



# **Newcastle Citizens Assembly Evaluation**

**Final Report**

May 2011

## **Acknowledgments**

Thank you very much to everyone who took part in the Newcastle Citizens Assembly evaluation process.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Introduction

Newcastle Citizens Assembly began in 2009 as a new process to engage communities in the work of the Newcastle Partnership. The project hosts, Newcastle Healthy City (NHC), commissioned Northumbria University to carry out this second and final evaluation of the project during March-May 2011. The evaluation aims were: to update the recommendations from the first evaluation report; to identify lessons learned from the project; to update on service improvements; and to provide examples of good practice. Data was provided through semi-structured interviews, an online survey, and documentary analysis.

### Recommendations update

2010 recommendation	Update
To work with more people	Two further cycles of events have been run
To develop and manage relationships with other organisations	Other VCS groups have been engaged, but no Memorandum of Understanding was forged
To actively promote the project	Facebook site set up and marketing consultant employed for a short period
Sustainability and success	Little progress due to wider context changes
Capacity issues	Additional staff have been taken on
Funding	100% funding bid to the Newcastle Fund was unsuccessful
Value for money	This was never identified as a priority by the funders
Governance structure	Governance of the project moved to the Newcastle Partnership CEF officer group
Enhance impact on service providers	Feedback events and follow-on work have involved service providers
Strategic alignment	The project's independent status may have created confusion regarding its strategic fit
Dealing with difficult improvements	Careful facilitation of groups means no problems have arisen
More effective leadership from Newcastle Partnership	Some confusion identified as to whose role this was: the Council or Newcastle Partnership
Mapping exercise	Community Empowerment website fulfils this role
More collaborative working in the VCS	Some joint working occurs, but some organisations appear to opt out
Definitions of community engagement	No progress
Engaging Elected Members	No progress

## **Lessons learned**

### **1. Community engagement**

The project featured successful and well-executed community engagement. The events had a unique and informal feel, and were accessible. The use of social media was effective.

Groups were keen to be involved so that they could highlight issues that concerned them and receive useful information and support. Part of the appeal of the model was that it was presented in a simple and straightforward way which people could easily grasp.

### **2. Improvement process**

The improvement process was *'solution-focused'*, people-centred, and encouraged normal discussion of issues. Heavy burdens were not placed on people's time (although demands on staff time and skills were high). Improvements raised by groups were often cross-cutting rather than relating to single themes within the Sustainable Communities Strategy; many ideas related to the public realm. Participants enjoyed developing improvements, meeting new people, and watching their group develop passion and cohesion through the process. It was highlighted that taking part in such a deliberative process has in some ways been more important than the actual outcome.

### **3. Work with service providers**

Survey respondents reported new or improved working relations with a number of service providers, although some reported a *'lack of co-operation'*. Service provider engagement with the project was slow in some cases, and may have been tokenistic rather than being embedded within agencies at a strategic level. The lack of any obligation to take on any improvements was considered *'disappointing'*, yet agencies engaged with groups despite this. Discussions between service providers and community groups were compared to co-production approaches. However, service providers often lacked the resources to incorporate improvements in the short term. Involvement in the project had led to some changes in agencies, and also highlighted the *'need for joined-up provision'*.

### **4. Governance, management and leadership**

The project was considered to be well-managed and run by a highly-focused team. Changes in key agency personnel and local community engagement structures may have had a negative impact on the developing project, and also on the political support it received. The role of Newcastle Partnership and the project's Task Group, and the possibility of having high profile champions, were discussed, as was the project's potential role in revitalising local democracy.

**Value for money**

A lot of work has been achieved by a small staff team, the engagement work of the project was recognised as valuable, and the majority of improvements raised have resulted in positive progress being made. However, it was suggested that the project had not engaged with a large enough number of people (although there were no targets for this in the project SLA), or made much progress in reaching 'new' groups or people who were not already engaged.

**Improvements update**

Updates were provided on progress made to date on the improvements proposed in the first cycle of project activity.

<b>Improvement</b>	<b>Progress</b>
01 Look after our Newcastle	Children's bin designs were chosen to decorate bins, but cost was a problem. The Council's community engagement team is now applying for ward-based funding to take it forward.
02 Develop opportunities for shared family learning clubs	Discussion is ongoing regarding holding a Spotlight Event on informal learning and activities. The group proposing the improvement are now involved in new activities at a local centre.
03 Visual communications on Metro trains	Visual displays are now in situ but due to technical problems are not yet switched on. Nexus and DeafLink are now in direct contact about access issues.
04 Develop more culturally appropriate activities for older women	The Quality of Life partnership are progressing the improvement with research and focus groups about current provision, and are working with HAREF.
05 Suitable activities for adults with learning disabilities	Group members were signposted to existing provision and have expanded their range of activities.
06 Informal health information sessions	A pilot programme of sessions was run; the group has identified the need for partnership work and identifying 'what works'.
07 Improved access to public toilets	NE1 has started a 'Use Our Loos' scheme in Newcastle.
08 Enhance our parks for use by all the community	The group met with a representative from the Council's Parks and Countryside team, but have received no updates from him. The Head of Community Engagement is now following this up.
09 More suitable activities for young people	The group was signposted to existing provision and the Council's Integrated Youth Service staff agreed to take their suggestions forward and keep them informed of progress.
10 Improve public transport by bus	The group now has direct involvement in this issue via the Public Transport Users Group.

<b>Improvement</b>	<b>Progress</b>
11 People not drinking alcohol in public places	A number of steps have been taken to address this issue, including the Police's Safer Summer Streets initiative.
12 The sustainability of old buildings	The group visited several regeneration and heritage projects, and discussed their ideas with service providers.
13 Keep cleaner, be greener	The group is seeking funding to do research and a DVD project, and have made links with other agencies to discuss their ideas.
14 Unpaid carers to be able to access breaks from caring	Funding is available for this purpose from 2011 onwards.

### **Good practice**

Good practice was identified in the following areas:

1. Using successful methods to engage people in community activity;
2. Providing opportunities for local citizens to meet new people;
3. The supportive role of project staff in helping people through the process and managing their expectations;
4. Giving small groups a voice on city issues, and helping them to make the most of this opportunity;
5. An informal style of engagement which made people feel comfortable and confident;
6. Providing opportunities for joint deliberation and discussion;
7. Raising people's awareness about the realities (and limits) of service provision;
8. Running accessible and high profile events;
9. Providing useful feedback to service providers;
10. Having a Task Group to provide input for the project and feed back information through their organisations;

### **Succession**

The end of the project in March 2011 has left a gap in provision as well as the loss of its identity, brand and profile. A need was highlighted for informal and unstructured community engagement activity which fits into the network of community engagement work within the city and has the support of service providers. Issues regarding independence, resources, and hard-to-reach-out-to groups were also highlighted.

## **Final recommendations**

The key recommendations arising from the Citizens Assembly project are as follows:

### **1. Community engagement approaches**

- Use a light, informal approach that people find easy to engage with.
- Focus on positive solutions rather than problems.
- Avoid making too many demands on people's time or energy.
- Provide opportunities for people to deliberate and discuss their ideas with service providers and decision makers.
- Avoid creating conflict-driven situations by taking a tactful and diplomatic approach. Try to be aware of local political, strategic, and interpersonal factors which may lead to problems.
- Be aware that it can take a lot of time (and resources) to engage effectively with communities.
- Encourage groups to 'take ownership' of their plans or ideas, and to take them forward independently.
- Bring people together at a city-wide level to enable them to find mutual interests, support and strength.
- Plan community events using the [Organising an Accessible Event](#) guide.
- Make use of other good practice suggestions highlighted in this report (see section 8).

### **2. Community engagement strategies**

- Use a combination of different engagement methods and activities (including individual approaches) in order to reach a wide range of citizens and groups.
- Community engagement can be resource-intensive; invest sufficient resources to ensure activities can be effectively organised and managed.
- Allow community engagement initiatives sufficient timescales to develop and mature, and to demonstrate their impact.
- Evaluation of community engagement activity is essential to find out how effective it is and whether it offers value for money.

### **3. Promoting citizen involvement in decision-making**

- Partnership working: good communication between and within departments and agencies is necessary to run services effectively and to make improvements. Cross-departmental and cross-agency approaches can be even more beneficial.
- All stakeholders need to be genuinely committed to citizen involvement, and to recognise it as a positive process that can have clear benefits for both service providers and service users.



- Financial investment by service providers in involving and consulting users in decision making processes can lead to cost savings by resulting in more effective, efficient and targeted service provision.
- Transparency is needed in decision-making processes: who is making decisions, on what basis, and to benefit whom?
- Independent citizen involvement processes (such as the Citizens Assembly) can be advantageous; they are people-focused, have no agenda, and minimise duplication by using a single process to feed information to multiple service providers. However, there is a need for a responsible lead agency (or partnership) which is in a position to ensure that service providers engage with and respond to the results of such a process.

### **Conclusion**

Newcastle Citizens Assembly provided a valuable opportunity to develop and test a new community engagement model which is informal, open, positive, and easy to engage with. The project has led to some new initiatives and changes in the way local services are provided. Its legacy includes heightened capacity among participating groups, and new relationships between local citizens and service providers. The project model, lessons learned through its delivery, and good practice identified through the process provide a solid foundation for future innovative community engagement activity.

