


Business case tool for community empowerment:

Background information and guidance

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Introduction from the IDeA:

What is a business case?



A business case is the answer to 'WHY'? It responds to the need to inform and validate why the organisation is prepared to invest time and resources in pursuit of a particular initiative. It therefore sets out the rationale and case for action, or approval of a course of action (including a programme or project). In doing this it also establishes how the information available is interpreted and evaluated to justify a decision to proceed further.

(IDeA, 2007, pg 67)



A business case is a document that shows that something is worth doing, or not worth doing. It is often associated with 'cost benefit analysis', as part of assessing value for money. This compares inputs with outputs and outcomes. In some areas of service provision valuing these outcomes is more straightforward than in others, because outputs and outcomes create a saving or increased income to the public sector. So for instance, a preventative diabetes project can calculate how many people have been diverted from requiring emergency hospital treatment, and can calculate the real or potential savings from this. It can then compare the cost of the prevention project against the savings of the diversion, and so work out the cost benefit. But cost benefit is not the only outcome from the project. There will be a range of benefits to other stakeholders –these might include patients actively supporting each other, developing social networks, contributing to their communities and improving their quality of life. Capturing these benefits is often seen as more challenging than identifying savings or changes in income for the public sector, but HM Treasury guidance encourages decision makers to value these non-market impacts wherever possible .

In the community empowerment field, the impact is often more to do with these non-market impacts than with changes to costs or income to the public sector. It is hard to put a monetary value on the benefits of building social capital, or on better service decisions that have been informed by the community, or on the achievement of getting more people voting in elections, without an appropriate system in place. Therefore a business case is more challenging and requires a range of approaches.

The approach presented within this guidance provides one way to create a solid business case. The Social Science Policy and Research Centre, University of Brighton developed it for the Network of Empowering Authorities. As yet it is relatively untested, and we offer it as a step along the way, a contribution to a developing body of thought and resources in this field. This guidance should be read alongside the '[Business case self-completion tool](#)', also developed by the University of Brighton with the IDeA. It should be reviewed alongside other resources, particularly Social Return on Investment methodology.

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1. Introduction

The aim of this document is two-fold. Firstly, it provides contextual information to enable you to consider key issues prior to developing a business case for community empowerment. Secondly, when read alongside the '[Business Case Tool](#)', it highlights a structure for developing a business case that can be piloted by local authorities in a range of contexts. It can be used either for a specific community empowerment initiative, or for a broader approach to community empowerment across a service or agency.

2. Context

What legislative and national drivers underpin a business case for community empowerment?

There are many national legislative and policy drivers that make community empowerment important for local councils and local strategic partnerships (LSPs). The most obvious is the Duty to Involve, which came into force in April 2009, and aims to embed a culture of participation and empowerment throughout public authorities. Another example of the Government's commitment to empowerment is the establishment of the Asset Transfer Unit whose vision is:

"Empowered and self-reliant communities transforming land and buildings into vibrant community spaces - growing a thriving and diverse third sector in partnership with the public sector."

(Asset Transfer Unit, 2009)

You can see a summary of national drivers under 'Government expectations for community empowerment' in the community empowerment section of the IDeA website.

These requirements provide the context within which local authorities and LSPs work. The development of a business case that clearly identifies the aims, practices, costs and benefits of community empowerment work, within particular current contexts, will provide you with an aid to understanding the complex ways in which empowerment work contributes to a variety of legislative, political and financial drivers.

What is relevant at a local level?

There will also be a number of local drivers for local authorities and LSPs. A business case needs to reflect key local priorities such as your Sustainable Community Strategy or other local strategies, community cohesion objectives, service transformation programmes, Total Place initiatives, budget and efficiency savings, initiatives to revitalise local democracy and so on.

For instance, the indicators within your local area agreement will play a central role in steering decisions around the business case for community empowerment. You will need to look at the range of relevant indicators. For example, Chanan (2009) notes that if both NI4 (the percentage of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality) and NI7 (environment for a thriving third sector) have been selected, this will require consideration of distinctions between empowerment of individuals and groups. In relation to NI7, a business case would benefit from mention of local compacts with the Voluntary and Community Sector. Highlighting the resources that have been put into their development, the reasons for this and an assessment of their success will provide useful contextual information.

