



Motivations and Barriers to Citizen Governance

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Motivations and Barriers to Citizen Governance

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Contents

1	Executive Summary	5
	Background and objectives	5
	Conclusions	6
	Recommendations	7
2	Background and Objectives	8
	Introduction	8
	Objectives	9
	Structure of report	9
3	Methodology	11
	The sample	11
	Recruitment	11
	Participants and venues	12
	Discussion guide and piloting	13
4	Community	14
	What constitutes ‘community’?	14
	Relationship with local area	14
	Triggers to wanting to be part of the community	15
	Is community important?	16
5	Awareness and Knowledge of Citizen Governance	17
	What constitutes involvement?	17
	Awareness of the concept of citizen governance	18
	Awareness of local opportunities to get involved	18
	Where do people get their information from?	19
6	Motivations	21
	Motivations to involvement	21
	Is there a desire to get involved?	23
7	Barriers	25
	Barriers to involvement	25
8	Public Decision Making Roles	27
	Understanding and awareness of these types of roles	27
	General perceptions of involvement in decision making roles	27
	Motivations	30
	Profile of decision making participants	30
	Barriers	30

9	Public Service Roles	33
	Understanding and awareness	33
	Experiences	34
	Perceived profile	35
	Motivations	36
	Barriers	37
10	Encouraging and Sustaining	39
	How to encourage?	40
	Who to encourage?	42
	How to sustain?	44
11	Conclusions and Recommendations	46
	Conclusions	46
	Recommendations	48
Appendix 1	Participant Profiles	50
Appendix 2	Discussion Guide	52

1 Executive Summary

BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

Communities and Local Government leads on the government's Together We Can action plan.¹ Launched on the 28 June 2005, Together We Can sets out the Government's commitment to empower citizens to work with public bodies to set and achieve common goals.

To support the Together We Can plan, the Community Empowerment Division (formerly the Civil Renewal Unit) within the Department commissioned TNS to explore the motivations and barriers to activities that might be loosely termed 'citizen governance' through qualitative research. Examples of 'citizen governance' which is defined as the involvement of citizens in decision making and scrutiny roles in public services, include acting as a school governor, lay member of police authorities, youth offender panels and members of patient and public involvement forums.

The key objective of the research was to provide information to inform policies aimed at supporting and sustaining more effective citizen governance. The research was designed to explore people's awareness and knowledge of citizen governance, the barriers and motivations to involvement and the types of people who get involved in these roles.

The research comprised 13 focus group discussions (12 plus one pilot group) which were held in the North, Midlands and the South of England. Participants were recruited from the 2005 Local Area Boost to the Citizenship Survey. Participants were selected on the basis of whether or not they had engaged in citizen governance participation.

There would have been limited value in contrasting current participators with non participators who have no interest in taking part in citizen governance as in our experience their responses would have been fairly predictable (no time, no interest). Therefore, 'Non participators' have been defined as those who have undertaken some involvement in the community, but at a low level, such as completing a questionnaire about the area, or contacting an MP about a particular issue. 'Participators' were defined as those who currently participate in the community either in a governance role, or in some kind of involvement like a decision making committee or tenants association. The group discussions could then concentrate on the motivations and barriers for those participating and those who are not participating in the community.

A total of 86 respondents participated in the focus groups. Of these, 71 were classified as 'Participators', with six of these participating in their communities through a governance role (such as school governor or magistrate) and the rest involved through some form of local decision making group or tenants association.

The number of 'non-participator' groups was limited to two, to ensure that the emphasis was on those currently participating in the community.

1 <http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1502431>

CONCLUSIONS

The key findings from the research are summarised below:

- 'Citizen Governance' in itself is a term that was not clearly understood by the participants, nor was the concept fully understood. Participants described all roles in the community as volunteering, and saw little immediate distinction between 'volunteering' and 'citizen governance' roles.
- Governance roles were perceived to be undertaken by people who tended to be well educated, articulate, 'well to do' and had time on their hands. For this reason, many felt that 'ordinary people' were unlikely to get involved in these roles. In particular, governance roles were sometimes considered to be available only by invitation, and that invitations would only be offered to the 'right people'. Most people had not even considered governance roles as an option and expressed a lack of confidence in their ability to contribute to them.
- The groups discussed some general barriers which applied to all types of volunteering and governance roles. Time was mentioned by most participants as a key barrier to involvement, with participants seeing governance roles as particularly demanding and time intensive. Many people felt that the intensity of the commitment would rule them out of taking on a role like this. Awareness and knowledge of governance roles and routes into them were lacking. Some suggested that this was due to the lack of advertising and promotion of these opportunities.
- Awareness and knowledge of governance roles and routes into them were lacking. Some suggested that this was due to the lack of advertising and promotion of these opportunities.
- Fear of repercussions of becoming known in the community was also a barrier, as was a lack of confidence in their ability to contribute in a governance role. Governance roles were seen as potentially cutting people off from their communities rather than making them champions for their communities.
- Participants expressed a wide variety of reasons for getting involved in the community (in volunteering roles). Motivations could either be positive (such as wanting to contribute because they were proud of their community) or negative (such as protesting about proposed changes to local services), emotional (feelings of guilt) or rational (gaining experience).
- However, while volunteering was seen as largely philanthropic, many participants were suspicious of the motivations behind people's involvement in governance roles. Typical examples included people wanting to become magistrates because it gave them power over others. 'Non-participants', in particular, tended to be suspicious of the motivations behind taking on governance roles.

- There was agreement that more people need to be encouraged into governance roles. Children and young people as well as young mothers and the retired community were seen as under-utilised in the community. Young professionals were perceived to be the most difficult to target. It was suggested that age-specific groups could help address these issues.
- Of the various recruitment strategies discussed, face to face recruitment was thought to be the most effective method of encouraging more people into governance roles. In particular, being asked by someone already on a committee was seen as a powerful way of gaining the involvement of those that were unsure or lacked confidence.

A full list of conclusions is presented in Chapter 11.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There are a number of recommendations that come out of this research.

The concept of citizen governance

The concept of citizen governance is not well understood. The Department should consider whether more needs to be done to promote the concept of citizen governance, including the possibility of enhancing the 'brand' of citizen governance by linking it to an initiative such as 'Together We Can'. In particular, any promotion activity needs to clarify the differences and similarities between citizen governance and volunteering.

In considering the concept it may be useful to present volunteering as a stepping stone to citizen governance roles. In particular, it is recommended that the targeting of existing volunteers to take on citizen governance roles is considered.

Countering misconceptions

There are wide-spread misconceptions about citizen governance roles that need to be addressed in communications to the general public. In particular, there is a misconception that they are not open to 'ordinary people'. Governance roles need to be sold to the general public as accessible and feasible options coupled with building their skills and confidence to take on such a role.

Presenting governance roles

Many were concerned that citizen governance roles tended to be very time consuming and required a large amount of training. It might be useful to present governance roles on a sliding scale of time and commitment required to encourage those considering taking on a role to match this to their availability. Presenting citizen governance in this way, allows people to have freedom to dip in and dip out of different levels of involvement as time and commitment allow, resulting in a more positive experience where people feel they are of use and making a difference.

Supporting those in Citizen Governance Roles

Those in citizen governance roles often considered the roles were demanding. They also felt that there was a tendency for the role to grow through taking on additional tasks. People in those roles sometimes felt unable to decline the extra commitments. Those people currently participating in the community need to be sustained. Acknowledgement and support measures need to be in place to sustain those who have made the commitment to the community. The Department should consider what provision exists to support those in citizen governance roles.

2 Background and Objectives

INTRODUCTION

Communities and Local Government leads on the government's Together We Can action plan.² Launched on the 28 June 2005, Together We Can sets out the Government's commitment to empower citizens to work with public bodies to set and achieve common goals.

One of the key ways that citizens are able to influence public services is through involvement in their governance and scrutiny. Estimates have put the current number of citizens formally involved in governance roles at more than 450,000.³ There is no one type of citizen governance model or citizen governor. For instance, tenant representation in housing is different to school governors or councillors. But there are some common challenges to making these arrangements effective. Some of the government's concerns relate to effective recruitment, retention and support of governors. Understanding of people's knowledge and perceptions relating to the opportunities to take part in governance roles underpin the interest in carrying out this research. The recommendations presented will contribute towards Together We Can's aims of bringing a more coherent narrative around empowerment and respective action to improve the co-ordination of work to support citizen governance across the various government departments and their local delivery partners.

This work builds upon the quantitative data provided by the Citizenship Survey,⁴ the main findings of which were published on 27 June 2006 by the Department.⁵ The Citizenship Survey is a biennial survey currently in its third year and acts as a tool to measure many issues relevant to the success of Together We Can. In particular, it provides valuable information on:

- the extent to which people report participation in citizen governance roles
- which groups of people are most likely to participate and
- how participation is linked to people's views on political efficacy, trust in institutions and attitudes to their neighbourhood.

The findings from the 2005 Citizenship Survey show that 38% of people had engaged in civic participation in the previous 12 months before interview. Civic participation covers engagement in a range of democratic processes including contacting an elected representative, taking part in a public demonstration or protest, or signing a petition. A smaller percentage (8%) were involved in local decision making by being a member of a group in 2005, while 2% took on a more formal role such as a local councillor, school governor, special police constable or magistrate. Of these two groups, nearly a third were involved at least once a month.

2 <http://www.togetherwecan.info> Also available is the annual review published in June 2006.

3 Estimate according to Langlands Commission on Good Governance in Public Services (2004).

4 <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/citizensurvey.html>

5 <http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1501031>

There was a strong relationship between involvement in civic activism and sense of local efficacy. Nearly three-fifths (58%) of people involved in citizen governance roles agreed that they could influence decisions affecting the local area compared with 37 per cent of people who were not involved in civic activism. People involved in civic activism were also more likely than those who were not involved to think that they could influence decisions affecting Britain (29% compared with 21%).

The survey also showed that people who felt a strong sense of attachment to the neighbourhood were more likely to have participated in citizen governance. Twelve per cent of people who felt they belonged ‘very strongly’ to their neighbourhood had engaged in citizen governance roles compared with four per cent who felt they belonged ‘not at all strongly’.

OBJECTIVES

The key objective of the research was to provide information to inform policies aimed at supporting and sustaining more effective citizen governance. The specific research objectives were as follows:

- To explore peoples’ awareness and knowledge towards governance roles (the range and types of ways of participating/the presence and accessibility of each)
- To understand what motivates people to participate in a governance role
- To explore the triggers and individual paths towards taking a governance role
- To establish what kind of person embarks on undertaking a governance role – exploring life experience, demographic and personal situations
- To understand the importance of being a service user and how this related to interest in certain areas of governance
- To understand what the barriers are to participating in a governance role
- Understand how people feel about their participatory roles
 - The match between expectation and reality
 - The strengths and the weaknesses
- To ascertain in what ways people participating are fulfilling their own personal aims and objectives (representing a group)

STRUCTURE OF REPORT

The next chapter of this report (Chapter 3) provides further details of the methodology of the study including the sampling strategy.

The subsequent chapters look in detail at the findings to emerge from the discussion groups. Chapter 4 sets the scene with a discussion of participants’ perceptions of their community. Chapters 5-7 then look at participants’ broader awareness of citizen governance roles and the perceived motivations and barriers to this kind

of involvement. Following on from this, Chapters 8 and 9 focus on more specific forms of involvement with Chapter 8 looking at public decision making roles and Chapter 9 focusing on public service roles such as school governor or magistrate. Chapter 10 then looks at participants' views on how involvement in these citizen governance roles can be encouraged and sustained.

