



It's as easy  
as ABCD

Cumbria, like many local authorities, has a history of challenge to assist people to feel that they can influence what Local Authorities do. This was evidenced in the Best Value Performance Indicators, Cumbria's Calling Exercise and the recent Place Survey.

The CIEP (Cumbria Improvement and Efficiency Partnership) Community Empowerment and Neighbourhood Working theme aims to support the delivery of Cumbria Strategic Partnership's (CSP) Community Engagement Framework – Listening and Learning.

### Project Aim

- To embed a continuous learning culture in Cumbria using a generic framework for engaging with communities, that allows the public sector to be more empowered in their work with communities.
- To enable Elected Members and Strategic Officers to better understand the processes of participative government and how they can facilitate this.

### What we did and how we did it

The Project Board, along with its wider Affinity Group identified the need for a culture change programme. A nationally recognised provider - the Scottish Community Development Centre, was brought in to assist us in shaping a Learning and Development programme based on the Achieving Better Community Development (ABCD) model as a foundation.

12 half day ABCD workshops have been delivered across the County to a broad range of public sector and voluntary organisations. Participants build the model together based on their knowledge of what is already happening and considering different empowerment dimensions to improve practice in the future. We followed up with a 'Train the Trainer' session to enable participants to be able to deliver ABCD sessions in their own areas.

### Who was Involved?

Local Authority Officer and Members, Police, PCT, 3rd Sector.

### Results

- Over 250 Officers and Elected Members from a variety of Public Sector backgrounds attend the events. Some comments from those who attended;  
'ABCD provided me with a better understanding of the community engagement process'  
'The networking, meeting others, discussing similar issues and how we could work together to improve communities was really valuable'
- Organisations from across Cumbria have requested ABCD sessions to be delivered to them in Year 2.
- Building upon the learning from the ABCD sessions a cohort of participants went on to engage in Learning Evaluation and Planning (LEAP) sessions. The LEAP sessions are a more practical tool on how to embed the theoretical ABCD model in communities.
- The models generated at each of the ABCD sessions will be amalgamated into a Cumbria wide model of how a sustainable community could look. This will be recommended to the CSP Executive for their approval.



### Lessons Learnt

The ABCD Model can be successfully used to build understanding and delivery of Community Empowerment in Cumbria.

### Risks

- ABCD must be followed up to embed engagement over the long term.
- Actions from the initial workshop may not be carried out or sustained.
- Wide target audience: How to reach all public service officers.

### Benefits

The common language is being taken up across many public sector organisations, for example in South Lakeland District Council and the Cumbria Association of Local Councils, and has been used in a host of learning events and conferences in Cumbria for example, the University of Cumbria Sustainable Communities Conference, January 2009.

## Contact

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