

# 50<sup>+</sup> Citizen Engagement Project

## Phase 1

### Research Review

#### Barriers to Engagement: from understanding to action

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Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government



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## FOREWORD

This report represents phase one of a project that is designed to ensure that people who are 50+ are at the heart of the decision-making processes around commissioning, planning and the delivery of services for older people and other local governance arrangements. Identifying the barriers to effective engagement is a key part of the project.

The next stages are to:

- Road-test the findings of this research review in workshops
- Pilot innovative solutions for engagement
- Provide templates for the successful pilots' formats
- Providing accessible "toolkits" and innovative solutions for both professionals and those who are 50+.

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# SECTION 1

## Executive summary

### PURPOSE

This report addresses three of the objectives listed in the 50+ Citizen Engagement Research Project (see Appendix 1):

- To review current research to identify clearly established barriers that prevent or deter people who are 50+ from getting involved in consultations, engagement projects and decision-making processes.
- To review current research to identify what HAS been found to work and what has NOT worked when trying to engage effectively with people who are 50+.
- Produce a simple “readable” lay person’s report making recommendations, to the task & finish group, as to the key barriers for people who are 50+ and which, if removed or reduced, could help make a significant difference to engagement.

### ENGAGEMENT & OTHER DEFINITIONS

The Glossary (p.38) gives a list of commonly used terms in the context of citizenship. The list contains working definitions – hopefully they will generate debate.

As for ‘Engagement’, we understand it as follows:

- **engagement** has more or less the same meaning as **involvement** or **participation**;
- people have **levels** of engagement / involvement / participation, ranging from, say, reading a newsletter to editing an older people’s forum newsletter;
- public sector organisations can provide different **types** of engagement, for example, by setting up meaningful consultations or funding a citizens’ jury;
- some types of engagement require a more extensive level of engagement, for instance, chairing an older people’s forum;
- ‘it takes two to tango’ – engagement is about relationships.

*Evidence Box A* shows some of the types of engagement grouped according to how often they are used. Section 3 (p.39) gives further details.

As for ‘Active Citizenship’, Together We Can suggest this definition:

“Citizens taking opportunities to become actively involved in defining and tackling the problems of their communities and improving their quality of life.”

Although we will be keeping in mind the big picture of citizenship, the main focus of this project is on the civic aspect of citizenship – especially the links between people and their local government.

**Evidence Box A - types of engagement for older citizens**  
*Engagements listed by the BGOP / PSI Report (2007)*

- Information newsletters/publications
- User feedback surveys
- Community events and festivals
- Voluntary & community sector representation
- Older Peoples Forums
- Citizens' Panels
- Older Peoples' Champions
- Steering group representation
- Local Strategic Partnership representation
- Open board/general meetings
- Sessions in day/recreational centres
- Community planning/regeneration representation
- Sessions with cultural/faith groups
- Consulting 'expert' older citizens
- Older citizens as participatory researchers
- Older citizens as peer mentors/inspectors
- Older citizens as service delivery agents
- Timebanks or other forms of co-production

*Democratic Innovations (selected from Power Inquiry)*

- \* Consultation Innovations
  - planning for real
  - participatory theatre
- \* Deliberative Innovations
  - (DIY) Citizens Juries
  - Consensus conferences
- \* Co-governance Innovations
  - Participatory budgeting
  -
- \* E-democracy Innovations

**Key:**

- - frequently used
- - less frequently used
- \* - rarely used

## KEY FINDINGS

1. Very few older people are engaged extensively as citizens.  
This does not mean that many older people are not active in their communities. It means that comparatively few older people are active in, for example, local decision-making processes.
2. It is unlikely that there will be a sudden increase in the number of older people fully engaged as citizens. Progress in citizenship is probably best achieved by using a combination of existing and new ways of overcoming the current barriers to engagement.
3. Traditional forms of engagement have tended to communicate with older people as a mass. Traditional types of engagement have their place but their limitations need to be recognised.
4. New ways of engaging older people as citizens are most likely to succeed if older people are approached as individuals. There is a need to personalise any invitation to become more fully engaged as a citizen.
5. Barriers to engagement are of two basic sorts.

First, for a number of reasons, older people themselves might not be able to or want to become more actively engaged as citizens. The reasons are detailed below under points 6 and 7.

Second, public sector organisations might not be able to or want to engage older people as citizens. Considering this issue was a secondary focus of this phase of the project but limited findings are recorded below under point 8.

6. Evidence pieced together from a variety of sources provides the profile of an older person most likely to be fully engaged as an active citizen. *Evidence Box B* shows these findings.

It is important that *Evidence Box B* is read carefully. It is not intended to present a picture of the ideal 50+ active citizen.

*Evidence Box B* is about the likelihoods of certain person characteristics. The evidence helps us to understand why so few older people are extensively engaged as citizens.

It is useful to think about *Evidence Box B* as telling us something about the people who have by-passed the barriers to engagement. If we think about things in this way, we can go on to make suggestions about helping older people to become more actively engaged if they want to be.

This profile is useful not only in identifying the barriers to civic engagement for older people but also in informing strategies for recruitment.

### **Evidence Box B - Older People and Citizen Engagement**

The literature search did not produce any dedicated research on older people and citizen engagement that could be directly used in this project.

A picture – somewhat sketchy – of the engaged older citizen emerges as someone who:

- ⇒ Is in a minority of, say, one in a hundred for the most active forms of engagement.
- ⇒ Is on average about the age of 65.
- ⇒ Contributes considerably more time to volunteering than the average citizen.
- ⇒ Has a prosocial personality – agreeableness, helpfulness, empathy and emotional stability.
- ⇒ Is motivated by the two-way benefits of civic engagement – gaining personal health and well-being in return for giving time and energy to the community at large.
- ⇒ Has above average levels of education.
- ⇒ Is in good physical health.
- ⇒ Has sufficient financial resources.
- ⇒ Is socially active.
- ⇒ Has religious beliefs
- ⇒ Has altruistic and non-materialistic values.

It needs to be emphasised that the above are likelihoods.

This - possibly stereotypical – picture of the engaged older citizen needs adaptation or revision according to local contexts. For example, in South Wales there are many trade unionists who are active citizens without necessarily fitting all the above characteristics.

7. Barriers to the civic engagement of older people can be listed as:

- Lack of personal resources
- Lack of motivation
- Previous negative experiences
- Cultural Issues

*Evidence Box C* provides a tool for discussing older people's barriers to 50+ citizen engagement.

**Evidence Box C - Barriers to engagement, the older person's view**  
(for greater detail see pages 22 to 25)

Lack of personal resources (note 1)

- Education & skills
- Money
- Physical & mental health
- Mobility & transportation
- Disability & sensory impairments
- Social confidence & self-esteem
- Social contacts
- Time

Lack of motivation

- No knowledge of benefits of participation
- Unaware of civic participation opportunities
- The issues debated are of little interest

Previous negative experiences

- Unsatisfactory meetings
- Consultation overload
- Failures of council to listen
- Perception of manipulation
- Unmet expectations
- Bureaucratic slowness / inertia

Cultural Issues

- Minority groups
- Usual suspects
- Language and literacy
- Values and beliefs
- Form and style of engagement
- Community divisions

8. From the perspective of public sector organisations, the research records:

- some movement towards creating opportunities for new forms of engagement;
- a concentration on 'consumerist' engagement in connection to the quality of public services;
- a prevalence for viewing the general public as apathetic;
- the lack of resources – financial, expertise and time – to establish long term engagement relationships.

9. Regarding 'what works', the use of both universal and targeted strategies is key to success in overcoming the barriers to citizen engagement. This strategy can be formulated as:

- a. **Continuity / Sustainability.** Keep doing what has been partially successful, e.g. the Forums. Make sure they are supported in such a way that guarantees their survival but does not compromise their independence. The Forums themselves must not be a barrier to engagement.
  - b. **Personalise.** Building relationships with older people who are 'good prospects' is key: personal invitations to come and join civic engagement; celebrating difference; building on the first contact of a complaint; overcoming people's fears of inadequacy through sensitive mentoring and training; addressing older people's personal barriers to fuller citizenship by directly recognising and responding to their needs.
10. Application of this strategic principle coupled to the use of *Evidence Box C* the table on the barriers to citizen engagement is most likely to be successful if:
  - the reality that comparatively few older people are likely to be 'fully engaged' as citizens is accepted;
  - different levels of engagement are recognised and accepted – but without assuming that people will necessarily 'climb the ladder of citizenship';
  - the background and needs of individuals are understood and acted on;
  - a variety of types of involvement are available and become standard practice in citizen engagement;
  - thoughtful use is made of existing tools for participatory activities;
  - the challenges that accompany citizen engagement are fully acknowledged.
11. Fundamentally it's about 'different strokes for different folks'. Older people should have the opportunity to engage more fully as citizens in ways that suit them. If more older people are to be more fully engaged as citizens, then it falls to public sector organisations to encourage a culture of citizenship by providing appropriate opportunities and resources.

## **SECTION 2**

### **Research Review – towards an evidential basis for action**

#### **METHODOLOGY - A NOTE**

##### **Realising the Report Objectives**

The section on methodology (see Appendix 2) describes the approach taken to meet the three objectives listed above. As yet, there appears to be no research directed specifically at the issues under consideration. As a result, the research task became one of making the best use of available knowledge.

This process produced the following list of questions used in shaping this report:

1. The Pattern of Volunteering
  - a. What types of volunteering are there?
  - b. How does civic engagement fit the overall pattern of volunteering?
  - c. How many people are engaged in local governance? – and at what level?
2. People who volunteer
  - a. What do we know about the (older) people who volunteer?
  - b. Older people who have high levels of civic engagement - do we know anything about them?
  - c. Why do people volunteer in general and in particular?
3. Barriers to Engagement
  - a. What are the barriers to engagement?
  - b. Do we know anything about people who have overcome the barriers to engagement?
  - c. For those people who aren't engaged, do we know what's preventing their engagement?
4. Civic Engagement Success Stories
  - a. The claims for successful civic engagement – what about the evidence?
  - b. Are there proven ways to overcome the barriers to civic engagement?

#### **ANALYSIS**

##### **Reminder – democracy & local governance**

Why are we interested in a greater number of older people being involved in the decision-making process?

