



National Empowerment Partnership

IN YORKSHIRE AND THE HUMBER

UPDATE 3: FEBRUARY 2009

Chair of NEPYH is awarded OBE

Congratulations to Salima Hafejee who has been awarded an OBE for services to community relations in West Yorkshire.

A Snapshot

Since April 2008

- » the Regional Empowerment Partnership has hosted 7 key events.
 - 298 participant places were taken up (over 100 by local authority officers and members, and the same for the voluntary and community sector)
 - 206 different individuals participated
- » 92% of consortium members were active in the partnership; one consortium meeting had a special focus on forward legislative framework with Regional Minister Rosie Winterton and had an extended invitation list
- » Over the three Community Panel meetings there was 93% participation; one meeting was hosted by GOYH and involved 7 civil servants, and 4 panel working groups have been formed - rural matters, community representation and governance, Spring 2009 communities conference, and panel development / member selection

New Voices

See the yhep website for new stories in our voices series – including 2 stories of community led development from North East Lincolnshire.

Mentoring for leadership

Following our invitation to take up the challenge of supporting others, we have a number of people who are giving their time to mentor community or strategic leaders. So, if you think an hour or so once a month where you have the ear of someone from the outside, sounds just what you need, please contact COGS for an application form. This is a free service and we will pay any expenses incurred such as travel.

Spotlight on the Yorkshire and Humber Faiths Forum

When the Yorkshire and Humber Faiths Forum was formed in December 2005 it was supported by Yorkshire Forward, the Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber, and the Yorkshire and Humber Assembly with the Churches Regional Commission acting as the parent organisation. Their support acknowledged the contribution of faith communities towards community cohesion, justice and inclusion and allowed Yorkshire and Humber Faiths Forum to provide a voice for faith communities on issues that are of importance to them.

YHFF has now moved on to become uniquely the interfaith forum for the region. It is the only regional organisation regularly bringing together people from nine different faiths. In 2007 the time came for YHFF to consider independence and with the help and support of the parent organisation, Churches Regional Commission, Yorkshire and the Humber, began the processes necessary to establish themselves as a registered charity and registered company. This process was completed in May 2008.

In 2008 YHFF established the UK's first, and to date, only regional interfaith youth council, United Faiths. Young people of different faiths are taking their place at the table and have a platform for their voices too.

During 2009 YHFF has many projects and events planned. February sees the United Faiths' Music and Media Conference in Leeds whilst in May groups across the region will join together to celebrate the first anniversary of the launch of the Wilberforce Way, walking the entire 60 miles length over 5 days. The results of the YHFF commissioned 'Economic Impact Assessment' will be made public in the summer and in autumn, YHFF will host a conference looking at the relationship between Faith and the Environment. All the news from YHFF and United Faiths is published three times a year in Soundings newsletter and for up to the minute news bulletins YHFF sends out *Soundbites*, their monthly e-newsletter.

With an increasing confidence in the capacity and skills of faith based communities YHFF is well placed to provide access to faith communities for all those public and regional agencies working to improve the prospects of everyone living and working in the region.

For more information go to
www.yorkshireandhumberfaiths.org.uk

Inside

National snippets - regional action, Active citizenship and stronger communities - together we can revitalise democracy!, South Yorkshire Community Engagement Improvement Partnership moves on, Looking back a bit, Looking forward, Community Panel spreads its wings, Creating better futures in Yorkshire and the Humber

National snippets - regional action

Here at NEPYH, we have always believed that empowerment is most likely to happen at the most local level. In November, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government backed up her commitment to local involvement with plans for new neighbourhood councils.

In the East Riding of Yorkshire there are 168 Parish and Town Councils, and in North Yorkshire over 500. Following on from commitments made in the empowerment White Paper, a major grant has been awarded to the National Association of Local Councils (NALC). NALC will work with the existing parish councils and help communities establish neighbourhood councils. The idea is that existing councils will be supported to work to meet the highest possible standards in service delivery and community engagement, including help available for councillors to encourage greater community involvement.

