Developing and supporting empowerment champions

A compilation of case studies from

A. BAME (Black Asian and Minority Ethnic) empowerment champions Prepared by WAITS
B. Disability empowerment champions Prepared by Council of Disabled People
C. Young people empowerment champions Prepared Youth Action Network

March to May 2010
The National Empowerment Programme: Context and overview

The National Empowerment Programme (NEP) is a programme committed to supporting and improving empowerment activities across England. It gathers evidence of effective community empowerment activities and promotes the powerful benefits of involving communities in decisions that affect them.

The focus is to provide a structure for empowerment activities and to steer and lead the empowerment agenda. In particular, it supports local authorities and community organisations to increase the number of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality.

The NEP is managed by the Community Development Foundation and funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government.

The Empowerment Partnerships

The practical work of the NEP is carried out by organisations working together in empowerment partnerships. There are nine empowerment partnerships across England and each one brings together a range of statutory agencies, voluntary and community organisations, networks and people who are running community empowerment activities. The partnerships use their collective expertise to support local authorities, statutory agencies and community organisations to work together. This helps to give more power to communities and local people to make decisions about what happens in the areas where they live.

RAWM was granted the contract to deliver one of the nine empowerment programmes in 2008. The West Midlands Empowerment Partnership is called Every Voice Counts (EVC) and its work is directed by the EVC Partnership Board. This Board has members from GOWM, IEWM, BIG Lottery, as well as two local authority NI4 representatives, and a range of voluntary sector organisations.

RAWM: Already engaged in a Big Society agenda

RAWM is a body that exists to support the voluntary and community sector in using their voice and their influence to engage with both government and the local agenda. All of RAWM’s projects originate from the need to provide an effective voluntary and community sector response to a changing environment. This quite often requires RAWM to not only manage the change environment, but to also provide strong leadership and, where appropriate and necessary, challenge behaviour and practice in a constructive manner.

RAWM’s role in the empowerment agenda in the West Midlands has been to promote empowerment, encourage partnership working, provide opportunities for communities and citizens to engage with local authority NI 4 leads, link to voluntary and community organisations in their communities, and take part in activities to develop their voice and influencing. RAWM also highlights the huge variety of resources and opportunities that exist to enhance community engagement and participation and bring these resources together to be accessed to support the growth of the Big Society.

RAWM delivers the NEP alongside a number of other programmes, including the Target Support for Empowerment and Participation Improvement Fund (TSEPI) which is a two year programme complementing the work of the EVC, delivered through Local Authorities commissioning Voluntary and Community Sector organisations to feed into and improve priority needs in their local areas. RAWM also delivers projects around Sustaining Influence and Change (BIG Lottery), 2012 Sports Volunteering Project (Sport England and AWM), Regional Voices (DoH), Third Sector Economic Engagement Programme (AWM) and various infrastructure programmes funded by Capacity Builders.
BAME (Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic) empowerment champions

Prepared by WAITS

March 2010

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1. Introduction

The primary objective of the ‘Every Voice Counts in the West Midlands: BAME (Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic) and Empowerment’ programme was to improve and embed the quality and impact of citizen empowerment activity, citizens’ engagement activity and community development activity across the West Midlands.

It was aimed at delivering mechanisms to impart these issues to community leaders, with particular emphasis on BAME groups.

The project aimed to meet the broader strategic objectives regarding the need for the statutory agencies to engage and involve more people from marginalised and excluded communities, including BAME communities.

The Duty to Involve (2009) requires that information and consultation reaches those who are often excluded in these areas. It has been acknowledged that for citizens to increase their engagement with governing agencies, their social capital needs to increase.

The ability to understand the decision-making chain and processes would ensure that individuals are able to influence and shape local decisions that impact on their everyday lives. Furthermore, Birmingham City Council and Sandwell MBC have both identified National Indicator 4 (NI4) as a strategic priority within their Local Area Agreements (LAA). NI4 relates to increasing the number of people who feel that they can influence decisions in their locality.

2. Local analysis

Although there is an aspiration to increase the level of hard to reach and excluded communities able to access the decision-making arena, the infrastructure is lacking to increase the numbers able to do so. There is evidence that BAME communities do not participate in consultation and they are distinctively absent on key strategic partnerships and agencies.

WAITS (Women Acting In Today’s Society) has participated and contributed to a number of consultation exercises with the following outcomes:

- **WAITS National Equality Partnership Consultation (undertaken in March 2009)** – over 30 women from Chinese, African-Caribbean and Bangladeshi communities (amongst others) from the target wards identified a strong need for inclusive engagement with their communities to be developed for culturally specific and co-ordinated statutory services.

- **WAITS Black Women’s Focus on Health and Well-Being Consultation (October 2008)** – over 30 women from diverse backgrounds identified a ‘detachment’ from local health services, which were unable to meet their specific cultural needs.

- **WAITS BAME Domestic Abuse Awareness Training Programme (2008-2009)** – this was developed in response to numerous consultations with BAME women and children, highlighting the barriers they face to accessing statutory services and the reasons for them. This programme of awareness-raising has been delivered to health professionals and visitors, housing associations, and the West Midlands police amongst others to ensure that their services are equally accessible and are delivered adequately to BAME communities.

- **WAITS Legal Services Commission Consultation (2008)** - consulting with 16 BAME women experiencing domestic violence on the issue of accessing Legal Aid and legal advice. The report produced identified a key problem of unequal access to legal information for BAME communities. The consultation enabled the Legal Services Commission to develop its equality and diversity policies to meet the needs of this client group.
3. Addressing the need

It is envisaged that the successful implementation of the Every Voice Counts in the West Midlands: BAME and Empowerment programme will provide the impetus to create a strategic BAME Empowerment Network for the West-Midlands. This forum will act as an advocate for the needs of people from BAME communities, providing the framework for future engagement with statutory agencies, decision-makers and other policy arenas.

Outcomes for the programme were identified as:

- Providing up to 72 people from BAME communities with the necessary skills and confidence to make active change within their communities.
- Empowering communities to have a voice in wider policy arenas. This is with the aspiration that they are then able to be involved in, and contribute to, the processes that go into decision-making.

4. Project activities

The activities drew from the extensive knowledge and skills developed by WAITS in empowering its constituent group (women and minority women). They included:

- Publicity amongst local and regional and networks: WMSIP; BVSC; Birmingham City Council Intranet and Networks; Brap; and through the WAITS data base of 90 women’s groups to raise awareness of the programme and attract participants.
- Six learning sessions with the whole group on the topics of:
  - Leadership (parts 1 & 2)
  - Ways to support community engagement
  - Building effective relationships
  - How to influence decision makers.
- Two individual learning sessions were held with the case study participants to support them in organising meetings with decision makers that could help with their work.
  - Participants in the ‘How to Influence Decision makers’ session organised meetings with the Ladywood District Manager and the Heritage Lottery Grants officer. This was to give them an opportunity to test their learning.

The activities were designed to ensure that the following aims were met:

- Identification of potential ‘BAME empowerment champions’.
- Enabling the empowerment champions to engage with local statutory partners and decision makers, so that the network could potentially become an active voice for change. This involved improving the skills and knowledge of participants in, for example:
  - Confidence
  - Leadership
  - Analysis of power
  - Citizenship
  - Presentations
  - Decision-making processes
  - Organising meetings with decision makers.
Demonstrating the good practice of this programme by providing two case studies relating to participants. These are included in Appendix 1.

For various reasons the project did not progress at the time that was originally envisaged, which meant that activities were condensed to fit in with the adjusted timeline. This should be borne in mind when assessing the overall success of the project.

5. Delivery outcomes

The learning and delivery outcomes are best expressed by the participants themselves, who in answering the evaluation question ‘what have you learnt in this session?’ gave the following answers:

- I feel better able to organise meetings with decision makers in my area
- I am now able to identify leadership styles
- This will help in developing my business plan
- I have learnt transferable skills
- I met inspirational and influential women
- I learnt how to resolve problems and build organisations
- I will be able to apply what I have learnt to everyday life
- I have broadened my knowledge in management
- This will improve my people skills
- I have learnt communication skills and gained self confidence
- I have learnt how a powerful leader can make good decisions and about building relationships
- This will help me to develop groups
- I will be able to be more strategic in influencing decision makers
- I have learnt how to influence decision makers and discuss in a structural way
- I better understand power and mixing with others
- I have not used the one-to-one training before, I have learnt more about the way groups can influence decision makers
- I have learnt how to influence, to make a decision and about the one-to-one relationship triangle
- I have learnt how to influence action
- I will use this to change my system at work
- This will help me in becoming more strategic in meetings with decision makers
- I have learnt how to meet people in a more structured way
6. Key lessons

From the evaluation feedback and participants comments at the workshops, key lessons identified are as follows:

- Participants valued the informal space where they were able to build relationships, test out new skills with decision makers and explore partnerships.
- Participants had a more limited understanding of the institutional structures and the complexities involved than anticipated and this was a barrier to achieving all the aims of the programme. A longer programme would allow the learning to become embedded and integral in the participants’ relationships and networks.
- The requirement to commit to the training and take time out of delivering services for activities which may not be viewed as urgent is a concern that cannot be ignored.

Although it was envisaged that the project would support up to 72 individuals with a series of learning outcomes, due to the time constraints there were fewer than this. Six learning sessions were held, with 10 leaders attending the first two sessions and eight attending sessions three, four, five and six. In total 46 community leaders signed up to attend the course.

