National Standards for Community Engagement

Case studies from the pilots

Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to case studies 1 and 2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case study 1: Dunoon Area Development Group</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case study 2: Helensburgh Area Development Group</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case study 3: West Lothian Early Years Partnership</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study 4: REACH Community Health Project</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study 5: North West Dundee</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study 6: Stirling Community Planning Partnership</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

The Draft Standards for Community Engagement were completed in March 2004. They were developed through a participatory process that mirrors the Standards that have emerged. The first stage involved focus group work across Scotland with communities and communities of interest and agency representatives working with them. The findings from these focus groups were translated into Standards by working groups, which also comprised community and agency representatives. The draft Standards were reviewed at consultative conferences. Throughout the process an advisory group of experienced community and agency representatives offered further comment. There was never any doubt therefore that the Standards reflected both community views on best practice in community engagement and that of experienced practitioners.

It was always intended that the Standards should be a practical tool, which would support partnerships and agencies to improve their practice in community engagement. To ensure that the Standards were usable, they needed to be piloted, and altered in the light of feedback.

The pilot phase of the project began in April 2004 and was completed in March 2005. All pilots took place within that timeframe, though not all of them lasted the full 12 months.

Priority in selecting sites for the pilots was given to areas that had been the locations for focus groups in the initial stages of the project, and were still expressing a desire to be involved. Six sites were selected and the specific focus of the pilot was negotiated with the lead contacts. Three of the original pilots withdrew due to set up problems, which were mostly attributable to changes in personnel. Two further sites were found.

The final six pilot sites were:

- **Argyll and Bute Social Inclusion Partnership (SIP) 1**: application of the Standards in the context of local regeneration through Dunoon Area Development Group
- **Argyll and Bute 2**: application of the Standards through Helensburgh Area Development Group in the context of the expansion of the regeneration area boundaries
- **West Lothian**: application of the Standards in the development of a multi agency partnership initiative, involving a wide range of statutory and voluntary agencies, to improve the quality of early years services in Craigshill, Livingstone. This was associated with local community planning.
- **Pollokshaws, Glasgow**: application of the Standards to the setting up of a new black and minority ethnic consultation project within REACH community health project
- **Dundee**: application of the Standards in north west Dundee with a particular focus on using them to assess the capacity building support needs of local community organizations that would participate in local community planning.
• *Stirling:* development and adaptation of the Standards for application in relation to community engagement in community planning across Stirling.

Each pilot site was assigned a facilitator from the Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC), whose tasks included: assisting the pilots to understand and use the Standards; observing how well the Standards worked in practice and making recommendations for altering the Standards to make them more practical.

There follows a description of each pilot together with the lessons learned.
Introduction to Case Studies 1 and 2 Argyll and Bute SIP

Two sites within the Social Inclusion Partnership (SIP) were selected in Argyll and Bute for the pilot, one in Dunoon and the other in Helensburgh. Although the focus was similar, the local conditions and issues resulted in quite different pilots. This account of the experience therefore begins with this introduction setting out the common context, but goes on to present the two experiences as separate case studies.

Argyll and Bute SIP were involved in the development stage of the Standards and were interested in participating in the pilot. The focus was on applying the Standards in local structures, which were entering a phase of potential change, due to a review of regeneration area boundaries and community planning structures.

The Social Inclusion Partnership in Argyll and Bute operates in five areas each of which has an Area Development Group (ADG). The ADG provides a multi-agency forum for engagement with representatives of community organisations. Each ADG is serviced by a lead officer from the Council’s community learning and development staff and involves a range of representatives from council services, health, the police, housing associations, voluntary intermediary (eg. local councils for voluntary services) and social care agencies. The local Councillor is also an active member and in some cases chairs the meetings.

Each ADG has responsibility for allocation of the local SIP budget (approximately £54000 per annum) to support local initiatives to promote social inclusion. This budget is crucial in involving partners and levering in extra funding from them. Whilst the ADG’s have decision-making functions requiring formal procedures, as befits their financial responsibilities, every effort is made to keep the style of meetings as informal and straightforward as possible. Nonetheless on the spectrum of styles of community engagement this pilot operated in a relatively formal and structured way.

The ADG’s represent the local participatory forums within the SIP, but an overarching SIP Strategic Board operates to integrate and plan work in relation to all five SIP areas across Argyll and Bute. Community representatives from each of the ADG’s are elected to participate in the Strategic Board. This wider grouping has played an important role in the transition from SIP to community regeneration funding that was in progress at the time of the pilots.

As part of the pilot, the ADGs in Dunoon and Helensburgh agreed to apply the Standards to their work.
Case study 1: Dunoon Area Development Group

Context

The SIP area in Dunoon contains a population of approximately 2000 people (930 households) in three neighbourhoods within the town. Each of these areas has community representatives who participate in the ADG. They are drawn from a variety of local organisations concerned with the needs of tenants, younger and older people. They represent about a third of the active membership of the ADG which has up to 30 agency and community participants, though normal attendance at each meeting would be approximately 20.

A community development assistant supports the community representatives in the ADG. Between the monthly meetings of the ADG she meets with the representatives who review local issues and concerns and the work of the ADG and the Strategic Board. The meetings of the community representatives enable them, not only to reflect on how the ADG is responding to issues that they raise, but also to prepare and inform themselves about matters that are being raised through the ADG. In the process of the pilot these meetings became an important focus for discussion of the Standards.

With its SIP funding the Dunoon ADG has supported a range of projects responding to locally identified needs. However, it is equally concerned with a dialogue that reflects on and influences the practice of mainstream service providers within the SIP area.

Purpose

At the start of the pilot in Dunoon it was anticipated that the impact of regeneration funding and community planning would require review of the operations of the ADG. However as the timescales for the new developments were uncertain it was simply agreed that, subject to the willingness of the participants to be involved, the Standards would be used as a framework for the ADG to review its performance in relation to community engagement.

A presentation was made to the ADG outlining the Standards, their origins and purposes. It was felt that the Standards would be particularly useful as a basis for improvement – “identifying what we do well and what we will need to do better”. Community representatives felt that the Standards highlighted relevant issues including: being listened to, getting access to the information needed, developing confidence to be involved, ensuring the consultation leads to action. All participants saw reviewing performance in relation to such issues as potentially helpful.

Participants and lead role

All members of the ADG agreed to apply the Standards. However, as the community representatives had a particular interest in ensuring that they were able to participate effectively, they agreed to use the Standards as part of their pre-agenda meetings with their community development support worker.

Leading roles in taking the Standards forward were played by: the community education ADG lead officer who ensured that they were a prominent part of the agenda
over the pilot period; the community development worker supporting community representatives, and the SCDC facilitator who attended both ADG and community representatives meetings to actively support the application of the Standards. As the process progressed, and confidence with use of the Standards developed, the facilitator played a diminishing role. The ADG lead officer saw himself and the community development worker “championing the Standards”.

Process of application

The involvement of participants from Argyll and Bute in the research to develop the Standards meant that there was already some familiarity with them. They were formally introduced to the Dunoon ADG when their agreement was sought to become a pilot. However, the application of the Standards really began with a focus group involving 21 members that enabled them to review the range of Standards. Members were invited to score the clarity and relevance of the Standards for their work and where their performance might benefit from further attention to particular Standards.

Initially participants were invited to consider each of the sets of Standards and score them according to their importance for the current work of the ADG. The scale was 1-3 where 1 = very important, 2 = quite important, 3 = not very important.

All of the Standards headings were seen as important. The results in rank order, with mean scores in brackets, were as follows: involvement (1.0), support (1.3), working together (1.4), improvement (1.4), sharing information (1.6), methods (1.6), working with others (1.6), feedback (1.7), planning (1.8), monitoring and evaluation (2.).

Whilst it was recognised that importance was attached to all the sets of Standards, attention was given to considering further the top two priorities – involvement and support. The specific Standards under these headings were rated for: their clarity of meaning; their relevance to the ADG and the degree to which attention needed to be given to improving performance.

Through this discussion a variety of barriers were recognised as needing attention. These included: meeting in working time, child-care, transport, literacy, hearing impairment, costs, confidence to participate, formality of meetings (especially for young people). Work was already ongoing to address some of these barriers. For example, the introduction of pre agenda meetings for community representatives had already increased their confidence. It was noted that some of these barriers would also apply to sub groups and recognised that barriers needed to be considered in relation to all forms of engagement, not just ADG meetings. Less formal means of engagement through ADG members included the elderly forum, health project and even activities like the swim pass project that could be used to publicise what the ADG does, and get feedback.

---

1 The relatively low ranking of planning was felt to reflect the fact that a major planning exercise has just been completed. The low ranking of monitoring and evaluation was felt to reflect the stage of the work of the ADG. It was also noted that if monitoring and evaluation had been separated then the former would have been given more importance.
In relation to *involvement*, consistent attendance, authority and legitimacy of representation were seen as particularly important for effective participation. These had been problems in the past. Consideration was given to the problem of measuring legitimacy. It was seen as important to be able to point to evidence that the views being expressed reflected those of the group represented, perhaps through consultations, surveys or meetings. The expectation of consistent attendance needed to be matched with reasonable expectations of level of commitment.

This initial review highlighted issues but it did not lead naturally to a process that would enable the ADG to address them. Hence the next meeting addressed two questions:

1. How do we build the Standards into the practice of the ADG in a way that will enable attention to be given to how well we are conducting our activities without interfering with the efficient conduct of the work?
2. How will we ensure that we act on any concerns identified and ensure continuous improvement of practice?

Five options were considered:

1. An annual Standards review day
2. Application of the Standards in each of the sub groups of the ADG (e.g. Health and Well-being sub group)
3. Consideration by the community reps at their pre and post agenda meetings of the performance of the ADG in relation to the Standards
4. Having a standing item on Standards at the end of each ADG to enable anyone to raise any concerns about how the work of the ADG was being conducted
5. Setting up a small Standards monitoring sub-group

Though the idea of an annual review day was seen as valuable it was recognised that it would not be a satisfactory basis for piloting the Standards. A Standards subgroup was rejected as it was seen as the responsibility of all members of the groups to ensure that the Standards were being met. Identifying issues in relation to the Standards immediately rather than after a sub-group process was seen as important. The ADG was chosen as the primary focus for examining the Standards rather than sub groups as the performance of the sub-groups was part of the overall operation of the ADG.

The preferred way of using the Standards was by having a standing agenda item at meetings to allow the whole group to identify any concerns. However there was an issue about how efficient this would be if all the Standards were to be considered. Two ways of approaching this were tested. Firstly, the lead officer would identify in advance which areas of the Standards would be most pertinent to the content of the agenda and particular attention would be given to these. Secondly, it was agreed to treat the headings in the Standards framework as the Standards with the detail as indicators. This latter approach was particularly beneficial and is now the format for the Standards.

In addition, as the Standards were seen particularly as a protection for the community participants, it was agreed that the SCDC facilitator should attend the pre-agenda

---

2 It should be noted that for the pilots there were 44 draft Standards clustered under 10 headings. Following the experience of the pilots the headings were converted into Standards statements and the original draft Standards into indicators for performance assessment.
meetings of community representatives to explore where there might be issues arising that they wanted to raise in the ADG. Such items would then be brought forward to the ADG agenda.

