Foreword

Councillor Ron Round
Leader of the Council & Chair of the Knowsley Partnership
The members of the Knowsley Partnership work to ensure that services to the residents of this borough are excellent. To achieve this, we have always understood that residents themselves hold the key to solving the majority of the challenges we face.
This Community Empowerment Framework outlines how we will continue to build on our success by placing the community at the heart of everything that we do. Whether you are a commissioner, service provider, resident or an elected member, the Framework gives guidance on how you can play your part.
The Knowsley Partnership and Knowsley Council commit to ensuring that services and solutions are tailored to meet the needs of our residents and we also commit to building the foundations for residents to shape their own destinies.
I hope you find this framework informative and trust you will use it to help make Knowsley “The Borough of Choice.”

Sheena Ramsey
Chief Executive of Knowsley Council & Chair of the Knowsley Partnership Executive Team
This Framework is the culmination of much development over the past few years. National and local policy has highlighted the value that an empowered community can play in shaping the future of our neighbourhoods.
Community Empowerment in Knowsley is defined in this framework and I hope that the opportunities that exist for all stakeholders are brought to life in an accessible and meaningful way that allows you to translate strategy into action.
As you all know, the current economic climate and the huge reductions in public spending place enormous challenges on organisations and residents alike. This means that the only way we can hope to continue to improve quality of life is by creating the conditions for residents to take control. Having residents in control breaks the dependency on public service provision and enables cost savings to be made with the minimum impact upon quality of life.
This is not new to Knowsley. In recent years we have understood what it will take to foster cohesion in our neighbourhoods, we recognise the importance that the family unit has to play and we have agreed how we will challenge behaviours that the majority find unacceptable.

The Community Empowerment Framework brings this work together and provides the platform for further transformation in the future.

Councillor Dave Lonergan
Cabinet Member for Regeneration Economy and Skills

In the years since I have been responsible for this Portfolio, we have deepened our understanding of what makes our communities what they are.

The days of service providers “doing to” the community are long gone and we now find ourselves in a different business environment.

As a result of the work to develop this framework, public services commit to involving the community, the voluntary and other sectors in the development of services.

Where service provision is best placed within the public sector, we will liaise with the recipients to ensure that the services meet their needs.

In the future, some services that have traditionally been provided by the public sector may be better delivered by others. We will move towards a model which develops the capacity of the community to ensure that this is a success. This can only take place where communities want this to be the case.

The world is changing and public service provision in Knowsley will change with it. This framework provides advice and support to those who are committed to improving quality of life in Knowsley.

I hope that you will find it useful and I encourage everybody to seize the opportunity and play your part.
Introduction

This Community Empowerment Framework will inform how the Council and its partners empower, engage, develop, consult and communicate with Knowsley’s communities. For the public sector, community empowerment is important as it demonstrates where effective relationships and engagement between service providers and the public have been established. This is even more important in an environment of “reducing resources and a local wish to change behaviours and reduce dependency on public service provision.

This Framework sets out the 5 themes that will drive the Knowsley Partnership’s vision for community empowerment in Knowsley. As part of the work of the Young Foundation, elected members, public agencies and community and voluntary sector representatives have been given the opportunity to express their views through a number of one to one and group interview sessions, as well as an online survey which was collated as part of the research. These themes are based on the findings and recommendations from the Community Empowerment Working Group set up by the council’s scrutiny function which found that:

• reshaping the relationship between the Council, its partners and the community is key to developing community empowerment in Knowsley.
• keeping community action at the forefront of empowerment will allow all sections of the communities to participate and enable activity and results to be clearly visible. Frontline workers and community champions would play a key role and support and investment will be required to facilitate this.
• a range of different tools are required in order to capture the community narrative and that this is key in developing the right interventions.
• the role of the elected member in empowering communities, complemented by community champions promoting change from within the community and frontline workers providing support and capacity are crucial. Ongoing promotion and investment in these roles is vital to harness community strengths and to enable residents to shape and deliver services in the community.
• effective communication is a vital element in empowering the community in Knowsley. Messages must be meaningful, tailored to the audience and structured around both the strategic and local priorities. There are opportunities to strengthen communication channels by using social media to reach different sections of the community.

