# Principles for community empowerment

Draft May 2019

# Introduction

Community empowerment is relevant to all parts of the public sector and is an area of increasing importance given developing legislation and policies. The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 requires community planning partners to secure the participation of community bodies in community planning. In particular, those that represent the interests of people who experience inequalities of outcome from socio-economic disadvantage.

It is important that public service providers and scrutiny bodies have a shared understanding of what we mean by community empowerment and consider what it means for our work.

This document applies to all public bodies and aims to support improvement. Rather than provide a checklist of actions, we have set out core principles for all public sector organisations to consider. It provides:

- an overview of what we mean by community empowerment

- summarises opportunities and challenges experienced by communities and public bodies

- outlines principles to help public bodies make the most of the opportunities

- highlights good practice examples of what is already happening across Scotland.

The document was prepared by Audit Scotland, working with a Community Empowerment Advisory Group (CEAG). The group includes experts in the field of community empowerment and representatives from Scottish public bodies and scrutiny bodies.

The CEAG was set up under the direction of the Strategic Scrutiny Group (SSG), which brings together Scotland's main public-sector scrutiny bodies. Community empowerment is a priority area for the SSG.

## Community empowerment advisory group  (use logos)

- ❖ Scottish Government
- ❖ COSLA
- ❖ Health Scotland
- ❖ Inspiring Scotland
- ❖ SURF
- ❖ North Ayrshire Council
- ❖ South Ayrshire Council
- ❖ Scottish Community Development Centre
- ❖ The Consultation Institute
- ❖ Stratagem Int
- ❖ Scottish Community Safety Network
- ❖ Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations
- ❖ What Works Scotland
- ❖ Scottish Health Council
- ❖ Forest Enterprise Scotland
- ❖ Development Trust Associations Scotland
- ❖ Improvement Service
- ❖ Education Scotland
- ❖ Audit Scotland
- ❖ Care Inspectorate
- ❖ HM Inspectorate of Constabulary for Scotland
- ❖ Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
- ❖ Police Scotland

# Community empowerment is about supporting people to take more control over their lives

## Definition of community empowerment

There is no one standard definition of community empowerment:

- The World Health Organisation describes community empowerment as:

  *the process of enabling communities to increase control over their lives.*

- Similarly, the Scottish Government defines community empowerment as:

  *a process where people work together to make change happen in their communities by having more power and influence over what matters to them.*

Communities may be geographically located, or they may share common interests, concerns or identities.

## What is community empowerment?

Community empowerment processes support people to do things for themselves and enable people to take control over the decisions and factors that affect their lives and communities.

Effective community empowerment processes:

- shift power and influence from government and agencies into the hands of communities and citizens

- are underpinned by changes in the feelings and confidence of those being empowered

- help to build trust between communities' and public bodies providing their everyday services, and their partners, and increase the value they place on the relationship

- requires the active understanding and commitment from a wide number of stakeholders to achieve it.

# Community empowerment is a priority in Scotland

**Implementing community empowerment**

Empowering communities is a national priority for the Scottish Government. It is an important part of public service reform, focusing attention on reducing disadvantage and inequality and improving outcomes for communities. Community empowerment is central to a human rights based approach to policy and decision making. The human rights PANEL principles (Participation, Accountability, Non-Discrimination and Equality, Empowerment and Legality) mean that:

- people should be involved in decisions that affect their rights and be fully supported to take part in developing policy and practices which affect their lives

- prioritising those people who face the biggest barriers to realising their rights.

Community empowerment is a gradual process which involves continual learning and the constant building of a community's capacity to articulate and address their priorities. It also involves communities having greater influence and input to decision-making. Public bodies and communities are likely to be at different stages as they develop their understanding and gain confidence in working together. Public bodies need to invest in capacity building appropriate to their local communities, particularly in the poorest communities, to successfully address inequalities.

In some communities, people may already be driving change and public bodies have a role in supporting and facilitating this. Other communities will need to be supported to participate more fully. Public bodies should be finding ways to empower communities, for example by sharing and shifting power in decision making and enabling local communities to make a difference.

