



Participation, Inclusion & Exclusion in the 21st Century

Is Inclusion a Myth?

*Building Community Involvement with
Mobile Technologies, Science & Data Processing*

Open Meeting Report

For Event held on 29th November 2006
at

Sheffield Hallam University, Stoddart Building,
City Centre Campus, Arundel Gate

Written by Wendy Stern

The effect on our daily lives of:

- Corporate enforcement, regulation, compliance and value for money
- Public Sector effectiveness: accountability, governance, transparency
- The extent that local authorities empower people to take control

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Is Inclusion an Urban Myth?

Dedication and acknowledgements to our late Chairman, Paul Lowen

We are dedicating this, our first report, to our late Chairman, Paul Lowen, who passed away on 25th March 2006, having been critically ill for a considerable while since 1999.

With great vision, Paul, who was also a member of the Power Inquiry's Sheffield Event Team anticipated the Power Inquiry would continue as a major pressure group to encourage political involvement and participation.

As our guiding light, Paul played a significant part in developing strategy and thinking both for our Power Inquiry Sheffield Event and as the found of Action for Involvement.

We were most fortunate to enjoy the benefit of his professional expertise to develop our survey questionnaire with co-author of 18 years, Wendy Stern. Together, they were instrumental in producing our Power Inquiry Sheffield Event Report in September 2005 and set the standard for future publications.

Paul will be very sadly missed by us all with condolences to his family; his obituary, published in the Guardian on 1st March 2007 is at www.guardian.co.uk/otherlives/story/0,,2023672,00.html.



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About Action for Involvement (A.F.I.)

Inspired by our late Chairman, Paul Lowen, Action for Involvement evolved out of our Power Inquiry investigations in to political involvement, inclusion and participation. Chaired by Baroness Helena Kennedy QC, the Power Inquiry is funded by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust.

On completing our work for the Power Inquiry, we re-grouped in 2006. We then made a successful bid to the Big Lottery Fund's Awards for All in order to organise and deliver events, similar to the one we delivered for the Power Inquiry in September 2005 at Sheffield Hallam University.

We are a community-based consumer action group concerned with ensuring people benefit from the introduction of corporate governance and social responsibility in to the Public and Private Sectors.

As such we aim to create greater awareness of:

- Corporate enforcement, regulation, compliance and value for money
- Public Sector effectiveness: accountability, governance, transparency
- The extent that local authorities empower people to take control

In doing so our objective is to educate people in our communities alongside people in the public and private sector of the need for a fair exchange.

Our core mission is to educate people in our Community about the way corporate governance and corporate social responsibility affects the Public/Private Sector relationship on our everyday lives in order to bring about better service delivery

We are fortunate to have a dynamic, enthused and strong team who relate to, and understand the issues of disaffection affecting our community with a wide range of expertise.

PART I: EVENT FRAMEWORK

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Provide a forum for Sheffield's residents to have their say regarding political participation and inclusion in our local community and make appropriate regional and national inputs.

FOCUS

We asked our Event participants to consider the issues focused upon:

- those who control the lives we live and
- whether we care who these people are who control our lives?

PURPOSE

Create space to discuss issues affecting political involvement, participation and inclusion to feed in to our investigations and report on to decision makers.

We have therefore taken great pains represents views expressed which is not to be seen as endorsing any political opinions or parties whether or not invited to speak at our Events.

Our report is a composition of ideas and concerns raised by speakers and participants alike and set out as follows:

- Part I: Event Framework
- Part II: Executive Summary, Purpose, Methods and Focus
- Part III: Issues Raised by Speakers
- Part IV: Open Discussion
- Part V: Conclusion - Our Inherited Challenge

METHODS USED

Guest speakers represented their views, the synopsis of which is intended to give a flavour of issues raised and is not a full transcript. Participant inputs are anecdotal.

Our report is to be taken on an "as is" basis and other conclusions or inferences may not be drawn from the synopses or reports of our speakers and participants.

To ensure a balanced outlook we trawled widely for speakers across the spectrum. In the Sheffield area political representation is predominantly Labour with a strong representation of Cabinet Ministers and we approached the major political parties in Sheffield.

We also contacted prominent members of Sheffield City Council, Sheffield First Partnership for Regeneration, Sheffield & District Afro-Caribbean Association, Sheffield Chamber of Commerce & Industry, the think-tank Demos, Corporate Culture and several academic institutions including both of Sheffield's Universities.

Concerns discussed about "hard to reach" groups which our speakers, Ashley and Magda raised, led to our Secretary, Wendy, attempting to speak of the difficulties of inclusion for those people suffering with communications disorders. As Wendy suffers from a speech impairment to include total voice loss, she could only indicate the effect of organisational mishandling of disabling communications disorders which has led to a Special Report on the issues raised.

Survey Questionnaire

All attendees received an Event Information Pack including a questionnaire and feedback form. The return rate was under 50% of attendees - 11 returned and completed questionnaires. We sent an email with an anonymised link to an online version to all attendees who had not returned a completed survey and feedback form at the Event none of which were returned. As a result the data in this section of the report can only be seen as indicative due to the low response.

PART II: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As a community-based consumer action group we are keen to see people in our communities take initiatives to raise standards of service delivery in the Public Private Partnership. Accordingly and in the spirit of our late Chairman's goals we asked people to share their views on political inclusion and participation.

Our report reflects the issues raised by our speakers and participants, notably Parliament's apparent inability to control and manage vital debates. We therefore explored concerns affecting youth, minority ethnic communities, ageism, disability, information processing, science and technology. A consensus seemed to exist that Parliament and politics - as we traditionally think of them - is not the only solution to control political and social organisation.

In a stimulating debate, our Event speakers and participants sought other workable solutions by exploring the views and ideas affecting New Labour, young people, BME communities and disabled people through to the implications of data protection and the information age.

Crucially, all participants saw a compelling need to dispel the myth of political apathy as being the source of increasingly poor election turnouts. As importantly they sought to explore ways to open debate and the route towards the solutions to our problems, for example by making better use of resources.

