### **Valuing achievement**

A celebration event for participants was held at the Arts Pavilion in east London at the end of the programme. The event was an opportunity to network over nibbles and drinks and there was a ceremony to award participants with the certificates that they had achieved. As well as the accreditation certificates, those attending at least three out of the four day-long sessions received a certificate of attendance.

One participant who is a local councillor, as well as being involved in an organisation that provides care and mentoring services for the elderly, read out a poem that he had written about the Take Part programme. A Muslim participant led a two-minute silence for the 7 July London bombings.

## **SOUTH WEST**

### **Supporting participation by people with learning disabilities and their carers**

#### **Context**

The South West hub is led by Exeter CVS and is run in partnership with local carers’ groups, mental health advocacy groups

and Devon Learning Disability Team. Its target group is people with learning disabilities or mental health issues and their carers. Since September 2004, 151 people with learning disabilities have been trained to speak up about their service provision. The learning has primarily taken place through Speaking Up courses for people with learning disabilities and through an associated course for carers.

Participants on Speaking Up courses will often have very particular needs in relation to local service providers – specifically, healthcare, housing, transport and access needs. Yet they are also the people who often have very little voice with which to speak up for their needs and to influence local service providers. In response to this situation, Exeter CVS has developed particular expertise in providing Speaking Up courses to enable people with learning disabilities and mental health issues to make their voices heard effectively. This has led on to the provision of courses for carers, as well as inputs to training programmes for professionals such as the police, enabling them to listen more effectively.

The hub includes Cornwall Neighbourhoods for Change, the Plymouth Community Partnership, the Plymouth Guild, and Students and Refugees Together, supporting the integration and social inclusion of asylum seekers, refugees and black and minority ethnic groups through mentoring and cultural activity. Plymouth-based initiatives include training opportunities for social workers, placed with community organisations and groups.

### **Approaches and methods**

Speaking Up is all about participating. Before the individuals involved can participate more fully in the life and decisions of the wider community they must first learn to participate in activities with their fellow learners. The starting point for Speaking Up courses is, therefore, to develop a comfortable working space where individuals with learning difficulties can be given the time and opportunities to develop the skills and confidence that they need.

Once the confidence to speak up within the group has been developed, it is time to find out more about how local service providers and infrastructures operate and how to reach out to them. The hub works closely with local service providers and has used regular meetings of the Devon Service Users' Forum to introduce course participants to the workings of local infrastructures and to give them a place where their voices can be heard. Again, the emphasis is on step-by-step progress, with participants initially attending the forums as observers before being encouraged to speak up for themselves and to express their views.

Participants have gained the skills and confidence to speak up where it counts and to represent their own and their interest group's interests. The courses are continually developed through consultation with projects and working with co-tutors. For example, a co-tutor recruited from the Learning Disability Team in mid-Devon helped to develop active role play through her experience with a local drama group. Another co-tutor on a recent course for a mental health group was able to bring his own experiences as a service user to the design of the course.

**Outcomes***Individual*

These courses have had an impact on individuals, their families and their carers. Participants have had the opportunity to gain qualifications, to expand their knowledge and to learn new skills: most of all, though, participants have the opportunity to speak up for themselves and make their voices heard.

According to Kathryn Bird of the Devon County Council Learning Disability Team,

**“In Devon, advocacy projects and user forums existed in some places, and it was on the suggestion of the Devon-wide LD co-ordinator that Exeter CVS developed the accredited Speaking Up course. The course enhances the confidence and skills of service users to self-advocate and to participate more effectively in service user representations. At the same time, Devon County Council has developed more opportunities for user involvement, eg in the training and recruitment of staff, in addition to service user forums at various levels.**

**“The funding from the Home Office [for the ALAC pilot] has allowed Speaking Up to be delivered county-wide and it has been very successful in getting new users involved in advocacy and meetings, as well as developing the skills of existing forum members. Service users get support from both statutory and voluntary sector-based advocacy workers as**

**required at meetings and other interventions, but many are now able to operate without constant support.”**

There are plenty of examples of individual achievement, too: eight learners have gone on to train social services staff in carer awareness, 22 carers have gone on to be involved in social services initiatives, and five carers are involved in social worker training at the University of Plymouth. Forty people with learning disabilities have become peer group representatives on health and social services matters.

