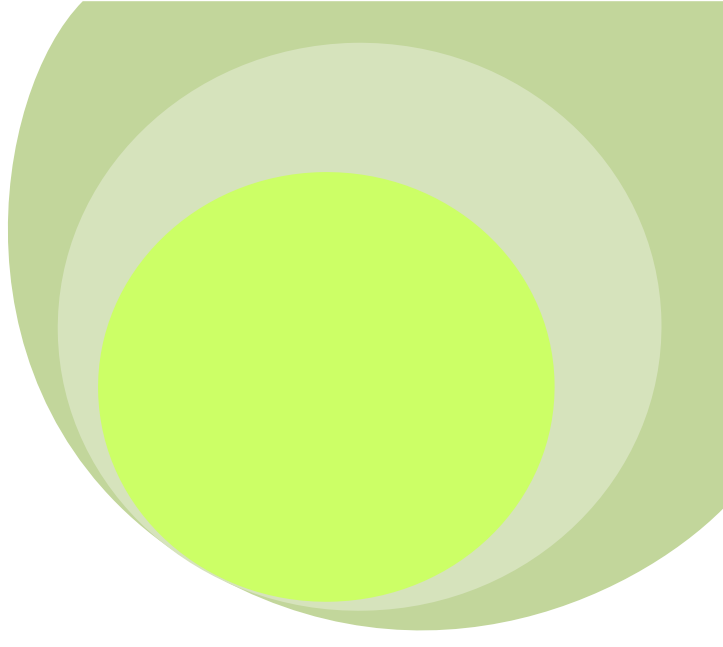
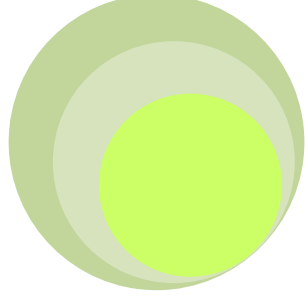
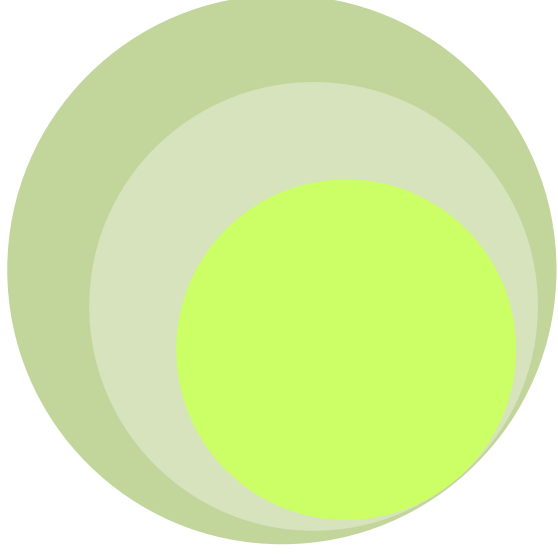




# **New Generation Leadership Programme incorporating Community Empowerment Training Evaluation Report**

**Merida Associates  
October 2008**



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### Acknowledgements

Our thanks to everyone who contributed to this evaluation, giving their time and sharing their opinions and ideas.

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## 1. Introduction

This report presents the findings and recommendations of a snapshot evaluation of the New Generation Leadership Programme, incorporating the Community Empowerment Training Course, which was commissioned by the Centre for Equality & Diversity (CfED) and undertaken independently by Merida Associates.

### Evaluation objectives

- To review the delivery of the programme against its stated objectives
- To assess the satisfaction of programme participants
- To assess the outcomes of the programme and training
- To identify any lessons and make recommendations for improvements that may be taken forward to inform future programme delivery by CfED.

### Summary of evaluation activity

The evaluation was commissioned to provide a snapshot overview of programme activity and outcomes, rather than an in-depth review and analysis. The following activities were undertaken within the minimal time available for primary research.

**Desk research:** a review of background documents, programme materials, session evaluations and participant portfolios.

