

Craigmillar Learning for Community Participation and Action report: Chapter 8 - Participating in decision making and partnership working

Published by Craigmillar Capacity Building Project (CBP)
63 Niddrie Mains Terrace, Edinburgh, EH16 4NX

First Published 2006

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ISBN: 1-905851-09-X (from Jan 2007: 978-1-905851-09-6)

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

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Final version of the Craigmillar Learning for Community Participation and Action report, Chapter 8, Jan 2006

Acknowledgements:

The Craigmillar Capacity Building Project gratefully acknowledges the support of the many people, projects and organisations across Craigmillar and beyond who helped with this action research project.

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

Thanks also to the following for allowing the use of text from one of their publications:

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

Chapter 8: Participating in decision making and partnership working

Introduction

One person estimated that perhaps up to 500 people in the area were active in the life of the community through voluntary, unpaid work and activism¹. This makes sense if you take all the different groups, organisations and networks into account, and the different areas in which they operate – health and social care, sports and leisure, education and learning, older people, younger people, churches and other faiths groups, women and men's groups and clubs, local trade unions, housing and neighbourhood, community forums and community politics, community arts, disabled people, and community action groups. Certainly the researcher found it relatively easy to trace at least 150 people who were 'active' in the community.

What this means is that there is a huge pool of people who are already actively participating as volunteers, activists and members of local groups and organisations – doubtless there are many more who would be involved given the chance – and, crucially, who have vital knowledge, skills and connections to bring to local participation in decision making and partnership working.

This chapter looks at these two themes of participation in decision making and partnership working and looks in more detail at the sorts of work people in the community are doing, in particular at:

- participation – motivation and changing nature of participation (pages 4-6)
- participation – participatory research (pages 7-11)
- participation – other approaches including the arts and work with young people (pages 12 –18)
- partnership working – with agencies and services (pages 19-22)
- partnership working – the Craigmillar Social Inclusion Partnership (pages 23-26)
- a final comment for a learning programme for local active people (page 27-28).

Note: Before reading this chapter it would be useful to look at Chapter 1a. This will give you some background information on lifelong learning, community learning and development, and participatory research.

¹ The population of 'Greater Craigmillar' varies according to the area being considered. The electoral ward of Craigmillar has about 7000 people and the Social Inclusion Partnership which includes Bingham about 8000 people. However if you include other neighbourhoods such as Magdalene which were included within the area covered by the Craigmillar Festival Society and within which many people active in 'Greater Craigmillar' continue to live, the total grows to over 12000.

Participation - finding the motivation to 'keep going'

To sustain community participation, in whatever way people choose to get involved, people need to find the motivation, the energy, both to start and then keep it going.

These were some of the ways that three different people spoke about this:

You only get out what you put in. I get a lot of enjoyment otherwise I'd be sitting in the house watching TV. Now I'm learning new skills and meeting people.

People are encouraged by what others are doing

Being involved makes you feel better about the place. But ... we'll not know what's improved for at least another 3 years.

Many people were motivated by the thought of a better future for themselves and their children:

I needed help but didn't get it – I see the bairns need it (the research group²)

There's talent in Craigmillar but not enough money (the research group)

I wouldn't be doing this if I hadn't got the bairns (Castleview Parents Group)

I was surprised at how concerned students were (comment from teacher on the work of the Eco Committee at Castlebrae Community High School)

People also had bigger picture concerns and linked these with their personal experiences:

Many people are doing things differently. You learn to look at the bigger picture, everyone's different; but we all want to work with kids and to better the place they live in, teach them respect and

² 'The research group' was a mix of local active people from different parts of the community. It involved 7 different local active people; 4 people who were volunteers or activists; 3 people who were both staff with local organisations, lived locally and were active in the community and 2 people who were staff in local organisations but did not live locally also attended one meeting. There were 3 meetings in all – some people attended once, some twice.

appreciation, and to say thank-you (the ACT group³)

I wanted to know where all the Social Inclusion Partnership money was going and wanted something to keep interested.

Finding the type and balance of work you find satisfying is also important to sustaining motivation. One person was being more careful about the number of commitments they had:

I've been cutting down to keep on top of it all

Comment on learning: People have varied reasons and concerns for getting started and then keeping going. They do it because it is interesting and satisfying work, because they believe in a better Craigmillar for themselves and new generations, and because they find inspiration through others.

For a learning programme which looks to support people in sustaining, enjoying and learning from their participation, these are important messages to hear. The programme needs to work with people to give them the tools for making their participation satisfying in a number of ways, which includes feeling that you are making a difference, which can sustain their participation over substantial periods.

