



**Making Spending Count?**

**National PB Conference**

**15<sup>th</sup> September 2008**

**Conference Report**

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## Introduction

The conference was a one-day event show-casing existing good practice in PB and looking at possible models to embed PB further such as mainstreaming PB, using PB in policing and health contexts and with children and young people.

Over 240 people attended (including exhibitors, staff and volunteers) the conference, with 'no shows' less than 10. This exceeded PB Unit expectations of numbers reaching approximately 150. In order ensure the conference remained a good quality experience and to not exceed room capacities, we limited the number to 240 – however, because some delegates turned up without prior booking, this number was slightly exceeded. The majority of delegates stayed for most of the day, only leaving towards the end to meet public transport.

Delegates represented a wide range of organisations, including national agencies such as government departments, the Big Lottery Fund, British Council, Oxfam, and Help the Aged. Local authorities from across England were well represented, and 12 police authorities were also represented. A few representatives of PCTs were present as were people from regional organisations such as Regional Empowerment Partnerships and Government Offices. Community groups were well represented ranging from tenants and residents groups to larger community activism groups. A number of academics from the UK and abroad also attended.

There were 11 exhibition stands from a range of organisations – private, public and community/voluntary sector. The number was deliberately limited to 11 due to unexpected demand for delegate places, which meant that the space hired at the hotel had to be re-arranged. Exhibitors ranged from companies with e-participation software, training organisations, local council and information services.

Presentation slides from speakers and Hazel Blears MP keynote address can be found on our website. This report does not intend to address these aspects of the conference, instead focussing on the workshops and feedback from them given that delegates had to choose which workshop to attend and so may find information about the other workshops useful.

**“I thought yesterday's conference was a well organised, informative and enjoyable day.”**

**“The most helpful part of the conference was the depth of the discussion and problems others were able to suggest solutions to. A really positive event – very interesting. Thank you.”**

## Conference Programme

Below is the conference programme. We are excluding the Keynote address and presentations from this report as the speech and presentation slides are on our website.

### **Making Spending Count? National participatory budgeting conference**

**15<sup>th</sup> September 2008  
Midland Hotel, Manchester**

#### **Programme of the day**

<b>9.30am</b>	<b>Registration</b>	
<b>10.30am</b>	<b>Chair's opening remarks</b>	<b>Tricia Zipfel MBE</b>
<b>10.35am</b>	<b>Keynote address</b>	<b>Rt. Hon. Hazel Blears MP</b>
10.47am	Question & Answers	<i>Rt. Hon Hazel Blears MP</i>
<b>11.00am</b>	<b>The story so far: celebration of success</b>	
	Celebrating success DVD	
11.10am	UDecide, Newcastle	<i>Vince Howe, Social Policy Team Manager, Newcastle City Council</i>
11.20am	Manton Neighbourhood Management	<i>Richard Edwards, Pathfinder Manager, Manton Community Alliance</i>
11.30am	East Salford devolved highways budgets	<i>Anne Godding, Neighbourhood Manager, Salford City Council</i>
11.40am	Local health budgets in Thornhill	<i>Dave Shields, Strategic Services Manager, Southampton City Council</i>
<b>11.50am</b>	<b>Tea/coffee break</b>	
<b>12.05pm</b>	<b>Looking ahead: beyond small grants processes</b>	<i>Mark Waters, Director, PB Unit</i>
<b>12.20pm</b>	<b>Roundtable discussion</b>	
<b>12.45pm</b>	<b>Lunch</b>	

