

## Empower .....

Welcome to the first edition of Empower, the quarterly e-bulletin that will keep you up to date with all the latest local and national empowerment news.

Empower aims to:

- Support partner organisations to develop empowering engagement processes through signposting people to information, practical tools and support.
- Communicate Wolverhampton Partnership's inclusive approach and our aspiration to facilitate the engagement of under-represented groups
- Facilitate communication between various partner organisations and different sectors in the city
- Inspire partners in the city to develop and share best practice in community engagement by highlighting stories about engagement in action and the outcomes of engagement and by providing information about opportunities to get involved in different areas of work

**Empower will be most effective if it contains contributions from all partner agencies. Please send your contributions to [sam@wton-partnership.org.uk](mailto:sam@wton-partnership.org.uk)**

## Thinking about doing a consultation or engagement activity?

If you are you thinking of undertaking a consultation or engagement activity please follow the simple steps below so that you and the people you are engaging with get the most from the activity:

### Before you start

- Check the Engagement Database to see if your activity is really needed. Search the site to see if anyone has done the activity before or if you can join in with another activity that is already planned. That way you could save time and money.
- If you start a new activity, you need to put it on the Engagement Database so that the public and other agencies can find out about the activity.
- You will need to complete a pro forma which will also help you to plan your activity
- To get a pro forma contact [sam.axtell@wolverhampton.gov.uk](mailto:sam.axtell@wolverhampton.gov.uk).
- Go to <http://engagement.wton-partnership.org.uk/index.php> to see the Database.

### Need Support?

- Read Wolverhampton's Public Involvement Resource pack which is packed full of handy hints about different techniques and working with different groups in the community. Download it free by clicking on the following link: <http://www.wton->

[partnership.org.uk./UserFiles/File/involving\\_public%2520resource%2520pack%25202006.pdf](http://partnership.org.uk./UserFiles/File/involving_public%2520resource%2520pack%25202006.pdf)

- Contact Sam Axtell, Consultation and Community Involvement Officer, to find out about the new 'Engagement Clinics' - a chance for staff to learn from each other as they develop their consultation or engagement activities. Contact [Sam@wton-partnership.org.uk](mailto:Sam@wton-partnership.org.uk)
- Read the Wolverhampton Compact Consultation Code of Practice: <http://www.wolverhamptoncompact.co.uk/pdfs/consultation.pdf>
- Advertise your consultation/engagement on the engagement database
- If you are hoping to work with specific communities there are projects who could support you or provide advice. Contact the Network Consortium for further information by phoning 01902 572020

## The Big Society

The new coalition government has launched their manifesto on the 'Big Society'. The vision for developing the 'Big Society' includes aspirations for:

- Funding the training of independent community organisers
- Every adult to be a member of a local neighbourhood group.
- Encouraging people to make volunteering and community participation something that they do on a regular basis
- Refocusing the Sure start initiative
- Referendums and local vetos on tax increases
- A community right to buy amenities or run services
- An end to the ring fencing of government grants to local authorities: an end to the targets imposed on councils by the previous government; and ending the current inspection regime (Comprehensive Area Assessment)
- Providing neighbourhood grants to the poorest areas and encouraging the use of ward budgets for Councillors.

Reaction to the 'Big Society' idea has been mixed. Many welcome it as a refreshment and amplification of a cross-party theme that has been developing for decades. Others have criticised it for its lack of clarity and resources to implement the work.

To read more go to:

<http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/407789/building-big-society.pdf>

## What drives feelings of influence?

Urban Forum, Ipsos MORI and the Institute for Political and Economic Governance have published 'Citizens and Local Decision Making: What Drives Feelings of Influence?' designed to better understand what affects NI4. (NI 4 is the indicator which is being used to capture progress on Empowerment. It is measured bi-annually in the Place Survey. The survey question is "Do you agree or disagree that you can influence decisions affecting your local area?")

The research findings reveal evidence of three main areas that can impact on feelings of influence:

1. Provision of information
2. Consultation - listening to views and acting on them
3. Attitude towards local authority and partners

In Wolverhampton work on influence is being developed by the Black Country Take Part Pathfinder (link to website <http://www.blackcountrypathfinder.co.uk/>).

The Pathfinder is supporting communities to become more influential through the use of the Voice tool

(<http://www.blackcountrypathfinder.co.uk/voice.php>)

and public agencies to become more responsive to community influence through the Echo tool

(<http://www.blackcountrypathfinder.co.uk/echo.php>).

Read the full report here:

[http://www.urbanforum.org.uk/files/citizens\\_and\\_local\\_decision\\_making\\_full\\_report\\_2010\\_03.pdf](http://www.urbanforum.org.uk/files/citizens_and_local_decision_making_full_report_2010_03.pdf)

### **Thriving Third Sector Strategy produced for the City**

A strategy for Developing the Environment for a Thriving Third Sector in Wolverhampton has been developed. The strategy seeks to establish: **“An environment in which the third sector can play a full and influential role in identifying need, designing and commenting on services and delivering some of those services, either alone or in partnership; and doing so in a way that values and embraces Wolverhampton’s communities”**

The strategy and resulting action plan will be an important focal point for the delivery of NI7 (an environment for a thriving Third Sector), part of Wolverhampton’s Local Area Agreement. They will provide a working framework for the third sector to have an increased influence at policy and strategic levels.

For further details contact Heather Ernstsons, Head of Operations and Development, Wolverhampton Partnership by emailing [Heather@wton-partnership.org.uk](mailto:Heather@wton-partnership.org.uk)

### **Take Part Learning Programme**

As part of the Black Country Take Part Pathfinder, a number of learning programmes aimed at citizens from across the Black Country who are or want to be active in communities and/or public life.

The aims of the learning programmes are to support citizens to develop skills, knowledge and confidence to influence decisions that affect their lives. They are not about individual empowerment - but the intention is rather that participants will be able to feel empowered to work collectively

towards social justice in whatever area of society that they feel appropriate for them.

To find out more about these learning programmes and how they fit into the Black Country Take Part Pathfinder please contact Saffi Price, Black Country Take Part Coordinator [sprice@wolverhamptonvsc.org.uk](mailto:sprice@wolverhamptonvsc.org.uk)

### **Sustainable Communities Act Amendment Bill becomes law**

On Thursday 8th April 2010 the Sustainable Communities Act Amendment Bill successfully passed through the House of Commons and the House of Lords and became law.

This means that the now amended Sustainable Communities Act will be an ongoing process and that the 'second round' of that process will begin by the end of 2010. It also means that Parish and Town Councils will be formally included in that process.

Wolverhampton City Council supported the Bill. To read a copy of the report agreed by Cabinet please click here:

<http://decisionmaking.wolverhampton.gov.uk/CMISWebPublic/Binary.aspx?Document=124694>

To read more about the Amendment Bill and the Sustainable Communities Act please click here: <http://www.localworks.org/>

### **Funding Communities, Adding Value: Community development approaches to grant giving**

This book which can be downloaded free from the Community Development Foundation's website features a case study about Wolverhampton Network Consortium.

<http://www.cdf.org.uk/web/guest/publication?id=79346>