Communities Secretary Hazel Blears said:

“As the smallest unit of electoral democracy, they play a vital and effective role in putting power in the hands of local people, to make the key decisions that affect their local communities.”

Often, services are best delivered at the most local level, with local people, who are best placed to know what is right for their local area, having a real say.

NALC is stopping off on its ‘Stepping Stones’ tour in York on Saturday 21 February 2009. Parish councils, town councils, principal councils, community and voluntary groups can hear and discuss how community action can make the lives of local people better, and it will be an opportunity for councillors and officers of all tiers of local government to share practices.

For more information contact NALC on 020 7637 1865, or e-mail nalc@nalc.gov.uk

Building on Success - Inspiring communities network launched

“We need to give communities the tools they need to change their own lives.”

(Hazel Blears)

At the Champions of Participation residential conference held in October, Rose Ardron – past chair of Sheffield NDC called on the conference to learn from the successes of the neighbourhood

renewal programmes, stating:

“Participation creates a precious legacy – it is not a tap that can be turned off and on. Those of us who responded to the call, to the new spaces that were opening up, didn’t do it just so that we could occupy those spaces. We did it in order to open them up to others.”

Now, building on the progress made through programmes such as Sure Start and the New Deal for Communities the Government wants to make more of local networks and harness the energy and commitment of communities in finding solutions that will improve life chances. In particular government wants to get a better understanding of how to tackle persistent deprivation with an emphasis on involving local people. It has announced plans to create a network of ‘inspiring communities’ in the UK’s most deprived areas.

Announced as part of the New Opportunities White Paper, CLG is to provide £10m over the next two years to support the aspirations of young people in 15 local communities. The funding can be used in a variety of ways, from supporting young social entrepreneurs to creating community pledges, in which residents set ambitious goals for young people. Residents, local organisations and partners will be invited to develop and put forward plans, which it is hoped will build up a range of good practice to share with local authorities. ‘Inspiring communities’ neighbourhoods should be selected and ready to launch their individual campaigns in August 2009.

At the programme launch, Hazel promoted one of our region’s inspiring projects;

“Let me end with an example of what can be possible. The other week I was in Leeds. I visited a former school in one of the roughest parts of the city. Owned by a community group, it had been converted into a community centre called Shine. As they were doing the refurbishment, they insisted on the best. Now they’ve got a place for people to meet for youth groups, healthy living seminars and antenatal classes. And they’ve got a smart new business suite with absolute state-of-the-art facilities, open to both local social entrepreneurs and commercial firms from out of town. Because it’s the very best, businesses can have the confidence to invest their money. Sometimes visitors are a bit puzzled. They say - ‘it’s too good for Leeds!’ But that’s just the point. It isn’t. And it’s giving young people in the

neighbourhood another reason to set their sights that little bit higher.”

Get involved - an introduction to the work of parliament

Yorkshire and the Humber is one of 2 regions chosen to launch the parliamentary outreach service. The aim of Parliamentary Outreach is to raise awareness of the work and processes of Parliament and to increase understanding of how the public can engage with Parliament – the House of Commons and House of Lords.

There are five main strands to the work:

- » Providing information sessions to civic engagement and citizenship groups on the work of Parliament.
- » Delivering training to charities and voluntary groups on parliamentary processes.
- » Working with Select Committees on regional visits and with local groups on submitting evidence to committees.
- » Working with libraries and museums to run exhibitions and education programmes, exploring historic and cultural links as well as the general history and work of Parliament.
- » Providing training to businesses on Parliamentary processes

It is anticipated that the majority of the work will be with community groups, adult learners, groups with a remit to increase civic participation, citizenship classes, and groups whose aim is to increase social inclusion.

This is a forerunner to the November agreement for regionally based select committees which shall be appointed “to examine regional strategies and the work of regional bodies”. The intention is that the committees will look at the “development or implementation of policies where there is a regional aspect to decision-taking and delivery, and would not be focused on the purely local impact of nationally set policies”.

