

WORKSHOPS TO ESTABLISH METHODS AND INDICATORS FOR EVALUATION OF SOCIAL CAPITAL

Centre for Social Action, De Montfort University was contracted by SARP to facilitate and support the SARP funded projects and initiatives in evaluating their impact on the building of social capital in the communities in which they worked. As part of this process the Centre for Social Action facilitated workshops for people from the projects.

The purpose of the workshop was to clarify the purpose of evaluation, what indicators could be used and what methods were most appropriate. The aim was to ensure that initiatives and projects developed suitable and workable programmes for evaluation of the development of social capital, which also formed part of a coherent and consistent evaluation plan for the SARP as a whole.

Arrangements were for the workshops to be held in convenient community buildings. Childcare and travel cost were met. There were two trainers.

The style of the training was participative and experiential. The social action process which asks the questions **what** to evaluate, **why** evaluate and **how** can it best be done were used to analyse the purpose of evaluation and to identify action plans for each initiative. The training sessions provided people with an opportunity to discuss their project, plans for evaluation and highlight any problems or concerns they have. They were an opportunity for people to learn from each other. The trainers used a range of methods including roleplay, drawing, discussion, action planning both in groups and individually.

Outline programme:

- 1 Exploration of social capital and its relevance to the initiatives
- 2 Identification of the strengths and weaknesses of the social capital model
- 3 Input on social capital framework
- 4 Why evaluate? What is the purpose of evaluation?
- 5 What are the possible ways of collecting information?
- 6 What are the pros and cons of these methods for my project?
- 7 How can the development of social capital be seen locally?
- 8 How can this be developed into relevant indicators?
- 9 Action plan for evaluation of the development of social capital as a result of the work of each initiative.

1. EXPLORATION OF SOCIAL CAPITAL AND ITS RELEVANCE TO THE INITIATIVES

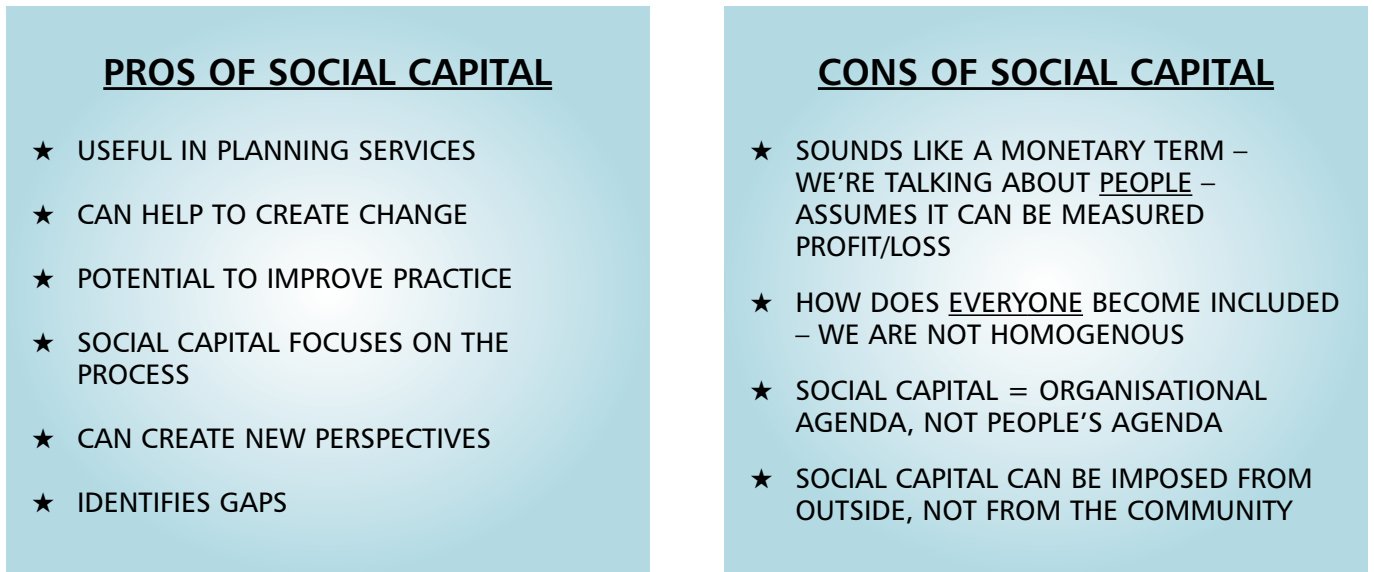
After introductions and welcomes participants were asked to consider the following comments about social capital: Social capital is 'the space between people', 'the glue which holds society together', 'the raw material of civil society'.