*Community relations*

Through the programme and through attending meetings and forums, participants have been empowered to meet and interact with a wider range of people.

*Civil society*

Part of the Speaking Up programme involved participants attending a service user meeting relevant to their group, such as a carers' forum, a learning disability forum, a mental health service user group or a Sure Start parent group. Participants reported back to the Speaking Up group about issues around making their voice heard at the meeting. If they had not already been involved, many learners continued to participate in these forums following the programme, with some taking on roles such as chairing a meeting. Others got involved in new groups or roles, for instance as trainers or school governors.

*Civic engagement*

This work presents challenges for health professionals in accepting that service users (non-professionals) can make valid contributions to improving services. This

is a gradual process, and for managers in particular, user involvement is just one of the government drivers and targets they have to achieve. The hub offers the challenge of proving that by improving a service, money can be saved or other achievements made, making the effort of involving users worthwhile.

There is evidence that service user forums have become more effective, thanks to the training the learners involved in them have received. Across the board, the Speaking Up course has 'fed' service user involvement initiatives in both the health and social services, and other initiatives have sprung up in response to this.

### **Valuing achievement**

Working with adults with learning difficulties who had very little experience of success in gaining qualifications, the hub tutors looked towards Basic Skills qualifications as a way of validating and recognising the achievement of the participants. The core literacy, numeracy and ESOL curricula provide descriptors of achievements that can be aimed for at various levels, from Pre-Entry up to Level 2 (the equivalent of GCSE); and these, with the help of the NOCN, were easily mapped to some of the predicted outcomes of the Speaking Up course so that learners could work towards an NOCN award incorporating a Basic Skills element. The embedding of Basic Skills also facilitates the drawing down of mainstream funding from the LSC.

## **SOUTH YORKSHIRE**

### **Investigating concerns in the Somali community**

#### **Context**

The South Yorkshire hub believes in a learner-centred approach to active citizenship. Initially, this means talking to people to find out what they need to get active, and then supporting them in achieving their goals.

A prime example of this is the hub's work with members of Sheffield's Somali community. With our help, they have been investigating the reasons for high crime rates and low educational achievement among young Somalis. Concern about their children's future, based on poor performance at school and growing involvement in gangs and criminality, were the elements that initiated this piece of action research. Link Action, the Somali group, was put in touch with the South Yorkshire Take Part team by contacts in the Northern Refuge Centre, with which the hub has an excellent working relationship. A small group was formed to see what they could do to understand the complex problems more fully.

#### **Approaches and methods**

A set of research questions was developed, and Somali volunteers, who wanted to manage the questionnaire process, were trained in community research techniques. Somali community groups in different parts of the country also took an interest and some networking around the common issues was planned.

Three main questions were addressed:

- How happy were Somalis with certain aspects of their lives in Sheffield, especially education and crime?
- What kinds of things would they like to improve about their lives and their neighbourhoods?
- What were the differences in values between the younger and older Somali generations, and what was the quality of relationships within the home?

In all, 120 interviews took place and the Somali volunteers all contributed to the process of completing the database. The Sheffield Ethnic Minority Achievement Service helped share the data with the group and the interviews were evenly spread across several parts of the sizeable community (some 5,000 Somalis now live in Sheffield). Around 75 per cent of respondents were women and the group was roughly divided between under- and over-24-year-olds.

Analysis of the data was conducted locally in groups and then presented for further discussion at a network event held at Fircroft College, Birmingham, attended by groups from four areas.

The results revealed problems in education with local schools and difficulties experienced by the community as a result of language and cultural barriers – although the attitudes exhibited by the younger and older participants were different.