**Interviews:** 4 semi-structured interviews with contributors to the programme.

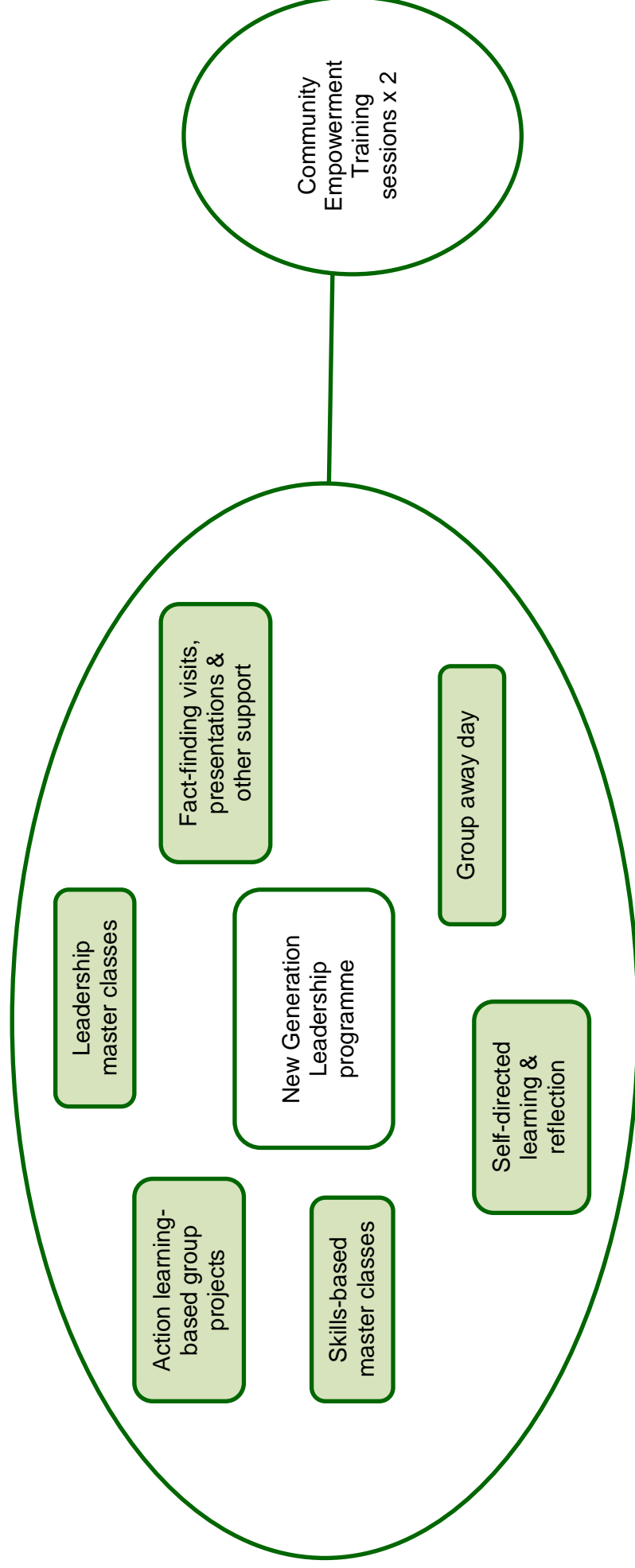
**Postal survey:** sent to participants of the Community Empowerment Training course.

**Focus group:** with programme participants.

### New Generation Leadership Programme Objectives

- Encourage local residents to become community leaders, equip them with the skills that enable effective engagement with localised 'political' and decision making structures.
- Engage residents to broaden their horizons and support them to become more effective within their communities.
- Establish a leadership network that will represent the interest of community leaders, offering peer support and mutual learning and facilitating development opportunities.

## Programme components



## Community Empowerment Training course objectives

The course contributed towards meeting the first objective of the leadership programme.

- To increase participants' understanding of the law in relation to public consultation and race equality.
- To empower participants to assert their rights in relation to race equality and public consultation and to hold public bodies to account in the most effective manner.

The programme was funded by Dudley MBC and the LSC through the Breakthrough Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities Fund and the Three Ward Fund, which together target funding into the top 8 deprived wards in the Borough.

