Effective Community Participation Strategy Community Development Section

1.0 Foreword

As part of the development of the Vision for Leeds a review of community participation revealed that, whilst there are many examples of innovative and effective involvement activities, there is no citywide, collaborative approach to community development and community development projects are often suffering from short-term funding, lack of long-term planning and co-ordination.

It is difficult for communities to engage with different agencies and systems but increasingly we need to and are required to deliver improved services within a partnership structure. This calls for a concerted effort from all partners to make participation exercises effective and meaningful.

The Vision for Leeds 2004-2020 places the active involvement of communities as central to successful and thriving neighbourhoods. It pledges to **develop** community involvement structures and to carry out a regular resident's satisfaction survey to ensure that progress is being made. Special effort will also be made to involve marginalised groups and individuals in consultation and decision-making.

Community development helps to create environments and cultures that underpin **genuine participation and involvement opportunities**. This section of the Effective Community Participation Strategy lays out the need to develop communities in Leeds, identify the effects that community development can have on issues facing both communities and agencies, the values and methodologies of community development and where to go to find further information and support.

This strategy aims to outline the principles needed to achieve the types of participation to the right hand side of the diagram below. Deciding together, acting together and supporting communities to act for themselves needs investment and support of a community development approach. Without community development these aspirations are unlikely to be reached. It is important to stress that the types of participation to the left hand side of the diagram are also important and have their place in effective community participation.

Type of Participation	Information Sharing	Consultation	Deciding Together	Acting Together	Supporting Communities
Definition	You are telling/informing people about what is planned.	A number of options or questions are posed and you listen to the feedback that is given before making your decision.	You encourage others to provide some additional ideas and options, and join in deciding the best way forward.	You, the community and often other partners decide together what is best. Partnerships may be formed or used to carry it out.	You support communities to do what they want - perhaps within a framework of grants, contracts, advice and support provided by the resource holder.

An increased level of community development needed
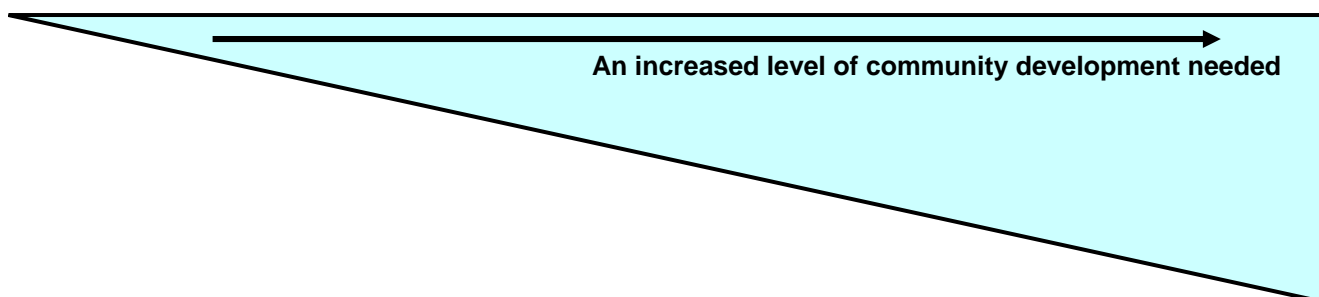
2.0 'Why include Community Development in the Effective Community Participation Strategy?'

Because:

- Community development is about empowering local people to get involved with their community and change the issues that affect their lives.

- Community development is about the sharing of power, experience, skills and knowledge to bring about change and regeneration in communities.

