Empowering communities

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Contents

Introduction

All communities have the capacity to grow and develop, but for some reason not all communities do so. In order to understand at least one of the reasons for behind this, this course will look at the topic of community empowerment. It will start by defining the key parameters of community empowerment and some of the most common forms, before looking at the barriers to community empowerment and ways that these can be overcome. It will conclude by looking at a particular challenge that can arise if communities are not sufficiently empowered and supported: crime and criminality.

After studying this course, you should be able to:

- understand the various ways in which communities can be empowered
- appreciate the key elements of community empowerment
- understood the barriers and incentives to community empowerment
- reflect on the various forms of stakeholder engagement
- consider ways in which empowered communities can deal more effectively with crime and criminality.

1 Empowering communities to help themselves

Figure 1 Working together

At its simplest, *community empowerment* refers to measures designed to increase the degree of autonomy and self-determination in people and in communities in order to enable them to represent their interests in a responsible and self-determined way while acting on their own authority. The World Health Organisation (WHO, 2020) breaks down the concept of community empowerment as follows:

- **Community empowerment** refers to the process of enabling communities to increase control over their lives.
- **Communities** are groups of people that may or may not be spatially connected, but who share common interests, concerns or identities. These communities could be local, national or international, with specific or broad interests.
- **Empowerment** refers to the process by which people gain control over the factors and decisions that shape their lives. It is the process by which they increase their assets and attributes and build capacities to gain access, partners, networks and/or a voice, in order to gain control.
- **Enabling** implies that people cannot 'be empowered' by others; they can only empower themselves by acquiring more of power's different forms…

(Adapted from World Health Organisation, 2020; emphasis added)

While the breakdown given above might seem fairly straightforward, it is far from being a clearly defined concept. As Robin Ersing has pointed out:

> Despite the popularity of the term *community empowerment*, the concept eludes a precise definition. While some disciplines have contributed to defining aspects of community empowerment, these contributions often refer only to a particular viewpoint. For example, the field of public health often defines community empowerment in terms of "wellness" and the ability of local residents to increase health-promoting behaviours. From this definition, a campaign aimed at reducing alcohol or tobacco use would constitute one method for empowering the community through education, leading to a collective change in behaviour.
>
> (Ersing, 2003, p. 262)

Activity 1 The meaning of empowerment

Allow approximately 15 minutes

What does ‘empowerment’ mean to you? Reflect for a few moments then note down your immediate thoughts and responses.

Some points to consider might include:

- When you think of the term ‘empowerment’, do certain words, images or scenarios come to mind? If so, what are these?
- Who do you think can be empowered – individuals or communities?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

It might be tricky to know where to start with this and you might have a range of ideas. The key is to recognise that there are different approaches to empowerment and that different people will understand and engage with empowerment differently depending on the type of involvement they have with the community.

1.1 The principles and rights of community empowerment

In addition to defining what community empowerment is, it is also worth reflecting on the key principles underpinning its practical application. Ersing (2003) argues that the practice of community empowerment can be summarised by three key principles, namely: building the competence or capacity of local residents and groups; providing opportunities for residents and local organizations to collaborate as change agents in resolving problems; and the use of advocacy and community or social action as change strategies to promote community well-being.

Within a UK context, the practice of community empowerment is arguably most developed in Scotland. Scotland’s 2015 Community Empowerment Act outlines a number of key rights which local communities can claim:

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT ACT 2015 (Scotland)

Right to Participate: Provides communities with powers and opportunity to address an identified need e.g. to tackle inequality, to contribute to regeneration and/or economic development, or improve health & well-being.

Where a community believes it can improve the outcome of a public service:

1. Participation request is submitted to public service providers
2. Organisation specifies the outcomes it expects to achieve, why it should participate and its relevant knowledge/expertise
3. Local authority decision to refuse must be based on reasonable grounds.
4. Improvements to services agreed through participation requests are published, including how communities were involved in decision-making

Right to Assets: Provides community bodies with a right to purchase, lease, manage or use land and buildings belonging to local authorities; distinct from the community right to buy provision that focuses on individuals and companies.