³ A group of people who had been involve in the ACT youth workers training through the Capacity Building Project. The ACT course, 'A Consortium o f Training', is a training course for part -time and volunteer staff in Community Learning and Development. It is aimed at local authorities and voluntary organisations and is for those involved in work with 5- 12s, youth work, adult learning or community work. Current consortium members are: Midlothian Council, Moray House Institute (University of Edinburgh), Scottish Borders Council, West Lothian Council and Craigmillar Capacity Building Project. The training is accredited – that is it is recognised by colleges and university.

Participation – times are a changing

Various people also spoke of the barriers they faced in getting others to participate. Keeping other people involved takes energy and leadership skills and it can be very frustrating:

People have a chance to voice their opinions but don't realise it. They need to talk with the Community Regeneration reps. For example (there was) one woman who was moaning and I told her to go to local group meeting and she came to the last meeting ... it may have opened her eyes a wee bit.

Some people say 'same cronies'. To people who say this I say come along and join-in but they won't

It's important to encourage other people to come along, when regeneration (is being discussed). Informal meetings, and the more people who attend the better, even every second month.

The difficulties that people found in getting others involved were leading active people to look for other ways to encourage participation. One person had a strong sense of a significant change that is taking place in this community and other communities – people's openness to participate is changing:

People are not interested in politics; they are opting out of the political processes, see the last 2 elections. If young people don't have confidence in the democratic process then they turn to the streets ... 'Normal' people don't go to community meetings ... so you need other ways to involve and consult people ... there are other ways to communicate like Information and Communication Technology ... people use TV and the internet to get information (whereas) they used to meet down at the University Settlement for their political education, a couple of hundred men⁴.

Comment on learning: There are no easy answers to getting others involved. You have to keep trying different approaches and talking to others trying to do the same sorts of work. A learning programme needs to take on board this flexibility of approach that keeps trying to find the answer, 'unlocks the door' and finds way that are relevant to people to participate. The rest of this chapter explores the sorts of answers that people in Craigmillar have been working towards.

⁴ At Napier University, The International Teledemocracy Centre is researching and developing e-democracy systems including an 'e-community council', 'e-petitioning for the Scottish Parliament', and a portal for 'Young Scot'. See http://itc.napier.ac.uk/ITC_Home/ITC/Research.asp

Participation – an example of using participatory research across the whole community

With sufficient resources participatory research can be done successfully across a large community. Craigmillar Community Council commissioned⁵ Scottish Participatory Initiatives (SPI)⁶ to lead a community-wide consultation with local people into their views of the Draft Urban Design Framework⁷. The framework is a draft regeneration plan for a significant part, but not all, of 'Greater Craigmillar'; it contains draft plans for housing, community facilities, green spaces and transport services.

SPI worked with the Capacity Building Project, Child Care Services, and some local people, who were employed as sessional workers, to build and train a team of people in doing the research. The team then used key information from the plan to facilitate discussions in small groups or with individual people about:

- What is good about the plan?
- What is bad about the plan?
- How can the plan be improved?

A wide range of local organisations supported the research team in meeting with people, and the City Council agreed to use the process as their main form of consultation at 4 public meetings. At the public meetings presentations were given by the City Council planning department, PARC (the Craigmillar Joint Venture Company) and the Community Council, which outlined their very different views on the plan.

The consultation made contact with 284 people of all ages, from all areas of Craigmillar and the surrounding areas, and with a good mix of both men and women. Scottish Participatory Initiatives' final report⁸ demonstrates the range of views local people have about the draft plans, in particular the strength of feeling against much of the proposed housing plans.

The report was sent into the City Council Planning Committee and formed the basis for the Community Council's positional statement of the Draft Urban Design Framework.

⁵ Funding of £5000 from provided through PARC (the Craigmillar Joint Venture Company) and the Craigmillar Social Inclusion Partnership; other costs such as staff time were provided 'in kind' by local organisations.

⁶ For more information and contact details on Scottish Participatory Initiatives go on the internet to: <http://www.srds.co.uk/spi/>

⁷ Contact details for PARC and the EDI Group Ltd can be found on the internet at: www.edigroupscotland.co.uk. Copies of the Draft Urban Design Framework are available from PARC.

⁸ The Final Report on the community consultation lead 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>

Comment on learning: The researcher was involved in this piece of participatory research and it was a substantial process that engaged a very significant number of local people in thinking about what they want the future of Craigmillar to be like, and whether the existing Draft Urban Design Framework was anything like a match for their needs and hopes for the future.

It is worth getting a hold of a copy of the participatory consultation report⁹ for, not surprisingly, it creates a powerful picture of what people in Craigmillar are looking for in a plan for their future. It is something that all parties, the community, the Craigmillar Community Council, the City Council, PARC and the Scottish Executive could use as a starting point for working to build a community vision of what Craigmillar should be like ten to twenty years from now. It is a starting point for working with the whole community on the community's terms.