They were asked to discuss in small groups what was their understanding of social capital, and what it meant to them.

- ★ CITIZENSHIP
- ★ LOOKING OUT FOR EACH OTHER
- ★ SOCIAL CAPITAL REFLECTS A SENSE OF BELONGING
- ★ THERE ARE VARYING DEGREES OF SOCIAL CAPITAL BETWEEN PEOPLE IN THE SAME NEIGHBOURHOOD
- ★ GOOD SOCIAL CAPITAL RUBS OFF OTHER PEOPLE AND GROWS IN THAT WAY
- ★ IT'S INFECTIOUS
- ★ WITH THE BUILDING OF SOCIAL CAPITAL THERE SHOULD BE A SHIFTING OF POWER: EMPOWERMENT
- ★ WORKING ALONGSIDE LOCAL PEOPLE
- ★ PARTICIPATION, INVOLVEMENT
- ★ DECISION MAKING

2. IDENTIFICATION OF THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE SOCIAL CAPITAL MODEL

People were asked to consider what the pro's and con's of social capital were. Once again they did this in small groups.



The trainers gave some inputs about social capital and the following is the framework that was developed as a result of the workshops and used throughout the Nottingham SARP:

3. SOCIAL CAPITAL FRAMEWORK



Participants discussed one category of social capital in each of the six small groups:

- share with each other about the work of your project
- how does that category apply to your project?
- what are you doing to increase it?
- how will you know if you have had the hoped for impact?

4. WHY EVALUATE? WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF EVALUATION

The focus of the training then moved on to consider evaluation. Firstly people considered the reasons for evaluation.

Reasons For Evaluation

- ★ CONDITION OF FUNDING
- ★ COST EFFECTIVENESS
- ★ TO BE ABLE TO APPLY FOR MORE FUNDING
- ★ REINFORCE LEARNING
- ★ GETTING RID OF ASSUMPTIONS
- ★ OPPORTUNITY FOR REFLECTION
- ★ ACTION PLANNING
- ★ ESTABLISHING AND PROMOTING GOOD PRACTICE
- ★ IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES AND WEAKNESSES
- ★ CHANGE DIRECTION IF NEEDS BE
- ★ MODIFY OR ADAPT PROJECT TO CIRCUMSTANCES
- ★ UNDERSTAND WHAT HAS WORKED AND WHAT HASN'T WORKED

This enabled participants to consider the difference between quantitative and qualitative evaluation. The trainers role-played two brief examples of consumer evaluations taken from real life situations. Participants listed all the issues that arose from the role-plays.

From this discussion people were asked to think about how to finish the statement; "For us effective evaluation must..."

The following are some examples of participants' responses.

- ★ INVOLVE PEOPLE FROM THE START – ALL STAKEHOLDERS
- ★ ACCESSIBLE TO EVERYONE
- ★ MUST BE CLEAR AND TRANSPARENT ABOUT THE OBJECTIVES
- ★ QUALITY AND NOT JUST QUANTITY – QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE MEASURES
- ★ NOT MAKE ANY ASSUMPTIONS
- ★ CONTINUAL FEEDBACK TO GROUP AND RELEVANT PEOPLE
- ★ USE METHODS CONSISTENT WITH AND APPROPRIATE TO THE PEOPLE YOU ARE WORKING WITH
- ★ BE DISSEMINATED TO PARTICIPANTS ETC. FEEDBACK LOOP
- ★ SHOW 'VALUE ADDED' OF SOCIAL CAPITAL
- ★ SHOW UNEXPECTED OUTCOMES

5. METHODS OF COLLECTING INFORMATION

Participants were asked to identify different ways of collecting information for evaluation.

