

## 4 different examples of alac in practice *continued*

### 2.1 Project Managers: Training for trainers and Participatory Evaluation

**Participants: Project Managers, particularly those from the community and voluntary sector with experience of active citizenship and empowerment-related community practice.**

#### Promoting and Outreach / Engagement Process

Several Project Managers were engaged from the start with the project as part of the existing Lincolnshire Citizenship Network. The constructed conversations approach used by the project meant that new contacts were identified through conversations with members of the network and other external contacts (e.g. in the public or voluntary sector). The community and voluntary sector had a significant presence at the 2006 conference and 60 individuals were contacted in responses to the follow-up questionnaire. The contacts grew through meetings and conversations within this informal network.

#### Course content or forms of experiential learning

A dozen participants met regularly in the early stages of the project in semi-formal workshop and classroom experiences at the University. Visits were also made by the group to other participants' organisations and visiting speakers invited to take part. More than 10 events were specifically developed with this Project Managers group. Other events in the project (e.g. the Participatory Evaluation workshops) were open to a wide range of participants, (including Project Managers) from a wide variety of voluntary and statutory sector organisations.

This workshop series included sessions led by Goldsmiths University, Manchester Metropolitan University and the Community Development Foundation. In total 27 Project Managers took part in learning activities within the Project (contributing more than 8 hours each on average to the process).

#### Reflective Practice

These individuals engaged in reflective learning sessions and workshops as well as contributing / co-authoring the Guide For Practice. The use of Project Manager's network provided reflective learning opportunities – developing capacity in active citizenship and an opportunity for peer review and support. A participatory approach to learning was used – developing the project's activities and materials through an approach that involves the skills, experiences and knowledge base of all participants (e.g. the development of the guide to practice and participatory evaluation training). Learning started from practice and introduced policy and theory as part of the reflection process.

#### Specific Learning Needs & Barriers to Participation

Participants wanted learning activities that supported their professional activities and the values that underpinned them. Different forms of (professional/theoretical) language can prove a barrier to learning and connecting theory to practice. This group spent considerable effort reviewing the language used in relation to active citizenship and empowerment in order to help create a shared understanding and some common language and concepts that would support future activity in Lincolnshire.

#### Take Part aims and objectives

In the case of the Project Managers the role of the ALAC Project was to create a space for reflection and learning between experienced managers in the community domain. This activity enabled participants to challenge and support each other, to reflect on barriers to active citizenship and to celebrate achievements. Crucially, it also enabled all involved (including the project team) to continue to refine and make distinctions and to be able to act on new possibilities and to use a new 'language' to underpin and develop their work; developing a collective voice around community empowerment at a conceptual and strategic level.

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Personally  
should think  
should put  
money in  
engaging with  
11-12 year  
olds before  
they become  
teenagers

ALAC Participant

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## 4 different examples of alac in practice *continued*

### Headline reflections

#### Social change / justice

- Enable project managers working for social change to critically reflect and develop their ideas, practice and conceptual language together
- Enable people to identify common issues/problems and find solutions
- Promote social solidarity to strengthen communities

#### Inclusion / participation

- Facilitate learning processes between different organisations
- Provide access for the voluntary sector to this area of policy and practice
- Enable voluntary sector managers to develop their own activities
- Strengthen active citizenship in the voluntary and community sector and in the public sector

#### Challenging inequalities

- Project has been creating appropriate learning environments for professional development in the voluntary sector underpinned by Take Part values engaging with public sector bodies and government agendas for developing community empowerment
- Enhance and/or develop skills that enable learning to engage in local decision making

#### Promoting diversity

- Co-authorship of the Guide for Practice.
- Enable people to know their rights and find their voice

### Outcomes & lessons for the future

The Project Managers' group valued the opportunity to meet and share experiences and goals with a peer group they recognised as sharing similar values and to be able to reflect on these aspects in a 'safe' environment. The Take Part national learning framework provided a useful framework for these discussions and the ability reflect on both practice and policy allowed the group the space to construct a more highly developed language to describe and develop their activities. The networking element of this activity was highly valued as was the challenge of being reflexive and developing trust to explore other organisations' situations and experiences. Along with the more general partnership work developed through the project this group of learners have been

helping to shape future capacity for active learning for active citizenship in the County – particularly in relation to the voluntary and community sector. Project Managers from the group are continuing to develop their own interests in active citizenship beyond the end of the project and several are working with the Take Part Hub to develop further partnership working. The project has demonstrated a latent demand within the voluntary sector for this kind of reflective, developmental activity and has highlighted the need to support informal learning for the voluntary sector within Higher Education. Project Managers continue to support the work of the East Midlands Take Part Hub in a variety of ways and these sustained relationships and the learning already undertaken form an invaluable for building further work in the sector.

"Having a place away from work that's one step removed gives me professional development, 3600 view – people don't get to do that very often – allows me to look at my own activity" (ALAC Participant)

"What I love about the process is that it identifies you as an individual....the style used [has] allowed different people to tap into the material in very different ways" (ALAC Participant)

"Important element is that informal learning is very subtle and often [we're] not very aware that we're doing it....very good way to enlighten people that learning needn't be a huge amount of effort, time consuming – with exams.....[need] the self-belief that the answer is in you" (ALAC Participant)