

# Let's talk about Participation - Masterclass

On 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2019, SCSN held an event in The Pearce Institute, Govan, entitled 'Let's Talk about Participation' those working in the fields of safer communities and justice, to find out more about approaches that enhance citizen involvement in the planning and delivery of public services.

The event aimed to explore the current landscape of participation in Scotland and the role of civil society and why it's important for better outcomes and change. We heard from great speakers about a range of participative approaches from using the Place standard, open government, citizen juries to involving people with lived experience in planning and young people in scrutiny. The speakers also reflected on how to mainstream participative approaches and deliver ambitious changes in the way we deliver public services with and for communities.

After the presentations, there was a chance to discuss the presented approaches and for delegates to consider how they might use them in their own team, organisations and partnerships, through a 'speed dating' format. Finally, there was a 'fishbowl' discussion on opportunities for advancing participative approaches in Scotland.



This learning report pulls together a summary of the presentations (including links to presentations and videos of the inputs) alongside the main discussion points from the questions and answer, 'speed dating' and fishbowl sessions as well as some of our own reflections. We will also include feedback from attendees to give readers a sense of the day and the major learning points.

## Context

In the late 2000s terms like 'empowerment' and 'coproduction' began to make their way into public services in Scotland where previously 'community engagement' had been. The last five or so years in Scotland, particularly since the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 has seen a shift in will towards improving the involvement of citizens and communities in planning and delivering public services and a strengthened voice for citizens in many aspects of public service

**"WHERE ACTIVITIES ARE  
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CHANGE"**  
Scottish Coproduction Network

planning and delivery is fundamental to deliver the system-wide change envisaged in the Christie Commission report and is now expected, for example by Audit Scotland in its scrutiny role, as well as statutory requirement. However in 2016, Audit Scotland found that partnerships were “not yet delivering the ambitious changes in the way public services are delivered with and for communities” so there is more to be done to support citizens to participate in local partnerships.

## **Presentations**

### **Introduction to participation – the why and the how – Fiona Garven, Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC)**

- Participation is a long game
- We need to maintain the capacity of the community sector as a foundation for participation to thrive
- Public sector needs to have the capacity, and will, to respond
- Build in equalities from the start
- Don't do participation just with marginalised communities
- We need proper deliberation
- We need to stick with it, and we need coherence

[Presentation](#) and [YouTube video](#)

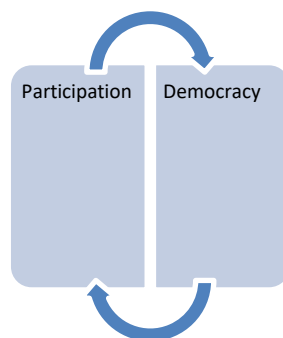
### **Participation context and drivers in Scotland – Doreen Grove, Scottish Government on behalf of Local Governance team, Dr Claire Bynnar What Works Scotland and Elric Honoré, Civil Society.**

- In Scotland, the figures elected representative to constituents is 1:4,500, the worst in Europe.
- More positively, civil participation is on the rise in Scotland. But 77% would get more involved in their community if it was easier to participate in decisions that affect it (Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2015 + Ipsos Mori 2014)
- Participation thrives when important issues and resources are at a stake, and citizens feel their contribution can actually make a difference
- But we must be wary of what groups are participating, and whether this further entrenches inequalities. Unless corrective measures are taken “participation of all varieties will be skewed in favour of those with higher socioeconomic status and formal education” (Ryfe & Stalsburg 2012)
- Scotland's Civil Society Network serves as an engine for ideas and as a collective voice to collaborate with and challenge government.
- Open Government Action Plan 2018-2020 aims to provide a framework that supports systemic change in Scottish Government to improve the way people are able to take part in open policy-making and service delivery. It hopes to bring decision making closer to people, and make the decision making part visible. This would allow people to be fairly heard and allow them to see the process as it happens.
- National Standards for Community Engagement: will identify and involve the people and organisations that are affected by the focus of the engagement, overcoming any barriers to participation.