- Day book
- Collecting stories
- Case studies
- A day in the life of . . .
- Diaries
- Post cards
- Numbers
- Visitors books
- Surveys
- Contact sheets
- Video
- Photos
- Arts (drama, drawing and dance)
- Interviews structured/ unstructured
- Focus groups
- Questionnaires
- Participant observation
- Issue boards and post-its
- Attendance sheets
- Test scores
- Databases
- Registers
- Use of existing data
- Drawings
- Audio tape

6. EXPLORATION OF THE PROS AND CONS OF THE METHODS OF INFORMATION COLLECTION

Participants in different small groups were asked to take one method of information collection and think of

- the pros and cons of using it
- what sort of information would you get from it?
- where might it be best used?

■ **Diaries/Collecting Stories/Case Studies/Day In The Life Of** – free flowing personal accounts of what has happened either personally created or with the help of a facilitator

Advantages

- ❑ Good flavour of events for individuals
- ❑ Power of personal account
- ❑ Involves people
- ❑ Snap shot
- ❑ Can compare within the groups

Disadvantages

- ❑ Confidentiality
- ❑ Might depend on literacy (could be taped)
- ❑ Is personal, may be inaccurate
- ❑ People may not want to tell you things

Appropriate for

- ❑ Complementing figures
- ❑ Use with wide range of groups
- ❑ Useful information for new people
- ❑ Useful for someone taking part to see how much they have moved
- ❑ Good for measuring the project over time

■ Interviews

Advantages

- ❑ Very flexible and adaptable
- ❑ Can provide information from wide range of people
- ❑ Can give quantitative and qualitative information
- ❑ Can give standardised information
- ❑ Personal contact

Disadvantages

- ❑ Easy to do badly
- ❑ Can be expensive (training and paying interviewers etc.)
- ❑ Time consuming

■ Focus Groups

Advantages

- ❑ People coming together
- ❑ Richness of information
- ❑ Chance for people to express their views and opinions
- ❑ Can be tailored to specific needs of the group

Disadvantages

- ❑ Need effective facilitator
- ❑ Time consuming
- ❑ Are all voices heard?
- ❑ 'Hard to reach people' unlikely to participate

■ Questionnaires

Advantages

- ❑ Easy and quick
- ❑ Fixed format
- ❑ Consistency

Disadvantages

- ❑ Takes time to analyse
- ❑ Fixed format
- ❑ Problems for some people to complete
- ❑ Response rate can be very poor
- ❑ Must have good questions that people can understand

■ **Postcard** – giving participants or attendees at an event a stamped addressed postcard, that they can fill in with their thoughts and return by post later.

Advantages

- ❑ Simple and easy to use
- ❑ Immediate
- ❑ People can take it away and think about answers

Disadvantages

- ❑ Limited view
- ❑ No follow up
- ❑ May not be returned
- ❑ Limited space

Appropriate for

- ❑ One off events, e.g. seminars, events

■ **Issue Boards and Post-Its** – headings on flip charts (either written 'what could have been better', or drawings ☺) and people post comments written on post-its.

Advantages

- ❑ Snap shot
- ❑ Simple
- ❑ Raises issues
- ❑ Anonymous
- ❑ Cheap

Disadvantages

- ❑ Difficult to analyse
- ❑ Exclusive (literacy)

■ **Observation** – observation can be participative, when the observer joins in with activities or discussions, or non-participant when they are outside and watching.

Advantages

- ❑ Could be useful in policing content

Disadvantages

- ❑ Invasion of privacy
- ❑ Who decides significance of what is happening?

■ **Day Book/Contact Sheets** – recording against an agreed proforma (for example the social capital indicators). This can be a group activity, as a result of discussions or individual recording.