- Community development aims to build active, influential and sustainable communities based on justice, equality and mutual respect.
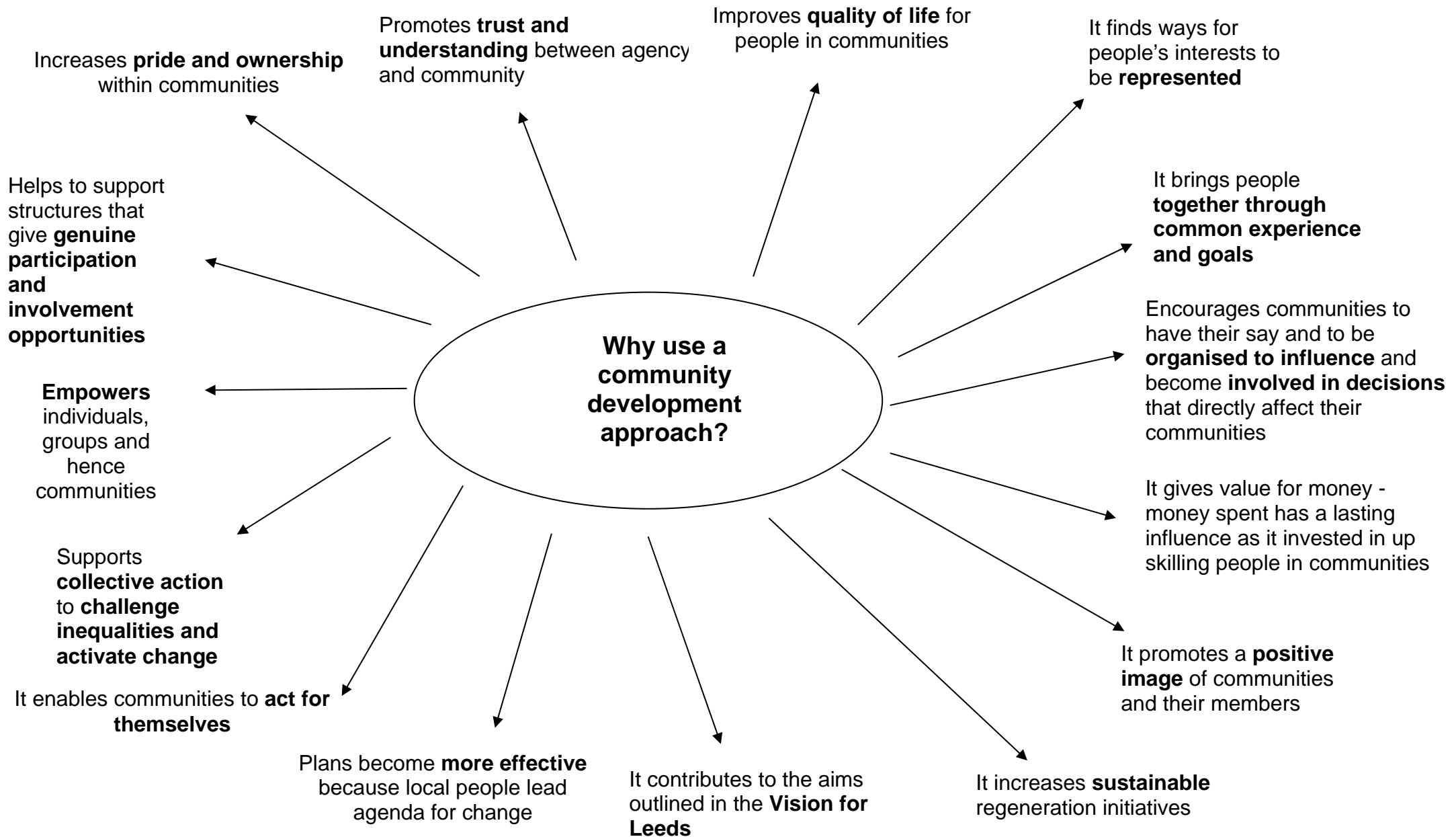
This part of the Effective Community Participation Strategy highlights the value of community development not just as an approach to achieving effective and meaningful community participation but also as a long-term regeneration initiative which creates sustainable change in communities and will assist practitioners in the achievement of the aims set out in the Vision for Leeds.

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The strategy is aimed at Leeds Initiative partners who wish to make better and more successful use of community development processes. It is not intended to replace individual organisations' strategies towards community development or community engagement but to encourage sign up to a set of shared principles and joined up working.

3.0   The objectives of this community development section of the strategy

- To increase the **active involvement** of people in the regeneration of their communities.

- To set and promote **realistic expectations** of what community development can achieve.
- To outline the **values and principles** of community development work.

- To outline realistic **resource requirements**.