1. Community bodies can apply to buy, lease, manage or simply use land and buildings owned by public authorities.
2. Requests must be granted unless public authority can demonstrate 'reasonable grounds' not to.
3. Communities can request a review of a decision to refuse and an appeal option to government.
4. Public bodies must maintain and publish a list of their assets.
5. To request ownership the community body must either be constituted as a company limited by guarantee, or a community benefit society.

Figure 2 Community Empowerment Act (2015) Scotland

Source: (Development Trusts NI, no date.)

In a similar vein, the 2011 Localism Act in England highlights the importance of the right to challenge as being crucial to community empowerment.

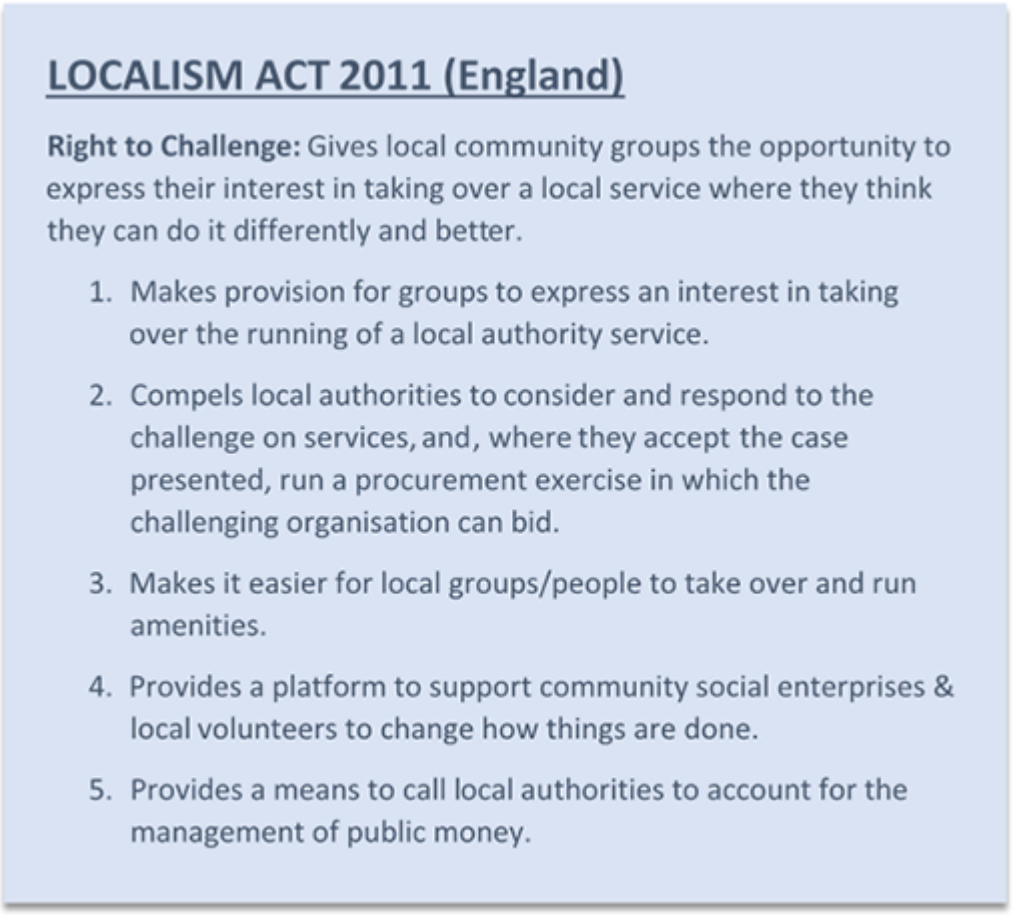

Figure 3 Localism Act 2011 (England)
Source: (Development Trusts NI, no date.)

1.2 Key elements of community empowerment

So what does Community Empowerment look like in practice?

In contrasting various approaches to community empowerment, Rolfe (2014) argues that any attempt at practical implementation must find a balance between power and responsibility:

> On the one hand, many communities have a keen interest in gaining more power over their own destiny (not always for nimby-ish reasons), while on the other hand, there are concerns that governments want to shift responsibilities onto communities as they hollow out public services in a context of austerity.

