

**Thinking so far: improve the capacity of communities to identify and act on issues that impact on their own, and others, health and wellbeing**

**How we summarise this area of action...**

...involves community development.

This is a long-term process whereby people in the community work together, with facilitation and support of people from organisations, to identify their own assets, create change, exert more influence in the decisions which affect their lives and work to promote health and wellbeing for themselves, the communities in which they live, and the society of which they are a part.

**A longer description**

It is easy to overlook the talents we develop through our experiences. Just think how valuable our life experiences as a parent or even as an ex-smoker can be to those who are currently struggling with changes in our lives. We all have many talents and it is important that we can recognise them and use them to improve our own lives, that of our family and friends, our communities and the city as a whole.

The great thing is – the more the talents are used, the more they develop and grow. And, the more we do this together - the more we get to know, trust and respect other people.

Whether we use lots of services or not, it is important to be able to make decisions about issues that affect your wellbeing and health. Lack of power and a feeling of being out of control can impact on our self-esteem, choices and actions which can result in poor wellbeing and health.

Developing communities can take a long time and needs the right help and support. It needs us to work together to identify our talents, create change, have more influence in decisions and work to promote health and wellbeing for ourselves, the communities in which we live and the city as a whole.

(abstract from draft of Re-thinking Wellbeing and Health in your neighbourhood)

**‘Working with communities’: a few distinctions**

Engagement, participation and involvement	... a way of organisations ‘finding out’ about communities’ needs to improve or co-produce decisions about services or other areas of work
Community-based or outreach approaches to service delivery or health promotion	... in these approaches, the ‘concern’ – such as smoking or diet - is identified by organisations usually on the basis of data analysis (Labonte, 1999)
<b>Community development/ empowerment</b>	<b>... a way of intervening to improve the capacity of groups to identify and act on their own concerns</b>

All three are important to improving wellbeing and health but it is the third area that is the focus of this area of action.