Most respondents felt comfortable in their local communities; however, most did not know enough about what help and services were available to them locally.<sup>5</sup>

Similar education concerns had been experienced and successfully addressed in the Tower Hamlets community. Their best practice solution was the creation of Somali school-home liaison workers who have helped to bring about dramatic improvement in school performance by Somali children over the past six years.

### **Outcomes**

This piece of work could not have been funded and delivered through normal channels. The creative space afforded through the pilot was the key to this successful community initiative. Local people, who had previously not engaged in learning or civil activities, became involved in the programme and valued a free, safe discussion space in which to raise difficult ideas and develop new knowledge, skills and relationships with other key figures in local society.

### **Individual**

Individual participants built confidence and developed new skills in particular areas such as basic research methodology and IT. Three gained jobs, one received a promotion, 23 went on to more formal study, and three became UK citizens.

### **Community relations**

Group work lay at the heart of this hub's active learning programmes. Collaborative learning offered both support and motivation and was influential in developing individual confidence and skills. The participants grew as a result of the exercise – for instance the Somali community, through its action research and formal dissemination, developed a new relationship with the City Council's education staff. This led to a new subcommittee being formed and a

5. For a fuller breakdown of the findings and statistics, please see 'Somalis in Sheffield', available on the South Yorkshire hub site at [www.sy.org.uk](http://www.sy.org.uk)

project developed to train home-school link workers. The new organisation, Link Action, was successful in attracting a grant for a worker.

**Civil participation**

Networking locally and nationally works! And it produces valuable results. Through a presentation in Sheffield Town Hall, new forms of collaboration and closer working have begun between the community and the local authority. Refugees and others have made practical links with advisers, services and local representatives through the visits and discussions that the project involved. The work with the Muslim community brought speakers and key people into contact with new local community activists, who were able to voice their concerns direct. This opening-up process was valuable and continued through visits and discussions after the end of the Take Part work.

**Civic engagement**

Many participants spoke of gaining a better understanding of how democracy and local institutions worked. Eleven have gone on to join a project based on 'power mapping' the local area. Several groups have developed better relations with local councillors, MPs and MEPs as a result of Take Part activities.

**Valuing achievement**

Valuing participation and achievement can arise through the production of work that is recognised and valued by others in the community. One of the products of this programme was a full report which was written by the group and published for local use by other voluntary and community sector organisations.

A presentation was made in Sheffield Town Hall to celebrate the completion of the first phase. Over 80 people attended and the event brought together a large number of service providers and the community. The event was a very positive exchange and marked the foundation of new relations.

**TEES VALLEY****Improving carer access to community participation****Context**

The Tees Valley hub came on board in April 2005, one year after the first round of hubs. Given the short timescale it has achieved a great deal, with 350 people directly benefiting. The hub has worked with or had contact with 410 organisations in the Tees Valley and has been cited as an example of good practice in the sub-region.

The hub is a partnership between:

- voluntary and community sector organisations from the five boroughs of Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland and Stockton-on-Tees;
- the local Learning and Skills Council, who hosted partnership meetings; and
- adult education services and local authority members from each of the boroughs.

The lead partner, SkillShare North East Ltd, has provided training and support to the voluntary and community sector for the past 16 years. SkillShare bases its working practice around enabling people to become more involved in all aspects of facilitating change in their localities, as have many of the other partners within

the hub. Hartlepool Adult Education, part of Hartlepool Borough Council, has seconded a development worker to the Tees Valley hub to work with SkillShare.

The Tees Valley has a population of almost 652,000 (source: Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit). Due to the diverse nature of the area – ranging from heavily populated industrial areas to remote rural communities – the only way fully to utilise the opportunities afforded by the hub was to delegate responsibility for activities to each individual borough. Consequently, five local Take Part partnerships were formed to concentrate on local activities based on locally identified needs and aspirations.

One of the main points of concern to emerge from the partnership was the isolation felt by carers. The Take Part work focused on creating opportunities for training to gain knowledge and information in order to participate in the life and development of their local communities, thus alleviating isolation.