This Framework defines what is thought to be important for the effective future development and implementation of community empowerment in Knowsley and provides guidance to officers, Members and community activists to effectively work together in the future. This is not prescriptive but aims to harness the current good practice found across the public sector and frontline workers in a more cohesive way.
Background

Community Empowerment has been recognised as crucial in Knowsley for a number of years as it is our belief that a more empowered community will be a more cohesive community. While acknowledging the innovative practices demonstrated around the Health and Young Peoples’ agendas, the Knowsley Partnership has recognised the wider challenges it faces in fostering cohesion within our neighbourhoods.

This framework will define what is meant by community empowerment, outline the current picture in Knowsley, bring together learning from best practice and set out the way forward.

So, what is an empowered resident or an empowered community in Knowsley? An empowered resident is one who takes part in the democratic process and understands the value of this. He/she may choose to volunteer or show leadership in addressing issues in their neighbourhoods and is happy to stand up and be counted when they are dissatisfied. They will be focussed on finding solutions rather than dwelling on problems and they will look to work with agencies when the opportunity arises. An empowered community will be resilient to change and foster the belief that residents should help each other and themselves rather than depend on others. An empowered community is one that wants its voice to be heard, that will influence what happens locally and, when the opportunity arises, will look to take control. Community Empowerment is about having the conditions in place that allow local people to make a difference to improve their localities and that encourage them to believe it is both possible and worth it.

This Community Empowerment Framework will inform how we empower, engage with, consult, communicate with and develop Knowsley’s communities. The themes within the framework are guiding principles which aim to achieve certain outcomes. To achieve an empowered Knowsley community, a new relationship is required between public services, local elected members and the wider community. This relationship will build on existing successes and will take the way we work together to another level. This framework is designed to help shape the new relationship between the borough’s stakeholders. It is not a prescriptive model, rather a series of steps and examples of good practice that can help us all achieve our aims and aspirations together.
The previous Government introduced the ‘Duty to Involve’ in April 2009. The duty requires authorities to take those steps they consider appropriate to involve representatives of local persons in the exercise of any of their functions, where they consider that it is appropriate to do so. The council’s Cabinet agreed that the council would review its response to the Duty to Involve and that this work would lead to the development of a Community Empowerment Strategy for the Borough. Following this, the Council commissioned the Young Foundation, an independent centre for social innovation, to undertake research in November and December 2010 with members, officers and the community to inform the development of the strategy.

A Community Empowerment Working Group was established by the Safer Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee to contribute to the development of a Community Empowerment Strategy for Knowsley. The aim was to ensure that the resulting product was fit for purpose and supports the work of Members, officers, partners and the community in the future.

The working group identified a number of expert witnesses to form the basis of their review. These key witnesses were invited to meet the group and provide evidence relating to the following themes:

- Defining community empowerment and assessing the current picture in Knowsley
- New ways of working and local best practice
- National best practice and the way forward

The review gave Members an opportunity to examine community empowerment in the Knowsley context through consultation feedback and evidence from a range of projects, some of which have gained national recognition. From this, a definition for Community Empowerment in Knowsley was agreed as:

*Community empowerment is the vital role people have in shaping and improving their own areas. At the heart of it are motivated people actively engaged in making a difference to the places that they know best. Community Empowerment is about fostering the conditions that convince local people that making a difference is both possible and worthwhile.*

Members were also provided with information from projects being delivered across the UK. The working group identified the five themes and recommendations in the table opposite as being key to empowering the Knowsley community and concluded that they are thought to be important for the effective future development and implementation of a Community Empowerment Framework in Knowsley. These themes and recommendations are outlined on pages 6 and 7. A further workshop was held with a cross section of community and voluntary sector representatives to discuss what these themes meant to them. The Community Statements under each of the Themes detailed later in this document are the result of their work.
Themes and Recommendations from the Community Empowerment Working Group

**Theme 1**
Forging a new relationship

- **Defining Community Empowerment in Knowsley**
  Adopt the Local Government Improvement and Development definition of Community Empowerment.

- **Visible Community Action**
  Encourage different and visible ways for people to get actively involved in their communities and solve their own problems rather than focussing on governance as a way to engage or empower.

- **Frontline Workers**
  Train and invest in frontline workers to enable them to harness community strengths.

**Theme 2**
Understanding the Community Narrative

- **Work from the community’s strengths**
  Utilise methodology that allows community strengths and assets to be built upon in order to gain permission from communities to develop a sustainable approach to problem solving.

- **Place Profiles**
  Develop a Place Profile which incorporates soft intelligence gathered through understanding the community’s story to ensure that we understand community values, beliefs and attitudes.