The adoption of these approaches gave prominence to the application of the Standards as tools for planning, assessing and monitoring performance. There were two related contexts in which the Standards were to be used: the community representatives meeting and the full ADG.

Community representatives meetings: The initial approach was to review representative’s views of the way in which the ADG was operating. However, it was immediately apparent that the draft version with 44 Standards was much too complicated to understand quickly. Attention was therefore given to considering particular headings.

In the first meeting a discussion of the involvement Standards considered whether all participants who should be involved in the ADG were involved. Several gaps were identified, including the involvement of men as community representatives. However, the main concern was that, despite their feeling that it was a major issue in Dunoon, the ADG did not regularly include participants who were addressing drug misuse issues. The discussion rapidly moved on to exploring the issue of drug misuse itself and its’ implications in terms of anti-social behaviour, crime and health. This became the substantive focus of the meeting.

The actual time spent on the involvement standard was quite small but it precipitated a debate about a need that was not being addressed fully. It was agreed that drug misuse should be raised at the ADG, where the concern was subsequently recognised. In the absence of participants with a particular knowledge of these issues, the ADG agreed that it would be helpful to invite relevant agencies to a future meeting and this decision was implemented.

In the meantime, the community representatives recognised that they had different views of the scale, causes and appropriate responses to the problem and, with the support of the community development worker, undertook to invite to their own meetings knowledgeable informants such as the police, a health visitor and representatives of projects working with young people. These very informal discussions led to considerable change in perspectives on the issues and enabled the representatives to participate more effectively in the discussion at the subsequent ADG meeting. It has also led to community representatives being invited to participate in inter-agency training on substance misuse.

As the exploration of the drugs issue progressed, the role of the SCDC facilitator involved little direct promotion of the Standards. Rather, he used the opportunity to reinforce the recognition that the way in which the group was conducting itself demonstrated good practice in relation to the Standards. For example, it illustrated commitment to acquiring necessary information, to improving the capacity of representatives to be effective, to planning in the light of investigating the need to be addressed, to working together effectively with other partners. In this sense reference to the Standards was more a means of reinforcing awareness of positive performance than a guide to the way in which the work of the group should be conducted. However,
it required a facilitator, who was very familiar with the Standards, to draw out the evidence of the qualities of practice in relation to them.

The Area Development Group: Developing work on applying the Standards in the ADG as a whole was initially quite difficult. It was agreed that issues arising in relation to the Standards would be reviewed at its end. This proved problematic. Items that had been discussed earlier in the meeting were reviewed; one particular item became the subject of substantive re-discussion but key interests had by now left the meeting. Other people had to meet other commitments and leave the meeting at the designated finish time (including the facilitator). Unresolved issues remained and the review of the Standards at this stage created more difficulties than it resolved.

The problem in this instance resulted, not just from the way that the Standards were used in the meeting, but also from retrospectively applying the Standards to a piece of work that had not been planned with them in mind. When the particular work was well underway it was difficult to address those aspects that were now causing concern to some participants. This reinforced the need to think about how the Standards are integrated into the overall process of work. Locating the discussion at the end of a meeting felt like an afterthought and left attention to the Standards vulnerable to the inevitable pressure of being squeezed out by a big agenda. It was important for the Standards to be live in the process of dialogue and discussion so that they could be used to identify and tackle issues as they emerged.

Another feature of the discussion was that the participants had not developed a sense of ownership of the Standards and they felt like an external imposition in the process of the meeting. To be influential the Standards need to be integrated.

In the light of the difficulty of the first meeting the lead ADG officer suggested a different approach. He noted that two key issues had emerged from the focus group. These were the degrees to which the involvement Standards and the support Standards were being met. He suggested that the group should have a look at each of these in the next two meetings, allocating 30 minutes to them as a starting discussion. This was done by splitting into two smaller groups to review key indicators of involvement and support respectively. In each case three questions were addressed: How good or bad is the ADG at this? How do we know? How do we improve on or maintain this level?

This approach proved much more helpful. A focused, time limited discussion of an agreed area of importance engaged all participants. The use of the Standards enabled participants to acknowledge what they were doing well and, at the same time, enabled participants to identify very specific and practical measures to improve performance. For example, whilst there was ample evidence that participants valued the ADG, there were ways to make the experience more positive, such as: avoiding jargon, adjusting the start time of the meeting, keeping to time, providing feedback, ensuring that there are practical results. For the most part improvements to practice highlighted were practical and easy to action.

Issues

A range of issues emerged from the application of the Standards in Dunoon. In the form that they were initially used, both community and agency representatives found them too complex. Community representatives said that they had found the Standards
‘hard to understand’, ‘difficult language’, ‘long-winded’ and ‘frightening and off-putting’. They thought it would be much better to keep them as simple as possible. Partly as a result of their feedback the ten headings became the Standards, with the rest becoming indicators.

The independent facilitator had a significant role in supporting initial use of the Standards but the role of the lead officer in integrating them into the ADG process was of key importance in taking them forward.

Community representatives felt that the pilot was a ‘rushed process’ and didn’t fit into the way that they were working. With hindsight the pilot took place at an exceptionally busy time for the group which included the winding up of the SIP and the development of a business plan and Regeneration Outcome Agreement. Clearly introducing a pilot with a specified time frame is an interference in the normal pattern of working and the comments are a reminder that the Standards need to be fitted into the working styles of particular groups.

Similarly in the period of the pilot the ADG focused primarily on the two Standards – involvement and support – highlighted as most relevant at the start. This is a reminder that the Standards are far reaching and relate to the full range of dimensions of community engagement. As in other pilots selecting what is most relevant at a particular point in time is necessary to ensure that their adoption enables rather than distorts the process of developing good practice. The practicality involved in reviewing indicators, such as those for support, seemed to bring home to participants the importance of the Standards. During these discussion community representatives highlighted practical barriers that inhibited their participation. Some of these had previously been hidden, for example, carer responsibilities or transport difficulties.

Lessons/Conclusions

In interviews at the end of the pilot community representatives and lead staff identified the following lessons

- Community representatives felt that they were already meeting many of the Standards and they used them to endorse their practice. But they also made them more aware of what agencies needed to do to improve engagement and therefore more able to argue for it. ‘It is hard to get through to people that they should consult and involve and the Standards help with this.’ In addition, they helped the group look at gaps – ‘what we are focusing on and what we are not focusing on enough’ and get a structure for their work. Ultimately they were useful in that they took the focus away from just numbers to consideration of the quality of involvement.

- The ADG lead officer and the community development support worker felt that the Standards had given the community representatives credibility because they could say that they were using them as a reference both to look at their own practice and to challenge agency staff on the ADG. They had also given officers a way of challenging community representatives on representation issues. All this meant that community representatives and agency staff had ‘a more informed view of the other side’. In addition they provided a good basis for self evaluation of performance.
• The ADG lead officer noted that use of the Standards wasn’t easy because the Standards represented the ideal and had to be balanced with the realistic. However, that had stimulated some interesting discussions, for example, about how they conducted a survey, what questions went on it and who they asked. He also felt that the Standards had helped him address his priorities for the ADG in relation to decision making, operating procedures and structure. He noted that as a product of reviewing involvement and support Standards specific changes had already been implemented for example length and times of meeting. Overall, though there had been some difficulties to overcome, the ADG lead officer found the framework very useful, noting: ‘we have been needing a structure for reflection’. Continuing to review the procedures and practice of ADG will involve the use of a day out to focus on self-evaluation and planning using the Standards as a framework.

• The SCDC facilitator shared the conclusion of the participants. He felt that the pilot endorsed the value of the Standards as a framework for good practice. However applying it needed care to ensure that the volume of work associated with the application of the Standards was commensurate with the capacity of the users to take them on board without diverting energy from their core purpose. In the initial stage this was not the case, but as time went on the Standards were integrated more effectively into the business of the meetings.

• The SCDC facilitator was aware that in the initial stages he was the authority on the content and use of the Standards. Transferring this to others was essential if there was to be positive progress. However, the lead officer’s view, that he would need to be a champion of the Standards, is a reminder that this role might be essential, at least in the short term. A key lesson from this pilot was the need to keep the Standards as simple as possible.

• Another lesson was that it may not always be necessary for facilitators to overtly reference the Standards provided that the issues that they highlight are being addressed effectively. This is illustrated in the work with the community representatives. On the other hand the difficulty encountered when retrospectively applying the Standards, was a reminder of the value of the explicit use of the Standards as a framework for planning an initiative.

• In Dunoon as in other areas it took longer than had been anticipated to establish the work of the pilots. The time frame created some artificial pressures but even within these it became apparent that timing the introduction of the Standards to suit the participants is an important consideration.
Case study 2: Helensburgh Area Development Group

Context

The small areas of Kirkmichael and Craigendorran form the SIP area in Helensburgh, with a population of approximately 1000 people and 400 houses. With the transition to Community Planning, and a review of deprivation and regeneration targets in Argyll and Bute, boundaries of the designated area, have been changed to include Rosneath, Gairlochhead and Portincaple, almost doubling its size. The SIP plus the new areas would become a regeneration area.

The SIP initially developed its work through a community learning centre, but the emphasis has moved to social economy development with an ERDF funded project which is focused specifically on Kirkmichael/Craigendorran. The match funding for this has come from the £54,000 SIP budget.

It was anticipated that the SIP budget would reduce to 75% from April 2005 and to 50% from April 2006. At the same time the changed boundaries would require redistribution of resources to meet the needs of the wider area. Hence overall resources would be reducing and, in particular, new matching funding sources would be needed to sustain the ERDF social economy project.

In the new funded areas of Rosneath and Gairlochhead, community development trusts had been funded by the Loch Lomond National Park, through Community Futures. Local action plans had been developed for these areas that needed to be taken into account in deliberations on broadening the boundaries of the regeneration area.

The proposed restructuring of the SIP therefore had implications for how resources would be distributed. This was a potential source of contention. The ADG for Kirkmichael and Craigendorran felt that the Council had already determined the boundary changes and, although they contained threats to their local interests, they also recognised that other areas had unmet needs. At the time of the pilot, the ADG did not involve community representatives from Gairlochhead or Rosneath, but it was intended that it should do so in due course.

The ADG was chaired by the Councillor for Kirkmichael and Craigendorran and had active involvement from around 20 agency and community representatives. Apart from the Council departments the ADG attracted involvement from the health sector, police, housing associations and voluntary organisations, particularly the Council for Voluntary Service (CVS).

Purpose

The focus for piloting the Standards was on the way in which effective community representation could be established for the re-designated area. The Standards were to be used to raise awareness of how the discussion should be conducted. They were seen as providing a basis for creating new structures from a clean sheet, rather than just widening the existing ADG. However, the focus was initially restricted to the early
stages of establishing contacts within the new areas and developing a dialogue within the existing ADG about how the expansion of the area would be handled.

**Participants and lead role**

The lead officer for the SIP introduced the Standards to the ADG. A key feature of the pilot was her leading role in establishing the use of the Standards as the ADG developed its work toward the re-defined regeneration boundaries. The SCDC facilitator also played an active role in explaining and supporting the use of the Standards.

Initially the Standards were introduced to, and discussed by, the ADG membership as a whole. However, it was subsequently decided, that there should be a specific sub-group to take forward the expansion issues, and this smaller group became the focus of the pilot. It consisted of approximately 10 people including: the SIP lead officer; two other community education colleagues who were taking forward the establishment of contact in the new communities; representatives of other agencies active in the areas, including the CVS; and a housing association. Community representatives from the existing area were active contributors to the sub-group, demonstrating admirable commitment to reaching out to involve the new communities.

