



Engaging and Influencing Decision-Makers

A Guide for Community Groups

Introduction to FCDL's How-To Series

This guide was published in May 2008 by the Federation for Community Development Learning (FCDL) as part of a series that have been produced by members of the National Empowerment Partnership. The Department for Communities and Local Government's Community Empowerment Action Plan aims to "enable more people to play an active role in the decisions that affect their communities." The Federation has also contributed two other guides to the series namely: *Working Effectively With Communities* (a Guide for non-Community Development Workers) and *Engaging with Local Government Regarding Sustainable Development* (a Guide for Community Groups Concerned about Environmental Impacts on their Community).

Although written at a certain point in time these three guides have been designed so that they retain relevance and usefulness even as government initiatives come and go. This is because the guides follow a community development learning model which acknowledges that communities (and those working with them) need more than just to be presented with fact based knowledge which can go out-of-date. Community development learning is concerned with building on the skills, knowledge and experience of communities themselves; community development workers (paid and unpaid); and the increasingly wide range of other workers who need to use a community development approach in order to engage effectively with communities.

Community development learning also places great importance on reflective practice so that communities are encouraged to continually question their own motives, inclusiveness and ways of doing things. It can support communities to identify their own needs and agendas and further develop the skills, confidence, and organisational capacity to engage with, partner and challenge policy and decision-makers, hopefully without losing their own agendas and energies in the process.

For further information on FCDL resources (which all three guides draw on) please see back pages of this guide, look on www.fcdl.org.uk or contact us at info@fcdl.org.uk.



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Introduction to this Guide

“This Government very much believes that involving local people is vital to tackling some of the big issues that we face as a society, all the way from climate change through to obesity. It also believes that empowerment is an important part of that as it can unlock talent in our citizens and communities. It has got a role in reviving civic society and local democracy, a role in ensuring that we have greater and more effective accountability at a local level, and a role too in helping to use the power of people who are consuming public services to actually drive change.” (David Rossington, Communities and Local Government, speaking at the Inspire East Conference of February 2008).

Since the inception of New-Labour there has been much talk of community empowerment ranging from the role of communities in regeneration programmes (such as New Deal for Communities) to the role of communities in local decision-making processes. October 2007 saw the Government Department - Communities and Local Government, launch ‘An Action Plan for Community Empowerment: Building on Success’ in conjunction with the Local Government Association. The plan outlines that which the government would like to see: greater participation, collective action, and engagement in democracy; changes in attitudes towards community empowerment and; improved performance of public services and quality of life.

To achieve these outcomes the plan outlines actions against three key areas which are concerned with: widening and deepening empowerment opportunities locally; supporting and enabling people to take up empowerment opportunities; and strengthening local representative democracy.

Central to these actions is the statutory ‘Duty to Involve’ that will come into being on 1st April 2009 through the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill. This will give local authorities the duty to ‘inform, consult and involve’ local people. The current Government states that it wants everyone, irrespective of where they live, work or play, to be provided with opportunities to get involved.

So what does this mean in practice?

This How To Guide is designed to help community sector organisations make sense of, create and act upon opportunities to influence decision-makers. For the purpose of this Guide, community sector organisations are considered to be small groups dependent on volunteers with few or no paid workers. A selection of such groups (which can, although not always, be quite marginalised) are captured below:

Different Types of Community Groups (adapted from FCDL NOCN Resource Pack 11 ‘Social Justice’)

- Older people without a family support structure
- Black and Minority Ethnic Groups
- A Community Forum in a particular neighbourhood
- A youth group
- An environmental group
- Newly arrived asylum seekers, refugees
- Gypsies and Travellers
- A self-help group for people affected by mental ill-health
- A Disabled people’s support group

The guide examines community empowerment from a community development learning perspective. This means that the guide is designed for use by communities (whether they be communities of interest or geographical communities) to collectively examine their own needs, rights and responsibilities in order to determine their own agenda before meeting with decision-makers. The most effective and genuine community empowerment approach is that underpinned by community development learning

as this approach teaches communities to:

- Ask questions (about themselves, policy-makers and decision-makers). No question is ever too daft or simple as the chances are that there are others in the room who want to ask the same question.
- To gain understanding of information that informs decisions. Information can be found through a number of channels including discussions with people 'in the know', websites, central and local government publications and press articles. These are presented with a certain point of view in mind so it is essential for communities to ask questions to help get to the bottom of people's motivations for making a particular decision.
- Challenge inequalities that may have arisen from particular decisions, agendas or simple oversight.
- Ensure that community empowerment (rooted in the communities' needs) is sustainable through the development of skills that ensure that communities can keep on engaging with decision-makers.

Community development learning is a central part of effective community development work. The focus of community development work is to draw out the concerns and issues of a particular community rather than leaving an outside agency to dictate what it sees as important. Community development work includes:

- Developing local support such as self-help groups, help lines or social groups.
- Developing (and/or informing) services such as youth groups, housing initiatives or social care projects.
- Campaigning against discriminative legislation, policy or practice.
- Working with service providers to improve the service provided (e.g. education or health).
- Working to involve communities in local initiatives, including work to regenerate areas.

Community development learning is usually stimulated and supported by those who can work with a particular community around issues or problems that affect them. This role can be undertaken by community activists, community groups and paid community workers.

Section 1. The Terms of Engagement

Why seek to influence?

This needs careful consideration as seeking to influence decision-makers is a time-consuming business. Your organisation must be very clear about what you do and what you are hoping to achieve before deciding to meet with decision-makers.

Group Exercise – Reasons for Seeking to Influence

With members of your group take some time (maybe using some flip chart paper and post-it notes) to quickly think about the reasons you are seeking to influence decision-makers. You may want to consider negative as well as positive reasons so that you are aware of the range of motivations and what you may need to deal with.

When you are finished you may want to look at the things we thought of to see how your responses compare (see page 6).

It is important to consider what it means to engage with decision-makers and what benefits or pitfalls may result for your organisation. It may be that your organisation can secure funding but this has to be balanced against your organisation's purpose. Funding packages from government are often restricted in nature which means that the money is tied to a specific project. If this meets with your organisation's aims then this is great. What you do need to be careful of is something which is often referred to as 'mission drift' – where an organisation 'follows the money' even if this does not fit with the organisation's aims. Weighing all this up involves a careful balancing act and a very clear idea about your own group's agenda.

Before examining what opportunities are out there for influencing decision-making processes it is worth noting that whilst politicians have their outlooks shaped by their respective parties, multi-agency partnerships will have their agendas shaped by the co-ordinating organisation (which may not always act in a non-biased fashion). For instance a local community safety partnership may be co-ordinated by the police and therefore its primary aim will be related to policing concerns and targets. Working out what agendas sit behind the decisions that politicians and agencies make will help you understand where everyone is starting from and where you might be able to start a conversation with them.

It may be that you feel that your group is either under-represented or not represented at all in a decision-making forum. If this has been an oversight on say, a partnership's part, then you will need to ask why this is so and make sure that your community's issues are raised and added to the agenda.

Questions and issues from a community development learning perspective...

Social Justice

Do decisions made (and the process behind making those decisions) respect and value diversity and difference?

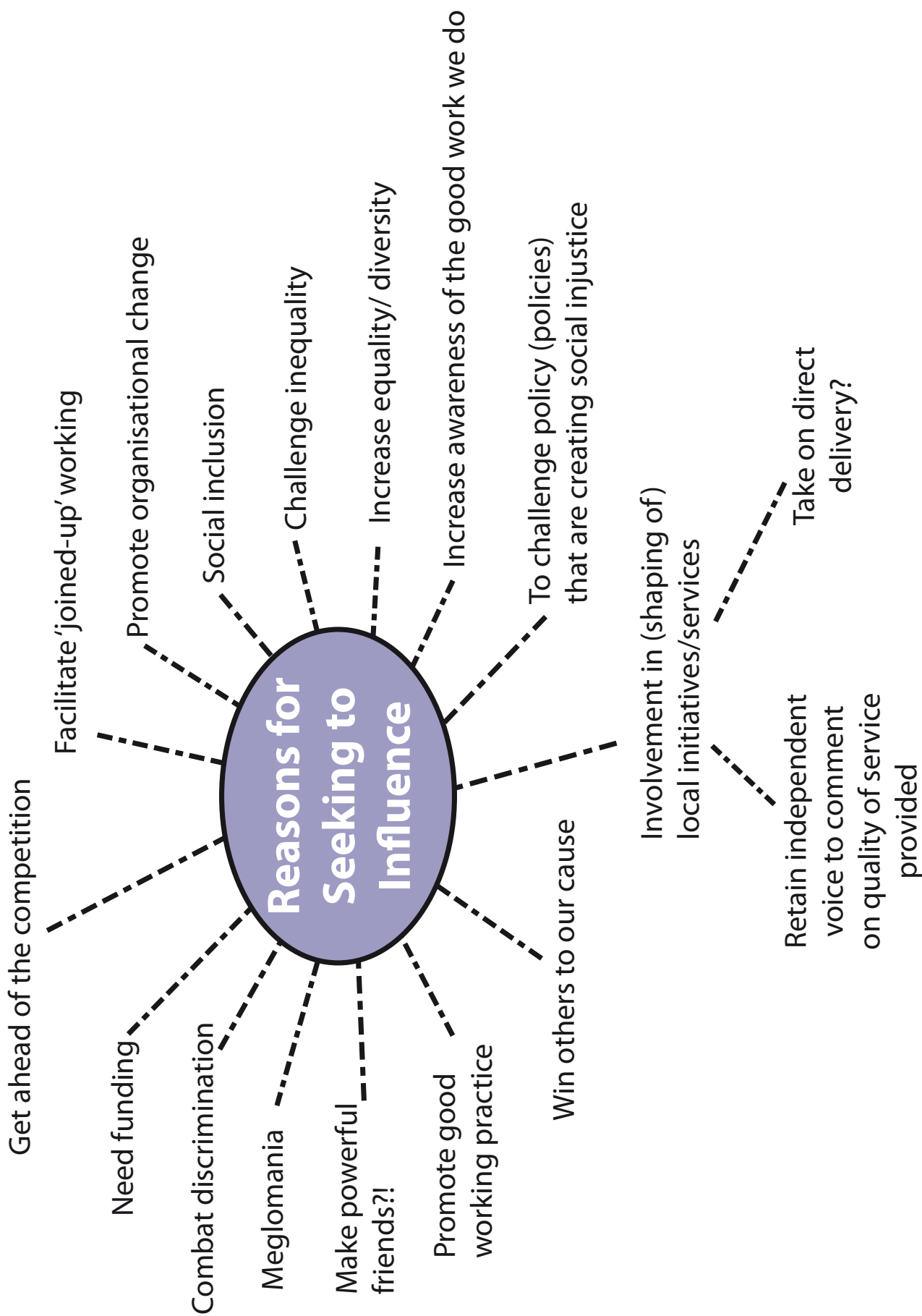
Do decisions endorse (be it unconsciously) oppressive and discriminatory actions and attitudes or have assumptions been challenged?

