

**PB Unit**  
making people count

# Participatory Budgeting in the UK: Values, Principles & Standards

Consultation Document April 2008



This document has been produced by the PB Unit, a project of the charity Church Action on Poverty, as part of the developmental work on a Quality Assurance Framework for participatory budgeting in the UK.

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# Background

Participatory Budgeting has been evolving in the UK since 2000, when a delegation of community activists and local government officials from Salford and Manchester visited Brazil to understand how PB works and how it might be implemented in the UK context.

For the past few years, the Department of Communities and Local Government (and previously the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister) have financially supported Church Action on Poverty, and the PB Unit, once it was set up, in developing UK models of PB through the introduction of national pilots.

Currently there are 22 national PB pilots with other PB projects being undertaken in the UK. Communities Secretary, Hazel Blears MP, has expressed her ambition for every local authority area to be undertaking some form of PB by 2012. With this announcement and a recent PB strategy published by Communities & Local Government, awareness of PB has been significantly raised. Due to the increased awareness and take up of PB, concerns were raised around the quality of PB being implemented. This combined with the possibility that the PB Unit may not be aware of all PB projects in the UK and that possibility increasing, means that the PB Unit would not be able to confirm the quality of PB being implemented. Furthermore Local Strategic Partnerships may feel pressure to 'tick a box' and 'water down' PB to the point where it would not actually be PB anymore.

The PB Unit, practitioners and Communities and Local Government felt that some minimum standards and guidance were needed for PB, effectively, a Quality Assurance Framework that practitioners could refer to, when implementing PB, and by which PB projects could be measured

and monitored so that the integrity of PB projects could be assured.

Work on quality assurance began in January 2008 when it was recognised that political and policy momentum around PB was rising, but prior to the publication of the PB strategy by Communities and Local Government. This work has continued to evolve since the beginning of 2008 and have involved PB Unit staff, associates, practitioners from the pilots and civil servants. However, it was felt that the process of setting the values, principles and standards should be as inclusive as possible because the work on PB in the UK is still evolving and the PB Unit is aware that other views may be 'out there' and should be sought.

It is our ambition that these values, principles and standards will set the minimum expectations around how PB is implemented in the UK. This document will help to measure and monitor PB projects to ensure integrity is retained. We hope that PB projects will continue to raise the bar on quality and PB will be a high quality engagement experience whilst still remaining inclusive and accessible to all parts of the community. If standards are not maintained and met then the core benefits of PB such as community empowerment, social cohesion and more responsive services, may be lost, and this would waste the opportunity that PB offers, hence the need to develop a Quality Assurance Framework.

# Purpose of the Document

This document has been produced by the PB Unit, working in conjunction with the Department for Communities and Local Government. The PB Unit is a project of the charity Church Action on Poverty, set up in 2006 as a result of some preliminary work around PB in the UK.

This document sets out the values, principles and standards required for PB. It aims to capture the spirit and not just the letter of PB and to reflect those values that are considered important and should be taken into account when implementing PB processes. Their aim is to help define what constitutes PB and how it differs from other engagement mechanisms. However, their purpose is not meant to be prohibitive or prescriptive. PB is an evolving practice and innovation and risk taking should be encouraged and supported.

The values, principles and standards will form part of the Quality Assurance Framework around PB in the UK, providing guidance to practitioners implementing PB processes around the key qualities and standards for implementing PB effectively for the UK context. The final version of this document will form the basis of quality assurance for PB in the UK. This document will serve as an easy reference tool for PB practitioners to help meet standards when implementing PB. The document will be available in both a 'hard' copy paper format and as an online resource. It's anticipated that as PB continues to develop in the UK, these values, principles and standards will be reviewed and revised as necessary.

There is a danger that practitioners end up becoming so entrenched in process and 'ticking

boxes' that the point of PB is missed, which is to empower local people, increased democratic involvement and improve local public services. Too little process and any engagement process could be considered PB, too much and PB becomes another box-ticking exercise. The purpose of the values, principles and standards is to provide clarity and some standards but not to get too 'bogged' down in ensuring all aspects are stringently met that the real purpose of PB is lost.