**Process of application**

Direct consideration of how to use the Standards began with a focus group to look at how the Standards for community engagement might help the development of collaborative work in relation to community engagement in the expanded ADG area. As part of the session each participant completed a questionnaire setting out each of the Standards on a grid. They were asked to rate their view of: the clarity of the standard; its relevance to expanding the work of the ADG and, whether the current performance of the ADG in relation to the standard was strong or weak.

In the time available 7 Standards and their associated indicators were examined. The overall results indicated that for the most part the Standards were felt to be clear and that they were all generally relevant to the work of the ADG and its expansion in particular. There was considerable confidence in the way that the ADG conducted itself and evidence cited to support this that was subsequently demonstrated in the conduct of the pilot. However there were some Standards that were seen as requiring particular attention as the expansion process developed.

In relation to the involvement standard it was noted that the indicators required consideration of who the participants needed to be in the widened engagement structure, how the ADG would take account of the interests of those who are not yet organised and how to ensure that they maintain continuing dialogue with those they represent. Overcoming barriers to participation was noted as an issue under the involvement standard and examined more fully in relation to the support standard. Continuing to meet the support needs of participants in the wider area might require rethinking the ADG structure and how it works. It was, for example, noted that participants would have different levels of access to equipment, the location and timing of meetings might need to be reconsidered. Implementing the support standard could be an opportunity for involving other agencies that might provide local access to resources e.g. the library.
Given that the changed boundaries necessitated a restructuring of the ADG the planning standard was particularly relevant. The key issue was recognition of, and planning responses to, the new needs and issues that would emerge. In the current work of the ADG some concern was identified about how well public policies were explained and the amount of time allocated to agreeing the purposes of engagement. Both would need attention. In terms of action, the importance of delegation to appropriate people was noted.

In relation to methods, enabling excluded people (e.g. disaffected young people, drug users) to participate and diverse views to be expressed were seen as particularly hard to achieve. It was felt that the ADG needed to get in touch with key groups in the new areas to discuss the methods to be used to involve people. It was noted that the new area involved different Council wards and that the interests of other councillors would need to be taken into account. Each community in the widened ADG area was seen as having its own distinct interests and it was felt that attention needed to be given to ensuring a partnership approach and involving all interests. Meetings would need to be structured to enable everyone to have their say.

Turning to the working together standard, participants noted that it was essential to address hidden agendas. Developing relationships in the widened group would require care. It was felt that the working together standard and indicators should be used from the start to help people to work together. Everyone should know the background to the new developments. It was also suggested that it was important to try things and, if they failed, to learn rather than blame each other.

As different agencies were already working in the new areas the working with others standard was also of relevance. Focusing on avoiding duplication of effort and complementary activity were priorities. It was seen as important to put the message out that the ADG wanted to work with other people, to look at what was going on already and to build on what was being done. Building trust was essential.

Reviewing the Standards in this way began a process of highlighting features of the task of expanding the ADG area that would need to be given particular attention by all the participants. At the next ADG meeting the notes of the focus group and the scores for the relevance and relative strengths and weaknesses of the ADG in relation to the Standards were circulated. Whilst participants said that it had been useful to explore the range of the Standards as an overall performance assessment tool, it was also apparent that it would not be possible to respond immediately to the breadth of issues that this inevitably threw up.

The meeting highlighted the need to start by looking at the planning Standards that were relevant to how the wider engagement with Rosneath and Gairlochhead would be conducted, moving on to the involvement Standards that would be relevant to identifying who should be participating and, in turn, the methods Standards that would affect how they were engaged. The use of the Standards could therefore follow the flow of the work itself. It was decided to pilot the Standards within the sub-group responsible for expansion issues to avoid competing with ADG core business.

In moving into the new areas it was agreed that the Regeneration Outcome Agreements (ROA) should be a key focus of engagement, acknowledging that there were issues
around how the complexities of the policy context of regeneration, community planning, inclusion and health improvement should be introduced.

Reflecting on the ADG discussion the facilitator noted that using the Standards had ensured attention to the process of introducing the ROA. For example, someone commented that proposals would need to be developed for how to involve everyone who is relevant. There was openness to adjusting the way the ADG worked to the needs of the wider range of participants. Some interesting ideas, drawn from experience elsewhere, were highlighted, for example, ‘buddying’ arrangements between community reps and agency reps.

As the work of the sub-group developed, the Standards were used explicitly as a guide to actions. Initially, the sub-group gave particular attention to the application of the planning Standards. The implications of each of the indicators was considered and applied to the task of the expansion of the area. Later, careful thought was given to issues of involvement, and how to create the widest and most effective opportunity for the new communities and their diverse interests to be represented, within the resources available. The lead officer’s approach demonstrated how well the Standards could be used to support reflection on practice issues and performance, by someone who understood the principles underlying them.

The development of engagement in the new areas became the subject of review in subsequent sub-group meetings. For example, in relation to meeting the involvement performance indicators a variety of methods of engagement were being used including: a drop in facility in a local hall; publicity through the newsletter of local community trusts; planned meetings between community representatives from the existing and new regeneration areas and outreach to existing and support to new groups. It was noted that not all the relevant agencies or community groups and interests were yet involved.

It is probable that, as experienced workers, the approach to involvement in the new areas would have been very similar even if the Standards had not been applied. However, the Standards appeared to provide a framework that supported more explicit review and assessment of practice. For example, the indicators for involvement triggered some discussion about the need to put in supports to help people participate if it meant travelling some distance to go to meetings.

Issues

Throughout the period of the pilot the ADG was dealing with complex business that demanded its full attention, particularly around the SIP transition process and the establishment of the ROA. Added pressures included the emergence of short-term priorities such as an opportunity to put together bids for additional SIP funding from the Scottish Executive. In this context, as the lead officer noted, it was difficult to give full attention to introducing the Standards as well as get through the required business. This represents a conundrum that is likely to be commonplace. Whilst the Standards may improve performance, getting to know and use them may have short-term impact on efficiency and effectiveness. In this context, the decision to focus on the sub group was sensible and enabled those involved in a task in which the potential benefits of using the Standards were readily recognised, to begin to apply them. It is to be hoped that the knowledge of the Standards and the confidence in using them acquired by this sub-group can be transferred to the wider ADG.
Applying the Standards that were immediately relevant to action was also an important means of overcoming the difficulty of introducing them. In this context the planning and involvement Standards were agreed to have been particularly relevant and helpful.

As the pilot progressed external factors impinged on the development of the work and its complexity. In particular, whilst the expansion of the SIP area had been planned on the basis of analysis on behalf of the Council of Deprivation in Argyll and Bute, Scottish Executive national analysis and related regeneration policy meant that the newly identified area did not fall within the 15% most deprived areas of Scotland that would be the primary focus of regeneration funding. Once again the significance of relationships with external agencies was highlighted. Workers felt that a lot of uncertainty surrounded the requirements that the Scottish Executive would lay down and that changes in guidance on use of funding made it very difficult to explain policy clearly and simply to community groups. From their viewpoint policy should be clear and established before agencies should be expected to explain them to communities. This may be difficult to achieve. Nonetheless, whilst there are always likely to be tensions between central policy processes and local practice implementation, the experience highlighted the need to look at how the Standards could be applied to an integrated approach.

As noted, at the time of the pilot the development of the ROA was a central task. It had been agreed that the ROA was to be the starting point for developing engagement in the new areas. It was apparent that whilst in relation to the existing area the ROA had been subject of partnership and participation, it was not the case that a similar opportunity for engagement has existed for the new communities. It was recognized that the ADG was meeting an external deadline for the ROA without the wider participatory process in place for the new areas. This meant that the decisions about the activities that would be the focus of the work would not have been debated with representatives of a significant part of the community affected. But the externally imposed time scales meant that this was inevitable and highlighted how difficult it might be in some circumstances to meet the Standards fully.

It was interesting that whilst the conduct of the discussion in the sub-group was triggered through attention to particular Standards, issues were frequently highlighted that were the subject of attention within other Standards. The need for the lead person to be well acquainted with all the Standards and the relationship between them became evident.

The lead officer thought the Standards could be used effectively as a contract with partners but that ‘this needs to be supported from the top’. She felt that the community representatives were committed to the Standards but that partners were, in some cases, just paying lip service to them.

As the pilot drew to a close it became apparent that, whilst the potential of the Standards had been demonstrated, the full value of their application could not be assessed as the cycle of development was not completed. The lead officer commented that she felt that the pilot period had been too short and that they had ‘just dipped into them’. Nonetheless there was substantial learning from the experience.
Lessons/Conclusions

• The use of the Standards in the pilot illustrated their value in several ways. Firstly they were a useful assessment tool and directly contributed to a process of planning. As work progressed they began to be used for monitoring and evaluation of practice. The lead officer described them as ‘a very useful checklist of the range of things we need to be considering in engagement.’

• One of the benefits of the pilot was that the Standards were being introduced to the work of a group that was already busy. Whilst it was slow to find a focus and the cycle of work to which they were applied was incomplete, the pilot nonetheless demonstrated the importance of focusing attention on particular Standards that are relevant to the conduct of effective practice. An approach that integrates them into the organic process of development enables gradual application of them over time as each stage develops.

• The application of the Standards emerged as a particular contribution to awareness of the processes involved in good practice. Frequently attention is given to what needs to happen but insufficient attention to how it will be achieved.

• However in order to implement good practice, it is important to link the applications of the Standards to methods toolkits that are relevant to the particular standard being applied.

• As in other pilots the value of a ‘champion’ for the Standards was evident and the lead officer demonstrated the importance of this role.

• The most important lesson is that the Standards have been sufficiently beneficial to practice for the ADG in Helensburgh to have committed itself to continuing to use them. Specific changes have already been implemented, for example, ADG meetings are now being rotated around different areas and the structure of the agenda has been changed so that meetings will start with community issues and finish with other business to give the community a real chance to get their issues debated.
Case study 3: West Lothian Early Years Partnership

Context

The West Lothian pilot took place in the Craigshill neighbourhood, part of the Inveralmond area of Livingston New Town. The emergence of a thematic partnership focusing on the evidence of particular needs in relation to pre-school children and parents provided a focus for applying the Standards. It was felt that this focus, driven by opportunities arising from the Changing Children’s Services Fund, would potentially provide learning that would be transferable to broader local community planning.

The Craigshill neighbourhood had been identified from statistical data as an area with a high proportion of young parents with young children and relatively high indices of poverty and associated health inequalities. A range of agencies were concerned, involved and willing to collaborate with each other. Development work with the early years partnership was being fostered by the leader of the Communities Team within the Social Policy Section of the West Lothian Council. This team would also be responsible for leading on local community engagement in relation to local community planning.

When the pilot started, the early years partnership was still in its initial stages of development. A focus group of interested agencies had considered the potential benefits of collaboration and other key agency staff had been consulted. Those with an active interest in the development included Sure Start, health visitors and the Health Board Locality Manager, Home Start, a parent support worker, local nursery and primary schools, a Barnados project, a YWCA project, a local community centre, community education staff. This range of agencies was already conducting a wide range of activities to support parents and children.