How has the decision-making process sought to address power imbalances? Who was represented and who was not? What action is being taken to redress the balance?

Does the decision-making process adhere to civil and human rights?
How should we test that the decisions made do so?

..to think about and raise with decision-makers.

Reasons for Seeking to Influence



Section 2. Who Are the Decision Makers?

Think about the decision-making bodies that affect individuals and communities in your area. Decisions that impact on your community can be made at a range of different levels – locally, regionally, nationally or even internationally. Important decisions are made by both elected political representatives and unelected individuals.

Group Exercise – *Who Are the Decision-Makers in Your Area and How Easy are they to Influence?*

Part One

Take some flip chart paper and some post-it notes and work together with your group to identify decision-makers that impact on your own lives and communities. You may wish to think around categories such as health, education, transport, employment to start generating ideas. There may be other categories that you can think of relating to your own local circumstances. In addition to local/national government and public service providers – what about decisions made by private businesses or even other voluntary community sector organisations? The sample of logos provided on page 9 may spark off some ideas if you are stuck.

Part Two

How easy is it to influence these decision-makers? Use colour coded stickers to identify:

- GREEN – those which are easy to influence
- AMBER - those where there are channels to influence but it is quite difficult to get them into conversation
- RED - where there seems to be no chance!

Have you uncovered some individuals or agencies whose decision-making processes are a mystery to you?

Part Three

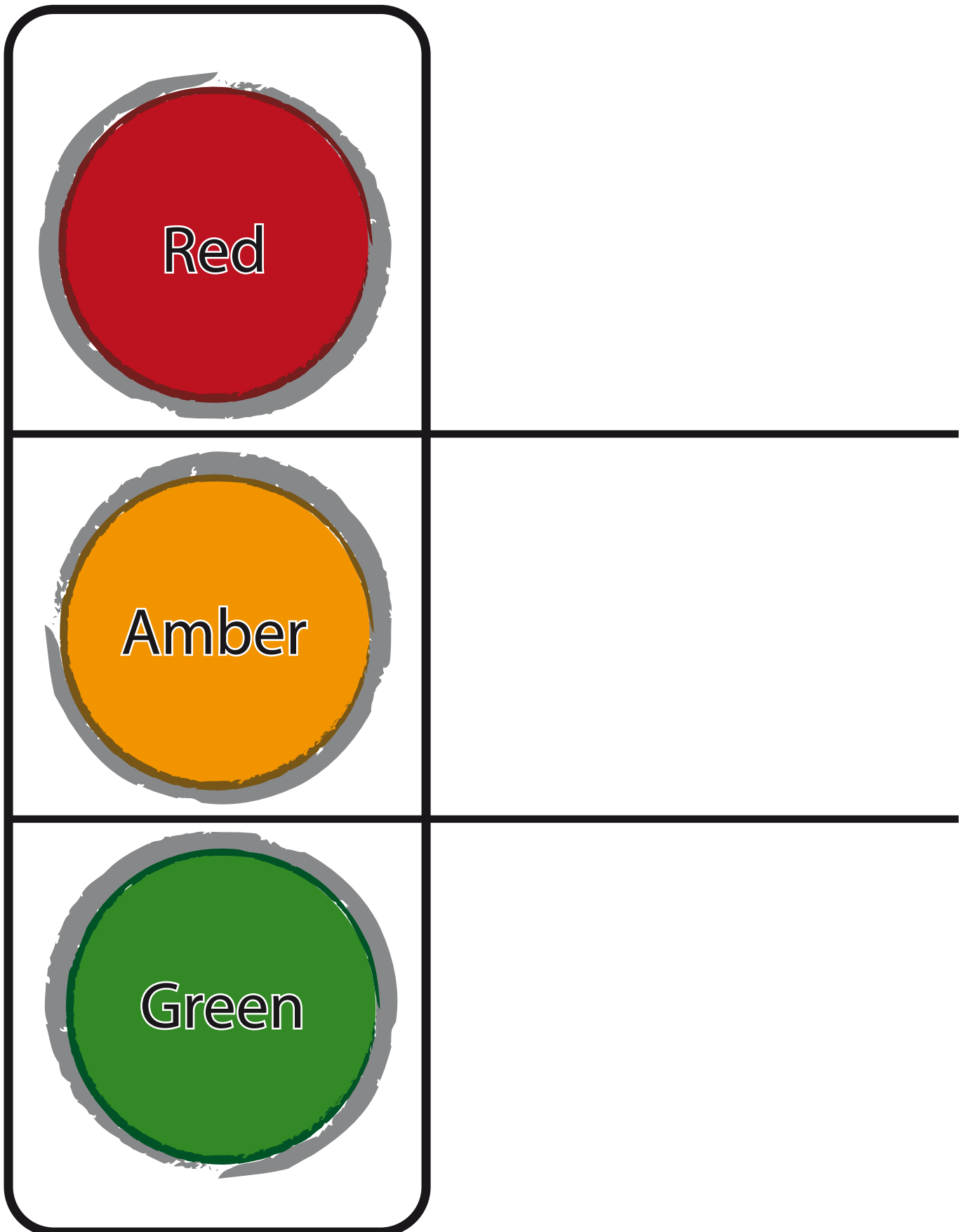
Draw out a large traffic light on a piece of flipchart paper (or enlarge the template provided on page 8). Cluster the post-it notes within the green, amber and red zones of your traffic light. Then think about:

- Why some organisations are easier to influence than others?
- How you could turn an amber light into a green one?
- Where you just don't know how to influence or even whether it is worthwhile to try?

Collect your thoughts by writing them near the green, amber and red zones on the traffic light.

Take a look at our traffic light on page 10. How do our thoughts compare?

2.1 Decision-Makers – How Easy is it to Influence Them?





Primary Care Trust



Government Department



Sustainable Development Commission



Network Rail



Chamber of Commerce



County Council



Government Department



European Parliament



UK Parliament



NDPB/Quango



Funder



Regeneration Programme



?



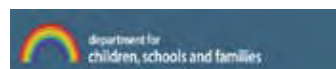
City Council



Whitehall Government Department



Community Safety Partnership



Government Department



Housing Association



Police



Government Department



Government Department



Quango. Non Departmental public body (NDPB)



Local Strategic Partnership



Regional Assembly



Voluntary & Community Sector Consortium



Government Office (in the region)



Whitehall Government Department



Leading learning and skills



Private Company

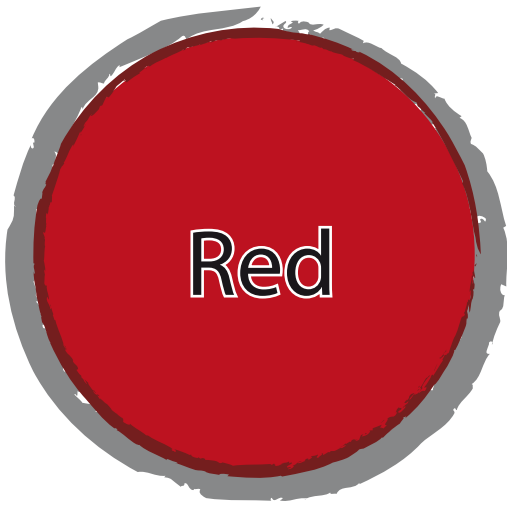


Regional Development Agency



Parish Council

Decision-Makers – How Easy is it to Influence Them?



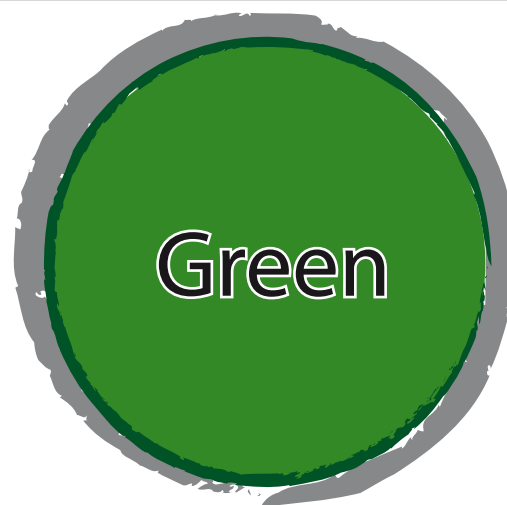
Difficult to influence because:

- We are too small;
- Government policy is running contrary to our aims;
- There is limited funding available;
- Don't know anybody from this organisation;
- Closed-shop decision-making;
- Hard to convince about the value of our work;
- Don't know how their decision-making processes work.



Means of influence could be better...

- We need papers for meetings in plenty of time – need to ask co-ordinating organisation to do this;
- Organisation has good objectives and we need to work with them to improve these further;
- Organisation is required to involve the community but does not know how – risk of them choosing the easiest option which is not satisfactory;
- We need to expand their thinking!



Easy to influence because...

- Good working relationship. Mutual trust.
- Funds available;
- We know the right people;
- They are convinced about the value of our work;
- Our agenda fits with theirs/ their agenda fits with ours!

Questions and issues from a community development learning perspective...

Self Determination

What is the background to decisions being made? Is it a top-down or a bottom-up agenda that is being followed? Are issues identified by communities ever used as starting points?