One way of overcoming this is suggested by Miller *et al*. (2018) who argue for the use of assets-based approaches which 'value the resources that exist in the community and build on the strengths and affordances of communities'. They further argue that 'a strong assets-based approach that emphasises and values the experience of community members is an effective way to empower communities to make positive change'.

Perhaps not surprisingly, therefore, community empowerment has come to be regarded as consisting of three key ingredients:

1. **Active citizens:** people with the motivation, skills and confidence to speak up for their communities and say what improvements are needed.
2. **Strengthened communities:** community groups with the capability and resources to bring people together to work out shared solutions.
3. **Partnership with public bodies:** public bodies willing and able to work as partners with local people. (Department of Communities and Local Government, no date.)

In the following section develops this further by looking at four key elements of community empowerment:

- Third sector involvement
- Active citizenship
- Engaging community stakeholders
- Participatory budgeting

2 Third Sector involvement

Figure 4 Supporting communities

On a very simple level, society can be seen to be made up of three main sectors: **public**, **private** and **voluntary**. While this breakdown might seem simplistic, it can help provide an initial starting point when thinking about the role that each plays.

1. The term 'public sector' typically refers to organisations linked to the government and state that provide many of the core public services needed by society. These include such basic public services such as health, education, roads, and policing, and which are funded through general taxation.
2. The 'private sector' refers to businesses, companies and other commercial organisations which provide goods and services in the economy and aim to make a profit.
3. The 'voluntary sector' or third sector is neither government controlled nor is it focused on profit. Rather, it occupies a space between the public and private sectors and seeks to meet the unmet needs of society. These needs might be unmet because of a lack of potential profit (so discouraging interest from the private sector) or perhaps because the public sector has not had the resources to address them or has otherwise neglected to address them.

The UK Government has defined third sector as: 'non-governmental organisations that are value driven and which principally reinvest their surpluses to further social, environmental or cultural objectives. It includes voluntary and community organisations, charities, social enterprises, cooperatives and mutuals. We also include housing associations within the third sector.' (Department of Communities and Local Government, no date.)

Broadly speaking, organisations classed as being part of the third sector might include:

- charities
- community organisations including sporting bodies
- non-governmental bodies
- non-profit and not-for-profit organisations
- voluntary action groups
- churches and religious groups.

While the above definitions might seem to suggest a clear distinction between the public, private and third/voluntary sectors, the reality is – and always has been – quite different. In practice this can mean that organisations within each sector often operate beyond what might be regarded as their own sector's boundaries.

Just as importantly, the development of effective solutions to community issues to requires collaboration between each of these sectors. No one sector or organisation can do it by themselves – rather resources, expertise and perspectives must be shared for the best result to be achieved for all community stakeholders.

2.1 Examples of the Third Sector in practice

Historical examples might include medieval monasteries providing healthcare and support for those in need (Thane, 2011) or the work of the various Joseph Rowntree Trusts in the provision of housing, education and other supports in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Similarly, in more modern times it is not uncommon for private sector organisations to provide services such as waste collection that were once provided by local authorities or for third-sector organisations to provide social housing or care for children with disabilities.

From a community empowerment perspective it is crucial to note that while most discussions of engagement with the third-sector relate to larger third-sector organisations which have a national or even international profile, the reality is that most are quite small. The UK Civil Society Almanac 2019 (NCVO, 2019) indicates that of the almost 167,000 charities in the UK, 47% of charities have an annual income of less than £10,000. By contrast, less than half a percent (or 708 organisations) have annual income of over £10 million. Interestingly, this same research (NCVO, 2019) has shown that on average the largest source of funding for third-sector organisations is donations and support from the public.

What this clearly indicates is the importance of stakeholder engagement and active citizenship, most particularly by enhancing volunteering and the level of community empowerment overall.

2.2 Barriers and incentives to community empowerment

While the above discussion might make community empowerment seem like an overwhelmingly positive and, indeed, necessary phenomenon thing, there are none-theless challenges and barriers.