From the start there was potential for funding to support a local community engagement initiative and consideration was given to the potential for development of a collaborative, inter-agency, shop-front service in the local shopping mall. This was seen as a primary focus for engagement with local pre-school children and their parents. Although they made up only one sector of community need, it was felt that the demographic evidence relating to young children and parents meant that they were an appropriate focus for initial community engagement.

Purpose

From the start it was intended that community engagement would emphasise informal and extensive methods of involving people rather than a formal representative forum of community and agency interests. This provided a particular opportunity to test out the adaptability of the Standards as these had been developed with a primary focus on more formal and structured types of community engagement.

In practice what happened was that the Standards were applied at two levels, firstly to the working of the partnership itself and secondly to its engagement with the community. Given that there were no community representatives in the partnership itself, the application of Standards for community engagement may seem odd. However, though the intention was to apply them to the way that the group engaged the
community, it was found that the Standards were generally as applicable to assessing and monitoring the quality of interagency collaboration and, in particular, the way that it planned and reviewed its community engagement.

The Standards were therefore employed as a guide to the conduct of the work of the partnership and in particular to planning, implementation and reflection on two forms of community engagement. The first of these was a survey of community opinion on children’s services in the area and the second the use of a shop front in the shopping mall as a drop in facility to discuss and comment on the findings of the survey.

Participants and lead roles

In this pilot, the users of the Standards were the representatives of the various agencies involved in the partnership. The community were engaged through the opinion survey conducted by the members of the group and the drop-in facility in the shopping mall.

The lead role in the development of the partnership was taken by the leader of the Communities Team. She introduced the idea of using the Standards and ensured that consideration of them was on the agenda for all meetings of the partnership. However, whilst there was recognition of the relevance of the Standards, the SCDC facilitator played the lead role in supporting and encouraging the group to make them an explicit dimension of their deliberations.

Process of application

Agreement to use the Standards was initially established in the Communities Team and its line management, but it was a matter for the group itself to decide if it wished to apply the Standards as a pilot. This was done by adopting a focus group approach to the partnership in which its members were invited to score the clarity and relevance of the Standards for their work and where their performance might benefit from further attention to particular Standards. The decision to apply the Standards was based on their assessment.

Though time only allowed exploration of the first 5 sets of Standards, it was immediately evident that their meaning was well understood, that their relevance was universally recognised and that in almost all cases there was a need to give them more attention. The set of Standards that emerged overall as most needing attention was planning which seemed to reflect the current stage of group development. However, the closeness of the scores indicated that other issues were also seen as important like: ensuring that the appropriate people are involved; that community participants are supported to participate and, that methods are selected that reflect their needs.

Opportunity to discuss the application of the Standards led to questions about how to make the Standards work. Suggestions included building them into action plans, and using them as a baseline to revisit later. Both of these became features of the way they were subsequently used. It was also noted that whilst the general Standards relating to barriers to participation were of central importance it would be helpful to think about the specific barriers that could inhibit the participation of children and parents as the focal group for this engagement. There was early recognition not only of a need to focus on what work is currently relevant but also to think about specific issues in
relation to the particular community that is being engaged. Similarly it was recognised that the Standards provide a way of thinking about future demands of a piece of work

In relation to working together in the early years partnership it was felt that a good start had been made but that it was necessary to ‘be hard on ourselves’ to ensure we are meeting the Standards. The current absence of community representation in the partnership led into discussion about whether the partnership itself could be the mechanism for engagement or whether it was the means to other forms of engagement. The latter was the case and emphasis was given to simple and straightforward forms of contact. It was felt that existing contact between agencies and community members were forms of engagement that could be built on.

In agreeing to use the Standards, the lead worker said ‘the Standards will give us a structure’. Yet as meetings progressed it became apparent that it was not necessarily natural for the participants to apply such a structured framework to the planning and assessment of what they were doing. The SCDC facilitator played the role of reminding participants of the Standards in order to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the engagement proposed. He noted that ‘whilst the Standards may be recognized as relevant, it is not necessarily natural for people to use systematic tools to support their practice. You may need a facilitator who understands and is committed to using them as a tool …. The Standards can feel like a parallel process rather than a tool that participants use in their work’.

A key challenge for the partnership in its early meetings was, not only to think about how they would engage with families with early years children, but also why they wanted to engage with them. Using the Standards to focus discussion on the purpose of the engagement led to recognition that there was a danger of trying to plan a response to an ill defined set of needs. The group knew that they wanted to improve health and learning outcomes for children but they were not completely clear on why they were engaging parents. They therefore agreed that they needed to focus on thinking about the purpose of engagement, methods they could use, and who would be able to put them into practice. Various tentative ideas were suggested like exhibitions, vox pop interviews, door knocking, snowballing networks, use of a shop-front as an opinion centre.

Focusing the ideas of the group and developing a plan of action were clear priorities for the Communities Team leader. She brought with her to this task a familiarity with the LEAP planning framework which was well applied to clarifying change purposes, performance measurement indicators and elements required to implement action. It was agreed that the purpose of the planned engagement was:

• To find out what people want for under 3’s
• To integrate local services
• To identify gaps in services and plan the use of the funding
• To give and get information about services
• To value the opinions and lived experience of local people
• To encourage self help and participation
• To specifically encourage community participation in the early years group and find out how parents might want to be involved

It was agreed that the initial means of engaging the community would be through a community survey conducted by member of the partnership with local parents in the
shopping mall and outside schools and nurseries. Careful thought was given to the timing and form of the survey and locations for data collection.

At this stage the Standards were used as a tool to review the planning work that had been done. The SCDC facilitator took the role of identifying where the Standards had been met and issues that might not have been addressed. This was a useful application of the Standards and enabled the group to identify that it had met most of the Standards but not some important things. In particular:

- Timescales had not been adequately clarified
- Roles and responsibilities had not been sufficiently clearly set out, for example how the display of information in the mall would be co-ordinated
- No attention had been paid to making sure that the wider agencies represented were aware of what was being done

Whilst the Standards had the benefit of highlighting weaknesses in the planning they were as important reassuring the group that for the most part they had met them. The facilitator remained concerned that without his interventions the Standards would have been overlooked.

The conduct of the survey resulted in a range of useful information but it was recognised that as a form of engagement it had to be used to promote continuing dialogue. Here consideration of the feedback Standards led to very imaginative proposals for the way that the survey data would be used. The results were not presented in a dry report form but through an interactive community arts approach.

A shop unit in the shopping mall was rented and opened every morning for two weeks with members of the partnership on hand to meet callers. It was set out with play space, soft play equipment, a black board and toys on one side, and on the other, a bed with curtain drape, bedside cabinet, alarm clock, slippers and a rug. In the ceiling hung the words: ‘Dream Something Better!!’ All of this was clearly visible from the outside. On the window was a notice saying who was running the shop and inviting people to come in and talk about early years issues. Once inside it was immediately apparent that that the pillows and quilt had things written on them. One pillow had pictures printed on it reflecting the things that people had complained about in the survey. The other had a set of pictures of things that people hade valued and a bold map of the area. Callers were invited to look at the pillows, locate where they came from on the map and add any comments. This was done by use of stencil like sheets that could be written on and then ironed on to the quilt. One had the outline of a large face and a smaller one inside it. Adult comments went into the big face and children’s comments on the smaller ones. There were also sheets with ‘dream bubbles’ with boy or girl figures that children could fill in. The quilt therefore became the focus for comments and discussion. Disposable cameras had also been available for people to take away to add to a photo display to go with people’s comments.

The public response to the shop was good. The display stopped people outside, kids were very happy to go in, though parents had to be encouraged. It stimulated a lot of discussion in the shopping mall and the general response had been very positive. The range of issues that had been identified included: community safety issues (traffic calming and underpasses), dog fouling, access to play facilities, activities for children, support services for parents. These largely reinforced the findings of the earlier surveys but the presence in the mall enabled a dialogue between ordinary members of the
community and the agency staff, who were in the shop. Staff clearly enjoyed the experiences, valuing the collaboration that was going on between them and the contact with the public.

Reflection on the feedback and methods Standards had helped to bring about an exciting and productive form of engagement that motivated further interest in involvement both from the agency staff and from community members who had begun to express interest in being involved in early years activities. It was felt that a longer lease should be taken on one of the larger shops to promote a continuing public dialogue with children’s service providers, with the potential to extend this to a wider range of community issues as part of the local community planning process. This would enable the development of a central signposting services to all the local services that are available in the community and a focus for continuing review of issues to be tackled. The possibility that this might ultimately be run by community volunteers and agencies was discussed. Whilst the building would not be suitable for permanent play activities it was thought that it could be used for specific events run by different services e.g. story reading by library staff, health information. It was agreed that such possibilities should be explored.

In order to further dialogue with community members those who had expressed an interest in being actively involved were invited to a Christmas party where children were entertained whilst parents and workers had opportunities to discuss ideas for future development. In this way the more informal methods moved towards a more formal relationship with specific community members.

By the time the pilot finished, the emphasis of the work of the partnership was on planning these next stages of development in concert with local people expressing an interest in active involvement.

Issues

It is evident that in this pilot the Standards were seen as both relevant and useful. The main issue that arose related to the difficulty of establishing integrating the Standards into the normal working of the group. It was telling that in a final review session conducted by another SCDC worker the facilitator was referred to as the ‘Standards policeman’. It was recognised that this leadership role must in future be integral to the work of the group if the Standards are to continue to be actively influential.

The attention to the Standards helped to stimulate a very imaginative approach. However, the Standards themselves could only highlight the need to think carefully about the nature of the focal community. Responding to these insights required access to skilled and committed workers. The Standards can highlight what is working and what is not, they can suggest ways of improving performance but they only indicate what sort of practice is likely to be most positive. Putting that into place requires skills and resources. In this case the skills were available within the group and resources enabled the engagement of a community artist.

The organic nature of the engagement was very interesting – it has the potential for long term development of a better working relationship between agencies and community without necessarily creating a formal structure. However, during the pilot the power of the community was limited and action depended on the responsiveness of
agencies. There is the potential for this to develop as a partnership initiative with community representatives.

Lessons/conclusions

- participants agreed that the Standards helped them to keep focused and reminded them of things they might not have considered. As a reflection of the stage of their work, particular Standards were felt to have been more relevant than others including involvement which promoted much more in depth thinking about who should be involved; methods which had to be ‘fit for purpose’ and planning which helped to ‘plan the partnership with parents well’ and ‘prepare properly’.

- participants felt that the Standards had helped them to work together as a collaborative group of professionals more effectively. Looking at the Standards together built relationships. Whilst they felt that some of the Standards were obvious and they were already committed to them, they found it helpful to have their good practice endorsed by an independent source. They were also aware that what might seem obvious to them was not necessarily obvious to Community Planning Partners who would have more need of the Standards. One member of the group felt that the Standards had supported them to do ‘proper community development work’. Others commented on the transferability of the Standards between different pieces of work

- The SCDC consultant shared these conclusions feeling that the Standards proved helpful as much as a reminder of qualities of good practice as anything else. He was clear that they had contributed to imaginative thinking and that, despite having been prepared with a formal definition of community engagement in mind, they were equally useable and beneficial for guiding relatively informal approaches to engagement. However he was concerned by the prominent role he had had to play and the need, in future, to have a conscious awareness of the Standards embedded in the group. He noted that good practice is self-reinforcing – meeting the Standards was a source of pride that encouraged further commitment.
Case Study 4: REACH Community Health Project

Context

This pilot involved the use of the Standards to devise outcomes and outcome indicators and measures for a new community health project, which focused on community engagement.