## 2. Findings and analysis

### 2.1 Profile of participants

The profile data (see Appendix 1) for both elements of the programme shows that participants were mostly well educated, with a majority in both groups having degree-level attainment. All those who recorded their ethnicity were from BME communities. A good representation of men and women was achieved, with a range in terms of employment status. The age range was all 30+. This profile indicates that the people recruited would have considerable experience to share, they would be likely to be able to cope with the demands of an intensive programme and were diverse enough groupings to enable awareness raising and recognition of common ground across BME communities. These factors that suggest that the recruitment process was successful in attracting people who would benefit from the programme.

Participants were recruited from target wards and most of them were from the voluntary or community sector, either as current leaders, leaders in waiting or able to influence current leaders. Some of them were paid workers, rather than residents, in those areas. A number of participants were employed by the council so were not acting as community leaders themselves, although they do work with and support individuals and groups in the community, and some of those had a view to take on community leadership roles in the future.

Recruitment was not targeted towards BME communities - it was an open process - but no participants from White communities were recruited. It is possible that because CfED is perceived generally as supporting BME communities that assumptions were made that it was a targeted programme. Focus group participants expressed the wish that representatives from White communities could have been involved in the discussions of common issues that had taken place on the programme.



*Participants pulling together on away day*

Contributors felt that recruitment had been thematic around communities of interest, rather than communities of place such as the deprived wards, which could have had more direct relevance to the overall objectives of the funders.

## 2.2 Delivery against programme objectives

The programme brought together a group of people with a common interest in developing leadership skills in order to support their communities and improve their personal effectiveness. It provided a package of activities and learning opportunities through which participants could reflect on concepts of leadership and challenge their perceptions of themselves and others in leadership roles. The programme enabled people to think about what makes an effective leader and to think about their own leadership style.

Focus group participants described a number of “light bulb” moments where they had gained insights into their own leadership styles and motivations and were able to reflect on and critically analyse the style and motivation of national and community level leaders. A clear learning point for participants was the importance, for them, of being ‘authentic’ as a leader.

There is good evidence, from the activities delivered and feedback from participants, that people did have their horizons broadened during the programme. Participants reported becoming more aware of other communities and stated that barriers were broken down between communities represented within the group.

Participants found the master classes informative and the group projects had been good for building relationships and offering an opportunity for working together on something practical.

Focus group participants were starting to think about relating the learning to “real life” and described changes in their own leadership behaviour in the workplace. However some people felt that they had not had any opportunities to try to put the learning into practice.

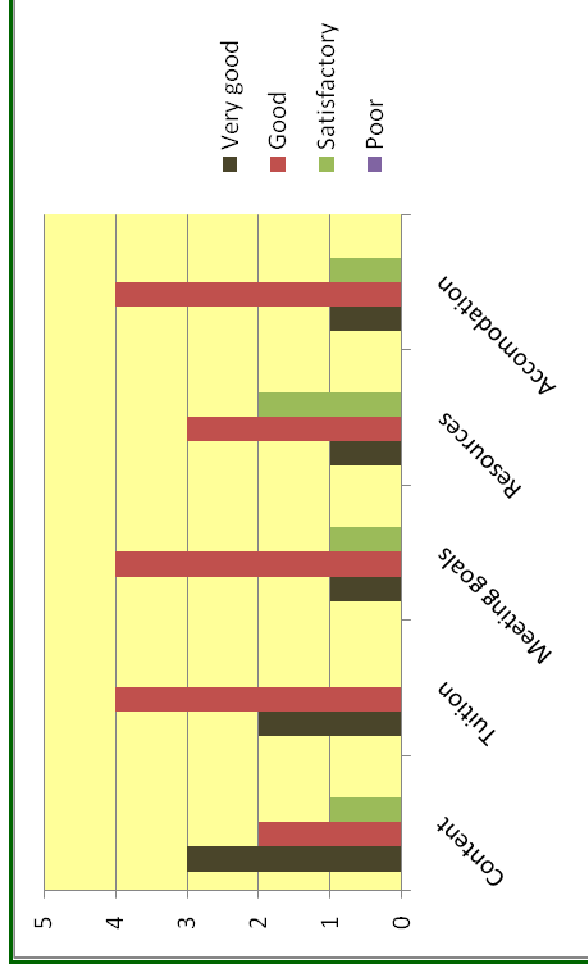
There is strong evidence of delivery against the first two objectives of the programme. In terms of developing a community leaders network (third objective), relationships between programme participants have been established and are likely to be maintained in an informal manner. What is less clear is if the group are able to form a more structured network, extended to include other community leaders, and organise themselves to provide peer support and developmental opportunities without ongoing external facilitation and support.



