



Taking Part? Case Study:

The role of learning in volunteering in
promoting community cohesion in a rural
county

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About the Taking Part Research Cluster

Taking Part is the ESRC research cluster developing research and a critical mass around active citizenship and community empowerment. The cluster has a particular emphasis upon enabling the voices of the most disadvantaged groups to be heard effectively, as part of the wider agendas for social change, social solidarity and social justice.

The cluster is a partnership between the University of Lincoln, Goldsmiths College, University of London and Manchester Metropolitan.

1. Summary

The purpose of this report is to detail research of how volunteering promotes community cohesion using a 'Take Part' approach.

'Take Part' is based on the Friere approach of engaging individuals through a process of dialogue and reflection. This research explores a number of themes that show how volunteering can promote community cohesion, based on two case studies in different parts of Lincolnshire. It sets out to explore whether volunteering does indeed promote community cohesion, and how research can improve the community's response. A number of themes emerged:

- Community is less about the physical area of a location and more about the people and groups within the location and how they create a space together. This space can be a community of interest or the bringing together of a community for action.
- It is easier to define cohesion for what it isn't, rather than for what it is. This definition is coupled with the sense of place, which can be different to the sense of belonging as defined by the previous government.
- Volunteering can be formal, informal and does not have boundaries that can be defined by a single definition. Many volunteers don't see or appreciate the value this can bring to society or themselves.
- The structures in which communities operate are dependent upon their success, and this can often be the barrier to long term planning. Finding the way through often ambiguous and lengthy processes takes time and patience and can be the source of considerable frustration, leaving the citizen feeling powerless.

The findings from the two groups show:

- People volunteer as they are concerned about a particular issue, however once involved, they are more likely to stay involved, thus becoming an active citizen.
- Passion for action can sometimes outweigh structure and process, leading to individual rather than collective action.
- Many felt volunteering increased their sense of belonging in a community (one of the key elements of community cohesion).
- Individuals found it hard to articulate what they wanted to personally achieve from volunteering (knowledge, skills, confidence).
- Volunteers are passionate about their cause, but not always the most structured in terms of achieving outcomes.
- Volunteers in the groups felt they represented the wider community, but were wary of the power this gave them and not being a true representation.
- Individuals have had to learn to 'sit back' and take on board other people's views.
- Some individuals struggled with the length of time it takes to be democratic (processes, meetings, decisions, action).

- Groups felt they needed a conduit to have the appearance of authority.
- The process of reflection helped them structure themselves more appropriately.
- Introducing a risk assessment (Wragby) has increased capacity to deal with immediate concerns whilst not losing sight of wider community issues.
- Reflecting on their aims has helped them achieve clarity and enhanced decision-making capability.
- Reflecting on what they can't change has opened up new possibilities.
- Learning from the Shuttleworth report has meant Abbey group's engagement with agencies is more structured.

The analysis of volunteering in the two case studies reinforces the importance of local volunteers in improving community cohesion. Nurturing the social infrastructure of neighbourhoods can help to erode the inequalities and social exclusion faced by some community members. A cohesive neighbourhood is one that can adapt to change to collectively shift the balance, tackle barriers, promote positive relationships and develop space for dialogue.

The researcher concludes:

- The research process helped individuals to identify their value to the group and in turn, appreciate their role in the group dynamics.
- The groups recognised that collective action has a greater impact than individual action.
- The research process has helped the groups to organise and structure themselves, so they can participate more actively and articulate responses to decision makers.
- Analysing the structures of the groups helped individuals to identify the perception others have of them and how this can be enhanced.
- Stakeholder analysis helped them to focus on who to influence and how they can be more involved in local decisions such as planning applications.
- Volunteers will commit time to action but not necessarily to reflection, and if they do commit to reflection, they will not necessarily alter their actions.
- Individuals prioritise their time according to the importance of the task to them – on more than one occasion politely stating research and learning was not a priority.
- Transparency in the structure of the group allows for more inclusivity and involvement of the wider community, thus encouraging people with different skill sets to the group.
- Prioritising time, resources and actions by 'working smart' allows for more focus and in turn capacity. A good example of this is Wragby dividing the work areas.
- Inclusion across the diversity strands helps with meeting wider community cohesion, bringing about differing views and perspectives.
- Using the Take Part approach has enabled the groups to be more focused and look at longer term planning, such as the Parish Plan/Neighbourhood Plan.
- Through facilitated dialogue, the individuals have recognised the impact they have as a collective on community cohesion and how in the future they might improve this.

- The volunteers within Abbey and Wragby bring a wealth of experience, living and working in the communities where they want to bring about social change.
- To bring about social change they have to continue to fight their cause and not be ‘fobbed off’. An example of this in Wragby was where the group accepted the Local Authority response without pursuing it.
- The two groups were constrained by the limits of the individuals involved, including the time they had available and their skills and confidence levels.
- Groups struggle to adapt to change due to the existing ‘status quo’ and ‘the way it’s always been done’.
- Individuals are becoming more confident as they learn how to harness their skills and use them to participate more and influence outcomes.
- The balance of power is shifting as groups experience what works and what doesn’t, through a process of reflection.
- Overall both groups were adopting a reactive approach as opposed to a proactive one.

The case studies demonstrate volunteering in a community group can create a space for participation, engagement and active citizenship. The government’s commitment to The Big Society promotes empowerment and devolving power to community groups. This alteration in balance is helping communities to actively take part in generating social change, however groups need support, structure and co-ordination to truly engage.

2. Introduction

The Active Learning for Active Citizenship programme was designed to engage more people in local decisions. Seven ‘hubs’ tested a variety of approaches to citizenship learning. The evaluation of the original programme presented the findings and looked at the outcomes for the individual and the wider community. From this a ‘learning framework’ was developed to help people deliver citizenship learning. This framework has been the cornerstone of this research to establish whether Active Learning for Active Citizenship in volunteering can promote community cohesion in an area.

Building upon the previous work of the programme, the researcher considered what would be needed to answer the research question. The researcher came up with the following points:

- What is Active Learning for Active Citizenship?
- What is community cohesion?
- What is volunteering?
- And how do individuals see this?

The Wragby Parish Council and Abbey Ward case studies were chosen as they offer different perspectives of communities within rural Lincolnshire. Wragby is a small market town eight miles east of Lincoln lying in the district of East Lindsey, thereby having a three-tier structure of County, District and Parish Council. Abbey, however, lies within the city boundaries and is not classified as a parish and therefore has County and District Council but no formal structure

below this. Both areas seek to engage local communities to bring about positive change in their area. To enable this to happen the communities are reliant on volunteers. This research looks at the similarities and differences between the two places (Wragby and Abbey) and between the people who volunteer in each location. The learning element of this research is for the groups to learn together with the researcher through experience.

The researcher could have used a variety of methods including qualitative and quantitative ones. However, the Take Part programme is underpinned by the use of participatory learning. This style of learning has engaged the researcher and the groups in creating spaces for constructive conversation, sharing learning and evaluating experiences. It is about supporting individuals on a journey to bring about collective action. In this case, the collective action being community cohesion.

The start of the journey included;

- A kick off meeting with the Chair of the Parish Council and the District Council Neighbourhood Manager to agree the research questions and methodology.
- An initial meeting with the residents of Abbey Ward to discuss the research and the requirements.
- Attendance at the regular meetings of both groups as an observer.
- Interviews with the volunteers.
- Facilitated session with each of the groups.
- Review of the relevant literature.

Throughout the journey the researcher further reviewed the literature and outputs relating to the findings of the field research.

The final part of the journey for the researcher was to;

- Follow up research with the individuals on the impact of a learning approach.
- Review the community outcomes.
- Complete the research findings and present them back to the groups.

2.1 Aims of the research

The research question of 'How learning in volunteering can promote community cohesion' led to the following aims;

- To provide a relevant analysis using a participatory evaluation approach, of how active citizenship/volunteering can contribute to community cohesion and inclusion in the activities.
- To assist the organisations in developing a robust methodology and also research capacity for collecting evidence for the above analysis.
- To carry out the research and produce the evidence of active citizens/volunteering in the two case studies.

- To write the report about the contribution of volunteering in community cohesion and inclusion, highlighting shared similarities and potential learning opportunities.

2.2 Definitions of active citizenship

Before looking at the case studies it was important for the researcher to understand the models and thoughts around citizenship and active citizenship. Active citizenship is described as a process of using active individuals already engaged in volunteering and supporting them to participate on a collective level. Take Part (the national active learning for active citizenship network) takes the Friere approach to engaging individuals through a process of dialogue and reflection.

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972) Freire introduced the following concepts:

- Dialogue is a process of conversational encounter and exploration with others that facilitates critical analysis of the world.
- Praxis is the process of reflection and political action, ‘naming the world through the word’ Freire 1988.
- Conscientization: the process of ‘learning to perceive social, political and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality’.

Freire’s concept is based on ‘those that are most likely to learn are those that find themselves in a situation and take the initiative to transform it’.

Who are better prepared than the oppressed to understand the terrible significance of an oppressive society? Who can better understand the necessity of liberation? It will not be defined by chance but through the praxis of their quest for it, through recognising the necessity to fight for it.¹

This model is by no means definitive and should be looked at in relation to the other approaches that exist. The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)² uses the following diagram to explain the relationship between formal and informal citizenship, individual and collective actions. This demonstrates how individuals can move from informal action through to formal action and collective action.

¹Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

²Jochum, V, Pratten, B and Wilding, K (2005) *Civil renewal and active citizenship: a guide to the debate*. London:NCVO

Fig 1

The subsequent learning framework developed by the Take Part network identifies the key aspects of this journey and the possible outcomes that demonstrate where people are.

Four Aspects of Active Citizenship³

Domains	Process (what we do and how we do it)	Outcome (the end result of activities)
Personal	The ways people gain knowledge, skills and confidence to take action on the things that matter	People are more confident, have skills, an understanding and are able to do things
Community Relations	Actions that bring people together to recognise and challenge inequality and exclusion	People accept the values of social justice and opportunity for all
Civil Participation	Actions that support and strengthen the range and quality of organisations in society	Thriving community groups and networks in which people are involved
Civic Engagement	People and communities interact with the political world to achieve change	Strong and democratic effective organisations, responsive services and governance structures

Fig 2

The researcher used this framework as a base for the initial research questions along with the more detailed version that can be found at appendix 1. The framework identifies the four stages that people move through and the likely outcomes for them at each stage. This framework helped the researcher to identify where people are on the learning journey and how their experience and subsequent reflection moves them through the NCVO model. This is explained in more detail in chapter seven.

