

Craigmillar Learning for Community Participation and Action report: Chapter 1a – an overview of the research and summary of the key findings

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A 'research group' of local people – to locate key issues and concerns

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A full list of those who wished to be acknowledged is found in the separate Chapter 12: 'Background information (appendices)'.

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Craigmillar Communiversy (see chapters 7 and 9)
The Estate of Bill Douglas (see chapter 7)

Chapter 1a. An Overview of the Research and Summary of the Key Findings of this Report.

Introduction:

This chapter provides both an overview of the research described in the full report, and a summary of the key findings or messages from the full report.

The brief overview provides useful background knowledge for readers who want to look at particular topics covered by individual chapters – a list of the chapters is included within this introduction.

Working towards making the report accessible: The whole report including this summary chapter is written in a style that aims to avoid over-use of jargon and of theories so that a wide range of people living and working in this community, and in other communities, will find it an ‘easy’ read. We have also split it into chapters on key themes, and then into sections dealing with individual issues, so that people will find it easier to get at the issues that interest them.

The report cannot however be considered a fully accessible document. Firstly people who have difficulty with reading written English¹ will not be able to access it. Secondly people not used to sorting through lengthy documents to find the bit they want will struggle to use it too. There is a real tension here between producing a substantial report that demonstrates the diversity of knowledge and skill in the area, and which can be used to support trainers running a learning programme, or producing a report that is short and easily accessible to many people.

Wanting to find out more about a particular issue? Anyone wanting to get access to this report or bits of it should contact us at the Craigmillar Capacity Building Project and we will work to find a way to support you to do this.

¹ For instance, people for whom English is not their first language such as Deaf people who use BSL or people from minority ethnic communities, people who have difficulty with reading, and people who have visual impairments.

Overview of the research.

Why research on learning for community participation and action? The Craigmillar Capacity Building Project (CBP) agreed funding with the European Social Fund (ESF) to look at developing lifelong learning for community activists and volunteers, and others who are active within the area of 'Greater Craigmillar'. In particular the CBP wanted to meet and discuss with a wide range of local active people the sorts of knowledge and learning they've found useful or need for their community participation; and to build a picture of the sorts of knowledge and skills you need to know in order to be both active and effective – *to understand 'the pool of community knowledge'*.

This research report looks at the knowledge and skills that local active people find useful and need. What has been learnt from this research is being used *firstly* to develop training courses that can be used in this community and others – and these will be available on the web. Likewise to encourage community organisations and services to think more about the importance of learning and support for community activists, volunteers and residents. A further survey was carried out to determine demand and priorities for learning, and this information is now being used to develop training courses in the second year of work.

And *secondly*, what is being learnt can also *inform* the development of a 'learning programme'. This would include the training courses being developed but should be seen as broader than this. It would also include the informal sharing of learning within a community, and the development of planning for learning for local people across the whole range of community knowledge identified, and over a number of years.

Thinking about lifelong learning, and community learning and development:

Lifelong learning is concerned with the importance for adults of continuing, after completing their education as a 'young person', their learning, personal development and growth both at work and in their social and community life; learning does not and should not end once school years have been completed.

Community learning and development is concerned with the importance for communities to be learning so that they can be actively involved in, and lead on, the planning and directing of their own development and regeneration.

There seems to be a consensus within government policy that such learning is a '*good thing*', and these two themes are brought into many Scottish Executive policy documents – see chapter 1b of this report. This can hide the fact that there are very real areas of disagreements about the types of lifelong learning and community learning that are needed. This report is influenced by several writers who question whether present approaches can make a real difference to communities:

- *firstly*, Jane Thompson² who argues for ‘*committed dialogue*’ within communities and between communities, services and government about what sorts of learning is relevant to them, and how learning should anticipate a future in which equality and social justice are central;
- *secondly*, John Kretzmann and John McKnight³ who argue for an ‘*asset-based community development*’ approach in which a community’s knowledge, skills, experiences, resources and ownership – its assets - are central to community development.

This report aims to work with both these perspectives: to look at the learning assets of this community, its *pool of community knowledge*, and to see how such assets can support and develop a *committed dialogue* both within communities and between communities, services and government. It aims to work towards a picture of learning for community participation and action that primarily reflects what makes sense to people in communities; rather than starting from what makes sense to people services, government and their staff.