**Theme 3**
Local Leadership

- **Role of Elected Members**
  Ensure that Elected Members are at the heart of designing and delivering community empowerment activities.

- **Community Champions**
  That the borough invests in the promotion of the role of community champions across all communities who will act as a catalyst for change from within. These roles will complement the strategic leadership role of Elected Members.

- **Viral Change**
  That partners understand the potential of viral change within communities and that this approach is adopted as and when appropriate using the influence of Elected Members and Community Champions.
**Theme 4**
**Shaping Services**

**Shaping Services for the future**
Utilise natural leaders to act as Community Champions and work alongside the community to co-design and co-produce solutions and services.

**Community Delivery of Services**
Recognise the potential of services delivered from within the community.

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**Theme 5**
**The Community Conversation**

**Tailor Communication Channels**
Tailor communication and consultation to reshape the relationship between the Council and residents and pay particular attention to feeding back results and actions.

**Innovate in how we Communicate**
Be innovative in reaching out to our target groups and explore channels that are capable of reacting to and dealing with the differing needs of our communities.

**Young Foundation report**
Publish the Young Foundation report on community engagement in Knowsley.
Theme 1 - Forging a New Relationship

There is a huge appetite for a new relationship between residents and agencies within Knowsley. A recent survey of residents by the Young Foundation identified that 91% of residents agreed it is a good idea to give communities in Knowsley more power and influence, with 92% agreeing that they personally would like to have more influence over decisions affecting their families and neighbourhoods. In requesting the development of this framework, the public sector agencies and elected members have also demonstrated their appetite for change.

A new relationship will recognise that local solutions are often the most effective means of solving local problems. Public services are encouraged to move away from a paternalistic model of providing services “to” communities to a more co-operative model where they act as a catalyst to support communities to do things for themselves. However, there is recognition that there will always be a need for a certain level of services provided by public agencies where they are better and more cost effective than those that can be provided elsewhere.

The Knowsley Partnership is also encouraged to review the way it involves the community. The Young Foundation consultation found that the current model of governance only includes a small number of people and that a more visible and active role with greater opportunities for getting involved is more likely to make residents feel that their participation is valued and unlock further potential within the community. This approach would offer opportunities to a much wider pool of residents than the current model, which can often restrict what feels like meaningful participation to a handful of people.

Transforming from our current way of working to a true partnership where communities find solutions for themselves with the support of the public sector agencies around them will require commitment from all involved. It will also require the investment of officer time and other resources. Police Community Support Officers have been identified by the community as an example of good practice already occurring in our neighbourhoods. Given the climate of reducing resources within the public sector, organisations will need to ensure that existing resources are used to their full potential. The role of all front-line partnership workers is crucial in developing a new kind of relationship with the community and work in Page Moss, for example, has identified that front line workers themselves recognise their unique potential.
These statements have been developed to outline the aspiration for the future roles of service providers / commissioners, elected members and the community.

The Role of Service Providers
We will change our assumptions on how outcomes are most effectively achieved. The assumption of internal service provision will be challenged and agencies will look to exploit the opportunities that lie within. We commit to building community capacity, in particular in bringing the potential of our front line workers to the fore to support the community in finding its own answers.

We will help improve behaviours within the community by educating, empowering, encouraging and enforcing where appropriate. We will focus on the potential of the family unit rather than the individuals that make up the family to improve outcomes for everyone who lives in the borough.

The Role of Elected Members
We will work with agencies and the community to understand how the best outcomes will be achieved. We will use our unique position as representing both the community and service providers to foster a new and improved relationship.

The Role of the Community
We will be actively involved in supporting each other. Throughout the community there are good relationships between all partners and residents. We will jointly deliver services on a local level based on who is best at delivering those services. This is done through good communication at every level.

We will help improve behaviours within the community by educating, empowering, encouraging and enforcing where appropriate. We will recognise the potential of the family unit rather than the individuals that make up the family.
Achieving a new level of community engagement was always going to be a critical success factor in the Stockbridge Village Stronger Communities Project. The key principles of the project were to simultaneously reduce the high levels of crime and increase confidence and engagement opportunities within the local community.

