



# What is community development work?

*sharing practice sheet* no. 1

**This exercise uses the revised Occupational Standards for Community Development Work to enable participants to explore what community development work means to them.**

The Occupational Standards for Community Development Work have recently been revised. Following extensive consultation the new standards reflect the current nature of community development work across the UK. The revised standards provide the basis from which we can promote effective and appropriate community development work practice across the UK.

The exercise can be run without giving a detailed explanation about the standards. If participants are interested a brief introduction to the standards can be presented. The Federation for Community Development Learning has produced a summary sheet on the Occupational Standards. Copies are available on 0114 273 9391.

## Definition

The following is the definition of community development work used in the occupational standards. Participants may have differing ideas about what is community development. This exercise uses the definition as a starting point.

The key purpose of community development work is collectively to bring about social change and justice, by working with communities<sup>1</sup> to:

- Identify their needs, opportunities, rights and responsibilities
- Plan, organise and take action
- Evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the action  
all in ways which challenge oppression and tackle inequalities

<sup>1</sup>communities refer to those that can be defined geographically and/or those defined by interest.

This exercise was used as part of a practice sharing event held in Islington, London on November 1st 2002. The event was organised by the Federation for Community Development Learning and Healthy Islington. It was supported by Camden and Islington Health Action Zone. See also: Turning over a new leaf – identifying barriers and solutions to learning (sheet no.2)

The London event is part of a series of practice sharing events being co-ordinated by the Federation. The aim of the events is to both celebrate and share examples of good practice within community development learning.



## Materials for this exercise

- Summary sheet explaining the Community Development Work National Occupational standards.
- Occupational Standards Key Role Cards. You can make these up using the information in the standards available from Federation on 0114 273 9391 or [www.fcdl.org.uk](http://www.fcdl.org.uk)

## Step by Step

1. Explain that this exercise aims to encourage participants to talk about what community development work they are doing or have done.
2. Word storm, say words or sentences relating to their understanding of community development. Don't assume that people have the same understanding or have ever been given a chance to discuss their understanding. Emphasise the importance of recognising that the definition of community development has been built on the experience of those who have carried out the role.
3. Lay out 6 piles of cards; one pile for each of the key roles of community development work practice identified within the standards.
4. Ask participants to select one key role that relates to some part of their past or present work.
5. Ask participants to talk about how they carry out their work by referring to the Key Role Card of their choice.
6. Participants can share the outcome of this exercise with the larger group. Depending on the context in which the exercise is used, the outcomes can form the basis of agreeing a common definition through to identifying priorities within communities.

## Optional next stage to this exercise

Participants can continue talking about their work by turning the Occupational Standard Key Role Card over. On the reverse side you can give more detail of what is likely to be involved in carrying out the key role.

7. Continue their discussion of the same work example:
  - a) Choose one of the descriptions of the key role and say what helps them to carry out this role
  - b) Identify what gets in the way of carrying out this role
  - c) Discuss as a group any ways of supporting individual workers carry out and promote good practice

## Using the technique

This exercise provides a useful starting point in agreeing what is community development work as well as encouraging participants to reflect on their own practice. There are a variety of elements within the standards that can be used in drawing up job descriptions, training programmes, action plans, etc. This simple exercise can also be used when evaluating a work programme or drawing up priorities based on an action plan.