Local Government Association

New Conversations

LGA guide to engagement

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Nobody doubts the huge importance of engaging with residents at a time when public services are undergoing fundamental change and resources continue to diminish.

The risks of transforming the everyday services that people rely on without giving them a genuine stake in that process are huge, but the diagnosis can often be easier to pronounce than the cure.

It has been said that engagement is everybody's responsibility in a local authority, but all too often it ends up being nobody's. There can be a temptation to think it is an abstract process that somebody deals with. In reality, good dialogue with residents and securing mutual trust between the council and the community needs to be part of the whole council's DNA.

The challenges are huge, but we face them from a position of well-earned strength. Around seven out of ten people are satisfied with the way their council runs things. Recent research showed 74 per cent of residents most trust their council to take decisions about the local area – compared to just 15 per cent who cited central government.[1]

So how do we effectively engage at a time when resources are scarce? How do we build and maintain trust when difficult decisions are being taken? What are the legal pitfalls that need to be navigated during a period of unprecedented reform?

1 'Polling on resident satisfaction with councils', LGA, October 2016, p.12

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To try and help find the answers to these questions, and many more, the LGA and The Campaign Company have produced this guide to how councils can strengthen trust, build resilience and respond to today's challenges through high-quality engagement. Crucially, it shows how this can be achieved with limited resources.

We are also pleased to publish case studies from Hackney, Harlow, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and Staffordshire. These are four very different areas that share the same ambition to deliver effective, modern engagement and have been piloting the approach of this guide.

Much has been said and written about how trust between people and political institutions is in decline. Local councils and, in particular, elected councillors – are uniquely placed to bridge that gap and start new conversations.

I hope you find this guide useful.

Councillor Judi Billing
Deputy Chair, LGA Improvement and Innovation Board

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Introduction

"Look, we know you're working hard for us, but what we've got here is a parent–child relationship between the Government and the people. What we need is an adult–adult relationship." **Citizen at a public meeting in Colorado**[2]

Why this guide matters

These are potentially daunting times for local government. Expectations are rising and budgets are getting smaller. Services are better, but trust in many institutions is falling. Communities are frequently more able and willing to step up, but they're also less deferential, and when things go wrong, they come armed with the tools of judicial review, Freedom of Information requests and social media.

In this context, a serious effort to involve and understand residents is more important than ever. Satisfaction with local government remains fairly high compared to other organisations, and this provides local authorities with both opportunity and responsibility.[3] By grasping what people need and what they can do for themselves, authorities can work better with communities and be more efficient. By bringing people in on decision-making, councils can get decisions right, manage expectations and improve relationships with residents.

Through creative engagement approaches, organisations can tackle cohesion issues and combative dealings with residents that low-trust relationships often generate. They can minimise the risk of judicial reviews and connected reputation issues that these relationships create.

2 'The Next Form of Democracy', Matt Leighninger, 2006 – quoted by RSA
3 'Polling on resident satisfaction with councils', LGA, October 2016

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What this guide is and what it covers

This is a guide for councillors and officers working to build a stronger dialogue between councils and residents. We use 'engagement' within the document to mean anything that creates a stronger two-way relationship between council and communities. This runs from formal consultation to more deliberative and informal listening exercises. It can include co-production, crowdsourcing, events and public meetings.[4]

Central to this is the idea that, by doing more to listen and respond on a regular basis, councils can have a better all-round dialogue. In other words, the more authorities invest in creative types of positive engagement, the less likely relations are to sour.

The guide will be useful for people throughout the local government sector – whether you're looking to improve statutory consultation practices to avoid legal challenges or wanting to engage in more creative ways. It provides advice on how to rebuild trust in relationships that have broken down and help you and your Council become better at listening and responding to resident concerns.

What next?

> Read about the context for this document in '**A changing conversation**'

> Skip to '**What hat are you wearing?**' to find out which parts of this document will be most useful in your role

4 These terms and others are explained in more detail in the Glossary, which you can access at any time in the document

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How the guide works

The 22 short chapters each contain tools, checklists, tests and real-life examples, to make them as practical and useful as possible. There is also a **Glossary** at the end of the guide, which you can access at any time by clicking the button in the bottom right.

The three overall sections are as follows (you can click on one to go directly to it).

- **Section 1: Covering the basics**
  This section lays down seven foundations for getting consultation and engagement right – from early decision-making through to evaluation. It's a good starting point if you want to make sure your council is up to speed.
- **Section 2: Surpassing expectations**
  This section contains eleven pillars which support effective engagement, helping it to go further, build social capital, save money and create confidence in the council.
- **Section 3: Engagement in action**
  There are four chapters in this section, on four local authorities we've worked with in producing this guide: Harlow, Hackney, Staffordshire and Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA). Pilot engagement projects at these organisations demonstrate the diverse challenges different authorities face.

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Which hat are you wearing?

People working across the local government sector have a role to play in this new conversation. From staff and officers who regularly talk to the public through to cabinet members and committee chairs.

To start with, click below on which 'hat' you're wearing when you're reading this. Is it as the local councillor for your ward, for example, or in your capacity as cabinet member for public health?

That way we can flag which sections and chapters might be a good place to start, and explain how the guide applies to your role:

- **cabinet member or committee chair**
- **local councillor**
- **chief executive, or member of senior management team**
- **officer planning and delivering services**

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i) Cabinet member or committee chair

Whether you're a council leader (or opposition leader), a cabinet member (or shadow member) a committee chair or mayor, engagement with the community is vital. You'll have a broad vision for how the area you represent, or the policy remit you're responsible for should feel and function. You will want the reputation of your area and authority to be strong.

Engagement is essential here. Only through dialogue with the community can councils develop policies that reflect residents' needs, and turn a grand vision into something meaningful to everyday lives. Whether it takes the form of traditional consultation or a more innovative listening exercise, engagement is ultimately what makes democracy function.

- If your council has an immediate challenge around consulting or engaging – perhaps one that risks being damaging for the organisation as a whole – then head to **'Section 1: Covering the basics'**.
- If you're more interested in the wider possibilities of engagement for enhancing governance and achieving a political vision, then head straight to **'Section 2: Surpassing expectations'**. Within that the first subsection (**'Trust in democracy'**) might be especially useful.
- **Section 3: 'Engagement in action'**, features pilots from four very different local authorities: Hackney, Harlow, Staffordshire and GMCA. Depending on what type of authority yours is, you might want to start there, to see how others are addressing engagement.
- Look at the context for this guide and why engagement is so important right now in **'A Changing Conversation'**.

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ii) Local councillor

Engagement is at the very heart of politics and democracy. This is true whether you're a newly elected frontline councillor or someone who juggles your ward work with a cabinet role. It also stands whether your party is leading an authority or you are in opposition.

This guide should help build on the vital representative work you and fellow councillors do. It provides a range of innovative and sophisticated engagement techniques. It also gives guidance on how these can feed into the council's wider engagement, so the conversations you're having every day in your neighbourhood can inform the council's broad strategy. That will help you to hear from groups beyond those who are already engaged, to represent your area better, and to reduce caseloads by anticipating issues before they arise.

- If you'd like to know about the nuts and bolts of engagement, then see **'Section 1: Covering the Basics'**. If the guide is more relevant in your capacity as a councillor, then you might want to go straight to **'Section 2: Surpassing expectations'**, which gives advice on different types of creative engagement. Many pillars in that section will be relevant, especially **Pillar B**, which is about the role of the councillor and engagement.
- **'Section3: Engagement in action'**, features pilots from four very different local authorities: Hackney, Harlow, Staffordshire and GMCA. Depending on what type of authority yours is, you might want to start there, to see how others are addressing engagement.
- Look at the context for this guide and why engagement is so important right now in **'A changing conversation'**.

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iii) Chief executive or member of the senior management team

Delivering outcomes in the present climate is a significant challenge, as work to meet political priorities comes up against hard financial realities. Outcomes are also scrutinised more closely than ever before.

This guide argues that through a genuine, open dialogue with residents, local authorities can make their communities more cohesive, their organisations more economically efficient and their services better. Engagement isn't something to do on top of the other things; it's something that will make the others easier.

- If your council has already had to grapple with legal processes around consultation or planning decisions, or is being confronted with them for the first time – then go straight to **'Section 1: Covering the basics'**. If you're starting from the beginning then **Foundation I**, which helps you to assess how good your council's engagement is, may be especially useful.
- If you're interested in how you can become more of a "thinking organisation" in general or in how you can develop the policies people want, then go straight to **'Section 2: Surpassing expectations'**. The final four pillars in that section, which are about how people interact with services (we call this **'Trust in the system'**) are especially crucial.
- **'Section 3: Engagement in action'**, features pilots from four very different local authorities: Hackney, Harlow, Staffordshire and GMCA. Depending on what type of authority yours is, you might want to start here, to see how others are addressing engagement.
- Look at the context for this guide and why engagement is so important right now in **'A changing conversation'**.

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iv) An officer planning and delivering services

Engagement will continue to play a big role in what local authorities do at every level. Traditionally, consultation was undertaken by a specified consultation department, and was a mainly statutory requirement. Communications, meanwhile, were left to a designated team. Decisions came from directors or senior managers at the top. This is less and less true today. Almost every type of council service is subject to public scrutiny, and engagement increasingly needs to be integrated across the organisation. More and more, councils aspire to be places where staff take the initiative, rather than being 'top down'.

Most council departments now need to be comfortable speaking and listening to residents. Employees at all levels are increasingly encouraged to identify solutions and engage with residents' needs. So, most teams and departments, whether directly responsible for communications, consultation, strategy or not, need to be as engaged with the public as possible.

- Your professional role may involve changes that are controversial or subject to legal scrutiny. If so you should read **'Section 1: Covering the basics'**, which is about the principles of good consultation and engagement. This section will also be useful if you're part of a team expected to engage more than in the past, or where decisions are more controversial.
- If you feel comfortable with the basic principles of engagement, then go straight to **'Section 2: Surpassing expectations'**. There is a lot there which can help your policy decisions to involve people better. In particular, the third subsection, **'Trust in the system'**, contains four useful pillars about how engagement is helping services to be more responsive – through personalisation, digitisation and the role of staff.
- **'Section 3: Engagement in action'**, features pilots from four very different local authorities: Hackney, Harlow, Staffordshire and GMCA. Depending on what type of authority yours is, you might want to start here, to see how others are addressing engagement.

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A changing conversation – The context for this guide

> "Power is leaching from the centre, even as the complexities of national and international challenges multiply…The digital age, globalisation and higher levels of education have equipped more people to become insurgents or to form single-issue pressure groups…Power is draining away from those in whom it is formally placed, but with no obvious substitute in sight. Power is fragmenting. But what is the true cost to democracy?", **Will Hutton, The Guardian, 2013**

Politicians, public organisations and institutions find themselves in a tricky position. The challenges they face are arguably as hard as they've been at any point in post-war history and the public has less faith in them than ever before to get the decisions right.[5] This is a national or even global problem, but one which local institutions can help solve. By creating meaningful conversations with residents, councils can 'trust their way' to a stronger relationship with those they serve. This guide aims to help boost that dialogue.

'Easy-answer' politics

In the UK and some other parts of the world, there's been a much-documented rise in the politics of easy answers. Some refer to this as 'post-truth politics'[6] where emotive arguments trump rational ones. Others suggest democracy itself is in crisis.[7] Either way, this could threaten rational debate and meaningful engagement.

5 Edelman Trust Barometer 2017 – UK Findings, 16 January 2017
6 'The age of post-truth politics', New York Times, 2016
7 'What's Gone Wrong with Democracy?' The Economist, 2014

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The process has happened in line with falling levels of direct participation in politics,[8] which may have actively contributed to the rise of 'easy-answer' approaches to decision-making.[9] This has also coincided with a decline in deference to experts[10] and establishment figures, as well as with rising access to information and discussion. This is reflected in social media, but also in steady increases in the use of mechanisms such as Freedom of Information requests and judicial reviews.[11] Citizens are increasingly unwilling to place their faith in others to make decisions for them, or to be the obedient, passive recipients of policy.

In this context, 'easy-answer' politics can be seen as the response of rising self-confidence and frustration among communities who have not been trusted or given the tools to answer hard questions.

Goodbye, 'government-by-spreadsheet'

The presumption some have is that, by improving services (by doing the same thing better) trust can be returned. There is some truth in this. Getting the basics right does make a difference, but the belief that service quality alone will solve things is a sort of 'government-by-spreadsheet' approach, which reflects the old way of making policy.

Government-by-spreadsheet isn't all bad and it frequently delivers good outcomes. However, it often doesn't lead to organisations listening, thinking or responding. One great weakness is that it's not very good at creating trust. Indeed, Demos describe how it can lead to a 'performance paradox':

> "Objective performance is not the only criterion that people use to evaluate government – expectations, perceptions and socio-economic factors all have an impact… These factors have led to a situation in the UK in which many people admit to having positive personal interactions with public services, but consider the public sector as a whole to be performing poorly – the so-called 'performance paradox' in which services improve, but satisfaction falls."[12]

8 'Membership of UK political parties', House of Commons library, 2016
9 'In an age of historically low party membership, party identification, voter volatility, rising abstentionism and greater individualism, mainstream parties are struggling to be representative.' The Populist Signal, Claudia Chwalisz, 2015, p. xi-xii
10 'Trust the experts', Demos, 2014
11 'Judicial review applications', DataMarket
12 'The State of Trust', Demos, 2008, p. 25–27

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Service provision has frequently got better as a result of the service-focused approach. Yet the high-handed way this has been seen to be delivered, the government-by-spreadsheet ethos, has undermined many improvements in perception.

Moreover, because the initial bonds of trust were weak, public organisations were often not given the benefit of the doubt when the there was pressure on service delivery. This is most obvious in the case of the significant fall in government funding since the financial crisis of 2008. Budget reductions have made it harder and harder to meet people's expectations about services. Citizens whose experience was in the 'government-by-spreadsheet' era often had neither trust in their council to make the hard choices, nor the opportunity to be able to contribute to decision-making themselves.

All politics is local

These flaws in 'top-down' models have been observed and alluded to by policy-makers from across the political spectrum.[13] There's a growing consensus from all sides that a dispersal of power away from 'top-down' approaches is vital and that many of the solutions must be local.[14]

To be clear, this isn't because councils are the place where problems with trust stem from. Quite the opposite. Although trust for local government isn't always high, it's consistently higher than for national government. This gap has steadily grown[15] and authorities are still held in higher esteem than many national institutions.[16]

However, while the low level of public trust isn't usually a problem of local government's making, it is within their power to solve. Councils are the form of authority with which residents most often have direct contact and they're a big part of the solution to closing up the trust deficit.

Local authorities today have a unique opportunity: to win back trust on the front line, and to make huge savings through the capacity and cohesion that process can build.

13 IPPR, for example, talk in 'Many to Many' about the need for stronger citizen bonds, and the CSJ talk about social 'breakdown'
14 Indeed, localism has been called, variously, the 'antidote' to public disaffection with experts (Damian Hind, Policy Exchange, 2016), and the key to the 'restoration of trust in our political institutions; ('Trust in Practice', Demos, 2010, p. 16)
15 Between 2001 and 2012, for instance, the gap in trust between local and national government effectively doubled in size, from 16 per cent to 31per cent. 'Building Trust' action plan, SOLACE and LGA, 2013
16 'Polling on resident satisfaction with councils', LGA, October 2016

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The courage to 'trust first'

Anthony Seldon's 2009 book 'Trust' starts with ten core arguments about trust. One of these is that "Government in Britain will gain trust if it promises less and…trusts more."[17]

The challenges we have described above mean public organisations are sometimes fearful to do that. Faced with public anger and apparent unwillingness to compromise, the instinct among some is to raise the drawbridge.

Yet now is precisely the moment to 'trust first'. This can be done by breaking away from process-driven consultation models, and fostering an ethos of strategic, continuous and meaningful engagement.

Most councils have a communications department and consultation team. By joining up these speaking (communications) and listening (consultation) functions, local authorities can enable a sophisticated and long-running dialogue.

Letting this conversation have more of an influence in the council's strategy can change how the council is seen and how it sees itself. It can lead to more day-to-day innovation from departments, rather than a reliance on data-driven planning or received wisdom. It can help a council take a more proactive role within communities, instead of always being braced to defend itself against criticism.

Although one effect will be better relations at a broad level, helping to break the national trust deadlock shouldn't be seen as 'cleaning up someone else's mess'. It's actually an area where short-term spending can bring immense long-term value for a council and its residents.

Evolving conversation

Good engagement can create social connections between individuals and groups. It can enhance the motivation and capacity to participate in decision-making and bolster economic efficiency and resident choice. It fosters a more open relationship with residents, saving time that might otherwise have been spent fighting long-running battles. It generates capacity in the community, by building on assets, networks and local identity. It also helps residents understand and access the system more easily.

By being at the forefront of relationships between citizen and state, local government can lead the way to a more grown-up experience, one which is constructive and responsive, and which authorities ultimately benefit from too.

17 Trust: *How we lost it and how to get it back,* Anthony Seldon, 2009

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Section 1: Covering the basics

The scrutiny paid to decision-making has increased a lot in recent years. Greater demands for transparency have meant legal challenge and investigations of due process are now commonplace.[18]

Added to this is a rise in the public's ability to cross-examine, share and interrogate information, thanks to the internet, the media and Freedom of Information legislation.

Councils have adapted at different speeds. Everyone is under pressure: for some councillors and officers, engagement still feels like something that would be beneficial but not essential. Moreover, 'engagement' can seem like a vague concept because it covers so much.

The aim of this section is to provide the basics. It consists of seven foundations which provide the basis for good consultation and engagement. Each of these will help you assess what level your council is at, and provide core principles and relevant context. Taken together the section will explain how to evaluate engagement, decide what type of engagement is required, and avoid things going wrong.

The seven foundations are:

- **Foundation I:** How good or bad are we at engagement?
- **Foundation II:** Should I engage, consult, or do something else?
- **Foundation III:** How do I decide which medium and channels to use?
- **Foundation IV:** How do I make sure I stick to the law of consultation?
- **Foundation V:** What pre-emptive steps should I take to avoid running into trouble?
- **Foundation VI:** How can I follow good practice?
- **Foundation VII:** How should I evaluate my engagement work?

18 In 1970, for example, there were 396 judicial reviews yet by 2010 there were 2,426. See Simon Rogers (citing Christopher Hood and Ruth Dixon), Datamarket

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What next?

> Skip straight on to **'Section 2: 'Surpassing Expectations'**

> Read about the four local authorities piloting these approaches in **'Section 3: Engagement in action'**

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Foundation I: How good or bad are we at engagement?

> "The consultation on local government has been a lost opportunity, and a waste of time. The county council approach remains top down. We need to turn decision-making on its head." **Council leader, following a 0.3 per cent response to a consultation on local services**

One of the first things to know when thinking about engagement is how your organisation is currently doing. If you already know this, you may want to move to **Foundation II**.

Ultimately, engagement is about creating dialogue. The two sides of this dialogue, residents and the council, pose different challenges. To know what you're working with, you need to understand both. Below are three areas of questioning to frame your inquiry.

1. What views do residents have of the council? Do you have sufficient insight to understand how they see engagement? How will they respond when you talk to them?
2. What do your officers and councillors think of engagement? Is there a shared view of its importance and how it should be done?
3. Is there evidence of engagement influencing decisions? How does engagement 'live' within the organisation? (Documents? Training? Official roles?)

When it comes to the balance between engagement among residents and at the council, any combination is possible. You may have self-motivated and engaged residents but an authority that remains top-down and inward-looking. You might have an eager and outward-looking council but an apathetic population with low capacity to do things for themselves.

Councillors writing for the New Local Government Network (NLGN) have come up with a scale for mapping this, charting how open or closed the council is in its outlook, and how engaged or apathetic the community is. (Below is the NLGN chart. **Read more in this tool**).

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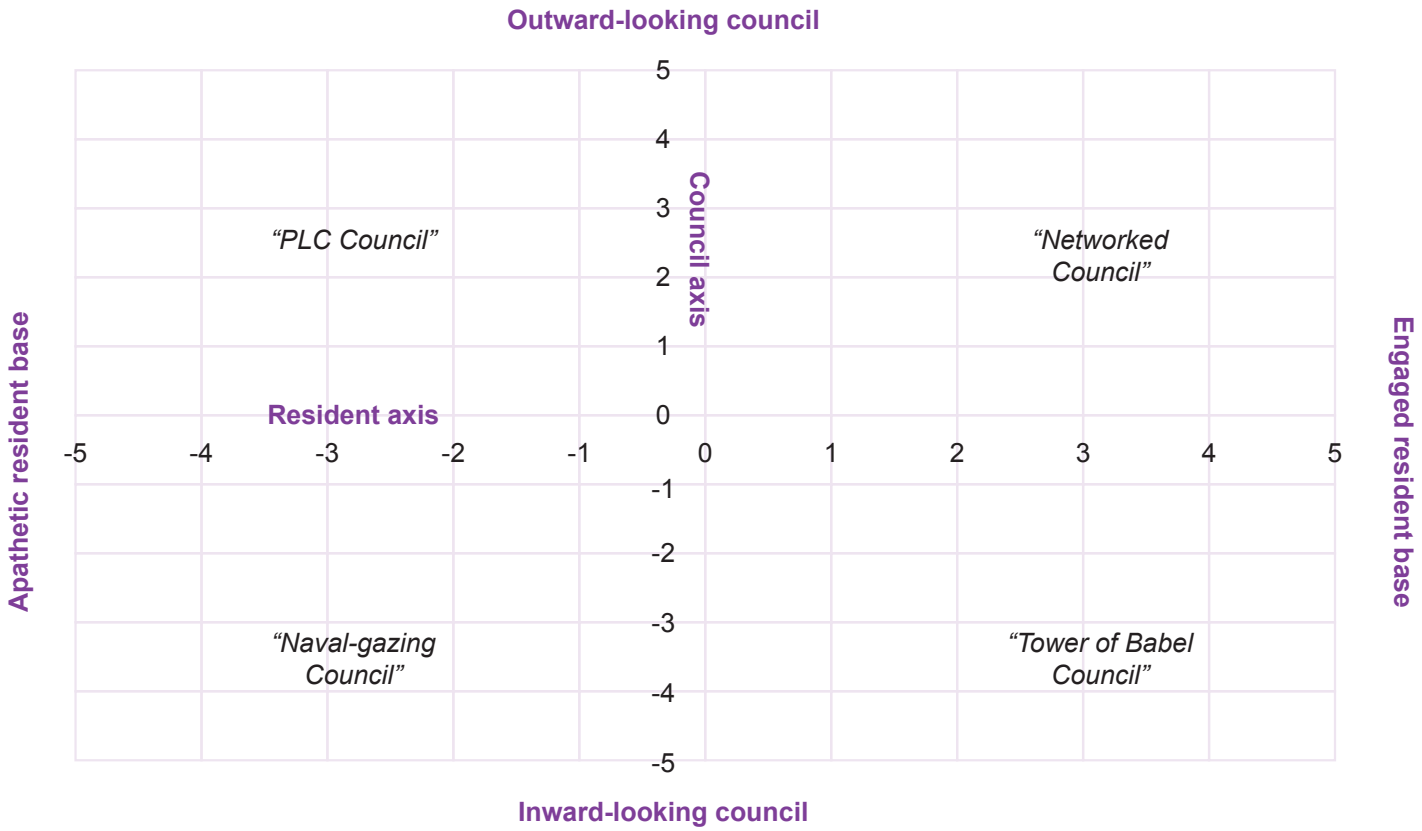

To understand residents, you need to dig deeper into the dynamics at work in the population. Some of the basic data your council already has will be fairly instructive here. For example, what are the demographics of your borough? How diverse is the area? How transient is the population? How equal is the area and how much cohesion is there between different groups? What are education levels like? Is the area economically fairly equal, or do rich and poor live alongside each other?

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Beyond this, there are insights around people's willingness to engage and the likelihood of them stepping up. What are attitudes to the council? Are levels of satisfaction and trust high or low? Are there problems of cynicism or alienation, indicated by high antisocial behaviour levels, or low levels of participation in community activity and local elections? What levels of participation have previous consultations received? You might already be tracking some of this information internally, but if not there are ways of building it into satisfaction surveys. You can ask simple things, like how well respondents feel local people get on with each other.

Pillar K gives more ideas on surveying trust and satisfaction. On the specific question of trust, meanwhile, there are two further tests within this guide: **'Testing trust'** and **'Satisfaction hard won'**. These give further ideas for gathering insight and understanding the engagement challenges your area is likely to face.

Next, you'll need to get a sense of how good you presently are at engaging. The scope of roles related to engagement will differ depending on the structure of your organisation.