*Compiling portfolios to support learning*

### 2.3 Satisfaction of participants

Chart A: Post-course feedback from participants



No. = 6

Participants reported that they enjoyed the programme and found that it had increased their confidence. They found the style of facilitation both inspiring and motivational. Participants valued the information given as part of the programme, as one commented: *“The notes are very important as I can read up on these in my own time and understand things”*.

All of the focus group participants had found the videoed presentations really useful and would have liked time to develop this element further. *“Having it videoed was a good idea - it is one thing to see how I see myself and then I saw the video”* and *“doing it more than once would have given us a chance to practise where we needed to improve”*.

The programme was spread over a 20 week period, including the Summer holidays, and participants particularly appreciated the role played by CfED, and its Chief Executive in particular, in keeping in touch with them and supporting their participation.

Focus group participants would have liked to receive a certificate for the programme and for this to have been presented at an awards ceremony.

Overall the focus group participants rated the programme as 8 out of 10.

People who attended the community empowerment training reported high levels of satisfaction with the course. They said that they would use the learning, as community leaders, to feedback to their communities and “to ensure that my community is better served by the Local Authority in future”.

#### 2.4 Programme outcomes

All focus group participants reported increased confidence. Some described feeling more confident in day to day situations and felt more able to speak up within their community, as one commented “I now have more confidence, I can take my ideas forward”.

Focus group participants reported that, through working together, they recognise there are some issues that are universal to all communities and that they could be stronger if the got together to address them. They felt they had increased awareness of other communities and overall they felt that it had been good to work together, and with other community leaders/activists, and to recognise that they have a lot in common.

Participants understood more about how to engage with Dudley MBC consultations and strategy development and further understood why this was important for their community. All of them felt better equipped to engage in council consultation processes and had understood (most of them for the first time) why it is important for their communities to make their views known and to start to influence strategies and policies.

Several felt that the course had enabled them to read strategy documents and to look at how these could impact on local communities and to identify gaps in documents that related to their own communities.

One participant who was already active in his community felt that as a result of the course he was better able to communicate at the right level across all the members of his community and recognized that prior to the course he had tended to talk to people in ways they may have found difficult to understand.



Community empowerment training participants recorded marked increases in knowledge about public consultation processes and the statutory race equality duty. Follow up questionnaires show that people shared the learning within their organisations and communities and that some had attended public consultation meetings since the training.

It is too early to identify sustainable longer term outcomes from the programme. That would require follow up contact with participants after 6-12 months.

## 2.5 Lessons for the future

- This was an intensive programme of study, sustained over 20 weeks, and some participants found it a strain to find additional time for the personal reflection and reading required to really make the most of the learning opportunities provided by the programme. Sessions that had been planned to be delivered over half a day were curtailed to fit into two hour slots, so that participants could attend after work. This meant that time built-in for reflection and support was lost. Participants recognised and felt these constraints. Overall the group felt that they had been given lots of information on the programme and they had found it difficult to retain and reflect on it. One commented “*people are coming here in the evenings after work and we’ve not really had the opportunity to read and digest the information - we need to find the time to reflect on the learning*”. Participants recognised that they had personal responsibilities to do this, they commented that they had been introduced to the concept of learning diaries but that “*we were treated like adults and encouraged to do this, but maybe we needed more direction*”.
- All elements of the learning package have been successfully delivered but they were not always joined up as effectively as they might have been. Contributors felt it would be useful to identify someone able to have a “helicopter view” of the programme and who is able to marry all the parts, helping participants to link and maximise learning from the master classes, the presentations and visits together, ensuring that the self directed reading, the project work and the taught element were in tune with each other and synergistic. “*Maybe we needed to have a more directive approach by asking people to come back to the next session and tell everyone HOW they’re implementing the learning*”.
- For many of the participants, working in Action Learning Sets was a new way of learning. This is a process that is usually directly facilitated but resources for the programme could not support on-going facilitation. Whilst people engaged with completing the task, they found it difficult to reflect on the process, identify individual learning and to relate this to their leadership role within their community. If resources would allow, it would be beneficial to include one to one coaching and development time in the package, linked to Personal Development Plans with short, medium and long-term goals. This one to one approach would also provide a more structured mechanism for assessing impact on individuals.

