



# Participation Toolkit





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# Why Involve Communities?

Community participation and involvement is important for any organisation, community or group who want to make improvement and change in their community. This may be: when new projects are suggested or developed; to gather information to provide evidence; or to ensure people understand and act on the needs or issues of community experiences.

When communities are involved and feel part of change, decision making is better, resources are used more effectively and outcomes for the community improve, through better services and democratic participation.



The Scottish Community Development Centre highlight that, if community participation is done well, it can lead to:

- Services that are planned, developed and delivered in a way that are influenced by and respond to community need;
- People who find it difficult to get involved are able to influence the decisions that affect their lives;
- The various strengths and assets in communities and across public and private sector agencies are used effectively to deal with the issues communities face; and
- New relationships are developed between communities and public sector bodies which build trust and make joint action possible.

Shetland Partnership's shared vision is that:

***“Shetland is a place where everyone is able to thrive; living well in strong, resilient communities; and where people and communities are able to help, plan and delivery solutions to future challenges.”***

# Types of Participation and Engagement

The following are five different forms of participation and engagement. They have different purposes; different types may be used at different points in a participation process.

At the outset, and at different points in any participation and engagement exercise, it is important that participants understand the approach being used and are clear on the extent to which they can influence the results.

## Inform

Informing is telling people what is planned. It tends to be when a decision has been made and may include the merits of a decision. It may be a decision about a change in service, or information about a new project or piece of work, for example.

To be open and transparent, all relevant information should be made available, unless there is justification to withhold parts.

Participation exercises all use informing, to some degree, if only to let people know how they can be involved.

## Why Do This?

- To keep people informed
- To be open and transparent about a decision or process.

## When to Inform?

Informing is suitable as a standalone engagement if there is little to no room for change, negotiation or if a decision has already been made on the action to be taken.

Informing may be used in other ways too:

- Letting people know what and why work is being done around a particular issue
- Communicating opportunities to participate in decision making or developing policies
- Helping people to understand the details of a decision / action / policy
- Highlight specific data or information related to an issue
- To keep in touch with service users and share relevant information.

## What Methods Can I Use?

The following are example of ways to inform people:

- Newsletters
- Social media campaigns
- Posters / Displays
- Information leaflets
- Information videos
- Website or webpages

# Consult

Consultation is a way of seeking views on options or proposals. The parameters for using feedback are usually defined and specific. The information provided during a consultation exercise is used by policy makers and decision makers to support any final decision.

## Why Do This?

- To seek feedback on a defined set of proposals
- As an opportunity to listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations
- To refine current thinking.

## When to Consult?

Methods of consultation vary, but the process is always framed in terms of an opportunity to seek responses to already identified questions, options or proposed courses of action.

Some examples include:

- Gathering opinions and perspectives on a defined set of issues
- Collecting ideas for a solution or alternatives
- Gathering views on the level of support for different proposed solutions
- Gathering views on the impact of a service, project or activity.

## What Methods Can I Use?

The following are example of ways to inform people:

- Surveys
- Citizens' Panels
- Deliberative Workshops
- Opinion Polls
- Focus Groups
- Qualitative Interviews
- Roundtables
- Roadshows

# Involve

Involving is a process of enabling people to be part of the development of options and potential change. It should be a two-way process, for those involved. It should also mean that everyone involved shares in the delivery of any actions taken.

It is a more direct way for people to influence different options and decisions.

## Why Do This?

- To ensure concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the options and potential change developed
- To be receptive to direct input from people
- To demonstrate how this input has influenced the results of the exercise.

## When to Involve?

Participation exercises that are about involving must create an environment for a two-way relationship and dialogue between those leading the exercise and participants.

It is important to start this work as early in the process as possible, maintaining relationships through the exercise. Involvement approaches are particularly helpful when there are many possible outcomes to the process. They provide an opportunity for the exchange of information and the sharing of different perspectives.

Some examples include:

- Understanding the reason people have different perspectives
- Understanding those different perspectives
- Understanding the detailed impact of activity, from the point of view of those impacted by it.

## What Methods Can I Use?

Consideration must be given to where potential participants are, and to meet them in this environment.

Some examples of effective involvement methods include:

- Deliberative Workshops
- Focus Groups
- Qualitative Interviews
- Roundtables
- Roadshows
- User Panels
- Conferences

# Collaborate

These participation exercises take a partnership approach to the process and to any decisions arising from the exercise. This can include defining the issues, generating alternative ideas and agreeing potential solutions.

## Why Do This?

- To value the advice and ideas of participants in generating solutions
- To incorporate this into any recommendations, decisions and change, as far as possible.

## When to Collaborate?

Collaboration is about sharing power to inform decision-making. A collaborative approach is particularly useful when there is uncertainty around how best to proceed, or when there are multiple possible solutions.

Collaboration can be a useful approach when the final decision has the potential to impact different people in different way; this approach allows participants to understand the potential impacts against a wider common good.

Some examples include:

- Providing a deep understanding of the problem or problems by gathering information from people with different experiences
- Developing solutions with those who experience the issues, first hand
- Finding common ground
- Understanding the intended and unintended impacts of possible solutions or activity.

## What Methods Can I Use?

- Many methods are the same as for those when involving. The difference is in how they are used and what level of influence is offered to participants. Some examples of effective collaboration methods include:
  - Appreciative Inquiry
  - Deliberative Workshops
  - Roundtables
  - Citizen Research

# Delegate

This approach supports those involved to make any final decision about the way forward. They could also be involved in taking any actions resulting from this decision.

## Why Do This?

- To strengthen participatory processes
- To empower participants, including involvement in implementation.

## When to Delegate?

Delegation is about giving the power to decide, to participants. Legislative and budgetary constraints mean there are limited circumstances where delegation is possible. It is, therefore, particularly important to be clear from the outset, about the scope of any delegation, whilst also ensuring that participants are comfortable with the responsibility.

Some examples include:

- Empowering others to develop solutions and recommendations
- Developing support to implement the solutions and recommendations
- Strengthening decision-making
- Enabling a full understanding of the impact of a service or activity.

## What Methods Can I Use?

There are several methods to support delegation, with some examples including:

- Participatory Budgeting
- Citizens' Assemblies
- Citizens' Juries

# National Standards of Community Engagement

The National Standards for Community Engagement are good-practice principles designed to support and inform the process of community participation, and improve what happens as a result. They are used to support community engagement and user involvement in Scotland and have been widely accepted as key principles for effective practice. They provide detailed performance statements that everyone involved can use, to achieve the highest quality results and the greatest impact.

They are not designed to replace existing community engagement or participation frameworks. They are intended to act as a central benchmark and reference point for best practice.

For more information, including how we can know if we have met the standards, the VOiCE Scotland website has useful information as well as a downloadable version of the National Standards.

## What are the seven standards of community engagement?

- Inclusion - We will identify and involve the people and organisations that are affected by the focus of the engagement.
- Support - We will identify and overcome any barriers to participation.
- Planning - There is a clear purpose for the engagement, which is based on a shared understanding of community needs and ambitions.
- Working Together - We will work effectively together to achieve the aims of the engagement.
- Methods - We will use methods that are fit for purpose.
- Communication - We will communicate clearly and regularly with the people, organisations and communities affected by the engagement.
- Impact- We will assess the impact of the engagement and use what we have learned to improve our future community engagement



# Key Things to Think About Beforehand

## Key Questions to Ask

These are questions that should help you shape your participation process.