REACH Community Health Project is an innovative voluntary-sector organization whose aim is to provide culturally sensitive and accessible preventative clinical health information and services to the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) community living in the city of Glasgow. The project is also committed to influencing change within mainstream health services to better address the health needs of this particular community.

In its current location, REACH has two treatment rooms and a fully equipped mini-gym. The project is based within Network House, a multicultural community centre, which houses 5 other BME organizations that provide training, advocacy and support to a range of BME communities.

In response to the major health inequalities faced by the BME community living in Glasgow, REACH has expanded its services to provide a broad based, integrated health service programme. In partnership with NHS Greater Glasgow and Primary Care Division, it has developed a Community Health Clinic that offers preventative health promotion information and comprehensive clinical advice to individuals from the BME community.

REACH also provides policy briefings and consultation responses to a range of organizations dealing with issues that affect BME health and well-being in the city.

In November 2003 REACH was successful in attracting Scottish Community Action Research Funding (SCARF) to investigate how the BME community can achieve equal access to mainstream primary care services by identifying the major barriers that prevent effective access, and proposing practical solutions to tackle these inequalities within the health service.

The results of this research were published in The Missing Link: Black and Minority Ethnic Community Participation in Health in September 2004.

The research highlighted large gaps in provision and support and in March 2004, REACH put in a bid to the Community Fund to develop a new project: Public Policy, Active Citizenship (PPAC). This aimed to provide;

• Research, training and development to both statutory professionals and BME communities to enable more effective BME community engagement and participation in the policy development process
• A framework for delivering more accessible and integrated community based health services for the BME community.

The project was successful in attracting funding from January 2005.
As part of the preparation for the launch of PPAC the Chair of REACH discovered the Standards and became interested in being a pilot.

**Purpose**

The REACH Chair was keen to use the Standards to support PPAC but without any clear idea about how they might help. At the first meeting the SCDC facilitator explained the purposes of the Standards and how they might support PPAC at this stage in its development. It was agreed to work on:

- outcomes for the project using the Standards as a guide
- outcome indicators and measures using the Standards as a guide
- a work plan using the Standards as a guide

The intention was to see how much of best practice in community engagement could be incorporated into the design and set up of a new project.

**Participants and Lead Role**

This pilot involved a total of 5 meetings with some work in between them, both for the facilitator and the participants. At the time of the pilot the PPAC project was no more than a successful application. It had not been funded to start until January 2005. The first 2 meetings took place between the facilitator and the REACH Chair. At subsequent meetings members of the PPAC advisory board were invited to attend and the group was expanded to include an independent consultant specializing in diversity issues and the manager of a community health network. Several other participants representing the BME community were not able to attend.

Key roles were taken by the REACH Chair, who was very keen to make use of the Standards in the PPAC project, and the facilitator, who was actively involved in devising a way to use them. Both of the other two participants in the meetings were actively engaged.

**Process of application**

At the first meeting between the facilitator and the REACH Chair, the facilitator explained the purpose of the Standards and potential uses were discussed. A process was drawn up whereby the Standards would be incorporated into the process of devising outcomes for the project, and outcome measures and indicators.

Although this was a useful process for the project it involved the setting up of special meetings for the purposes of the pilot.

The Chair struggled initially with the detail of the Standards and both she and the facilitator were concerned that the other participants might get bogged down in the detail and struggle to see the relevance of them. It was felt important not to start focusing on the detailed work of the project without the involvement of the staff team, who were still to be recruited.

At the second meeting between the facilitator and the Chair a structured programme was devised which concentrated on the responsibility of the advisory board, in defining the change the project hopes to achieve ie. the outcomes. It seemed logical to combine
defining the outcomes with considering what evidence would show that they had been achieved for the purposes of the evaluation plan.

So it was decided to use the Standards both to review the outcomes (which had already been defined in the Community Fund application) and devise outcome measures and indicators (which were at that stage undefined). This involved combining the use of the Standards with the Learning, Evaluation and Planning (LEAP) model, which can be used to create a framework for strategic planning and evaluation.

In preparation for the third meeting the facilitator wrote up the 3 outcomes on separate pieces of flipchart.

These were:
- Increased confidence of BME community members to effectively influence policy makers and health professionals to take action on community identified health priority areas
- Increased participation of BME members, men in particular, in health and social policy development and in accessing mainstream healthcare services
- Increased understanding and awareness of BME health needs and the importance of community participation in policy discussions by policy makers and health and social care professionals.

This meeting involved the facilitator, the REACH Chair and the independent consultant. The process initially involved looking at the outcomes and then looking at the Standards with the aim of defining best practice indicators and measures. Participants became quite bogged down, because there was so much detail in the Standards. An alternative approach was tried, setting aside the Standards, and brainstorming measures and indicators for each outcome and only then comparing them to the Standards. This process, although hard work, was much more effective.

Particular points raised as a result of using the Standards included:
- The involvement standard provoked a discussion on what it means to be an activist and what it means to be representative - a couple of indicators on reaching hidden groups within the BME community were introduced as a result
- The Support standard prompted the inclusion of an indicator around policy makers and health and social care professionals providing support that was needed to BME community members to participate
- The Methods standard encouraged reflection on methods which were fit for purpose and started a debate about whether some of the methods used for engagement were too Eurocentric. A couple of indicators on using appropriate methods were included.

The third meeting lasted two hours. Although there wasn’t time to review all the Standards participants worked on them before the fourth meeting. Two hours was probably enough time in terms of energy levels because it was difficult and intensive work, particularly for those who were not familiar with the Standards.

At the fourth meeting the manager of the community health network joined the group. The facilitator wrote each standard on a separate piece of flipchart and mind mapped the sub-sections of each one. These were put round the walls. It helped to ensure that each one was covered and it was easier to digest the Standards in a large visual format.
Particular points made included:
- further focus on involvement and representation and a refinement of indicators on those, from looking at the involvement standard
- From considering the feedback standard an indicator was introduced on community activists feeding back to the communities they represent
- The planning standard encouraged thought on how communities need to be engaged from the beginning and a third outcome was refined to reflect this
- The support standard was considered in conjunction with the improvement standard and an indicator was refined to include support to build confidence and capacity
- a couple of indicators were introduced on using methods which were fit for purpose and acceptable to the community
- it was felt that most of the planning and working together Standards applied more to the next stage of the work where it was intended to reconvene when the staff team were in place to focus on the work plan (this took place after the pilot process had finished)

Issues

The main issue that arose in relation to the REACH pilot was the applicability of the Standards within the BME context. Both the REACH Chair and the independent consultant, who was experienced in the diversity field, felt that there were particular issues to consider when seeking to engage BME communities in service planning. Considering the methods Standards provoked a discussion on whether most methods would be Eurocentric and not suited to working within some cultures. Participants agreed that the Standards could be used to support the inclusion of BME communities in service planning but only in conjunction with needs awareness and diversity training.

Lessons/Conclusions

The Standards, in their original format needed some translation – even for professionals who were experienced in community engagement and had time to read them. Using a separate flipchart, mind mapping each standard and putting them up round the walls, was quite effective in keeping focused and ensuring nothing was overlooked.

All 10 Standards were seen as relevant and ‘having huge value for community health projects’ although it was acknowledged that it was important to focus on Standards and indicators that fitted with the stage of development of a project. For REACH, Standard 10 on monitoring and evaluation had been particularly useful in focusing attention on measurable and straightforward indicators for the PPAC project.

Standard 4 with its reference to methods fit for purpose was particularly important when considering how to engage with BME communities. For example issues of language and translation would be crucial. The REACH Chair recommended that the Standards be translated into the main languages including Urdu, Cantonese and Hindi. Other translation should be available on request.
This pilot benefited from having an internal ‘Standards champion’, the REACH Chair who could clearly see that using them would benefit the project, and an SCDC facilitator familiar with both the Standards and the LEAP framework.

Participants agreed that the process of using the Standards to review outcomes and define measures and indicators was useful, raising as it did, new issues for discussion and focusing on best practice. Taking time and having a break between the third and fourth meetings allowed for reflection, and enabled issues to be returned to and examined in more depth the second time around eg. representation.

Once the staff were in place (which was after the end of the pilot period), the facilitator agreed to go back and work with the project to apply the Standards to the work plan, both because some of them were more relevant to the actual processes used in the running of the project eg. Methods standard, and to ensure that the outcomes and outcome indicators and measures still feel realistic in the context of the resources, skills and time available.

Using the Standards encouraged participants to question the assumption that community groups are naturally ‘representative’. Common terms like ‘community activist’ and ‘involvement’ and ‘engagement’ were analysed and defined for the purposes of the project rather than being taken as read. Being clear about definitions early in the life of the project will hopefully prevent conflict over values and principles arising later.
**Case Study 5: North West Dundee**

**Context**

The Dundee pilot in focused on the application of the Standards to the development of a community engagement strategy for an area of the city. The Communities Department had already established a common framework for community engagement, which was designed to inform and guide the relationship between communities and the Community Planning Partnership. This is known as the ‘Community Engagement and Communication Strategy, and it sets out to:

- Better inform
- Improve understanding
- Develop constructive dialogue
- Raise the level of confidence in participation

Much of the statement reflects the values and principles of the Standards.

The council had also divided the city into 8 areas for community planning purposes. It was decided that the Standards would be used to inform the development of a community engagement strategy in one of those areas, with the lessons from this to be captured and applied elsewhere at a later date. The area chosen as the focus for the pilot was North West Dundee, which includes the neighbourhoods of Ardler, St Mary’s/Brackens, and Downfield/Dales. Towards the end of 2004 an additional neighbourhood, Kirkton, was transferred into the North West area.

The North West neighbourhood consists primarily of several housing estates, built in the 1950s and 1960s by the local authority. There are also two industrial estates and two country parks. One of the areas – Ardler – was a designated SIP area, and was in the latter stages of a substantial programme of redevelopment, involving the demolition of six multi-storey blocks and their replacement with mixed tenure low-rise housing. Other parts of the North West also have SIP status.

Starting in August 2003, a great deal of energy had been devoted by local officers and the community in writing a Local Community Plan. This process was co-ordinated by the Neighbourhood Partnership Network (NPN), made up of Council department representatives and other service providers including the Police and the Health Board. The NPN does not have community organisation members, but did host a series of community events and stakeholder meetings as the community plan was being written. The Local Community Plan lists 78 key issues or identified needs that emerged from the consultation process, and provides baseline information, describes ‘what will happen’ and the results that must be achieved, and summarises the inputs needed and the scheduled completion date for each activity.

The plan is grouped under five main themes: building stronger communities; community safety; the environment; health and care and learning and working.

The level of organisation of the community in north west Dundee was mixed. In the Ardler area a strong network of neighbourhood and interest groups were in place, and the Ardler Village Trust is established as a community / agency partnership to lead the continuing process of regeneration - particularly the physical and economic aspects. In other parts of the north-west area a number of local groups are in operation, but the
establishment of an effective community forum across the whole north-west area is still being developed.