Highlights from the morning sessions included emphasis on the **time** it takes to have meaningful participation; and the importance of approaches that value deliberation and compromise and to move away from seeing things in absolute terms. For this to happen participation needs to be **inclusive**, that is to **seek out diverse opinions**, perspectives and experiences.

Participation also needs to be **consequential**, that is, to affect or change something. All the morning speakers touched on the important link between participation and democracy.

All speakers encouraged attendees to focus on **embedding / mainstreaming participative approaches** so they become the normal way of doing 'business' rather than 'innovative approaches', and a plea to avoid being distracted by shiny new concepts or techniques. Scottish Government can set the conditions for these approaches, but local partners need to do the work.



All speakers appealed attendees to think about what it is you are trying to do or the problems you're trying to solve and use the right technique for it; not technique first. The *how* is now as important as the fact that it is happening.

### [Presentations and YouTube videos](#)

### [Q&A session](#)

**Q:** There are specific costs for disabled people to participate in these more participatory approaches e.g. scribes, interpreters, and therefore a risk that some events will even further marginalise people with disabilities.

**A:** The time and money that is spent on non-participatory approaches such as surveys could be diverted to more costly (in some ways) but more effective approaches. The specific additional costs for disabled people to participate should be considered.

"We need to invest up front in getting things right. It will always be less expensive than getting things wrong!"

We should be honest about boundaries – e.g. what will and won't happen as a result of the participation.

Follow up comment: A plea that Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) are not an after-thought, and make it so people with disabilities do not need to ask for support, it is offered.

**Q:** How does all this 'small stuff' make a big system change?

A: Fiona Garven - We still invite people to participate on our (public service organisation's) terms. We need to value the process more, and realise that aiding participation **is** the job, not a part of our job. This is particularly the case for those involved in community planning.

Lorraine Gillies – In all the time I've worked with communities I've never had any of them asking for a plan or a strategy – they ask for **action, change, support or help**.

Claire Bynnar – Remembering the 'hourglass of blockages' – holistic approaches clash with institutional logic and structures like distinct budgets and services.

5 minute lightning talks on participative approaches and case studies:

- Involving people in audit and scrutiny, Jillian Matthew, Audit Scotland
  - Audit Scotland's vision and purpose
  - Community Empowerment
  - Case Study

[Presentation](#) and [YouTube Video](#)

- Designing services with people, Leah Lockhart
  - What is good service design?

[Presentation](#) and [YouTube Video](#)

- The Place Standard tool, Etive Currie City of Glasgow Council
  - Local people are experts – need to ensure we are having discussions with them, at the right times.
  - The places where we live, work and spend time in can have a major impact on our health, wellbeing, sense of identity and prosperity.
  - Place Standard tool is a simple, free, easy to use tool to assess the Quality of A Place – available as a booklet, online, and in-app.

[Presentation](#) and [YouTube Video](#)

- Lived Experience, Lorraine McIntosh and Phil Bradley, Aid and Abet
  - An insight into lived experience and its importance

Unfortunately as this was a last minute addition we have no presentation or video to share.

- Using the Place standard in youth justice, Andrea Coulter Clackmannanshire Third Sector Interface (TSI) and Clackmannanshire Council

- They overlayed the results from their Place tool work rather than taking averages and used these as a talking point for some deliberation.
- It can be a highly effective tool to use in a social environment, and with a cohort or community of interest. In the work they did they found that using the tool with a cohort of people who had been in contact with the justice system had very similar results to the wider community.