- Do you have a clear idea of why you are engaging and what you are trying to achieve? This is important from the start.
- What do you want to get out of the engagement? Some examples include:

- Identifying new ideas
- Identifying issues
- An increased understanding of the needs of service users
- Clarity on priorities for improvement
- Assessment of how services are currently being delivered
- Recommendations for delivery
- Clarity of preferences towards proposals
- Gaining an overview of perspectives/concerns

- Is what you are trying to achieve realistic and achievable?
- Do you have a plan? This should outline what activities will be carried out and when, who will participate, and what their roles will be. A timeline and budget will be important.
- What are your limitations? Do you have the skills and capacity, or do you need training?
- What do you already know? Is there evidence or data which could be helpful to you? The Shetland Partnership website is a good starting point for [Shetland-Wide Evidence](#) and [Data Deep Dives](#), and [Locality Profiles](#).



- Has there been similar work beforehand?
- Is there an awareness around the topic or issue?
- Should anyone else be involved? For example, other stakeholders, or people with additional skills or expertise. The local [Community Involvement and Development Officers](#) are a useful starting point.
- Consider your audience – understand the community’s demographics, needs and interests. Is the participation and engagement activity for the whole community, or is it targeted?



- Which [method/methods](#) are you using? Which would suit best?

- Timing and accessibility: schedule events at convenient times and accessible locations for the community. Consider things like public transport, locations, childcare, food and catering.

- How will you make people aware of the activity?

- Make sure you follow-up and share outcomes and next steps with the community after the engagement.



- Consider whether the process will involve the collection and / or storage of personal data. A Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) Screening of Full, may be required

- Consider whether this work is a Project, requiring Project Governance, such as a Project Board and Risk Assessment.

- Have you considered any barriers to engagement, and how to be inclusive? It is important to ensure all voices are heard, especially marginalised or underrepresented groups.

- Does your organisation have a Terms of Reference, or a constitution?

- Be transparent about the process, goals and limitations of the engagement.

# VOiCE – A resource to support development and planning of an engagement strategy and activities

This is a short summary of the VOiCE tool that can be used to design and deliver effective community engagement. The Scottish Government recommends the use of [VOiCE](#).



VOiCE is a planning and recording software, designed to assist individuals, organisations and partnerships to design and deliver effective community engagement. The system is useful in helping users to take a common approach to planning, monitoring and evaluating engagement activity. The VOiCE tool also helps users to learn lessons for future engagement activity.

VOiCE is designed in three sections:

- Plan
- Do
- Review

A series of logical steps based on these sections helps to create well-constructed and consistent engagement practice. VOiCE also provides a data bank for all the engagement activity that your organisation or partnership is involved in, helping you to analyse:

- What engagement is being (and has been) conducted
- What issues and needs it addresses
- Where it is happening
- Who is involved in it
- Who is not involved in it that might be
- What has or has not been effective.

VOiCE tool accounts for individuals and organisations are free for any organisations working or based in Scotland's communities.

More information regarding VOiCE accounts is on the [VOiCE webpage](#).

It is also recommended that users of VOiCE follow the National Standards for Community Engagement principles. Read our [short guide to the National Standards](#), or head directly to the [National Standards website](#) for more information.

# Developing a Participation Strategy

The following will help you develop a Participation Strategy and approach, for your planned work. This doesn't need to be a large or complex document; it just has to be sufficient to ensure that you have a clear purpose and process, with a robust plan to support delivery.



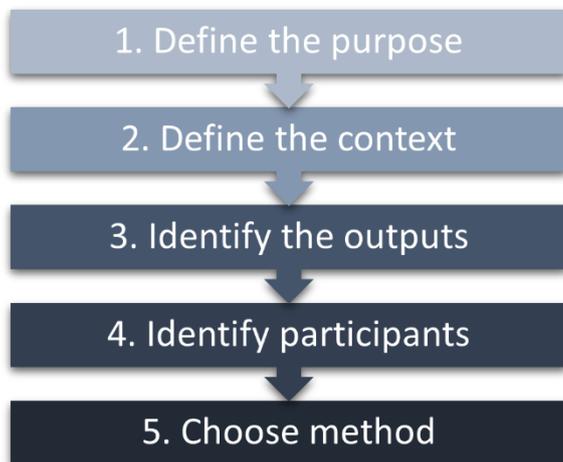
Underpinning everything is having a clear understanding of the high-level purpose behind the work:

- **Why?** – What is the reason behind this piece of work? What is the driver behind it?
- **What are the desired outcomes?** – What difference is being sought, what changes need to happen?

A strategy helps to keep participation activity focused and aligned to the purpose and desired outputs from the work being done. It is an effective way of identifying:

- Opportunities for participation
- Participants
- Timeframes for participation activity
- The best methods of participation.

## Planning Participation Activities



Participation can range from small-scale, to a much larger exercise with multiple strands and methods. Once the purpose is understood, the 5-step framework in Figure 1, can be used to take steps to think about the practical elements of carrying out participation activity. The 5 steps in the framework are as follows:

1. Define the purpose (Why?)
2. Define the context (and opportunity)
3. Identify the outputs (What?)
4. Identify participants (Who?)
5. Choose method (How?)

Figure 1: a 5-step framework for planning

## Define the purpose (Why?)

Understanding why participation is required and agreeing a clear purpose with those involved creates a solid base to build activity on.

Consideration should also be given to the stage of the decision-making process at which the participation is required.

These three questions can help to define the purpose of activity:

- What knowledge or understanding can be added by carrying out participation?
- What questions or problems are participants being invited to address?
- What can change as a result of any participation?

## Define the context (and opportunity)

When planning participation, it is important to understand the wider context:

- What has come before?
- What is the history behind this or similar work?
- What awareness is there around the topic or issue?
- What is practical in terms of budget, resources and time?



The following questions can help to understand the context:

- Is the time right in the decision-making process for participation?
- What are the opportunities for participants to influence the decision-making process(es)?
- Does this activity duplicate other activity, or come after a similar process that has involved similar participants?
- Is there sufficient resource to carry out any activity?

## Identify the outputs (What?)

Outputs refer to the type of information the participation will produce. What does the participation need to achieve?

Knowing what information you need will help with choosing the right method, choosing what questions to ask, and with identifying who needs to be involved.

Examples of some of the outputs that engagement activity can deliver include:

- New ideas
- Identification of issues
- An increased understanding of the needs of service users
- Clarity on priorities for improvement
- Feedback of how services are currently being delivered
- Recommendations
- Preferences towards proposals
- Gaining an overview of perspectives / concerns.



## Identify participants (Who?)

Deciding who to involve is a key part of planning.

Understanding the different roles that participants can have in a participation activity will help to identify who should be involved. These could be stakeholders, individuals, citizens or community representatives, for example.