How do we ensure that the decisions that we make do not oppress others?

Is there enough information for communities to make informed choices? Are decisions that communities are being asked to make appropriate and useful? For instance where citizens are involved in decisions will be very revealing about the level of power they are being allowed – are they involved in budget-setting (at one end) or small details regarding delivery (at the other)?

..to think about and raise with decision-makers.

2.2 Who's Who (in the decision-making world)

How did your group get on with the traffic light exercise? You could well have identified a range of organisations that impact on you and your community from a local to an international level! This section looks in more detail at a few of the decision-makers that you may have identified.

2.2.1 Who (What): The European Union (Governance)

Info:

Oh what a mystery! But what really goes on here and why is it important to know at a community level?

Well, it is estimated that between 60% and 80% of new UK laws had their origins in the European Union. The decision-making triangle of the European Union can be outlined as follows:

1. The Council of the European Union (also known as the Council of Ministers) - Every Council meeting is attended by one minister from each EU country (which ministers attend a meeting depends on which topic is on the agenda: foreign affairs, agriculture, industry, transport, the environment, etc.). The Council has legislative power, which it shares with the European Parliament.

2. The European Parliament is the elected body that represents the EU's citizens. It exercises political supervision over the EU's activities and takes part in the legislative process. The European Parliament's main role is to analyse and amend all EU legislation, firstly through its committees and then in the full session. It is the only directly elected European Union institution and in most policy areas it has the right to throw out proposals entirely if it does not support them.

The Parliament can request the European Commission to draft legislation in any areas that it feels require EU action. So it is always worthwhile bringing a burning issue to your MEPs' attention.

MEPs sit in political groups in the European Parliament, which are made up of like minded parties from several member states. These groupings act like European political parties and enable alliances to be formed and compromises to be negotiated.

Elections to the European Parliament take place every five years.

3. The Commission is the third part of the institutional triangle that manages and runs the European Union. Its members are appointed for a five-year term by agreement between the member states, subject to approval by the European Parliament. The Commission is answerable to the Parliament, and the entire Commission has to resign if the Parliament passes a motion of censure against it.

How Influence:

Lobby your Minister of European Parliament – as individuals, organisations and through like minded networks.

The Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB) is an example of a national charity that recognises the importance of lobbying at this level and even has its own Euro Campaign Team. Working together with like minded organisations (from other countries in the European Blind Union and the European Disability Forum) this lobbying work has paid off as they have been able to persuade the European Parliament to support new legislation on many issues.

Resources/ Links:

To find out about your local MEP see the UK Office of the European Parliament website at: www.europarl.org.uk/index.htm

For further information on the workings of the European Union see Europe in 12 Lessons at europa.eu/abc/12lessons/index_en.htm

To find out more about how RNIB has interacted with the European Parliament see: www.rnib.org.uk/xpedio/groups/public/documents/publicwebsite/public_epelections.hcsp.

2.2.2 Who (What): UK Parliament (Governance)

Info:

Seeking to influence the policy and practice of the UK government can broadly be split into two channels of approach:

1. Approaching the Politicians Directly

The UK is divided into 646 areas known as constituencies each of which sends a Member of Parliament to the House of Commons. General elections generally happen every 4-5 years. At this time an election is called in each of the 646 constituencies. Most of the candidates in the election will represent a political party but some can be independent candidates. The candidate with the most votes becomes the local MP and represents all of their constituents (even those who did not vote for them). After the general election the leader of the political party with the most votes will become the Prime Minister and that with the second most votes will become the Leader of the Opposition.

Your MP's receptiveness will depend either partly or wholly on the party-line they are aligned to. Some will be willing to engage in debate with you and may take your views to inform the actions of their party, others will simply wish to toe the party line and will reflect this back to you. This does not mean that you should give up lobbying as an obvious groundswell of support makes it more obvious (and indeed essential) that the ruling party must respond (especially if the opposition party is seen to begin to gain favour with the public by responding). A good example of politicians from a range of political parties 'jumping on the bandwagon' in response to public pressure can be seen with the MakePovertyHistory campaign: www.makepovertyhistory.org/2005/whattheysaid.shtml. The campaign resulted in raising the profile of a range of issues that cause poverty and politicians responded with some big promises. This was a great success, but was just the beginning as now these leaders need to be held to account to ensure that they deliver on their promises. This campaign demonstrates that change takes time and sustained political pressure through a number of campaign waves. Therefore do not be disconcerted if your campaign does not seem to gain results straight away but seek to gather momentum and supporters to increase the pressure!

In addition to writing to your MP, campaigners often ask if you could contact your MP to press them to sign an Early Day Motion. An Early Day Motion (EDM) is traditionally a motion put down by a Member of Parliament (MP) calling for a debate on a particular subject. In recent years however, the increasing number of EDMs has meant that time is very rarely found for them to be debated. The modern-day purpose of EDMs is to allow MPs to express their opinion on a subject and to canvass support for their views by inviting other members to add their signatures in support of the motion. Unlike most votes in the House of Commons, EDMs are unwhipped, that is, there is no pressure put on an MP by their party to sign it. Therefore it is thought that an EDM gives a fair indication of what that MP truly believes and is why they are of such interest. You can see which EDMs have been signed by your MP by typing your post-code into the search engine provided by www.theyworkforyou.com. This website allows you to see your MP's voting record and interests.

2. Influencing the Development of Policy

The details of policy are worked out within government departments. There are currently eleven Whitehall departments. You can look at the websites for each to see what they are consulting on and put forward your views. You can also seek to influence policy at an earlier stage by becoming involved in networks that will inform the development of these policies (e.g. becoming involved in networks that will inform Government Office or your Regional Development Agency). This is about networking and partnership working, sharing success, promoting ideas that work and demonstrating that it would be common sense for these things to become policy.

How Influence:

Lobby your MP, take part in policy consultations and get involved in networks that will inform policy-makers.

Resources/ Links:

The best resource for finding out about the UK Parliament can be found at www.parliament.uk. This website gives background information, gives a full list of current government departments and ministers and allows you to track bills as they work their way through parliament.

To find out about your MP see: www.theyworkforyou.com.

2.2.3 Who (What): Government Offices (Government Initiative)

Info:

Government Offices represent central Government in the regions. Working with local and regional stakeholders they offer experience and expertise to Whitehall Departments in the development of policy and in the way that policies are best implemented. GOs represent eleven Whitehall departments, and are involved in regenerating communities, fighting crime, tackling housing needs, improving public health, raising standards in education and skills, tackling countryside issues, and reducing unemployment. Bringing together the activities and interests of so many Government departments within a single organisation makes the Government Offices well placed to join up the delivery of Government policies across the English regions.

Government Offices manage significant spending programmes on behalf of their sponsor Departments, including a number of European funds.

How Influence:

Find out about your local Government Office, look out for any consultations that they run and feed in ideas if appropriate. With limited time and resources it is probably best to act as part of a network and make sure that your point of view is being fed through to the wide range of organisations and individuals that will be working with the Government Office in question. The first port of call for this can be your Local Strategic Partnership (see below). The stronger the networks you work in the more lobbying power your organisation will have at this level.

Resources/ Links:

To find out about your Government Office see: www.gos.gov.uk/regionFinder

2.2.4 Who (What): Regional Development Agency (Government Initiative)

Info:

England's Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) were first launched in 1999, with the London Development Agency following in 2000.

Their mission is to spread economic prosperity and opportunity to everyone in the nine regions of England. When establishing the RDAs, the Prime Minister said he wanted to 'bring fresh vitality to the task of economic development and social and physical regeneration in the regions' through a business-led approach.

The RDAs implement this goal through focusing on the specific regional priorities that drive economic growth. They support business development and competitiveness by encouraging public and private investment, and by connecting people to economic opportunity. They work to improve levels of

education, learning and skills, and do all that they can to enhance their region's environment and infrastructure.

Eight of the nine RDAs report to the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR), the sole exception being the London Development Agency (LDA), which reports directly to the Mayor of London and the London Assembly.

Each RDA is led by a Chair and a Board of 15 people, appointed by BERR Ministers (except in London, where the Mayor appoints). The RDA Chairs are all business people, while the Boards are made up of representatives of business, local government, trade unions and voluntary organisations.

The day to day running of the RDA is the responsibility of the Chief Executive. The Chief Executive is appointed by the Board, subject to approval by BERR Ministers (or the London Mayor in the case of the LDA).

How Influence:

Board members are recruited and appointed by the relevant Minister. Board members are expected to have significant knowledge of the local region and an in-depth understanding of the economic activity and regeneration strategies.

Regional Voluntary Sector Networks have links with the RDA's. These are membership organisations: networks of networks. Make sure you are in the network if there is one in your area as this will ensure the opportunity to comment on strategies and policy issues.

Although few people will have the chance to be an RDA Board Member there is nothing to stop individuals and community organisations making contact with or lobbying the local RDA. Community members can also have input into RDAs through Stakeholder Groups or Social and Economic Partnerships.

Resources/ Links:

To find out about your Regional Development Agency (England) visit: www.englandsrdas.com.

2.2.5 Who (What): Regional Assemblies (Government Initiative)

Info:

Regional Assemblies are partnership bodies which bring together representatives from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors. Set up in the 1990's their original defined role was to channel regional opinions to the business-led Regional Development Agencies. Their role currently includes: scrutinising their regional development agency (RDA), integrating policy development and enhancing partnership working at the regional level across the social, economic and environmental policy agenda. They also carry out a wide range of advocacy and consultancy roles with UK government bodies and the European Union but their public profile is very low. Each acts as a Regional Planning Body with a duty to formulate a Regional Spatial Strategy including a Regional Transport Strategy, replacing the planning function of county councils.

The Regional Assemblies are voluntary organisations and their Members are determined by their nominating bodies. The exact profile and number of Assembly Members varies from region to region. In general 70% of Members are local authority councillors and 30% are social, economic and environmental partners drawn from sectors such as business, arts and culture, education, faith groups, community, voluntary and environmental organisations. Members of the European Parliament are also Members of some Assemblies.