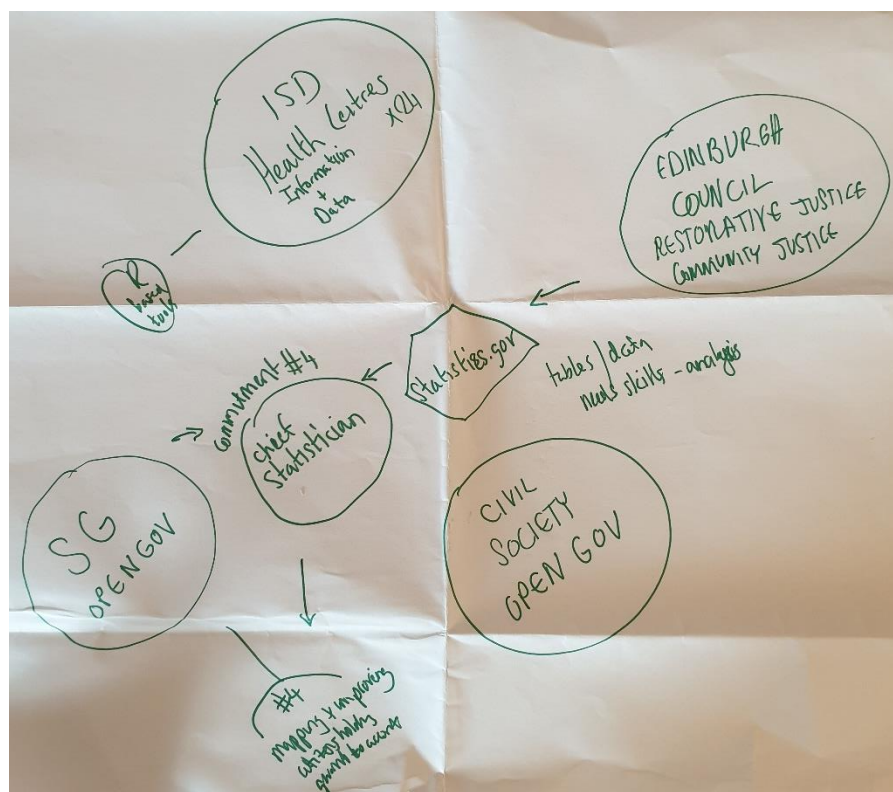
[Presentation](#) and [YouTube Video](#)

- Involving young people, Lisa Murphy, Young Scot
  - A plea that young people are interested in all issues, and have an opinion, not just 'young people' issues. Young people also have more than just opinions to offer – they can make change suggest activities and undertake work too!

[Presentation](#) and [YouTube Video](#)

### Speed dating / open space to speak to the presenters

This was an opportunity to hear more about each of the lightning talks, and kick-start some thinking about how participants could use these approaches in their own work. Some tables took notes which are reproduced below so we don't lose clarity of the conversation on the day.





YOUNG PEOPLE SESSION 1

PAS + HES → HERITAGE PROJECTS — AREAS — LOCAL HERITAGE ISSUES + CELEBRATION

→ CO-PRO OF LEARNING RESOURCES

↳ WJHES ↳ CREATIVE CONTENT

St → PROB. FOR GOV. → CHILDHOOD ADVERSITY (ACES)

↳ TRAUMA TRAINING

↳ AWARENESS RAISING + COMMUNITY ACTION

→ POLICY ENVIRONMENT DIVIDED ACROSS THE TEAM

→ ENGAGEMENT.

YOUNG SCOTLAND — 'HARD TO REACH' — 'EASY TO IGNORE?'

→ SHARED RESPONSIBILITY — LOCAL AUTHORITY

SCHOOL

LOCAL SERVICES.

→ HOW CAN YS BE AN ADVOCATE AND ROLE MODEL FOR OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE?

→ INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION BECOME THE NORM.

→ BUDGET PLANNING — ASSIGNED.

CHANGE OF MINDSET REQUIRED — BUILDING TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS

GETTING THE RIGHT CONDITIONS — FRAGILITY OF RELATIONSHIPS

TRANSPARENCY + OWNING ASSUMPTIONS / EXPECTATIONS LISA

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS — EXISTING — MAINTAINING — STARTING — NEW TAKES EVEN MORE TIME

BUILDING IN TIME TO REFLECT AND AFTER COURSE.