• I have learnt how to influence decision makers and that these groups can be influenced and I have gained experience in influencing
• I am slowly boosting my self esteem and forming a network
• I have learnt how local agencies work.

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I have learnt how local agencies work.
7. Good practice

- The ability to empower individuals by meeting their travel costs and offering crèche facilities increased accessibility to training and is beneficial to all participants.
- The long-term success of activities aimed at marginalised people would need to build at its core the need for accessibility.
- The opportunity to test out learning in a safe environment enabled participants to share best practise and personal experiences.
Appendix 1: Case studies

CASE STUDY

UZMA KERR

Background
Uzma Kerr has worked for Breast Cancer Care UK for two years. Her role involves promoting services and facilitating information workshops to raise awareness. The post is fixed-term and offers no further extension due to funding issues. Uzma would like to continue providing the service to communities throughout the Midlands and feels there is a market for the work.

Initial meeting
Uzma booked a place on the BAME and Empowerment programme to enhance her skills and gain a better understanding of how to engage with decision makers.

Requirements
Uzma requires guidance and support to start a business similar to her present role. She feels there is a market for delivering breast cancer awareness workshops, but needs support and guidance. During a meeting with WAITS an action plan was discussed and the following were identified as key issues:

- How to meet with decision makers
- No experience of starting a business
- Writing a business plan
- Understanding and implementing budgets
- Completing a needs analysis
- Identifying appropriate funding
- Referees for funding
- Timescales
- Availability to meet with WAITS and relevant organisations.

Action plan

- Attend the Every Voice Counts in the West Midlands: BAME and Empowerment programme. Participation on the programme enabled Uzma to engage with other women who were in a similar situation. It was an opportunity to network, share ideas and gain an understanding of good practice. The sessions were beneficial as Uzma gained a better understanding of leadership and the decision-making process. Having the opportunity to practice effective meeting skills gave Uzma the confidence to ask effective questions when meeting with decision makers during the last learning session.

- Attend appointments with Mr Shah – Business Development Manager. WAITS to provide start-up business support and identifying funding.

- Attend a meeting with Heritage Lottery. Discuss the project and receive feedback.

- Confirm dates for support meetings with WAITS Capacity Building Development Worker.

Summary
At the end of the learning sessions WAITS has been unable to maintain contact with Uzma. She had indicated that she was setting up her service to replace the work she was doing as a paid worker, the post was being made redundant and she could see that there would be a gap in service provision. WAITS can only assume that Uzma was unable to continue due to personal issues related to her impending redundancy.
LYNETTE WEBBER

Background
Lynette has many years’ experience of working with the elderly in care homes and communities. After experiencing health problems herself, she realised the importance of exercise and maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

For three years Lynette has completed extensive training and worked towards securing finance to deliver health programmes for elders, children and women’s groups. Through networking and self promotion, Lynette has delivered sessions to raise awareness in communities, and she runs a heart group monthly.

She aims to secure funding in future to enable the delivery of sessions and a programme of activities throughout Sandwell and Birmingham. The programme will also raise awareness of the British Heart Foundation.

Initial meeting
Lynette has attended several WAITS events and receives ongoing support. The community organising team helps to promote Lynette’s services. In order to improve her meeting skills and understand how best to engage with decision makers, she enrolled for the Every Voice Counts in the West Midlands: BAME Empowerment programme.

Requirements
Lynette requires guidance and support to secure funding in the near future. Although she is confident the programme will provide valuable information and techniques she can use to make her meetings effective, Lynette would benefit from asking specific questions and making her objectives clear during meetings. During a meeting with WAITS an action plan was discussed and the following were identified as key issues:

- How best to contact and meet with decision makers
- Learning difficulties support – completing forms
- No experience of starting a business
- Writing a business plan
- Understanding and implementing budgets
- Completing a needs analysis
- Identifying appropriate funding
- Referees for funding
- Timescales
- Availability to meet with WAITS and relevant organisations.

Action Plan

- Attend Every Voice Counts in the West Midlands: BAME Empowerment programme. Participation on the programme enabled Lynette to engage with other women who were in a similar situation. It was an excellent opportunity to network, share ideas and gain an understanding of good practice. The sessions were beneficial as Lynette gained a better understanding of leadership, action planning and the decision-making process. Having the opportunity to use effective meeting skills gave Lynette an understanding of why planning ahead is beneficial. The opportunity to personally meet with decision makers was also beneficial, as Lynette was able to ask specific questions and get feedback.

- Arrange meeting to discuss funding with Neighbourhood Manager.

- Arrange meeting with the Heritage Lottery.

- WAITS will provide support filling in applications.

- Prepare questions and a clear outline of the project.

- Confirm dates for support meetings with WAITS Capacity Building Development Worker.
• Identify organisations working on similar projects and approach with the possibility of working in partnership.

**Summary**

Lynette is receiving ongoing support from WAITS. She arranged a meeting with the Cabinet Member for Adults and Communities in Sandwell using her new skills in organising one-to-one meetings, which led to a small pot of funding for an International Women’s Day event in Sandwell. An appointment was made to meet with the Ladywood Neighbourhood Manager in March, but unfortunately he did not attend (he had double booked the time). This situation highlighted the difficulties involved in attempting to establish relationships with decision makers.
## Appendix 2: Timetable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Milestones</th>
<th>What you did</th>
<th>Results</th>
<th>Lessons learned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Start of project:</strong> Research, identify and meet with up to 72 people from BME communities through the identified VCS networks and groups.</td>
<td>The WAITS EVC programme was advertised through our networks and in communities via flyers, email, websites and verbal communication. Birmingham City Council circulated the flyer through their intranet and networks.</td>
<td>There was lots of interest in the sessions, One community group wished to register six members of the group, they did not participate in the end as they could not commit to attending all the sessions.</td>
<td>Email was used to publicise the learning sessions, which is not always accessible for BAME groups. With a longer programme, Meetings would have been arranges to support leaders to identify barriers to attending, Eg language, childcare and educational attainment, which may have increased participation also the use of a variety of mediums to raise awareness of the project, i.e. Advertise in community languages and using a variety of mediums would have given leaders more awareness of the project. The short length of the program did not give people interested in attending time to prioritise time to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document and develop a database of local statutory partners and decision-makers.</td>
<td>Developed a database to be distributed to the participants and our networks.</td>
<td>Data base in progress.</td>
<td>It proved difficult to deliver learning sessions, attend EVC meetings and produce a database.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devise content and format of 8 learning sessions with participants, identifying key issues that participants wish to advocate.</td>
<td>Key issues identified were leadership skills, understanding decision making processes, improve their knowledge and citizenship.</td>
<td>Evaluation of the programme showed participants benefited from the informal format of the programme, they were able to demonstrate new skills in reaching decision makers identifying their leadership styles which led to increased confidence.</td>
<td>The programme would have been beneficial for many organisations and community leaders if there was a longer programme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliver 8 learning sessions with up to 72 participants and up to 10 local statutory partners and decision-makers:</td>
<td>Widely advertised the programme via email to infrastructure organisations and community groups delivered the programme from an accessible and central location for easy access.</td>
<td>Led to a number of enquiries. The level of commitment was difficult for small organisations to commit too.</td>
<td>A more flexible programme would have benefitted front line servicers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning session 1 – Understanding leadership. Participants will have identified their current leadership skills and roles, understand how to develop them, and begin to create a personal action plan for future development of these skills.</td>
<td>Learners identified their current leadership roles and learned how to develop them. The aim being that they create a personal action plan for future development of these skills.</td>
<td>The programme consisted of two leadership learning sessions which covered the subject of leadership styles and communication.</td>
<td>Leadership learning sessions are popular and communities This group benefited from the leadership being focused on management benefit from these sessions for self development.</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Learning session 2 – Group formation. Participants will have developed team building and leadership skills, and undertaken a visioning exercise for the network.</td>
<td>Participants did role play exercises and worked in teams to build the team and solve problems.</td>
<td>The teams bonded, shared ideas and discovered their strengths within their team.</td>
<td>This session would have benefited from more participants to have larger teams, therefore enforce their skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning session 3 – Identifying decision-making structures. Participants will have gained an understanding of service providers, councils and MPs.</td>
<td>Group discussions and work exercises. An explanation of the decision making structures and roles of MP’s councils, etc.</td>
<td>Participants are better informed of the services and understand how to access meetings or get more involved themselves.</td>
<td>Many people are unaware of the route to take if they are interested in being involved in local or national issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning session 4 – Understanding the concepts of power, politics and community. Participants will have understood different forms of power and different types of community renewal strategies.</td>
<td>Learning session included discussions on the forms power. Discussed community renewal strategies, and how they could access these.</td>
<td>Participants understood there are different forms of power and politics was a part of everyday lives.</td>
<td>This is an in depth subject which could run as a programme in itself for greater understanding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitor and evaluate additional support and needs of participants throughout the sessions.</td>
<td>Used verbal feedback, handouts and evaluation at each session to meet the needs of each individual Also a Flip chart ideas sheet.</td>
<td>Participants were referred to WAITS capacity building programme for support after the end of EVC.</td>
<td>With a longer programme participants would have had the skills and support to develop their own network.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning session 5 – skills workshop 1. Participants will have accessed an opportunity to build on skills as identified in their personal action plans – e.g. presentation skills, confidence building, public speaking, effective campaigning.</td>
<td>Participants took part in a Power, engagement and descion making workshops.</td>
<td>Participants planed a community event Understood the different forms of power and how to influence descion makers.</td>
<td>More training needed in who has the power in public bodies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning session 6 – skills workshop 2. Participants will have completed their own personal action plans for skills development.</td>
<td>Participants identified areas for development in sustaining their groups and organisations.</td>
<td>All participants felt they had developed the skills for partnership working.</td>
<td>A longer programme would have led to detailed action plans and support package.</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Learning session 7 – Effective communication with decision-makers. Participants will have appraised different forms of communication with community leaders and decision-makers.</td>
<td>Participants organised meetings with two decision.</td>
<td>Participants identified who they would like to meet with, planned the meeting through first going through a session with a scenario. The group suggested they met with a funder and decision maker from the community a Funding Officer from Heritage lottery and Neighbourhood Manager attending the session discussed their role and in small organised groups met with participants to have more detailed conversations.</td>
<td>This was felt to be a worthwhile exercise with. A longer programme would led to more involvement with decision makers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning session 8 – Making a long-term impact. Participants will evaluated the programme, understanding different options of maintaining a long-term impact with the network, e.g. virtual network, intranet, etc.</td>
<td>The theme of building relationships ran throughout the project Participants had experience have having structured conversations with a view of understanding self interest and developing partnerships.</td>
<td>Participants exchanged details and agreed to meet informally after the course.</td>
<td>A longer programme could have explored different methods of communication.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identification of up to 15 ‘BME Empowerment Champions’.</td>
<td>Participants encouraged to join community networks e.g. WAITS, BVSC and NCVO to get their issue on Local and National agenda.</td>
<td>Participants in evaluation said they felt more confident to seek out partnerships and relationships.</td>
<td>A longer programme would have led to the development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Produce 2 case studies on identified participants.</td>
<td>Two participants agreed to be case studies. Case studiers agreed to meet and complete action plans a have support from WAITS to complete them.</td>
<td>One participants met with cabinet member for Adult and Communities in Sandwell, secured funding for International Women’s Day.</td>
<td>A longer programme would have led to a more detailed action plan and follow support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Begin ongoing communication process between Empowerment Champions and local statutory partners and decision-makers.</td>
<td>Those that attended the workshops have been introduced to WAITS capacity building programme and will have on going infrastructure support.</td>
<td>Lynets get together has Organised three community events since the end of the EVC programme with support.</td>
<td>BAME Community Champions need ongoing support to embed learning and have support to keep on track when things go wrong.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of project: complete monitoring and evaluation requirements for EVCP</td>
<td>In completing the end of project report, the deadlines to submit information fell at the time when the worker had booked annual leave and was travelling abroad, the report was completed on time but was return for more work by EVC. WAITS CEO reviewed the report and found that the copy sent was a draft working copy not the finished report.</td>
<td>The final report was reviewed by WAITS CEO and a final draft resubmitted to RAWM on 26 April.</td>
<td>More dialogue should have been had regarding difficulties in meeting revised timescales.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
1. Introduction