Service providers will be interested in service performance measures related to their specific area of work. For example, those working within children and young peoples' services will want to demonstrate the connections between empowerment work and their specific targets, such as NI 110 - young people's participation in positive activities.

Showing how community empowerment initiatives can help achieve outcomes for local priorities will improve the potential for influence. Identifying links between local empowerment work and current strategic priorities may help persuade those who don't necessarily understand the place of such work within the bigger picture. For example, the development of financial literacy skills achieved through involvement in participatory budgeting projects potentially increases individuals' abilities to manage their own budgets and debt in a challenging economic climate.



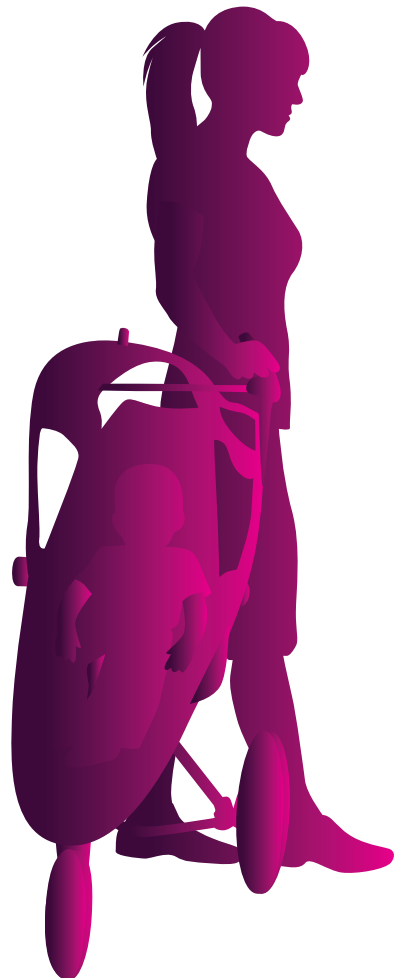
An obvious starting point for the development of a business case is to identify what is already going on. In any given location there could be numerous programmes, projects and initiatives that could potentially have an 'empowerment' element. One study by Barnes et al describes the range of empowerment related initiatives a typical inner city neighbourhood might have:

- a number of overlapping regeneration or neighbourhood renewal projects;
 - a Children's Fund and Sure Start Project;
 - all working alongside district and ward committees of the city council, a district strategic partnership of public, private and voluntary and community sector stakeholders, community networks and a neighbourhood forum;
 - within the mainstream agencies of the city council, PCT, police and other bodies;
 - and a city-wide LSP shaping overall regeneration policy;
 - parents involved in governing bodies for primary and secondary schools, who may wish to stand for further education college governing boards;
 - and citizens and patients who may be members of the National Health Service (NHS) Foundation Trust for the area.
- (Barnes et al, 2008).

The range and type of mechanisms in a particular area will be different, depending upon the nature of the locality, the population and the extent to which this has been a focus for specific area-based initiatives. From the point of view of members of the community, such a plethora of opportunities and processes could, potentially, cause confusion and uncertainty as to how to influence local agendas. The development of a business case could usefully encourage a more strategic and joined-up approach to community empowerment.

What is the need for a business case?

A business case is important because it can help to demonstrate how your community empowerment work can deliver against these national drivers and local priorities in an effective and efficient way. It can help persuade relevant stakeholders that it is worth doing and allocating appropriate resources to. It can also better connect the empowerment work into the mainstream purpose of councils and their partners, rather than letting it be considered as an optional extra. A business case will enable the decision makers and stakeholders to understand clearly the direct benefits and outcomes that are or will be achieved by empowerment, along with the costs of undertaking empowerment. In times of reducing public sector budgets, it is more important than ever for empowerment approaches to show the value that they create to both society and the priorities of local and central government.



3. Community empowerment

Is there agreement on what the term means in different contexts?

Development of a business case for community empowerment requires clarity and consensus around the meaning of the term in different contexts. The IDeA uses the following definition:

“Community empowerment is the outcome of engagement and other activities. Power, influence and responsibility is shifted away from existing centres of power and into the hands of communities and individual citizens.”

