Title: Community Wellbeing Champions Initiative: Programme Level Evaluation Report

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SCS topic headings: Personal Safety; Home Safety; Travel Safety; Safety in Public Spaces; Environment Safety; Safety of Vulnerable Groups; Partnership Working; Community Engagement; Evaluation and Monitoring

This document is a REVIEW of effective intervention approaches.

Summary of the intervention's aim

The 'Community Wellbeing Champions Initiative' is part of the Implementation Plan (Vol. 3) for the Anti-social Behaviour Framework: Promoting Positive Outcomes, which was published by the Scottish Government in March 2009. The Framework sits within the overall National Performance Framework as part of making communities safer & stronger. The Implementation Plan seeks to deliver the anti-social behaviour framework through three themes:

- Developing & sharing knowledge
- Supporting practitioners, partners and community
- Developing and communicating a coherent picture

Whilst the Community Wellbeing Champions Initiative could, arguably, support delivery of all three themes, it sits within the second one in terms of the Implementation Plan. The Initiative consisted of five pilots undertaken by local Community Safety Partnerships in South Lanarkshire, North Lanarkshire, Fife, Shetlands and Stirling. A broad and open remit enabled each area to develop the pilot to suit local need. Each undertook a very different exercise but each were successful according to their own local criteria. The Scottish Government contracted the PB Unit to provide support and guidance to the pilots and to evaluate the implementation of the programme.

What is Participatory Budgeting?

Participatory Budgeting (PB) processes are designed and implemented according to the needs of the local area and people. As a result, there are many different variations of PB, both within the UK and internationally. There are approximately 4 different broad models being used in the UK currently, with more being developed. These are:

- community grant giving
- neighbourhood level with specific service(s)
- mainstream funding across an authority area
- county wide schemes.

Thus a single definition is somewhat limiting for a term that can cover a range of processes and is always locally designed and developed.

PB is not a neutral process, it is value laden, and as this report demonstrates, each stakeholder will come to the process with their own values and motivations. PB Unit developed 8 values, and a set of corresponding principles and standards. The values are more important than a single definition because they provide the parameters to PB; they provide the spirit of what's intended through PB.

The report examines the broader questions about PB and rather than answering the question 'does this work?' It examines 'what works where and why and how?'. As a result, it is hoped the findings can provide useful guidance in the development and design of future PB processes.

The Community Wellbeing Champions Initiative Pilots

The five pilot initiatives within the programme were connected to the established Community Safety strategy in the area, and embedded within the partnership framework that is delivering that existing work. For this reason, each pilot had distinct and different aims, goals, timescales and designs. The variety of pilot work provides a greater range of data than if the pilots been followed a uniform model, because in each case PB has been developed within the context of the local situation. This enhanced the quality of learning available through the programme, as the evaluation has been able to look at cross-cutting themes, commonalities and differences. It has been possible to look at what type of processes produce which kinds of outcomes, and what motivations may produce what kind of processes.

The evaluation brief posed the following questions:

- What is felt to be an appropriate role for local councillors in relation to PB processes?
- What was the impact of the PB pilots on relationships and trust between community members and statutory organisations?
- In what ways has PB enhanced local democratic cultures?
- How did the PB pilots impact local perceptions of anti-social behaviour?

- Did the PB pilots have an impact on community capacity?
- Have the PB pilots resulted in changed decisions / outcomes in the local area?
- To what extent have the National Standards for Engagement been utilised through the PB pilots?

These questions are addressed in the main body of the report under a number of broad themes.

The main outcomes emerging from the pilots are:

- Community cohesion and capacity-building;
- Improved understanding of community needs and improved services (more in keeping with community priorities)
- Improved support for community groups
- Improved local democracy
- Additional funding brought into the area.

Whilst each of these outcomes were reported in at least two of the pilots, and most in all of them, the outcomes do seem to be linked with the type of approach taken by each pilot.

All five pilots were tailored to local circumstance in a very deliberate way, and they all set out to achieve fairly specific outcomes based on their existing programmes and partnerships for community safety. (The report summarises some key elements which make each pilot a unique response to their local issues.)

Reduction in anti-social behaviour

All the pilots specifically sought to address anti-social behaviour in one way or another as these were community safety pilots- and all reported relatively high levels of perceived anti-social behaviour and some had high levels of crimes associated with anti-social behaviour.

Furthermore, all pilots demonstrated some reduction in perceptions, or greater awareness amongst citizens of their perceptions (barriers being broken down between groups upon meeting each other for the first time through the process), or greater determination by citizens to address the issues.
 Some saw a reduction in reported figures for crimes associated with anti-social behaviour although it's difficult to draw a causal link between a reduction and PB, as PB was one of a number of initiatives or enforcement interventions that happened either at the same time, or just before or after the PB process.

Additionally, the introduction of PB into community initiatives can also be considered to result in more general beneficial aspects too:

Community capability

PB processes have generated significant community cohesion benefits in terms of increased knowledge, understanding, solidarity and positive connections between

different sections of a community, as well as providing a public opportunity for the expression of these views, and of pride in the community.