- If people are driving the activity, scrutiny bodies need to consider how public bodies help catalyse the activity, how they respond to it and support it. For example, a local community group has developed a befriending project to link socially isolated people back into the community. They may want to access some training that the council could provide.

- If public bodies are driving the activity, scrutiny bodies need to consider how effective it is and what difference it is making to service delivery and outcomes for local communities. Leadership, organisational culture and ways of working are key to supporting staff to deliver change and work effectively with their communities.

# Community empowerment is a priority in Scotland

*Turn this into a timeline exhibit

➤ In 2011, the **Christie Commission** on the future delivery of public services identified four principles for public services reform. One of the principles is that public service reforms must aim to empower individuals and communities receiving public services by involving them in the design and delivery of the services they use.

➤ In 2014, the **Commission on Strengthening Local Democracy** published its report. It identified seven principles for stronger democracy in Scotland.

➤ The **Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015** provides supportive legislation which places duties on public bodies and provides rights for those being engaged and empowered.

➤ In June 2018, the Scottish Government launched its refreshed **National Performance Framework** jointly with COSLA with a new outcome: *'We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe.'* More empowered communities will also help achieve the other outcomes set out in the NPF.

➤ The **Islands (Scotland) Act 2018** aims to further empower island communities.

➤ During 2018 and 2019, the Scottish Government and COSLA are undertaking a review of local governance to look at how local decisions are made and how local democracy is working (**Democracy Matters**).

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**The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015**

The Act is based on the principles of subsidiarity (that social and political decisions are taken at as local a level as possible), community empowerment and improving outcomes. Underpinning all these provisions is the intent to focus attention on reducing disadvantage and inequality.

The aims of the legislation are to:

- empower community bodies through ownership of land and buildings and through strengthening their voices in the decisions that matter to them

- support an increase in the pace and scale of public sector reform by cementing the focus on achieving outcomes and improving the process of community planning.

Three major elements of the Act have implications for audit and scrutiny:

- Part 2 is about strengthening community planning to give communities more of a say in how public services are to be planned and provided.

- Part 3 enables communities to identify needs and issues and request action to be taken by public bodies on these. These are known as participation requests.

- Parts 4 and 5 extends the community right to buy or otherwise have greater control over assets.

# People driving community empowerment

## Community led and based organisations

Established by individuals or community groups, these are often known as community anchors. They can have different purposes, but generally provide support, opportunities and develop positive cultures for people to feel valued and able to participate, influence and make local decisions. They are often a community development trust or a community-controlled housing association (see Case study on slide 10). For example, Ardenglen Housing Association is a community controlled housing association which owns almost 1,000 homes in the east of Castlemilk in Glasgow. Over the past 20 years, it has channelled almost £50m of public money into transforming the housing, local environment and living conditions of their community in Castlemilk.

## Community activism

Individuals or community groups have self-organised to tackle a local issue, often known as community activism. Here, members of a community voluntarily work together, in a planned way, to bring about a clearly identified and agreed change which contributes to an improvement in quality of life.

## Participation in local decision-making structures

People have a voice on local decision-making structures and are helping to improve the lives of others in their community through new or improved services. This could be delivered by individuals and / or co-produced with local organisations.

## Land or island buy-out

Individuals or community groups have self-organised to buy land or an entire island. The right to buy land is extended under Part 4 of the Act.

## Asset transfer

Community bodies have bought, lease, manage or use land and buildings belonging to the public sector. This is known as asset transfer and is covered under Part 5 of the Act. To do this, the community must set out what it plans to do with the asset and how it will improve economic development, regeneration, health, social or environmental wellbeing, or reduce inequalities.

## Participation request

A community body can request to take part in a process with a public body where it believes it could help improve an outcome. This is known as a participation request and is covered under Part 3 of the Act. An individual community body requests a discussion with public authorities on their terms to have a say about local issues and services. It can also involve getting better access to a decision making process, such as a board, working group or meeting, and making it more transparent to the wider community.