## 1. Introduction

Newcastle Citizens Assembly began in 2009 as a new process to engage communities in the work of the Newcastle Partnership, the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) for the City of Newcastle upon Tyne. The Citizens Assembly acted as a platform for discussion between the citizens of Newcastle and Newcastle Partnership on city-wide issues, aiming to influence decision makers and bring about positive change by encouraging people to become 'active' citizens, and championing the issues they raised.

The project hosts, Newcastle Healthy City (NHC), commissioned Northumbria University to carry out an initial evaluation of the Citizens Assembly between November 2009 and April 2010.

This is the second and final evaluation of the Citizens Assembly. It was undertaken by the same team of researchers between March and May 2011.

## 2. Evaluation aims

The aims of the second phase of the evaluation were as follows:

- 1) To provide an update on the recommendations from the first Citizen Assembly evaluation report, which was completed in March 2010;
- 2) To identify lessons learned from the Citizens Assembly approach and model of working, including its community engagement, improvement process, and work with service providers;
- 3) To provide an update on service improvements from the first round of improvements, including responses from service providers;
- 4) To provide examples of good practice from the Citizens Assembly process and approach.

The findings section of the report considers these four aims in turn.

## 3. Evaluation methods

The first evaluation included the following research tasks: documenting the process of setting up the project; interviewing staff and partners; attending Citizens Assembly events, and running an e-voting session at one of them; conducting an online survey of participating community groups; and assembling case studies of selected groups, which documented the development of their improvements and their experience of engaging with the project. Finally, a review meeting was held with staff and key stakeholders to review the findings and frame future recommendations for the project.

For the final evaluation, the following research activities were carried out:

1. Semi-structured interviews with seven stakeholders in the Citizens Assembly. This process involved project staff and representatives of partner agencies (including local service providers who have worked with the project).
2. An online survey which targeted the voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations that have participated in the Citizens Assembly. A prize draw incentive was offered to encourage engagement in the online survey.
3. Additional documentary analysis to inform the data collection process.

# FINDINGS

## 4. Recommendations update

This section gives an update on the recommendations from the first Citizen Assembly report (March 2010), provided by the project manager for the second evaluation.

### **2010 Recommendation: To work with more people**

We recommend that the work of the Citizens Assembly is continued and extended so that more citizens can take part, especially from those communities and geographical areas that have not yet been involved in the process. The Citizens Assembly is developing a new round of improvements with groups from the East End of Newcastle.

*Update 2011:*

*The project has run two further cycles of events: the first, beginning in April 2010, focused on the East End. A feedback event was held in September 2010 and eight groups attended. In November 2010 another event was attended by ten groups. This was an intergenerational event with older people and young people, and was set up slightly differently to previous events, with a lead person working on each improvement.*

### **2010 Recommendation: To develop and manage relationships with other organisations**

Citizens Assembly staff should continue with their efforts to forge working links with other organisations with an interest in engaging with citizens and the community sector in Newcastle. In doing this, it should be stressed that the Citizens Assembly is not a threat to these organisations and may be able to help them become more accountable to the communities they serve, alongside providing a structure and mechanism for feedback. This could also help the project to tap into existing community networks via the contact lists of other organisations. We suggest the development of Memorandum of Understanding to assist with this process. Relationship building is an ongoing activity and goal for the Citizens Assembly project.

*Update 2011:*

*No Memorandum of Understanding has been established. The Governance of the Citizens Assembly has shifted to the Newcastle Partnership's Community Empowerment Framework (CEF) officer groups. Other VCS groups within the City have been engaged via further rounds of events and improvements.*

### **2010 Recommendation: To actively promote the Citizens Assembly**

Effectively communicating the role, aims and activities of the Citizens Assembly, and where it fits into the range of community engagement structures in Newcastle, will help to raise the profile of the project, while reducing any confusion about its identity and what it actually does. Part of the project's strength is its independence from other bodies, such as the

Council, and this should be communicated. The previous strategy of employing a temporary marketing consultant was successful and should be repeated. We suggest investment into branding and identity activity, along with keeping the project website up to date and exploring other networking tools such as Facebook, Twitter, and a blog to keep citizens engaged and informed. Our interviews with Newcastle City Council indicate that not all senior officers are aware of the Citizens Assembly. We suggest Newcastle Healthy City arranges officer briefing sessions to bring staff at the Council up to date with the Citizens Assembly.

*Update 2011:*

*A Facebook site has been set up for the Citizens Assembly and marketing brochures have been produced. A marketing consultant was employed for a short period of time. There has not been a briefing session for Council staff, but a brochure and covering letter was sent to most key officers and Councillors within the Council.*

### **2010 Recommendation: Sustainability and success**

The Citizens Assembly needs to develop and adapt over time so that it remains relevant and effective, or to fulfil the requirements of funders. It may be possible to develop theme-based strands of work that can be funded by the appropriate service providers, who may welcome this as a way to improve their accountability and fulfil community engagement requirements. We suggest Newcastle Healthy City and Newcastle Partnership explore what success would look like, and how it may be measured and monitored. This information will be vital for sustaining the involvement of both community groups and services providers, as well as engaging any potential funder.

*Update:*

*During summer 2010 the funder and Service Level Agreement holder began looking at the project's outcomes and wider contextual changes such as the change in Government. The Citizens Assembly was working to the LAA (Local Area Agreement) indicators, but these have now been abolished. In the context of public sector cuts and the new Coalition Government, conversations have shifted towards the Newcastle Fund and contributions to the Sustainable Communities Strategy. During this time of change, there has been little focus on issues of sustainability and success.*

### **2010 Recommendation: Capacity issues**

These will need to be addressed if the Assembly is to continue to support both existing groups and their improvements, and develop improvements with new groups. One option will be to employ more staff, which would of course have implications for project funding, or, Newcastle Healthy City and partners could explore other mechanisms, as discussed under the 'issues and risks' section of this report. Whatever approach is taken, we encourage Newcastle Healthy City to focus on 'lean' staffing structures that balance management, delivery and administration.

*Update:*

*The Citizens Assembly has been creative with staffing, taking on one volunteer initially, then employing them for eight hours per week, and bringing the Marketing Consultant back for a short period. The lack of strategic support from the NHC CEO has meant a bigger workload and more capacity problems for the project manager. The project applied to the Newcastle Fund for funding for a full-time manager and full-time networker only, but the application was not successful.*

**2010 Recommendation: Funding**

With current project funding due to end in March 2011, the project needs to review its options for future funding and consider alternative approaches. In the event that Newcastle Partnership does not provide funding beyond March 2011, the project may have to consider applying to other organisations or funding streams. The idea of asking service providers to fund theme-based work by the project is discussed in the recommendations section of this report. We suggest Newcastle Healthy City and partners engage in early discussions to start exploring a potential funding model and succession strategy. One that builds on what has already been achieved, allows for sustainable growth, demonstrates good value for money, is lean and efficient, and clearly shows strategic fit with other engagement opportunities in the City.

*Update:*

*Independent funding for the Citizens Assembly has been discussed, as well as the potential for sponsorship and selling the model (for example, if the PCT or other service providers wanted a community intelligence model). However, a 100% funding bid was made to the Newcastle Fund in the end, due to the lack of any other funding strategy emerging from the NHC Board or interim CEO.*

**2010 Recommendation: Value for money**

We suggest that any new funding model is based on offering good 'value for money'. We understand that in the context of community development work this concept is difficult to measure, monitor and demonstrate, but we think it is worth investing time to explore this concept as it will inevitably be at the fore of any potential funder.

*Update:*

*There has been no discussion or progress on this because the funders did not identify it as an issue.*

**2010 Recommendation: Governance structure**

The governance structure of the Citizens Assembly has recently been changed. It now reports to Newcastle Partnership's ICEE (Inclusion, Cohesion, Equalities and Empowerment)

Group, as well as reporting to the LSP Strategic and Delivery Boards, the Healthy City Board and its own Task Group. This arrangement is complicated and reporting is likely to take up a lot of staff time. We suggest the reporting process is revisited and streamlined, so that only one report is made to Newcastle Partnership, and then distributed through the Partnership's networks.

*Update:*

*Governance of the Citizens Assembly moved to the CEF (Community Empowerment Framework) officer group, part of the Newcastle Partnership's governance structure.*

### **2010 Recommendation: Enhance impact on service providers**

A potential weakness of the Citizens Assembly model is the inability to provide any guarantees that service providers will listen to, engage with, or act upon the improvements raised through the project. This is something that the project has already tried to address by approaching service providers with the aim of forging partnership agreements. This was not successful in the early days of the project, but service providers may become more receptive to the idea as the project continues and develops a track record. We suggest Newcastle Healthy City and Newcastle Partnership engage in discussions with services providers to explore options that are workable and manageable, so that there are clear and transparent mechanisms in place to influence decision makers. One option maybe to develop a 'contract' between Newcastle Partnership and Service Providers setting out responsibilities to explore implementation of an improvement within a particular timescale.

*Update:*

*The Citizens Assembly has had two feedback events, and from these received very good feedback from the decision makers. There has been follow-on work on each of the improvements and work with groups, and decision makers have been very positive. There are, however, issues around the lack of transparency regarding decision making in the Newcastle Partnership. It seems that this is not happening at the wider Partnership level, and it is not obvious who is making the final decisions.*

### **2010 Recommendation: Strategic alignment**

Due to time and capacity issues the strategic fit between the Citizens Assembly, and other City Council engagement and involvement opportunities have not been as robust as might be expected. Following the Council review of Community Services, a new post, Head of Community Engagement and Empowerment was created and recruited to in December 2009. This new post brings together responsibility for ward co-ordinators, community development and community facilities into one service. We believe this new appointment provides a good opportunity to explore joint working arrangements. We suggest Newcastle Healthy City and partners clarify the strategic position and fit of the Citizens Assembly with other engagement opportunities such as Ward Committees, Neighbourhood Charters and Participatory Budgeting so that the citizens of Newcastle can be presented with a clear structure of involvement and engagement.