Things to investigate include attitudes to engagement within the council. Has it traditionally gone well and impacted on decisions or has there been a culture of tokenism? There are also more technical questions around processes and how learning has traditionally been managed. For example, who is formally responsible for consultation, and are evaluations of previous consultations stored in a single place and fed back to the whole organisation?

This process doesn't have to be overly bureaucratic but it does have to provide you with the means to step outside your routine and critically evaluate processes and culture that have become routine or habitual. This can be done via internal surveys and interviews, or data reviews and reference to good practice. At the end of the process, you should be able to tell the story of how the authority engages – even if only in 'elevator pitch' form, or as a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis. – You will then be able to make judgements about where improvement is needed.

Once you have clearly examined the resident and council sides of the engagement equation, you're ready to consider the next steps in this guide.

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Skip to **Foundation II**, which asks about the kind of engagement that's right for you

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> Head straight to **'Section 2: Surpassing expectations'**

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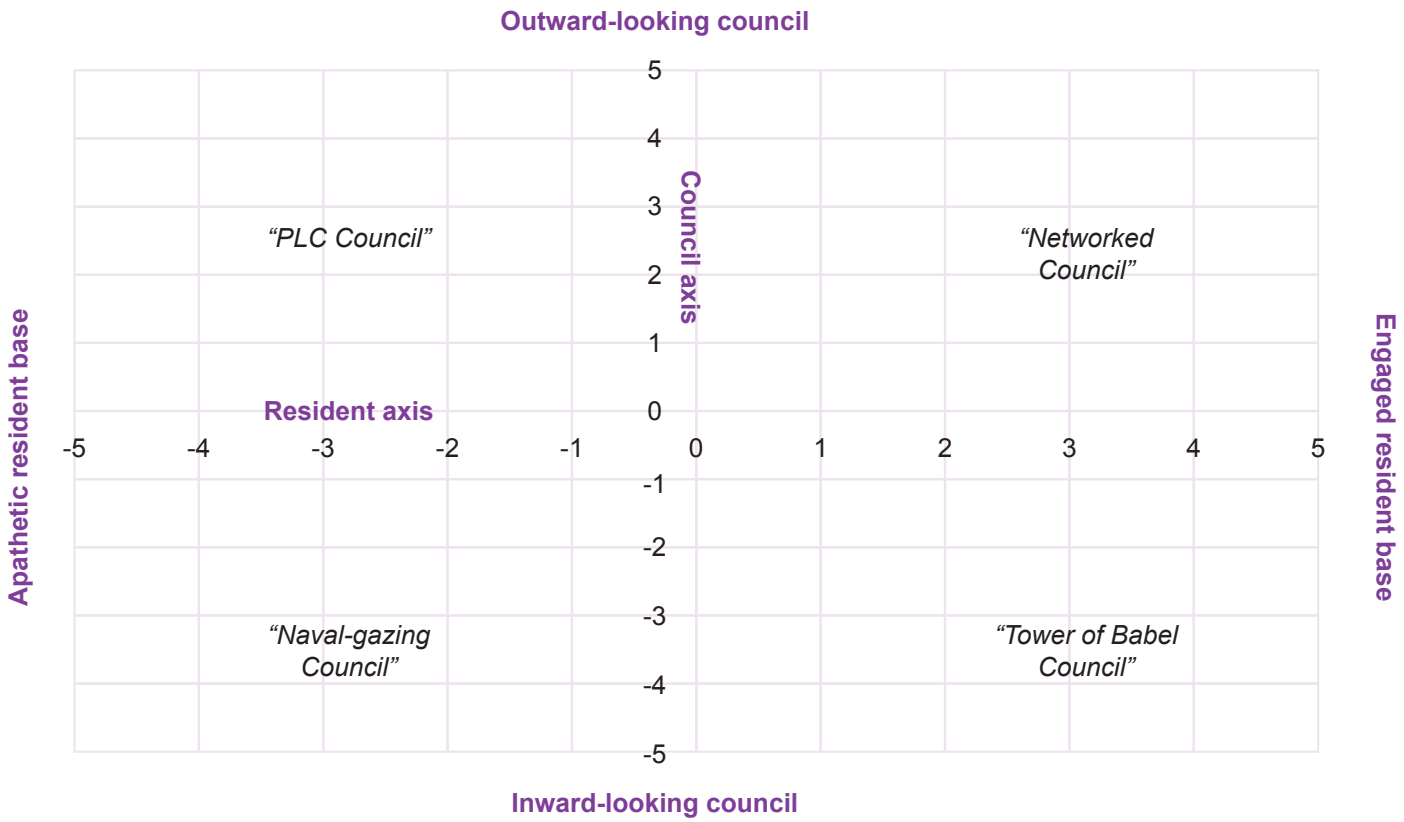
Test: What type of council are you?

The grid below was designed to give you a rough idea of your engagement starting point. It was developed by local councillors for the New Local Government Network.[19] To use it you have to decide both how outward-looking or inward-looking your council is, and how engaged or apathetic your residents are. You then plot these estimates on the grid to see which of the four simplified types of council yours is closest to. Finally, you can interpret your council's position by reading the description of its type beneath the grid.



19 'Future Councillors: Where next for local Politics?' 'Democratic Futures', Simon Parker and Liam Scott-Smith, NLGN, July 2013

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Read the following descriptions of an extremely outward-facing and an extremely inward-facing council. Where does yours lie on the spectrum of +5 to -5?

Outward facing (+5) You're a highly outward-facing authority, with many initiatives driven by exposure to new ideas. You're considered to be at the forefront of local government thinking and look beyond the immediate sector for ideas. There are often specialists visiting and your staff are regularly at conferences and on boards leading the discourse. The cabinet and the leadership are seen as innovators, and the overall style is entrepreneurial.

Inward Facing (-5) You find approaches to most issues from within a set of officers and cabinet members. It is common for there to be defensive responses to decisions, and people rarely 'stick their head above the parapet'. There's a general distrust of the public, and external bodies or new ways of thinking are seen as a threat. Solutions tend to be tried and tested.

Now read the descriptions of very engaged and totally apathetic residents, and place yours on the spectrum of +5 to -5.

Engaged (+5) When decisions are made, or being talked about, local people are always in the room either physically or figuratively. This clear in your communications, which bring people into the conversation. Most initiatives involve local people, and resident groups are working on and delivering services with the council already. When you start an initiative, you are often surprised by how many people take an interest and contact you to get involved.

Apathetic (-5) It is difficult to think of a service or initiative where local people are anything more than superficially involved. Services struggle when changes are required and a great deal of time is spent dealing with difficulties on the front line. Bringing residents into conversations is always an uphill struggle and you rarely scratch the surface. Most people don't know who the leaders in the council are, and it's difficult to get local groups to meaningfully take part.

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Finally, read the description appropriate to your 'type' of council below, and consider what this means for your approach to engagement and the challenges that you face.

PLC Council	Networked Council
• business-like, pragmatic and technocratic • stable politics and a strategic view • high performer able to push through services redesign • executive members more like officers, perhaps with a business background • entrepreneurial flair and paternalistic	• public able to do more for themselves • councillors focused on economic growth • devolution of many services to the neighbourhood level • challenge to traditional councillor role: councillors have an entrepreneurial and activist skill set • integration of services with others such as adult social care with GPs
Navel Gazing Council	**Tower of Babel Council**
• politically divided with regular hung or changing leadership • low public activism • likely to strip back services to bare minimum in the face of cuts • unruly political groups with frontline councillors involved in high-energy scheming and plotting • executive members struggle to get things done	• navel gazing internal characteristics • an active civil society ready to take on and challenge the internal scenario • public protests • electoral challenge from residents associations and independents • pressure for extreme localisation • councillors defensive • highly political with political skills coming to the fore (negotiation, rhetoric, communication and mediation)

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Test: Satisfaction hard won

Various factors outside of your council's service quality will have an impact on satisfaction levels.

This test is a quick assessment which lets you see how difficult it will be for your authority to win the satisfaction of residents.[20]

Look at each statement and then mark how strongly you agree (giving a higher number the more strongly you do). There are more and less rigorous ways of doing the test. You may want to dive straight in, or, for a more scientific outcome your team could benchmark against national averages for each question.

Once you're finished, tally up your score out of 30 and see how you did.

	Mark out of five
1. A high proportion of the population in my community are in managerial and professional occupations	
2. A lower than average proportion of the population we serve is under ten years' old	
3. A high proportion of the housing in our area is in council tax band C	
4. There is a comparatively low inflow of people aged 1–14	
5. My council serves an area which is rural	
6. [For those answering 1, 2 or 3 to Q5] The surrounding area is also fairly urban	
7. Finally, which region are you in? (London = 1 mark; South East, South West, North West, Wales, Northern Ireland,East Midlands, Scotland, West Midlands, Yorkshire, East of England = 2; and North East = 3).	

20 This test is roughly based on work by Ipsos MORI in 2008, 2009, and 2010 which looked at the external factors determining satisfaction, and provided an 'Area Challenge Index' to determine how 'satisfaction resistant' an area is

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How did you score?

Tally up your score once you've done the test, and see what the implications are for your council's satisfaction ratings.

Your council's score	What this means for your satisfaction
5 or less out of 30	You're **against the ropes** – it's really hard going
6–12	You're **swimming upstream** – it's a struggle but not impossible
13–18	You're **jogging on the flat** – some factors work in your favour and some don't
19–24	You're in **pole position** – it's not a doddle, but things are working for you
25 or more	You're **freewheeling** – pretty much everything's in your favour

What this means

Your score gives you an approximation of how ready your resident base is to feel satisfied with your performance. If your organisation is 'against the ropes' or 'swimming upstream' then local people will be less likely to give the benefit of the doubt or appreciate service improvements. This doesn't mean winning trust is impossible, but it means you might have to work harder, instead of being able to rely on residents noticing changes when they happen on the ground.

Engagement is key to this. Services may be stretched and communities more sceptical. However, as we will see, by being straight with people, listening, and gently helping them to understand the situation, you can buck the odds and keep satisfaction high.

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Test: Testing trust

Below are three other insight methods you can use to understand your population. Each looks at the different types of challenges you might be likely to face when it comes to trust. You can use them to create surveys and develop insight about how trusted you are and what sort of challenges you might be likely to encounter.

SOLACE trust test

This test recognises trust as an important part of achieving an informed, involved and engaged local population. Using communication to build trust is sensible but not simple. The trust test asks authorities to assess the extent to which their communications addresses trust, and provides a set of measures that can be used to track improvement over time.

Residents who are informed about services and the issues impacting on those services are well placed to be involved. Trust develops together with a sense that people are able to and aware how to influence decisions. Measuring this information consistently over time will create performance benchmarks locally and nationally. Access the full text and description of the test here.

'Truster' tribes

The think-tank Demos has come up with four types of truster, each with a different relationship to their local council.

- The **'we haves'** tend to be a small but influential minority. They know a lot of people, want to get involved in social issues and have the time to act on that feeling. While 'we haves' are prepared to interact with the council to get things done, they often get frustrated with public service institutions.
- The **'we have nots'** are also an influential minority. They usually live in social housing and have got to know a lot of people through shared adversity. They have individual problems with council services, particularly benefits and housing, and feel the best way to resolve them is by using strength in numbers to secure the things they're entitled to.
- **'I haves'** are a larger group. They're self-sufficient, busy and focused on work and entertainment. They tend to be young and mobile and they seldom integrate into their neighbourhoods. This group wants to be treated as consumers of council services, which they see as important to keep things working.

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- The **'I have nots'** are usually isolated and dependent on the council for financial or social support. They often feel that they cannot help themselves and so they struggle with the council to get the support they feel they deserve. Many resent their dependency and feel trapped or controlled by public agencies.

Thinking about how many of each are in your borough can be a really useful way of figuring out how hard trust will be to win – how much engagement is needed and how to approach the conversation.

Values Modes

The Values Modes insight tool was developed by Cultural Dynamics in 1973. It segments the population into three groups with different driving motivations. The tool offers nuance and is a good way of understanding the different ways people relate to and trust their council, as well as what they're looking for from it. It identifies particular groups who are likely to lack trust and importantly provides a framework for engagement that is most likely to work well with them.

- **Settlers** (or sustenance-driven people) are motivated by resources and by fear of perceived threats. They tend to be older, socially conservative and security conscious. They are often pessimistic about the future, and are driven by immediate, local issues impacting on them and their family.
- **Prospectors** (or outer-directed people) are driven by the esteem of others. They are motivated by success, status and recognition; are usually younger and more optimistic; often conscious of fashion or image; and tend to be swing voters.
- **Pioneers** (or inner-directed people) are motivated by self-realisation. Their views are governed by values of collectivism and fairness. In their personal lives they are ambitious, but seek internal fulfilment rather than the esteem of others.

The group a person belongs to is likely to change over the course of their life. It impacts on their cultural identity, political leaning and trust in the council. Values Modes reveal motives and techniques for behaviour change, and can help you realise who the hardest to reach are so you can strike up a conversation with them.[21]

21 'Consultation and communication in relation to motivational needs', Sciencewise and Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, February 2010

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Foundation II: Should I engage, consult, or do something else?

> "Often the word 'consultation' is used when what is meant is 'information', and scenarios are not put forward. The public are not stupid. They need to know what happens here if they choose this option and what happens there if they choose that option" **Simon Hoare MP**

First and foremost, when thinking about engaging around a specific issue, you need to be clear on the difference between engagement and consultation.

Sometimes other listening events, forms of co-production, types of participation, or information drives, get labelled as 'consultation' when they shouldn't be. This is very risky. From the outset you need to be clear that consultation is a specific and concrete term, and 'engagement' is a much broader and more varied one.

So, before going any further, be clear on whether it's more appropriate to engage, consult or do something else. A good definition of consultation is as follows:

> "The dynamic process of dialogue between individuals or groups, based upon a genuine exchange of views with the objective of influencing decisions, policies or programmes of action."[22]

Engagement is looser. It's about encouraging productive relationships between communities and public bodies.

> "Developing and sustaining a working relationship between one or more public body and one or more community group, to help them both to understand and act on the needs or issues that the community experiences."[23]

Consultation will also have a clear beginning, middle and end. It might be part of an ongoing, continuous period of engagement, but it is a process. Its remit should be finite and the scope for stakeholder input should be clear.

22 Elected Member Briefing Note, Improvement Service and TCI, 2013
23 National Standards for Community Engagement, Scottish Community Development Centre

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Engagement, meanwhile, is broader. At times, it will be about working with the community to design campaigns or interventions or about asking for action and involvement. At other points it will mean seeking insight into what local people think and feel. It increasingly involves using digital technologies, and seeks to make services more responsive to residents' needs.

The **'do I need to consult?' tool**, is useful for working out what you need to do.

Generally speaking, engagement provides the more positive experience for stakeholders. It gives them a greater opportunity to see the productive impact they've had. It builds the community's confidence in the council, and offers insight for the council into the community. At times this might be less true, such as when there's a piece of bad news to be broken – about which residents have no choice. This too is a type of engagement, and one that needs to be honest, transparent, and open in dealing with queries.

Unless there's scope for consultees to influence a decision, then it shouldn't be called a consultation. It might be an information exercise or the co-production of an improvement to a service or a series of listening events. However, it isn't a consultation.

You must make it clear to stakeholders what they can influence and, more importantly, what they can't. Pillar A looks in more detail at how you do the groundwork so that you're clear from the start about the scope and limits of the engagement process.

It's of paramount importance that terminology is correct and that you stick to the process you agree throughout the process (even if you are going beyond statutory requirements). If you say you are going to consult and involve you must be consistent in adhering to that process and those principles. You need to be sure you have the capacity and political commitment to see your agreed approach through to the end. If you change mid way through you can be open to challenge. As the story of **'R (ex parte Bokrosova) v Lambeth 2015'** demonstrates, getting this wrong can lead to cynicism and disenchantment and the consequences could include damage to credibility or legal threat.

The terminology was codified in 1969 by Sherry Arnstein in her 'ladder of citizen participation'.[24] The Consultation Institute has sought to rationalise and update its use and has set out the four essential parts.

- **information-giving**: where residents are informed, but have no influence
- **consultation**: where residents can inform decisions, but don't have the final say

24 'A Ladder of Citizen Participation', Sherry R Arnstein, 1969

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- **co-production**: where things are done jointly, acting together
- **supporting citizen power**: where residents lead and the council stands back

It is worth noting that the Consultation Institute takes issue with Arnstein's point of view that participation is intrinsically flawed if it does not result in transfer of power to communities.[25] Of course, citizens will ideally take more and more responsibility. **Pillar D** and **Pillar G** respectively look at co-production and the enablement of 'citizen power' in more detail. But councils need to be realistic – sometimes you need to inform or consult in the traditional senses.

In deciding what level to engage at, you need to be aware that stakeholders' interest will vary, depending on how important an issue is. Are people happy just to be kept informed or do they want to be involved?

Identifying stakeholders and their level of interest and influence can be simplified by stakeholder mapping. **This tool**, which features under **Foundation III**, will help you to prioritise and choose the right level of dialogue for each group. Foundation III also includes more on how to choose the right platforms, mediums and channels for engagement. This way you can avoid engaging too little on burning issues, or too much on questions people don't care about.

Pitching this right is vital, and this is where pre-engagement comes in. We'll look at this at the start of Section 2: Surpassing expectations, but it's basically about working out, through initial conversations with stakeholders, how broad your parameters are and how much scope there is. Ideally, you should aim for continuous engagement with stakeholders and communities, to build trust on both sides. This will mean that if you do need to actively consult, your stakeholders are informed and you have a good basis for participation.

What next?

> Skip to **Foundation III**, which is about the right channels to use for your engagement

> Return to the start of this **section**

> Head straight to **Section 2: 'Surpassing expectations'**

25 Arnstein's Ladder versus the Gunning Principles – TCI September 2016

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Story: 'R (ex parte Bokrosova) v Lambeth 2015'

What happens when consultation becomes mixed up with other types of engagement – the perils of unaffordable expectations

'R (ex parte Bokrosova) v Lambeth 2015' was a classic case of judicial review resulting from the conflation of consultation and another form of engagement. The Consultation Institute calls it "an excellent illustration of some of the perils of enthusiastic co-production and the dangers of inadequate financial clarity."

The 1985 Housing Act, under Section 105, requires councils to make 'such arrangements as it considers appropriate' to involve tenants in significant changes to housing management, and in this case, this was held to amount to 'consultation'. The authority adopted a 'detailed and sophisticated' programme of consultation. This included significant elements of co-production, in an attempt to secure the agreement of tenants to major changes that would address serious deficiencies in the housing stock. This process culminated in the identification of five separate options. One was total refurbishment. Two were partial refurbishment, with some demolition. The other two were for more radical redevelopment.

During the course of the process, the council became concerned that the first three options could not be funded, but did not share the financial modelling with the consultative working group set up to look at funding aspects. When Lambeth eventually withdrew the unaffordable options whilst the consultation was still proceeding, tenants mounted a legal challenge claiming the decision was unlawful. The Consultation Institute points out that the case was 'a clear interpretation of the S.105 consultation requirement' and 'points towards the application of Gunning Principles.'

The legal view was that, "Section 105 does not refer to "consultation", but it is, in substance, an obligation to consult… The Section 105 arrangements in this case consisted of the detailed and sophisticated programme of consultation... The decision had two relevant effects. It was a decision to renege on those arrangements, and it meant that the council was unable, before making a decision on the regeneration of the estate, to consider the representations which would have been generated had the arrangements been followed."

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Test: Do I need to consult?

Public consultations are challenging, time-consuming and cost money. Today, given the increasing number of consultation-related judicial reviews, knowing when a consultation is required can save a great deal of time and money. The Consultation Institute identifies two areas to focus on when deciding if you need to consult:

- statutory provisions
- doctrine of legitimate expectation (common law)

Statutory provisions

Statutory provisions are legal requirements which state that a consultation must occur. They exist in several key areas.

- **Health –** In health and social care, such requirements exist in the Health and Social Care Act 2012, Section 14Z2, which states that "the clinical commissioning group must make arrangements to secure that individuals to whom the services are being or may be provided are involved (whether by being consulted or provided with information or in other ways)."[26]
- **Environment –** In consultations relating to the development of environmental policy, Environmental Impact Assessments[27] must be carried out, to determine potential effects on the natural environment.
- **Equality –** The Equality Act 2010[28] states that public bodies must have "due regard" to a variety of Equalities objectives (Equality Act 2010, Section 149) and consequently, Equality Analysis (formally Equality Impact Assessments) must be carried out to demonstrate that decision-makers are fully aware of the impact that changes may have on stakeholders. The concept of "due regard" was reinforced in 2012 during the review of the Public Sector Equality Duty which "requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities"[29]

26 Health and Social Care Act 2012, Accessed 8 December 2016
27 Environmental Impact Assessment, Accessed: 13 December 2016
28 Equality Act 2010, Accessed: 13 December 2016
29 Review of public sector Equality Duty 2012, Accessed: 13 December 2016

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- **Best Value Duty Statutory Guidance**
  The Best Value Duty[30] applies to how "authorities should work with voluntary and community groups and small businesses when facing difficult funding decisions."[31] It states that authorities are to "consider overall value, including economic, environmental and social value, when reviewing service provision."[32] To reach this balance, prior to choosing how to achieve the Best Value Duty, authorities remain 'under a duty to consult representatives of a wide range of local persons.'[33] This duty to consult is not optional. Section 3(2) of the Local Government Act 1999[34] provides details on those who should be engaged in such consultations.

Doctrine of legitimate expectation (common law)

This is rapidly becoming the most important aspect of the law of consultation. It is now seen as common law, whereby the courts recognise consultees' rights to expect a fair process which incorporates guidance and management promises. The legitimate expectation applies:

- when there has been a clear promise of consultation
- where official guidance or policies imply a promise to act in a particular way
- where there is a withdrawal of a benefit with significant impacts to be considered
- where the nature of the relationship would create unfairness if there were to be inadequate consultation.

Essentially, where people have come to legitimately expect a process of consultation, for example, with local authority budget cuts or healthcare changes, there are grounds for a judicial review should a public consultation not take place. Similarly, a consultation must be conducted properly should the choice be taken to embark on one (whether a legal requirement exists for it or not). This is part of ensuring that the consultation process remains a fair one.

30 Revised Best Value Statutory Guidance 2015, Accessed: 13 December 2016
31 Ibid (p.4)
32 Ibid (p.5)
33 Revised Best Value Statutory Guidance 2015, (p.5) Accessed: 13 December 2016
34 Local Government Act 1999, Accessed: 13 December 2016

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Foundation III: How do I decide which medium and channels to use?

> "The idea of citizen participation is a little like eating spinach: no one is against it because it is good for you." **Sherry Arnstein, Author 1969**[35]

The ultimate goal is that engagement becomes second nature. In this ideal world, decisions will less frequently reach the point of formal consultations over unpopular decisions, because engagement will be happening all the time, and council and community will be in tune with each other.

There will still be many occasions when specific engagement is required or a particular issue needs resident input. 'How best to address engagement on issue X?' you'll need to ask. This instantly raises nuts and bolts questions, such as whether to commission a listening exercise or design an event; whether to do something face-to-face or set up an online questionnaire.

A huge element of this is about speaking to hard-to-reach groups or disengaged stakeholders. Often there will be stakeholders who need to be asked but who aren't IT literate enough to participate in an e-consultation, or physically mobile enough to come to a town hall event. Putting your consultation online and waiting for a queue to form at the town hall won't cut it, and legal challenges have come about in the past because councils have bypassed stakeholder groups in this way. The **'How to choose'** and **'Stakeholder mapping model'** tools, which feature below, offer ways to get your process right so you don't miss key groups. The **information about social networks in Pillar E** gives more insight on how council channels can reach further into the community.

Some things are fairly obvious. For a survey of older residents, a digitised consultation may bypass a large section of your target group. Other aspects are subtler. If an issue is controversial or emotionally charged, for example, group events or 'town hall'-style Q&As may be the wrong approach. They could lead to quieter voices or minority opinions being drowned out.

To get it right, you'll first need a thorough analysis and understanding of the context. The more clarity on this, the better. There are four key questions to ask:

35 See 'A dangerous and promising path', Blake L. Jones, University of Kentucky College of Social Work

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1. what is the objective of the engagement?
2. who are the stakeholders and what are their needs?
3. what stage of the decision-making process are we at?
4. what resources and limitations apply?[36]

This analysis should give you a good appreciation of what is required from the engagement exercise, before you begin deciding on which methods to use.

Your will have a clear view of your stakeholders and their abilities, allowing you to design and develop activities that don't exclude or create barriers for sections of the community. If the project is already at an advanced stage, you can then make choices about how you communicate the role engagement is playing. Do you need information, for example, or policy ideas? Is there a specific ask or proposal you're looking to road-test?

You'll often find that a uniform approach to this process is not appropriate. A set of focus groups and a survey may be right for project X, but for a variety of reasons may be inappropriate for project Y.