# Public bodies supporting community empowerment

**People deciding how local money is spent**

This is known as participatory budgeting (PB). The Scottish Government is working with PB Scotland to develop a [PB charter](). This sets out principles and good practice, including public deliberation before voting. People should have the opportunity to consider different evidence, perspectives and arguments before voting. Public bodies need to build capacity within local communities to get inclusive participation and sustainable shared benefits from PB processes. The Scottish Government and COSLA have agreed a joint [framework]() to support councils to work towards at least one per cent of their budgets being subject to PB by 2021.

**Local communities working with public bodies to improve outcomes in their local area through community planning processes**.

Under Part 2 of [the Act](), local authorities are required to work with their community planning partners, engaging with community bodies, to improve local outcomes. Joint efforts and resources should be targeted on those areas of greatest need to reduce inequalities. Each community planning partnership must prepare and publish a local outcomes improvement plan (LOIP). The plan should set out priority areas for improving outcomes, what improvement it aims to achieve and the timescales.

**Engaging with local communities**

The [National Standards for Community Engagement]() define community engagement as:

*a purposeful process which develops a working relationship between communities, community organisations and public and private bodies to help them to identify and act on community needs and ambitions. It involves respectful dialogue between everyone involved, aimed at improving understanding between them and taking joint action to achieve positive change.*

The standards set out good practice for public bodies, the third sector and others, to engage with communities. They are designed to help public bodies plan how to involve communities in shaping local plans and services, identify who should be involved, and make sure that the community engagement process is fair and effective. Public bodies will engage in different ways, but should consult people in a way that demonstrates genuine dialogue and enables communities to influence decisions. Public bodies can be legally challenged if they do not follow consultation law (known as the [Gunning principles]()).

Public bodies should also be finding ways of involving communities more in the design and delivery of services. In a co-production approach, public bodies and communities work together to co-define the issues, co-design the best responses and co-deliver using all the available public body and community resources and assets. This represents a greater shift of power to local decision-making.

# Opportunities

✓ individuals and communities express the issues which matter to them, helping to ensure investment in public services is directed where it is most needed

✓ It harnesses the strengths people from all communities can bring

✓ It increases confidence and skills among people

✓ It mobilises individuals to make improvements to their own lives and help others

It can lead to

✓ better, more responsive and efficient services

✓ better outcomes for communities, including improving well-being, self-confidence and self-esteem

✓ greater satisfaction with quality of life in a local neighbourhood

✓ re-energised local democratic processes, systems and structures

✓ greater accountability of public bodies and elected members

✓ increased trust and confidence between communities and public bodies

# Challenges

➢ Public bodies that provide little opportunity for communities to influence or take control of decision-making processes.

➢ Communities are not homogenous and rarely speak with one voice and community empowerment processes need to include a cross-section of the community, not just the most vocal, articulated or resourced.

➢ Community empowerment processes may increase inequalities between presently well-resourced and under-resourced communities. This is because some communities are more effectively organised and already have the necessary capabilities afforded by the Act and community empowerment generally.

➢ Poor relationships and a lack of trust between communities and the public sector may affect the willingness and capacity to work together and share power.

➢ Continued financial pressures and austerity measures may affect how community empowerment is implemented by public bodies.

➢ True partnership working needs to improve, where all community partners are working towards a shared goal

➢ The impact on reducing inequalities may be small as tackling the underlying causes of poverty requires broader social, political and economic policies and interventions.

➢ Clear leadership needs to demonstrate the attitudes and behaviours to embed cultural change and make it relevant to the whole organisation.

# Principles for public sector bodies

**1. Community control  2. Public sector leadership  3. Effective relationships  4. Improving outcomes  5. Accountability**

**Principle: Setting communities up to successfully take more control over decisions and assets**

Public bodies support communities to successfully take greater control over decisions and assets. Effective processes are in place and support is provided by public bodies to ensure this is done in a fair and sustainable way.

**Principle: Ensure strong and clear leadership on community empowerment that sets the tone and culture of the organisation**

Leaders provide a clear and consistent message, set clear objectives and priorities, encourage ideas and innovation, community leadership and support communities to develop sustainable approaches.