Some useful questions are:

- Whose voice is needed to be heard to deliver what is needed?
- Why should people participate?
- What impact will the participants' involvement have? How can this be made clear when seeking participants?
- Will different participants be involved in different ways and at different stages of the process?
- Will the engagement activity be open to anyone wishing to participate, or does it need to be targeted in terms of reaching participants?
- Are there barriers to anyone being able to participate? For example, consider:

- Do participants need to have experience, awareness, knowledge or interest in an issue or topic?
- The timing and format of the activity.
- The technology and / or digital skills required to participate.
- Are there any language requirements?
- Do participants need to agree with a specific desired outcome, or is hearing from opposing points of view important to the defined purpose of the engagement activity?

## Choose method (How?)

There are a wide range of different methods of participation that can be used. Often it is beneficial to approach activity with an understanding that different methods will be needed.

More information on methods, and local case studies can be found following the links below.

- [Methods and Techniques](#)
- [Local Case Studies](#)



# Methods and Techniques

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# Surveys and Questionnaires

Surveys normally include a set of questions with a range of answers. They enable the collection of standardised, relatively structured data from a large number of people.

## Suitable for:

Questionnaires and surveys are a good way to collect information, opinions or data from other people. This can be for gathering facts, like ages or incomes, as well as people's opinions, ideas, attitudes, knowledge, and experiences. They are effective for reaching a wide range of participants.



## Type of engagement:



Consult

## How to do it:

- Identify your participants. This will depend on the reason for your engagement.
- Design the survey or questionnaire. This is a crucial part of this research. It's important to ensure that the questions will enable you to gather the data you need.

**Consideration should be given to the type of questions. Some commonly used types of questions are:**

- Yes/No questions
  - Category questions, for example ticking the box for the age group you are in
  - Choosing from a list of options
  - Agreeing or disagreeing with a statement
  - Rating scales
  - Open ended questions; although analysing these questions can take more time and effort, the detailed feedback they provide can be very useful.
- Ensure the survey includes an introduction covering: who is carrying out the survey, why it is being done, and how the results will be used.

As required under the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) a Privacy Notice must be included if personal data is being collected. Guidance on this can be found from the Information Commissioner's Office. It is also good to check your organisation's Data Protection Policy and seek advice.

Participants need to be able to understand the questions and be able to answer accordingly. It is a good idea to test the survey out with others before carrying it out to ensure it makes sense.

### Consider ethical issues:

- Take care with wording of questions so they are not perceived as being judgemental or insensitive.
- Make sure to be inclusive. Questionnaires can exclude people who cannot read or write and people who do not speak the language, and consideration needs to be given to people who may not be able to respond to online surveys, if that's the method to be used.
- Surveys are usually anonymous and a name or identifying feature is not usually necessary. If it is, there should be a good reason for doing so. Care must be taken to ensure that individuals or small groups of people are not identifiable when the findings are presented.

Once you are happy with your survey, you can set it live online or print copies to share, depending on what you have decided will work best. Decide how long you would like the survey to be open for, and how you will promote it and reach participants. Not everyone who sees or receives a survey will respond, so bear this in mind regarding the response rate.

Close the survey, unless you would like to extend it to encourage more responses. From here, you can analyse the results. If you are using software, it may be able to help sort the information and analyse the responses.

If there are open-ended questions, you will need to look at ways to analyse qualitative data.

★ Advantages	⚠ Challenges
<p>Data can be collected in a consistent format</p> <p>A wide range of people can be included</p> <p>Surveys can include a mix of open and closed questions to gather both comments and statistical information (qualitative and quantitative)</p> <p>Different formats can be used, such as online and paper copies</p> <p>Surveys are generally inexpensive, especially online</p> <p>Respondents can stay anonymous which might lead to more honest feedback.</p>	<p>Not everyone will complete a survey, the response rate may be low</p> <p>Survey fatigue - respondents may lose interest if the survey is too long, or if they have received many surveys around the same time</p> <p>Misunderstood questions - it is important that surveys are designed well, communicated clearly and analysed carefully</p> <p>Large volumes of responses, particularly for open-ended questions, can be time consuming and require specific skills.</p>

## Further information:

There are some useful guides on developing effective questionnaires available online, for example, this [step-by-step guide](#) produced by South Lakeland District Council and this [concise booklet](#), produced by East Suffolk Council.

## Case study:

Access to Free Period Products Consultation – Ensuring that everyone who may need to access period products can obtain them free of charge as and when they are required

(see online at: <https://www.shetlandpartnership.org/examples-community-participation/access-free-period-products-consultation>)

# Newsletters

Newsletters are a way to provide information to people, either electronically or as a printout.

## Suitable for:

Newsletters are suitable for sharing information with a broad audience. They work well if they are interesting, easy to read, and well-designed. You can also include a story in an existing newsletter.



## Type of engagement:



Inform

## How to do it:

- Newsletters will vary in length but should be designed with the target audience in mind. Usually the target audience would include:

- Users of a service
- The community
- Those likely to be impacted by an issue, strategy, policy or decision
- People with an interest in an issue.
- Rating scales

- Newsletters should be accessible and written in Plain English. Making a document accessible includes, amongst other things, choosing fonts that are easily readable, and using colours that have suitable contrast against the background colour. If the newsletter will be made available online, think about ensuring it is compatible with online accessibility tools (such as screen readers).

- Think about the following:

- Who will decide what goes in the newsletter?
- Who will design it?
- How often will you produce it?

- The focus should be on presenting relevant and interesting information in a concise and visually appealing way. Contact details and/or website details should be included so that follow-up questions can be asked by those reading the newsletter.
- Consider whether the newsletter will be available electronically, via paper copies, or both.
- Platforms for electronic newsletters can be found by looking through an online search engine. If applicable, it's a good idea to check with your organisation's Data Protection Officer and ICT team to determine which platform may be suitable.

- Consider GDPR requirements when looking at content, and distribution lists. More information can be found here: [UK GDPR guidance and resources | ICO](#) and here: [Electronic mail marketing | ICO](#).
- Plan the content. If you are to receive articles for it, decide a deadline when they must reach you by.
- Distribution - think about where and how newsletters will be made available. This will determine who reads it.

★ Advantages	⚠ Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Newsletters are useful for letting people know what work is being done around a particular issue, and why the work is being done</li> <li>• Newsletters are a widespread and widely understood form of communication.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written materials can be challenging for people with lower literacy levels, those who speak languages other than English, or individuals with learning difficulties, disabilities, or visual impairments. It's important to think about how to address these barriers.</li> <li>• Materials should be high quality otherwise their credibility is reduced.</li> <li>• Newsletters can be difficult to update – information can date quickly, for example.</li> </ul>

### Further information:

[Plain English Campaign](#)

### Case study:

Bressay Newsletter – Celebrating Bressay and Encouraging Community Engagement

(see online at: <https://www.shetlandpartnership.org/examples-community-participation/bressay-newsletter>)

# Conferences

A formal meeting of people with a shared interest, where people can discuss issues and ideas relating to a specific topic.

## Suitable for:

Conferences are suitable for large groups and face-to-face meetings. They are designed to achieve various goals, such as providing a better understanding of a topic, clarifying preferences for proposals, reviewing current service delivery, and gathering suggestions for improvement.