Research by Berry and associates (2014) with public health practitioners found a number of key issues with the concept of empowerment in practice. These include the following:

- 'Empowerment is really easy to say but really difficult to do' (Berry *et al*., 2014, p. 38).
- 'Empowerment' has become a buzzword and has lost its meaning over time, with some people seeing it as just jargon and others finding it quite alienating.
- It can be difficult to measure the outcomes of 'empowerment' initiatives so a strong evidence base can sometimes be hard to establish.
- 'Empowerment' is a long-term process and most project evaluations are based on short- or medium-term outcomes, making applying for funding difficult.
- 'Empowerment' is a difficult concept to translate into different languages and cultures, because ideas about what leads to empowerment, or what an empowered individual or community is, are informed by norms and values.
- It may be difficult to empower individuals and communities in cases where people have no hope that changes for the better can be made.

So what factors can help or, alternatively, hinder community empowerment? The 2008 Communities in Control White Paper from the UK's then Department for Communities and Local Government outlined the following barriers and incentives:

Table 1 Barriers and incentives for community empowerment

Barriers	Incentives
Things that stop people wanting to take part include:	On the other hand, factors that make people want to take part include:
• Lack of interest or understanding about local governance • Negative perceptions and lack of trust in public institutions • Lack of awareness of how to get involved and inaccessible recruitment practices • Lack of time to participate • Lack of confidence and perceived lack of skills • Stereotyping of those who participate • Scepticism about the difference participation will make • Earlier experience of poorly executed participation • Financial costs of participation • Fear of repercussions • Structural disincentives and cultural resistance • Socio-economic status	• A desire to serve the community, change things and/or make a difference • Personal invitation to become involved • Practical or rational reasons (for instance, personal benefit) • Positive experiences of participation • The existence of activist cultures and social capital • Local leadership and/or institutional culture • Socio-economic status, confidence and skills

Another key incentive to engagement with community empowerment is a clear focus on the benefits. In developing their approach to community empowerment the Scottish

Government has drawn upon research which highlights that when communities feel empowered, there is:

- greater participation in local democracy
- increased confidence and skills among local people
- more people volunteering in their communities
- greater satisfaction with quality of life in the neighbourhood.

Consequently, better community engagement and participation lead to the delivery of better, more responsive services and better outcomes for communities.

Social loafing and learned helplessness

A particular challenge in community empowerment relates to social loafing. Social loafing can be understood as: 'The general tendency for people to expend less effort on a task when working as part of a group than when working individually.' (Law, 2016) In practical terms this relates to individual members of a group or community not making a full contribution on the basis that they expect that someone else will inevitably step in to fill the gap. In terms of community empowerment this might mean citizens not getting involved in community projects because they are confident that someone else will – even if that is not always the case.

The potential risk is that ultimately community empowerment suffers due to a sense of general apathy – those who are actively engaged and involved might give up because it seems as though others in the community simply do not care, while those who are not involved might just not bother.

At its most extreme, this can be exacerbated by what has been termed 'learned helplessness' – 'A condition in which someone has learned to behave helplessly and feels powerless to alter her/his situation or condition, even if the opportunity presents itself' (Harris and White, 2018).

3 Active citizenship and stakeholder engagement

So how might communities take proactive steps to enhance empowerment? In the following section we look at a number of approaches.

While it might seem like a modern and fashionable phenomenon, the notion of active citizenship is far from new. As Blunkett (2003) asserts:

> The ethos of active citizenship is derived from the Athenian tradition which unites the values of democratic self-determination with mutuality and solidarity. This means that those who can look after themselves and contribute to the well-being of the wider community will endeavour to do so, while those who cannot will equally be respected and supported by others. This requires a sense of common purpose. As we live in a society with a diversity of cultures, what we need both to bind us together and to enable us to respect our differences, are common beliefs in the democratic practices of citizenship itself, and the rights and duties that go with it. (2003, p.8)

These common beliefs are crucially supported by 'a set of fundamental values that includes respect for the rule of law, democracy, justice, tolerance and open mindedness, and regard for the rights and freedoms of others' (Darmanin, 2012, p.7).

Just as important is active engagement with and by community stakeholders. McGee (2003) distinguishes four types of participation, starting with the most basic elements of information sharing and then ultimately progressing through to initiation and control by stakeholders.