### **Approaches and methods**

**“Humans are producers of their life circumstances, not just products of them.”**

(Bandura 1986)

The Tees Valley hub believes that in order to enable individuals to reach their full potential and become more active citizens, there needs to be initial support. Isolation and traditional barriers to learning often leave individuals lacking confidence to engage in the public arena. To tackle this, the hub has fostered a supported learning approach to encourage participation and engagement from individuals. By creating safe and comfortable spaces, putting

learners alongside mentors and positive role models, and setting up collaborative activities, the hub encourages learners to build on their self-esteem and realise that they can actively contribute to society.

The focuses for the hub’s programmes were identified by the community-based organisations taking part. They used a questionnaire to identify current provision and gaps. Participants were openly recruited through these networks.

Each local Take Part partnership defined its own programme of events in response to local needs. The opportunities offered include accredited and non-accredited courses, training to specific groups, open-access training, conferences and networking events. This varied provision was designed to encourage, support and move people towards greater involvement in local, regional and national arenas, so as to afford them the opportunity to effect change both within and beyond their own communities.

The selection of the ‘right’ people as tutors is vital with active citizenship learning: as well as being supportive, they need to be able to provide a positive role model and to be willing to learn alongside, and from, the learners. As one participant said,

**“The tutor has been very supportive. She ... feels like a best friend.”**

This approach proved to be very successful with a wide variety of participants, some already actively involved and others just beginning their journey into learning.

## **Outcomes**

### *Individual*

Learners have gone on to join local groups and participate in national networks, becoming more confident and able to engage in addressing the problems and issues they faced locally. Some have even taken up leadership roles within their own communities.

**“The first thing I said [was], I don’t think I should be on this course because I’m only a resident. That was my confidence then. Now I am confident in what I do, but I can always learn things from new people. If I was not confident in a subject then I would know where to go for advice.”**

**Participant in a Tees Valley hub programme**

### *Community relations*

Participants are more aware of social exclusion and the impact that they personally have on this issue.

Three participants facilitated equality and diversity workshops as part of a ‘Leading the Way to a Professional Voluntary Sector’ conference which was funded through the hub and held in the Redcar and Cleveland area.

Part of being an active citizen is taking up causes on behalf of the people around us as well as for ourselves.

**“I have always fought the underdog’s corner, so that people have a voice.”**

**Participant in a Tees Valley hub programme**

Participants in Tees Valley programmes have also trained and mentored people involved in other community development schemes, both locally and nationally.

**“I cannot imagine going back to my previous job, which was in a factory. I am setting my challenges higher and higher. I am like a sponge. I am always striving and I am open to new ideas.”**

**Participant in a Tees Valley hub programme**

### *Civil participation*

A core element in the Tees Valley approach is the emphasis on networking. As individuals and as groups, participants are encouraged to build and continually extend local networks. As well as being ideal vehicles for disseminating information and for reaching out to others who might be interested in active citizenship learning, networks help to build knowledge, to raise awareness and to facilitate further active learning and active citizenship.

**“I have built up good contacts and good networks. I am a people’s person and believe in the value of networking.”**

**Participant in a Tees Valley hub programme**

Learners have gone on to join local groups such as the Kirkleatham Community Forum and participate in national networks such as the Residents’ Involvement Group, part of the Guinness Trust. One participant who had already served as a school governor went on to complete a Special Needs Teaching Assistant course and is now serving her community as a special educational needs governor.

***Civic engagement***

In four of the boroughs, IT equipment and services were purchased for carers’ support organisations. The equipment enabled service users to access relevant information so as to include them more fully in the processes of democracy. The distance learning provided, in some instances, has led to individuals becoming trainee advocates in their localities.

Increased confidence has enabled people to facilitate change in services, and to ensure that decisions are made through consultation and that needs are identified by those affected by the issues.