## Type of engagement:



## How to do it:

- Conferences usually take place over a full day or a half-day.
- A common format is to have sessions with all participants, as well as smaller workshops.
- Spread experts across different groups so everyone gets a chance to engage with them. For smaller group work and workshops, it is helpful to have facilitators for each group.
- For larger conferences with multiple topics, allow participants to sign up for specific workshops or break-out groups ahead of the event.
- Ensure the location is accessible to all, and that everyone can join in to any discussions or questions.
- Provide tools like accessible communication formats, audio/visual aids, and varied engagement methods.
- Adapt the format to the audience, such as using shorter presentations and more discussions.
- Schedule the event at a time suitable for attendees.

★ Advantages	⚠ Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allows participants to hear from a variety of people</li> <li>• Good for knowledge sharing and networking</li> <li>• Strengthens relationships between attendees</li> <li>• Listening to speakers and participating in discussions can inspire new ideas and motivate attendees to implement changes</li> <li>• Presenting at a conference can increase visibility for some organisations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It may be expensive to organise, depending on venue and logistics</li> <li>• Participants can lose focus if a presentation is too long</li> <li>• There may be unexpected questions which come up</li> <li>• Bear in mind that technology can fail, and so have a plan if the slides or audio do not work</li> <li>• There may be unforeseen issues, such as a last-minute speaker cancellation or weather disruption.</li> </ul>

### Further information:

Online search engines should show different organisations' guidance on carrying out a conference which may be useful to look at.

### Case study:

Community Justice Conference – Shetland Partnership

(see online at: <https://www.shetlandpartnership.org/examples-community-participation/community-justice-conference>)

# Roadshows

Roadshows provide a space for discussion with communities around a topic, issue, or project, and usually take place in multiple locations. The goal is to reach diverse audiences, build relationships, and generate interest or participation. Usually interactive, with visually appealing displays, a roadshow can be a good way for people to learn and reflect on what a community's thoughts and feelings are.

## Suitable for:

Roadshows are suitable for a variety of individuals, organisations, and industries that aim to engage with their audiences in multiple locations, such as a public awareness campaigns.



## Type of engagement:



## How to do it:

- Think about where you are going to take your roadshow.
- Beforehand, consider the following:

- Venues
- Cost considerations
- The time for staff or volunteers to be at the event
- What you are going to include
- Promotion – how will people know why they should attend?
- Accessibility, including time of day, work and childcare and transport links. At the venue itself, are there hearing loop systems, is the space accessible to wheelchairs, for example?
- Whether you will have refreshments.

- Roadshows often include posters, leaflets, and videos.
- Depending on the venue size and the number of stands or stations, consider the best flow or order to best present the information and stimulate discussion.
- As they are drop-in events, attendance may vary throughout the day.

- It can be useful to have a space for participants to sit and chat about things they've maybe looked at or discussed at the stands or stations.
- People should be on hand at each station or stand. If consulting and gathering feedback, having a quick and easy to complete opinion poll or survey at the exit can help to gather this.
- Prepare take-away materials, ensure enough copies, and provide clear signposting to more information.

★ Advantages	⚠ Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roadshows allow direct engagement with face-to-face interaction</li> <li>• They are brought to local communities, meaning that they can be more accessible and reach wider audiences</li> <li>• Immediate feedback is available</li> <li>• With various sources of information, and activities, roadshows can make information more engaging.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They can be expensive due to hiring venues and transport</li> <li>• Roadshows can take a lot of time to prepare and deliver</li> <li>• The turnout of roadshows can vary.</li> </ul>

### Further information:

Online search engines should show different organisations' guidance on carrying out a conference which may be useful to look at.

### Case study:

Employability Roadshow – Community Roadshow Offering Employment Support

(see online at: <https://www.shetlandpartnership.org/examples-community-participation/employability-roadshow>)

# Workshops

Workshops allow people to share ideas and have discussions in smaller groups in a larger group setting.

Workshops can use different presentation formats, facilitation styles, and group discussions, creating a space for collaborative planning and problem-solving.

## Suitable for:

Workshops are suitable for exploring issues, sharing information, identifying concerns, setting goals, and testing ideas.

## Type of engagement:



Collaborate | Consult | Involve



## How to do it:

- Define the purpose and goals of the event.
- Assign a host and table facilitators to guide discussions, keep the workshop on schedule, and ensure that all participants have an opportunity to contribute.
- Think about how to arrange the venue and how to set up tables. Do you need to organise food and refreshments? Are there dietary requirements? Is the venue accessible?
- Consider the questions to be asked, and brief hosts and facilitators. Ensure discussions are recorded, whether through notetaking or a feedback sheet.
- Ensure participants know what is expected of them.
- Create a clear agenda.
- Share relevant information and include activities to deepen understanding or explore topics.
- Conclude by sharing group findings, with a spokesperson or facilitator presenting.
- Plan how to share workshop outcomes and their impact on decisions.

## ★ Advantages

- Workshops bring people together to discuss complex issues and find creative solutions, with smaller groups allowing quieter voices to be heard.
- Workshops participants consider diverse opinions, leading to more informed contributions.
- Sharing key points from group discussions helps everyone stay informed and understand the direction of the conversation.
- Often workshops include participants moving around the room, which can ensure people remain engaged.

## ⚠ Challenges

- Each table or breakout room needs experienced facilitators to keep discussions on track.
- Some participants might take over the conversation, making it harder for others to share their ideas and perspectives. Facilitators should clearly state ground rules and ensure everyone has the opportunity to participate.
- Appointed spokespeople might not accurately reflect their group's ideas when sharing the results of small group discussions. Having a separate sheet for feedback by the whole group could help here.

## Further information:

More information on carrying out a workshop will be available via a search engine which may be useful to look at.

## Case study:

Islands with Small Populations Workshop – An event to bring together Island Representatives to review the Islands' Locality Plan

(see online at: <https://www.shetlandpartnership.org/examples-community-participation/islands-small-populations-review-workshop>)

# Roundtables

A roundtable brings together a small group of people for a discussion, where everybody has an equal right to participate.

They are similar to focus groups, but are slightly more informal, and are designed for collaborative discussion, idea sharing or problem solving.

## Suitable for:

Roundtables are good for bringing people together to talk about important topics and solve problems. They work well when different people with different ideas come together to share their thoughts and work as a team. Whether it is to come up with new ideas, agree on a plan, or give feedback, roundtables help everyone have a say and learn from each other.



## Type of engagement:



Consult



| Involve

## How to do it:

- Set clear goals: are you exploring ideas or gathering feedback?
- Think about participants – who is invited, do they have relevant expertise or experience? Will perspectives be diverse?
- Consider the venue and layout. Consider catering, accessibility requirements and ease of access by transport.
- Prepare any necessary materials like leaflets or a whiteboard.
- Have a facilitator to welcome participants and explain the discussion's purpose.
- Ask open ended questions to get everyone involved and encourage different viewpoints.
- Summarise key points at the end.
- Thank everyone for their contributions and explain next steps.

## ★ Advantages

- Roundtables promote equal participation with open discussions
- Smaller settings allow for deeper conversations on specific topics
- They help build connections between attendees
- Participants hear diverse viewpoints, gaining a better understanding of complex issues
- They are flexible, and can be adapted to suit different group sizes, topics and objectives.