2.3 Definition of community cohesion

Community cohesion became the buzzword following the 2001 riots in Burnley, Oldham and Bradford. The government of the day immediately set up a panel to analyse the causes of the unrest and a series of reports was commissioned. The main report, often referred to as the 'Cantle Report', was undertaken by Ted Cantle and entitled *Community Cohesion: A Report of the Independent Review Team*. This set out the recommendations for action considered necessary to improve community cohesion and help address some of the factors which lay behind the disturbances.

³ Take Part Learning Framework(2006 -2011)

The report argued that despite the many examples of community activity and inclusion projects, open and honest dialogue was lacking and there was little debate with the communities. This resulted in a reluctance to confront the issues and find solutions.⁴

Whilst the main aim of the report was to address the cultural differences of communities, the second aim was *to increase the sense of citizenship, based on (a few) common principles, which are shared and observed by all sections of the community. This concept of citizenship would also place a higher value on cultural differences.*⁵

Subsequently, the government decided to adopt the recommendations in the Cattle Report to include community cohesion as a new policy area. Community cohesion was included in the Home Office Strategy and organisations were commissioned to produce guidance for local authorities, councillors and the third sector. The Commission on Integration and Cohesion was established in 2007 and a number of initiatives followed this.

There are numerous definitions of community cohesion. However, for most local authorities the definition of community cohesion used by Communities and Local Government 2009 is the most widely recognised.

Community cohesion is what must happen in all communities to enable different groups of people to get on well together. A key contributor to community cohesion is integration, which is what must happen to enable new residents and existing residents to adjust to one another.

Our vision of an integrated and cohesive community is based on three foundations:

- *People from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities*
- *People knowing their rights and responsibilities*
- *People trusting one another and trusting local institutions to act fairly.*

And three key ways of living together:

- *A shared future vision and sense of belonging*
- *A focus on what new and existing communities have in common, alongside a recognition of the value of diversity*
- *Strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds.*

(Communities and Local Government, 2009:9)⁶

With community cohesion becoming such a popular talking point and an influx of migrants from the A8 countries, it is without surprise that the government introduced National Indicators into the Local Area Agreements (LAA) when these were refreshed in 2008.

⁴ Community Cohesion A Report of the Independent Review Team, Chapter 2

⁵ Ibid

⁶(Communities and Local Government, 2009:9)

The main source of this data was to be collected through the newly initiated 'Place Survey'. This was the first time that local baselines could be established based on national data sets. The indicators are set out below;

- NI1 - % of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area
- NI2 - % of people who feel that they belong to their neighbourhood
- NI3 – Civic participation in the local area
- NI4 - % of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality
- NI5 – Overall general satisfaction with local area
- NI6 – Participation in regular volunteering

Of the six indicators only four had to be chosen for inclusion in the refreshed LAA. Lincolnshire opted for NI1, 3, 4 and 6, primarily as these were the areas of most concern from an anecdotal point of view and, secondly, were supported by the evidence of the Place Survey results. To enable these to become more meaningful to communities, the Lincolnshire Community Cohesion Partnership translated them into community outcomes with the following categorisations and sub categorisations.

- Belonging
 - Activities that bring people together
 - Build a sense of belonging within communities
 - Communicate the values and benefits of diverse communities
- Participation
 - Increase resident participation in decision making
 - Enhance the role of community interest groups
 - Enhance the role of schools, workplaces and faith groups
 - Provide space for open dialogue and debate
 - Extend community networks
 - Strengthen local leadership
- Service Information
 - Provide service information
 - Improve the quality and responsiveness of services to new communities
 - Provide welcome schemes for new arrivals
- Exclusion & Community Tension
 - Counteract negative perceptions of newcomers
 - Identify and tackle community tensions
 - Tackle extremism

In addition to this sub, groups of the partnership were formed to focus on areas of particular concern, these were;

- Volunteering
- ESOL
- Extremism

- Democratic Participation

It was important to the authorities and third sector in Lincolnshire to provide some measurable outcomes that were meaningful to the people of Lincolnshire. Owing to its rurality, this also presented different issues to those already experienced in the major towns. Lincolnshire was predominantly a settled community and a sudden influx of migrants from the A8 countries was creating tensions, especially around the farming areas such as Boston. This led to Lincolnshire experiencing its first disturbances in the summer of 2008. Significant work was done as a result of this to identify community champions and volunteers to help ease some of the tensions from different community groups. At the same time a number of new initiatives and funding were being made available by central government. These, however, focused on the areas of predominant migrant worker influx such as Boston, Spalding and Abbey Ward in Lincoln.

The partnership was keen not to focus all the attention on those areas and to broaden its remit to encourage active citizenship, hence the strand around democratic participation. The partnership recognised that having more active citizens would in turn bring about positive change and cohesion. This was a longer-term strategy but one that didn't rely on short-term grants funding or central government intervention.

The volunteering sub group of the partnership had the remit to enhance the volunteering opportunities in Lincolnshire and to actively increase the breadth and depth of volunteering activity.

2.4 Definition of volunteering

As with community cohesion there are many definitions of volunteering and these have changed over the years as the focus on service delivery changes. There seems to be a less prescriptive definition, however the most widely accepted definition is one that is generally used by third sector organisations and is from Volunteering England.

Volunteering is '...an activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or individuals or groups other than (or in addition to) close relatives.' (as defined by Volunteering England)⁷

Volunteering England also go on to explain the reasons and the benefits for people volunteering:

There are many reasons that people give for volunteering. For some, volunteering can be a route to employment, or a chance to try something new, which may lead to a career change. From this perspective, volunteering can be a way of:

- *Gaining new skills, knowledge and experience*
- *Developing existing skills and knowledge*
- *Enhancing a CV*
- *Improving one's employment prospects*
- *Gaining an accreditation*

⁷ Volunteering England www.volunteering.org.uk

- *Using one's professional skills and knowledge to benefit others (usually described as pro bono)*

For others, volunteering appeals because of its social benefits. These include:

- *Meeting new people*
- *Making new friends*
- *A chance to socialise*
- *Getting to know the local community*

On top of this, many people volunteer for a variety of other reasons, such as:

- *Giving something back to an organisation that has impacted on a person's life, either directly or indirectly*
- *A desire to make a difference to the lives of others*
- *Good karma*
- *Helping the environment*
- *Helping others less fortunate or without a voice*
- *Feeling part of a team*
- *Feeling valued*
- *Having quality time away from work or a busy lifestyle*
- *Building up trust*
- *Gaining confidence and self-esteem*
- *Finding a volunteering role that suits one's own needs and lifestyle*

With the wide variety of volunteering opportunities that are available today, there is bound to be something for everyone. Another reason for its popularity is that volunteering is open to all.

As part of the Local Area Agreement Lincolnshire agencies spent time working on a volunteering strategy, which can be found at appendix 3 and is summarised below:

- To improve the quality and range of volunteering opportunities
- To increase the numbers and diversity of volunteers
- To help volunteers reach their potential
- To support and enhance the delivery of services through volunteers

The researcher is not without bias in this area as they have been instrumental in working with the agencies to deliver this county wide strategic vision.

2.5 Impact of volunteering on community cohesion

Plenty of anecdotal evidence exists to demonstrate that volunteering contributes to community cohesion. However, as we have seen in previous sections, both community cohesion and volunteering by definition are vague and can mean many things to many people. It is therefore hard to establish direct correlation between volunteering activity and community cohesion.

The researcher also had to consider the political landscape surrounding this agenda. Previously, anyone wishing to get involved would have to go through a formal route or were considered by some as 'the usual suspects'. This is highlighted by Henry Tam who stated:

Far from regarding people who embrace civic activist roles negatively as the ‘usual suspects’ – always a sign that those using that term are uncomfortable with the presence of citizens who have accumulated experience to question their decisions...⁸

This political arena is complicated by the number of organisations wishing to engage within a three-tier authority. For example City of Lincoln Council has 10 wards besides Abbey, all with different demographics. For this reason it is important to identify the opportunities for transferable learning opportunities. These learning opportunities can only come through meaningful dialogue and yet, with the high volume of people wanting to engage either community groups or agencies, this has become an immense task with little substance and meaning.

Previously, the County Council has encouraged Parish Councils (491 in total) to engage with Districts to help to reduce officer time. Parishes however were finding this inadequate, as many of their issues are County Council service related, such as Highways.

This is further complicated in Lincolnshire by the geographical location of some of the groups, with many having in excess of 40 miles between large towns. Engagement with individuals, groups and even sometimes other agencies could at times be sporadic. Because of this and the demographics of Lincolnshire with an estimated population of 703,000⁹ over 2274 square miles, it is difficult to engage with the few that are actively participating. The citizenship survey identifies less than 10% of adults in England and Wales who take on some form of civic activist role in any given year. Empowering this minority, finding measurable outcomes and being able to measure them meaningfully was a nigh on impossible task.

There is significant evidence to suggest that people’s sense of belonging increases with time as they live in the area.¹⁰ The government used this as one of the key indicators for a cohesive community; ‘a shared future vision and sense of belonging’. Part of the government’s plan was to measure this sense of belonging and this was done through the Place Survey. The results below show how this disaggregates for Lincolnshire.

Indicator	National	Lincolnshire	East Lindsey	Lincoln 7
NI1	76	74	75.9	59.5
NI2	59	63	71	41.4
NI3	14	14	13.6	11
NI4	29	28	30.8	24.3
NI5	80	83	86	66.5
NI6	23	24	24.9	16.8

Fig 3

As the data shows, Lincolnshire is generally above average in most of the areas. However, as this disaggregates to the areas on which the case studies are focused, the effect is more noticeable between Wragby in East Lindsey and Abbey in Lincoln 7. Abbey has significantly lower levels of satisfaction across all the indicators and in particular the sense of belonging (NI2) and volunteering (NI6).