But the report needs (needed) a positive, open response from services and agencies like the City Council and PARC in order to make that a reality. Without their investment in such participatory work with the community this opportunity for rebuilding Craigmillar in a way that makes sense to the people who live here will be lost. Everyone is learning in these circumstances because this sort of work is 'breaking new ground'. It needs commitment to learning, a 'committed dialogue', to make participation effective. And sadly this has not been the case so far from the City Council ...

The City Council Housing Department who were involved in part of this participatory research at four public meetings produced a short, highly critical report condemning the way the participatory research had been done¹⁰. What their report failed to acknowledge or understand is that:

- Scottish Participatory Initiatives, who facilitated the research, is an experienced research consultancy and has done much valued work for Council departments previously;
- This is a learning approach, not a controlled laboratory experiment, one that they joined in with, one that will have weaknesses but which 'we' can all learn from;
- Mainstream organisations like the World Bank value this sort of participatory community research over traditional research methods, despite, or in fact because of, its 'rough and ready'-ness. The results of participatory community research are much more likely to reflect the community's views and needs than research carried out by outside agencies using traditional research methods¹¹.

⁹ For details of where to find the report see note 8 above.

¹⁰ For a copy of this City of Edinburgh Council Housing Department document go on the Internet to: http://cpol.edinburgh.gov.uk/getdoc_ext.asp?DocId=66476

¹¹ See Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex (IDS) Policy Briefing on 'The Power of Participation: PRA and Policy'; go on the internet to: www.ids.ac.uk/ids/bookshop/briefs/brief7.html

What this suggests is that the Housing Department *either* has a deep misunderstanding of the nature and value of participatory research processes *or* an unwillingness to accept the results of a research process that identifies that the majority of the community are unhappy with and/or against substantial parts of the (then) Draft Urban Design Framework.

The City Council Planning Department did not furnish individual members of the City Council Planning Committee with individual copies of the research report, despite its involving highly significant numbers of local people, in readiness for their first meeting to discuss the consultation on the Draft Urban Design Framework in June (2005). A single copy was made available for their inspection at a central point, and individual copies had to be handed directly to them by the Secretary of the Community Council during their first committee meeting. Ironically, the Planning Department did provide a copy of the Housing Department's critical report of the research process to individual members within their papers for the meeting.

The report compiled by the Planning Department on the results of the whole consultation period¹², in readiness for the City Council's Planning Committee meeting at the end of June (2005), suggests that the Planning Department too has *either* not understood how to work with participatory approaches to planning, *or* has no interest in doing so. There is no attempt to integrate the results of the participatory research, which does have very strong and clear messages, into their consultation report. The Craigmillar Community Council's response to the plans, which is developed from the participatory research, is included, but the Planning Department's response, particularly on the key issue of housing, can best be described as evasive – certainly not a commitment to participatory working.

In conclusion, this is a very strong example for a learning programme, for local people, to learn from. It demonstrates:

- Firstly, the potential of participatory research to support a whole community in beginning to think through and plan for its future.
- Secondly, how difficult it can be for communities to be heard and form a genuine partnership to plan for their futures ... if, as in this case, local government, but more generally central government and other planning bodies, fail to engage in open, democratic and participatory styles of working.

There is an issue of power here - who has it and how they are willing to use it - that local people and communities across Scotland can use to understand, sadly, just how difficult it can be to get heard and to be taken seriously.

OR go to the World Bank website and using their search function, search under 'participatory appraisal'; go on the internet to: www.worldbank.org

¹² To find a copy of this City of Edinburgh Council Planning Department document go on the Internet to: http://cpol.edinburgh.gov.uk/getdoc_ext.asp?DocId=66474

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See Chapter 9 on Regeneration for more about housing and community development.

Participation - using participatory research in a local neighbourhood:

Another example of using participatory research, but in a neighbourhood rather than community-wide, is through a local neighbourhood group, the Niddrie Marischal Neighbourhood Association:

The Joint Venture Company¹³ has built and now completed loads of houses in Niddrie Marischal but they didn't think about the resources and facilities for community regeneration work. There is no open land left. Why didn't the JVC consult?

A play area for under 5s didn't work, the slide was too small.

The group at Greendykes has a strong spirit and have done planning before the houses were built. They know what they want and how to get it – they've still got open land there.

I did local survey work with young people. I went 'walkabout' asking families and am now waiting to hear from the JVC. I also got young people to draw pictures of what they wanted.

Comment on learning: Again, this is a valuable example of the importance of asking people, in this case young people, simple but crucial questions about what they want. It's not complicated, but it gets the answers you need if you want people to participate in regeneration ... or anything else. This is participatory research done at a neighbourhood level. It is further evidence for a learning programme that you can do this effectively on a big or small scale - community-wide or down your street.

How PARC (the Craigmillar Joint Venture Company) responded in this case and what has been learnt for then working in the area of Greendykes, would take further research - but such research would be another important area of learning for a learning programme to draw upon about working, in this case, with planners and market-led approaches to development and regeneration.

¹³ Now called PARC., then the Craigmillar Joint Venture Company .