The Council of Disabled People (CPD) is a voluntary sector Disabled People’s Organisation (DPO). This means we are user led and have a good understanding of the barriers faced by individual disabled people. We bid for the Every Voice Counts (EVC) Disability Empowerment commission in November 2009, with an ambitious project to deliver a learning opportunity to individual disabled people living in the West Midlands. We were awarded the contract in December 2009, to be delivered by March 2010.

Our aim with the EVC commission, under the Disability and Empowerment theme, was to deliver activities that would enable 15 disabled people to become ‘Empowerment Champions’. We focused specifically on eight local authority areas in the West Midlands that are working towards improving inclusion of all their communities.

The West Midlands Region has a population of nearly of 5.3 million people of which, based on national statistics from the Office of Disability Issues, an estimated 20% (1 million) are disabled people (aged over 16), many of whom experience both social and economic disadvantage. In the eight local authority areas targeted for the EVC commission this percentage varies from 16% to 23%.

Research conducted nationally and locally has shown that disabled people are: more likely to experience health inequalities; twice as likely to leave education without any formal qualifications; twice as likely to be unemployed and therefore more likely to be living in poverty. They are also more likely to be in unsuitable housing with an increasing incidence of demand outstripping supply on a year by year basis.

The majority of organisations supporting disabled people are organisations FOR rather than OF. However, there has been a growing recognition by Government that service users should be at the forefront of decisions affecting them and the services that exist. This can be seen as a significant shift in philosophy, which is proving difficult for many organisations, hence the need for change and support to non user-led organisations to include disabled people in the management structure and project delivery.

In the past five years, a number of leading DPOs in the West Midlands, including Disability West Midlands, Shropshire Disability Consortium, Birmingham Coalition of Disabled People and West Midlands Disability Arts Forum have collapsed – largely due to capacity and infrastructure issues – and the remaining groups are barely surviving.

There is a need to develop the skills of disabled people to become leaders, to develop their strategic thinking and their knowledge and to enable them to become involved at a policy level. Being at the policy table and being part of a network will give disabled people a much stronger voice than they have currently. This EVC commission seeks to address some of the initial learning needs of disabled people, setting a group of people on the path to becoming more involved and engaged.

Barriers to consultation and involvement include:

- Methodology which does not take into account the access needs of disabled people
- Lack of investment in enabling disabled people to take part
- Lack of joined up thinking between different agencies (and different departments within the same agencies) leading to ‘consultation fatigue’ within a small group of disabled people.

There is, therefore, a need for a learning programme which takes account of the additional special requirements of individual disabled people in an attempt to overcome some of these barriers.

This report describes the activity undertaken to meet the following outputs:

- Provision of information for up to 40 disabled people interested in learning (disability issues, importance of engagement) and skills development
- Three learning sessions, delivered to a minimum of 15 disabled people, with a view to them becoming Empowerment Champions
- One orientation day delivered in each of the eight target areas by the statutory authority to between 64 and 80 disabled people, so that they are better informed about the role of the authority and their avenues to be heard
- Provision of at least two case studies demonstrating the benefits of increasing the participation of disabled people to inform service delivery.
2. Project activity

Project activities were delivered with the aim of providing learning and development opportunities so that a minimum of 15 disabled people could ‘graduate’ as Empowerment Champions. The target beneficiaries were disabled people of all ages, and from diverse communities, particularly targeting those not formally engaged in any form of consultation (eg Local Authority Access Panels, Physical and Sensory Impairment Reference Groups).

By disabled people we mean:
- People with physical and sensory impairments
- People living with long-term (chronic) illness
- People living with mental health issues
- People with learning difficulties.

These were the targets provided in the tender:

a. Raised awareness of the EVC initiative and the benefits of having an effective voice at a local, sub-regional, and regional level – 320 disabled people plus carers

b. Attendance at statutory agency orientation days – 64 to 80 people

c. Expressions of interest and initial sign-up to development and learning programme – 32 to 40 people

d. Final graduation as Empowerment Champions – 15 to 20

e. Feedback from Empowerment Champions to their organisations or groups – up to 150 direct beneficiaries

f. Raised awareness in statutory authorities of the needs, issues, and aspirations of disabled people – hundreds of indirect beneficiaries per eight areas.

Self-development course

The programme was developed by a professional trainer in December and January, building on the CDP ‘Have Your Say’ and ‘Disability Awareness’ programmes. As part of the development, CDP reviewed material produced by Circles Network for their ‘Partners in Policy Making’ programme.

The programme consisted of three parts:

a. Pre-course Research – these materials were distributed to participants prior to the face-to-face training. Their purpose was to get people thinking about what the programme itself was about, to reflect on their own experiences as a disabled person (valued as part of this programme) and carry out some research and investigation. It covered history, legislation, best practice, and attitudes.


c. Face-to-face Training Part 2 – consultations on what they are, why take part, benefits to taking part, practical skills and tips.

Parts 2 and 3 were delivered to 28 participants in four different locations:

- Birmingham
- Hereford
- Coventry
- Stoke.

As part of the EVC commission the programme has now been adapted for delivery to adults with learning difficulties, and is being delivered on two separate half days in partnership with Grapevine, Coventry.

The Disability Timeline is included in Appendix 2 as a sample of the course materials.

Written feedback was collected at the end of each session and summarised in a report per session. Participants were asked to rate six key elements of the face-to-face sessions, and assess the quality of delivery as well. Further feedback was solicited by email and on the phone, although not all participants were contacted. In some cases feedback was sought from partners (Hereward College, Coventry and Grapevine) who had organised groups to attend.

Marketing and promotion

The purpose of this was to promote both the EVC concept and the EVC self-development course for disabled people.
Marketing activity started in January and had several elements:

a. Indirect marketing via our website, bulletins and websites of external agencies, e.g., the CVS in each of the eight local authorities.

b. Direct marketing to other organisations of or for disabled people by email flyer:
   - Coventry and Warwickshire – over 48 organisations
   - Birmingham, Sandwell, Walsall – over 13 organisations
   - Herefordshire – over 13 organisations
   - Stoke and Staffordshire – over 23 organisations.

At a very conservative estimate (at a rate of 2 per organisation) 200 disabled people received information about the EVC concept and the programme, raising awareness of the importance of having a voice.

A list of the organisations targeted is included in Appendix 3 and the email flyer is included in Appendix 4.

c. Direct marketing to individual disabled people on the phone and by email.