Once you have that analysis your aim should be to create multiple channels to reflect the particular demands of your engagement. You're legally obliged, when consulting, to use a diverse range of channels which are suitable to the context. Decisions have been taken to judicial review in the past precisely because a council chose only a single channel, such as consulting online. (See **'Draper Versus Lincolnshire County Council'**. There is a longer list of **key judicial review cases** in Foundation IV).

For example, a piece of engagement around regeneration may need to cater for residents on an estate who have concerns about changes and anxieties about upheaval. Choosing a personalised format, using familiar and convenient channels, will be vital to making sure this potential sense of turmoil isn't exacerbated. As part of the same process, however, you may have business interests and community groups that need an overview of potential impacts and opportunities. The method of engagement and the tone of communications for this second set of stakeholders will be different.

36 'Community Planning Toolkit', Big Lottery Fund, Community Places, 2014

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Knowing your audience (see **Foundation I**) will be a significant help to getting tone and format right. You need a variety of dialogue methods so you can involve a high proportion of stakeholders. This should be a mix of quantitative (feedback forms/ surveys) and qualitative (focus groups/ deliberative events/ exhibitions/roadshows/vox pops etc).

Based on your analysis there is a body of practice which you can apply. There are many examples of different and creative ways of engaging.[37] These include community narratives research, community forums, online discussion areas, consensus-building exercises, and visioning exercises. Click on the **Glossary button** to find out more about what these are. Any or all of these may be right for your engagement, but only by thinking through what you are aiming to achieve can you tell if they are.

What next?

> Skip to **Foundation IV**, which is about making sure engagement stays within the law

> Return to the start of **this section**

> Head straight to **'Section 2: Surpassing expectations'**

37 'Community Planning Toolkit', Big Lottery Fund, Community Places and National Lottery, 2014

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Test: How to choose the right level of engagement

Engagement is a complicated process. To make it successful you need to consider its inputs and outputs, and the form that it takes. This test suggests steps for approaching engagement exercises. A tool can't tell you all the answers, but it can tell you some of the questions to address.[38]

1. what is the objective of the engagement?
2. who are the stakeholders and what are their needs?
3. what stage of the engagement process are we at?
4. what resources and limitations apply?

Only then can you answer the final, key question – 'What methods should I choose?'

What's the objective of the engagement?

For engagement to be successful both the council and residents need to know exactly what it is for. The objectives in the table below build on the different levels of engagement outlined in Foundation II.

Information giving	There is little scope to comment or influence the decisions that are being made. We do need to explain what is happening and be transparent
Consultation	There is little scope to influence the decisions that are being made but there is room to work with residents on what happens next.
	There is some scope to influence the decision that will be taken and we are open to alternatives.
Co-production	There is a lot of room to shape the decision/service and what it is that we are deciding on. It is important that we have well-informed and involved sections of the community to help with this.
Citizen power	The decision or service is up for grabs and there's potential to work in partnership with local people. We are offering long-term involvement.

38 'Community Planning Toolkit', Big Lottery Fund, Community Places and National Lottery, 2014

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Who are the stakeholders and what are their needs?

You can use the **stakeholder tool** to help with this. It will help you sort those you need to engage from those you don't. You need to consider the needs of those you do. Each group has different needs, again the stakeholder tool will help you here. When you have your final stakeholder analysis, you will have a sense of the barriers to engagement that you need to overcome. The section below is an extract from the community planning toolkit designed by Community Places:

Potential Barriers	Design Issues to consider
i. the capacity and ability of different stakeholders to participate ii. 'hard to reach groups' such as young people or older people, minority groups or socially excluded groups iii. levels of community infrastructure iv. contested or divided communities v. rural isolation vi. gaps in information vii. literacy and numeracy levels and dominance of oral culture	i. techniques and engagement methods to be used ii. need for independent facilitation iii. location and accessibility of the venue iv. the number and type of engagement events v. transport requirements vi. childcare needs vii. format and content of communication and publicity materials viii. use of interpreters and signers ix. need for outreach activities

Here is an example of how you might overcome a lack of engagement with time-poor parents.[39]

> "Time-poor parents are a good example of a specific set of needs. Parents of young children can be difficult to engage particularly if they are working. Setting up standalone events to engage parents is likely to be both difficult and unsuccessful. Parents can however be reached via their children; marketing companies have known for years that children are a way of accessing the decision-making parents. Schools based projects are a positive way of gaining legitimacy and influence particularly if the children are encouraged to involved the family as part of the project through 'family learning'. Examples where this may be appropriate, healthy weights, physical activity, community visioning exercises, voter registration, and community planning amongst others. This type of approach has collateral benefits of building parental engagement with schools."

39 'How to involve hard to reach parents', National College for School Leadership, Clare Campbell, 2011

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What stage of the decision-making process are we at?

Below is a table for the different channels and methods you should use depending on how far advanced you are in the process. The idea, of course, is that once you're past the initial stage of just beginning to talk, the rest should follow fairly naturally, as you become more familiar with stakeholders.

Where are you?	Communication	Engagement methods	Information
Just beginning to talk	Exploratory style focused on gauging awareness	Focus groups and research surveys	Introducing initial thoughts
It's out there and people are talking	Setting the agenda and communication of clear direction	Feedback sessions, deliberative events and co-production	Explanatory, making a case for the direction
Plans are receiving feedback and we're working on it	Formal communication that invites feedback	More formal planning and impact sessions	Detailed plans and the impacts, roles and responsibilities
Decisions have been made and we're dealing with the consequences	Directional communication, front-line teams and others delivering messages	Face-to-face with front-line teams and individual correspondence; high level support for transition	Guidance on what happens following decisions

What resources do you have and what limitations apply?

We can all design the perfect engagement process given a blank sheet of paper, but in reality the paper is rarely blank. Restricted budgets and legal requirements about timelines mean that your goal is effective and efficient engagement rather than perfect engagement. To achieve that you need to identify and prioritise the resources at your disposal. These might include:[40]

- input by staff, volunteers and other interested stakeholders
- background information or briefing papers on the issues or plan proposals

40 See The community planning toolkit

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- independent facilitation
- communication and promotion, venue hire, transport, childcare, translation
- printing and circulating a report for provision of feedback
- resourcing local community and voluntary groups to (where necessary) support people in understanding and responding to information and proposals.

You need to have a budget that matches the scale and scope of the process. You will have defined that when you set out your objectives and likely stakeholders. If there is a mismatch, then either ambition or budget must give way. Before dropping anything from your engagement plan, make sure you consider the statutory requirements.

What methods should I choose?

The below, again taken from the community planning toolkit, is a list of the different types of engagement type you might consider. All of these are defined more fully in **the Glossary**.

- art and creativity
- community mapping
- planning for real ©
- public meetings
- focus groups and workshops
- deliberative events
- web based consultation
- future search
- open space technology
- citizens' juries
- consensus building
- citizens' panel
- street stalls
- questionnaires
- local community meetings

What next?

> Skip to **Foundation IV**

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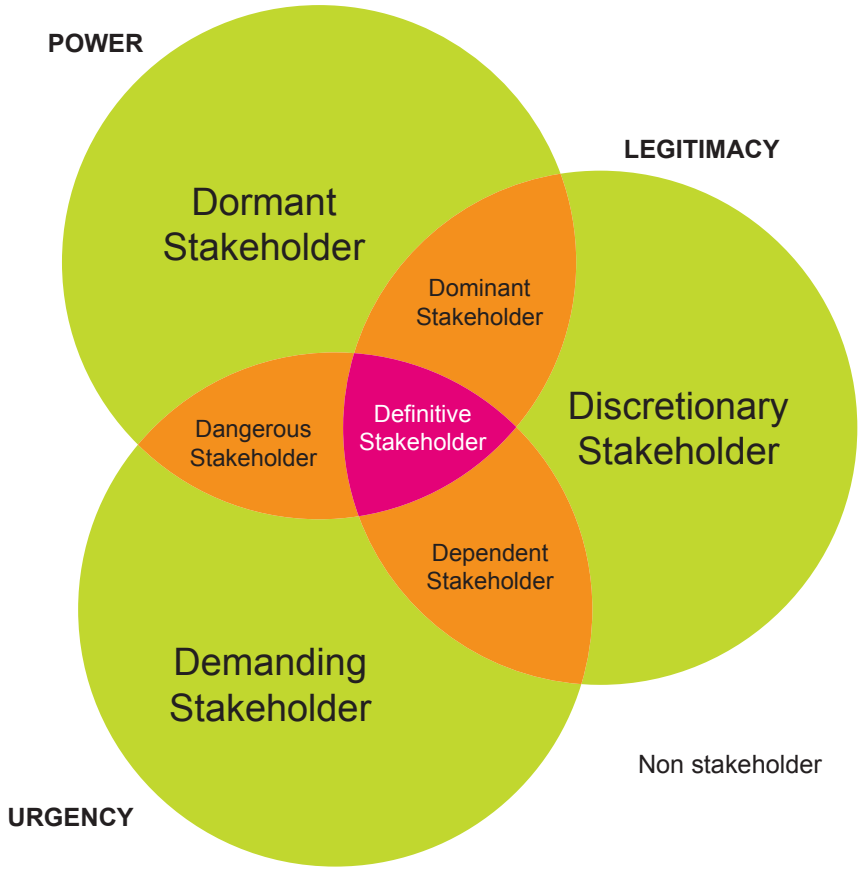
Tool: How to map stakeholders

Stakeholder mapping is a key part of any engagement process. Every authority will have a variety of interest groups to think about engaging. These can include:

I. local residents
II. area-based groups
III. communities of interest
IV. faith-based groups
V. racial, ethnic and cultural groups
VI. local community and voluntary groups
VII. web-based or virtual groups
VIII. statutory partners

We can't engage all of the people all of the time. People don't want to be engaged on everything. The tool below can help prioritise and make judgements about where to invest your efforts.[41] It's built on the following three overlapping spheres:

- **power:** how much they can influence the decision
- **legitimacy**: how much right they have to be heard
- **urgency**: how strongly they feel about an issue



41 The tool is known as the Stakeholder Salience model, and was designed in 1997

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This may look complex but it's helpful in shaping a more nuanced approach to addressing public issues, one which brings in those with the power to help change things, without drowning out those who have a legitimate right to be heard or who feel most urgently about an issue.

To use the tool, label your stakeholders as either green, amber or red, to denote medium, high or very high priority. Someone who has power over the decision but is disinterested and unaffected by it may just be green, for example. If they're affected as well and have legitimacy in being heard, then they move up to amber. If they're also very exercised about the outcome then they become red.

For instance, a high-profile councillor for an estate being developed might be a green stakeholder. If they also live on the estate then they'd become amber. If they were very angry about the development, they'd become red.

Having created a comprehensive list of stakeholders labelled in this way, you can then categorise the different individuals and groups.

The version below is filled out, using the hypothetical example of a council's engagement with the local community about regulation of the sex industry. It's realistic about how the change will be made – businesses will probably have more power – but still makes sure less powerful or interested parties have a voice. The strategy for reaching each group flows from this.

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	Residents	Sex workers	Businesses
Interested (mark 1 or 0)	**1**	**0**	**1**
Entitled to be heard (mark 1 or 0)	**1**	**1**	**1**
Powerful (mark 1 or 0)	**0**	**0**	**1**
Overall priority (add combined scores)	**2**	**1**	**3**
Channels	Local press, social media, institutions like schools, local organisations	Ad hoc – brokered introductions and social networks	Regular briefings, e-bulletins, business conferences
Framing	'Your view is vital to us and it will be quick and confidential to participate'	'We will respect your view. We will make it quick and easy for you to have your say'	'You can influence the area you trade in'
Tactics	Partner with schools and resident organisations, third party intros at regular events	Highly proactive, safe, anonymous, compensated for time and input	Professional briefings, use advocates from the Chamber of Commerce
Call-to-action	'Help the community – on your own terms'	'Be paid and be heard'	'An opportunity to influence your area'

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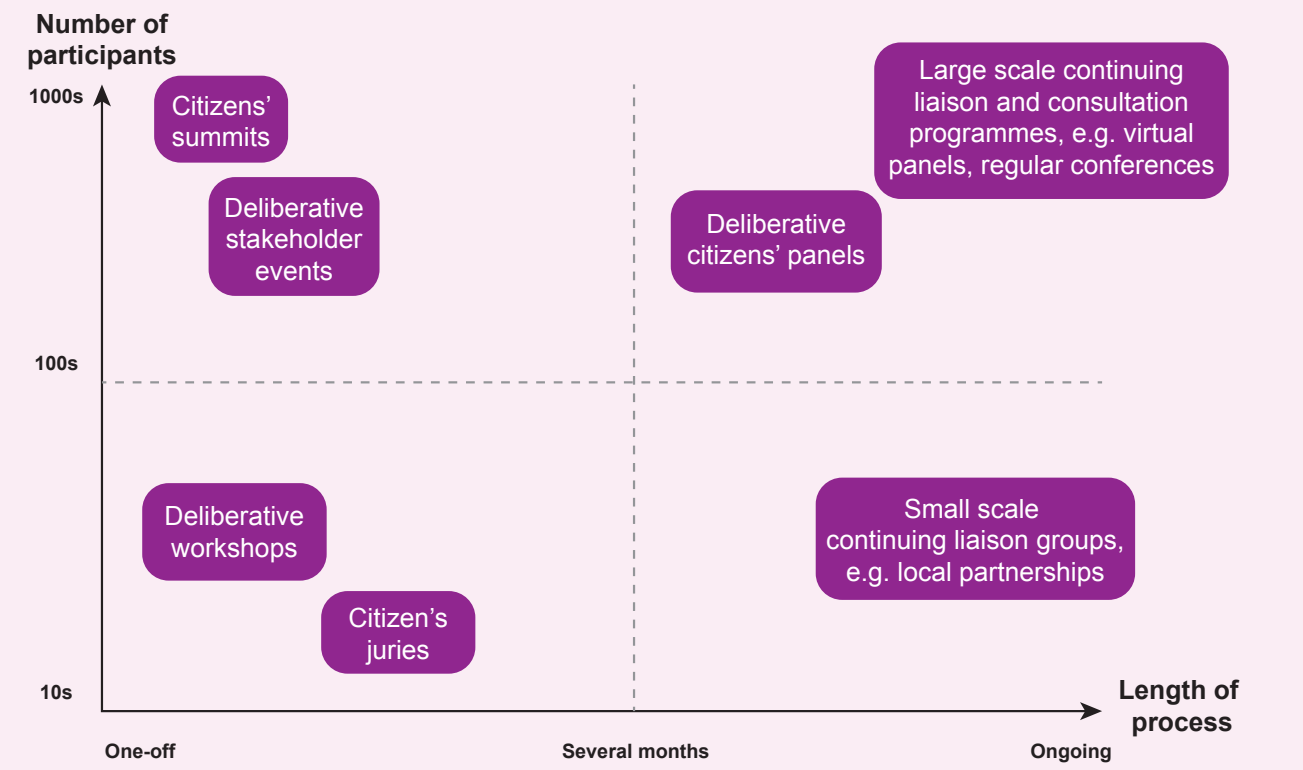
Tool: What type of engagement to use to promote dialogue and considered discussion

'Involve', an organisation that promotes public involvement, provide the following chart for working out which sort of format to use for this type of engagement (a full list of different types of formats are included in **the Glossary**). The chart maps the size of the stakeholder sample against the length of the engagement. You can read more here.



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'Involve' has also put together a useful nine-step guide to getting public engagement right. The key is not to start with a method because it sounds spectacular, but to think through the nine steps and then choose a method.

1. **Scope**
   What is actually open to change and have you made that clear to the public? Which of the following levels of engagement do you want?
   - inform: provide information to the public
   - consult: obtain feedback from them
   - involve: work with them to answer a pre-set question
   - collaborate: define the question together and share each aspect of decision-making
   - empower: place the final decision-making in their hands
2. **Purpose**
   Why the engagement? What kind of information are you trying to get from the public that you can't get any other way? What do you want to do with it?
3. **Outcomes**
   What specific outcomes, linked to the purpose, are you looking for? And how about secondary outcomes, like increasing mutual understanding or developing contacts that might be useful later?
4. **Outputs**
   What should the engagement process produce? eg a report
5. **Participants**
   Who needs to be involved to make the answers to the above possible?
6. **Budget**
   How much money is available?
7. **Timescales**
   When do you need the results by? Are there any other time constraints for the project as a whole or any of its stages?

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8. **Institutional response**
   When and how will the relevant decision-makers review the results of the engagement process and respond?
9. **Monitoring and evaluation**
   What information would it be useful to collect about the project (eg performance against desired outcomes, successes, learnings etc)? How are you going to go about it?

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Foundation IV: How do I make sure I stick to the law of consultation?

"I fought the law and the law won." **The Clash**

We have discussed the legal and regulatory framework for consultation and engagement in Foundation Two. Most consultations, even highly contested ones, do not end up in the courts as disputes and challenges are resolved by other means. The ultimate recourse for those who feel they have been unfairly served is judicial review. This is the legal instrument in place as a check to make sure public bodies carry out their duties fairly.

There are many judicial review precedents that are relevant to consultation and engagement. For example, the case of R (ex parte LH) v Shropshire County Council made clear for future consultations that where a closure of a service is proposed, specific proposals must be consulted on. The case of R (ex parte the Partingdale Lane Residents Association) v London Borough of Barnet, meanwhile, made clear that emails showing that a decision has already been made could be used as evidence.

We've already touched briefly on judicial review in earlier parts of this guide. This Foundation considers in more detail how to avoid it, and ensure compliance with the law.

A consultation can be challenged if it's unfair, if the process was flawed or the consultation gave rise to misleading expectations. Anyone with 'standing' in relation to a decision from a consultation – i.e. anyone who experiences its impact – is entitled to bring a complaint.

There are clear rules about when you need to formally consult. These include when there's a legal requirement, when you've promised to do so, and when the legal rights of particular groups are affected. In the lead-up to any consultation you'll have had some level of engagement with stakeholders, and may even have done some co-production (**Pillar D** has more about what co-production is). Be mindful that lines can blur; if you're not careful, your engagement can quickly become a full consultation with binding legislation. We've already looked, in **Foundation II**, at the situations where you do and don't need to consult.

Another point to note is that when a judicial review challenge is upheld, it's not about the subject of consultation, it is always about the process of consultation. (Click for a **map of what the judicial review process looks like**). So, the procedure must be absolutely watertight. Complaints can sometimes be managed by taking steps like extending the consultation.

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There is also specific legislation that needs to be taken account of, including the Local Government Act 1999, the Health & Social Care Act 2012 and the Equalities Act 2010.

*

Once a judicial review has been raised and the case goes to court there is a set of rules that a Judge will use to determine whether the consultation is lawful. These are known as the four **Gunning Principles**, and it's important to always keep them in mind. In simple terms they dictate that consultation:

1. must happen before the decision is made
2. must give sufficient context and information
3. should provide enough time for people to think things over
4. should demonstrate real deliberation and thought over the results

For example, consulting only online would be prohibited by the second Gunning Principle. **Pillar I** looks at the role of digital technologies in consultation, and the rules around it.

While the Gunning Principles offer a legal precedent, there are broader guidelines for good consultation and engagement, which are updated by the Government each year. While they're not legally binding (and are slightly more geared to central government use), it's important to keep them in mind, as they play an important role as a further round of checks.

With shrinking budgets, councils can't afford the expense of getting the legal aspects of consultation and engagement wrong. Court cases are expensive, and the media firefighting and reputational damage that comes with a legal challenge bring their own costs.

What next?

> Skip to **Foundation V**, which is about taking pre-emptive steps to avoid legal trouble

> Return to the start of **this section**

> Head straight to **'Section 2: Surpassing Expectations'**

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Rules: The Gunning Principles

They were coined by Stephen Sedley QC in a court case in 1985 relating to a school closure consultation (R v London Borough of Brent ex parte Gunning). Prior to this, very little consideration had been given to the laws of consultation. Sedley defined that a consultation is only legitimate when these four principles are met:

1. **proposals are still at a formative stage**
   A final decision has not yet been made, or predetermined, by the decision makers
2. **there is sufficient information to give 'intelligent consideration'**
   The information provided must relate to the consultation and must be available, accessible, and easily interpretable for consultees to provide an informed response
3. **there is adequate time for consideration and response**
   There must be sufficient opportunity for consultees to participate in the consultation. There is no set timeframe for consultation,[42] despite the widely accepted twelve-week consultation period, as the length of time given for consultee to respond can vary depending on the subject and extent of impact of the consultation
4. **'conscientious consideration' must be given to the consultation responses before a decision is made**
   Decision-makers should be able to provide evidence that they took consultation responses into account

These principles were reinforced in 2001 in the 'Coughlan Case (R v North and East Devon Health Authority ex parte Coughlan[43]), which involved a health authority closure and confirmed that they applied to all consultations, and then in a Supreme Court case in 2014 (R ex parte Moseley v LB Haringey[44]), which endorsed the legal standing of the four principles. Since then, the Gunning Principles have formed a strong legal foundation from which the legitimacy of public consultations is assessed, and are frequently referred to as a legal basis for judicial review decisions.[45]

What next?

> Skip on to **Foundation V**

42 In some local authorities, their local voluntary Compact agreement with the third sector may specify the length of time they are required to consult for. However, in many cases, the Compact is either inactive or has been cancelled so the consultation timeframe is open to debate
43 BAILII, England and Wales Court of Appeal (Civil Decision) Decisions, Accessed: 13 December 2016.
44 BAILII, United Kingdom Supreme Court, Accessed: 13 December 2016
45 The information used to produce this document has been taken from the Law of Consultation training course provided by The Consultation Institute

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Knowledge: What is judicial review?

Understanding what the law says, and that there are actions you need to take to ensure you're acting within it, is vital in avoiding costly court battles. This section will provide you with the basics and further reading.

What is judicial review?

As public bodies, local authorities make thousands of public-facing decisions. Each one has the potential to impact on individuals and groups. Judicial review is there to give the public the chance to challenge the council's use of its administrative powers. Where there is a claim against a decision in the public realm, a case may be heard by the courts.

The courts' scope is limited and supervisory. Often the court is looking at the procedural basis of decisions and making judgements about adherence to legal procedures as set down by Parliament. As such, your decisions will be at risk if you have not followed the laws that cover the decision-making function that you are exercising. These might be contained in any number of Government legislative acts such as The Local Government Act 2003 or The Childcare Act 2006. It is important to be on top of the legislation that is relevant to the work you are undertaking.

How does it impact on engagement?

Engagement tends to be part of a wider process of change in which decisions that impact on people will be made. You may be engaging residents on the potential of co-delivering cultural services with residents' groups. Some elements of the decision-making process, where they relate to statutory services such as libraries, demand a formal consultation. The consultation element of that decision is a recognised legal process and you need to adhere not only to the law that covers library provision but also the procedural law on consultation. The legal standards most often quoted in relation to consultation are the **Gunning Principles** and **Legitimate Expectations**.

For a fuller explanation of judicial review, read the Public Law Project 'Introduction to Judicial Review' or the Government's Judge Over Your Shoulder document.

