Influence work

1. Building an evidence base

As a first step in taking forward some of the ideas included in a paper (volunteering, community influence and the changing relationship) discussed at the last Our Society Steering Group meeting it is proposed that desk and face-to-face research and learning is carried out by Our Society Planning Group members to compliment and link to the Community Rights made Real project timescales and aims.

Proposed purpose of desk research: to determine whether we have an evidence base in support of the government’s approach to public service reform, localism and, for example, recommendations in the University of Birmingham Policy Commission report. This will involve reading around key themes (see below) and seeing whether/how these are expressed through local voices using a range of primary data sources, and identifying whether there are additional factors or conditions that we would add to our local context.

This research would take forward ideas presented at the last meeting as follows:

✓ Drawing together existing work to be in a position to describe and test the barriers people face in taking up opportunities for participation.
✓ Developing a way to check that what has been drawn together reflects the issues.
✓ Informing thinking about barriers to influence which those promoting opportunities for participation will need to be aware of address.
✓ Informing discussions around the changing relationship between the council/DCP/other public sector bodies and citizens/groups/communities.
✓ Linking to systems thinking work.

2. Proposed Plan

Group members willing to carry out research are:

• Lorna Prescott - lead
• Donna Roberts
• Keeley Wright (graduate volunteer)

Suggested timescales:

September 2011: Lorna to gather and make sources available. Lorna, Donna and Keeley to meet to develop shared understanding of fields of work relevant to research, consider different power analysis frameworks and tools and agree how they will work together face-to-face, online and independently. Session with LSP Board to be held (tbc) which will contribute to research.
October 2011: Desk research to be carried out. Findings to be discussed by Our Society Planning Group as research is in progress and learning relevant to Community Rights project fed in to project. In particular consider how learning can shape co-design process and future events with VCFS (Nov/Dec) and LSP event in Feb 2012.

November 2011: Research report and summary produced, with recommendations to Our Society Steering Group in relation to next steps of research and taking activity forward. This will relate to conversations with and possibilities for collaboration with UoB and others.

3. Policy documents and key themes to cover

- Open Public Services White Paper
- Localism Bill
- Behaviour change/Nudge: www.civicbehaviour.org.uk
- Participation and influence: www.pathwaystoparticipation.org.uk
- Citizen power, connected communities: www.thersa.org.uk
- Practice-based research on social productivity in public services: www.2020psh.org
- Power analysis: www.powercube.net Carnegie UK e.g. www.tinyurl.com/carnegiepowerproject

Steering group members invited to add more.

4. Primary sources for research

These are all local to Dudley or the Black Country:
- Dudley LSP minutes/notes May 2011
- Dudley LSP Big Society Event report and workshop notes (Nov 2011)
- Dudley Voluntary Sector Network Big Society Event report (Sept 2011)
- Black Country Take Part Pathfinder Learning Programme session notes (2009-2011)
- Black Country Take Part Pathfinder Learning Programme evaluation report (2011)
- Voice workshop notes from discussions within networks/organisations in Dudley (2007-2011)
- Echo workshop notes – Dudley Children’s Trust (2010) and Dudley PCT (2011)
- in it together consultation report and workshop notes (2009)
- in it together training and support consultation report and workshop notes (2009)
- evaluation of in it together/engaging together training and support activities (2010-2011)

Steering group members invited to add more.

Lorna Prescott
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