Lincolnshire felt that this sense of belonging was not just about the in-migration that we experience from the A8 countries but also those that chose to go to the University to study or

⁸ Taking Part, (2010), Mayo M and Annette J, Niace

⁹ ONS Mid 2010 population estimates

¹⁰ Hudson et al (2007) Markova and Black (2007)

those that chose Lincolnshire as a place to settle. For this reason, the programmes needed to reflect these differences. Whilst this was all very good with agencies sitting round a table, there was recognition that there needed to be greater involvement from the communities concerned. With all the focus from central government on cohesion there was no shortage of funding being made available to the most affected areas, but the big issue for Lincolnshire was identifying the volunteers, as all the agencies were looking for people to take part in their projects and to disseminate the learning.

Critics would argue that this watering down of the cohesion agenda from the main emphasis of tackling inequalities and community tensions produces little impact overall. The case studies demonstrate how volunteering and belonging to a place makes people feel more integrated and have a greater sense of cohesion.

3. National context

The country is currently facing some of its most challenging and difficult times, including those working in the public and third sector. At the same time the current coalition government is promising great opportunities through policies such as the Big Society and the Localism Bill. However, at a time when the financial support for these programmes is diminishing it is all the more important to motivate and promote active citizenship.

In reality, though, how does this differ from the previous government? Under New Labour we saw the introduction of the Single Regeneration Budgets scheme in 1994 aiming to bring about economic, physical and social regeneration in local areas and its main purpose was to act as a catalyst to attract other resources from the private, public and third sector.

In 2000, the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund was introduced to some of the most deprived areas in the country (88 in total) and was to narrow the gap between these most deprived neighbourhoods and the rest of the country. Its aim was to bring partners together and to increase the visibility of an area as a priority for service providers.

In July 2008 we saw the introduction of the *Communities in Control* White Paper which, although it came without funding, provided clear guidance on how communities can use power, influence and control and the tools available to them. This included who has power, on whose behalf it is exercised and how those with power are held to account. It also included a number of new duties, such as the duty to involve.

Following the coalition's Big Society came the introduction in March 2011 of what they considered to be the main programme to deliver the outcomes in the form of Community Organisers. The government committed to training 5,000 independent community organisers over the lifetime of the current Parliament.

In a speech to unveil the Big Society plans in March 2010, David Cameron announced the creation of a:

"Neighbourhood army" of 5,000 full-time, professional community organisers who will be trained with the

skills they need to identify local community leaders, bring communities together, help people start their own neighbourhood groups, and give communities the help they need to take control and tackle their problems"

Whilst this is motivation for communities to be involved there still remains the question of Freire's approach of learning through reflection:

'look critically at the situation they find themselves in and take the initiative in acting to transform society'¹¹

This disparity between a top down approach and a bottom up approach is explored in more detail throughout the research.

4. Local context

Between 1991 and 2001 the population of Lincolnshire increased by 10%, the fastest growth rate of any county in England, greater than both the national and regional rates of 3% and 4% respectively. This growth was due to inward migration from other UK regions. Since the last census in 2001, the county has experienced a new wave of inward migration supplementing the continuing domestic migration patterns. This new wave includes several thousand students registered with the new University of Lincoln and tens of thousands (accurate statistics unavailable) of economic migrants who have arrived from outside the UK. As a result, Lincolnshire continues to have one of the fastest growing populations in the UK.

Lincolnshire's population is not only growing, it is also ageing. There have been significant increases in the proportions of people in the 40-59 and 75+ age groups. At the same time, there has been a clear trend for 'out-migration' amongst the 16-44 year age groups. This ageing population trend has been countered to a limited extent with middle age groups migrating into Lincolnshire, including families with children. The majority of non-UK economic migrants are also in their 20s and 30s with a sizable minority bringing children with them.

5. Methodology

The process of participatory research is one of active learning, through designing, conducting and reporting on the research findings. Using this participatory approach means that the outcomes of the work are owned by the community and can be used by them. In addition the research team would have developed important skills and improved their knowledge¹²

Using this as a basis for engaging with the two case studies, enabled the researcher to look at the structures, processes, people and places involved. The same methodology was used for both case studies, however some of the approaches varied owing to the different structures they operate within. The approaches used with individuals also varied as learners were at different stages of the learning cycle. This type of flexible approach allowed the researcher and the individuals to explore the principles and practices of individual learning. Many people are already active citizens without realising it, and one of the first steps for the researcher was to talk to learners about what they already do. It also enabled the researcher, in conjunction with the

¹¹Freire P, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, 1972, London:Penguin

¹² Take Part Admin (??) Participatory Research and Evaluation

individuals, to identify the opportunities to participate and engage further to understand how they can shape social change.

6. The Taking Part Case Study: Wragby Parish Council

6.1 Place

Wragby is a parish of about 1,000 households. It sits on the western edge of the Lincolnshire Wolds, astride the A158 between Lincoln and Skegness and the A157 to Louth. It is a rural village with shops around the market place, however there hasn't been a market there for some years and it is now a car park servicing the shops. There are three public houses, which have managed to survive the economic downturn. Wragby also has a town hall, a swimming pool, a primary school, a sports centre and a health centre, to mention just a few of the facilities in the village. There are several new housing developments bringing a mix of owner-occupied, social housing and shared ownership. To some people, this has presented a problem, with the lack of planning meaning that amenities including the school are now reaching capacity.

There is a newly constructed business park although the take up for this has been low and it is partially empty. The fire station and library are located on this site and have community rooms available. However it is not accessible for the less able owing to the distance and poor crossing facilities on the main road.

There is an hourly bus service to Lincoln and the coast.

6.2 People

The Parish Council consists of nine councillors and a clerk and sits every month except August and December, in the town hall. All are welcome to attend the public forum, which takes place before each meeting, and ask questions or make a short statement. They may stay for the meeting but not take part (this is owing to parish council regulations and is not unique to Wragby). Wragby is within the East Lindsey District Council area and the wider area of Lincolnshire County Council.

In addition to this there are a number of formal and informal committees, including the swimming pool board, the town hall committee and various local groups, such as the heritage group.

Wragby Parish Council has recently had its first elections in a while and has seen many new councillors join. The demographics of the new councillors have been interesting and the resulting diversity through ethnicity, gender and age are now much more representative of the community. The youngest member of the new councillors is 26 and this brings a completely different perspective to the group.

6.3 Structures

The Parish Council has formal structures as part of its governance and has to abide by the national codes of practice. All new parish councillors are invited to participate in training on these, however, this can prove problematic as they are often held in the daytime when people are at work. This is an indication of how local agencies are disadvantaging employed active citizens from engaging with the process.

The structures of the parish leave little room for manoeuvring. Whilst the National Association for Local Councils (NALC), welcomed the update report from the coalition government following the Localism Act, little is being done to revise the structures in which they operate.

6.4 Process

The processes within the Parish Council are predominantly dictated by the National Association of Local Councils in the form of standing orders. There are key sections to these standing orders including;

- the legal framework of local councils
- local council employees
- engaging with the public
- council meetings
- procedure and mechanics of debate
- chairing meetings

Whilst these are there to protect the volunteers and to promote transparency for the community, they can at times hinder the dialogue and, as such, restrict the learning opportunities. This is explored in more depth in section 8.

In addition to this, NALC provide a number of models through which the parish can structure, manage and execute their business.

In addition to these standing orders, the Parish Council is able to set its own precept, using the standing orders process. It is able to manage business and marketing independently and Wragby chooses to publish a newsletter three times a year, delivered free to every household. In addition to this, the Parish Council has its own website and a Facebook page.

The Parish Council also produced a Parish Plan in 2006. Many of the actions identified address issues of safety, community cohesion and general belonging as a sense of place. The plan identifies 10 areas for improvement:

1. Better communication
2. Road safety
3. Improve the market place and village boundaries
4. Improved car parking

5. Low cost social housing for Wragby people
6. Improve facilities for young people
7. Encourage more business
8. Encourage tourism
9. Wildlife area
10. Public recreation field

The plan arose as a result of community consultation about the area and acting on this to create an action plan.

The Parish Council is assessing the future and it is hoped this research will contribute to this.

7. The Taking Part Case Study: Abbey Ward

7.1 Place

Abbey Ward is one of the 11 electoral districts within the City of Lincoln. It lies along a main route into Lincoln (Monks Road) and has three distinctive parts, the area around Monks Road known predominantly as Abbey, the area to the south of Bagholme Street where Shuttleworth House is located and the area to the north east known as the Tower Estate. There is also a further area around the newly built Carlton Centre. The first three of these areas have for many years hit the indices of multiple deprivation and as such have been subject to scrutiny from various authorities. This in turn has led to increased funding in the area and the refurbishment of some of the infrastructure.

Abbey Ward is home to Lincoln College and as such attracts a large number of students to the area. This is demonstrated by the types of accommodation nearer the town end of Monks Road, where it is predominantly single occupancy flats or rooms. The remaining part of Monks Road is a mixture of social housing and owner occupancy but it has seen an influx of migrant workers as landlords have capitalised on this market. Tower Estate is mostly social housing and one resident described it as 'the forgotten estate'. This is because most of the funding and initiatives take place in the main area around Monks Road. Shuttleworth House is a block of high-rise flats managed by the city council and in the past year, it has seen tensions between residents to the point of needing to commission a report and subsequent action plan.

There are a number of small, privately owned shops including a Polish shop. In addition to this there is a reasonably sized Co-op and a further range of shops in the Carlton Centre, although for many this is inaccessible without transport. There is one primary school, which accommodates approximately 500 children. There is also a working men's club, however this is a private members club and attracts businessmen from around Lincolnshire.

There is a range of places of worship and the YMCA, although none of these offer community facilities in the way of reduced rate room hire or community venues. There are some clubs and

groups that meet, including a voluntary youth group, although these are finding it increasingly difficult to attract volunteers and to find suitable venues.

Consequently, community groups have found their own spaces in which to create dialogue with communities. Tower Action Group has secured premises through the city council. Monks Road Neighbourhood Initiative (MRNI) works with the college and uses their rooms and the City of Lincoln Council has established a drop-in centre to hold housing, benefits and policing surgeries. This is also staffed so people can pop in to seek advice or assistance at any time.

7.2 People

Abbey ward has a diverse range of people, from the long-term residents that have grown up and stayed in the area, to a settling migrant population and a transient student population.

Initial community groups were established (MRNI) to tackle some of the issues faced in the area and, since then, other groups have been active to deliver short-term projects. The MRNI continues and considers itself an umbrella group to bring the other groups together. There is a core group of residents who are involved in both the MRNI, Tower Action Group and the newly established neighbourhood board.