Meetings were held with the local community to identify what their vision for the area was and how they felt it could be achieved. From the beginning they were very clear that instead of concentrating on solving problems it was important to focus on building on their assets and strengths which they identified as the people, their hidden skills and the wide range of local resources and community buildings. From this starting point the Community Catalyst group was established as a local stakeholder forum. Within two months there were 50+ members who had established their own vision, objectives and work plan. With the community leading, attendance at community events and activities increased significantly overnight – 1,500 at a community gala day and 400 at an event to celebrate Chinese New Year.

The range of activities and projects that this group has developed and delivered in its first year is very impressive and includes the creation of marketing materials, a campaign logo and a community directory. They have used these to knock on doors and explain their work to the wider community, recruit new members and get people signed up to their campaign – One Vision, One Community, One Spirit.
Theme 2 - Understanding the Community

The borough has recently taken part in a “Connecting Communities” programme based in Page Moss. This work supported the view that the “one size fits all” approach adopted in the past has one overriding flaw - it does not accept the unique characteristics of our many varied neighbourhoods. Residents involved in the Connecting Communities project felt more in control of what was happening in their community and could play a role in shaping activities. Frontline workers could see that their support was effective in bringing about change in the community. Local agencies making decisions about service delivery and budgets could see the results of working in partnership with the community.

The basis of this work was to understand the story of the community and why the huge investment in deprived areas over the past two decades had not proved as effective as anticipated in addressing inequalities. A number of techniques were tested out with the community and demonstrated we did not have the level of understanding required to ensure that services were effectively delivered.

- **Narrative Capture**: This process enabled officers and stakeholders to understand the community through residents story telling. This led to a better understanding of the community which would not ordinarily have been possible through more traditional hard data capture and analysis (e.g. ACORN and MOSAIC). The story of the community helps us understand how community values have evolved over generations.
Values Modes analysis: This analytical technique has enabled a better understanding of the community’s values, beliefs and attitudes, levels of cohesion, strength and resilience from the community’s perspective, and how they receive and perceive communication from organisations like the Council. It also helps us understand why previous interventions which were not tailored to our neighbourhoods have been less successful.

Appreciative Inquiry methodology: Appreciative Inquiry is a powerful and positive way to enable change by encouraging people to study, discuss, learn from, and build on what's working, rather than simply trying to fix what's not. This has enabled officers and stakeholders to approach problem solving from a positive perspective rather than using a deficit model. Service providers are able to find out what works for that particular community and to develop new interventions as appropriate.

This process is one of the most fundamental in empowering communities as, for the first time, we will be able to articulate what our communities are actually like and what type of solutions work in this area. The better we know our communities, the better we will able to design and deliver services to meet their needs.

The Role of Service Providers
We will complete a programme of activity which will inform future service delivery. Service providers commit to involving residents in the process of harvesting this information. We will recognise the importance of Place Profiles and will, where appropriate, use it to challenge the provision of universal services with a new focus on locally tailored interventions.

The Role of Elected Members
We will champion the the community’s values when making decisions. We will continually challenge service providers to develop services or interventions suited to the distinct characteristic of our wards and encourage residents to engage in the process of information gathering.

The Role of the Community
We will be a community that has honest communication with accountability so we meet each others expectations in partnership.
CASE STUDY

YOUTH COMMISSION

In 2008 Knowsley Council established an independent commission chaired by Phil Redmond CBE and managed by the national charity 4 Children. The Youth Commission was to undertake research on the complex and multi-layered influences affecting the lives of young people, the factors that influence how our young people grow up and mature and to reflect the view of what it means to be a person in Knowsley today with all the opportunities and challenges that exist.

During the summer of 2009 the Youth Commission undertook extensive consultation with 997 young people, parents, strategic decision makers and elected representatives and stakeholders through unstructured face to face consultations and discussion. Through the adoption of such methods the council has embarked upon an innovative journey of policy implementation which is a true reflection of young people’s and the community’s perspective.

The Youth Commission recommended that this whole scale review of what life is like for young people in Knowsley should be used as the first step towards unlocking their potential and the next steps should focus on what should be done and, how and when it can be done. The challenges proposed are exemplified through a number of youth initiatives already in place across Knowsley, such as OurPlace and Youth Only Zones. The council and its partners have formally committed to adopting the report as the policy framework for all future youth provision and engagement, ensuring provision is based on the genuine insight of young people and the community themselves.