**“Training which otherwise could not be accessed has been obtained for carers – as a result they are becoming empowered to address issues and discuss and resolve problems directly with service providers.”**

**Scott Jobson, Hartlepool Carers**

Some participants attending training in Hartlepool have had the opportunity to engage with, and find out more about, the local authority: its structure, role and purpose as well as its accountability to them. Information about how national policies affect their everyday lives was also provided, giving them the opportunity to explore the impact of decisions made by national government.

One of the Effective Community Involvement and Leadership Programme participants called it:

**“informative, a very steep learning curve, lots of new information – very interesting and helpful.”**

Trainees gained a greater understanding of democracy in some areas. Some have gone on to participate actively in consultation events and attend networking sessions.

**Valuing achievement**

An important part of participating in Take Part programmes is recognising what has been achieved. This can come through reflection and dialogue, but awareness is often heightened by being given the opportunity to do something that people would not have thought of doing before.

As well as celebrating the successes of participants by providing certificates, nominations for Adult Learners' Awards and presentation events, in some cases something as simple as a photograph of the learner group is sufficient reward. Across the Tees Valley learners' achievements were celebrated with end-of-course meals, including in one case a traditional Kurdish meal cooked by a participant. Other celebrations included post-course gatherings and presentation events.

**“I gained a Highly Commended Award during Adult Learners' Week as part of an NVQ group, which was good recognition.”**

**Participant in a Tees Valley hub programme**

Participants were also given information about progression, including NOCN's Effective Community Involvement and Leadership programme and Level 2 and Level 3 NVQs in Community Development Skills.

**“A ‘Train the Trainer’ course had already been suggested but I was unsure about doing it because I wasn't sure it was for me. By facilitating the workshop, I realised I had the confidence and the ability to embark on this course.”**

**Participant in a Tees Valley hub programme**

The programme recognises that celebrating and valuing achievement can be vital in raising aspirations.

This participatory approach to citizenship will no doubt carry on and develop as confidence and knowledge grow. It is worth noting again here that the programme is still in its infancy and its true benefits are yet to be realised in full. Although there have been some very obvious and significant achievements already, these are just the first steps which, with further support and nurture, will surely grow and flourish now that active citizenship is firmly embedded in the Tees Valley.

## 5. Themes

In this section, we set out the educational theory and practice underpinning the Take Part approach.

### 5.1 The writings of Paulo Freire

Paulo Freire (1921–1997) was a Brazilian educationalist. His view of education as a process of transformation and change is central to the Take Part vision.

Freire's most famous work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972), introduced ideas about education which inform Take Part's approach today:

- **Dialogue:** the process of conversational encounter and exploration with others that enables critical analysis of the world. Dialogue involves respect. It should not involve one person acting on another, but rather people working with each other.
- **Praxis:** a process of reflection and action which embodies certain qualities; these include a commitment to human well-being, the search for truth and respect for others. It is informed action and requires that a person 'makes a wise and prudent practical judgement about how to act in *this* situation' (Carr and Kemmis 1986 p190). This involves interpretation, understanding and application in 'one unified process' (Gadamer 1979 p275).
- **Conscientisation:** the process of '*learning to perceive social, political and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality*' (Shaul et al. 1972 p15). It is about developing consciousness, but consciousness that is understood to

have the power to transform reality (Taylor 1993).

- **Shifting the power dynamics of education:** Freire proposed that these processes be facilitated using 'experience' and 'problem posing'. Rather than the tutor/facilitator delivering education to the learners, they all bring their experience together in the process of critically exploring reality and so recreate knowledge. Too much education, Paulo Freire argues, involves 'banking' – the educator making 'deposits' in the learner.

Through the experiential approach, Freire hoped that a process of transformation and change would take place, that new knowledge and insights would lead people to change structures, situations and institutions.

Freire's views were influential as he challenged the role and methods of formal education and the role of the educator. Freire challenged educators to consider not just how they educated but also the power dynamics of teaching and learning. In the British context, John Dewey (1859–1952), like Freire, was committed to using experience, interaction and reflection as the basis for educational practice. In addition, Dewey was committed to education as a central element in democracy and what he called 'enabling the sharing in a common life' (Dewey 1916).

