



Involvement

There are eight key areas to help guide the Local Conversation. These are:

- Action
- Approach
- Context
- Governance
- Influence
- Involvement
- Leadership
- Relationships

This section looks at **involvement**, and how to encourage local people to get involved with the Local Conversation. It will cover:

1. What we mean by involvement
2. Why involvement is important to the Local Conversations programme
3. Some theory and approaches
4. Equity, diversity and inclusion
5. What you can do to increase involvement, including some practical examples
6. A summary
7. Some helpful do's and don'ts
8. A final exercise

1. What we mean by involvement

This is about the involvement of community members in activities, projects and programmes aimed at providing community and public benefit. Effective community involvement is essential in improving the quality of life in a local area because residents know their communities best, what works well and what could be better. They should therefore be involved in shaping decisions about where they live. People can become involved in a variety of ways such as through participating in a local activity, joining a community group, contributing and responding to community Facebook groups, providing feedback on local services and influencing change in their neighbourhood.

Involvement opportunities can lead to:

- **Active citizens:** people with the motivation, skills and confidence to speak up for their communities and say what improvements are needed

- **Strengthened communities:** community groups with the capability and resources to bring people together to work out shared solutions
- **Partnership** with other groups and agencies to improve neighbourhood services and enhance democracy.

Involvement requires a flexible approach: a range of ways to reach all of the groups of people who make up the local neighbourhood, and to encourage their participation over time.

2. Why involvement is important in the Local Conversations programme

Local Conversations is a resident-led programme and cannot succeed without the active involvement of residents. They cannot achieve the vision for the neighbourhood unless a large proportion of residents are supported to connect and work together to address or influence changes they want to see in their communities. The process of involvement should happen throughout the lifetime of the Local Conversation, to make sure that as many people as possible can meaningfully participate. The more diverse and representative of the whole community the Local Conversation is, the more shared its priorities are and the better it can serve the neighbourhood.

People will have become involved in different ways, at different times, and for different reasons. Some may be involved because a friend mentioned the Local Conversation and they go along to an activity, while others will have been closely involved in helping to shape your vision for the neighbourhood. Some people might provide feedback, where others do not. Some people might work together on particular projects within the Local Conversation, but not all. Others will be deeply involved, taking on leadership roles and responsibilities. All levels of involvement are needed for the Local Conversation to succeed.

3. Some theory and approaches

Principles of involvement

There are certain principles that should underpin any community involvement work you engage in. These include:

- The need to understand the communities you are working with - who lives there, their needs, priorities, tensions, strengths, and existing networks
- The need to support and invest in participation at all stages of the process
- Sensitive structures in place so voices can be amplified and people get together - building effective groups and structures which strengthen

communities rather than divide them (ensuring all voices can be heard, and equality of opportunities to be involved)

- Opportunities for a wide range of (formal and informal) ways in which people can participate - enabling community ownership and control
- The need to celebrate involvement and to recognise influence - for example, evidence that communities have been heard
- The recognition that people participate from a variety of starting points and cultural experience and that this has implications for how people learn and contribute.

Why people get involved

We need to understand what motivates people to be involved and how they can be encouraged to stay involved. Their reasons for involvement may relate to personal circumstances, beliefs, direct experience of a service, or seeing community needs or opportunities that are not being met.

Example: Reasons for involvement - community activists share their stories

This is what people said when they came together to share their stories about what led to their involvement:

- **Personal qualities:** believed in myself; passions; enthusiasm; giving something back; knowledge, skills and experience; want to make a difference; can do attitude
- **Belief in people:** people can make a difference to self and others; people can achieve their potential; all have a right to a good quality of life
- **Values:** recognise need for equality and diversity; should all have a say in the things that affect our lives; passion for community involvement; inspired by Gandhi, *'even if you are in a minority of one, the truth is the truth'*; have rights which we need to be aware of and fight for
- **Personal circumstances:** problems on the estate; children started school and I wanted to volunteer; wanted something to do when stopped working; born disabled so wanted to be given justice; grew up surrounded by racism
- **Spotted flaws in the system:** money not being used properly; concerns about inconsistency in services; statutory officers do not always share information - why?
- **Opportunities:** attended National Autistic Society meetings and became a branch officer; started a Home Start volunteering course; helped by Voluntary Action