Course administration

This was an intensive part of the project activity because we had to ensure all access requirements were met for participants and liaise with venues over the phone several times to ensure they could meet our requirements.

As a group of beneficiaries disabled people have needs in addition to the usual concerns of participants engaging with training, and a one-size-fits-all approach on our part would not have been fruitful.

Disabled people have to manage their own impairments, hospital appointments, organise personal assistants, book carers and transport in advance. They more likely to be unemployed so cannot finance their own involvement or access the internet, more likely to have to take time off sick and more likely to have limited access to educational and employment opportunities that provide a natural training ground for learning the skills needed to participate.

For some disabled people it is hard enough just getting to an event let alone overcoming all the barriers to participation in a training day.

Some of our participants needed verbal reassurance that venues really were accessible for them and that their particular dietary requirements would be met having had bad experiences in the past.

Examples of access requirements included translation of all course materials into an audio format, requesting a specific room layout to meet the needs of participants with hearing impairments, and hiring a portable hoist.

Liaison and joint activity with NI4 Leads

National Indicator 4 (NI4) leads in the eight local authorities were contacted by CDP. CDP followed up this contact with research online using resources provided in particular by Sandwell, Birmingham and Walsall local authorities.

As a result, the following NI4 areas were involved to varying degrees in supporting the project:

- Coventry City Council – delivered an event in March involving eight participants.
- Warwickshire County Council – plans to hold an EVC session. Further liaison about other areas of CDP work has taken place, leading to longer term joint working with the Community Engagement Team and other local authority officers.
- Stoke City Council – plans one-to-one follow up with two participants who live in Stoke City.
- Herefordshire County Council – plans to review of Herefordshire’s Disability Equality Scheme, working in partnership with Herefordshire Disability Forum.
- Birmingham City Council and Sandwell MBC – have no activity planned yet.
- Staffordshire County Council – NI4 lead not involved in disability and empowerment. Change in personnel in the Corporate Diversity Team has meant contact could not be maintained.
- Walsall MBC – we had no participants who lived in this local authority area.
3. Achievements and challenges

This EVC commission has been successful in part, with outputs being fully or partially delivered.

Successes

• Development of a new learning programme, which can be delivered across the West Midlands, including to adults with learning difficulties.
• Delivery of a training programme to 28 participants in full, 14 in part (ongoing) – a total of 42 participants (from seven local authority areas) which exceeded our initial target. From the feedback collected at the end of each face-to-face session (see Appendix 5) the majority of the participants found the six key elements either very useful or useful.
• Contact made with many agencies working with or for disabled people in the eight local authority areas and beyond (nearly 100). This rekindled existing relationships and helped make new links for the Regional Disability Network. We have expanded our database of contacts, which will be beneficial for our promotional activity in the future.
• Contact (directly and indirectly) with over 200 individual disabled people (a conservative estimate) who consequently had a raised awareness of having a voice, and of the existence of the Regional Disability Network.
• New working relationships developed with five other agencies: Hereward College; Grapevine; Stoke Disability Solutions; Herefordshire Disability Forum; and Circles Network – which will bear fruit in future.
• Contact made with eight NI4 leads, where none existed before, and new knowledge and experienced gained on both sides.
• Delivery of engagement opportunities with their local authorities for disabled people living in Coventry, Warwickshire, Stoke and Herefordshire.
• Ongoing working relationship with Warwickshire County Council, Coventry City Council and Herefordshire County Council, which will be of benefit to both groups of, and individual, disabled people living in those areas.
• Added to database of suppliers and venues which can meet a diverse need of access requirements. These can be recommended to other public and voluntary sector agencies.
• Organisational (CDP) learning about the most effective methods of marketing to individual disabled people to get their interest and sign them up.
• The commission has led to medium and long-term benefits: individual participants have been invited to play a greater part in the West Midlands Regional Disability Network and have been, or will be, offered increased engagement in local authority service planning and review; and additional sustainability has come from CDP’s enhanced knowledge and understanding of the public sector and learning about practical delivery of such programmes.

Challenges

• The biggest challenge has been the time period. Although some extension was allowed the project could not deliver what it set out to.
• One area of compromise was the lead time required to contact participants who would: (a) benefit from the programme; (b) want to take part in the programme; and (c) had the capacity and time to take part. On reflection a two-stage signing up process would have benefited both the potential participants and the project delivery.
• The second challenge the project faced was in connecting with the NI4 leads. When contact was made, it would have been more successful had the NI4 leads been better briefed in advance.
CDP also overestimated the amount of time those leads had to give to the EVC programme, or indeed their engagement in meeting the EVC overarching aims.
It became evident that the eight planned ‘orientation’ days would not be delivered as original conceived. In some cases no activity is likely.
• The third challenge CDP faced was not understanding enough about the methods of contacting individual disabled people across such a wide geographical spread. We
consequently did not build sufficient time into our tender for signing up participants.

- Geography was always going to be a challenge for our participants. Disabled people on the whole have to make more complex travel arrangements (including early starts) and the way we chose to address this (four locations for eight local authorities) did not prove to be a major barrier to meeting the volume targets. However we did not get representation from all local authorities.

We built some form of graduation event into our original project plan. However, this could not take place in the duration of the project and CDF will celebrate achievements with participants following the project.

4. Acknowledgements

Many agencies were involved (some large, some small) in helping us to promote and deliver this EVC commission. We would particularly like to thank:

- Grapevine, Coventry for helping us to adapt the programme for adults with learning difficulties.
- Coventry City Council, for their speedy and enthusiastic response to working with CDP on this commission and the delivery of a successful focus group.
- Warwickshire County Council, for setting in motion the consultation day in this local authority and for providing many follow-up opportunities for CDP.
- Stoke City, for attending the EVC event and providing a mechanism for individual participants to become further involved in local authority delivery.
- Birmingham Centre for Independent Living, the Kindle Centre Hereford, St John’s Welcome Centre Stoke and the Koco Building Coventry (locations where training was delivered) for meeting our requirements and special requests.
- Herefordshire, Walsall, Stoke-on-Trent, Birmingham and Sandwell councils for their time on the phone and for enabling CDP to learn more about NI4 targets and how local authorities seek to consult and engage.
Appendix 1:
Disability timeline – a sample of course materials

The progress towards reaching disability equality made over the last twenty years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1990 | • The Americans with Disabilities Act  
      • The Politics of Disablement published by Mike Oliver a disabled academic  
      • NHS and Community Care Act.  |
| 1991 | • The British Council of Disabled People (BCODP) publishes the case for fully comprehensive Anti Discrimination Legislation  
      • Disabled People in Britain – A case for Anti Discrimination Legislation published by Colin Barnes.  |
| 1992 | • Disability Living Allowance introduced  
      • Disability Awareness in Action (DAA) established – an International public education organisation.  |
| 1993 | • The Disabled Persons Direct Action Network (DAN) established.  |
| 1994 | • The Spastics Society becomes SCOPE  
      • Government publishes a consultation document on measures to tackle discrimination against disabled people.  |
| 1995 | • Fourteenth attempt to introduce a Civil Rights Bill for Disabled People failed at second reading  
      • Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) passed by Conservative government amidst protest and opposition from the disability movement  
      • Rights Now campaign launched  
      • Carers (Recognition and Services) Act passed.  |
| 1996 | • Community Care Direct Payments Act passed.  
      • First parts of the DDA come into force. Introduces the concept of reasonable adjustment on employers, replaces quota and registration arrangements. The initial service provider duties came into force.  |
| 1997 | • Disability Rights Task Force established.  
      • Labour wins election. David Blunkett, who is visually impaired, appointed to cabinet. Anne Begg first wheelchair user to be elected to Westminster.  |
| 1998 | • Disability Rights Commission Bill published  
      • Employment threshold for employers covered by the DDA lowered from 20 to 15 employees.  |
| 1999 | • Next phase of the DDA came into force. Three new duties on service providers designed to reduce and/or remove barriers to service experienced by a disabled person.  
      • See the Person campaign launched by the Government.  |
| 2000 | • The Sydney Paralympics – the British team were second overall  
      • Disability Rights Commission established  
      • Human Rights Act came into force  
      • Carers and Disabled Children Act passed.  |
| 2001 | • Special Educational Needs and Disability Act passed  
      • Severe Disablement Allowance abolished  
      • Changes to Incapacity Benefit introduced.  |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Government proposes single Commission to address disability, race and gender.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2003 | European Year of Disabled People  
 | UK Disabled Peoples’ Parliament launched in Birmingham. |
| 2004 | Last part of the DDA 1995 service provider duties came into force. The duty to reduce, remove or alter physical barriers to service experienced by disabled customers. |
| 2005 | Disability Discrimination Act passed. Not about new entitlements rather closing gaps and loopholes of existing DDA 1995. Introduces disability equality duty on public bodies  
 | Office for Disability Issues established. Its function is to act as a champion of disabled people within government and co-ordinate government policy on disability issues |
| 2006 | Equality 2025 formed – a network of disabled people who advise the Government on how to achieve equality for disabled people by 2025 |
| 2007 | Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) established. A non-departmental Public Body separate and independent from government but accountable for public funds. Took over from the Disability Rights Commission, Equal Opportunities Commission and Commission for Racial Equality, but also has responsibility for age, sexual orientation, religion or belief as well as human rights. Has a Disability Committee because of the distinctive nature of disability equality and complex technical and ethical issues involved. |
| 2009 | Bert Massie and Jane Campbell resign from EHRC Disability Committee because of irreconcilable differences with Trevor Phillips, the chair of EHRC.  
 | United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability ratified by the UK Government but with reservations in the areas of education, immigration, defence and benefits. This dilutes its scope and effectiveness.  
 | Equality Bill published. Brings together existing Equalities Legislation under one Act.  
 | Does it compromise and ‘squeeze’ disability equality?  
 | Will it receive Royal Ascent in 2010 election year?  
 | EHRC launches Disability Harassment Enquiry. |
## Appendix 2:
### List of organisations used for promotion