1.45pm	<b>Response to roundtable discussion</b>	<i>PB Unit</i>
1.50pm	<b>Launch of values, principles and standards</b>	<i>Phil Teece, Programme Manager, PB Unit</i>
2.05pm	<b>The wider perspective:</b> International perspective	<i>Elke Loffler, Chief Executive, Governance International</i>
2.15pm	Senior Councillor perspective	<i>Cllr.Lorna Reith, Deputy Leader LB of Haringey</i>
2.25pm	Children & Young people	<i>Jez Hall, PB Unit</i>
2.30pm	Health perspective	<i>Davy Jones, Consultant &amp; PB Unit Associate</i>
2.35pm	Policing green paper perspective	
2.40pm	Town and Parish council perspective	<i>Justin Griggs, Head of Development, National Association for Local Councils</i>
2.55pm	Workshops: Stanley Suite: Introducing PB & community grants processes	<i>Alan Budge, PB Unit</i>
	Victoria Suite: Community safety and neighbourhood policing	<i>Phil Teece &amp; Ruth Jackson, PB Unit</i>
	Alexandra Suite: Embedding PB (strands)	
	- Local Authorities mainstream budgets	<i>Mark Waters</i>
	- Health agenda & local health budgets	<i>Davy Jones</i>
	- Children and young people's budgets	<i>Jez Hall</i>
	- 2x open sessions (topics will be decided from themes in roundtable discussion)	<i>Leslie Silverlock Heather Blakey</i>
4.00pm	Feedback from workshops	<i>Tricia Zipfel</i>
4.30pm	Closing remarks	<i>Cllr. John Merry</i>
4.45pm	End of conference	<i>Tricia Zipfel</i>

**“The programme provided a well-rounded comprehensive and strategic view with good local examples of PB. It was all helpful and interesting.”**

## **Roundtable Discussion comments and questions**

Participants wrote 1 key challenge and up to 3 questions on to flipchart paper. This was then used to theme the two 'open session' workshops. Below are some comments from the flipcharts and some of the questions that we will attempt to answer. Many of the questions fell under the same theme which is why we won't answer them all.

The main themes both the key challenges and questions covered were:

- Elected member buy-in and power
- Mainstreaming PB
- Partnership working
- Community development and capacity building
- Representation and fairness – hard to reach vs. hard to ignore!
- Resources and finding funding
- Central government's role
- Who leads?
- Is PB value for money/business case/recession fears
- Culture change
- Assistance and resources
- General buy-in, particularly sceptics.

## **Comments:**

- Engagement of both the wider community but also internal partners
- Strategic decision making vs. local interaction
- PB may benefit in terms of gaining understanding of financial processes and responsibilities for all
- There is a challenge in abdicating some of the role of being the community lead
- Joint funding/resources with other parties may potentially ameliorate issues around finding resources.
- More than lip service – need to respect the level of expertise on both sides, continuous dialogue, feedback, effective inclusive feedback will ensure that explanations are heard, understood and respected.
- Communities love PB
- Where people have real responsibility they do behave responsibly
- Consultation is not participation. Participation is meaningful interaction
- PB can help with increasing satisfaction and reducing fear of crime
- Need to make resources (who's contributing) more transparent
- Role of a good councillor is one who facilitates good PB.
- Use of activities that PB pays for to meet LAA indicators (by place) – tool for extreme cost effectiveness.

## **Questions and answers:**

As a side note, all answers provided are the PB Unit's view and not necessarily the view of central government or other agencies.

### **Q1. Only small amount of money to being with – will people bother?**

*A1. So far the answer is most definitely yes! Any of the projects so far will testify to the fact that far more people turned up and participated than they expected. We think that the incentive of being able to make decisions on actual money, regardless of the amount, gets people interested. Also, whilst a few thousand pounds isn't much in terms of a budget, it's a lot of money to local people. Small amounts of money can be useful to educate people in understanding how budgets work and how much different services or projects cost. Through this process you can develop a more meaningful and informed relationship with communities who understand the value of things.*

### **Q2. Does PB transfer power to elected members?**

*A2. Yes, because those elected members that are involved in PB are seen by participants at the events, possibly before in promoting the project. So they are linked with a very positive engagement activity, and because the principles of equality, transparency and clarity are key aspects of PB, those elected members can be seen as more trustworthy and are far more likely to be voted for in elections. By being involved they are harnessing more of the power in their electorate. There is a saying that to get power you must first give it away!*

### **Q3. Will central government free up funding constraints (e.g. annuality, specific grants with conditions etc...)?**

*A3. We are well aware of the frustrations of working within the public sector, including the constraints around funding (a number of us used to work in the public sector). The government is working towards freeing up funding and the Area Based Grant is an example of this, which is unringfenced. Whilst we recognise there is still some way to go, it's a really positive step. A number of projects are now using part of the Area Based Grant for PB. It's likely that 'funny money' or additional grants will always be subject to certain conditions because the money is there to achieve certain aims. We are not aware of how far central government will take this policy but we will pass on your comments to them and continue to advocate for more devolvement of power, including finance.*