(IDeA, 2009)

This sees empowerment as an outcome of a range of activities and processes, which engage different groups, enabling them to take their own action and to actively participate in decision-making. These activities will vary depending on the needs of each community and a business case for community empowerment will need to reflect this varying local context.

As an emphasis on public participation and community engagement has developed in a range of policy contexts, community empowerment work can deliver a number of rather different benefits:

- Improving the quality and legitimacy of public decision making
- Improving service responsiveness
- Enabling services to be designed and delivered by community organisations and/or ‘local people’
- Removing or reducing the ‘democratic deficit’
- Generating ‘positive freedoms’, civic virtues, mutuality and trust
- Achieving social order and social cohesion
- Building community capacity and empowerment
- Reducing social exclusion
- Improving health and reducing health inequalities
- Building individual skills and capacity (Barnes et al, 2004)

Clarity over purposes and intended outcomes and identification of appropriate methods for capturing impact will assist in creating a robust business case and ensuring that this can be evidenced. For example, community empowerment work could be argued to be central to the successful implementation of the Duty to Involve and to revitalising democracy. However, these two aims have rather different purposes and thus what empowerment means in each context is rather different. One is to do with developing strategies and processes to ensure service users can meaningfully affect decision making about services. The other is to do with citizens’ knowledge of and ability to participate in democratic processes. The structure advocated here promotes early identification of objectives and potential outcomes and appropriate methods for capturing impact.

What do we know about the success of community empowerment?

There are very few examples nationally or locally of evaluations that really show the impact of community empowerment. One example is a systematic review of evidence related to empowering communities (Pratchett et al, 2009), which focused on six mechanisms that are commonly used:

- assets transfer
- citizen governance
- electronic participation
- participatory budgeting
- petitions
- redress

Pratchett and his colleagues analysed the success of each mechanism in relation to three types of impact:

1. The effect on participants involved in the process
2. The effect on communities
3. The effect on decision making

Findings highlighted that two of these mechanisms, citizen governance and participatory budgeting 'showed clear evidence of spill-over from individuals to the wider community' - that is, there was evidence of impact at both individual and community level. The report recognises the high level of input required for such mechanisms (in terms of finance and time-scales) but concludes that the evidence base indicates that, due to their 'spill-over' effect, they 'should be at the centre of strategies for empowerment' (pg 20).

As you develop your business case it is useful to consider what types of mechanisms are being used in your local area and what is the local experience of their impact. Are there other mechanisms that have been used which you feel provide evidence to show the worth of community empowerment work?

Findings from the evaluation of Neighbourhood Management (NM) Pathfinders (SQW, 2008) explored the improved levels of engagement of varying service providers during the lifetime of NM projects. The Police and Environment Services emerged as the strongest and most active partners. Other evidence suggests this has a knock on effect in terms of levels of satisfaction with these services. A report on Neighbourhood Policing and Developing Citizen Focus Policing highlights the success of three forces (Dorset, Hertfordshire and Lancashire) who demonstrated significant commitment to developing citizen focused policing, "resulting in clear outcomes for the public in increased satisfaction measures" (HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, 2008, pg 11). In selecting evidence for use within a business case, it would be useful to explore, locally, which services are involved in empowerment initiatives, why and what impact this work has had.

The focus of empowerment work can be at an individual, group or locality level. The Neighbourhood Management work necessarily explored service providers' performance at a locality level. However, if their performance was to be examined from a different perspective, for example with a focus on equalities groups, the results may well indicate different strengths and weaknesses.

The methods suggested below will take into account the different purposes, focuses and contexts for empowerment work and inform the way in which a business case for community empowerment should be developed.

4. Making a business case

What is a 'business case for community empowerment'?

Thinking about the who, why and what of community empowerment is the starting point for thinking about what a business case for community empowerment might achieve and how.

You should be clear about who you are trying to persuade with your business case. Is it your LSP, senior officers in your organisation, politicians or your community? Your audience will affect the focus of your business case and what it is trying to achieve – do you need to make the economic case, showing the cost benefits, or is it more important to show the social benefits of your community empowerment work?