### Coventry & Warwickshire
- ABI Support
- Grapevine
- Wm Faiths
- Aimhs
- Guideposts Trust
- Rugby Disability Forum
- Krysalis
- New Ideas Advocacy
- YMCA
- Entrust Care
- Nuneaton & Bedworth Dial
- Penderels Trust
- WA4B
- Life-Path
- Action for Blind People
- Arty-Folks
- Baby Lifeline
- CWIC
- Different Strokes
- Rowans Trust
- ERBS Palsy Group
- WREP
- Circles Network
- CVSWD
- Stratford CVS
- Cerebra
- Coventry Mind
- Nuneaton & Bedworth Leisure Trust
- WCAVA
- Coventry WMSNT
- Rethink.org
- Rehab Coventry
- Pastels
- Rugby CVS
- Crossroads
- North Warwickshire CVS
- Voluntary Action Coventry
- Scope 4 Coventry
- Starley Housing Cooperative
- Remploy
- MS Coventry
- Coton Centre
- British Legion
- Take a Break Warwickshire
- Age Concern Warwickshire
- Autism West Midlands
- Heart of England CF
- RNID
- Beeleine Community Transport
- Hereward College
- Stroke
- Disability Solutions
- Saltbox
- NSUG
- LDCVS
- North Shropshire
- Voluntary Action
- Stoke Council Access Team
- North Staffs User Group
- Community Action and Support East Staffordshire
- PHAB Freewheelers
- North Staffs Carers Association
- Deaflinks
- Mencap
- British Colostomy
- Assoc North Staffs
- Headway North Staffs
- Blue Mountain Housing Association
- Age Concern
- Changes
- RNIB Action for Blind
- Stoke City Wheels in Motion
- Sport Across Staffordshire
- Mercian Ability Partnership
- VAST
- Elite

### Hereford
- Hereford SIL
- Echo Herefordshire
- Livability
- Parkinsons Group
- Herefordshire Disability Forum
- Hereford Stroke Club
- Leominister Shopmobility
- Wheelchair User Group
- Herefordshire ME & FM
- Hereford Access for All
- Hereford Arthritis Care
- Hereford Macular Disease Group
- Royal National College for the Blind

### Birmingham
- WAIT Action
- iSE
- Refugee Council
- SWM
- Growing Up in the West Midlands
- Digbeth Trust
- REWM
- Valuing Age
- Race Equality Sandwell
- Ideal for All Sandwell
- RNIB
- Queen Alexandra College
- Action for Blind People
Appendix 3:
Promotional flyer sample

IT’S TIME TO GET YOUR VOICE HEARD!

Are you a Disabled Person who wants the opportunity to make a difference to your local area?

Do you want to develop your confidence and understanding of the methods and techniques available to get your views, priorities, concerns acknowledged and listened to?

Are you someone who wants to show that Disabled People can make an informed, valuable and worthwhile contribution to issues in their local community?

Would you like to become a member of the Regional Disability Network (RDN) and have a voice in influencing the West Midlands regional agenda on Disability issues?

If your answer is yes to any of the above then the exciting and innovative Every Voice Counts project is for you!

Benefits include:
➢ New experiences
➢ Training support
➢ Mentoring opportunities

Date: Tuesday 16th February 2010

Location: Birmingham Disability Resource Centre
Berton Road, Birmingham, B25 8PQ
9.30am – 4.30pm
All refreshments included and travel costs reimbursed up to £20.00

Contact: Lisa on 02476 716217
If you would like to book a place please call or email Lisa Wiggins on 024 7671 6217 or lisa.wiggins@cdp.org.uk

National Empowerment Partnership

EVC
Every Voice Counts
Appendix 4: Summary of feedback forms

Feedback on EVC sessions – summary of responses to each element of the programme.

Programme elements:
- Disability timeline
- Definitions (impairment, disability)
- Barriers in the way of disabled people
- Disability Discrimination Act – an overview
- Communication
- Empowerment

Comments on training style:
- Pace of training
- Level of detail
- Skill of the trainer
- Handouts

Questionnaire analysis: Birmingham EVC event

Questionnaire analysis: Hereford EVC event
Young people empowerment champions

Prepared by Youth Action Network

May 2010

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1. Introduction

This is the final report for Youth Action Network’s RAWM funded Every Voice Counts project running from October 2009 to April 2010. Youth Action Network is a national organisation supporting young people to get involved in and lead youth volunteering projects. Youth Action Network has a strong track record and recently celebrated its thirteenth year of supporting youth action.

We define youth action as youth volunteering that is led by young people. Because it is youth led, youth action focuses on the things that are important to young people and that they want to influence. Examples include improving facilities for young people locally, tackling bullying, or helping the wider community to have a more positive view of young people. Youth involvement can contribute to youth action but is only one part of this.

At the heart of everything we do are the nine principles of youth action; taken together these nine elements are what makes youth action such a brilliant way of working with young people – they are a recipe for success.

The nine good practice principles are the guiding lights of the organisation and are:

- **Youth participation** – Enabling young people to identify, plan, carry through and reflect on their action.
- **Benefiting others** – Encouraging young people to bring about positive change for themselves and communities.
- **Fun and rewarding** – Ensuring young people enjoy themselves and gain a sense of achievement.
- **Flexibility** – Meeting young people’s differing skills, levels of confidence, commitment and interests.
- **Support** – Ensuring that young people are properly protected and get the most from the experience.
- **Recognition** – Young people are offered the opportunity to have their action recognised or accredited by others either formally or informally.

- **Progression and leadership** – Supporting volunteers to take on increasingly challenging activities or levels of responsibility if desired and/or appropriate.
- **Diverse and inclusive** – Offering non stereotyped activities and supporting all young volunteers in exploring and challenging prejudice and discrimination.
- **Personal and skills development** – Young people are encouraged to reflect on and learn from their experiences and to develop new skills.

We promote participation as one of the nine key principles of youth action. Our quality assurance framework (Reach) ensures that organisations are involving young people in decision making and organising their own volunteering. Organisations working towards Reach assess their own progress on participation (as one of the strands of the framework) and provide evidence of the extent to which they are youth led.

Our training programme for organisations working with young people (TREaD) includes modules on participation, recognition, diversity and recognising and overcoming barriers to participation. Of most relevance, however, is our flagship project: the VIP Project. Under this highly successful peer training and consultancy project we recruited and trained over 38 young people nationally as VIPs (Volunteers Inspiring People).

Our intention with this project was to build on our experience of empowering young people through the VIP and other projects. We also wanted to provide a further service to our member organisations in the form of young reporters who could report on all of the good practice happening and publish it widely. We aimed to start to build a picture of youth action and participation and how this differs across the country; focusing in the West Midlands as a pilot through this funding.
2. About the project

Aims
The overall aim of the project has been to recruit and develop a group of young volunteers within the West Midlands who are then available to visit organisations and report on good practice in youth action; through the development of Case Studies for publishing on our website. We aim to build a picture of youth action taking place within the West Midlands and inspire and champion the youth action approach through the activities of the young people. We also aimed to develop a relationship with statutory agencies and be able to provide case studies of youth action taking place within the sector.

Activities and milestones
The following activities were planned between September 2009 and March 2010:

- Recruitment of 10 regional volunteers
- Training in the youth action approach
- Consultation (by young people) with young people and organisations
- Case study report of youth action in the West Midlands with recommendations for future action.

The target beneficiaries were:

- 10 new young volunteers, recruited and trained
- 15 existing volunteers
- 10 organisations working with young people, including voluntary and community organisations and statutory organisations and partnerships.

The milestones were:

- October 2009: Recruitment of 10 volunteers
- November to December 2009 – training volunteers
- January to February 2010 – ten consultancy sessions delivered (to individual organisations or to organisations and their partners)
- February to March 2010 – writing up case studies.