The purpose of this document is to consult on those values, principles and standards; to seek views on their appropriateness and if anything has been omitted or if they are considered too prescriptive or not truly reflective of PB in the UK. Questions have been set for the purposes of consultation, although comments outside the questions are welcome. Appended to this document is the consultation document which includes the questions with space for comments. Please use this form to submit your response.

## The questions the consultation asks are:

1. *Do you think the values and their principles & standards clearly define PB from other engagement mechanisms, where relevant?*
  - a. *If no, where could it be clearer?*
2. *Are there any PB specific values that you think have been omitted?*
  - a. *If yes, what are they and why?*

- b. *What would their respective principles & standards be?*
3. *Do you think there are superfluous or general values that could be removed?*
  - a. *If yes, which ones and why?*
4. *Do you think the definition on p.8 distinguishes PB clearly from other participatory processes?*
  - a. *If no, why not? How would you change it?*
5. *Do you think the final values, principles & standards document will be helpful to you when undertaking PB processes?*
  - a. *If no, why not? What could be added to it to make it more useful?*

The values, principles and standards contained in this document, whilst not exclusive to PB, do define it from other engagement processes. Appended to this document are the values, principles and standards of community development<sup>1</sup>, which would, if adhered to, produce well formed PB processes as well as other forms of community development . These general values can be referred to but are not included in the main document as they do not distinguish PB from other forms of engagement. This appendix is excluded from the consultation and is provided for reference purposes only.

We are particularly seeking views from central government departments, local authorities, PB practitioners (whether they be in the public, private or voluntary sectors) and community groups who have experienced or would like to experience PB processes. Anyone, however, is welcome to submit their views. The consultation is not limited to the UK (we welcome international views) however, please submit your response in English.

In addition to formal consultation responses, the PB Unit will set up some more informal web based forums to facilitate discussion on the values, principles and standards which will inform the final version of this document. The web based discussions will be hosted on Involve's discussion forums as the PB Unit's website doesn't currently have these capabilities and to reach a wider audience interested more generally in participation methods.

All consultation responses will be considered and valued seriously, whether they be through the formal process or through the online discussions. We cannot promise to incorporate every view, however, we will provide feedback to those that have provided a response and take into consideration all views where possible, particularly those that differ from our own. This document will be reviewed regularly as PB develops in the UK and there will be further opportunities to revise it.

**The consultation period runs from 1st May – 30th June 2008.** Consultation responses should be submitted by email to: [mail@participatorybudgeting.org.uk](mailto:mail@participatorybudgeting.org.uk) or posted to:

**PB Unit  
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Please mark your response 'Values consultation response' in either the subject heading of your email or on the envelope.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Community Development Challenge, Department for Communities & Local Government, 2006*

# Defining Participatory Budgeting

Participatory Budgeting (PB) began in Brazil where it has successfully empowered people in extremely deprived communities since the late 1980s. Its tools and principles are now used in many places across the world. Over 300 municipalities around the world have used PB, in countries such as Venezuela, Canada, Spain, France and Chile, as well as the UK<sup>2</sup>.

PB is relatively new to the UK context and is continually evolving. There isn't a fixed definition because innovative PB projects continually require definitions to be re-evaluated.

Essentially, the short definition of Participatory Budgeting is:

***“Local people decide how to allocate part of a public budget.”***

If citizens are directly making decisions on the allocation of public money then the process should be considered participatory budgeting. All the other aspects of participatory budgeting make PB as good as it can be and improves the benefits of the opportunities afforded by PB. They should be seen as good practice and implemented where possible. However, not having an annual cycle or scrutiny powers or should not prevent implementation of PB.

However, we have proposed the following definition as a means of providing clarity and understanding.

## **What we mean by participatory budgeting:**

Participatory budgeting directly involves local people in making decisions on the spending and priorities for a defined public budget. PB processes can be defined by geographical area (whether that's neighbourhood or larger) or by theme. This means engaging residents and community groups representative of all parts of the community to discuss and vote on spending priorities, make spending proposals, and vote on them, as well giving local people a role in the scrutiny and monitoring of the process and results to inform subsequent PB decisions on an annual or repeatable basis.

