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## VOiCE Case Studies

### Evaluating Engagement in a Neighbourhood Partnership

Suite 305, Baltic Chambers, 50 Wellington Street, Glasgow G2 6HJ

**t** 0141 248 1924/1964 **f** 0141 248 4938 **e** [info@scdc.org.uk](mailto:info@scdc.org.uk) **w** [www.scdc.org.uk](http://www.scdc.org.uk)

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“It was useful to have partners around the table to formulate a collective view in an informal setting. The discussion focused on roles and function, what didn't happen and what could have been better.” Neighbourhood Partnership Manager.

Partners discussed their initial thoughts when undertaking the work to fill in the Analyse and Plan sections of VOiCE. Each individual had their own perceptions of what worked and what didn't work in the engagement process. This led to constructive discussions about the score for each of the Standards and the Engagement Outcomes.

As a result of these discussions, in the Review section partners concluded that the engagement exercise was very good but was weak when it came to involving the BME community. Participants agreed that they had not put in place specific methods to engage this group and that they needed to be aware of this for any future engagement activity.

## The Value of VOiCE

The group reported that they enjoyed using VOiCE for a number of reasons. It was seen as a positive process in which each partner had an equal say in the discussion which was subsequently recorded on the VOiCE tool. Community Representatives and community and voluntary sector colleagues felt that their voice was reflected in the record of the discussion. There was open debate which encouraged and supported partners to talk about their own perceptions of the engagement process. It was clear that community and voluntary sector colleagues had a different perception of the success of the engagement process from their statutory sector colleagues. In particular there were different views about how effective the group were at feeding back the results of the consultation, the community and voluntary sector colleagues felt that feedback could have been quicker and more thorough.

Participants found the scoring against the Standards a rewarding and informative process. By reviewing the Standards against a live project many felt it was a way to revisit the Standards and accompanying indicators in some detail and increase their knowledge of the application of the Standards in practice. VOiCE helped highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the engagement process and allowed for honest discussion and debate about what worked well and what could have been better. For many colleagues round the table this was the first time that they had collectively reviewed their work in terms of community engagement, they noted:

'It [review of engagement] simply hadn't happened in the past. You move on to another piece of work without taking time to reflect and look back.'

They reported that this was an opportunity for meaningful reflection and a way to identify and record the lessons that they have learned and identify key actions for the future.

Overall the participants felt good about the whole VOiCE review process, they advised that it was a very positive discussion and they particularly liked the fact that it was a self evaluation, conducted internally which didn't involve external consultants. They described VOiCE review as a 'breath of fresh air' in comparison to the traditional approach of appointing consultants to evaluate initiatives as all the knowledge and experience was in the room. VOiCE helped harness and structure the discussion to produce an effective evaluation.

The Neighbourhood partnership manager has been promoting VOiCE to the wider Partnership including most recently the local Police. He has also been working directly with the community itself to plan future engagements using the VOiCE tool.