Moreover, this Event reflected and reinforced the same or similar concerns raised at our Event for the Power Inquiry in September 2005. We discussed viable systems and procedures intended to protect us from poor practices that affect our voting methods, communications, regulatory frameworks, compliance, enforcement systems and expert advice. Of particular concern at this Event were the issues of:

- freedom of information, data protection and information technology
- science and technology
- lack of adequate expenditure on suitable facilities for young and old alike
- Societal issues regarding the tick box mentality to ethnic minorities
- access, accessibility and invisible disabilities
- ability of umbrella organisations to avoid accountability of public funds

Much of this was ascribed to the failure of the governors to involve or inform us - the governed - as to the why's or wherefore's of decisions before enactment.

Poor relations between politicians and media were seen to add little value to the compelling need to find long-term solutions rather than a quick fix particularly in relation to the major consideration of constitutional reform.

In our efforts to find practical, cost-effective solutions we looked at the way in which public, private and not-for-profit sectors conducted their activities. Our participants suggested that achievable solutions required greater transparency and accountability, that helped a political system be seen as fairer, more just and equitable.

One example of these more open solutions is the Internet and similar technologies. During our Event, consideration was therefore given to the invaluable contribution such technologies have made to politics, in particular, single issue politics.

Ashley's comments on "hard to reach" groups triggered discussion based on his contention that it is all very well setting targets to reach those concerned but it must be subject to emphasis on quantity *and* quality of engagement.

Likewise, Magda and Wendy held that the difficulty for BME communities and disabled people alike, seems to be an apparent inability of Public, Private and Not for Profit service providers to offer accessible, transparent and accountable facilities. It is not to say, for example, that poor research practices is irrelevant.

Magda's specific concern for BME communities is that service providers contribute to the factors affecting BME communities from accessing their services. The consensus was that we must think far more creatively and laterally to find new ways of reaching out to and involving people in these groups bearing in mind that democracy is only one method to achieve involvement and participation.

In our Special Report, "Hard to Reach - We Think Not!" we express concern that over 10 years have passed since enabling legislation was introduced to ensure access and accessibility for people with communications disorders. Nevertheless, disabled people, regardless of disability, are deemed "hard to reach".

As unsettling is the fact that little if any effort appears to have been made to find effective ways to include disabilities in to mainstream society, most particularly communications disorders.

The consensus was that a range of practicalities must be considered when relating to groups incorrectly labelled as "hard to reach" in particular the need to be far more focussed on achieving quality results to draw in and involve such people.

Crucially, we need people to reach out and be at the epi-centre of local and national organisations in order to contribute to our society. As our reports state, many people feel discouraged, disenchanting and disenfranchised over the way they feel issues important to them seem to be mishandled by our local councils, councillors and officers in their use of limited resources.



The Hansard Society's conclusion that "failure to [continue to pilot engagement via mobile devices] will result in missed opportunities and costly attempts to catch up with citizens' demands spurred on by their experiences of using mobile devices in other aspects of their lives". (R.Ferguson & Dr L Miller, 2005) As the major communications method, our young people use mobile phones to develop their own *lingua franca* which we ignore at our peril.

Regardless of how much capital or other resources society pumps in to capacity building, unless we open up and create channels of communication, the issue of what to do with *hard to reach* groups will remain the "BIG unresolved issue".

For all of these reasons, it is encouraging that our Government seems to take such concerns seriously and is apparently creating opportunities for us to take a more active role in government and governing of our local councils.

Innovations such as those announced by the Communities and Local Government Secretary to the Local Government Association conference, include 10 pilot projects across the UK giving people the power to decide on their local councils' budget priorities. Similar to the Open Budget scheme that the Power Inquiry helped London Borough of Harrow set up in 2005 for Harrow residents to have more direct and detailed say over their council's budget, led to a 300-strong deliberative assembly. (Local Communities Given Budgeting Power, Molly Kearney, July 5, 2007 12:40 PM, www.makeitanissue.org.uk/2007/07/local_communities_given_budget.php)

PART III: ISSUES RAISED BY SPEAKERS (in order of appearance)

Capacity Building for greater social & political involvement of BME communities

Magdalena Read, Magda Read Associates, Chair & founding Director of BME Economic Development

Based on my work and related research with BME communities I will explore scenarios contributing to:

- a) disenfranchisement in these communities
- b) effectiveness of Corporate Governance and Social Responsibility in helping BME organisations become more socially and politically engaged

For background, the Government's Cross Cutting Review of Public Spending 2002 recognised the BME Sector's value to UK economic development to popularise Social Enterprises. Council for Ethnic Minority Voluntary Organisations (CEMVO) supports the BME sector including capacity building. Nationally, the sector comprises over 9,000 ethnic minority-led voluntary and community organisations of which over 1,000 are in Yorkshire & Humber.

BME communities are increasingly less grant-reliant, more entrepreneurial and self-sufficient via income-generating work from Public Sector and mainstream enterprises. Although poor support is still a major barrier, contributing to UK economic development is creating a more professional sector keen to comply with Corporate Governance and Social Responsibility to become more socially and politically involved.

Simply put, social responsibility aims to equip ethnic minority communities and their organisations with the skills, resources and manpower to become sustainable enabling them to have a louder voice and effectively contribute to government policy making. For Government and other parties to establish trust and effective connections with BME communities in order to draw them out, they need to:

- a) appreciate the sector's political will and commitment to *TRUST* the BME communities to do the things they do best.
- b) acknowledge the sector's diversity, knowledge, skills and experience combined with social capital to become the sector's core strengths.
- c) treat organisations as individual and not use the "one-size fits all" model to avoid a tokenistic intervention where providers take the easy option without concern for actual needs.
- d) barriers to effective engagement or community integration which can disenfranchise BME communities.