The two outreach officers recently met with the REP Community Panel and welcome opportunities to meet with a variety of groups. A series of workshops for the voluntary sector are being held in February and March - in Beverley, Bradford, Scarborough, Harrogate, Scunthorpe. For dates and times see [yhep](http://yhep.org.uk) website.

For more information on Parliamentary Outreach in Y&H contact Hannah Roberts or Daniel Wood at yh-outreach@parliament.uk or telephone 020 7219 6664.

Active citizenship and stronger communities – together we can revitalise democracy!



The Regional Active Citizenship Learning Alliance (RACLA) is a new network supported by the empowerment partnership, which aims to:

- » promote the learning dimension of the active citizenship agenda
- » provide a forum for individuals and organisations to share information and practice, to discuss issues and to influence policy and developments
- » raise awareness of active citizenship learning opportunities at a community level

What do we mean by Active Citizenship learning?

We mean learning how to bring about social change. This includes:

- » Learning how the political system works, locally to globally, the decision-making processes, people and power structures
- » Developing the knowledge, skills and confidence to engage with the political processes at any level

Three commitments are at the centre of this alliance

- » Empowering the critical and engaged citizen, confident to ask 'why?', seek the facts, challenge and change things
- » A commitment to democracy, social justice,

equality and inclusion

- » A commitment to openness and transparency in public affairs, with easy access to information, debate and decision-making

Over the next few months RACLA will:

- » Establish and maintain a database of citizenship learning activities and attitudes across the region
- » Build a broad and committed membership
- » Lobby for resources and change, for free access to high quality, practical, political education
- » Organise meetings and events
- » Publish articles and learning materials

In the picture

One key element for RACLA to complete is the formation of a regional picture of citizenship learning across the region – formal and informal. This will produce a snapshot of the political health of the region, a baseline data set that can be continuously amended and up dated, and a resource that will be a useful support for all involved in these activities as policy makers, providers, leaders and learners.

If you would like to find out more and contribute information about what you are doing, contact Ted Hartley, tedhartley@mac.com, or see the [yhep](http://yhep.org.uk) website.

Take Part Pathfinder starts off in South Yorkshire

The Take Part Pathfinder project is one of several across the country that are encouraging groups and individuals to work together within

communities to develop and promote effective ways of empowering citizens with knowledge, skills and confidence to increase engagement in civil, civic and democratic activity.

The Pathfinder is funded by the Department of Communities and Local Government and supported by the Regional Empowerment Partnership. The seven core partners in the South Yorkshire Pathfinder are:

Workers' Educational Association (WEA) who is the lead body with the three local authorities of Rotherham, Barnsley and Doncaster, Take Part Network, Novas Scarman Trust and the Academy for Community Leadership (Northern College).

The first year's work (January 2009-March 2009) will include a range of citizenship learning activities in the communities, residential programmes at Northern College, visits to Westminster in February and a Regional Campaigning Road Show. There will also be community led information gathering and database building, website development, production of publicity and learning materials, development of the City and Guilds IPAC (Individual Profile in Active Citizenship) accreditation and general development work in the localities to provide a basis for activities in the following two years.

Signs are that this will be a lively and exciting project which will help advance the empowerment agenda, strengthen democracy locally and support people into new roles and activities in their communities.

For more information please contact Trish Land at the WEA on tland@wea.org.uk.

South Yorkshire Community Engagement Improvement Partnership moves on

This partnership between the four local authorities and the Fire and Rescue Service illustrates how a relatively small resource can make a big difference to professional practice. With funding from LGYH capacity Building Programme, SYIP has held a major conference (November 2007), piloted the national community engagement standards (Scotland), collaborated around community engagement strategies, shared approaches and learning around neighbourhood agreements, driven the concept of a regional Champions of Participation residential and disseminated learning at a region wide community engagement conference (November 2008). Some of this has been through teamwork with the regional empowerment

partnership – matching ideas and resources to create a bigger pool of regional support for empowerment, exactly what partnership should be about.