It is important to explore the relationship between a **business case** that is made to persuade key decision makers to invest time and resources, and **evaluation** which is designed to enable learning and reflection on how successful a project or strategy has been, what it has achieved, and how it might be improved. In this context we can consider evaluation evidence as a potential resource for a business case.

Measuring the benefits, the why, of community empowerment is challenging because community empowerment principally delivers social benefit. Government recognises existing difficulties surrounding measurement related to social benefit and the measuring of social clauses in commissioning agreements. The Office of the Third Sector is therefore developing resources to aid local authorities and other commissioners, notably tools to use to evaluate Social Return on Investment (SROI).

Discussions surrounding the use of SROI recognise the influence of the 'theory of change' evaluation process. The principles of this approach have much to offer when

considering developing a business case for community empowerment.

"A theory of change specifies, up front, how activities will lead to interim and longer-term outcomes and identifies the contextual conditions that may affect them. This helps strengthen the scientific case for attributing subsequent change in these outcomes (from initial levels) to the activities included in the initiative." (Connell & Kubisch, 1998, 18)

Theory of Change approaches can contribute to programme development as well as evaluation as they require stakeholders to make explicit why they think the strategies they are putting in place will produce the outcomes they seek. They also offer a framework within which to reflect on progress by defining short and medium term outcome indicators, as well as indicators of long term change. This approach has been adopted in a number of recent UK policy evaluations including the evaluation of Health Action Zones, New Deal for Communities, the Children's Fund and of local strategic partnerships (DCLG, 2004)

Social Return on Investment is a potential tool to support the development of a business case. The purpose of conducting an SROI calculation is to enable the measurement of change, to assign value and establish impact. The SROI process has been developed from cost-benefit analysis and social accounting methodologies. The process recognises that there may be different changes for different stakeholders and so requires a theory of change approach to identify what changes an initiative or strategy might produce, how and why. It can be used either extensively (i.e. across a range of projects or across a service) or intensively, focusing on the detail of one project or initiative.

“SROI tells the story of how change is being being created by measuring social, environmental and economic outcomes and uses monetary values to represent them. This enables a ratio of benefits to costs to be calculated. For example, a ratio of 3:1 indicates that an investment of £1 delivers £3 of social value” (SROI Project, 2009, p1)

The degree to which models such as SROI and theories of change could be used within the development of a particular business case will vary from locality to locality. The Great Yarmouth [worked example](#) is a case study which uses some of the principles and practices associated with SROI but is not a full SROI analysis.

A full example of what an SROI analysis might look like in this context can be found on the SROI UK Network’s website www.sroi-uk.org.

A ‘business case’ is often associated with ‘cost benefit analysis’. The cost benefit ratio is influenced by context. For example, the level of input required to build community capacity to engage in partnerships will be different in areas characterised by high and low levels of existing community organisation. Business case development will need to take account of such differences in assessing both costs and likely benefits.

Finally, you need to be clear about the resources required to produce your business case. The [‘Issues to consider and resourcing implications’](#) page within the business case section of the IDeA website provides a discussion about resources that you will need to have access to when compiling your business case.

This Business Case Tool will encourage users to make informed use of evidence, selecting test case examples that most closely relate to local priorities. Depth over breadth of information is encouraged.



5. A step-by-step guide to developing a business case for community empowerment

The previous sections have indicated the preparatory work that is necessary in order to develop a business case for community empowerment.

In this section we set out the processes necessary to build the business case. This section explains how to fill in our '[A business case for community empowerment: self-completion tool](#)'.

The pro forma asks a series of questions, in a seven-stage process that, if followed, will result in a well-argued business case for empowerment.

Stage one: scoping

Stage two: identification of (and agreement on) outcomes

Stage three: identification of inputs (financial and non-financial)

Stage four: identification of outputs and processes

Stage five: identification of benefits

Stage six: Identification of risks

Stage seven: based on evidence from stages 1-6, creation of an argument for the empowerment activity (a business case).

We use a system similar to that outlined in the IDeA's An Ideal Empowering Authority: An Illustrated Framework and also draw on the South West Regional Empowerment Partnerships project which focused on the development of a business case (Chanan, 2009).