Chapter 11 draws together the conclusions from the preceding chapters and presents the key recommendations that can be drawn from the findings of this work.

This report includes a number of quotations from the focus groups which are used in a variety of ways to illustrate the findings. On the whole, the quotations represent the consensus of the whole sample but in some cases they may be used to represent an alternative perspective or viewpoint. It is indicated where the latter is the case.

In order to ensure that the quotations are representative of those who took part, a spread of comments have been included according to the different groups in the sample profile, in this case age, region and level of participation. This is indicated in the attributions alongside the quote.

3 Methodology

The research involved 13 focus group discussions (including one pilot group) conducted by specially trained facilitators. Details of the methodology including information about participants are given below.

THE SAMPLE

The areas chosen for the focus groups were selected at random from the original 20 areas in the Local Area Boost to the Citizenship Survey (People, Families and Communities, 2005 survey). A geographic split between the North, Midlands and South of England was ensured, and one city and one town selected from each of these three areas, to ensure participants came from a range of different areas. A mix of younger (age 16-40) and older (age 41+) respondents were used to ensure that the focus groups covered all ages. Two focus groups were held in each town/city, one with younger respondents and one with older participants.

Table 3.1 provides further details of the make up of the different groups.

	Area	Quota
(Pilot) Group 1	Southern Town	Young participants (16-40)
Group 2	Northern Town	Older participants (41+)
Group 3	Northern Town	Young participants(16-40)
Group 4	Northern City	Older non-participants (41+)
Group 5	Northern City	Young participants (16-40)
Group 6	Midlands City	Older participants (41+)
Group 7	Midlands City	Young participants (16-40)
Group 8	Midlands Town	Older participants (41+)
Group 9	Midlands Town	Young participants (16-40)
Group 10	Southern Town	Older participants (41+)
Group 11	Southern Town	Young, non-participant (16-40)
Group 12	Southern City	Older participants (41+)
Group 13	Southern City	Young participants (16-40)

RECRUITMENT

Our sample was drawn from the 2005 Local Area Boost to the Citizenship Survey. This enabled us to select respondents according to whether or not they engaged in citizen governance participation. This survey includes five separate measures for different types of citizen governance activity, including participation in public service roles, participation in a decision making role, and more general forms of involvement.

The 5 questions from the Citizenship Survey used for recruitment are as follows:

- Q.64 – In the last 12 months have you been a local councillor, school governor, special constable, magistrate?

- Q67 – In the last 12 months have you; been a member of a local group making decisions about the community, member of a tenants group, member of group tackling local crime, etc?
- Q6 – In the last 12 months have you, completed a questionnaire about the community, attended a public meeting, been involved in a group set up to discuss local problems?
- Q58 – In the last 12 months have you, attended a rally, taken part in a demonstration or signed a petition?
- Q55 – In the last 12 months have you contacted your local councillor, MP, Public official or Government official?

There would have been limited value in contrasting current participators with non participators who have had no involvement in any form of civil renewal activity, as it might reasonably expected that a large proportion of these people will simply not be interested in citizen governance issues, leading to fairly predictable responses of no time and no interest. A much more useful comparison group would be those who have undertaken some involvement in the community, but at a low level, such as completing a questionnaire about the area, or contacting an MP about a particular issue. These people will presumably have at least some interest in community issues, but for one reason or another, are not involved in governance or decision-making roles. 'Non-Participators' were therefore defined as those who had carried out at least one of the activities listed in Q55, Q58 and Q61. 'Participators' were defined as those who currently participate in the community either in a governance role, or in some kind of involvement like a decision making committee or tenants association (those who answered positively at Q67 and/or Q64). The group discussions could then concentrate on the motivations and barriers for those participating and those who are not participating in the community through citizen governance roles.

There was not an equal split between non-participant and participant groups; the number of 'non-participant' groups were limited to two. This was to ensure that the emphasis was on those who were currently in governance or decision making roles and ensure a productive discussion.

Participants were recruited by telephone. A recruitment screener was incorporated to include a suitable definition of participation in terms of frequency and intensity to ensure the 'mix' of respondents was right. Whilst the groups were to be heterogeneous in term of gender, ethnicity and social class, it was also important to ensure a degree of homogeneity. A total of 86 respondents participated in the focus groups. Of these, 71 were classified as 'Participators', with six of these participating in their communities through a governance role (reflecting the small number of people involved in these roles) and the rest involved through some form of local decision making group or tenants association. When interpreting the findings therefore, please bear in mind the small numbers of respondents involved in this research. Some participant profiles can be found at Appendix 1.

PARTICIPANTS AND VENUES

The groups were restricted to approximately 6-8 participants per group (although some were larger to make up for shortfalls in other groups). This number of

participants allow for a more in depth discussion and the chance for everyone to have their say.

Local community venues such as school halls and leisure centre facilities were used to hold the group discussions to ensure that they were familiar and convenient for participants to attend. The groups were all audio recorded.

All participants who attended a focus group received out of pocket expenses of £30.

DISCUSSION GUIDE AND PILOTING

TNS designed two versions of the discussion guide; one for those currently participating in the community and one for non-participants; although both covered similar topics. A pilot group took place in the South to allow the discussion guide to be tested for clarity and comprehension as well as length. As this is a particularly sensitive topic it was felt that the groups needed to be slightly longer to sufficiently introduce the content and to satisfactorily wrap up the session at the end. Therefore the groups were scheduled to last up to two hours.

Following the pilot group, the final content of the discussion guide was agreed with the Department.

Topics, including barriers and motivations to the three different levels of involvement (general, decision making roles and public service roles) were included in the discussion guide. A copy of the participant discussion guide can be found at Appendix 2.

4 Community

KEY FINDINGS

- Community does not have to be the area in which you live, it can be based around work, faith or interest groups – anywhere you feel a sense of belonging
- Participants who expressed a strong sense of attachment to their community were more likely to say that they have/would get involved in their community
- If people see their future in the local area, they are more inclined to get involved as part of a future investment
- Recently moving to an area can increase the likelihood of involvement as people want to establish themselves in the community, but it is equally likely that transient populations do not get involved
- Some people, however, think their communities are not worth the effort – particularly where they see their communities as in decline
- Others are worried about the potential negative repercussions of involvement from some sectors of the community and so keep themselves to themselves

WHAT CONSTITUTES ‘COMMUNITY’?

Participants generally associate themselves with a community, although this does not have to be their local area. Some communities are based around interest groups, faith groups, or work. Communities can be anywhere people feel a sense of belonging.

“But then you can have other communities. It depends how, like you have a church community or a work community.” (Young participant, Midlands Town)

RELATIONSHIP WITH LOCAL AREA

The relationship people have with their community seems to be linked to the likelihood of their involvement in the community. For example, some participants had lived in their local areas all their lives and felt a strong sense of attachment to their community. Those with extended family in the area were also more likely to have formed a bond with the local area.

Transient young professionals were less likely to have a connection to the area and were therefore less likely to get involved. Some participants in the group discussions described themselves as transient and they regarded their local area as a ‘base’.

These people were more likely to think of their ‘community’ as their workplace or social environment.

There are exceptions however, as some people with no existing relationship with the community, (perhaps having recently moved), can be motivated to get involved in order to establish a relationship to the area. Involvement can be a means of establishing connections and relationships with the community.

TRIGGERS TO WANTING TO BE PART OF THE COMMUNITY

Personal circumstances can influence the level of involvement in a community and can prove to be both a motivating factor to encouraging involvement, and a barrier preventing it.

As discussed above, some people are motivated to get involved in a community if they are **new to the area** and are keen to make new acquaintances and establish themselves.

“They’ll join most groups in their area. Because they see it as a way of getting new friends, new circle of contacts and things.” (Young participant, Midlands City)

Similarly **becoming a parent** can change a person’s priorities and interest can be sparked in local facilities and schools for children.

“...having a child’s quite important because it makes you want to contribute more... it makes you think about the area more.” (Young non-participant, Southern Town)

Being committed to an area; whether having recently moved in, or having lived there a long time can encourage people to want to invest for the future. Knowing that you are going to stay in a particular community can motivate people to want to take an active role in their area; to have a say to ensure that the community is the best place for them and their family. Similarly if you have lived in a community for a long time you can be motivated to protect and sustain the area to which you have a connection.

“I think if I was living somewhere for a few years and had no intention of staying, then it wouldn’t bother me at all.” (Older participant, Midlands City)

“I wanted to establish roots here. I thought ‘this is my home’. Now I have grandchildren living here and the area is important to me.”
(Older participant, Midlands City)

Across all the groups there was consensus that if they were to get involved, it would be within their own community. Very few people would give up their time outside the local area.

Some discussion groups indicated the increased likelihood of getting involved in the local area following some sort of **tragedy or local incident**. An event which pulls the community together is a means to getting involved and getting to know people, although this fuels the impression that the community only comes together for negative reasons – to right a wrong, or to fight some cause.

“The complete ground floor of all the houses on one side were completely flooded and it actually brought people all together.” (Young participant, Midlands City)

A few participants in the groups felt that the community spirit has long left their areas and that the norm is to now **‘keep yourself to yourself’** and not associate with people living nearby – in fact many participants in the group claimed they did not even know their immediate neighbours as the tendency is not to mix.

The propensity for people to ‘keep themselves to themselves’ is promoted by a perception that the **community is no longer a safe place to be**. Several participants commented that a lack of facilities, combined with losing touch with neighbours has created a community where no one knows one another and where young people intimidate residents. This fear results in people not wanting to make themselves a ‘target’ by voicing their opinions or ‘making waves’ in the community. Several participants spoke of how there was the possibility of repercussions and this meant that it was not worth getting involved.

“Gorton’s not worth volunteering for... but if you live, I’m not saying in a posh area, but a reasonably decent area where you can walk and well you think its worthwhile to do that to keep the people together, but when you’re frightened of walking down the street and you see gangs and all this, you think, well just keep my nose out, just sit in the house watch telly, mind me own business.” (Older non-participant, Northern City)

“If you’ve got youngsters in the area they’ll think you’re a busybody who is stopping them sitting on somebody’s wall. Then they’ll come along and spray paint on your house.” (Older participant, Midlands City)

IS COMMUNITY IMPORTANT?

Regardless of the perception that some communities were no longer worth the investment of involvement, there was a consensus across all the groups that having a community was important. Ideally communities are places to feel safe and have a sense of belonging yet several respondents felt that their communities had ‘gone downhill’ and lost their sense of ‘togetherness’.

“The community spirit went 20 years ago as far as I’m concerned.”
(Older, non-participant, Northern City)

“The community is dying.” (Older participant, Southern Town)

If people no longer feel any affiliation or relationship with their community, they are not likely to make the effort to get involved.

5 Awareness and Knowledge of Citizen Governance

KEY FINDINGS

- Generally participants were able to list ways of *volunteering* in the local community, but were not necessarily aware of real opportunities in their own communities
- Many did not consider governance roles an option for them
- There are misconceptions about what governance roles entail
- In general, involvement is not well advertised, people do not know where to go for information

This chapter examines the participants' awareness and knowledge in general about involvement and participation in the community.

WHAT CONSTITUTES INVOLVEMENT?