Participatory research: Participatory research aims to work closely with the people who are the focus of the research, in this case people active within Greater Craigmillar, to support them in expressing their views and in thinking through what the research means. It usually seeks to develop some form of action or active outcome beyond a report, and so is often also called *action research*. This research aims to work within this tradition by talking with people about their views on knowledge and learning for those active in the community, and by using these views to support the development of training and a local learning programme.

What research has been done: The full report describes the research carried out between September 2004 and June 2005. The researcher met with 79 people who are active in the community in a variety of ways. These people were volunteers, activists, members of organisations and committees, and/or were ‘helping out’ within organisations or the community, in the Greater Craigmillar area; others worked, both, as staff within local organisations, and as activists, volunteers and residents within the area. There was a balance between women and men, and a strong input from people with disabilities.

² See Jane Thompson’s (2001) report, ‘Rerooting lifelong learning: resourcing neighbourhood renewal.’ Details from the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education on the Internet at: <http://www.niace.org.uk/>.

³ See John P. Kretzmann and John McKnight (1993) ‘Building Communities from the Inside Out: a path toward finding and mobilizing a community’s asset’. Go on the Internet to: www.northwestern.edu/ipr/abcd.html

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The research report also looks at other forms of diversity within community participation, for instance the experiences of people from different ethnic groups and people of different ages.

The researcher also met with a wide range of staff and organisations within the area, and some outside of the area, to build background knowledge; and consulted with a range of local people and groups on the initial findings and parts of the written report.

From research to training and a 'learning programme': The ESF funding for this work is aimed at turning the research findings a learning programme for those who are or want to be involved in community participation and action. In particular the ESF funding is focused on:

- the piloting and development of training courses and modules for local people to support their participation and action.

However, the idea of a learning programme is used in this report to mean something larger than simply this. A learning programme is assumed to involve too:

- support for informal sharing of learning and knowledge within the community for community participation and action;
- planning and development of learning and training for the full pool of community knowledge identified by the research, and *over a number of years*
- support for local people (who want to) to use the training courses to gain qualifications, and, where they want to, to use these to gain access to further formal education and learning
- support for community organisations and groups in developing their knowledge and skills to support people in undertaking a range of relevant informal sharing of learning, and more formal training.

The other chapters in this report look at the following areas:

- Chapter 1b: Full introduction to this report.
- Chapter 2: Understanding community and participation in Craigmillar.
- Chapter 3: Local campaigning.
- Chapter 4: Working with people.
- Chapter 5: Organising meetings and events
- Chapter 6a: Community Organisations - Working on a Management Committee or Board of a local organisation

- Chapter 6b: Community initiatives
- Chapter 7: Lifelong learning and community participation
- Chapter 8: Participating in decision-making and partnership-working
- Chapter 9: Community regeneration
- Chapter 10: Local decision-making and the wider world
- Chapter 11: Conclusions for a learning programme
- Chapter 12: Background information (appendices)

Each chapter gives information and views from local active people, active as volunteers, community activists, members of organisations and people who are 'helping out, on:

- what they do, how they do it, and what is working well for them;
- dilemmas and difficulties that they are working towards resolving.

This information is broken up into themes or sections within each chapter. At the end of each section there are comments from the researcher on what this means for a learning programme for people who are active in the community.

A SUMMARY of the key findings from the full report.

Understanding your community - *the diversity of community participation and action, and the relationship between communities and community services (from chapter 2):*

The participation and action within a community involves a complex web of relationships, actions, networks, groups and organisations. No one person alone can grasp this complexity, much is hidden from you depending on how you are involved, however, encouraging people to explore the 'pool of community knowledge' brings more and more in 'to view'. A learning programme that aims to support and sustain a *committed dialogue* within a community needs to provide opportunities to explore this pool of community knowledge.