**Take Part**

The national framework for active learning for active citizenship

**Themes | 5.1 The writings of Paulo Freire**

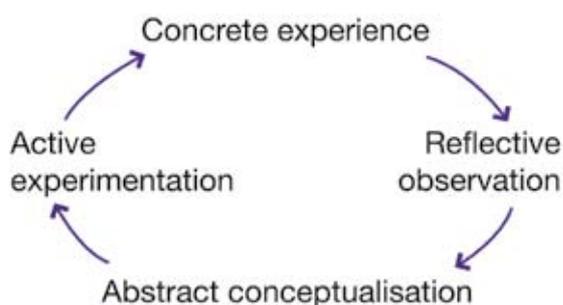
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Both Dewey and Freire's work recognises the importance of the context of the lives of the people with whom we work, particularly their positions in relation to power. Freire discussed this in class terms, while Dewey took the liberal view of the potential for all to share in the common good.

## Themes | 5.2 How experiential learning supports active citizenship

### 5.2 How experiential learning supports active citizenship

The notion of **reflective practice**, a process of learning that can support active citizenship, is derived from theories of experiential learning. These state that learning is based in experience, and that to find solutions to problems or to change behaviour, this learning cannot take place without a process of reflection. Kolb (see Kolb and Kolb 2001) outlined a cycle that demonstrates the reflective learning process:



Learners start with their own **concrete experience** and step back to examine this through **reflective observation**. The **abstract conceptualisation** stage introduces theories (such as power and power relations, leadership or diversity), which could be new to the learner and which provide a framework to understand their own actions or situation. Then the learner uses the process of **active experimentation** to test out new knowledge and understanding in the context of their everyday situation. The cycle then continues as the **active experimentation** leads to a new **concrete experience**, and so on.

#### Reflective practice

Reflective practice is a method that is based on people's unique experiences and can involve feelings and emotions. The role of the facilitator is crucial in creating a safe space and for managing a learning agenda that is less predictable than more traditional methods of teaching.

In order to be most effective as a learning method, individual reflection is best complemented by a shared group analysis of the situation in question. For instance, through asking themselves such questions as, 'When have I felt powerful? When have I felt powerless?', and then moving on to explore how power affects society in general, learners not only receive group support around personal feelings of powerlessness (if they choose to share their feelings), they can also begin to relate their own experiences to structural barriers created by power relations in the external world.

As well as prompting a journey from the personal to the societal, group reflection can help generate links between engagement activities at different levels. Through sharing experiences around community leadership and reflecting on similarities and differences between learners from different communities, people can enhance their understanding of their own leadership styles and how they are influenced by the particular

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needs of their own communities or organisations. A learner's analysis of these issues in light of the broader concept of community leadership, and how it relates to governance, can help learners to situate their own community activism within a wider political framework; in other words, understand where they fit into the bigger picture, how and where they currently influence public decisions, and how and where it could be useful to develop new avenues of political influence.

The usefulness of reflection, when applied during programmes of active learning for active citizenship, is that it can prompt a journey of understanding from the 'I' of individual circumstances to the 'we' of community and society, and then on to structural issues of political involvement and influence.

## 5.3 Community development

**“Community development is about building active and sustainable communities based on social justice and mutual respect. It is about changing power structures to remove the barriers that prevent people from participating in the issues that affect their lives.”**

**Community Development Exchange CDX<sup>6</sup>**

The key words here are:

	<b>For example</b>
<b>Active</b>	People being actively involved in defining and tackling the issues facing their communities
<b>Sustainable</b>	Creating places where people want to live and work, now and in the future, places which meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents
<b>Social justice</b>	Underpinned by justice and fairness – a vision of freedom and equal opportunities for all in terms of liberty, opportunity, income, wealth and self-respect
<b>Mutual respect</b>	Promoting common understandings of and consideration towards each other
<b>Power structures</b>	How priorities are set, who makes decisions and how they are made
<b>Participating</b>	At different levels – from taking part in activities to making decisions about what the activities should be

The broad vision of community development is to achieve a healthier life for all.<sup>7</sup> This large concept can be broken down as aiming for:

- an improved quality of life; and
- stronger communities.