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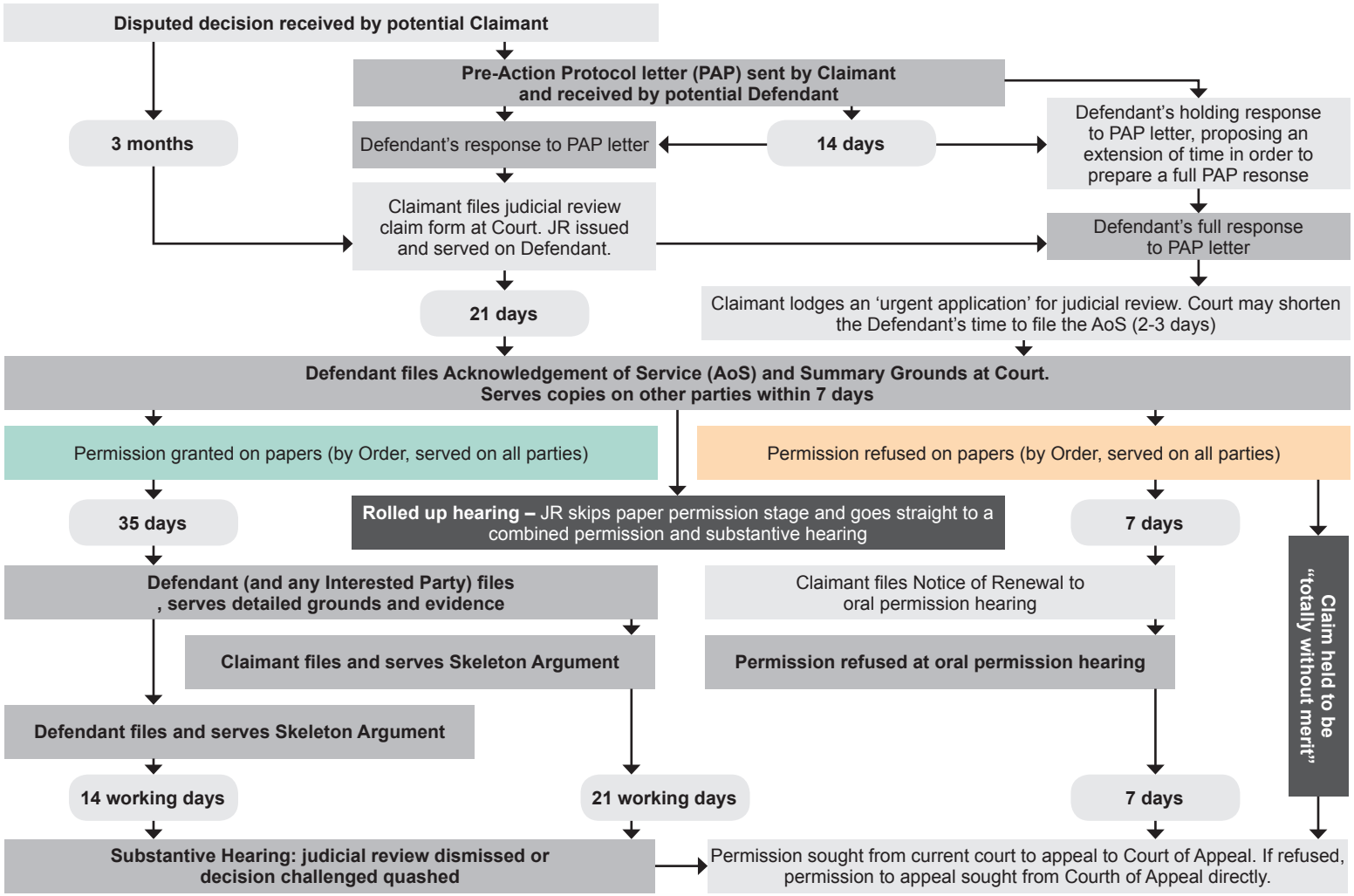
Tool: The Judge Over Your Shoulder flowchart for judicial review

The stages of judicial review



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Judicial review is a complicated and lengthy process, summarised well in the above' flowchart. Further flowcharts for the appeal process can be accessed in the Judge Over Your Shoulder guidance.

The four main things to consider are:

1. does the claimant have 'standing'? In other words, is the decision they are challenging sufficiently relevant to them or the person they are representing?
2. has the claimant brought their challenge within the relevant time limit?
3. has the claimant tried all alternative remedies to judicial review?
4. can the matter be settled without the need for litigation? Is alternative dispute resolution appropriate?

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Knowledge: Where others went wrong – key judicial review cases

To reduce the chances of a judicial review, it's worth examining the precedents. Here are nine of the most instructive from the last fifteen years. Click on their titles for the judges' decisions.

- R (ex parte Nash) v London Borough of Barnet
  A local campaigner challenged the council's decision to outsource £470m of services. The judge rejected the challenge because it had not been made early enough. The Court of Appeal upheld this judgment, but it added that the council had not done enough to seek residents' opinions about the outsourcing.

  Significance:

  - first judicial observations on the Best Value duty to consult
  - proposals to outsource at a strategic level almost certainly require adequate consultation

- R (ex parte LH) v Shropshire County Council
  The council held a consultation on the policy of 'individualised' budgets, meaning disabled people (such as LH) could choose their own form of social care. It held a second consultation, which made it clear that the policy would involve the closure of some (unspecified) day centres. The council then closed Hartleys day centre in Shrewsbury. The court rejected a challenge from LH, but the Court of Appeal ruled that a consultation into the specific closure of Hartleys should have been held.

  Significance:

  - even well-conducted consultations, if their scope isn't wide enough, can lead to unlawful decisions
  - for public bodies managing the closure of facilities, specific proposals must be consulted upon

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- R (ex parte the Partingdale Lane Residents Association) v London Borough of Barnet
  In line with a commitment he had made in his election manifesto, a new cabinet member instructed officers to prepare traffic orders to re-open Partingdale Lane to through traffic, and to carry out associated consultations. In speeches and emails, the councillor stated that the lane 'will be re-opened'. The claimants argued that the consultation had been pre-determined. They won.

  Significance:

  - this is a clear case of pre-determination and shows how careful elected members must be, especially with manifesto commitments
  - the court ruled that the Gunning Principles applied to statutory consultation requirements
  - the case illustrates the evidentiary value of emails etc. in establishing that the decision-maker had made up their mind.

- The Royal Brompton Hospital v The Joint Committee of PCTs
  The NHS was seeking to rationalise where children's cardiac surgery took place. The Royal Brompton Hospital was excluded from all four configuration options published in the consultation, and it therefore sought a judicial review of the exercise. The judge initially found for the hospital, having been persuaded that deficiencies in the way the NHS had gathered and presented information about the hospital's research capability would have misled consultees. This decision was reversed by the Court of Appeal.

  Significance:

  - although the hospital eventually lost, the case shows that disappointed consultees can make an argument if 'option development' processes are seriously flawed
  - this shows the advantages of offering consultees the opportunity to advocate solutions other than the stated ones
  - Ii dissuades judicial review applicants from involving the courts where the consultation process itself is the best solution

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- Draper v Lincolnshire County Council
  Lincolnshire Council proposed to reduce its libraries from 44 to 15, in order to cut its library budget by two million pounds. The consultation made it clear that whilst the council was not open to influence about the number and definition of the libraries it would retain, it was open to considering other options. Campaigners challenged the subsequent decision, alleging pre-determination, and also that the council had failed to consider an expression of interest submitted by Greenwich Leisure Ltd, claiming that it could save £1.8m. The campaigners won the case.

  Significance:

  - this centres on the provisions of the Localism Act
  - it demonstrates the perils of a single option consultation

- R (ex parte Moseley) v London Borough of Haringey
  The Welfare Reform Act 2012 requires English councils to devise a Council Tax Reduction Scheme, and to consult the public on it. After a challenge to Haringey Council had failed at the Court of Appeal, it went to the Supreme Court which decided that the council had not provided people with enough information about the true range of options available.

  Significance:

  - the first consultation case to go to the Supreme Court, with a resounding endorsement of the Gunning Principles
  - the court rejected the assertion that consultees could have been presumed to have known what the other options may have been
  - the case edges the law further towards a requirement to tell the public more about discarded options.

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- Kendall v Rochford DC & DCLG
  Mrs Kendall challenged a council decision, arguing that the council had failed to comply with its own 'Statement of Community Involvement', and failed to observe Article 6 of the Strategic Environment Assessment Directive. The judge ruled that the council had met its statutory requirements, but he also said that the council had been over reliant on its website to reach key stakeholders.

  Significance:

  - the case explores the role of a council's Statement of Community Involvement
  - it was a landmark decision on consultation methods: some consultation exercises must not be over reliant on new technology
  - Ii demonstrates the relevance of Aarhus Convention principles [46] (as implemented through EU directives and UK regulations)

- R (ex parte Capenhurst) v Leicester City Council
  Six charities challenged the council's decisions to terminate their funding. Although the council did undertake a consultation, it claimed that this was not legally necessary as the relationship with the charities was contractual. The court rejected this and held that once a consultation is carried out, it must act fairly (ie consistent with Sedley/Gunning) and in this case the council had not explained the criteria for terminating funding well enough to the charities.

  Significance:

  - a reminder that fairness in funding decisions or cutting services requires attention to detail.

46 Established by UNECE (the united nations economic council for Europe) the principles empower people with rights to access easily information and participate effectively in decision-making

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- Diocese of Menevia v City and County of Swansea Council
  A successful challenge to the council's plans to withdraw support to families whose children travelled to faith schools. The court found the council guilty of "indirect discrimination".

  Significance:

  - the case demonstrates the risk of "desktop only" impact assessment exercises
  - you cannot make assumptions about who might be impacted
  - Ii found guilty of discrimination, there's doubt over whether you can re-consult and make decisions on the same subject (as of January 2017, this is yet to be tested in court).

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Foundation V: What pre-emptive steps should I take to avoid running into trouble?

Engagement is about involving people in democracy but it can open you up to criticism, unforeseen consequences and people with their own agendas. It also exposes the depth of your thinking, the strength of your communication channels and the level of trust within your community.

As a result, things rarely run smoothly. We live in the era of social media and instantaneous, open communications. A campaign opposing a change or attacking a decision can spring up overnight. In the worst-case scenario this can end up in court, or with a breakdown in relations so deep that trust is permanently damaged.

However, you can take pre-emptive steps to reduce the risks attached to consultation and engagement. You can maintain good relations with local people and even turn problems to your advantage. The **Thamesmead case study below** is a good example of this.

There are two parts to consider: relations with the council, and cooperation within the authority.

In local communities

You can never eliminate the risk of a public challenge entirely but being prepared can help you to put in place measures to mitigate the likelihood of it happening and minimise the impact if it does.

A big part of this is understanding the anxieties of the community affected and providing the key information as early as possible. Imagine an open and inclusive engagement process on a potential estate regeneration. If your community is not ready to take part in co-creating the project, then you may end up with deep concern and fear about what's next.

Getting your messaging wrong can exacerbate problems and create new ones, especially if you reveal information too early, or all in one go. As with any strategy, the starting point is to imagine how residents might respond to proposals. You need to be as prepared as possible for the questions and responses that arise.

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You're much less likely to be taken by surprise if you are able to draw on ongoing engagement processes that let you softly test new concepts, identifying resistance as you go. For example, at a local resident meeting about a different topic, you might talk to people informally about other decisions on the horizon. Local councillors have a big role to play here, because they engage with local people every day. They know their wards, and will have a strong idea of how receptive locals are likely to be to a particular change. (See **Pillar B**, which looks at the councillor role in engaging, for more on this.)

Knowing your community, in terms of mood and feeling as well as facts and figures, is extremely important. It means issues are less likely to emerge in the first place because you'll be responding to people's needs in everything you do. It also means that if issues do arise you can develop responses that mean something to people. It also helps if you have established relationships and know how to contact the key community leaders. This will help you to reach out to the hardest-to-reach, and ensure that your engagement or consultation doesn't end up preaching to the converted, while leaving a disgruntled minority in its wake.

Within the council

Absolutely key to this is being internally clear about who is managing the overall strategy. It is vital that someone has a clear project leadership role with appropriate authority. This isn't something that can typically be done through a committee approach but everyone needs to understand what others are doing and why.

Budget constraints in recent years compound all of this, meaning decisions on reducing services and cutting spending are now commonplace. The threat of Judicial Review is one which many campaign organisations use to slow down unpopular decisions. There will be many council teams who have little experience of delivering a legally robust engagement process. Departments like planning are much more experienced in this field, and can teach others.

Another part of the challenge is that most senior council officers only encounter the pitfalls of getting engagement or consultation wrong once they've fallen into them. Training from and discussion with other councils or departments within your own council should ensure that senior management involves legal teams earlier in the strategy phase. It's better to put protections in place than add them in later.

Ideally, this will be linked to a much wider engagement strategy, which goes beyond statutory consultation. If learning from across the council is brought on board from the start, then problems can be pre-empted with far greater ease.

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> Move to **'Section 2: Surpassing expectations'**

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Story: Thamesmead case study, Bexley Council

Bexley Council had amongst the lowest cohesion levels in London.[47] The borough had developed new approaches to improving community engagement as part of a Capital Ambition[48] funded project, Communication, Cohesion and Trust.

In October 2009, Moses Nteyoho was murdered in Thamesmead, an estate in the north of the borough with serious cohesion issues. Immediately after the murder, there was an eruption of anger in the community about the perceived slow and inadequate response of the authorities – police, ambulance services and the council.

This was a pressure-cooker environment, creating a highly volatile local situation. The council took the lead. They hosted events for local people to vent frustrations, and built some foundations for sustainable improvement in the medium term. Key elements of their strategy included:

1. **Quickly held public meeting**
   The Capital Ambition work the council had done before the murder to understand underlying issues and build relationships with influencers in the community equipped them to perform a leadership role and co-ordinate activity on behalf of several agencies. This included holding a public meeting.
2. **Resilience and existing insight**
   Previous insight work had equipped council staff to be resilient in the face of anger and hostility. They recognised that emotion was driving behaviour and were able to deploy emotionally intelligent skills to deal with it and develop rapport.
3. **Influence and information channels**
   The authority recognised that public agencies didn't have the confidence and trust of residents. They sought to reach out to those with influence and trust within the community. Although they continued to disseminate information through formal and traditional channels, the process of reaching out to community leaders and asking them to help communicate key messages became the main way of getting information out to disengaged residents.

47 Bexley had the third lowest level of agreement in outer London in the 2008-09 Place Survey (a survey of local resident opinion) to the question 'To what extent do people from different backgrounds get on well together?'
48 Capital Ambition was established in 2008 by London Councils as the regional improvement and efficiency partnership for London. Capital Ambition has led and supported London local authorities in realising greater efficiency, performance improvement, innovation and new ways of working together to deliver local public services in the boroughs

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4. **Openness and transparency**
   The most vocal critics amongst residents were brought together. They were invited to work with the authorities to establish exactly what had happened on the night in question with regard to the response of the emergency services. Residents were played the actual recordings of 999 calls and the interaction between police and ambulance services and encouraged to think through how the situation could have been dealt with differently.
5. **Establishing and maintaining relationships**
   A second public meeting was held where residents reported back on what they had found. This succeeded in transforming the atmosphere and began the process of building confidence. Residents who had undertaken the research were asked to carry on in their role as links between the authorities and residents. A high proportion agreed to do this.
6. **Co-ordination among agencies**
   A network of 'community communicators' in Thamesmead was established. These were a key part of the transformation in the relationships between residents and public agencies. **(See here for how community communicators worked in Barking and Dagenham).**

In the aftermath, this short video was produced, setting out the impact of the approach taken.

The episode demonstrated the importance of having meaningful relationships with, and understanding of, the community to start with. It also showed the importance of actually speaking to people rather than relying on more traditional means of communications such as paper surveys.

By reaching into the community and identifying the angriest people, the council was able to turn frustration into something more constructive. In this instance, they weren't hard-to-reach but their anger made them initially unwilling to listen. The decision to engage this group took real courage.

In their response, meanwhile, the council worked hard to establish better joined up thinking with agencies and services like the police, and to capture the things they learnt from doing so.

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Foundation VI: How can I follow good practice?

> "What have the Church of England and local government got in common? If they don't keep up with the times, both could become an irrelevance to the daily lives of our citizens." **Paul Scriven, former Leader of Sheffield City Council**

The previous Foundations have looked at the legalities of consultation, and how to pre-empt problems, but what does truly excellent consultation look like and how can you know you've done well?

The **Consultation Institute's charter** outlines seven elements of best practice:

- integrity
- visibility
- accessibility
- transparency
- disclosure
- fairness
- publication

These are explained in more detail below. They're the gold standard of a good consultation process, and they apply to other types of engagement too. The charter can act as a guiding set of benchmarks against which to measure the quality of your engagement.

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It's also important that your engagement follows a process of best practice. The **route-map to good consultation** tool shows, through a simple 'before, during and after' model, what a well-executed procedure looks like. The basic stages are as follows:

Before

a. decide key questions

b. decide stakeholders

c. what's come before?

d. decide resources and timescales?

During

e. choose consultation methods

f. write communications plan

g. design and implement

After

h. analyse and interpret

i. provide feedback

j. evaluate

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Finally, there are a number of shifts taking place in how councils operate which it will be useful to bear in mind when planning any engagement process. Your council will likely be focusing on many of them already.

- **Efficiency and value-for-money**
  Every council in the country is coming up against pressure on budgets. Consultations or engagement processes will need to respond to this. Engagement needs to first find learning that prevents waste (for example, money being spent on a service people don't want). Secondly it will need to be economically efficient in and of itself (for instance, by keeping things 'in house' where possible).
- **A local focus**
  Increasingly, more powers and responsibilities are devolved in certain areas. Some councils have successfully negotiated devolution deals and it is important to consider how to engage local communities in these plans. Will residents be concerned that different arrangements, will lead to more distant and less responsive relationships with their local authorities? Our GMCA case study demonstrates how this is being tackled in Greater Manchester. Similarly, consider solutions which give power to local organisations like residents' groups or parish and town councils. See **Pillar F** for more on localism and place. Within **Pillar G** there is some information about how methods like 'parishing' work, and some guidance on 'double devolution' – the process where more power is given to small councils.
- **Integration**
  Most councils are now keen to integrate their services with other public services to achieve better outcomes for people who use these services. The more your engagement process can build cooperation between council and other public services, the more effective they'll be.
- **Political change**
  A number of district councils are exploring moves to join in one single entity. This will mean a local authority with wider geographical horizon and it may ultimately lead to fewer local councillors. Within this, engagement is vital to retain and enhance perceptions of good representation. See **Pillar H**, which looks at personalisation and engagement.
- **Digital**
  The digital agenda is the revolution of our age. How it's used defines best practice in councils today and in the future. Without a relevant digital presence, your engagement may marginalise growing numbers of the population. But you should not rely on digital so much that you exclude others. See **Pillar I**, which looks more at digital and engagement.

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As well as fulfilling most of the expectations around consultation best practice consideration of these issues will help keep your engagement aligned as a valuable asset in achieving your wider objectives.

What next?

> Skip straight to **Foundation VII**, which is about evaluating your engagement work

> Return to the start of **this section**

> Move to **'Section 2: Surpassing expectations'**

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Rules: 'The TCI charter'

The Consultation Institute provides a charter, which outlines seven key aspects of good consultation.[49]

1. **Integrity**: Intentions must be honest, and with a genuine willingness to listen and be influenced
2. **Visibility**: There should be a real effort to make all of those who have a right to participate aware of what's going on
3. **Accessibility:** There needs to be reasonable access, using appropriate methods and channels and catering for hard-to-reach groups
4. **Transparency:** Things submitted need to be made public and data disclosed, unless there's a specific reason to make them exempt
5. **Disclosure:** All relevant material and context should be disclosed by the council, and in return residents should disclose the full range of local opinion
6. **Fairness:** Assessments and interpretations of consultations need to be objective. Decisions need to be representative of the spread of opinion
7. **Publication:** Participants have a right to receive feedback on the final output, and on the eventual outcome of the process

Before, during and after a consultation process, these seven components should be things you abide by, steering your decision processes and marking good practice. Subsequently these can act as a checklist for assessing the quality of your consultation. They can also act as a guide for other forms of engagement.

What next?

> Skip to **Foundation VII**, which is about how to evaluate engagement.

49 For more on this please contact TCI

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Tools: A route map to good consultation

The below tool shows the process at the heart of any good consultation. Good examples of councils that have built this type of approach into their consultation guides and toolkits include Northampton Borough Council and Gateshead Council.[50]

Step One – 'before'	**Decide key questions**	**Decide stakeholders**	**Review previous work**	**Review previous work**
	• To inform decisions • Statutory need • To help decide spending priorities or shape services • To get views on proposals • Plan your evaluation and agree 'what success looks like'	• Proportionate to the issue (not all of the people all of the time) • Directly, indirectly or potentially impacted by the issue • People important for success of initiative • Includes hard-to-reach	• Build on previous work at your council and beyond • Access knowledge centres within the authority • Look for national guidance and case studies	• Cost of consultation – i.e. staff time, reources • Cost of implementing consequence of decisions • Keep enough time to genuinely consider and respond

Step Two – 'during'	**Choose consultation methods**	**Write communications plan**	**Design & implement**
	• Type of feedback: qualitative and quantitive? • Audience needs and interest • Complexity of the issue • Resources and timescale • Your capacity to analyse responses – are you expecting 20 or 3,000?	• Do alongside other communications initiatives • Involve messaging specialists • Test all messages to predict how people will react	• Have a clear timetable and activity schedule • Create content and exercises that provide enough information • Brief staff and councillors not already involved • Be willing to evolve if needs change

Step Three – 'after'	**Analyse & interpret**	**Provide feedback**	**Evaluate**
	• Budget carefully (it is the public record) • Ensure clear data protocols • Guarantee technical capability • Create a forum for discussion to avoid sense of 'closed doors'	• Communicated to everyone involved • Accessible and 'on message' – delivers key info • Clear on reasoning for how decisions were reached • What's coming next and how people can be involved	• Be clear about the success of different elements • Use techniques such as surveys, depth interviews and focus groups • Learn from the process for next time • 'Make the case' for consultation

50 This tool was developed by The Campaign Company as part of the research for this project

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Foundation VII: How should I evaluate my engagement work?

Good evaluation tells you what went well and what didn't. It highlights areas for improvement and how to achieve better value-for-money in future engagement work. If the engagement process can be proved to have been effective, then this justifies the expenditure of money and other resources.

Feeding back on the evaluation as thoroughly as possible, meanwhile, is important so that those involved know the outcome of the consultation.

Because of this, evaluation should be thought about at the beginning rather than left until the end of the consultation or engagement process. If it isn't allocated time and resources from the start, it can end up uncosted and overlooked.

The arguments for consultation and engagement of course go far beyond these sorts of cost-benefit analysis. However, knowing the financial impact of engagement enables you to make the case for it in future.

In this context, think early on about whether to outsource for your evaluation or to keep it in-house. This will be influenced by the nature of the project. On the one hand, it could be important to achieve external legitimacy, especially if public perception of your organisation has not been good historically. On the other, if the objective is internal learning then it might be useful to keep it in-house. Whichever route you take, decide early on and stick to your choice.

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There are three key elements to good evaluation, set out in the table below.

	Internal (looking at in-house data)	External (speaking to the public)
1. Return-on-investment	• money spent on engaging versus money saved through outcomes • deduced using council figures • see **Cost-benefit calculator** tool below • looking at efficiency of engagement process itself. i.e. was as much as possible kept in-house?	N/A
2. Process	• paper evaluation, testing the process as against best practice • use in-house materials to test the process you followed against best practice (as set out in the **'Route-map to good consultation'** tool in Foundation VI)	• testing reach of the engagement itself: visibility, message takeout etc. • small samples of those involved: • did they feel informed, included, listened to? Which activities worked? • small samples of those who should have been involved (i.e. hard-to-reach but impacted); did they hear about the consultation? How informed are they about the outcomes?
3. Impact and outcomes	• difference made thanks to consultation or engagement. eg were you able to discount particular options? Evidence found that makes one option stand out against the others? • outcomes for the authority: decisions made, savings generated, changes that will now happen	• testing understanding of the issues and content consulted on • small samples of those involved – do they know about the issue better now? Have their views on it changed? Satisfaction with changes?

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Because they involve gauging long-term impact, some of the external elements of the above table will need to wait until several months after the consultation. For example, assessing whether people feel informed about the final decision cannot be done the day after a consultation finishes.

This provides an important opportunity to catch up with residents after the formal engagement process has come to an end. Done well, it can encourage relationships to take root and become lasting and permanent.

This feeds into the final point to make here, which is about having a long-term goal of continuous and ongoing engagement.

Indeed, because so many of the outcomes sought by engagement are intangible (improved relationships, changed perspectives, etc), the evidence by which you can measure success is often contextual, subjective or invisible in the short term. So, while statutory engagement exercises must always be evaluated afterwards on the basis of the economic and decision-making impact that flows from them, they shouldn't be seen as a substitute for the longer-term measurements of trust and outlook.

Really great engagement strategies will ultimately go beyond discrete evaluations. They'll put more and more emphasis on this kind of continuous engagement, serving the dual purpose of generating, ongoing feedback and enabling more regular contact with residents. **Pillar K** looks at this in much more detail.

What next?

> Now you've finished 'Covering the basics', you may want to head straight to **'Section 2: Surpassing expectations'**.

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Tool: the cost-benefit calculator

This Cost Benefit Calculator tool from Involve is designed to help local authority officers and councillors assess the costs-benefit ratio for an engagement exercise and make the business case for it.[51]

Stage One: Goals. Decide what you're aiming to do with the calculator.

- Create the business case for a particular engagement programme?
- Make the case for engagement across an entire organisation or area?
- Compare the costs and benefits of one type of engagement versus another (or of engagement versus non-engagement)?

Stage Two: Remit. Define the focus and purpose. Key questions include:

1. What are the parameters of this business case in terms of time and responsibility? Are there other projects that overlap with your project that you may need to factor in?
2. What difference do you want to make through your engagement? How will you measure success? Is it increased trust, efficiency or improved service outcomes?
3. Do you need to cover the whole project or just a particular aspect – like a single event or a work strand?
4. How will you know if your benefits are linked to engagement and wouldn't have happened anyway? Are there comparators that you can use?

Stage Three: Metrics. Decide what to measure; often this involves finding an imperfect 'proxy'.