CASE STUDY

PAGE MOSS

A significant amount of work has been carried out with the Page Moss community to really appreciate and understand where they are in relation to engagement and development. Utilising new and innovative methodologies such as Appreciative Inquiry, Ethnography and Value Modes have offered a greater insight into how the community functions and how the Council and its partners create positive and sustainable links to this community. This understanding and engagement has led to a locally developed Page Moss Development Plan and a piece of artwork which is displayed locally on the side of Page Moss shops which expresses how the people of Page Moss feel about their neighbourhood.
The foundations of an empowered community are built on the premise that solutions lie within. We all depend on the knowledge and intelligence within the community. The formal and informal leaders within Knowsley’s neighbourhoods will be critical in helping the community achieve its aspiration. These leaders will come from a variety of sources including local elected members, frontline workers and the community itself. Traditional approaches to change may not work effectively because they are too focussed on process. However, local leaders create change every day by being active behind the scenes and changing what communities believe and perceive by passing information along a range of formal and informal social networks. This is effective because behaviours and messages are spread from person to person which, over time, creates a new culture. By recognising and tapping into these informal social networks, local leaders can support the development of cultural change or any other ‘change approach’ that may benefit the community. This approach builds on the inner strength of the neighbourhoods across Knowsley and utilises existing networks. This is a “viral” approach to changing from within.

Community Champions
Recent work in Page Moss and Stockbridge Village has suggested that this model is preferred by the community and is ultimately more effective. Community champions, whether elected members or volunteers, feel more empowered as they are a key part of any solution being delivered within the community. Additionally, volunteer community champions have reached wider audiences by using their informal networks rather than traditional methods. Once established, the community champions have demonstrated a capacity for more technical involvement, for example being trained as accredited youth workers. This further builds the capacity of the neighbourhood.

Elected Members
In its series of papers in 2010, the Improvement and Development Agency (IDEA) recognised the vital role to be played by elected members and the essential qualities that they will need around communication, political understanding, partnership working, regulating and monitoring. These are vital skills for elected members, underpinning the delivery of this framework.
Frontline Workers
The field work of the Young Foundation and the Connecting Communities work in Page Moss both identified that the role played by frontline workers has huge potential which is of great value in a climate of reducing public sector resources. Frontline workers, such as care workers, housing officers, PCSOs, street scene and refuse operatives and park rangers have day to day contact with a wide range of residents, including those that may be under or unrepresented. Their role can be built upon to spread important messages and to identify and implement new solutions to improve quality of life. An appetite within frontline workers for more empowerment has already been seen in North Huyton and it is anticipated that this will be the case across the borough.

The Role of Service Providers
We have recognised the vital role that elected members and community champions play in leading change within our neighbourhoods. We will work in partnership with local leaders to develop local solutions. We will support and develop elected members and community champions so that they are equipped to successfully lead their communities when facing the challenges that lie ahead.

The Role of Elected Members
We will help develop a vision for our community and bring different groups in our neighbourhoods together. We will help identify issues of concern to local people and help them establish their priorities.

We will lead and communicate to bring about change. We will be accountable, monitor progress on initiatives and stand up for the community.

We will be fair and ensure that all groups have a voice. We will facilitate discussion and resolve conflict when working with groups who have different aspirations for their area.

The Role of the Community
We will communicate effectively with each other and show respect for all role models working within the community. We will be content knowing that all decisions are made fairly and with equity ensuring fair access to services by all partners. This approach will pave the way for our future generations.
CASE STUDY

PAGE MOSS FLOODS

In 2009, the Page Moss area of Huyton suffered its second flood in two years. The Page Moss Methodist Church became the hub for local residents for meetings and support, and providing **three square meals a day to families in need**.

The informal resident networks were instrumental in identifying vulnerable people and families and supporting them and each other in a time of crisis.

Small groups subsequently sprung from the adversity of the floods, with people attending who had not even visited the Church before. This included a mother and toddler group and yoga sessions.

Local Councillors also played a key part in the floods, regularly visiting victims, supporting residents with individual issues and becoming the link between Council Departments, KHT and United Utilities. Ward Councillors also stayed involved with residents after the Council, KHT and United Utilities pulled out of the area, ensuring actions and payments were followed up to the satisfaction of the residents who were affected by the flooding.
Theme 4 - Shaping Services

Research undertaken by The Young Foundation found that the Knowsley community want to find its own solutions to local problems with support being provided by the Council and other partners. Evidence from a variety of projects also showed increased levels of buy-in and commitment from the community where they were actively involved in designing and delivering solutions. Consequently, one of the driving forces behind the development of this framework is the Knowsley Partnership’s wish that the community’s ownership and influence on services is increased.