In May 2002, the UK government published a White Paper 'Your Region, Your Choice' outlining its plans for the possible establishment of Elected Regional Assemblies. The paper posited Elected Regional Assemblies as one of three key regional governance organisations alongside Regional Development

Agencies and Government Offices for the Regions. These assemblies were to be responsible for regional strategies dealing with sustainable development, economic development, spatial planning, transport, waste, housing, culture (including tourism) and biodiversity. They would be funded primarily by central government grant, with powers to raise additional funds from a precept on the council tax. Three referendums were planned, for the regions of North East and North West England and Yorkshire and the Humber.

Rejection of the idea of an elected Regional Assembly by the North East referendum has led to a re-think. Regional Assemblies will be abolished in 2010 with their executive functions transferring to the Regional Development Agencies. Local authorities will be given an increased role in scrutiny at the regional level including scrutiny of Regional Strategies and the RDAs. The current responsibilities of the Assemblies relating to spatial planning will be exercised by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.

How Influence:

Contact your Regional Assembly (you can find out who that is through the web link provided below) to find out how it works and what will happen after 2010. There are opportunities to be involved in consultations.

Resources/ Links:

You can find out about your Regional Assembly through the English Regions Network: www.ern.smartregion.org.uk.

2.2.6 Who (What): Local Authorities (Governance)

Info:

The pattern of local government in England is complex, with the distribution of functions varying according to the local arrangements. Below the region level and excluding London, England has two different patterns of local government in use. In some areas there is a county council responsible for services such as education, waste management and strategic planning within a county, with several district councils responsible for services such as housing, waste collection and local planning. These councils are elected in separate elections. Some areas have only one level of local government, and these are dubbed unitary authorities. Below the district level, a district may be divided into several civil parishes. Typical activities undertaken by a parish council include allotments, parks, public clocks, and entering Britain in Bloom. They also have a consultative role in planning. Councils such as districts, counties and unitaries are known as principal local authorities in order to differentiate them in their legal status from parish and town councils, which are not uniform in their existence.

The area which a council covers is divided into one or more electoral divisions - known in district and parish councils as 'wards', and in county councils as 'electoral divisions'. Each ward can return one or more members - multi-member wards are quite common. In the election, the candidates to receive the most votes win. The term of a councillor is usually four years. Councils may be elected wholly, every four years, or 'by thirds', where a third of the councillors get elected each year, with one year with no elections.

When voting it is important to look at what parties are promising at a local level.

Local councils are funded by a combination of central government grants, Council Tax (a locally set tax based on house value), Business Rates, and fees and charges from certain services including decriminalised parking enforcement. The proportion of revenue that comes from Council Tax is low, meaning that if a council wishes to increase its funding modestly, it has to put up Council Tax by a large amount. Central government retains the right to 'cap' Council Tax if it deems it to be too much. This means that Central Government can still exercise a significant amount of power over local authorities. Local authorities that 'rebel' against national direction can in a sense be seen to be punished for doing so,

when national government holds back funding.

How Influence:

To find out more about your local council search for your council's webpage and follow the relevant links. You can write to and/or meet with your local councillors.

As with influencing national government there are two channels of approach. One through approaching Councillors directly (which forces council officers to act) and the other by being involved in partnerships and networks that influence the way local service delivery is developed and monitored. Your Local Strategic Partnership is a good start for the latter.

Councils often get the chance to apply to central government for funding for specific projects. The deadlines for registers of interest can often be quite fast which means that any expertise that your organisation/network can offer (that is practical and appropriate) is quite likely to be taken up if you have developed a good relationship with the council officers responsible.

Resources/ Links:

Search for your council's webpage for more information or use the map to find your local council at: www.gwydir.demon.co.uk/uklocalgov/localgov.htm.

2.2.7 Who (What): Local Strategic Partnership (Government Initiative) [LSP]

Info:

These are non-statutory bodies which aim to bring together (at a local level) a range of stakeholders from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors. Local partners working through a LSP will be expected to take many of the major decisions about priorities and funding for their local area.

They are a major part of the government's Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy which aims to make improvements to mainstream services to produce better outcomes in the most deprived areas and contribute to sustainable development.

LSP's should give communities a greater say in the running and delivery of public services by drawing the key service providers into a single partnership with which the community is actively engaged.

LSP's are usually co-ordinated by local councils and bring together stakeholders regarding a range of issues including: Health; Learning & Skills; Community Safety; Economic Development; Environment and Housing.

How Influence:

Get in touch with your local Council for Voluntary Service (CVS)/ Voluntary Action or search on the internet for your local Community Empowerment Network. You can find out who your local CVS is by contacting the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA).

Resources/ Links:

NAVCA www.navca.org.uk or contact your local council to ask about the Local Strategic Partnership operating in your area.

2.2.8 Who (What): Neighbourhood Management (Government Initiative)

Info:

Neighbourhood Management is one of the 'big ideas' in the current government's campaign to tackle social exclusion. It is a process rather than a project and involves communities working with local agencies (e.g. local authorities, police, health services, development trusts, housing associations and

regeneration companies) to improve services at a neighbourhood level.

How Influence:

To find out if there is a neighbourhood management process operating in your area and how to get involved contact the council's social inclusion officer, partnership officers or area panel officers. Or contact neighbourhood forums that may already be involved. Your local Community Empowerment Network may be able to help you with this.

Resources/ Links:

For general information on neighbourhood management see: www.neighbourhood.gov.uk and www.renewal.net/NNMN.

2.2.9 Who (What): Patient and Public Involvement in Health – Local Involvement Networks (Government Initiative) [LINKs]

Info:

Primary care trusts (PCTs), strategic health authorities (SHAs) and the NHS have a legal duty to consult and involve patients and the public in service design.

Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) Forums were established in NHS trusts and PCTs in 2003. They aim to improve services by bringing to these organisations the views and experiences of local service users. However, the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health bill states that Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) will replace PPI Forums in April 2008. This change is in response to the limitations of PPI Forums outlined in the Department of Health's 'A Stronger Local Voice' paper of 2006.

LINKs will enable local people to influence local health and social care services; - obtain their views about their need for, and experiences of, local health and social care services; - bring local people's concerns to those responsible for services; - enable local people to monitor and review the commissioning and provision of care services; - allow commissioning issues throughout PCT and local authority services to be examined, which should help to promote more joined-up working.

There will be 150 LINKs across the country (one in each local authority area). Councils will be responsible for contracting a host organisation and subsequent service management.

How Influence:

Contact your local council (social services department) for further information.

Resources/ Links:

For more information see:

Department of Health: www.dh.gov.uk/en/Managingyourorganisation/PatientAndPublicinvolvement/index.htm

Idea: www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelid=7382287

Direct Gov: www.direct.gov.uk/en/HealthAndWellBeing/HealthServices/PractitionersAndServices/DG_071867

2.2.10 Who (What): Foundation Trusts – also known as Foundation Hospitals (Government Initiative)

Info:

NHS Foundation Trusts were established as part of a wider NHS reform agenda, through the Health and Social Care (Community Health and Standards) Act of 2003. The idea stems from not-for-profit healthcare

organisations in the US and Europe. They have been likened to an old-style co-op or housing association model with profits being ploughed back into the trust. They are different from existing NHS trusts as they allow hospital managers more autonomy. They are not line-managed by the Department of Health; can borrow money from banks to finance capital programmes; can retain the proceeds from land sales to reinvest in local services (rather than returning the cash to a central pot); can gain access to central development budgets without having to submit formal bids; can establish private companies; and have the ability to pay staff more. The government maintains that this sort of halfway house between private and public sectors ensures that health services become both more efficient and responsive to patients. There is some concern that this change will result in a two-tier health system with the possibility of increased privatisation. However, the government states that Foundation trusts give patients, staff and members of the public more choice over how hospitals are run and hopes all NHS trusts will have Foundation status over the next 5 years.

How Influence:

If you are connected with a Foundation Hospital (e.g. reside in the area or have been a patient there) you can become a member. Members are entitled to vote for governors that appoint Directors who are responsible for the running of the hospital.

Resources/ Links:

You can view the Public Register of NHS Foundation Trusts at: www.nhsft-regulator.gov.uk/register1.php.

For general information including the background of Foundation Trusts the following links may be of interest:

NHS Direct: www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/articles/article.aspx?articleId=1085#

NHS Foundation Trust Information Guide for Members: www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_4087726

Foundation Trust Background: www.guardian.co.uk/society/2004/mar/31/nhs2000.medicineandhealth/print

Foundation Trust Network: www.nhsconfed.org/ftn/index.cfm

2.2.11 Who (What): Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs) otherwise known as Quasi-Autonomous Non-Governmental Organisation (Quango)

Info:

The task of turning the wishes of Government Ministers into action traditionally fell to the Civil Service made up of Government Departments and statutory organisations. One policy of the Conservative government of the 1980s was to shift the emphasis away from direct ministerial control to “arms length” government via the creation of numerous agencies and other organisations which are frequently referred to by the unofficial title of Quangos (Quasi-Autonomous Non-Governmental Organisations). The term QUANGO although widely used is not an official one and its use can be confusing, no one even knows exactly how many Quangos there are as different authors define Quangos in different ways. For example some consider that the Health Service Trusts are Quangos, others do not. The important thing to appreciate is that although QUANGO includes the words ‘non-governmental’ these organisations are in fact extensions of government through which much of the policy of government is carried out in practise. The majority of Quangos are funded directly from taxes and in many cases are responsible for the spending of tax revenue, for example by giving out grants. Although Quangos are said not to be under direct ministerial control they are accountable to ministers via the government departments which oversee their work!

An example of a quango (although this may be disputed by the organisation itself) is the Learning and

Skills Council (LSC). A database of quangos can be found at the Economic Research Council's website at: quangos.ercouncil.org/search.

How Influence:

At first QUANGOs seem quite hard to pin down but however 'arms-length' they are it is worth remembering that they are influenced by government. Often they will be seeking to implement government targets. The most frustrating aspect is the deflection of discontent from politicians to the quangos (discontent becomes aimed at the puppet rather than the puppeteer). It is therefore best to work out what constraints the quango is operating under and where its policy direction comes from in order to concentrate your lobbying efforts in the right direction.