*Update:*

*There appeared to be a feeling that the Citizens Assembly did not align that well with other activities in the City. Other groups, such as the Well Being and Health Partnership, have now started to run their own similar events. The Citizens Assembly has not had the same status as a Council structure, and this has created confusion. It is not clear how well the Citizens Assembly was articulated to Council staff, in terms of a clear message being delivered by the project and by senior Council staff. It was introduced during a time when changes were being made to engagement structures within the Council, which may have exacerbated the issue.*

**2010 Recommendation: Dealing with difficult improvements**

To date, the groups have come up with a set of reasonable, practical, and fairly simple improvements which have not been contentious or sensitive. As a matter of good practice, we suggest that the Citizens Assembly staff and partners develop internal processes for dealing with improvements, should they occur, that are 'unreasonable' or 'unsound', or seek to exclude one group or another from service delivery. Whilst such processes have not been needed, we think it is important to communicate to both groups and services providers how the Citizens Assembly would deal with such a situation should it arise. We recommend that the Community Empowerment Framework officers group champion this issue and identify a way forward.

*Update:*

*Whilst some service improvements have been difficult or complex, none have been 'unsound'. Discussions around improvements were facilitated in such a way as to weed out any potential for 'unjust' or 'unsound' improvements. If any improvements did fall into these categories, the project would have said to the originators that this improvement could not be taken forward by the Citizens Assembly. For example, an improvement was raised around accommodation for Asylum Seekers; project staff worked with a range of organisations to move this forward, but did not take it to the event because it related to a single property in one locality, and therefore did not fit the project criteria.*

**2010 Recommendation: More effective leadership from Newcastle****Partnership**

The Citizens Assembly was commissioned by the Newcastle Partnership as a mechanism for empowering the local community. However, the Newcastle Partnership has not so far taken an active leadership role with regard to the project. It is suggested that stronger leadership from Newcastle Partnership could help to fulfil several objectives: it could promote the project and its activities among local organisations; it could strengthen the project's position with regard to other organisations, such as the Council; it could champion the Citizens Assembly model as good practice among its networks; and it could facilitate better

partnership working with other organisations. Furthermore, the Newcastle Partnership could be in a position to encourage its service provider partners to commit to acting on improvements raised through the Citizens Assembly process. We recommend a dialogue between Newcastle Healthy City and Newcastle Partnership is established to discuss leadership roles and responsibilities.

*Update:*

*There seems to have been some confusion as to whose role this was, with both the Council's community engagement team and Newcastle Partnership assuming that the other would take it on. There appears to be an issue regarding leadership and co-ordination of community engagement within the city in general, not just affecting the Citizens Assembly but wider networks too.*

### **2010 Recommendation: Mapping exercise**

In order to ensure that the Citizens Assembly is working with a wide range of community groups we suggest that Newcastle Partnership lead a mapping exercise to identify both current engagement work in Newcastle and the range, profile, and location of community groups. This information should be developed into a 'live' database which organisations can add to as they come across new community groups. This information should be used to alert community groups in Newcastle to the range of engagement opportunities that are available to them, and used by the Citizens Assembly to target community groups.

*Update:*

*There is a Community Empowerment website which is supposed to co-ordinate all engagement work in the City, but it is not certain how well used this is.*

### **2010 Recommendation: More collaborative working in the Voluntary and Community Sector**

A number of evaluation respondents commented that organisations in the Voluntary and Community Sectors in Newcastle tend to be unwilling to work in partnership. We believe that greater commitment to joint working with more collaboration, better co-ordination of community engagement and participation activities, less working in 'silos' and less duplication of effort could be highly beneficial to the Sector as a whole. This is particularly important at the moment when the sector is facing large funding cuts. We suggest exploring Memorandum of Understandings between key organisations as a way of not only developing more collaborative working arrangements, but to also clarify areas of work and roles and responsibilities in order to avoid confusion and duplication of effort. An Away Day is planned for the Newcastle Citizens Assembly Task Group members and other stakeholders in May 2010 to discuss the findings of this Evaluation.

*Update:*

*Key organisations have worked together, but some have withdrawn from the Citizens Assembly, and some organisations have made a decision not to work with the Citizens Assembly (this may have been in reaction to 2009 funding decisions, in which some organisations lost significant amounts of grant money through the restructuring of VCS engagement).*

**2010 Recommendation: Definitions of community engagement**

There is a need for greater clarity and shared understanding of what is meant by the term 'community engagement'. Issues such as representativeness, tokenism and the problem of 'the usual suspects' continue to be argued but with no real conclusions. Linked to this is the question of whether there is a genuine commitment from local authorities and government 'to pass power into the hands of local communities so as to generate vibrant local democracy in every part of the country and give real control over local decisions and services to a wider pool of active citizens' (CLG, 2008: 12). We suggest Newcastle Healthy City and Newcastle Partnership reach a common understanding as to who the key audience for the Citizens Assembly is, and that this is communicated to all stakeholders.

*Update:*

*This issue has been raised but there has been no progress. There is no consensus or agreement about what is meant by Community Engagement, nor is there a willingness to explore or evaluate Community Engagement work in the City.*

**2010 Recommendation: Engagement with Elected Members**

We recommend Newcastle Healthy City and Newcastle Partnership engage with Elected Members in Newcastle City Council to identify a process for improvements suggested by community groups to find their way into the Political System. Such a process will also help with recommendation 2.9, enhancing the impact of the Citizens Assembly on Service Providers.

*Update:*

*The project recognises that this is an area of work which has not progressed. However, it seems that additional help was needed to achieve this, for instance by making involvement of Councillors part of the internal structures of the Council. It was, however, acknowledged that work with Elected Members is both important and needed.*

## 5. Lessons learned

This section identifies lessons learned from the Citizens Assembly approach and model of working, with specific reference to: community engagement; the improvement process; work with service providers; and governance, management and leadership.

### 5.1 Community engagement

The community development work carried out by the project was considered by stakeholders to have been very well done. The project was considered to have successfully engaged with local people and therefore to have *'achieved what it set out to do'*. No specific numerical targets for community engagement were set for the project.

Citizens Assembly events were praised for their *'unique'*, informal feel and interesting and innovative approach. The effort made to make the events accessible was acknowledged.

One stakeholder commented that the project's community engagement work through social media had been successful in engaging new people into the Citizens Assembly process. The same person thought the fact that this work was not Council-branded was vital to its success.

There were some doubts as to how well the project succeeded in engaging with people or groups that did not already have a *'voice'* within local networks. This may have happened to some extent, but the *'usual suspects'* were also represented, especially in the early stages of the project. However, it was acknowledged that this was a big challenge and that such un-engaged groups are by their nature very difficult to reach. Furthermore, in the words of one stakeholder, *'you've got to start somewhere'*.

Survey respondents were asked why their group got involved in the Citizens Assembly. The two key reasons – each cited by about half of respondents - were that they viewed the project as a new forum through which they could draw the attention of service providers to key issues that concerned them; and that it was a way to access information, advice and support to help them take an improvement forward.

Project staff emphasised the importance of presenting the model to people in a very simple and straightforward way, to encourage them to engage with it. Although the process has been multi-layered and has required a lot of behind-the-scenes work and preparation by project staff, its transparency and simplicity has been stressed when engaging people to participate in it, and this appears to have been a key part of the project's appeal.

## 5.2 Improvement process

Several people remarked on how positive they found the *'solution-focused'* approach of the project in developing improvements, which they preferred to a focus on problems and complaints.

One stakeholder said they thought the *'honest'* and people-centred approach of the project, which gave people the chance to discuss issues in a *'normal way'* which was non-political and unforced (as opposed to more formal consultation approaches), was refreshing.

Asking people to think about their improvement at a city-wide level was seen as an important way of reducing the potential for conflict by removing the personal and local element, and encouraging people to see connections between themselves and other city residents.

One person remarked that the project worked in such a way as not to place heavy burdens on people's time. It made an effort to fit in with other group events and activities, and to make the experience of participating in the Citizens Assembly quick, easy, and positive.

However, using such an approach was time-consuming for the project and required good facilitation skills and confidence in the approach. Staff visited some groups a number of times to help them prepare their improvement. It appears that encouraging groups to move from local issues to city-wide issues was a particular challenge in some cases (and was not always completely achieved).

The project used the Sustainable Community Strategy and its themes (Economy, Health, Environment, Housing, Safer Communities, and Children and Young People) as a framework for improvements. Staff found it a challenge to articulate detailed strategy to groups in a jargon-free way to show how it relates to people's lives, while at the same time encouraging groups to be proactive, open and positive in developing their improvements within the structure of the themes. A tension was identified between people's ideas and the Strategy's themes, which appear to be addressed using a *'silo'* approach, whereas the ideas emerging tended to be more cross-cutting and often embraced several themes at once.

One stakeholder commented on the large proportion of improvements that were developed relating to the public realm (e.g. open and shared spaces within the city). The same person suggested that analysis of common themes within the range of improvements identified may help city service providers to plan their future work priorities.

Survey respondents were asked how they came up with their idea for an improvement. A quarter said their group had a clear idea for an improvement from the outset. Around half said their group had various ideas at the outset of the process but they quickly agreed upon

one idea. Two said they consulted service users and chose the most popular idea. All said they were happy with the improvement that they took forward.