When asked to detail examples of getting involved in the community, participants gave a varied list of examples, such as being involved in local churches, involved as a youth worker, speaking to your MP, getting a petition going, demonstrating or protesting a cause or participating in a neighbourhood watch scheme. Very few participants (other than those currently involved) suggested involvement in a governance role. Magistrates, governors or local councillors were rarely considered to be examples of involvement. These governance roles were not uppermost in the minds of respondents, although were recognised as being 'top levels' of involvement when probed by the facilitator.

Completing questionnaires was generally viewed as a very low level of involvement and people tended not to think of this as a valid means of community involvement. There was a general consensus that unless the topic affected the respondents personally, people have very little motivation to respond to a questionnaire. Most people felt that the People, Families and Communities questionnaire (The Citizenship Survey) asked specifically about the local area and so was in the interest for the respondent to take the time to complete.

"They stated it (the Citizenship Survey questionnaire) was for your local community. So I said well if it's for the local community yeah I'll do it. If they would have said it's about Great Britain, I wouldn't have been bothered if it was for the UK." (Older non-participant, Northern City)

Attending a public meeting was not viewed as an effective way of getting involved in the community. The perception among participants tended to be that meetings were inhospitable places where people felt intimidated to give their views and often the

decision was made regardless of public opinion. There is little incentive to attend. Public meetings will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 8.

“If you’ve got the public meeting you’re almost inevitably going to find someone who holds every opinion – and so you can pick the people who agree with what you want to say already.” (Young participant, Northern City)

A decision making committee such as a local health forum or tenants association were recognised by the respondents as a way of getting involved in the community but was perceived to be attended by a particular ‘type’ of person; someone well educated with the confidence to speak in front of others and who feels strongly about a particular issue. Additionally, some viewed these committees as ‘self appointed’ are therefore not representative of the views of the community. There were concerns that they were influenced by the personal agendas of the members. These will also be discussed in more detail in Chapter 8.

“One of the problems with committees is that they’re almost always self-appointed so the committee can get what they want, doesn’t have anything to what everybody else wants.” (Young participant, Northern City)

AWARENESS OF THE CONCEPT OF CITIZEN GOVERNANCE

Participant’s struggled to understand the concept of citizen governance or decision making roles – even those group members who were currently participating in the local community described their role as ‘volunteering’. Participants had a sophisticated understanding of volunteering as a concept but a very limited understanding (and many misconceptions) of governance roles such as school governors or magistrates.

“If you’ve not got money in your back pocket like that to put something into that school, you will not become a governor. Now I’m telling you that, that’s a straight fact.” (Older non-participant, Northern City)

Governance roles such as local councillor, school governor and magistrate are perceived to involve high levels of commitment and were generally only suggested by the groups as ways of getting involved when probed by the facilitator.

The type of person getting involved at this level is perceived as someone who is well educated, articulate and confident. To many, these roles were equivalent in time and commitment to a full time job, and not accessible or open to the ‘average’ person.

“I don’t think it would be anything, anybody I know would even consider. It’s just somebody who’s there; it’s not something you aspire to.” (Young participant, Midlands City)

In our view, if people do not understand the term citizen governance, or relate to the governance roles as something they could do rather than a role for a certain ‘type’ of person, we can hardly expect people to be involved at this level.

AWARENESS OF LOCAL OPPORTUNITIES TO GET INVOLVED

Perhaps the limited understanding of citizen governance is because it is not visible day to day in the community. Advertising and awareness of these roles is limited.

Those participants currently engaging in these governance roles tended to have been approached and asked to take on the role, or went looking for the opportunity themselves.

“I mean you don’t see notices up saying will you please come and be a school governor? They don’t advertise the fact so a lot of people don’t realise that all these things are needed.” (Older participant, Southern City)

Several people commented on a general lack of awareness of groups or meetings that currently happen in the local area.

In some discussion groups, participants raised the issue that they do not even have basic facilities in their communities in order to begin even the lowest levels of involvement. A lack of meeting places or community venues can reduce the propensity of getting involved and the opportunity to meet with other local people.

Some young participants commented with disbelief that some people did not know what was going on in their communities. This perhaps indicates that once you are active in the community it is easier to find out what is going on – it is the first steps into involvement which are the hardest.

“...imagine people not being aware that there are things out there, but it’s difficult to look at it from someone else’s point of view because I know that things are there, I can’t imagine people not knowing that things are there, so it’s hard to say what goes on inside people’s heads.” (Young participant, Northern Town)

WHERE DO PEOPLE GET THEIR INFORMATION FROM?

Without visible facilities and groups in the local area, how do people find out what is going on within their communities?

Personal circumstances again play a part in finding out what is going on in the local community and influence where people get their information. It was thought that parents were more likely to have connections to the community through their children, whether it is through the local school, or through after school activities such as scouts or sports. Newsletters and fliers for school events can promote local activities and involvement for parents.

Young, transient people are less likely to have these ready-made ties to the community. They could find out about opportunities through the local newspapers which may carry adverts for different opportunities in the community. Advertising in local shops and post offices can help to encourage awareness of local opportunities, but this is likely only to be accessed by a small proportion of the community. Many participants agreed that there needs to be more information in the community about ways of getting involved, in places (such as supermarkets) which are accessible to everyone.

Word of mouth can be a positive way of getting information into the community. Several participants in the group discussions indicated their current involvement was largely because someone asked them to come along to an event or because they knew someone already involved. Face to face recruitment, as we will discuss in a

later chapter, does appear to be an effective way of getting people involved in the community.

“I mean people get a leaflet through the door and just put it straight in the bin or straight in the recycle bag, it needs to be word of mouth rather than anything else.” (Young participant, Northern Town)

One participant in the Midlands noted that he used the Council **website** for accessing information about the local area. He said he found it quite useful, although had found it by accident while surfing the Internet. He felt that other people would benefit if they knew it was available.

“City Council website. Which I think is quite useful but I’m not sure that many people know about it but I only found it by accident, kind of looking for something else on the website and there was this massive survey on there which they invited you to complete. So that was quite useful.” (Young participant, Midlands City)

Only a very few participants across all the focus groups had seen **advertisements on trains** and buses promoting governance roles such as magistrates and special constables. One participant thought they were effective and some people he knew had sought further information as a result of seeing these posters.

“There’s adverts on buses and on the tubes and all sorts showing people.” (Young participant, Midlands Town)

Very few people in the group discussions decided they wanted to volunteer their time and consequently sought out an opportunity. For the most part, respondents in the groups were **approached by an existing member** or else, they ‘fell’ into their volunteering opportunity

“I think some of it comes down to you falling into these things by accident because you’ve got a child at pre-school, or you’ve got a child who’s perhaps got an illness which brings you into contact with new people.” (Young participant, Southern City)

It is fair to say however, there is a basic lack of awareness of how to make the first steps into involvement.

6 Motivations

KEY FINDINGS

- Both emotional and rational reasons can be motivating factors
- Personal circumstances, such as being time rich or wanting to gain experience in a particular role can influence involvement
- Others are motivated to get involved when they are protesting or opposing something that they perceive will negatively affect them
- Opinion was mixed as to whether there is a desire to get involved in community roles; some think there is a genuine interest while others believe people to be apathetic

This chapter of the report will look in detail at the possible motivations to getting involved in the community. Key themes from the focus groups have indicated that there is a wide range of reasons which encompass emotional and rational motivations to participate. Participants expressed a wide variety of reasons for getting involved in the community (in volunteering roles) and by and large these reasons were similar to those given for taking on governance roles.

MOTIVATIONS TO INVOLVEMENT

As discussed earlier, personal circumstances play an important part in motivating some people to get involved in the community.

Many people find themselves getting involved when they **feel particularly strongly about an issue** that affects them. For example, several members of discussion groups mentioned their involvement in protest marches over the closure of hospitals or schools. Other people get involved when they are protesting something closer to home, such as the safety of their street, or a new development which could affect the price of their home.

“People who wouldn’t normally get off their backside to do anything went on a march on Saturday, from Queens Park into town, because they’re closing the accident, well they’re closing the accident and emergency and intensive care at the hospital.” (Young participant, Northern Town)

The **power to influence** events such as school closures and new developments in the community can also motivate people to get involved and create a sense of satisfaction and achievement at making a difference in the community. Being able to put forward opinions and suggestions that can shape the community gives people a sense of power and in some cases the motivation to get involved.

“If you can sit there and you can make a difference to somebody’s life, and it has made a difference to another person’s life then you feel satisfied.” (Older participant, Midlands Town)

“Sense of satisfaction to know that you can have influence on something, that you have had that influence.” (Older participant, Southern City)

The group discussions revealed that respondents felt that both they and ‘others’ got involved in their community in order to **advance their careers**. Gaining experience by volunteering at a particular organisation or spending time with a particular group of people can help to further careers and help people get the experience they need.

“The volunteer work that I do, that’s what I’d like to do for my career, so I’m happy to do it, for no pay.” (Young participant, Northern Town)

These examples of involvement tend to be driven by self benefit where the volunteers stand to gain from giving up their time. However, these tend to be temporary volunteers; once their goal has been achieved it is likely their involvement will cease, rather than continue with another cause.

“I can imagine it was tailing off towards the end because they got most of the things put right that were wrong, and so on.” (Older participant, Southern City)

“Of course, then there’s nothing to argue about so the association collapses through lack of support.” (Older participant, Southern City)

Some people were motivated to participate in their community because they felt they have **something of worth to contribute**. This could be related to their work – e.g. social workers often work with youth groups; nurses can participate in health forums as they feel they have an area of expertise, or at least personal interest in the topic or group.

“I spent 25 years working in the health service that was what my background has been, as a result of being in that particular, in a caring profession put it that way, I’m now working as a volunteer.” (Older participant, Northern Town)

Others could be motivated by **genuine altruism**. Some people may genuinely find themselves with time on their hands and a desire to get involved or to ‘give something back’ to the community.

“I was proper shy but I wanted to make a difference, I wanted to try and have input in changing things, making things better.” (Young participant, Northern Town)

“They might like the area, been there for years and want to do something positive and put something back.” (Young participant, Midlands City)

IS THERE A DESIRE TO GET INVOLVED?

Opinion was divided as to whether there is a desire among people to get involved in their communities. Non-participant groups tended to think that there was a general apathy among people to get involved. They believed there is a tendency for people to look after ‘number one’ and not participate in the community. Despite agreeing that this was an unfortunate situation, the perception tended to be that people were ‘busy’ and had ‘no time’ for involvement.

“At the end of the day, they’d rather stop in and watch telly.”
(Older non participant, Northern City)

“It’s like I can’t be bothered. What’s the point?” (Young non-participant, Southern Town)

“...you know it’s look after number one, dog eat dog, that seems to be the attitude, which is a crying shame.” (Older non-participant, Northern City)

Participant groups however, agreed that there was a desire among people to get involved, but there is a general lack of awareness as to how to go about it.

“It’s often not knowing what is out there to get involved in.”
(Young participant, Midlands City)

Some groups mentioned a feeling of **guilt** in that they should get involved more in the community, but unless there is a specific trigger, they are not motivated to do so. This fuels the perception that unless something negatively affects you, there is little motivation to get involved.

“You do feel as if you should put more in, it’s like a guilt thing there isn’t there. You should put a bit more effort in and do something. But if everything’s ticking along quite nicely then where is the need for it.”
(Young participant, Midlands City)

Some felt that they could allay the feelings of guilt by contributing financially to a good cause. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 9.