Resources/ Links:

LSC described as a quango in the Guardian Newspaper at: education.guardian.co.uk.

You may not realise how much our life is influenced by the work of quangos – see the database of quangos to gain an idea of how prevalent they are: <http://quangos.ercouncil.org>.

2.2.12 Who (What): Private Businesses

Info:

Private businesses are set up to generate profit to both re-invest in their business and to pay to shareholders. Private businesses have great influence over politicians – think of all the photographs you have seen of the Prime Minister with business people grinning in the background! So how can we even the score and influence businesses?

How Influence:

First and foremost is to remember that you are the consumer. Without you businesses cannot make their money. You can make a difference to how businesses operate through direct campaigning (e.g. demonstrating your value as a consumer and your concerns) and indirect action (e.g. taking your business elsewhere).

Resources/ Links:

You can find countless examples of individuals and communities taking on big business and you might like to look at some of the following:

(Book) No Logo by Naomi Klein (2000) Publ. Harper Collins. See also: www.naomiklein.org

Shopping more ethically (specialist organisations)– see for example, PeopleTree www.peopletree.co.uk, Howies www.howies.co.uk and Traidcraft www.traidcraft.co.uk.

Shopping more ethically (influencing the mainstream) – see for example, No Sweat www.nosweat.org.uk Labour Behind the Label www.labourbehindthelabel.org River Cottage Chicken Out Campaign www.chickenout.tv

Political campaigning – for example, see Plane Stupid www.planestupid.com and World Development Movement, www.wdm.org.uk

Questions and issues from a community development learning perspective...

Working And Learning Together

What forms of collective working are informing decisions, by whom and how?

What is there in decision-making processes that can be changed to make them more accessible and easier to contribute?

Who sets the measures for accountability? Who sets what is measured and why? How will measurement be carried out?

How does the decision-making process evaluate who has been included/excluded?

How can we learn from each other and share experience?

..to think about and raise with decision-makers.

Section 3. How to Influence

Through the traffic-light exercise you should have started thinking about which organisations have an effect on your lives and communities and how easy it is to influence them.

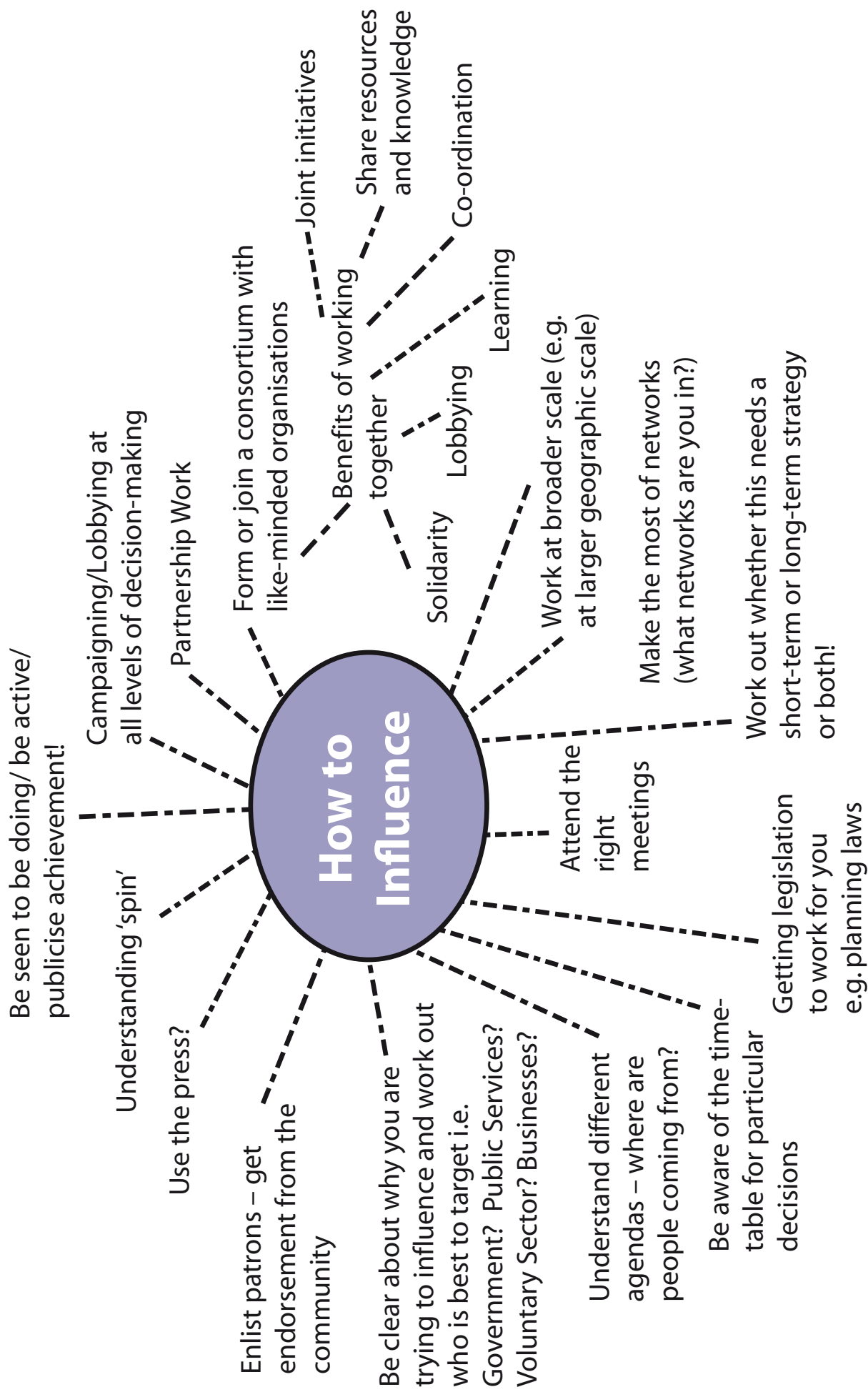
For those that you have marked as green (i.e. 'easy to influence') you clearly do not consider influencing to be a problem. The only thing to reflect on here is the relationship that you have with the organisation/ individual that you find easy to influence. Is this someone that you have won to your cause and have a good and equitable working relationship with or is it someone that you have some measure of power over yourself? For example, it may be that your organisation has some money to give out to other voluntary and community sector groups. In this case you will have quite a lot of influence over who can apply for that money and how it is managed. In this case it is important to be aware of your own responsibilities regarding your relationships with other groups and that you act in a fair, clear and accountable fashion.

For those that you have marked as amber, these are organisations/ individuals that you would like to engage with and that have their own community engagement strategies. This means that they are also seeking to engage you! They will either have clear processes for involving community groups (e.g. a Local Strategic Partnership may look to fill a certain percentage of places on its boards with individuals from the Voluntary and Community sectors and will actively recruit to these places) or be glad of an approach (e.g. a Housing organisation seeking to strengthen one of its Tenants and Residents Associations). Of course, just as you have your own agenda, the organisations seeking to engage with you will also have theirs. This means that it is important to ask questions to find out what their motivation is so that you know where you can start a conversation. It may be that your agendas collide and you can work from there. It may be that you think an organisation is concerned with the wrong things (of least relevance to your group). In which case you will need to see whether you can either: suggest how different ways of working may meet both their needs and yours; or, take more of a campaigning role to try and challenge some of the targets they are working to. In the case of public service delivery these targets will probably have been instigated by a higher level of government and the organisation may be glad that the issue of the constraints they are working under are beginning to be raised politically.

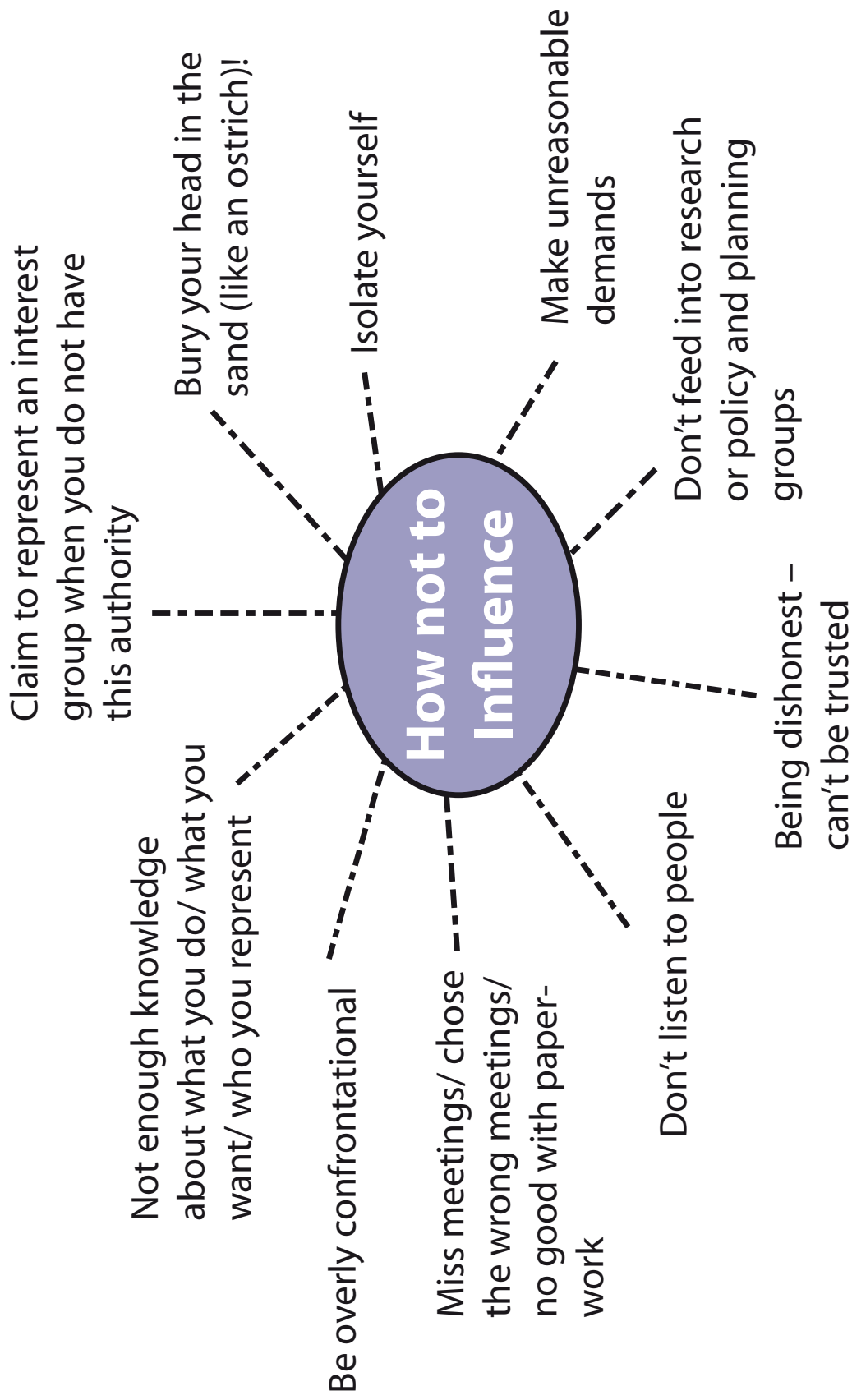
It may be that it is a private business that you have placed in the red category. Their primary motivation is to make money and therefore may be tricky to influence. However, you may be able to influence them through your actions as a consumer (see the links on page 20) or by finding out how the planning system can work in your favour.