When asked what they most enjoyed about the improvement process, nearly half said meeting new people and watching their group develop cohesion and passion through the process, while a third said developing and exploring their improvement idea. The least enjoyable aspects of the improvement process included the tight timescales they had to work in (mentioned by three quarters of respondents).

More than one person made the point that the Citizens Assembly has involved participation in a deliberative process, and that taking part in this process has in some ways been more important than the actual outcome.

### **5.3 Work with service providers**

Project staff commented that there was not a single point of contact for them at the Council or any other agencies in terms of a specific department that they had clear links with. Instead they directly approached the key officers that they deemed most appropriate on a case-by-case basis for each improvement that was proposed.

Project staff met with most service providers before the feedback events to make sure they were clear about their role. They also tried to ensure that where possible, a range of service providers attended so that they could give different views; *'flexibility and thinking differently about moving things forward was an important part of the process'*. Service providers were also encouraged to be honest with the groups regarding any resource or other constraints that prevented them from being able to act on improvements.

Project staff made it clear that the aim of the Citizens Assembly was not to do service providers' jobs for them regarding community outreach and public consultation, but to champion the interests of groups it worked with.

Survey respondents reported new or improved working relations with a number of service providers as a result of participation in the Citizens Assembly, including: Newcastle City Council, Newcastle Primary Care Trust, Newcastle Youth Council, Nexus and a range of local voluntary and community sector organisations. Two thirds said they had found such contact worthwhile, while one third remained neutral on this matter (often this was because it had not led to any change in service provision).

Several stakeholders said they thought that engagement of service providers had initially been slow – one mentioned *'frustration'* that not all agencies were in attendance at the first event - although it was acknowledged that levels of engagement improved as the project progressed.

One service provider representative expressed disappointment at not having been involved in the Citizens Assembly's work at an earlier stage or having the opportunity to work more closely with the project. He suggested that this may be due to ingrained ways of working, saying '*this raises some issues within the City Council around our need for joined-up provision*'. Had such links been established at an earlier stage, this individual said he would have tried to ensure the project was embedded into local governance arrangements on the Local Strategic Partnership.

Generally, it seems that the response from service providers, when asked to consider improvements, was good – they were interested and willing to engage in the process by meeting groups and discussing their ideas. However, one interviewee suggested that there may have been a tendency for them to see the Citizens Assembly as an extra burden on them, rather than an opportunity.

An issue has emerged regarding the transfer of knowledge within service provider agencies. In one case, an individual staff member from one agency that had worked with the project had taken early retirement just before the evaluation, and had not briefed any of his colleagues on his involvement with the Citizens Assembly, with the result that the agency now has no record of any involvement in the project. This suggests that the agency's approach to the project was rather tokenistic, rather than being embedded at a higher strategic level.

One described the process of discussions between service providers and community groups as being similar to co-production approaches, highlighting the opportunities for shared learning and problem solving with regard to service improvement. Crucially, this was a two-way process, with a '*dialogue*' being established, and both groups and service providers sharing knowledge and asking questions of each other.

There was a suggestion from one stakeholder that it may be difficult to build up trust between service providers and community groups, because they are likely to have very different agendas, and they may not be entirely honest about their motives for becoming involved in a project like the Citizens Assembly.

One stakeholder suggested that the project model – which took pains to manage people's expectations and continually warned community groups not to get their hopes up – may have set up an expectation that service providers were unlikely to be responsive regarding improvements.

One person said they felt it was disappointing that agencies were not obliged to take on any improvements. This was thought to be linked to the Council's lack of senior '*buy-in*' to the Citizens Assembly (which was mentioned by more than one person). However, the same person said they were heartened to see that agencies had engaged with groups despite this.

### Case study 1: A service provider's experience

A stakeholder whose role is to co-ordinate the work of a local partnership of organisations providing services for vulnerable adults described his involvement with the Citizens Assembly. He was contacted in March 2010 and asked to meet with a community group the following week at a project feedback event. The group had presented an improvement asking for more activities for adults with learning difficulties.

Despite the short notice, which gave him little time to prepare a response, he was happy to go along, and he felt that the meeting was productive. He explained that there was no budget available to make any improvements, but promised to put them in touch with Learning Disability Champions who would be able to inform them of all existing provision. He also agreed to visit them again for further discussion.

Following this, however, he thinks a misunderstanding arose, in which the community group was led to believe he would be able to do more in terms of providing new activities. This raised their expectations unrealistically, and the next meeting he had with the group went badly as a result. He felt that he was *'put in a position'* and he also felt sorry for the group members, whose hopes were raised that something would happen immediately to improve the situation, when this was not the case.

His feeling is that everyone suffered as a result of this misunderstanding, and he suggested that safeguards should be put in place to prevent people ending up more frustrated and disenfranchised than before by their involvement.

Despite this, this stakeholder still asserted that his involvement with the project, and the meetings with the community group, were useful, informative and valuable.

The issue of independence was viewed by some stakeholders as a vital issue. The project was independent of the Council (this was described by one interviewee as *'a mixed blessing'*), but at the same time it was important that it had some degree of *'buy-in'* from the local authority; without this it is hard to see how the project could have any influence on service provision.

Because it was independent, the Citizens Assembly had the task of trying to build and maintain good relationships with service providers, while also trying to persuade them to act on improvements. As one person said, this was a difficult position to be in and the project was left to rely on *'goodwill alone'*.

More than once, service provider representatives described how difficult it was to respond to improvements in a more meaningful way due to timing; they felt they were given little



notice about improvements (partly a result of the project's short timescales and heavy staff workload).

One service provider representative made the point that some service providers may have found it easy to incorporate improvements into their work plans, for instance if they were already planning to do them anyway, or because the improvement was a small-scale, discrete or one-off activity that was relatively easy to implement without requiring large funds or a big lead-in time. In such cases, this individual argued that, although there was not much change in actual outcomes, a win-win situation was created where the agency involved had its plans affirmed by the community, and the group felt that they had genuinely influenced change.

A key issue was the lack of uncommitted resources that service providers had access to in order to effect any improvements, at least in the short term. Service priorities are usually set - and budgets committed accordingly – on at least an annual basis, with the result that agencies are not freely able to respond to proposed improvements by altering service provision.

### **Case study 2: a service provider's experience**

The Head of Newcastle Council's Environmental Service became involved in the project following a proposed plan to collect grass cuttings with a view to using them as an alternative fuel source. This was part of an overall 'green' improvement put forward in the first round of project activity (Improvement 13; see section 7: Improvements update for more information).

Although this initial idea proved to be unworkable, he met with the group that had proposed it to explain further, and ended up having a detailed discussion about the waste collection service and the group's thoughts and ideas. He felt that both parties gained knowledge and understanding from this experience. The group explained that they thought grass cuttings left behind look messy and can cause a slipping hazard in wet weather; although there has been no immediate action, details of this issue have been fed in to the service improvement plan. The group was also invited on a visit of the city's recycling plants so they could find out more about what goes on locally.

This service provider had this to say about his involvement with the project:

*'The group were aware of Council targets and national work on environmental issues and were keen to explore what could be done at a local level. We were really pleased with this and to have met the group as a lot of our work is about behavioural change in the context of sustainability...it was a very constructive session.'*

Several representatives of service providers welcomed the opportunity presented by the project for them to engage with communities which they had not previously reached. In some cases, agencies were able to make contact with groups and individuals they described as *'disenfranchised'*. One person said *'we do struggle to get into communities...but we need to have relationships at a local level'*.

Other existing methods of engagement such as ward committees and Charters were considered to be helpful to an extent, but there were doubts as to how well they reflected *'the ambitions and concerns that the broader community have'*. As a result, agency representatives said they welcomed having a wide range of opportunities and avenues with which to engage with local people.

Two stakeholders said that they had changed the way in which their services were provided as a result of their involvement with the project. In one case, this involved making it easier for people to access information about services. In the other, the service is making changes to the way it engages with service users. To this end it is looking at developing a range of innovative solutions including partnership working, cross-Council work, and a more informal governance structure. The team is seeking specialist advice from the Council's Education Engagement Officer Team.

A quarter of survey respondents said the least enjoyable aspect of their involvement in the process was the *'lack of co-operation'* or *'resistance'* among service providers regarding engaging with their group. Others were disappointed by the lack of tangible impact or change as a result of their improvement.

## 5.4 Management, leadership and governance

Most stakeholders believed that the project was well managed and run by what was described as a small but highly focused staff team. The project manager was thought to have done '*a lot of great work*' to make the project a success, and the work and dedication of the community networkers was also praised.

One stakeholder highlighted the different ways in which the two community networkers operated, and they thought the staffing change midway through the project had led to a small change in the '*feel*' of the project in its later stages (though this was not thought to be either better or worse than before – simply different). This highlights the personal factor of community development work: staff personalities can influence the process and results.

It was highlighted that project staff had a difficult job to do in building and maintaining relationships with such a wide range of different people – including community groups, the wider Voluntary and Community Sector, and service providers.

Project staff felt that there was insufficient leadership and strategic direction from Newcastle Healthy City, which left staff having to fulfil this role themselves. This may have been due in part to several changes in management personnel at Healthy City during the life of the project.

Changes in personnel in the leading agencies (primarily the Council), and changes in community engagement structures at a city level, are both thought to have impacted on the developing project. There may have been a lack of consistency and continuity as a result, as well as a degree of general uncertainty around what structures there were and where the project fitted in.