### **Q4. Is there a conflict between cabinet-style decision making and empowering local residents?**

*A4. There shouldn't be. Different decision making processes are appropriate for different circumstances. There are some decisions which need to be made by a cabinet rather than local people. These may well be 'business' decisions for the public agency. A key word in the 'duty to involve' is the word 'appropriate'. Local people should be informed, consulted and involved when appropriate. Sometimes it's appropriate for the cabinet to make the decision. Other times, it's appropriate to involve local people. And when it is, the duty says they should be. As more decisions are opened up to local people there will be more trust on decisions they can't decide on because there will be more mature dialogue.*

**Q5. How can more people be encouraged to participate e.g. electronic voting, etc.?**

*A5. To answer that, we think you need to ask yourself two questions – firstly what's the purpose of the project, and then secondly, who then do you want to involve to achieve the purpose? For example, if it's a young people's pilot – then you want to involve young people and agencies that work with them. Or maybe the project is in a certain geographical area (e.g. a neighbourhood management area), so you'd want to involve all the people in the area – would that include young people too or is there a cut off age? Maybe it's a project with older people – what's the lower age limit or maybe it's linked to pension status? Once you know who you want to involve you need to think about how you currently engage the different groups you want to involve and if those engagement mechanisms are effective. If so, use them (no point reinventing the wheel). If not, then some community research and development may be needed with certain groups to understand how best to encourage their involvement in PB. It may well be that electronic voting will engage with some key groups, and if so, you should consider if that's an important mechanism for involvement.*

*More people can also be encouraged to participate over time. Word of mouth is very effective. If participants in the first event enjoyed themselves and see the benefits of their involvement, they'll tell their friends, family and neighbours. If they see the projects they voted for being implemented in their neighbourhoods they'll be convinced that their vote counts and convince others to vote too.*

**Q6. Who will be the leaders in taking forward PB?**

*A6. Good question, with no concrete answer. Unfortunately, we can't see the future! Because the PBU is a project of a charity's whose focus is empowering people in poverty and helping them out of poverty, we come down on the side of the community. Our vision would be to see this led from the grassroots. However, central and local government (and Local Strategic Partnerships) are where the money is held, so this is why our focus has been in developing policy with central government and promoting and advocating the approach with local public agencies – and then supporting them to deliver it. As time goes on and the approach becomes more embedded as a way of doing things, then we would hope that it will become more community led and community demanded.*

**Q7. How far beyond small pots of funding can PB really go without major cultural change?**

*A7. It depends on the situation. Different organisations in different areas will have different cultures. Some will need a major culture change to move PB beyond small pots of funding, for others it's the next logical step in a process on community engagement they're developing. Others still have been doing it for a while but never realised it was PB! But if major cultural change is needed then we'd probably suggest a step change approach with a plan to mainstream PB over a few years.*

**Q8. Framework and evaluation - How will central government measure success at individual local authority and community level?**

*A8. That is a very timely question! Communities and Local Government has very recently awarded a contract to SQW consulting to undertake a very in-depth evaluation of PB. They will be working with current projects at the project level – whatever level that may be (local authority, neighbourhood, community etc). It's likely however, that the*

evaluation will be at local authority level. The PB Unit felt that whilst this piece of work is very important and useful, we would also like to undertake cross evaluation of projects. This will be a much more holistic approach and will focus more on the impact on communities and participants. In terms of the parameters of success, we aren't sure what government's criteria are for that, but for the PB Unit, it's successful if empowerment, social cohesion, active involvement and relationship (as in between public agencies and local people) benefits area realised. That is if more people are empowered to volunteer or get involved in other ways, if more people say the services have improved in their areas, if more people say that their community is stronger and they now know people they didn't used to know, if more people say they trust their councillors or public sector officers. And this is the focus of our evaluation.

### **Q9. What happens when the expert 'knows best' about local issues?**

A9. Does the expert actually know best, or do they only think they do? And in what respect do they know best? Sometimes there is more value in allowing people to make their own bad decisions than making good decisions on their behalf – that's the point of democracy! As Gandhi once famously said 'we want the ability to govern ourselves badly'. There is nothing that says that the experts can't provide their solutions to issues to local people as well as hearing what local people have to say, before all the options are costed and voted on. That way every voice is heard, including the expert's. Also, PB doesn't require you to start with a blank sheet of paper. Experts can provide expert solutions and the community can vote on those – although you are missing out on innovation by ignoring the community solutions. And if the experts are still upset and insisting they know best, then maybe it's more about culture change than anything else.