Once you have found out what opportunities there are to engage with decision-makers (e.g. local strategic partnership meetings/ responding to policy consultations/ identification of forums set up specifically to engage with the community) this is just the beginning – the race is not yet won!

On the next two pages you will find some thoughts about the different things you will need to consider when thinking about how to influence.



It is useful to consider at this point 'how not to influence' to be aware of pitfalls to avoid! The diagram overleaf lends some thought to this.

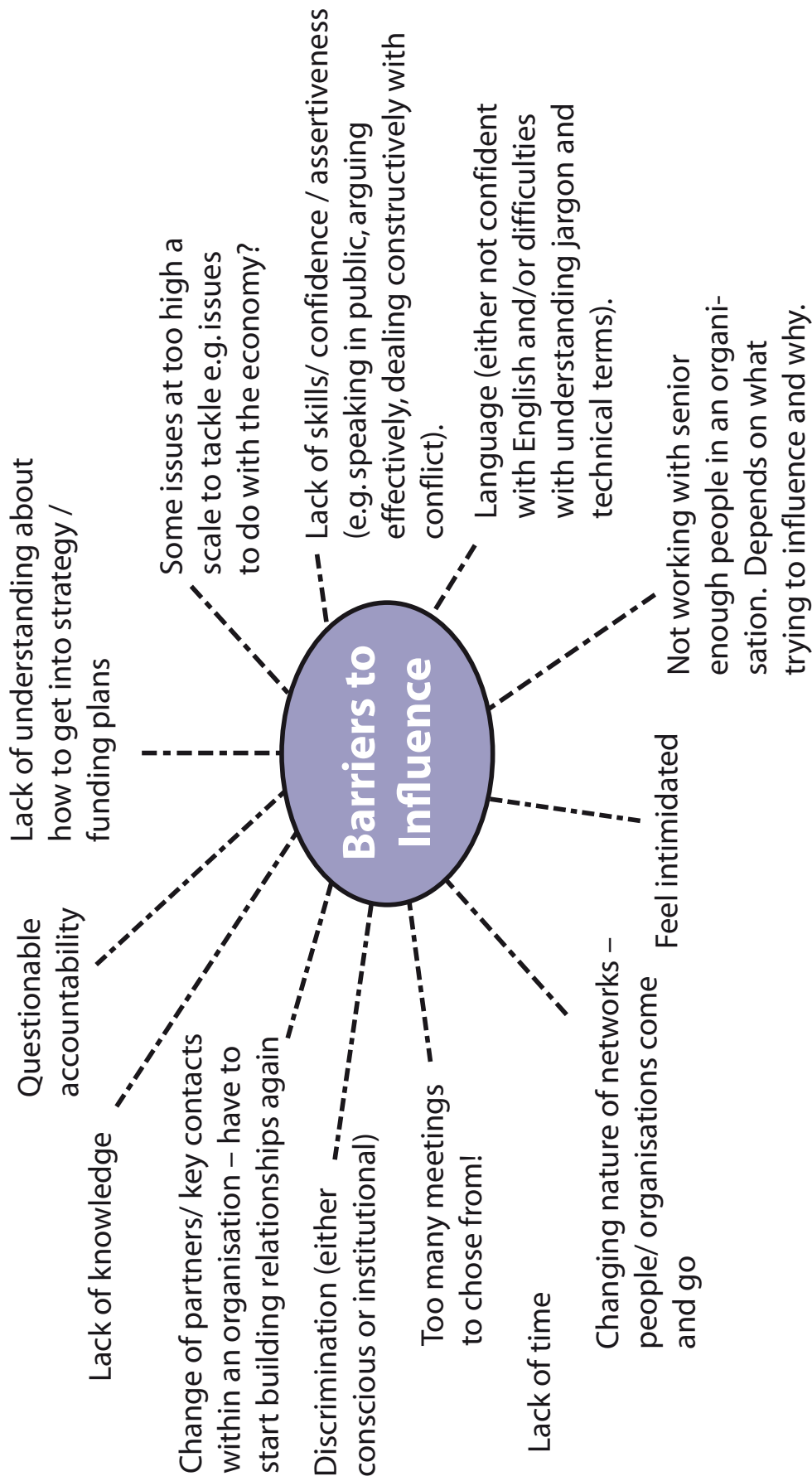


Before looking at ways to engage with decision-makers it may be useful to look at some variations (some quite subtle) within decision-making processes (see the chart below):

3.1 Different Types of Decision-Making (taken from FCDL NOCN Resource Pack 7 'Developing Community Organisations')

Type of Process	Explanation
1. The Plop!	Where someone makes a suggestion and it drops like a stone into a pool and no one takes any notice, so a decision is effectively made not to decide.
2. The One Person Decides Model	Where a decision is made quickly. It may be that they do not take anyone with them and so they are left to implement it without help. Or it may be that they have the power to force through the implementation of their decision.
3. Topic Jumping	Where just when you thought a decision was about to be confirmed someone drops in a new point. Sometimes this can be helpful and needs to be allowed, other times it's a sign of someone trying to distract the group from making a decision they don't like.
4. The Handclasp	Where one person makes a suggestion and another one agrees. There is no discussion and it almost passes unnoticed.
5. The Clique	Where decisions are made by a small group outside of the meeting or during a break.
6. Minority Decisions	Made by the more dominant people in the group even though it might not be conscious.
7. Silent Consensus	Where some groups try for unanimous agreement but sometimes people don't feel they can disagree and so keep silent.
8. Consensus	Takes time to hear everyone's views and debate the issues. This often requires compromise. People accepting a decision they might not fully agree with.
9. Voting	Which may be determined by any constitution the group has.

With your group think about the forums you are engaged with and how decisions are made. Does your group use any of these methods? How would you work to combat some of them to make them more inclusive? There are a variety of barriers to effective engagement. Take some time with your group to think about what these may be and compare your responses with those given on page 26. How might you deal with some of these barriers?



Questions and issues from a community development learning perspective...

Sustainable Communities

What does it mean to be a sustainable community?

What does it mean to be empowered?

Are communities being supported to develop their skills so that they can take action? If not – what support is needed?
How would you argue for this?

Are structures for decision-making accountable and to whom?

What can we learn from experience?

How can we work collaboratively to make a difference?

...to think about and raise with decision-makers.

3.2 Engaging with Decision-Makers

3.2.1 Attending the Right Meetings

You must ensure that you are at the right meetings to either assist or promote the work of your organisation. It may be that easy invitations flood in from some partnerships, in which case you will need to assess whether this is genuine partnership working or an opportunity for another tick-box to be checked. There is room for a healthy amount of suspicion but do not allow this to become obstructive. It may be that the first motivation of an organisation has been to attempt to 'tick-a-box' to say that they have engaged but when they meet you they may realise that your organisation is great to work with and can help tackle hard issues.

It is important to challenge decision-makers about why they have come to certain decisions but you must be careful to show willingness to work with them to find alternatives – or even to suggest them! Just as you want them to listen to you; you need to ensure that you listen to them in order to understand where each representative is coming from i.e. what their organisation's aims are and what constraints they are working under. Forging good working relationships is key in order to avoid being dismissed as an uninformed person who refuses to listen and tackle the current context. Of course attending meetings is a time-consuming business so the following chart may help you to decide which partnership(s) to join.

Issues to Consider When Negotiating to Join a Partnership (taken from FCDL NOCN Resource Pack 9 'Effective Partnership Working')

1. What is its real purpose?
2. Why was it set up?
3. What does it hope to achieve?
4. Is partnership working the best way to achieve its aims?
5. How much has already been decided? Has it already received funding and therefore needs to deliver some outcomes?
6. What will be gained from the proposed partnership?
7. What are the potential gains/ drawbacks?
8. Who else has been invited? Who has not been invited?
9. Who are the major players?
10. What do partners have in common?
11. Are they your normal competitors?
12. Will there be benefits for all partners?
13. Is it likely to be a temporary or permanent partnership?
14. Is it to be an informal partnership or a more formal organisation in its own right? Are there legal implications for our organisation?
15. Is it going to act as an independent body?
16. What do other people/ organisations think about this – not just potential partners but the wider community and those affected; do they want it to succeed or fail?
17. Are the partners used to working together? Do they have very different organisational cultures?
18. Do you share the same values and beliefs?
19. What role are you being asked to undertake? Representative or token?
20. Who are you expected to be accountable to?
21. What resources are you expected to contribute?
22. What resources will the partnership provide to support your involvement?
23. What will it contribute to meeting the need of your community/members/users?
24. What are the risks involved?