**Purpose**

Having produced the plan with a high level of community involvement, the initial intention of the NPN and the Community Planning Officer was to use the Standards as part of the programme of implementation of the Local Community Plan. In particular, the Standards were to be used as a reference point for the way in which the agencies responsible for taking forward each of the action priorities should best engage with community interests. Also, because several of the action priorities were about improving the level and quality of engagement and participation, a key area of practice was in fact the process of engagement itself. A key focus of the use of the Standards in Dundee thus came to be on *methods* of engagement at area level, with the involvement of a wide range of agency partners.

The engagement process in Dundee was thus clearly set within the context of community planning at area level, in a situation where a considerable amount of work had already taken place to consult with community and agency stakeholders about the key needs and issues, and there were formal plans in place, and where a structure was in place to co-ordinate the agency response and to continue the process of development. The city council saw the Standards pilot as an opportunity to test and assess its own approach to engagement, and intends to use the lessons from the pilot to inform the way the process is managed in other areas.

The focus and purpose for this work was to produce a ‘northwest community engagement and communication strategy’ which would serve to inform and govern the way the local community plan priorities would be addressed, and how community interests would continue to be engaged. The starting points for this were the Dundee Council Community Engagement and Communication strategy as described above, the local community plan document, and the Standards for community engagement. It was intended that the first step in the task would be to produce an audit of the whole range of engagement activities that were in place in the north west area, and to use this audit as a basis for planning a three-year strategy for engagement in the implementation of the local community plan.

**Participants and Lead Roles**

The co-ordination of this would be the responsibility of the Neighbourhood Partnership Network (NPN) and the majority of the fieldwork would be carried out by the Communities Officer for the area. The Policy Officer of the Communities Department was also involved, with the role of capturing the lessons from the process and considering how they could be applied elsewhere in the city. The SCDC facilitator worked with both these officers, suggesting ways in which the Standards could be worked into the process, and assisting with the planning and facilitation of the consultative events.

**Process of Application**

In June 2004 a plan was agreed for the project. The main elements were:
The Communities Officer would produce an audit of ‘where we are at’ by contacting all key agencies in the area, and requesting information on what they do in each of the four areas in the Dundee Council Community Engagement and Communication Strategy – i.e. information, understanding, dialogue and participation. A month was allowed for this, but in the event it took considerably longer.

The NPN would meet in late July to agree a version of the above to go out to the wider stakeholders in the community. Two forthcoming community events, the Ardler Day Out, and the St Mary’s Fun Day were seen as possible opportunities to inform the community about the process, and a meeting with community stakeholders was also planned for August.

It was intended that this process would lead to a completed and agreed strategy by October 2004.

In the event the process took rather longer than this. The key milestones, with comments, are as follows

*The preliminary meeting with community stakeholders:* This had taken place in April, while the outline plans already described were being developed. It was an evening meeting with representatives from six local community groups or organisations from Ardler and St Mary’s. This group was introduced to the Standards and to the proposals for developing the community engagement and communication strategy, and invited to play an active role. The view of those represented however, was that they would prefer the audit to be carried out by the Communities Officer, and that they would wish to be consulted again once that process was complete. They welcomed the Standards, and agreed that they would be a helpful reference point.

From this point, the pilot in Dundee became essentially an officer-led exercise rather than a practical application to a ‘live’ piece of work. However it is important to recognise that if the Standards are to apply to community planning – a process led by local authorities – it is reasonable to expect local authorities to develop effective mechanisms for all partners to engage with community interests. It is also important that this is a collaborative task, to ensure that there is some consistency and coherence in the approach and attitude of all partners in community planning at area level.

*The August meeting with community stakeholders:* This meeting had been planned to feed back the results of the audit to the key community stakeholders and to explore with them the question: ‘Are officials communicating effectively with people?’

Unfortunately this meeting was poorly attended. Apart from the Communities Officer and the Chair of the NPN there were 3 community representatives and a (fairly recently appointed) priest. A large number of apologies had been received. A further problem was that at that stage not all agencies had responded to the audit questionnaire. However, despite the poor turnout and limited information base, the meeting was useful. The audit had identified 27 different methods of engagement that were in operation in the area, and these were posted on a display board in the meeting. They included newsletters, meetings, working groups, conferences, and many other types of engagement. All had been identified by local partners agencies (public, voluntary and community) as the things they did to encourage engagement.
These methods were introduced for comment: several agencies had requested feedback on whether the community thought they were on the right track, and requested guidance on what methods were most appropriate. The SCDC facilitator introduced the Standards and suggested that, as the meeting was essentially about methods of engagement, the methods Standards could be used to assess what was done. First, the group was asked to assess the clarity and importance of this standard to the process. Using the Standards indicators, all 4 were seen as having a very clear meaning, and their relevance was either high (indicators 4.1 and 4.2) or very high (indicators 4.3 and 4.4). All the indicators were seen as ‘always needing attention’.

The participants then selected four methods that had been identified, and reviewed their value, and their strengths and weaknesses, as methods of engagement. In summary, the view of the group was as follows:

Questionnaires: good for focusing the mind, getting honest responses and targeting particular groups, but weaknesses included poor response rates, literacy issues and a ‘fear of forms’.

Newsletters: good for providing detail, reaching out and targeting, and encouraging feedback, but weaknesses that they are often ignored, that they are a lot of work, and again, issues of literacy.

Brochures were seen as having similar advantages as newsletters, but a longer ‘shelf life’ and ability to put points across clearly. The weakness is that they are seen as conveying an agency message rather than a community one, and there is no local involvement.

Meetings: good for involving a cross section of the community, hearing and exchanging views, making policy makers visible and accountable, stirring up interest and stimulating other activities. But the weaknesses included people sounding off rather than focusing in, the limited number of people who always attend, the barrier to shy people, and the experience of too many meetings without a clear focus or purpose.

The participants agreed that it was useful to reflect on the methods of engagement in use in the area, and that the questions posed by the Standards were a useful trigger. One participant left the meeting saying that he intended to use the Standards in his work role in leisure services.

Progress with the audit of engagement and communication: As noted earlier, progress with this was slower than had been planned, with several agencies not returning the information sought by the Communities Officer. Over time however, successive drafts included more information. A wide range of statutory and voluntary organisations were asked to provide information for the audit.

The agencies had been asked to complete a pro-forma that was divided into the 4 themes within the Dundee Community Engagement and Communication Strategy (information, understanding, dialogue, participation). For each activity, they were asked to note which theme it fell within, who the audience was, frequency or timescale, and who was responsible. They were also asked to provide some information on the content or purpose of the activity. The draft that was produced by September 2004 noted 24 items under the heading ‘information’; 14 under the heading ‘understanding’,
26 under the ‘dialogue’ heading and 27 under ‘participation’ – a total of 91 different engagement activities in place.

The SCDC facilitator suggested that the list of activities could be reassigned to the headings within the Dundee Community Engagement and Communication Strategy, to more accurately reflect the actual nature of the engagement, as distinct from where respondents had placed them. A revised list was then produced, which categorised the activities under the following headings:

**Information**
- Newsletters
- Email and electronic communication
- Reports and flyers
- Updates and face to face work
- Information points
- Other

**Understanding**
- Meetings
- Plans
- Surveys
- Other consultation

**Dialogue**
- Forums and working groups
- Consultation
- Conferences
- Other

**Participation**
- Work groups and forums
- Other

Within this process it became apparent that there was a largely unrecognised method of engagement – the routine work of workers in day-to-day contact with the public. These included police patrols, youth workers, health workers and others. While carrying out their normal work, such people were in regular contact with the community, and potentially an excellent route for engagement, if this could be recognised as part of the role.

*The December meeting of the NPN:* By November, the audit was complete, and the engagement activities had been assessed as described above. The next step was to present the analysis to the membership of the NPN, and to initiate a discussion about how the NPN could take the lead in turning the audit into a strategy. There was a good turnout to this meeting: 21 members of the NPN were there including, among others, representation from the Police, the Ardler Village Trust, Waste Management, the Healthy Living Initiative, the Integrated Community School, and the Communities Department. An update was given on the changing boundaries of the north-west area, and on the recent announcement of the Community Regeneration Fund.
The SCDC facilitator gave a short presentation to the group, summarising the Standards project, and suggesting that the activities recorded in the audit could be assessed in light of the Standards in order to set an agenda for a strategy to improve engagement across the area. He also suggested that, from the perspective of the NPN, the eventual outcomes for the community of improved understanding, dialogue and participation, would depend on the effectiveness of the NPN in developing a strategy for change, influencing the behaviour of partner agencies and the collaboration between them, and conveying a perception of change to the community.

The group was then split into three smaller groups, who were asked to consider the audit process and content in relation to the Standards. All three groups were asked to think about the methods standard. One group also looked at the involvement, planning, and support Standards; a second looked at the working together, sharing information, and working with others Standards, while the third looked at the improvement, feedback, and monitoring and evaluation Standards.

These discussions clearly encouraged a critical review of the position reached in relation to community engagement, and also brought out several issues in the operation of the partnership, the role of the city council, and how things could be done better. Amongst the many points made during the day the following were important:

- Why was the timetable for consultation on the Community Regeneration Fund so pressurised. Coming from Communities Scotland was this not in conflict with the message of the Standards?
- The Standards can be used as a checklist for the use of the Community Regeneration Funds
- The Standards can be tied into the existing Social Inclusion checklist and Engagement toolkit developed by the Communities Department
- Many local workers deal with vulnerable and excluded people and have a critical role in engaging with these groups
- There would be great potential to combine methods of engagement through joint work between NPN members
- The idea of ‘welcome packs’, already used by Sanctuary Housing, could be extended to be an ‘engagement pack’ for the community as a whole
- A recognition that in general, engagement with excluded groups was poor: ‘we reach who we can’. It was also noted that the people who are hard to engage with are not necessarily the same as excluded groups. It was further recognised that there are three broad levels of engagement with people in the area:
  - With those who are ‘community aware’ – the contacters
  - With those who are not involved but could become so
  - With those who are not involved and do not want to be

This led to questioning of whether this meant different approaches would be needed for each of these classifications, and whether the middle of these tiers should be the strategic target group.

- Those looking at the support standard thought that improvements could be made in addressing financial and practical barriers, and recognised that partners should take the initiative in offering financial and practical support, rather than expecting people to approach officials for help. ‘If we don’t offer financial help it’s a barrier and we only get the people for whom it’s not a barrier’
The Standards were likened to the Disability Discrimination Act: getting people to really think about access and inclusion issues and how they could be addressed.

The group looking at feedback recognised that, to date, the whole Communication and Engagement strategy was in essence, a feedback strategy – telling people what was in place. The NPN should be much clearer about what it would want to feed back from events such as the Health fair, and that this should be planned in relation to a wider evaluation process. Thinking about the Standards had led to a recognition that planning and evaluation of engagement are critical – ‘don’t just do it – plan it and evaluate it!’

There should be multi-agency community engagement methods training, and other initiatives such as visits, inter-agency strategies, email briefings and improved website links, and other actions could improve the quality of engagement between agencies and with the community.

The group also provided feedback on the use of the Standards in the work done. It was noted that the meeting had been the best opportunity that the NPN members had had to step back from the set agenda and limited time available at the regular meetings, to really think through how they related to the communities, what the issues were, and how things could be improved. The Standards had also provided a challenge – given people a set of criteria against which they could assess their own, and others’ practice, and identified where improvement could be made.