### **Q10. Reaching out beyond the 'professional meeting goer'. How do we ensure that the community decision-makers are representative?**

A10. I think this is probably one of the most common questions we're asked. And at times we wish we had a nice little tool that we could give to everyone and say 'there you go, use that and you'll have perfect community representation'. Unfortunately, it doesn't work like that! We live in a democratic country where people have free will – you can't force empowerment upon people – that's a bit of an oxymoron! It's virtually impossible to 100% guarantee complete representation of the community at anything and PB is no exception. However, like with other engagement mechanisms, there are various activities you can do. Some communities are easier for representation than others. 'Hard to reach' groups should be targeted through community development to promote PB to them in a way that engages with them. Asking for representation information (age, address, ethnicity etc) at events (on registration forms or feedback questionnaires for example) can help to monitor participation from event to event, and may help you target under-represented groups for the next event. Think about arranging transport for certain groups or providing crèche facilities so that those with children can come. Choose a date and time sensitively. If you are really concerned you can restrict the amount of funding for certain themes or require a minimum to be spent on certain themes (for example, older people and younger people, or projects for different neighbourhoods in a community) although this isn't ideal as it moves away from the values of PB.

### **Q11. How feasible is it to use PB for mainstream budgets?**

A11. That depends on the budget. PB is not about using 100% of a budget. It's only ever been a small percentage of an investment budget, so it's not affecting core service provision. The maximum percentage allocated by PB in Brazil was 18% of the

investment budget. We would never suggest you ask the community if they'd rather fund schools or bin collection, for example! There are certain statutory duties public agencies need to perform and these budgets can't be open for discussion. However, other budgets have more flexibility. For example, in Salford they devolve a proportion of the highways budget. So local people can decide which highways schemes they want in their area based on the issues. They can decide whether to have traffic calming or pedestrian crossings, whether to remove a tree out of the pavement or have more lollipop people. That doesn't affect core business – highways are still maintained – and the money is still spent on highways – the difference is, instead of being annoyed by the road works, the residents have asked for the project and know why they want it.

**Q12. How do you avoid the merits of schemes being determined by the 'populist' decision making process?**

A12. There may initially be a populist element in residents' priority setting (eg around headline issues such as youth behaviour, the physical environment etc.) The aim over time is for citizens to become more knowledgeable, in general terms, of issues affecting their neighbourhood, and thus come to make more informed decisions over time. The Brazilian experience over the last 25 years provides evidence in support of this aspiration. In terms of people turning out 'en masse' in support of particular projects, this can happen, and needs to be addressed in the way most appropriate to local conditions and with the endorsement of the participants themselves.

**Q13. What happens when the community wants something and there is no 'owner'? Making groups formalise themselves can result in bureaucracy and stifle innovation and sustainability.**

A13. In Bradford and elsewhere, the approach has been deliberately 'light touch'. Local people with ideas they wished to deliver themselves could choose to become formally constituted as a group, or merely nominate a local organisation (church, school etc) to act as banker for any monies received. It also needs to be borne in mind that one person's 'bureaucracy' is another person's 'robust accountability regarding public funds': the trick is to strike the appropriate balance between the two.

**Q14. Is the hype greater than the effect?**

A14. PB processes need to demonstrate over time that money will be spent at least as well as through other methods. This is based on the notion that local people are the experts with regard to their communities. There is to date little hard evidence to either support or challenge this contention with regard to PB in the UK, as the sums of money so far disbursed have been relatively small. The 'hype', however, is not to be dismissed merely as hype. PB has already been shown to have demonstrable benefits in terms of community cohesion, networking between organisations and greater understanding of public finances, to name just three.