The degree of political support the project had from the Council was not consistent throughout the project due to changes in personnel. The previous Council Leader was a more active champion of the project, but when he left and a new Leader was in post, there appeared to be less support for the project; as one person said, '*it may have slipped down the agenda*' at this point.

One person said they thought the project would have benefited from being more actively supported by Newcastle Partnership's Strategic Board; they thought that it could have had a role in influencing and '*chivvying*' service providers.

Although Newcastle Partnership's lack of leadership had been cited as a problem in the last report, stakeholders considered that it was right to take a '*hands-off*' approach. It was felt that it was not the Partnership's role to push the project – it made links and encouraged partners to respond positively, but the project needed to create its own relationships to be really effective (and in many cases it was thought to have done just that). However, the lack

of higher level input from Newcastle Partnership, along with the involvement of the Council's Head of Community Engagement, was thought to have led to a more Council-focused approach.

The Citizens Assembly Task Group initially had a role in steering the project as it developed. The group stopped meeting latterly, and one interviewee felt that this may have made the project more isolated, and potentially affected Task Group members' goodwill towards it.

One stakeholder suggested that it was sometimes difficult to engage Task Group members in the project – and that they did not always feed back information about it within their own organisations - and it was also hard to arrange meetings which suited all members.

The idea that the Task Group potentially had a range of useful functions – ensuring the project has a wide network of 'friends' and supporters who can support and promote it, give advice and opinions, and also assist with the difficult job of managing relationships within the city (which has been a key challenge for the project) – was discussed.

The idea of having a high profile champion of the project, who could lend support and influence service providers to engage more fully with improvements and community groups proposing them, was put forward by at least one person. Others felt that there should have been a direct relationship between the project and service providers, so that the project was more able to influence them.

Since the last evaluation report, the governance of the Citizens Assembly has moved within Newcastle Partnership from the ICEE (Inclusion, Cohesion, Equalities and Empowerment) Group to the CEF (Community Empowerment Framework) Officer Group.

One of the aims of the Citizens Assembly was to enable local people to have a 'platform' to share their ideas regarding the way the city is run. However, as one stakeholder thought, this was always going to be a difficult job for the project because it was so small, lacked in political support, because its independence made it *'fragile'*. The result of these factors was that while it did make a contribution to engagement and empowerment, it could not be expected to have much impact in terms of re-invigorating local democracy.

The same person argued that for such a project to really re-vitalise local democracy, it would have to have been Council-led, because the Council is the main body that it would ultimately be challenging.

## 6. Value for money

The entire award granted to run the Citizens Assembly project, from 2009 to 2011, was £250,000. The greater part of this sum, £161,082, has been spent on staff salaries. This included staff costs for the project manager and community networker, plus a contribution of 30% towards the NHC CEO's salary. Of the rest, just under £30,000 has been allocated to running Citizens Assembly events, £28,000 has been spent on office costs, £18,750 on management, and £6,634 on printing and publicity. This left the project with a balance of £5,916 to fund the final evaluation.

Opinions were mixed regarding the value for money offered by the project. While most stakeholders expressed the opinion that the Citizens Assembly was a '*valuable*' project and had not been a waste of money, some thought it offered poorer value than other methods of engaging local communities.

One person said they thought the project had been relatively expensive '*when you consider the number of people that have been engaged through it*'. 42 different community groups were engaged to take part in the process of proposing improvements. Statistics collected by the project indicate that a total of 530 people supported the first round of improvements, and that by the end of the project around 800 people had been involved through a combination of email, text, and completing support forms.

Several people suggested that a huge amount had been achieved in a very short time by just two staff members.

Interviewees mentioned several different factors relating to the value of the project. For instance, one said that if it did genuinely engage with new people and groups that did not have access to other channels of involvement, then this was very valuable. It appears that it did do this to a certain extent, although not exclusively.

Another thought that if a reasonable number (i.e. at least half) of the improvements identified through the project had led to actual changes in service provision, then this would indicate good value for the project. Section 7 of this report describes the progress that has been made – and is in some cases still continuing to be made - regarding the initial round of 14 improvements, showing that the majority of improvements have been followed up to some extent, and some have been fully achieved.

The quality of the engagement achieved is also an important factor. One stakeholder highlighted the value and importance of establishing a dialogue between public sector agencies and community groups, such as the project has done, saying '*it is hard to put a price on it*'. As an example of this, members of a group in the Outer West of the city, who had proposed environmental improvements, recently attended the Newcastle Partnership's

Environment, Housing, and Transport Delivery Partnership to discuss related issues as a direct result of their involvement with the Citizens Assembly.

Regarding the cost of delivering the project, one interviewee pointed out that engagement work is very costly and resource-intensive if done properly and accessibly (e.g. with an appropriate venue, catering, interpreters, speech to text typists, crèche, and transport costs). Using a community development approach can place high demands on staff time, because of the need to work at a pace which suits all group members.

The project ultimately ran for a short time period (approximately 18 months) and had high initial set-up costs; it is possible that the value for money offered by the project may have improved if it had been funded for a longer period.

Potential comparators for the project in terms of value for money were suggested by some interviewees. One person suggested that the Council's 'Udecide' Participatory Budgeting project had provided better value for money than the Citizens Assembly; the pilot Udecide programme ran from 2006-2008 and engaged 4,500 people to have a say in spending £280,000. However, this may not be a useful comparison: Udecide gave people the chance to decide how Council money would be spent to run services, unlike the Citizens Assembly. It also had more direct Council support, which is likely to have been an advantage.

Another possible comparator was the Council-run Newcastle Neighbourhood Day, which invited community groups to get to know their neighbours, and offered grants of up to £200. This initiative had a budget of £15,000 and engaged '*a significant number of groups*'; one stakeholder suggested it gave good value for money in terms of engaging with a broad range of people. However, while this project did engage with local people, it did not aim to give them a '*voice*' with regard to local services, unlike the Citizens Assembly.

No information was available on the value for money offered by community engagement comparators such as Ward Committees or Neighbourhood Charters.

## 7. Improvements update

This section tracks progress made on service improvements from the first round of improvements, including responses from service providers. The most recent (update) information was provided by project staff in March 2011.

### **Improvement 01: Look after our Newcastle**

Proposed by 5-12 year olds from Nunsmoor Centre's Summer Play Scheme

#### **Progress**

This improvement was moved forward by Sue Shaw, Newcastle City Council's Neighbourhood Response Manager and Dawn Brown, Newcastle City Council's Community Engagement and Empowerment Service working with Nunsmoor Centre staff. Seven of the children's bin designs were selected to be printed onto a hard wearing material and put on around 70 bins in Elswick and Wingrove. The children helped workers to display the designs on the bins.

At the Newcastle Citizens Assembly Feedback Event held in March 2010, members of Deaflink offered to help put the designs onto the bins. The event was covered by the media.

#### *Update:*

*Sue Shaw has left her post. In our final conversation she stated the costs for the luminous designs were too expensive for her budget to cover. Following discussion at the CEF Officers Group Meeting, it was agreed that the Council's community engagement team would follow up the work, applying for money through the 'Green in Wingrove' ward project to move it forward. The Nunsmoor Centre will remain involved in the work. The Citizens Assembly manager will also raise the issue at the new NCC Environment Group meeting in May 2011.*

### **Improvement 02: Develop opportunities for shared family learning clubs at existing local facilities**

Proposed by Westgate Hill Primary School Parents Group

#### **Progress**

A meeting with Louise Borrell, Newcastle City Council's Family Learning Coordinator took place to discuss the improvement and a member of her team attended the Feedback Event in March 2010 to explain family learning priorities across the city. She felt these priorities did not cover the ideas the group proposed. During discussions at this event, the group agreed that more information on what activities are available and whether existing buildings can be utilised by the community for family learning were still important improvements for Newcastle. They also felt that there needed to be more support available for people who are interested in setting up a group.

The group had an initial meeting with Glen Pendleton, Newcastle City Council's Community Assets Coordinator, to discuss their improvement. The Citizens Assembly Manager also met with Helen Wilding, Newcastle Partnership's Wellbeing and Health (W & H) Coordinator to discuss holding a 'Spotlight Event' on informal learning, activities and places where people meet.

*Update:*

*The Parents Group has now moved to the West End Women and Girls Centre and are currently involved in a range of new activities with support from development workers at the Centre. There has been no further information on whether a 'Spotlight Event' will take place. However, Barbara Douglas (VCS Rep on the W & H Board) has assured us this issue is being discussed at their meetings. Glen Pendleton is currently leading work in the city on Community Hubs and community facilities, which he says will involve local people.*

### **Improvement 03: Visual communications on Metro trains**

Proposed by Deaflink

#### **Progress**

Metro Trains Electronic Visual Displays have been installed and went live in April 2010. They are in all carriages and show the route, the next station and any alerts of changes to the service. Team consultants are looking at ideas for accessible signs in bus stations and interchanges, and meetings took place between Deaflink and Nexus to discuss this. Nexus is working on visual and audible systems for Deaf and Blind People.

Next steps were identified including continuing campaigning, monitoring transport staff attitudes, meeting with the Commercial Director of Go North East to discuss the issue, and highlighting the need for deaf awareness training, and working with other deaf groups in the region.