Knowsley already has a strong track record of involving service users in the development of service provision within the borough, particularly in the areas of Health and Wellbeing Services and Children’ and Family Services. This has the potential to develop further with the potential for better value services to be provided from within the community rather than by the public service sector. It is also acknowledged that some services would have greater impact if they were provided from within the community itself. This might be formally commissioned and delivered by the faith/voluntary sectors, social enterprises or being informally delivered from community groups or individuals within the community.

Understanding the bespoke needs of the communities and, where appropriate, designing tailored services to suit the needs of those geographic communities or communities of interest is crucial. The role of the community is vital to the provision of appropriate services at a neighbourhood level. Where there is a strong desire from residents to develop and deliver services themselves, it is important that this should be supported and opportunities be developed for this to happen. This includes both the formal and informal elements of the community and voluntary sector which range from “friends of” parks groups, sports clubs to registered charities and social enterprises.

A period of infrastructure development will be needed before service provision can be transferred to the community and voluntary sector. Additionally, the partnership understands that this approach to service delivery is community and voluntary sector led and should only be undertaken when this is on “the community’s terms”.
The Role of Service Providers
We will recognise the need for the community to have significant influence on all aspects of service design. Where necessary, we will invest in the development of community capacity to enable future growth in the role of the community and voluntary sector.

Service providers will also recognise internal and external best practice in this regard and replicate as and when appropriate.

The Role of Elected Members
We will support our communities to get engaged in the design and delivery of services and we will encourage public services to delegate responsibility for delivering services to the community sector when this is the most suitable way forward.

The Role of the Community
We will shape a sustainable future where the community has ownership, including social enterprise, with clear communication and strong links throughout.
CASE STUDY

THE FAMOUS GRAPES FC

There has always been a big demand among young people for football coaching on the Stockbridge Village estate. Cage Soccer became a regular activity, although unsustainable in the long term due to the reductions in funding.

The Famous Grapes are a local football team who are keen to develop and play a greater role in their community. They were approached by the Council to see if they were willing to deliver football coaching to local youngsters as part of their club development plan. An eight week pilot programme was agreed and in return they were given funding that would be reinvested into the club.

From an early stage it was clear that the local relationships between the young people and the coaches had a positive effect on attendance levels and commitment. The success of their work has resulted in them delivering further sessions. This work has proven that local communities can often have a greater impact and attract more local people to participate in activities than other external bodies, often at a lower cost.

CASE STUDY

YOUNG ADVISORS

The Knowsley Young Advisors Programme was established from a pilot that began in January 2007 and has developed to be recognised nationally as one of the most successful Young Advisor programmes in the country. Young Advisors are local young people aged between 16 - 21, who guide community leaders and decision makers on how to engage young people in community life, regeneration and renewal. Currently 27 Knowsley Young Advisors, including one looked after young person, one young person leaving care, and two young carers have employment status with Knowsley Council. The programme is self sustaining as Young Advisors generate their own income by promoting the programme to services, who then commission them to undertake specific pieces of work. For example, Knowsley Young Advisors have worked at a community level with Area Partnership Boards to gather neighbourhood intelligence on a range of issues including young people’s perceptions on territory, youth facilities, environment and safety.
Theme 5 - The Community Conversation

Nationally, residents often report that the conversation between the public service agencies and their communities or service users needs to be improved. In recent field work by the Young Foundation presented to the Community Empowerment Working Group in winter 2010, a recurring theme about the need for improved conversation and interaction with the community was represented and the elected members on the working group and on the wider committee endorsed this as an area for improvement.

It should be recognised that there are already many examples of good practice within the Council and the other agencies. These relate to both traditional and more modern forms of communication. The Knowsley News is a good example of a traditional form of effective communication which is delivered regularly to every household in the borough and contains both a borough-wide and a local focus. With regards to modern platforms, the Council also engages using platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Community Messaging.

However, what is clear is that there is a need to expand the range and frequency of interaction between service providers and residents and for this to be tailored and re-shaped using modern, innovative methods of communication and in particular, providing more effective feedback, results and actions.

The Young Foundation researched national best practice and found that public agencies across the country are testing innovative means of engaging their residents using a range of modern platforms including social networking sites, electronic voting tools and survey techniques such as “Survey Monkey.” In the modern climate, the added benefit of the majority of these tools is that they are free at the point of use to both the user and the provider.