5.1 Stage 1: Scoping

Defining your business case and pulling together all the issues that impact on and affect it

The initial scoping section aims to help those leading on this work to think through who might need to be involved, why and how. The answers to these questions should emerge from thought given to who and what the business case is trying to persuade or influence.

You will see in the 'self-completion tool' that there are a lot of questions to answer here but much of the information needed to answer them already exists – it is a case of pulling this

together. The more robust the thinking and collaboration is with regard to this section, the firmer the foundation will be for moving forward to build a convincing business case.

To see an example of how one council completed this section, view the Wolverhampton [worked example](#).

Example:

One of the scoping questions asks about involving communities in your overview and scrutiny work.

"Overview and scrutiny committees have powers to investigate issues of local importance and can make recommendations to the council and other agencies for improvements. Councillors working on overview and scrutiny to review policies and performance increasingly enable a range of views to be heard, including those of the public and service users.

There are many good examples of how councillors can use their overview and scrutiny role to involve local people in an active and influential way. In Cornwall, the overview and scrutiny committee commissioned a theatre group to work with dementia sufferers and their carers, using humour and drama to discover their views on the quality of dementia care. In Coventry, a health scrutiny review of the discharge from hospital process used older people as peer researchers to talk to older patients, both in hospital and after they had returned home. This allowed them to report on the patients' experience of health and social care in a sympathetic and empathetic fashion. In north Somerset, a summit was held with representatives of the local media and the youth parliament to enable young people to question the media about the way in which they were stereotyped as 'hoodies' and hooligans. As a result, the local paper set aside a page in each issue where young people were able to write their own stories and provide a different perspective (Leadership Centre for Local Government et al, 2009)" (Pitchford et al, 2009, pg 41)

5.2 Stage 2: Outcomes

What are the key outcomes your authority and partners are looking for from the community empowerment work you are planning?

Section 3 above on community empowerment offers some examples of the type of outcomes you may be seeking.

- What long-term outcomes should the community empowerment approach/initiative achieve? (Much of the thinking around this should have been done during the scoping phase – the challenge now is to explore in more depth what outcomes could be expected, for whom and how. Again, the involvement of a diverse range of stakeholders in this process helps create the opportunity for various outcomes to be explored and links between them to be identified.)
- Do a range of differing assumptions underlie different stakeholders' views on outcomes? If so, is there a need to explore these and decide how to work with such differences?

Example:

This gives a flavour of aims that could, with some work, be converted into more concrete expected outcomes.

Extract from a case study on the Participatory Budgeting Unit web-site.

"Keeping Saffron In Your Hands", Leicester

Saffron has received Neighbourhood Element funding since 2006/07 and has allocated its project funding through the Neighbourhood Management Board, consisting of local residents, ward councillors and organisational theme representatives. The Board members have had an interest in participatory budgeting (PB) processes since being briefed by the Neighbourhood Manager and having a specific session delivered about PB as part of a training programme. The Board decided to allocate £40,000 of its funding through a PB process.

Aims:

- To involve a larger number of local residents of Saffron than just those who sit on the Neighbourhood Management Board, in the allocation of neighbourhood funding
- To equip local residents with an understanding of budgetary processes and give them the responsibility of prioritising issues for public spending
- To encourage wider resident engagement in other forms of local participation
- To develop the sense of community in Saffron by running this event
- To showcase the potential of the Saffron community to multi-agency partners

5.3 Stage 3: Inputs

What inputs, both financial and non-financial, are needed to implement the empowerment approach/initiative?

Many projects and processes receive finance and resource, such as personnel time and expertise, from a range of national and local organisations. The best possible definition of inputs should be attempted if robust conclusions are to be drawn about the value of empowerment work. Thus you need to identify what resources, both financial and non-financial from your own and your partner agencies, have or will contribute to the empowerment approach/initiative. Think about these in terms of:

- finance
- staff time
- volunteer time (where appropriate)
- additional skills which may need to be brought in
- training
- materials
- travel costs
- hospitality costs

Note: In relation to staff and volunteer time, consider what measures could be used for costing these (e.g. daily rates for paid staff, volunteer time can be costed using set notional salary rates)

Example:

Extract from K. Lavan, Participatory Budgeting in the UK: An evaluation from a practitioner perspective

U-decide children and young people's pilot: the process:

The U-decide pilots used funds allocated by the LSP but delivered by the local council. Both U-decide pilots developed along a participatory grant-making model in which the funds were allocated either directly to community projects, or to groups who would work in partnership with the council and other service providers to deliver their ideas. The children and young people's pilot targeted its funds citywide. A small group of young people, 'The Wikkid Planners', worked with a council officer to design and develop the process.