- **Information sharing**
  - the state puts budget and public policy information into the public domain
- **Consultation**
  - the state sets up mechanisms such as forums, councils, and referendums or surveys to gather information on citizen preferences
- **Joint decision making**
  - citizens not only provide information on their needs and preferences but are active in real decision making
- **Initiation and control by stakeholders**
  - citizens have direct control over the full process of developing, raising funds for, and implementing projects or policy, as in social fund and community-driven development projects

As Fölscher (2007, p.247) points out, 'As participatory practices move up this ladder, the argument goes, they become more effective instruments of participation: direct initiation and control by stakeholders is more powerful than joint decision making, which in turn is more effective than consultation and information sharing.'

Activity 2 Stakeholder engagement in your community

Allow approximately 5 minutes

What forms of stakeholder engagement have you have seen in your community?

Based on this, what in your opinion distinguishes kinds of stakeholder engagement which have been effective from those which were less effective?

Discussion

You may have seen or even experienced many, varied forms of stakeholder engagement in your community. Quite possibly some of these were very effective, but equally some may have been less effective. Common reasons can include a lack of broader stakeholder commitment, competing demands for time/attention or even a lack of sufficient funding.

Figure 5 Partnership working

3.1 Volunteering

A key aspect of active citizenship is volunteering and involvement with charities and other third-sector organisations. Volunteering in this regard can be defined as ‘the commitment of time and energy, for the benefit of society and the community, the environment, or individuals outside (or in addition to) one's immediate family. It is unpaid and undertaken freely and by choice’ (Department for Communities, 2019).

Data from the Northern Ireland Department for Communities and Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency highlight that volunteering remains relatively high in Northern Ireland. Key headline figures from 2018/2019 indicate that:

- The proportion of the adult population volunteering remained consistent at 27% in 2018/19 compared to 2017/18.
- Of those who had volunteered in the previous year, 37% had carried out fundraising, 31% had helped in a church or religious organisation and 28% had worked with young people.
- The most commonly cited benefits as a result of volunteering were ‘makes me feel better about myself’ (68%), ‘helps me make a positive contribution to society’ (59%), ‘I made new friends’ (55%) and ‘I had fun’ (51%).

Ultimately, therefore, active participation is beneficial not just for the recipients of the support but also for those volunteering their time and energy.

4 Participatory budgeting

Originating in Brazil, participatory budgeting is a form of community stakeholder engagement relating specifically to the management of public finances. Defined by Wampler (2007, p. 21) as 'a decision-making process through which citizens deliberate and negotiate over the distribution of public resources', participatory budgeting processes are unique to the extent that they engage non-elected members of society in financial processes for the benefit of all members of society.

Wampler (2007, pp. 21-22) argues that participatory budgeting is effective, and consequently important, as it addresses the needs in a positive way of both the governments and the citizens in those areas where it has been practiced. Participatory budgeting can consequently play a role in enhancing not just the performance of state institutions but also and the quality of democracy and democratic involvement. In particular, participatory budgeting

> helps improve state performance through a series of institutional rules that constrain and check the prerogatives of the municipal government while creating increased opportunities for citizens to engage in public policy debates. It helps enhance the quality of democracy by encouraging the direct participation of citizens in open and public debates, which helps increase their knowledge of public affairs. (Wampler, 2007, pp. 21-22)

What forms does participatory budgeting take?

Since its emergence, various studies have examined the forms that participatory budgeting can take in practice. A study by the Public Policy Institute for Wales (Williams *et al*., 2017) summarised the key forms of dimensions of participatory budgeting as follows:

Table 2 Forms of participatory budgeting

Level of participation	What involvement means in terms of degree of control (e.g. inputting views versus making the decisions) and whether PB is used as a tool for empowering participants or as a consultation mechanism with little change in power dynamics and influence.
Who is involved	Whether those who participate are, for example, citizens, representative groups, NGOs, or private companies.
At what stage are participants involved	Broadly, there are four stages, all of which could involve participants: • identifying needs • developing project proposals • selecting projects to be funded • monitoring effects.