7.3 Structures

Abbey Ward, being a group of active residents, is not governed by formal structures and, as such, this gives them much more manoeuvrability to be flexible in their approach. This informal approach, however, could create an element of exclusivity rather than inclusivity as it could become more about who you know, rather than how to get actively involved.

7.4 Process

Since Abbey Ward operates in an informal manner they are able to adapt their processes to suit the requirements of who they are engaging with. The group itself meets formally and actions are agreed and circulated. Information from each of the groups is fed back to the MRNI and to the neighbourhood management board. The neighbourhood management board is a wider group of stakeholders, including agencies working in the area. This allows for an escalation process and more formal engagement.

The Abbey group has also been successful in securing grant funding such as MIF, NRF and Cohesion funding. These have required the group to adapt its processes to meet funding requirements. More recently the group secured Community First funding which has meant that they have to have an agency partner, named individuals and media such as websites and e-mails. The group already contributes to a local newsletter and the MRNI website.

The neighbourhood management board is in the initial stages of implementing a neighbourhood action plan and this piece of research is contributing to this.

8. Findings

8.1 Analysis of the current processes, practices and structures

Many people are already active without realising it and one of the first steps is asking learners what they already do. For this, the researcher used the four aspects of active citizenship identified in the Take Part Learning framework. This provided a basis on which to start engaging with individuals, looking at where they are on the active citizenship journey and working with them to identify where there are learning opportunities and how these might be fulfilled.

In using the Take Part approach participants and tutors learn from each other. Each participant, though she or he may not realise it at first, will have something to teach others¹³

A series of open questions were designed to stimulate people's thinking about their role in active citizenship and how their previous experiences had conditioned their thinking and actions. Throughout these conversations the terminology around, active citizenship, volunteering and community cohesion were also explored. The dialogue then moved onto how they participate within existing models and structures and how empowered they felt to bring about social change. The researcher also explored levels of confidence within individuals and as a collective and the consequence this has to bring about social change.

8.1.1 Wragby – individual interviews

Seven volunteers took part from Wragby Parish Council, many of them relatively newly elected, so this presented the researcher with an ideal opportunity to explore the motivations behind volunteering and how this could contribute to community cohesion. There was a wide range of responses from this group with most feeling that the old council was insular and not enough was being done about changes needed in the village. Only two people made reference to the fact that it was to fill a gap in their CV and, even then, they both went on to say they volunteered on more than one committee. It became apparent to the researcher that what might have started out as an egotistic motivation for these two individuals had become more altruistic as they began to reflect and progress on their learning journey.

Some of the group have had experience of community organising through work, whereas others came to the group with no experience in this area. This presented a few challenges to those without experience, as they felt less able to contribute to some of the discussions, feeling that they had less to offer.

Many felt their experiences didn't have much to offer the group and this gave the researcher the opportunity to draw out some of their past histories, both personally and work related, and to create a dialogue about how this might influence the way in which they participate as part of a group.

¹³ Take Part Network (2011) Take Part Learning Framework

It was interesting that people became more comfortable with the research process once a dialogue was created around a common ground. This allowed the researcher to encourage them to question their understanding of the structures and processes they operate in and to reflect where they might as individuals/a collective be more effective in influencing and shaping social change.

Some people's journeys were very different to others. Some came to the group to give something back to society as they had been on the receiving end of assistance, others because they wanted to change society. All had the common aim of wanting to change the current modus operandi. This move from the personally responsible citizen to the participatory citizen is described by Westheimer and Kahne, 2004 as learning about self in the context of social change and developing the self-confidence to become active as a responsible citizen.

Many of the people involved had previously 'helped' out in the community but didn't consider this in the context of volunteering or what value this added to community cohesion. Through dialogue, the researcher was able to determine that the majority of the volunteers had joined the Parish Council to increase their sense of belonging and this was demonstrated with comments such as:

'I've become more involved in community life since having a family and moving to Lincolnshire'

'I moved from South East London where there was no community spirit'

'I bought a house in the village 2 years ago with my partner and wanted to be more involved'

This sense of belonging became quite a strong theme in this group, with only two of the people being born and bred in Lincolnshire and only one in Wragby itself. Whilst the group found it easy to communicate why they volunteered, they found it much harder to demonstrate what it is they wanted to achieve from this and the kind of community outcomes they were looking for. All agreed they wanted to 'make it better', which gave the researcher the key themes for the group session explored later.

The demographics of the group also became an interesting discussion point with the entire group saying that the previous council was not representative of the current communities living in the village. The group is now represented across the age range from the 20s up to the retirees. This broad age range is much more representative of the recent demographic changes in Wragby and what data, such as Mosaic profiling, is telling us about the area.

These demographics are also well represented by gender, with four men and five women, and whilst this might not seem significant there is one case in point that demonstrates how this has contributed to community cohesion.

One of the younger members of the council moved to the area two years ago with a small child and was unable to cross the road near the market place due to no crossings and the requirement to get a pushchair up and down the kerbs. On approaching the then Parish Council she was told that it was not considered an issue for them as they had time to cross on the red light changes.

This was obviously an issue for young mums and possibly even the less able and yet the Parish Council didn't consider the needs of everyone, as the current members were able to cross in the given time.

Subsequently the young mum has petitioned in the village, been elected onto the Parish Council and continued with this campaign, resulting in agreement with the highways department to install a four way crossing in the market place.

The group members were asked individually if they felt they represented the community and if this was important. Everyone agreed that it was, however, more than one person said it was more by default than by engineering. This is particularly difficult in this situation as the Parish Council is elected by the community with the most overall votes. Whilst this can be considered democratic it also means that there is no guarantee that you will get a representative cross-section, unlike a community group where you can seek representation of particular interest groups.

In understanding how this works for them in practice, the group was asked about engagement with the wider community. Again this presented some interesting challenges with the standing orders stating that members of the public are only allowed to speak in the first 15 minutes of the public forum part of the meeting. This gives them no opportunity to comment on the discussion or the decisions that are being taken during the meeting. The Chair works around this rule by informing the public which items he would like to take comments on, and an example of this was the recent discussion around the option to bring a market back to the market place.

These orders also make it difficult for the members of the group.

One stated:

'has to watch that people don't treat individual councillors as representative of the whole parish as it is not their decision to take, it's an awareness of committee decision over individual'

This level of individual engagement makes it hard for the councillors to have meaningful dialogue with community members as the timescales between this and taking it to the council meeting for discussion can mean it loses its momentum.

Some of the group also found it quite challenging to be in this position of power. Power here is determined in the sense of perceived power, having been elected and expected to take decisions on behalf of the community when they themselves felt inexperienced. On exploring this, the researcher asked about self-development and how this might be fulfilled. The entire group said they had been on or offered the one day new councillors course, however, one person commented:

'There are training courses but because of the nature of what they think a typical parish councillor should be they are all run in the afternoon'

This obviously doesn't suit the changing demographics of the new parish councillors who work or have commitments in the daytime. The majority of the group felt they would have liked some

mentoring or even a buddy system and this is something that could be considered in the future. Other learning opportunities were identified by the individuals as: spending time with another parish council, learning to work as a group, recognising that everyone has a viewpoint and, more fundamentally, their own individual learning about themselves.

The researcher saw this individual learning as a key point in moving into the group session and several comments were raised. These were perhaps the best examples of the journeys people have been on:

'I learnt to be restrained, remembering to be polite all the time and to show the public face, even if I don't agree'

'you are all thrown together and there is not enough time to do group stuff'

'I learnt to bite my tongue more and be patient, the decision by committee is much different to working life where I take my own decisions'

The researcher allowed some time for the individuals to reflect on the dialogue and then explored this in more detail in the group session.

There was considerable concern about the legalities such as declarations of interest, voting and tenders. This is an area where the new councillors are knowledge-weak and one member even commented:

'I've realised we put too much reliance on the clerk to do these things for us'

Other people commented that they weren't sure what they could say in the meeting and when and felt the need to check with the Chair, sometimes not commenting at all rather than getting it wrong. The researcher used the dialogue here to explore how as individuals there are barriers to their participation and how to overcome them. The researcher can't help but feel that if there are barriers within the group, then the barriers to those outside the group are probably more widely impacting.

On the whole as individuals within the group they felt they are listened to and are given a fair chance of a full and open debate. Some of this is down to process, with papers being circulated in advance and good facilitation of the meeting itself where no one is allowed to hijack it with single agenda issues. The researcher questions if this is more to do with individual style and by chance rather than by engineering.

The majority stated that the group has a positive approach and takes each issue at a time looking for solutions and not problems. Where there is a wider community impact outside of the Parish Council they seek further views via public meetings. Public attendance at the Parish Council meetings has been positive and the first of two public meetings were to be held in the coming months. The difficulty the group were having with this is the length of time required in making democracy work.

Having explored individual motivations and perceptions the researcher wanted to draw the interviewees back to how this contributed to community cohesion and the starting point for this was their perception of the neighbourhood.

Out of the seven interviewees one person felt it had become worse, two people felt it was much better and four people felt some things were better and others worse. On exploration of this, it seems that village life in itself had become better, but the things that had become worse were those influenced by either the political, environmental or social factors. Politically, the Parish is being expected to do more for less with less support from County and District councils. Environmentally, the village is growing and the infrastructure isn't growing at the same sustainable rate. For example, the school is now at capacity and any newcomers to the area would need to find alternative schooling. Despite this, growth in the village is seen as a positive, as the comment below illustrates:

'how many other villages of this size can support 2 cafes and 3 pubs'

It does have its negative sides as the bus services are not frequent enough and more and more people need to have their own transport to seek work outside of the location.

The environmental impact has also created a social impact. The new housing estates lack supporting facilities whilst vandalism has increased in the village as young people fail to find sufficient outlets for their energy. There is a youth centre in the village which is under threat of closure and some would argue that keeping this open should solve the problem. One of the interviewees gave the following quote:

'I remember the youth centre for what it provided me, my own daughter doesn't go as it no longer meets the children's needs'

For the researcher this was exactly the type of insight into where volunteering can contribute to community cohesion. The requirement to look at what 'is' and see if it is fit for purpose and not to continue with the status quo. These grassroots insights are the links to the wider community cohesion objectives.