*Update:*

*The Visual Displays have been installed on Metro trains but some are experiencing technical difficulties and are still not switched on. Nexus and Deaflink are now in direct contact about access issues.*

### **Improvement 04: Develop more culturally appropriate activities for older women**

Proposed by Mahila Mandel Women's Group

#### **Progress**

The Quality of Life Partnership (QoLP) facilitated a workshop on this issue in June 2010. QoLP are aware of the need to look into provision of informal opportunities for BME elders to take part in a range of activities. A range of organisations were present and they



discussed current activities, whether culturally-specific activities are needed, and whether mainstream activities should be more inclusive.

*Update:*

*QoLP are moving ahead with the issues identified as priorities at the workshop, and are currently carrying out their own research on activities available for BME elders. Two focus groups are planned. They will continue to work with HAREF.*

### **Improvement 05: Suitable activities for adults with Learning Disabilities, especially in the holidays**

Proposed by the Welcome Project for adults with Learning Disabilities

#### **Progress**

At the Feedback Event in March 2010 the group met with Bill Norman, Newcastle City Council's Valuing People Coordinator. They discussed a number of issues including the need for activities, funding, creating a directory of activities, networking, 'buddying', and partnership working. The group then met with Learning Disability Champions who signposted them towards current provision.

*Update:*

*Bill Norman met with the group again in November 2010. He told them a directory of activities would not be produced, as it would go out of date too quickly. The group worker has made contact with the Community Link Team which produces a small booklet on local activities. She feels the group have expanded the range of things they take part in and her project has been re-funded so she can further develop this work. Her new funding has an element concerned with expanding contact with BME communities and Citizens Assembly linked her up with Ann McNulty (HAREF) to progress this work.*

### **Improvement 06: Create informal health information sessions**

Proposed by the BME Women's Group

#### **Progress**

Through the Health and Race Equality Forum (HAREF), a pilot programme of informal health information sessions was run by the Health Improvement Service for Ethnic Minorities from the PCT. At the feedback event in March 2010 the group agreed that they had learned some new things and felt more confident as a result of these sessions. They also thought workers needed to be more mindful of cultural issues, and suggested training would be useful to achieve this.

The group agreed a number of next steps: to make a list of willing organisations and invite people to talk to them about their services in the community; to identify successful approaches that were interactive, visual and pictorial with allocated time for questions; and

sharing lessons on 'what works' with other groups. They also thought there needed to be more informal health information available, and that statutory bodies should make this information accessible across the city.

### **Improvement 07: Improved access to public toilets**

Proposed by the Elders Council

The Elders Council had carried out research on this issue, and proposed that a 'Use Our Loos' scheme be set up to increase local provision. This enables people to use the facilities at local shops and businesses, often increasing their custom at the same time. They identified next steps including seeking a sponsor and gaining support for the scheme (for instance from NE1 and Pubwatch).

*Update:*

*NE1 has started a 'Use Our Loos' scheme in Newcastle.*

### **Improvement 08: To enhance our parks for use by all of the community**

Proposed by the Dads and Male Carers Group

#### **Progress**

At the feedback event in March 2010, the group met Rob Delap from Newcastle City Council's Parks and Countryside Team to discuss the issue of keeping parks safe and ensuring a visible staff presence. He confirmed changes such as getting park staff to wear hi-vis clothing, and putting fencing round certain parks so they can be secured at night. He also said vandalism levels were very low in local parks. A number of next steps were discussed, including increasing public awareness of who park staff are, having more information signs with contact information, getting schools involved in planting, having designated dog walking areas and bins, and getting staff to liaise with police on community safety issues.

*Update:*

*Despite numerous emails and phone calls, no progress updates have been received from Rob Delap. The Head of Community Engagement at the Council is now following this up and will feed back to the group directly.*

### **Improvement 09: More suitable activities for young people, particularly boys**

Proposed by the Women's Gardening Group

#### **Progress**

At the March 2010 feedback event, the group met with Rod Stapley, the Council's Lead Specialist for Integrated Youth Services. They discussed the need for funding, suitable venues, staff and training, education, and raising awareness of existing clubs and activities. Rod confirmed that youth provision was being reviewed (although there was no extra funding available), and that targeted and preventative youth work was needed, ideally with

parent and carer participation. He suggested that 'Plings' was a good online resource with information on local activities, and also said that a lot of current activities are under-used. He promised to take the group's ideas forward and follow them up.

*Update:*

*Rod Stapley and a colleague met the group following the event and the group reported that they were happy with the outcomes of the discussion, which gave them other ideas for future work. Rod agreed to keep the group informed of progress.*

### **Improvement 10: Improve public transport by bus**

Proposed by the Friday Afternoon Group

#### **Progress**

The group met with Gordon Harrison from Nexus, who agreed to feed back their questions and suggestions to the bus providers. Group members asked about extending Sunday services at the Nexus Question Time Event in June 2010. Nexus have now set targets relating to the number of passengers using bus services on Sundays. Once targets are hit, this will provide a case to review their services. Two members of the group have joined the Elders Council following the March 2010 feedback event, and will now be part of the Transport Sub-group to champion their improvement further. The group also put Gordon in touch with other groups in the east end of Newcastle.

*Update:*

*The group is now involved with the new Public Transport Users Group. Members felt that bus services had improved and that they had gained a lot from the Assembly process, with a positive outcome overall.*

### **Improvement 11: People not drinking alcohol in public places where children play**

Proposed by 5-13 year olds from Cruddas Park After School Club

#### **Progress**

Discussions at the feedback event in March 2010 identified a need for a proactive and preventative strategy around provision for children and young people. Current activities included Anti Social Behaviour Orders for drinking alcohol in public spaces, Alcohol Watch operating in Newcastle, a Youth Crime Action Plan to tackle underage drinking, police patrols to clamp down on drinking in public places, and the police targeting shops selling alcohol to underage people. The group also heard how new legislation was being brought in April 2010 around dispersal orders to help police.

*Update:*

*The police gave a very positive response: Benwell local command extended its area to cover Cruddas Park based on the improvement and the 'Safer Summer Streets' initiative ran in several areas in 2010. The police were very happy to receive positive feedback from the children and young people.*

## **Improvement 12: The sustainability of old buildings**

Proposed by Benwell Hall Knit and Natter Group

### **Progress**

Some of the issues regarding retaining and retrofitting older buildings were discussed at the March 2010 feedback event, including: the need to meet environmental standards; how properties can be 'listed' and neighbourhoods can become 'conservation areas'; and the limited lifespan of buildings. Bridging NewcastleGateshead (BNG) provided information on its work, such as creating mixed neighbourhoods, converting Tyneside Flats in Benwell, and how it uses a consulting company for advice on whether to retain or knock down old buildings. The group were invited to visit a local retrofitted property, and to visit the Newcastle Partnership office (housed in an old building) to hear more about local urban regeneration. The group also planned to meet with the Quality of Life Partnership and the Elders Council on LIFETIME homes and access for older people, speak to the Area Regeneration Team (Heather Davidson) in Scotswood Library about the plans for Scotswood and Benwell, and get involved in the Heritage Open Days in Newcastle.

### *Update:*

*The group is extremely happy with what has happened since the feedback event and very positive about the Assembly process.*

## **Improvement 13: Keep cleaner, be greener**

Proposed by the Outer West Area Forum

### **Progress**

The group met with Science City to discuss researching the feasibility of recycling leaves, and with Rob Nichols, Newcastle City Council's Head of Environmental Services to find out what currently happens to the leaves that are collected. He was very interested in hearing innovative ideas. The group discussed doing research into recycling, such as changing people's behaviour, reasons for recycling/not recycling, good practice examples, and ways of reducing landfill. Community Furniture discussed their work recycling white goods and furniture, including the difficulties involved, the need to promote the service and work with the Council refuse service, and providing training on doing repairs.

### *Update:*

*The group met with Rob Nichols who arranged for members to visit local recycling plants. A DVD project has been proposed about changing recycling behaviours and the group is seeking*

*funding from Science City and the Council's Waste Minimisation Group for this. They hope to work with students from Northumbria University and are being supported by Jackie Bartlett from the Council. Members of the group have also attended the Council's Environment Group to discuss their ideas.*

## **Improvement 14: Unpaid carers to be able to access a break from their caring role**

Proposed by the Carers Centre Newcastle

### **Progress**

At the March 2010 feedback event, it was ascertained that the issue of breaks for carers is identified in the Primary Care Trust (PCT) 5 Year Plan and Carers Strategy, and that there will be funding available (although not for the current year). Newcastle LINK has sent a Freedom of Information request to the PCT asking a number of questions on this issue. The need for partnership working on this issue was identified (e.g. Council, PCT, and other organisations), as well as consultation with carers on what they need, and a group to be set up to make decisions on spending the available money. Staffing was noted as a problem (there had been no lead Council officer in place for six months). The need for childminding, befriending and support was flagged up, as well as seeking out information on best practice from other areas.

### *Update:*

*Newcastle LINK made two separate Freedom of Information requests and established that Newcastle PCT has £871,000 to spend in 2011/12 on breaks for carers. This was confirmed by a separate FoI request made by the Princes Royal Trust for Carers.*

*Sam Harrison (Newcastle PCT) confirmed the following:*

*'A Carers Officer has now been appointed by Newcastle City Council and NHS North of Tyne have an initiative in their strategic plan which states that 95% of all assessed carers will receive support or short breaks by 2013/14. £871,000 has been made available for short breaks for carers between April 2011 and March 2014 and the Carers Strategy Group will develop the criteria for assessment (membership of the group will include Newcastle City Council, the PCT and Voluntary and Community Sector/carers representatives)'*

## 8. Good practice

This section highlights and provides examples of good practice within the Citizens Assembly process and approach.