Re-imagining Community Involvement Project, 2010

Enablers to involvement

There are some fairly basic things that can help people to become, and stay, involved:

- **Timing** - it must be convenient for the people you want to involve
- **Place** - people need to feel comfortable about the venue, which must also be accessible
- **Consider caring responsibilities** - whether you need to provide a crèche or carers' costs
- **Relevance** - start with people's own concerns and wants, and the issues relevant to them
- **Go to where people are** - schools, clubs, places of worship, work or coffee mornings, for example, rather than expecting them to come to you
- **Structure** - task or theme-based working groups can be more focused and involving. Also, informal approaches to running meetings through facilitation and smaller group work can be more engaging for people, especially those less confident to speak up in a larger group
- Be **realistic and honest** about what can be achieved with the time and resources available
- **Be aware of people's participation needs** - you may need an interpreter or a signer, and to consider levels of literacy
- **Cover participation costs** - ensure that the costs of participation (travel, or buying lunch, for example) don't prevent people from being involved
- **Have fun!**

Barriers to involvement

There are lots of reasons why people do not get involved, some of which may be do with your group, and some not. It is helpful to be aware of these:

- **Satisfaction** - people may feel they are happy with where they live and their community and not see a need for change
- **Lack of identity with the group** - people may not feel the group is for them, for example if it is too white, too middle class, or too old
- **Lack of identity with the neighbourhood** - people may have stronger allegiances to communities of identity which may be town or city-wide, rather than to where they live
- **Lack of time** - people may feel they are too busy with work or family life
- **Lack of interest** - your publicity might not be appealing or relevant
- **Disillusion** - people may have been involved in community activities before and not feel that anything changed as a result
- **Fear** - people don't have the confidence to join something that they don't know a lot about, or don't know the people involved

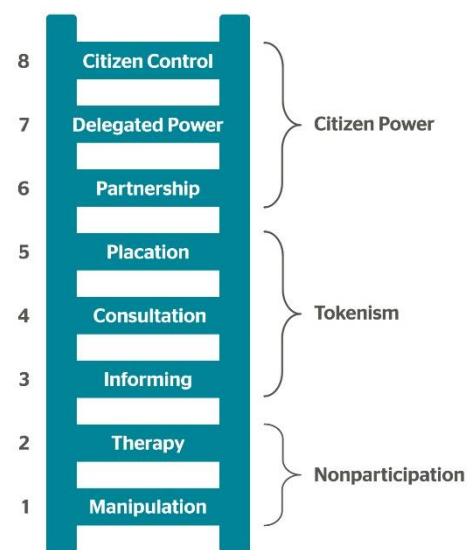
- **Formal structures and too many meetings** - formal structures may keep momentum going, but they are not enough to maintain involvement alone
- **A lack of visibility** - people might not know about the Local Conversation (however many leaflets you have put through doors!)
- **Transience** - people do not think they will be living in the area for very long, and so may not commit

Keeping people involved

There will always be ebbs and flows of involvement. This is normal and it is rarely constant. Everyone needs to take break, and whilst paid staff take holidays, volunteers often don't. There are also many reasons for people wanting or needing to change their involvement. There may be conflict in a group and several members might leave; people may need to move out of the area; people get new jobs, or find themselves with caring responsibilities and are not able to give the same amount of time as they could before; people might get bored and fed up with long processes, or not see anything tangible happening. These things are all normal and part of life, and turnover of people can be a positive as new people bring fresh perspectives. Nevertheless, it is important to understand both why people stay involved and why they drop out if we want to build involvement.

Levels of involvement

Different strategies can be used to promote involvement. It helps to think about the level at which you want to involve people, recognising that this may change over time. One way of beginning to understand and think about involvement is to look at the work of [Sherry Arnstein](#), who came up with the idea of a ladder of participation. The ladder of participation points to different levels of involvement. Many organisations work in communities, and most of them would say they involve local people and/or local communities. Arnstein's ladder is useful as it helps us to understand what this involvement looks like and how deep-rooted or how genuine it really is.



At the bottom of Arnstein's ladder is **manipulation**. We've all come across so many 'consultations' where the outcome is already decided and there is a 'PR' exercise to bring the public around.