Others felt that generally people do care and are willing to be involved in their communities, but unless they can see they are **making a tangible difference** and are motivated to continue, people will not make the effort.

“I think there are a lot of well meaning good hearted people, it’s just that they don’t see the point for spending their time on something that they’re going to think nothing’s going to come of it.” (Young participant, Southern Town)

The groups described the different ‘types’ of people who get involved in the community. There is the ‘positive’ type who is time rich and genuinely wants to make a difference in the community.

“I think you get the one or two who genuinely want to be there and make a difference.” (Young participant, Midlands Town)

Then there is a type characterised by the ‘negative person who has a personal goal, who wants to protest something, but who has no long term commitment to the community’.

“I could see maybe local businesses attending regularly, if it’s the area and it’s affecting them. I think in general, Joe Public would attend when the issues arise that affect them.” (Young participant, Midlands City)

They also considered that there are people who think involvement in the community is a positive step and who think having a say in the area you live is important – but it’s not for ‘people like me’ – and so rely on other people taking on community roles.

“That’s right because you just think somebody else will do it.”
(Young participant, Midlands Town)

7 Barriers

KEY BARRIERS

- Time was mentioned by most participants as a key barrier to getting involved. The perception is that everyone now has busy lives and other commitments take priority over the community
- Fear was also an important barrier, with many people commenting on the fear of repercussions if they were to become known in the community
- Unless there are guaranteed outcomes, people felt there was no point in getting involved. If the participants felt that their contribution would produce tangible results, and they would be listened to and taken seriously, there was more motivation to get involved
- A lack of incentive was also perceived to be a barrier. The groups felt that people would not want to get involved unless there was an incentive to motivate them

BARRIERS TO INVOLVEMENT

This chapter of the report will look at the perceived barriers which stop people getting involved. These have been generated by the discussion cards and bubble chart exercise (where respondents think in the third person of potential barriers). These barriers also incorporate both emotional and rational barriers. Barriers relating specifically to the decision making roles and public service roles will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

A consensus across the groups was that people had **no time** to get involved. The perception is that any kind of involvement in the community is time consuming and requires a large commitment and tends to put people off.

“Now me daughter and her generation, it’s different for them, because they’re having to work I don’t think there’s as much time available for a lot of people.” (Older participant, Midlands Town)

“People haven’t got time have they? They’ve got full time jobs and the families to look after.” (Young participant, Northern Town)

A barrier discussed briefly earlier is **fear**. Some participants in the discussions spoke about their concerns regarding young people in the street whose presence intimidates residents. People then tend to keep themselves to themselves to avoid any confrontation or interaction with these young people. There is a fear that making themselves known in the community will result in negative repercussions from these young people.

“It’s amazing how many people are living in fear. People are happy to give their views, just not get physically involved.” (Older non-participant, Northern City)

Similarly the potential for voicing a different or controversial view from others in the community can discourage people from getting involved. The fear of alienation or setting yourself apart from the crowd put people off.

“But you could have a controversial view as well. So if you’ve got a controversial view about something and you’re raising that, and you’re in the area, then potentially you could be alienating yourself from people you’re living with.” (Young participant, Midlands City)

“If it’s a real sore point and you’re in a community meeting and you’ve got the only view that disagrees with everybody, then potentially you could ruin friendships.” (Young participant, Midlands City)

Some groups discussed the perception that people would not get involved unless there was some kind of **incentive**, a financial reward for their time and effort, otherwise they were not motivated to take part.

“I won’t do it for free.” (Young participant, Northern City)

Those currently participating commented on the personal rewards they felt they had gained since they began volunteering – self fulfilment, personal development, sense of achievement, the feeling that you are making a difference. However, these benefits are somewhat intangible and it is likely that people will be unaware of these benefits until they take part. The perception was that without a tangible reward; some people would not be likely to take it on.

“But you’ve also got those who won’t do any voluntary work simply because they’re not being paid for it. ‘Why should I give up my time for people? Who does anything for me? You do get that.’ (Older participant, Southern Town)

This point will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 10.

Others felt that it was not worth getting involved in any type of community activity, unless there were **guaranteed outcomes**. If their involvement was guaranteed to make a difference, then they were more likely to take part. If they assessed that the outcome could end up negatively – e.g. protesting a development which is ultimately going ahead then there was little incentive to take part.

“But you can complain and you complain until you’re blue in the face and nothing is done and why? Because it’s all agreed beforehand. So all this in a lot of cases is a waste of time, energy, effort and blood pressure.” (Older participant, Midlands Town)

8 Public decision making roles

KEY FINDINGS

- Decision making was not seen as ‘citizen governance’, but as another form of volunteering
- People tend to get involved at this level when they have an issue with something in the community – something negative they want to protest
- Barriers to getting involved at this level relate strongly to personality and access; knowing how to get involved
- Being approached and asked by another person already on a committee was a powerful trigger for involvement

This chapter of the report will look at perceptions of public decision making roles and the barriers and motivations to taking on such level of involvement.

UNDERSTANDING AND AWARENESS OF THESE TYPES OF ROLES

Participants were asked to discuss decision making roles such as being on a committee or other decision making group in the community which could look at crime, or health, or housing, for example. Generally the groups understood the different ways of getting involved in a decision making role, the most salient being public meetings held by local councillors and tenants associations. However, these roles were not considered to be ‘governance’ roles only another form of ‘volunteering’. Respondents had not considered (prior to the group discussions) that this was a type of ‘volunteering’ that could be classed and grouped.

GENERAL PERCEPTIONS OF INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION MAKING ROLES

Across all the groups, only a few participants had direct experience of being on a decision making committee, and some of those who had, felt that their experience was not a positive one. Participants discussed their views of involvement at this level. These tend not to be based on actual experiences of the group, but on their perceptions of what involvement is like for ‘other’ people.

Most people considered that committee members are involved for **selfish reasons**; to voice concern over something directly affecting them, or to advance their own careers. As discussed briefly in the previous chapter, people tend to want to have their say only when they are protesting an issue which affects them and their community.

“We got involved through flooding really. We felt so strongly that nothing was being done and it wasn’t really the houses. That’s why we started going to the council meetings, to try and support the people that were being flooded at the time.” (Young participant, Midlands City)

“The reason for us was all this crime – we set up a neighbourhood watch.”
(Older participant, Midlands City)

Public meetings and tenants associations in particular were perceived to be **unrepresentative** of the community. This could be because of the type of person who is interested in getting their views across; a person with lots of time to spare. These people tended to be perceived as older, or retired people whose views do not necessarily represent the views of the community.

“They just represent an aspect of the community. But because they are in the majority then you get an unfair sort of bias towards certain decisions maybe.” (Young participant, Southern Town)

Fuelling the perception that groups are unrepresentative was the belief that **older and younger** people would not be able to work side by side, as there would be conflicts of interest about what is best for the community. Some people felt that decision making groups were not aimed at young people and so they were not encouraged to attend.

“They (older people) don’t want us there. They don’t market it for us.”
(Young non-participant, Southern Town)

Similarly, older people were concerned that younger people joining their groups would disrupt the flow of the group by not listening to the older people.

“I have a feeling that people, if there were younger people on the committee or wherever, they don’t listen to the older people.” (Older participant, Midlands Town)

Meetings are also perceived as **tedious and time consuming** and so discourage people from attending. Only those with a particular ‘axe to grind’ or who are affected directly by the outcome of the discussion would be encouraged to attend.

“I think if it’s something that doesn’t affect you directly and you’re sat in one of these meetings and you think, ‘gosh, I could be at home mopping my floor’.” (Young participant, Midlands City)

Many participants were concerned about **tokenism** – specifically that they were invited to represent the general public, but that those on the committee had no real intention to listen to their views. People felt that the community were often consulted on issues, as part of the council’s attempt to look as if they were engaging the public – consulting for consulting sake. Many felt that decisions had already been made and public opinion would not sway the decision makers and the meetings are all for show.

“It was getting quite heated apparently at one point. People felt that it was already settled. So whether it was or wasn’t, if you’re thinking that, then that’s a negative attitude to people you’re talking to, you think well, what’s the point?” (Young participant, Midlands City)

“They had a public meeting saying ‘come and tell us what you think, whether you want this resource centre?’. And they obviously expected

the answer to be yes. And the public meeting, for whatever reason, was full of people who said they don't want it, 'we think it's going to damage our existing services'. And at the end of it they said 'well you're having it anyway. That's already been decided'." (Young participant, Northern City)

The above quotes illustrate that some participants felt there was no point in attending public meetings as decisions had already been made.

Awareness of public meetings was generally poor. Some participants felt public meetings were intentionally badly publicised by the council. This would ensure a poor turnout, allowing motions to be passed with little or no objection from the public. This reinforces the perception that committees and decision makers are self appointed and do not always care about the views of the community.

"They're not well advertised, the meeting's going to be on such an such a date at this time at this place. You're always welcome to attend. You occasionally get the letters from the local councillors and MPs saying 'well, we're having a meeting about this issue, if you'd like to attend it'll be on this date'. But the general public don't know when these meetings are being held." (Young participant, Midlands City)

"And last year, they give a deadline for the nominations for people to be on the committee to be in. And what happened was they signposted it on the Sunday, and the nominations had to be in and seconded on the Monday at nine o'clock. Which meant that obviously nobody challenged the committee because there was, nobody had time to do anything. So the committee got re-elected unanimously." (Young participant, Northern City)

In order to get the best out of public meetings, all the groups agreed that there needs to be a **good chairperson to manage** the 'huge egos' and ensure the discussion does not get stuck on small points.

"They are only as good as the people who you've got in the meetings and the most important thing is the power of the chairman. Because a chairman can drive things through and no matter where you are it's the chairman. It's like the headmaster of a school, if they are not strong, no matter what the others might want to do or do, it fails." (Older participant, Midlands Town)

Several older group members felt that involvement in the community was not a role that should be taken on by the community – these are **jobs for local councillors**. They perceive their council tax entitles them to have councillors who take on these decision making roles – and it should not be down to the community themselves to make time to get involved.

"What do we have councillors for? Aren't they supposed to do this? The people that you elect to look after the council. What's their job? You want us to do their work?" (Older non-participant, Northern City)

MOTIVATIONS

The motivations that encourage people to get involved in their community are often the same motivations which apply to decision making roles. Examples include: being motivated through having time on your hands and wanting to meet new people. But what makes people get involved, in decision making, as opposed to general volunteering? Some people tend to jump straight into decision making roles rather than graduate from a volunteering role. This promotes the perception that people only get involved in decision making roles when they are fighting or protesting a negative in the community. The strength of the discontent with the community, or a proposed development will determine the level of involvement.

“It all depends if the nerve in that person is touched... if something’s sensitive to yourself, then you’ll get up and do something about it.”
(Older non-participant, Northern City)

“I think it’s because you start to feel concerned about something. You can be angry about something and think, well if I don’t do something about this, what’s the point in me moaning on.” (Older participant, Midlands City)

However there were some examples of people becoming more involved in decision making as their volunteering roles snowballed into more commitment.

PROFILE OF DECISION MAKING PARTICIPANTS

Above all, the perception of people involved in decision making roles were ‘trying to change the world’. As discussed above, people taking on these roles generally have an axe to grind and so are likely to be motivated and enthusiastic about their particular viewpoint.