One of the requirements of this research was to help the group identify where the learning can be shared and how this might be achieved. The researcher explored this through the individual interviews and then again as a group. The findings identified numerous ways they felt this would have been useful to them starting out, and they also wanted to help others learn from their experiences. One of the examples given was around the interactive speed devices (Smiling Sid). Wragby were keen to purchase one and use volunteers to deploy it. However, as simple as that sounds, it became a political hotbed. Who would place the order? Police, Road Safety Partnership or the Parish? Where would it be deployed? It cannot be attached to street furniture owned by the County Council, it cannot be in certain areas restricted by the police force and so the story goes on. There is nowhere where this information is shared, or solutions that other areas have found to be successful.

The Parish Council have said they would welcome some kind of data bank or FAQs, perhaps to be held locally by the Lincolnshire Association of Local Councils (LALC). If everyone is

learning everything from experience individually, over and over again without sharing, there is little time for real reflection to take place.

8.1.2 Wragby – Group Session

The researcher conducted a group session based on some of the themes identified from the individual interviews, looking at how they as individuals contributed to community cohesion and how this might be measured.

The first area the group looked at was what does better look like? Everyone had said they wanted to create a better place but what does that mean to people and how do they define this as a group to make common aims and objectives? The group, being newly formed, had some quick wins such as maintaining the basic infrastructure, demonstrating they are fair, transparent and democratic and responding to people's concerns. From here they started to look at what else they might want to achieve and, with the researcher as a facilitator, they started to look at how they might know when they had got there. One of the key indicators for the Parish was to receive fewer complaints from members of the public.

The next area the group looked at were the barriers to achieving the outcomes: this came without surprises and focused around some of the PEST analysis mentioned in the previous section. The only addition to this was the willingness of people to criticise, but not to get involved to bring about change. There was also an in-depth discussion about being fobbed off. This evolved from the reliance on the clerk to do things and accepting that if they had tried before then it was not worthwhile trying again. There were some key comments here, including:

I wouldn't accept this in my workplace so why do I allow it to happen here'

Why do we not shop around more for our goods (ink cartridges) as we would at home'

The main consensus to this was time: as volunteers they give so much time and yet it never seems to be enough. This was also a constraint within the research as the researcher was asking for individual interviews, group sessions, attendance at meetings and subsequent follow on and feedback sessions.

Leading on from this, the group started to explore how they could reflect on the first part of the session and use this to their advantage in looking at where they could bring about change and do things differently to achieve a similar outcome. This got the group discussing how they take responsibility and what each of them could do to bring about the collective larger scale changes. This led to a discussion on their role in challenging the norm and how they tackle some of the issues such as the recycling facilities. This has been a point raised in the past and the clerk couldn't get an answer. The researcher posed the question to the group as to whether this was satisfactory. The group began to feel a bit negative at this point with one person saying:

I thought we were doing ok but I realise there is so much more we could be doing'

My role as a researcher was to use this constructively and get them to identify how they will use this to promote all the good work they are doing. This led to a very constructive session around

the opportunities and how they communicate the action that has already been achieved. For example, the agreement of the four-way crossing - who knew beyond the Parish Council about this decision - and yet it might make a difference to so many in the community. The group suddenly became alive again looking at the possibility of using the annual meeting to reflect on what had happened, but also to use it to gather thoughts on what parishioners might like to happen in the future. Along with this, they considered revisiting the Parish Plan, although at this point they needed to focus on maintaining the basic infrastructure.

The group felt they would like more contact with the District and County councillors and were going to start a dialogue with them to see how this might be achieved. Suddenly, the group had gone from doing what is always done to talking about where things could be taken and how this might evolve. The final session asked them to reflect on their individual interviews and the previous sessions and to discuss how they could improve the effectiveness of the group. The key points for them were communication, building relationships with key players and creating spaces for dialogue. The group also commented on the value of communicating as a group and not leaving it for someone else to do. There was also a key learning point for them in not relying on what the clerk said, and taking more responsibility for challenging the way things are done, whilst improving individual knowledge of process and procedures.

combining reflection and action, to make a wise and prudent practical judgement about how to act in the situation. The Take Part learning seeks to create multiple opportunities for 'praxis' with the aim that learners will get into the habit of praxis and adopt it collectively as a tool in their group involvements.¹⁴

8.1.3 Wragby – further reflections

The findings from the Wragby group showed that individuals had moved from the personal aspect of active citizenship to the community relations of active citizenship (see Fig 2). This initial move to participate in a formal volunteering role had left some of them feeling overwhelmed. Through this research process individuals within the group have been able to recognise their own knowledge, skills and level of confidence. Individuals have taken on their own areas of responsibility such as finance, the cemetery etc. and demonstrate a level of confidence in speaking publicly about these at the parish meetings. This learning through doing has been one of inclusivity in this group as they have all been 'thrown in at the deep end'. Some of the learning has taken place much quicker, as problems have been posed to the group early on from the wider community, and initially it was these that actually hindered the reflection process. The group session discussions highlighted a number of barriers and opportunities and subsequent parish meetings have started to look at these. Some of the barriers were around the newness of the formation of the group and increasing their knowledge and being aware of what had gone before and assessing the 'lie of the land'. Another barrier was around the need to improve relations with other agencies and not to be 'fobbed off'. The monthly meetings are testament to the group's persistence in overcoming these barriers and many of the community's concerns are being addressed.

¹⁴ ibid

Part of the reflection process of the research was for the group to identify the opportunities. These were mostly around communication and inclusion and one of the first key activities was the Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations. This was a success and brought together many members of the community across the generations. The annual Parish meeting was used to highlight the previous year's achievements and a leaflet drop ensured parishioners were aware of the date, which meant it was well attended.

The group have also implemented a risk assessment based on their priorities, and whilst this did not form part of the constructive dialogue, it demonstrates the group are continuing to reflect and to prioritise their time and resources. This has increased their capacity to deal with immediate concerns and not to lose sight of the wider community issues.

The meetings themselves demonstrate greater clarity and the new clerk brings a certain amount of organisation to the group, thereby increasing the group's capacity to deal with more items. Although there is still a reliance on the clerk, as one individual reflected:

'The clerk is a paid member and therefore by delegating to her we achieve more and can use the meeting more productively'

Within the meeting itself, the decision making process was democratic and yet people were able to voice their concerns and even had the confidence to seek clarity in areas they were less knowledgeable on.

The group are seeking to be more inclusive of the wider society and have taken the decision to refresh the Parish Plan.

When the Parish Plan was initially discussed in the group session it was dismissed, due to time constraints and not appreciating its value. The group have since decided to refresh the plan and intend to launch the community consultation at the annual Wragby Show, where they will have a public presence. This inclusion will increase their influence with statutory agencies, helping to bring about social change.

8.1.4 Abbey – individual interviews

Six volunteers took part from within the Abbey Ward area of Lincoln. Collectively, the group was known to the researcher but there had not been the opportunity to work with them as individuals before. The group was an amalgamation of interested parties, some were Chairs of other groups and others came simply because they wanted to be involved. As with Wragby, the researcher explored the same themes starting with motivations for volunteering and what they hoped to achieve both personally and for the community. The motivations in Abbey varied from getting involved as they were unemployed, to campaigning about a particular issue, to generally wanting to make a difference. When questioned, none of the interviewees felt that volunteering was for anything other than altruistic reasons. Abbey has in the past struggled with its image and at times has had its share of anti-social problems. This, for many, had been the main reason for volunteering. One of the interviewees said:

I want to see things move on and I see this as building foundations for future generations'

The backgrounds of the Abbey residents vary considerably, with many moving in from outside Lincolnshire. This has resulted in a diverse group with a range of experience. Only two of the group had been previously involved in any kind of community organising, one being the local vicar and the other being a long-term resident who had formed the Monks Road Neighbourhood Initiative (MRNI). Far from being to the detriment of the group, it has enhanced the group's outlook, as they recognise they all bring different skills and experiences. The group is passionate about change and all agreed Lincoln is very insular in its outlook.

'there is a need to bring it into the 21st century'

Despite this, sense of belonging was not a key factor in the discussions with this group. Two of the group mentioned the social exclusion from the working men's club which, in their words is primarily for business men and not blue collar workers. Whilst this does show elements of exclusion, there were no significant concerns raised from any of the members of the group. The group felt the inclusion of the community in this club would not increase community cohesion, despite the building being the most central point of the community. Buildings became a discussion in themselves, in that the area has no shortage of buildings and yet the community find it difficult to use them, either because of the charges or, as above, the exclusion that takes place. Working through the City of Lincoln Council the group is able to use the college facilities for meeting rooms, and there are also two smaller meeting rooms provided by the council at the Tower Estate and the Belmont Street offices.

In the individual sessions, several members of the group spoke about businesses in the area, most of these being public sector or small businesses. This was felt to create an issue with engagement on an individual level, owing to the time and financial restraints. One interviewee also felt that the community had fewer powers as:

'Businesses believe they are kings'

From this observation the researcher explored the relationships between the community and some of the agencies working in the area in more depth. This seems patchy in places. There is a good relationship with one of the local councillors and an excellent relationship with the neighbourhood manager but, outside of this, the group struggles to engage at an appropriate level. All of the interviewees volunteer for other projects or help out in the community and the researcher's experience of them demonstrated a certain level of confidence in what they wanted to achieve. This leaves the question of what is preventing them from achieving their objectives. This is explored later in the section.

The Abbey group were much more able to communicate what they wanted to achieve, both as individuals and as a collective for the community. The researcher surmises that this is because they have been established for longer and have had experience of bid writing and meeting funding requirements. On more than one occasion the individuals mentioned the need to influence people to get things done, this is significantly different language to the Wragby group, who were about making decisions and getting on with it. The researcher would have explored the perception of power at this point had it been relevant to the research question.

The Abbey group was much more comfortable with the research than the Wragby group and again, the researcher would have liked to explore this further. The researcher found the freedom of dialogue was greater in Abbey. There may be a number of reasons for this: the group has been established for longer and relationships formed, there is no competition or single agendas, the group is not accountable to the public and there are no formal legalities outside of the funding regulations.

The inclusion of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) or socially excluded groups was considered a key point for the group, however despite their best efforts they had not been able to recruit people from these groups to the Neighbourhood Management Board. The same was said of the businesses in the area. To overcome this, the group kept in regular contact and have asked the local shops if they would be prepared to have community news boards displayed in their windows. When comparing the demographics of the group to the Mosaic profiling of the area, there are clear differences in age, gender and ethnicity. From a researcher's point of view this is no surprise as the area has a high make up of transient population, mostly Eastern European males and a significant number of students.