Outcomes

- Personal development of the young people participating (e.g., increased confidence, leadership and communication skills, event organisation and planning skills and accreditation and recognition)
- More participation by young people in the work of Youth Action Network and its members, including young people planning and delivering events such as residential training events
- Benefits for organisations working with young people who receive support from the VIP Team including the VIP Team inspiring other young people to get more involved in decisions that affect them and helping partner organisations to better engage with and see the value of engaging with young people
- More young people moving into training, education and jobs as a result of their experience on the VIP Project
- Recruitment of a diverse group of young people to the VIP Project and young people themselves valuing this diversity
- Wide dissemination of good quality youth action through the collection and dissemination of over 50 case studies
- Better relationships between young people, their communities and partner agencies around developing and embedding empowerment and empowering ways of working
- Improved and sustained engagement of empowered young citizens adding to a pool of confident and able people with control over programme design, delivery and feedback in their communities.
3. Achievements

Despite the project starting a little late, the project has been successful in terms of its overall milestones, as shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Milestone</th>
<th>Progress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment of 10 regional volunteers</td>
<td><strong>Achieved:</strong> Our recruitment of young volunteers took a little longer than we had anticipated. We believe that this was partly due to the very specific nature of the role – we were looking for young people who had volunteered before and who would like a role that involved writing case studies. We held an information day for potential reporter volunteers during October 2009 and an induction day for them on the 7th November 2009. Although we had not recruited our full cohort of volunteers in time for the induction day, we did reach 10 by the time the reporter training took place during December 2010.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training in the youth action approach</td>
<td><strong>Achieved:</strong> This training, involving our new group of YANsters (young volunteers) and our existing group as well as all staff took place during the weekend of Saturday 29th November. This was repeated again for new volunteers during January 2010.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation (by young people) with young people and organisations</td>
<td><strong>Partially achieved:</strong> All young reporters, after having received training and support during October to January 2010, were ready to visit organisations and collect information during February and March. However, they will require further training and support in order to be able to offer a full consultancy service in addition to the case study service they are currently offering.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case study report of youth action in the West Midlands with</td>
<td><strong>Partially achieved:</strong> With reporters beginning to collect case studies and visit organisations as late as March and April 2010 we have only just begun to build a picture of youth action in the West Midlands – any case study report will need to take this into account. Reporters will continue to collect case studies for our website over the coming year and will be in a position to provide consultancy services within the next six months. Copies attached at Appendix 1.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We are extremely proud of our achievements with this funding and for us, the grant gave us the opportunity to ‘kick start’ a process that will become fundamental to the way we operate – involving more young people in our delivery over the coming years.

The opportunity to recruit a new cohort of volunteers and work on a regional basis brought with it unique challenges for the organisation that we are continuing to work on. The fact that the funding gave us the opportunity to begin a much longer piece of work rather than deliver a one off project, means that outcomes of the funding are more difficult to identify and demonstrate at such an early stage. However, an update on progress so far is detailed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Milestone</th>
<th>Progress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal development of young people</td>
<td><strong>Achieved:</strong> Focused report produced on the young people’s involvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased participation in Youth Action Network and its membership</td>
<td><strong>Progressing:</strong> We have recruited over 16 new volunteers, 10 of whom are from the West Midlands. The YANsters have sent a representative to a board meeting and they have been developing plans for how to become more involved in the organisation as a whole. This will continue to develop over the next 12 months.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development opportunities for organisations</td>
<td><strong>Progressing:</strong> At present, as part of the development in the confidence and expertise in youth action YANsters are focusing on the collection of case studies rather than the delivery of development opportunities for organisations through consultancy. This will be built into their role (and may require additional recruitment) within the next 6 to 12 months.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased employability of young people involved in the project</td>
<td><strong>Progressing:</strong> Evidence supplied in separate report focused on the development and experience of the young people involved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased diversity of Youth Action Network’s volunteers</td>
<td><strong>Achieved:</strong> We have recruited a diverse group of young people as can be seen from our volunteer register.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 50 case studies</td>
<td><strong>Progressing:</strong> This work is ongoing. Some of the case studies are complete and we anticipate that all 50 will be written up by the end of the year. Copies attached at Appendix 1.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Challenges and recommendations

Alongside our successes in recruitment, training and support of YANster reporters, we have faced various challenges along the way that can be reduced to two main areas: the volunteers and their role; and the new areas of work we are developing through the project. The tight time frame has also been a considerable challenge.

Young people

When Youth Action Network made an application for this funding we had an existing group of YANsters trained and supported to deliver training to other young people and organisations. However, this group, having been with the organisation for over 2 years (extremely unusual for a youth volunteering organisation) has reduced over the last six months due to various changes in the lives of the group. One member of the group is due to become a parent, another has been successful in gaining more hours in his employment as a youth worker, another has been focused upon studies and exploring options for volunteering abroad and another has been focused on his university placement as a finance student. As a result of the uncertain capacity of this group to support the new cohort of volunteers the new group has been recruited and supported largely by our development officer. This has not had an impact upon our ability to deliver to the milestones and outcomes of the project, but it has meant that the project was not as youth-led as we had anticipated or would have liked. It has also meant that we have been unable to deliver the consultancy sessions planned in as thorough a way as we’d hoped, because they have been delivered by new rather than existing volunteers. Going forward we have a new YANster recruitment strategy to replace those volunteers who have left during the last 12 months.

The role of reporter

Due to the need to recruit the reporters quickly because of the short-term nature of the funding our recruitment strategy for volunteers was to take all comers. We were recruiting to a specific role and did receive interest from a good diverse range of young people, however we were unable to assess levels of competence and ability to write good reports for our website due to timeframes therefore we offered the same training to all rather than being able to provide more support and training to those young people who required it. This has not impacted upon the number of case studies produced but has had an impact on the quality as a result of some of the volunteers requiring additional support to reach the standard we would like to see.

As an organisation promoting a youth-led approach we were anticipating being able to publish the case studies produced by the young people with very little input or changing by workers. However, the first case studies received, although interesting and demonstrative of youth action, were not written in a way that provides adequate information for the 9 principles section of our website as we had hoped. This provided us with a dilemma – do we keep the case studies as they are and publish them as is or do we alter them as workers for publishing? This dilemma runs to the very heart of who we believe we are at Youth Action Network and presents us with an ongoing challenge. However, this grant is about voice and for us the young people’s voice should be paramount. In order to deal with this issue we have decided to publish the ‘raw’ case studies as they are in the news section of our website. Going forward these case studies will continue to be published on our website and we hope that they will inspire other young people to permit a reporter to write a case study about their experience.

Working in new areas

This grant represents Youth Action Network’s first experience of regional and cross-sectoral work. This has presented various challenges to us. Our engagement with NI4 leads has not developed at the rate we anticipated and we have found it difficult to penetrate the structures beyond a superficial level. Although we did receive some very positive responses from some leads, especially during the early stages when we were recruiting, these relationships have not developed; mainly due to time frames and our capacity to do the required ‘leg work’ to make this happen. We believe that our production of case studies and our ability to offer consultancy in the coming months will provide us with a profile in the West Midlands and may raise our profile with NI4 leads increasing their willingness to work with us.
Working with the statutory sector also presented a very practical challenge in terms of getting access to information for case studies within the sector. When requests were made to send young reporters to consult with statutory sector projects we faced some complexity in terms of gaining access with various ‘levels’ of the organisation being required to provide permission for that access. This has resulted in our case studies being focused largely on the voluntary sector and not providing us with the information about youth action activity in the statutory sector that we believe would give us some interesting comparisons with the voluntary sector. We will continue with our attempts to address this challenge and anticipate the creation of case studies of statutory sector activity to complement existing voluntary sector case studies over the next 2-6 months.

We had hoped to be able to present a ‘picture’ of youth action within the West Midlands as a result of the project. However we feel that any evidence we have at the moment, based on the few case studies completed largely within the voluntary sector, is anecdotal and would not be enough to draw substantial conclusions, or make comparisons or recommendations.

**Working with NI4 leads and engaging with an existing regional structure**

This funding came with the condition that we engage with NI4 Local Authorities throughout the process. This has proved difficult given the tight time frame and our capacity as a small organisation. Our initial offer to the NI4 Local Authorities was to be able to report on some of the excellent practice taking place within the statutory sector with regard to promoting empowerment through youth action.

Facilitation of networking between ourselves and the Local Authority empowerment leads in the form of an introductory day could have provided an opportunity to introduce ourselves in person and explain in detail what we were looking to achieve through the funding.

**Focusing upon the case studies rather than the impact on the young people**

This funding was about identifying, assessing and reporting on young people’s empowerment via youth action within the West Midlands. Our approach was through consultation with and reporting on youth action projects or organisations within the West Midlands. However, the reporters we recruited have their own powerful stories to tell in terms of their own empowerment. These stories, and other similar stories collected from young people involved in youth action, could be utilised to engage and inspire other young people to get involved locally. Case studies attached at Appendix 1. Those reading the case studies collected so far will largely be workers working within youth or participation work and the information will have to find its way through various levels of infrastructure before it reaches and hopefully empowers young people.

We would be very interested in exploring the development of an online ‘place’ within our website to showcase the difference youth action makes to young people and for our reporters to tell their own stories of youth action (via blogs, diaries etc). We would also like them to tell the story of youth action experience within various areas of the country, beginning with the West Midlands and building on the work carried out with this grant.
The Aaina is a project based in Walsall, West Midlands which was set up 13 years ago by a small group of Asian women who wanted a gender sensitive learning and supporting environment. It was originally set up specifically for Asian women but now offer a more open to all women policy as well as for boys up to the age of 11.

Aaina, aim to empower young people and in particular disadvantaged women to achieve more.

Aaina have an outreach project that supports women and their families in areas such as housing and finances. The V volunteering projects offers support training and placements to young women aged 16-24 years who would not traditionally access services outside of their own communities.

Benefiting others
At Aaina young people who do voluntary work definitely don’t just benefit themselves. Volunteers allow Aaina to reach much further and stretch their own services such as their ESOL classes which are run by paid workers but also volunteers. The volunteers allow more classes to be run and this allows Aaina to meet with the demand for ESOL classes from newly arrived and existing non English speaking residents.

People who access the ESOL classes improve on their English and also wider multicultural Britain which allows them a better understanding of life in Britain.

Volunteers have also been involved in community clean ups, this has helped the wider community at large living in a safer and cleaner area. The real important thing is that groups of people who might not traditionally work together have worked in partnership on such projects run by Aaina.