Currently, participatory budgeting projects have allocated spending on a number of services including crime and anti-social behaviour, the environment, road improvements, activities for children and young people, health and fitness activities, community centres and improving assets such as football facilities.

PB projects have been specific to certain neighbourhoods or areas, or they have been local

authority-wide and themed, for example, children and young people, and health. PB has also been applied in the UK to a range of different public budgets including those of housing associations, schools, and primary care trusts – it isn't limited to local authority budgets.

As PB is quite new, innovative forms of PB are being developed all the time and new budgets, new themes, new partners, and different areas are demonstrating that PB is possible and beneficial for a wide range of services and areas.

The projects can take a number of forms:

- *for spending of parts of specific grant pots, for example, New Deal for Communities or Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders;*
- *mainstream council budgets devolved to local area committees, for example for road improvements;*
- *Setting local authority area wide priorities, agreeing projects and spend around an annual revenue budget-setting process*
- *agreeing wider local area agreement, local strategic partnership priorities and spending (ie, mainstreaming).*

The fourth level referred to above has yet to be trialled, but we hope to work with local authorities to explore how this can be done this year. Additionally, many local authorities undertake consultation of residents' views across the borough on the council's draft budget – a wider level of engaging with people than participatory budgeting, but not as deep.

These different forms of PB are not mutually exclusive and indeed could be considered together as part of a PB process based upon a budget year.

Participatory budgeting is most effective when conducted in an inclusive way, helping bring about real change in the relationship between citizens, communities, local council officials and elected councillors<sup>3</sup>.

In the process of engaging with citizens in this way, it can create a number of other benefits:

- *It helps bring diverse people together, supporting community cohesion;*
- *it helps to raise people's understanding of the complexities of public budget setting and deciding between competing priorities;*
- *it can lead to real improvements in the way local people and elected councillors and council officials work together;*
- *by empowering people, devolving more decisions on spending public budgets in this way, services can be better tailored to local circumstances, and improved resident satisfaction with them is likely to result.*

Ultimately, we are seeking to get more people to take part in their community and rejuvenate local democracy.

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<sup>2</sup> Information from [www.participatorybudgeting.org](http://www.participatorybudgeting.org)

<sup>3</sup> Paraphrased from *Participatory budgeting a draft national strategy: giving more people a say in local spending consultation; Department for Communities & Local Government; March 2008*

# PB Values, Principles and Standards

## **Value:**

### **Local Ownership**

- *Involving all concerned in decisions made around PB processes & projects*
- *Ensuring local representation is supported by the wider community*
- *Promoting the participation of individuals and communities, particularly those traditionally marginalised or excluded*

## **Principle:**

Residents should be involved in the setting of budget priorities and the identification of projects for public spend in their area wherever possible

## **Standards:**

1. Wherever feasible, budget allocation should apply to the lowest possible level. I.e. to neighbourhood level.
2. A PB process must begin early enough in the budget cycle for residents to have input to both priority setting and project identification where appropriate, and to demonstrably feel able to influence budgetary decisions.

**Value:** **Direct Involvement**

- *Promoting direct involvement of communities in PB processes*
- *Promoting direct involvement in budget decisions*
- *Committed to the provision and promotion of training, development or capacity building which support direct community involvement*

**Principle:** PB processes should involve direct as well as representative engagement wherever possible

- Standards:**
1. Direct and open involvement of residents in budget decisions will replace the funding allocation and grant-giving work of resident panels, grants panels, committees and sub-groups wherever practicable
  2. Budget literacy programmes and seminars and workshops around direct democracy will support this process

**Value: Support representative democracy**

- *Committed to promoting and supporting representative democracy*
- *Supporting the role of ward councillors as community champions*
- *Developing both representative and participatory models to work along side each other*

**Principle:** Participation mechanisms such as PB should be seen as supporting representative democracy rather than undermining it. PB can increase trust and legitimacy of those in power by citizens and provide a greater role for ward councillors.