The following aspects of community participation are all crucial in understanding this pool of community knowledge:

- *the range of roles for active people* – including: community activists, volunteers, community leaders or representatives, 'community connectors' (or 'magnets'), committee members, group members, someone using a service, someone 'helping out' in their neighbourhood or street.
- *the range of networks of communication for active people* – including: 'word of mouth' channels, the web, newsletters, video/DVD, posters and boards.
- *the variety of settings that active people participate in* – including: health, sport, community decision-making, learning and education, community arts, business and community enterprise, housing and neighbourhoods, churches and other faith groups, community care and welfare, mutual support groups, campaigning groups.
- *the diversity of people within a community* – including the differences between people through: gender, class and economic circumstances, Black and minority ethnic identity, age, sexual orientation, disability/no-disability, cultural identity, identity through faith, religion and/or belief.
- *participation in both optimistic and difficult circumstances* – positive situations, where people feel that positive things are happening, e.g. a successful project; and difficult situations where there are real struggles to keep going e.g. experiences of discrimination, injustices and fear of violence.

A learning programme, should aim, by supporting activists and volunteers in exploring this diversity of participation, help build understanding of what community services and community organisations can offer. It can build the

confidence and skills of local active people for involvement in dialogue with such services and organisations.

However community services and organisations need to *work hard* to be open to such a dialogue in order for such discussions to be of real value to all parties; without such a commitment from community services and organisations, local people will not have the opportunity for such a dialogue.

Local campaigning - skills and knowledge for effective campaigning (see chapter 3)

Local experience of campaigning highlights the importance of:

- background research – building your knowledge of an issue;
- the use of a range of tools to raise concerns – film and the arts, lobbying, conferences, and action research;
- access to support – a ‘community guide’ or legal advice, for instance;
- developing strategies – particularly around who takes decisions, how they take them, and how dialogue with these organisations and partnerships can be established.

A learning programme should support activists, volunteers and residents in accessing such local knowledge and in building their skills and confidence in campaigning; in particular campaigning work that can support neighbourhoods and communities in getting heard when government, services, decision-makers and policy-makers are not open to a committed dialogue.

Working with people – skills and knowledge for working with others in a variety of situations and forms of community participation (see chapter 4).

People who are active in this community spoke of a wide range of skills and knowledge that they found useful for working with other people including:

- listening, using confidentiality, boundaries and ground-rules;
- building trust, and using creativity and the arts;
- working in groups, leadership and working with conflicts;
- seeing the wider context of poverty and discrimination that local people struggle with.

And they are using these ‘people skills’ in many different community situations, including:

- in day to day life in neighbourhoods and in the community;
- working to support other people who use their service;
- mutual support within a support group;
- within their community groups, organisations and associations;

- on committees or in meetings;
- at social clubs, lunch clubs, art groups and youth groups;
- within the councils and forums that represent the community.

A learning programme for people who are active in the community needs to create opportunities for activists, volunteers and residents to talk and learn about this range of knowledge and skill, and how people make actual (practical) use of it in their community participation and action. Communities don't necessarily work in the same way as services, and 'people skills and knowledge' generated by the experiences of people working in services need adapting by people working within their own communities to support their own circumstances. It is important then for a learning programme to support the development of an ongoing and *committed dialogue* about how people active in their community can value their existing 'people skills', share experiences and learning, and develop further skills.

Organising meetings and events – making them accessible and supporting the full diversity of the community in joining in (see chapter 5)

Many activists and volunteers highlighted the importance of making sure that events and meetings are:

- 'accessible' – with childcare, transport, a range of food for different diets, support for joining in such as hearing induction loops and interpreters;
- 'supportive' – developing a 'culture' within meetings, events and organisations that supports a wide range of people in building their confidence in joining in.

There is already an existing resource that explores these two issues. The 'We have the Power' campaign group, a group of local people involved in adult learning, worked with CALNET and the Capacity Building Project to produce a report and video called '*That wee word MON£Y (and other things) in Adult Learning*'; this provides a range of good advice and ideas on accessibility and support⁴. A learning programme needs to provide opportunities for local active people to share their knowledge of how to make their events and meetings accessible and supportive, and use local resources such as the 'That wee word MON£Y' report. In doing so it can help to support a *committed dialogue* across the community about how to involve the full diversity of people in its cultural and social life, and its decision-making, development and regeneration.