Many publications start with a reminder about the motivation for the recent interest in civic engagement. The central concern is with the health and sustainability of the democratic process which one way or another underpins our way of life.

It's also worth remembering that citizenship involves both compulsory and voluntary activities. We must pay tax. We volunteer to attend a public meeting. It's this second kind of activity that concerns us most here.

### **The pattern of volunteering – some general considerations**

Being a fundraising volunteer for the RNLI.  
Being a volunteer member of a lifeboat crew.  
There's one heck of a difference!

There's also a difference between signing a petition and chairing an older people's forum – no doubt about that.

Even within a single voluntary organisation, there will be considerable variation in roles, responsibilities and behaviours. There will also be differences between types of voluntary organisation.

Those observations also apply to the context of civic engagement – Arnstein's '*Ladder of Civic Participation*' is a good model of the extent of that variation (note 2).

At the outset, it's worth reminding ourselves that there is no such thing as a general theory of human behaviour or social life. Similarly, there is no general theory of volunteering.

By considering the *pattern of volunteering*, we can begin to understand similarities and differences between civic engagement and other forms of voluntary activity.

Here's some facts and figures that are part of the volunteering story in England:

- Women participate more than men in informal volunteering, e.g. taking the neighbour's kids to school. (Women: 41%. Men:32%)
- Women and men are more equal in terms of formal volunteering. (Women: 31%. Men: 27%)
- The 75 and over age group volunteer least of all age groups.

(Source: Murphy et al 2005)

For a moment, let's add a different message to this fact about older people. Research findings from other countries suggest that older people around the age of 65 make the most significant contribution to volunteering of all age groups.

## Locating our interest – the scope of civil & civic activities

We are interested in engaging people aged 50+ who previously have only been marginally involved in the democratic process. The desired form of engagement is specific: consultation, engagement projects and the decision-making process. These three activities all require members of the general public to *volunteer* their time and possibly other personal resources such as expertise.

Is civic engagement just like any other type of volunteering?  
Or, is it special?

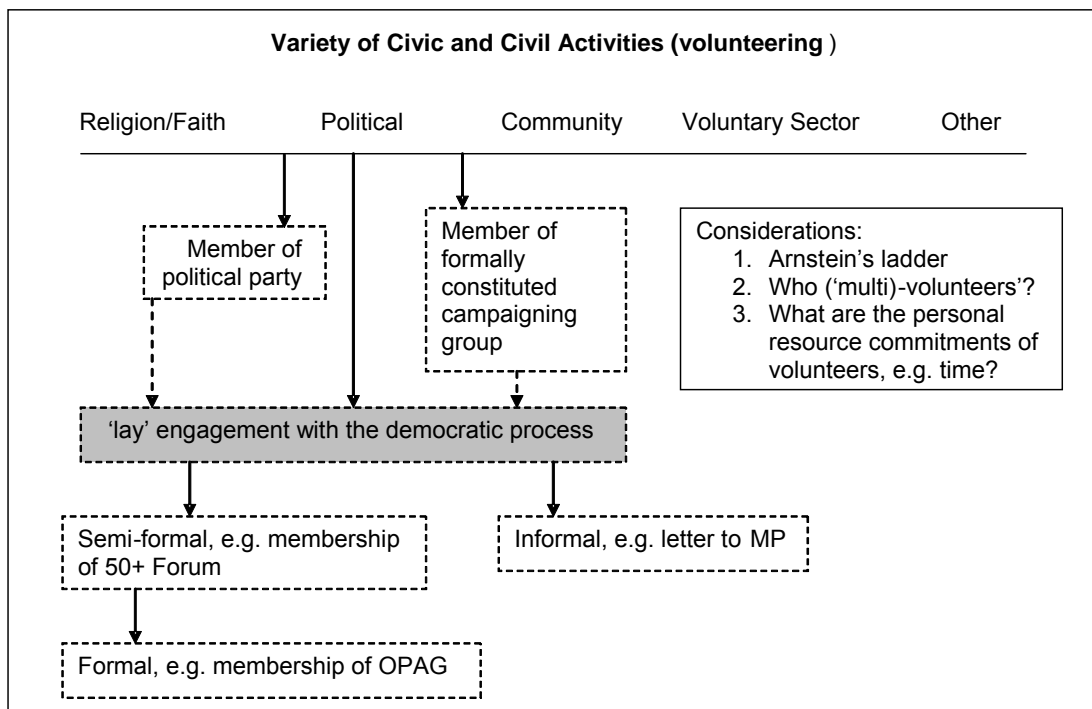
Volunteering is characterised by its great variety. To give some examples: lay preaching, serving in a charity shop, house-to-house collection for a campaign, looking after the neighbour's cat and being an expert patient. In this project, we are not directly interested in these - or the hundreds of other - examples. Yet, we might well be indirectly interested. For example, is the person who serves in a charity shop and looks after the neighbour's cat a better than average prospect for engaging in local governance?

*Figure 1* has been produced to guide discussions. The figure attempts to remind us that our concern for engagement with democratic processes, including local governance, needs to be framed within a bigger picture.

Reading *Figure 1* from top to bottom brings 'Arnstein's ladder' to mind: are there levels of engagement?

If we read *Figure 1* from across its top line, the question arises: are some older people active not just in religion but politics, their community and voluntary organisations as well?

**Figure 1: The Variety of Civic and Civil Society**



How do such very active older people – often (ungraciously) termed ‘the usual suspects’ - spread their resources across so many commitments?  
At present, this question seems to be unanswered.

### **Political Engagement**

The research evidence suggests that only a small number of people have a high level of political engagement.

- In England, under three in a hundred of the adult population are classified as civically engaged. Compare this figure with the fifty in a hundred people who report they are active in their communities. (source: Leach et al 2005) That is, ‘community volunteering’ is far more popular than ‘civic volunteering’ (see note 3)
- The recent report from the Economic and Social Research Council (2007) contains this table:

<b>% saying they had</b>	<b>1986</b>	<b>1989</b>	<b>1991</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>2000</b>
Signed a petition	34	41	53	39	42
Contacted their MP	11	15	17	14	16
Contacted radio, TV or newspaper	3	4	4	5	6
Gone on a protest or demonstration	6	8	9	9	10
Spoken to an influential person	1	3	5	3	4
Contacted a Government Department	3	3	4	3	4
Formed a group of like-minded people	2	3	2	3	2
Raised the issue in an organisation they already belonged to	5	4	5	4	5
None of these	56	48	37	53	47
<b>Base</b>	<b>1548</b>	<b>1516</b>	<b>1445</b>	<b>1137</b>	<b>2293</b>

Source: Bromley et al 2001: 201 table 9.1

The figures are part of a picture showing that political engagement is varied both in type, e.g. contacting an MP, and numbers, e.g. about 2 or 3 in a hundred people forming a group with like-minded people

- The 2006 *Joseph Rowntree Report* specifically considers the involvement of older people in policy and planning initiatives. One of the case studies is based on the project Growing Older in Darlington (GOLD).

**Table 2: Statistics for Growing Older in Darlington (GOLD)**

Resident population over retirement age	19, 212
GOLD membership	385
Active members	40 (approximate)

The evidence suggests that the GOLD project is well-organised, thoughtfully planned and adequately resourced. Even so, only about 2 in a hundred of the retired population are on the GOLD membership database. Further, only about 1 in 500 are classified as active.

- Figures for Older People’s Forum membership in Wales are in line with the figures from Darlington. In two Welsh local authority areas, just under 1 in 100 people over retirement age are forum members. Just like Darlington, very few are very active members.

### **Evidence Box 1 – volunteering & democracy**

Volunteering in local governance is relatively unpopular.

Bearing in mind Arnstein’s Ladder on levels of civic engagement: as the level of engagement rises, the number of people actively involved falls.

Crucially, for our *50+ Engagement Action Research Project*, we need to consider that perhaps only two in a hundred older people will actively participate in the decision-making process.

### **People who volunteer**

In this section, the objective is to draw up a set of ‘pen-pictures’ that could be used to identify good prospects for recruits to civic engagement. These pen-pictures can then be used to inform a discussion of the barriers to civic engagement. Suffice to say the issues are complex and under-researched (Note 4).

Existing research classifies people in one or more ways:

- age and gender;
- personality;
- motivations;
- resources and ‘background’, such as: income, social support and educational attainment;
- beliefs and values.

Other features are also added to this mix include (Note 5):

- life-course, for instance income changes on retirement;
- situational factors, for example volunteering expertise for a charity or time volunteered for civic engagement.

### ***The volunteer identity***

Researchers have made progress in describing the usual characteristics of people who volunteer. The term ‘volunteer identity’ is sometimes used to

mean that some people 'fit a mould'. Just like, say, policeman or teachers, people 'become the job'.

Table 3 displays a selection of the research findings.

The following quotes provide detail:

In respect of personality, Lodi-Smith and Roberts (2007, p.80) conclude that: "people who invest in more in social institutions tend to be warmer, more responsible and organized, and less anxious and depressed than others."

Finkelstein et al (2005, p.414) make the interesting point that once a person has established a recognised volunteer identity, then they are motivated to act to maintain it: "... individuals who are most likely to engage in ongoing, discretionary helping are those who have internalized a prosocial role and who strongly feel that other people expect them to continue in a manner consistent with that role."

**Table 3: Selected research findings on the volunteer identity**

<b>Classification</b>	<b>Selected research findings for the volunteer identity</b>
Personality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the literature often refers to a 'prosocial personality'</li> <li>▪ characteristics associated with this type of personality include: agreeableness, helpfulness, conscientiousness (disputed), emotional stability and empathy</li> </ul> <p>(sources: Penner 2002; Bekkers 2005; Lodi-Smith &amp; Roberts 2007)</p>
Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ perceived personal health &amp; well-being benefits, (objective positive association established for formal volunteering)</li> <li>▪ helping others so as to remain consistent with beliefs and values</li> <li>▪ facets include: self-esteem, social relationships and enjoyment</li> </ul> <p>(sources: Penner 2002; Finkelstein et al 2005; Li and Ferraro 2005; Malin 2005; Finkelstein 2006; Tang 2006; Li and Ferraro 2006)</p>
Resources and background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ higher levels of education (disputed) and religious affiliation are associated with above average levels of volunteering</li> <li>▪ poor health, low income and restricted social networks limit formal voluntary activity</li> </ul> <p>(sources: Penner 2002; Bekkers 2005; Kloseck et al 2006; Tang 2006)</p>
Beliefs and values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ religious beliefs</li> <li>▪ altruism</li> <li>▪ post-materialistic values</li> </ul> <p>(sources: Penner 2002; Bekkers 2005)</p>

Penner (2002, p. 454) provides insights into the remaining classifications in *Table 3*: “Active volunteers and non-volunteers did not differ with respect to age, education, gender or income. [But] ... people who belonged to an organized religion were more likely to be volunteers (80 percent) than people who did not belong (62 percent) ...”