- Standards:**
1. Local councillors should be involved from the start of any PB process and participate in designing the PB process with local people.
  2. Local councillors must not be involved in influencing or participating in a vote by local people in a PB process
  3. Councillors should aim to ratify decisions made by local people as soon after a vote is taken as possible, preferably at the same meeting.
  4. If for any reason a decision is overturned, this should be explained to the local people involved in the PB process, to mitigate any disempowering effects that an overturned decision may incur.

**Value: Mainstream Involvement**

- *Promoting models of PB where mainstream funding is used and repeated annually*
- *Promoting capacity building needed for good decision-making on mainstream budgets by communities*

**Principle:** Over time PB processes should move towards residents being involved in decisions over mainstream budgets (as opposed to just small grants processes)

- Standards:**
1. Small grants processes should generally be seen as a way of introducing and testing PB processes and not an end in themselves
  2. The long term aim of PB should be publicly stated as applying to citizen involvement in influencing mainstream departmental budgets (albeit perhaps only the investment part of such budgets)
  3. Capacity building and budget literacy programmes will support the direction of such PB processes to enable citizens to participate effectively in mainstream budgetary processes

## **Value:**

### **Accessibility**

- *Committed to ensuring accessibility for all involved*
- *Recognising and challenging barriers to full and effective participation*
- *Promoting widespread and relevant promotion of PB events*

## **Principle:**

Participants must have good and clear access to PB processes

## **Standards:**

1. All normal standards around venue accessibility to be adhered to.
2. Stringent monitoring to take place around achieving true representation of all groups within the demography of the area, especially to include minority and hard-to-reach groups
3. All use of language and technology will take account of the needs and abilities of those attending PB events or those receiving communications around PB
4. Attractive and targeted marketing and publicity should ensure all those eligible to be involved in the PB process are aware of PB events and opportunities for their involvement.
5. A baseline assessment for desirable levels of accessibility and equal representation should be agreed and monitored; including the involvement of traditionally marginalised or excluded groups.

## **Value: Transparency**

- *Committed to open and clear processes in PB projects*
- *Involving communities in scrutiny of PB funded projects/programmes*
- *Committed to providing full and open information on all public budgets*

**Principle:** PB processes are designed to give citizens full and clear knowledge of public budgets in their area, even those they do not have direct say over

- Standards:**
1. The true costs of all projects must be made known
  2. The names and roles of all those with responsibility for managing and planning PB processes must be published and clear grievance procedures put in place
  3. All rules devised for a PB process will be drawn up in partnership with local residents
  4. Any conflicts of interest for any person involved in the PB process to be made public and absolutely clear
  5. Budget literacy support should be provided and public budgets should be explained to those involved to allow the best possible allocation of resources through the PB process
  6. True costs of projects funded through PB should be widely known and reported in a consistent manner
  7. The budget available for PB processes should be clearly defined at the start of each year, and as far as is possible, protected from being reduced by budget pressures within that year.

**Value:****Deliberation**

- *Committing to a deliberation process as an integral part of PB*
- *Supporting practices which promote deliberation*
- *Supporting deliberative democracy*

**Principle:**

PB processes should provide an opportunity for citizens go beyond questions of personal choice and involve real deliberation around budget decisions

**Standards:**

1. The physical space at PB events will allow for people to group together for the purposes of deliberation
2. The programme at each PB event will allow sufficient time for a process of deliberation before voting takes place on the budget
3. Sufficient resources will be made available for appropriate facilitation of deliberative processes at PB events
4. Facilitators should ensure, where possible, that all voices are heard, not just the loudest and intimidation of any form should not be tolerated at PB events.