Following this meeting the leading officers met to plan what to take to the meeting with the community stakeholders to be held in January. The meeting was to be on Burns night so a haggis lunch was organised, although without the whisky or recitations. There were 7 community members at this meeting. Again, the Standards pilot and the Dundee Community Engagement and Communication Strategy were explained, and the intention to develop an action plan to improve engagement was discussed.

At the end of the pilot, the Policy Officer was preparing a report on progress to take to the Community Planning sub-group.

Issues

Reviewing the Dundee pilot the following emerge as the key issues.

First, this was, by and large, an officer led initiative. The community had been invited to take part at an early stage, but had decided to leave it to the officers to develop the audit and strategy and report back to them. This decision was, of course quite consistent with the Standards, in so far as the community was engaged in the discussion on what was intended, had the opportunity to comment, and the authority to propose the approach they preferred. The community does not have to engage directly in an engagement process!

It is also quite acceptable, and indeed correct, that officers take a lead in developing a local engagement strategy within a community planning context, provided that this is done in consultation with the community, as it was in this case. Some organisation or structure is required to ensure that the Standards are made known, applied, and built into the process. While this may be done in
various ways, the approach taken in Dundee is certainly appropriate, with the local partnership body leading the process and the local community planning officer supporting the work.

• The timescale for understanding, planning and applying the Standards at area level was longer than intended. This was due to the usual administrative issues of coping with the size and complexity of the area and the number of partners involved, the time it may take for organisations to respond to requests, and the issues about finding suitable times for meetings. Another dimension was the reporting timetable to the relevant Community Planning subcommittee, to which the Policy Officer was committed. Meanwhile, unexpected events were to happen, notably the arrival of a HMIE inspection in late 2004, which diverted the focus of most of the officers involved in the pilot to preparing for, and reporting to the Inspectors. Also, the addition of a new area to the local community plan areas, and the announcement of the Community Regeneration fund had to be addressed.

• The Standards are probably best applied to a ‘live’ community issue. At the time of the Dundee pilot there was not a great deal happening in the community. The major decisions had already been taken, plans for future action had been agreed and were in place, and both the community and the officers involved in the NPN were content to ‘fine tune’ the procedures that were in place. In some ways, this opportunity to develop improved systems for engagement was a good thing, and one that would not have been available had there been contentious issues to deal with. Nevertheless, there was a sense that the engagement was about the nature of engagement, rather than about the community needs and issues that had to be tackled. From the perspective of establishing a sound local community planning framework this was important and timely work, but the absence of real, gritty issues meant that the Standards were perhaps not properly tested in a complex or highly charged atmosphere.

Having noted that, it is also important to record the effect that a focus on the Standards had on the interest in, and value of collaboration between the partners in community planning at local level. As noted above, the plans to establish an area-wide communication and engagement strategy linked to the Standards, encouraged a lively and fruitful debate to take place among the agency partners in the local community plan – a debate that was thought to be more fruitful than the normal NPN meetings.

Lessons/conclusions

Following the work on the pilot, the key individuals involved were interviewed and asked for their reflections on the Standards and on the issues they highlighted. These comments should be read as coming from people who would expect to have a leading role in applying the Standards to community planning at area level, including the post-SIP regeneration areas.

Positive comments are that:

• The Standards cover all the engagement issues and introduce rigour to the process of engagement that all community planning partnerships must take forward
• You can make the Standards work for you, but you need to be selective in the way they are used – they are a useful tool to help develop community engagement strategies.

• The Standards are a useful tool for setting baselines, and planning and evaluating engagement. With hindsight, it would have been helpful to have built a framework of baselines and targets into the work of the pilot.

• They are useful for prompting discussion and helping translate ideas into practice, but the most important role for the Standards is as a planning and evaluation tool – raising awareness, monitoring improvements and measuring change.

• They had a strong impact on officers – the Standards have influenced the process of change, have encouraged wider officer involvement and have stimulated useful debates about principles and practice.

• They are practical and common-sense: a good way to bring some tricky issues into focus, but there is a danger that without direction and encouragement they will become a reference document rather than a live guide to practice.

• The Standards are useful for checking out with community groups whether engagement and action are being taken forward properly – there is a view that engagement is something the council ‘does’, rather than a relationship between communities and other partners.

• Standards can also be used as a community development tool – a way to think through issues and solutions with community groups.

• Community engagement is clearly written into policy – the Standards are a framework for putting the policy into practice – they are a problem solving toolkit and a reference point.

Concerns and issues are that:

• The Standards can appear daunting – if there is no message that they will be enforced there will be little motivation to apply them at all.

• Community engagement is not cheap – the Standards imply expenditure on information provision, engagement with excluded groups, removing the barriers to participation – which costs money, demands on staff time.

• Communities are more interested in outcomes that process, so there is a particular responsibility for officers to get engagement right.

Overall, it was recognised as important that the NPN was seen to have the lead role, as a body that involved all key partners but was not dominated by any. It was seen as important that the Standards be incorporated into the day-to-day work of all key staff, by being given authority, being built into team plans and to individual work programmes, and used as a resource in working with community groups.
Case Study 6: Stirling Community Planning Partnership

The pilot in Stirling was at Community Planning Partnership level, where a clear commitment to community engagement in the community planning process had already been agreed. The Community Planning Partnership took a decision to base its engagement strategy on the Standards, and the pilot tracked the work from May 2004 to March 2005. The process is not complete. The significance of the Stirling pilot is in the issues that emerge when working across a range of agencies and organisations to achieve consistency and coherence. If the Standards are to be adopted as a general framework for engagement in community planning the lessons from Stirling will need careful consideration.

Context

The Stirling Community Planning Partnership aims to improve the quality and relevance of services across the council area by focusing the attention of public, voluntary, community and business sectors on the main issues of public concern. As it is a relatively small area, many of the community planning partners also operate in neighbouring community planning partnerships; in particular Clackmannanshire and Falkirk. This is the case for Central Scotland Police, Central Scotland Fire and Rescue, Scottish Enterprise Forth Valley and NHS Forth Valley. In addition, Stirling is within the boundary for the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park.

As a local authority, Stirling Council had been active in the earlier stages of the Standards project, having been a site for an early focus group, and having had several staff members and residents involved at the working party stage. However, the pilot was agreed as a Community Planning Partnership pilot not a Stirling Council pilot.

When the pilot got under way, the aim of the CPP in relation to the Standards was to:
- examine the extent to which partners could sign up to the Standards and test partners views of their relevance
- use the Standards as a self evaluation tool to judge the Partnership’s own practice
- develop a framework of the Standards for Community Engagement for local application
- involve a particular focus on the use of the Standards within the Regeneration Strategy Group and its responsibility for the transition of SPUR (Stirling Partnership for Urban Regeneration) to community planning.

There was also an intention to draw on the Standards to help tie together the partnership agenda and as a tool to draw the partners together on a shared agenda. It was noted at an early stage that certain partners had received their ‘own’ guidance on community engagement and the issue of possible confusion, conflict or duplication had been recognised. For example, early in the process the Scottish Executive Health Department issued guidance on engagement in the form of a document entitled ‘Informing, Engaging and Consulting the Public’.

It was recognised that development of the community planning process would be a longer-term task than the Standards pilot. In addition the pilot coincided with work which the Partnership was independently undertaking on community engagement. A number of developments in the structure and operation of community planning in
Stirling were expected to take place in 2004, and it was hoped that the Standards would be able to inform these. The most important developments were to be:

1. the transition of the SIP (Stirling Partnership for Urban Regeneration) and regeneration activity to Community Planning and the creation of the Regeneration Strategy Group within the community planning structure to manage this. Within this new structure was a commitment to create a Community Engagement Group reporting to the Regeneration Strategy Group which would focus on ensuring there was continued community engagement within the new decision making structure.

2. the emergence of Community Governance across Stirling. Part of this strategy saw the development of clusters of communities involving community councils, local community planning groups and other community organisations. The aim of these clusters was to provide a bridge between local community planning and strategic community planning structures, ensuring that there was community impact on agencies’ forward planning.

Participants and Lead Roles

The Standards work in Stirling was planned and carried out by a sub-group of the Community Planning Partnership led by the Community Planning Lead Officer and facilitated by a senior manager in the Communities Department. Other members included staff involved in community governance, community regeneration, community learning and development, and the Police. The SCDC facilitator attended this group with the primary roles of supporting and observing the process.

Process of Application

The main components of the work in Stirling were anticipated in a report prepared for the meeting of the Community Planning Partnership held in May 2004. The report detailed the meeting between a small group and the SCDC facilitator at which the process and timetable for the pilot had been agreed.

A cross agency group was to be set up to progress the work of the pilot, which initially involved developing and testing a Standards scorecard. It was intended that the scorecard would be agreed by the Community Planning Steering Group in August 2004 and completed by Community Planning partners from their standpoint of their agencies during September. The results were to be collated in October and presented at a one day event. The Stirling version of the Standards was intended to be developed by November and agreed by the Community Planning Steering Group in December.

The next phase of the work was to involve concentrating on the practical use of the Stirling version of the Standards with the Regeneration Strategy Community Engagement Group and a Community Governance grouping.

The SCDC facilitator attended the May meeting and gave a presentation on the Standards. After discussion, the Community Planning Partnership agreed to the proposal for developing and testing a Stirling version of the Standards for Community Engagement according to the timetable suggested, and encouraging wider partner involvement in developing the scorecard.
Development of the Scorecard

As noted above, the CP steering group agreed to the development of a ‘scorecard’ as a trigger for applying the Standards to community governance and community engagement.

A scorecard for assessing the level of readiness for SIP transition to community planning was in use in Stirling. The idea was to adopt a similar approach for the Standards – in order to assess whether people are ready to apply them and to what extent could they adhere to the Standards. It would provide the Community Planning Steering Group with a map of the level at which the various partners would be ready to engage – starting from agency viewpoint in first instance. It was envisaged that at a later stage, in 2005, the CPP would be ready to test the Standards in practice.

It was thought that a ‘Stirling Scorecard’ could be used for various purposes:
- To move practice forward
- To identify what communities think about agencies
- To aim for a dialogue about agency practice and community engagement
- To establish partner agencies’ view of their baseline as part of a shared process
- To help establish a vision of where partners want to be with engagement

By June the subgroup to take forward the task of developing the scorecard had been convened. It included representatives or lead officers in relation to: community learning and development, community governance, community engagement, community safety, Central Scotland Police, Scottish Enterprise Forth Valley, and Forth Valley NHS, as well as the Community Planning Manager. It should be noted that the Community Planning Manager post is a partnership funded and managed position. This means that the manager is impartial and not tied to any one agency. This role was important in the later stages of the work.

It was accepted that the reason for starting with agencies, rather than with community organizations, is that the onus is on them to engage, thus they need to be thinking about the message and application of the Standards from the start.

The group decided that it could facilitate sessions on the Standards in each partner agency. It was thought that the process of partner and peer assessment should lead to more effective partnership and a clearer sense of direction. It was also noted that the CPP would want to assess partners’ understanding of, and readiness for engagement in any case, so the pilot was not work being done only for its own sake. The challenge would be to apply the Standards in different contexts across the community planning process in relation to meetings, projects and programmes.