A **community development** approach is about working with communities, in ways that:

- consider the needs of the individual, in terms of their knowledge, confidence and skills;
- promote and include the experiences of different communities;
- recognise the strengths and benefits of collective working and wider networks; and
- encourage and enable people to take part and influence what is happening – to be ‘engaged’.

6. CDX ‘working statement’ on community development – CDX is a nationally recognised network of individuals, groups and organisations with an interest in community development ([www.cdx.org.uk](http://www.cdx.org.uk)).

7. The World Health Organization defines ‘health’ as ‘a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity’.

## 5.4 Community engagement

**“The development and sustaining of working relationships between public bodies and community groups to assist both of them to understand and address the needs and issues experienced by particular communities.”<sup>8</sup>**

As a ‘relationship’, community engagement is also about communities understanding the needs and issues, priorities, targets and constraints of agencies.

Crucially, community engagement is about ‘communities’ – not about individuals. One assumption is that communities already exist and are just waiting to be approached and ‘engaged’. Although a statutory agency may identify a particular community or neighbourhood, the people who identify themselves as that community, or live in a particular area, may not have any collective understanding of the issues they want to prioritise or the primary needs of their area.

As a neighbourhood example, imagine a street of 16 houses. You want to gain an understanding of the issues and ideas for improvements from the local ‘community’. If you knock on all 16 doors you may get a general idea of common dissatisfaction around street lighting or rubbish collection, but if you dig deeper, you are likely to get up to 16 different responses about bigger issues and frustratingly conflicting suggestions for ways forward.

Community engagement is intrinsically linked to community development. In

our example, there is little or no existing ‘community’. But imagine if you brought the 16 households together to discuss their ideas and suggestions and provided a forum for them to work together to agree the major issues and the most promising way forward, with knowledge about how your agency could support the work. You will get much more coherent, sophisticated and workable information and a relationship will have started to develop. There is also much more of an onus on you to be very clear about why you want to engage with this neighbourhood in the first place and recognition of the skills required to do so.

It is important to be realistic about the degree to which communities are able to engage with and influence service delivery<sup>9</sup> and the level at which this takes place. For example, communities may be engaged in ‘short listing’ prepared options – or they could be involved in identifying and drawing up the original options paper (Wilcox 1994).

8. Adapted from SDCD ‘Standards for Community Engagement’ developed for Communities Scotland, 2003.

9. ‘changes’ has developed an ‘axis of Influence’ to help identify how influential communities are and what is needed in order for this level of influence to increase ([www.changesuk.net](http://www.changesuk.net)).

## 5.5 Our commitment to lifelong learning

The idea that lifelong learning is for everybody lies at the heart of the Take Part vision. When we think of learning, we tend to think of schools and colleges, exams and qualifications, but most learning takes place outside the classroom.

We learn by doing things, by trying to shape our lives in response to the world around us; we are educated and shaped by our day-to-day experiences.

We live in a rapidly changing world and the skills and knowledge that we need to negotiate our path and to make informed choices are constantly changing. What we need in order to engage effectively – whether at a local, national or global level – are opportunities for active and ongoing education; education that is flexible enough to respond to individual needs, that takes into account what we already know and the changes happening around us.

Giving people space, encouragement and the tools to reflect on their past and their future, on their learning history and ambitions, enables them to recognise the competencies that they have developed and those that they need to acquire in order to participate effectively in society.

Take Part aims to build on what is already there. Participants in Take Part programmes should learn as much from their fellow learners as from their teacher. Each participant, though they may not realise it at first, will have something to teach others. It is as much about sharing knowledge and skills as receiving them.