At the top of the ladder, Arnstein describes approaches where **citizens are given real control** over the decisions that are being made. This is similar to the aims of the Local Conversation. **Citizen control** might be seen in some models of partnership or **co-production** where the people who design a service, the people who deliver it and the people who use it work together to reach a collective outcome.

In the middle rungs of the ladder, are **informing, consulting and placating**. Arnstein describes these as tokenistic forms of participation:

- Being given **information** about what is going on is clearly an important part of involvement but if the process stops there, you haven't participated in it. You are simply being told what's going on, without having any real way of influencing or controlling what is happening.
- Similarly, being **consulted** about what you want to happen is not the same as having control over what happens. What you say might shape what happens next, but it also might not.
- **Placation** occurs when people are granted a limited degree of influence but their participation is largely tokenistic. It may be, for example, that one or two people are co-opted onto a committee without any accountability back to the community.

This model is a conceptual tool and has some limitations. It is a hierarchical scale which does not represent the complexity of communities and their involvement (for example, who is and who is not involved from the community) or the fluctuating power dynamics within communities and with other organisations. For example, community control can be exclusive to a few community leaders rather than an indication of broad community involvement. It leads to seeing the lower levels as negative and higher levels as positive, which is not necessarily the case. Different approaches will be appropriate in different circumstances and often people in communities will be involved at different levels at the same time. The key point to remember is that involvement should be a continuous process with a variety of opportunities for involvement.

David Wilcox (1994¹) adapted Arnstein's ladder to illustrate the range of ways in which communities can be involved:

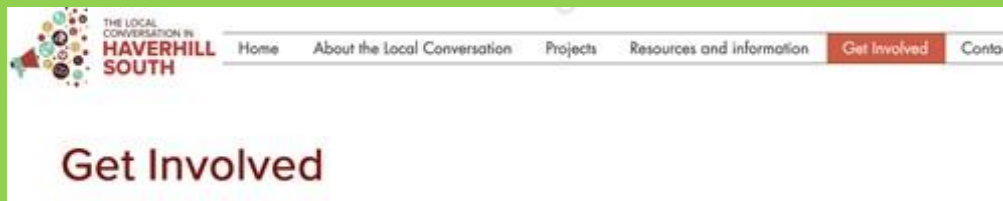
Information	Consultation	Deciding Together	Acting Together	Supporting Local Initiatives
<i>'here's what we are going to do...'</i>	<i>'these are the options what do you think?'</i>	<i>'we want to develop options and decide together'</i>	<i>'we want to carry out joint decisions together'</i>	<i>'we can help you achieve what you want within guidelines'</i>

Local Conversations' Steering Groups and their Lead Organisations need to consider what is appropriate in different circumstances, such as the resources available and the extent to which people want to be involved. For example, if people are primarily involved as beneficiaries of services, then they are likely to need up-to-date information on the services and facilities available, whereas 'acting together' and 'supporting local initiatives' generally take longer and demand more of people such as group work or working in partnership skills. For more, read the Approach and Leadership sections of the Practice Guide.

¹ Wilcox D, 1994 *The Guide to Effective Participation* (Partnership Books, Brighton, Sussex)

Example: providing different opportunities to get involved

The Local Conversation in Haverhill South has a specific tab on its website labelled 'Get Involved'. It portrays a range of people involved and suggests different ways to join in.



This project is run by residents for residents. Whether you have a particular focus that you would like to get involved with or a general interest in making this area a better place to live, we would love you to join us! There are lots of different ways to get involved:

Come to a forum meeting

The best way to find out more is to come to one of our forum meetings that are open to the community. At these, residents come together to hear from the community, brainstorm ideas such as when, where and how we should spend money and develop our new projects. These are at the Leiston Community Centre from 18:30-20:00 on Mondays once a month or join us on ZOOM contact us for the log in details.

Join an action group

Action groups are focused on a specific project such as the BMX Pump Track, community activities or the community allotment. We are currently forming new action groups based on the resident ideas.

Join our steering group

The steering group oversee the project. They lead the operations, manage the grants and ensure that the priorities are being achieved.

Please get in touch to find out more:

[Get in touch](#)

Exercise: supporting greater involvement

With your Steering Group:

1. Think about and list different activities in your community
2. For each activity, consider whether people are involved as:
 - Beneficiaries and users of services
 - Consultees and representatives of opinion
 - Participants in decision making processes
 - Partners in making things happen
 - Initiators of plans and services.
3. Could people be more closely involved?
4. What support and resources will be required to enable people to get more closely involved?