At the end of this meeting, and at the follow up meeting it was agreed that work would be done to assess all the Standards and indicators to establish whether the CPP saw each as
- ‘basic’: generally recognised and being done
- ‘trying’: recognised and working towards attainment
- ‘aspirational’: desirable, but have some way to go before achieving this
It was also agreed that once the scorecard had been developed, there would be sessions facilitated by the Community Planning Officer with each of the main partners, focusing in particular on the indicators that were assessed at the ‘trying’ level, to explore why agencies were having difficulty reaching the standard. The discussion would be on where each partner saw itself now, rather than where they hoped to be in future.

By November 2004 it was clear that the original plan and timetable for developing, discussing and adopting the ‘Stirling version’ of the Standards had not been achieved due to competing priorities, staff shortages and political imperatives. However, despite slow progress on this, a strong view was emerging in the CP partner agencies that:

- Community engagement is a key policy area for all partners
- They need to demonstrate good practice
- Consistency across community planning areas is important, and greater commonality is already being achieved
- Agencies working at Forth Valley level want to achieve consistency across their service, and with other community planning processes in their areas – for example Forth Valley Police are keen to develop a coherent approach to engagement across the Force, in particular with reference to the implications of the anti-social behaviour legislation, and Forth Valley Health Board has agreed that they will adopt the community planning process to set up community forum activity within the Community Health Partnership

There had been community governance ‘suck it and see’ meetings in six areas: these had shed light on the importance of how engagement takes place, and how communities are supported to engage. Participants were saying that they needed the things set out in the Standards.

The Standards Working Group itself made slow progress due to participants not being sufficiently clear about the purpose of the activity, organisations being represented by different individuals at different meetings, and the message having to be repeatedly clarified and reinforced.

Meanwhile, the CP steering group was expected to approve the CP Lead Officer arranging a workshop with each of the 6 key partner agencies to get their sign-up to the Standards, and to assess their organisation’s baseline against the Stirling CP expectation on each standard. It was hoped that all these meetings would take place between November and February when the CP steering group would next meet. When the pilot finished, much of this work was yet to be done.

**Issues**

Although the pilot in Stirling did not involve direct work in communities, and although the pace of development was slow, several significant lessons can be drawn from the experience, which are likely to be of relevance elsewhere, particularly for community planning partnerships. From the perspective of introducing the Standards at Community Planning level, the concerns and issues identified included:

---

4 The Community Planning Officer is employed by the Community Planning Partnership
• Community planning partners are driven by different sets of Standards, expectations and policy and have different organisational cultures – they will only buy into the Standards if the connections between them are explicit
• There are issues for services that cross several local authority or community planning area boundaries. They will not readily accept working to different agendas in different areas
• There is an issue of who has the skills, the time and the resources to lead and manage the engagement process at community planning level, in accordance with the Standards. Community learning and development staff may have the skills but not necessarily the capacity, and their energies may be directed elsewhere.

Lessons/Conclusions

It is important to recognise that the Stirling pilot was not the application of Standards to an established engagement, but intended to observe and learn from the process through which a CPP aims to secure partner commitment to the idea of engagement, and to ensure it is built into all relevant Partnership structures.

This was the only pilot to operate at community planning level – thus its importance is in assessing the use of the Standards as a tool to promote effective community planning and partnership work. If Community Planning is intended to be the key vehicle through which the Standards will be adopted and accepted across Scotland, the issues and lessons from the Stirling pilot are important. So what are the lessons?

First, the Standards were recognized to be of value in raising awareness of the importance of engagement across community planning partners, who come to community planning with differing interpretation of community engagement and differing levels of commitment to it. They set out a clear agenda and set of expectations for community engagement and thus encourage community planning partners to consider the issues and their responses.

Second, the Standards had a practical value. This included their role in helping move the debate on from discussion to action, and in particular their use as a trigger for debate, focusing attention on questions such as:
• how the partnership can develop
• how to address difficult partnership issues
• how partners should work together to respond consistently and coherently to community needs and issues
• how to achieve consistent approaches to engagement across the community planning partnership.

Third, the Standards were seen to be of value in relation to gathering evidence on the impact of community engagement in community planning. This was seen as a crucial test. The Community Planning Partnership recognized that it would be judged on the demonstrable value of engagement and its link to improved outcomes. To meet this challenge, the Standards are important as a framework for assembling and interpreting evidence on these impacts. The Standards will also be important more locally, to check that the levels and outcomes of engagement in different clusters are fair and equitable.
In applying the Standards to these areas, other conclusions can be drawn from Stirling. It was very important for the Standards debate to be led by the Community Planning Officer as an ‘honest broker’ in community planning, and not to be seen as local authority led initiative. Community planning works at a level where organisational and cultural change is crucial. There are several ‘oil tankers’ that prove slow to change their culture or relationship with others. However, in Stirling, the community planning partners are increasingly talking of the process as something they have a stake in or ownership of.

It is also very evident that, at community planning level, it is a very long term process to adopt, assess, and introduce the Standards, and to begin to address the issues they expose. Time is crucial to this: more so than support. It must be acknowledged and accepted that it will be a long time before results will be apparent at strategic level. It is also important to recognize that without work at the strategic, community planning level, the Standards are unlikely to embed at local level. If all partners are not involved and engaged centrally, they will not encourage or endorse local work.

The idea of developing a local ‘scorecard’ proved useful as a tool to engage in discussion with the community planning partners, and to work with them to assess their level of performance. Working individually with key people from the partner agencies was also important. The partnership took the view that it was important for community planning partner agencies to consider the Standards in advance of ‘going live’ with the public. Because there had been few discussions with communities that were informed by the Standards by the end of the pilot work, it is difficult to draw conclusions about the significance of this decision. If it is important for community planning partners to be seen to be working to a shared understanding of engagement, and using the Standards in a consistent way, the approach is justified. It should be noted that, conversely, this approach carries the danger that community interests may consider themselves excluded from an important stage of the process.

A wider issue is what can be learned from Stirling that other community planning partnerships can draw on. The points already made are all relevant: time and resources need to be invested, and the process must be planned and led, within a framework of accountability to the Community Planning Partnership. Stirling had several advantages in relation to some other community planning areas: it is a relatively small and manageable area, and considerable energies were already being invested in developing workable local structures, and in developing engagement strategies. Then the question must be posed of how best to assist the application of the Standards in circumstances where the context is more complex and there is less experience of community engagement.
Conclusion

There are individual lessons to be learned from each of the pilots, which are detailed above, but some common themes also emerged.

The Standards for Community Engagement were developed to apply to a diverse range of community engagement but the specific need for a stronger voice for communities within the Community Planning process was seen as critically important. Two of the pilots used the Standards directly in that context. The other four used them in slightly different contexts, but all focused on how the community could be most effectively engaged in planning and developing services. The pilots showed, therefore, that the Standards can be put to good use at different levels, from small projects to larger planning partnerships, and in a variety of contexts.

A primary purpose of the Standards is to encourage statutory agencies and partnerships to challenge and be challenged on their community engagement practice. What also happened during a number of the pilots was that community groups and voluntary organizations began to question their own practice as well. They started to reflect on issues such as whether they were truly representative and how effective they were at feeding back to those they represented. Using the Standards gave these groups a framework for recognizing and working on these issues in a safe context, rather than being challenged and potentially undermined at a partnership level.

Most of the pilots took place in the context of partnership working. Participants in these pilots recognized was that using the Standards not only contributed to good practice in community engagement but also facilitated more effective partnership working.

Whilst the Standards were used in all the pilots to highlight issues which needed attention, they also enabled the pilots to celebrate their successes. All the pilots felt encouraged by having their own good practice validated by the Standards.

The accessibility of the Standards was a key discussion point during the pilots. Most community representatives, and some agency staff, found the draft version introduced to the pilots very dense at first. At the same time, once they had had the opportunity to become more familiar with them, most participants agreed that the detail was crucial, and that there was a danger that the Standards would be watered down if they were oversimplified. As a result the format was changed so that the core Standards were captured in a set of 10 outcome statements, with the detail forming a set of indicators for each one. Evidence showing that these indicators have been met will demonstrate that the Standard has been reached.

Participants in the pilots found trying to focus on all Standards at the same time overwhelming. In practice those which were most relevant to the current work of the pilot ended up being used most effectively. For instance one pilot focused on the involvement and support Standards whilst another used the methods Standard to plan out ways of accessing sections of the community. It would have been impossible for pilots to work through all the Standards and still attend to the core business of the group. At the same time it was acknowledged in all the pilots that all the Standards would be relevant at different times and it was important to avoid the temptation to focus on those which were easiest to meet. One pilot decided to hold an away day in
order to give more attention to the whole question of community engagement using the complete Standards as a framework. This took place after the pilot was over but it demonstrated a different approach which involved setting aside time to focus on the Standards rather than attempting only to integrate them into the normal working of the group.

In order for the Standards to be useful, there had to be a recognition in the group that community engagement was an issue. Once that had been established, the Standards became a framework which helped to address the particular aspect of community engagement that was relevant at the time, rather than an end in themselves. So one group used them to think about who wasn’t being included in their community, which led to a strategy to include people affected by drugs issues, whilst another group used them to set indicators as part of a strategic planning process.

At times the Standards felt like an added pressure on some pilots. This was partly due to problems with their density as presented in draft form at the start of the pilots and partly because occasionally they seemed to distract from core proceedings. The role of the facilitator in helping the groups to see how the Standards could help them with the task in hand was crucial in these instances. The facilitator required an in-depth knowledge of the Standards and how they could be used. Although this role was taken on by SCDC at the start, over the course of the pilots other agency staff and community representatives became familiar with the Standards and their potential. In all of the pilots agency staff and community representatives decided to continue using them to support their work on community engagement.

Whilst the Standards were useful in bringing participants attention to issues they needed to attend to, they did not in themselves replace good community work practice. In the West Lothian pilot the Standards highlighted the need to use methods of engagement which were inclusive and ‘fit for purpose’ but the creativity of the methods used was down to the early years partnership and the community arts worker they employed.

In the same way the Standards may need to be accompanied by other forms of training. Although the Standards were designed to be used to engage communities of interest as well as geographical communities and are embedded in equalities principles, they do not replace guidance on or specifically cover diversity issues or disability equality.

One of the pilots demonstrated how the Standards could be used alongside another framework, Learning, Evaluation and Planning (LEAP). Parallel use of the LEAP framework was also identified in two others. The Standards could also be used alongside other processes and framework e.g. quality assessment.

In all of the pilots, using the Standards led to changes in practice. These changes were seen as contributing to better community engagement and, in themselves, encouraged further use of the Standards. In some cases the changes cost money for instance hiring a community arts worker to try out a different method to get people involved. In other cases it didn’t for instance changing the timing of meetings.

Lessons from the pilots will, we hope, be useful for those setting out to use the Standards themselves. The lessons drawn from the pilots have informed the range of
support materials that has been prepared to accompany the Standards. Further support materials available on this website include:

- *Illustrations from the pilots* – a description of how the experience of the pilots relates specifically to each of the ten Standards
- *Reference Manual* – which explores in detail each standard and its accompanying indicators
- *Standards Toolkit* – which suggests ideas and frameworks for applying the Standards in practice
- *User’s Guide* – detailing where the Standards come from and how they can be used