## ⚠ Challenges

- Roundtables promote equal participation with open discussions
- Smaller settings allow for deeper conversations on specific topics
- They help build connections between attendees
- Participants hear diverse viewpoints, gaining a better understanding of complex issues
- They are flexible, and can be adapted to suit different group sizes, topics and objectives.

## Further information:

More information on carrying out a roundtable will be available via a search engine which may be useful to look at.

## Case study:

Locality Profile Meetings – Community Feedback on Locality Profiles

(see online at: <https://www.shetlandpartnership.org/examples-community-participation/locality-profile-meetings>)

# Websites/Webpages

A website is a collection of pages on the internet where you can learn about various topics, watch videos, or chat with others.

## Suitable for:

Websites or webpages are useful for communities and organisations because they enable people to share ideas, stay informed about events, and connect with each other. People can use websites to work together, stay updated, and support each other in different ways.

## Type of engagement:



Inform



## How to do it:

- If creating a website, choose a website builder that works for you. An online search engine or expert in the area will be able to provide guidance.
- If creating a website, choose a website name that is easy to remember and relevant to what you are doing.
- Make the website or webpage(s) easy to use, with clear menus and links. Keep it simple and organised.
- Add pictures, videos, and graphics to make the website interesting and explain your message.
- Use simple language that's easy to read and understand.
- Choose fonts that are easy to read and make sure the text stands out from the background.
- Consider people who use tools, like screen readers, to help them read.
- If there's a lot of information, give a summary with links to more details on separate pages.
- Update the website often to keep it fresh and show people it is still active.
- Add new content, like news or small updates, to keep the website interesting.
- Guide people to the website or webpage by promoting it. This can be done in several ways, such as using social media or newsletters.

## ★ Advantages

- A website can be visited by anyone, anywhere, making it easy to connect with many people
- People can comment, share ideas, and talk to each other, making it fun to join in
- Websites provide a central place for people to find important updates, resources, and news, keeping them informed
- You can use pictures, videos, and graphics to make the content more engaging and easier to understand
- Websites can be designed for all types of users, including those with disabilities, making sure everyone with internet access can participate
- Websites are always available, so people can visit them anytime they want
- Compared to physical events or printed materials, websites are more affordable and easier to update
- You can easily add new content, ensuring the website stays current and interesting for visitors
- Websites can bring people together, help build a sense of belonging, and encourage collaboration on projects or causes.

## ⚠ Challenges

- Websites can have problems, like broken links or being slow, making them hard to use
- It is important to keep the website fresh with new information, but that can be time-consuming
- Accessibility: Making sure the website works for everyone, including people with disabilities, can be a complex task. There is some information on the requirements here: [Understanding accessibility requirements for public sector bodies - GOV.UK](#)
- Creating a website that looks good and is easy to use for everyone can be tricky
- Websites can be hacked, which might cause problems or steal personal information
- Not all websites look or work well on phones or tablets, which can limit who can access them
- If there is too much information on a website, it can be confusing and hard to find things
- Getting people to visit and use the website can be hard without good content or promotion.

## Further information:

[Plain English Campaign](#)

[Understanding accessibility requirements for public sector bodies - GOV.UK](#)

## Case study:

Anchor Webpages – Helping families under pressure find out where to seek support

(see online at: <https://www.shetlandpartnership.org/examples-community-participation/anchor-website>)

# Information Campaigns

An information campaign is when people or organisations share important information to help others understand something or take action.

The goal is to spread knowledge on a specific topic, like health or safety, so people can make informed decisions. These campaigns use various methods, like posters, websites, social media, and videos, to reach a wide audience.

## Suitable for:

An information campaign is useful when you need to share important information with lots of people. It helps raise awareness, change behaviour, or teach people about something important, like safety tips or how to join an event. It is useful for encouraging people to take action, get involved, or learn more about a topic. Using things like social media, posters, and websites can help spread the message to a large audience.



## Type of engagement:



Inform

## How to do it:

- Decide the message or information you want to share.
- Keep your message simple so everyone can understand it.
- Use different tools and share your message through posters, social media, videos, or websites.
- Consider working with people who have communications expertise.
- If using social media, think about a schedule of posts and which platforms are best to use. Analytics can be useful to measure the success of the campaign.
- Consider where best to distribute posters throughout the community and whether there are colleagues or acquaintances that can help to spread the word.
- Plan when to share your message so people are paying attention.
- Encourage action – ask people to do something such as joining an event or helping with a cause.
- Keep sharing new information to keep people interested and involved.
- Monitor the impact of the campaign through information such as website traffic, social media engagement, surveys, event attendance or with surveys, for example.

## ★ Advantages

- Information campaigns can be designed to reach a wide audience
- They use different tools, like social media, videos, or posters, to reach all kinds of audiences
- Campaigns help people understand issues and why they matter
- They share reliable and accurate information you can trust
- They encourage people to make better choices or take action on important topics
- Seeing the same message multiple times can change how people think or behave over time
- You can track how well a campaign is working by looking at things like social media likes, shares, or surveys
- When one person shares the message, it can inspire others to share it too, helping it spread further.

## ⚠ Challenges

- It can be difficult to identify exactly who needs to hear the message and how to reach them
- The message might get lost if the audience is overwhelmed with too much information
- Smaller campaigns might not have enough money to make high-quality content or reach a lot of people
- Complicated topics can confuse people, especially if the message is not clear or easy to relate to
- Some people might choose to ignore the message completely
- On social media, fewer people might see the campaign unless money is spent on adverts
- It can be hard to know if the campaign really changed people's behaviour or just made them aware of the issue
- Changing someone's opinion or habits can take a long time, so it might not show results right away.

## Further information:

More information on carrying out an Information Campaign will be available via a search engine which may be useful to look at.

## Case study:

We Shine Brighter Together – A communications campaign linked to the cost of living crisis

(see online at: <https://www.shetlandpartnership.org/examples-community-participation/shine-brighter-together>)

# Citizens' Juries, Citizens' Panels and Citizens' Assemblies

## Distinctions between Citizens' Juries, Panels, and Assemblies

Citizen's Juries, Panels and Assemblies are all methods of public participation designed to involve everyday people in decision-making, but they differ in structure, purpose and scale. Here is a breakdown of their key differences, followed by information on each method.

Feature	Citizens' Jury	Citizens' Panel	Citizens' Assembly
<b>Size</b>	Small (12-25)	Medium (20-100)	Large (50-200)
<b>Purpose</b>	In-depth decision on a specific issue	Ongoing feedback on various topics	Addressing major, complex issues
<b>Duration</b>	Short-term (days or weeks)	Long-term (regular input)	Medium to long-term (weeks/months)
<b>Formality</b>	High formal deliberation	Less format, flexible input	Formal and structured deliberation
<b>Impact</b>	Focused recommendations	General advice	Significant policy recommendations

## Citizens' Jury

A Citizens' Jury is a form of participatory research where a small, diverse group (usually 12-25 people) evaluates evidence and provides recommendations on specific issues.

The group is chosen to represent a community. They hear from experts, discuss different perspectives, and deliberate. After careful consideration they provide recommendations or a decision. It is a way to involve everyday people in making informed contributions to policies or solutions.