- The original programme plan had envisaged 24 people in the group, both the course facilitator and the participants felt that this would be too many and commented that the group size was “*about right*”.
- There was some learning about practical organisational aspects of the programme. The timing over the Summer made constancy of attendance difficult so it was not often that all participants were able to attend. The venue was adequate but with hindsight a roomier venue, with more versatile space would have been preferable.
- The 20 week commitment may have discouraged some people from registering. While it was important to emphasise the time commitment required in the promotional literature, in future the diversity and range of activities within the learning package would be promoted more effectively to highlight the variety of learning and networking opportunities on offer through the programme.
- The course facilitator identified a need for a second facilitator to support the less assertive women members of the group and those who “*were having difficulty understanding the concepts*”. There were no pre-qualifications required for registration, and most of the participants were educated to degree-level, but it was identified that 1 or 2 people found it difficult to understand some of the language used. Another contributor suggested considering running a programme specifically for women community leaders in recognition of the power imbalances in many community structures.
- The action learning projects could have been developed a little further to link BME communities into mainstream neighbourhood activities, linking up with other communities in their area - communities of place as well as interest - and tying in more effectively with the Breakthrough funding objectives.
- Participants at the focus group identified a need to find out about community activism/community organising. This learning need could be linked to the Community Cohesion agenda and opportunities for building social capital<sup>1</sup>.
- CfED has established the need for the development of community leadership in Dudley and has delivered a model that appears to support the development process.
- Community leaders will need ongoing support, for example through mentoring, facilitating Action Learning Sets or developing a network.

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<sup>1</sup> **Social Capital** - refers to relationship building, developing networks and the expression of social co-operation, mutuality and solidarity.

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### 3. Recommendations

- a) Review the programme with partners in Dudley MBC and explore ways of locating the programme in a more strategic arena, which would give CfED and the programme a stronger basis for mainstreaming/embedding the work. Explore opportunities for linking programme graduates into the community renewal framework as community leaders in neighbourhood strategic decision making processes. Identify how they could add value to locality focused work for communities of place, as well as communities of interest.
- b) Follow up this cohort in 6-12 months and assess the medium term impact of the programme. Assessing this longer-term impact will enable CfED to see if participants have been able to use the learning to achieve their personal and community leadership goals and will help to provide an evidence base for continuing the programme on, for instance, an annual or bi-annual basis. A rolling programme would bring tranches of people through, upskilling existing and potential community leaders and building a “critical mass” of people with leadership skills and knowledge in communities.
- c) Identify possible ways to continue to support fledging leaders network of programme participants. Explore opportunities to develop a mini-“Common Purpose” style leaders network, something with status and purpose that people see value in and want to join. Explore the potential to work in partnership with Dosti on this idea.
- d) Explore opportunities to work in partnership with other Black Country agencies to roll the community leadership programme out, as a model of good practice.
- e) Develop an accreditation or certification route for the programme, which could incorporate an awards ceremony - perhaps linked to the potential “Common Purpose”-style network.

### Appendix 1: Participants profile data

The leadership programme and the community empowerment training participants were all recruited from the 8 target wards. Different people attended each element.