Aaina project is based on supporting Asian women in the community. There is a lack of provision for this particular group and the services we provide are integral to all the women accessing our services.

**DAWN’S HANDY TIP ON BENEFITING OTHERS:**
- Partnership work is vital in really reaching out and through this you can help more people in the community.

**Flexibility**
Aaina have adopted the approach that they want to ensure they get the best out of their volunteers. In order to do this they try and be as flexible as possible they are open on weekends, school holidays and evenings when young people are available and need the services of Aaina the most.

Aaina always have an initial discussion with all of their young people and this discussion is about what and when young people need Aaina the most.

Dawn at Aaina said, “It’s not always possible to accommodate every young person, every time but we always ensure the young people understand the reasons for why sometimes due to funding or staff shortage we may not be.

Appendix 1: Case studies
able to accommodate them. Because of our honest and transparent approach all of the young people always come back even if they were unable to attend a particular event.” Dawn told us that it’s very important that they are able to offer what young people want and when they want by doing this there are able to retain more young people.

**DAWN’S HANDY TIP ON FLEXIBILITY:**
- If you are around when your young people need you are much more likely to get younger people attend your events.

**Support**
At Aaina, whenever young people take the lead in their project, workers are always there to support them if the young people need us. Although the organisation only has two full time workers they still offer one to one support on a regular basis if the young people need it. They have supported many young people to gain qualification to help them to get a place at university, colleges or getting a job.

**DAWN’S HANDY TIPS ON SUPPORT:**
- Try and establish what young people will need in terms of support for them to fully participate in their volunteering with your organisations
- Never assume – always ask
- Remember not all young people will tell you they need support as a worker you should let young people make mistakes and let them learn from these mistakes. They will come to you for support and respect the fact that you let them do it their way.

**Recognition**
Aaina believe that recognition for the efforts of young people is crucial. Aaina regularly have celebration events with young people often leading on the planning.

Aaina offer various accreditations as a means of recognition but also for personal development of young people accessing their services. The volunteers who volunteer full time receive a £10 voucher as a recognition for their dedication to volunteering.

**How Aaina do it**
We offer a volunteer of the week incentive scheme where they are awarded certificates and gift vouchers. We offer in house training sessions in areas such as jewellery making, data protection, child development, health and safety, child protection and customer care. Young people complete a work book on the key areas of volunteering that the can refer back to and upon completion are awarded a certificate.

**DAWN’S HANDY TIP ON RECOGNITION:**
- Recognition is vital ask the young people what they would like and always be aware that not all young people will want certificates. Some just do it for personal satisfaction.

**BY HOGAR SALIM**
Gardener Project, Bishop Vesey School, Birmingham

Gardeners’ revolt
A group of fourteen sixth form students, armed with spades and garden forks, stormed Bishop Vesey’s Grammar School in Sutton Coldfield, Birmingham on the 13 February. They were not, however, attempting a violent coup d’état of the school, but in fact taking steps to make it more self-sufficient.

This is part of an ongoing environmental project at the school which its leader, Peter Moss, says is an attempt to “…bring a sense of community back into the school through the environment.”

Having volunteered for the Castle Vale Community Environmental Trust for two years, Peter has gathered experience which he is now using to organise the school’s environmental team and get teachers on board for the cause – to make the school more environmentally friendly and ultimately gain the Green Flag Award and Eco School status.

In order to achieve this, a school must meet set criteria in areas such as biodiversity, electricity and waste management. Therefore, the team have begun a number of campaigns which have thus far included monitoring how much the school pays for water, a ‘switch off the lights’ campaign and the digging of the allotment on Saturday.

The allotment itself is intended to provide supplies for the school canteen and thus cut down on catering costs – both financial and environmental.

Although the project was Peter’s idea, he could not put it into action without the commitment of other volunteers who turned up to transform an area of grassy scrap land into a vegetable grower’s paradise. The team achieved this through a well balanced mix of hard work and good humour with one member, Esther Tichauer, describing the day as very enjoyable as she could “…have fun while doing something good for the environment.”

What we have at Bishop Vesey’s Grammar School is a team of dedicated volunteers who have demonstrated that through perseverance and determination, young people can make a real difference.

BY CHRIS JARVIS
**CASE STUDY**

**Catch22**

Catch22 national charity known as Rainer and crime concern and its two national charities bonded in 2008. It works with young people who find their self's in difficult situations with different reasons for their situations. Catch22 help the young people out and work with them and their families as well as the communities.

Catch22 is proud to say wherever the young people needed the most whether in schools or anywhere they get involved with their communities. Catch22 will help them with everything they need.

Over the years Catch22 worked with uncountable young people across England that’s including the Midlands. The young people may come from neighbourhoods or tough upbringings, where crimes and unemployment are happening around them. Those young people might be leaving care or have been kicked out of schools. Some of the young people have started getting in trouble with the police.

**Support**

They work to stop the crime from happening by working with the young people who are getting into trouble at schools or with the police. Catch22 can help prevent things from getting worse by offering practical support for the young people and offer positive activities for the young people to do in their free time.

Catch22 doesn’t stop when the young people get into trouble. Repeat offending accounts for more than half their crime. The organisation tries to find ways to move the young people away from getting in trouble and help them to find new opportunities.

Catch22 is about giving the young people support and realistic guidance in order to find the best way to assisting them and see the effect of crime and that later effect the young people.

**HANDY TIPS ON THE SUPPORT**

- Supporting the young people is like life line for those at risk
- There are on average 11,000 young people in custody
- Many employers won’t have them and that can be too easy to fall back to their old habits
- 75% of the young people commit further crimes
- Working harder to change the employers their mind set by supporting and showcasing positive stories for the young people
- Make sure the support is on the young people terms and be patient.

**BY KHALIL ALI**
Fun and rewarding, benefitting others, flexibility
Young people in Dudley have been drafted through local schools and the ‘Entry 2 Employment’ scheme to get involved in volunteer work with vinvolved.

The vinvolved Dudley team has recently been working with BTCV, a group which helps volunteers to undertake conservation work, giving young people a new experience that will benefit both themselves in terms of development and their local area in relation to the environment. This project has allowed the volunteers to take part various activities tasks, from building bird boxes to restoring paving around local canals, ultimately improving the appearance of the green spaces around them in Dudley as well as encouraging the wildlife and improving biodiversity.

Volunteers at Dudley have also been involved in the organisation of a Battle of the Bands, in which young people from around the area would put on a live music event. Roughly 45 young people were set to DJ, play in their own bands and coordinate the lights in order to put on a night that everyone, both volunteers and attendees alike could enjoy. This would have been a showcase both of the commitment of the volunteers involved in organisation, and the talent of the bands playing.

Unfortunately, the night was cancelled due to an unforeseen event involving one of the key band managers of the night. However, this did not stop the group of volunteers who are keen to show their talent. A similar event is currently in the arrangement stages at a different venue, which clearly shows how much time and effort the young people are willing to put in order to put on their event.

HINTS AND TIPS WE PICKED UP FROM VINVOLVED DUDLEY
- Events that are geared towards the interests of the people involved will gain the best result
- Don’t let problems deter you from your end goal – if something comes up that prevents your initial plan from going ahead, try a different route
- Volunteer work can consist of small tasks, but have a great impact on the area around you.

BY CHRIS JARVIS AND ALEX PIKE
Envision was set up by young people in 2000. Today Envision’s flagship programmes support young people aged 16-19 year olds from 130 schools and colleges in Birmingham, Leeds and London. Envision also operate satellite schools in Cardiff, Essex and Oxford. Last academic year they worked with over 4000 young people across the country.

Youth participation
Envision help young people to design their own local community project that young people want to develop such as tackling issues that face the young people. This way Envision are more likely to keep them fully involved.

Envision believe in allowing young people to achieve their aspiration and they are there offering support, where the young people come up with ideas and this sort of relationship works best for both parties.

Some examples of the programmes
Anti bullying – Groups of young people campaigning and raising the issue in schools with a view to show young people the affects it has on those on the receiving end of bullying.

Handy tips from Andrew
• Listen to what young people want it’s their project
• Don’t decide for young people let them decide even if they make mistakes and you know they will.

By Jamal Suleman
Herefordshire involved team is a part of a big network of young volunteer advisors across the region. The main aim is to increase the numbers of young people who volunteer.

Young participation
involved Herefordshire believe young people are the heart of the organisation and they make sure they are involved in as many ways as possible. Herefordshire involved have their own Youth Action Team, consisting of 12 young people. The team form part of a decision-making steering group.

The YAT team help with marketing and assist the project with recruiting new volunteers and helping with fundraising. The team assisted in the distribution of £14,000 to other youth projects, through the Youth-Bank initiative.

HANDY TIPS

• It’s easier to get involved with young people by asking them and giving them ownership
• As a worker you can’t do everything – work as a partnership with the young people you can reach further.

Diverse and inclusive
Herefordshire involved have tried every method to hit as many young people as possible using local college, youth clubs and established volunteering groups to get information to young people. The project got their Youth Action Team to attend a number of key youth events open days at college day etc. The young people from the youth action team also look after the projects social networking site. Herefordshire involved believe that their biggest marketing tool is word of mouth – through this the majority of volunteers have signed up to the project.

HANDY TIPS FROM THE TEAM

• Try to be creative and don’t be afraid to try new ways of attracting young people.