To be able to sit on a committee, the participants across the groups agreed that there were certain characteristics that are desirable for a productive outcome. Patience was a particularly good quality to possess, as was the ability to communicate and be articulate in front of an audience.

Several participants were keen to point out however that anyone can get involved at this level of governance if they felt strongly enough about a cause.

“I don’t think it’s a particularly stereotype of person, I just think any Tom, Dick and Harry can go and do it if they want.” (Older non-participant, Northern City)

“There’s never a set sort of person. I mean we’re all different. You know, there’s never a set sort of person.” (Young non-participant, Southern Town)

BARRIERS

This chapter will discuss the key barriers highlighted by the groups as pertinent in stopping people getting involved specifically in a decision making role.

A fear of the unknown in terms of what to expect from existing committees was a real barrier discouraging people from attending meetings or groups. The vulnerability

of being new in what could be an established group of people was thought to be a barrier to participation at this level. Not knowing who, or what to expect was thought to discourage participation.

“If you don’t know what to expect that will put you off won’t it.”
(Young participant, Midlands City)

In addition, **not having confidence** in your own abilities, such as believing yourself to be less educated and believing that you will not be taken seriously by peers was a barrier to participating.

“Yeah, I think it can be quite intimidating. If someone was thinking about joining that and it’s a certain group of people, their confidence might play an issue. They might think well, how am I going to have anything to say against them? They’re well educated and...” (Young participant, Northern City)

“Yeah... they’ve not got the confidence and they don’t know what kind of people are going to be there, I think that puts a lot of people off as well.”
(Young participant, Northern City)

“I found it difficult to get involved in doing things with the school and that was, I think initially when my daughter went, because of confidence. I found that I didn’t think I fitted in with a certain group.” (Young participant, Midlands City)

Similarly the fear of being **talked down to** by other group members put people off from attending.

“I’ll do whatever’s needed to be done, because I wanted to be involved in it but I didn’t want to be talked to like a 5 year old.” (Young participant, Midlands City)

Also a **fear of using politically incorrect language** was a concern to some older people:

“I am not sure that I know all the politically correct language – I might end up putting my foot in it.” (Older person, Southern City)

Having a large transient population in the community decreases the sense of community spirit and gives people an excuse not to get involved. People in the groups agreed with the statement **‘I don’t care about my area I’m going to move soon anyway.’** This was a particular issue for residents in areas with large student populations. Students live in the community but do not tend to get involved as they do not need to invest in an area in which they are not going to stay.

“If you were a student and I’m just remembering when I was a student, you don’t give a monkey’s about the street you live in.” (Young participant, Southern Town)

“Lots of people just don’t care, they’re not interested. Lots of people don’t feel part of the community and lots of people are transient.” (Young participants, Midlands Town)

The group discussions revealed that perhaps people were not involved in decision making roles because **no one had approached, or asked them to take part**. People currently participating in the community found that approaching people face to face and asking them to be involved was particularly effective as they could play to people’s strengths and sense of social responsibility and guilt; and make them feel as though their involvement would make a difference.

“It’s something you maybe think about but you never actively seek out. But if somebody approached you, you might.” (Young participant, Midlands City)

“If you’re asked you feel slightly committed you know.” (Older participant, Southern City)

“I’ve never been asked, I’ve never got involved in anything like that. But if I got asked and knew that I was seeing something at the end of it then yeah, of course I’d get involved.” (Young non-participant, Southern Town)

Those members of the discussion groups who have been involved in governance roles and decision making in the community often felt that the invitation to participate was quite informal; and it was the informality which made them feel at ease to take part. Often they were approached by existing committee members and made to feel they were important to the success of the committee. However, the informality of the invitation was at odds with the seriousness of the role and the amount of time and commitment they were expected to give. This indicates that perhaps it is better to be upfront about what the role entails and have fewer people offering to take part, than being vague and losing people as the role is found to be more than they anticipated.

“It didn’t get presented (to me), it was just a case of ‘would you like to come on, we’d like to have you on the Board of Governors.’” (Older non-participant, Northern City)

“There’s a position on the Governors... ..you’re interested aren’t you? Sign here.” (Young participant, Northern Town)

9 Public Service Roles

KEY FINDINGS

- There was a limited awareness of public service roles and some misconceptions about what the roles entail
- Most people did not even consider these as an option, and viewed them more like a job in terms of commitment and time intensity
- Those currently participating at this level had either a personal interest in their chosen role, wanted to make a difference in the community, or had simply been approached by someone in the role
- Those in public service governance roles described it as an intensive commitment and highly demanding
- Guilt and social responsibility were seen as motivating factors in this role
- The profile of participants at this level of governance are considered to be almost exclusively older, well educated, time rich, articulate and middle class

This chapter of the report will look at getting involved in public service roles such as a school governor, or magistrate. Across all thirteen groups only six participants had or were currently involved in a public service role. There were others in groups that had recently been approached and invited to become a magistrate and were thinking about whether to decline or accept.

UNDERSTANDING AND AWARENESS

Key public service roles were discussed across all the groups. These focused on the roles of magistrates and school governors. In general, respondents had heard of these roles although had a limited understanding of the tasks involved and in some cases, misconceptions surrounding involvement.

“I’m surprised that they’ve got such a wide range of responsibility. I mean monitoring and evaluating the work of the school, surely a teacher should do that. Management of a budget. I wouldn’t have thought they would do that.” (Older participant, Midlands Town)

“Yes, they get paid loads though”. (Young participant, Midlands Town)

“People don’t, we’ve demonstrated here that people don’t know how to become a magistrate.” (Young participant, Midlands Town)

EXPERIENCES

This chapter of the report will look at the experiences or past experiences of those group members who had or were currently participating in a governance role, their motivations and thoughts on their overall experience.

Wanting to make a difference in the community was a motivating factor for one participant. This magistrate felt that in his local area, the same young people were getting into trouble time and again. This was the trigger to getting involved and stopping the vicious circle in the community.

“It’s just like when you see people go into the court and you see the same people all the time getting away with it, and then you think to yourself, why should they get away with it, they’ve been here about ten or fifteen times before?” (Magistrate, Northern City)

Others had a **personal interest** and sought out an opportunity to get involved.

“I sat there in the Crown Courts listening to the court cases and whatnot and then from there I asked one of the Magistrates down there, how do you go about it, and he put me onto the right people to deal with and that’s how I came.” (Magistrate, Northern City)

While others were simply **invited** to take part in a governance role, although some people felt that they were put on the spot to initially take on the role, which then snowballed into more of a commitment.

“I first became a Governor, my son and my daughter were both at the school and it wasn’t as Special Needs Governor then, it was just as Parental Involvement Governor, I did quite a few of the Parental Involvement Courses with other parents and got those people involved, but as I stayed in for more years, it was oh would you fancy doing Special Needs Governor.” (School governor, Northern Town)

The participants involved in governance roles commented on the **snowballing** effect of showing willing in the community. Several people had been approached to become governors because of their work in other areas of the community or their profession (teacher, working with young offenders) – perhaps running committees or organising meetings.

“If you’re willing to do it you’ll get called for everything in sight won’t you.” (School governor, Midlands Town)

“If you show the slightest interest...” (School governor, Southern Town)

Most of the participants in governance roles spoke of the intensive **commitment** that was expected of them. On paper, the time a governance role is expected to take up is minimal compared to the reality of the situation, where people could find themselves giving up several nights of the week to their role.

“We used to sometimes go in three nights a week, when it was budget time. It wasn’t just pop yourself down for a couple of biscuits and a coffee; it was a lot of work.” (School governor, Midlands Town)

“It wasn’t a large commitment, it was just quite an intense commitment.” (School governor, Northern Town)

“Well I do 25 hours a week.” (Magistrate, Northern City)

Those who were in governance roles were satisfied with their contribution and could see the **benefits** of their participation, some even saying they felt they had made a difference.

“Oh yes I loved it. Especially when you get a nice exclusion, I must admit.” (School governor, Midlands Town)

“Making a difference to some children actually, yeah.” (School governor, Northern Town)

Despite being able to see the benefits of their involvement, most of the participants felt that their commitment to their governance role was **too intensive and expanding** into something they had not anticipated when they originally took on the role. Some said they would never take on a role like that again, and described their participation as ‘a nightmare’.

“Never again... thank goodness they’ve left (her children).” (School governor, Northern Town)

“I was a governor for years. It was a nightmare.” (School governor, Southern Town)

PERCEIVED PROFILE

The groups discussed the stereotypical images of people who take on these governance roles. The perceptions of school governors are that these tend to be women with family, or with a connection to the school. They tend to be in their late 40s or older, but never tend to be younger women. They are middle class and hold or have held related jobs, such as a teacher.

“Twinset and pearls.” (Young participant, Midlands Town)

“Somebody who’s got a vested interest in that in some way... a teacher.” (Young participant, Southern Town)

Magistrates tend to be thought of as older men, never women. They also tend to be older, educated and articulate, although slightly pompous and set in their ways.

“Think crusty old white men.” (Young participant, Northern Town)

“Intelligent people, compassionate people.” (Young participant, Southern Town)

“You think of them as older men definitely.” (Young participant, Midlands Town)

Respondents relayed associations of a magistrate with personality traits such as egotistical, power mad, arrogant and closed mindedness.

The groups often discussed the prevalence of the stereotype of someone who actively involves themselves in the community (that is being a ‘volunteer’). There is a perception that volunteers are ‘busybodies’ who have a tendency to interfere. Some young people felt that involvement was only for older people and so this became a barrier to involvement as they did not want to be associated with the stereotype.

“I think people may have a perception that people who do volunteer work, or you know, neighbourhood groups, are all busybodies like, you know, sort of Mavis off Coronation Street, it’s very stereotypical, when you say volunteer, you’ve just got this vision of a do gooder haven’t you, maybe, I don’t know, ‘cos when I first started doing it, my boyfriend give me loads of stick, oh you geek, that sort of thing. No, I’m not a geek.”
(Young participant, Northern Town)

“It’s something my Nan would do.” (Young non-participant, Southern Town)

“I wouldn’t want to be classed as one of these whingey people.”
(Young participant, Southern City)

MOTIVATIONS

Particularly salient motivations discussed by the focus groups include the **high status** and **influence** that comes with a public service role. The discussions indicated that this could be a motivating factor for some people. However this was seen as a rather selfish motivation and most disapproved of people taking on these roles to further their own social standing or career.

“You have to be very aware of the kind of people that can sometimes join. They’re using it as a foot up the ladder.” (Older participant, Midlands City)

“It’s a high status.” (Young participant, Midlands City)

Social responsibility, where people feel obliged to get involved at this level was another prominent motivation, that was frequently mentioned. Often people can feel guilty that they should be seen to be doing something in the community, and this can be the motivation to take on a governance role.

“You do feel as if you should put more in, it’s like a guilt thing there isn’t there. You should put a bit more effort in and do something.”
(Young participant, Midlands City)

“If you don’t do... no one will.” (Young non-participant, Southern Town)

The **guilt** associated with social responsibility can manifest itself in ways, other than involvement. For example, one group in particular commented on the value they

place on their time, and felt that they would make a financial contribution to charity to compensate for not spending time on community roles.