Subject to a full debate into the causes of stigma, I subscribe to the view that Corporate Governance and Corporate Social Responsibility using the capacity building model can help BME communities become more involved politically and socially.



Opportunities, Communications & Politics for Today's Youth

Ashley Sweetland Director, Youth Strategy Unit, Corporate Culture Ltd and Trustee of UK Youth Parliament

I'd like to acknowledge the Cabinet Office for much of the contents of this contribution.

Firstly - let's talk about democracy. I'll then outline UK Youth Parliament's work which I helped set up and run, followed by issues affecting young people, politics and political participation in this country.

Why it matters: 'Democracy' said Churchill 'is the worst of all systems, apart from all the others.' That we can govern ourselves through democratic institutions and representatives dates from ancient Greek city states, but in British history, it is only since women's vote in the early part of the last century.

Without democracy, there is only tyranny or dictatorship, be it tyranny of small elites or dictatorship of powerful cartels. Democracy can only exist with vibrant, representative political parties. To date no country has secured democracy. After the walls were brought down in Eastern Europe by broad-based citizen movements, people formed political parties to make sense of democracy. Even in countries like Switzerland, with highly developed culture of direct democracy through referenda, political parties exist.

Democracy in Britain, only in its comparative infancy, is in trouble. At the 2005 General Election, turnout was just over 60%, slightly up on 2001, but well down on 1997 when 70% voted, or 1992 when 77% voted; in 1950 84% voted. Government was elected on a mere 35.2% of the vote. Only one third of MPs were elected with a majority of the votes in their constituencies, down 50% in 2001.

With 16 million young people in Britain today MORI estimated in 2002 that only 39% of 18-24 year olds voted, compared to 70% of over 70s. In 2005, it fell to 37%. And while over 90% of 65+ year olds see voting as a civic duty, only 56% of 18-24 year olds do. Ashley also considers the poor press young people attract is unjustified. The British Elections Survey suggests non-voting in the young can become a lifelong habit: 'habits of non-voting acquired in youth have tended to be carried forward into middle age'. In other words a demographic, democratic timebomb!

Life can be good for young people today:

- more young people than ever attend university;
- Unemployment is at an all-time low;
- youth unemployment is banished;
- Britain's creative industries are booming;
- More vocational courses exist to encourage young people to stay on in education;
- Government's supported charity V involves hundreds of thousands of young people in volunteering;
- Citizenship is on the curriculum for the first time.

Young people today have opportunities which no other generation has had. However there are still significant barriers for young people due to class, race, religion, family income or location. Thus:

- 60% of young people will leave school without basic maths or English
- The UK has the highest teenage pregnancy rate in the EU
- Nearly 50% of 12-16 year old boys who play truant commit criminal offences
- Only 25% of pupils receiving free school meals go on to get five good GCSEs

A typical 15 year old, in Britain today; say, Tony, views 4+ hours television daily, gives more to charity than previous generations, spends £400+ annually on mobile calls and mainly uses texting; internet is a fact of life and he may have tried drugs or sex. Tony is attuned to environmental issues, has no interest or sympathy in main-stream politics, lives in a multi-cultural society as part of a global village.

Imagine Tony in an Election polling station where people vote in pencil attached by string to place paper ballots in a rusty tin box; or attend a local party branch meeting in a community centre, to listen to minutes being read by the secretary, before discussing who organises the jumble sale. Tony belongs to a generation for whom voting and participation in political parties is an alien experience.

So whose responsibility is it to ensure Tony becomes a full citizen? His? Mine? Ours?

In this context, some key issues for our debate are:

- Does it matter if young people don't vote? Should it be left to the 'grown-ups'?
- Should young people be educated into understanding the political system, or should the political system be moulded to fit young people's lifestyles?
- Is it the sole responsibility of government, or can other organisations take on the role of promoting democracy to young people?



Government, information and democracy.

Peter Bradwell Demos Researcher and formerly of The Campaign for Freedom of Information

17 million people registered to vote in 2005 didn't bother to turn up; of those that did, only 9 million people voted Labour in the UK. In a country with a population of 60.2 million, less than 1/6th of the population therefore voted for the government now in power.

So should we say people are apathetic? When that many people opt out of a process or system, it seems odd to think something is wrong with the people rather than the system. If, for example, people stopped going to football matches, wouldn't we be concerned with what was *wrong* with football, not the fans?

The problem is that formal politics no longer feels as relevant to the way we live our lives - the gap between politics, politicians and people.

The Demos pamphlet "Everyday Democracy" looks at how people in their everyday life can make decisions that contribute to a common good. Part of that is valuing activity and organisations *outside* of formal politics. So that changes a little what we think of when we say 'inclusion' and participation.

Apathy and the concept of inclusion raise interesting issues, presumes people need to be brought 'back in' to politics. Our point is that people are involved with politics through their daily lives, and that working formal politics back into how people experience democratic involvement is absolutely key.

So why is 'information' relevant to this? I think it is important to consider how the internet works, and the changes it has effected.

The internet is a way of connecting people *directly* to each other in new and exciting ways. The important question is: Can this new information age help resolve the disconnection between politics and government? There are two important areas where access to information is vital:

- a) access to official government information
- b) through 'peer-to-peer' information sharing

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 embeds our rights to ask the government what it does in *our* name with *our* money. A useful description of the Act can be found on The Campaign for the Freedom of Information website (www.cfoia.org.uk). But aside from access to official information, greater 'peer-to-peer' sharing of information sharing is really important. But why?

We've suggested democracy needs informed conversation and public debate led not just by government, or mass media, but by people sharing information in new ways to create new kinds of open public debates. By giving people the means to be better informed, we can help people to help themselves organise politically and socially.

We can ensure people have better conversations about politics, and the potential to make 'better', more socially conscious decisions in their everyday lives. Such concerns are central to the concept of inclusion, rarely factored in to policy debates. Inclusion can also work the other way round to how we may traditionally think about it.