### New Generation Leadership Programme - 15 recorded participants (data for 14)

Chart 1: Previous educational attainment

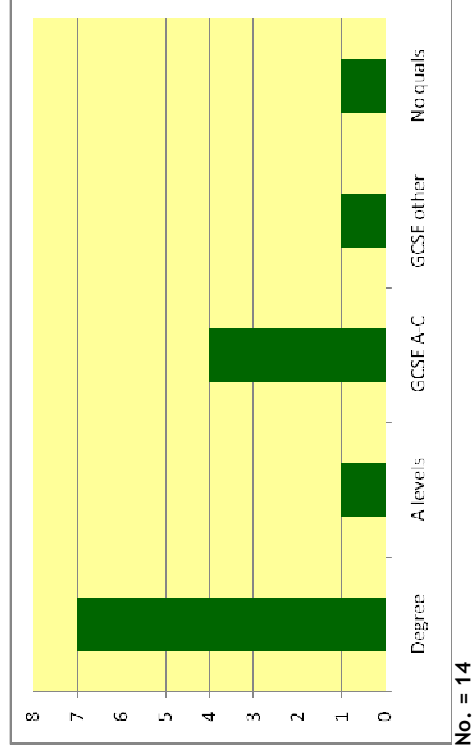
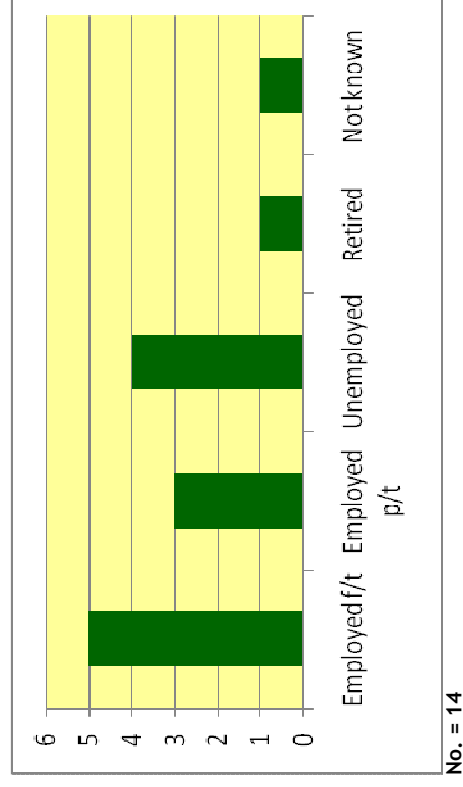
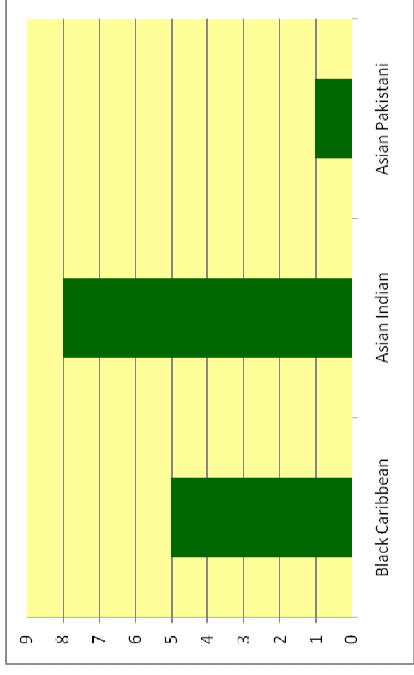


Chart 2: Employment status



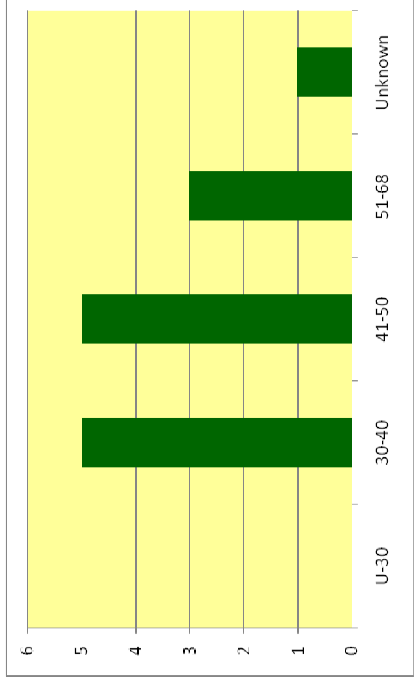
Female	10	disabled	2
Male	4	not disabled	12