Overall, the research findings from the various studies seem at odds with each other. Part of the problem arises from the definitions of volunteering used. As things presently stand, the research needs interpretation. When used in the context of older people, together with dedicated research, it is possible to outline a profile for older volunteers – as carried out below.

The reasons for using the expression, ‘the usual suspects’, begins to become clearer. Simply, there are ‘go-to’ people who are known for their availability and willingness to participate. Recent research by Blakey et al (2006) reflects the reality of the existence of the usual suspects. However, these authors put forward sensible proposals for going beyond the usual suspects - proposals that will be considered later.

### ***Older people who volunteer***

“Recruitment and retention of older volunteers are important areas that require further examination.”  
(Kloseck et al 2006, p.88)

Despite the lack of extensive evidence on the recruitment and retention of older volunteers, there is research which can usefully inform the *50+ Citizen Engagement Project*. This observation is especially relevant for the ‘life-course’ perspective in which the differences and changes which accompany ageing are fully recognised. As a straightforward example, volunteering at the age of 55 is unlikely to be the same as volunteering at 95.

Linking this life-course perspective to *Table 3* produces insights into the barriers to engagement for some older people. For instance, older people who previously had established a strong volunteer identity but now lack financial and other resources to sustain that identity, with the loss of well being. Focussing on older people’s resources for civic engagement then becomes one possible course of action. On the other hand, if there is any truth at all in the notion of ‘prosocial personality’, then the prospects for engaging older people with a contrary personality are not very encouraging. (note 6)

The life-course perspective also allows us to re-visit some of the themes we looked at in the section, ‘*The Pattern of Volunteering*’. We now examine in more detail questions about: the number of older people volunteering; their amount of time they spend volunteering; and the type of volunteering they do.

In a study commissioned by The Vale of Glamorgan CBC in connection to ‘*The Strategy for Older People in Wales*’, Malin (2005) provides an account that informs our context directly. The ‘..... because they enjoy it!’ report records the volunteering experiences of older people themselves. The report

also contains useful information on volunteering numbers both in The Vale of Glamorgan and in Wales based on the Beaufort Research (2001). Appendix 3 contains a commentary on the tables and charts from this research stream compared and contrasted to international findings.

The following points summarise the information on the number of older people volunteering:

- There is some evidence to suggest that after the age of 65, volunteering activity decreases. After the age of 80, volunteering is rare.
- Before the age of 65, the evidence is mixed. In The Vale of Glamorgan, volunteering reaches its peak in the age range 60-69 (Malin 2005). In the US, there is a very gradual decline in volunteer numbers between the ages of 35 and 64 (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2005).

As for commitment to volunteering, Tang (2006, p.377; emphasis added) records:

“ ... ***older volunteers were the most committed*** to volunteering, with a median of 96 hours against a median of 50 hours for all age groups (Bureau of Labour Statistics, 2005). Older adults were actively involved in volunteering with high levels of commitment ***if they had opportunities and adequate resources ...***”

If the sections in bold italics also apply to Wales, then this represents information of significance.

Kloseck et al (2006, p.86) record a similar finding for Canada:

“... 23 per cent of Canadians aged 65 or over volunteered to work with charitable and non-profit organisations and that those who volunteered tended to be the younger seniors. While this is the lowest per cent of all groups volunteering, seniors in the National Survey contributed the highest number of volunteer hours of all age groups.”

That is, there is evidence to suggest that during their life-course, volunteer make their most significant contribution in terms of time between the ages of 60 and 75.

In respect of the type of volunteering older people do, the literature search produced minimal information. As time goes on, older people are affected by their ability to do physical activities and this is a factor in research on ‘functionality’ (e.g. Finkelstein et al 2005). Do older volunteers compensate by adopting organisational roles such as: mentoring or trusteeship? In their study of the predictors of volunteerism and leadership, Kloseck et al (2006, p.87) make the tentative statement:

“The fact that very few, if any, older individuals appeared to be willing to take on leadership positions suggests that current community capacity-building

approaches may not work with very old individuals with multiple and complex health conditions.” (See note 7)

### **Evidence box 3 – older volunteers**

There are indications that:

- ⇒ There is an increasing decline in the number of older people volunteering after the age of 65.
- ⇒ Volunteering after the age of 80 is rare.
- ⇒ A ‘hard core’ of volunteers aged over 60 make the greatest time contribution to volunteering.
- ⇒ Personal resources are likely to be a significant factor in sustaining voluntary participation.

Further research is need on:

- ⇒ Older ‘multi-volunteers’ – that is, people who volunteer in a variety of contexts and in different ways. For example, are there older people who are trustees in a charity and run a youth football club and are active in older people’s forums?
- ⇒ Exploring the progression of the type of volunteering as the life-course progresses. For example, do older people gradually move from more active to less active volunteering roles?

### ***Older people and civic engagement***

The previous section was mixed in terms of findings. There is fairly reliable knowledge about the general picture of older people’s volunteering. But we appear to lack specific information upon which to build programmes of action. Unfortunately, this lack of specific information extends to our core interest of older people and civic engagement.

Taken at face value the 175 pages of the recent *Joseph Rowntree Report* (Reed et al 2006) should contain a wealth of actionable advice on good practice. However, whilst the 5 case studies make for interesting reading, there is little in the way of specifics. Older people are referred to generically – as a mass. Now and again phrases such as ‘from all walks of life’ (Reed et al 2006, p.106) and ‘older people from various backgrounds’ (same reference, p.112) are used. But there are very few details beyond these bland attempts at categorisation. The overwhelming impression is that in the 5 projects, the *usual suspects* were involved. That’s not to say that these projects weren’t worthwhile in all sorts of ways. Just that there’s nothing new here. Even so, the case study on the *DIY Citizen’s Jury* will be considered shortly as offering an opportunity for the personal development of a limited number of individuals.

The literature search produced one paper (Bekkers 2005, p.451) that provides a useful general statement about active citizens:

“The most distinctive characteristics of active citizens are their greater [personal resources], as well as their political preferences and attitudes. Civic engagement increases with the level of education, religiosity, interest in politics, and post-materialistic value orientation ...”

Despite the fact that the research was conducted in the Netherlands and the substance of the quote is more suited to our discussion of the volunteer identity, it has some use in informing the content of Evidence Box 4.

#### **Evidence Box 4 – older people and civic engagement**

The literature search did not produce any relevant dedicated research on older people and civic engagement.

Joining together pieces of the information recorded above, a picture – somewhat sketchy – of the civically engaged older volunteer begins to emerge as someone who:

- ⇒ Is in a minority of, say, one in a hundred for the most active forms of engagement.
- ⇒ Is on average about the age of 65.
- ⇒ Contributes considerably more time to volunteering than the average citizen.
- ⇒ Has a prosocial personality – agreeableness, helpfulness, empathy and emotional stability.
- ⇒ Is motivated by the two-way benefits of civic engagement – gaining personal health and well-being in return for giving time and energy to the community at large.
- ⇒ Has above average levels of education.
- ⇒ Is in good physical health.
- ⇒ Has sufficient financial resources.
- ⇒ Is socially active.
- ⇒ Has religious beliefs
- ⇒ Has altruistic and non-materialistic values.

It needs to be emphasised that the above are likelihoods.

This - possibly stereotypical – picture of the engaged older citizen needs adaptation or revision according to local contexts. For example, in South Wales there are many trade unionists who are active citizens without necessarily fitting all the above characteristics.

### ***Further comment***

*Evidence Box 4* is derived from studies that emphasise people's attributes, such as age and educational attainment. Attempts are made to link these attributes to certain actions, such as attending a forum. These attempts are not always successful – nor are the results always useable. For the purposes of this project it may be useful to keep in mind what people actually do, for instance, contact their MP, as recorded in *Table 1*. These issues reflect a general problem in social science in how to link behaviours to attributes.

## **BARRIERS TO CIVIC ENGAGEMENT FOR OLDER PEOPLE**

The aim of this section is to identify barriers to the civic engagement of older people – barriers that can be meaningfully addressed by cost efficient interventions. So, without being specific, a glance at *Evidence Box 4* suggests that there are perhaps insurmountable barriers between certain older people and civic engagement. We are not attempting to engage civically every older person. It also needs to be stated that *Evidence Box 4* is not going to be used as a checklist to vet older people. On the contrary, we can use *Evidence Box 4* to generate positive interventions, such as ensuring older people have sufficient personal resources to fully participate as citizens. The focus is creating further opportunities for engagement.