Yes, we have to use the Freedom of Information Act to ensure a transparent, accountable formal democratic process which is not just about listening. But inclusion is also about valuing evenings like this - an example of non-formal politics and participation which is crucial to a healthy public debate.

Some questions that might help us think about our debate are:

- a) How might freedom of information change the way people relate to government?
- b) How has it already started to change people's beliefs and actions?
- c) How can I use the FOI Act to get more involved in politics in my area or nationally?
- d) Just how useful is 'new media'?
- e) How can I use blogs to communicate with people and get them to organise to become better informed?
- f) What does the way government and political parties act towards people and their rights to information tell me about how they think about *their* relationship to people and voters?

So, that is an introduction to some of the reasons why we at Demos think access to information is central to healthy public debate both more widely and at our Event.

PART IV: OPEN DISCUSSION

Preamble

A crucial theme to emerge from this Event was that of capacity, capacity building and the vital part capacity building plays in order to build effective community groups regardless of services and orientation.

In this context, we discussed a wide range of potentially contentious issues central to political involvement and participation affecting the apparent failure of governors to understand the everyday pressures of us - “*the governed*” and its effect on people trying to engage in politics. With our speakers we discussed:

- Building a viable capacity framework for organisations
- Implications of capacity building for ostensibly “hard to reach” groups such as BME communities, young people, older people and disabled people
- Science, technology
- Experts
- New media

The value of Capacity Building

Magda Read considers that capacity building’s value for voluntary sector groups and organisations is its recognition of organisations as unique with uniquely different issues. Although specific organisational needs must be met, it is not to say groups developed that have undergone some form of capacity building became stronger and more powerful. Their effectiveness may be constrained by the way Government and delegated authorities are amenable to inputs from the recipient organisations.

Most capacity building projects are based around Organisation Development (OD) processes - a two-way process to help organisations achieve objectives which requires the organisation’s involvement and self-help without which the organisation can not be empowered.

Capacity building change agents can only guide, mentor and coach staff to take responsibility and nurture skills to develop their organisation. Infrastructure support is a 2-way process, which needs to be reinforced for organisations and sectors pushing for needed support. Those involved in capacity building must recognise that for the organisation to achieve their aspirations they must have:

1. vision
2. trust
3. commitment

Likewise organisations must trust in the process they aspire to create if they are to learn how to “walk and talk” appropriately. As no two organisations require the same intervention Magda maintains that we can not develop a model based on the principle of “one size fits all” and the main factors to be considered in capacity building are the organisation’s:

- state of development
- objectives
- customers and clients needs

An OD perspective of capacity building evaluates required governing documents and, where they do not exist, the intervention is to help put such documents in place to meet organisational needs. Although a small BME group will have different needs to those of a large voluntary organisation, broadly speaking they are likely to need documents, systems and procedures that help articulate and take ownership of their mission and vision. For an organisation to be capacity built, it minimally requires the following interventions:

- a) governing documents, ie constitution, memorandum & articles of association;
- b) governance and compliance;
- c) business and Action Planning;
- d) financial systems;
- e) funding;
- f) management systems: policies and procedures to deliver effective services;
- g) communications and marketing;
- h) information technology;
- i) networking and partnership collaboration.

This would enable the organisation to develop a robust, sustainable infrastructure to compete in the marketplace.

“Hard to reach” groups

In-depth discussions focused on BME communities, youth culture and similarities of such concerns for older people, ageism, disability, access and accessibility. It raised wider issues of capacity building including how to engage groups identified by the Government as “hard to reach”.

In dismissing this concept, Ashley contends the plain truth is that to reach certain groups takes more effort and/or costs more money. He argues we must think far more creatively about how to reach out to, and involve people in these groups. Respectfully he stresses that democracy is one way to achieve involvement and participation which must be far more focused.

BME Communities

Capacity building has proven highly effective in engaging people in BME communities to deliver because it aims to provide tailored objectives in order to meet specific organisational needs.

Thus Magda objected to BME communities being deemed “hard to reach” on the basis that they would maintain that they are *not* hard to reach but the service providers make it difficult for these groups to reach their services for a number of reasons. She added that the difficulties were sometimes due to lack of skills and capacity to understand and consider the needs of BME communities.

When involving communities in politics, informal participation is affected by stereotypes embodied in concepts such as “minority”. Magda informed us, for example, of an incident in which respected officials and senior managers at a high profile seminar justified decisions to prevent effective communications with ethnic minorities on the grounds that such people don’t know enough or can not speak English well and therefore saw no need to involve them in discussions.

This is where trust comes in; because if the BME community and its members are not trusted to do the things they are best able to do how can we engage with them effectively? It is like showing a child how to walk. If the child is not trusted to walk when they start to do so, how can they learn to walk independently?

Inclusion from the BME communities takes places when we trust the communities to play their part.

Confucius says , “Give me a fish and I will eat it in a day; but if you show me how to fish, I will have fish for the rest of my life”.

However, in those cases where the Government has difficulty in accessing BME organisations effectively CEMVO is usually willing to act as an intermediary to trigger the formal process. Lack of trust represents specific, common themes with the rest being important but less central.

Young People & The UK Youth Parliament (UKYP)

Capacity building and giving decision making powers to young people involves the free flow of information to anticipate and overcome obstacles. Typically, barriers may occur where a lack of regard exists for availability and schedules of young people, particularly while at school. UKYP thus identified a need to extend programmes and school hours to include:

- convening meetings with MPs and Ministers is difficult because they meetings when young people are expected to be in school;
- careers advice is often only available from 9-5 when young people are supposed to be where we want them - at school.

Owing to the difficulties posed by such timetable conflicts, Ashley exhorted us to think outside the box and find ways of offering services to young people when they are available after school hours, say from 6pm to midnight.