- To ensure marginalised and socially excluded groups are **invested in and empowered**.

- To develop **effective partnership** working and **reduce duplication** of resources.

- To support and develop **good practice**.

Increases **pride and ownership** within communities

Promotes **trust and understanding** between agency and community

Improves **quality of life** for people in communities

It finds ways for people's interests to be **represented**

Helps to support structures that give **genuine participation and involvement opportunities**

It brings people **together through common experience and goals**

Why use a community development approach?

Encourages communities to have their say and to be **organised to influence** and become **involved in decisions** that directly affect their communities

Empowers individuals, groups and hence communities

It gives value for money - money spent has a lasting influence as it invested in up skilling people in communities

Supports **collective action** to **challenge inequalities and activate change**

It enables communities to **act for themselves**

It promotes a **positive image** of communities and their members

Plans become **more effective** because local people lead agenda for change

It contributes to the aims outlined in the **Vision for Leeds**

It increases **sustainable** regeneration initiatives

3.0   Definitions of terms

What is community development?

Community development aims to build active and influential communities based on justice, equality and mutual respect.

Community development work involves working with communities to:

- Identify their strengths, needs, rights and responsibilities.
- Plan, organise and take action.
- Assess the effect of any actions taken.

(Community Development Xchange, www.cdx.org.uk/)

What do we mean by community?

In this context community can be where someone lives (geographically) or based around a shared concern, issue or identity (communities of interest). It is important to recognise that individuals have multiple identities and may feel that they belong to more than one community.

4.0   Values of community development

Community development is a way of working that follows these values and commitments:

- Organise and bring people from communities together so that they work **collectively** agreeing and working towards achieving **common goals** or priorities.

- Recognising and optimising the **skills**, **knowledge**, **experience and potential** that exist within communities. Where there are gaps **build capacity** through activities that not only build skill but tackle social exclusion, promote community cohesion and nurture relationships.

> Community development takes time, starts small, is more than just consulting, might be the first step for people becoming involved in decision making or partnerships in their community and is not the answer to all our problems.

- Bring people who have felt or feel powerless due to discrimination or exclusion together to build their confidence and ability to **challenge and raise awareness of inequalities**.

- Celebrate the **successes** and learn from **challenges** through interactive evaluation.

- Assisting individuals and communities to engage in **decision making** by raising their capacity and improving their **access** to decision making structures.

- Raising a community's **political awareness** of their own community, city, region and country and raising agencies awareness of **real local concerns**.

- **Sustaining change** by investing in people as well as places.

5.0 How is community development undertaken?

The Home Office Firm Foundations Report Sets out the 'basis for change' which will underpin action to expand and improve community development practice within partnerships and agencies. These recommendations have been adapted to be fit for purpose in Leeds.

1. Adopt a community development approach

This means including an element of community development into **planning, policy and resource management.**

Operationally it means working with communities to agree a set of values and goals that are owned by all parties and then taking action together to meet them.

Encouraging communities to be more confident in bringing forward their own agendas for change and being prepared to **listen and negotiate**.

2. Recognise and build on what exists

Spend time getting to know the community. Appreciate and use the skills, experience, interests, knowledge and ideas that already exist. These strengths are sometimes referred to as *social capital.*

Identify and use the **structures and resources** that already exist and where there are gaps acknowledge them and work towards filling them.

In **agencies and organisations** review what is known about community development and what skills are there. Ensure that cross partnership support networks are available.

Consider and use the knowledge of the **voluntary, community and faith sector** as a tool to engage with communities they are often based within communities and have established and strong links.

3. Think long term

Community development can be **self sustaining** because skills and resources are left with the community. Invest in the vibrant community, voluntary and faith sectors, take time to **build strong and equal partnerships.**

4. Ensure that appropriate support is accessible at a neighbourhood level

Access to 'start up' and maintenance funding should not be underestimated. **Small pots** can go a long way.

Somewhere for people to **get together** is often a catalyst for community development.

Skilled workers are available for individuals, groups and organisations to use for support and guidance.

Access to **forums or networks** that create a space where individuals, groups, organisations and partnerships can come together.