Despite the lack of representation the group seemed able to create dialogue with the wider community through a variety of means. They hold drop in sessions at the two main centres (Tower & Belmont Street), produce a newsletter and are generally known members of the community. Minutes of the Neighbourhood Management Board are also published on the website. Because of the informal volunteering taking place, the group is able to meet and discuss issues as they arise and get agreement rather than waiting to call a formal meeting. This has distinct advantages over the Wragby group, as the action doesn't lose momentum and can often be resolved in a shorter timescale.

The majority of this group felt that life equipped them to deal with the challenges presented by the community or within the group. They were less clear than Wragby on areas of self-development, with one interviewee saying:

I don't know what I don't know so hard to say what I need to learn'

Others have assumed the common sense approach:

I have gone to several committees and not known what I was doing but most of it is common sense and logical'

I'm happy as a doer and don't want to lead the group'

Only one person mentioned community development training and this was because they had previously attended training run by the local authority and one of the third sector agencies. The individual learning journeys of this group were less apparent, and this was explored in more detail in the group session.

Despite this, the group members felt they were listened to within the group, although one mentioned that sometimes this can be a battle with some of the older generation and longer standing community members saying they knew best. The group generally approaches problems

with a positive outlook and are not afraid to ask for help, although this doesn't always produce a response. Within this area of dialogue the researcher brought in an additional question around the neighbourhood manager as an intermediary between the community and the agencies. It was quite apparent that the group felt they needed this piece of the jigsaw to make it complete. Partly because this role provides a space for dialogue, both physically and holistically, but also as a catalyst to bring about change in the way agencies respond to the community. The entire group felt that the positive changes that have happened would not have happened had there not been a central facilitator. None of the individuals saw themselves as the facilitator and remarked about the need to have 'authority' to do that role.

Having explored individual motivations and perceptions the researcher wanted to draw the interviewees back to how this contributed to community cohesion, and the starting point for this was their perception of the neighbourhood.

The general consensus was that the area had worsened, albeit over a period of time, and that it had gone unnoticed until it became much worse.

'Still plenty of multiple occupancy, people who can afford bigger houses want to live out of town. See it everywhere that what was once affluent has fallen on bad times, it changes the whole character of the area'

'Tower Estate had a lot of ASB and between the group and the councillor we started to fight for things and people started listening'

'Shuttleworth is getting better since the group was formed'

What is clear is that all of these took time to get considerably worse before any positive action was taken. The impact of in-migration also had a considerable effect on the area as the low cost housing and houses of multiple occupancy encourage the A8 migrants to settle in the area, thus putting increased pressure on the services. Unlike Wragby, it was not the infrastructure that couldn't support the community but the lack of service information and alternative provision. For example, the local primary school was not equipped to deal with the language barriers and the difference in customary practices when it had a deluge of children with English as a second language.

A national survey found the levels of community cohesion in the area were one of the worst in the county and, as such, significant funding was made available to support migrants and the indigenous population. Many of the projects were run by the agencies involving the volunteers that have now formed their own group. As with most top down approaches, the action was led by the funding requirements, and whilst this has had a positive effect at times it perhaps didn't always achieve the desired aims. Now the volunteers speak about what was good and worked well and continue with that, discounting the elements that didn't work so well.

The researcher was able to explore this with individuals and then continue the theme into the group session. Identifying where the learning could be shared was difficult in Abbey as the structures, processes and opportunities to share are not as defined as in Wragby. The group did try some mixed sessions with two of the other wards but these fell by the wayside due to lack of organisation and commitment. As individuals, the group was keen to hear about others' learning

and to be able to share their own, but questioned the feasibility of it as they don't want to go to meetings for the sake of it. Whilst people wanted to facilitate this type of learning in all the interviews, it was apparent that time is a key issue and a barrier to further engagement.

8.1.5 Abbey – group session

The researcher conducted a group session based on some of the themes identified from the individual interviews, looking at how they as individuals contributed to community cohesion and how this might be measured. The Abbey group clearly had lots of thoughts and ideas and as so much had gone on previously, they were able to talk about the types of measures that might be suitable, such as less conflict between communities including reducing crime stats, increased safety, based on some of the police perception indicators and traffic campaigns, to name but a few.

Their key message to the researcher at this point was:

'We want to deliver what people want not what agencies want'

The group had clearly experienced many barriers before and rather than focussing on the ones that crop up regularly (funding, negativity) they looked to the ones that they felt could be overcome, such as poor communication between agencies and community, not adopting a 'one size fits all' approach and knowledge sharing. The group approached this from a different perspective to Wragby, who were less about the structure and more about the outside influences, whereas Abbey was keen to highlight the enormous expectations placed on volunteers and the lack of volunteers to share what they considered 'the load'. As with Wragby, this became a restraint with the research in as much as people wanted to help but were only willing to give a finite amount of time.

This was the only time that power featured in Abbey's discussions and it was around the need to have the authenticity to bring about change and to be taken seriously. Most of the work that the residents have done has received external funding or required no funding. This has meant that agencies haven't had to engage on a true partnership level. The group questioned whether, if they started to challenge this, they would get the support they needed and be listened to.

Throughout the session the dialogue was free flowing and as such, didn't fit into neatly titled sessions, but rather naturally flowed from the barriers to self-help and onto the opportunities. The list of self-help and opportunities was much longer than the barriers and tied back into the group's main aims of contributing to community cohesion.

There were many examples of the work that the group had organised in the community, including fetes, events celebrating different cultures and intergenerational activities. One of the areas the group highlighted was how to share this information and to create some form of cross working. The group discussed its identity and how this could be improved and, with the help of the facilitator, decided that they should have some form of branding: a name, more structure, joint aims and objectives that the community can sign up to and, more importantly, some way to demonstrate what's in it for people (especially the small businesses in the area). This was the

first time the group had considered their image and how they looked to the rest of the community and how they could improve their structures and practices to make it more accessible to other community members. Up to this point, the researcher has simply referred to the group as the Abbey Group as they themselves had not considered this.

From here the group was able to explore how it could make itself more effective and talked about the quick wins that could be demonstrable to the community. The main point of the conversation was to work smarter in the following ways:

- Measure success
- Provide value in what we do
- Better evaluation
- Build on positive outcomes

Based on this, the group hoped to achieve a platform on which to engage and influence the appropriate people. The group already had significant skills in doing all of the above but perhaps lacked focus to be able to capture and report on this to the relevant agencies and the community.

Despite this, Abbey seemed to be much further along their collective journey than Wragby and this enabled them to understand the reflective process and take the learning from it. This was apparent within the session where it was stated:

Learning is key, including today'

As a researcher facilitating learning this was one of the highlights of working in the groups, to have instant recognition of how the research was helping their learning and moving them forward to achieve their aims.

The group also saw this as an opportunity to reflect on how to move forward with the neighbourhood plan and how this might be perceived by the residents and community. The work that was undertaken in the focus groups formed the basis for the neighbourhood board agenda. Even the language being used within Abbey is considerably different in the group, recognising that residents and community may or may not be one and the same.

combining reflection and action, to make a wise and prudent practical judgement about how to act in the situation. The Take Part learning seeks to create multiple opportunities for 'praxis' with the aim that learners will get into the habit of praxis and adopt it collectively as a tool in their group involvements.¹⁵

8.1.6 Abbey – Further Reflections

The findings from the Abbey group demonstrated that the individuals were further along the active citizenship journey than perhaps those in Wragby, perhaps somewhere between the community relations and civil participation process (see Fig 2). Many of the individuals had previously volunteered and were self-aware of their skills, knowledge and the confidence this

¹⁵ Take Part Network (2011) Take Part Learning Framework

gave them. There was a good understanding of the principles of civil participation but a lack of clarity about how to harness this to bring about social change.

The group had previously focused on smaller scale changes around social inclusion and tackling some of the issues with the young people in the area. Most of the initiatives had been funding led and required some kind of intervention. The researcher was able to use this as part of the group session, to get them to reflect on the activities that had the most impact and why they were.

The Abbey group was much less structured than Wragby and lacked consistent processes and because of this they felt they weren't working as 'smart' as they could be. Since the initial sessions with the individuals the group has had the Community First project to focus on and has used the group session to assist in the planning for this. This has included being more structured in the way they operate, being accountable as a panel for the decisions they make and improving communication and networking with local agencies.

They have taken some of the barriers identified in the group session around lack of co-ordination and knowledge sharing and are now regular members on the Abbey Neighbourhood Board. The board meetings demonstrate the change in dynamics between agencies and residents with residents directing some of the agenda items. Recent meetings have also seen local businesses being invited to talk to the board about expansion plans and their corporate social responsibility. This has been received well by the businesses and the residents, as they feel more informed about the local area, thus increasing their sense of belonging (NI2).

Owing to the nature of the area, the group were already focussed on social inclusion as much of the previous funding had been to ease the impacts of migration and improve community cohesion. This work has continued, such as the Shuttleworth House project, and it feels as though agencies are now taking more notice of the issues, and some of them have even committed to progress the recommendations in the report.

By working smarter the group has been able to be more directional when it comes to the issues they would like addressing and this is forming part of the new Neighbourhood Working Transition Plan. The group has issued a community survey and plan to combine this with a number of community consultation events. One member of the group described it as:

When we hear of something we become more proactive, communications are so much better – it's like sowing seeds, not all of them grow but some do

The group talked about the lack of social centres as one of the barriers in the group session discussion. Revisiting this with the group they were much more positive and just stated:

Social centres are disappearing so we have to make our own

This is quite apparent in the work that has taken place in the Abbey Ward over the course of the research. The group has been active in setting up Jubilee celebrations, opportunities for young people, additional support for disadvantaged groups and increasing networking activity in the local area.

This level of community involvement has without doubt increased the community cohesion in the area. The group has increased its capacity by demonstrating the value they add to the businesses and the agencies in the area and through this, they have been able to work together to create a better environment. There is also more understanding of the pressures communities, agencies and businesses are under and this was shown in the recent discussions around volume of large goods vehicles in the expansion plans of one of the local foundries. The solution the group have proposed is for increased signage and restrictions on hours of movement. The business involved did not think this was unrealistic and was happy to accommodate them.