### Suitable for:

Citizens' Juries are useful when an issue is complicated, where knowledge is contested and there may be important ethical and social repercussions. A Citizens' Jury can be used on different policy issues and involves people in developing their knowledge of a policy area, asking questions of expert witnesses, collective group discussions and deliberations to reach a final decision.

They are often designed to deliver on things such as:

- Providing a specific verdict or decision
- Recommendations for delivery
- Clarity on priorities for improvement
- Clarity of preferences towards proposals.



## Type of engagement:



Delegate | Involve

## How to do it:

- A Citizens' Jury typically lasts between 2 to 4 days, depending on the topic. It is important to choose suitable venues and make sure there is enough time for everyone.
- Identify who is affected by your topic and select a representative group of about 12 to 25 people. Let them know what will be expected.
- Prepare a key question related to the issue or present a series of options for the Jury to think about.
- Prepare information packs for the participants and consider what they need to attend, like covering their expenses and providing support.
- Plan surveys for before and after the event to see how opinions change.
- Recruit and prepare expert witnesses.
- Hire independent moderators to help with the discussions.
- On the first day, explain the rules and start the discussion.
- Throughout the event, bring in experts to give detailed information. The Jury can ask them questions and discuss the issues.
- At the end of the discussions, reach a consensus on recommendations.
- Finally, compile a report and, if appropriate, arrange a presentation for the commissioning body.

## ★ Advantages

- It helps get people involved who do not usually have a say in decisions
- It includes different types of people from the community
- It helps manage different opinions and makes the decision-making process transparent
- Being seen as fair and unbiased makes people trust the process more
- It gives people a chance to really understand the issues
- Regular community members get to take part, ensuring decisions reflect everyone's needs.

## ⚠ Challenges

- Jury members need to reflect the community
- A Citizens' Jury requires choosing jurors and experts and planning the schedule
- Independent moderators are required, which may be costly
- Everyone must understand the process and how the results will be used; this takes time to plan and organise
- The Jury may need up to 4 days to come to a decision / recommendations
- The commissioning body must follow the recommendations or explain why not
- The process can be expensive.

## Further information:

[What is a Citizens' Jury? | Inclusive research | Scottish Learning Disabilities Observatory](#)

## Case study:

Citizen's Jury on Shared Decision Making (external, Health Improvement Scotland)

(see online at: <https://www.hisengage.scot/informing-policy/citizens-jury/>)

# Citizens' Panel

A Citizens' Panel is a large group of people that represent the community's diversity.

They are regularly engaged to share their opinions and preferences. Statutory agencies typically use these panels to understand what the community cares about and to get feedback on specific topics. Citizens' Panels can range in size from a few hundred to several thousand people.

## Suitable for:

Citizens' Panels are particularly useful for ongoing consultation processes, allowing authorities to track public opinion over time. They are typically used to gather a wide range of public opinions and preferences on various issues.



## Type of engagement:



Consult | Involve

## How to do it:

- Citizens' Panels usually involve a rolling programme of research and consultation. It is therefore important to be clear, when recruiting members, what involvement will include and how frequently panel members will be asked to participate.
- Clearly outline the goals of the panel, such as to gather public opinions on specific issues or consulting on local priorities.
- To recruit participants: use random sampling from the electoral roll or postcode address file to recruit a diverse and representative group of citizens. Ensure that socially excluded and hard-to-reach groups are included. Use various communication channels like digital adverts, direct emails, and local media to reach out.
- Inform participants about their role and what to expect.
- A Citizens' Panel is not a standalone engagement method, it will typically involve engagement through surveys and other methods. Regularly engage the Panel through surveys, focus groups, and workshops to gather detailed feedback on policy options and other issues.
- Analyse the collected data and provide feedback to participants and the wider community. This can be done through newsletters, local media, or online platforms.
- Keep the Panel database up-to-date and periodically renew the Panel to ensure it remains representative of the population.

## ★ Advantages

- Citizens' Panels helps gather a wide range of public opinions and preferences on various issues
- They provide detailed feedback on policy options, helping to shape decisions that reflect community needs
- They engage a diverse group of citizens, ensuring that different voices are heard
- They can be used for regular surveys and in-depth research, such as focus groups and workshops
- They can help to track local opinions over time.

## ⚠ Challenges

- Citizens' Panels require a lot of staff time to set up, and to maintain
- It can be difficult to be truly representative of the community
- Keeping participants consistently engaged over time can be challenging
- Some issues may be too complex for Citizen Panel members to fully understand processes, without more background information and support.

### Further information:

[Citizens' Panel | Involve](#)

### Case study:

Citizens' Panel to bring together people across Scotland to inform and influence key decisions about health and social care policy and services (Healthcare Improvement Scotland - external).

(see online at: <https://www.hisengage.scot/informing-policy/citizens-panel/>)

# Citizens' Assembly

A Citizens' Assembly is a group of people randomly selected to represent the demographics of the local community.

They come together to discuss important public issues and make recommendations. Assembly members learn about the topic from experts, deliberate on different viewpoints, and work towards a consensus. This process ensures that decisions reflect the diverse perspectives and needs of the community. Typically, there are 50 to 200 participants. Citizens' Assemblies are a democratic method used worldwide to empower citizens and solve problems through deliberation and recommendations.

## Suitable for:

Citizens' Assemblies are used to address complex public issues. They discuss topics like constitutional reform, climate change, social policies, and community planning. They help ensure decisions reflect the community's needs and values through informed deliberation and consensus-building.



## Type of engagement:



[Consult](#) | [Involve](#) | [Collaborate](#)

## How to do it:

- Citizens' Assemblies usually takes place over several days, either consecutively or over weeks/months. It is important to be clear what the time commitment will be for participants.
- Beforehand, decide whether you want to run a Citizens' Assembly. A successful Citizens' Assembly depends on the time and resources you have, the political context, and the problem you are trying to solve.
- Consider the assembly's size, length, and scope, as these affect cost and resource needs. The amount of time it takes to design and deliver an Assembly should last at least 5 months. If resources are limited, consider smaller processes like Citizens' Juries.
- Political support, ideally from Councillors, is important.
- Ensure the problem lacks easy answers and choose a clear, focused question. Test it with residents and politicians.
- Select evidence and witnesses, often with help from an independent advisory group. Include lived experiences and expert insights, providing balanced information.
- Recruit a diverse group reflecting the wider public in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, etc. Randomly select individuals, send invitations, confirm participation, and provide support for full engagement.

- Success on the day depends on good design and preparation leading up to the assembly. Helpful guides with standards, tools, and methods are available under 'further information'. An Assembly includes:

- A learning stage - participants should think critically about the information they hear and have opportunities to ask questions.
- A deliberation stage – good facilitation is important
- A final process of decision-making – this could involve voting, ballots, or reaching a consensus without voting.

After a Citizens' Assembly concludes, the recommendations are presented to policymakers or the commissioning body. These recommendations are compiled into a report that outlines the Assembly's findings and suggested actions. Policymakers review the recommendations and provide a formal response, indicating which suggestions will be implemented and why. The recommendations and the response are shared with the public to ensure transparency. If accepted, the recommendations are integrated into policy decisions and actions, ensuring the Assembly's work has a tangible impact on public policy.