5. Embrace Diversity

Organisations may be required to carry out targeted community development work specifically with **communities of interest** rather than concentrating on geographical areas.

Communities and their members are all **different.** It is important to remember that solutions to similar problems may be different in each area. Often the best way to reach solutions is through the community members themselves.

In reality community development comes in many guises. Due to funding, targets, politics and localities the work can sometimes be undertaken in an ad hoc way.

A person does not have to have 'community development' in their job title to be undertaking community development work. It is in fact unlikely that they would have community development in their job title and it may even be that they do not identify the work they are doing as community development.

Similarly a person does not have to be employed to be undertaking community development work they may be a volunteer or a local activist.

This poses a question in terms of staff development, management and sharing of good practice. Community Development Xchange undertook a national survey of people who identified themselves as undertaking community development work.

The survey found that many of the managers of these workers did not understand or were unaware of the values of community development. It also identified that many workers undertook community development in addition to their role.

It is therefore important to identify work as community development and ensure that there is adequate support for it within organisational structures or within the community.

The following are all examples of how a variety of people undertake community development:

Ghulam – Community Education Development Worker

I work in deprived communities with groups and individuals who want to do something about where they live.

At the moment I am working with a group of parents who want to set up an arts study support sessions for the young people on their estate.

We have been meeting regularly talking through the logistics of setting up a group, getting funding, and networking with partners, aligning with national policy and making it sustainable.

I am arranging for them to have some training from the local college around safeguarding children, health and safety and equal opportunities.

Rheta – Unpaid Community Activist

I started off just going to meetings organised at the community house we have down the road and from there have got more and more involved.

I became secretary and then went about setting up a community partnership. There were so many things going on and I just wanted to pull everything together.

We now get so much more done. The young people have designed and helped build a playground that they maintain themselves. It's rarely vandalised because they care about it, they know what went into getting it!

This year we are concentrating on working with the older people on the estate. We want to get the young and older people working together to break down barriers.

Patricia - Public Health Development Worker

My job is so varied. This week I have:
1. Taught a session of community research methods to a group of community members. They will be researching health inequalities and priorities on behalf of the PCT.
2. Visited a new mums group to give support with breast feeding.
3. Helped a new group prepare for their summer launch event. They want to have a 'healthy options' barbeque for the street.
4. Tonight I am going to support the new chair of the local forum.

Stuart – Youth and Community Worker

I am the driver of our young people's van Monday, Wednesday and Friday nights.

It keeps you young that's for sure. This week we are taking out our newly trained condom advisors. They are young people who volunteered for the programme.

I am also going to support the group to present their graffiti work to the local partnership. They are hoping to gain some space to set up a graffiti club. We have some real talents in this village.

Nicola – Community Project Development Worker

At the moment I am working with a group of people from the local mosque. They are setting up a social enterprise at the centre. It's a community café.

Between them there is a book keeper, baker, first aider, PR expert and negotiator. The only thing I have had to sort out for them is a refresher for their food hygiene certificates and health and safety.

We're hoping that they will bring people into the centre. They know everyone and the food is amazing.

Daryl - Neighbourhood Warden

Our aim is to improve quality of life. We provide a authoritative presence in the communities we work in.

I work with the people in communities, getting to know them. Together we promote community safety, help with environmental improvements and housing management.

Policy Drivers

The policy drivers related to community engagement outlined earlier in this strategy are all relevant to community development. In order for communities to become empowered to engage in local strategic decision making and to become active in regeneration initiatives they need to be developed so that they have the capacity to not only *engage* in decision making but to play their part in partnerships and in regeneration generally.

The Home Office Report **Firm Foundations** 'A National Capacity Building Strategy' states that: 'active involvement of citizens and communities with public bodies to improve their quality of life is crucial to the achievement of a wide range of Government objectives'. Community development 'helps achieve civil renewal, with more people exercising their rights and responsibilities and participating actively in the public realm'. The report recognises that a community development approach is vital to the success of both Government and local objectives.

The **Vision for Leeds** aims to answer the question 'How will communities, groups and agencies work together to deliver what is needed?' It is unlikely that this will happen without developing communities so that they can play an active role in all elements of the Vision.