### **Social exclusion and barriers to engagement**

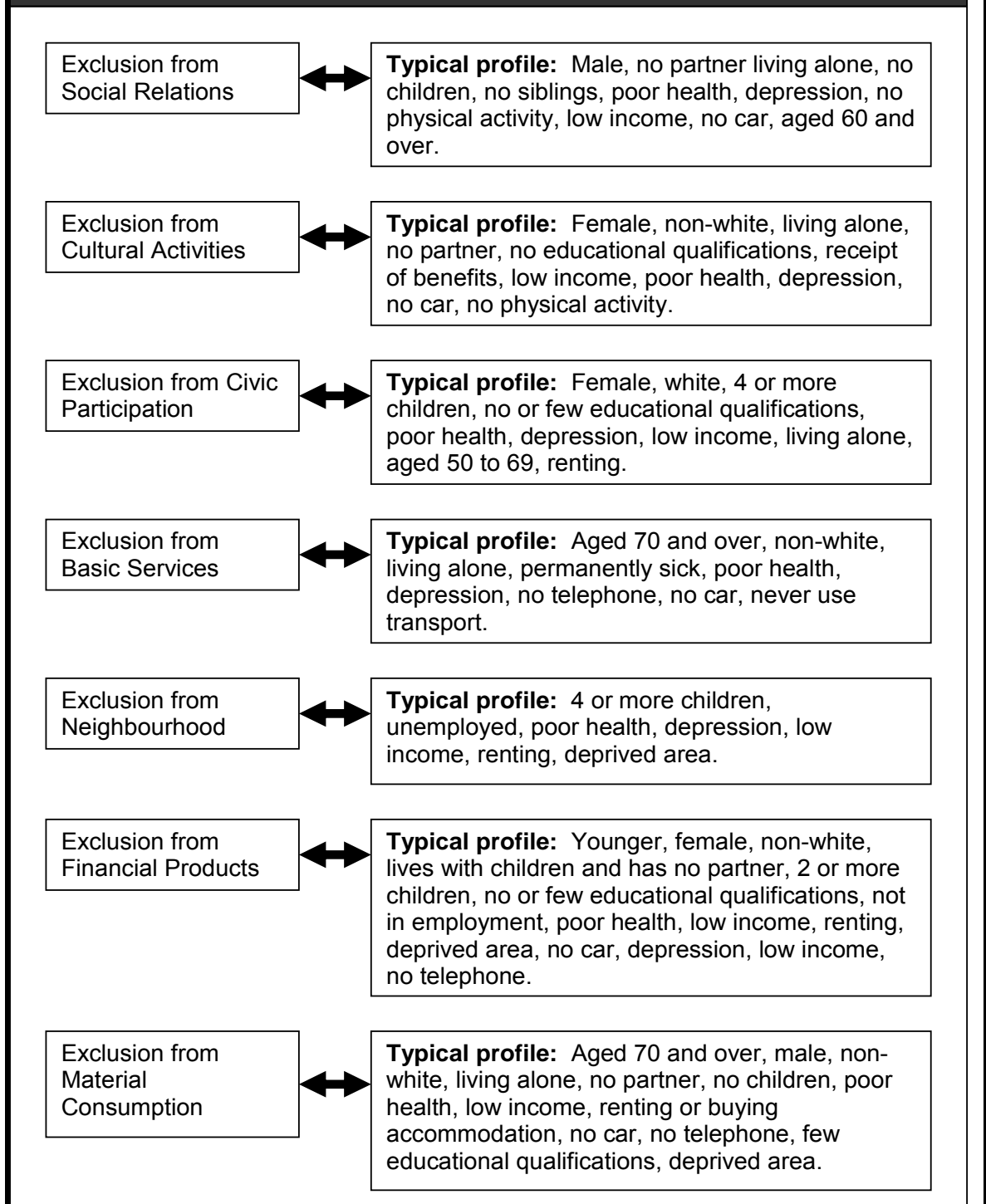
It's worth comparing and contrasting *Evidence Box 4* with *Figure 2* in which 'civic participation' appears as a distinct category. The profiles of the people who are socially excluded seem often to be just the opposite of those who are civically engaged. To some extent, the barriers to social inclusion are common to the barriers to civic engagement. That's not too surprising but it's a useful starting point in considering barriers to engagement. Although we should bear in mind that in England, "43% of people at risk of social exclusion volunteered at least once a month ..." (Murphy et al 2005, p.6)

This approach – using the characteristics of people to sketch their profiles – is the one that has been adopted in this report. Using this approach, we start to see people as individuals rather than just a population mass. (see note 9)

### **Types of barriers to civic engagement for older people**

Different sorts of barriers to civic engagement are considered under the following headings. The information is mostly drawn from *Evidence Box 4* but other inputs have also been used, notably '*Customer and community engagement briefing*' (OPM 2006). Smith (2005, pp.105-108) provides an institutional perspective on barriers to participation.

**Figure 2. Characteristics of those excluded on each of the seven dimensions**



[Source: ELSA, Wave 1 – see note 8]

## ***Lack of personal resources***

Barriers to engagement arise because older people do not have the personal resources to participate. For example, they simply can't attend a meeting because of poor health and lack of mobility.

### Education & skills

- Civic engagement can involve reading documents such as plans and policies. Older people with low levels of literacy are naturally disadvantaged. Documents often don't use plain English.
- Active participation can require expressing your point of view both clearly and with respect to certain conventions. Further and higher education learning experiences are partly designed with this fact in mind. Comparatively few people in the older generation have had the chance of further or higher education.

### Money

- Civic participation necessarily involves some financial expenditure.

### Physical & mental health

- A consistent research finding is that poor physical health inhibits all forms of volunteering. Some conditions, such as depression, can be a motivation to some forms of volunteering.

### Mobility & transportation

- Older people's civic engagement can be limited by both access to transport and their personal lack of mobility. For example, attending meetings may not be straightforward

### Disability & Sensory Impairments

- Blindness, partial sightedness and deafness may be significant barriers to civic engagement whether consultation, engagement projects or decision-making.

### Social confidence & self-esteem

- The literature search did not produce formal references to social confidence and self-esteem. These factors were suggested after reading of an earlier version of this report. Suffice to say that these factors make sense as facets of 'human capital' – without exploring how that concept intersects other capital forms, e.g. social or cultural.

### Social Contacts

- Older people might lack the vital social contact that would link them to civic engagement.

Time

- 'Time' did not often appear as a factor in the literature review but is included on account of anecdotal evidence gathered from the implementation of *The Strategy for Older People in Wales*.

### ***Lack of motivation***

Volunteers are possibly motivated by the knowledge and reality that civic participation is enjoyable. Not everyone knows this. Generally, if people aren't in one way or another motivated to become civically engaged then that is a barrier.

Benefits of civic participation

- This factor is all about generating a virtuous cycle of engagement. If older people are, for instance, lonely or depressed then evidence suggests that volunteering will help remedy those conditions. On the one hand, loneliness and depression are barriers to engagement since they may well engender a general lack of motivation. On the other hand, if the benefits of civic engagement are communicated to an older person suffering loneliness and depression, then with the appropriate support they might enter a virtuous cycle of volunteering and well-being. If older people don't know about the health and well-being benefits that come from participation then that's a possible barrier.

Awareness of engagement opportunities

- Are all older people aware that, for instance, there are older people's forums?

The issues debated are of little interest

- In respect of community involvement, Larsen (2004, p.3) states that it is easier to attract local residents in connection with, for example, housing rather than economic development.

### ***Previous negative experiences***

Older people may have made attempts to participate more fully in the democratic process but have been left frustrated or disappointed.

Unsatisfactory meetings

- Too much control by local government officials and officers. Badly organised. Poorly chaired. Held in inappropriate places. Agenda hijacked. Insults.

Consultation overload

- Duplication: repeatedly asking the same questions from the same people.

#### Failures of councils to listen

- Consultation 'after the event'
- Councils ignoring the results of consultations
- Consultation is just 'window-dressing'

#### Perception of manipulation

- The perception that civic engagement is a political device to stifle dissent or protest. (this issue will be developed a little more later)

#### Unmet expectations

- For example, in order to recruit more people into an engagement exercise, there may be a temptation to make over-enthusiastic claims about the eventual outcomes. Recent research has stressed the need for honesty on the part of public sector organisations in order to develop trust. Expectations need to be realistic and carefully managed. For example, how many older people join forums in the belief they are going to change pensions policy?

#### Bureaucratic slowness / inertia

- To quote from Jean Lane of Caerphilly's 50+ Forum:  
" ... [D]ecisions are made but no action is taken. I was given the task ... of rooting out age discrimination ... last summer and it was decided that the 50+ Forum would review the policies of the Local Health Board and the Local Authority in terms of age discrimination. A report to WAG indicated that progress had been made on this. The only progress is the working party set up by the 50+ Forum – that is not progress on the task itself. Despite requests, no policies have been given to us other than some hurriedly collected ... which were not truly relevant to age discrimination. I find the readiness to shelve things to the next meeting - two months later - irksome. Is this the bureaucratic inertia that so frustrates the general public? Any policy maker should be aware that policies will be tweaked down the line by managers who have to implement them if only to make them work, thus maintaining the status quo."

#### ***Cultural issues***

##### Minority groups

- Belonging to a minority group means the older person doesn't fit the required mould. The recent 'Make the Connections' publication (WAG 2006) is noteworthy in addressing this issue.

##### Usual suspects

- Going along to, say, a forum for the first time and finding a cosy club of usual suspects.

### Language and Literacy

- Civic participation can involve long and intense discussions of difficult matters of policy, perhaps using technical or unfamiliar language
- Similarly, documents remain central to government and local governance and they are not noted for their readability.

### Values and beliefs

- Older people who are civically engaged may well have values and beliefs that others do not share. Intolerance and lack of respect may form a barrier to civic engagement.

### Form and style of engagement

- This factor is a generalisation of some of the issues highlighted under 'previous negative experiences'. Such has been the expansion of the 'engagement industry', exemplified by the '57 Democratic Innovations' (Smith 2005), that there is a sense that the medium of engagement is at least as important as any messages. Whether the elderly will appreciate engagement as a cultural experience is a moot point. But for those only just aged 50+ ... maybe. (see Wilcox / blog for considerably more on social media.)

### Community divisions

- This is another factor suggested by the Project Task & Finish Group. It seems sensible to distinguish community divisions from minority groups. Experiences of, say, public meetings where serious community divisions can surface, indicates that this issue appears to be neglected in the literature as a barrier to engagement.

## **Summarising the barriers to civic engagement – possible solutions**

*Table 4* summarises the above in a way that can be used by the Project Board, Work Plan Group, Stakeholder Workshops and others to devise possible solutions.

### **Table 4 in use**

This report has been guided by the fact that civic engagement is relatively unpopular. Civic engagement is not mass entertainment! That fact has taken our general direction of travel towards identifying individuals who might share certain characteristics. One result is the stereotypical image of the usual suspect. Another result is *Table 4* since this represents individuals who are 'good prospects' for civic engagement but have a barrier in front of them, such as a lack of personal resources. Once possible solutions to these barriers have been identified then the job's done, isn't it? ... not quite.