Social networking sites are becoming increasingly embedded in our everyday lives. The efficiency and effectiveness of these tools to disseminate information and generate feedback is unmatched and although agencies in Knowsley have begun to explore these, the pace of development is being outstripped by their use in the community itself. Sites such as Facebook offer a real opportunity for public agencies to engage with new and different audiences. In its paper “Unleashing the Big Society”, the New Local Government Network (NLGN) states that “the emerging model of engagement today…” is about bringing people together to achieve things for themselves. The rise of social media on the internet provides new ways to grow social capital and connect it to useful activities - whether that is sharing cars, swapping educational opportunities or pledging to help a neighbour with their gardening.”
However, the evidence presented to the Scrutiny Working Group suggests that the power of enabling the community voice through such an approach and the business value of the content itself far outweighs the risk.

The Role of Service Providers
We will recognise the importance of effective, tailored and innovative communication methods to truly empower residents and other stakeholders within our resources.

We will seek the most effective methods to communicate with and engage our stakeholders and will provide appropriate feedback as a matter of course.

The Role of Elected Members
We will encourage residents to engage in consultation activities with Knowsley public sector organisations. We will champion effective communication between public agencies and the community.

The Role of the Community
We will be community champions with a pool of knowledge empowering our community. There is at least one point of contact in our neighbourhood, spreading information by word of mouth and through officers getting out and about.
CASE STUDY
COMMUNITY MESSAGING
Knowsley Community Messaging Service is a free to receive alert system that sends texts, emails and voicemails to over 7000 people in Knowsley. Launched in 2008, over the last two years intensive engagement with the community by PCSOs on the beat and at community events has lead to a steady and continuous increase in membership.

Members are regularly updated on relevant neighbourhood issues predominantly around crime and community safety, but also wider health and wellbeing issues and activities and neighbourhood specific information. It is particularly popular with some of Knowsley’s more vulnerable community groups such as members of Knowsley Older Peoples Voice. With over 7000 members it can be presumed that each recipient would share their messages with family members and friends which means one message on Knowsley Community Messaging could reach over 28,000 people. Members also include local press and media who further distribute the messages.

The Knowsley Community Messaging Service offers users the opportunity to reply to the messages in confidence, meaning that the communication channels are always open, building the Safer Knowsley Partnership’s reputation and brand awareness whilst helping to maintain the communities’ confidence in our services.
Conclusion

This Community Empowerment Framework will inform how the Council and its partners empower, engage, develop, consult and communicate with Knowsley’s communities. For public agencies, community empowerment is important as it demonstrates the result of effective relationships and engagement between service providers and the public. This is even more important in an environment of reducing resources and a local wish to change behaviours and reduce dependency on public service provision.

This Framework defines what is thought to be important for the effective future development and implementation of community empowerment in Knowsley and provides guidance to officers, members and community activists to effectively work together in the future. This is not prescriptive but aims to harness the current good practice found across the public sector and frontline workers in a more cohesive way.

Public sector partners and the community will continue to work together to further develop the actions required to deliver the themes that sit within the Framework.
Bibliography

What does community empowerment mean in Knowsley? The Young Foundation - Saffron Woodcraft and Carmel O’Sullivan, March 2011 Community Empowerment Review, Safer Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee

Introduction to community empowerment  Last updated 2 February 2010. Find out what community empowerment is, and what the benefits could be for your council. IDEA, 2010.

New improvement tools  Last updated 26 May 2010. This section contains tools that will help your organisation or partnership to improve your practice against each of the three pillars of the framework for an ideal empowering authority. IDEA, 2010.

Government expectations for community empowerment  Last updated 23 March 2010. Evolution of government policy and legislation on community empowerment since the late 90s, and what is currently required of local councils and partners. IDEA, 2010.

Framework for an ideal empowering authority  Last updated 5 November 2010. Our updated publication 'The Ideal Empowering Authority: An illustrated framework' tells you what ‘ideal’ looks like and how you can raise your own organisation’s or partnership’s performance to mirror that of the leaders in this field. IDEA, 2010.

Practical ways to engage with your community  Last updated 28 April 2009. A list of important tools and methods for engaging your community. How to plan the right tool or method for you. IDEA, 2010.

Case studies of council and partnership good practice  Last updated 7 July 2010. Case studies showcasing councils' work on community engagement and empowerment. IDEA, 2010

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