### 8.1 A model for promoting community activity and involvement

Survey respondents were incredibly supportive of the principle behind the Citizens Assembly, describing it as *'an opportunity for people to make a change'*, *'a platform for community activism'*, *'bringing together a diverse range of people and interest groups'...* *'to approach similar themes through different eyes'* and *'a good alternative'* to traditional means of setting priorities. Almost 85% of respondents felt the Citizens Assembly model should be used for future community engagement work.

It was described as *'an interesting tool in the armoury of engagement'*, although the person who said this thought the project had not run for long enough to be able to tell if it was a model of good practice.

### 8.2 Providing opportunities for local citizens to meet new people

Respondents were asked what they most enjoyed about being involved in the Citizens Assembly. The most common answer given was meeting new people (mentioned by 40%).

### 8.3 Helpful and supportive staff

The role of the project staff in helping people understand the processes and structures involved, and to manage their expectations, was seen as very valuable.

### 8.4 Giving small groups a voice

The project tried to give small groups a direct voice and a platform, and supported them to make the most of this opportunity. In the words of one participant, *'this is valuable and rare, and worth trying to promote'*.

### 8.5 Informal engagement style

It was suggested that the project enabled the Council to take part in discussions with local people in an informal way which allowed debate and dialogue without a political slant. Participants seemed to feel confident and comfortable expressing their views and opinions and were able to take part in an honest, constructive and informal debate.

The use of a community development approach when working with community groups and helping them to develop their improvements was praised.

## 8.6 Providing opportunities for joint deliberation and discussion

One person made the point that before the Citizens Assembly began, *'people were nervous about bringing people together on a city-wide level'*. It was suggested that the project has proved that this is possible, and has paved the way for potential new structures, such as a representative assembly of local people that could debate and deliberate on various issues.

Responses received from survey participants on what was good about the project included having an opportunity to raise issues, working with *'encouraging'* and *'helpful'* service providers, feeling part of the community and watching individuals grow in confidence. One stakeholder said: *'I can see it being useful to continue the practice of bringing people together, for example around the theme of health and well being.'*

## 8.7 Raising awareness about the realities of service provision

One of the stakeholders praised the way that the project guided people through the difficulties and challenges associated with trying to get their ideas pushed through. They felt that this was a very valuable insight into the way things work in practice, and that it probably helped people to understand how difficult it is to influence change.

## 8.8 Running successful and accessible events

The project was praised for its ability to run good quality and accessible events at high-profile local venues. This was thought to be a good way to show participants that the project took them seriously and respected their contribution and time. Around a quarter of survey participants said that one of the things they most enjoyed about the project was attending the events.

One of the improvements raised during the course of the Citizens Assembly concerned the accessibility of events, and a guide called *Organising an Accessible Event* was produced by the project in conjunction with a number of partners in November 2010 (the guide can be found [here](#)). It covers issues such as the date and timing of events, venues, publicity, bookings, crèches, interpreters, speakers, facilitators, and ground rules.

## 8.9 Providing useful feedback to service providers

A Council representative said that some departments within the Council have welcomed the feedback they have received via the project regarding the improvements that have been made, and the chance to make new links within the community.

## 8.10 Task Group

Having a task group to help guide the project's development was considered to be useful. Going to meetings was seen as a valuable way for members (mainly other voluntary and community organisations and groups) to keep up with events and activities in the project, in order to feed them through their own organisations and networks, and also gave them some ownership of it.

## 9. Succession

The Citizens Assembly project ended in March 2011. This section of the evaluation considers next steps: what could happen next, and what lessons from the project should be taken into consideration in planning future similar work in the city. Good practice elements arising from the project are identified in the previous section.

The end of the Citizens Assembly has had a number of consequences. The identity, brand and profile that the project had developed has been lost. Secondly, the one-to-one community development work that the project did with groups will no longer happen.

It seems that most of the groups that proposed improvements had *'hit their mark'* and were able to continue to champion their improvements without the help of the project or the need for an exit strategy. Any groups requiring follow-up support are being encouraged to contact Newcastle Council for Voluntary Service, and individuals will be invited to contact the Council community engagement department. However, no new work will be done with community groups now, and no new improvements will be proposed.

There is therefore a gap in provision of community engagement work (of which the project played what was described as a *'small but valuable part'*). Remaining activities now include Ward Committees and Neighbourhood Charters, Udecide, and Community Engagement Monitoring. A key question is whether this is a gap that needs to be filled, and if so, how can that best be achieved. Several stakeholders expressed the view that some of the successful aspects of the Citizens Assembly should be incorporated into ways of working within the city regarding community engagement.

Several stakeholders suggested that there is a need for informal, unstructured and supportive community engagement such as that offered by the Citizens Assembly, as well as the more formal structures such as ward committees, which can be intimidating and off-putting to newcomers. Offering opportunities for discussion and deliberation between a range of different people (e.g. community group members and service providers) is also important.

The Citizens Assembly project manager observed that for a community engagement tool to be effective, it has to be *'easy, straightforward and appropriate to people'*, and you have to make sure you do something with the results. These things will equally apply to any successor to the project.

Several interviewees made comments about the fit of any future similar project within the local context. One said that you need proper *'buy-in'*, agreement and support from the project funders from the start. Another mentioned the need for a joined-up approach across



the city, so that all of the different strands of community engagement work taking place fit together to form a coherent network of activities and organisations.

Independence was considered a key issue for the project, having been both a strength and a weakness at different times. One interviewee suggested that it may be possible to have a more mixed approach in future, which combined both independence and closer partnership working with service providers.

The limited resources that the project had – with only two staff members – made it difficult to build relationships with all of the key stakeholder groups within the city. A more well-resourced (or better-connected) project may find it possible to build a wider set of relationships, for instance with local Councillors, other Voluntary and Community organisations, and faith networks. However, it is likely that resources for any succession work will be fewer rather than greater, bearing in mind the current economic climate. It seems likely that there will be less intensive one-to-one style work with community groups in future, possibly in favour of a more strategic approach.

The question of how and where to reach groups and individuals who are not currently engaged in any networks arose during the evaluation. It would appear that a useful strategy is to ensure that a number of different routes and methods of engagement are available (including targeted, localised, and city-wide approaches), and that a diverse range of groups and organisations is involved in these. This may enable wider engagement which goes beyond the '*usual suspects*'.

Local partnerships and service providers may wish to use lessons from the project when developing their own initiatives to engage with local communities regarding service delivery. Such work would be from a different perspective (i.e. that of service provider rather than local people), but it could ultimately lead to the same results in terms of better and more efficient local services.

When asked about future work, three-quarters of survey respondents felt service providers should continue to engage in community engagement initiatives. However, they suggested that in order for this to be successful, service providers would need to: devote a greater level of resources to the process; develop consultation exercises which are '*user friendly*' and appropriate to the target audience to ensure that the process is '*inclusive*'; and reassure the public that their ideas are valued and appreciated.

## 10. Final recommendations

This section highlights some of the key recommendations arising from the Citizens Assembly project.

### 10.1 Recommendations for community engagement approaches

- Use a light, informal approach that people find easy to engage with.
- Focus on positive solutions rather than problems.
- Avoid making too many demands on people's time or energy.
- Provide opportunities for citizens to deliberate and discuss their ideas with service providers and decision makers.
- Avoid creating conflict-driven situations by taking a tactful and diplomatic approach. Try to be aware of local political, strategic, and interpersonal factors which may lead to problems.
- Be aware that it can take a lot of time (and resources) to engage effectively with communities.
- Encourage groups to 'take ownership' of their plans or ideas, and to take them forward independently.
- Bring people together at a city-wide level to enable them to find mutual interests, support and strength.
- Plan community events using the [Organising an Accessible Event](#) guide.
- Make use of other good practice suggestions highlighted in this report (see section 8).

### 10.2 Recommendations for planning community engagement strategies

- Use a combination of different engagement methods and activities (including individual approaches) in order to reach a wide range of citizens and groups.
- Community engagement can be resource-intensive; invest sufficient resources to ensure activities can be effectively organised and managed.
- Allow community engagement initiatives sufficient timescales to develop and mature, and to demonstrate their impact.
- Evaluation of community engagement activity is essential to find out how effective it is and whether it offers value for money.

### 10.3 Recommendations for promoting citizen involvement in decision-making

- Partnership working: good communication between and within departments and agencies is necessary to run services effectively and to make improvements. Cross-departmental and cross-agency approaches can be even more beneficial.

- All stakeholders need to be genuinely committed to citizen involvement, and to recognise it as a positive process that can have clear benefits for both service providers and service users.
- Financial investment by service providers in involving and consulting users in decision making processes can lead to cost savings by resulting in more effective, efficient and targeted service provision.
- Transparency is needed in decision-making processes: who is making decisions, on what basis, and to benefit whom?
- Independent citizen involvement processes (such as the Citizens Assembly) can be advantageous; they are people-focused, have no agenda, and minimise duplication by using a single process to feed information to multiple service providers. However, there is a need for a responsible lead agency (or partnership) which is in a position to ensure that service providers engage with and respond to the results of such processes.

## **11. Conclusion**

Newcastle Citizens Assembly provided a valuable opportunity to develop and test a new model for community engagement. Participants found the model informal, open, positive, and easy to engage with. Service providers also engaged with the model, and in a number of cases a dialogue was successfully established between agencies and local people.

The project has also led to some changes in the way local services are provided; in several instances, progress is still being made towards incorporating improvements, with participating community groups now providing direct input into the process of change.