**Principle: Build effective working relationships between public bodies, local communities and local partners**

There is a healthy working relationship between communities, public bodies and local partners, marked by reciprocal trust, openness and transparency.

**Principle: Evaluate whether outcomes for local communities are improving and inequalities are being reduced**

Public bodies are continuously improving their approach to community empowerment, evaluating local outcomes and experiences and learning from others. This includes evaluating the impact on local inequalities and understanding and learning from the experiences of seldom heard groups in communities.

**Principle: Be accountable and transparent**

Public bodies are clear and open about their approach to community empowerment and provide regular information to communities that is understandable, jargon-free and accessible. Public bodies are responsive to local communities when reaching decisions with a clear rationale for making difficult decisions.

# Principle: Setting communities up to successfully take more control over decisions and assets

*Good Practice: Public bodies support communities to successfully take greater control over decisions and assets. Effective processes are in place and support is provided by public bodies to ensure this is done in a sustainable way.*

What does this involve?

- ✓ Putting communities at the heart of decision making processes

- ✓ Re-designing processes to allow communities to take more control and influence over setting priorities, making budget choices and designing services.

- ✓ Putting in place strong governance processes as greater control is shifted to communities.

- ✓ Advising and supporting communities as necessary, providing input of professional judgements.

- ✓ Providing clarity about the level of influence communities have over decisions and managing expectations where there are genuine constraints.

- ✓ Ensuring seldom heard groups can fully participate and are supported to do so

- ✓ Communities choosing to take greater control for example delivering services or taking management, lease or ownership of public assets.

- ✓ Communities and individuals taking greater control feeling empowered and appropriately supported, regarding community empowerment opportunities as genuine and sustainable.

**Potential case studies**

- **What Works Scotland Community Anchor examples**

- **Scottish Health Council Citizens' Jury example**

- **What Works Scotland Co-production examples - Cross-public service approach to tackling ASB and gang crime by groups of young people in local areas**

# Principle: Strong and clear leadership on community empowerment sets the tone and culture of the organisation

*Good practice: Leaders provide a clear and consistent message, set clear objectives and priorities, encourage ideas and innovation, community leadership and support communities to develop sustainable approaches.*

What does this involve?

✓ Leaders understanding and being committed to community empowerment, understanding the types of decisions at corporate and service level that need community empowerment at the heart of them.

✓ Organisational culture is based on trust, equality and collaborative relationships with local communities and partners. This culture is evident across the whole organisation

✓ Clearly and consistently embedding community empowerment in organisational and partnership objectives and strategies

✓ Linking related strategies on poverty and disadvantage, being clear about how community empowerment can help achieve wider objectives and support a preventative approach.

✓ Reflecting the views of local communities, including seldom heard groups in plans and decision making

✓ Supporting appropriate capacity and resource at staff level to facilitate community empowerment processes

✓ Investing appropriate resources (financial and non-financial) to build community capacity and encourage community leadership, particularly among seldom heard groups to empower communities in a sustainable way

✓ Understanding where skilled individuals are in the organisation and deploying them effectively to help support and embed community empowerment across the organisation.

**Potential case studies:**

• **East Ayrshire Council Vibrant Communities – BVAR report**

• **West Dunbartonshire Council/ SCDC example**

• *Link to HSC integration Nov 18 report – Exhibit 8, page 25 – Traits of effective collaborative leaders

# Principle: Effective working relationships are being built between public bodies, local communities and local partners

## Good practice: There is a healthy working relationship between communities, public bodies and local partners, marked by reciprocal trust, openness and transparency

What does this involve?

✓ Communicating in an open and accessible way. Avoiding jargon and minimising bureaucracy.

✓ Developing the skills and capacity of people to take greater control and be involved in decisions particularly the seldom heard

✓ Building relationships and trust communities and public bodies. This includes those communities that are seldom heard

✓ Recognising and harnessing the strengths and assets in all parts of communities.

✓ Going at the pace of the community. Recognising it can take time and investment in financial, practical and emotional support for members of the community who are engaging, particularly the most vulnerable.