One of the key principles of the **Compact for Leeds** is to recognise and value the diversity that exists in society and in Leeds specifically. It aims to 'include all groups that find themselves under-represented and excluded, for the benefit of people who make up those groups and for communities and individuals as a whole'. It is naïve to think that by diversifying methods of engagement all individuals and groups will be reached. It is important to invest time and resources into developing these individuals and communities so that they can act together and participate in addressing their priorities. Community development creates innovative ways of preparing people for this level of activity.

District Partnerships have been established to deliver services and initiatives. These are dependant on an understanding of local agendas and local people. There is evidence to suggest that areas where a community development approach is used have increased involvement and active participation in influencing and delivering sustainable regeneration initiatives that affect the whole community.

The **Leeds Regeneration Plan 2005 – 2008** outlines the great success Leeds' partnerships have had at addressing national targets around reducing crime, improving educational attainment and housing standards however the gap is far from closed. 1 in 5 people live in neighbourhoods that are amongst the worst 10% in the country. In these areas 1 in 3 children live in families where no-one works. How do we reach these people? How do we ensure that initiatives reach these communities? Community development organises communities, enabling them to identify and address their own challenges alone or in partnerships. When a community's potential is harnessed initiatives are sustainable and value for money added.

Leeds has an innovative and commended **Local Area Agreement** with a welcomed cross cutting theme aimed at '**empowering local people and building the role of the voluntary, community and faith sectors**'. The objectives that accompany this aim include 'capacity building through activities that build skills create social inclusion and encourage community cohesion and good relationships between diverse groups'. This can not be done without investing in the community development agenda.

7.0 Evaluation and monitoring

Community development produces results. People engaged within community development often feel that their quality of life has improved as that they feel they are an important part of a thriving community.

How do we measure these qualitative outcomes?

Community development can produce personal outcomes that together make a big difference. These outcomes might be:

- An increase in social capital and community cohesion.
- An increase in communities helping themselves; building the capacity of community led service providers to plan and deliver activities and programmes to meet local needs.
- Increased effective community participation.
- Sustainable initiatives and participation through a confident and supported community.

The Local Area Agreement process has enabled the city to negotiate some agreed tangible outcomes and outputs around community development. These are:

- Increase by x% the number of local people who feel they can influence decisions affecting their area.
- Increase in membership of local neighbourhood and residents forums.
- Increase in the number of volunteers.
- Increased awareness of existence of local neighbourhood and residents forums.

Taken from the Leeds Area Agreement 2006 - 2009

These targets will be measured via the performance management arrangements for the Local Area Agreement. Many of the community development or capacity building targets will be measured by qualitative perception analysis surveys conducted throughout the community, voluntary and faith sectors and with their service users and through the Leeds Initiative voluntary, community and faith sector research project. The surveys and research will set a baseline which will then be measured for increase year on year. The qualitative data will be coupled with quantitative measures of individuals, groups and organisations engaging with their community.

There are useful tools specifically designed for assisting with monitoring, measuring and evaluating performance in community development.

A few examples of these are:

The ABCD (achieving better community development) model of Evaluation from www.scdc.org.uk/abcd_model.htm

The Visible Communities Framework from Community Matters www.communitymatters.org.uk or www.cdx.org.uk
Evaluating community projects - A Practical Guide from Joseph Rowntree Foundation www.jrf.org.uk or www.cdx.org.uk

References and Contacts

'Active Citizens, Strong Communities; **progressing civil renewal',** 2003, Home Office.

'Compact for Leeds', 2002, Leeds Initiative.

 'Firm Foundations: The Government's Framework for Community Capacity Building' 2004, Home Office, Civil Renewal Unit.

'Leeds Regeneration Plan 2005 to 2008', 2005, Leeds Initiative.

'Vision for Leeds 2004 to 2020', 2004, Leeds Initiative.

For more information on this strategy contact:

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Facilitators of the Community Involvement Network

Leeds Voice 0113 277 2227
Facilitators of the Community Empowerment Network for Leeds and Community Development Strategy Group

Voluntary Action Leeds 0113 297 7920
Facilitators of the Leeds Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector infrastructure Consortium