**Table 4: Towards overcoming the barriers to engagement**

Barriers to engagement	Possible Solutions
Lack of personal resources	
- Education & skills	
- Money	
- Physical & mental health	
- Mobility & transportation	
- Disability and sensory impairments	
- Social contacts	
- Time	
Lack of motivation	
- No knowledge of benefits of participation	
- Unaware of civic participation opportunities	
- The issues debated are of little interest	
Previous negative experiences	
- Unsatisfactory meetings	
- Consultation overload	
- Failures of council to listen	
- Perception of manipulation	
- Unmet expectations	
- Bureaucratic slowness / inertia	
Cultural Issues	
- Minority groups	
- Usual suspects	
- Language and literacy	
- Values and beliefs	
- Form and style of engagement	
- Community divisions	

(adapted from OPM 2006, p.15)

**Scenario – first contact**

Suppose an older person has indicated an interest in civic matters by:

- coming along to a forum meeting for the first time
- writing a letter to the local newspaper
- complaining to their local council
- writing to their local councillor, AM or MP
- writing a blog
- joining a protest

- forming a campaigning group
- other examples, including those from *Table 1*.

What is now needed is some sort of action that allows them the opportunity to take the next step – or, as some might see it, perhaps climb the next rung of Arnstein’s ladder. At this moment, there needs to be a previously worked out response to declarations such as:

“I enjoyed coming to the forum but it’s not easy for me to come.”

Clearly, there are possibly considerable sensitivities in responding to that but that’s how conversations start and that’s how relationships are built. That’s a pretty obvious comment on how human beings go about being human. But at some stage in the conversation when the barrier to further engagement is articulated, there has to be a well-worked out response in the form of an invitation or offer. That’s where the *possible solutions* in *Table 4* come into play.

We then have to move on from *what* is the possible solution to *who* is involved in that solution.

## **BARRIERS TO ENGAGEMENT – THE POSITION OF PUBLIC SECTOR ORGANISATIONS**

“Asking people set questions in focus groups or polling is a poor substitute for real democratic processes.” (The POWER Inquiry 2006, p.9)

Up to this point we have focussed on the barriers to active citizenship from the perspective of older people. The lack of widespread public enthusiasm for the deeper levels of civic engagement have been recorded. Is this general lack of enthusiasm for citizenship mirrored by public sector organisations? There may well be statutory requirements for public sector organisations to involve their publics but the extent to which they fulfil these requirements is likely to vary.

At this point, it is worth noting that scepticism about public sector intentions over civic engagement exists. A brief discussion of the issues is recorded under ‘Further Considerations’ (p.30).

The report, ‘*Meta-Evaluation of the Local Government Modernisation Agenda: Progress Report on Stakeholder Engagement with Local Government*’ (Leach et al 2005) represents a comprehensive and recent overview. The report refers to ‘supply-side’ (e.g. local government officers) and ‘demand-side’ (e.g. citizens) issues rather than barriers to engagement. Supply-side considerations are indicative of the view that public sector organisations do have responsibilities for the democratic infrastructure that are beyond the capabilities of individuals or groups. Key findings include:

- the recognition that there is considerable public engagement but often in more informal ways, e.g. attending a demonstration;

- whilst there has been some movement by local government towards participative and deliberative democracy, there has been an emphasis on the quality of service delivery: "... service delivery/Best Value was the most popular policy focus for participatory issues. Less importance is attached to democratic objectives such as increasing citizen awareness and empowering local communities." (Leach et al 2005, p.40). That is, engagement has often been 'consumerist' in nature. Of course, the quality of public sector services is of concern to everyone. But there is a risk that this issue dominates to the exclusion of others. The local government agenda then becomes 'Engagement but on our terms' – clearly a barrier to deeper citizen engagement.
- Overload; duplication; lack of evidence of engagement outcomes; and failure to engage minority groups – all these are cited as problematic, or even, making further barriers to engagement.

Strangely, the Leach et al (2005) report does not consider the lack of local government resources as limiting engagement opportunities. This theme is taken up by a very recent study in Wales (Hall et al 2007, see note 10). Preliminary findings indicate resource issues in relation to:

- competing claims on resources, that is, effectively citizen engagement is a low priority;
- there is a lack of expertise within local government on how to actively engage the taxpayer;
- a lack of time to develop the network of relationships necessary for deeper forms of citizen engagement.

This report also draws attention to local government perceptions of large-scale public apathy about citizen engagement. This can be interpreted as local government setting up a barrier to engagement.

## **CIVIC ENGAGEMENT SUCCESS STORIES**

*Evidence Box 1* (p.13) provided a reality check on expectations for the numbers of people highly engaged in local governance. But there are some encouraging signs. For example, in a survey (MORI 2001), "...20% of respondents claimed they would like to have more of a say in what the council does, and the services it provides, ..." (Leach et al 2005, p.43).

Moving beyond this general statement, this section poses two questions:  
 What works in the civic engagement of older people?  
 What doesn't work?

In response to these questions, the literature research search did not produce very much in the way of good evidence. There are interesting accounts of familiar civic engagement initiatives but little in the way of quantifying the outcomes and impacts of a civic engagement project – perhaps that just isn't possible. Literature dedicated to older people appears especially limited.

The following provided short commentaries on the documents read.

## Reports

*EngAGE – Involving Older People / Cynnys Pobl HŶN*  
(Age Concern Cymru 2007)

This is a very comprehensive report detailing much of the 50+ citizen engagement activity in Wales in the last four years.

All aspects of engagement are covered, including;

- definitions of engagement;
- equality & diversity issues;
- organisational responses to the challenge of engagement;
- the policy dimension of engagement;
- Involving Older People Toolkit;
- Engagement Through ...

This last item – Engagement Through ... - records an extensive list of different approaches to and ways of doing engagement. This is a radical conceptualisation of the field and warrants considerable promotion.

*Llefaru dros ein Hoed / Speaking Up for our Age*  
(Help the Aged 2003, 2007; Jones 2006)

These three documents represent what is arguably the most comprehensive information and practical guidance on Older People's Forums and related issues. Specifically, the suite of documents coverage includes:

- an outline of the participative approach that underpins the implementation of The Strategy for Older People in Wales;
- key factors in the partnership of citizenship between older people, Welsh Assembly Government, Local Authorities and the Third Sector;
- the roles of Older People's Forums, Strategy Co-ordinators and Older People's Champions;
- a toolkit for setting up and maintaining forums that contains 'everything you could want';
- a forum directory.

In addition, the annual conference reports of *Speaking Up for our Age* are available.

*Older people 'getting things done': Involvement in policy and planning initiatives* (Reed et al 2006)

This is the Joseph Rowntree report already mentioned. The only additional comments concern the DIY Citizen's Jury. This account contains a convincing

argument for the benefits of the personal development of older people through their involvement in a fundamental process of democracy.

“It brought me out of my shell you know. I never thought I’d see the day I’d go to Cambridge University and sit there and others listen to my views. I didn’t have the confidence because I had never been a speaker. [Now that has changed.] So I go out a lot.” (Reed et al 2006, p.51)

Citizen’s Juries have been used by only 6% of local authorities (source: Leach et al 2005) but this quote indicates their potential if the purpose of engagement is as much about encouraging active citizens as developing the decision-making process.

Perhaps the more general message that needs to be taken from the study is engaging older people as individuals not as a group or a label. Meeting the needs of individuals and giving opportunities for personal development.

It’s all about the human touch – whatever the context. As Yardley et al (2006, p.650) write in recording the views of older people in six European countries: “A personal invitation from a health professional to participate is important ...”

*Beyond the Ballot – 57 Democratic Innovations from Around the World* (Smith 2005)

According to this report, there are grounds for optimism in increasing the number of people actively participating in the democratic process. Here are some examples:

- “... as many as 8.4% of the adult population in Porto Alegre [Brazil] stated that they had participated in budget assemblies in the last five years.” (Smith 2005, p.64) The percentage quoted is still quite small in terms of the whole population – but it’s four times as big as some of the figures noted above! It’s the form of involvement – people actually participating in the allocation of public funds – that is perhaps crucial. The report ‘*Breathing life into democracy – the power of participatory budgeting*’ (2005) provides a dedicated overview of this democratic innovation.
- Consultation innovations include ‘standing forums’ such as our own Older People’s Forums. Consumer Panels and ‘Planning for Real’ are also mentioned. The dangers of consultations being hijacked are acknowledged.
- E-democracy innovations are considered. E-petitions such as the recent “Scrap the planned vehicle tracking and road pricing policy” have proved (too?) popular.

It’s not possible to do justice to range of innovations described in ‘*Beyond the Ballot*’ in a quick review. The report deserves to be scanned at the very least.

*Making the Connections: Engaging the Public in Decisions – The Citizen’s Voice* (WAG 2006)

This report gives an especially good account of engagement with minority groups. There is also a brief but useful review of public engagement methods – though not remotely as comprehensive as *Beyond the Ballot*. The importance of inviting people to consultations is stressed (WAG 2006, vi)

**Key messages – Vary it! Personalise it!**

Innovations in the *form of involvement* are likely to increase the number of people engaging in democratic processes.

Activities that directly engage older people as individuals are likely to further engage them civically.

**Good practice guidance and standards – towards a toolbox**

There are some useful resources available to the Work Plan Steering Group. None of them provide specific guidance on the civic engagement of older people. Even so, they can be usefully employed in conjunction with this report in taking the *Engagement Action Research Project* on to its next stage.

*Facilitating community involvement: practical guidance for practitioners and policy makers* (Larsen 2004)

The guidance is quick to access, making for handy reference as a checklist. In keeping with the key message box above, Larsen (2004, p.8) suggests:

- “● ensuring the use of both universal and targeted strategies ...”

*National Standards for Community Engagement and National Standards for Community Engagement – Reference Manual* (Scottish Executive, no date)

Perhaps this should be considered for adoption.

*Signposts A practical guide to public and patient involvement in Wales and Signposts Two Putting Public and Patient Involvement into Practice* (NAW / OPM 2001 /2003)

These are worth looking into – whilst bearing in mind NHS and local government difference. The notion of expert patient is interesting. What about expert citizens?

## FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

“The route to enhancing meaningful civic life is not badgering people to become engaged because politics is fun and easy; it is asking people to become engaged because politics is dreary and difficult” (Theiss-Morse and Hibbing 2005, p.245)

This report began with a reality check: not many people are highly engaged civically. The above quote takes us back to the starting point. It also permits further consideration of the *previous negative experiences* already discussed as a barrier to the civic engagement of older people.

From Arnstein’s seminal paper in 1969 to Stephen Thomas’s 2007 paper, there is a tradition that constructively questions what goes on under the heading of ‘civic engagement’.