Resources into the process:

- £50,000 over two years for U-Decide children and young people's and liveability pilots for administration and publicity
- Staff time of pilot lead, police officers, community development officers and other staff.
- Voluntary time from young people in Wikkid Planners group.
- Voluntary time from around 40 residents on Working Group.
- Staff time of youth workers.

5.4 Stage 4: Processes and outputs

What processes and actions are associated with the community empowerment work, why have you decided on these and what outputs do you expect them to produce?

As well as thinking about resources, you also need to consider what activities and mechanisms are planned.

- What activities will take place?
- Why were these activities chosen?

Explain choices made in relation to expected outcomes stated in section 5.2

Example:

Extract from K. Lavan, Participatory Budgeting in the UK: An evaluation from a practitioner perspective

U-decide Children and Young People's pilot:

Before event:

4 priorities for the money set from pre-existing review of children and young people's views of their needs.

Youth groups across the city informed about the U-Decide pilot through publicity and existing networks with statutory, community and voluntary sectors.

Young people invited to propose bids by completing a simple pro-forma.

Bids checked for legality and each group invited to send 4 young people to event.

A group of young people, 'The Wikkid Planners', worked with a council officer to design and advise on the process.

At event:

Youth groups were given materials to make a creative display about their project and asked to make a short presentation to the other groups bidding for money

Participants prioritised projects using e-voting.

18 projects were successful in obtaining funding. 4 were unsuccessful but were given on-the-spot and follow-up funding advice.

After event:

Money allocated to groups and support given to help them spend the money.

Ongoing monitoring of project delivery with support provided as necessary.

What needs to be added to this example is a justification or rationale for these mechanisms. Have they been tried before and demonstrated to be successful? Do they build on existing activities? The key point is to recognise that there may be different ways of achieving objectives – your business case needs to say why resources should be invested in this particular activity or set of activities.

5.5 Stage 5: Benefits profile

What benefits have been or could be achieved as a result of the inputs and processes?

The DCLG (2009) report 'Empowering Communities to influence local decision making. Evidence-based lessons for policy makers and practitioners', details five key ways in which empowerment work can 'make a genuine difference' – if it is done well. These are:

- **increase trust in public institutions.** Citizens need to know that public organisations are listening to them, and that their views will be taken into account when decisions are made that make a difference to their lives.
- **improve the quality of services.** Involving people in designing services helps make them "right first time", more responsive and accountable, and can deliver better value for taxpayers' money.
- **take and justify difficult decisions.** Involving people in decisions about how local money is spent, through techniques such as participatory budgeting gives communities a better understanding of the difficult prioritisations and trade-offs that have to be made, and a stronger sense of "ownership" over the eventual results.
- **promote good community relations.** As individuals engage with their neighbours, with community groups and local decision makers on how to tackle shared concerns, there is more interaction between people of different backgrounds and more emphasis on shared goals. Greater openness about decision making and greater involvement in those decisions can also remove perceptions of injustice that can challenge cohesion.

- **build resilient community networks.**

Third sector organisations and community groups bind communities together, giving people the means to make their voices heard and to make a positive difference.