Participation - Person centred planning

One person the researcher met with, who is both active in the community and now employed by a local organisation, spoke of using person centred planning to support their own planning. This is where a person, group, organisation or even a neighbourhood or community get together to look at what they've been doing and think about what they want to get done next:

I was encouraged to do a plan and got key decision makers involved in the planning ... it was a 'MAP' and looked at:

- *Where I've come from*
- *My strengths and weaknesses*
- *My dream job*
- *My past experience of voluntary sector*
- *An action plan*

Some plans you're not sure where that's person's been or where they want to go – it needs honesty to work. I recommend it if you've got to know about your gifts and strengths. It can help you stay where you are or move-on and get a job.

Comment on learning: Person centred planning tools include a MAP, like this one, that builds into an action plan. Another is a PATH that gets people to set out a vision and then figure out the steps to work towards this vision¹⁴. In both cases the focus is always on action and commitment to move towards the goal.

Individuals, groups, organisations, and potentially communities can use them. Again, this is an example of a tool that a learning programme could encourage local people to try, to see how effective it is for them.

¹⁴ More information on person centred planning tools is available through Scottish Human Services Trust; see contact details at their website at: www.shstrust.org.uk

Participation - Using the arts

The Children Decide Group at the Venchie¹⁵ worked through the use of arts to design a park:

We built a model of what the area was like and what we wanted it to be like using cartons, boxes and pictures. We produced an exhibition of photos and then a booklet¹⁶ about the project using money from the Social Inclusion Partnership

We needed a park for teenagers. All the parks were for younger children. We went round the play parks in the area, took photos, we saw what was suitable for teenagers – nothing.

Getting contacts was the hardest then we phoned people up and wrote letters. We contacted the council about land. There was space at Harewood Crescent but only for 3 years and spare land beside the Venchie. Also Kintry¹⁷ had land for a play park by the Hays and we went to visit.

We wanted a half-pipe for skate-boarding and did costings through catalogues. It didn't happen quickly enough but we worked as a group and hoped for the best.

The play park by the new Hays estate is the result of their work.

Another young person spoke of their experiences of producing a play with other young people from across the city, and which was presented to the City Council, and further afield:

I worked with other young people and EYSIP¹⁸ on a video called 'Who are you calling a Ned?' It was written by young people and one adult in their 20s. It looked at treatment by police, schools and parents. The show was performed at the Festival Workshop, the video was then shown at City Chambers, and it got coverage on BBC Newsround.

Comment on learning: Again, these are valuable tools that local people can learn more about, and which the Children Decide group and other young people could advise a learning programme on. These are not tools simply for young people but can be used more extensively with all ages and between

¹⁵ Contact details for the Venchie Children and Young People's project are on the internet at: www.craigmillarcapacitybuilding.org/pdf/directory%202004.pdf

¹⁶ The book of photos, 'the Children Decide Photograph Gallery', is available from the group via the Venchie ... contact details in note above.

¹⁷ Contact details for Kintry Housing Partnership are on the internet at: <http://www.craigmillarcapacitybuilding.org/pdf/directory%202004.pdf>

¹⁸ Edinburgh Youth Social Inclusion Partnership - for more information go on to the internet at: www.youthinclusion.org/

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ages. The value of using the arts is in their ability to connect people and get them using their imaginations together. There are examples in Chapter 9 of using the arts for other age groups in community regeneration.

Participation – developing meeting skills and developing people

Instep¹⁹ has been using the 'Bored Meetings' training pack with the Student Council members at Castlebrae Community High School. The pack has been produced by EYSIP (Edinburgh Youth Social Inclusion Partnership), Stevenson College and EVOC²⁰. It is made up of 16 sessions that include activities that get people thinking about how to get better at participating in meetings both as individuals and as a group. Those who've completed the training and passed an assessment receive a National Certificate from Stevenson College. Instep run sessions in the holiday, which they find better as more students attend, because the sessions are not competing against the sports programme. Three young people have completed the course and are now being assessed, and EYSIP are now supporting them in facilitating course sessions for other young people.

Those students who have spent a lot of time doing the course know how to express themselves and understand procedures which makes a real difference in meetings. Instep has also taken the Student Council on a residential course, which included exercises and activities on leading groups, confidence building and team building.

The Student Council has taken up issues such as the redecorating of the toilets. The whole school was consulted on ideas for murals and dealing with graffiti through a questionnaire. The council then selected 9 ideas from the list and used a diamond decision making framework²¹ in order to decide which was the top priority.

One young person spoke of having done the Bored Meetings Course:

... and is waiting to get assessed for the course. I'm already a member of Student Council and done a presentation to the School Board explaining what the Student Council is doing – this was an intimidating and a long meeting.

I took part recently in the East Edinburgh Youth Participation Day. We had a £1000 budget and looked at facilities for young people in the area. I put my name forward to be a member of the Edinburgh Youth Council.