★ Advantages	⚠ Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diverse representation - they include people from all parts of the community, making sure different viewpoints are considered in decisions</li> <li>• Participants learn from experts and deliberate on issues, leading to well-informed recommendations</li> <li>• By involving ordinary citizens, these assemblies can increase public trust in the decision-making process</li> <li>• The diverse viewpoints and collaborative nature often lead to creative and effective solutions to complex problems</li> <li>• Recommendations, from a representative group of citizens, can carry significant weight with policymakers and the public.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring the assembly is truly representative of the community can be difficult; often only a small percentage of those invited agree to participate, and they might not represent everyone equally</li> <li>• Keeping people interested and involved over time can be challenging; you might need to communicate regularly and offer incentives</li> <li>• Setting up and running an Assembly takes a lot of time, effort, and money</li> <li>• Some topics are very complicated, and participants might need a lot of background information to understand them fully</li> <li>• Turning the Assembly's suggestions into real actions can be difficult, especially if there are different opinions</li> <li>• There's a risk that certain groups might dominate the discussion or that outside factors could influence the process.</li> </ul>

## Further information:

How to run a citizens' assembly – a handbook for local authorities is available to download here: [The Innovation in Democracy Programme \(liDP\) - GOV.UK](#)

## Case study:

Bristol's Citizens' Assembly – How do we recover from COVID-19 and create a better future for all in Bristol? (Involve UK, Sortition Foundation and Bristol City Council - external)

(see online at: <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/ask/find-consultation-engagement/consultation-engagement?id=16>)

# Focus Groups

A Focus Group is a small group of people who get together to talk about a specific topic.

A moderator leads the discussion, asking questions and encourages everyone to share their thoughts and opinions. This helps researchers understand what people think and feel about the topic.

## Suitable for:

A Focus Group is useful when you need to explore complex issues, understand social dynamics, or gather diverse viewpoints. They can be useful for creating new ideas, understanding why people think or act a certain way, and allowing participants to discuss and build on each other's ideas. They are useful when detailed feedback is needed.



## Type of engagement:



Consult



| Involve

## How to do it:

- Develop questions to guide a semi-structured conversation.
- Choose a comfortable venue.
- Ensure accessibility by providing equal communication opportunities for everyone, including language interpreters and accommodations for those with speech or hearing impairments.
- Inform participants what is expected of them and what they can expect from the facilitator (either verbally, or through a written information document).
- Make sure all participants give informed written consent.
- Ensure all participants agree on how the data will be recorded (e.g., notetaking, audio or video recording) and include agreement in signed consent.
- An ice breaker can be useful.
- Allow enough time for discussion of each question.
- Summarise the feedback for each question before moving on to confirm you have understood participants correctly, as well as at the end of the session.
- Provide opportunities for any other comments for those who may not feel comfortable speaking in front of everyone.

★ Advantages	⚠ Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus Groups allow for thorough conversations and detailed information</li> <li>• They allow ideas to be explored more than surveys</li> <li>• They allow the inclusion of different perspectives</li> <li>• Group discussions can generate new ideas that participants might not come up with individually.</li> <li>• They are flexible, you can change the questions to suit</li> <li>• They allow for immediate feedback and follow up questions can be asked if needed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organising focus groups and analysing results can take a lot of time</li> <li>• Opinions of a small group may not accurately represent the larger population</li> <li>• Some participants may dominate the discussion or influence others</li> <li>• Participants might not feel comfortable sharing honest opinions, especially on sensitive topics</li> <li>• Coordinating focus groups, across different locations or demographics can be complex.</li> </ul>

### Further information:

More information on carrying out Focus Groups will be available via a search engine which may be useful to look at.

### Case study:

Focus Groups with People Representing Protected Characteristics in Shetland

(see online at: <https://www.shetlandpartnership.org/examples-community-participation/protected-characteristics-focus-groups>)

# Conversation Cafes

A Conversation Café is a relaxed and informal setting where participants can discuss various topics and identify key priorities.

They create a welcoming space for people to share their experiences and views, ensuring everyone feels equal and heard. Typically, they involve up to 10 people plus a host and can be one-off sessions or a series. The groups can vary depending on the topic, with a facilitator guiding the discussion to help everyone contribute and build on each other's ideas.

## Suitable for:

A Conversation Café is a way to bring people together to talk and share ideas. It is useful for building community, coming up with new ideas, solving conflicts, learning, and making changes in organisations. Additionally, Conversation Cafés can act as platforms for debunking myths and dispelling shame and stigma that may surround many experiences. They provide a space for connection, tackle isolation, and can make people feel valued.



## Type of engagement:



Consult



| Involve

## How to do it:

The [conversationcafe.org](https://www.conversationcafe.org) organisation describe six principles for good conversation:

1. **Open-mindedness** - Listen to and respect all points of view.
2. **Acceptance** – Suspend judgment as best you can.
3. **Curiosity** – Seek to understand rather than persuade.
4. **Discovery** – Question assumptions, look for new insights.
5. **Sincerity** – Speak what has personal heart and meaning.
6. **Brevity** – Go for honesty and depth but don't go on and on.

- Find a welcoming and accessible venue. Set a theme or topic for discussion and prepare materials like Conversation Café agreements and prompts.
- Ensure the venue is comfortable with small group tables, refreshments, and name badges to encourage participation.
- Promote the event to attract participants.

- Welcome participants, introduce the theme, and explain the Conversation Café principles to create a respectful environment. Conversation Cafes typically last 1-2 hours with a host or facilitator leading the session.
- Invite everyone to share their thoughts and listen to others. Ensure everyone has a chance to speak and remind them to keep their contributions brief.
- Guide the conversation, keep it on track, and ensure any agreements are followed.
- Before closing, summarise key points discussed and thank participants. Ask for feedback and suggestions for future topics.
- Share a summary of the discussion with participants and plan future Conversation Cafés based on their feedback.

★ Advantages	⚠ Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conversation Cafes provide a respectful and non-judgmental environment where everyone gets a chance to speak and share their thoughts</li> <li>• They can help people connect, build relationships, and understand each other through empathy</li> <li>• They bring different perspectives together for richer discussions and innovative solutions</li> <li>• They can make participants feel valued and heard</li> <li>• They are flexible and can be used in various settings and for different topics.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some participants may dominate the conversation, while others may feel hesitant to speak up</li> <li>• Conversations can sometimes stray from the main topic</li> <li>• The success depends a lot on how well the facilitator manages the discussion</li> <li>• Different opinions can lead to conflicts that need careful handling</li> <li>• Keeping the discussion within the set time can be tough</li> <li>• Creating a welcoming space can be challenging in some settings, and capturing and acting on the insights from the session can be difficult.</li> </ul>

### Further information:

Conversation Café: [conversationcafe.org](http://conversationcafe.org)

Conversation Café toolkit – in support of Scotland’s Women’s health: [Conversation Cafe toolkit - in support of Scotland's Women's health - Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland](#)

# Participatory Budgeting

Participatory budgeting (often shortened as PB) is a way for people to directly vote on how local money should be spent.

