

Participatory Practitioners for Change

Annual Report

October 2009

Introduction

The PPfC has grown and changed considerably during the period of the Oxfam grant. In 2006 there were 51 names in the mailing list and a group of more active members of about 20 took part in meetings mostly working on their own practice and developing key documents about participation in the UK. These documents include the Principles and Guidelines for Commissioners.

The ppfc lead group felt that the priority this year was to increase the numbers of people involved in the network. The group felt that one way to achieve this was to work in partnership with other organisations to plan activities, we hoped that this approach would enable a wider range of people to access the network and add value to the workshop programme.

Members of the lead group planned events by phone and email. In addition the lead group met in June after the event held at Staffordshire University to finalise the Oxford workshop and agree the format of the AGM.

As a result of this years work to increase the numbers of people involved in ppfc the mailing list now contains more than 80 names and recent meetings have been in collaboration with other organisations have attracted a wider range and greater number (over 100 people attended 3 events) of participants.

During this year 6 people have agreed to join the lead group. The new members will formally join the group after the virtual AGM. Plans for next years activities will be developed at a meeting of the lead group in December.

Thanks to all the members of the lead group and our partner organisations Creative Communities Unit, Staffordshire University and Reachability

Programme of Activities

6th November 2008, Woodbrooke College, Birmingham

Participation and Conflict Resolution Practical Skills Workshop

PPfC collaborated with Responding to Conflict (<http://www.respond.org/>) to host a workshop exploring participatory approaches and their role in conflict resolution. Dr Marwan Darweish, Senior Peace and Conflict Advisor led the

workshop, taking us through participatory approaches to conflict analysis and consensus building tools and skills.

Responding to Conflict are an internationally recognised organisation devoted to transforming conflict and violence by facilitating individuals and organisations to address the underlying causes of violence in situations of real or potential conflict through skills development and capacity building.

Cost to Participants £68, which covered accommodation at Woodbrooke and food from the evening of 28th October through to the end of the workshop on the 29th October.

Day delegates (for the 29th) were charged the slightly lower rate of £45.

Numbers attended: 10

Thursday 25th June 2009: Participatory Approaches in Action Workshop held in partnership with Creative Communities Unit, Staffordshire University

A day of workshops for community based workers on looking at the principles, process and tools of participatory consultation. PFC used the event as a way of profiling members practice and invited people to talk about their work and facilitate a short workshop.

A workshop report was circulated to all participants by Staffordshire University. Please see

http://www.staffs.ac.uk/schools/humanities_and_soc_sciences/ccu/conf09.htm

Workshop Programme:

1. *Roars Not Whispers, Scottish Youth Parliament & Oxfam Scotland*
Sarah Stocks and Nik Clifton

http://www.rnw.org.uk/Roars_not_Whispers/Home.html

The workshop explored how Roars Not Whispers uses participatory learning to form and support a group of young people who want to make change in their community

2. *Action not Words A Solutions Focussed Participatory Approach in South Tyneside*

Marilyn Doyle and Chris Doyle

<http://zebra.coop>

Working with members of the community, elected members and council officers Marilyn and Chris pioneered a participatory Solutions Focus Approach to Neighbourhood Development for South Tyneside MBC. The workshop explored the approach focusing on how development can be sustainable and truly meet the needs of local communities.

3. *Talking About Our Health Greater Pilton, Edinburgh*

Anita Aggarwal and Nathalie Nogues

www.pchp.org.uk

Over the course of last year (2008), Pilton Community Health Project and the Black Community Development Project worked with a group of people from BME backgrounds who live in Pilton to explore the health needs of the BME community in the area. During this workshop Anita and Nathalie described how they engaged with the local BME community and what they found out. They then used participatory tools to explore how to overcome some of the challenges that came up during the process.

4. *Duty to Involve in England: Case Studies* Sally Ramsden
www.reachability.co.uk

The Duty to Involve is a new Law in England as of 1 April 2009. It requires local authorities and other statutory bodies such as the police, fire and transport services to: inform, consult, and involve their customers and local communities.

Sally gave a short presentation about the Duty to Involve, exploring some of the key implications for the sector. She highlighted some patterns of success from around the country.

5. *Keeping things systematic: Evaluation Methods and Tools*
David Mathews
www.participationinstitute.org/

EIPP, the European Institute for Public Participation, is evaluating public participation in Germany (with the Bertelsmann Foundation) and developing its programme in the UK. The workshop included a short introduction to EIPP's research findings on how to be more systematic about public participation methods followed by a practical session on how to make participation more effective through using straightforward evaluation methods and tools.

6. *Keeping the process on track:*
John Rowley
www.participatorytraining.co.uk

The process that participatory practice follows can determine if the work is successful or not. This session identified what makes a good process and why it is important. We discussed how to know if a process is likely to allow good participation and learning and what to do when you fear that the process is not going to be good.

Cost to participants: Free

The event was subsidised by Staffordshire University (venue, food, staff support)

PPFC paid travel expenses to Stoke on Trent to members who facilitated a workshop.

Numbers of Participants 48

Monday 28th September 2009 Oxford
Creating Conversations for Change
Workshop run in partnership with Reachability www.reachability.co.uk

A one-day workshop in designing and facilitating participatory events to create powerful conversations and connections involving large groups of people. Participants spent the day taking part in and reflecting on a series of sessions drawing on World Café, Open Space and elements of Appreciative Inquiry - practices that can work with anything from 12 to 1000 people or more.

The workshop explored:

- what these methods offer
- how they work
- the advantages and pitfalls
- the underlying principles
- relevance of these methods to the challenges of our times.

Participants received a substantial resource guide, detailing methods and useful links.

Chris Chapman, was the lead facilitator for this event, he specialises in designing and facilitating large group methods such as The Art of Hosting, Theory U, Action Learning, Communities of Practice, World Cafe, Open Space Technology and Appreciative Inquiry. Chris worked with Sally Ramsden from ReachAbility.

A workshop report was circulated to all participants by Reachability.

Cost to Participants

£50- students, volunteers, people on low income (less than £15,000) or on benefits; organisations with the equivalent of less than 1.5 full-time staff.

£85 - Third Sector and individuals

£125- public sector or commercial

NB: PPfC supported ten free places at this event for people who are students, volunteers, or people on a low Income

Numbers of people attending: 47

PPfC website

The website was established in 2007 as the electronic presence of the PPfC. It is necessary to have a web presence and this reinforces the identity of the group. The website has not be modified or updated since it was launched and material transferred from the Oxfam website. A very simple design and structure was chosen to save costs.

There are usually relatively few visitors (about 40/month with a bounce rate of 42%) partly perhaps because the site has remained fairly static and few links from other sites have been set up. Nevertheless the site has led directly to

the addition of 13 members and is a place that members refer others to in order to explain and promote the group.

Members have not posted much material on the website partly because it is a slightly complicated process but mostly because members are not familiar with or enthusiastic about this means of communication. Announcements of PPfC events are always posted on the site and members refer others to the site as part of the promotion of events. Events and training opportunities managed by individual members are also posted on the website. It has not developed into a discussion forum.

However, recently a wiki has been set up (<http://ppfc09.pbworks.com>) and the lead group has used it to develop materials and exchange ideas for the formal AGM in December. A blog has also been set up but so far has only been used to post material that is also posted on the website. These tools are much easier to use than the website.

The AGM in December will decide whether or not to invest more in developing the website to help draw in more visitors. One possible development would be to make it easier to post news and other items on the web. It would also be possible to link the blog and the website so that the site appeared more active. Some analysis would be necessary to see if PPfC could manage with only one domain name.

**PPfC Lead Group
October 2009**