The Eco Committee involving about 6 pupils and 5 staff has also benefited from the Bored Meetings training in its meetings. It's taken up composting,

¹⁹ Instep works with students at Castlebrae Community High School on community involvement and employment. It's contact details are on the internet at: <http://www.craigmillarcapacitybuilding.org/pdf/directory%202004.pdf>

²⁰ The Bored Meetings training pack is available through the Edinburgh Voluntary Organisations Council. For their contact details go on the internet at: www.evoc.org.uk

²¹ See the 'Participation Spice it Up' Training pack produced by Dynamix and published by Save the Children Fund; for details see the Dynamix website at: <http://www.seriousfun.demon.co.uk/books.html>

gardening and planting, and is looking at a litter patrol and using a points system for rewarding and/or condemning. The Eco Committee and the Garden Group have now gained a Silver Eco School award for their environmental work.

Comment on learning: This is a valuable example of an approach to participation that gives people confidence to take part in meetings. This can then lead into taking up leadership or having the confidence to challenge leaders, decision makers and policymakers. The Bored Meetings pack is one that a learning programme can learn from, with its emphasis on using activities to give people confidence in participating.

Working with a local college and getting the course accredited so that people can get a qualification that is valued by lifelong learning organisations and education colleges, illustrates how community participation can support people in developing their learning.

Revolting Youth – training for young people in ‘alternative active citizenship’

Café K and the Jack Kane Community Centre worked with the Capacity Building Project, with the support of Community Education and the Craigmillar Social Inclusion Partnership, to pilot training.

The workers used a ‘community education model of community work with the aim of energising young people into community action’²². There was also a clear emphasis on the rights of young people.

They worked with the young people, taking time to explore issues in depth, as suited the group – and trying a range of approaches to stimulate discussion including:

- arts and craft
- watching the film ‘Made in Britain’ which looks at the response to powerlessness of one young person
- visiting a Community Council meeting
- going on a residential weekend.

The key area of discussion was that of power and inequality so that young people could think through their own experiences and feelings, and how powerful or powerless they felt and why. In particular how they felt about the representation of young people in the media, and how young people are represented within local decision making.

The young people continued to meet after the course and developed their own report. This identifies what they enjoyed about the course, what they would change, what they learnt and their recommendations for future courses. Their recommendations for future courses include:

- doing some theatre
- making a short film
- doing activities is better than listening to someone ‘teach’
- workers should be funny, have energy and not take themselves too seriously
- it shouldn’t feel like school.

Comment on learning: This is a different approach again, that supported young people in talking with each other about themselves and what they thought was important. It then got them to think more about their own

²² Revolting Youth is a pilot training course for young people developed with young people by Café K, the Jack Kane Community Centre, the Capacity Building Project, City of Edinburgh Council Community Education and the Craigmillar Partnership, which “aimed to provide ‘alternative active citizenship’ and explore the responsibilities of society, the government and those in local community structures to young people”. The two Revolting Youth reports, one by staff and one by the young people are available from Café K and the Jack Kane Community Centre – for contact details see on the internet at: www.craigmillarcapacitybuilding.org/pdf/directory%202004.pdf

experiences of powerlessness and how they could respond to this. A creative example of a group of people 'building their own understanding' of their situation - an approach that active people across Craigmillar could learn from, and which a learning programme needs to draw upon.

A recent local research report, 'A Word to the Wise?'²³, was carried out by local youth workers in the Craigmillar area, who involved 80 young people in completing a questionnaire on local issues and involvement in decision making. It made a number of recommendations to local organisations including Craigmillar Social Inclusion Partnership and the City of Edinburgh Council about involving young people. In particular recommending:

- commitment to involving young people from the very beginnings of a piece of work and having the right balance of workers and young people leading pieces of work
- having a lead local body to coordinate participatory work with young people in the area and developing a strategy
- that organisations look to use their energies and resources to take forward issues that young people have highlighted within the report and other pieces of research done locally.

The Revolting Youth project and the 'A Word to the Wise?' report illustrate creative and clear ways of doing this, through building a core of young people with knowledge, understanding and a group commitment to develop an informed perspective on local issues or a particular project.

²³ '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

Partnership working – with local groups and organisations, and with services and agencies

Members from Womanzone²⁴ spoke of several partnership initiatives. One was aimed at meeting with pregnant women to help them understand what a good diet involved:

We're in partnership with Bristo Church and Craigmillar Medical Centre's Ante Natal section. It's a good link for both organisations ... we've done a smoothies roadshow at schools and Richmond Church. And now we're doing food bags.

Another is a City wide partnership of women's groups and organisations, which Womanzone has the lead role in:

16 Days of Protest in December 2004 included a march against Violence against Women, World Aids Day, and a Spanish film on domestic violence. It starts on the anniversary of a massacre of women in Montreal in 1989. The work includes linking up with other agencies.