A. What's the goal and purpose of the evaluation?
B. What are possible indicators of success?
C. What monetary measures exist?
D. How do we get data?
E. What are the important assumptions at play?

51 There are other more general guides to cost-benefit analysis in local government, such as the 2014 technical guidance to support the Treasury's Green Book.

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The flowchart example below uses the example of an engagement around responsiveness of services to show how this might be done.

Stage Four: Attribute value.

Attribute a financial value to each element which doesn't have a clear cash value. There are two ways to do this:

- Find types of existing market value that can act as a proxy – i.e. the cost of staff time spent on complaints before and after engagement
- Ask those who benefit to estimate how much they value that benefit means to them – i.e. what they would be willing to pay for the change, or how much they would have to be paid to accept the change

Generally, the first of these is seen as more accurate than the latter as a way of working out the non-monetary amounts. The table below can be used as a template to input all of the above costs and benefits, so as to come to an overall figure. (There are a number of other templates and tools in Involve's document which might be useful as you make your calculations)

Costs and benefits	Totals
Total monetary costs	
Total non-monetary costs	
Total monetary benefits	
Total non-monetary benefits	
Deduce using this equation: (Benefits+NM Benefits) – (Costs–NM Costs)	
Overall cost-benefit	

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Stage Five: Analysis. Cross-examine what you've found.

Give your findings a 'reality check' by looking at the costs and benefits of one or more aspects. Develop alternative scenarios, for example, or ask colleagues to challenge assumptions. This helps stress test the tool.

Make sure you include elements that cannot be quantified in monetary terms, too – such as any adverse impacts on particular groups or any positive impacts on relations.

Stage Six: Use. Present the cost-benefit analysis.

- Think about the audience and decide how much detail to go into when presenting findings
- Create comparators for how much might have been spent using other methods or no methods at all – these alternative scenarios might include:
  - Doing nothing
  - Sticking with previous tried and tested methods at your council
  - Use of alternative engagement methods (i.e. one big event rather than a series of meetings)
  - Use of alternative ways of solving the problem (i.e. using conventional marketing instead of face-to-face engagement)

*

Through this approach, it is possible to have some grasp of the public value that is being created against the relevant taxpayer spend. This obviously doesn't mean reducing all engagement activity to arithmetic. But, with the right amount of time and resource investment, it makes a useful tool for assessing the real value of engagement.

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> Skip on to the **next section**.

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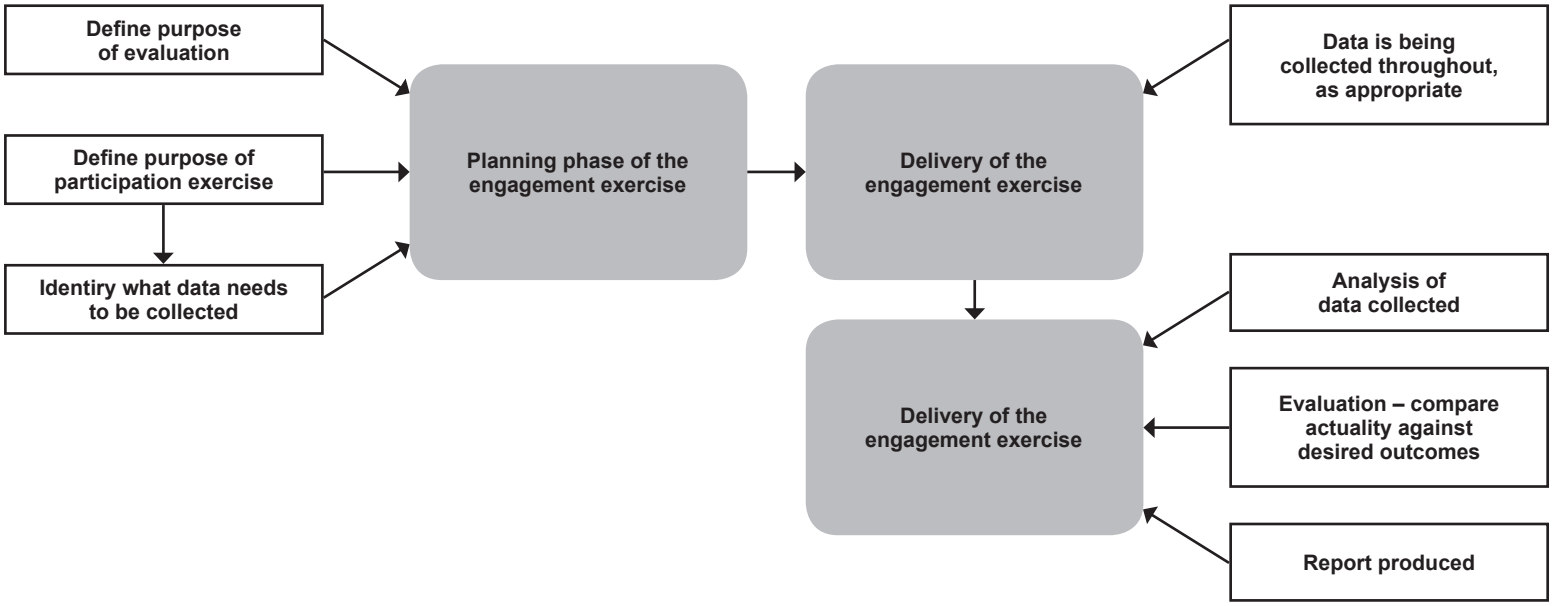
Knowledge: Useful guidance on evaluation

There are many guides for evaluating engagement. Below are three of the best.

1. Making a difference: a guide to evaluating public participation in central government. Produced by Involve, this guide captures both the thinking required and the processes that underpin successful evaluation. Below is an extract, a simple annotated flow chart that demonstrates the evaluation steps that need to be planned alongside engagement.
2. Evaluation: Practical Guidelines. A guide for evaluating public engagement activities. This is a fairly comprehensive guide produced by the Research Council.
3. Public Engagement Evaluation Guide. This is produced by Manchester Beacon, a partnership of Manchester universities aiming to promote public engagement as business as usual. It includes a comprehensive set of links and references to further guidance on engagement evaluation.



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Section 2: Surpassing expectations

Engagement is now central to how councils operate. Gone are the days of press release blasts and tick-box consultations. Local authorities of the future will need to knit together their speaking and listening functions, to build real trust and understanding.

This is especially true in an era of falling budgets, rising expectations and low trust in national politicians. A cocktail of different factors – economic changes, cohesion issues, social media, globalisation, and increasingly curious and non-deferential citizens – means that councils must have real, honest conversations with residents.

Whereas the previous section looked at the fundamentals of getting engagement right, this one looks at how to go beyond that and be truly innovative. It consists of 11 pillars. We call these pillars because, whereas the guidance in Section 1 was all about the core basics, the advice in this section explains how you can build up from the foundations, and support engagement.

Doing this well will not be a frill or an add-on. It's a way of being a council that trusts residents and is trusted in return, saving money and time in the process. There are three big benefits to this:

- More trust in democracy means citizens play a part in decisions. They develop a more 'mutual' relationship with the council, instead of being passive recipients.
- More trust in the community means different groups trust the council more to distribute resources and reflect their needs, building trust within the community
- More trust in the system means people interact with the council on a day-to-day basis and so understand how services work and trust the council to function.

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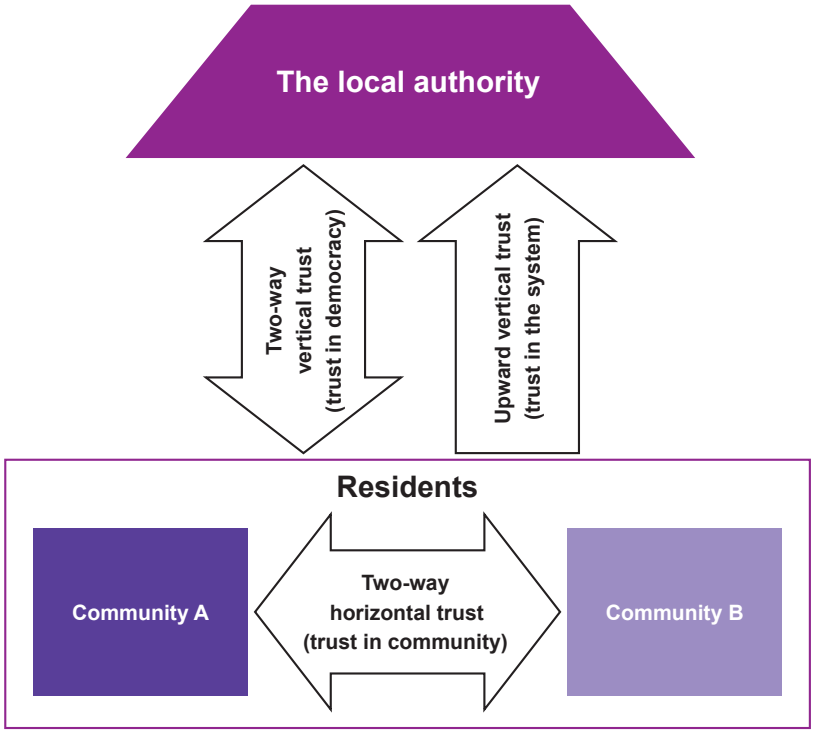
The diagram above gives an illustration of how these three elements of trust relate to each other. The first four pillars in this section are about creating 'Trust in democracy'. The next three look at ways engagement can help build 'Trust in the community'. The final four look at how engagement can bring about more 'Trust in the system'.[52]



What next?

> 'Trust in Democracy' subsection is immediately below.

> Go straight to **'Trust in the community'** or **'Trust in the system'**

> Move on to the next section altogether, **'Engagement in action'**

> Return to the start of the document, **click here**

52 This was generated for this document. Originally it builds loosely on sociologist Barbara Misztal's work on the benefits of trust, as outlined in The State of Trust, Demos, 2008, p.15-16

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Section 2.1: Trust in democracy

This section is about how engagement can help democracy function better.

Most councils are moving away from a top down model, one which can make residents feel that decision-making happens far removed from them or their community. In a top-down model consultations may feel to residents to be a tick box activity unlikely to result in solutions influenced by their contribution.

This can lead to alienation and disillusionment, making policy changes difficult and meaning that people don't understand the wider context in which a council's choices are made.

Good engagement can provide a way of changing this bad feeling and lack of understanding, helping create real partnership and allowing residents to be informed contributors to decision-making.

The following four pillars should help you deliver this. Click on any of these to go direct, or scroll down to start on Pillar A.

- **Pillar A: From pre-decided to authentic** – how clarity about what can be changed makes engagement more meaningful
- **Pillar B: From representative to participatory democracy** – how to make the most of the councillor role
- **Pillar C: From top-down to responsive** – how to embed engagement within the organisation
- **Pillar D: From ownership to partnership** – how to co-produce meaningfully; from crowd-sourcing to participatory budgets

What next?

> Skip to the next part of this section – **'Trust in the community'**

> Skip to the next section **'Section 3: Engagement in action'**

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Pillar A: From pre-decided to authentic

How clarity about what can be changed makes engagement more meaningful

"You can't always get what you want." **Mick Jagger**

It goes without saying that a good engagement or consultation process is better for public trust than no engagement or consultation process. However, engagement processes or consultations done badly – where outcomes are predestined or choices are false – are arguably worse for trust than either.

The Gunning Principles are all about preventing insincere or inauthentic consultation. We've already looked, in **Foundation IV**, at how you can make things legally watertight in that regard. This pillar is about how you can make your engagement truly and legally authentic.

Failure to do this may be something your council has encountered in the past. You might have asked a question that was too open, and got a response that simply wasn't doable. Or you might have asked a question which was too narrow and faced accusations of a 'tick-box' exercise.

The key to moving away from this type of scenario lies in 'pre-engagement'. This means thinking through, at the outset, what the real scope for change can be and then giving communities as much freedom as possible within that.

1. Decide the parameters of your engagement through 'pre-engagement'. Be brave and clear about what they are and why.
2. Believe in, and commit to a decision-making process which, within these parameters, genuinely responds to the views of residents. In other words, be as open as you can to new ideas, within the constraints of what you know is doable.

To put it another way, this is about deciding what's on the menu: what dishes can feasibly be prepared, and what ingredients sourced – and then allowing the community as much input as possible in what they eventually choose.

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In practical terms, pre-engagement means first involving stakeholders and colleagues who really understand the subject matter, so they can decide what the realistic choice is. If you're running a participatory budget session, for example, then you need to first get a clear steer from your finance team about exactly how much wiggle room exists. Keeping the budget as it is will clearly not be an option, so allowing residents to input on whether to accept any cuts would be a mistake. However, there will probably be a choice between where the cuts fall heaviest – on sweeping streets or collecting bins, for the sake of argument. Good insight, consultation and engagement will give councillors perspective on the relative weights of different opinions. This can inform how they make judgements about competing views, to reflect the balance of residents' opinion as far as possible.

It's also good to get stakeholders and residents involved in the process as early as possible. Some preliminary insight from residents might help you work out where their priorities lie. That way you can design your engagement so that it's couched in the right terms and addresses the right things.

In some instances, the scope for change on a decision will be low or zero. In this situation good councils must have the courage to tell residents "Not everyone can get what they want, but we'll be clear with you about why." In the long run councils need to trust that they'll get more credit for having been straight and transparent with those who feel they have lost out in a decision. Many of the stickiest problems occur because councils don't do this, instead choosing to dress as a consultation something that's actually just an information process. The tool below on the **dos and don'ts of delivering bad news** explains some of the key points around difficult information processes. Key things to avoid saying for example, include "It's not as bad as you think," and "I know how you feel."

Once the parameters of a choice have been made, however, genuine openness to new ideas or strong feeling among residents is vital. Engagement should be real, authentic, and demonstrably meaningful. You should not enter into it unless you're genuinely willing, within the pre-set parameters, to act on what the public want.

The Royal Society of Arts have identified five 'myths', common in some organisations, which might explain why they are often hesitant to let communities wield power (even within fairly narrow parameters).[53] Each of these myths is explained and confronted in **this tool below**.

Believing these myths cannot be an option. The solutions instead lie in pre-engagement: in thinking through at the start the genuine scope for the engagement process, and then in committing to giving citizens real input within it.

53 'From Fairy Tale to Reality', The RSA, 2013, p.8–9

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> Skip on to **Pillar B**, which is about the councillor role

> **'Section 3: Engagement in action'** and the **Hackney** pilot is particularly relevant to this subsection

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Knowledge: From fairy-tale to reality: myths and facts about engagement

The RSA's document From Fairy Tale to Reality (2013) looks at how 'radical engagement' can be created. The thrust of the argument is that true engagement, i.e. that which is entered into to foster genuine citizen participation, instead of just to fulfil a statutory requirement, must become more than just a grand ideal.

Pre-engagement is an important element of this. Failure to get this right is part of the reason engagement projects and consultations often seem opaque to residents, and create cynicism. The RSA believe that taken together the five myths about engagement encourage public servants to:

> "Think that engagement is not for them and hinder them from making use of important innovations. These negative myths have numerous impacts. The hidden costs of failing to engage include increased conflict, overlooked opportunities and less efficient services that miss the mark."[54]

The myths are outlined in the table below.

The myth	The reality
It's too expensive	The costs of engagement are usually tiny compared to the overall cost of the service, and this small expense can play a vital risk management role, often ensuring that the service provided is of a high quality.
Citizens aren't up to it	Citizens have expertise that professionals often do not, including knowledge about the impact of services and decisions on service users. Who knows more about local needs and conditions than local people themselves?

54 'From fairy-tale to reality', RSA and Involve, 2013, p4

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It only works for easy issues	There are numerous examples where people have successfully engaged citizens in some of the most complicated and contentious issues of our time… In fact, as risks mount we will need engagement more.
Citizen power is a "floodgate"	We prefer to look at citizen engagement as a pan boiling over if left covered. While a gut instinct might be to slam the lid down tight, this tends to make matters worse rather than giving citizens the chance to air grievances and let the steam dissipate.
People don't want to be involved (they just want good services)	Not everyone will want to run their local library or set up a community action forum. However, three-quarters of people routinely say they would like to be more involved in their communities if the opportunity could be integrated within their busy lives.

Getting pre-engagement right means debunking some of these myths. Only by looking past them can councils put to bed, once and for all, the view that engagement is something you do to rubber-stamp a decision once it's effectively been made.

The pre-engagement/ pre-consultation phase takes courage. It requires councils to be honest and realistic with residents and with themselves about the parameters and scope for decisions.

And it also takes empathy and flexibility. The 'if' in the bottom row – 'if the opportunity could be integrated within their busy lives' – is a huge one. Overcoming this 'if' requires councils to understand residents more and to get creative.

But by busting the above myths your council can involve citizens earlier, and start to look past the old-school, "arm's length" style of engagement.

What next?

> Skip to **Pillar B**

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Tool: The dos and don’ts of breaking bad news

Engagement invites a person to open up and express their views and feelings, but what they want cannot always be accommodated. Even when you’ve been very clear about the scope for change on a particular issue, people can end up frustrated and angry. This is especially a risk when you have to deliver news they don’t want to hear. It may be possible in the long run to bring about their wishes, perhaps through further engagement, but in the immediate term you have to try and deliver bad news well.

✘ **Don’t** say ‘It’s not as bad as you think’

✘ **Don’t** be evasive about details to cushion the blow

✘ **Don’t** sugar coat too much

✘ **Don’t** say ‘I know how you feel’

✘ **Don’t** tell them how they should feel (there’s no ‘should’ when it comes to emotions).

✔ **Do** be prepared, with all the relevant facts to hand

✔ **Do** be clear and direct

✔ **Do** give them space to feel what they feel

✔ **Do** maintain professional boundaries: it isn’t the real ‘you’ that the person is angry with, it’s the role you play in your job

✔ **Do** actively listen to them.

Finally, as well as the above dos and don’ts, it’s worth getting to grips with active listening. This is a technique which can help diffuse difficult situations and develop some common ground. Below are the key elements:

- listen carefully without coming across as time pressured
- acknowledge how the speaker feels
- summarise in your own words what the person has said
- check that they agree with your summary
- it’s only at this point that it might be good to offer advice, opinions, or to share personal experiences.

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Pillar B: From representative to participatory democracy

How to make the most of the role of the councillor

> "Democracy means government by discussion, but it is only effective if you can stop people talking." **Clement Atlee, Prime Minister 1945-1951**

The implication of representative democracy is that a politician is elected by their ward or constituency, and then sets off to do their bidding in parliament or at the town hall. Their primary engagement comes with the electoral cycle, when they again need to go and canvas those they represent. Increasingly, of course, this isn't sufficient.

In local government as well as national, the expectation is that democracy is participatory, with the councillor bringing those they represent into the debate. Councillors still have a huge and vital role to play as decision-makers, and have the ultimate call. Their way of doing this and the dynamic with the electorate is becoming ever more inclusive.

Councillors therefore are at the front line of engagement. They're going to have to live by a decision day after day, lobbied by residents. It's their electoral fortune at risk – and they're often going to be a resident themselves.

Within this, councillors can sometimes undermine decisions the council makes, by choosing to oppose them. However, they can also make a project come to life. Local politicians generally have a close relationship with stakeholders and often lead local opinion. They can broker a compromise and bring together a coalition of the willing. To make the most of this, good engagement needs to be rewarded, recognised and plugged into the council's corporate mission. The 'Back of a clipboard' starter kit **below** details five approaches for new councillors to become as engaged as possible. You can also read the LGA's councillor's workbook on neighbourhood and community engagement for more ideas.

A big part of the responsibility – certainly in councils with an executive decision-making model – lies with frontbenchers leading on policy. They need to ensure frontline councillors are involved from the start. On a big project, this can mean a huge amount of engagement with colleagues. Yet the alternative is for months of work on a policy to be lost because these colleagues weren't brought in.

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The same goes for opposition groupings, who also have a big role to play. It's often politically expedient for opposition frontline councillors to criticise changes regardless, and this will always be a factor. But a more a bi-partisan approach can bring a big win for the council's overall ability to be representative.

Including a range of councillors in a project often leads to compromises on a set of proposals as concerns come to light. A fear of things being watered down like this is often the reason why Frontline councillors are excluded, but fighting through this must be part of the new conversation councils are having. Frontline councillors should no more be bypassed than residents.

Good officers, meanwhile, ought to encourage councillors to provide a steer. There's sometimes a misplaced fear of less senior politicians in a similar way as there is of residents. Officers and executive councillors live and breathe their projects, so tend to race ahead and become overly rational about what needs to happen. Frontline councillors are a tonic to this. They're able to empathise more with the community and are sensitive to the subtler consequences of decisions. Empowering councillors by asking them to lead steering groups guarantees that you've got someone constructively asking the hard questions – keeping you connected to the concerns of affected groups.

So, informed and involved frontline councillors can play a key role simply by doing what frontline councillors do best: listening and talking to voters. The more they reach into their communities, talking to people beyond the usual suspects or the people that voted for them – the better they can do this. See **Pillar E** for more on generating this type of outreach through networks.

The danger in talking about council engagement and the councillors role is that people see it as an 'either, or' question. Either councillors see their job as the only engagement function at the authority. Or officers take the opposite view, and see the local politicians as merely messengers for their engagement agenda. To work properly, a strategy must make the link between officers and politicians – and hence be the result, in itself, of good internal engagement.

What next?

> Skip to **Pillar C**, which is about embedding engagement within your council

> Return to the start of **this section**

> Head straight to **'Section 3: Engagement in Action'**. All four of the pilots are relevant to this subsection, but **GMCA** especially so.

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Tool: 'Back of a clipboard' engagement list – a starter kit for frontline councillors

Below is a five-step starter kit for being as engaged as possible with your residents and local businesses. It was written by Cllr Peter Lamb, based on his experiences as a local councillor in Crawley.

In all of the engagement you do, however, be aware that your role as councillor exists in two capacities. The first is as a representative of the council (and there will be advice both from your council and from the LGA on how to do this).[55] The second is as a representative of your political party (if you are in one, in which case you'll have separate guidance on this). A big part of getting the engagement right will be in balancing these two things – so you're able to fulfil your role both as a representative of the council in the community, and as a representative of community concerns within the council.

1. Get out there

With all the new technology connecting us, it's all too easy to forget that the best way to engage is often face-to-face. Not every part of the community has the ability to access the internet regularly. Online communication usually requires residents to opt-in to hear what you have to say, meaning you preach to the converted. Many still prefer to speak to a real person for example at:

- **Advice surgeries:** These provide residents with the opportunity to meet their local representative and raise any issues they might have. All that's needed is an accessible venue, somewhere to sit and a bit of advertising.
- **Mobile surgeries:** Surgeries provide an opportunity to reach out to harder-to-engage parts of the community, instead of waiting for residents to come to a venue.
- **Community events:** One of the best ways of engaging with your local community is through participating in local events.

55 See 'Finding your way' and the 'Councillor's Guide', both by the LGA

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2. Keep people in the loop

Though people are busy, most would still like to know what is going on in their community. Regular information from local representatives can help to build the trust upon which future engagement can be based. There is much evidence to support the assertion that people are more receptive to engagement that informs and are far less keen on engagement that seeks to promote a particular point of view or sectional interest. Here are a few ways of keeping your residents in the loop effectively:

- **Newsletters:** Give some thought to the design. With all the junk mail a person gets these days, you have at most a couple of seconds to grab their attention.
- **Direct mail:** People will often read letters which come through their door, particularly if they're addressed to them personally. While direct mail may be too expensive for regular newsletters, it can be useful for communicating about a particularly important issue. For example, when planning permission is being sought for a project which you do not believe is in the area's best interests, it may help drive up the number of objections (be aware that, if you're on a planning committee yourself, this isn't allowed).
- **E-newsletters and text messages:** A fast and cheap way of reaching residents. Online services like MailChimp are a good idea if you're doing this, as anything involving complex designs or mail outs to a large number of people are likely to be blocked without one. Also, remember that no council resources can be used for party political communications, so be clear whether you are acting as a representative of the council or of your party when you are sending out a communication.

3. Reach out

Networks of engagement already exist which can help you to connect with your residents. Here are a few ways of reaching out:

- Make the most of the council: Although Communications and Community Engagement teams have been put under pressure due to budget cuts, almost every local authority still employs officers in these roles. Ask them how they can help you engage with local people.
- Work with other agencies: Reach out and partner with parish councils, neighbourhood policing teams or the many other bodies which represent residents.

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- Community networks: Highly-connected people influence community opinion. To persuade them is to persuade others. Examples may include the chair of a residents' association, school governors and long-serving teachers, local small businesspeople and publicans, religious leaders and neighbourhood watch co-ordinators.

4. Use the media

Despite the rise of newer channels, 'traditional media' remains an important means of communication.