**Value:****Empowerment**

- *Promoting the empowerment of individuals and communities through PB*
- *Promoting 'active citizenship' in creating better public services*
- *Supporting a stronger civil society*
- *Committed to community development and capacity building within PB*

**Principle:**

PB events are centrally concerned with the empowerment of local citizens

**Standards:**

1. Although there may be a number reasons for embarking on a PB project, it will be made clear in all publicity and conduct of events and processes that empowerment of local people is a priority
2. The empowerment of local people will be made evident by the co-planning and co-leading of PB events with citizens, officers, councillors and partners
3. Evaluation processes will involve questions which explore how successful PB has been in terms of empowerment

**Value:****Co-responsibility**

- *Committed to clarity and transparency of the aims of PB projects*
- *Committed to involvement of all stakeholders in setting aims of PB projects*
- *Committed to clarity of roles and responsibilities in PB projects*
- *Developing community sense of ownership and responsibility for their local areas*

**Principle:**

PB should build common purpose and a commitment from all stakeholders

**Standards:**

1. Aims of the programme agreed in a democratic and deliberative forum involving members of the affected community.
2. Roles and responsibilities agreed between those involved.
3. Process adapted to local contexts and responsive to all stakeholders interests.
4. Community development practices should be used to develop a sense of shared ownership and responsibility for local areas between communities and statutory agencies.

# Appendix A: Community Development values, principles & standards

## What are the National Occupational Standards for community development?

The National Occupational Standards outline clearly the Skills, Values and Practice Principles required for community development work and have been developed to provide the basis from which we can promote effective and appropriate community development work practice. The Federation for Community Development learning (FCDL) led the development and subsequent review of the National Occupational Standards through widespread consultation and endorsement within the community development work field. The standards identify community development work as an occupation in its own right, and are now held by Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK), the sector skills council for lifelong learning. For more info [www.fcdl.org.uk](http://www.fcdl.org.uk)

## Key purpose of community development work

The key purpose of community development work is collectively to bring about social change and justice, by working with communities\* to:

- *identify their needs, opportunities, rights and responsibilities*
- *Plan, organise and take action*
- *Evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the action*
- *All in ways which challenge oppression and tackle inequalities.*

*\*communities refer to those that can be defined geographically and/or those defined by interest*

## Values and practice principles of community development work

### SOCIAL JUSTICE

- *Respecting and valuing diversity and difference*
- *Challenging oppressive and discriminatory actions and attitudes*
- *Addressing power imbalances between individuals, within groups and society*
- *Committing to pursue civil and human rights for all*
- *Seeking and promoting policy and practices that are just and enhance equality whilst challenging those that are not*

### SELF-DETERMINATION ENVIRONMENT

- *Valuing the concerns or issues that communities identify as their starting points*
- *Raising people's awareness of the range of choices open to them, providing opportunities for discussion of implications of options*
- *Promoting the view that communities do not have the right to oppress other communities*
- *Working with conflict within communities*

### WORKING AND LEARNING TOGETHER

- *Demonstrating that collective working is effective*
- *Supporting and developing individuals to contribute effectively to communities*
- *Developing a culture of informed and accountable decision making*
- *Ensuring all perspectives within the community are considered*
- *Sharing good practice in order to learn from each other*

## SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

- *Promoting the empowerment of individuals and communities*
- *Supporting communities to develop their skills to take action*
- *Promoting the development of autonomous and accountable structures*
- *Learning from experiences as a basis for change*
- *Promoting effective collective and collaborative working*
- *Using resources with respect for the environment*

## PARTICIPATION

- *Promoting the participation of individuals and communities, particularly those traditionally marginalised/excluded*
- *Recognising and challenging barriers to full and effective participation*
- *Supporting communities to gain skills to engage in participation*
- *Developing structures that enable communities to participate effectively*
- *Sharing good practice in order to learn from each other*

## REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

- *Promoting and supporting individual and collective learning through reflection on practice*
- *Changing practice in response to outcomes of reflection*
- *Recognising the constraints and contexts within which community development takes place*
- *Recognising the importance of keeping others informed and updated about the wider context*

## Roles and skills for community development work

### ROLE A: DEVELOP WORKING RELATIONSHIPS WITH COMMUNITIES AND ORGANISATIONS

- *Make relationships with communities*
- *Build relationships within and with communities and organisations*
- *Develop strategic relationships with communities, organisations and within partnerships*