Resources:

- A [summary introduction to the Guide to Effective Participation](#) (Wilcox, 1994)

If you are interested in exploring co-production further, you can find resources here:

- Involve - [Resources: Co-production](#)
- Alliance Scotland - [Co-production](#)

4. Equity, diversity and inclusion

Equity is about ensuring people have the right amount of resources, support and information to ensure that they have as equal an outcome or chance of success as any other person or group.

Diversity is about recognising, respecting and valuing differences in people. The diversity of the local population for example, should be reflected in governance and decision-making groups.

Inclusion is about ensuring people are valued, involved and influencing. It involves taking deliberate action to create environments where everyone feels respected and able to achieve their full potential.

Communities are made up of diverse groups of people, including people of different genders², ethnic backgrounds³ and religions⁴, disabled people⁵, older people⁶, young people⁷, members of LGBT+ communities⁸, people with mental health needs⁹, people with learning disabilities¹⁰, and people from different socio-economic backgrounds.¹¹ It is critical therefore that all Local Conversations take a proactive approach to equity, diversity and inclusion and that you know who lives in your neighbourhood. It is not enough to be open and welcoming, you must also challenge the way in which your Local Conversation works, whether it is designed to be inclusive and whether it centres the needs of more marginalised people. You must positively target the involvement of under-represented groups and those whose voices are seldom heard and create allyships which help to increase and champion their voices. Local Conversations should be speaking out about the key issues affecting underrepresented groups of residents in their neighbourhood (including local and national government policy changes and legislative developments) and providing opportunities for people and communities that are less visible or traditionally less involved to participate.

Lead organisations and Steering Group members need to build the skills, confidence, tools, and techniques to ensure that they understand and practice equity, diversity and inclusion.

Reflection:

- How do you currently discuss and raise the profile of diversity and inclusion in your Local Conversation?
- Do you need to build confidence and knowledge to hold effective discussions about who is and is not involved, and to take action to broaden involvement where it is needed?
- Do you need a working group to focus directly on equity, diversity and inclusion?

In Section 3, we looked at the concept of citizen control. If the point of involvement is to ensure residents can act and decide together about where they live, then diverse voices need to be a part of this. Diversity should be embraced through encouraging and enabling a range of people with differing interests and identities to be involved. It is critical therefore that all Local Conversations should be taking an anti-oppression approach. This means that they not only support the equality and inclusion of particular groups but that they also take an active stance opposing the systems and behaviours which cause harm and offence.

² LSE Commission on Gender, Inequality and Power, [Confronting Gender Inequality](#), London School of Economics (2015)

³ Cabinet Office, [People living in deprived neighbourhoods](#), Ethnicity facts and figures (2020)

⁴ Welsh Government, [Analysis of protected characteristics by area deprivation: 2017 to 2019](#) (2020)

⁵ DWP, [Disability facts and figures](#) (2014)

⁶ Public Health Scotland, [Older people](#) (2021)

⁷ Public Health Scotland, [Young people](#) (2021)

⁸ Equalities Office, [National LGBT Survey](#) (2017)

⁹ NHS England, [The Five Year Forward View for Mental Health](#) (2016)

¹⁰ Public Health England, [Learning disabilities: applying All Our Health](#) (2018)

¹¹ Cabinet Office, [Socio-economic background \(SEB\)](#) (2019)

Resource:

If you are unsure how to find out who lives in your neighbourhood, which is a crucial first step to knowing how representative the Local Conversation is, you can find out more on [NomisWeb](#), which publishes population data from the Census as well as profiles of each parliamentary constituency.

There is more information about understanding who lives in your neighbourhood, and getting to grips with data, in the **Context** section of the Practice Guide.

You should reflect on equity, diversity and inclusion on a regular basis - at least annually. You could also ask residents from minority ethnic groups, LGBT+ residents, or disabled residents, for example, whether they feel involved or not in the Local Conversation. Ask them if there is anything you can do to further their involvement. The best way to avoid diversity and inclusion being seen as a tick box exercise is to prove that it isn't one - by showing the changes you are making. If the Local Conversation is not diverse enough and not inclusive enough, say so. Be clear and honest that your goal is to give voice to everybody who lives in the neighbourhood, and to work together to bring about the real, long-term change residents want to see to make it a better place to live.