- **Local newspapers:** The falling number of local reporters means that newspapers are more willing to accept pre-prepared content.
- **TV/ Radio:** TV and radio remain popular channels, and while the opportunity to communicate a message via the airwaves is rare, the potential reach is considerable.
- **Blogs/online radio:** Some local news blogs and online radio sites now have a similar audience size to their analogue equivalents.

5. Go digital

Digital media can offer a global audience, yet fail to make solid contact with the community you want it to. It also poses risks. Representatives can find themselves held to account years later for a misjudged comment made in a moment of madness. Nonetheless, digital channels can be powerful if used in the right way.

- **Google Alerts:** Once you've put a term into Google Alerts, you will receive an email whenever a new story relating to it is published online which allows you to keep on top of issues that are important in your local areas for example a supermarket development. This is vital real time information to enable you to engage appropriately in relation to current and emerging issues.
- **FixMyStreet:** Users submit practical problems in the community – like a broken paving slab or some graffiti – to the local authority, and councillors can respond and comment.
- **Facebook:** Individual councillors often don't automatically attract huge numbers of local residents to their profile, groups or pages. This doesn't mean it isn't useful for engaging, but you need to go to where people are, by following or liking other appropriate pages set up by local groups or individuals.

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- **Twitter:** As with Facebook, Twitter offers a potentially global reach but requires people to actively engage with you.
- **NextDoor:** A neighbourhood based forum for local people to exchange ideas.
- **Surveys/Polls/Petitions:** While you will also need to use other methods to advertise your survey, poll or petition, online tools can be a powerful two-way route to community engagement and to taking the temperature of opinion around issues in your area. There are various ways of running a survey or a poll online for free, including on Facebook or Twitter, or on specific sites like Survey Monkey.
- **Personal website or blog:** A channel of communication exclusively within your control.

This guide was compiled by Cllr Peter Lamb, Leader of Crawley Borough Council. You can read an extended version here.

What next?

> Skip to **Pillar D**

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Pillar C: From top-down to responsive

How to embed engagement within the organisation

> "A leader is best when people barely know he exists. When his work is done, his aim fulfilled, people will say "We did it ourselves"."
> **Lao Tzu, Daoist philosopher**

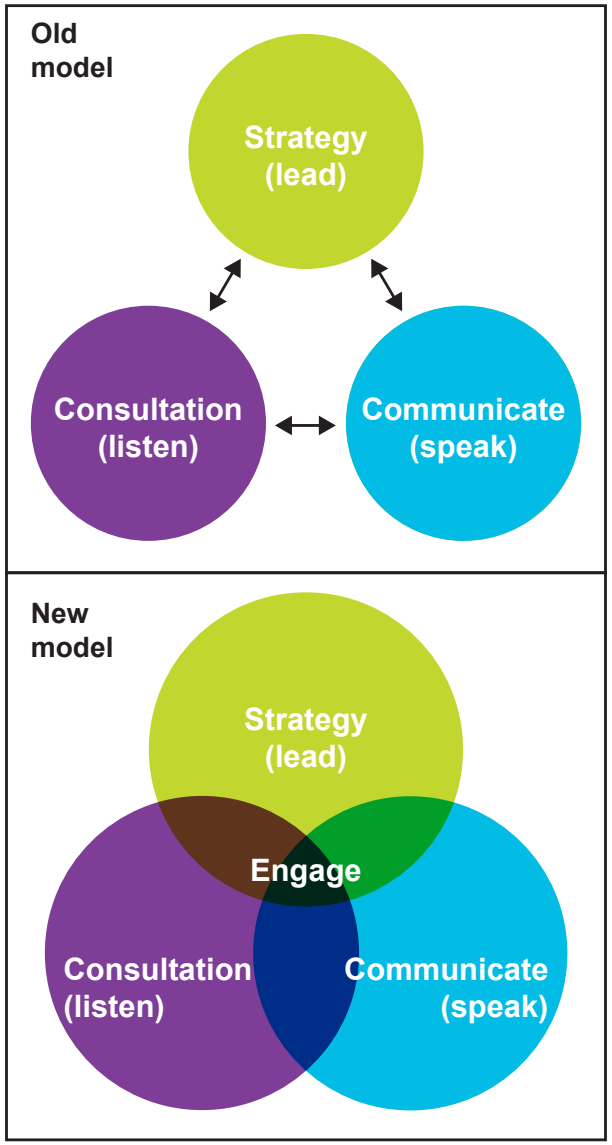
Creating a listening culture and a responsive ethos are some of the most intangible and hardest challenges for a council. To people with busy jobs it can feel like a 'nice to have' accessory rather than a key to success. Yet for engagement to mean something beyond a combination of painful consultations and superficial listening events, it needs to be integrated within the whole council's ethos. It can't be just something that people see as simply the role of the consultation team or communications department.

Councils that are poor at engaging and do not have it embedded in all that they do, tend to separate engagement out into three distinct 'functions':

a. **Thinking function:** a leadership team which is top-down in nature

b. **Listening function**: a consultation team (or individual), which carries out statutory consultation, and feeds back to the leadership team

c. **Speaking function**: a communications department which transmits the council's message or brand, as set by the leadership team



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As the diagram below suggests, for engagement to be embedded and effective, these three functions need to overlap as much as possible. Communications need to be better informed by what consultation activities are telling them about attitudes on the ground.

Leadership

This new emphasis on engagement needs to come from the top. Hierarchical organisations are, by definition, not ones which engage well with their staff, and tend to do less well in their interactions with the public as a result (see **Pillar J** for more on how this relates to front-line staff). Leadership is therefore integral to the creation of a responsive culture.

For anyone with any power or responsibility within the organisation, this means trying to empower others. Good leaders look to identify other good leaders among councillors and officers and to encourage them to engage meaningfully, both within the organisation and with residents. This sort of leadership culture enables engagement to be integrated at every level – instead of being something done discretely by a single team or department.

This helps staff to develop understanding and commitment to 'why' things are done and engenders a greater sense of ownership. This will lead to a more engaged workforce at every level – proud to represent the council and keen to feed ideas upwards. Done well, this will be something that goes beyond the council and filters into the community.

Consultation

Councils take the temperature of the population in an increasingly wide variety of ways. As well as voicing their opinions to frontline staff, residents can deliver feedback through multiple channels on social media. They can participate in attitude and tracker surveys, which most councils now do regularly – or through feedback forms to specific departments. They may speak to people at events, or even act as council 'ambassadors' in the community.

So, there are many new ways in which local people can start a conversation with their authority. 'Consulting' residents is something councils in fact do on a daily basis, not just through one off, statutory processes. Those at the council responsible for consultation can see it as their role to capture this, taking on the broader remit of 'engagement' – and seeking to get integrate and coordinate this type of listening into different parts of the council.

In addition to this, as the ones speaking to communities and hearing grievances consultation departments have a bigger role to play as communicators – explaining and interacting with those they engage with, to create a genuine dialogue.

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Communications

Communications is increasingly a two-way street. This is partly thanks to social media and new tools like blogs with comment sections which gives residents far more 'right of response'. As well as this, more interactivity is brought about through the nature of modern communications, which increasingly uses different channels – like events – and a campaign mentality which seeks to engage.

This often reflects the mood among the public, with communities anxious to have a voice and be listened to. So, the communications role is increasingly about listening, just as the consultation role is increasingly about speaking.

Meanwhile, there is also more and more of a communications function in other parts of the council. Customer service departments speak to residents daily, and service-led departments send out letters and texts. So, to become a more engaged council, communications teams often need to take on a broader remit than they traditionally have.

What next?

> Skip to **Pillar D**, which is about "co-production"

> Head straight to **'Section 3: Engagement in action'**.
The **Hackney** and **Harlow** pilots are particularly relevant to this section

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Pillar D: From ownership to partnership

How to co-produce meaningfully; from crowd-sourcing to participatory budgets

> "My guideline is that a conversation partner should be speaking 80 per cent of the time, while I speak only 20 per cent of the time. Moreover, I seek to make my speaking time count by spending as much of it as possible posing questions rather than trying to have my own say." **Bernard T. Ferrari, academic and author 56**

Co-production is one of those terms that's crept into the public policy vocabulary, and tends to be used a lot. We kind of know what it means – but it's still fairly vague.

It's more than just a public policy idea, however; it's a part of modern life. When you custom-design a card online or scan your own groceries at the supermarket you're co-producing with the company in question to get the most tailored possible service. (Personalised budgets are an example of this model of 'personal co-production' within the public sector. See **Pillar H** for more on this).

But as well as 'personal co-production', there's 'collective co-production', which offers an impact on the wider community. This collective approach is often used for building trust and making the most of social capital,[57] and is probably the most relevant to this guide. Examples range from participatory budgeting to community garden initiatives.[58] The idea is that government and the community work together, enabling one another, with greater and greater citizen empowerment as a result. (See the case study of **transport for children with special educational needs in Coventry.**)

Central to co-production is the realisation that you as a council need the input and insight of the resident as much as they need you. There are skills which people in the community have, and these can be built upon. This moves your authority's role away from delivery and towards enabling mutual relationships which will support this approach.

56 Author of Power Listening
57 'We're all in this together: harnessing user and community co-production of public outcomes', Institute of Local Government Studies, Bovaird and Loeffler, 2013
58 Making co-production work – lessons from local government', TUC and APSE, 2013

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To co-produce well, think through the places where you might be able to collaborate for each project or service. This might include budgeting, commissioning, design, delivery or even evaluation.[59] Ideas such as citizen juries are examples of how co-production approaches can be applied to decision-making. **(See Glossary for more on what these are)**.

There are challenges involved, of course. One of the joys of co-production is that there's a degree of unpredictability. Co-production must also be something that's part of a council's ethos – not tucked away in a separate department.

To get to this point it's important to be clear about the limits of co-production as well as the possibilities. Co-production isn't always suitable, and – as with all types of engagement – it needs to happen within clear parameters. The **'Wisdom of crowds'** case study is an example of these limitations, showing that if the scope is too broad a co-produced approach can lead to a lack of direction and ultimately apathy.

You can begin by creating pilot projects to test the water – but your target must be for whole services (and ultimately the whole authority) to be comfortable with co-production methods. That needs leadership and staff development.

You also need to ensure that co-production doesn't privilege some groups and communities over others. This danger is pointed out by the Association of Public Service Excellence and the Trade Union Congress, who say that "The skills and capacity to engage in co-production are not evenly distributed, creating disproportionate and often unfair disadvantage between communities." [60]

This is an important thing to acknowledge: co-production, more than any of the other approaches described in this guide, runs the risk of generating the least engagement from the very people that need it most. Taking steps to "map" communities will help you understand capabilities and levels of confidence and competence among residents. This can feed into the approach you take to co-production, making sure that it's inclusive. It can also help you to focus on building capacity. If a community lacks the IT skills to co-design a community website, for instance, then you need to focus on giving people these skills first.

59 'We're all in this together: harnessing user and community co-production of public outcomes', Institute of Local Government Studies, Bovaird and Loeffler, 2013
60 'Making co-production work – lessons from local government', TUC and APSE, 2013

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This is undoubtedly hard work and there's a lot to do, but it will be rewarding in the long term. It can also, once a virtuous circle is created, become a way of saving money. Lambeth Living Well, for example, estimate that 20 per cent savings to mental health budgets have been made through co-produced approaches. It'll create social and organisational capital, and create fit-for-purpose services that are more relevant and potentially more efficient.

What next?

> Skip to the next set of Pillars, which are about **'Trust in the community'**

> Return to the start of **this whole section**

> Head straight to **'Section 3: Engagement in action'**.
The **Hackney**, **GMCA** and **Staffordshire** pilots are particularly relevant to this subsection.

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Tool: Six key steps in campaign co-production

Co-production practice has developed over recent years encouraged by bodies like NESTA and the New Economics Foundation. It was originally seen in terms of service delivery, but it is equally applicable for something such as a public health campaign.[61]

There are six elements which are the foundation stones of co-production[62]. These definitions overlap with each other so co-production in practice will involve all of these features, and they are all underpinned by similar values.

1. **Building on people's existing capabilities:** The key thing is to provide opportunities to recognise and grow people's capabilities and actively support them to put them to use at an individual and community level. This benefits from auditing human resources early in the activity.
2. **Reciprocity and mutuality:** Offering people a range of incentives to engage which enable them to work in reciprocal relationships with professionals and with each other, where there are mutual responsibilities and expectations. This does not have to be financial and could be access to people they need to engage with through to information that makes them feel they are on the 'inside track'
3. **Peer support networks:** Engaging peer and personal networks alongside professionals as the best way of transferring knowledge. Too often there is a them and us relationship between officers and the community and this needs to be broken down through working as a team together
4. **Blurring distinctions**: Removing the distinction between professionals and recipients, and between producers and consumers of services, by reconfiguring the way campaigns and interventions are developed and delivered. For example, instead of it operating from the town hall, perhaps a pop-up office is created at a local community centre for a time-limited period?
5. **Facilitating rather than delivering:** Enabling public service agencies to become catalysts and facilitators rather than central providers themselves.

61 'People Powered Health Co-production Catalogue', NESTA
62 coproductionnetwork.com

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6. **Assets:** Transforming the perception of people from passive recipients of services and burdens on the system into one where they are equal partners in designing and delivering services. This again requires an audit in the first instance, but it also requires reframing people's perceptions so they realise they are an 'asset' through a combination of all the preceding points.

What next?

> Skip to **'Trust in the community'**

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Story: New ways of getting children to school in Coventry

Coventry City Council needed to reduce spending on an annual budget of £4.45 million for transporting children with special educational needs (SEN) to and from school in Coventry. They wanted to incentivise parents to get more involved with the process. So they used a behavioural insight tool called Values Modes.

The first initiative developed was the 'personal transport budget'. This meant that rather than the council getting every SEN child to and from school by default, parents were offered a budget to arrange transport themselves. Parents who accepted a personal travel budget were able to make savings by negotiating better deals locally, joint-commissioning and spending money more imaginatively.

The second initiative was 'independent travel training', which was a way to hep certain SEN children learn how to get to and from schools without any help at all. Where this was suitable, it could empower the child and save the council money.

The take up rate for these alternative provisions was high. As a result, a projected saving of £1 million pounds (or 13 per cent of the budget) was forecast. On top of this financial benefit, new relationships were forged between the council and some of its residents.

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> Skip to **'Trust in the community'**

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Story: The wisdom of crowds – the co-produced football club, and what we can learn from it

In 2011 Leonard Brody, the co-owner of Coventry City Football Club, put forward the idea that Coventry fans should be able to 'text a sub' during a match – so that the fans could have players replaced or tactics changed. Brody had asked himself the question, 'How do you engage fans more in the game and get their input in the process?' Surprisingly, the fans were not happy with the idea because, despite being given more power as a result of the proposal, they sensed this was the wrong kind of engagement. It's the type of 'co-produced' approach that seems like a nice idea, but is actually an abdication of leadership which undermines the manager. Good co-production is about supporting people in having more say (like the many fans who have places on the boards of their clubs) not about saying 'over to you' and hoping for the best.

Brody's approach was taken up several notches by 'MyFootballClub'. This was an online group that attracted enough paying members to buy the non-league club Ebbsfleet United in 2008. Members of MyFootballClub were excited by the chance to 'co-produce' transfer policy or team selection, and things went well at first, but then problems struck. Members hadn't been given all the powers they'd been promised. Many stopped voting or cancelled their memberships altogether. In 2013, with the club relegated and money troubles biting hard, a foreign investor bought the club outright. A utopian idea about co-producing the running of a sport club ultimately led to disillusionment.

Crucial to both Coventry and Ebbsfleet stories is that power sharing and co-production can only work when they play to people's strengths. It isn't possible for fans, some of whom actually lived abroad in the case of MyFootballClub, to make tight calls such as whether an injury is small enough for a player to play through. As the manager of Ebbsfleet said in frustration, "It's not just about picking the side from a living room. You are dealing with human beings!"

Football teams and local government are obviously different but these examples show how co-production, while a fantastically powerful approach if done well, should always be chosen because of the additional creativity or insight it allows participants to bring rather than as a default choice.

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Knowledge: Citizens Juries – a Q&A

What is it?

A group of lay people consider a complex issue together. Borrowing from the terminology of the courtroom, jurors hear from expert witnesses, cross-examine them, deliberate together and finally give their verdict. The jury consists of 12 to 24 people who meet for two to five days and are paid a small sum for their trouble. Unlike a courtroom jury, they actively investigate the evidence. Their verdict comes in the form of recommendations to the council.

Why is it a good idea?

A citizens Jury enables input from a well-informed and representative group of residents. Therefore, the policies it influences are likely to have credibility in the wider public's eyes. In 2008, the City of Wolverhampton Council held one on the issue of budget priorities. From it they learnt that the future prosperity of the city was the most important issue for people. One juror said, "If there are no jobs for the kids, they will leave Wolverhampton." Beneath economic prosperity were 27 other issues listed in order of priority, and the council could plan its expenditure with that in mind.

How can it be done?

In 2004, The Jefferson Center put together a useful handbook on citizens juries. Probably the most crucial step is the first one: making sure the jury is representative of its community. This can be achieved in different ways. One is by doing a random telephone survey to gauge who might be interested in taking part, then carefully selecting the jury from this list so that its makeup reflects census data for the area (gender, age, socio-economic group, ethnicity). The potential jurors in Wolverhampton were also given an area satisfaction survey to make sure that their opinions were broadly similar to the average, i.e. that they were both positive and negative about the present and the future of their city.

What are the important things to remember?

To avoid bias, it is important that an independent organisation is involved from the start. They will also be involved in choosing the questions for the jury, and selecting appropriate expert witnesses. Once the 'hearing' is over, the jury presents its recommendations to the council, usually in the form of a written report. The council must then show how it has worked these recommendations into its policy decisions.

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Section 2.2: Trust in the community

As well as direct relationships between councils and the community, high levels of trust can also benefit relations between different groups within the community.

When the council doesn't inspire trust – when decisions aren't explained, or grievances are ignored – the result is poor cohesion and suspicion of other groups whereas the idea of 'collective efficacy' shows how, if people feel that others in their community are engaged, they'll be far more willing to engage themselves.

Evidence in the past shows that when residents understand the pressures the council is under, they step up. Listening properly and explaining fully and honestly can build resilience and involve people who are hard to reach (or hard to hear).

The following three pillars each offer practical advice on how engagement within localities and neighbourhoods can improve relations with – and within – communities. Click on any of these to go direct, or scroll down to start on Pillar E.

- **Pillar E: From hierarchy to networks** – how to create engagement channels which run deeper into the community
- **Pillar F: From organisation-based to place-based** – how to build a sense of place and local identity
- **Pillar G: From needs to capabilities** – how to give communities the confidence to do more

What next?

> Skip to the next set of Pillars – **'Trust in the system'**

> Move to the next section **'Section 3: Engagement in action'**

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Knowledge: Collective efficacy explained in a nutshell

Collective efficacy is the willingness of neighbours to intervene for the common good. By getting personally involved, people can reduce crime in their community. The evidence shows that informal actions can be as important for crime prevention as formal policing.

The term was coined by Robert Sampson in the 1990s in a study of hundreds of neighbourhoods in Chicago. After surveying thousands of residents, Sampson found that violence was less likely in those communities with high 'social cohesion', by which he meant the togetherness or connectedness of a place. For example, are residents in a community trusting of one another or is there a deep level of cynicism and distrust?"

The greater the social cohesion, the greater the collective efficacy. Put simply, people are more likely to watch a neighbour's back if they think that neighbour will do the same for them.

There may even be an inverse relationship between collective efficacy in public and violent behaviour in private. In 2002, another study in Chicago found that more collective efficacy meant less domestic violence against women.

How do people demonstrate their willingness to get involved? In his original survey Sampson asked residents how likely they thought their neighbours were to take action to stop: truancy, loitering, graffiti, fighting, children showing disrespect to an adult, and budget cuts to the local fire station.

One thing that affects social cohesion and in turn collective efficacy is the number of people moving in to and out of a community. When the turnover is high, they are less likely to bond and hence be willing to stick their necks out for each other. There's also a big question about how much self-confidence and ability people have to do things for themselves. Efforts to improve the skills people have and to show them the things they're already doing for their communities, and building on those are crucial to helping individuals realise their potential.

Think about how much collective efficacy there is in your local area. What factors like transience might affect how much people have staked in their neighbourhoods? And what can you, as a councillor or officer, do to help people feel able to chip in?

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Pillar E: From hierarchy to networks

How to create engagement channels which run deeper into the community

> "The currency of real networking is not greed but generosity."
> **Keith Ferrazzi, author and networking expert**

Anyone who's run a public engagement activity knows that they aren't always as inclusive as they could be. The 'usual suspects' – people who are connected, confident, and knowledgeable about local issues – are often best at having their voices heard. When the concerns of only the most determined individuals monopolise the conversation, then the concerns of the isolated or alienated can be obscured.

The key to unlocking inclusive participation lies in bolstering social networks. When people have strong social networks, they find out about new developments more quickly and feel more empowered to have their say. **Foundation III** has already looked at how you can make sure the format and approach of your engagement process reaches everyone. This pillar looks at how the channels available to the council can run much deeper into the community, building on the networks that already exist between people.

Often, it's people's circumstances that determine whether or not they have strong connections. Students, those in work, and people who volunteer usually have robust networks. On the other hand, others – often people who are unemployed or retired – are more cut off from the community and can experience social isolation. In local government consultations, they can find they don't have the confidence or wherewithal to get their viewpoint across.

Building robust social networks, which extend into the heart of the community, necessitates thinking in bold and creative ways. More often than not, it involves partnering with charities, voluntary associations, resident groups and other organisations who are able to open the door to individuals who otherwise might remain at the periphery.

There are two central approaches here, and they're subtly different.

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	Who does it reach?	How do you do it?
1. Making connections between different groups	Isolated and/or indifferent: i.e. disabled, elderly, some migrant or non-English-speaking communities, young people	Make connections between more confident social groups (who the council can reach fairly easily) and less confident groups
2. Identifying connectors, communicators or ambassadors via peer-to-peer	Alienated and/or angry: i.e. issue-led groups (usually around housing, migration or crime), those frustrated with the council, vocal critics	Identify influential local people within communities, such as landlords, barbers, taxi drivers etc, and include in council thinking to help reach most alienated

The first approach involves forging connections between those unlikely to otherwise meet. Charities like North London Cares, which pairs young professionals with older neighbours, are good examples of this.[63] Such schemes pair more connected people, usually volunteers, who work with the council or the third sector to reach out to members of the community with few social connections – i.e. struggling families, lonely youngsters,[64] or retired people. Approaches can include buddying systems, the use of clubs, and schemes which make it easier to identify and signpost the less well-connected.

Glasgow's Community Connector programme is a great example of this.[65] The scheme provides the following forms of support, amongst others.

a. **signposting and referring:** Spotting local services, clubs, and groups that can be joined

b. **buddy support:** Accompanying people when they start new activities

c. **volunteering opportunities:** Recognising people as assets in themselves that can support others

63 See the North London Cares website
64 The LGA engaging young people workbook gives suggestions on how to engage young people
65 See http://www.coproductionnetwork.com/

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The second approach tends to be used more when the relationship between the council and certain groups, or even whole communities, isn't functioning, and residents have become unresponsive or cynical. Peer-to-peer approaches involve going into communities, speaking to influential community leaders, and building lasting 'connector' or 'ambassador' networks through relationships. This may be the only way of breaking the impasse.

The **Barking and Dagenham case study** shows how this works in a situation where cohesion is poor – but it can be applied to more benign issues too, like if people are ignoring council messages on recycling or petty crime. Below are **three key tips for using social networks**.

By fostering robust networks throughout the community, the groundwork can be laid for genuinely inclusive engagement. Councils put themselves in a better position to work with residents, and channels to reach beyond those who are well-versed or well-connected.

These approaches are obviously of intrinsic value when it comes to addressing challenges relating to mental health, isolation and wellbeing. However, they also work to create more engaged and capable societies, with higher collective efficacy. The worst thing for trust within any community is if people turn inwards and stop speaking to each other.

What next?

> Skip to the next set of Pillars, **'Trust in the system'**

> Return to the start of **this section**

> Head straight to **Section Three, 'Engagement in action'**
(the **Hackney**, **GMCA** and **Staffordshire** pilots are particularly relevant to this subsection)

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Story: Understanding and harnessing influence in Barking and Dagenham

When facing cohesion challenges in 2007, the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham undertook a major research programme to better understand the nature of the lack of cohesion and the potential for interventions to assist.

The insight identified particular areas in the locality where issues were at their most acute. Residents reported that they were more likely to believe and trust people known to them who they respected rather than what they read in the local papers or indeed were told by the council or other agencies.

