Community Engagement Terms & Definitions

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Know your LAA's from your NI 11's? Whether you're targeting community organisations, local authorities or preparing a funding bid, knowing the right language will make a difference. This is our guide to support your understanding of community engagement terms and definitions.

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Community Engagement and Learning the Language

Know your LAA's from your NI 11's? What separates a community group from a voluntary group?

Whether you're new to Community Engagement or just trying to keep up to date, being unfamiliar with the latest language from the Voluntary and Community Sector can be a barrier. This guide is a dictionary and more, designed to provide definitions and context about the key terms used in Communities work and how you can access the local information relevant to you.

Use our quick index to pick out key definitions or scroll through our whole dictionary for an overview. We'll be adding more terms as they come up, but if there's something you'd like to see included please do let Helen know (you'll find her contact details at the end of this document).

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Key Terms:

Community Engagement:
The process of working collaboratively with and through groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations to address issues affecting the well being of those people.

Two key outcomes of Community Engagement may be useful to bear in mind:
- More people actively involved in their neighbourhoods
- Local people able to influence decisions about their own neighbourhoods and public services

(From *Citizen Engagement & Public Services: Why Neighbourhoods Matter*, (2005) ODPM/ Home Office)

Community groups or organisations:
These are user-led clubs formed by members of the community in response to a particular issue. Issues are wide ranging and can be linked to hobbies and leisure, such as a group forming to provide a local needlework club, or to wider concerns such as a group forming in response to their individual concerns about climate change. Community groups and organisations are generally run entirely by volunteers, without a formal constitution or management structure. As their group or services develop, they may decide to formalise their work in order to access more funding and register as a 'voluntary organisation'. A community organisation or group differs from a voluntary organisation in that the control lies in the hands of the beneficiaries as individual users, members or residents.

Voluntary organisations:
Organisations with a constitution, a management structure, employees and formal structures for planning their services. Voluntary organisations can be of any size: highly local, cross-borough or regional, or local hubs of a national charity such as Age Concern which offer varying services under a national framework. Voluntary organisations may be similar to community groups in that they might be staffed largely by volunteers, provide direct services, and have strong local roots. Certain types of voluntary organisations may sit behind the 'front line' and not offer their main services to the public, instead working as grant-giving agencies or supporting other groups. These are known as '**Second Tier' organisations**.

The Voluntary and Community Sector or 'VCS':
The common acronym used to refer to these two sectors above. They are commonly grouped together. They represent a large number of organisations and involved individuals. In fact…

It's estimated that nationally there are more than 250,000 unregistered voluntary and community organisations, with community groups making up most of these.

HM Treasury (2005), Exploring the Role of the Third Sector in Public Service Delivery and Reform.

Definitions (A-Z):

Active Communities: Communities in which citizens are empowered to lead self determined fulfilled lives, and in which everyone regardless of age, race or social background has a sense of belonging and a stake in society.

Charity: Any organisation registered with the Charity Commission. To register you have to pass certain standards of transparency and good management. These require considerable time and effort, meaning that many community groups choose not to apply for registered status. Registering as a charity will make an organisation eligible to apply to more funding streams and opportunities.

> There are around 169,000 registered charities in England and Wales, with 27,897 of these in London.
>
> *Charity Commission (March 2008)*

Community: A specific group of people who all hold something in common. The word 'Community' is associated with two key aspects: people who share locality or geographical place or people who have a shared or common interest. This second group are sometimes described as **communities of interest.**

Communities of interest: Groups of people who share an identity, for example the Afro-Caribbean community, or those who share an experience, for example people who are currently homeless.

Consultation: A process of dialogue that leads to a decision. Effective consultation should be a two-way process of sharing knowledge and opinions and working together to act upon the information that emerges from the consultation. A good consultation exercise should work towards informing a decision that will affect those consulted.

Deprivation: The term used to measure quality of life under a system developed by the Home Office since 1998. Closely linked is:

Indices of Deprivation: A series of different measures of deprivation used to chart communities' overall quality of life. The Indices are used widely to analyse patterns of deprivation, identify areas that would benefit from special initiatives or programmes and as a tool to determine eligibility for specific funding streams.
The most recent, measured in 2007, included more deprivation measures; including income, employment, health and disability; education, skills and training, barriers to housing and services, living environment, crime, income deprivation affecting children; and income deprivation affecting older people. The Indices divide geographical areas into units called **Super Output Area's** (SOA's) – see definition below.