The benefits of broadening involvement

- You will be reflective of the whole community
- You will stand to gain broader support
- You will have a broader array of interests, skills and talents
- More perspectives will inform decision making
- New community relationships will be built which can spark new initiatives that might never have otherwise existed

Reflection:

- Do you think your Local Conversation is inclusive and representative of different groups of people in the community and their interests? What information might be available to help you understand the make-up of the community even better?

Exercise: inclusion and exclusion

In pairs or small groups, discuss:

- What you think exclusion means, when thinking about your communities? Who might be excluded, and from what? How?
- If your community described itself as inclusive, what would you expect to be doing and what would you see?
- Ask each group to feed back to the whole group and then discuss what you might need to do to be more inclusive - this might be making contact with other community groups, faith bodies and networks, and thinking about what the Local Conversation has to offer them.

- Building on this, create an involvement action plan together.

5. What you can do to increase involvement, including some practical examples

Community involvement is not a quick fix and it rarely just *happens*. It is built over time and requires a planned and resourced approach if it is going to be effective. People need to be able to see the potential benefit to getting involved, either for themselves or for the wider community, and to clearly understand how they can contribute. And remember, no-one wants to join a group to have a bad time. Meetings don't need to be boring, activities should be fun, and trips and events help build community spirit and bring people closer together.

Why did you get involved and what do you have to offer?

If you are trying to attract new people, then think about why you got involved. The things that attracted you might well attract others. People commit to a group because they gain something from their involvement. Be proud of the benefits of being involved, and work to give others the same opportunities to make new friends, learn new skills, and work on the issues important to them.

How do people know who you are and what you do?

Community groups could often be better at communicating what they do. People need to know what they are getting involved in. You need to have a clear message about your purpose, which you can share in a range of ways - for example on posters, leaflets, or social media. Think about the type of publicity that would appeal to you and ask others what works best for them. You should be open and adaptive to people's participation requirements which may be visual, hearing or language based. Being open and adaptive ensures that the Local Conversation is genuinely inclusive and welcoming of involvement from all.

Example: keeping people informed through social media

- Many residents from **Lozells** are using a WhatsApp broadcasting group to communicate about Neighbourhood Forum meetings and to find out about community events and activities. The group ensures privacy and numbers of members are not visible. It has proven to be a very quick way to mobilise local people!
- The **Local Conversation in Caia Park** ensures that there is always an event set up on Facebook for community discussions and meetings that are open. Transparency is important locally, for example notifying residents when a small grants decision making is taking place and of the decisions made, as well as posting them online.

'Local Conversations' may mean very little, as a name, to residents. You should think about developing clear messaging about what the Local Conversation is about that will encourage residents to get involved. It is important to think about the different reasons residents may want to get involved, and the different ways they might wish to take part. Residents' initial questions are likely to be around how getting involved will benefit them, their friends and family, or how much time they'll need to give up. Holding informal conversations with different people will help you tailor this messaging appropriately. This messaging needs to continue over the entire life of the Local Conversation, not just at its start, so new people get involved in different ways all the time. This keeps the Local Conversation fresh, and it helps those involved from the beginning not to burn out.

Exercise: defining your offer through the what, why, how and who of involvement

Four sheets of flipchart paper are placed on the walls or on tables. Each has a heading:

- Who are you?
- What are you doing?
- Why are you doing it?
- How are you doing it?

Split into four groups, with each group being given one of the headed pieces of flip-chart paper and asked to respond to the question on post-its. After a few minutes, groups should gradually move around the flipcharts until everyone has had an opportunity to contribute to all the questions.

Each group then takes one of the flip-charts and comes up with a statement which reflects the common themes noted on the post-its.

The statements can then be summarised further into one short paragraph, by pulling all the four elements together.

The process of this exercise should help you think through why people might want to be involved and how, as well as producing a clear purpose to attract others.

What is it that people want to do and why they might want to be involved?

Make sure activities, events or meetings address **local interests** and priorities. You can find out what people would like to see in a number of ways, including:

- Listening to people about their hopes and concerns - you could start with conversations with neighbours, friends and family members
- Identifying target groups that are currently underrepresented and asking to go along to places where they meet for a conversation - for example, places of worship, mother and toddler groups, local cafes, or a stall at a community fair
- Put a suggestions box in the local supermarket
- Create opportunities to get to know what people want and to encourage their involvement.