While the project has now ended, its legacy includes heightened capacity among participating community groups, and new relationships between local citizens and service providers. The project model, lessons learned through its delivery, and good practice identified through the process provide a solid foundation for future innovative community engagement activity in Newcastle upon Tyne and other areas.

## **APPENDICES**

## Newcastle Citizens Assembly Online Survey Results

A questionnaire was developed and sent by email or post to the voluntary and community sector organisations and groups that were directly involved in developing the 32 Citizens Assembly improvements. Around forty groups in total were contacted (some improvements were joint ones which involved several organisations working together).

Citizens Assembly staff contacted the groups on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011 informing them about the survey. The survey was sent out on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> April, a reminder was sent on 20<sup>th</sup> April, and the survey closed on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2011. A prize draw incentive of 4 x £50 high street vouchers was offered to encourage people to complete the survey.

15 completed questionnaires were received. The results are summarised in this section.

### Becoming involved in the Citizens Assembly

1. Respondents were asked why their group became involved in the Citizens Assembly. Two key reasons were given and responses were fairly evenly split. 53% of respondents reported seeing the Assembly principally, as a new forum through which they could draw the attention of service providers to key issues of concern to them, commenting *'it offered another route to highlight issues of concern raised by older people'*, *'we believe we had a very strong reason for our appeal to be heard and believe that the citizens assembly was the best place to do that'* and *'It provided another opportunity to get the voice of our users heard'*. 47% of respondents saw the Citizens Assembly as a means by which to access information, advice and support to help them take an improvement forward. Responses included: *'as a means of taking forward our agenda'*, *'it was a new way to give and get information'* and *'we had an idea for a project but it was outside of the remit of the organisation that was supporting us'*.
2. 87% of respondents submitted an improvement at a Citizens Assembly Event. 13% of respondents did not submit an improvement but have been working with a service provider to take forward an improvement.

### The improvement process

3. In terms of the specific roles of those who submitted an improvement at a Citizens Assembly event, 54% were paid workers with a group, 15% were members of a group, 15% were unpaid volunteers with a group and one respondent was acting as an individual (was not involved with a group). One respondent did not indicate what their specific involvement in the process was.
4. When asked how they came up with their idea for an improvement, 23% of respondents reported that their group had a clear idea for an improvement from the outset. 54% said their group had various ideas at the outset of the process but they quickly agreed upon one idea. 15% reported consulting with service users about their thoughts on what issues should be addressed and decided upon which issue to take forward based on

popular opinion. One respondent did not indicate how they/their group came up with their idea for an improvement.

5. All respondents reported being happy with the improvement that they took forward.
6. When asked what they most enjoyed about the improvement process, 17% of respondents reported that it was selecting which improvement idea to take forward, commenting: *'the challenge of selecting the issue'* and *'getting the opinions of service users'*. 33% of respondents reported most enjoying developing and exploring the improvement idea once agreed upon. Responses included: *'meeting up to develop the idea'*, *'sharing discussion'* and *'how we expanded the idea and looked at the pros and cons'*. 42% of respondents said they most enjoyed meeting new people and watching the cohesion and passion of the group develop throughout the process, commenting *'all of the group had input to our improvement'* and *'they become really passionate and all had a common goal...all of them contributed, they gelled extremely well'*. One respondent was unable to identify the single most enjoyable aspect of the process; they reported simply enjoying being involved in a *'new venture'*.
7. When asked what they least enjoyed about the improvement process, 75% commented on the tight timescales within which they had to develop the project idea and capture evidence of the impact of the improvement. The remaining 25% of respondents' concerns centred on a *'lack of co-operation'* or *'resistance'* from service providers to engage with the improvement group.

### **Working with service providers**

8. Respondents reported new or improved working relations with a number of service providers as a result of participation in the Citizens Assembly, including: Newcastle City Council, Newcastle Primary Care Trust, Newcastle Youth Council, Nexus and a range of local voluntary and community sector organisations.
9. Respondents reported working with service providers in a range of ways. Two-thirds of respondents had had discussions with service providers about their improvement at a Citizens Assembly event. One third had met with service providers on additional occasions to discuss their improvements. A quarter of respondents had met with service providers to discuss the wider service which they provide.
10. Respondents were asked if they found the opportunity to work with service providers useful. Two-thirds of respondents suggested they appreciated the opportunity to discuss their improvement with the service providers, in relation to the development of the improvement idea, implementing the improvement and the outcomes of the improvement process. One third of respondents, however, did not regard having the opportunity to talk to service providers to be useful or felt it was only *'sometimes'* useful, as they felt there was little evidence of change as a result of discussions.
11. When asked if they felt their improvement had led to any changes in the way the service providers work, one third of respondents did not believe so due to: a lack of funding to

take the project idea forward, because funders did not seem interested in the improvement or because funders did not see the value in working together. Approximately half of the respondents felt it was too early to comment on the impact of the improvement as the project was still ongoing. One respondent felt the improvement had been partially adopted and no respondents felt the improvement had been fully adopted.

12. Overall, however, two-thirds of respondents felt contact with service providers had been worthwhile and one-third of respondents remain neutral on the issue. No respondents felt contact with service providers had been of no value.
13. Looking to the future, three-quarters of respondents felt service providers should continue to engage in community engagement initiatives. However, they suggested that in order for this to be successful, service providers would need to: devote a greater level of resources to the process; develop consultation exercises which are ‘*user friendly*’ and appropriate to the target audience to ensure that the process is ‘*inclusive*’; and, reassure the public that their ideas are valued and appreciated.

### **Involvement with the process**

14. Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed with various statements on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 - Strongly Agree, 2 - Agree, 3 - Neutral, 4 - Disagree, 5 - Strongly disagree). Respondents did not ‘disagree’ or ‘strongly disagree’ with any of the statements provided. Respondents gave the following answers :

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>
I have enjoyed taking part in the Citizens Assembly	50%	42%	8%
I think taking part in the Citizens Assembly has been worthwhile	42%	33%	25%
Things might change for the better in Newcastle because of the Citizens Assembly	17%	58%	25%
The Citizens Assembly is a good way of raising issues about services in Newcastle Upon Tyne	50%	50%	0%
I would encourage my friends and family to work with service providers based on my experience of working with them on our improvement	25%	58%	17%

15. Respondents were asked what they most enjoyed about being involved in the Citizens Assembly. The most common answers given were: meeting new people (40%) and attending the events (25%). Other responses included having an opportunity to raise



issues, working with *'encouraging'* and *'helpful'* service providers, feeling part of the community and watching individuals' grow in confidence.

16. When questioned about what they least enjoyed about the Citizens Assembly experience, respondents were disappointed by the lack of tangible impact or change as a result of their improvement. Responses included, *'it's hard to track impact'*, *'slow progress'*, *'the lack of priority given to the issues that were raised'*, *'not being able to change views'* and *'some partners not being entirely willing to engage'*. One respondent suggested that the time distance between Citizens Assembly events was too long.
17. Respondents were incredibly supportive of the principle behind the Citizens Assembly, describing it as *'an opportunity for people to make a change'*, *'a platform for community activism'*, *'bringing together a diverse range of people and interest groups'...**'to approach similar themes through different eyes'* and *'a good alternative'* to traditional means of setting priorities. Almost 85% of respondents felt the Citizens Assembly model should be used for future community engagement work.
18. Despite such positive comments, respondents suggested that in future community engagement exercises, service providers should take the following suggestions into consideration:
  - Service providers should ensure that issues raised are addressed through the most appropriate channels – there was a suggestion that some of the issues raised may have been more effectively dealt with through existing mechanisms.
  - Community engagement initiatives need time to mature. Reasonable and flexible timescales should be allocated to such initiatives to ensure that all involved have sufficient time to develop the project idea and to capture evidence of impact.
  - Sufficient financial and human resources should be invested in the initiative to ensure the effective organisation and management of the process and to take improvements forward.
  - Community engagement activities require 'buy-in' from by all stakeholders. Service providers must be genuinely committed to consultation and partnership working for successful outcomes to be achieved.

**Summary of support for Citizens Assembly improvements (cycle 1)**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Improvement title</b>	<b>Developed by</b>	<b>No. of supporters</b>
1	Look After Our Newcastle	Nunsmoor Centre Summer Play Scheme	32
2	Development of Family Learning Clubs	Parents Coffee Mornings	26
3	Visual Communications on Metro Trains	DeafLink Project	147
4	Develop More Culturally Appropriate Activities for Older Women	Mahila Mandel Women's Group	45
5	Suitable Activities for Adults with Learning Disabilities	Welcome Project	47
6	Create Informal Health Information Sessions	BME Women's Group	8
7	Improved Access to Public Toilets	The Elders Council	11
8	To Enhance Our Parks for Use By All of the Community	Dads and Male Carers Group	65
9	More Suitable Activities for Young People	Women's Gardening Group	33
10	Improve Public Transport By Bus	Friday Afternoon Group	24
11	People Not Drinking Alcohol in Public Places	Cruddas Park After School Club	38
12	The Sustainability of Old Buildings	Benwell Hall Knit and Natter Group	16
13	Keep Cleaner, Be Greener	Outer West Area Forum	15
14	Unpaid Carers to be able to access a break from their caring role	The Carers Centre Newcastle	23
<b>TOTAL SUPPORTERS</b>			<b>530</b>

**Total number of supporters for Citizens Assembly by method**

<b>Method</b>	<b>Total</b>
Email	58
SMS text	38
Support forms	659
Multiple methods	35
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>800</b>