3.2.2 Actions Between Meetings

Lots of power play goes on within and between meetings. There are different sources of power. It is useful to be aware of these so that you can start thinking about how to either work with or combat them. Some sources you may be able to make use of and manipulate yourself! How might you make use of/ interact with the sources of power outlined below?

Different Sources of Power (taken from FCDL NOCN Resource Pack 5 'Representing Your LGB Community')

<i>Type of Power</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
1. Formal authority	Comes from a place in an organisation that is recognised as powerful – on the basis of individual charismatic qualities; of traditional authority; of bureaucratic position.
2. Control of scarce resources.	Comes from those who can control the resources such as money, materials, people, technology that others need.
3. Use of organisational structure, rules and regulations.	Comes when people can create, change, amend the rules, procedures and structure of an organisation to increase their power and influence.
4. Control of decision processes.	Comes when people can influence the outcome of decisions directly – wheeling and dealing – or by stopping decisions being made in the first place – by keeping control of agendas and not letting some topics get discussed.
5. Control of knowledge and information.	Comes from controlling who gets to know what and when, making oneself an expert, or from controlling the design of information systems and flows of information.
6. Control of boundaries.	Those who are the link between organisations or departments; who get to know what is going on and can use that as a lever and who can control access to others.
7. Ability to cope with uncertainty.	As change is a factor in all organisations those who can cope with it best will gain more power, and may create more uncertainty to keep their power.
8. Control of technology.	The person/ group who can install and maintain technical systems has power through affecting what other people can do (or not).
9. Interpersonal alliances, networks and control of 'informal organisation'.	Comes from friends in high and useful places – to provide information, support, to check out ideas with informally, to swop favours with, to be in the know, to get in first.
10. Control of counter-organisations.	Getting involved in and taking over those other organisations which can affect what happens to your organisation/ group. For example, pressure groups such as the hunting lobby when it attempted to take over the National Trust to stop it banning stag hunting.
11. Symbolism and the management of meaning.	Controlling the way that people perceive their best interests, can be directly selling an idea or by listening and summarising what others have said. You can put your own spin on it and subtly influence their views.

- 12.** Gender and the management of gender relations. Gender makes a difference – some people benefit from the organisational culture which promotes one gender more than another. Other people work out a successful strategy to survive within an unfriendly culture, such as women managers who work out the best way to fit in and be seen as credible by male managers.
- 13.** Structural factors that define the stage of action. Some people have power from their position – the chief executive – but this can be limited by others who have other types of power and can frustrate the plans of the apparently powerful person.
- 14.** The power one already has. Comes from making the most of your power – doing deals with others, calling in favours; energy comes with small victories which encourage people to take on another fight.

Effective influence is about more than simply turning up to meetings (although these are of course important forums if tackled well). With your group take a bit of time to think about the power sources outlined above in relation to the issues raised below:

Power and Meetings – Where It Is Exercised (taken from FCDL NOCN Resource Pack 5 ‘Representing Your LGB Community’)

<i>Where might power be exercised?</i>	<i>What kind of power is being used here?</i>	<i>What effect might this have on your representatives?</i>
1. Around setting the agenda.		
2. The decision-making processes that are used.		
3. Who takes the minutes and the style used.		
4. What happens outside of formal meetings?		
5. What happens inside the meetings, dynamics and alliances, etc....		
6. Other factors relating to power at meetings.		

3.2.3 Be Seen to Be Doing!

Promote what you do and how your organisation helps to tackle difficult issues. Part of this promotion involves learning to ‘speak the language’ of other organisations i.e. explaining what your organisation does in terms that others will understand. For instance, it may be that what your organisation does can help another with reaching its own targets. This could either be in a direct way, for example helping someone to find a job; or indirectly, for instance supporting someone to improve their situation and mental health so that they are in a better position to find a job.

'Talking the language' is not about being all things to all people but about being clear about what you do and how that relates to the aims of others. The chart below lists some factors for successful partnership working. If you are already involved in a partnership or partnerships you may like to play a round of Bingo with the chart below and see if you can check off all the boxes!

Factors for a successful partnership (taken from FCDL Taster Session 5 'Understanding and Getting Involved in Partnerships')		
Agreement that a partnership is necessary.	The right people/ organisations are involved.	There is respect and trust between the different parties involved.
There is a respect for the different cultures of the organisations involved.	The leadership of a respected individual or individuals, who is/ are seen as impartial (in practice this is not always the case).	The development of a shared vision of what could be achieved.
Realistic Goals.	Time to build the partnership.	Shared agendas.
The development of compatible ways of working and flexibility.	Suitable structures are developed which are appropriate to that partnership.	Good communication systems.
Collaborative decision-making, with a commitment to working towards consensus.	Effective organisational management.	An acknowledgement that each party brings expertise and skills.
An acknowledgement of the real costs of the partnership to each party.	Each party recognises who is doing what and who isn't, and who has responsibility for particular activities/ areas.	Every partner gains from the partnership.
A lack of suitable alternatives – access to resources is only through the partnership.		

It may be that you are undertaking more of a campaigning role to challenge an injustice encountered by your community. In which case it is about making your argument clear and demonstrating the support of your community.

As well as forming good (and appropriate) working relationships within partnerships it is also useful to enhance your profile by informing local politicians (Councillors and MP's) about what you do and organising press releases. There is a lot of information available about how to write a press release. In general, your release must not be more than one side of A4, contain all of the pertinent information including a useable quote and if possible include a quirky title and idea for a photograph.

Questions and issues from a community development learning perspective...

Participation

Who is being asked to participate? Are all sections of society included, particularly those who are traditionally marginalised/excluded?

What barriers are there to full and effective participation?

What skills do communities need to participate effectively?

What can organisations do differently to improve participation?

..to think about and raise with decision-makers.

3.2.4 Engaging with Politicians

In terms of engaging with politicians first you need to find out about who your local councillor/ MP is and then set up written correspondence with them. Although it is possible to e-mail politicians, letters still have more sway and are worth taking the time over. Politicians still assess the interest in an issue by the weight of their post-bag! Encourage all members of your group to write and other people in the networks you are in. On receiving a reply it is then useful to meet with your group/network to discuss the implications and 'unpack' what is presented.

At first glance your politician may seem sympathetic to your cause and could be seen to be telling you about the great progress they have made but is this really so? Are you sure that they will represent your views or are they just toeing the party line? Have they talked with the Minister concerned about the issues you have raised? Often – one letter is not enough and will set off a dialogue over time. It may be that you feel that letter writing is not enough and your group would like to meet with your local Councillor/MP. To find out who your representatives are (at local, national and European levels) take a look at www.writetothem.com. If you want to understand the motivations of your MP you can find out about their activities and how they have voted on issues by looking at www.theyworkforyou.com.

3.2.5 Working as Part of a Network

As the old maxim goes 'There is strength in numbers!' With limited resources working as part of a network is incredibly important. There are a range of networks you may get involved in at local and national levels for example:

- A local Community Empowerment Network – bringing together all organisations from the voluntary and community sector.
- A Local Strategic Partnership – involving a range of key stakeholders who often work together to tackle a range of issues from health to employment in a locality.
- A national network with other organisations/individuals that share the aims of your organisation.

Find those that are the most active and make sure that you contribute wherever you can to enhance the strength of the network.

3.2.6 Understanding Structures that May be of Use to You

Influencing Legislation

Green Papers are consultation papers issued by government departments for discussion of proposals which are still at an early stage. Look at the consultation pages of the different Whitehall departments to find out what green papers have been published that you might like to respond to. A list of departments can be found at www.parliament.uk/directories/hciolists/hmg.cfm.

Once responses to the green paper have been assessed, a modified, firmer proposal called a white paper is published. White Papers are issued by the government and lay out policy, or proposed action, on a topic of current concern. Although a white paper may on occasion be a consultation as to the details of new legislation, it does signify a clear intention on the part of a government to pass new law.

You can find weekly updates of what green/white papers have just come out at: www.publications.parliament.uk. Click on the week's bulletin and scroll down to see the heading 'Documents etc. received' and click the link 'White and Green Papers received since last Bulletin'. Any Green/White Papers listed will be displayed under a subject heading e.g. WORK, HEALTH or CRIME etc. Please note that these bulletins only list what is new and not everything that is still being currently consulted on.

A government bill is then drafted and submitted to Parliament for approval. This process involves a series of 'readings'. The First Reading is the formal publication of the bill. In the Second Reading MPs debate the principles presented before voting on the bill. Then the proposals go through to a small committee of MPs who take a more detailed consideration and can vote on proposed amendments. After this it returns to the House of Commons where further amendments can be suggested. The Third Reading is

used to approve or reject the bill through a vote of MPs. At this stage no further modifications can be made. Then the bill is passed to the House of Lords where it undergoes the same procedure. Further amendments may be made but it is the House of Commons that finally approves the bill to go forward to the Queen for Royal Assent. At this stage the bill becomes an Act and is on the Statute Book as a piece of parliamentary legislation (unless amended through the same process). It can be months before a bill becomes an act although it is possible to fast-track some bills and approve them in days or even hours.

You can see this process in action for yourself at www.parliament.uk under 'Bills and Legislation'. This website also explains the working of parliament in more detail than can be provided here.

Examining how proposals become law helps to understand why it is so important to lobby your MP in addition to taking part in formal consultations. However, influence can be made even before this as those that put together the initial green papers draw their inspirations from prior investigation and discussions with key stakeholders. This is why it is important to get involved with powerful networks that might play a part in influencing these discussions (e.g. Local Strategic Partnerships or prominent national networks with a shared interest).

Planning Laws

You may feel that a planning application is being forced through by a private developer that will ultimately cause problems for your community. You may feel helpless but in actual fact there may be bits of planning law that would work for you and support your objections. Clearly this is a complicated field and you cannot be expected to be an expert but there are people who might be able to help you. Start by contacting the planning department at your local council to find out how the system works. Find out who else is concerned about the plans and what skills people in your group/ network have to help find out more. Furthermore, good advice can be found about how to interact with the planning system at www.planninghelp.org.uk. It is also worth keeping an eye on legislation passing through parliament that relates to the planning system and taking the opportunity to contribute to consultations.