The need to involve young people on their terms is of paramount importance. A survey commissioned by “Young People Now” in their Positive Images Campaign (26 April - 2 May 2005 issue) found 57% of newspaper articles in (the first week in August 2005) were negative, compared to 12% positive and 30% neutral. David Miliband reports it did not surprise the young people he met at City Summits who “complain they are 'demonised' in the media. ... young people have not got 20% better in the space of a year; ... they don't get a fair showing... .” (www.davidmiliband.defra.gov.uk/blogs/ministerial_blog/archive/2006/05/02/413.aspx)

Relationships affecting young people are further exacerbated by the way that Government communicates with them. For example, Ashley commented on the Government Green Paper, *Youth Matters* where pictures are used to replace language. Young people found this practice patronising because they understood the issues better than civil servants who drafted the Paper.

Ashley reinforced his concerns by citing an incident in which an MP who refuted the right of a UKYP member to speak on issues was informed frankly that:

“30,000 young people aged 11-18 voted for me. That’s more than most councillors in your area. That gives me the right to say this ...”

In this regard, a project Demos developed involved children in public places and which suggested for example, that under-cover shopping malls - a major resource designed around the exchange, high disposable income - could offer non-chargeable child-care, facilities and experiences for children.

Divergent views existed in respect of opportunities available for today’s youth; some felt young people today have far more opportunities than was available in the post-war baby boom by virtue of having created their own entertainment and values leading to what would have been called adulthood.

Conversely, others felt responsible for having been of the generation to vote year on year for cost-cutting exercises to withdraw affordable facilities such as youth clubs, scouts, guides and outward bound courses. Typically such services have either been withdrawn or are now beyond the means of today’s youth.

UKYPs Inter-generational work

Dr Lorna Warren of the University of Sheffield who works with older people dismissed our speakers' concerns specifically in respect of young people as irrelevant to societal norms. In respect of the "age divide", Lorna pointed out that 'notions of a 'time bomb' and 'old v new Britain' were not helpful to efforts to find a path to working together' adding that such a state "always exists at any stage and we've survived the major demographic timebomb."

Lorna went on to add that "most older people have difficulty identifying with being old and prefer to be treated as individual. [The fact remains that we need to learn how] to respect differences, different cultures and finding ways to work together and [without buying] in to differences".

As regards Helen Jackson's speaker's notes (see Appendix B) which Joe read to us, Lorna, respectfully states that as far as our need to emulate young children, "older people *never* stop asking "why". Older people use new technology - many are excluded due to lack of resources, usually cost. And the art of conversation is still dominant regardless of technology - we wouldn't be here if we didnt talk to one another".

Ashley assured us "every interest group needs to shout its corner"; a softly, softly approach results in nothing and he would expect a Trustee of a UK Older People's Parliament to say very similar things to secure engagement! Although a long process, UKYP does its utmost to ensure re-education is acceptable to all concerned.

He then cited a UKYP Campaign to get people under 18 or in full time education free travel as is available in London. In the Queen's speech older people have free travel. Ashley candidly stated he considers that it is because over 90% of people of 60+ vote which thereby gives them voter power. UKYP having learned from this now want to mobilise young people to lower the voting age to 16 and increase youth power with input to decisions without outweighing any other group.

In this context one participant, Martin Brighton said he considered that

"we have allowed the removal of facilities, organisations and resources that were plentiful in our time, that is as a generation the 50 years old, solvent, adults we should be ashamed of ourselves. In our time, we had a choice of activities that suited us, sufficient to ensure we could never be bored. We have left our young people with virtually nothing; nothing to do; no leadership; no guidance.

Then, as they naturally sought things to do, as we did, but lacked guidance of acceptable behavioural norms; we have systematically imposed increasing restraint on our youth, without providing them the opportunities we enjoyed.

Parents of such children are unlikely to attend meetings of this nature; they would not, or could not give their children the *time* and guidance we received in our youth. Today's youth seem to be similarly disinclined to engage in consultation having seen the futility of previous government-led consultations.”

Science, Technology & “The Expert Role”

Engagement to create dialogue between scientists, the public and government on topical scientific issues is increasingly important. From work done in discussion groups people are now beginning to understand they are affected by science and scientists whether the subject matter is research on stem cells, genetic testing or nano-technology.

Any validity in the objectives of discussions between scientists and the public is undermined without government involvement. When Science Innovation and DTI then invited the public to engage with scientists to discuss matters, it appears to have become a tad embarrassing when, for example, Tony Blair's speech writer, then stated we must combat the anti-science brigade.

The Democs Game, a tool developed by the New Economic Foundation (NEF), is intended to help small groups of people discuss topics about which they may know nothing. NEF devised this tool to engage on science-related topics such as stem cell, genetic testing, climate change and nano-technology. It has separate cards for science and ethics which permits everyone to discuss and vote on policies to promote at the end of the discussion. Findings are usually uploaded on to the organisation's website to publicise their investigation outcomes.

It is important to show that dialogue can have an effect. For example, people want to know what will happen with the outcome of their inputs in to such discussions because if in government we would put these policies forward for implementation. Government Expert Advisors are facing challenges to the way they advise the government and deal with a public increasingly unwilling to consider expert advice as authoritative. It is a difficult challenge. As research from the think tank, Demos, shows:

“Rebuilding expert advice for the 21st century means looking at what counts as knowledge. Opening-up needs to mean more than showing people how expert advice works. Opening-up needs to mean open-mindedness, ... asking new questions and ... listening to a much wider range of perspectives. Expertise is about more than evidence. It is also about judgement and wisdom. [It] is not that we should reject the received wisdom in favour of the wisdom of crowds. But we need to go beyond a simple model of ‘evidence-based policy.’ Drawing on recent case studies and research with ‘lay members’ of expert committees, [Demos] looks to a new [more diverse] model of expertise ... [that takes] better account of uncertainty, is aware of its context and trusts the public.” (Irwin, Jones & Stilgoe; Demos, 2006).

Scientists, for example, are now beginning to employ sociologists and University social research departments to advise on the trends in society and where to focus on. And similarly, some pharmaceutical companies invite Social Science Research teams to help identify how to communicate effectively with the public.