> In London the SOA's identified in 2007, as being in the most deprived 10%, are concentrated in inner London, particularly (though not exclusively) the inner north east, including Tower Hamlets, Newham and Hackney. You can access more information about the Indices of Deprivation (the most recently published are from 2007) on the link below or contact us for more information about your area
> http://www.communities.gov.uk/communities/neighbourhoodrenewal/deprivation/deprivation07

Engagement: The process of coming together to share in the activities or concerns of a group. Policy makers and funders are increasingly asking organisations to increase public 'engagement' in the arts, both as attenders and participants.

Empowerment: Interventions that are designed to increase the strength of individuals and communities. The process often involves the empowered developing confidence in their own abilities.

Local Area Agreements: Local Area Agreements (LAAs) set out the priorities for a local area agreed between central government and a local area (the local authority and Local Strategic Partnership) and other key partners at the local level. LAAs have been designed to simplify some central funding, and help join up public services more effectively, allowing greater flexibility for local solutions to local circumstances. LAAs last for 3 years before they are renewed.

> You can look up the Local Area Agreement for your borough at:
> http://www.localpriorities.communities.gov.uk/

Front-line organisations: Any organisation working directly to provide a service to the public; a front-line organisation may belong to the voluntary, community or public sector.

Grass-roots organisations: An organisation that has been formed by members of the community, and remains closely connected to their target group. There will be an emphasis on user-led services.

Intervention: This term comes from the public sector. It describes the point at which a professional, such as a social worker, implements something that is designed to facilitate a change in their client's lives. The word is derived from the principle that social services do not 'take over' the lives of people they work with, but take specific, *targeted* steps or 'intervenes' at appropriate times. Considering which interventions you might want to make in local cultural provision, and why, may help you focus your ideas for collaboration.

Involvement: The process of working with local people and communities to address issues that affect them. It is likely in any process that there will be different levels of involvement amongst individuals and at different stages. The term involvement is often used interchangeably with **participation** although they do not necessarily mean exactly the same thing.

Local Government Green Paper: A green paper presents a range of ideas and is meant to invite interested individuals or organizations to contribute views and information. It may be followed by a white paper, an official set of proposals that is used as a vehicle for their development into law.

Local Government White Paper: An official paper setting out Government policy.

National Indicators: A set of 198 indicators introduced in October 2007 that reflect national priority outcomes for local authorities working alone or in partnership. These are the only measures which central Government will now use to manage performance by local authorities. They replace all other existing sets of indicators including Best Value Performance Indicators and Performance Assessment Framework indicators and will be reported by all areas from April 2008. Those specific to culture are as below:

NI 9:   Use of public libraries
NI 10: Visits to museums or galleries
NI 11: Engagement in the arts

National Indicator 11 (NI 11), Engagement in the Arts: Measures the % of the adult population in a local area that have either attended an arts event or participated in an arts activity at least 3 times in the past 12 months.

London boroughs who have signed up to NI 11 as a national indicator are Croydon, Greenwich, Harrow, Hounslow and Waltham Forest. Boroughs can also choose local indicators. These are local priorities that are not part of that borough's negotiation with Government. Merton and Lewisham have both chosen NI 11 as one of their local indicators.

Outcomes / outputs: These are two different models for evaluating a project in the voluntary / community sector which could be useful for those planning a project for the first time. Outputs are quantitative, such as the number of children taking part in a play group or the number of times they met. Outcomes are the qualitative, 'soft' results of the work, which often represent the underlying goals of a project. For example, outcomes of a play group could be increased confidence among new mothers, or a stronger peer support network. This could be measured by gathering feedback or anecdotal evidence about their attitudes.

Many traditional funding regimes, particularly those administered by local authorities, focus on outputs, but awareness is growing across the voluntary / community sector that evidence about outcomes is as valid a way of measuring success. For those designing and implementing a project, outcomes can be more important, as they help workers keep in mind the ultimate change a project is aiming to make.

Participants: The preferred term for anyone taking part in a project or activity.

