

# Mapping power in our community

**Aim: To get a better understanding of power and how it affects a Big Local partnership.**

## WHY USE THIS TOOL?

- To help your local partnership discover its own power.
- To be in a stronger position to work with other local organisations in a constructive way.
- To end up with a visual map of the key sources of power one local organisation has.

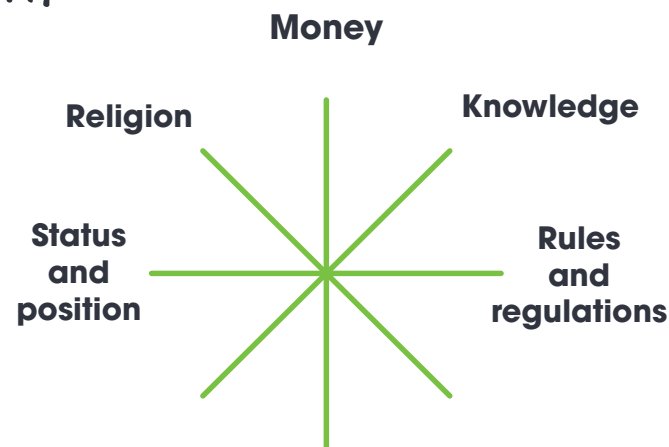
# Preparing for the activity

## AN EXAMPLE IN PRACTICE

This tool was used by the Greenmoor Big Local, a well-established partnership in inner-city Bradford at a time when some members felt they were being slightly dominated by a local organisation. They used it to plan how to handle the situation, and it helped them understand more what was going on. The main image used in this tool is a star, drawn on a flip chart as a set of crossing lines around a central point. After a short introduction, the idea of having power is applied firstly to the Big Local Partnership, then to organisations that the Partnership interacts with.

## PREPARING FOR THE ACTIVITY

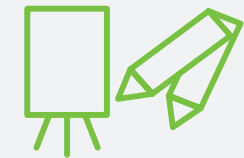
In advance, you will need to prepare a flip chart with a star on, with headings around the arms – see Figure One.



### YOU WILL NEED



A large room with a flipchart stand



Flipchart pens and paper



30 mins prep  
1 hour minimum to run the activity



### Don't Forget!

It is best if the content of this session remains confidential to the group. Make this clear before beginning and during. The main conclusions at the end can be used openly.

# Running the activity

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## 1. SET THE SCENE

Introduce the general theme of understanding power.

**Write these up on flip chart paper and ask the group to choose one to work on.**

## 2. SET EXPECTATIONS

Remind everyone that the content remains confidential. The main conclusions and any action points agreed at the end do not need to be confidential.

## 3. GROUP DISCUSSION

**Ask everyone:**

What are your experiences of power in your own lives? Were they positive? Were they negative?

## 4. DEFINING POWER

What do you think of this definition of power?

**Power has two key elements:**

**The ability to have influence over others - power 'over' others**

**The ability to do things yourself or with others - power 'with' others.**

Write this on to a flip chart and begin a discussion on the definition. (Please note this definition is extended further in the Tool Expressions of Power).

## 5. SOURCES OF POWER

Introduce the star you prepared with headings around some of the arms, as in Figure One.

**Ask the group:**

Where does power come from?

In turn, go around the headings inviting comments on each one, for example:

How does money act as a source of power?



There is space in Figure One for you to invite the group to add their own ideas. If need be, add additional arms to the star. The idea of this is to get people thinking about power and where it comes from.

## PART ONE

Now draw a new star in the middle of a blank flip chart with the title '**Big Local Partnership**'.

**Ask the group:** In what ways is our **Big Local partnership** powerful?

Ask for suggested headings for each arm of the star and write these at the end of each arm, for example, 'Giving grants'.

**Invite discussion on each of the headings:** In what ways do these give us power?

**Write these up on flip chart paper and ask the group to choose one to work on.**

## PART TWO

With a clean sheet of flip chart paper, draw a **small star** again in the middle. Write 'Big Local' around the star.

**Ask the question:** What **local organisations** have power over **Big Local**?

As different organisations are suggested in turn, draw a small star for each one around the main Big Local star and put a heading on it e.g. The Council.

**Ask in turn:** Do you see this organisation as having much power over us?

If the organisation is seen by the group as very powerful e.g. the local newspaper, change the small star into a larger star by extending the arms. If it is not seen as very powerful, then leave it as a small star and so on. A picture will be built up that is a pattern of stars of different sizes surrounding the central Big Local star.

**Invite discussion on this pattern,** for example: Looking at the picture, is it an easy environment to work in?

## PART THREE

- Ask the group to choose one of the larger stars to look in more detail at the sources of the power in each case (e.g. the Council)
- Draw that star again on a separate flip chart sheet. Invite the group to suggest headings for each arm on the star to describe sources of power, such as delivery of local services, grants to local groups, access to the press, control of planning, owning the community centre etc.
- Add notes at the end of each line from the group's discussion of each source.
- You will end up with a visual map of the key sources of power the organisation has. If you have time, you could repeat this for other organisations that are seen as having power over the Big Local partnership.

### What does the group think?

Now invite general discussion.

**Ask:** For each of the organisations holding power over us, how could we build a better relationship?

This may mean, for example, keeping them better informed, inviting them to key meetings, being more assertive about our needs, challenging their position on Big Local when appropriate. You can make notes of key conclusions on a flip chart.

# Reflections and next steps

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## NEXT STEPS AND ACTION PLANNING

Invite the group to decide on any action points arising from this discussion. A simple way to do action planning is to use these headings called the W's.

**What** - the action needed

**Who** - who is involved, who is leading

**When** - key deadlines and milestone dates

**With** - resources needed



This is one of a series of DIY tools created for the 150 communities taking part in the Big Local programme. Find out more at [www.localtrust.org.uk](http://www.localtrust.org.uk)

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Mapping power

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