Examples: making it fun

- The **Local Conversation in Holyhead** has an events group (Cybi Events). They offered free attendance for residents to an open air cinema event, but each resident had to complete a questionnaire to receive a ticket.
- The **Local Conversation in Govanhill** used a safari trip organised by the residents' Forum to engage with 103 people, including 30 who had not previously connected with the project. This gave them the opportunity to talk to people about the Local Conversation in Govanhill, to hear about what is important to them, to encourage them to join up as a volunteer, Forum member, or just to come along to an event or activity.

What will make people feel welcome, and want to come back?

Be friendly, warm and welcoming to new people when they walk through the door. It can be quite daunting to enter a room of people who all know each other and are chatting away in small groups so make an effort to offer them a cup of tea, introduce them to others and build a relationship. If you are having a meeting, make sure that everything is explained so that new members can contribute to discussions and decision making. These things can give new people a good feeling about coming along and encourages them to stay involved. You could formalise welcoming through creating roles of 'meeters and greeters' or setting up a buddy system for new people but the main thing is to create a welcoming culture.

Many people are 'doers' rather than meeting goers. In addition, everyone wants to feel valued so it is a good idea to offer people a role or a job early on, even if it's small. Find out what people enjoy, what they have done in the past, what they do in their spare time and what they are interested in doing in the future. See if you can match their interests to some work that needs to be done. People are more likely to stay involved if they think they are being useful and can see they are making a difference.

Equally, most people do not choose to spend their leisure time sitting in meetings. So try not to have meetings too often and don't let them drag on too long - try to keep focussed on what you are trying to achieve and try to make sure that some progress is made between each meeting, so that momentum is maintained.

Group enthusiasm is infectious and will rub off on others. A good way to motivate people is to reflect on what has been achieved, celebrate it and acknowledge hard work and success. Celebrations help bring everyone closer together, build identity and unity, and ensure people involved feel valued for their contribution.

Finally, think about where you meet and how accessible it is. The cost of getting somewhere should not be too large in terms of money, time and effort. Is it somewhere people are familiar with, does it feel safe, is it easy to get to? Consider the timing and format of meetings, including refreshments and how appropriate they are.

You can't please everyone all the time. There needs to be enough **flexibility** in your projects to respond to different attitudes, different cultures and different priorities.

Flexibility means that you respect differences whilst emphasising common values. If you make people feel like outsiders they won't engage with your group.

There is more information about supporting people to be active in the Action section of the guidance.

6. Summary

There are different levels of involvement which suit different people at different times. There should therefore be a variety of ways in which people can become involved and opportunities for them to remain and become further involved. Information and consultation are pretty passive forms of involvement whereas decision making, taking action and supporting new initiatives illustrate greater community control. People need to enjoy their involvement and to feel that their contribution is valued.

Example: Bridgend Inspiring Growth

Bridgend Farmhouse in South Edinburgh is a community owned and run charitable organisation which bought and developed a once abandoned farmhouse and, through the community getting together, transformed it into a hub and learning centre for the surrounding communities. Since it started, the members of the local community have taken control of every aspect of the project, campaigning for a £1 asset transfer of the land from the council, raising the money to renovate it, and developing the hub entirely through volunteers' hard work.

The project hosted weekly activity sessions involving 30 participants in a range of projects to create a welcoming space, learn new skills and develop the hub. Activities included cooking, wood working, vegetable growing, arts and crafts, painting and decorating. Throughout the project, people of all walks of life came together, regardless of life experiences, ethnicity, background or difficulties they faced.

A monthly volunteers' forum ensured all volunteers could make decisions and drive the project. People are now actively involved in what happens in their community and at the hub. The project has led to many new ideas, initiatives, partnerships and friendships, and has nurtured an active community.

It is important to reflect on the methods you have used to get people involved, and if there are any others you can try.

Reflection:

- How have you tried to involve people in the Local Conversation and related activities so far? What worked and why? What did not work and why?
- Are there different groups of people you have struggled to involve? What can you do differently next time?

