

From here to there..and back again

A local perspective on the challenges of effective,
evidenced community engagement

Di Robinson

Neighbourhood Manager, Community Counts in
Gloucester

So what of Neighbourhood Management?

- Powerful engagement agenda.....on route to empowerment?
- Engaging with people where they are at – from activist to armchair
- Proving community engagement makes a difference:
 - ◆ culture change in agencies – the real battle?

One or two of the challenges....

- Achieving a shared understanding of what community engagement and empowerment means and what the point is
- Getting the right skilled support for communities
- Developing measures that mean something to all the stakeholders
- Prioritising this agenda alongside ever more complex service agendas
- Shifting mainstream cultures

And one or two more...

- Getting the message out to much wider, diverse and complex communities – and how to measure what works and what doesn't
- How do we sustain the community engagement structures we've established after we've gone?
- How do we sustain any change in mainstream culture EG: core competencies, job descriptions etc

Mainstream Culture Change

- Barriers to change.....
 - ◆ Mustn't raise community expectations
 - ◆ Too slow
 - ◆ Too expensive – blank cheque
 - ◆ Too fluffy
 - ◆ What does the community know or understand about my work? I am the expert
 - ◆ And my personal favourite.....

We do it already.....!



So what's our approach?

- Tightly focussed engagement around interest
 - ◆ developing in depth skill and understanding of issues and services over longer term
- Evidencing how resident engagement impacts on service provision

Local examples:

- ◆ Street Reps
- ◆ Peer Health Educators
- ◆ Neighbourhood Panel

Neighbourhood Panel

- ◆ “The police have always been very good at thinking they know what is bothering the local community – now we really know and can focus on tackling those priority issues with the community” – SCT Police Sergeant
- Iterative process – not a “quick fix”
- Local community champions
- Impact of resident engagement on service delivery:
 - ◆ Operational impacts
 - ◆ 100%+ increase in quality community intelligence
 - ◆ 24% reduction in crime since 2004
 - ◆ 17% reduction in fear of crime since 2004

Measures - from fluffy to firm.....

Subjective:

- ◆ whether people feel that they can influence local conditions and decisions

■ Objective:

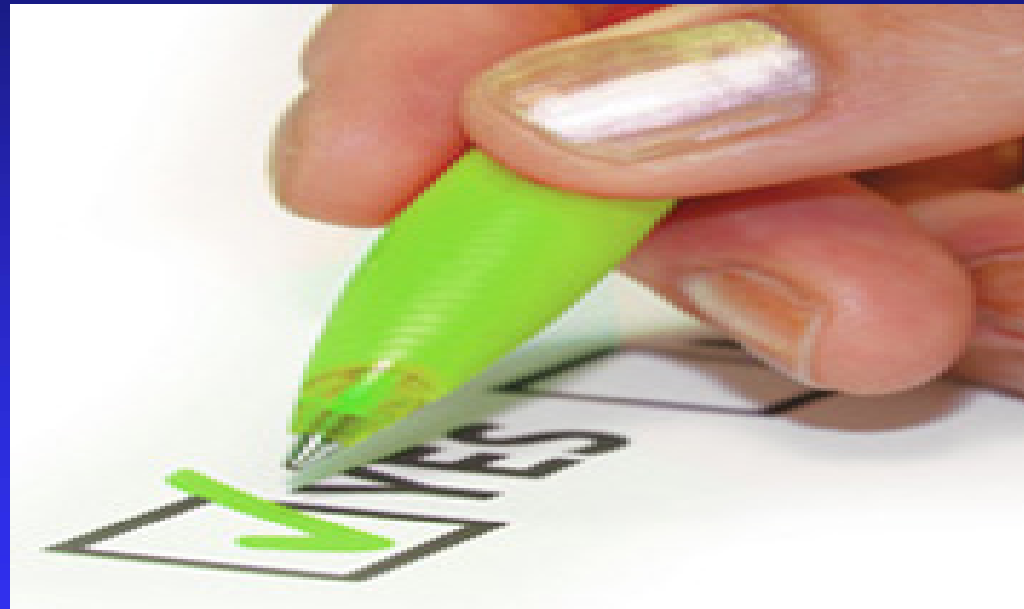
- ◆ whether people actually participate in civic affairs and influence their locality – eg: school governors, councillors, members of local partnerships, neighbourhood organisations etc
- ◆ Real opportunities and rights provided through law, contract or other official record – which do not need to be exercised to exist.

Some examples

- Governor Services
- Street Care
- Open spaces
- PCT:
 - ◆ Diabetes Care
- NEETS
- Highways

Keeping it real!

- We've been here & there...and now we're back again
- So be wary of national indicators which only skim the surface



- Let's ensure this is a tick box exercise that makes a difference