“We value our time more than money. We have credit cards and bank notes and cheques and all that and it’s, but it’s not tangible. The time is tangible. We’re all running out of time, everything’s fast and furious but there’s money there. There’s always money there. You can always find money.” (Young participant, Southern City)

“I would rather give money than give up the time with my children.” (Young participant, Southern City)

BARRIERS

Of particular interest was the perception that to take up a public service role you had to be a particular ‘type’ of person. Several people in the group discussions were not aware that the general public could take up this level of involvement while others felt it was only an ‘**elite**’ group of well educated people who would be taken on as governors or magistrates. These types of roles are ‘not for people like me’.

“I saw an advert a few months ago, and it was for magistrates, in the Evening News, and I thought, shall I apply for that? No, because I’m too common.” (Young participant, Northern Town)

Further to this notion was the lack of aspiration people felt towards taking on a role that was perceived as suiting and being performed by those with negative personality traits (the stereotype profile). Respondents were wary of being perceived as arrogant or egotistical.

Another interesting barrier to taking up a public service role was the perception that it is particularly **time consuming** and highly demanding; almost like having a second job. The intensive commitment that the groups perceived was required discouraged many people from taking on this role.

“The job is a burden on you because the meetings are all like this time aren’t they, governor’s meetings?” (Older participant, Midlands City)

In addition, the need for **employers to be flexible** enough to allow time off work meant that many people were discouraged, or simply not able to give the commitment.

“Would your school give you 26 half days off? Not a chance, couldn’t do it. You couldn’t do it.” (Young participant, Southern Town)

“I would like to do it but I was told by the employer that I worked for at the time that ‘I can’t pay you, you do it in your own time, unless you have time off’. That’s why I didn’t take it up many years ago.” (Older participant, Southern City)

Others felt the commitment required to take on a public service governance role was conducive to a regular, **lengthy commitment** one that would be difficult to resign from. The potential life long commitment discouraged people from getting involved.

“You don’t want to be tied to something do you? You kind of think, ‘oh God if I get involved in this, they’re going to want me all the time and I don’t want to do this’.” (Young participant, Southern City)

One of the key barriers for people thinking of taking on a governance role was the **process by which people are chosen**. The potential humiliation of nominating yourself and then failing to be elected into a governance role was a discouraging factor in getting involved.

“I never put my name up for it because I never want to go through that voting process because I can’t see nothing more humiliating. Say like us lot and there’s one opening, I wouldn’t want to go against competition against someone.” (Older participant, Southern Town)

“You get a slip of paper and like there might be two people and you think ‘oh, well I know that one’. That’s how you do it. Because they’re not made known to the parents. We don’t have a meeting and say, ‘well this is the candidate, and this is the candidate’. It’s not like that, it’s word of mouth.” (Older participant, Southern Town)

10 Encouraging and sustaining

KEY FINDINGS

- General agreement that more people need to be encouraged into governance roles
- Groups were adamant that face to face recruitment was the most effective method of encouraging more people into governance roles, although were divided in their opinions as to whether financial incentives were effective in recruitment, but were effective in sustaining people in their roles
- Children and young people, as well as young mums and the retired community were seen as potential untapped resources for the community because of their time capacity. Young professionals were perceived to be the most difficult
- Sustaining existing volunteers was highly important and recognition and rewards were seen as ways to do this

As we have discussed above, the concept of citizen governance is not well understood, even by those currently participating in these roles. Participants did have a much more sophisticated understanding of volunteering and saw this as a much lower level, non-committal equivalent to governance roles, which by comparison were seen as similar in time and commitment to a full time job.

It is clear that to fulfil the aim of encouraging more people into governance roles, the concept of citizen governance needs to be explained to the public. People were unsure what constitutes a governance role, as opposed to being a volunteer. The strong distinction between volunteering and citizen governance may be unhelpful. In order to make the concept of governance clear, it may need to be portrayed as a specific branch of volunteering, or linked to the Together We Can initiative in order to enhance the 'brand' of Citizen Governance.

Groups of participants noted how their involvement snowballed as their confidence grew, and they found themselves taking on more roles in the community. Indeed some participants talked about how they had started volunteering and ended up getting more involved in decision-making. One participant described how he had started by coaching his son's football team, but found that he had got embroiled in discussion with the council over the poor state of the pitch, which he blamed on the building of the light railway. Increasingly, he found himself attending and then joining local council meetings. Others, too described how volunteering had led into a more decision-making role.

This viewpoint that one should be able to dip in and dip out of volunteering and governance roles to suit personal circumstances could overcome some of the key barriers discussed in previous chapters. As discussed in Chapter 9, some of those

who had been in a governance role felt that the intensive commitment that they gave, depleted their energies and resulted in a negative experience, which they did not plan to repeat.

The possibility where people can move to less demanding roles to suit their personal circumstances could sustain people in 'volunteering roles' and leaves the door open to return to governance as personal circumstances allow.

One of the most important barriers discussed in Chapter 9 was the perception that governance roles require particular personal characteristics such as education, being articulate and patient, all within a particular age group and social class. To encourage people into these roles it needs to be clear that they are for everyone, and not for an 'elite' group of people.

The following chapter of the report will look at the participant's suggested ways in which the government can encourage more people to get involved in their communities.

HOW TO ENCOURAGE?

Several of the group members made suggestions as to how the government can encourage more people into governance and involvement roles. One suggestion that was made in several groups was the idea of a **financial incentive** which would encourage people to give up their time. There was agreement that this would be an effective way of encouraging more people; especially those people who claim to have no interest in volunteering or governance roles.

"But I think if you're trying to recruit new volunteers who are not interested in volunteering at the moment, finance will play a big role."
(Young participant, Northern Town)

Only one respondent across the groups claimed not to be interested in a governance role, unless there was a financial incentive. For the majority of participants, they believed those people who are committed to volunteering and governance will do these roles without being paid.

"Because time being such as this, people are normally very hard pressed and they're thinking 'oh God not another free job'. But if the people are interested and it's to their advantage then they will do it."
(Older participant, Southern City)

Other people felt that financial incentives would attract the 'wrong type of person'. Several respondents felt that financial incentives would attract people 'only in it for the money' who would not normally give up their time. These people would not necessarily have an interest or commitment to the role and the groups felt that this was not a long term solution to encourage involvement.

"I think you would get more people involved if you paid them but there are people who, it might not be good, there might not be necessarily the right people..." (Young participant, Northern City)

Those currently participating in a governance role suggested that there should be some sort of reward given to people who are involved in the community; a way for the government to say thank you to the people who take on these roles in the community. Suggestions included a rebate on council tax, or holiday vouchers.

“...percentage of your Council Tax.” (Young participant, Northern Town)

One participant suggested that the government could not afford to pay for the work that is undertaken by volunteers and the service they provide to the community is so valuable that important jobs could not be achieved without them. Therefore, financial rewards might be a way of *sustaining* those already involved in governance roles, but not necessarily the best way to *recruit* them.

“The amount of work that’s done by volunteers could not be paid for by any government; it is absolutely colossal. I don’t know the figures but I’ve seen it, no party of any, no government could afford to pay for it; the whole system. If we all went home and sat there and said right we’re not doing anything anymore the whole thing would collapse.” (Older participant, Northern Town)

Those currently participating in the community felt that there were other rewards that can be gained from involvement, other than financial. **Seeing the impact of getting involved** through personal development and a sense of fulfilment and satisfaction can be gained from volunteering time in the community. These benefits could be better advertised to the community to encourage involvement.

“But those people who are doing it, enjoy and see the rewards for themselves.” (Young participant, Northern Town)

One of the main ways the groups suggested to encourage more people to get involved was to increase **publicity and accessibility** of opportunities. One of the most pertinent barriers to getting involved in different roles was the lack of awareness of ways to get involved and a lack of awareness of the need for people to volunteer their time. As discussed previously advertisements need to be accessible and available to all and in places where both young and older people can access them. There was a consensus that face to face recruitment and word of mouth was the most successful way of encouraging new people into governance roles.

“No. I suppose when you actually start talking to them about it, it may start them thinking which they hadn’t thought about before and they probably think ‘oh yes, I’ll try that. I’ll look it up on the internet’.”
(Older participant, Southern City)

The groups agreed that in order to have effective recruitment to governance roles, **face-to-face recruitment** was more valuable than leaflet drops or advertising. The one to one contact allows initial concerns or questions to be answered and allows a first hand account of what is expected, to be discussed. Being approached and asked to participate, as discussed previously is a huge motivating factor. Being told that you are suitable and capable of undertaking such a role is flattering and can motivate people to get involved. Similarly, using people in the community who have ‘big’ personalities, in that they can inspire people to get involved was an effective way of encouraging involvement.

“It’s that one to one contact, going round knocking at your doors, talking to the people in your community, and saying, hey come on let’s get on board with it because I think that face to face contact is really important.”
(Older participant, Northern Town)

“He’s just incredible. He’s an incredible guy. And you sort of want to do it.” (Young participant, Midlands City)

Being approached by someone already in a governance role who could give information about what the role entailed was a valuable resource that should be utilised in communities. Being able to appeal to people in the community, and play on their guilt can be a successful method of recruitment. Other people were just pleased to be asked, and for many of the participants, this was the difference between getting involved, and not bothering.

“Yes. You need someone to come and say to you, look, we need this done. This is what it is. Make it interesting to them and they say yes, alright then I can give a few hours. I know we’re all busy but I know... it’s going to make a difference. You can’t always expect somebody else to do it.”
(Older participant, Southern City)

One group discussed the role of **local councillors in the community**, and felt that it was their responsibility to take on governance roles, and not the responsibility of the community. Others, who did not necessarily agree with this statement, did think the local councillors should be more visible in the local area and have a much more hands on role in encouraging people in to governance roles. It was suggested that councillors should approach people in their wards and make them aware of the opportunities for involvement in their community. The face-to-face recruitment, coupled by the status of the councillor, emphasising the importance of governance roles could help to encourage more people.

“Why don’t they come round and say ‘look, we’ve got ideas for the community, would you come to a meeting?’ or ‘I’d like to talk it through with you’.” (Older participant, Southern City)

One final suggestion was to target people who are already involved in community activities and appeal to them to take on more of a governance role. By **going to existing groups to recruit volunteers** such as the Prince’s Trust or Women’s Institute, governance organisations can tap into an existing resource of people who are likely to be warm to involvement.

“Scouts would be one ... would be another, University because universities are always looking to improve their image in the community.” (Older participant, Southern City)

WHO TO ENCOURAGE?

Everyone should be encouraged to take up a governance role in the community, and the groups discussed different sections of society in terms of how and why they should be encouraged.

The groups agreed that it was important to encourage people to be part of their communities from an early age, and so targeting **school children** should be a priority. This would help children understand the importance of community and hopefully by starting involvement at an early age, this will continue throughout their lives.

“But if they know about it, obviously by the time they get to 16 then if they’re interested enough they can then put their services forward.”
(Older participant, Northern Town)

“The kids are like, they’re going to be growing up in this area and that so I think they should go into schools and talk to children in schools about it more than like the adults.” (Young non-participant, Southern Town)

One way of targeting young people would be to have organisations give talks and information days at schools, so that the information is accessible to the young people, who are not likely to pick up opportunities from newspapers or leaflets.

“I think if you want young people to, they’re not the biggest readers of newspapers, they’re not going to pick it up from a lot of folk might go on local television or local newspapers because they’re not into that at that age, but I think if like the Red Cross the NSPCC... organisations... you go in, you spend an hour or whatever it might be, with different... different schools by the time they leave school then they’ve got an idea of what is going on in the community and you would probably get some interest.”
(Older participant, Northern Town)

Young mothers were perceived by most groups to be overlooked in terms of encouraging them to take on governance roles. This group were seen to be vulnerable to feeling isolated and trapped and so encouraging involvement (with appropriate childcare facilities) could allow this section of the community to meet new people and get involved.

“Yeah well young mums or young dads yeah they can be trapped with kids all day, they’re ready to tear their hair out, but if you do that you’ve also got to have the facilities to make crèche facilities as well which a lot of people would use.” (Older participant, Northern Town)

The **retired community** were also viewed as a valuable resource due to their life experience and being time rich. However there are concerns that too many volunteers from this age group could introduce a bias in the community towards older people, and therefore groups consisting largely of older people would not be representative.

“But then you want people representing things that are important to you. Like somebody who’s 65, or a bloke’s not going to be interested in the things that I am in the community so.” (Young participant, Midlands City)

The groups agreed that **transient and young professionals** will be the hardest to encourage. The inevitable time commitments with work and family make this group particularly difficult to encourage into governance roles. Young people often felt that their involvement was not encouraged and they were overlooked by older community members.

“They’re not aiming, they’re not trying to get young people because we’re all from the same community, and none of us would have known about it. They’re not doing a lot to try and get us involved.” (Young non-participant, Southern Town)

“All these meetings, they’re not aimed at us. As we were saying like mainly older people have got the time, they’re retired and they don’t work. So they’re the ones that might not relate to us, but we’re still in that community.” (Young non-participant, Southern Town)

In order to encourage more young people into governance roles, a possible suggestion is to have meetings which are age specific – allowing young people and older people to discuss similar issues affecting the community but in separate forums tailored to the particular audience.

The groups were largely positive about the idea of a **‘one stop shop’** where people could walk in and have to hand information about local opportunities and get advice as to how best to utilise their skills in the community. In order for such a facility to work, the groups agreed that it would need to be in a highly visible and accessible place and be widely publicised to encourage people to visit.

“Might set up, might be mobile places in local parks, near the schools, that sort of thing so people could just drop in after they’ve taken their kids to school or after they’ve picked their kids up or something like that.” (Young participant, Midlands City)

Some groups mentioned they have a similar facility in their local areas in the form of the Community Voluntary Service (CVS). Some of the participants had used this facility, by phone or face to face to be matched to an organisation seeking volunteers. For the most part however, this facility was unrecognised by the groups and generally underutilised by the community.

“I’m not sure how many people actually know where this CVS is in Burnley.” (Young participant, Northern Town)

However, there was concern that if such a service was established in the community, there would only be a handful of people who would take advantage of it.

“The people who are going to be running it are going to be sat their twiddling their thumbs waiting for the odd person to call in just to get some information.” (Young participant, Midlands City)

HOW TO SUSTAIN?

Despite all the means of recruiting people to voluntary roles, it is important that they are encouraged to sustain these roles once they have made the commitment. There is a huge bank of volunteers undertaking all manner of services to the community and it is paramount that these people are not lost. Acknowledging and recognising the commitment and service volunteers provide is one way of sustaining their service. Similarly it is important that they are kept informed of developments within the organisation or group they are involved with and made to feel part of the team, and not separate from paid members.

“I think you’ve to keep, thinking from where I’m working, but you’ve got keep them engaged and you’ve to give them things to do, there is an element of management, if you’re managing a group of volunteers you’ve got to keep that contact with them.” (Older participant, Northern Town)

“To give them training and more than anything else you have to give them status because if you keep running it down volunteer make the, I am a paid worker and you are a volunteer.” (Older participant, Northern Town)

Support is another means of sustaining volunteers; offering them training and making their role as flexible as possible is also important. Volunteers need to be made to feel that ‘every little helps’ and show people how they can get involved with the time they do have available.

“I think we’ve to communicate that the level of commitment people have to give can actually be quite small, because you can think volunteering it means everyday I’ve got to do something, every week but if you say well look I can do that once a month.” (Older participant, Northern Town)

Some participants felt that to ensure more people get involved in the community, it should be made **obligatory**. The group suggested that those people who were perhaps unemployed should be made to get involved for a period of time. Similarly, others felt that if it was made compulsory, in a similar way to Jury Service, where everyone would have an equal opportunity to be involved in the community at some point, and be expected to do so.

“Be compulsory, like Jury Service.” (Young participant, Northern Town)

11 Conclusions and Recommendations

CONCLUSIONS

The key conclusions from the research are summarised below.

Awareness and understanding

- 'Citizen Governance' in itself is a term that was not clearly understood by the participants, nor was the concept fully understood
- Participants described all roles in the community as volunteering, and saw little immediate distinction between 'volunteering' and 'citizen governance' roles
- Awareness and knowledge of governance roles and routes into them were lacking. Some suggested that this was due to the lack of advertising and promotion of these opportunities

Understanding of specific roles

- There were many misconceptions surrounding these roles; what they are, and what they are not. When prompted, the groups understood decision making roles and were aware of roles such as magistrates and governors
- Governance roles were viewed by many as highly demanding and time intensive. Some of the participants currently involved in these roles had taken them on in order to represent their communities, but some had since found that the demands of the roles had made them a chore
- Specific roles such as School Governor and Magistrate were seen as very time consuming and onerous in terms of commitment to the role. Training was also seen as very demanding. Many felt that the intensity of the commitment would rule them out of taking on a role like this

Profile of participants

- Participants were perceived to be people who were well educated, articulate, 'well to do' and had time on their hands. For this reason, many felt that 'ordinary people' were unlikely to get involved in these roles. Most people had not even considered governance roles as an option
- Governance roles were sometimes considered to be available only by invitation, and that invitations would only be offered to the 'right people'
- Those currently undertaking a governance role had either a personal interest in their chosen role, wanted to make a difference in the community, or had simply been approached by someone in the role. For the most part they described their roles as an intensive commitment and highly demanding

Community

- Those participants who felt positive about their community expressed the view that they were more likely to get involved in their community. However as other research has identified 'community' need not be a geographical location but could be based around work, faith groups, or interests groups
- Many forms of public decision making roles were not seen as 'citizen governance'. For example, involvement at public meetings and tenants associations was seen as a response to a specific issue. People involved in these activities often saw their involvement as short term and focused on a particular issue of concern to them

Motivations to involvement

- Participants expressed a wide variety of reasons for getting involved in the community (in volunteering roles) and by and large these reasons were similar to those given for taking on governance roles
- Motivations could either be positive (such as wanting to contribute because they were proud of their community) or negative (such as protesting about proposed changes to local services)
- Similarly, motivations to get involved tended to be largely 'emotional' or 'rational'. Emotional reasons might include feeling guilty and wanting to put something back into the community. Rational reasons could include wanting to gain experience of committees to help with career advancement
- While volunteering was seen as largely philanthropic many participants were suspicious of the motivations behind people's involvement in governance roles. Typical examples included people wanting to become magistrates because it gave them power over others
- Those in the non-participation groups were more likely to be suspicious of the motivations behind people taking on governance roles. They were also more likely to be apathetic about participation in general

Barriers to involvement

- The groups discussed some general barriers which applied to all types of volunteering and governance roles. Time was mentioned by most participants as a key barrier to getting involved. The perception is that everyone now has busy lives and other commitments that take priority over the community
- A major issue, particularly for governance roles, for many people was concern that their valuable time might be wasted. Unless there are guaranteed positive outcomes, people felt their involvement could be futile. If the participants felt that their contribution would produce tangible results, and they would be listened to and taken seriously, then this would increase their motivation to express an interest in getting involved

- Fear was also a barrier, with many different groups commenting on the fear of repercussions if they were to become known in the community, or alienating themselves with a controversial opinion. Governance roles were seen as potentially cutting people off from their communities rather than making them champions for their communities
- Many people expressed a lack of confidence in their ability to contribute in governance roles. Lack of confidence in public speaking, feeling intimidated by others, knowing how committees work and making decisions that affected other people were frequently mentioned as barriers to involvement

Encouraging people into involvement roles

- Being asked by someone already on a committee was seen as a powerful way of gaining the involvement of those that were unsure or lacked confidence
- There was agreement that more people need to be encouraged into governance roles. Children and young people as well as young mothers and the retired community were seen as underutilised in the community. Young professionals were perceived to be the most difficult to target. It was suggested that age specific groups could be useful in dealing with this issue
- Groups were all in agreement that face to face recruitment was the most effective method of encouraging more people into governance roles. There were mixed views as to whether financial incentives were effective in recruitment. It was felt that they would be effective in sustaining people in their roles, but there was concern that they might attract the 'wrong type' of person, that is, someone whose primary motivation was the financial incentive

RECOMMENDATIONS

There are a number of recommendations that come out of this research.

The concept of citizen governance

The concept of citizen governance is not well understood. Communities and Local Government should consider whether more needs to be done to promote the concept of citizen governance including the possibility of enhancing the 'brand' of citizen governance by linking it to an initiative such as 'Together We Can'. In particular any promotion activity needs to clarify the differences and similarities between citizen governance and volunteering.

In considering the concept it may be useful to present volunteering as a stepping stone to citizen governance roles. In particular it is recommended that the targeting of existing volunteers to take on citizen governance roles is considered.

Countering misconceptions

There are widespread misconceptions about citizen governance roles that need to be addressed in communications to the general public. In particular, the misconception that they are not open to 'ordinary people'. Governance roles need to be sold to the

general public as accessible and feasible options, coupled with building their skills and confidence to take on such a role.

Presenting governance roles

Many were concerned that citizen governance roles tended to be very time consuming and required a large amount of training. It might be useful to present governance roles on a sliding scale of time and commitment required to encourage those considering taking on a role to match this to their availability. Presenting citizen governance in this way, allows people to have freedom to dip in and dip out of different levels of involvement as time and commitment allow, resulting in a more positive experience where people feel they are of use and making a difference.

Supporting those in Citizen Governance Roles

Those in citizen governance roles often considered the roles demanding. They also felt that there was a tendency for the role to grow through taking on additional tasks. People in those roles sometimes felt unable to decline the extra commitments. Those people currently participating in the community need to be sustained. Acknowledgement and support measures need to be in place to sustain those who have made the commitment to the community. Communities and Local Government should consider what provision exists to support those in citizen governance roles.

Appendix 1 – Participant Profiles

This appendix details the history of involvement for some of the participants who were involved at a governance level. These show the journey into governance roles.

EX-SCHOOL GOVERNOR, MIDLANDS TOWN

On moving to the area the participant volunteered to be a chairman at the primary school and then graduated five years later to being the governor at the secondary school that her three sons attended.

“I’m one of these who stick my hand up at the wrong time.”

The respondent felt she had the skills and the confidence to carry out the role.

“I’ll probably say what everybody else is thinking.”

This respondent had to give up the role because of ill health but had recently been very active in local groups concerned with activities for young people and the funding of a skate park. Although the role of school governor was very demanding for her, she is proud of her achievements during that time and open to the idea of returning to such a role.

EX-SCHOOL GOVERNOR, MIDLANDS TOWN

This participant had recently retired and was well known in the local community. He was approached and invited to become a school governor. He also felt that his skills learnt in the workplace would be useful to the school. He was previously a director in an engineering company.

“I was convinced that I would be useful to them there because I had experience of meetings and organising.”