A different person spoke of a positive response from a range of services when they meet with the Niddrie Marischal Neighbourhood Association:

The group has met with the Police, the JVC, Kintry and the council to tell them about problems in the area. It was a loud meeting but the services listened – people were not having it any longer.

They also spoke of work between the Community Regeneration Forum²⁵ and local Council services on an 'Allocations Agreement' and on an 'Anti-Social Behaviour' neighbourhood agreement:

It involved working with police, youth participation group, council and local Housing Association's to produce a 'wish list'. It started in April 2004 and was seeking everyone's views to reach an agreement. There's 2 reps from each Neighbourhood Group.

It has been difficult to consult as there's some arguments but it's important to involve landlords. Negotiations were hard work but the council has been receptive. People do listen.

²⁴ Womanzone is a local community health project working with women on health and human rights issues. For contact details for more information on Womanzone's work go on the internet to: www.craigmillarcapacitybuilding.org/pdf/directory%202004.pdf

²⁵ The Community Regeneration Forum is a consultative body for Craigmillar made up of representatives from local neighbourhood groups. For contact details go on the internet to 'Craigmillar Neighbourhood Alliance' at: www.craigmillarcapacitybuilding.org/pdf/directory%202004.pdf

Anybody getting a new house will now get a copy of the Community Safety and Anti- Social Behaviour agreement.

Another person was more sceptical about working with the services:

What they (officers) don't like is someone who will challenge this. They are wrapped up in their own views. People who get involved as reps, on Boards and working groups, need to be aware of what it is (this process of co-opting), and need the confidence to challenge.

They did however see it as important work and that it was important to understand how the council's decision making structures work:

It's important to work with council officers to make it happen. You can use it (council's structures) to the best of your abilities, even though I don't like it. A lot of our people could benefit from this knowledge ... but wouldn't believe it happens like this.

So understand what the system is:

Deal, negotiate with councillor officers, understand the roles of the officers – they rarely overturn director's recommendations ... get in the system and speak to lower/middle management, get into their reports

And build relationships with officers:

Also don't always give council officers a problem. You don't want them to always feel 'Oh, Craigmillar' ... you need to give them something too. It's not just about crisis or problems – or they'll never phone you back.

Another approach to partnership working that a local member of staff raised was that of 'Problem-solving partnerships', and they gave one local example:

It originated from the housing department who saw a problem because of 'anti-social behaviour'. The partners included the City Council Housing Department, Community Education, the local Community Centre, the police, tenants and residents groups, housing associations, the local action group and the Capacity Building Project. The partnership identified one area of the problem being that there was nothing for 'older young people' to do ... and that they were perceived as a problem.

Each group involved put their ideas, knowledge and resources 'into the pot' in the search for ways to work with this problem. There were, of course, some tensions between different partners but activities have been developed over a series of meetings; these include a street-work project, a youth club and youth café, and local football and sports coaching. Applications were made for various smaller sources of funding including money from the City Council community safety and

these projects are now developing. The use of 2 community flats are still being thought through.

An illustration of how effective partnerships can be built within the community.

Comment on learning: There is clearly significant potential for local groups and organisations to work in partnership with each other and with other wider services and agencies such as City Council departments and Health services. In this report there are both examples of doing this successfully and when it has been a struggle, and people and organisations have not been taken seriously.

There are clearly times when services and agencies can approach with an openness that allows them to work with criticism, respond to it and demonstrate that they've heard what people are saying. However services and agencies also have considerable power through the knowledge, skills, and resources that they hold - power that can have considerable impact on people's day-to-day lives and their community and neighbourhoods. It can be difficult for communities to match this power so that they can work on an 'equal footing'. If services and agencies are reluctant to enter into genuine partnerships, this can make for a serious 'mismatch' of power and vision. It will require depths of confidence, courage, skill and commitment from a community to challenge services and agencies when such a 'mismatch' occurs.

The challenge for people active within the community could then be knowing when to take a sceptical, challenging approach to services, and when to see that services are open to working creatively, openly and genuinely with them. The role of a learning programme could be to support local active people in continuing to reflect on this central issue of when partnership working can be successful and when it needs to be challenged; to understand more about what sorts of conditions allow for genuine partnership, and what leads to a mismatch of power and vision. Sharing stories and knowledge could be one way to open up this area for further discussion.

The mention of 'Anti-Social Behaviour' (ASB) in two examples above also demonstrates that partnership working with services and agencies is taking place in a national policy making context – both Scotland wide and UK wide. Communities are being asked to join in with making national policies work ... but are they being asked to genuinely join in with the policy making in the first place so that the policy is relevant to the experiences of neighbourhoods and communities? ASB, for example, is a controversial area of national policy making. There are a range of views nationally on how helpful this sort of strategy is, from:

- it can be used to support services and communities to control troublesome individuals and so improve life in an area

to:

- individual people and individual communities will be victimised by this, and that what is really needed is genuine investment in people and communities.