**Q15. We want to get on with it – what assistance/resources are available?**

A15. The first point of call to locate useful resources should be the PB unit website. There are many case studies, videos of actual experiences in the UK, and our toolkit. The toolkit contains practical advice and templates for running a small grants process, and should provide many answers to your questions. Our Values, Principles and Standards provide guidance on best practice. On our website you can sign up for e-bulletins or find out about regional or thematic learning communities for PB. If you would

*like hands on support for your PB project, the PB unit can also provide this including advising you and supporting your learning and evaluation.*

### **Q16. How do you convert the sceptics?**

*A16. The value of participation is not something that can be easily appreciated without experiencing it first. The key to influencing those with concerns or fears is to show through simple practical means that they will find benefit in the process. That is why we suggest beginning with a pilot, often based on participatory grant making, before using mainstream money. You also need to remain open to listening to sceptics as they can provide useful critiques of your plans. Don't become discouraged by those who either feel nothing needs to change, or nothing can change. Keep passionate to your belief that people change when they see practical outcomes from a process and let them know that there is real evidence of the benefits of opening up budgeting processes. Make good use case studies from elsewhere. The videos on our website are particularly powerful tools to explain the early stages of PB processes.*

### **Q17. How do you get elected members to be passionate about PB?**

*A17. Elected members are constantly responding to competing pressures and agendas. They will be balancing party allegiances, electoral opinion and a wide range of statutory regulation and monitoring. It is not surprising they may feel that participatory budgeting might only complicate their work and reduce their role as elected representatives. Showing videos of actual experiences can be helpful, particularly where they show councillors actively supporting a programme. Encourage councillors to accompany you on a study visit. Consider holding special briefings for councillors before your pilot begins. Give them evidence of the possible impact and benefit of the work. Keep them informed and involved throughout the pilot. It is an important principle within PB that elected councillors or statutory accountable bodies retain their democratic powers and you need to factor in an opportunity for them to formally approve decisions taken by community participants to fully legitimise the process.*

## **Workshop Synopsis**

### **Introducing PB and community grants pots**

The workshop was a practical exercise looking at how to develop the 'small grants' model of PB.

The participants were given a short introduction to the model, and signposted to the relevant section of the PB toolkit, then asked to work in small groups to look at:

- a) the key ingredients of a small grants process
- b) a timeline needed to deliver effectively.

The groups then fed back. One group said at the beginning of the discussion they were convinced there was no spare money for PB within existing budgets. By the end of the workshop, they had identified some! This feedback is an example of the value of the workshop in getting people to consider how to begin to do PB from a 'standing start', and to really give serious thought to the possibilities and challenges.

### **Mainstreaming PB**

This workshop was important as it is increasingly clear that PB could and should be a tool to be used for mainstream budgets as well as specific one-off pots of money. Certainly, central government supports the concept through policies such as the 'Duty to Involve' and Comprehensive Area Assessment Use of Resources. These help to move PB and other direct participation methods into the centre of mainstream priorities/decision-making. The concern however in the workshop was that most (not all) areas felt that they should start much more modestly with smaller pots of money before attempting to mainstream it - they could see the logic of it as a goal but it seemed some way off for most of them. Insofar as they were keen to head in this direction, participants tended to see two parallel routes:

a) using some form of PB to help give a steer on the broad service and budget priorities linked to the Local Area Agreement;

b) using PB as a tool to help decide between projects designed to deliver specific Local Area Agreement priorities or targets.

It was one of the larger workshops which reflected participants' desire to understand how to implement PB in mainstream services/budgets.

### **Children and Young People's PB**

The workshop consisted of approx 15 people from a broad range of backgrounds. The level of experience, both of PB itself and engagement with young people in general was mixed. Nevertheless everyone seemed engaged and prepared to contribute to the discussion. The smaller size of the workshop enable more relaxed unstructured conversations to occur.

There were two questions that had been brought to the workshop to discuss:

a) given the commitment for young people to direct significant public resources, how can they use PB to influence mainstream money?

b) how do we ensure all young people hear about and take part in PB?

The workshop began by asking participants for their vision for PB with Children and Young People (CYP), tempered by a reality check or concern to accompany that vision. Many of the concerns related to ability of adults in positions of power to share it with CYP, rather than the unwillingness of CYP to engage.

Following a brief review of experiences, we addressed the questions. To answer the second question we worked first in smaller groups, brainstorming and then sharing ideas to get towards a reasonably comprehensive list of issues to consider when working with young people, ranging from choosing the location, different types of forums, engaging minority or hard to reach groups, to possible communication techniques and approaches.