New Media, Data Processing & The Information Age

Capacity building is all very well but community groups and organisations need to understand how to utilise and benefit from new media such as the internet, podcasting and citizen's journals. People like the Mirror Group's Editor, David Seymor, publicly say they believe there will be fewer newspapers in 10 or 20 years time because big papers are moving towards new communications technology.

People are beginning to make their own news by writing citizen journals; we can expect the dynamic to change due to new technology which will play a far bigger role in public debate. Young people are going to the internet to find news rather than read newspapers. Business Guardian reports a new company set up to offer consumers, primarily young people, a free mobile phone with top-ups for feedback on advertising, (<http://business.guardian.co.uk/story/0,,2042684,00.html> on 26th March 2007). Given this trend it would be unwise to overlook the mobile phone's diversity, dexterity and power which enables users to:

- speak on the move locally, nationally and globally
- send text messages for business, personal, commercial and advertising,
- take snapshots and video conferences pick up and send emails
- picture & media messaging
- keep a diary, contacts and notes

Text Messaging, Inclusion & Political Innovation

Text messages are a powerful, highly cost-effective electronic communications method which, at the press of a few buttons, permits the user to postpone or cancel meetings, request data for a report, or send a personal note without interrupting either their own activities or those of the recipient.

It is therefore noteworthy that text messaging was originally invented as a means of communicating short messages for engineering purposes, rather than the commercial and social communications we have today. As William Gibson said in his cyberpunk novel *'Neuromancer'*, "The street finds it's own use for technology".

The business case for text messaging is reinforced by Thus plc which say it is: "Short. Sharp. Simple. Mobile phone texting (SMS) ... is probably the fastest growing method of communication [and that] in the UK alone, a hundred million messages are sent every day." (www.thus.net/products/mobilesolutions/messaging.shtml).

A Hansard Society research project “Citizen Calling Evaluation Report” (R.Ferguson & Dr L Miller, Hansard Society, 2005) bears out our need to consider new ways of inclusion. Designed to involve marginalised groups not “normally targeted by Parliament using a dedicated mobile phone number ... to assess the capacity of mobile telecommunications technology to support parliamentary consultation.” Although they conclude “contemporary mobile devices alone cannot support select committee inquiries ... the firm belief of the research team [is] that Parliament and other political institutions should continue to pilot engagement via mobile devices given the pace and potential of development in mobile telecommunications technology.

The increasingly low turnout at local government and national elections is a great concern in political circles and it is heartening to note that politicians seem to take such concerns seriously. That steps also seem to be in hand to create opportunities for us to play a more active part in government and governing of our local councils appears to be self-evident.

In addition to the high profile and active line to democratise the House of Lords, other equally important political innovations reported by the Hansard Society and Power Inquiry respectively are the:

- a) Pilot consultation theme of ‘Young People and the Criminal Justice System’ run with the Home Affairs Select Committee for four weeks in September - October 2006 was a unique experiment, allowing evidence to be submitted to a parliamentary committee using mobile phone technology to assess the viability of mobile technologies for communication to select committees and to engage young people (conventionally non participants in the parliamentary process) politically. “Citizen Calling Evaluation Report” (R.Ferguson & Dr L Miller, Hansard Society, 2005)
- b) Communities and Local Government Secretary’s announcement of 10 pilot projects across the UK giving people the power to decide their local councils’ budget priorities - similar to the Open Budget process that the Power Inquiry helped London Borough of Harrow set up in 2005 and designed for its residents to have more direct, detailed say over their council’s budget via a 300-strong deliberative assembly. (Local Communities Given Budgeting Power, Molly Kearney, July 5, 2007 12:40 PM, www.makeitanissue.org.uk/2007/07/local_communities_given_budget.php).

Statistical Analysis of Returned Questionnaires

Summary

The majority of our respondents for both sexes came from the 15 to 25 age range - a group targeted by one of our speakers as being under represented in the political process, with female correspondents being more evenly spread over the age range and males being mainly in the 15 to 34 age group. It should be seen as indicative. Our disappointing response is due to circumstances prevailing at the time of this event.

Basic Demographics

	15 - 25	26 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 59	Total
	%	%	%	%	%
Male	27.3	27.3	0	9.1	63.6
Female	18.2	0	9.1	9.1	36.4
Total	45.5	27.3	9.1	18.2	100

Analysis of responses to Survey Questions

	15-25		26-34		35-44		45-59	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Awareness of Terms								
Corporate Governance	25	25	12.5	25	0	0	12.5	0
Corporate Social Responsibility	25	25	12.5	25	0	0	12.5	0
Capacity Building	0	0	44.44	0	11.11	22.22	0	0
Meaning of Terms								
Corporate Governance	0	0	11.11	33.33	11.11	22.22	0	0
Corporate Social Responsibility	0	0	11.11	33.33	11.11	22.22	0	0
Capacity Building	0	0	11.11	33.33	11.11	22.22	0	0
Customer Service Impact on Political Views								

Public Sector	0	0	25	25	25	0	0	0
Private Sector	0	0	25	25	12.5	12.5	0	0
Not for Profit	0	0	12.5	37.5	0	25	0	0

PART V: CONCLUSION - OUR INHERITED CHALLENGE

It was agreed that AFIs events creates vital space for communities to share their concerns and develop the trust needed to become more cohesive; new media was seen as a supportive mechanism to contend with the challenges we face; to finding ways of meaningful conversations like our Event is consistent with the need for collective conversations in an individualised society.

In this respect, it is vital to think and do things differently. Capacity building could mean giving people the ability to be involved in decision-making in a meaningful way, and opening the flow of information to overcome obstacles to people's knowledge of the world around them.