Participation: An umbrella term referring to the right of individuals to directly participate in political, economic, management or other social decisions. Ideally, every person would have a say in decisions directly proportional to the degree that particular decision affects him or her. Those not affected by a decision would have no say and those exclusively affected by a decision would have full say.

Sherry Arnstein discusses types of participation and "nonparticipation" in one of the first texts on this theme, *A Ladder of Citizen Participation* (1969). She defines citizen participation as the redistribution of power that enables the citizens that are presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future.

The public or statutory sector: Public services which are provided by the State, in all parts of the UK, are called statutory agencies. These include local authorities (councils), but also police, fire, education, social and health services. Any of these authorities may choose to provide some discretionary services according to local need, but basic services must be offered everywhere.

Respite: This usually describes activities to support people who act as carers for a friend or member of their family who has serious health problems, often with very limited emotional or financial support. 'Respite care' offers professional care so that the usual carer can have a break. Similarly, any sort of activity could be described as respite if it offers a short break for those who usually live in difficult conditions to allow them to relax and 'recharge'. As a leisure activity, cultural provision offers considerable opportunities for respite.

Regeneration: The process of upgrading an area through social, economic and infrastructure investment and improvement.

Second-tier organisations: An organisation that exists to support other organisations and groups as part or all of their work, such as Councils for Voluntary Service. Second-tier organisations have an important role in facilitating networks, offering training, promoting best practice or pooling resources. They may be government-funded, exist as charities in their own right, or represent consortia which come together to apply for joint funding for partnership projects. Some organisations have both a front-line and a second-tier function – for examples, volunteer bureaux might work directly with members of the public interested in volunteering, and work with charities where these volunteers are placed to help them develop volunteer management expertise.

Service user: Many voluntary / community sector organisations describe the people they work with as service users instead of clients. This can help to emphasise that these services are being provided for free. 'Service-user' can be abbreviated to 'user', but this may lead to inaccurate associations with drug use being made. Service users can also be described as members or clients.

Social Enterprise: Businesses set up to tackle a social or environmental need. Their main aim is to generate profit to further their social and environmental goals, and so their profits are reinvested to sustain and further their mission for positive change rather than increasing shareholder's profits. Well known social enterprises are *The Big Issue*, Jamie Oliver's restaurant Fifteen, and the fair-trade chocolate company Divine Chocolate.

> The 2005-2007 Annual Survey of Small Businesses UK found that there are 62,000 of them in the UK, contributing over £24bn to the economy, and employing approximately 800,000 people. A YouGov poll released in 2007 found that over 60% of the British public would prefer their local services to be run by a social enterprise - instead of the government, private profit businesses or traditional charity.
>
> http://www.socialenterprise.org.uk/pages/about-social-enterprise.html

Super Output Areas (SOAs): A geography designed for the collection and publication of small area statistics. They are used on the Neighbourhood Statistics site and the Office of National Statistics. SOAs give an improved basis for comparison across the country because the units are more similar in size of population than, for example, electoral **Wards** (see definition below). They are also intended to be stable, enabling the improved comparison and monitoring of policy over time.

> You can look up your statistics for your local neighbourhood at:
> http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination
> Different search options allow you to look for stats by Local Authority, Ward, SOA and more…

Sustainable communities: This refers to places where people want to live and work, now and in the future. They meet the needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment, and contribute to a high quality of life. They are safe and inclusive, well planned, built and run, and offer equality of opportunity and good services for all.

The Third Sector: The 'Third Sector' describes any not-for-profit or not-just-for profit body, such as voluntary and community organisations and social enterprises. Arts and cultural organisations can sit in any, or all, of these sectors depending on their funding. The 'first' and 'second' sectors refer to private business and public state-run organisations respectively.

User-led: Organisations who are led completely or partially by their 'users' are described as 'user-led'. Community groups, and voluntary organisations, are expected to have some level of user involvement in planning and delivering their services. This may mean that the service is entirely run by volunteer service users or ex-service users, or organisations may hold regular focus groups to inform their activities. Service users may also be represented on the management committee, whether elected by other 'clients' or invited on board by trustees.

Wards: A division of a city or town, especially an electoral district, for administrative and representative purposes. A ward is smaller than a borough but larger than a Super Output Area.

For more information about community engagement and how Audiences London can help you, contact

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