This report includes four papers which provide material for reflexive thinking. Thomas (2007) asks the question: “Whose process is it anyway?” We touched on this issue at the first project Task & Finish group meeting. Does the process we’ve initiated belong to older people ... yet? Is engagement being done with, to, or on behalf of older people?

Martinson & Meredith (2006) question the policy directions in advanced economies arising because of the ‘demographic timebomb’. The authors are critical of the trend that erodes the spiritual aspect of aging, replacing it with productive activity. They write:

“In Britain, as in other parts of Western Europe and the United States, ... older citizens [are] valued for their ability to contribute to the market economy through paid or unpaid workforce participation. The emerging social policies promoting paid work and volunteer opportunities for older adults both create and reflect a new public discourse on what it means to be old.” (Martinson & Meredith 2006, p.321)

Thiess-Morse & Meredith (2005) challenge some of the reasons for promoting civic engagement. In particular, they indicate that groups allegedly convened democratically often pursue sectional self-interests. The authors interpret this result as arising due to undue emphasis on outputs and outcomes. As they articulate in the above quote, democracy is a messy process – but it’s that process that really counts. Good citizens continue with democracy even when the decisions keep going against them.

Ryfe (2005) reviews ‘deliberative democracy’ continuing the above theme of uncomfortable democracy. He ties an academic account to five mechanisms: rules, stories, leadership, stakes and apprenticeship.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

This research review is based on a wide range of literature spanning different disciplines, countries and types of volunteering. Despite the lack of research dedicated to the engagement of older citizens, there is reasonable confidence in the reliability of the findings in their application within this project. Initial responses from project participants have confirmed this view. It remains to be seen whether the findings can be used to design, implement and evaluate 50+ Citizen Engagement Projects.

## NOTES

1. The term 'personal resources' needs clarification. In the literature review, terms such as human and social capital appear regularly. For the present purposes, 'personal resources' seems a more accessible expression. Also, included under this heading are 'social confidence & self-esteem'. These factors stem in part from an attempt to operationalise the notion of the prosocial personality. This extension represents lay common sense rather than the application of formal psychological science.
2. Arnstein's 1969 paper, 'A Ladder of Citizen Engagement', has been widely used and frequently cited. Also, its usefulness has been questioned in that it suggests a normative progression through stages of engagement. The metaphor of the ladder is probably at fault here. It is better just to think in terms of levels of engagement – the position taken up here.
3. More time for literature searching or more research are needed here. The information given is based on whole population surveys. It would be interesting to know the figures in age bands, e.g. 50-59, 60-69, and so on.
4. This researcher was at times left in two minds about the state of knowledge on a number of important issues. Were the unanswered questions simply due to the time constraints on the literature search? Or, was it that nobody has attempted a response to the relevant questions? This researcher suspects the latter.
5. A certain amount of 'finessing' was required to impose conceptual order on the evidence. Appendix 3 shows Penner's 2002 model which may offer some help in piecing together the process of volunteering.
6. The finding that there are likely to be people who are 'psychologically distant' to volunteering is perhaps uncomfortable reading. But it does suggest the need – at least in the first instance - to target resources on meaningful and effective ways of overcoming the economic, structural, social and cultural barriers to engagement for people disposed to citizen engagement. A person with a pro-social personality is simply a good prospect for engagement. Clearly, no engagement project should aim to exclude people who exhibit anti-social behaviour.
7. Where is the research that tells us about the patterning of volunteering for the 'hard core' volunteers. Do they spend all their time with one organisation? Or, do they 'spread themselves around'?
8. ELSA: English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA). The reference is Barnes et al (2006).

9. In essence, an attempt has been made to segment the population of older people according to certain characteristics. Ofcom (2006) uses this approach to engagement and leaves an impression of rigour that is lacking in many of the other reports reviewed.
10. Hall et al (2007) is an in-depth report on public involvement in three county boroughs in Wales. Published in June 2007, the report arrived a little too late for full consideration in this research review.

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## SECTION 3

### Additional Reference Information

As far as possible within the research context, this report has been designed with accessibility and readability in mind. This final section contains what could be termed ‘research nuts & bolts’. Or, in other words, really useful information that could not be included in the main body of the text – due to concerns about breaking the flow of the text.

#### **GLOSSARY – SOME ‘DEFINITIONS’ OF IMPORTANT TERMS**

(with acknowledgements to Vegeris et al (2007) for sources and to Wikipedia and togetherwecan <http://togetherwecan.direct.gov.uk/>)

#### **Active Citizenship (see also Engaged Citizen)**

Citizens taking opportunities to become actively involved in defining and tackling the problems of their communities and improving their quality of life. (togetherwecan)

#### **Civic engagement**

Civic engagement can take many forms— from individual volunteerism to organizational involvement to electoral participation. It can include efforts to directly address an issue, work with others in a community a problem or interact with the institutions of representative democracy. (Wikipedia)

#### **Civil Renewal**

The renewal of civil society through the development of strong, active and empowered communities, in which people are able to do things for themselves, define the problems they face, and tackle them in partnership with public bodies. Civil renewal involves three essential elements: active citizenship, strengthened communities and partnership in meeting public needs. Its practical process is community engagement. (togetherwecan)

#### **Deliberative Democracy**

Deliberative democracy, also sometimes called discursive democracy, is a term used by some political theorists to refer to any system of political decisions based on some tradeoff of consensus decision-making and representative democracy. In contrast to the traditional economics-based theory of democracy, which emphasizes voting as the central institution in democracy, deliberative democracy theorists argue that legitimate lawmaking can only arise from the public deliberation of the citizenry. (Wikipedia)

## Engagement

- **engagement** has more or less the same meaning as **involvement** or **participation**;
- people have **levels** of engagement / involvement / participation, ranging from, say, reading a newsletter to editing an older people's forum newsletter;
- public sector organisations can provide different **types** of engagement, for example, by setting up meaningful consultations or funding a citizens' jury;
- some types of engagement require a more extensive level of engagement, for instance, chairing an older people's forum;
- 'it takes two to tango' – engagement is about relationships.

## Engaged Citizen

Someone who:

- recognises everyday responsibilities and rights, for example, by showing respect for the law and co-operating with a fair taxation system;
- acts to support and develop civic life, for example, by voting and attending meetings convened by local government;
- is active in community life, for example, by helping and receiving help from neighbours or supporting local sports teams;
- acts to promote the links between civic and civil life, for example, by communicating the message that law & order is easier in a culture of tolerance and mutual respect - but does not accept that 'anything goes';
- is always willing to listen and learn – especially 'listening to a different point of view' and 'learning to agree to disagree';
- is generally active in support of the democratic tradition and all that involves.

## Volunteer

A person who spends time, unpaid doing something that aims to benefit the environment or people, either individuals or groups other than or in addition to close relatives. (togetherwecan)

## TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT

This list was produced by Jackie Dix:

- **Citizens council** – this have been used by the National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) to seek the views of a representative sample of lay people and has been well resourced in terms of both time an money. The council has met for over two years.
- **Citizens' juries** – bringing together a small group of citizens to deliberate on a particular issue.

- **Supermarkets** – to reach a good cross section of the public with on the spot questioning and has the advantage of reaching people who are not normally engaged.
- **On street recruitment** - a method used to recruit to citizens forums for the Assembly Government's research to investigate the way people want to be engaged by public services. Again has the advantage of reaching people who are not normally engaged.
- **Focus groups** – these can be targeted to seek the views of people who are not normally engaged such as with parent and toddler groups, disability groups and at youth clubs or care homes.
- **Community visioning** – there are a broad range of community visioning/planning approaches that aim to generate ideas from across the community leading to the development of a vision and action plan. It is similar to the regeneration approach of planning for real.
- **Rehearsal for Reality** – a theatre company based in Wales which puts on imaginative theatre to promote awareness of citizens' social situation and opportunity for change.
- **Consultation documents** – these can be supplemented by events to discuss the consultation further.
- **User feedback surveys** – to ensure regular feedback on service. Taken further this could involve regularly consulting with service users seeing people as experts in their own fields and even user led research.
- **E-consultation** – with online questionnaires and discussion forums.

Here are further details on selected forms of engagement copied and pasted directly from Smith (2005). These selections are included to promote interest in Smith (2005) – the whole report deserves to be read.

### **Planning for Real**

Planning for real is a technique developed by (and a registered trademark of) the Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation and is often used to engage the public in neighbourhood regeneration. This approach to consultation makes more creative use of public meetings and involves the creation of a 3D model of the community, usually built by local community groups or school children. A series of events are then held where participants place option cards (or fill in blank cards) on to the model to represent changes that they would like to see. Often the model is taken to community groups which do not usually engage in consultation exercises, allowing participation at a time and place convenient to participants. The use of cards also means that citizens who may not be confident enough to voice their views in open meetings can offer suggestions. At the end of meetings, suggestions are prioritised and an action plan may be developed. Planning for Real offers a highly visual approach to consultation. The possibility of using new information and communication technology (ICT) is being explored – for example, the virtual experiment undertaken in Slaithwaite, West Yorkshire.

## **Participatory Theatre**

Participatory theatre is based on the 'theatre of the oppressed' developed by the Brazilian Augusto Boal who believes that imaginative theatre can promote awareness of citizens' social situation and opportunities for change. The players perform a short play that shows a protagonist failing to achieve a goal. The play is repeated and members of the audience are invited to offer suggestions of how the protagonist could have acted differently and to come onto the stage to replace the actors to try out their ideas. Participatory Theatre can work particularly well as a way of engaging individuals and groups who are alienated from more formal and traditional approaches to participation.

[In Wales Participatory Theatre is known as Theatr Fforwm Cymru]

## **Participatory Budget**

Participatory Budgeting was initially established in Porto Alegre in Brazil in 1989. Of all the participatory initiatives used in developing nations, it is Participatory Budgeting that has caught the imagination of practitioners and academics. Like the Kerala example, it manages to combine popular engagement at the local level with the development and monitoring of a city-wide budget. It achieves this by mixing open assemblies with representative bodies.

Participatory Budgeting begins with a series of neighbourhood and regional popular assemblies that generate investment priorities and select citizens to sit on decision-making bodies which present a city-wide budget to the city legislature. Participation levels are impressive – over a five year period in the late 1990s, as many as 8.4% of the adult population stated that they had participation in the process during the last 5 years.