It lets the public decide on budgets and investments, whether it is for small projects or big organisational plans. The number of people involved can vary, but usually includes those who use the service, are interested in the issue, or are most affected by the decisions.

## Suitable for:

PB can be useful for making decisions because it gives power to the participants. It is used to make specific choices, understand what people prefer, and come up with new ideas. This method ensures that the voices of those directly impacted are heard, leading to fairer and more inclusive outcomes.



## Type of engagement:



Consult



Involve



Delegate

## How to do it:

Participatory Budgeting (PB) can be done in many different ways, depending on what you want to achieve. But no matter how it is done, there are three main steps:

- **Ideas Step** - People come up with ideas on how to use the budget or resources
- **Voting Step** - Participants vote on which ideas they like best
- **Results Step** - The ideas with the most votes get funded or put into action.

Because PB can be done in so many ways, you can find lots of helpful resources on the [PB Scotland website](#).

## ★ Advantages

- It gives people a direct say on how public funds are spent, empowering communities to make decisions that affect their lives
- PB makes the budgeting process more transparent, as participants can see how decisions are made and where the money goes
- It involves a diverse group of people, ensuring that different voices and perspectives are heard, especially those who are most affected by the decisions
- By involving the community, PB can lead to more informed and relevant decisions that better meet the needs of the people
- It brings people together, helping them feel like part of a community; everyone gets involved in talking about and deciding on important matters
- PB can lead to creative and innovative solutions, as participants bring new ideas and perspectives to the table.

## ⚠ Challenges

- It will cost to organise and run the process
- The success of PB often depends on the support of political leaders; without their backing it can be difficult to implement the decisions made by participants
- Getting a wide range of people involved can be tough; it needs good outreach and engagement to make sure everyone who should be involved gets a chance to participate
- PB can be tricky because it involves many people and needs good coordination and openness, making it hard to manage
- Keeping PB going for a long time can be tough, especially if political priorities change.

## Further information:

PB Scotland Resource Hub: [PB Resource Hub — PB Scotland](#)

[Participatory budgeting | SCDC - We believe communities matter](#)

## Case study:

Shetland Islands Council examples of Participatory Budgeting

(see online at: <https://www.shetland.gov.uk/participatory-budgeting>)

# User Panels

A User Panel is a group that regularly meets to provide feedback on a service or product, helping to identify problems and suggest improvements.

It allows organisations to hear directly from users and consider their needs and preferences.

## Suitable for:

A User Panel is useful when you want to hear from underrepresented voices create a two-way dialogue between service providers and users, test new ideas, and identify problems early. This helps organisations understand the needs and preferences of their users and make improvement based on their feedback.



## Type of engagement:



## How to do it:

- Identify your Panel. User Panels are usually workshops with both service users and service providers.
- Recruit participants by using various methods such as social media, email invitations, or partnering with relevant organisations. Ensure participants fit the criteria.
- It is important that service providers are committed; if not, a different method should be looked at.
- Make sure participants know the time commitment and purpose of each meeting.
- Clearly state the group's goals when recruiting participants.
- Schedule regular meetings and explain their purpose.
- Keep participants engaged by offering incentives and making the process enjoyable.
- User Panels should not be the only way to get feedback, as they might not represent everyone and their results are not statistical.
- Collect feedback, listen to their ideas and use them to improve.
- Changing the Panel members over time can keep things fresh and prevent stagnation.

## ★ Advantages

- Getting direct feedback from people who have firsthand experience with the topic
- User Panels can quickly show what is working and what is not
- If done right, they allow for open communication and teamwork
- They are a fast and cheap way to gather feedback and work well with other methods.

## ⚠ Challenges

- To ensure diversity and represent everyone's experiences, a wide range of people need to be recruited
- Since the Panel is made up of current service users, it does not include those who haven't used the service yet
- Some Panel members might have health issues that make it hard for them to participate regularly
- Organisers should be flexible and offer different ways to contribute, such as through email and social media
- User panels should not be the only way to get feedback. Other methods should be used too.

## Further information:

More information on carrying out User Panels will be available via a search engine which may be useful to look at.

# Ongoing Dialogue and Participation

These methods involve proactive and personal approaches to connect with community members. They are designed to foster strong relationships, gather feedback, and encourage participation. They tend to include:

- Personal interaction, engaging with residents face to face to build trust
- Accessibility, making it easy for community members to participate or share their views
- Inclusivity, ensuring that all voices can be heard, especially those who might not attend larger, formal events.

Examples include door to door visits, community pop-in events, street surveys, community fairs, local walkabouts, and mobile information booths.

## Suitable for:

Maintaining regular, ongoing communication with community members and keeping them informed about community developments. They are also useful when continuous improvement is required as feedback can be gathered to continue improving community services and programmes. They can also be useful for introducing programmes, promoting events, gathering feedback, building relationships and addressing issues.



## Type of engagement:



[Consult](#) | [Involve](#) | [Inform](#)

## How to do it:

- Plan and prepare by identifying the goals of your engagement – are you gathering feedback, promoting an event or services, or building relationships?
- Identify who you want to reach in the community
- Prepare any resources and materials such as flyers, surveys, information packs or promotional items
- Follow up and evaluation by looking at any feedback or suggestions collected
- Take action to address any concerns or issues raised by residents or attendees
- Share the outcome of the engagement effort with the community, highlighting any changes or improvements made based on their input
- Use the insights gained to refine and improve future engagement methods.

## Example: Community Pop-In Events (See case study [Community Pop-Ins](#))

- Select accessible and welcoming locations for the events.
- Use, social media, local newsletters, and posters to promote the events.
- Arrange the space to be inviting and comfortable, with areas for information sharing, feedback collection, and social interaction.
- Encourage residents to interact with each other and community leaders, share their views, and participate in activities.

## Example: Door-to-door visits (See case study [Island Resilience Visits](#))

- Ensure that community workers or volunteers are trained in effective communication and engagement techniques.
- Plan the visits at times when residents are likely to be home and available.
- Use the visits to personally invite residents to upcoming pop-in events or other community activities.
- Collect feedback, concerns, and suggestions during the visits.

### ★ Advantages

- Direct contact encourages more meaningful participation from community members
- Immediate feedback is gathered
- Stronger community bonds are created
- There can be a broad reach – these methods can reach individuals who might not attend larger, formal events
- Events are held in accessible locations, making it easier for residents to participate
- Regular feedback helps improve community initiatives and addresses residents' needs.

### ⚠ Challenges

- These events can be resource intensive and require organisation from community workers and volunteers
- Pop-in events may have unpredictable attendance, making it difficult to plan effectively
- Not all residents may be willing or able to participate in door-to-door visits or events
- Some residents may feel uncomfortable with visits, perceiving them as intrusive
- Ensuring the privacy and confidentiality of the feedback collected can be challenging
- There is a risk of miscommunication or misunderstanding during face-to-face interactions.

## Further information:

[Scottish Community Development Centre information and resources](#)

## Case study:

Island Resilience Visits

(see online at: <https://www.shetlandpartnership.org/examples-community-participation/building-community-resilience-island-visits-organisation-leaders>)

Community Pop-Ins

(see online at: <https://www.shetlandpartnership.org/examples-community-participation/community-pop-ins-2>)



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