Knowledge is useful, but what is even more useful is having the skills to continually acquire new knowledge: to know where to look and how to get what you need in response to a changing world and changing needs.

If we look at our lives, it is obvious that active learning doesn't just take place in the classroom; we learn by assuming responsibilities and by doing tasks with our families, at work, as a volunteer and in our social and cultural participation. This is why Take Part learning is active learning, experiential learning and learning through doing.

## 5.6 Constructed conversations

### **How constructed conversations work**

Constructed conversations work from the principle that citizens have the potential competence to identify issues and injustices in their communities. However, for this to happen efficiently, citizens need support. These conversations are mostly informal, with a structure and enabled by a facilitator who operates as a 'critical and constructive friend', to help people to:

- establish and build relationships with people with whom they would not normally connect;
- explore themes as they arise in the dialogue – participants have the freedom to develop the conversational topics as a collaborative process;
- develop self-awareness and the confidence to engage with people and organisations;
- see connections between observation and action – recognise links between actions and consequences;
- look beyond themselves and their own issues; and
- produce not only expected but also unexpected outcomes, which work towards strengthening the community at large.

This approach recognises the need for individuals and groups to act as catalysts to support self-organising and self-constructed communities which contribute to the further development of civil society. These are referred to as 'self-organising processes', which can be understood as how people go about making relationships, working together, organising, and working in groups and as individuals to develop civil society.

Different collective learning experiences (workshops, seminars and conferences) permit the gradual evolution of a network of learners. This has the additional intention of increasing community connectivity, thereby enabling learners to create their own networks and capabilities for observation, reflection and action.

As people relate to each other in shared interactions, it is natural for them to maintain conversations and share information. This dialogue can become more purposeful and focused once it is constructed and facilitated. Constructed conversations strengthen the relationship between observation, reflection, planning and action in ongoing individual and collective learning processes. They help participants share viewpoints, weigh their contributions and focus their attention on issues that are of collective significance.

### **Useful academic studies**

Conversations have been the object of multiple studies. Books and papers offer numerous possibilities as to how to support, design, direct or construct them (Winograd and Flores 1986; Maturana 1988; Beer 1994; Espejo 2003).

Some of these publications are about structuring the rules of engagement, others about the participants' expectations, while others address the moral foundations of conversations in democratic societies (Walzer 1990) and the relationship between the participants' conversations and their observations as they step out of these conversations (De Zeeuw 1996).

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### 6. References

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### Useful websites

[www.aga.org.uk/qual/gcse/cit.html](http://www.aga.org.uk/qual/gcse/cit.html) – a list of the specifications for the GCSE Citizenship Studies programme.

[www.changesuk.net](http://www.changesuk.net) – includes an ‘Axis of Influence’ to help identify how influential communities are and what is needed in order for this level of influence to increase.

[www.nocn.org.uk](http://www.nocn.org.uk) – the National Open College Network is the UK’s foremost provider of accreditation services for adult learning.

[www.openquals.org.uk/openquals](http://www.openquals.org.uk/openquals) – QCA’s database of accredited qualifications.

[www.plainenglish.co.uk/guides.htm](http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/guides.htm) – a series of downloadable guides to help government departments and official organisations communicate clearly.

[www.scvo.org.uk](http://www.scvo.org.uk) – the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations website.

[www.togetherwecan.info](http://www.togetherwecan.info) – the Government’s Together We Can action plan to enable people to engage with public bodies and influence the decisions that affect their communities.

[www.ucas.com/access](http://www.ucas.com/access) – a website listing Access courses, which prepare adult learners from non-traditional backgrounds and under-represented groups for admission to undergraduate education.

## 7. Take Part network

The Take Part network is made up of the regional hubs which have taken part in the active learning for active citizenship action research and are taking Take Part forward. The network's role is to promote the Take Part approach to active learning for active citizenship, by continuing to run their own programmes and to enable other learning providers to develop their own, based on the good practice in this framework.

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