⁴ The group worked with Craigmillar Adult Learning network (CALNET) and the Capacity Building Project to produce a video-report and report, 'That wee word MON£Y (and other things) in Adult Learning', and these are available through Adult Learning Link and the Capacity Building Project. For contact details go on the internet to: www.adultlearninglink.edin.org or www.craigmillarcapacitybuilding.org/

Community organisations – *skills and knowledge for working for management committees, Boards or steering groups of a community organisation (see chapter 6a).*

Given the long-standing work over several decades of community organisations within Greater Craigmillar, there is a breadth and depth of knowledge and experience here about working to develop and sustain such organisations. Key areas highlighted by local people, who are active on committees and Boards, include:

- careful use of forward planning/ action planning;
- communication and team-work within a committee, and with staff and local members and service-users;
- financial/business development – including different models of development as social enterprises, community enterprises and more traditional voluntary organisations and community groups;
- legal responsibilities of committee and Board members;
- partnership-working and policy-making;
- training and support from community organisations and services.

The complexity of knowledge and skills listed illustrates the importance of committee and Board members having the opportunity to share knowledge and develop their skills. There is not always agreement within this community about the value of each area. For instance, some committee members were sceptical about the value of action planning, others saw it as important; likewise some saw a social enterprise model as a valuable approach to 'community ownership' of a project, whilst others saw raising or applying for funds as painful work and *only* as a means to the ends of their group doing activities.

A learning programme can play a valuable role in creating opportunities for committee and Board members - particularly new members – as well as activists, volunteers and residents to share their knowledge and develop their skills; initially this would be at an introductory level.

However a learning programme should in the longer term aim at building-up a deeper 'bank' of knowledge, experience and learning that local people and organisations can tap into to support their learning and action. Again, a *committed dialogue* within the community and with community organisations about how to achieve this would be crucial. Such a resource would be a valuable contribution to the debates and discussions about learning for communities that other communities across Scotland and the UK are having, as well as those held by policy and decision makers.

Community initiatives - *skills and knowledge for working within groups of volunteers and activists that 'arise' from within the community (see chapter 6b).*

Community initiatives, where groups of volunteers and activists who live in the area, rather than existing community organisations or community services with staff, take-up a project and carry it forward, are a crucial part of community life; they create new opportunities for their neighbourhoods. The work they do is diverse – through youth groups, self-help groups, housing groups, and campaigning and action groups.

A learning programme can support local active people in understanding what can make these initiatives successful: the commitment of a core group; flexible support from community organisations and services; strengthening skills in managing themselves and complex situations; and finding the right sorts of funding. This is valuable knowledge for activists and volunteers to grasp – they may want to try this approach themselves, or will be better placed to understand and support these initiatives. *In particular it will help them to work with the very real frustrations and tensions that community initiatives face as they seek to get the resources and recognition that they need to develop.*

Further a learning programme should in the longer term aim at building-up a deeper 'bank' of knowledge, experience and learning about community initiatives that local people and organisations can tap into to support their learning and action. Again, a *committed dialogue* within the community and *in particular with community initiatives* about how to achieve this would be crucial. Such a resource would be a valuable contribution to the debates and discussions about learning and resources for communities that other communities across Scotland and the UK are having, as well as those held by policy and decision makers.

Lifelong learning and community participation and action: learning the value of bringing together (integrating) informal and more formal learning with volunteering, activism and paid work (see chapter 7)

Experiences of people who are active in the community highlighted the value of:

- informal learning simply by trying new activities and being supported in doing so;
- informal learning through discussion with others within this community (sharing learning);
- informal learning through making connections with other people and groups in other communities who face similar challenges and struggles;
- developing skills in Information Communication Technology including the use of computers, the Internet and film (DVD, video, TV);
- bringing together informal learning, formal learning (for qualifications), and experience of community participation and action to support the

development of people's unpaid roles in the community ... as well as for gaining paid work;

- developing flexible approaches to supporting people's learning by community organisations and community services.

The research has also highlighted the value of further considering:

- the use of people's stories as a source of sharing learning within a community which could be linked with the use of film as listed above;
- the stress that both lifelong learning and community participation can bring to people – they create change and therefore tension in people's lives that may be very difficult to them, or have unforeseen consequences.

These are two areas that it would be valuable to carry out further action research into.