### **PB in a health context**

This was a key session as the changing health agenda is increasingly focussed on community engagement and patient experience. Approximately 12 people were involved in the workshop and a number of them were from primary care trusts or involved in health services in other ways, such as LINKs.

The discussion centred on two questions:

- How can participatory budgeting contribute to the emerging health agenda in terms of personalisation, patient & public involvement and citizen empowerment?
- What models could be developed for participatory budgeting and health in a local area (e.g. PCT)?

Although health is a relatively new area for PB, participants felt that PB had real benefits for health contexts and the potential to improve services and patient involvement and experience of services.

### **PB in a policing context**

Given the publication of the Policing Green Paper and the Home Office's commitment to PB in it, this was a very timely and relevant seminar. Over 40 people attended the seminar, mostly from police authorities, forces or partnerships, further demonstrating its emerging support in this sector.

The context of the seminar was broadened to community safety, so that police partnerships could also be considered.

After a brief introduction to PB, participants were divided into small groups to discuss three questions:

- What are the challenges to PB in a community safety environment?
- How can PB help you deliver the community safety agenda?
- What do you need to do to initiate a PB project in your force(s)?

People were also asked at the workshop to contact the PB Unit if they were interested in being involved in a practical police and PB workshop to develop some models of PB for the police context. This is due to be held later in the Autumn.

### **Open Session: How can the community play a leading role?**

Two questions were posed:

- Does community empowerment mean community led?
- How can you ensure that PB is accessible and inclusive?

This topic is very important to PB as it gets to the heart of the distinction between consultation and participation. No facilitator input as questions arose from roundtable discussions.

Participants began by questioning the perceived assumption that workers are interested in top-down processes, and residents in bottom up ones, though others felt that it is in the council's interest to have a few residents or activists to consult, rather than lots.

The perhaps 'unexpected' element of the discussion related to the extent that the discussion gravitated to 'overcoming apathy' – with an implied assumption that lack of community leadership / ownership is a community issue rather than a structural one.

There were interesting reflections on what kind of community leadership facilitates wider ownership (again suggesting an understanding of community leadership as often 'gate-keeping' in nature).

One participant (a community development trainer) suggested that leadership does not equal ownership – ownership moves beyond engagement, means that communities should be involved in process *design*, which should be determined by communities.

### **Open Session: The role of Elected Members**

This was the second session which was developed from a popular topic of the roundtable discussions. In keeping with its title, the session was less structured and open for participants to discuss the role of elected members in a way that they chose.

Two questions were posed, which came out of the feedback from the roundtable discussions:

- How do you ensure participative democracy supports representative democracy?
- How do you ensure that elected members play a meaningful role in PB?

The workshop was one of the larger groups with over 20 people participating, demonstrating the relevance of the topic and the concern that people have about how to fully involve Elected Members in PB and how PB supports representative democracy.

## **Workshop feedback**

### **PB in the community safety context**

- *What are the challenges to PB in a community safety environment?*
  - no / little spare resources (unlike 'funny money'). Any pots of money delivered to serious and organised crime (level 2) in some forces
  - media impact on resources
  - votes = immediate results, need to be clear about expectations, e.g. head cameras
- *How can PB help you deliver the community safety agenda?*
  - can only work at lowest level
  - already on the way to deliver PB with Intensive Partnership sweeps – local issues identified by residents but for a six week period plus resources allocated
  - more involvement of community in making final decisions about which priorities
  - transparency about money and staff resources put in
  - feedback results
- *What would you need to do to initiate a PB initiative in your force(s)?*
  - money – where would this come from? What level of devolution exists?
  - Resources required to facilitate/administer
  - Bottom-up buy in (in particular where unitary status)
  - Police Authority buy in

### **PB with Children and Young People**

- *Given the commitment for young people to direct significant resources how can we use PB to influence mainstream money? i.e. mainstreaming young people's participation*
  - Residents Board with young people
  - Youth Forum – select their representative
  - Youth Council – youth led
  - Who does take part?
  - Needs :           Advisory board
  - Body of governance
  - Support mechanisms
  - Coherence – should be spread across the system
  - Annual decision points – January, March/April, August, November
  