Herefordshire involved ran a speed volunteering event at their local tech college. This was basically a high speed dating event around volunteering. 15 local organisations attended and over 60 young people came along to speak to the organisations. The event was fun and gave a chance for both parties to talk through ways in which volunteering retention and access to volunteering opportunities can be improved.

Personal and skills development
The project offers information, advice and guidance on volunteering for young people, working closely with other organisation to help develop opportunities around the young people. In addition, the project gives the young people a chance to develop further through ASDAN and Youth Achievement awards.

At the involved Herefordshire it’s not just about volunteering but also wider social skill development, encouraging young people to try and access other courses. Some young people applied for vcashpoint and two projects were successful.

Kirsty Williams (YAT member aged 21) said, “The YAT has given me the chance to become involved in something which is owned by young people and for young people. I have been made to feel really welcome and we recently went on a teambuilding trip which was great fun. I have picked up loads of new skills and feel much more confident talking in a group now.”

BY HOGAR SALIM
Background
The Smethwick Bangladeshi youth form is a registered charity it works to support the communities of Smethwick in the Midlands. The project provides different services to address social and economic deprivation experienced by the communities.

SYBF strive to provide quality of their services and committed to providing a high quality. Through investment in local people SBYF have developed a skilled and motivated team by expanding their portfolio of services.

Senior youth worker Ajid is employed by Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council is the lead when it comes to activities for young people at the SBYF. Ajid and his team of volunteers offer centre based youth club activities on a Tuesday, Thursday for young men and Friday for young women. Ajid has been influential in changing the youth club provision in this deprived area of the Midlands.

Ajid said, “High number of young people are under achieving in this area and I wanted to ensure that these young people are given some alternative opportunities to build their skills and that is why I run a number of Duke of Edinburgh schemes.”

Personal and skill development
Those young people who access the youth provision at SBYF just want to come for a few hours as means of escape and wanted to play pool, computer games and hang out with their mates.

One of the ways that Ajid got through to the young people in order to get them see value in gaining some skills and qualification it was through running a series of informal workshop and getting the young people to see the value in getting involved in some courses around their personal interests. The following workshops were run:

- Inspire the young people
- Type of jobs the young people can get
- The benefits of gaining qualification

Through those informal fun and interactive workshop Ajid was able to get young people understand how important it was to get skills and qualifications.

Ajid also involved some local residents who had similar upbringings to the young service users of the centre. This also encouraged the young people. The young people could relate to the speakers because they were local people form the same background.

As a result of the workshops the young people decided to take the Duke of Edinburgh award and the biggest achievement is the young people also decided they will set up steering group to look at the community issues.

**HANDY TIPS**

- Young people can work better if they can see the benefit of their involvement
- Make sure you regularly view the work and get them to map their journey
- Using the same person that young people relate to.

**BY KHALIL ALI**
Background
Stechford Youth Network (SYN) is a Birmingham based organisation which was first established in March 2006. The project was set up and run by Qudues Zafar who wanted to allow young people better integration with their own peer groups but also the wider the community within the Stechford area of Birmingham and reduce crime around the area by getting young people off the streets.

Although the project is relatively new in comparison to other projects in the area, SYN have made a mark and a significant impact since they first started allowing hard-to-reach young people to access their services and where many other projects have failed they have succeeded and are continuing to grow. They currently have many youngsters from the age of 8 to 19 who regularly attend.

Youth participation
SYN always consult with all of their young people before deciding on activities that they are offered. Sometimes funding restrictions don’t allow all of the young people’s ideas to be taken forward but the young people are always informed about this which allows them to gain the trust of the young people.

Young people are always encouraged and supported in taking part and because of this support and encouragement they are always oversubscribed.

SYN offers opportunities around the interests of the young people, for example mentoring, residential, leadership and the more traditional youth club evenings. They say this is the reason they always get high attendance to all of their events, projects and activities.

TIPS ON YOUTH PARTICIPATION
• Be honest with your young people – gaining their trust is the doorway to their participation.
• Offer opportunities that the young people want. If you are unable to, tell them why – don’t assume they will know why.
• Let the young people lead and let them make their mistakes – they will learn from them.

Benefiting others
The project was set up after a need for provision in the area for young people as many were just hanging around street corners with nothing to do. Once the project was set up they initially attracted mainly young people from newly arrived Asian communities. Through the development of the project, and with time, young people from other backgrounds from within the Stechford area started to access the service.

It was very challenging trying to get the young people to understand that the only real difference was the colour of their skin. A facilitated session took place and through persistence the young people started to develop friendships with each other.

Young people being young people they still got into trouble; it was interesting to see how they would get into trouble when they were with groups from within their own community but also it was exactly the same when the groups of young people mixed.

continues on page 16
Qudes was able to use this to explain to the young people that they were the same. It was through this work that the community started to notice that more young people were mixing with each other and this also resulted in the wider community becoming more open to each other.

The result of the work meant they were able to work in churches and other places of worship and young people regardless of faith could access the service. It was a breakthrough and the entire community benefited from the work.

**TIPS ON BENEFITING OTHERS**

- Young people can often lead and be an example for the wider community. By getting groups of young people to work together you can show how there can be crossover between different groups
- Make sure the community is kept informed. If you have a community newsletter from your project point of view, showcase your work and how inspiring the young people can be
- If the community get on board it will be to your advantage.

Diverse and inclusive

SYN found that a simple way of saving money and, at the same time making the project more diverse and inclusive, was to approach local places of worship, such as churches and mosques.

They felt that these prominent places are often under-used by the community as a whole and, of course, young people very rarely venture into these places. They wanted to ensure that they approached these places with a view to running activities from them. They experiences some resistance but their perseverance paid off. They now run activities for young people from these places. They ensure that all of the young people are aware of their surroundings giving them some knowledge of another faith and they find that the young people behave differently in these places.

The other thing is that using places of worship means that young people who may not be allowed to engage in activity outside of their own communities have the opportunity not just to engage in positive developmental activity but also have a chance to meet other young people from different backgrounds.

**A TIP ON BEING DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE**

- Be creative in your approach – diversity is something that isn’t as simple as an organisation saying we have an open door policy.

**BY HOGAR SALIM**
CASE STUDY

WOLVERHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL

Wolverhampton City Council has over 31 projects within its Youth Service and those clubs and projects offer different services for young people living in the different regions.

Their main work is to develop relationships with the young people and support those who are most vulnerable. Wolverhampton Youth Service believes in taking the ‘youth work’ to the young people instead of the traditional youth club setting and believes that detached youth work assists them in building solid relationships with the young people of Wolverhampton.

The detached youth workers support young people to develop their own projects and have done things like graffiti wall projects, motor mechanics, fundraising, youth shelters and BMX bike projects. Their current work also includes DJ-ing, dance projects and regeneration of parks where play equipments is suitable for all ages. The workers also work with young people around lots of other issues including drugs and sex education and providing opportunities with the community.

Flexibility
The worker said: “Working as a detached worker can be an isolating experience, although we depend a lot on our co-workers and managers to offer support and advice. You have to be highly motivated yourself to get through to the young people as detached work is slow to develop and there will be no guarantee of success. The hope is by offering young people slow, regular, consistent support they will begin to trust you and start to attend youth club sessions.

“A detached worker should be realistic; you may not always get through to the young people as they may be at different stages so engagement can sometimes be difficult. To try and engage with these young people A detached worker could try pointing out some common problems in the community or in the young person’s local environment and support them to think about solutions. As in a youth club, the worker should try to establish some ground rules so the young people are aware of yours and their limitations. A detached worker should be ready and willing to go wherever the young people hang out, this could be street corners, waste ground, canal bridges, parks, cafes, clubs, etc. You’ve got to become part of scene.”

HANDY TIPS
• Most importantly, build relationships with young people before offering them support.
• You must invest time to research the young people’s patch. This will help you understand your young people and the issues that affect them. It will also assist you in setting long-term objectives for the project and young people.

BY KHALIL ALI
Youth volunteering Wychavon (YVW) is a fund project which focuses on engaging young people aged 16-25 with volunteering. The project support and can offer funding to young people that are interested in youth led projects and also having a positive impact on themselves and their community.

Youth participation
Katie Roberts and best friend Libby Knight were both brains behind the Little Comberton Youth Club which came about after Katie became a volunteer and met with Sara Spur (Youth Project leader at YVW) who helped develop Katie’s idea.

Katie believed the youth club was exactly what their community needed to engage with the young people Katie and Libby also wanted to encourage young people to get involved with the youth club.

The lack of interaction between the different generations was an issue that Katie and Libby wanted to confront by more young people being part of the village hall on a regular basis.

HANDY TIP FROM SARA
• Try and offer young people opportunity to engage in activities they like more likely to keep them motivated
• Don’t assume it’s about asking young people about idea and working with them on developing their idea partnership is the key

Fun and rewarding
Sara thinks that if you are working with young people then its crucial fun and awarding are part of the package. Volunteers are always helping others and should be able to have fun on their volunteering journey.

HANDY TIP FROM SARA
Make sure you have a variety of ice-breakers and team-building games to get young people more involved. One they get involved you will get more from them.

Flexibility
YVW know that young people have hectic lifestyles and they often over stretched and to ensure they get the most of being involved at YVW the project ensure operate when the young people are available. Sara ensures that whenever she is booking an event or running workshop it is during school holidays or weekends when the young people are free.

HANDY TIP FROM SARA
• As an organisation working with young people it should be on their terms.

BY KHALIL ALI