Advantages

- ❑ Regular record of key information
- ❑ Can be built into practice
- ❑ On-going record of what is happening
- ❑ Can be tailored to each project or activity
- ❑ Contact sheets good for detached work

Disadvantages

- ❑ Can produce a lot of information
- ❑ Must be regularly filled in

■ **Numbers/Attendance Sheets/Visitors' Books/Registers**

Advantages

- ❑ On-going
- ❑ Quick and easy
- ❑ Cheap
- ❑ Solid factual information

Disadvantages

- ❑ Very limited information
- ❑ Doesn't give any feelings
- ❑ Must be supplemented by other information

■ **Data Bases**

Advantages

- ❑ Good for large volume of figures
- ❑ Correlating information
- ❑ Quick to analyse

Disadvantages

- ❑ Need to be technologically competent
- ❑ Limited information
- ❑ Only get out what you put in
- ❑ Training needed
- ❑ Computers needed
- ❑ Confidentiality

Good for

- ❑ Large project with a lot of figures

■ **Use of Existing Information**

Advantages

- ❑ Not re-inventing the wheel
- ❑ Can track decisions and actions
- ❑ Allows for comparisons inside and outside the project

Disadvantages

- ❑ May assume a certain level of management structure to have produced the information
- ❑ Time consuming
- ❑ Needs skills to use the data and interpret any significance

■ **Video**

Advantages

- ❑ Show a situation
- ❑ People can see it for themselves
- ❑ Interesting
- ❑ Visual
- ❑ May capture something not anticipated
- ❑ Group/users can be in control

Disadvantages

- ❑ People may be camera shy
- ❑ Can be interpreted differently
- ❑ Cost
- ❑ Can be subjective
- ❑ Confidentiality
- ❑ Editing

■ **Photos**

Advantages

- ❑ Concrete evidence
- ❑ Accessible
- ❑ Pictures tell stories
- ❑ Powerful
- ❑ Quick
- ❑ Needn't be too expensive
- ❑ Illustrate emotions
- ❑ Can do before and after photos
- ❑ Group/users can take photos

Disadvantages

- ❑ Intrusive
- ❑ Can be manipulated
- ❑ Confidentiality

■ **Audio Tapes**

Advantages

- ❑ Emotions can be expressed
- ❑ Qualitative content
- ❑ Can be privately used
- ❑ Good for people with language, literacy or visual difficulties

Disadvantages

- ❑ Confidentiality
- ❑ Time consuming
- ❑ Technical problems
- ❑ Difficult to use and analyse

■ Arts Based Activities

Advantages

- Allows for personal creativity
- Can be fun
- Innovative
- Disseminate information to a wider audience
- Not reliant on literacy
- Can get others involved

Disadvantages

- Can be daunting
- May be difficult to interpret. Who decides what it means?

7. INDICATORS, POSSIBLE 'QUESTIONS' AND AREAS FOR EXPLORATION

People were asked to think about their projects, the social capital framework and what they had thought about evaluation and consider possible indicators and areas for exploration.

The purpose of this was to encourage people to think about the social capital framework and what might be appropriate indicators for their work. At this stage the indicators were considered without linking them to a particular method of information collection. This meant that a project might be thinking of finding out about their work's impact on 'what do you think you contribute to your community?', but they could do this using photographs, diaries, questionnaires, focus groups or individual interviews.

People also felt strongly that what might be appropriate indicators depended on the context they were working in. In discussion they raised a number of general issues. Some social capital terms are not in easy language and they may need to be adapted, the history and experience of both communities and individuals will affect how people respond, it is important not to make assumptions. They felt it is important to be respectful, non-judgemental and not fall into using stereo-types

RECIPROCITY - Possible Indicators or Questions

- Who/where would you talk to, to ask for a favour?
- Who/where do you go for information or advice?
- What do you think you contribute to your community?
- What do you get back from your community?
- Are you happy with what you do?
- What do we mean about doing something for the community?
- What are your expectations of the people in your community?

PERCEPTION OF COMMUNITY - Possible Indicators or Questions

- What do you think 'community' means?
- What do you think about the community where you live?
- What are the good/bad things
- What improvements would you like to see?
- How do you think other people see your community?
- Do you feel that you contribute to your community in some way? How important is this to you?
- Do you think things have changed in and for your community? In what ways?