Method of involvement	The two broad categories involve: • 'deliberative' approaches, which involves some form of debate among participants; or • 'aggregative' approaches, where participants vote for their preferred outcome. • Often PB can involve both deliberative and aggregative approaches.
Scale	PB has been implemented at different spatial scales (e.g. national, local, neighborhood); with different types and levels of budget (e.g. small scale grant allocation, or setting priorities for, in some cases multi-million pound, mainstream budgets) and with different foci (e.g. making choices within a policy or thematic area, such as health, or across themes but within a geographical area).
Whether and to what extent PB is redistributive	• PB has been used to redistribute wealth by allocating more resources to the poorest areas.

(Adapted from Williams et al., 2017, pp. 5-6)

Examples of participatory budgeting

PB in Scotland

PB in Scotland has been increasing over the last few years and is viewed by the Scottish Government as a way of increasing citizen engagement in decision making. This ambition was developed into policy through the *Community Empowerment Act 2015,* which aimed (amongst other things) to strengthen citizens' voices in the decisions and services that matter most to them. To deliver this, the Scottish Government created the Community Choices fund (£1.5 million) dedicated to funding and supporting PB. This national budget is delivered locally and has a redistributive element with the funding targeted particularly in deprived areas. There has also been a broader commitment to mainstreaming PB practice as by 2021 1% of all local government budgets will be allocated in this way. In October 2018, a PB festival was held to raise awareness and strengthen the implementation of PB processes locally.

Figure 6 PB Festival

(Grounds and Murtagh, 2018, p. 9)

Example of participatory budgeting

PB in Northern Ireland

The implementation of PB processes across NI has been modest; however, the 'The Big Dish Out' represents a local example that was delivered by the 'Waste No Time Team' with support from the Causeway Coast and Glens local council. After a lengthy engagement period which helped to promote and secure support for the process, two PB events took place with participation from Cross Glebe Community Association and a number of local groups in the Cushendall area. The agreed bid pot of £6,000 attracted bids from 32 different projects, which was eventually split 10 ways to support local projects with various objectives that included tackling isolation, improving community safety and promoting inter-generational activity. Although each project only received £300, the Big Dish Out provided local people with a greater sense of ownership as they were able to decide what issues were important to them and as a result resources were allocated with full community backing.

Figure 7 The Big Dish Out

(Grounds and Murtagh, 2018, p. 9)

4.1 Participatory budgeting in action

In the following two clips, Angela McCann of Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council in Northern Ireland provides an overview of a participatory budgeting project in action.

In the first clip, Angela discusses what participatory budgeting means in practice and how, in a very practical sense, it can contribute to community empowerment.

In the second clip, Angela highlights some of the longer-term benefits and implications for communities of implementing participatory budgeting in practice.

Activity 3 Participatory budgeting

Allow approximately 20 minutes

Take a moment to reflect on how participatory budgeting might work in practice in your context. Are there any key steps you could take to tailor aspects of participatory budgeting to the needs of your community?

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 1 Angela McCann

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 2 Angela McCann

Discussion

Having watched these two clips you may have noticed a number of key themes emerging. You may have also seen some differences between the theory and practice of participatory budgeting. The key thing to remember is that each community setting

and context is different and needs will vary significantly. As a consequence, any participatory budgeting process will need to be specifically adapted to the needs of the local community.

5 Empowering communities to deal more effectively with crime and criminality

A key challenge facing many communities across the world is that of how to deal more effectively with crime and criminality. Involvement in crime and what might be termed criminal persuasion can occur at any time of life, though children and young people are more vulnerable.

- In order to minimise the risk of criminality, the involvement of parents and communities is vital.

Role of parents

Parents are usually the most important people in their children's lives. Their views and behaviours can have a good or bad influence on their children's behaviour including offending behaviour. Children are much less likely to get into trouble if their parents:

- have a good relationship with them and can talk openly with them
- can agree sensible clear rules and encourage them to stick to them as much as possible
- know where they are and what they are up to.

School and community

Children are also less likely to get into trouble if their parents have an interest in their school life and they have good relationships with their teachers. This all helps to encourage children to go to school as often as possible.

Children are less likely to offend if their parents can help them to become involved in activities or interests in their local community. This can include youth clubs, sports clubs, uniformed groups and church groups.(NIDirect, no date)

Moving beyond the more commonplace types of crime and criminality, the terms radicalisation; extremism; grooming and recruitment are often heard in the media and popular discourse. These all play a significant risk for people of all ages, but most particularly young people.