The PB process has a significant impact on community capability. This can include personal development of skills, experience and confidence for individual community members, organisation development for community organisations and cohesion outcomes for the wider community. Process design impacts strongly on the kind of community capability outcomes generated.

Motivation

The main motivations for getting involved and staying involved in the pilot projects were to:

- Enhance democracy
- Improve or increase engagement
- Reduce anti-social behaviour
- Improve quality of life/improve the neighbourhood
- Increase community spirit (cohesion, stronger communities)
- Test a process that could be used in other ways.

Motivations were common across pilots with different approaches, and across different stakeholders, although some motivations were more common amongst certain groups than others. Officers and councillors had more strategic motivators than community members.

Impact on local democracy

As a community-led process, PB clearly involves changes to decision-making power. However, the depth of the change is limited by the extent to which officers retain control over the process of engagement itself (process design).

  The sustained engagement of a steering group is a key site for democratic learning, including increased knowledge, confidence to voice opinions and views, and opportunities for engagement. This results in more positive forms of citizen engagement, including a problem-solving approach rather than simply describing problems. Furthermore, PB can promote greater faith in the local democratic system, to the extent that people are satisfied with the outcomes of their involvement through PB.

Most of the evidence from these pilots relates to improved relationships between officers and citizens (where the overwhelming majority of joint working took place), rather than between councillors and citizens. These pilots indicate that trust increases as a result of concrete changes in agency practices (in other words, the move to using a participatory process such as PB) and increased officer visibility. Where councillors are directly involved, there are similar positive outcomes. However, these are relatively limited within this programme of pilots because councillor involvement has itself been limited.

Within the programme, there are overwhelmingly positive reports regarding the quality of community decision-making. Decisions were taken seriously and with consideration and reflection. This was supported by good facilitation, the availability of information and opportunities for discussion between participants and presenters.

Summary of evaluation conclusions

The main learning points from the programme evaluation were that different processes within the PB umbrella produce different outcomes, so the process and objectives for the project need to be carefully considered before embarking on any programme to ensure that the desired outcomes are most likely to be achieved. The motivations and process design affect the outcomes that will be delivered. PB does not deliver one set of objectives– what will be delivered is determined locally.

The report concludes that differences in motivation and process design in the case of the five pilots were intentional because they were a considered response to local issues, based on community consultation to understand local issues and needs from the communities' perspective. Thus, rather than PB being a process that was 'parachuted in' to different circumstances, PB has been a tailored response to specific issues within a broader framework of addressing community safety and tackling anti-social behaviour.

Overall, the report systematises learning rather than measure the success of the 5 pilots. The programme as a whole produced a number of key learning points about implementing PB. More detail on these points can be found in the executive summary, the conclusion and throughout the report, however, in summary:

- PB is an effective means of making local decisions which can have a wide variety of positive outcomes.
- PB is an approach not a technique.
- PB demonstrates that citizens are capable of effective and considered decision-making.
- The steering group is a key site for learning and development outcomes.
- Working together builds trust and improves relationships.
- This programme suggests that active councillor involvement in PB (as opposed to more general support for the process) is significantly more limited than officer or citizen involvement.
- The experience of these five pilots suggests that PB is an effective means of engaging with a wider cross-section of the community than more traditional means of making public finance decisions.
- Frameworks such the National Standards for Community Engagement and the PB values have a clear utility in focusing attention on the values and motivations underlying implementation techniques, and as such are useful in process planning as well as evaluation.
- The public and collective nature of decision-making is crucial in generating some of the community cohesion outcomes claimed for PB.

How the evaluation gathered information for findings and conclusions

The five pilots were chosen by the Scottish Government and COSLA through an application process. They were looking for innovation within community safety and for proposals that utilised PB as a way of addressing larger issues as part of a coherent strategy to address anti social behaviour.

Each of the 5 pilot areas in the Community Wellbeing Champions Initiative undertook a process of self-evaluation. While the PB Unit offered support in using self-evaluation tools, which was taken up by some groups, each area created an individual evaluation design, and produced a local evaluation based on local aims and evaluative interests.

Each pilot area to provided both raw and analysed data as collected for their own evaluations (a list of data sources for each area is provided on p.53).

Additionally, the researchers asked to visit each area to conduct a maximum of two focus groups with programme organisers and / or participants and applicant groups. The following areas accepted our request to visit: Fife, Shetland Islands, Stirling and South Lanarkshire. These visits enabled further exploration regarding the programme level concerns, and to get a first-hand sense of the process in each area, which contributed immeasurably to our understanding of the other data provided.

The final report offers reflection on the programme level questions. Local evaluations, which include more detail on both local aims and outcomes and on the practicalities of each process, will be available from each of the five pilot areas.

Further details about the SCS evaluation of this report are available on request. Please contact info@scsn.org.uk

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