8.2 Identifying the learning

There appears to be a gap in the top down approach to managing community change, requiring community groups to fulfil funding obligations, to that of the bottom up approach that is sought after by the communities themselves. Bureaucracy also presents a knowledge gap to communities, the type of language, jargon and veiled processes that authorities employ can often be confusing, bewildering and complicated. Take, for example, the difference between outputs and outcomes - perhaps one of the most recent changes in the new coalition government. Coupled with the top down approach of funding this has led to social change but perhaps not one with long term sustainability.

Through a process of dialogue the researcher was able to work with the volunteers to identify what it would take for them to become more active citizens and promote community cohesion. For the majority in Abbey this was to be more empowered and to be heard by the larger agencies (County Council). Wragby on the other hand was about them moving away from the old stereotypical parish council image and presenting a new dynamic more community focussed group.

There is no one size fits all to identify how volunteering can promote and increase community cohesion in an area, partly because of how cohesion is perceived and defined (see section 2.3) and partly because communities don't take the time to reflect on their experiences.

The government methods for measuring community cohesion are inappropriate to community groups due to the generic nature of the indicators. A more meaningful set of indicators need to be defined by the communities themselves. Although these could include some of the national indicators such as sense of belonging, it would be unrealistic for the communities to collect this at a local level.

The areas we discussed in the group session looked at the factors that influence community cohesion. More appropriate suggestions were around having a say about the local area with examples including planning, street furniture and green spaces. Interestingly, at no point did deprivation and inequality come up as an issue affecting cohesion. Whilst this was not expected in Wragby, there was a possibility it may have been voiced in Abbey, as they are in the top 5% of deprived areas in the county. Crime and fear of crime was deemed significant in undermining cohesion, particularly in Abbey where they want to be able to get trustworthy data. Cohesion did not appear to be affected by either migration churn or diversity in either group, even though

Abbey experiences high levels of both. Similarly, there wasn't concern in the groups for other factors influencing cohesion, both groups focussed on intergenerational activities and multi-cultural events.

The communities in both case studies have been able to identify the knowledge gaps, but have not necessarily been able to do much about this, because of the lack of support offered in the past. The support required tends not to be in the formal aspect of training but in that of mentoring support and support from agencies to help them achieve their aims.

The two communities have an advantage over local authorities in that they are best placed to engage with harder to reach communities in order to seek out issues and concerns regarding community cohesion. Working as a collective in this way provides local insight into issues and concerns that can be prioritised and directed to the relevant agency.

As knowledge and skills have increased throughout the research so has confidence in the individuals. At the last Abbey session, individuals were taking a proactive approach to engaging with a local business about to submit expansion plans to the planners. This allowed for a discussion around community concerns and for the business to look at how these could be alleviated before submitting the plans.

The group session helped the groups to identify the gaps in provision in their area, thus reducing the competition between the groups for funding and to target those areas for long-term social change such as planning applications. The groups are now finding that they have a platform to create a space in which to have a dialogue.

Having this clarity about their role has enabled the groups to look at the value of themselves as active citizens and more importantly, the impact this is having on the wider community and community cohesion. They are able to articulate their aims, achievements and lessons learnt and this have given them more capacity and a feeling of greater empowerment.

This questioning of previously accepted circumstances has led them to challenge their thinking as individuals and as a group. In some cases this has not changed their outlook, such as in Wragby where they accept the overreliance on the clerk, whilst recognising that and the limitations it may bring.

Both groups are also presenting more effective challenge to local agencies. For example, in Abbey the Shuttleworth report has been sent to the agencies for them to comment on what support they can offer. Learning from this, and developing methods for collecting evidence and data, has allowed the group to prompt agency action.

Monitoring and evaluation requires resources and knowledge and this has been lacking in the past, partly due to the lack of capacity and partly due to a lack of understanding about what is important for them as a community. The group sessions were able to identify a number of areas where they can increase capacity and proactively seek community cohesion outcomes. Both groups talked about quick wins, medium term and long term outcomes. Some of the quick wins included bringing people together at events, whereas longer-term solutions will be established through the community plans.

Both groups have different experiences and yet their understating of their situation has led to the same outcome, and both have since gone on to begin to implement processes for neighbourhood plans/ parish plans, using research themselves to gather evidence to be able to implement strategic plans for the local area with a view to bringing about social change. This sees the move from a reactive community to a proactive community.

8.3 Learning opportunities

In terms of bureaucracy the government is making progress, specifically in the form of the Community Organisers programme, which aims to;

'enable people to take action on their own behalf and have the power and confidence to tackle the issues which are important to them. It will also enable them to make the most of new local community rights and opportunities to achieve their own aspirations'¹⁶

There is still the question here that this is a top down approach that is being supported by funding and therefore needs outputs to meet requirements. As with most previous initiatives, the policy makers have focused on the quantitative measures (in this case 5,000 community organisers) and not the qualitative measures that are important to the communities. This continues to be a debate that takes place between communities and agencies, with Wragby and Abbey being no exception.

The research has helped Wragby and Abbey to look at the opportunities such as networking with local businesses, councillors and government agencies. This greater communication has increased their possibilities for prompting social change. Both groups have used the research as part of their planning for long-term social change. Whilst neither group has perhaps been able to share their own experiences, both groups are learning from others' experiences and groups that have already completed parish plans/neighbourhood plans.

Although individuals may reflect on an experience this does not mean they will change their action in the future, perhaps because barriers exist, personal reflections are met by the group negatively or the priorities within the group are different to individual priorities. Learning from experience does not make people more actively involved, people have to think of themselves as active, having a role, bringing about social change and seeking to influence community life.

Through dialogue, the researcher enabled the volunteers to become more effective in promoting change agendas through structuring more appropriately, stating aims more concisely and looking at methods of how to measure outcomes.

Both groups need to consider what learning elements they want to take from the time the researcher spent with them. Consideration should be given to:

- How to improve the knowledge of the volunteers in a short space of time
- Improving relationships with agencies

¹⁶ <http://locality.org.uk/projects/community-organisers>

- Inclusion opportunities within the wider community
- Prioritising time and resources (division of labour)
- Creating spaces for active learning and critical reflection
- Highlighting community issues in a structured way for agencies to respond to (Parish Plan, Neighbourhood Plan)
- Using networks to discuss issues before they become a problem

Currently, neither group actively creates spaces in which to learn and critically reflect and the research presented an opportunity in this area, by facilitating group sessions outside of the normal meetings. If both groups were to maximize the opportunities for active learning through active citizenship it would create opportunities for a more forward looking approach and open up the possibilities for wider engagement. Abbey Group should consider the opportunities to increase its volunteers, as most of the activity is undertaken by a regular core of volunteers.

Evaluating the reduction of causes of community tensions such as anti-social behaviour will be much easier than trying to ask communities about the cohesiveness of their community. As with much of the work around cohesion, many of the impacts are not measurable within the short term, as behaviour and attitude changes take time.

The research has identified four ways to improve community cohesion, monitor the progress on the causes of community tensions, undertake research for the community plans and ensure the outcomes in the community plan are SMART and how they will be evaluated and finally, report on successes.

- 1) Both groups agreed they wanted less complaints from the community about the area, be that crime, vandalism or general aesthetics. Work in both groups has begun with scorecards in Abbey and a risk register in Wragby.
- 2) Undertaking research for the community plan is essential in identifying the issues and prioritising. The parish plan process is a tried and tested method for establishing community plans, including consultation and identifying the priorities, through to negotiating with agencies to assist in delivering outcomes.
- 3) Most importantly the groups must make it SMART, this move to proactive planning needs to consider how to measure and evaluate outcomes.
- 4) And finally, both groups need to report on successes, this was one of the weakest areas for both groups with neither of them informing the community what had been achieved.

The community plans are providing a framework from which to monitor, research, evaluate and inform communities. Using the concepts outlined above, along with methods from the parish planning toolkit, should enable the groups to develop clear systems for collecting, monitoring and evaluating data.

A final point would then be to disseminate their learning to other communities in a similar position.

9. The role of the researcher

The researcher was commissioned to look at the role of volunteering in promoting community cohesion. The initial proposal identified two communities on which to complete case studies. This was when the researcher encountered the first issues around engaging with the communities. The first was to be a Parish Council in the West Lindsey district that was already involved with the university and known to the researcher through their previous role in local government. Despite several attempts to contact them over a period of a month it was agreed with the University to change the location to Wragby. The researcher had previously worked with members of Wragby Parish Council and was able to make contact and reach agreement for the purpose of the research and to agree joint outcomes. The researcher used this knowledge to complete the desk-based research and initial individual interviews, after attending the first public meeting. Difficulties arose in this group with the amount of time that the researcher was asking of individuals. The group were happy for the researcher to attend meetings, see copies of minutes and any agenda documents, but were reluctant to give up more than a couple of hours of their time for the research. As the research went on this became a little easier as they began to see the value, however they were still reluctant to create space for continuing dialogue with the researcher after the initial research period.

The second group was again chosen for their community work and individuals were approached. Initial agreement was reached; however, it soon became apparent that other members were not forthcoming in providing availability for a one to one session. On discussion with the University the research moved to another group within the same area but with a different focus to the original one. The second group was the Abbey group, which invited the researcher to their meeting to discuss the proposal. This was met with enthusiasm as long as time was kept to a minimum.

The researcher found some excellent examples of community-based action and learning opportunities; however, this was severely impacted on by the time restraints of both the research piece and the amount of time asked of the volunteers. As part of the research, additional follow-on work was programmed in to identify some of the longer-term social changes that are happening in the areas.

Coming to an established programme of work, the researcher had to increase their own knowledge of the programme and the concepts behind the Take Part approach before they could begin to convey this approach to community groups. This, at times, was not only difficult to grasp but awkward to articulate, particularly in the initial stages around the benefits and outcomes the groups could hope to achieve by being part of the research.

Methodologies in the Take Part programme are quite different to any the researcher has been involved in previously and this meant that it was a case of trial and error to make the most of the time available. As the researcher became more confident in the concepts and methods it was easier to create space for dialogue. As the research project progressed the researcher became better known and this helped considerably with the information flow.

As a researcher it is about gathering a trail of evidence and analysing the facts to arrive at a solution. However, if community cohesion were that simple then there would be more frameworks, tools and evaluations on which to base the research. One of the hardest areas of development for the researcher was to deliver this to the reader.