A learning programme therefore needs to support local people in recognising that their participation naturally and automatically involves learning and development of skills and knowledge. They can develop these skills and knowledge further through informal learning, and can get these recognised through a qualification through formal learning ... but this needs to make sense to them and their community, to feel purposeful to them. A learning programme should aim to be flexible in its approaches so that it can support the full diversity of volunteers, activists and residents in the community.

Participation and partnership working – skills and knowledge for increasing the power of communities in the decision making that impacts on them (see chapter 8).

Activists and volunteers highlighted a wide range of experiences of participation in decision making. It was clear that many were motivated to make an impact on such decision making, that they were looking to make a difference to their neighbourhood or community, and that where this happened they found this work satisfying. However there was also a strong sense that mobilising the wider community to participate, particularly in decision making, was not easy and that there is an ongoing search for ways to make participation in such decision making accessible and relevant to local people.

A range of different approaches are being explored in the area that a learning programme can learn from, including the use of:

- participatory research;
- training that uses the arts, film and visits to promote talking and understanding of local issues;
- training that develops skills and confidence in meetings;

- person-centred planning;
- problems solving partnerships and other forms of partnership work.

A key issue for a learning programme to support local people in thinking through how to work with partners that are more powerful than them; partners such as the Council and its services, the Health Board, and other services, business representatives or arms of government. These partners can be open to genuine discussion on local issues that can be used to construct agreed plans for action – in effect *committed dialogue*. But there are clearly times when this is not the case, and powerful services and government approach projects with little commitment to working *on a community's terms*.

Local people need the opportunity to reflect and learn from a range of community experiences of partnership working with community services, agencies, business and government, including through the Craigmillar Social Inclusion Partnership. They can look at when it is effective to do this sort of partnership working, and when a more challenging, campaigning approach is more effective; they also need to look at how services, partnerships and government are or should be accountable to them, and how their views can be effectively represented within such partnership working.

Choosing between when to work in partnership and, when to campaign, is a key issue for further research. Some research has already been undertaken; for instance, 'A Word to the Wise?'⁵, highlights the importance of involving young people in planning work from the very beginning, and for services and local government to commit to making sure the findings of consultation or research with young people demonstrably impacts on their projects and strategies. This should be taken further and consideration given to:

- how communities can input into national and local policy-making;
- how the full diversity of a community can be represented on local decision-making bodies;
- how communities, partnerships, services and government can work together on a 'community's terms'.

Community Regeneration – the knowledge held within the community to support the development of a broad and holistic understanding of community regeneration (see chapter 9)

A broad range of knowledge held within this community has been demonstrated including:

- the role of community arts in creating space supporting regeneration;
- different approaches to, and concerns about, housing;

⁵ 'A Word to the Wise?' A report into young people and decision-making in Craigmillar can be downloaded from the Craigmillar Capacity Building Project website. For a copy go on the Internet to: www.craigmillarcapacitybuilding.org

- different approaches to, and concerns about, local economic development;
- local experiences of health and well-being, and what supports people in sustaining good health;
- different experiences and concerns around ongoing attempts to regenerate the community;
- a recognition of the contested and political nature of regeneration both locally and nationally.

There is then considerable local knowledge and experience for a learning programme to draw upon. There is also a willingness to ask questions about whether community regeneration is really 'working', given that national policy and government has been attempting to regenerate communities struggling with poverty and unemployment for well over 30 years now. A learning programme should create space for local people to firstly learn from local experiences and then begin to consider the bigger questions about regeneration, poverty and national policies. This might open up opportunities for a more genuine *committed dialogue* with policy-makers and decision-makers – or at least a recognition of where presently this is and isn't possible.

Local decision-making and the wider context – knowledge of local decision-making processes, and of the wider social, economic and political world in which local decision making takes place (see chapter 10).

Local volunteers and activists spoke of the range of knowledge that it is important to have when understanding the work of local decision making bodies and these include:

- understanding the differences between a consensus -building model and 'parliamentary-style' conflict-based model, and when each can be used to try and find 'common-cause' across a community;
- skills for meetings – including understanding democratic working and working respectfully;
- understanding more of the wider policy context of decisions– local and national;
- developing new ways to involve and give power to the wider community in local decision making – increasing accountability, legitimacy and representativeness.

