

Learning Link Scotland Briefing
on
Scottish Community Empowerment Action Plan
“Celebrating Success: Inspiring Change”

Summary

In 2009 the Scottish Government and COSLA launched the Community Empowerment Action Plan, which aims to; encourage people in rural and urban areas to participate in the running of their neighbourhoods, provides clarity on what community empowerment is, how communities can get involved and a range of best practice examples from across Scotland. It also sets out the variety of funding grants available from a range of government sources operating over 2008 – 2011, with a total investment of around £180 million.

Scottish Government recognises the challenges in measuring the difference Community Empowerment makes. The Single Outcome Agreements are viewed as having indicators and measures that relate to community engagement and community empowerment. Audit Scotland is also developing their approach to Best Value II audits which will contain a specific focus on how local government and their partners are engaging with communities. The Scottish Government are working with COSLA and the third sector to provide coherence in measuring the difference.

To receive updates on the Community Empowerment Action Plan you can register on [Topic Newsletters and Alerts](#) page, The Scottish Government ‘Housing and Regeneration’ or contact Wendy-Louise Smith via email WendyLouise.Smith@scotland.gsi.gov.uk.

Background

This plan indicates that Community Empowerment is a cross cutting issue that has the potential to revitalise wider and constructive participation in Scotland's democratic processes and to bring new voices into policy and service delivery debates at all levels of government. The Scottish Government and COSLA agreed definition is:

“Community empowerment is a process where people work together to make change happen in their communities by having more power and influence over what matters to them.”¹

Along with this plan COSLA and the Scottish Government also signed a joint statement on Community Learning and Development (CLD), outlining how this approach contributes to the achievement Single Outcome Agreements. The joint statement, launched in November 2008, is based on the policy document “[Working and Learning Together to Build Stronger Communities](#)” (WALT).

¹ Scottish Community Empowerment Action Plan, *Celebrating Success: Inspiring Change*, Scottish Government, 2009

The Community Empowerment Action Plan is part of the wider commitment by COSLA's Community Wellbeing and Safety Executive Group to address Social Inclusion issues – including opportunities for democratic participation. COSLA and the Scottish Government have three joint frameworks that are inter-linked:

- Equally Well (health inequalities)
- Achieving Our Potential (tackling poverty)
- Early Years Framework.

These three frameworks are all based on a common principle of early intervention and COSLA and Scottish Government have recognised the need to strengthen the links between the frameworks as well as the need to integrate the work of public and private sector including the voluntary and third sector partners. Crucially it must involve, in a real and participatory way the communities themselves.

Specific Actions

Scottish Government acknowledges that for community empowerment to become a reality investment in practical actions is needed, these actions will help to support the long term culture change that will be needed to see more communities becoming more empowered. The actions are designed to address many of the serious issues and there is a range of activities stemming from the action plan which include support, guidance and investment from Scottish Government and COSLA:

- Training to support community engagement and empowerment.
- Development and implementation of a model scheme of establishing community councils and a code of conduct for community councillors.
- Support for communities to own assets.
- Support for local councillors to support community empowerment.
- Investment to improve community capacity building.
- Community Empowerment Programme – Direct investment accessible by community groups²

The Community Empowerment Funding Programme

A variety of funding grants are available from a range of government sources operating over 2008 – 2011, with a total investment of around £180 million. The Scottish Government are focussing on communities which experience disadvantage or inequalities, for example in relation to race, disability and those most in need of greater capacity.

[Community Empowerment Highlands and Islands Enterprise Grant](#) – approx £12m
 Focused on community groups, social enterprises, or other community 'anchor organisations' HIE also funds more generic development in the Social Enterprise,

² Scottish Community Empowerment Action Plan, Scottish Government, 2009

Community Land, Community Renewable Energy, Arts and Culture, and Gaelic based sectors

[The Community Chest & Volunteering Scotland Grants](#) - £3m - to build the capacity of small community groups, a small grant scheme run by the Voluntary Action Fund

[Forestry for People Challenge Fund](#) - £1.5m - to help groups realise the potential contribution of local woodlands to the health, learning and strengthening of communities

[Scottish Community Foundation awards](#) - with grants of between £250 and £250k to strengthen Scotland's communities. It awards grants to disadvantaged and marginalised groups in Scotland and has run a [Women's Fund](#) designed to promote gender equality and to tackle sexual discrimination since 2002. Women's Fund for Scotland provides grants of up to £5k through an open application process to organisations

[Wider Role Fund](#) - £36m - this supports Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to undertake projects in their local communities - beyond their principal role as landlords - which make life better for the people living there