The researcher also discovered many areas that could spark further research such as looking at how Wragby Parish, being democratically elected, has managed to achieve a cross-section of people while Abbey, which is able to recruit volunteers, struggles to get a cross section. Being an area the researcher has operated in for some time, there were many such opportunities that have been left unexplored.

10. Conclusion

The case studies demonstrate that active learning for active citizenship can be advantageous to community groups in improving community cohesion; however, it is not without difficulties. It is still primarily led by the top-down approach with policy makers focussing on quantitative outputs and expecting measurable outcomes. For smaller community groups, this can be problematic in terms of identifying the time necessary to participate, reflect and act upon those reflections.

The turnover of volunteers, whilst sometimes being a positive in terms of bringing different experiences to the group, can at times make it difficult to maintain a stable environment. This was seen to have a negative effect on communication and networking, as volunteers have to rebuild those relationships. This element of continuity was considered important in the groups.

Funding continues to be at the forefront of discussion for many community groups and although the current government's Big Society agenda is encouraging groups to do more for themselves, groups are still required to evidence their impacts to be eligible for funding. This leads back to the question raised earlier about the bureaucracy, jargon and veiled processes: only groups that have these skills are successful in accessing funding streams, contesting planning or generally engaging with local agencies. Through the group session both groups were looking at the alternatives available to get things done by using networking, goodwill and influencing partnership working.

Both groups are moving towards added value interventions in an attempt to create sustainability in the community. Abbey, for example, is working with Off The Bench to provide sessions for young people, in an effort to reduce anti-social behaviour and crime in the area.

What did emerge from both case studies was the need for an intermediary or catalyst, to be the link between communities and authorities. In Wragby, this was the Chair of the Parish Council and in Abbey it was the neighbourhood manager. On discussion it was deemed important for it to be someone in authority that could speak on behalf of the group and neither case study felt that a self-appointed person could achieve this. In both case studies the groups felt empowered to make changes locally but needed support in achieving some of the longer-term social changes that they are trying to achieve. In essence this is what the Community Organisers programme is

trying to achieve, although based on this being a top down initiative and only recently implemented, it remains to be seen if it will have the outcomes expected.

The researcher has facilitated dialogue to enable the groups to formulate new spaces for participation, to consider how that participation might take place and to look at alternative ways of engaging with local agencies. Supporting the groups through research has enabled them to evaluate themselves and to reflect on how others perceive them. This critical look at themselves, the group and the wider implications enabled them to look at what they can do for themselves and where they need additional support. The risk here is that the support given will be conditional and will require the groups to be compliant, to suit the supporting organisations agenda.

Throughout the researcher's time in the project there has been a significant shift in the individuals' and the groups' outlook. Some of this will be due to familiarity with each other and some is undoubtedly due to the learning that has taken place during the research period. The recognition of having shared issues has meant that the groups are now working as collectives and this strengthening of position has led to greater empowerment.

The findings have demonstrated that the research has helped the groups to reflect on their current structures, processes and opportunities for increasing their effectiveness. For individuals as volunteers this has helped them clarify their roles and feel more empowered in participating as an active citizen. Structuring the way they work has improved the level of dialogue with agencies and this in turn has promoted a sense of empowerment. Having this increased sense of empowerment has meant the groups are able to work smarter and have begun to look at methods of data collection to aid them with their continued learning. Both groups have also done some analysis of their limitations and have sought to find ways to overcome any barriers there have been in the past.

All of these actions, through research and continued learning, have meant the groups have grown in confidence and have thereby increased their capacity, resulting in a more cohesive approach being taken.

Despite some negativity, people continue to volunteer for all of the reasons discussed in the case studies and yet policy makers focus on how many people are volunteering, how many are participating in formal volunteering (defined by the Place Survey) and how many are progressing onto employment or gaining qualifications. This takes no account of retaining the exceptional volunteers that are already out in communities and are exhausted in their battle for social change. In order to maximize their potential, it is a priority that learning, knowledge and experiences are shared but, as with all disparate groups how is this to be done across one programme on a one size fits all approach?

11. Appendices

11.1 Appendix 1

Aspects of Active Citizenship	Citizen learning process: I feel able to... I know more about... I know how to...	Citizenship outcomes: Local, National, European and global dimensions
Personal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value own skills, knowledge and confidence • Know where to go to get what you need • Communication skills, negotiation skills, lobbying skills • Feel able to have a voice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People identify and articulate their own issues and problems • People take leadership roles in their community • People have the power and will to make choices in their life • People voice their concerns
Community relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise that social exclusion is the responsibility of all • Understand how their behaviour affects others • Know the basis of inequality and how power operates • Understand more about people who are different to themselves • Feel more confident in asking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved relations between diverse groups of people • Community projects are inclusive of people with different backgrounds • Increased points of contact between different communities • Increased networking between communities
Civil participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand how groups/networks work • Know how to encourage fair and democratic decision-making • Understand how to encourage support and develop volunteers • Know the importance of networking and delivering change • Charing, meeting and facilitation skills • Negotiation and campaigning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More civil society groups active in community-led service provision • Well-run democratic community groups • Increased informal community organising • Increased networking between community and voluntary groups • Effective representation in partnerships and involvement with public bodies • Increased volunteering opportunities
Civic engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowing how the external world operates • Understand your current democratic position and the opportunities for change • Understand the rules of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More people want to and feel capable of having a responsible role in formal democratic structures • More people play an active role in a community/

	<p>engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aware of range of opportunities for civic participation • Understand role of elected representatives and how to lobby them/work with them • Know how public meetings work • Feel able to contribute and ask questions at a public forum • Recognise how to influence policy and practice at a European, national, regional or local level 	<p>neighbourhood level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizens work with public bodies to set and achieve common goals • Improved relations between citizens and statutory agencies • More people take part in dialogue with decision-makers • People lobby for change in the way forums and other structures operate • People campaign and petition
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11.2 Appendix 2

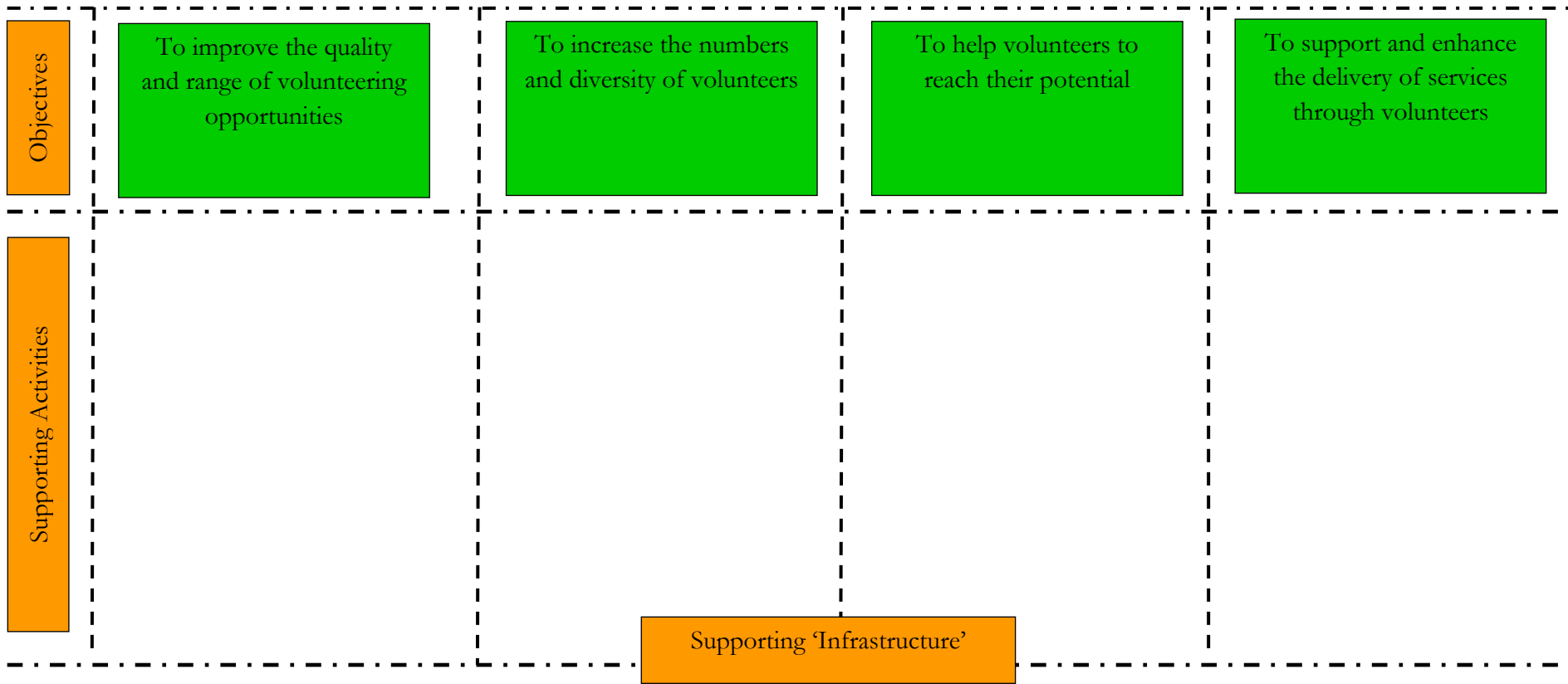
Participants

Paul Carrick	Neighbourhood Manager
Annie Brown	Abbey Ward Resident (Monks Road)
Eve Wind	Abbey Ward Resident (Tower Estate)
John East	Abbey Ward Resident (Chair of MRNI)
Ian Mills	Abbey Ward Resident (Shuttleworth House)
Faye Smith	District Councillor
Marcus Coleman	Chair of Wragby Parish Council
Nigel Bailey	Wragby Parish Councillor
Leasha Bernard	Wragby Parish Councillor
Vicky James	Wragby Parish Councillor
Jo Knowles	Wragby Parish Councillor
Tom Buxton-Rockley	Wragby Parish Councillor
Julie Thacker	Wragby Parish Councillor

11.3 Appendix 3

Volunteering Strategy

Mission: To support and increase the quality, quantity, impact and accessibility of volunteering throughout Lincolnshire



- Create and maintain a mechanism to share best practice
- Create and maintain a mechanism to coordinate activities
- Map and research the volunteer base
- Create and maintain partnership working
- Data sharing policy

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