Chart 3: Ethnicity



No. = 14

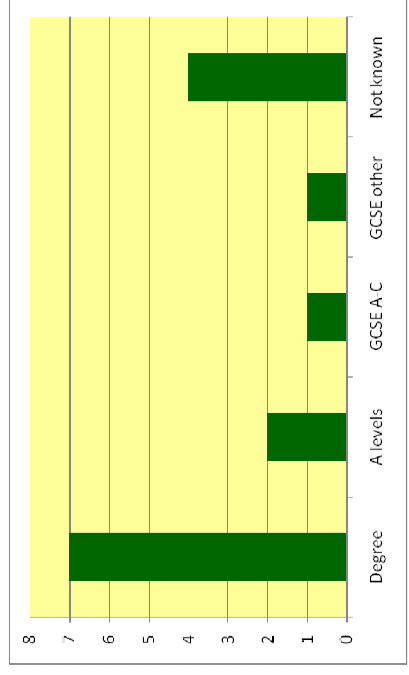
Chart 4: Age range



No. = 14

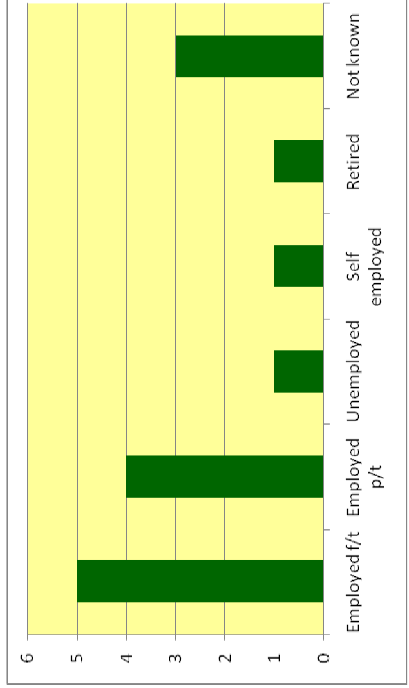
Community Empowerment Training Course - 18 recorded participants (data for 15)

Chart 5: Previous educational attainment



No. = 15

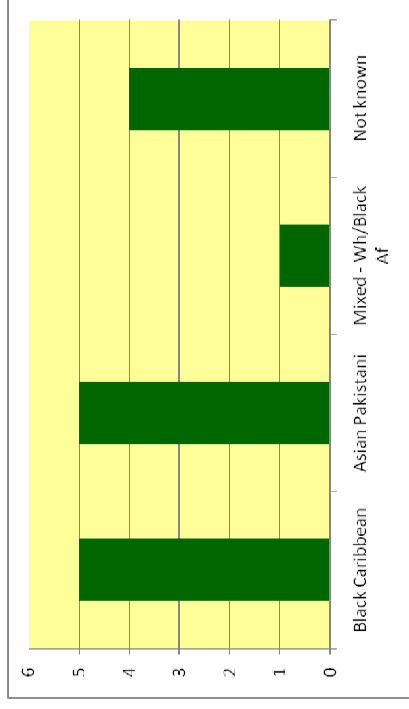
Chart 6: Employment status



No. = 15

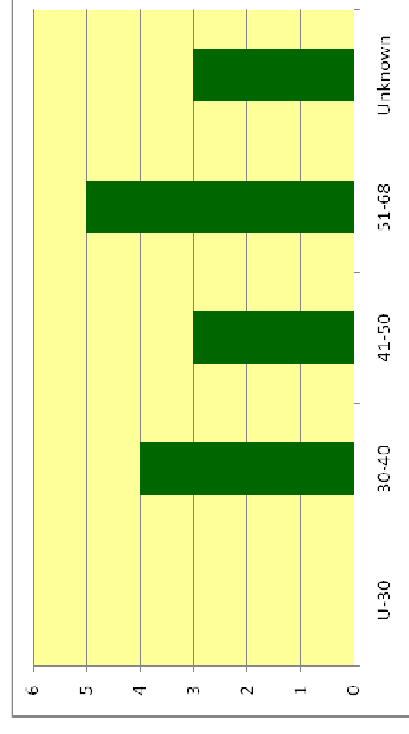
Female	7	disabled	0
Male	8	not disabled	14
		not stated	1

Chart 7: Ethnicity



No. = 15

Chart 8: Age range



No. = 15

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