CITIZEN POWER/PROACTIVITY IN A SOCIAL CONTEXT - Possible Indicators or Questions

- Have you been involved in any campaigns in your community?
- Do you feel you have control about what happens in your community?
- Are you able to challenge things (ie family, project, environment?)
- Could you speak out more - have you done it?
- How do you resolve disputes?
- How powerful do you feel your voice is?
- Can you make a complaint - can you influence it - do you know how to?
- Do you feel happy about joining/forming another group?

CELEBRATION OF DIVERSITY - Possible Indicators or Questions

- How does your project or community respect differences?
- What interest and interaction does your community have with others?
- How inclusive or exclusive is your group?
- Does your group or project represent the wider community?
- How much do you choose to socialise and interact outside of immediate personal grouping?
- Non-judgemental
- Respect
- Challenging stereotypes
- Acceptance of differences
- Breakdown of barriers

FEELINGS OF TRUST AND SAFETY - Possible Indicators or Questions

- Do you feel safe walking along the street in your neighbourhood? (day, night, close to home, further away)
- Would you leave your door unlocked?
- Crime rate in the area – perception
- Lending money/leaving key with neighbour
- During absence/holiday – would you trust people to keep an eye on it?
- What makes you feel safe?
- Who would you trust with personal situation details – councillor, health professional, etc?
- Reporting of crime would you report it? Who to – police?
- What are you most afraid of?
- Who do you trust least
- Use questionnaire, semi-structured interview.

PARTICIPATION IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY - Possible Indicators or Questions

- Numbers attending projects/groups
- Membership/attendance at locally organised groups e.g. bingo, church, PTA, residents associations etc.
- Specific roles in community groups eg. Committee
- Personal involvement in organising an informal community event
- Local volunteering
- Use of local shops and facilities
- What different levels of participation are there?
- Do people know what there is out there?

VALUE OF LIFE - Possible Indicators or Questions

- What do you think/feel gives you value in life? e.g. health of children, work, health, relationships, money, involvement in community
- Do you think/feel your community has the same values as you?
- What gives you the most enjoyment/satisfaction in life?
- How you see yourself ?
- Do you have a sense of achievement?
- What are people's levels of self esteem and confidence?
- Do people have a sense of belonging?
- Environmental changes e.g. dog mess, litter.
- Do people have the opportunities to experience the highs of life?
- How are people treated by professionals and people in authority?

CONNECTIONS AND NETWORK - Possible Indicators or Questions

- How often do you participate in activities outside the home? What activity?
- Diagrams of before and after activity
- What knowledge do local people have of services and mechanisms to use them?
- Agencies’ interconnections
- Numbers and characteristics of networks
- Contacts between friends, neighbours and family - both quality and quantity of these.

8. ACTION PLAN FOR EVALUATION

The final exercise of the day was to give people an opportunity to pull together the topics of evaluation and social capital and begin to plan how they would evaluate the impact of their project on social capital indicators.

Each participant was given a Planning Chart to fill in. They took these home with them.

SARP Planning Chart

Categories of social capital that my project will influence	Project activity that will contribute to that change	Indicators – how will we know	Measurement – evaluation tools

EVALUATION OF THE WORKSHOP

At the end of the workshop people were asked to complete an evaluation form. The following are comments from the evaluation forms and some over heard comments!

"It was an opportunity to demystify the words and claim them as our own."

"I don't want to be here - this is middle class intellectuals sitting around talking about what we are going to impose on poor deprived communities next."

"I liked the down to earth discussions about evaluation - it was a spring board for thinking."

"I wasn't sure about the meaning of social capital - it's now much clearer and has given me a base to work on to capture the impact of what we do."

"I got a better understanding of the concept of social capital and how it is part of all of our work and the importance of measuring/evaluating this part of our project."

"I liked meeting other people who are working with social capital."

"A bit worried about the excessive use of jargon - is it inevitable?"

"It has extended my knowledge of social capital (though I still need to get my head around it), I enjoyed thinking about different ways to evaluate."

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