A programme to recruit local 'influencers' was launched in eight target areas. This consisted of identification of local people who held positions of influence – from parent teacher association activists, residents' representatives to local publicans and shopkeepers. This 'formal' list was supplemented by doorstep and telephone contact where residents were asked if there was anyone locally who they would look to if issues arose in the neighbourhood. Through this more 'informal' influencers were identified.

Influencers were then approached to participate in a Community Communicators Project where they were asked in the first instance to share their own views and those of their networks of friends, customers and others about a range of local issues. They were not asked to 'champion' the Council, but rather to work with them to improve understanding and services for local people. Over 50 per cent agreed to participate on that basis. Dedicated officers were tasked with establishing and maintaining good relationships with the influencers and gathering regular insight. Over time some influencers were able and willing to disseminate information on behalf of the council about planned initiatives – changes or improvements in services – or in response to rumour and misinformation.

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The programme led to improvements in the insight and intelligence capability of the council – enabling quicker and more resonant communications to be made using trusted channels. It demonstrated to residents that the council was making a determined effort to listen to local opinion. Key policy initiatives arose from the project, which succeeded in rebuilding confidence and trust in the council to the extent that there was an increase in the NI1 rating of nearly 20 per cent in three years.[66] The principles were subsequently further tested in a project funded by London Councils and independently evaluated.[67]

What next?

> Skip to **Pillar F**

66 National Indicators or NIs were measured through regular resident surveys. NI1 describes "What percentage of people believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area". National Indicators no longer exist but while in use they were codified in the National Indicators Handbook for Local Authorities 2007

67 Using Community Communicators to build trust and understanding between local councils and residents, Matt Wood, University of Brighton Business School, 2009

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Tool: Key tips to mapping social networks

Social networks are all around us, in our connections with friends, relatives and neighbours. Understanding them is vital for community engagement and community resilience.

Network theory, as described in the economist Paul Ormerod's pamphlet 'N Squared', tells us that networks, while frequently resistant to change, also allow the potential for sweeping changes to result from seemingly minor interventions.[68] Taking into account even limited information on the structure of networks can make interventions and changes more effective – ensuring they reach more people and don't leave people feeling excluded or disengaged.

But how do you do this? There are four tips:

1. **Understand informal relationships**
   The RSA began its 'Connected Communities' programme in April 2009. Research as part of this in New Cross Gate successfully mapped the networks of 280 residents, to demonstrate how networks work. One key finding was that "'familiar strangers' like postmen and dustmen appear to be under-utilised community resources."[69] By understanding the casual relationships people have – who they chat to, where they get their information you can start to use networks better.

   Giving more responsibility and a greater buy-in on policies and messages to frontline staff and to others who speak to residents on a day-to-day basis, like hairdressers and publicans can help this happen, by bringing more people in on 'the conversation'. **See Pillar J** for more on involving frontline staff – and the **Staffordshire pilot** for an example of this in action.

2. **Understand informal meeting places**
   The RSA research also found that, in each area, supermarkets or shopping centres were the most used local place, while GP surgeries and health centres, hair salons and cafés also played key roles. Learning to recognise that these places are where people meet and treating these, rather than council facilities as hubs is a key start-point in effective engagement through social networks.

68 Ormerod concludes "The potential gains from more effective policies built on a better scientific understanding of how the world operates are enormous." N Squared, Public policy and the power of networks, Paul Ormerod, RSA 2010, p.37
69 'Connected Communities: How social networks power and sustain the Big Society', RSA, 2010, p.II-V

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In your area, this might mean going to the café of the local supermarket, or even a barber shop or pub, when you next need to get feedback or ask people about changes to services. This will often work much better than using council facilities. It will help you speak, on their own turf, to those who don't normally come into contact with the council.

3. **Think about the least networked**
People cut off or alienated from mainstream channels are the groups that it's most important to think about reaching when you engage through social networks. These individuals are the most likely to be vulnerable and need council help, or else to be angry. Reaching alienated and isolated people usually means going through more networked individuals, the café owner who is the lonely pensioner's sole point of contact, for example. The long-term goal, from an engagement perspective, should be to bring the least connected back into the loop.

A strong example of this was in Newham, a classic 'borough of extremes. In 2011, the council held a formal consultation into resilience.[70] Out of this sprang several new initiatives, and changes to existing ones, which tried to improve resilience by strengthening connections and bringing isolated or alienated groups back into the conversation. These initiatives included Community Hubs, Every Child a Musician, Shared Lives, Enablement, The Skills Place and Newham Workplace. (See Newham's 'Quid pro quo, not status quo' report for more on these).[71]

4. **Bring different groups into contact**
A key element of using social networks to engage is about making sure messages are reaching all the different areas your council serves. It's all very well if the most affluent wards or those with the greatest capacity are taking advantage of new services, taking on board council messages or buying in to changes the council is making. However, the key thing is to make this happen across the board.

70 The outcomes of this are written up in 'Community resilience in Newham', Newham Council, 2013; an earlier report was the 'Quid pro quo, not status quo: why we need a welfare state that builds resilience,' Newham Council, 2011
71 'Quid pro quo, not status quo: why we need a welfare state that builds resilience,' Newham Council, 2011, p.36-42

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Again, Newham is a good example here. As part of the research described above,[72] the council found that jobs in Stratford were being given to people the employer already knew i.e. those who were already well-connected, and predominantly those living in just one part of the borough. Less well-connected people weren't hearing about jobs or being offered them. There were implications of this for engagement as well as cohesion. If residents feel the progress of a borough isn't being shared evenly then alienation and disaffection is inevitable. Newham's research showed the importance of taking steps to forge connections so that everyone was included. Subsequent increased investment in Newham Workplace, the borough-wide employment service,[73] was part of the council's efforts to try and ensure the benefits of local regeneration reached all Newham residents. Workplace starts by understanding the needs of employers and building relationships with the major employers in the borough, then offering residents support and training focused on those real jobs. Since it launched in 2007, Workplace has supported 32,000 people into work, with half of these long term unemployed. It has high sustainability rates with around 70 per cent of those finding jobs through Workplace still in work a year later.

72 'Community resilience in Newham', Newham Council, 2013, p.4-10.
73 See Newham Workplace website.

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Pillar F: From organisation-based to place-based

How to build a sense of place and local identity

"Stood at the top of a hill, Over my town, I was found." **The Verve, 1995**

'Place-branding', 'place-building', 'place-leadership', 'place-based approaches'. These are terms you'll probably have heard before, and will certainly hear again. The terminology crops up so often because within it lies the potential to achieve the goals that public service drives towards. The importance of place is why local government exists; it's why it is local.

This is magnified, of course, by devolution, which is increasingly leading to areas having new powers, new representation, and a stronger sense of regional identity. The **GMCA pilot** is especially interesting to look at in this context, providing an example of the issues involved in engaging, and in building a collective place identity for such a vast area.

In changing times – as the effects of, for example, globalisation mean residents feel that local identity is being lost – this sense of place is all the more vital. Likewise, digitisation and budget cuts mean councils must work extra hard to be seen as champions of an area. With less resource to invest in the public realm, and more services going online, it's more important than ever that the intangible aspects of "place" become ingrained in an organisation's DNA.

Effective places tend to be described as flourishing or resilient. Decisions about local issues involve people, and reflect the area's collective identity and shared aspirations. There's a strong sense of civic society, with interconnected communities and spaces for residents to meet. Neighbourhoods are cohesive and capacity is high.

Yet creating a place which fits this ideal is inherently complex and organic. Local authorities achieve it when the organisation is truly aligned with the needs and desires of the place. It happens when the council's responses to problems match the personality of the area. It's the product of leadership which is place-appropriate, genuinely understanding and enabling of communities.

Creating this sort of organisation won't happen overnight. It relies on a change in mindset throughout the organisation. The whole council must start to see its role less as a municipal provider – interchangeable with any other council – and more as a proactive champion.

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A big part of getting this right comes through strategic communications, informed by research. A serious effort to understand the personality of your community is a good place to start. Where do residents feel they come from? Do they say they're from Bexley – or from Slade Green? What are the local things people are proud of? What's the identity of your borough or county? Idyllic 'Garden of England' or ambitious home of Great Expectations? What type of place do people want to live? How do people in your borough see themselves? What's the personality of the place? Quirky and different? Sought-after and state-of-the-art? Untouched and traditional? Do residents see themselves sticking around? Or is there a high turnover of people? How diverse is the area? Do people see this as a good thing? How equal is the borough? What are the things that people share? The **survey builder** gives a more extensive list of questions and issues.

Asking these types of question will help you recognise the relationship between people and place. They go beyond the things that all places share, such as a desire for good services and safer communities, to help inform a deeper sense of what makes your place different. A good example of this is the **London Borough of Camden's resident researcher programme**, which uses a strong understanding of place to save money and help insight work to double as engagement.

This information obviously feeds into branding, sense of place and the overall narrative and vision which informs everything you do as a council. It also has deeper implications for decision-making and spending choices, and the sorts of things you can ask of residents. If your residents are young and upwardly mobile for example, the things you can ask of them will be different to if they're socially conscious retirees.

Leading place is, therefore, about creating an organisation that's interdependent and cooperative with local communities. More than anything it relies on a deeper understanding of local people and their identity and personality.

What next?

> Skip to **Pillar G**, which is about empowering communities

> Return to the start of **this section**

> Head straight to **'Section 3: Engagement in action'**. The **Hackney** pilot is particularly relevant to this subsection

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Story: Community researchers in Camden

Camden Council has recruited a range of local people to sign up and be paid as "community researchers", rather than relying on external and expensive agencies who don't know the lie of the land. Researchers range from parents who need flexible hours to the long-term unemployed.

After receiving training (in participatory appraisal and quantitative research techniques) their work includes face-to-face interviews and raising awareness about local issues. So far they have gathered information on topics such as public health, and consulted residents on social housing policy.

It's a classic example of a place-based approach: training local people, tapping into the ethos of the area, recognising and partnering with the local academic sector. Most importantly, it's about getting insight from the people who know the place best, and who are already established in the community. It therefore helps the council to be more directly engaged than if they just hired an external agency.

This is a great example of the relationship between place and engagement. By understanding their borough, Camden were able to see this hidden capacity. This understanding of place saved money. But it also helped create a research team with far more invested in the area, and far better able to build a dialogue with other residents.

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Tool: Survey builder for understanding your area

Creating a 'place strategy' helps you go beyond engagement as a one-off process, and begin to develop an approach for the whole council that reflects the capabilities, concerns, aspirations and identity of your population.

Insight is central to this. As a council, you won't be able to reflect or represent your community as well as possible until you fully understand them. **Foundation I** has more on understanding how engaged the community is at a basic level. You'll already be gathering data about resident satisfaction, and will have information on demographics and deprivation, too and these things fit into the sense of place as well, of course.

The next step is to try and get a better handle on the personality, identity and 'texture' of your place – as much as the cold hard facts. A good example is 'Hackney: A place for everyone', which is **described in the Hackney Pilot**. This was a specific insight project, which went beyond conventional data collection and specifically sought to understand the borough's story and the type of place which residents wanted Hackney to be.

Below are some of the key questions to think about when gathering the insight to start doing this. Whatever method you're using for collecting this quantitative or qualitative data many of the key questions are the same. They're outlined below, and can be used as the building blocks for a survey or topic guide.

1. **Cohesion and clashes:** How do different groups feel about economic or cultural differences? Resentful of each other, or enriched? Is diversity thought of as a strength or a weakness? Is there cross-fertilisation between groups or are there cohesion issues? Can the area make an asset of how mixed it is?
2. **Transience and settledness:** What's the population turnover (this may link to age)? Are people transient and if so why? Is it a sign of an upwardly mobile borough always on the move? Likewise, if the population is settled, how do residents feel about this? Do they like the feeling of being an established community?
3. **History and identity:** What are the significant events from the area's past? What are the narratives and histories that dominate in different areas and neighbourhoods? How do people see themselves as a result of this? How does this carry over? Is there a maritime heritage, a history of civil rights protests? Have famous writers or explorers come from the area? Are people proud to come from the area?
4. **Values and ideals:** How do people see the world? What are their political values? Anti-establishment or pro-? What types of charities do people give to? What are the politics of the area? Do people consider themselves altruistic or traditionalist? Sustainable or self-sustaining?

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5. **Proactivity and capacity:** How much confidence and enthusiasm is there? How likely are local people to 'step up'? What sorts of thing are they likely to do? Are there many retirees, who could donate time and expertise? Or are there more likely to be students and young people, who can donate skills?
6. **Hopes and fears:** Is the area generally felt to be in decline or ascent? Are people positive about living there? What does the area aspire to? What do the people living there want it to be? Do they look forwards to a better future?
7. **Geography and mind-set:** Where do people say they're from when asked? Do they say the same name as the name of the council? Or somewhere more specific, like a ward or district? Or somewhere nearby, that other will know better? Do people tend to have a global or local identity? Do they leave the town much?

In putting these into practice as part of a place branding strategy, the LGA offers some useful guidance. Plymouth's place branding as 'Britain's Ocean City' is a good example of effectively applying this approach.

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Knowledge: Devolution and place

Devolution and place-shaping have much in common. The former gives more power from upper tiers of government to local councils, so they can improve services to fit the specific local context and needs. The latter is about the council understanding the identity and personality of the community, so it can better reflect and represent them.

People in this country on the whole have significantly more trust for local government than they do for national government (the closer power is, the less suspicious people seem to be of it). So, devolution and place leadership link together as the virtuous circle by which power is brought closer to people. Communities in turn are able to have a greater say in how it is exercised, meaning a more engaged resident base.

At the moment, this social angle of devolution is often underplayed at the expense of the economic one. Research by the New Economics Foundation has found that 42 per cent of government documents speak about devolution in terms of its economic benefits. By contrast, only 13 per cent of arguments refer to it as an opportunity to shift power and bolster citizen participation.[74] A big challenge is to address this imbalance, to emphasise the benefits of building power from the bottom-up. To do that a proper appreciation is needed that those who interact with services on a daily basis are best placed to see when things work, when they don't, and how they can be improved.

Below are three steps you can take to engage local communities around the devolution issue:

1. **Be clear to people what devolution actually means and what material changes it might bring:** It's easy to fall into the abstract language of 'empowerment' and 'transformation'. Instead set out for residents, in plain English, the things that newly devolved powers can and can't control. Explain to them in simple terms how changes in the structure of local government will impact on them' with tangible examples of how this will give them more power as citizens. (The resource pack developed as part of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority pilot.)

74 'Democracy: the missing link in the devolution debate', New Economics Foundation, 2015

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2. **Engage with communities so that they can help shape how devolution may look in ways that are relevant to their needs:** One example of this is the Citizens Assembly Project, piloted in Sheffield and Southampton. In Sheffield, 32 citizens were brought together over two weekends to discuss whether a new regional body should be formed. Experts were invited to give their views and different models were set out. The sessions helped shape how devolution might look in Yorkshire, with an elected assembly proposed that included tax-raising and law-making powers.
3. **Increase involvement with very localised forms of 'micro-government':** An example of this is the 'pop-up parish' or the neighbourhood planning project – eg Queen's Park Community Council, London's first parish council (click here for **more on 'parishing'**). These entities operate at a super-local level. They may have a limited lifespan and be designed to address an immediate problem at hand like planting trees or having graffiti removed but can evolve to address other important local issues. Projects like this devolve power to the most local level possible, laying the groundwork for the devolution big picture.

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Pillar G: From needs to capabilities

How to give communities the confidence to do more

> "We can't do well serving communities…if we believe that we, the givers, are the only ones that are half-full, and that everybody we're serving is half-empty… there are assets and gifts out there in communities, and our job as good servants and as good leaders…[is] having the ability to recognise those gifts in others, and help them put those gifts into action." **Michelle Obama, former First Lady**

People talk a lot about 'bottom-up' as opposed to 'top-down' government, but what does this actually mean? Generally, the term refers to approaches where local people are drivers of change. It is the citizen power element of engagement – the point beyond mutual co-production, where the community steps up and the council steps back. For many it is an ideal to aspire to, and in the present era of shrinking budgets it is increasingly sought after.

Yet this sort of approach won't happen on its own. The authority needs to act as an agent and enabler of change – providing tools, building capacity, rolling out good ideas to other parts of the area, speaking to people about what they need, and giving a voice to community leaders. For this to happen there must be a trusting relationship between residents and the local authority, with a strong ongoing dialogue. The council needs to understand residents' desire and capacity to step up, through listening. Meanwhile, the community needs to be given the confidence and platform to voice ideas and a sense of what the council needs their help with.

To be successful in this, councils can help communities to recognise the assets within the community. Assets are the things people are already doing well in without the council's help, like social clubs or community projects which sustain themselves, or individuals with the capacity or resources to step up and help others.[75]

75 The RSA's Civic Pulse or IDeA's Glass half-full guide provide tools for mapping these assets

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Asset mapping is about recognising the creative and social potential in everyone. In areas ranging from Liverpool to Greenwich to Croydon, research has repeatedly shown that a willingness to contribute more is latent within many communities, pretty much regardless of demographics or economics.[76] It's up to authorities to listen to residents, so as to find different ways of making the most of this potential resource.

This can't be done as a simple transfer of responsibility for services from council to community. It needs to be done in a way that has reciprocity at its core. If the council is seen as a public utility, asking people to do more will be like the gas board asking you to help lay the pipe work outside your house. You need to make an ask that is reasonable, finite and understood, and which involves showing of your hand in return and emphasising the benefit to the community. A new conversation with residents involves making this ask, and helping them to see their relationship with the council as a two-way one.

There are different ways to do this, but a big part of it is about giving people the right tools or helping them to develop them themselves. Sometimes investment from government, whether it be charities or the private sector, can help develop people's skills and build capacity. In order to help people achieve more on their own, councils need to understand what communities can and can't do, by engaging with them.

There are **six 'bottom up' techniques** which help to do this, by helping understand communities better, and give them the tools to do more. (These are asset-based community development (or ABCD), Neighbourhood Planning, Appreciative enquiry, Crowd-sourcing, Citizens UK and Parishing).

In Croydon for example, ABCD led to the **creation of Fair BnB**, a project which encourages people with spare rooms to house those on the verge of homelessness – saving the council money on hostels and B&Bs, and building trusted relationships between the council and residents in the process. Meanwhile, the story of Bishopthorpe Road in York (which you can read a first-hand account of by clicking here), shows what citizen power can look like once it really takes off and becomes truly organic.

76 Research carried out by The Campaign Company in Liverpool for the Leadership Centre (2011), for the LB Greenwich resident perception tracker (2016) and for Croydon Council's Opportunity and Fairness Commission (2016)

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In other instances, it's just as much about supporting people to capitalise on what they already do by building on and rolling-out good ideas. If one community has pulled together and sorted out a problem by itself, for example, the council can quite easily spread the idea to other areas and help it to take root. An open-minded approach, which looks to canvass citizens for ideas and listen to their solutions, is vital in making this happen.

To flourish, all of these ideas and others rely on good engagement by councils; engagement that seeks to genuinely listen and sees the positives rather than seeking just to fill the gaps. Building capacity and empowering people isn't easy – but councils can do it by listening carefully to what they're being told.

What next?

> Move straight to the next set of pillars, on **'Trust in the system'**

> Return to the start of **this section**

> Head straight to **'Section 3:'Engagement in action'**. The **Hackney**, **Staffordshire** and **GMCA** pilots are particularly relevant to this subsection

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Knowledge: 'Six key 'bottom-up' techniques

Listed below are six of the most interesting, unusual, or effective types of bottom-up community development. These types of approaches give citizens more power, through a variety of methods. They represent some of the subtler and more resident-led types of engagement, where the role of the council is primarily as enabler. Take a look through and explore whether any of them might help with building capacity through engagement in your council:

- **Asset-based community development (ABCD):** This is about identifying what a community has to offer rather than just what it needs. The 'assets' in question include people, associations and institutions. Once they have been identified, the idea is to get them working together for the benefit of the community. See the ABCD institute website for more on this.
- **Neighbourhood planning legislation:** Neighbourhood planning gives communities direct power to shape their neighbourhood. It came into force following the Localism Act of 2011. It's not a legal requirement, but a right which communities can choose to use. In the case of Queen's Park Community Council, the development of neighbourhood planning led to the establishment of a new micro-council. See Neighbourhood Planning legislation online here.
- **Appreciative inquiry:** A method for studying and changing communities by asking people what is working well, analysing why it is, and then finding ways to do more of it. The idea is that when people are properly involved in planned change, they won't require incentives to go along with it. Council staff can use this positive approach to start from the point of what's going right in communities. See Appreciative Inquiry Commons for more on this.
- **Crowdsourcing:** Crowdsourcing is getting many people involved in solving a problem. In the business world that might mean sourcing enough money on Kickstarter to develop a product. In community development, it often takes the form of sharing petitions, such as 38 Degrees, Spacehive and Change.org.
- **Citizens UK:** Citizens UK organises communities to act together so that they are included in the decisions that affect them. It does this through capacity building. Its focus is on developing leadership capacity, so that its members can better engage with decisions and hold decision-makers to account. See Citizens UK website for more on this.

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- **Parishing:** This is the process in which councils and local communities decide to establish a parish council, which is the lowest tier of local government in England. It used only to be possible for the Secretary of State for Local Government to enable this. Since 2007, district councils, unitary councils and London borough councils have had the power, following community governance reviews, to establish a parish or town council for themselves. This usually reflects a decision by the community to take the initiative.

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Rules: Engagement guidance around 'double devolution'

Local town and parish councils are uniquely placed to work with local authorities to deliver 'onward' or 'double' devolution (the process where devolution happens twice – first from national to regional and then from regional to local). As government policy on devolution becomes reality, many principal local authorities are already working with smaller councils to deliver double devolution. This links to **'parishing'**, which is described on the previous page.

A toolkit specifically for small town and parish councils provides a step-by-step introduction to devolution for local councils. It also highlights case studies of where services are already being delivered to local communities. This is important for three main reasons:

1. Local councils represent a clear focal point for greater engagement with the local community; they act as service deliverers, and builders of community resilience.
2. Because they're located in communities at a very local level, designing services and consulting on powers becomes much more tangible for local people in this environment.
3. As well as local people, local councils can bring community organisations and voluntary sector organisations to the fore in the design and delivery of local services.

You can view the town and parish toolkit here.

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Story: Croydon Opportunity and Fairness Commission and the creation of Fair BnB

A case study in community potential

Fair BnB grew out of the Croydon's Opportunity & Fairness Commission (OFC), a year-long look into how to improve Croydon for (and with) its residents. Research and engagement revealed a need for temporary homes, as well as assets in the form of over 4,000 spare bedrooms in the borough.

Strong insight from the OFC, through interviews and surveys with 3,000 residents, helped map the willingness of people to step up. The next step was to build a format which allowed citizen power to flourish.

The result was Fair BnB, a service designed to bring people on the verge of homelessness into the spare rooms of homeowners. Whether it's a person on their own or a single mum with a young family, guests can stay anywhere from a few days to eight weeks. Living with a homeowner, they have a better chance of getting back on their feet than they would in a hostel far away from their community, or their child's school. Hosts can provide friendship and advice for their guests, whilst making vital use of an otherwise empty space.

Fair BnB is now live and recruiting hosts. The council screens guests in advance to ensure a host's safety. They're paid between £15 and £25 a night depending on how big the spare room is. As a social enterprise, it will reinvest any profit it makes. The scheme will take less out of the council's temporary accommodation budget than the alternative of running a hostel place would.

There is a parallel between Fair BnB and Newham Council's 'Shared Lives' initiative, which brings an elderly or disabled person into the spare room of a homeowner who wants to be a carer part time. The council trains the carer, supports them and pays them a wage.

There is a co-produced element to Fair BnB, in that the idea was honed by dialogue with residents. The council's primary engagement role was as enabler, creating a structure through which residents could start to engage with council problems of their own accord.

For Croydon the benefits of this will be economic, with fewer council resources spent on paying for more expensive guesthouses or hostels. The benefits will also be social, with host families hopefully offering more emotional and practical support than private B&Bs might, stronger bonds forming between residents who wouldn't otherwise meet.

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This all came through the engagement carried out by Croydon OFC, which identified the capacity and appetite of local people to do more for themselves and others in the community. Robust engagement with local communities when the Commission was conducting research to inform its work fed directly into a policy idea with the potential to benefit all parties. It is a good example of how a dialogue with residents can save money and build social capital, through recognising communities' ability to step up.

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Section 2.3: Trust in the system

This section looks at how better engagement can create more faith in the system as a whole.

One of the overlooked elements of trust is that it makes things predictable for people. When people understand how the system works and find it easier to interact with it, they become more engaged.

Often, this doesn't happen and people do not trust their council. Even when they're satisfied with the services they receive, they feel the authority is bureaucratic and impenetrable – that they're being processed rather than engaged with as individuals.