Whilst the researcher here would be significantly more inclined to the latter²⁶, perhaps the crucial point for a learning programme for people active in the community to consider, is supporting people in thinking through:

- firstly, wider issues of policy and how they can or should be able to contribute to their development nationally
- secondly, how to engage with the development and use locally of national policy, particularly when local communities have not had genuine participation in their development, and yet have to live with their impacts within their own community. How can a community *both* challenge national policy and 'make the most' of resources offered in a difficult situation?

²⁶ See for instance the creative and community led ideas from Scottish Human Services Trust; go on the internet at: www.shstrust.org.uk/pdf/asbillfinalresp.pdf

Partnership working and leadership - the Craigmillar Social Inclusion Partnership

The Social Inclusion Partnership has a Board which includes representatives from a range of City wide services including the Council, the Health Board, the private sector, the local councillor (who chairs) and four community reps. Two of the reps are elected by the Craigmillar Community Council and two of the reps are elected by the Community Regeneration Forum. The Board has overall decision making responsibility for the work of the Craigmillar Social Inclusion Partnership – although it too is accountable to the City Council and the Scottish Executive.

The researcher met with two of the present reps and two past reps to hear more about their experiences. It takes time to learn the art of working within such a partnership:

At first I didn't understand working with professionals, using their jargon. You need to understand the jargon and the political will of groups.

Two community reps are members of the Joint Venture Company (PARC) Board and one spoke of the need for careful preparation:

It's a very intimidating meeting and includes working with Directors within the council. Now I do a pre-meeting with the worker to look at key issues. It makes me unpopular but I stand-up and say 'No'.

They spoke of the value of support from a worker²⁷ and of the Edinburgh Community Rep Network:

The worker gives support with SIP business, JVC business and Community Council: goes to meetings, shares information and does research. He also organised the Community Planning Seminar and attends Edinburgh Community Rep Network with reps. He keeps me right ... the Network looks at what's happening in Edinburgh generally and exchanges ideas and information.

Another rep spoke of the fast-moving nature of community leadership, the tough-skin needed to survive it and the value of developing your skills through community participation:

It's a fast moving game. I know the system from 20 years experience. 'Flying by the seat of our pants' – crisis management at the top in Craigmillar – success has many fathers, failure is an orphan.

If you want people to take up leadership roles, they need to know the basic rules of committee meetings - the last Community Council

²⁷ Worker support provided through the Scottish Executive's Community Empowerment (now Community Voices) funding.

meeting was a shouting match. A lot of people shouting or walking out in disgust achieves nothing. You need to know what to do and what not to do. The Community Council and Management Committees are a good grounding.

Two people spoke of the need to understanding the complex priorities that different parties bring to such a partnership of central government, local government and services, and the community:

Partnership is now used by the Blair Government to undermine; it's not there for our benefit but for agencies, and agencies are there to protect themselves.

I ended up another 'bum on a seat' to drive their (SIP) agenda. It wasn't open or transparent. I'm sure they've learnt lessons.

So some reps at least are sceptical about how much the community can actually effectively work within such a partnership – can it really serve the needs of the community?

There was agreement from two reps that this leads to them having to take very tough decisions about budgets when funding has been cut:

There are tough decisions on the funding panel as there is ever less money, but the community (ends up having) to take responsibility for these decisions.

There are cuts of about £180,000²⁸ (for the budget for 2005/06). It's hard as it puts people out of jobs ... the next round of cuts is coming up (for 2006/07). What do we do next? Before we used a Council policy (to decide). Taking a cut from each funded organisation doesn't work, they tried it before with the Craigmillar Festival Society and things become less efficient – it doesn't work. You need to be honest with people.

Harder still, the four Community Reps and the networks of local people they work with won't necessarily be able to agree on what the best approach to what needs to be done when taking such decisions. The two sets of reps from the Community Council and the Regeneration Forum took different approaches to this funding crisis for the budget of 2005/06. It is worth finding out more about their different positions and their reasons for this- see for instance their respective reports in the Craigmillar Chronicle²⁹.

²⁸ Cuts in Social Inclusion Partnership funding, Drugs misuse funding, and the Community Empowerment (now Community Voices) funding.

²⁹ See for instance the Community Council Reps report in the Craigmillar Chronicle January 2005, and the Community Regeneration Forum Reps letter in the Craigmillar Chronicle of January 2005.

There was also a strong sense from one person that more resources are needed so that Community reps can connect with a wider range of local people:

Community reps need a mechanism for communicating with people locally, other than the Community Council which has a maximum of 15 to 20 people ... the real agenda is yet to be written, organisations and people are driving things forward but survey round the area and few could tell you what was happening.