PB has spread to other Latin American localities and there is growing interest in this use in the UK (for example in Salford). A more detailed analysis of the process is offered in Case Study 5.3.

## **Online Deliberative Poll**

James S Fishkin, the originator of the deliberative opinion poll (4.3.), also promotes the idea of online deliberative polling (ODP). The real-time, interactive function of the internet can be exploited so that citizens who are geographically dispersed can deliberate with one another in the same virtual space. As Ackerman and Fishkin argue, the internet removes the restriction of being people together into the same physical location: 'these restrictions disappear if the face-to-face discussion can be mediated through technology'.

As with the traditional approach to deliberative opinion polling, ODP draws together a random sample of citizens (up to 500) to deliberate on a particular policy issue – the first ODP in January 2003 was on foreign affairs, the most

recent in the run up to the 2004 presidential elections as part of PBS Deliberation Day. Participants are randomly assigned to small groups which deliberate for around 2 hours per week over a four week period. At the end of the period, the (post-deliberation) opinions of citizens are surveyed. Compared to traditional internet discussion forums that tend to attract like-minded citizens, the selection process for ODPs ensures that deliberations reflect a diversity of perspectives.

To overcome the 'digital divide', citizens without internet access have been given WebTVs or computers as an incentive to participate; other citizens have been given an honorarium. In at least one of the ODPs 'all participants had microphones, reducing the disadvantage of those who were less literate or less comfortable with text.

A traditional deliberative opinion poll was run alongside the ODP on foreign affairs in 2003. Although there were similar changes of opinion, 'changes from online deliberation were less pronounced than in the face-to-face version'. Ackerman and Fishkin argue that 'these parallel results suggest that online deliberations, if they continue longer, might someday produce even bigger changes than those resulting from the face-to-face process. However, it is also possible to argue that face-to-face engagement between citizens may have a greater transformative potential than ICT-mediated deliberations. At present there is a lack of evidence either way. Only by running ODPs over a longer time frame will we know the answer.

## **SUGGESTED READING FOR THE PROJECT TEAMS AND OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES**

The main purpose of this report is to provide a resource for action by providing reliable information on the civic engagement of older people. This author's task has been one of searching, selecting and distilling. That is, papers and documents have been plundered and the debris re-constituted. Some of this literature deserves better treatment.

The following list is drawn from the *references* and *bibliography* (see below) and represents those documents that colleagues might at least like to thumb through.

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On p.58, this report contains the section:

- Citizens are more likely to be involved if:
  - (i) The issue is one they care about, or one close to their personal experience.
  - (ii) They are asked and made to feel that their input is welcomed.
  - (iii) The body asking for their views has the power to do something about the issue.
  - (iv) Their views are given due consideration and are seen to be reflected in the decision that is taken or action agreed on the issue
  - (v) The form of engagement is fit for purpose and in particular asks no more from citizen than is necessary. There must be a proportionality between what citizens are asked to put in, and the social benefits that results.
  - (vi) They receive the training and support they need to carry out the role effectively.

This seems worth noting and using.

Martinson, M and Minkler, M (2006) Civic Engagement and Older Adults: A Critical Perspective. *The Gerontologist*, 46(3), June, 318-324.

NAW / OPM (2003) *Signposts Two Putting Public and Patient Involvement into Practice*. Cardiff / London: NAW / OPM.

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Thomas, S (2007) *Community Participation in Governance: Whose Process is it anyway? – A literature Review*. University of Glamorgan.

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# APPENDIX 1

**This is, by the very nature of the project, an evolving brief**

## **ENGAGEMENT RESEARCH PROJECT (Third Draft)**

Project Completion date by the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2008

**For the purposes of this action research project the following will apply;**

- Effective Engagement is outcome focussed, providing a flexible set of techniques, adaptable to local circumstances but sharing a common principal that: power lies with those participating, enabling them to influence decision-making processes.
- There are many levels of the participation ladder and different people may want to engage in different ways, there is therefore a need to provide a variety of options.
- An essential component to active engagement is proactive feedback to all those involved.

### **Introduction**

This project is a result of the increasing awareness that, although we have the faithful core of groups of older people who regularly get involved, that there are many people who are 50+ who hold strong views on how they would like services to be delivered but do not get involved and are less likely to be engaged with the issues or local governance.

We also appreciate that for many professionals there is an understanding that consultation is “required” but often a lack of understanding of the real value it can add, particularly when engagement with citizens happens right at the beginning of a process. More often “consultation” is completed at the tail end of the process because “they know they should” at a point, when it is too late to make changes.

There has been a lot of research in this area but little work has been done in drawing together the evidence and tools, to provide practical accessible solutions that bring about the cultural change required to help ensure those who 50+ are given easy and accessible opportunities to influence service delivery and local governance.

We believe this piece of action research and its outcomes would be a fundamental step towards embedding the culture, that, actively engaging with those who are 50+ is valuable to all those involved.

## **Project Aim**

We want to ensure that people who are 50+ are at the heart of the decision-making processes around commissioning, planning and the delivery of services for older people and other local governance arrangements by:

- Identifying the barriers to effective engagement
- Piloting innovative solutions for engagement
- Providing accessible reports to help professionals and older people, helping them with engagement.
- Providing accessible “toolkits” and innovative solutions for both professionals and those who are 50+.
- The project will take into consideration the issues relating to poor literacy and sensory impairments in the provision of “toolkits” for Older People.

## **Target Groups**

- People who are 50+, and not currently engaged, who have strong views and opinions about local governance and the service provision for those who are 50+, who given the right encouragement, support and opportunities would become involved if the current barriers were removed.
- Professionals who at both a strategic and practical level are planning, commissioning and delivering services for people who are 50+. These professionals, either, might not currently appreciate the added value to service planning and delivery that can be provided through effective engagement, or, would like to, but do not have the tools to facilitate effective engagement of people who are 50+.

## **Key Stakeholders**

This project is supported by the following key stake holders who are providing resources or financial support:

The Welsh Assembly Older Peoples’ Directorate  
Caerphilly 50+ Positive Action Partnership  
Caerphilly County Borough Council Scrutiny Department  
BGOP – Better Government for Older People  
OPAG – Older Peoples’ Advisory Group  
Engage – Age Concern Cymru  
Health Alliance – Caerphilly County Borough Council  
NPHS – Caerphilly County Borough  
Cardiff – Older Peoples’ Strategy Group  
Carmarthen – Older Peoples’ Strategy Group  
Conwy – Older Peoples’ Strategy Group  
Denbighshire – Older Peoples’ Strategy Group  
Flintshire – Older Peoples’ Strategy Group  
Gwynedd – Older Peoples’ Strategy Group  
Merthyr Tydfil – Older Peoples’ Strategy Group  
Newport – Older Peoples’ Strategy Group  
Pembrokeshire – Older Peoples’ Strategy Group  
Wrexham – Older Peoples’ Strategy Group

**Other “in principle” supporters of the project are:**

National Partnership Forum for Older People Chair  
 Swansea – Older Peoples’ Strategy Group  
 Rhondda Cynon Taff – Older Peoples’ Strategy Group  
 Bridgend – Older Peoples’ Strategy Group  
 Ceredigion – Older Peoples’ Strategy Group

Objectives and timescales of when to be complete by:

<b>WHAT</b>	<b>WHO</b>	<b>WHEN</b>
To review current research to identify clearly established barriers that prevent or deter people who are 50+ from getting involved in consultations, engagement projects and decision-making processes.	Welsh Institute for Health & Social Care - WIHSC	April 07
Produce simple “readable” lay person’s report making recommendations, to the task & finish group, as to what the key barriers are for people who are 50+ and if removed or reduced, what could help make a significant difference to engagement. With suggested basic glossary of terms and meaning within the context of this project	WIHSC	May 07
To review current research to identify what tools and resources might currently be available	WIHSC	May 07
To review current research and undertake interviews to identify clearly established barriers that prevent or deter professionals from engaging with older people and to Produce simple “readable” lay person’s report making recommendations, to the task & finish group, as to what are the key barriers for professionals and if removed or reduced, could help make a significant difference to engagement.	WIHSC	May 07
To provide a provisional list of “toolkits” available for professionals and or older people to use to facilitate greater engagement	WIHSC	May 07
Post the initial report and provisional tool kit information on relevant websites to generate feedback and begin the process of encouraging the culture change required to ensure effective engagement	Project Officer	May 07
Review the recommendations made in the	Project Board	May 07

current research results report and decide on which barriers we would like to tackle re: professional and those people who 50+.		
Develop the brief for pilots. The detail of this objective can only happen once the decision is taken on which barriers to tackle.	Project Board	June 07
Project officer support to be provided (subject to funding) to facilitate the project. A steering group will monitor this work. The project officer work will be undertaken by the GAVO Participation and Involvement 50+ officer by bringing the post up to full time to the end of March 08	Project Officer	March 07- March 08
The work plan for the project officer to be developed by the steering group. This work plan will include the undertaking of piloting new and innovative solutions and the production and launch of a “tool kit” for professionals and one for people 50+ and over.	Steering Group	May 07
Undertake a limited number of pilots to test the effectiveness of new approaches to remove current barriers for both professionals and those who are 50+.	Project Officer <u>with</u> the support of stake holders	June 07/ October 07
Evaluate the effectiveness of the pilots and prepare a brief interim report which suggests what should be included in the final report and “toolkits”	Project Officer/ WIHSC/ key stakeholders	December 07
Deliver a readable report for professionals detailing the added value effective engagement can bring to service planning and delivery	WIHSC & Project Officer	Feb 08
Produce an accessible “toolkit/ Idiots guide” for older people wanting to get involved in decision making processes and local governance.-	Project Officer & WIHSC	Feb. 08
Produce for professionals a “toolkit/ Idiots guide” to effective engagement with those who are 50+.	Project Officer & WIHSC	Feb 08
Officially launch the report and tool kits at an event	Project Officer with Project Board & key stakeholders	March 08

## Engagement Research Project Board

We have a Project Board to lead on this project, the role of this Board will be

- To devise the brief for the project
- To provide a smaller 4 person steering group to devise and monitor work plans for the project officer and Welsh Institute for Health & Social care research with the full involvement of both Steve Thomas the project manager and Nick Gould from WIHSC. The steering group membership will be: the Task & Finish Board Chair, someone from outside CBC area, one other Local Authority person, one 50+ Positive Action partnership member
- To monitor the progress of the brief and take decisions on changes to the brief as & when required as the project develops and more evidence is produced.
- The ultimate responsibility for the project will sit with the Project Board. They will sign off on any key decisions and work plans and the Project Board's decision will be final.
- The Chair of the Project Board will produce as and when (with the support where required, of the project officer, WIHSC and the Project Board Members) reports needed for funders and key stakeholders.
- The Chair with the support of the project officer will arrange the meetings of the Project Board and the Work plan group meetings.