7. Some helpful do's and don'ts

Do:

- **Ensure there are lots of different ways for residents to get involved.** This means taking a flexible approach
- **Support people to increase their involvement over time.** The people most closely involved tend to build the strongest social connections, develop the highest feelings of control, have more confidence, develop more skills and deeper understanding, and improve their overall wellbeing
- Remember that **supporting these outcomes helps Local Conversations make real positive change**, as the power of the residents involved grows.
- **Think about the potential of co-production.** Working in partnership with other groups in the community, or with decision-makers, can give you a louder voice and can help get things done
- **Continuously review and widen membership**, and think about how new people and their interest can be integrated into the process
- **Reflect on the barriers stopping people getting involved.** Are you advertising widely enough? Are there other ways you could try? Are meetings at convenient times?
- **Take time to support the Local Conversation to improve its diversity and its inclusivity.** An effective Local Conversation reflects the makeup of the whole neighbourhood.
- **Tap into people's skills and talents and encourage residents to deliver their own activities.** This can take time as confidence grows, but it supports the development of leadership skills, social connections and greater control. It also supports the sustainability of the Local Conversation.
- **Celebrate your success!** Build in visible early successes to develop the confidence of participants. Take the time to look back at how far you've come, and all the hard work you have put in. This brings people closer together, and ensures they feel valued for their contributions.
- Make sure people are **having fun**

Don't:

- **Forget that some forms of 'participation' can be tokenistic.** Giving people information is important, but that is not where the conversation should end, and consultations aren't the same as giving people power over what happens.
- **Forget to reflect on who you are not reaching.** There will be groups of people you are not reaching, but there are always ways to involve them.
- **Underestimate people.** Give them support and the tools they need to manage complexity

- **Underestimate the power of people’s existing networks and contacts.** You can reach people through schools, GP surgeries, places of worship and other local clubs or activity groups. Speak to the organisations themselves. And don’t forget the friends, families and colleagues of those residents who are already involved. Ask them to actively spread the word.
- **Become disheartened.** Spreading engagement, and getting more people involved, is not always straightforward. People want to see benefits for themselves. They want to know what is expected of them and see that: you have realistic goals, people already involved are enthusiastic and keen, people they might already know are involved, and they’ll have fun along the way.
- **Ask residents to pay out of pocket.** Reasonable travel costs, administrative costs such as printing and copying, or putting on refreshments should always be funded by the Local Conversation.

8. A final exercise

Exercise: Reflecting on involvement, inclusion and your Local Conversation

In this section of the practice guide, we have talked about Involvement - including what it means, some theory, and some practical examples.

Although this guide is aimed at Local Conversations practitioners, it’s really important that residents also have access to the tools and resources we have discussed in this section - not least your Steering Group, or whatever it is called locally. Local Conversations are built upon connections, and ensuring everyone involved is supported to help increase your reach and to understand the importance of equity, diversity and inclusion is crucial to your success.

Getting people involved is not easy and, as we know, it ebbs and flows. Ask yourself - what three things have you taken away from this section to build greater involvement in your Local Conversation?

Sit down with your Steering Group, and ask them to reflect on who is involved, and who is not. It is also important to ask why that might be - might some groups not see themselves within the Local Conversation? Is there a disconnect? The first steps to addressing this are to understand why it might be.

Once you have reflected on this, ask whether residents feel equipped to deepen and broaden participation across the neighbourhood, with marginalised and harder-to-reach groups in mind. If not, what might help?

Have you got any top tips or tricks for involvement that might be useful for other Local Conversations? Is there anything you feel is missing from this section, or that you would like to add? Are there any useful references you’re aware of that we could add? Be sure to let us know.

IMPORTANT



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](#).

This means:

You are free to:

Share – copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format.

The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as you follow the license terms.

Under the following Terms:

Attribution – You must give [appropriate credit](#), provide a link to the license, and [indicate if changes were made](#). You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use.

NonCommercial – You may not use the material for [commercial purposes](#).

No Derivatives – If you [remix, transform, or build upon](#) the material, you may not distribute the modified material.

No additional restrictions – You may not apply legal terms or [technological measures](#) that legally restrict others from doing anything the license permits.

Notices:

You do not have to comply with the license for elements of the material in the public domain or where your use is permitted by an applicable [exception or limitation](#).

No warranties are given. The license may not give you all of the permissions necessary for your intended use. For example, other rights such as [publicity, privacy, or moral rights](#) may limit how you use the material.