- *How can we ensure all young people hear about PB process and take part?*
  - take the message to them via local groups, voluntary sector – youth meeting points. Talk to them, meet on their space, go to different places. Use plain English
  - Inform lead councillors on how young people communicate etc – both sides need help, e.g. with their respective languages
  - Top down changes occurring
  - Use new technology and different media, e.g. YouTube and Facebook
  - Young Advisors a channel of communication
  - Context – what works here
  - Young people's voice in print and other media
  - Outreach Youth Workers
  - Young people as consultants
  - Activities that appeal to young people, e.g. sports
  - For age 6-11 year olds make the approach through schools
  - Voting needs to be meaningful
  - Who spends the money? Them or the council?
  - Link into schools' Citizens Agenda

### **Local Authority mainstream budgets**

- Gershon / reducing budgets – more knowledge
- prioritising where spend goes
- Economy of Scale
- Tight budgets cut community involvement
- Satisfaction/engagement – need link to targets
- 'Eat elephant in small chunks' – skills/capacity/money
- Statutory / non-statutory
- Resistance of directors
- Two tier areas
- LSPs – capacity / two tier / branding
- Way into mainstream budgeting is to start *small* and local, also think across agencies – *big* ambitions
- Small grant PB can be immediate. Mainstream PB takes longer

### **Community Grants Processes**

Learning Points:

- There are always budgets that can be used for PB

- Need to provide appropriate support to groups participating in PB processes
- Effective communication – spreading the word in the community
- Support network – infrastructural support network
- Patience
- Focus on partnerships
- You need champions

### **PB and the Health Agenda**

- *How can participatory budgeting contribute to the emerging health agenda in terms of personalisation, patient & public involvement and citizen empowerment?*
  - PB methods could be used in ways other than distributing finance; for example community consultation on improving access to/rationalising' local health facilities
  - local health and social care prioritisation exercises could be informed through PB [there would be a need to avoid this being used to play services and their users off against each other as happened in the USA's 'Oregon' experiment]
  - there are potential linkages with projects for self management of care e.g. the Expert Patients' Programme
  - PB is a potentially useful vehicle for raising awareness on local health issues e.g. as part of a 'social marketing' campaign
  - PB could be used for gaining a broader understanding of local health issues and concerns e.g. wider community engagement in developing the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
  - PB is an ideal vehicle for distributing more localised health budgets e.g. as part of the roll out of Practice-based Commissioning
  - Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) could provide a useful vehicle for developing PB approaches with particular communities or neighbourhoods
  - PB be used in helping to inform the care provider market about people's individual choices and preferences with the growth of the personalisation agenda and self-directed care
  - PB should be seen as a tool to be used as part of the wider patient and public empowerment agenda, particularly in respect of people who are seldom heard, rather than a 'bolt-on'
  - PB should not be used, however, as a vehicle for ducking difficult spending decisions by NHS or social services organisations
- *What models could be developed for participatory budgeting and health in a local area (e.g. PCT)?*
  - provides the ideal means for engaging and empowering smaller communities especially those experiencing geographical isolation and/or severe disadvantage
  - PB would work best when distributing revenue funding for community health projects rather than complex, major infrastructure projects
  - PB projects for health should build on existing community mechanisms wherever possible (neighbourhood management pilots, CVS networks and forums, Sure Start projects)

- the new LINKs provide an excellent opportunity for trialing new engagement and empowerment methods and they should be involved in any PB health pilot projects
- provides the potential for identifying creative solutions to local health problems especially where these are determined by wider social, environmental and economic 'determinants'
- by securing genuine community ownership, PB promises to achieve more effective use of resources
- local health partnerships/ PCTs wanting to develop PB for health schemes would need to:
  - ❖ start small and develop over time
  - ❖ focus on a defined neighbourhood/ community of interest (e.g. a particular care/ disability group)
  - ❖ commit to a recurring programme (preferable on an annual basis)
  - ❖ establish a multi-agency project team that included finance people and commissioners (including GPS as practice-based commissioners) as well as community leaders
  - ❖ explore potential for synergies with other local authority budgets (Partnerships for Older People Pilots, Social Care Reform Grant, other specific grants for care groups, components of the Area-Based Grant for implementing LAA priorities) for targeted work at neighbourhood level or with particular groups
  - ❖ embed PB process and learning in the 'world class commissioning' agenda through community-based commissioning

## Outcomes

Analysis of the feedback forms and anecdotal evidence (emails, phone conversations etc) suggests that the conference was very well received and considered to be a helpful and informative day.