### ROLE B: ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO WORK WITH AND LEARN FROM EACH OTHER

- *Contribute to the development of community groups/networks*
- *Facilitate the development of community groups/networks*
- *Facilitate ways of working collaboratively*
- *Promote and support learning from practice and experience*
- *Create opportunities for learning from practice and experience*
- *Support individuals, community groups and communities to deal with conflict*
- *Take action with individuals, community groups and communities to deal with conflict*

### ROLE C: WORK WITH PEOPLE IN COMMUNITIES TO PLAN FOR CHANGE AND TAKE COLLECTIVE ACTION

- *Work within communities to select options and make plans for collective action*
- *Contribute to collective action within a community*
- *Support communities to plan and take collective action*
- *Ensure community participation in planning and taking collective action*
- *Contribute to the review of needs, opportunities, rights and responsibilities within a community*
- *Work with communities to identify needs, opportunities, rights and responsibilities*

## **ROLE D: WORK WITH PEOPLE IN COMMUNITIES TO DEVELOP AND USE FRAMEWORKS FOR EVALUATION**

- *Support communities to monitor and review action for change*
- *Facilitate the development of evaluation frameworks*

## **ROLE E: DEVELOP COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS**

- *Encourage the best use of resources*
- *Review and develop funding and resources*
- *Develop and evaluate a funding/resourcing strategy*
- *Develop people's skills and roles within community groups/networks*
- *Facilitate the development of people and learning in communities*
- *Develop and review community-based organisational structures*
- *Develop and maintain organisational frameworks for community-based initiatives*

## **UNITS IMPORTED FROM NATIONAL OCCUPATIONAL STANDARDS FOR MANAGEMENT**

- *Contribute to planning and preparation*
- *Co-ordinate the running of projects*
- *Contribute to project closure*

## **ROLE F: REFLECT ON AND DEVELOP OWN PRACTICE AND ROLE**

- *Identify and reflect on own practice, knowledge and values*
- *Review own practice, knowledge and values*
- *Evaluate and develop own practice*
- *Identify and take action to meet own learning and development needs*
- *Review and meet own learning and development needs*

# Appendix B: Values, Principles & Standards Consultation Response Form

Please complete in black or blue ink or type and clear writing. Please return no later than 30th June 2008. If you run out of space to write your response to any of the questions please continue on a blank piece of paper and clearly mark which question it corresponds with.

Name .....

Organisation .....

.....Job Title .....

Address .....

.....Post code .....

Telephone .....Email .....

i) May we contact you if we have any follow-up queries? Yes  No

ii) Have you been involved in a PB process? Yes  No

iii) If yes, what was your role?

.....

.....

Question 1: Do you think the values and their principles & standards clearly define PB from other engagement mechanisms, where relevant?

Yes – go to 2  No – go to 1a

Question 1a): If no, where and how could it be clearer?

.....

.....

Question 2: Are there any PB specific values that you think have been omitted?

Yes – go to 2a  No – go to 3

Question 2a): If yes, what are they and why should they be included?

.....

.....

Question 2b): What would their respective principles and standards be?

.....  
.....

Question 3: Do you think there are superfluous or general values that could be removed?

Yes – go to 3a  No – go to 4

Question 3 (a): If yes, which ones and why?

.....  
.....

Question 4: Do you think the definition on page 8 defines PB clearly?

Yes – go to 5  No – go to 4a

Question 4 (a): If no, why not? What would you add to it?

.....  
.....

Question 5: Do you think the final values, principles & standards document will be helpful to you when undertaking PB processes?

Yes – go to final comments  No – go to 5a

Question 5 (a): If no, why not? What could be added to it to make it more useful?

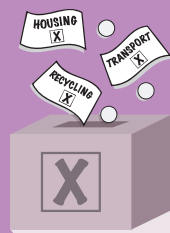
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Final Comments: Please add any additional comments you wish to make about the consultation paper.

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