Comment on learning: There is much for people who are active in the community to learn from the Community Representative's experience of partnership working and leadership, and the forms of support and resources that they find useful. This is a key area of participation where the community of Craigmillar engages with large agencies and services, and one that people active in the community and a learning programme can draw upon.

And there is much to learn about how the Craigmillar Social Inclusion Partnership works, and the reasons for its decisions – that is the different priorities of government, services and agencies, and the community and community organisations bring to it. The community's representatives and decision making bodies are faced with making tough decisions about how to work with partners who are usually more powerful than themselves, and about how to manage decreases in funding.

'Knowledge' circulates within this community about these processes and decisions, often in very different, even contradictory forms, but how are people who are active in the community to understand and interpret this? How are they to influence and participate in the important decisions around the direction of the Partnership and its funding decisions?

It is this sort of context and the tough decisions that follow from it that add to the difficulties for the community representatives and the bodies they come from, the Community Council and the Community Regeneration Forum, as they try to find common ground or common cause. This seems to be one of the forces that has helped to fashion the present 'community divide' described in Chapter One³⁰ and so illustrate just how tough it is for community representatives and organisations to work within such partnerships.

Underlying the concerns of the community representatives raised in this section are the key issues of 'representativeness' and 'accountability.' How can Social Inclusion Partnerships, or the Community Planning Partnerships which are replacing them, effectively represent a community, particularly the diversity of a community, and be accountable to a community?

A learning programme can support local active people in thinking through the sorts of mechanisms, and investment in those mechanisms, that such partnerships and their community representatives need, in order to further

³⁰ This community political divide is further discussed in Chapters 1, 9, 10 and 11 of this report.

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develop their dialogue across a diverse community. Local active people need the space to consider of how such partnerships, with the services and agencies that play a key role within them, can truly be accountable to a community.

As Community Planning Partnerships become a reality across Scotland, the learning from communities such as Craigmillar could offer insight into how communities can take their place at this table on an 'equal footing' and able to provide vision and leadership.

See Chapter 10 for further discussion of participation in local decision making and partnership working.

Final comment on learning for people who are active in the community

This chapter has covered a lot of ground, looking both at participation and at partnership working. One emphasis has been on discovering 'new' approaches aimed at increasing participation; there are a series of examples for people to think on and which a learning programme can support people in thinking about in more detail.

The second emphasis on partnership working has perhaps set up more questions than answers. As it moves into working with government, agencies and services, the full complexities of working with different priorities and agendas begins to surface. How do people who are active within the community learn to work effectively with and where necessary challenge larger agencies? And how can local people and local groups impact on decision making processes within a Social Inclusion Partnership or Community Planning Partnership, and within other decision making processes that are part of local and national projects for community regeneration?

One way of trying to think further about this is the framework of '*willing, allowed and able*' outlined in a recent Scottish Executive Health Department report³¹ on partnership working within the Health Service. It is also being used locally by the Inclusion Team at the Thistle Foundation³². It asks you to think about which people and organisations are:

- *willing* to participate, and why or why not?
- *able* to participate and how, or if not what are the barriers?
- *allowed* to participate, and why or why not?

It allows people to build up a picture of the opportunities for genuine participation and partnership working – the strengths and weaknesses of different services and agencies in working in partnership. This is surely a key part of the process of '*committed dialogue*', the idea put forward by Jane Thompson³³ and discussed in Chapter 1b. The aim is to find ways forward for working through participation and partnership with such services and agencies that can tap into the strengths and needs of this community, and anticipate a more equal society in the future. A learning programme for local active people should aim to create opportunities for supporting people in understanding how to increase local participation and partnership – the tools for a committed dialogue.

³¹ See pages 10 and 11 of the 'Services for all – making it happen' report published by Scottish Human Services Trust in 2003 from the conference put on by the Scottish Executive's Health Department. Go on the internet at: www.shstrust.org.uk/pdf/servicesforall1.pdf

³² For contact details for the Thistle Foundation go on the Internet to: www.thistle-foundation.biz/index.asp

³³ See Chapter 1b pages 12-13 and 17, and also Jane Thompson's (2001) report, 'Rerooting lifelong learning: resourcing neighbourhood renewal.' Details from the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education on the Internet at: www.niace.org.uk/.

The question of who is '*willing, able and allowed*' also raises the issue of diversity and representing the diversity of a community. The examples in this chapter have shown how participatory approaches can support young people, local neighbourhoods, and a community as whole in participating in decision making. There are key areas of community diversity missing such as Black and Minority Ethnic groups, older people, disabled people, LGBT³⁴ people, men and women, and people from different faith and belief groups. Crucially for an area of high deprivation, people in poverty and on low incomes are also missing, so that in particular poverty are in danger of being isolated even within their own community. The art of increasing the participation of the full diversity of the whole community in decision making is a key issue for a learning programme to consider, and for it to support local active people in reflecting upon.

³⁴ LGBT stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender people