Take Part interim report

Second year evaluation of the Take Part programme

By Stephen Miller and Areenay Hatamian
The Community Development Foundation

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Published October 2010

This publication is funded by the Take Part programme, funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government and managed by the Community Development Foundation

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Executive summary

This report reflects the interim findings from the Community Development Foundation’s (CDF) evaluation of Take Part, a three year programme of support for active citizenship and learning funded by Communities and Local Government (CLG) and managed by CDF.

The evaluation

The principle aim of this report is to highlight the key themes and trends emerging at the interim stage of the Take Part programme. The evaluation took place in the second year of the programme, and at this stage the information presented should be treated as indicative of emerging trends rather than definitive. Findings are based on a total of 173 structured and semi-structured interviews and four focus groups.

The Take Part programme

Take Part programme work began in January 2009, and is due to run until March 2011. There are two key strands: the Take Part pathfinders and a programme of national support.

Pathfinders aim to support community leadership and active citizenship learning in 19 areas across England. This work is complemented by a programme of national support, which aims to get more organisations besides the pathfinders to adopt the practices of the Take Part approach, and support those organisations in running Take Part initiatives which encourage more local citizens to ‘take part’.

Impact of Take Part on local communities

6,569 people directly benefited from Take Part activities in the 2009–10 financial year, with the majority involved in active citizenship learning, including workshops, one-off sessions, pathfinder organised events or informal and formal leaning activities.

The Take Part programme is increasing civil and civic participation among local people. There is also evidence of unexpected benefits, such as people moving on to gain further qualifications or new employment. Participants are more likely to get involved in volunteering, both in community groups and with public services. They have gone on to volunteer in Brownie groups, to form Neighbourhood Watch groups, to work in charity shops and to have a great involvement with their local schools.

Pathfinders supported participants in the pursuit of civic roles, with several successfully becoming school governors, councillors or magistrates. There is also evidence of benefits cascading to those not directly involved, such as community groups and families.
Pathfinder methods and approaches

Take Part is seen to be a flexible approach to developing more innovative empowerment activity. While pathfinders use a variety of activities and techniques to deliver their work, learning activities characterise the current programme.

Activities are developed in response to the needs and concerns of local people and communities, and structured in a way that helps overcome many of the typical barriers people face.

Pathfinders use a variety of channels to engage participants, with most promoting their work through existing networks and community organisations. Use of existing networks and organisations builds up trust and rapport among participants. A number of pathfinders also work with community organisations to deliver Take Part activities, which helps develop learning around people’s needs, as well as provide spaces for critical reflection.

Pathfinders also work with officials and public agencies to help them reflect on both their own practice and the barriers they may face when trying to engage local communities.

Partnership working

Pathfinders have good relationships with their respective local strategic partnerships and felt they were able to keep up with developments in their area through these relationships.

The Take Part programme has strong links to local authorities, allowing for better coordination between the programme and other empowerment activities. It is also seen to change the approach of local authorities to their own work, with an increase in the number of activities which are developed in response to people’s own issues and concerns. This was particularly reported among the local authority-led pathfinders.

Pathfinders also encountered a number of challenges to their partnerships arrangements. Some found coordinating partners’ activities difficult, and there was also evidence of staff changes in external partners reducing capacity and support.

Partnerships with other government-sponsored programmes, particularly those operating at a regional level, are less common. Pathfinders cite the different programme aims and timelines as possible reasons for this.

Staffing of pathfinders

103 staff work for pathfinders on the Take Part programme, and Take Part work requires both an additional number of staff and amount of time. There were also staff turnover and recruitment issues during the second year of the programme.
National support

The evaluation of the national support programme focused on the online resource directory and the 'train the Take Part trainers' programme. This highlighted that while there was limited use of the online resource directory during the second year, there was a good level of knowledge and demand for the train the Take Part trainers programme.

Interviews with local authorities outside of pathfinder catchment areas suggested Take Part could support their work. However, the programme is being promoted in a number of different ways and to various effects, and the Take Part offer is not always clear to those outside of the programme.

Pathfinders’ self-evaluations

Pathfinders’ evaluations took up a considerable amount of both the pathfinders’ and CDF’s time and resources. There is ambiguity among pathfinders as to what is seen to constitute impact, with concerns of how this relates to the measurement of success.

CDF provided extensive support to pathfinders in conducting their own evaluations, resulting in each producing their own interim evaluation report. While creating templates and providing guidance proved useful, bespoke evaluation support was also required.

Reflections for the final year

The interim evaluation indicates emerging trends, which will be investigated further in the final evaluation. Trends include:

- the Take Part style of learning is most effective when developed in response to people’s own issues and concerns
- learning is most successful when it is participatory and includes an element of critical reflection
- there is a strong emphasis on increasing levels of civic participation through Take Part, which is seen as requiring long-term support structures
- where the local authority has a working relationship with the pathfinder, there is increased coordination of empowerment activities.

Potential barriers and risks to the remainder of the programme include:

- limited networking between pathfinders at both regional and national levels
- the varied and localised nature of the pathfinder programme makes it difficult for external organisations to appreciate the Take Part offer
- there is seen to be poor coordination between empowerment initiatives at a local level.
Acknowledgements

We wish to thank Barbra Carlisle for her continued support and advice over the course of this research. Secondly we would like to thank the programmes team at CDF for their input and comments – Jason Nuttall, Claire Morgan, Helen Animashaun, Tania Pells and Thomas Neumark.

Additionally we would like to thank Graham Skeggs and Meghan Rainsberry for their work and support in the development of this report. We would also like to acknowledge the contribution of Maire Gaffney and ERS in collecting evidence for the evaluation, and Carol Goldstone Associates, Dick Ellison, Patrick Marmion and Steve Skinner for supporting pathfinders with their own evaluations and feeding in to the development of these.

Finally, but most importantly, we would like to thank the local authority representatives, community development workers, pathfinders and their beneficiaries for participating in the research. We would particularly like to thank the pathfinders for both their assistance with organising interviews and focus groups, and the contribution of their own evidence to the programme evaluation.

Stephen Miller and Areenay Hatamian
List of acronyms

**ALAC** – Active Learning for Active Citizenship

**CDF** - Community Development Foundation

**CLG** - Communities and Local Government

**ESOL** – English for Speakers of Other Languages

**GOR** – Government office region

**IPAC** – Individual Profile in Active Citizenship

**LA** - Local authority

**LSP** – Local Strategic Partnership

**NOCN** – National Open College Network

**PB** – Participatory Budgeting

**PCDL** - Personal and Community Development Learning fund

**PTLLS** – Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector

**REP** - Regional Empowerment Partnership

**TSEPI** - Targeted Support for Empowerment & Participation Improvement work

**VCO** - Voluntary and Community organisation
1 Introduction to the Take Part programme

The Department for Communities and Local Government, (CLG), through the Community Development Foundation (CDF), has commissioned a three year, £8.7 million programme of support for active citizenship and learning entitled the Take Part programme. The first phase of this work commenced in January 2009, and the programme is due to run until March 2011. There are two key strands of the Take Part programme: the pathfinders and a programme of national support.

1.1 The Take Part pathfinders

A total of £4.3 million has been committed over three years for Take Part pathfinders to support community leadership and active citizenship learning in a number of areas across England.

The Take Part pathfinders aim to:

- build the skills and confidence of local people so that they can pursue civic activism, community leadership and lay governance roles (including those of local councillors)
- support people and organisations in developing an understanding of barriers to participation, and how to overcome those barriers
- raise awareness of routes into lay governance roles, especially those involving local strategic partnership partners
- to support people in their progression through those routes to support improvement against Public Service Agreement (PSA) 15 National Indicator 3 (NI3) and PSA 21 NI4.

Eight phase 1 Take Part pathfinders joined the programme in December 2008 and a further 10 phase 2 pathfinders joined in April 2009. The lead organisations are a mixture of voluntary sector organisations and local authorities, each working in partnership with a variety of other organisations, including voluntary sector and local strategic partnership partners. Pathfinders cover a broad number of geographical areas between them:

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1 NI3 indicates ‘civic participation in the local area – narrowing gaps between groups in order to raise involvement of disadvantaged sections of society’ whilst NI4 indicates ‘people feeling that they can influence decisions in their locality’.
### 1.1.1 Table 1: phase 1 pathfinders and catchment areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pathfinder name</th>
<th>Lead organisation</th>
<th>Catchment area</th>
<th>GOR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln pathfinder</td>
<td>Lincoln University</td>
<td>Lincolnshire</td>
<td>East Midlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwark pathfinder</td>
<td>Southwark Volunteer Centre</td>
<td>London borough of Southwark</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redcar &amp; Cleveland and Sedgefield borough pathfinder</td>
<td>Skillshare Ltd</td>
<td>Redcar and Cleveland Sedgefield</td>
<td>North East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salford pathfinder</td>
<td>Community Pride</td>
<td>Salford</td>
<td>North West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brighton &amp; Hove pathfinder</td>
<td>WEA South</td>
<td>Brighton and Hove</td>
<td>South East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exeter pathfinder</td>
<td>Exeter CVS</td>
<td>Exeter</td>
<td>South West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Country pathfinder</td>
<td>Wolverhampton Voluntary Sector Council</td>
<td>Dudley Sandwell, Wolverhampton, Walsall</td>
<td>West Midlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Yorkshire pathfinder</td>
<td>WEA Yorkshire and Humber</td>
<td>Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham</td>
<td>Yorkshire and Humber</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 1.1.2 Table 2: phase 2 pathfinders and catchment areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pathfinder name</th>
<th>Lead organisation</th>
<th>Catchment area</th>
<th>GOR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hertfordshire pathfinder</td>
<td>Hertfordshire County Council</td>
<td>Hertsmere, Stevenage</td>
<td>East Of England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thurrock pathfinder</td>
<td>Thurrock Council</td>
<td>Thurrock borough</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mansfield pathfinder</td>
<td>Mansfield CVS/WEA East Midlands</td>
<td>Mansfield and district</td>
<td>East Midlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sutton pathfinder</td>
<td>Sutton CVS</td>
<td>London borough of Sutton</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northumberland pathfinder</td>
<td>WEA North East</td>
<td>North Northumberland</td>
<td>North East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burnley, Pendle and Rosendale pathfinder</td>
<td>Burnley, Pendle and Rosendale CVS</td>
<td>Burnley, Pendle, Rosendale</td>
<td>North West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portsmouth pathfinder</td>
<td>Portsmouth City Council</td>
<td>Portsmouth</td>
<td>South East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornwall pathfinder</td>
<td>Cornwall Voluntary Sector Forum</td>
<td>Cornwall</td>
<td>South West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stoke-on-Trent pathfinder</td>
<td>Stoke-on-Trent City Council</td>
<td>Stoke-on-Trent</td>
<td>West Midlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bradford and York pathfinder</td>
<td>CNet and York City Council²</td>
<td>Bradford and York</td>
<td>Yorkshire and Humber</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

² Please note that the Yorkshire and Humber phase 2 pathfinders is comprised of two organisations working in different locations who have shared the funding between them. For the purposes of the evaluation they will be referred to as one pathfinder with two projects. As such there are 18 pathfinders involved in this work, although these are comprised of 19 organisations.
1.2 Priority areas of activity

The pathfinders have six priority areas of activity:

- programmes of learning that build skills and confidence within a community context
- community leadership programmes that offer tailored support for civic activism and/or lay governance roles
- information about the availability of opportunities for influence and lay governance roles across the public sector in the locality, and support for greater mobility between such roles
- access to accreditation for citizenship learning and skills development
- activities that can support improvement against national indicator 3
- activities that can support improvement against national indicator 4.

The required outcomes of the programme are:

- increased levels of participation in civic activism, consultation and civic participation
- increased levels of participation in community leadership roles
- increased skills and confidence among citizens, particularly those from more disadvantaged communities, to support participation, and
- an increase in the numbers of people equipped to press for change in support of community leadership.

1.3 Take Part national support

The other strand of the Take Part programme is to deliver a national programme of support which complements the work of the pathfinders. The main aim of the national support programme is to engage organisations beyond the 18 pathfinders to adopt the practices being rolled out across the programme, supporting those organisations in running Take Part initiatives, and encouraging more local citizens to ‘take part’. This programme of support runs alongside the work of the pathfinders from 2009-2011, with a budget of £2.4 million. National support is explored in more detail in Chapter 6.

1.4 The Take Part evaluation

The evaluation of Take Part in the second year of the programme has centred upon three main objectives:

- assessing the operational procedures and practices used to deliver the Take Part programme
• investigating the impact of the Take Part programme upon stakeholders and local communities

• measuring the impact of the national support.

This has included an evaluation of both the pathfinder work and national support, as well as working with pathfinders to develop their own evaluations.

Interviews were conducted with a wide range of stakeholders, including all of the pathfinders, local authorities operating both within and outside of pathfinder catchment areas and agencies involved with delivering national support work. A number of focus groups were also conducted with beneficiaries of Take Part work, and this evidence is complemented by research mapping civic activists’ characteristics in each pathfinder area, as well as data captured through the pathfinders’ own evaluations. The full methodology used is detailed in appendix 1.

1.5 Aim of this report

This report reflects the interim findings from CDF’s evaluation of the second year of the Take Part programme (2009-10). The principal aim of this report is to highlight the key themes and trends emerging at the interim stage. The next three chapters explore the three evaluation objectives in more detail, and the report progresses to detail and reflect upon the support offered to pathfinders in relation to their own evaluations. The report concludes with a reflection upon the key findings so far and the way forward for the evaluation. At this interim stage no recommendations for the programme will be made in this report due to the restricted level of evidence available.

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3 This report does not include an evaluation of the first year of the programme. The programme was signed off by CLG in December 2008, with delivery covering just the last 3 months of the first year.
2 The impact of the pathfinders

2.1 Chapter overview

A key aim of the national evaluation is to investigate the impact of the Take Part programme upon stakeholders and local communities. In 2009-10 approximately 6,569 people benefitted from the pathfinders’ work, either through their involvement in workshops, one-off sessions, pathfinder organised events or informal and formal learning activities. Of these participants approximately 1,153 people were involved in either accredited or non-accredited learning activities.

At this point the evidence on the impact is indicative rather than definite, with the focus groups of beneficiaries involved in learning activities being the main source of evidence. Interviews with local authorities, community development workers and pathfinders along with pathfinders’ own interim reports add to the evidence on impact. Research into the characteristics and experiences of people already in civic roles is also referenced where relevant. The final report will reference a broader evidence base and build on the findings from the interim report.

This chapter looks at the evidence on impact that we currently have, including the impact on beneficiaries and the impact on local communities.

2.2 Emerging findings

• The pathfinders are increasing beneficiaries’ confidence to engage with local decision making. There is also evidence of improved skills and knowledge that can aid beneficiaries’ participation.

• There is evidence of increased civil participation, such as greater volunteering and civic participation as a result of pathfinder’s work. In total, 33 participants of pathfinder activities are pursuing, or have pursued, a civic role such as a councillor, magistrate or school governor.

• There is also emerging evidence of participants gaining further qualifications as a result of the pathfinders’ work, both through pathfinder accredited courses and educational courses with other learning providers.

2.3 Impact on beneficiaries

A principle aim of the programme is to build the skills and confidence of local people so that they can pursue civic activism, community leadership and lay governance roles. There are

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4 For the purposes of the civic activist mapping research “civic roles” included councillors, school governors and special constables and excluded magistrates.
indications that the pathfinders are having a positive impact on individual participants, particularly in terms of:

- increasing people’s confidence
- developing people’s knowledge and skills
- increasing access to education opportunities
- increasing individual engagement in participation opportunities locally.

### 2.3.1 Confidence building

Focus group participants stated that through their involvement with the pathfinders they had gained confidence in engaging with local decision making. Importantly, this increased personal confidence had enabled some to get actively involved in local issues that interested them.

‘I’m now a parent rep for my school, and I would have never done anything like that before. I would have just sat at home with the kids, but now I’m getting out and there and getting involved with things... you feel empowerment... It gives you a sense of direction in your life, which is good for everyone to have’.

**Focus group participant**

The impact of increased confidence can manifest in a number of ways, including participants taking positive steps to take control of their interaction with public services and agencies:

‘I made a phone call to the hospital, which I wouldn’t have done normally... and they sent me an information pack, which was really good’

**Focus group participant**

Participants directly attributed increased confidence to the pathfinder’s activities. Increased confidence also appears to have impacted on participants’ personal relationships, with people stating that they were more confident to tackle personal issues.

Given that lack of confidence was identified by local authority officers, pathfinders and beneficiaries as one of the main reasons for people’s lack of involvement, and that building confidence is one of the main aims of the programme, the fact that the pathfinders’ work is engendering confidence is a measure of their success to date.

Both pathfinders and beneficiaries commented that the language, setting and formality of certain decision-making processes can be intimidating for people who are not familiar with the environment. This is explored in more detail in section 3.4.3.

‘And that's come out quite strongly... confidence, skills and presentation skills, people felt they didn't have those skills to be able to take part in some of the government structures’

**Pathfinder**
2.3.2 Enhancing knowledge and skills

Several of the key priorities for the programme (see section 1.2) link to providing learning and building skills through a range of formal and informal learning environments. The evidence to date shows that the pathfinders have improved the knowledge and skills for individuals around democratic processes and institutions.

Evidence indicates that participants have gained knowledge about the processes involved in influencing local decisions and service delivery. Knowledge about local governance was evident, but the inner workings of individual local authorities can be difficult to grasp and even local authority interviewees admitted the structures could be confusing to those outside the organisation. Pathfinders felt that, through the programme, participants had become more skilled in questioning public sector bodies, for example asking questions to councillors or members of parliament at public events.

‘There was a councillor here last week and I feel very strongly about the traffic lights down in [X], because there was a little boy that got killed... and I happen to mention it to her, and she’s noted it down... Before coming here I wouldn’t have dreamed about bringing it up’

Focus group participant

Developing communication skills is a particular area of focus for pathfinders, which appears to be well received. Participants felt that their communications skills had developed as a result of training received through the pathfinders, and would be helpful to future communications with a wide range of audiences, including people in positions of power. The civic activist mapping research (ERS 2010), commissioned as part of the CDF evaluation, appears to support this focus on communication skills, as lack of confidence in public speaking was cited by both school governors and councillors in as an initial barrier to taking up the role.

2.3.3 Increasing levels of participation

Ultimately, the programme’s outcomes aim to increase participation in civic activism, consultation and in community leadership roles. Pathfinders are concerned about the ability of Take Part to demonstrate some of these outcomes within the lifetime of the programme. Pathfinders stressed that the time and effort required to prepare an individual for lay governance roles is considerable. It can also be largely dependent on where on the spectrum of participation an individual is when they become involved with the pathfinder.

‘I think the lesson to learn is that it’s a path where people don’t go from no activity to confident community activism; there is a pathway of personal development and support that is required... to get all that within the time is a challenge. But success [can be] the enthusiasm that comes through when people learn how they can influence’

Pathfinder
Findings from pathfinders’ interim reports show 33 participants have pursued, or are pursuing, a civic role, seven of whom have already taken up their position. There is evidence from both pathfinders’ interim reports and focus groups of more people pursuing a range of other forms of civic participation. Examples can range from contacting a relevant individual on a matter that concerns them and accessing e-participation websites to involvement in public consultations and to gaining membership of boards such as the Police Independent Advisory Board. The narrow focus on civic roles (specifically magistrates, councillors and school governors) compared to the broad range of civic activities must be considered when drawing conclusions on the evident success of the pathfinders in encouraging greater civic activism.

### School of Participation with refugees and people seeking asylum

Seventeen people from six different refugee and asylum seeker organisations in Salford took part in this activity. The group identified a number of serious issues during the school, particularly related to hate crime and the standard of accommodation. The group has been involved in negotiations with Greater Manchester Police, the city council and a range of statutory and private housing providers. As a result of this work:

- procedures for reporting hate crime and systems of communication improved within Salford
- the three key private housing providers in Salford who have contracts with the UK Border Agency have agreed to improve their induction processes, and procedures are now better linked up to other colleagues and support agencies in Salford
- members of the group now have places on the Police Independent Advisory Group and the multi-agency forum on refugees and asylum seekers in Salford.

They are now in the process of setting up a network to represent all refugees and asylum seekers in Salford. Once their network is formally constituted they will be able to have a representative on the Salford Strategic Partnership.

The School of Participation has been accredited by Manchester Metropolitan University.

Pathfinders and beneficiaries interviewed for the evaluation provided examples of increased participation in civil activities, such as active volunteering. These included leading a Brownie group, volunteering in a charity shop, and classroom involvement at their children’s school.

The civic activist research\(^5\) (ERS 2010) found councillors generally progressing to their roles after varied experience of both civic and civil participation. A high number of school

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\(^5\) The sample and methodology for the Civic Activist Mapping research is detailed in Appendix 1.
governors and councillors, 65 per cent and 70 per cent respectively, had been a member of
a voluntary or community group prior to taking on their current civic role. The research
indicates the path for civic roles begins with less formal positions within the community and
builds towards a greater level of individual commitment and responsibility.

Pathfinders expressed doubt about the take up of civic roles amongst participants within the
three years of the Take Part programme. The concerns were linked to the short time
frame of the programme coupled with the stage the pathfinder was at in terms of delivering
support programmes that encouraged people into civic roles. However, there was
confidence amongst the pathfinders that participants will have started to progress towards
gaining the skills and confidence to pursue a lay governance role as a result of Take Part, but
may only become a school governor or magistrate after the programme has ceased.
Longitudinal research carried out by one pathfinder (of an active citizenship learning activity
preceding Take Part) found beneficiaries were entering civic roles up to four years after the
course ended, which would support the pathfinders’ assertion.

In the final year of the evaluation CDF will conduct two waves of qualitative interviews with
a total of 76 Take Part participants. The key aims of these interviews will be to determine
the progression of participants as a result of the programme and capture qualitative data on
the impact of the pathfinders on levels of civil and civic activism.

These interviews will complement data collected by pathfinders in their own evaluations and
will also make reference to similar research on civic activism (ERS 2010; Mayo and Rooke
2006; Westheimer and Kahne, 2004). To ensure comparability with the interviews of civic
activists, these interviews will collect data on participants’ characteristics and demographics
(Dr Foster Research 2007).

### 2.4 Additional impacts on individuals

As a result of pathfinders’ learning activities, 252 people gained accreditation. While it is
notoriously difficult to attribute the impact of one programme on an individual life path, our
evidence would suggest this experience of adult learning had a cumulative effect on some
individuals. For example, learning through the pathfinders encouraged a small number of
individuals to explore taking up educational studies:

> ‘I thought well I’ve got no qualifications, I’m really young they ain’t gonna have me... so I just
didn’t bother...Now I’ve had my kids, I’m older now... I wanna see if I can be a midwife’.

**Focus group participant**

Similarly, taking part in the programme was seen as a valuable personal development
opportunity, with a small number of participants going on to find employment. While taking
part in the pathfinder’s activities cannot be directly attributed to success in the labour
market, increased knowledge, confidence and communication skills can be argued to be a
cause of enhanced sense of personal empowerment, which in itself can lead to change.
Focus group participants did state that they felt that their participation in the pathfinder activity was valuable to their personal development and future job prospects.

2.5 Impact on local communities

The impact on local communities of the Take Part programme could be significant if the programme outcomes are achieved, in particular around increasing the number of people equipped to press for change in support of community leadership. However, at this stage of the evaluation we do not have the evidence base to conclude that the programme has had an impact on local communities.

We have shown in the preceding section that the pathfinders can have a positive impact for those individuals participating in the programme, and there are activities within pathfinder areas that reach large numbers of community members and therefore increase the potential impact. For example, in Cornwall the pathfinder held an event with Parliamentary Outreach entitled 'Your Voice!' to demonstrate the number of ways local people could take part in decision making. Contributors included the Speaker of the House of Commons, John Bercow MP, and representatives of Cornwall Council, the EU, Parliamentary Outreach and the pathfinders themselves. The event attracted almost 100 participants.

This is one of a number of pathfinder-organised events. Figures from the pathfinder interim reports suggest that events and other one-off sessions and workshops have reached over 4,000 people. There is some limited evidence from the reports that changes in the extent to which people feel they can influence has shifted as a result of their attendance at these events.

We will be exploring impact on communities in the final year of the evaluation, primarily through a second round of interviews with local authority officers and community development workers in each pathfinder area. CDF will also be conducting a number of surveys with other empowerment initiatives and local authorities to gain external feedback on the impact of the Take Part programme. The surveys will create a picture of the empowerment work being undertaken and how it relates to the Take Part programme. This will help to demonstrate the impact of the Take Part programme beyond the pathfinders, as well as the effect of the national support element.

2.6 Cascading benefits

There is evidence that participants spread the knowledge and skills they acquire from the pathfinders to other community members. Participants expressed a desire to take what they had learnt and use it to effectively engage with people in their communities and form groups around issues that concern them. Participants felt that skills developed as a result of the pathfinder activities can be passed on to other members of the community group.

‘I think one thing that we can do is to build the capacity of the affected community to be able to lobby and represent themselves with policymakers.’
There are further examples from pathfinder interim reports of community groups that have formed as a result of the pathfinders and have increased their membership even after the pathfinder activity has ceased.

Furthermore, focus group participants stated that they passed on the knowledge gained through the pathfinder activity by discussing what they learnt with their family.

‘I actually had a debate with my husband about parliament, politicians, how it works. And I thought ‘actually I do know’... and my children are really proud of me. And I’m talking to them about what I’m learning, which is quite good.’

The impact of these informal discussions is difficult to measure but it supports the idea of benefits cascading to the community and will be explored in more detail over the remaining evaluation period. However, there is an indication from the civic activist research (ERS, 2010) that supports the idea that those involved in civic activism can encourage others to get involved. The research found that a significant minority of councillors (29 per cent) and school governors (47 per cent) knew a family member or friend who had undertaken a civic role with a number stating it influenced their decision to pursue the role (20 per cent and 30 per cent respectively).

### 2.7 Target groups and communities

The programme was designed to support improvement against national indicator 3 which measures the civic participation in the local area with particular focus on the involvement of disadvantaged sections of society. There are a number of groups with whom pathfinders are keen to engage. However, pathfinders seek to ensure an inclusive approach which focuses on encouraging greater engagement across the locality.

Activity to ensure greater engagement amongst women is cited by a number of pathfinders, and as an indication of this work one of the focus groups included in the evaluation fieldwork was composed entirely of mothers. Similarly, one focus group composed almost entirely of Asian elders is an example of pathfinders’ work concentrating on BME communities.

Focused, tailored work with disabled groups and older people is evident across pathfinders. Engagement with certain target groups, such as the disabled community, tends to be established through community groups and pathfinders find that this approach allows them to build trust and to access communities they strive to engage with. Work with young people is patchy (with the exception of one pathfinder that works exclusively with young people), yet given the emphasis of the programme on civic roles and informal adult learning this is understandable.
At this stage of the evaluation it is too early to assert the comprehensive impact of the programme on different target groups. However, the above provides an indication of which groups the pathfinders are keen to engage with and encourage greater participation. The final year of the evaluation will collect data on the impact of the programme on beneficiaries from these target groups, to gain an understanding of how the programme has helped engage them in civic activism.

2.8 Awareness and perception of civic roles

One of the chief aims of the programme is to increase levels of civic activism and participation, and to this end increase the take up of civic roles amongst Take Part participants. Focus group participants demonstrated good basic knowledge about what was required to become a magistrate, councillor or school governor and what their general responsibilities were. However, there were also a number of incorrect assumptions about certain aspects of several roles, such as councillors receiving salaries\(^6\) and magistrates requiring a background in law. There were also large gaps in knowledge about the criteria for becoming a magistrate, councillor or school governor. The findings from the focus group participants suggest activities are aiding beneficiaries’ knowledge, but it was felt there was still a significant distance to travel before their knowledge is sufficient to take up these roles. Activities to prepare participants for the roles are discussed in Chapter 3.

Focus group participants felt that the qualities needed to fulfil a civic role were professionalism, interest in the community, a good level of literacy and communication skills. When asked what would motivate them to pursue one of the civic roles mentioned, participants tended to concentrate on individualistic benefits such as financial reward, personal and professional development, and improving their own standing and influence within the community. Findings from civic activist research (ERS 2010) found the main motivations and benefits for those already in a civic role were:

**Motivations**

- To ‘give something back’ to the community.
- To gain influence (in order to improve the school or community).
- To undertake challenges in order to realise personal development.

**Benefits**

- Personal development and increased confidence
- Having a positive impact on the community
- Increased ‘status’ in the community

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\(^6\) Some councillors receive allowances that can be a similar level to a local authority officer, however they are not salaried as the payment is technically given not earned. (Representing the future: The report of the Councillors Commission, Councillors Commission, 2007)
• Access to opportunities for professional development.

There does appear to be significant similarity between the above findings and the focus group participants’ perceived motivations to take up a civic role. Similarly, the civic activist research (ERS 2010) substantiated the concern of focus group participants who felt the greatest disincentive was that the roles would be time consuming. The civic activist research found the loss of leisure time as a negative impact of taking up a civic role.

Older focus group participants also pointed out the age restrictions for certain civic roles⁷. Overall, there was a general feeling that there was not enough information about these roles and there were doubts amongst beneficiaries that they would be accepted for them. In contrast the civic activist research (ERS 2010) found a high majority of civic activists (83 per cent) felt they did not experience any barriers in taking up their role but felt the public perception of civic activists lacking power may act as a barrier to taking up a civic role.

2.9 Reflection on emerging findings

The current evidence indicates that the pathfinders are on course to achieve a number of the programme objectives. Increased confidence and improved skills of the focus group participants were largely attributed to the pathfinders, and there is evidence of greater knowledge. Our focus group participants provided examples of increased participation in civil activities and in local decision making, and pathfinder reports support this finding. There is also evidence of participants engaging in a range of civic activism, with a number pursuing and taking up civic roles as a result.

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⁷ Magistrates retire from the bench at the age of 70 and the Lord Chancellor normally expects a period of five years’ service before retirement. He will not generally appoint anyone who is aged over 65. There is no upper age limit for school governors or councillors.
3  Pathfinder methods and approaches

3.1  Chapter overview

The current Take Part programme delivers a variety of work aimed at strengthening local democracy. An aim of the evaluation is to assess the operational procedures and practices used to deliver the Take Part programme, and evidence has been gathered from interviews with pathfinders, local authorities and community development workers. This chapter details the key similarities and differences between pathfinder approaches to promoting active citizenship, examining the specific activities being delivered and their success rates.

3.2  Emerging findings

There are a number of emerging findings with regards to operational procedures and processes required to run a pathfinder and the characteristics of the current Take Part programme:

- pathfinders use a variety of activities and techniques to deliver their work, with learning activities being the most popular
- the majority of activities are developed with or by local people in response to their own needs and concerns
- pathfinders are also working with voluntary and community organisations, delivering work with them as well as enhancing their own capacity to engage local communities
- pathfinders are helping public agencies reflect on their own practice, and empowering local people to have an influence once they are engaged with official structures
- Take Part provides supportive environments for people to critically reflect, network and learn from one another.

3.3  Activities used to promote active citizenship

Each pathfinder uses a variety of activities and materials in seeking to deliver Take Part’s objectives and to promote active citizenship in their area. Active citizenship learning activities were seen by pathfinders to be the programme’s most distinctive element, and included both informal and accredited courses. In the final year of the programme the evaluation will further examine the success rates of various approaches.

3.3.1  Learning activities

Learning activities ranged from informal ‘taster’ sessions to accredited courses. Topics covered most commonly included basic active citizenship, entry into civic roles, and presentation and communication skills. Pathfinders felt that the range of training and learning activities available was what most appealed to local people.
As is explored in more detail in section 3.4, the majority of learning activities are being developed with or by local people, although some are delivered more prescriptively, with pathfinders presenting local people with a ‘menu of options’ from which to choose. Focus group participants praised tutors for making topics accessible and relevant. One common technique that was used was to support theory with practice, and after talking about ‘how your council works’ for instance, beneficiaries were asked to contact their local authority and acquire a certain piece of information. Tutors were also credited with making the political aspect of active citizenship more accessible and gradually introducing jargon.

The learning activities run by pathfinders vary in the time commitment required by participants, and it is common for pathfinders to use a combination of activities ranging from a few hours to several months in length. Accredited training most commonly requires the most significant time commitment.

3.3.2 Accredited training

Providing access to accreditation for citizenship learning and skills development is one of the main priority areas of activity for pathfinders, and there is a variety of accredited work happening across the programme through universities and a number of other learning providers. Several pathfinders have their own learning courses accredited by the National Open College Network8 (NOCN), with two pathfinders having been awarded learning centre status for the remainder of the programme. Some pathfinders are also offering the City and Guilds Individual Profile in Active Citizenship (IPAC)9, although this does not lead to a recognised qualification.

All pathfinders offering accredited training have been able to recruit participants, and in some areas levels of enrolment have been higher than expected with low dropout rates. A minority of pathfinders experienced recruitment issues, with suggestions that the time commitment required by participants for certain courses acted as a deterrent. For instance, the IPAC course requires 100 hours of portfolio building, and the absence of a recognised qualification was seen as problematic to the maintaining commitment of the participants. There have also been issues for a number of pathfinders in identifying and securing trainers and tutors, which has delayed delivery.

Pathfinders commented that the lead time for establishing an accredited programme is quite considerable. Pathfinders have highlighted the effort, time and cost involved in organising accredited courses, and there were also limitations on how much they could shape the training, which has implications for the needs-led approach of the programme (detailed in section 3.4).

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3.3.3 Field visits and guest speakers

Field visits were typically incorporated into longer learning activities. Whilst interviewees commented that field visits required more staff time and resources to organise and coordinate, they were seen by pathfinders to be an effective way of practically engaging local people with the topics covered during learning sessions, and focus group participants also commented that they found the visits worthwhile. These have included visits to local magistrates’ courts and council chambers.

‘The majority of our members have been living here for 40, 50 years, but they have never been able to go in to the town hall. We saw many fascinating things there... the lord mayor’s office, the chamber, all these things we had not seen before’.

Focus group participant

A number of pathfinders had worked with the Parliamentary Outreach team\(^{10}\) and all had positive feedback about their experience, with many planning to do more work with them in the final year. Parliamentary Outreach officers spoke at a number of learning sessions and events, with some pathfinders also organising visits for participants to the Houses of Parliament. Focus group participants had positive feedback about their experiences of the Parliamentary Outreach team, and whilst many reported finding the talks interesting and informative, field visits received the most enthusiasm, as many participants had never been to parliament before, with some never having been to London at all. Other guest speakers used by pathfinders have primarily included councillors and the police, although there are also examples of talks from other service providers as well as magistrates and school governors.

3.3.4 Information on influence

As one of the main priority areas of activity for the programme, pathfinders promoted information about the availability of opportunities for influence and lay governance roles in a number of ways. Both pathfinders and CDF will be monitoring the success of various approaches through their respective evaluations in the final year. The most commonly used approaches are ‘how to’ guides (which provide information on democratic processes and guidance on entering in to various civic roles), and the development of websites:

‘Another success is the website because that’s really been our key form of promoting it...and for people to access everything about what we’re doing, as opposed to keep coming back and asking stuff on the phone, sending out information on training courses, the website’s been very good’

Pathfinder

Either new websites have been created to promote pathfinders’ Take Part work or existing websites have been amended to better correspond with the programme’s main priority areas of activity.

### 3.4 Pathfinders’ principles and approaches

The variety of methods used by pathfinders reflects the flexibility of the Take Part programme. The programme is seen by pathfinders to advocate a ‘bottom up’ approach (in that it is led by the needs of learners and local people rather than being prescriptive) and as such it has been used in a number of areas to address pre-existing needs amongst communities and individuals. In some areas, pathfinders saw Take Part as an opportunity to plug a gap in existing provision, both through its approach and the additional financial resources attached to it. There is emerging evidence that this additional financial resource has enabled pathfinders to develop new activities, including examples of pathfinders reaching out to rural areas previously deprived of any significant active citizenship work, for instance. Across most pathfinder areas activities have been developed around the concerns and interests of beneficiaries, with this process happening in one of two ways.

Several pathfinders developed their activities in response to the needs of local people and communities. Pathfinders have consulted on what further learning is sought by individuals and community organisations, and responded through either the development of new learning activities or redesigning existing work. For example Portsmouth City Council trained a Polish student to conduct action research with the local Polish community into the barriers to involvement. The findings of this research have been used to both develop new materials and courses, and better promote existing resources to this community.

More commonly, pathfinders delivered pre-planned activities in a manner that was perceived to be both accommodating and personally relevant to participants. As the example overleaf illustrates, this can include accredited training.

Pathfinders highlighted the lead-in time and consultation needed to develop activities around local people’s needs and concerns. In areas where there was slippage in either the establishment of the pathfinder or its timetable of delivery, activities were less likely to be developed using a ‘bottom-up’ approach, with pathfinders instead presenting local people with a menu of options from which to choose.
The pathfinder is engaging a group of mothers by delivering a three-term accredited active citizenship course at a Sure Start children’s centre. The course is designed to develop participants in:

- Assertiveness and decision making skills
- Self-confidence
- Speaking and listening skills
- Knowledge of rights and responsibilities as citizens
- Understanding of diversity, prejudice and discrimination.

Participants on the course praised the tutor for making the content relevant to them as both mothers and women, whilst the course structure was also praised for being accommodating to their other commitments. It runs once a week and along the academic year calendar, alleviating any potential timetable clashes with school holidays. Childcare for under 5’s is provided by the centre during the course.

### 3.4.1 Engaging participants

Pathfinders use a variety of channels to engage participants with the Take Part programme, with many having promoted their work through existing networks and organisations. So with the course delivered in the Sure Start centre, for instance, this was advertised with the local development worker’s contact details rather than the Take Part tutor’s, as it was feared users of the centre might be intimidated by the prospect of an ‘outsider’ coming in. Local authority-led pathfinders in particular commented on the value of having VCOs involved, arguing that they appeared more approachable to the public. As such, using existing networks and organisations enabled pathfinders to build up trust amongst participants, and pathfinders also offered a significant degree of preparatory support to participants prior to them beginning an activity. Building up trust and confidence amongst potential participants requires considerable staff input and support, including from staff not directly employed or associated with Take Part (as detailed in chapter 5).

A number of pathfinders use these networks to focus upon people who have already had some involvement or expressed an interest in civic roles as well.

‘We work with the magistrates to identify people who are interested; we then offer them an ‘introduction to magistrates’ course where the magistrates come along and give them examples, and they actually participate in mock trials too’.

Pathfinder
The success of this approach in effectively recruiting to civic roles will be monitored through the final year evaluation.

### 3.4.2 Working with voluntary and community organisations

Besides working with voluntary and community organisations (VCOs) to secure participants, a number of pathfinders also worked with VCOs to deliver Take Part activities. This has contributed to the previously mentioned approach of developing learning around people’s needs, as well as providing spaces for critical reflection (discussed in more detail later in this chapter).

There were also numerous examples of pathfinders working to develop the skills and capacity of the organisations themselves, with some also using the offer of support to promote active citizenship. Pathfinders have gone into established groups such as parent forums, women’s aid and tenants’ associations, and complemented the support and engagement they already received by offering learning opportunities in active citizenship. This was seen to also strengthen the VCO’s activity, with evidence suggesting involvement in Take Part activity enhanced VCOs’ reputations locally by raising their profile through an identifiable programme.

**Thurrock District Council**

This pathfinder commissioned a local VCO to conduct a needs analysis in one locality using community researchers. The main aim of the research was to explore how local people feel empowered, and it resulted in the development of a Community Champions training programme. The whole exercise cost £12,000.

As a result of this initial work, the VCO were able to attract an additional £140,000 worth of funding into the local area, including funding from the Connecting Communities programme and an economic participation programme, which looked at the prospect of the VCO taking over ownership or management of a community asset. The following outcomes were achieved:

- 41 community champions trained – some now active citizens
- 2 community buildings managed on a lease basis
- 1 credit union collection point managed
- 5 part-time posts supported, providing local employment opportunities
- 100 participants at a Take Part event and almost 200 at a community quiz night, where people were encouraged to consider the Community Champions training programme.

Involvement in the Take Part programme has also led to some participants forming their own VCOs, which has a strong link to pathfinders’ emphasis on making their work
sustainable. Both pathfinders in the north-west have empowered individuals to create their own groups, for example. In one area participants have formed their own crèche, enabling them to participate in more community group meetings, whilst in another area a participant trained in active citizenship by the pathfinder has formed a group delivering ESOL\textsuperscript{11} classes to local Asian women to enable them to participate in more consultations. Both pathfinders’ and CDF’s evaluations will capture more data about the establishment of VCOs in the final year.

\section*{3.4.3 Influencing official structures and processes}

Pathfinders are also working with officials and public agencies to help them reflect upon both their own practice as well as the barriers they may face when trying to engage local communities. A number of pathfinders have used techniques such as the Echo tool, which enables public agencies to consider how open they are to community influence, in relation to their potential to respond to that influence\textsuperscript{12}.

Both pathfinders and focus group participants reported examples of local people struggling to navigate local authority decision-making processes, particularly with regards to the jargon used (see related evidence in chapter 2). For example, a Take Part event promoting active citizenship witnessed a number of older people requesting paper-based information about a local service. The local authority decided against providing this because it did not conform to their communications strategy:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Immediately... the local authority’s found a reason why they can’t do it because it doesn’t fit with what they want to do... There isn’t a ‘can do’ attitude. It is a ‘can’t do’ attitude.}
\end{quote}

\textbf{Pathfinder}

A number of pathfinders also reported resistance from officers and elected officials towards community empowerment and the aims of Take Part, suggesting increased involvement of local people is seen to undermine traditional lines of influence.

Evidence is mixed with regards to verifying or discrediting this claim, and it was beyond the remit of the evaluation to scrutinise local authority structures. The civic activist mapping research highlighted that just under 20 per cent of interviewees were aware of the pathfinder in their area (ERS 2010), and only 46 per cent were familiar with the empowerment agenda and policies related to \textit{Communities in control} (CLG 2008).

Conversely, around 10 per cent of civic activists interviewed had engaged with their local pathfinder, and council officers and elected officials have been involved with Take Part activities in a number of areas, with councillors sitting in on courses or signing up to shadowing schemes, for example. Those civic activists who participated in Take Part activities reported greater awareness of the empowerment agenda, and also placed a higher

\textsuperscript{11} English for Speakers of Other Languages.

\textsuperscript{12} For more information on the Echo tool, visit: \url{http://changesuk.net/}. Accessed 1\textsuperscript{st} June 2010.
value than their counterparts on the importance of people feeling able to influence local decisions. They regarded their involvement with Take Part to have reinvigorated their approach and improved their effectiveness in their role (ERS 2010).

The approach to power featured in the work of several pathfinders across both phases, with many highlighting the importance of both allowing people the opportunity to have their say, as well as empowering them to have an influence once they are involved in civic activism, consultation and civic participation.

‘I think in the past we’ve been guilty... in some of our regeneration projects and empowerment, people are thrown in at the deep end, come and get involved... people really haven’t been given the opportunity to develop the skills, capacity and the knowledge to make sure that they are an effective part’.

Pathfinder

Where the local authority is leading the pathfinder, the additional resource of Take Part funding enabled them to develop more innovative forms of empowerment work, with the additional staff capacity being used to coordinate other empowerment work in the area. This is explored in more detail in chapter 5.

3.4.4 Providing spaces for learning and deliberation

Take Part provides forums for people to discuss and critically reflect upon political and social issues in a non-critical and supportive environment, with evidence suggesting this improves people’s confidence so they can pursue community leadership roles.

‘If one of us has an idea you’ll always find somebody in the group who says ‘why don’t you go out and do it’ and you think ‘yeah, I should do it actually”.

Focus group participants

Focus group participants felt such environments were conducive to their learning and provided a safe, supportive space in which to learn. There was also evidence of participants both networking and learning from one another. These findings are in keeping with findings from the Active Learning for Active Citizenship programme evaluation (Mayo and Rooke 2006: 8), which proposed learning should be participatory and reflective, constructed through critical dialogues between learning providers and learners.

3.5 Reflections on the emerging findings

Take Part is seen to offer organisations the opportunity to undertake more innovative approaches to empowerment work, though learning programmes are its most distinguishing feature. Learning activities are developed in response to individual and community needs, and offer local people a supportive space to critically reflect, network and learn from their peers. In the final year the evaluation will seek to further explore both the impact of learning activities upon individuals as well as monitor the creation and use of further
community leadership and citizenship learning work and resources. The evaluation will also further investigate the development and impact of other activities such as accredited training, which so far has proven to be the most challenging aspect of the programme in terms of requiring additional resources.

The majority of beneficiaries are reported to have had some level of engagement previous to their involvement in Take Part, and the final year evaluation will further test this assertion through qualitative interviews with 76 participants. Pathfinders are using existing networks and organisations to recruit participants, and there is evidence this aids the development of trust between pathfinders and local people. Pathfinders are also working with other local voluntary and community organisations to secure participants as well as deliver Take Part activities. In a number of areas pathfinders have developed the capacity of VCOs and in some instances even contributed to the establishment of new ones.

As is highlighted here and explored in more detail in the next chapter, pathfinders have established relationships with local authorities which have enabled those authorities to develop more innovative approaches to their work as well as coordinate existing activities in the area. Pathfinders are also enabling authorities to critically reflect upon their own practices, as well as empowering local people to more effectively influence statutory agencies once they are involved in civic activism, consultation and civic participation.
4 Partnership working

4.1 Chapter overview

The Take Part programme is intended to develop local programmes of active citizenship activity in partnership with local authorities, the voluntary sector, business and local strategic partnership organisations in each area. A number of other central government-sponsored initiatives were earmarked to run alongside, and support, the delivery of the Take Part local pathfinder programme. The evaluation sought to investigate how pathfinders were linking up with other agencies, and the final section of this chapter looks at the partnership arrangements currently in operation within the programme.

Pathfinders were interviewed about their partnerships with a variety of other organisations and initiatives. The majority had relationships with other pathfinders as well their respective local authorities and local strategic partnerships.

4.2 Emerging findings

- Networking between pathfinders improved the sharing of learning and resources, although networks in some areas were difficult due to the differing styles of work across the pathfinders.

- Pathfinders have strong relationships with local strategic partnerships and local authorities, which is seen to improve coordination of empowerment activity.

- Take Part is impacting upon the way local authorities deliver their own empowerment work, with a reported increase in the number of activities developed in response to local people’s own issues and concerns.

4.2.1 Benefits of partnership working

The evaluation highlighted numerous benefits to partnership working for both the Take Part programme and other initiatives. Networking between pathfinders improved the sharing of learning and resources across the programme, with a number of pathfinders exchanging ideas and swapping materials, such as 'how to' guides (detailed in section 3.3.4). This demonstrates progress since the gap analysis conducted in July 2009, which found networking and sharing between pathfinders was limited (Claxton, Reid and Malik 2009). Pathfinders highlighted the quarterly conferences run by CDF as a catalyst for these relationships.

A principle aim of the programme is to raise awareness of routes into lay governance roles, especially those involving local strategic partnership organisations. The evaluation found pathfinders had good relationships with their respective local strategic partnership (LSP).

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13 For more details see Appendix 3.
Pathfinders felt they were able to keep up with developments in their area through their LSP, and in one area, for example, the pathfinder brokered a meeting between the LSP coordinator and the regional empowerment partnership (REP), who were planning to run a workshop for elected members on the empowerment agenda.

All of the pathfinders established relationships with their local authority, although the extent and success of these relationships varied across the programme. Interviews with local authorities outside of pathfinder catchment areas found just over one third of the respondents (7 out of 19) were aware of who the pathfinders were in their region, with five respondents commenting that they work together with a pathfinder. This work occurred in a number of ways, such as assisting pathfinders with the development of an action plan, matching people for mentoring and helping identify a model for accredited citizenship learning.

12 pathfinders had a local authority directly involved with their project, either as a delivery partner or sitting on a project or advisory group. In total, 29 local authorities are directly involved with pathfinders. There were seen to be numerous benefits to this, most notably the coordination of Take Part activities with other initiatives aimed at strengthening local democracy, such as Connecting Communities. However, it should be noted that this programme was only being run in three pathfinder areas. An example of how pathfinders linked in to this programme is illustrated in section 3.4.2.

‘We’ve got a number of things in [X] that are really good but they are quite sporadic and scattergun. We’ve tried to use Take Part as an opportunity to bring them together, have some sort of... overarching branding of the different offers that we’ve got’

Pathfinder

In addition to coordination, local authorities saw the benefits of these partnerships as also contributing to the sustainability of Take Part activities, in that existing structures might be able to incorporate and continue this work post-2011.

A number of local authorities suggested that their involvement with the programme had impacted upon the way they deliver their own empowerment activities, with an increase in the number of activities which are developed in response to people’s own issues and concerns. Among local authorities hosting a pathfinder, there was anecdotal evidence Take Part was linking up with and influencing the work of other departments, especially in terms of the consultative exercises they do. The majority of officers in local authority-led pathfinders stated Take Part offered them and their teams the opportunity to undertake empowerment work they may not have otherwise been able to do as part of their council’s normal services. These trends will continue to be monitored in the final year of the evaluation through follow-up interviews with local authority officers and pathfinders.

14 These figures exclude the five pathfinders led by a local authority.
As is discussed in the next section there was limited link-up across the programme between pathfinders and regional structures, although there was evidence of pathfinders linking in to their respective regional empowerment partnership (REP). A number of REPs were involved in the process of identifying phase 2 pathfinders, and across the programme several pathfinders linked in to REPs to keep abreast of developments within their region and share resources and learning. This often took the form of attending REP management group meetings, and some interviewees identified REPs as a possible mechanism for further enhancing networks between phase 1 and phase 2 pathfinders in each region.

4.2.2 Challenges of partnership working

Whilst pathfinders have strong partnerships with a variety of agencies, many experienced a number of challenges with both established partnerships and in trying to forge new ones. This included networks within the Take Part programme, with several pathfinders commenting that the differing styles of work across the programme made meaningful partnerships difficult. In some regions networking was hampered by staff turnover within pathfinders (see chapter 5), although there are indications that the mentoring programme being delivered by the Take Part Network was going some way towards strengthening relationships and further sharing of learning and resources.

Issues also arose amongst a number of pathfinders delivering their work in partnership with other organisations. Coordinating partners’ activities was the most common issue cited by pathfinders in this area, and there were also examples of partners reneging on agreements presented in the original bid.

‘The local authority are one of the key partners in the project, technically they are the lead partner... we haven’t probably, on this project, had as much support [from them] as was promised or we would have liked’.

Pathfinder

Allied to this, pathfinders found themselves vulnerable to changes both within their delivery partners and the local authorities they worked with. Staff turnover reduced partners’ capacity to deliver activities, whilst team restructuring and high turnover of chief executives in local authorities was suggested to have impacted upon the support given to and for the Take Part programme. Several local authority interviewees were sceptical of the approach of the programme in terms of its focus upon participative and informal learning methods, and whether it will prove more effective for helping them meet their targets than their current methods (see section 6.6.1).

Partnerships with many of the other government-sponsored programmes earmarked to run alongside the Take Part programme were less common, including with the Personal and Community Development Learning (PCDL) fund and the Empowerment Fund (see appendix 3). Whilst these programmes were not explicitly mentioned by interviewers during questioning, interviewees were prompted to comment on their relationships with other
empowerment initiatives in their area. Only one pathfinder remarked that they worked with the PCDL. Linkage between pathfinders and Targeted Support for Empowerment & Participation Improvement work (TSEPI) was also infrequent, and mostly pathfinders were merely aware of the programme.

A number of these programmes are run at regional level whereas Take Part is targeted at a local level, and this may be an influencing factor on the limited level of partnerships. It is also important to frame this evidence within the context of the programmes’ differing aims and timeframes too. The final year evaluation will investigate these relationships in more detail through surveys of regional level organisations, including REPs and Empowerment Fund recipients.

4.3 Reflections on the emerging findings

There are numerous benefits and challenges to establishing and maintaining networks and partnerships within Take Part. Whilst there is evidence that networks between pathfinders improve sharing of learning and resources, establishing these relationships can be difficult given the pathfinders’ differing styles and capacity.

Pathfinders have good relationships with a number of other agencies, though some have found themselves vulnerable to changes within some of these. Nonetheless, pathfinders have good relationships with their respective LSPs, presenting the potential for the programme to meet one of its main aims in raising awareness of routes in to lay governance roles, particularly those involving LSP partners.

Pathfinders have varied relationships with local authorities, with some authorities directly involved in the delivery of Take Part work. Involvement from local authorities is seen to enhance coordination of local empowerment activity as well as to contribute to the sustainability of the programme. Local authorities are also benefiting, with evidence indicating they are developing more needs-led activities.
5 Staffing of pathfinders

5.1 Chapter overview

The evaluation sought to investigate the main in-kind inputs towards pathfinders’ delivery, and pathfinders were asked to reflect upon the resources they invest into their work in terms of staff and time.

5.2 Emerging findings

- 103 staff work for pathfinders on the Take Part programme, and Take Part work requires both additional working hours and input from other staff members.

- There were staff turnover and recruitment issues during the second year of the programme.

5.3 Staff arrangements

Interviews with pathfinders highlighted that additional staff are involved with the programme who are not directly funded by Take Part.

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<td>Number of staff (full time and part time) working on the programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average number of staff per pathfinder</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

103 different staff were identified to be working on the programme by pathfinders, with evidence suggesting only a fraction of these are directly funded by Take Part. These figures refer to involvement occurring on at least a weekly basis, and pathfinders reported some staff were involved with the programme on an ad hoc basis. A full breakdown of staff numbers per pathfinder is reported in appendix 2.

On average, each pathfinder has six staff working on its Take Part work, although this figure includes six organisations who reported having seven or more staff, with one pathfinder reputed to have as many as 16 staff working on its activities. The local authority-led pathfinders are generally able to access a greater pool of staff to support them than other pathfinders, and in one authority as many as eleven staff were working on the project despite only one post being directly funded by Take Part. This workforce includes a project manager, an assistant supporting that role, two administrators, a graphic designer and six neighbourhood management officers.
Few pathfinders employed a full time post, although all pathfinders reported their staff spent more time than they were contracted to on the programme. A variety of reasons were given for this, although the principal theme emerging from interviews was the limited staff capacity to deal with the demands of the programme in terms of both delivery and project management. Seven pathfinders were using their host organisation’s administrators to handle the administrative aspects of the programme, whilst there were examples in the majority of pathfinders of senior management having to commit some time to Take Part. There is limited evidence of whether these costs are covered by Take Part, and there have been instances of pathfinders submitting increased management costs to CDF. Interviews with pathfinders in the final year will examine these themes in more detail, collecting more detailed information on the types of activities pathfinder staff spend most time on.

5.3.1 Staff recruitment and retention

The programme also experienced a high level of staff retention and recruitment issues. A number of phase 2 pathfinders recruited delivery staff specifically for the Take Part programme, with some unable to recruit a project coordinator until as late as September, almost halfway through the second year. There were some early signs that this has impacted upon delivery by creating slippage and leading to underspend, and further evidence on the impact of this will be collected through the final year evaluation.

Seven pathfinders also experienced staff turnover in the 2009-10 financial year. The reasons for turnover were unique to each area with no suggestion it was as a result of Take Part. In most cases, though, turnover was reported to have had a negative impact upon pathfinders, although there is no evidence at this juncture suggesting delivery against the main programme outcomes was seriously affected.

Staff turnover created gaps in local delivery knowledge, suggesting in such areas the handover between staff was inadequate. New staff reported having to spend considerable time building up relationships with local organisations and communities. Furthermore, there were examples of the original bid having been led by a small number of individuals who no longer worked on the programme. There was mixed evidence about how this has impacted upon the delivery of the programme, with a small sub-sample of interviewees stating that their organisation had since been giving less preference towards Take Part (in relation to their other activities) than they had when the original bid writer was involved. There was also evidence that due to staff turnover pathfinders had prioritised delivery ahead of programme management and administrative tasks.

5.4 Reflections on the emerging findings

The second year of the programme has witnessed numerous issues in terms of staff retention and recruitment, with several pathfinders experiencing staff turnover whilst others were not able to get staff in post until late in the year. Both of these issues have caused slippage in delivery for the affected pathfinders and it waits to be seen the impact this will have upon the programme.
The programme has required additional staff input and time, with more staff having to work on the programme than anticipated, and staff also reporting they work more hours than they are contracted. This latter point was consistent across all pathfinders.
6 National support

6.1 Chapter overview

Part of the Take Part programme is to deliver national activity which complements the work of the local pathfinder projects (the aims of the national support element of the Take Part programme are detailed in chapter 1). Eight different strands of activity have been planned to take place over the course of the Take Part programme, with some of this work having already happened and more scheduled to take place in the final year. The eight strands of work are:

- building on the Take Part framework
- train the Take Part trainers
- national resources portfolio (informed by findings of the work ‘building on the Take Part framework’)
- accreditation
- Take Part champions and development fund
- publicity and promotion of Take Part
- mentoring
- national Take Part conference.

At the time of the fieldwork\textsuperscript{15} few of these strands had begun to be delivered, and the evidence presented in the first half of this chapter is intended to feed into the development of several of these strands. The second half of the chapter evaluates the two strands that had earnestly begun in 2009-10 - the work to build upon the Take Part framework and the train the Take Part trainers programme.

6.2 Emerging findings

There are a number of key findings relevant to several of the strands of the national support programme:

- several local authorities saw a link between their work and Take Part, which could inform the work of the regional Take Part champions
- Take Part is promoted differently in different areas, which is reflective of the programme’s flexibility

\textsuperscript{15} Fieldwork was conducted between January-March 2010. More information about the methodology is included in appendix 2.
• there has been limited use of the online resource directory, with suggestions that it is difficult to navigate

• there is a good level of knowledge and demand for the train the Take Part trainers programme, although there is little evidence on its impact.

6.3 Local authorities outside of pathfinder areas

As part of the evaluation of the national support programme, local authorities outside of pathfinder catchment areas were interviewed to establish a baseline about both the awareness and take up of Take Part activities. This found evidence useful to the development of the regional Take Part champions strand:

### Regional Take Part Champions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planned start date</th>
<th>November 2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actual start date</td>
<td>January 2010</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Aims**

- Promotion, advocacy and development of Take Part activity across their region
- Coaching others in Take Part methodologies and encouraging new organisations to utilise the approach
- Developing local partnerships to support Take Part
- Allocating a development fund to local authorities within their region (up to £60K in 2009-10 and £45K in 2010-11) and attracting match/continuation funding where possible
- Linking Take Part with other initiatives at a local level e.g. Connecting Communities, Community Learning Champions, Duty to Involve.

**Main outputs**

Regional champions distribute grants of up to £10,000 to local authorities for investment in additional and new Take Part activities.

6.4 Current local authority practice

A total of 36 local authorities were interviewed as part of the second year evaluation both within and beyond pathfinder catchment areas (see appendix 1 for methodology). When discussing current practice within their area aimed at strengthening local democracy, the majority of interviewees highlighted that it is often centred on the use of neighbourhood management structures, dividing the local area into wards or neighbourhoods. Many had established forums, panels or boards within those areas to bring together local agencies.

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16 ‘Start date’ refers to the period practical work was delivered from.
(such as the primary care trust and the police) with residents to develop plans and influence decisions made in each area. There was a variety of experience in using this approach, and in some areas it was well established, whilst in others it was still being piloted. There is an indication that the development of this approach is strongly linked to the duty to involve, something which several authorities felt Take Part could also help them address, particularly through its focus on national indicator 4.

Local authorities outside of pathfinder catchment areas were also asked if they felt that any of their projects or policies overlapped with the six main priority areas of activity for Take Part (as detailed in the introduction), and as the following graph illustrates there was thought to be significant overlap with most of the priority areas.

6.5 Graph 1: overlap of Take Part priorities with local authority work in non-pathfinder areas

Whilst it is important to note this does not necessarily mean local authorities are conducting Take Part activities or using Take Part methods, interviewees felt Take Part could support their work through sharing best practice and learning from pathfinders’ experiences. Take Part’s focus on civic participation and building up people’s understanding and confidence to go into civic roles was seen as an attractive alternative by interviewees who felt this was not central to their own empowerment work. The funding of Take Part was also cited, and it was felt this could provide resources for other initiatives.

6.5.1 Use of participative methods

28 local authorities claimed to use participative methods, approaches and perspectives in their work, with the most common technique used being centred upon involving local people in the development of project designs, evaluation and research, and negotiating budgets. Users of services are particularly involved in service design, and participatory
budgeting (PB) was increasingly being adopted in a number of areas. Five authorities in the sample were also involved in the PB pilot (SQW Consulting, GFA Consulting and Cambridge Economic Associates, 2009), whilst five were part of the Network of Empowering Authorities.\(^{17}\)

Other measures include innovative approaches such as the shadowing of senior officers and partners on area boards by young people, young people making videos and putting forward their service proposals, and developing a kite mark for engagement work with mystery shoppers assessing it. Whilst it is beyond the scope of this evaluation to assess the impact of these approaches, there is evidence to suggest some of these activities could incorporate the needs-led approach characteristic of Take Part (as detailed in chapter 3).

Those respondents that said their local authority did not use participative methods gave a number of reasons for this including lack of resources, lack of political commitment and lack of knowledge. Further to this the majority of local authorities feel there are a number of barriers to them more effectively engaging communities, with the most common responses being a lack of time, the pressure of working to targets and a lack of information on how to engage more effectively.

### 6.6 The current promotion of Take Part

Whilst the evaluation did not explicitly set out to monitor the promotion of the programme, there is evidence to suggest that Take Part is promoted differently by pathfinders in each area. This is reflective of the programmes flexibility to meet local needs, and a number of pathfinders have developed their own branding in addition to that of the programme, with some commenting this was due to a lack of overarching marketing material. This evidence could be of use to the development of the publicity and promotion of Take Part:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Publicity and promotion of Take Part</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Planned start date</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Actual start date</strong></td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Aims</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The principal aim of this strand is to increase awareness and use of the Take Part approach to learning and support for active citizenship, to key stakeholders at national, regional and local levels.</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Main outputs</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The development of a website and a marketing strategy which will support those already involved in Take Part and encourage others to adopt the ‘Take Part approach’.</td>
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\(^{17}\) The Network of Empowering Authorities (NEA) was a group of 18 councils taking part in a two-year project to promote good practice in community empowerment. More information about the NEA can be found at: [http://www.cdf.org.uk/web/guest/nea](http://www.cdf.org.uk/web/guest/nea)
A number of pathfinders commented Take Part had enhanced their profile amongst other organisations conducting similar work, although as highlighted in chapter 3 this did not necessarily mean the establishment of new partnerships:

‘A lot more people are getting in touch with us now and saying ‘oh we’d like to work with you’. The dilemma of that is that our resources are very limited’.  

Pathfinder

Five pathfinders received additional grants from Learning Revolution Transformation Fund\(^{18}\) and most felt they were able to attract this funding as a result of their Take Part work.

A number of activities were being used locally to promote the programme, most commonly the development of online resources such as websites (as detailed in section 3.3.4). Other promotional activities included DVDs and bus advertising, with some pathfinders commenting that Take Part had enabled them to promote their work in ways they could not normally have afforded to. Amongst the local authorities interviewed outside of pathfinder areas, eight respondents claimed to have seen a number of resources promoting the programme, including emails, online resources, posters, flyers and leaflets.

6.6.1 The Take Part brand

As highlighted in chapter 3, pathfinders are adopting a number of approaches to develop active citizenship provision in their area. Whilst there are commonalities between them, there are a number of differences which make it difficult to accurately define the Take Part brand. This lack of consensus on the characteristics of Take Part has prompted some external organisations to comment that they do not fully understand the offer of the programme or how it works. There was also confusion amongst some local authorities on the methods being used by pathfinders and how these tie in to existing structures. In particular the main concern centred on Take Part building up local people's expectations about what can be achieved, only to end in 2011 with suspicions local authorities would be left to assume responsibility. However, as highlighted in chapter 3, pathfinders are linking in to existing networks and initiatives in order to both avoid duplication and enhance the sustainability of their work. The success of this cannot be evaluated until after the programme has finished, although there are also a number of issues for the promotion of the brand associated with this practice.

Pathfinders are all operating in areas where there is a variety of other work happening aimed at strengthening local democracy. In order to avoid duplication, some pathfinders are using promotional and educational materials developed for one programme in their Take Part work or vice versa. One pathfinder highlights this in the description of one of their activities:

‘It’s capacity building in a way that can hopefully maximise the resources that are available, building on the work that’s been done not just in [the local area] but surrounding areas’

Pathfinder

This is also linked to the point made in chapter 3 about pathfinders also sharing resources between each other, suggesting the need for either more generic or Take Part specific branded resources, something which is being addressed through the national resources portfolio. In some areas there are also issues with initiatives having similar names (e.g. a culture and tourism initiative also called ‘Take Part’).

### 6.7 Building upon the Take Part Framework

<table>
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<th>Building on the Take Part Framework</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Planned start date</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Actual start date</strong></td>
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**Aims**

This strand sought to build upon the work begun by the Take Part Network by mapping the Active Learning for Active Citizenship (ALAC) framework\(^{19}\) against other relevant policies and programmes, identifying agencies with the potential to deliver on the key outcomes of the Take Part programme, and developing a directory of resources which collates existing information, best practice and materials related to active citizenship.

**Main outputs**

The two principal outputs were a final report and the development of an online resource directory.

As the final report had not been published at the time fieldwork was being undertaken, the evaluation of this strand concentrated upon the other main output from this work, the online resource directory. This was intended to be an accessible resource for both pathfinders and organisations associated with the active citizenship agenda, with the ultimate goal being to support and stimulate more activity at a community and local authority level.

The evaluation sought to investigate the impact of the directory in achieving this goal, and in addition to interviewing one of the delivering agents for this activity strand, the pathfinders, local authorities and community development workers interviewed were also asked about their experience and knowledge of the directory. In addition to these 57 interviews quantitative data has been gathered from the directory itself.

\(^{19}\) The ALAC programme preceded the Take part programme. More information on can be found at: [http://takepart.org/](http://takepart.org/)
6.7.1 The online resource directory

The original dissemination plan for the online directory was scaled back due to unforeseen circumstances, and it was released with a ‘soft launch’ to internal programme partners instead. The evaluation therefore covers the pilot phase of the directory. As is illustrated in graph 1, the number of unique visitors to the directory peaked either side of Christmas but steadily declined towards the end of the year:

6.8 Graph 2: number of unique visitors to www.takepart.info by calendar month

This evidence is supported by findings from the qualitative interviews, which suggested there was limited use of the directory amongst pathfinders and little use amongst the sampled local authorities.

As part of the development of the directory, the managing consultancy undertook a mapping consultation with pathfinders in order to identify and collate resources and materials related to active citizenship. This was generally considered to be productive by the delivering agent, although varying levels of enthusiasm for this process were reported by pathfinders. Whilst some pathfinders welcomed the opportunity to be involved in the consultation, others were critical of the process for requesting information they felt already existed and had already been submitted to CDF. These findings will inform both the development of the national resources portfolio and the publicity and promotion strand.

The same pathfinders felt the learner-led nature of Take Part meant that there were not necessarily as many resources available to go on to the directory at the time it was being developed. These pathfinders felt that the managing consultants did not appreciate this and as such the directory was seen to have ‘nothing to do with Take Part’. There was also reluctance amongst some pathfinders to release their materials due to their bespoke nature,
alongside concerns regarding copyright – something which is also seen to be a negative after resources had been uploaded.

‘[People] write something up for a website or a case study and it’s got a particular format, and you’ve got to interpret that format and as I say, you don’t understand – a lot of it is contextual’

Pathfinder

11 pathfinders had used the directory since it went live, with five commenting they frequently used it, as the following table highlights:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewees</th>
<th>Number using directory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pathfinders</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local authorities within pathfinder areas</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local authorities outside pathfinder areas</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Several pathfinders and local authorities commented that they found it difficult to find the resources they were looking for and that the process of searching through the directory was time-consuming. This was the most common reason given for not using the directory amongst pathfinders, though these criticisms were also made by organisations who said they used the directory. This evidence is supported by visit duration data, which provides a proxy for how engaging a website is for users (The Central Office of Information, 2010). This data shows the majority of visits each month since the directory was launched have lasted 30 seconds or less.
6.9  Graph 3: percentage of visits each month lasting 2 minutes or less.

Evidence suggests that whilst users can find their way to the main directory, it is the process of looking for documents which proves problematic.

‘I’ve dippled into it, but it just takes far too long to find something that would be useful, so you give up’

Pathfinder

Pathfinders often remarked that they found it easier to go straight to other organisations’ websites when they were looking for specific resources.

Amongst the organisations that had used it, however, a number had recommended it to other organisations and colleagues. One pathfinder commented that they found it to be a useful tool for inducting people to work on the programme:

‘It’s great to be able to say you can go to this one place and it’s basically a gateway to everything – resources, theory, history of the initiative... it’s very useful also that once people are actively engaged and want to know more about these processes, that they can access that as use it as well.’

Pathfinder
6.10 Train the Take Part Trainers

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<tr>
<th>Train the Take Part Trainers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planned start date</td>
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<td>Actual start date</td>
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Aims

- To generate a national body of trainers who can deliver Take Part learning programmes across England
- To capture the learning on the best ways of training Take Part Trainers, which is being developed through the 18 local pathfinder projects, and
- To develop a source of expertise on the best ways of ensuring that trainers are equipped to deliver Take Part programmes.

Main outputs

845 learning opportunities throughout the lifetime of the programme.

The evaluation for this strand is ongoing and as such these findings should be treated as indicative rather than conclusive. The impact of the programme will be investigated through a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods, including two focus groups with participants involved in each of the following activities:

- introduction to active citizenship courses
- City and Guilds 7303 Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (PTLLS)\(^{20}\).

The evidence presented in this report comes from interviews with pathfinders, local authorities and the project lead for one of the agencies delivering the train the Take Part trainers work. Evidence is also included from the delivery agents’ own evaluation reports.

6.10.1 Indicative findings

The delivery agents’ own evaluation report suggests 379 people have passed through the train the Take Part trainers programme, and that it is reaching a far more diverse range of people than originally planned, including not only existing tutors and community activists but also people primarily interested in active citizenship rather than becoming trainers themselves. There is also an assertion that some participants are retraining to improve their

employability. However, the majority of participants are reported to already have a strong background in active citizenship, and further research is required to fully map the impact of the programme.

The train the Take Part trainers programme is primarily delivered outside of the pathfinder areas and as such there was limited knowledge of the programme amongst local authorities within pathfinder catchment areas. There was, however, a higher degree of knowledge of the programme amongst the 19 local authorities interviewed outside of pathfinder areas, with 11 aware of it. Whilst there was very little feedback on the nature of this awareness, one local authority commented that they regularly received updates and information about the local programme of activities. Regional structures such as REPs and government offices are also said to be aware of the programme, which will be further tested through a survey of the former in the final year of the programme.

There were examples of pathfinders linking up with the programme through local branches of one of the delivery agents. At the time of the fieldwork these links were primarily based upon the sharing of information, although three pathfinders had developed activities in collaboration with the delivery agent, including introductory courses and day conferences. However there was reported confusion amongst other pathfinders as to what the offer of the train the Take Part trainers programme was, and how it related to their own work. Some feared it would not only duplicate their own work but limit the number of people they could work with by creating participation fatigue.

At the beginning of the project the delivery agents conducted an audit of similar work being carried out by pathfinders so as to avoid duplication, asserting they were trying to work in a complementary way. One suggestion that was made by them for further coordination between the two programmes was for the train the Take Part trainers programme to provide a progression route for learners involved in introductory courses delivered by pathfinders. Previous gap analysis conducted as part of the work building upon the Take Part framework suggested that there is a lack of logical progression routes for people involved in learning courses, and there has been little evidence during this evaluation that this situation has changed. This is something that will continue to be monitored, as will the possibility of any duplication.

### 6.11 Reflections on the emerging findings

Further evaluation is to be conducted in the third year which will go some way to fully demonstrating the impact of national support activities, and in particular more evidence is needed on the impact of the train the Take Part trainers programme. CDF will be conducting focus groups with beneficiaries of this work in 2010, in addition to evaluating the regional Take Part champions work, the publicity and promotion campaign, the impact of resources developed as part of the national resources portfolio and the success of the mentoring work. There is plenty of evidence at this juncture to suggest there is a demand for Take Part work beyond the pathfinder areas but the offer of the programme requires
more effective communication. The online resource directory highlights the issues associated with developing resources for the programme.
7 Pathfinders’ self-evaluation

7.1 Chapter overview

As part of the Take Part programme, pathfinders are required to undertake a self-evaluation. CDF offers ongoing evaluation support to assist the pathfinders and this chapter sets out the scope and role of this form of support.

7.2 Key learning points

- Evaluation can be resource-intensive, for both pathfinders and CDF.
- Evaluating impact is seen as important in demonstrating the value of the programme, but there are different perceptions among pathfinders as to what ‘impact’ means.
- Creating templates and guidance to assist pathfinders fulfils one need, but bespoke evaluation support is often required.
- Evaluation needs to be embedded into pathfinder programmes from the outset with clear direction from the start about what is expected in terms of self-evaluation.

7.3 Chapter overview

Part of CDF’s national evaluation included providing practical evaluation support to pathfinders. The main objectives of the support were:

- to support pathfinders with their own evaluations, including the development of a framework as guidance
- to build pathfinders’ capacity
- monitor the quality of pathfinders’ self evaluations as part of the national evaluation, by comparing evidence across pathfinders.

7.4 Support activities to date

- A gap analysis, as part of the N2 strand of the national support programme, to explore what pathfinders were doing in terms of self-evaluation. The analysis showed that there were limited examples of self-evaluations demonstrating impact, and little dissemination of evaluation work.

- An online survey of pathfinders, aiming to identify the level of support required, and to get input into the design of the national evaluation. The survey found that just three of the 12 responding pathfinders had started their evaluation work (July 2009), with just two of these collecting baseline data (baseline data can help determine the journey taken over the course of the programme).

- In response to the evidence from the gap analysis and the online survey an evaluation guide was developed. It included:
- A step-by-step guide of how to self-evaluate, with examples of methods that could be used
- Instructions on how and when to use an impact map, including a template
- A glossary of research terms
- A bibliography of resources.

- **A plenary session** was held at the first regional pathfinder conference, focusing on evaluation and how to get the most out of the evaluation guide. The session used an ‘impact map’ activity to encourage pathfinders to think about how to evaluate their work. CDF recommended a participatory evaluation approach called Learning Evaluation and Planning (LEAP)\(^{21}\), which was also outlined in the evaluation guidance alongside other methods.

- CDF conducted **targeted visits** to six pathfinders to discuss their evaluation needs on a one-to-one basis. Overall, it was evident that if pathfinders’ own evaluations were to be carried out, ongoing support from CDF was required.

- Following feedback from the online survey and pathfinder visits, an **evaluation resource pack** was created. This was a set of practical resources to assist pathfinders with their evaluations and to encourage consistency and comparability across all pathfinders. Resources include:
  - A series of tables dividing the research questions up under the main six areas of activity
  - Examples of how pathfinders might address each question
  - Questionnaire templates
  - A Microsoft Access database for data entry
  - A case study template
  - An evaluation framework template (see appendix 2 for detail).

- Ongoing ad hoc **telephone and email support** was provided by CDF.

The aforementioned consultation exercises, development of materials and ongoing support required input from a CDF researcher approximately 2.5 days per week over a period of six months.

### 7.5 Pathfinder evaluation activity

Each pathfinder was asked to produce:

- An **evaluation framework**, using the practical resources supplied by CDF as appropriate (described above)

- A **quarterly evaluation monitoring** data, where the use of a CDF template database was encouraged to ease the process

- An **interim evaluation report** scheduled for submission in May 2010.

Evaluation frameworks were intended to enable CDF to quality-check evaluation activity as well as work with pathfinders to explore how to get the best from their frameworks. Half of the pathfinders submitted frameworks for comment by the stated deadline in November 2009 and CDF provided written feedback to each pathfinder, summarising key strengths and making practical recommendations.

Pathfinders’ evaluation data is assessed on a quarterly basis by CDF researchers, with the aims of both gathering evidence for the national evaluation, and as part of an ongoing support system for pathfinders. While CDF encouraged pathfinders to use the evaluation templates in the evaluation resource pack designed for them, pathfinders have the flexibility to collect data in any format that meets their needs. For pathfinders who used the CDF template forms, the quarterly monitoring required them to email their database as it stood, without any prior preparation other than basic data entry.

The first quarterly monitoring checkpoint was in January 2010, and despite repeated reminders CDF received just two pathfinder databases, with three stating they either had not collected any data or it had not been entered in to their database. Similarly, pathfinders reported lack of progress in planning and carrying out their interim evaluation reports.

In response, CDF amended its monitoring requirements for the final year of the programme, with semi-annual monitoring checkpoints introduced. CDF also contracted three independent consultant organisations to help pathfinders embed their evaluation frameworks within the core delivery of their project for the final year of the programme, and to produce their interim reports to deadline.

7.6 Influencing factors

The development of evaluation support systems, including practical resource packs, detailed written guidance, telephone support, personalised visits and close working with pathfinders does not guarantee an infallible system for self-evaluation. A key factor that plays a role in the success of pathfinder self-evaluations, and the ability of CDF to gather comparative evidence across pathfinders, concerns the balance between prescription and flexibility.

CDF operated a participatory approach to evaluation, giving participants control over their actions. Whilst developing resources to help, CDF were not prescriptive in insisting pathfinders use the resources. However, the lack of prescription contributed to the absence of clear milestones and direction, resulting in a hiatus of evaluative activities amongst pathfinders.

Pathfinders responded differently to CDF’s recommendation that they develop their own evaluation frameworks, with some embedding evaluation activities within their work programmes while others did not immediately develop a framework, and hence either did not start evaluating or start planning to evaluate their work until several months into the second year. For several pathfinders, evaluation was a new experience. Feedback from some
pathfinders suggested that the CDF guidance and resource pack has been too prescriptive and ‘mechanical’ for them. This suggests that a more bespoke approach is required in the final year.

Another influencing factor was the **contract terms** between the CDF programmes team and pathfinders. With reference to evaluation, the terms of the contract state pathfinders must:

- cooperate with arrangements that may be made for evaluation of the programme
- effectively disseminate information related to Take Part amongst stakeholders.

Self-evaluation is a valuable activity which demonstrates the impact on the ground of the work and resources input by pathfinders and their partners. However, contract terms were not specific enough, pathfinders had varying levels of skills and commitment to evaluation, and there were no financial resources earmarked within pathfinder funding for evaluation activities. The result was the de-prioritising of evaluation activity as well as practical difficulties in undertaking effective evaluation that could be used for comparative purposes.

The use of the questionnaire templates also highlighted a key issue about the **differing skill sets** required to undertake evaluative activities, as opposed to delivering an empowerment programme. In particular, pathfinders have struggled to gather secondary data regarding empowerment activity in their area prior to the commencement of their Take Part work, and this is something that will now be taken on by CDF.

### 7.7 Learning

For the final year of the programme it is important that CDF learns what has worked well and what can be improved on in terms of providing evaluation support to pathfinders. Aspects of ongoing support that worked well include:

- ongoing email, telephone and face-to-face support, which proved to be a useful resource for pathfinders
- encouraging all pathfinders to evaluate their own work
- assisting pathfinders in the production of their own interim evaluation reports, which can be used to promote the impact of their work locally.

Going forward, the following needs have been identified:

- enhanced working with pathfinders through **workshops**, to agree ways they can incorporate a reflective element in to their own evaluations, including seeking the views of beneficiaries in the design and delivery of evaluation activities
- more **effective communication** by CDF researchers, to explain both the principles of evaluation and highlight that templates are a guide to doing it yourself, rather than an obligatory task
• working with pathfinders to *minimise the administrative tasks* associated with self-evaluation and use the templates to best advantage

• **bespoke support** to pathfinders to develop suitable tools and evaluation methods

• review the language used in the resource pack and in any communication on evaluations to ensure use of **plain English** to aid understanding among pathfinders, who are not research specialists

• provide pathfinders with **training opportunities** in how to self evaluate

• build up the resource pack in relation to **measuring impact**, to help pathfinders in their understanding of what can be considered a reasonable achievement in the use and application of learning. In particular work with pathfinders around demonstrating their impact as part of assessing progress against national indicator 4 (this indicator is perception based and as such is not seen as a particularly robust measure of actual impact (Newton et al 2010))

• reflect upon pathfinders’ **definitions of ‘activism’** in the national evaluation. There is currently an emphasis on more formal civic roles and pathfinders argue there is a broad spectrum of participation, with civic roles being at the furthest end for most of their beneficiaries. While the CDF evaluation is capturing some of this information, it is imperative that it is more frequently collected at a local level by pathfinders and fed back to CDF. This has been integrated in to evaluative activities for the final year.
8 Reflections for the final year

8.1 Chapter overview

This chapter summarises the main findings outlined in this report that indicate where the success factors for the programme may lie and the potential barriers and risks that may affect the effective implementation of the programme. CDF’s evaluation of the Take Part programme is still at an early stage in terms of data collection and analysis, and as such it is too early to reliably highlight both the main impact of the programme and critical success factors. The interim evaluation can, however, give an indication of the trends emerging, and the final evaluation will demonstrate the full impact of the programme by addressing a number of core research questions (detailed in appendix 1).

8.2 Emerging success factors

The early indications are that a variety of factors are required to successfully deliver an active citizenship programme. Evidence suggests the Take Part style of learning is most effective when it is developed in response to people’s own issues and concerns. Learning is also seen to be most successful when it is participatory with an element of critical reflection, and the actual process of learning itself includes bilateral dialogue between tutors and learners. Whilst there is a strong evidence base for both these statements, further evaluation is needed on the impact of some of the other approaches being used, and this will be conducted in the final year evaluation through more detailed qualitative research with the pathfinders and beneficiaries. Approximately 95 additional interviews are to be conducted in 2010 with these two cohorts.

Within the timeframe of the programme, pathfinders see civil participation as a more realistic goal than increased levels of civic activism. Increasing the take up of civic roles is seen to require long-term support structures, and as such pathfinders are all trying to make their work sustainable beyond the end of the programme. The longitudinal study of beneficiaries to be conducted by CDF may go some way to verifying this theory, although at this point the evaluation cannot comment on how sustainable or long-term the support structures being offered by pathfinders are.

Evidence suggests that where the local authority has a working relationship with the pathfinder, there is seen to be increased coordination of empowerment activities. Again this requires further analysis, but it is potentially linked to both the sustainability of the programme (in terms of existing structures continuing the work) and the spread and incorporation of Take Part activities into other organisations’ work.
8.3 Barriers and risks

8.3.1 Duplication and saturation of empowerment activities

The limited staff capacity of pathfinders is a predominant emerging theme, and this has had implications for delivery, administration and partnership working. There are also issues about the capacity of the local authorities being reduced due to restructuring and cuts, limiting the potential for local empowerment initiatives to be better coordinated.

Coupled with this, some communities (such as deprived estates or BME communities), whilst small, are being targeted by several empowerment initiatives at the same time. It is felt that this is not only creating duplication in effort but it is also creating consultation fatigue and resistance amongst these communities. This could impact upon pathfinders’ ability to address the national indicator priority areas of activity.

8.3.2 Limited understanding of the Take Part programme

The varied and localised nature of the pathfinder programme makes it difficult for those organisations not involved with the programme to appreciate the offer of Take Part. There was also confusion amongst some local authorities on the methods being used by pathfinders and how these tie in to existing structures. The national support programme intended to address these issues, and the evaluation will continue to monitor its impact in the final year.

8.3.3 Limited networking between pathfinders

There is limited self-initiated networking between pathfinders at both regional and national levels. The national quarterly conferences managed by CDF have been cited by several pathfinders as the only time they meet or speak with others on the programme. Whilst limited networking does not necessarily seem to detract from pathfinders’ ability to deliver their work, the limited sharing of ideas and resources may be serving to create duplication of effort whilst reinforcing the notion there is no overarching identity to Take Part.

8.3.4 Measuring impact

The variety of activities aimed at strengthening local democracy in pathfinder areas will make it difficult to confidently attribute any improvement in levels of civic activism to Take Part. Pathfinders also deliver other empowerment activities themselves, such as Learning Revolution work (see section 6.6).

There was concern amongst pathfinders about measuring the impact of their work on feelings of influence, particularly with regards to national indicator 4. This is linked to the ambiguity surrounding definitions of what can be considered a reasonable achievement in the use and application of learning. Pathfinders were also concerned about role of the Place Survey in measuring the impact of their work, which no longer collects information regarding national indicator 3 and uses a random sample (thus potentially missing a
considerable proportion of Take Part beneficiaries). There are also concerns that the focus upon civic roles within the programme serves to overlook other forms of participation that could be used equally to measure the success of the Take Part programme.

### 8.4 Next steps for the evaluation

In order to further investigate the many trends emerging at this interim stage, an extensive programme of evaluation will be conducted in the final year. In addition to the pathfinders’ own evaluations, which have received bespoke support and development, CDF will undertake 151 face-to-face interviews with pathfinders, beneficiaries, local authorities, the delivery agent for the train the Take Part trainers work, regional Take Part champions and small grants recipients. A follow-up survey will be conducted with a wave of 38 beneficiaries interviewed by CDF to track their progress longitudinally. Surveys will also be conducted with REPs, Empowerment Fund recipients and all 354 local authorities in England.
9 Bibliography


Claxton, R., Reid, P. and Malik, A., (2009), Building on the Take Part framework, internal report.


ERS, (2010), Civic activists mapping research, internal report.


10 Appendix 1 – methodology

10.1 Scope of the evaluation

CDF developed a comprehensive evaluation plan towards the end of 2009 following consultation with relevant CLG and CDF personnel, as well as all 18 Pathfinders. The framework also made close reference to a number of other approaches to evaluating empowerment initiatives (Humm et al. 2005, Mayo and Rooke 2006, SQW Consulting 2009).

CDF’s evaluation framework is guided by three overarching objectives and a series of research questions:

1. Assessing the operational procedures and practices used to deliver the Take Part programme:

   **Key research questions include:**
   - How and why do pathfinders differ in their approaches to promoting active citizenship?
   - What success rates do specific approaches have and why?
   - How are pathfinders linking up with other agencies?

2. Investigating the impact of the Take Part programme upon stakeholders and local communities:

   **Key research questions include:**
   - What evidence is there of Take Part impacting upon local communities?
   - What critical success factors are necessary to ensure the effective delivery of Take Part?
   - What motivates local people to become involved in the Take Part programme?
   - What impact has the Take Part programme had upon the skills and confidence of local people (so that they can pursue civic activism, community leadership and lay governance roles)?
   - Are local people more aware of how to move in to lay governance roles?
   - Are local people being supported in pursuing lay governance roles?
   - Has the Take Part programme had an impact upon the actual number of people taking up lay governance roles?
   - Has there been any movement of beneficiaries between civic/lay governance roles as a result of Take Part?
   - What has been the take-up and benefit of accredited citizenship training?
   - What effect has Take Part had upon the types of civic and civil activities local people are involved in?
• Do local people have a better understanding of barriers to participation and how to overcome these?

• Have statutory organisations changed to remove barriers as a result of Take Part, and if so how?

• Has there been any improvement against national indicators 1, 2, 3 and 4 in each pathfinder area as a result of the programme?

• How has the participation of disadvantaged groups been affected?

• Have local people in non-Pathfinder areas benefited from the programme, and if so to what extent?

• Have local people benefited from the national support programme?

• Have there been any unintended benefits to involvement with the programme (such as increased level of employment)?

3. Measuring the impact of the national support programme:

Key research questions include:

• What impact has national support had upon community leadership and citizenship learning provision in both pathfinder and non-pathfinder areas?

• What have been the experiences of relevant agencies of national support?

• To what extent has the national support encouraged the use of the Take Part approach outside of the pathfinder areas?

10.2 Research methods

The study team completed a total of 173 interviews and four focus groups. The sample included:

• 40 focus group participants

• 42 councillors

• 42 school governors

• 31 special constables

• 34 local authority interviewees

• 19 pathfinder interviewees

• 3 community development workers, and

• 2 national support programme interviewees.

A mixed qualitative methodology was used and fieldwork took place between January and March 2010.
10.2.1 Interviews with pathfinders

Pathfinders were interviewed face to face and asked a variety of questions relating to their work – the processes they use to deliver it, its success and any obstacles they face. Interviews also collected data about the main in-kind and financial inputs to the programme, such as time commitment and financial cost for pathfinders in setting up this work, as well as the ongoing costs of running this process. The potential for recall bias was offset by verifying figures with interviewees.

Where the local authority was the lead organisation for the pathfinder, additional questions were asked regarding the rest of the authority’s approach to empowerment and the extent to which Take Part had any influence.

10.2.2 Interviews with local authorities within pathfinder catchment areas

Snowball sampling was used to identify local authority contacts for this element of the evaluation. Where a pathfinder dealt with more than one local authority, the authority to be interviewed was randomly selected and a contact requested. Where the pathfinder was led by a local authority, interviews were conducted with community development workers.

Face to face interviews were conducted with local authorities about their current empowerment practice and to what extent this made reference to Take Part. They were also asked about the publicity and promotion of the programme in their area, which also captured whether they were aware of and had access to the resources created as part of the national support programme. As such, this aspect of the evaluation also collected data about the relationships established between pathfinders and local authorities.

10.2.3 Interviews with community development workers

Interviews were conducted with three community development workers in areas where the pathfinder is lead by a local authority. This was intended to investigate the link-up between the pathfinder and other empowerment work happening in the area. Whilst the interviews were generally informative, the bias associated with snowball sampling was much more evident amongst this sample. Any information used from these interviews in this report has been carefully vetted.

10.2.4 Interviews with agencies delivering national support strands

Two telephone interviews were conducted in order to collect their feedback about the processes involved in undertaking national support work and any barriers encountered. Interviews were conducted with the lead agents delivering the ‘building on the Take Part framework’ and ‘train the Take Part trainers’ strands.
10.2.5 Interviews with local authorities outside of pathfinder catchment areas

Structured telephone interviews were conducted with local authorities outside of pathfinder catchment areas. Local authorities were asked about their current practice with regards to empowerment, their knowledge of Take Part pathfinders and their experience of the work that had happened so far as part of the national support element. These were top tier local authorities, chosen via random selection from within each pathfinder’s respective government office region. This sampling strategy also made reference to the gaps analysis conducted as part of the N2 strand, and two areas were included in the sample which were reported to have a dearth of empowerment activity and resources, as well as two areas where Connecting Communities work was happening.

10.2.6 Civic activist mapping

CDF commissioned the research consultancy ERS to undertake 114 interviews with people in a variety of civic and lay governance roles in each pathfinder area. They used a mixture of face-to-face and telephone interviews to examine civic activists’ motivations for taking up their respective roles and the processes they went through in securing their post. Interviews also examined any barriers activists faced or continue to encounter and how they have or will resolve these. More information on the methodology used in this piece of research is available in the final report (ERS 2010).

10.2.7 Focus groups

Four focus groups were conducted to coincide with learning activities in both phase 1 and phase 2 pathfinder areas, and participatory methods were employed. These focus groups captured feedback from beneficiaries on their experience of the Take Part programme and their views on civic roles. They were also asked about what barriers they perceive to increased participation and what support they would like to increase their participation.

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### 10.3 Desktop research

Extensive desktop research was undertaken using a variety of relevant secondary data as well as text resources produced as part of the Take Part programme. This includes work reports produced as part of the ‘building on the Take Part framework’ and ‘train the Take Part trainers’ strands. This has also included data reports from the online resource directory, which have highlighted the use and duration of use of the resource.

Data has also been gathered from pathfinders’ interim evaluation reports as well as their second year quarterly activity monitoring reports. These provided programme-level information on both the types of work being conducted and its reach in terms of numbers of people passing through the programme.
Appendix 2 – number of beneficiaries and staff per pathfinder

The following figures detail the staffing numbers and number of beneficiaries for each pathfinder. In most cases these figures have been verified with the pathfinder.

Pathfinders differ in terms of their focus and methods, with some targeting whole counties whilst others focus on specific neighbourhoods. Additionally, quantifying staff involvement is difficult due to the ad hoc nature of some roles. The figures below refer to involvement occurring on at least a weekly basis.

These factors make comparisons between pathfinders difficult and, as such, these figures are primarily illustrative. They should not be used as indicators of performance.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Pathfinder</th>
<th>No of staff</th>
<th>Total no of participants per pathfinder</th>
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<tr>
<td>Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale Council for Voluntary Service</td>
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<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cnet Bradford</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Pride/Church Action Poverty</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornwall</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exeter CVS</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>771</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hertfordshire County Council</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portsmouth City Council</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skillshare Ltd</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwark Volunteer Centre</td>
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<td>684</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stoke on Trent Council</td>
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<td>218</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sutton CVS</td>
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<tr>
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<td>514</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of Lincoln</td>
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<td>110</td>
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<tr>
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<td>430</td>
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<tr>
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<td>York Council</td>
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<td><strong>Total across the programme</strong></td>
<td><strong>103</strong></td>
<td><strong>6569</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3 – Take Part’s links to other programmes

Other central government-sponsored initiatives were earmarked to run alongside, and support the delivery of, the Take Part pathfinder programme. The following areas of work were identified as areas of national focus, or collaboration, for Take Part at the beginning of the programme in both the empowerment white paper *Communities in Control* and through CDF’s consultation with CLG. These were:

- **Personal and Community Development Learning (PCDL) fund** – sponsored by the then Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS). This is a safeguarded fund to support uncertified or non-formal adult learning, which is administered by the Learning and Skills Council. Across the country, local learning partnerships were to be established or identified to set the future priorities for the fund.

- **Empowerment Fund** – as outlined in Communities in Control, this fund aims to provide support for existing third sector organisations operating across England which are helping local communities turn key proposals into practical action on the ground in such areas as community leadership, community involvement in planning and social enterprise. The purpose of the support is to help selected third sector organisations to achieve to a greater extent than otherwise their own goals, and those selected to receive assistance will be organisations that have, and are pursuing, goals that further the empowerment of local communities.

- **Connecting Communities** – this programme works with local authorities to improve communication and engagement with deprived communities. The communities being targeted are those where some people feel, despite their best efforts, they are not being listened to and their views are not being taken on board.

- **National Empowerment Partnership (NEP)** – this programme supports empowerment activities across the nine English regions by gathering evidence of effective community empowerment and promoting the powerful benefits of involving communities in decisions that affect them. The practical work of the NEP programme is carried out by organisations working together in regional empowerment partnerships (REPs). The REPs use their collective expertise to support local authorities, statutory agencies and community organisations to work together. More information about NEP is available at: [http://www.cdf.org.uk/web/guest/nep](http://www.cdf.org.uk/web/guest/nep).

- **Targeted Support for Empowerment & Participation Improvement (TSEPI)** - additional funding for TSEPI is available to Regional Empowerment Partnerships (REPs) operating within the National Empowerment Partnership programme. A key aim of TSEPI is to deliver strategic change that will complement work being planned in the most difficult neighbourhoods and estates.