The capacity building funding has now come to end but we look forward to continued teamwork in the future.

Looking back a bit

Autumn was a busy time for the regional empowerment partnership. Here's a sample of what happened – full reports are available on the yhep website.

Learning from UK and International Experience

In October 2008, 46 people gathered in Skipton to explore ideas for community empowerment across the Yorkshire and Humber region. In different ways, they were all 'champions of participation' - councillors, local government officers, other service providers, community activists, voluntary sector workers, civil servants, regional officers and academics. They were joined by participation specialists from Brazil, India, Jamaica, Bulgaria and also from Northern Ireland.

Key themes identified and explored included issues around power, organisational culture, inclusivity and strategy. A key challenge addressed throughout the event focused on the of embedding participation - so that it is integral to the way we all work. Towards the end of the conference strategies and solutions were proposed and presented to Andrew Campbell, Director of Local Government Policy and Performance, at Communities and Local Government, who joined the workshop in its closing stages. He outlined government priorities in relation to empowerment highlighting: **Double devolution, the performance management framework** and the need to build **strong community engagement**.



Bulgaria and Barnsley bond; Valarie Vasilev, Chairman of Gabrovo Council illustrates the role of humour in community involvement to Joe Micheli (Barnsley Council)

Answers on a postcard please

Andrew concluded with challenging questions for the empowerment partnership:

“What do you want the region to be famous for?”

“What will you build your reputation around?”

“What do you want to be better at than anyone else?”

We would like to hear your thoughts on these questions – please email us at:

mail@cogs.uk.net

First regional Empowerment Commission

The Y&H Empowerment Commission was launched at Government Office on 31st October. The Commission was established to explore how regional and local strategies and activities are contributing to the empowerment of communities.

In the spirit of engagement and participation, the Commission is intended to be a meeting of peers – and by that we mean a coming together of all those with a stake in the empowerment agenda – whether they be regional bodies, local public agencies, third sector organisations or community networks. The Commission findings should inform the ongoing research activities of the Regional Empowerment Partnership as well as be a physical coming together.

The launch

Three local authorities and their partners volunteered to begin an assessment of their current position regarding support for empowerment within their locality. Using the nationally agreed NI4 Evidence Framework, York City Council, East Riding of Yorkshire Council and Leeds City Council had a 'first go' at addressing the framework questions and testing responses with partners. The initial findings from this inquiry group were presented at the Commission, along with their perceptions of topical opportunities and the challenges of such assessment processes. The Commission set challenges for those involved in assessment processes such as the need to “Tell the story behind the measure” as well as coming up with practical examples of empowerment activity and tips for illustrating its effectiveness.

The Commission also heard from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Yorkshire Forward. Helen Thompson from Yorkshire forward began with posing the question:

“Are we actually talking about empowerment or just using the words?”

and closed with:

“Agencies get this wrong all the time but when communities get it wrong we point the finger”

In addition to workshop discussions, two commentators – Jenny Pearce from the Centre for participation Studies and John Low from JRF provided an analysis of the day's dialogue, including a reflection on the range of dichotomies expressed:

- » Is this a tick box exercise or is it meaningful
- » Is it corporate or is it about values
- » Some talk about targets, some about change
- » Prescription vs flexibility
- » Conflict or win-win
- » Top down or bottom up
- » Difference between time frames of communities and local authority
- » Representative vs participation
- » Generalities vs specificities
- » Outcomes vs outputs
- » Is it an art or is it a science
- » Is empowerment about resources or process?
- » Communities and cohesion – too much/too little?

Other events that took place during our month of action included two communities of practice, a second dialogue with the Audit Commission and a well over subscribed conference focussing on community engagement strategies, standards and practice. All reports are on the website.