With the exception of the 'looking ahead' section which was excluded to a large extent with Mark Waters not being able to attend, all other parts of the programme received an average score of '4' out of a possible '5'. The venue and conference arrangements also received average scores of '4'.

Comments on the feedback forms indicated that people found the most interesting and helpful aspects of the day were the opportunities to learn from others experiences, share good practice and lessons learnt and to network. They also valued the opportunity to explore PB more, both formally and informally.

Since the conference, the PB Unit has received a number of requests for more information and support in developing PB. The PB Unit has also received requests to be involved in a PB and policing workshop which was mentioned at the conference as something the PB Unit wanted to do with some keen police authorities and their partners, demonstrating the more longer-term positive outcomes from the conference.

## Quotes and comments

Below are some comments we received via both emails and the feedback forms, about the conference.

“I enjoyed the conference at the Midland Hotel very much. I have returned enthused and completely sold. I am briefing senior officers and senior managers so we can consider how the principles of PB can be applied to our partnership work.”

“Thanks very much for yesterday's superbly organised event. I found it very informative and stimulating, especially - with no disrespect to all the excellent speakers - the DVD which was so well produced and even quite moving!”

“I have learnt so much from today. Many thanks.”

“Speaking to people who have run PB projects – gives me the confidence to run my own PB project.”

“PB will be effective in supporting elected members when consulting with the community”

I will use PB in my work “to start to raise awareness about PB, to start to implement more PB – move from small grants to mainstream.”

“I support a new LINK and hope that the LINK will wish to campaign for the use of PB methods and have an instrumental role in participating in PB.”

I will use PB in my work by “Encouraging local groups to get a voice and speak out for what they want.”

## Lessons learnt and good practices

### Key successes:

- Number and diversity of people attending
  - Success of organisation/planning the event
  - The programme and speakers were well planned
1. We exceeded our expectations on the number of delegates by a considerable number. Whilst clearly some of this was due to central government publishing key documents in the early summer, we also believe this was due to:
    - Identifying our key target audiences and tailoring/targeting promotion and publicity to them
    - Producing a promotions leaflet as soon as date was decided to raise awareness
    - Securing the date with a key political and government supporter of PB in Hazel Blears MP
    - We specifically chose Manchester for the conference because it has good transport links with both north and south of the country. We chose a central venue which was easy to access from public transport hubs.

2. The programme and conference overall was successful and delegates found it informative and helpful. We believe this was because:
  - We thought about the purpose of the conference and what we wanted to achieve rather than having a conference for the sake of it.
  - We were clear about our objectives and outcomes for the conference and chose themes for the day based on our objectives.
  - The agenda was fitted to the day rather than the other way around
  - We booked a flexible space in the venue which we could use in a variety of ways. Given that the programme changed before the event due to the numbers of delegates booked, having flexible space meant we weren't limited by it.
  - We thought about the agenda first and then thought about the speakers we'd like to cover particular agenda items – and so found the right speakers for the programme rather than fitting the programme around the speakers
  
3. Although we had two slots on the programme and our own stand at the conference, we didn't take these opportunities to really promote the work of the PBU. This is a key learning point.
  - We would have benefited more from highlighting our resources such as the toolkit and website and the support we can provide to projects.
  - We could have used the stand to more effect and presented our services in a more catchy way, rather than using the stand as the place to sign up for workshops.
  - Using the stand for workshop sign ups meant that PBU people on the stand spent most of the time directing people about workshops rather than speaking with delegates interested in our work. It also meant that people were confused about where to go for PBU information.

## More information and contacts

For more information on PB please look at our website at [www.participatorybudgeting.org.uk](http://www.participatorybudgeting.org.uk) which has a number of different resources on it including our toolkit and values, principles and standards document. You can also join our e-newsletter mailing list to be kept up to date with the latest PB information, via our website. E-newsletters are not sent out more than monthly and we don't pass your details on to anyone else.

If you want to have a chat with someone about PB or have some queries, call our office on 0161 236 9321 or email us at [mail@participatorybudgeting.org.uk](mailto:mail@participatorybudgeting.org.uk)