[Climate Challenge Fund](#) –£27.4m - (CCF) gives communities, through individual community groups and community planning partners, the ability to implement actions to reduce their carbon emissions

Renewables Fund – £21.5m - to enable communities to maximise benefits from local renewables developments through grants scheme and advisory network of local development officers administered by intermediaries

[Scottish Rural Development Programme](#) (SRDP); - approximately £44m [LEADER](#) is part of SRDP aimed at promoting economic and community development within rural areas, a bottom-up method of delivering support and implementing a local rural development strategy. Support is aimed primarily at small-scale, community driven projects that are pilot and innovative in nature. [Rural Priorities](#) (RDC - RP) is an integrated funding mechanism which will deliver targeted environmental, social and economic benefits

[Increase 3](#) - £7.5m - WRAP Scotland is launching a grant scheme designed to improve infrastructure for the reuse of household goods by community projects across Scotland

[SPORTSMATCH](#) – approximately £1.2m - an award scheme that supports grass roots sport projects that encourage participation at community level, especially youth groups

[Building for Sport Programme](#) - approximately £22m - Within this programme there is a strand which includes the provision or upgrading of any facilities used for sport in the general community

[Science Engagement Grants](#) – approximately £2.1m - run by the Office of the Chief Scientific Adviser. Supported projects may complement and enhance the school curriculum and take science engagement activities (touring shows, science festivals etc) into communities across Scotland

Best Practice Examples – The Case Study Research

The Scottish Government commissioned Social Regeneration Consultants (Nov 2008), to explore community empowerment practice in Scotland. The findings fed into the Community Empowerment Action Plan. The 12 case studies as part of the research showed the different ways in which communities can be empowered, for example:

- Gaining control of local assets and securing financial independence.
- Taking the lead, in partnership with public and sometimes private agencies.
- Working for the community benefit within an empowerment framework set by others.

The research findings were clustered in the five different strands;

- Leaders and Partners
- Changing Culture
- Learning and Capacity Building
- Equalities and Diversities
- Practical Solutions

the full list of research findings can be found in [Community Empowerment Case Study Research](#) Social Regeneration Consultants, 2009 a sample of which are below:

- Successful community empowerment depends on having in place on-going support, training and individual capacity building. All the case studies have a ‘You must never stop learning’ culture.
- Networking with other community empowerment initiatives, particularly those with similar roots or aspirations can be inspiring and lead to new and unexpected partnerships.
- Progress on initiatives always takes longer than communities expect; managing expectations is important.
- Some of the case studies have recognised the value of looking at themselves with a fresh pair of eyes on a regular basis, for example through a social audit or external evaluation.³

³ Community Empowerment Case Study Research, Pete Duncan, Social Regeneration Consultants, 2009

CLD - Capacity Building and Empowerment

The outcomes of community capacity building in CLD focus on achieving:

- Confident, skilled, active and influential communities.
- Effective and inclusive community organisations.
- Effective relationships between community organisations and other organisations and services.⁴

CLD is defined as “[...] *informal learning and social development work with individuals and groups in their communities. The aim of this work is to strengthen communities by improving people’s knowledge, skills and confidence, organisational ability and resources.*”⁵ (WALT)

To support community capacity building the action plan states that partners should take advantage of and build on the partnership work of CLD, under the umbrella of Community Planning structures to make the most of the available resources.⁶

Sources for Further Reading

[Community Empowerment Action Plan Scotland](#): *Celebrating Success: Inspiring Change*, Scottish Government, 2009

[In our own words](#): The story behind 12 examples of community empowerment in Scotland, [Community Empowerment Case Study Research](#) - Research Findings, Social Regeneration Consultants, 2009

[Joint Statement on Community Learning and Development](#) by the Scottish Government and COSLA, November 2008 which builds on Working and Learning Together to build Stronger Communities (WALT), sets out their joint vision for CLD in Scotland.

[Delivering Change](#), Scottish Government, 2008 - sets out the range of outcomes that we expect CLD to bring about or contribute to

[Early Years and Early Intervention](#): A joint Scottish Government and COSLA policy statement, 2008

[Equally Well Implementation Plan](#), Scottish Government 2008 - how the Scottish Government and CPPs will turn the recommendations into real outcomes in the medium and long term

[Early Years Framework progress and links to other Frameworks](#), COSLA Executive Group Item 7, 2009

^{4,6} Scottish Community Empowerment Action Plan, Scottish Government, 2009

⁵ In Working and Learning Together to Build Stronger Communities, Scottish Executive, 2003