As Martin Brighton said “our difficulty not just with today's youth but with many elements of society is of our making. Whilst many people may have turned out “OK”, as many have not. We have allowed those in power, with their own agenda, to dictate with ever-increasing disregard for us. It is therefore inevitable that, having been disregarded, we should decline to voice opinions on the grounds that to do so would be a waste of time, notwithstanding targeted abuse should anyone express a dissenting view. Barriers are created immediately when trust is mentioned because we haven't allowed our young people to have their childhood and get on with it. We have withdrawn opportunities from today's youth.”

Knowing the questions to ask is vital. As Pete and Joe stressed, while some scientific issues are at the top of the agenda, at least as many are hidden because we do not know what we need to know in order to ask the questions we need to ask to access the information available to secure what we need to know.

Freedom of Information generates its own issues because unless we know what is available we can not know what we need to ask thereby creating a seemingly circular and apparently unresolvable philosophical debate.

Inclusion should be in the very base of each communal unit; it is psychological rather than economical or even social needs and finding one's own solutions rather than a dependency upon others.

Josh and Wendy felt it is disappointing that after 10 years so little seems to have been done to encourage speech impaired people to become more actively involved in the wider environment. They both agree that for those with communications needs, facilitated typing and typing is far more effective terms of speed, clarity and, above all, achieving more successful outcomes.

Although there is still a long way to go, they also agreed technology reinforced by strong advocacy, self-advocacy, determination and assertiveness is integral to respect, successful involvement and inclusion.

We are all agreed so much more can be achieved by including people for us as a community to draw on talent and build up their potential. In order to engage people in politics, we need people to be at the epi-centre of local and national organisations.

Crucially, we need to find effective ways to reach out to minority communities, young and disabled people so that they want to contribute to our society. We concur with the Hansard Society's conclusion that "failure to [continue to pilot engagement via mobile devices] will result in missed opportunities and costly attempts to catch up with citizens' demands spurred on by their experiences of using mobile devices in other aspects of their lives". (R.Ferguson & Dr L Miller, 2005) As the major communications method, our young people use mobile phones to develop their own *lingua franca* which we ignore at our peril.

As our reports indicate, people feel discouraged, disenchanting and disenfranchised over the way they feel issues of importance to them are mishandled by our local councils, councillors and officers use limited resources.

For all of these reasons, it is encouraging to learn our Government seems to take these concerns seriously and seeks to create opportunities for us to take a more active role in government and governing of our local councils. We can see positive signs afoot with a range of political innovations. In her speech to the Local Government Association conference, Hazel Blears, the new Communities and Local Government Secretary, announced 10 pilot projects across the UK which would give people the power to decide their local councils' budget priorities. As a scheme it is similar to the Open Budget process that the Power Inquiry helped London Borough of Harrow set up in 2005. The Budget, designed for Harrow residents to have more direct and detailed say over their council's budget, led to a 300-strong deliberative assembly. (Local Communities Given Budgeting Power, Molly Kearney, July 5, 2007 12:40 PM, www.makeitanissue.org.uk/2007/07/local_communities_given_budget.php).

It therefore seems to follow that regardless of how much capital or other resources society pumps in to capacity building, unless we open up and create channels of communication, the issue of what to do with supposedly "*hard to reach*" groups will remain the "BIG unresolved issue".



About Our Speakers

In alphabetical order

Peter Bradwell, a researcher at Demos, specialises in political and social participation outside traditional politics, and the implications of how information is shared between people, and between people and government. Other interests include the future of digital rights management and online culture. Peter is currently working on information sharing and data protection. He recently co-authored the pamphlet 'As You Like It: Catching up in an age of Global English', which looked at what the future of the English language means for the UK. He also recently co-authored the report 'Future Planners: Propositions for the next age of planning', which looked at town planners' role in making sustainable, democratically legitimate places.

Magda Read, Director of Magda Read Associates, an educator and MBA qualified O.D. Consultant. Magda has worked with the Council for Ethnic Minority Voluntary Organisations (CEMVO) in Yorkshire & Humberside. This, and her conference paper '*Transformation of Ethnic Minority Voluntary & Community Sector Organisations to Social Enterprise*' led to co-founding BME Economic Development Ltd which aim is to address apparent imbalances amongst BME communities and to create greater self-sufficiency for these communities. Some of her research include BME community needs, barrier to engagement, and governance; mapping African Caribbean businesses for UK Trade and Investment. She's been involved in piloting the CRE Standard with a local authority. Magda has also been a journalist for various media outlets as a TV presenter, newswriter, reporter and contributor.

Ashley Sweetland, Director, Youth Strategy at Corporate Culture Ltd, communications and campaigns consultancy has always been active in youth participation. Co-Chairman, Trustee, non-executive director and UKYP Member and Chair of Bournemouth Youth Council he helped develop need2know.co.uk online youth portal. Seconded to Department for Education & Skills (DfES) he also joined The National Youth Agency (NYA) Active Involvement Team *Hear by Right* standards, curriculum reform and trained civil servants to engage with young people. Policy advisor of governance, volunteering and engaging young people to MoD, St John Ambulance Brigade, CAF/CASS, Home Office, DfES, Russell Commission Youth Advisory Board. Associate of Royal Society of Arts June 2006.



Apologies for Absence from Helen Jackson

At Helen Jackson's request we include a brief note to ensure everyone realizes force of circumstances prevented Helen joining us. While we share everyone's disappointment, we hope it is obvious Helen's only choice when faced with her grand-daughter's call for help was to give full support. Helen Jackson's speaker's notes were read by Joe Pritchard who was unable to take questions in our debate.

About Helen Jackson

Trustee South Yorkshire Women's Development On-Line, Fawcett Society, Age Concern Sheffield, Compass and Grenoside Millennium Green

Helen Jackson's distinguished career as Sheffield Councillor and Hillsborough's former MP is now trustee of South Yorkshire Women On-Line, Fawcett Society, Age Concern Sheffield, Compass and Grenoside Millenium Green. Helen founded and chaired All Party Parliamentary Water Group, sat on Environment Select Committee and chaired Parliamentary Environment Group to increase women's Parliamentary representation. A Parliamentary Private Secretary, on Labour's National Executive, she set up and chaired All-Party Parliamentary Steel Group, Chair of South Africa Group in Parliament. Helen also co-ordinated evidence to Africa Commission on international gender development and networking in Westminster for women's education and participation in public life and UK representative on AWEPA (European Parliamentarians for Africa). Helen works with EOC to raise awareness of women's pensions and economic contribution made by older people to society via paid and unpaid activities.