SESSION 2

COMMUNITY JUSTICE (SCOTLAND) — 'FUNDING' — HOLDING THE POWER

PARTICIPATE OR NOT? — HOW CAN WE BALANCE OUR FUNDED REQUIREMENTS BUT ALSO PROVIDED SPACE FOR DISRUPTION?

DEMOSOC

IN JUSTICE — CLEAR CATEGORISED OF PEOPLE BASED ON 'VULNERABILITY'

↳ PROTECTED / RESPONSIBILITY OF CARE THAT CAN BE DEBILITATING.

LANGUAGE — FORMAL / LEGISLATIVE AND INFORMAL / PLAYFUL

WHERE IS THE BALANCE?

SESSION 3 — NHS, SBRL, GOA, INNERLYDE, STAFF (CARE CYC).

DISABLED YOUNG PEOPLE.

ACCESS — ROUTES INTO — FLEXIBILITY

ACCOUNTABILITY — WHAT HAPPENS NEXT? LEGACY + STORIES + EXPERIENCE SUSTAINING?

## Final word

Special thanks to Lorraine and Phil and Doreen for stepping in at the last minute after illness meant two of our original advertised speakers were unable to attend on the day.

It's encouraging to see such a breadth of great work going on in Scotland to improve participation in public services.

Reemphasising the essentials of listening, taking time to understand the issue before moving to a solution and the importance of keeping why you're doing this at the forefront of your mind and actions was incredibly helpful.

It's clear that there is still some way to go before these approaches are not considered as 'innovative' and become the mainstreamed and normal way of doing business in public services. Participatory budgeting is a positive step forward, but should only be a springboard for even more participation, not the end of the journey.

At SCSN we are keen to support community safety partners to enhance community participation in their work where appropriate. As we plan our work into 2020 we will continue to develop participation as a theme, and were struck by the Clackmannanshire work to explore different cohort's experience of 'Place', and the use of the Place standard as a talking point for local participation in community safety.

## **Attendance and feedback**

It was a well-attended event with 23 people attending from Local Authorities and third sector organisations. We had some great questions, really interesting conversations and positive feedback from participants.

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*"Great event – good to be in the room with so many disrupters and the ideas that came from it were wonderful!"*

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*"A really enjoyable day. Liked the different formats of inputs, lightning talks and time for discussion after. The fishbowl was interesting and a bit different from a panel discussion – kept the discussion going more naturally"*

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We used an online survey using Survey Monkey as a way of collecting feedback from participants.

- 66% of people who responded gave the speakers' inputs as 4 or 5/5 stars.
- 79% of people rated the conversations as 4 or 5/5 stars.
- 60% of people rated the conversations as 4 or 5/5 stars.
- 60% of people rated the venue as 4 or 5/5 stars.
- 80% of people rated the overall event as 4 or 5/5 stars.

*"Very worthwhile event that stimulated good conversations on participation."*

**The attendees gauged their knowledge of participation or participative approaches at around 67% before the event and gauged their increase in understanding at 54% after the session.** The main 'take away' or things 'they would do differently' were around striving for more inclusion and equality, knowledge of placed-based approaches, networking ideas and working together and considering different perspectives and methods.

*"Perhaps a bit more about the future and the 1% participatory budgeting model being introduced for all Local Authorities"*

Most people heard about the event through work colleagues the SCSN newsletter. **93% said they would definitely attend another SCSN learning event.**

There were some comments about increasing the diversity of the speakers to include more grass roots and equalities projects, which we will take on board.

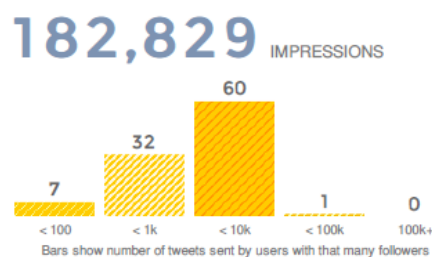
#### TWEETREACH SNAPSHOT FOR

## #SCSNParticipation

### ESTIMATED REACH

**89,025**  
ACCOUNTS REACHED

### EXPOSURE



### ACTIVITY