✓ Working effectively with community planning partners, the third sector, social sector and volunteer partners to empower communities with a clear focus on preventative work. Many of these organisations are deeply embedded in the community, have strong relationships and understanding of communities, and staff and volunteers with the right skills.

✓ Understanding and managing expectations of different parts of communities and managing conflict effectively. Seeking out consensus, but understanding that consensus may not always be achieved.

**Case study**

- **Glasgow City Council participatory budgeting example**
  - 4 thematic areas: Calton for Child poverty; Canal in North Glasgow for Income and employment deprivation; Pollokshields for Black and Minority Ethnic; Greeter Pollok for Young People. Unique for 3 reasons: 1) clear focus on tackling inequalities 2) it's a rare case of 'intersectionality', considering not only 'place', but also communities of identity and disadvantage (e.g. children and young people, ethnic minorities, income-deprived) and 3) it provides the foundations for learning and piloting that will inform the mainstreaming of PB in Glasgow.

- **East Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership working with a charity - Friends of East Ayrshire Churches Homelessness Action**

- **Corra Place-Based Approach – Measurement of place-based working and Report case studies**

# Principle: Evaluate whether outcomes for local communities are improving and inequalities are being reduced

*Good Practice:  Public bodies are continuously improving their approach to community empowerment, evaluating local outcomes and experiences and learning from others. This includes evaluating the impact on local inequalities and understanding and learning from the experiences of seldom heard groups in communities.*

What does this involve?

- ✓ Evaluating the impact of community empowerment from the perspective of communities, understanding their experience of the process and whether they feel empowered

- ✓ Evaluating local outcomes and whether these have improved, understanding how community empowerment has contributed to these

- ✓ Evaluating the impact on inequalities in local communities and understanding and learning from the experiences of seldom heard groups

- ✓ Evaluating in a proportionate and accessible way so as to encourage participation by individuals or community groups with limited resources and capacity

- ✓ Sharing experiences of community empowerment processes and outcomes across the organisation and with other public bodies, promoting a greater understanding of what works well and persisting challenges

- ✓ Drawing on these learning experiences to continuously improve the organisation's approach to community empowerment.

**Potential case study:**

- **SCDC VOiCE example**

# Principle: Be accountable and transparent

*Good practice: Public bodies are clear and open about their approach to community empowerment and provide regular information to communities that is understandable, jargon-free and accessible. Public bodies are responsive to local communities when reaching decisions with a clear rationale for making difficult decisions.*

What does this involve?

✓ Communicating in a way that is understandable, jargon-free and accessible

✓ Being clear and open about community empowerment approaches. This includes providing information about how communities can get involved, key contacts with the public body and clearly setting out processes.

✓ Providing accessible information about the organisation's strategic direction and priorities, local outcomes and improvement plans and how these aim to improve outcomes for communities.

✓ Engaging regularly with communities about what matters to them and being honest and realistic about what support can be provided and timescales to achieve shared goals.

✓ Being open about budgets for different services, including proposed budget reductions. Setting out options and opportunities for communities to get involved in having their say about what happens to them or taking more responsibility in delivering them.

✓ Putting in place appropriate governance arrangements for effective scrutiny and decision making about community empowerment.

✓ Clearly demonstrating how decisions have been made, how community views were considered and providing regular feedback

✓ Providing regular feedback on community empowerment developments and the outcome of processes such as participation requests, community asset transfer, participatory budgeting.

**Potential case studies:**

- **West Lothian Council approach to community participation and community regeneration**

- **North Ayrshire Council Locality Partnership Consultation and Engagement Process – COSLA award**

# Other key references and ongoing work

- The Improvement Service, NHS Health Scotland and Audit Scotland published a joint report in June 2018 summarising emerging themes from a review of all available LOIPs.

- *Community Planning after the Community Empowerment Act: The Second Survey of Community Planning Officials in Scotland*, What Works Scotland, April 2018.

- *Support for CPPs – Leadership development*, Improvement Service and SCDC, 2018

- PANEL principles, Scottish Human Rights Commission


- Include links to resources, support, training, etc.

- Glossary – Consultation Institute?