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Abstract of Helen Jackson's Proposed Talk

The question of how to make information universally relevant to our life is determined by its practical impact: a fascinating speech on abstraction only becomes relevant when it impacts on what we get paid, our job, how we get to work; whether our local Post Office or corner shop is closed.

I will outline the controversial new Companies Bill to explore its likely impact, how it could increase involvement of employees and client members of the public over how they feel they are treated by the public/private partnership. I will evaluate this framework in the context of the gender impact duty, age discrimination and vitally, our pension entitlement in the context of the real work people do: caring, cleaning, comforting, working for a wage.

Notes of Helen Jackson's Proposed Talk

Read by Joe Pritchard

My qualification to speak on how the public could feel more involved in change is as a publicly elected representative for many years. Although the answer to greater involvement ultimately rests with us, some tools we can use are:

1. Better use and understanding of democratic processes; knowing elected representatives Councillors, MPs, school governors, or health reps are easily accessible gives strength and confidence to test the boundaries of rules and regulations affecting our lives. Public bodies, the education system, media, and elected representatives all have a responsibility to make access easier.
2. A strong, well-promoted and resourced trade union movement to advise on queries and work-problems strengthens individuals. Although government has done much to strengthen race and gender equality trade unions, central and local government need to make advice more accessible. Sheffield City Council has done exceptionally good work on gender equality legislation.
3. Use of the Freedom of Information Act to ask questions is essential to elicit information. A delightful trait of 3 years olds is the constant use of 'why'. We should never lose that determination to understand; it is always good to see it in writing and not accept "because I say so" is never good enough.
4. Free, local and national media, radio advice programmes to share problems, learn answers to issues shows persistence pays. Companies Act or Pensions Reform going through Parliament suggests the relevance of these laws is poorly understood. Good quality briefing through many outlets is essential.
5. Plain English Campaign to persuade officials in simple language to tell us what is required which can save hours of meetings or phone calls to explain what cannot be deduced from unclear, vague and convoluted leaflets or letters

In conclusion we are fortunate to live in a democratic country where we have the chance to make our voices heard and get involved. The more we choose to participate actively, the more those in authority will have to act accordingly.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to everyone who helped us deliver a non-chargeable Event, notably:

- Our speakers: Peter Bradwell of the think-tank Demos, Magda Read of Magda Read Associates, Ashley Sweetland of Corporate Culture Ltd, And, those who due to force of circumstances can not be with us including, Helen Jackson former MP, Trustee of the Fawcett Society, Age Concern & South Yorkshire Women's Development Trust;
- It would be remiss of us to overlook the invaluable support of Awards for All for granting us a generous award to support our activities; Joe Pritchard who very kindly agreed to design our website and analysed our survey questionnaire;
- Keith Levy of Voluntary Action Sheffield, Bernadette Grocock of Sheffield Chamber of Commerce, Helen Sims and Philomena De Couto of Business in the Community and Maria Lowe of Business Link for advice
- Capita for so kindly reproducing our Event Information Packs;
- Pearl Walter and Trevor Simon for support, advice and guidance at various stages of our plans to deliver this event and publication of our report; Trevor for encouraging Wendy to re-enter public speaking after several years due to disabling voice loss;
- Ruskin College and University of Sheffield CICS Department for advice and the latter for also very kindly providing use of their Special Lists to publicise our Event;
- Sarah Weyman for persuading her Media Guardian colleagues to design our logo and Nikki Bond for her involvement.
- We are indebted to Joshua Harris and Dr Carole Harris for essential insights affecting the access and accessibility of people with communications disorders and Martin Brighton for identifying some practical examples.

Last but by no means least, we thank Wendy Stern for authoring our report, Joe Pritchard for analysing our survey and everyone who gave their time. We hope this acknowledges everyone and apologies for any oversights, however unintentional.

Nikki Bond, Joe Pritchard, Wendy Stern & Sarah Weyman



Appendix D

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Relevant Links

Major Political Party Website Policy Links

Conservative Party Website Policy link www.conservatives.com/tile.do?def=policy.listing.page

Liberal Democrat Party Website Policy link <http://www.libdems.org.uk/tenreasons.html>

New Labour Party Website Policy link www.labour.org.uk/ourpolicies

Other Political Party Website Policy Links

British National Party Policy <http://www.bnp.org.uk/policies/policies.htm>

Respect Party Website Policy www.respectcoalition.org/index.php?sec=39

Socialist Workers Party Website only (no Policy seems to exist) www.swp.org.uk

The Green Party Policy <http://policy.greenparty.org.uk/>



Interesting websites & information sources

Campaign for the Freedom of Information www.cfoia.org.uk

Council of Ethnic Minority Voluntary Sector Organisations www.cemvo.org.uk

Demos www.demos.co.uk

Hear from your MP www.hearfromyourmp.com

House of Commons & House of Lords www.parliament.uk (House of Commons and House of Lords)

Joshua's Planet, www.joshuasplanet.com

Knowledge Politics, www.knowledgepolitics.org.uk

New Economics Foundation, www.neweconomics.org.uk

Sheffield Forum www.sheffieldforum.co.uk

The Hansard Society www.hansardsociety.org.uk

The Power Inquiry www.powerinquiry.org.uk

They Work for You www.theyworkforyou.com

UK Youth Parliament www.ukyp.org.uk

Write to them www.writetothem.com

National Media

BBC www.bbc.co.uk

Daily Telegraph www.telegraph.co.uk

Guardian www.guardian.co.uk

Independent www.independent.co.uk

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Times www.timesonline.co.uk