## Membership of Project Board

Mandy Sprague	50+ Positive Action Partnership - Chair
Jean Lane	Caerphilly 50+ Forum Representative
Deborah Boyce	Engage (Age Concern Cymru)
Jackie Dix	50+ Positive Action Partnership
Liz Sharma	Consultation Officer CCBC
Steve Thomas	GAVO & Caerphilly 50+ Forum
Kerry Morgan	NHPS (National Public health service) & 50+ PAP
Ann Lewis	Care & Repair Merthyr
Claire Morris	Older Peoples' Strategy Coordinator, Merthyr
Sandra Trimarco	Older Peoples' Strategy Coordinator, Newport
Jonathan Jones	Scrutiny Coordinator CCBC
Rhianon Urquhart	Health Alliance & 50+ PAP
Catherine Lacey	Arts & Music Officer CBBC
Ann Meloy	Contracts Evaluation Officer CCBC
Nick Gould	Welsh Institute for Health & Social Care, University of Glamorgan
Simon Boex	Better Government for Older People & Older Peoples' Advisory Group

## 50+ Positive Action Partnership Membership

Caerphilly 50+ Forum steering group x 2  
Participation & Involvement Officer 50+, GAVO  
Consultant Nurse for older people, Caerphilly LHB,

Project Manager 75+ Screening project, Gwent NHS Trust  
 Partner Liaison Manager, Local Pension Service  
 Housing Manager, Caerphilly CBC  
 GAVO,  
 Older People's Member Champion & Deputy Leader, CCBC  
 Older People's Champion Officer and Director of Social Services, CCBC  
 Living Environment Partnership Coordinator CCBC  
 Community Transport Coordinator  
 Regeneration Partnership Coordinator , CCBC  
 Community Regeneration Manager  
 NHPS Health Promotion  
 Health Alliance  
 Older People's Voluntary Organisation rep  
 Voluntary Sector Liaison Committee rep  
 The Development Officer for Older People, CCBC  
 Planning Manager Older People Social Services, CCBC  
 Library services  
 Community Learning  
 Community Safety  
 Jobcentre Plus Newly Care & Repair Caerphilly  
 Health Social Care & Well Being Partnership Coordinator  
 Business Eye

### **Finance and Resourcing**

- The 50 + Positive Action Partnership are providing £14,000 to support the piloting of new and innovative ways of connecting with older people.
- The following councils between them are providing, approximately 85.5 hours of resource Days from the Welsh Institute for Health & Social Care – (WIHSC) for research, tool kit and report writing.
  - Caerphilly
  - Cardiff
  - Carmarthen
  - Conwy
  - Denbighshire
  - Flintshire
  - Gwynedd
  - Merthyr Tydfil
  - Newport
  - Pembrokeshire
  - Wrexham
- We are applying for £20,000 of funding to put in place a part time project officer for the project and to produce the first set of tool kits.

## APPENDIX 2

### METHODOLOGY

Performing a comprehensive systematic literature review of civic engagement and related issues, such as volunteering, was well beyond present scope.

The following research strategy was adopted:

1. Search for, access, and read any meta-analyses (post-2003) related to the topic under investigation.
2. Search for, access, and read any recent reports (post-2003) related to the topic under investigation.
3. Assessing the information gathered from these two steps so as to ascertain its applicability to the investigation.
4. Taking appropriate actions, e.g. searching academic databases, to fill in any knowledge gaps.
5. Compile evidence and write research review.

A number of problems were encountered in following the research strategy. Two problems in particular appeared. First, a considerable amount of research proved too general for direct use in this context, e.g. the motivations of all volunteers. Second - and on the other hand – some reliable research was too specific, e.g. elderly volunteers in residential care in Canada.

Other problems were:

- ⇒ The literature on engagement in its various forms is vast and is spread across many disciplines including psychology and political science.
- ⇒ The meta-analyses also proved too general.
- ⇒ Searches for peer-reviewed journal publications directly related to the barriers to civic engagement for older people generated little in the way of outputs.
- ⇒ There is a large anecdotal and grey literature on civic engagement but this has to be considered as unreliable evidence.
- ⇒ Separating out civic engagement from the general patterning of volunteering is not straightforward.
- ⇒ Isolating a literature dedicated to the civic engagement of older people proved difficult. Especially in connection to ‘barriers’, the tendency during searches was to be directed towards social inclusion / exclusion. There are understandable reasons for this tendency.
- ⇒ A number of documents frequently contain bulleted lists containing the terms ‘better communications’ or ‘building trust’ or ‘clarity about roles and responsibilities’. These characterise the rhetorics and homilies that seem to accompany the citizenship literature.

Consequently, the research strategy was adapted.

The brief was interpreted as generating a selection of the most relevant, reliable and actionable knowledge. In other words, the task became an ‘advanced’ scoping exercise. ‘Advanced’ in the sense that the knowledge gathered in the literature searches was used interpretively to produce

'pictures' of the phenomena under investigation. The pictures are of older people who are civically engaged and those who might be if they weren't barred in some way.

Perhaps this metaphor might help in understanding the process of the research task as it was eventually performed.

Imagine you are asked to paint a picture of two objects – one familiar and one not so familiar – but you can't paint them in the obvious way. The objects have to appear in the painting due to the way you've painted all the other parts. For example, the challenge is to paint a picture of the Eiffel Tower and some other object that looks like the Eiffel Tower but nobody has seen it so far. But you can't paint the Eiffel Tower. You have to paint other things which when combined suggest the Eiffel Tower and its unknown cousin.

Sketching the portrait of older people who are engaged in local governance and who might be engaged if some barriers were removed proved to be very much like trying to paint a picture of the Eiffel Tower and its unknown cousin in this strange way.

### APPENDIX 3

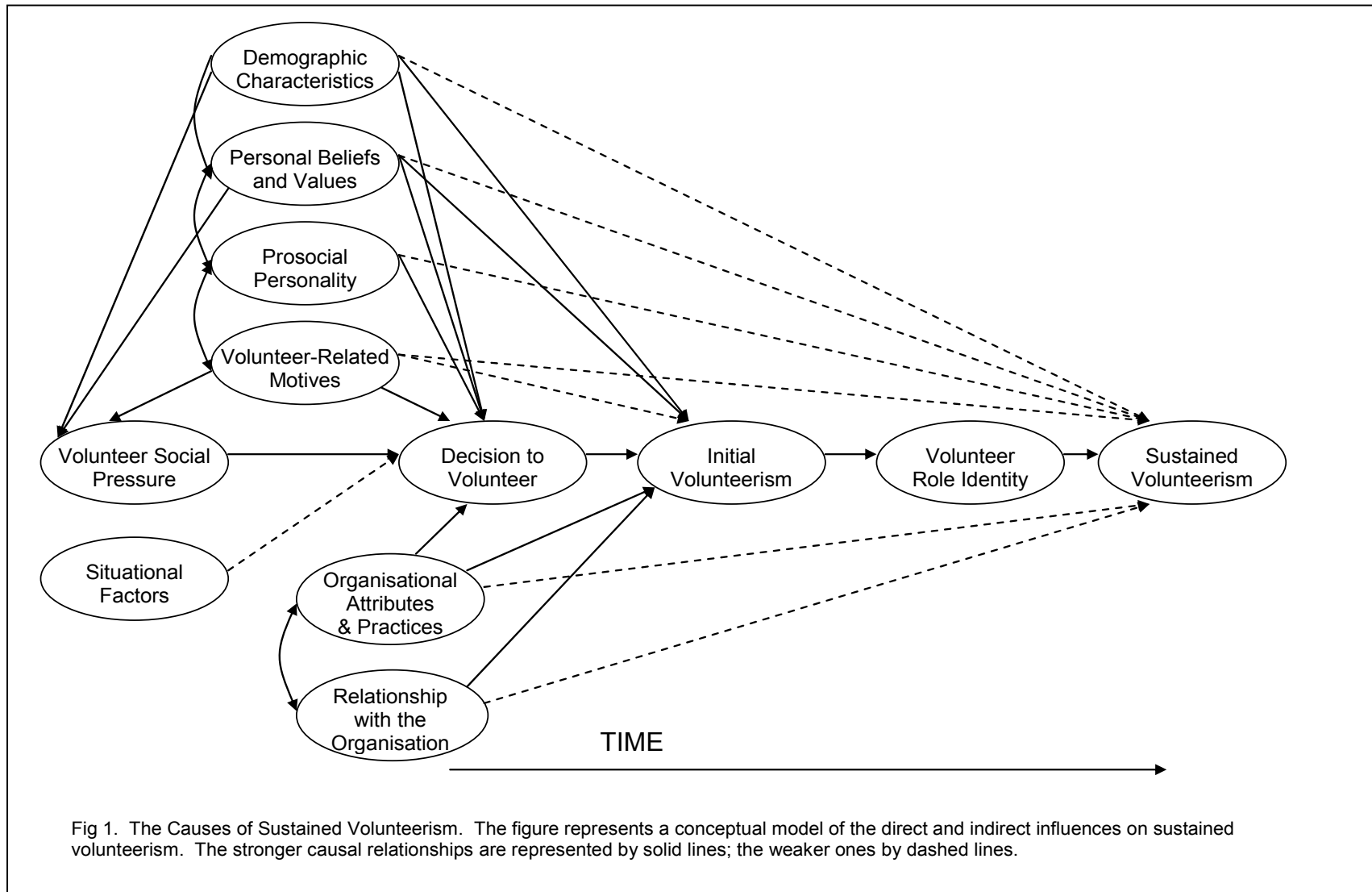


Fig 1. The Causes of Sustained Volunteerism. The figure represents a conceptual model of the direct and indirect influences on sustained volunteerism. The stronger causal relationships are represented by solid lines; the weaker ones by dashed lines.