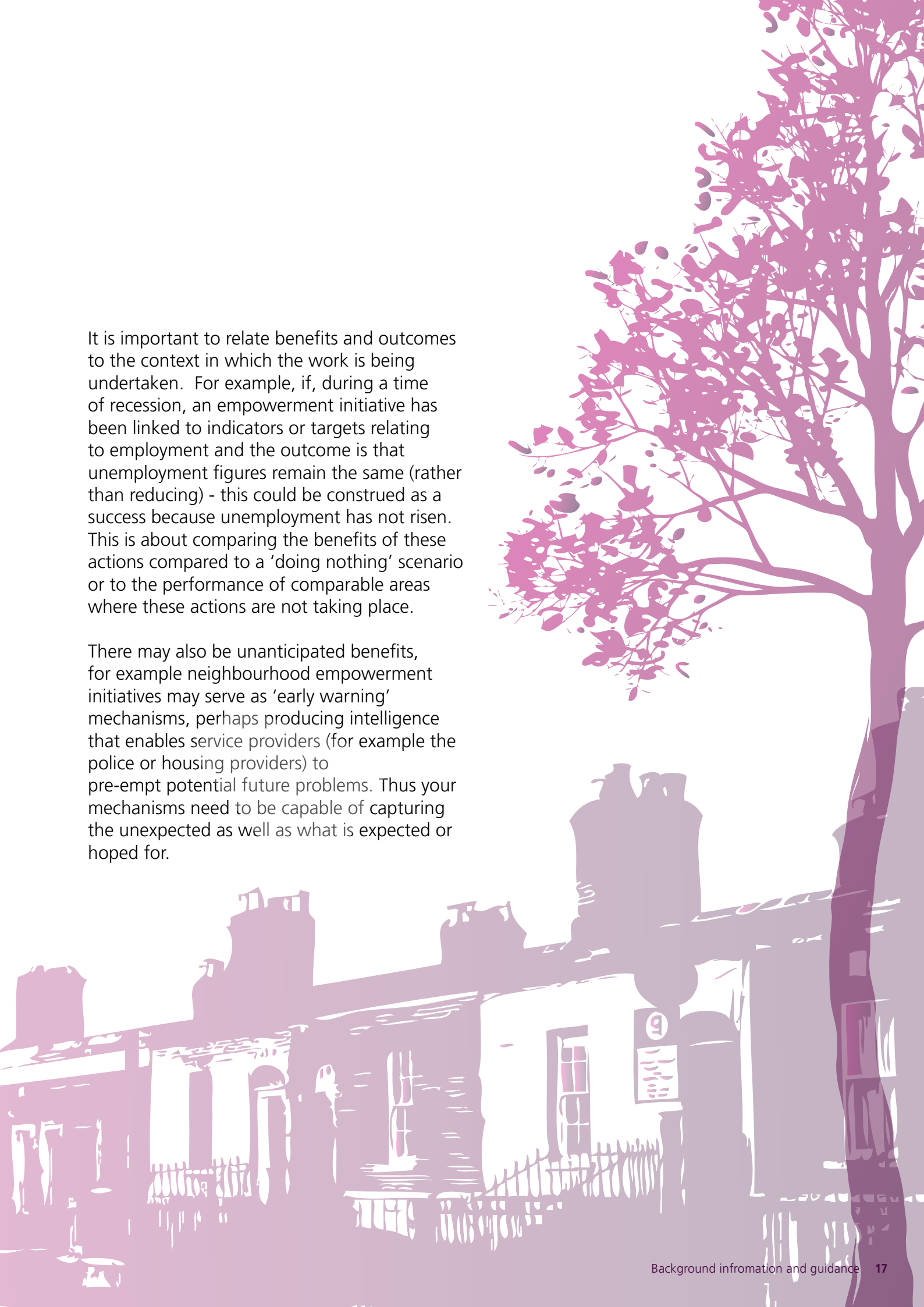
You can draw on these as well as the purposes and aspirations outlined in the 'Community Empowerment' section 3 to describe and define benefits. You will then need to set out ways in which benefits can be demonstrated:

- Who is the audience for your business case and therefore what should the emphasis be? Who or what are you trying to influence?
- What processes exist for evaluating benefits and impact from empowerment practice?
- Are the processes sufficient for capturing information on a range of outcomes for a range of stakeholders in a range of contexts?
- How are the benefits and impact of your empowerment work documented/described – benefits and impact for whom (organisations/staff/participants)?
- Is the evidence 'fit for purpose'; what might have to be done to ensure evidence is more robust?



It is important to relate benefits and outcomes to the context in which the work is being undertaken. For example, if, during a time of recession, an empowerment initiative has been linked to indicators or targets relating to employment and the outcome is that unemployment figures remain the same (rather than reducing) - this could be construed as a success because unemployment has not risen. This is about comparing the benefits of these actions compared to a 'doing nothing' scenario or to the performance of comparable areas where these actions are not taking place.