Community Panel spreading its wings

The regional community panel (the partnership grouping of people who bring first hand knowledge and experience of community life) is really finding its feet and has a number of events and activities in the pipeline, one of which is a forthcoming conference looking at what makes a community work - community issues, responses and solutions in this period of economic

Looking forward

Community Builders and Community Anchors

A series of self assessment workshops are being delivered throughout Yorkshire & the Humber by members of the regional Community Alliance team to help organisations identify for themselves whether or not they are community anchors:

5th February – Halifax, 12:00 to 4:00

10th February – York, 10:00 to 1:30

18th February – Doncaster, 1:00 to 5:00

23rd February – Leeds, 10:00 to 1:30

Sessions cost £20 per person - some bursaries available. For more information contact [Ann Hindley](#) or [Lorna Buttrick](#) on 01724 710819, or go to the [yhep website](#) for a booking form.

Community Development and Mental Health and Well-being Conference 25th February 2009, Dewsbury Town Hall

The conference aims to explore how Community Development approaches can empower communities, community groups and mental health service users (individuals and groups) to become more involved in influencing and setting agendas relevant to their lives.

The conference will look at the knowledge and skills needed to be effective in working around mental health issues within communities, and will look at current practice.

To book a place, please log on to:
www.yhcdn.net YHCDN.net

Duty to Involve: Community Development Perspectives 6th March at Leeds Metropolitan University

Aims :

- » To extend practitioners knowledge of the Duty to Involve requirements on local authorities and public health bodies.
- » To share experiences of working with statutory bodies to encourage their engagement and empowerment work with local communities
- » To develop our ideas of what a community development approach might look like, how we support communities to understand and use opportunities which might get opened up by the legislation
- » To decide what else the network can do to support community development practitioners work in this arena

To book a place, please log on to:
www.yhcdn.net YHCDN.net

Fed up with an urban focusthen come along to:

Community empowerment in town and country: meeting the challenges of dispersed communities 10.30 – 4.00 26th February at The Courtyard, Goole

Presentations, workshops and open space sessions exploring the particular challenges faced in areas of rurality and dispersed communities, and focusing on:

- » the role of members in community empowerment
- » culture change in councils and partnerships to be more responsive to communities
- » third sector perspectives on working with communities, neighbourhoods and localities

To book a place see booking form on
yhep.org.uk

Community Governance: what does it really mean? St George's Centre, Gt George St, Leeds LS1 3BR 5th March 9.30am - 1pm (lunch provided)

Community and VCS members are increasingly being asked to 'represent' others in neighbourhoods, on public bodies and within partnership structures. This free half day event, organised by the Regional CEN Network and the Regional Forum, will explore the concept of community governance. What does it mean to be a community representative? And are individual reps, the agencies that provide them and the agencies that want them REALLY clear about roles, accountability and legitimacy? What should be done by all partners to make these representatives effective?

This event is aimed at individual community representatives, officers from VCS organisations that 'provide' reps and agencies that seek representation from the community and/or the VCS. The event will be run as an Open Space session. Open Space enables participants to set the agenda, so attendees will be able to discuss whatever topic they are specifically interested in.

To book a place, please contact Ian Gardner at the Regional Forum on 0113 394 2300

Strategic partners working together – the annual regional empowerment event: What works – solutions to everyday challenges 13th March, Doncaster Racecourse

Many of you participated in the conference last March at the Leeds Hotel Metropole. This year we are combining our energies at the races in what promises to be a fun and fruitful learning experience. We will launch the forward plan for the empowerment partnership, reconvene the empowerment commission and learn from successful activities through a mix of 'speed dating', storytelling, young women's rap, market place resources and communities of practice.

We are also hoping for ministerial involvement in what promises to be a great day.

downturn. Invitations will be circulated to a number of community based organisations from across the region.

In the spirit of inclusivity, the Panel has recently undertaken a skills and interests audit and is now planning to recruit new members. Applications will be open to anyone active in

their own community and are particularly invited from migrant communities, disabled people, younger people and those south of the Humber i.e, N.E Lincolnshire

Recruitment information will be available on the [yhep website](#) by 9th February.