What are the risk factors and protective factors for radicalisation?

In recent years a significant amount of work has been undertaken to understand the causes of radicalisation in various contexts. While there is no one single reason or cause, Bhui *et al*. (2012) summarise the key risk factors and protective factors for radicalisation as follows:

Table 3 Key risk factors and protective factors for radicalisation

Factor	Description

Risk factors	Young people facing transitions: education, place, family, religion and so on
	Cognitive and social openings to new influences
	Social isolation and exclusion
	Grievances about discrimination that may be personal, related to unfair treatment at work, access to health care or about other inequalities in society
	Unemployment
	Migrant status and experiences before and after immigration
	International conflict that is considered unjust against a group with which individual identifies on religious, national or cultural grounds
	Perceived threat to family and cultural group
	Marginalized and traditional cultural identities
	Discrimination thought to explain group inequalities in health and social status and access to wealth
	Not able to negotiate needs and protest through non-violent and democratic means
	Contact with influential or charismatic leaders who justify terrorism (for example, in prisons, or in schools or universities)
Protective factors	Social support
	Social cohesion
	Social capital and trust in institutions
	Feeling of safety and security in neighborhood
	Integrated cultural identity
	Employment success
	Access to democratic means for negotiating needs and opinions
	Access to critical religious leadership that can moderate and inform on legitimate religious perspectives

5.1 The role of government and communities

A 2008 report by the UK Department for Communities and Local Government (2008) emphasised the role that Government at any level can play in supporting communities to more effectively address the challenges posed by radicalisation and extremism. Underpinning this perspective is the recognition that government action alone is not enough, and instead must be supported by active community engagement. This is a view supported by pan-European networks set up to address the challenge posed by radicalisation and extremism, including the Radicalisation Action Network (RAN).

Extensive research by RAN (Russell, 2018) has emphasised the importance of local engagement and actions by communities in addressing the longer-term impacts of radicalisation. This applies both when working proactively to prevent future radicalisation but also to reduce existing levels of radicalisation:

> Although governments and public authorities must do all they can, the prevention of extremism and radicalisation is most effectively addressed by

> communities. Extremism is able to thrive when communities themselves do not challenge those who seek to radicalise others. In some communities, particularly minority communities, there is a profound lack trust and confidence in the government, police and public authorities. This can make it harder for them to achieve success. It is therefore important to invest in community engagement and community empowerment. Community engagement should be in place routinely and not just implemented after a problem arises.
>
> (Radicalisation Action Network, no date.)

Beyond the trust and engagement that are implicit in local communities, there is also arecognition that a clear understanding of 'local dynamics and the hyperlocal nuances of a specific area' (Smit and Meines, 2019, p. 3) are key aspects of any effect strategy for successfully grappling with radicalisation and extremism. Ultimately, it is crucial to recognise that:

> Extremist groups exploit hyperlocal vulnerabilities and events to reinforce their narrative and strengthen their appeal. Since the local context plays a crucial role in the process of radicalisation, the local context forms the basis of any potential solution or counter/preventive strategy.
>
> (Smit and Meines, 2019, p. 3)

Activity 4 Radicalisation and extremisim

Allow approximately 20 minutes

In the following clip Robert Örell, an expert in radicalisation and extremism, discusses some of the key challenges facing communities.

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 3 Robert Örell

Discussion

In this clip Robert Örell highlights some of steps communities can take to overcome both radicalisation and extremism and the role of community empowerment in supporting this process. Key to this is early and active engagement with youth to understand them and their challenges, and an awareness of the role which communities can and should play in supporting those who live within them.

6 Conclusion

This course has considered the concept of community empowerment and the way that its principles can be applied to help and support the development of communities.

We have argued that for communities to be successful, not only must they be empowered but stakeholders from all sectors must collaborate effectively. Social loafing and waiting for others to take the lead are not effective strategies in any context, most particularly not in a community setting.

By considering the barriers to community empowerment and some of the risks which can arise if communities are not effectively empowered we have sought to highlight its importance and relevance to communities of all types.

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