There may also be unanticipated benefits, for example neighbourhood empowerment initiatives may serve as 'early warning' mechanisms, perhaps producing intelligence that enables service providers (for example the police or housing providers) to pre-empt potential future problems. Thus your mechanisms need to be capable of capturing the unexpected as well as what is expected or hoped for.



5.6 Stage 6: Risks

Identifying the potential risks community empowerment work can generate as well as benefits

The National Audit office states that the risks of any programme or project fall into four categories:

Financial	The risk that the budget you and the provider have agreed may be exceeded; and/or that there is poor value for money.
Performance	The risk that the objective you and the provider have agreed may not be met.
Reputational	The risk that unwanted actions of the provider may bring it, the programme or the funder into disrepute.
Opportunity	The risk that the funder or the provider, because they have not analysed risks fully and accurately and are too risk averse, decide not to take an opportunity that presents itself and so damage their effectiveness.

(National Audit Office, 2009)

In relation to community empowerment, a provider may be a contractor, a partner, another part of the authority or a community or voluntary organisation. As well as risks to the authority, it is also important to think about risks to the community (and/or voluntary and community organisation/s). These might include risks associated with putting substantial time and effort into a project and experiencing no benefit as a result. This might have a knock on effect in terms of disenchantment and of people feeling even more disempowered than before they started.

In addition, it may be helpful to identify the risk of NOT using empowerment techniques - for example, communities continue to feel ineffectual in relation to service provision and

services continue to be provided that are not as effective as they could be, or are simply not used because they are in the wrong place or inappropriately designed. The IDeA has produced an article, '[Getting Engaged](#)', profiling the consequences of not empowering communities.

- How will risks, from a range of perspectives, be identified?
- What measures are in place / could be put in place to mitigate identified risks?
- Is it possible to present an evidence-based comparison between these risks and those involved in alternative practice or 'doing nothing'?

5.7 Stage 7: Analysis

Pulling together evidence from previous sections to make a persuasive case

".. evaluations for ODPM of 15 user involvement projects included an analysis of the costs and benefits. Costs were higher compared to projects with minimal levels of participation, but this was found to be negligible when improved outcomes (crime reduction of up to 50% in some areas) were factored in." (Andersson et al, 2007: 145)

This section is where all the work put in thus far comes together. This is your opportunity to pull together evidence from previous sections to make a persuasive case. The thought that has gone into articulating who you are attempting to persuade of what, along with the context, outcomes, inputs, processes/outputs, benefits and risks will enable a coherent, evidence-based argument to be presented.

The argument will pay attention to local context and priorities (relating where necessary to national drivers) and will be written with the selected readers in mind. The extent to which your business case will focus on financial aspects will depend upon the knowledge and resources available. The extract below gives a flavour of the types of issues that might emerge throughout the process and provide food for thought about who you are trying to persuade and how.

Example

Service Improvement - Camden Council – London

Camden Council set up a mystery shopper project in 2005 to gather information about the level of service that disabled visitors received at council reception points. This mystery shopper exercise relied on participants from Camden's citizens' panel rather than professional mystery shoppers recruited via an agency. The up-front monetary costs for hiring were lower than they would have been if a research agency had been used as the volunteer participants were compensated with gift certificates rather than a wage. However, the management and training costs for the participants were higher compared to using professional mystery shoppers who would already have the required skills and training but these internal staff costs were not recorded in an identifiable way.

Interestingly we found that the project manager and the decision maker interviewed in this project had very different understandings of the cost benefit ratio. The project manager felt that the participative process was superior to the market research driven mystery shopper process, while the decision maker felt that the participative process was too resource intensive to manage and she 'would bring in a professional agency next time'. This difference of opinion could either be indicative of the fact that, in the absence of shared recording of costs and benefits, subjective views of the cost-benefit ratio can differ widely, or reflect that different individuals within institutions value different outcomes and participation may not be the best route to reach them all." (Andersson et al, 2007: 150)

References:

Andersson, E, Warburton, D and Wilson, R, 2007 The True Costs of Public Participation in Re-energizing Citizenship strategies for civil renewal Brannan, T, John, P and Stoker, G (eds). Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan

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