They felt this was relevant to a range of local bodies including the Community Council⁶, the Craigmillar Social Inclusion Partnership, and PARC (the Joint Venture Company for Craigmillar).

⁶ One recent example commissioned by the Craigmillar Community Council is a participatory appraisal of the housing regeneration plans for the area, the Craigmillar Urban Design Framework. The final report this consultation led by Scottish Participatory Initiatives on the Draft Urban Development Framework is available from the Capacity Building Project website at: <http://www.craigmillarcommunitycouncil.org/UDFConsultationReport.doc>

Many local volunteers and activists also demonstrated that their activity was not limited to Craigmillar but involved working City-wide or on national projects - and thinking nationwide and internationally. This included understanding of, and involvement in, decision making by the City Council, Community Planning Partnerships, Health Boards and the Scottish Executive.

There is a pool of knowledge here that the whole community and the learning programme can tap into. It is crucial that Craigmillar understands the workings of the wider world, in particular policy-making; likewise that its voices, and the voices of other communities where many people are struggling with low incomes and poverty, are heard by policy and decision-makers at all levels.

A learning programme can support the local people in accessing community knowledge:

- of how to influence and impact on local decisions;
- of the different local democratic structures that can be used, and how each can be made accountable and representative;
- of how national and local policies can impact on a community, and ways they can work to influence this;
- on where *committed dialogue* between communities, services and government is possible, and when it has to be campaigned for.

What else does a learning programme need to consider? Developing a flexible and informal style of learning support for local people (see chapter 11)

Finally a learning programme needs to consider not only its content but its broader style. The themes covered above and given in chapters 2-10 give a clear picture of the 'pool of community knowledge', the skills and knowledge people active in the community have or would value learning; and this is very much the potential content of a learning programme. However what they say also raises other issues, and asks key some crucial questions:

Targeting learning at people with few opportunities for training and learning?
There is a diversity of roles and situations in which volunteers, activists and residents work, but active people also vary considerably in experience – some are starting out, some have a little or limited experience, others have considerable experience. Who should a learning programme be focused on? This may be a false question in that much of the learning with a pool of community knowledge will be widely relevant – even long-term volunteers and activists can learn more, need to adapt to change or have a vital role in sharing their knowledge within a programme. However, it is also likely that presently most resources locally are being invested in those who are already experienced – even if such resources are both limited and insufficient – and that investment should therefore be aimed at:

- those who've lacked the opportunity for community participation so far, or those actively seeking to try out local community participation and action
- those who wish to develop further their roles within community participation and lifelong learning into areas where they don't have experience.

A flexible programme: Many people spoke of the value of informal learning in places and styles where they feel comfortable rather than a formal learning situation such as a college or even a local training course. Most people valued learning that directly relates to what they are doing in the community – that feels purposeful. They also value the support of other active people and local staff that they know already and trust. Some people, but not all, value learning about and through technology such as computers, and of gaining formal qualifications. There is much for a learning programme to consider in terms of being flexible enough to support the full diversity of local people. The piloting of the training courses in the second year of work will allow the development of a clearer sense of what this should mean in practice – potentially a set of practical guidelines or short stories of what local people find value.

Keep listening to local people: When the researcher returned to various groups to feedback the initial findings of the research, people continued to raise issues and concerns. There is then no final answer to what a learning programme should include, it will keep changing. It is important to keep listening to local people and in the second year of work to pilot the courses, the researcher will work with an advisory group that includes local residents, undertake a short survey to find out more about demand for particular areas of learning from the pool of community knowledge, and promote the pilot course widely to try to attract a varied and diverse range of participants.

In particular the programme needs to maintain sensitivity towards the need for both learning in *more* formal situations such as training courses, and other opportunities for informal learning through stories, meetings and the web.

Other considerations for the development of the learning programme:

- *Looking outwards:* There are a wide range of approaches to supporting community participation both within the Greater Craigmillar area and in many other communities across Scotland. These include different approaches to training, work with colleges and use of the web. A learning programme needs to look outwards and keep learning from other the experiences of other communities in Scotland, UK and further afield.
- *Opportunities to explore participatory and action research:* the research has highlighted the usefulness of a range of participatory approaches

and elements of these can be brought into the proposed training courses and into any informal learning, to see if they help people take-up their concerns and work towards action to make changes.