He stayed in the role for six years but found it demanding and more time consuming than he had been led to believe or indeed expected it to be. He enjoyed the sense of ‘feeling needed’ in the community during this time.

LOCAL COUNCILLOR, NORTHERN TOWN

This participant had stood as a local councillor as an independent candidate in Burnley. She had first become interested in her community when trouble started with young people in her neighbourhood. She often found burnt out cars abandoned outside her house. She felt that the council did nothing to reassure residents. She organised a local action group with other home owners to put the views of the community to the council. Since then, her involvement as chairperson in other committees has flourished. Her increased confidence encouraged her to stand as an independent councillor to do something for the community.

SCHOOL GOVERNOR, NORTHERN TOWN

This participant was married to a local councillor and so was in touch with opportunities in the local area. She was previously involved in residents' committees and was approached by the local school and asked to be a school governor. Her children attended the school and so she felt obliged to take on the role. She was a governor for 10 years and this involvement snowballed into taking on a role as special needs governor. When her children left school, she gave up her role and has since moved on to being on a committee running the local tenants' associations.

MAGISTRATE, NORTHERN CITY

This participant was an older gentleman who had a particular interest in the young people in the community. As he was retired, he spent time at the local court house watching the trials and got to know some of the young people who appeared for different offences time and again. His interest prompted him to approach a magistrate at the court and find out how he could get involved. His previous job was as a long distance lorry driver.

Appendix 2 – Discussion guide

Citizen Governance

Final Discussion Guide – Participators – v4

29th November 2005

1 INTRODUCTION (5 MINS)

- **Introduce moderator**

My name is X and I work for TNS – an independent social research company

Purpose of research

The research will be used to help those in government understand the views of those involved and thinking about becoming involved in their local community and what could be done to encourage more involvement. The research involves 13 discussion groups like this in a wide variety of different areas.

- **Confidentiality/MRS Code of Conduct**

We want to assure you that everything you say in this session will be confidential. We will not pass on the names of any participants to anyone outside of TNS. We will not use your name or anything that will identify you personally in any written reports or discussions with our clients. This includes the information you have written in the pre-task exercise

- **Recording**

We would like to record the discussion, purely to enable us to make sure we have understood what you say. The recording is for our use only and will not be passed on to anyone else. **Is everyone happy with this?**

- **Group logistics – time, rules etc**

- **Any questions?**

2 WARM UP/A CONTEXT (10 MINS)

- Respondent introductions – name, length of time lived in area
- Tell me about the area where you live – (throw out adjectives to describe the area)
- What do you like/dislike about the area
- What is a community/‘your community’

- Do you feel a part of a community – how
- In what ways do you feel a part of your community (probe for reading local paper, knowing the local councillor, etc)
- Is having a community important to you – why/why not

3 AWARENESS, UNDERSTANDING AND GENERAL PERCEPTIONS (15 MINS)

- What examples can you think of where people can get involved in what happens in their area or community (*Moderator to jot down on cards the examples given*)

Divide the group into two teams and ask them to jot down examples onto show cards – reconvene the group after 5 minutes. Discuss the examples as one group and try to get them to think of more. Add to their cards the following examples if not already generated by groups and spread these cards out on the table:

- a) *Completing a questionnaire about local services/problems in the local area*
- b) *Attending a public meeting about local services/problems in the local area*
- c) *Being involved in a group to talk about local services/problems in the local area*
- d) *Member of a tenants group*
- e) *Being a member of a group or forum to make decisions about local health services (e.g. patient involvement forums, local neighbourhood forums) or regeneration of the area, local services for young people, local education services or to tackle crime problems*
- f) *Being a local councillor*
- g) *Being a school governor*
- h) *Being a magistrate*

Mapping exercise:

It allows people's own categorisations and understandings to be exposed and explored

Ask group to sort or rank these:

- *Into how much involvement is required – 'involvement' can be their own definition e.g. time/energy/expense and to explain their reasons for this sort and discuss*
- *According to those they are more and less familiar with and discuss*

4 GENERAL MOTIVATIONS AND BARRIERS (15 MINS)

*I want to talk about each of these ways of getting involved in more detail later on. You all are here because you have got involved in some way in your community. Let's talk about the **general** reasons as to why people do or don't get involved – we can talk about specific roles later on*

- In general, what do you think makes people get involved in activities such as these in their local communities – probe for quick responses (without thinking too hard and without analysing or censoring their responses)
- Why did **you** get involved (*probe for time on their hands, see a problem/issue and feel they could do something to help, career development/networking*)
- Does there tend to be a **trigger** (something that acted as a catalyst to making you actually do it) and if so, what is this
- What kind of person is drawn to community involvement and why (*ask group for a portrait – age, gender, interests, occupation, background, ethnic origin, religion etc*) and what kind of person does NOT get involved)
How do you feel about this
- What are the reasons why people **don't** get involved in these ways – probe for quick responses (without thinking too hard and without analysing or censoring their responses)

Moderators to liaise and rotate between Chapters 5 and 6

5 DECISION MAKING ON THE LOCAL AREA (40 MINS)

Let's talk about some of these roles in more detail... moderator to focus the group on examples a-e by displaying these on the table:

- Completing a questionnaire about local services/problems in the local area*
 - Attending a public meeting about local services/problems in the local area*
 - Being involved in a group to talk about local services/problems in the local area*
 - Member of a tenants group*
 - Being a member of a group to **make decisions** about local health services (e.g. patient involvement forums, local neighbourhood forums), regeneration of the area, local services for young people, local education services or to tackle crime problems*
- **Understanding/expectations** – Are you aware of all of these

- What do you know about these ways of getting involved in your area that exist

Moderator to have an explanation of what is involved in being a member of a service user forum and to show if needed but to explain that this varies from area to area

- **Experiences** – *(those that have got involved in this way/ know about these structures)*
 - Are they effective – why/why not
 - How did you find the experience
 - What was involved
 - What did you like/dislike
 - Have you continued/are you still doing this/do you plan to do it again – why/why not
 - How could it have been a better experience for you
- **Motivations** – Why would someone get involved in this way/why did or would you get involved in this way *(probe on type of job people do/career development)*
 - What are the **core** reasons and what are the more **periphery** reasons
 - Is there a trigger to spur people to doing this – what is this *(probe for job requirements/friends/social circle/a ‘culture’ of volunteers)*

Barriers – What are the reasons why ‘other people’ don’t get involved in these ways?

Respondents to jot down possible reasons on bubble chart. Moderator to collect these responses in and keep for discussion

Bubble diagram – projective technique to get respondents to think in the third person and to uncover hidden/subconscious reasons. This has been adapted from the psychotherapeutic ‘thematic apperception test’ or TAT.

Probe on and discuss statements written out on cards (include within these any good examples from bubble charts – positioned as what ‘other people’ have said. Include the conventional and the more provocative – discuss each in turn, its relevance and the extent to which people think it is a reason ‘for other people’

- 1 “I don’t care about my area I’m going to move soon anyway”
- 2 “I don’t want to be connected with politics”

- 3 “I don’t think it will make any difference”
- 4 “That’s not my job, that’s what I pay my tax for”
- 5 “I don’t really want to mingle with the kinds of people that will be there, I won’t fit in”
- 6 “Nobody will listen to me; they won’t take what I say seriously”
- 7 “I don’t have the time”
- 8 “I’m too shy”
- 9 “I have enough responsibilities as it is”

- What other reasons are there (write on blank cards and add to the statements)
- Which of these reasons hold more power and why (*these can be sorted into a hierarchy*)
- Why haven’t **you** got involved in this way
- How would you go about getting involved in this way
- How aware do you think people are in the local area about these kinds of activities and ways of getting involved/how is it publicised and communicated/where would you go for information about involvement
- **Profiling** – Who does do this/Who should be doing this/who do you want to see doing this and why (*probe for demographic profile/skills/personality/time in life*)
- Should people be representing their own views or that of their community or constituency – does this matter
- What are the **benefits and drawbacks**

6 PUBLIC SERVICE ROLES (15 MINS)

Let’s talk about public service roles – e.g. being a school governor or a magistrate

- **Understanding/expectations** – Taking each in turn tell me about this role – what do you know about this role/what the role entails/how much time required/how you take on the role

Moderator to choose one role and focus on this for the rest of Chapter 6 – may want to choose the role that respondents have the strongest feelings about/experience with. Show explanation if necessary

- **Experiences** – (those that have got involved in this way) How did you find the experience
 - Was this your first volunteering/participatory experience
 - What was involved
 - What did you like/dislike
 - Have you continued – why/why not
 - How could it have been a better experience for you
- **Motivations** – Why would someone get involved in this way/why would **you** get involved in this way (*probe on type of job people do/career development*)
 - What are the **core** reasons and what are the more **periphery** reasons
 - Is there a trigger to spur people to doing this – what is this (*probe for job requirements/friends/social circle/a ‘culture’ of volunteers*)

Barriers – What are the reasons why ‘other people’ don’t get involved in these ways

Respondents to first jot down possible reasons on bubble chart

Discuss ‘other peoples’ reasons – from bubble charts and statements (exercise from Chapter 5)

- What are the core and the periphery reasons why ‘other people’ don’t get involved (*these can be sorted into a hierarchy*)
- What would stop **you** from getting involved in this way
- How would you go about getting involved in this way
- How aware do you think people are in the local area about these kinds of activities and ways of getting involved/how is it publicised and communicated/where would you go for information about involvement
- **Profiling** – Who gets involved in this way/for how long and why (*probe for probe for child at school in the case of parent governor*)
- Who should be doing this/who do you want to see doing this and why (*probe for demographic profile/skills/personality/time in life*)
- What are the **benefits and drawbacks**

7 GROWING AND SUSTAINING PARTICIPATION (15 MINS)

- Do you think there is a desire within your community to want to be more involved and what kinds of involvement and why
- Do you think people might consider getting involved in other communities, outside their own area – why?
- Do you feel it is a good idea to encourage people to take on these types of roles (what are the pros and cons of this?)
- What kind of person continues or extends their involvement/Is there a 'lifespan'
- What would make someone/**you** continue or move into other areas of involvement (for example from contacting a councillor to joining a group to make decisions about the local area)
- Do you think some people who contribute in this way to the community – could be encouraged to take on a new and different community role? Or once they finish being a school governor (say) is that the end of their community involvement?
- What kind of people do you want to see becoming more involved in your community and why
 - Who will it be easy to encourage to participate and why/what groups will be difficult to engage and why
- What can be done to encourage people to be **and stay** involved
 - What tactics need to be employed for different types of people – (e.g. age groups/ethnic origin) and areas (e.g. less affluent)
 - Will support be important to stop people from becoming disinterested – who will need the most support/what kind of support
 - Who should provide this encouragement and support – central government, local government, police or X
 - Where should meetings take place and why
- What do you think of the following idea for helping to encourage and sustain involvement (showcards) – would it work in your community – why/why not – how could this idea be developed? Where would the best place be for this in your community

A support centre – 'a one stop shop' where someone could go to get help and advice the different ways to get involved

8 WRAP UP (5 MINS)

- How can participation be encouraged and sustained in your and other communities – what ideas do you have

Group to imagine that they are the prime minister – can split into two groups or stay as one. Sometimes this acts as a good summary of the discussion but often it jolts the group into taking responsibility for their ideas and throws up some new and interesting angles or ideas.

- Anything else

Thank & Close