Creating Better Futures in Yorkshire and Humber

Yorkshire Forward has just launched the 2009 Creating Better Futures Awards. The awards programme is a good way for community organisations to showcase the work they are doing and winners receive £10k to further their work.

Following the success of last year, the Yorkshire Forward Creating Better Futures Awards 2009 continues to celebrate the successful partnerships between the private sector and voluntary, community and faith organisations (VCF). Running until 2010, they are also supported by the Yorkshire and Humber Assembly and dedicated in memory of the innovation and inclusion work of Julian Cummins the former Assembly and Yorkshire Forward Board member.

We were reminded of Julian recently when Helen Thompson gave evidence on behalf of Yorkshire Forward at the Empowerment Commission (a full report is on the website). In her presentation, Helen talked about the continuing relevance of Active Partners – the benchmarks for partnership working in community regeneration. These benchmarks were developed by COGS working alongside community members from coastal, rural, coalfield and multi-racial urban communities

across the region. The whole impetus for this work came from the Churches Regional Commission and Julian used his influence within Yorkshire Forward to pursue the central role of communities in regeneration programmes. It was Julian that coined the phrase, and the title of the benchmarks as 'Active Partners'.

Who should apply?

Yorkshire Forward is looking for examples of how partnerships between organisations in different sectors can make a difference.

The key qualities sought include:

- » Ambition
- » Promoting diversity
- » Involving people and communities
- » Make a difference to people's lives and to organisations

Why should you apply?

Awards will be presented to both organisations, along with a £10,000 grant for the VCF organisation involved in the partnership. Receiving an award will ensure your efforts are recognised and increase your profile. It could even generate new opportunities, enhance relationships or lead to new collaborations. Your

success will be shared at the awards evening in April with further media coverage throughout the region following the event.

How to apply

To enter the 2009 awards please download, complete and submit the CBF awards 2009 application form. Your entry can be submitted by either the business or the VCF organisation but it must be endorsed by the partner you are working with. Applications must be received no later than 12.00pm on Friday 6th March 2009.

The Awards ceremony will take place on Thursday 16th April at Leeds Town Hall.

For further information see:

(<http://www.yorkshire-forward.com/supporting-people/jobs-for-everyone/equality-and-diversity/creating-better-futures-awards-2009>)

The National Empowerment Partnership in Yorkshire and the Humber (NEPYH) is one of 9 regional empowerment bodies. We exist in order to:

- » increase and improve empowerment activity,
- » co-ordinate dialogue and learning across sectors;
- » demonstrate the difference that community empowerment can make.

We have two guiding bodies – the consortium of partners and the community panel. Consortium members currently include: Association of West Yorkshire Authorities (AWYA), BME Regional Panel, Centre for Participation Studies, Community Alliance, East Riding of Yorkshire Council, FOLDA (Forum Of Local Development Agencies in the Humber), Government Office for Yorkshire and Humber, Guide Neighbourhoods Network, Integreat Yorkshire, Kendray Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder, Local Government for Yorkshire & Humber, Northern Refugee Centre, Regional Active Citizenship Learning Alliance (RACLA) /Take Part, Regional Community Development Network, Regional Community Empowerment Networks Network, Regional Community Panel, Regional Neighbourhood Training & Resource Centre, Rural

Communities Councils in Yorkshire & Humber, South Yorkshire Local Authorities Community Engagement Partnership, The Regional Forum, Voluntary Sector Equalities Human Rights Network, West Yorkshire Local Development Agencies, York & North Yorkshire Sub-regional VCS Infrastructure Consortium, Yorkshire & Humber Youth Work Unit, Y&H Altogether Better Programme, Y&H Regional Assembly, Y&H Faiths Forum, Y&H Rural Affairs Forum, Yorkshire Forward

If you would like to be regularly updated on opportunities for empowerment activities, events and support; if you think you can contribute to the work of the partnership; or would like to suggest ways in which the empowerment partnership can help you to work more effectively, sign up via the website.

COGS:

0114 268 7070

mail@cogs.uk.net

www.cogs.uk.net