3.2.7 t's All in the Timing!

Being aware of what the time-table is for decision-making is very important. For instance, there is more likely to be spare funding around at the end of a financial year. Local Councils (and others) often operate on a 'use it or lose' it cycle. Funds emanating from central government often have to be allocated within the year or they are reclaimed. If you have developed positive working relationships with your local council or Local Strategic Partnership then you may be thought of when decisions on this remainder funding are being made.

As for decision-making close to elections, this may work in your favour or against it. You can use election time to draw more attention to your cause or it you may find it to be a time to avoid. For example, a community project wished to erect a youth shelter on an estate. A number of possible sites had been identified and a full community consultation was planned. However, the plans were brought to a stand still when some concerned members of the community raised it with their local councillors. Being election time this then became a campaign issue and prevented any further discussion over possible sites. Instead it was played out politically as an issue of either accepting or rejecting the shelter without looking at any alternatives.

Section 4. What Next? Developing a Strategy for Engaging With Decision-Makers

Look back at the traffic light exercise you completed and the thoughts you had about why you need to influence. The following table(s) can help you with planning the actions you want to take to improve your ability to influence. They are not exhaustive but may give you a start. You can either use both tables or make a choice about which is most suitable for your needs.

The first table asks you to identify which decision-making bodies are seeking to engage with you and helps you to consider whether it is worth getting involved.

The second table starts with your group’s own agenda and then looks at ways of engaging with decision-makers – whether they are actively seeking you out or not!

Table 1: They Want You!

What Opportunities for Engagement are there (and with whom)?	Would this opportunity help our organisation and how?	How important is it for us to become involved with this opportunity (High, Medium or Low Priority)?	What resources do we have (e.g. Group members who can represent us/ Links to other networks that can help us)?	When shall we do this?

Table 2: We Want Them!

What Do We Want?	What Level of Priority for Our Organisation (High, Medium or Low)?	Who Should We Engage With?	What resources do we have (e.g. Group members who can represent us/ Links to other networks that can help us)?	When shall we do this?

We hope this publication has been of some use to your group. You may also like to look at the following Directory Section for some interesting links to further information. This publication is part of the National Empowerment Partnership and has been put together by the Federation for Community Development Learning.

Questions and issues from a community development learning perspective...

Reflective Practice

Do decision-makers ever reflect on past decisions or their decision-making processes? Such reflection could improve the way they work in the future.

What context are we working in? What are the constraints?

How can we make sure that we keep each other up-dated about what is happening?

What have we learnt? What would we do differently next time?

..to think about and raise with decision-makers.

Directory and Links to Further Resources

Action with Communities in Rural England www.acre.org.uk

ACRE is the national umbrella of the Rural Community Action Network.

ASC www.ascskills.org.uk

The Academy for Sustainable Communities is the national centre for delivering the skills and knowledge needed to make better places.

BASSAC www.bassac.org.uk

BASSAC supports community 'anchor' organisations that are based in areas of deprivation. It is a national membership based organisation and lobbies for policies that tackle inequality.

Community Development Exchange www.cdx.org.uk

CDX (the Community Development Exchange) is the UK-wide membership organisation for community development. The organisation works to ensure that community development is recognised and supported as a powerful way of tackling inequality and achieving social justice. They have a very useful resource library which signposts to useful documents from a range of organisations.

Community Development Foundation www.cdf.org.uk

The Community Development Foundation (CDF) is a non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).

Community Matters www.communitymatters.org.uk

Community Matters is the National Federation for Community organisations. They currently have over 1,000 member organisations across the UK.

Community Sector Coalition www.communitysectorcoalition.org.uk

The Community Sector Coalition's mission is to be a credible and authoritative independent voice for the community sector. It has a membership of 20 national charities which collaborate through the Coalition, ensuring that learning is shared and a stronger voice campaigns on issues vital to the sector.

Development Trust Association www.dta.org.uk

The DTA helps people set up development trusts, and help existing trusts learn from each other and work effectively. They also influence government and others at national and local level, to build support and investment for the movement.

Europa europa.eu

Europa provides an access to information (press releases, legislation, fact-sheets) published by the European Union and its institutions. You can select the language you would like the site to be presented in on the introductory page – see 'en' for English.

Federation for Community Development Learning www.fcdl.org.uk

The FCDL is the UK-wide network for community development training and is the author of this guide. We are passionate that sustained learning allows communities to progress and become (and remain) empowered. In addition to supporting communities we support community activists (both paid and unpaid) and organisations with their own learning needs, advising on qualifications, good practice and channels for continued professional development.

Several resource packs published by FCDL are quoted from in this booklet. To find out more about these and other resource packs FCDL published please visit www.fcdl.org.uk

Government Offices for the English Region www.gos.gov.uk

Follow links to find out about your local Government Office.

I&DeA – Improvement and Development Agency www.idea.gov.uk

The IDeA works for local government improvement so councils can serve people and places better. It is owned by the Local Government Association and belongs to local government. On the website you can find the latest knowledge about good practice in local government and currently has lots of information about Local Strategic Partnerships and Local Area Agreements.

Inspire East www.inspire-east.org.uk

Inspire East is the regional centre of excellence for sustainable communities in the East of England. Lots of good resources!

Involve www.involve.org.uk

Involve works to show how public participation can positively and productively change the lives of individuals and improve the working practices of institutions. See People and Participation.Net for process planners, methods and case studies for successful participation: www.peopleandparticipation.net

Joseph Rowntree Foundation www.jrf.org.uk

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation is a social policy research and development charity, seeking to better understand the causes of social difficulties. They have three interrelated aims which are: 1/ examine the root causes of poverty and identify solutions; 2/ to find ways people and communities can be empowered to have control of their own lives; and 3/ to contribute to the building and development of strong, cohesive and sustainable communities. Their research is useful to inform both policy-makers and campaigners.

Make Poverty History www.makepovertyhistory.org

A coalition campaign to tackle extreme poverty.

NAVCA – National Association for Voluntary and Community Action.

NAVCA represents voluntary and community sector infrastructure organisations in England. Their members work with 164,000 local voluntary and community groups that provide community services, regenerate neighbourhoods, promote volunteering and tackle discrimination in partnership with local public bodies. Their purpose is to promote the *third sector* nationally. They draw on members' experience to influence government and contribute to national policy. www.navca.org.uk.

NCVO- National Council for Voluntary Organisations www.ncvo-vol.org.uk

A national lobbying organisation for the voluntary and community sector.

Planning Help www.planninghelp.org.uk

Planning Help is a website by the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) that shows you how you can influence planning decisions.

Royal National Institute for the Blind www.rnib.org.uk

Example of a national UK charity that has lobbied successfully at a European level.

UK Office of the European Parliament www.europarl.org.uk

For information on your MEP.

UK Parliament www.parliament.uk

See also www.theyworkforyou.com for information on your MP.

Urban Forum www.urbanforum.org.uk

Urban Forum is an umbrella body for community and voluntary groups with interests in **urban and regional policy**, especially **regeneration**. It was set up in 1994 as the national voluntary organisation through which local and central government could relate to the community and voluntary sectors on such issues.

Voice 4 Change www.voice4change-england.co.uk

Voice4Change England is a partnership of national and regional organisations that speaks for the interests of the Black and Minority Ethnic Third Sector.

Resources Available From FCDL

Taster Packs from FCDL: designed to be used as an introduction to key aspects of community development work, this series of 14 packs support three-hour sessions that can be used as a first step to further learning, or as a method for trainers to increase their confidence in this area. The tasters are:

1. What is community development work?
2. How groups work
3. Problems within groups
4. Involving people
5. Understanding and getting involved in partnerships
6. Skills for representing your community
7. Common issues in partnerships
8. Making meetings effective
9. Contributing effectively to meetings
10. Assertiveness/ confidence building
11. Feedback and listening skills
12. Report writing skills
13. Presentation skills – giving a short presentation
14. Presentation skills - Creating effective presentation materials

FCDL has produced a series of resource packs which complement the **National Open College Network (NOCN) Community Development Work Programme**. Each pack is designed to support the teaching of the module of the same name (or similar name), which can be built together to enable participants to gain qualifications at levels 1, 2 and 3. The resource pack are:

1. Understanding Community Development Work
2. Community Development Work Skills
3. Group work skills
4. Involving people
5. Representing your Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual community
6. Monitoring and evaluation
7. Developing community organisations
8. Reflective Community Development Work Practice
9. Effective partnership working
10. Practice and Principles in Community Development Work
11. Social Justice
12. Planning for community groups
13. Publicity skills for community organisations
14. Identifying needs in communities
15. Funding and resources for community groups
16. Neighbourhood regeneration
17. Community Development and Environmental Action
18. Sustainable Communities

Community Work Skills Manual

Community worker's practice guide, written by community workers, covering everything from the values and principles underlying community work, to roles and responsibilities, working with groups, community surveys etc.

Learning and Qualifications Framework

This free leaflet aims to enable people who come into community development from varied backgrounds, with different levels of expertise in community work, to work out what their learning needs are and how best to meet them.

How To Set Up a Refugee Community Organisation - is a resource designed with and for new and emerging refugee community organisations to help them establish themselves as organisations.

FCDL (Every Action Counts) Taster Packs:

1. Care for Your Area.
2. Improving the Environment through Community Buildings.
3. Climate Change Communications.
4. Food and Communities.
5. Community Development and Environmental Action.
6. Strategies and Policies to Support Environmental Action.
7. Local Actions on Travel and Transport.
8. Impact of Travel/ Transport on Communities.
9. Climate Change, Environmental Justice & Community Action.
10. Policies for Environmental Action.
11. What Planet Are You On?

FCDL (NEP) How-To Guides:

1. Engaging and Influencing Decision-Makers (a Guide for community groups).
2. Engaging with Local Government Regarding Sustainable Development (a Guide for Community Groups Concerned about Environmental Impacts on their Community).
3. Working Effectively With Communities (a Guide for non-Community Development Workers).

To find out more about these resources and others FCDL offers visit www.fcdl.org.uk



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