Better and more personalised service design can change this, creating systems that people understand and feel are responsive to them. While this may not be what we immediately think of as engagement, it can create the type of day-to-day relationship that builds capacity and prevents cynicism.

The following four pillars look at how this can be achieved. Click on any to go directly to them, or scroll down to start on Pillar H.

- **Pillar H: From standardised to personalised** – how to build personal relationships and a 'whole citizen' approach
- **Pillar I: From analogue to digital** – how to use technology to create a council that's easy to engage with
- **Pillar J: From employees to ambassadors** – how to harness the power of front-line staff
- **Pillar K: From satisfaction to trust** – how to engage, and measure your success, on a continuous basis

What next?

> Return to the start of **'Section 2: Surpassing Expectations'**

> Skip to the next section, **'Engagement in action'**

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Pillar H: From standardised to personalised

How to build a 'whole citizen' approach

> "I have always depended on the kindness of strangers"
> **Blanche DuBois, A Streetcar Named Desire, Tennessee Williams**

Personalisation is the process of building services around a citizen. Done well it means each person has a single, ongoing and unique relationship with local services rather than a set of individual interactions. Residents have a 'whole, end-to-end' experience, rather than variable and unsatisfactory interactions.

This links to the joining up of local government and public services. As such, it may seem like a never-ending task which is inherently structural, administrative and abstract – the opposite of engagement.

Yet the end goal of personalisation is closely linked to engagement. It is part of the vision already set out, of local government not as a supplier but as a listener and an enabler. There is a lot of evidence that it's one of the most important ways councils can build real trust. The more you personalise relationships with residents, the more you can engage with them.

The obvious reason for this is that people are more likely to trust and speak to their 'point of contact' at the local council than they are with a series of strangers. The think-tank Demos put this simply, following research on trust in 2008:[77]

> "Most people contact their council only very occasionally when things go wrong, engaging in one-off problem-solving interactions. This kind of relationship does not create much space for trust formation…If local government wants to build trust, the first step is to develop a better kind of relationship with the people it serves…These improved relationships will have to be long-term, consistent and characterised by honesty and reciprocity."

They go so far as to suggest giving every member of the public a named caseworker.

77 'The State of Trust', Demos, 2008, p. 54–56

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While most organisations aren't quite at this stage yet, the personalisation agenda in adult social care is an example of how the idea is gaining traction. Within the sector, care users are increasingly central to determining how funds are spent on their care, creating a more 'engaged' process than more prescriptive approaches.

Meanwhile, one example from within the local government sector is in Croydon, where the local authority tried to manage benefit changes in a more personalised way. They proactively contacted and engaged with 3,300 of those in households potentially affected by changes, referring individuals to appropriate support services. The goal was to maximise residents' income and encourage financial resilience before changes to welfare payments took place. The consequence was not only better outcomes but less tensions with the authority. It was held up in Parliament as an example of good practice.[78]

The Institute for Government points out that achieving this sort of personalisation itself relies on good engagement – both with service users and other service providers:[79]

> "The best way to do this is through face-to-face conversations…People need the opportunity to ask questions…and delve deeper into what can and cannot be applied to a particular context."

Put another way, engagement and personalisation create a virtuous circle. If your staff have personalised interactions with residents the two parties will be more engaged; and if staff are more engaged with resident needs they can create more personalised services.

Data coordination is important here. Indeed, there is a whole technological dimension to personalisation. The Government's 'Tell Us Once' service, which allows you to inform the state about the death of a loved one within a couple of minutes, is a good example of this, sparing grieving relatives the pain of having to tell multiple institutions about their loss. Many councils are taking a similar approach, using data-sharing to build their online services around the individual and make it easier to have proper relationships with them.

The **Newport Case Study** below is a good example.

78 The local welfare safety net, House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee, Fifth Report of Session 2015–16, January 2016, p.8-11
79 'Local public service reform' Institute for Government, 2016, p.17-20

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Responsibility for achieving this lies at all levels of your council. Simple thought experiments, like asking how your work impacts on another service or department, can get people thinking about overlaps, duplication and a lack of a person-centred approach. Likewise, the next time you're engaging or consulting, think about the process you've got in place. Do the ways in which you're asking for feedback feel impersonal and bureaucratic? If so what could you do differently, so that stakeholders can put a name to a face (and feel more engaged in the process as a result)?

Overall, engaging with and prioritising user voices is at the heart of the personalisation agenda and this is something everyone can do.[80] A more personal service should lead to a closer and higher quality relationship between residents and the council and vice versa, with personalisation and engagement reinforcing each other as much as possible.

What next?

> Skip to **Pillar I**, which is about shifting to digital

> Return to the start of **this section**

> Head to **'Section 3: Engagement in action'**.
The **Hackney** and **Harlow** pilots are particularly relevant to this subsection

80 Demos sets out a recommendation in a 2014 paper to engage families as early as possible in discussions about outcomes that targeted services will pursue and be held to account for. See, 'Ties that bind', Demos, 2014

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Story: 'Digital and personalisation' – Newport case study

In the last five years, Newport City Council has dramatically shifted how its residents engage with it. Three-quarters of contact in 2012 was made by phone or in person and the other quarter happened online. Two years later, the split was half and half.

Some of this 'channel shift' came through natural progressions in technology, i.e. increasing broadband speeds. In an era of tight budgets, Newport worked hard to accelerate this process by making online approaches as easy as possible. First, it looked carefully at traffic on its website to identify the most popular pages. Then it concentrated its redesign work on these pages, developing new 'integrated e-forms' to make the user journey more relevant and easy to navigate. This made the website more user-friendly, and meant each person only had to engage with the council once.

On its own, this approach isn't necessarily a huge benefit to engagement. As explained in Pillar I, digital can actually mean less engagement between council and community.

However, it's what the Council did next that makes it such a good example of how personalisation and engagement overlap.

Using their data, Newport profiled every household across the city, using factors like the age of residents to gauge how e-savvy they were likely to be. Whenever someone called or visited the council, this estimate appeared on the council officer's computer screen.

Officers made an effort to encourage the people who were most likely to go online to do so. Those who were unlikely to were offered practical support. Officers were deployed in job clubs, community centres, libraries and care homes, where they gave the digitally excluded the training they needed. In buildings where the public could access computers, such as libraries and customer services offices, 50 front-line staff were trained to help people access council services online.

By improving its website, profiling households, and providing training for the digitally excluded, the council made a saving of half a million pounds in two years. Just as importantly, more residents experienced the speed and convenience of a well-built online environment. No service was solely available online. People were encouraged to use digital channels to when that was appropriate and supported when it was not.

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The Newport approach is an example of how digital and engagement overlap. By using data and by building services around people, the council was able to identify the hardest to reach and least confident, and develop meaningful relationships with them. A channel shift like Newport's could have meant less engagement by the council with residents. Instead, through adopting a more personalised approach, it became the vehicle for more.

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Pillar I: From analogue to digital

How to use technology to create a council that's easy to engage with

> "[The 'Uber generation'] have been weaned in the age of choice, whether that is multi-channel television or video on demand…Anyone accustomed to the instant gratification of the app will unquestionably expect a similar response when they come to interact with the state…Their only concern will be whether it caters for them with the same efficiency and immediacy as YouTube or Instagram." **Jason Beattie, Mirror journalist, 2015**

The world that we live in is being shaped by technology. We're increasingly a smartphone society; we socialise, shop, study and complain online usually on our phones. We use apps to monitor our health, manage our finances and board planes.

In this context, it's not surprising that people expect to be able to interact with their council in the same way. Citizens want councils to be responsive to social media, and many councillors are using Facebook to form a new dialogue with communities. Local authorities have responded well to this. The internet provides councils with a huge opportunity to strengthen engagement. Technology provides a way of engaging with citizens and handling complaints in an immediately responsive way.

Social media is used more and more in consultation. The Consultation Institute gives **advice**, on when and how to involve the public and how to analyse the data. This includes advice on consultation by social media, which stresses the need to provide training, evaluate impact, monitor new developments, be cautious in deploying new tools, and clear about whose role social media is since responsibility for this can vary in different local authorities. The **story of when use of digital goes wrong** shows what happens when councils rush into engagement using social media.

Councils are beginning to recognise the ability of digital technology to connect citizens and to build resilience, cohesion and capacity. For example, Tower Hamlets is utilising solutions such as Casserole Club – an app which lets citizens share extra portions of food – to strengthen social bonds. Digital technology has therefore allowed greater engagement with the council by residents, and has allowed councils to enable greater engagement between different parts of the community.

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When it comes to engagement around a specific proposal for change the internet offers a whole new set of resources. The **Staffordshire pilot** later in this guide shows how the use of tablet computers can play a big role in strengthening a community engagement strategy.

Council meetings can now be streamed and citizens can comment in live as the meetings are underway using Twitter. They can participate in budget-setting engagement through apps such as Show Me the Money, Budget Ballot and You Choose – which enable easier sharing of views, and more immediate participation in decision-making. Other platforms, like CommonPlace, help to engage residents in choices. Using these types of platforms and portals allows you to spend less time collecting responses (which the technology does automatically), and more time on analysis. The initiatives just mentioned, and a number of others, are **listed here**.

To make these technological changes work, there are four key challenges a council would need to address. These apply whether you're thinking about a formal e-consultation or a type of co-production.

1. Councils should engage citizens directly in the co-production of digitally enabled solutions so that it's their service, not just the council's.
2. Organisations need to develop a strategic approach to digital engagement before engaging. Seeing a digital channel as a box to tick or paying lip service to a new technology will look half-hearted and clumsy at best, and disingenuous at worst.
3. Authorities need to create a culture where staff and councillors are equipped and encouraged to engage digitally as well as trusted to be innovative. Overly formulaic online approaches go against the core ethos of digital technology which is supposed to make things more flexible and can breed cynicism.
4. Councils need to be flexible in using digital technologies to engage. The big suspicion among residents will often be that making things digital can dehumanises services. Digital engagement needs to be broad enough for staff to respond flexibly, as individuals – even if this means sometimes picking up the phone.

This fourth element is that digital is no silver bullet for engagement, and can in fact be harmful if done badly. To begin with, some of the most vulnerable people in the community may not be online. People who rely on or prefer face-to-face dealings with the council risk being left behind by 'channel shift'. So, while tech platforms should be seen as mechanisms for better connecting with residents – on their terms and in real time – there's a risk that this means less engagement not more.

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This applies whether a person is excluded from a consultation by not being online (which as we saw in **Foundation III** is not allowed, and can result in judicial review). It also applies if a person ends up feeling that the council is less accessible, accountable or responsive, because you can't 'talk to a human'. All the most innovative channel shift strategies have mitigated the move online with more personal approaches, such as home visits from IT coaches.

The abiding goal needs to be that digitisation reinforces engagement, leading to more personalised services, stronger social networks, a better sense of place, and a more participative democracy.

What next?

> Skip to **Pillar K**

> Return to the **start of this section**

> Head straight to **'Section 3: Engagement in action'**.
The **Staffordshire** and **Harlow** pilots are particularly relevant to this subsection

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Knowledge: Examples and innovations

Many platforms exist to aid consultation and resident participation, and more are being developed all the time:

Some can be used for proposing, discussing and voting on initiatives, such as Loomio, DemocracyOS, Open Ministry, LiquidFeedback. In the UK, Commonplace and Delib have been particularly valued by government institutions as ways of making engagement more straightforward and digital-friendly.

Budget simulators, like the ones from Delib and YouChoose, allow residents to give their opinions on where cuts or increases to a budget should be made.

Delib's Citizen Space tool helps with organising and publishing consultations, as does Kahootz and Snap Surveys.

VOiCE provides technology for recording and executing four steps of engagement – analyse, plan, do, review.

The Faith Project employs technology to enhance trust between local councillors, residents and businesses.

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Story: When digital goes wrong

Information travels like lighting on social media. As does misinformation. On June 23, 2016 every mind in Britain should have been focused on EU referendum. But quite a few were on stationery instead. A conspiracy theory had gone viral that polling stations were providing voters with pencils, rather than pens, so that any leave votes could be rubbed out and replaced with remain ones. The Electoral Commission politely explained that it was just as possible to cross out a vote made in pen as it was to rub out one made in pencil. Pencils were provided because they are cheaper than pens.

The story shows both the extent of the mistrust some members of the public feel towards the authorities and how volatile the digital climate can be. Managing that climate responsibly is very important for local authorities. You need to try and stop misinformation from spreading and to strike the right balance between creative and provocative. Southern Rail recently provided an example of what not to do. In the face of several worker strikes, they tweeted a poster saying "Let's strike back. The RMT won't listen to us. But they may listen to you. #SouthernBackOnTrack". However, instead of responding with the descriptions of rail-strike misery that Southern Rail wanted to see, customers tweeted their anger: "Hey Southern Rail, you are the WORST. I fully support the union. Fire your social media team too."

People clearly felt that the leaders of Southern Rail were passing the buck rather than taking their share of responsibility for the strikes. Southern would have been better off tweeting nothing at all. The lesson here is that social media messages designed to promote engagement need to promote the right kind of information. Provocative tweets should also be checked by a variety of people before they are sent live). Pitching messages so that residents feel compelled to reply to them constructively is essential.

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Rules: Guidance from The Consultation Institute

When done properly online consultation furthers the sound of public dialogue and is far more efficient than its offline older brother. It can have its drawbacks, too, reducing genuine two-way conversation and producing data that is tough to analyse. The Consultation Institute has published a useful code of practice, distilled below, to complement its wider principles:

A. When to use online consultation

1. When the views you get might actually influence decisions
2. As part of a mixed bag; traditional consultation methods like face-to-face meetings remain very important, especially for stakeholders who can't easily use the internet
3. When carrying out a survey or questionnaire. Surveys and questionnaires are the most popular forms of online consultation. Forums and conversations can also be valuable. Beware of trolls and the need to moderate them.
4. To target certain groups. Rather than going in with a scattergun, think carefully about whose views you seek and how they are likely to respond to being asked for them
5. When it will reach more people or elicit better responses
6. When you can consider using mobile applications to widen participation
7. To integrate gaming technology, such as budget simulators, make your consultation more appealing.

B. How to do online consultation

3. You need to use or create a robust platform that is accessible to as many people as possible.
4. Encourage people to register on your website. This will discourage trolls and make it easier to keep in touch with respondents. Bear in mind that if the matter at hand is very sensitive some people might not want to respond if they can't remain anonymous.
5. Inform people about the issues you are consulting them on, via your own narrative or links to external resources.

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6. The courts use the 'Gunning Principles' to decide if a consultation is lawful. The Second Gunning Principle holds that consultees must be given enough information to enable them to give intelligent consideration to the issue at hand. That means information needs to be readable and balanced.
7. Phrase online surveys with great care so as to avoid ambiguity. Any closed answer options should be as near as possible to ones people would give if they could answer freely. Pilot phases are invaluable in designing these correctly.
8. Recognise that for controversial issues you will need technology that can cope with the huge number of people and campaigns that might get involved.
9. Consider integrating your online consultation with a social network consultation so as to widen the conversation.
10. Beware crude 'quick polls' because they feel like referendums instead of proper public dialogues which can put people off.
11. Decide on how much of your consultation to make public. For example, more people sign online petitions when they can see the number of others who have too, and people can be biased by the views of others. Whatever you decide, make sure you explain to each person your policy and methods.

C. **How to analyse and use the data**

4. Get the analysts involved in designing the consultation
5. You may need to exclude some contributions if they come from people not entitled to participate or transgress other parameters, and the rules on eligible date have to be transparent
6. After taking the time to participate, people expect to see the results of an online consultation: a full analysis of who responded, what their views were and how they will be considered by decision-makers.
7. So as to encourage people to base their answers on their own knowledge and experience, be cautious before allowing people to first see the views of others
8. Consider the resources you will need to do a proper analysis. E-survey tools contain powerful analytics, but the best consultation information is often qualitative, in which case you'll very likely need human power too.

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If you want to use a quote from a respondent you will need to get their permission first. Have a look at this guidance from the Market Research Society.

Try and make sure your respondents are representative of an area. For example, campaigners can have had a big effect on the balance of responses. You might be able to isolate campaigners and compare their responses with a control sample. Where this is a significant issue, you might need to consider doing an opinion research exercise based on a structured sample.

The Consultation Institute also offers four principles on consulting using social media.

1. **Provide training:** Help your colleagues to take extreme care when writing comments and responses, as once written they are "out there" and may be impossible to erase
2. **Evaluate impact:** Social media has a casual, transitory feel to it, but that shouldn't stop you undertaking a careful appraisal of how things are going
3. **Monitor new developments but be cautious in deploying new tools:** Try and keep an eye on the hottest new thing but avoid opening up channels that you won't be able to maintain. Be sure to pilot new methods before making them standard practice.
4. **Agree responsibilities and keep under review:** While day-to-day social media communications might be handled by one department, another department may handle individual consultations. Be clear on who is in charge of what.

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Pillar J: From employees to ambassadors

How to harness the power of front-line staff

"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence is not a single act." **Aristotle**

Engaging with residents is arguably more important for public-facing staff than anyone else in the authority. Front-line staff speak to local people when they encounter residents out and about, or using council services. They are often in the community on a day-to-day basis, visiting people's homes or tending to the public realm. This is something that no one else at the authority does and it's immensely important.

To start with, experiences with staff have a far greater impact on attitudes to the council than conventional channels. For example, if you read an article in a local authority's magazine you'll be less likely to change your opinion than you would be from a good interaction with the council employee or contractor who fixed your boiler.

That said, findings have shown that the public will be more likely to hold the authority responsible if they have a bad experience with a member of council staff than if they have a good one. Positive experiences tend to be attributed "to the individual providing that service rather than [to trust in] the institution to provide consistently high standards."[81]

Senior staff reading this might feel they're damned if they do and damned if they don't. They get blamed if things go wrong with front-line staff, but none of the praise when things go well.

Yet a huge part of this is about the quality of the relationship between public-facing employees and the council (see **Pillar C**, which looks at embedding engagement at every level). If the authority is top-down, and front-line teams feel they have no autonomy, they're likely to take on a 'gatekeeper mentality'. They'll defend council decisions, but won't have been given the power to change them or the information to explain them. This can lead to disengagement for which residents understandably blame the council.

81 'The State of Trust', Demos, 2008, p.26

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In this top-down climate, meanwhile, staff who do go the extra mile will feel they're doing so off their own bat not as wider representatives of the organisation. In extreme cases, they may side with residents in disputes becoming cynical, and feeling the service they give is happening in spite of a stifling council bureaucracy. So, a crucial question to ask yourself, **set out in the test below**, is what staff say about the council when they're off duty.

Either way the answer is to provide better internal engagement. The more front-line staff are encouraged to take initiative, and given room to manoeuvre, the more they become ambassadors for the organisation. If staff feel they have more power and responsibility in their jobs, they'll be more engaged than if the authority's structure seems remote or top down.

When it comes to employees, good engagement within the organisation is the best – if not only – route to good engagement beyond the organisation. If you're a Leader or senior manager at a council, start by thinking about relations with colleagues immediately junior to you rather than about engagement with residents. In doing this, it isn't enough for the Leader or CEO to dispatch a memo to all employees. Front-line staff must be invested in the change, with a genuine devolution of power and responsibility. If they aren't then day-to-day pressures will triumph.

Part of this can emerge from a second element of front-line staff's role in engagement, which is through being the eyes and ears of the council. Not only do public-facing employees have a chance to report back concerns and observe the mood within neighbourhoods, they also spend time in communities where insight can be gathered for other departments.

For example, someone might undertake a small practical favour for someone struggling with their care package. Reporting that action back to a relevant council department can play a big part in making authorities more responsive. It could mean, for example, that the care team is able to intervene earlier, and prevent a problem escalating. Giving staff a remit beyond the narrow realm of their specific job title can be a good means of improving engagement at every level. A great real-life example of this is provided in the **case study from York**, where child safety teams linked up with streets teams to tackle abuse.

These approaches often build on what people are already doing informally. They'll often be doing so in their capacity as citizens, and feel they're engaging regardless of (or in spite of) what their employer wants them to do. The key is to encourage staff to have the mechanisms to make their input meaningful and confidence to act in these instances through knowing the council is backing them. Only by doing this can public-facing staff be genuinely engaged.

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What next?

> Skip to **Pillar K**, which is about engaging and evaluating continuously

> Return to the start of **this section**

> Head straight to **'Section 3: Engagement in action'**.
The **Hackney** and **Staffordshire** pilots are particularly relevant to this subsection

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Test: Knowing your staff

The ability and propensity of staff to advocate on your behalf is an increasingly important factor for councils. Research indicates those organisations rated as 'excellent' often have the highest number of staff freely advocating the merits of the organisation.[82]

There are three techniques that might help in encouraging staff to be more involved and better at taking on advocate roles:

1. **Net promoter scoring**
   This was originally developed within marketing metrics as a way to measure customer satisfaction. It can also be used to measure the views of both staff and public

   The Net Promoter Score is calculated based on responses to a single question: 'How likely is it that you would recommend us to a friend, neighbour or colleague?' The scoring for this answer is most often based on a 0 to 10 scale.

   Those who respond with a score of nine to 10 are called Promoters, and are considered likely to exhibit positive behaviours, such as buying more, remaining customers for longer, and making more positive referrals to other potential customers. For a public body they are key people who will say positive things about the organisation so knowing how many you have is important

   Those who respond with a score of 0 to six are labelled Detractors, and they are believed to be less likely to exhibit the behaviour and attitudes that an organisation would seek to promote.

   Responses of seven and eight are labelled Passives, and their behaviour falls in the middle of Promoters and Detractors.

   The Net Promoter Score is calculated by subtracting the percentage who are Detractors from the percentage of staff who are Promoters. For purposes of calculating a Net Promoter Score, Passives count towards the total number of respondents, thus decreasing the percentage of detractors and promoters and pushing the net score towards zero.

82 'The reputation of local government', Literature review to support the 'my council' campaign, Ipsos MORI, September 2008

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This data can be supplemented by asking an open 'why' question for the score to understand what some of the drivers for the view are.

Residents cannot choose to be served by another local authority – they are locked into the relationship with the council as a monopoly provider. With that comes the responsibility for the council to manage that relationship as well as possible. Staff advocacy is an invaluable tool in that process.

2. **General satisfaction measurement**
For obvious reasons, staff who feel satisfied in their jobs are more likely to go out and be good ambassadors. Likewise, staff who feel dissatisfied or frustrated will probably be cynical or bitter when talking about the council to others. It is vital to have a real understanding of how satisfied the council's employees are, and to track and update this regularly. Doing this is a relatively cheap and simple task, and can be set up in a way that allows cross-referencing with reward schemes or events like training days and internal engagement processes.

3. **Staff engagement/advocacy about specific issues**
This can again be measured through staff surveys and might cover specific surveys or policies such a green waste collection.

As this is engagement with staff, it is important that such research is done independently and the data collected is anonymised as staff frankness is vital for the council to understand how it is perceived.

If this is to work for all three measures, it's important to poll regularly to establish **Baseline Measurement** so what is measured can be tracked over time. Identifying any past surveying from the initial audit in order to create measurements that track change so you can see whether new initiatives are working. Comparisons can also be made with other similar bodies and even with local control groups so Randomised Control Trial (RCT) methodology can be established in line with Cabinet Office Behavioural Insight Unit guidance[83] if required to test the effectiveness of measures for their value.

What next?

> Skip to **Pillar K**

83 Behavioral Insights Team, Using Random Control Trials in Public Policy, 2013

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Story: Child safety in York

Engagement exercises that consciously involve front-line staff are often not publicised, because they're done at an informal or very localised level within the organisation. However, in 2015, City of York's children's safeguarding team pioneered an approach that got public-facing employees in other departments to take a leading role.

The idea came about during a whole council senior management team development session. The local children's safeguarding board was running a campaign called 'It's not ok', to encourage residents to come forward more willingly if they suspected a child was being abused. As part of this, the children's safeguarding team visited the council depot, and spoke about 'It's not ok' to rubbish collection teams and other staff responsible for streets and house repairs.

To their surprise, not only had most already heard of the campaign but a number had considered making a referral, having seen suspicious things on their rounds. They had done this not because they saw it as their duty as employees, but because they were themselves residents and had a sense of civic responsibility. The increased knowledge and support gave them the confidence to act in the future.

Rather than just thanking them and moving on, York decided to build on this. The child safety team set up a second, employee-focused strand to the 'It's not ok' campaign, encouraging their workforce to report things. Part of this was just about giving staff the confidence to feel they weren't being busy-bodies or putting their jobs on the line by doing so.

Essential to the success of the idea was recognising that staff saw themselves as citizens first and employees second – and that this was okay. By normalising and formalising a role for staff in keeping children safe, public-facing employees became the eyes and ears of the council. This bolstered the campaign, helping contribute to a more engaged workforce and, as a result, a more engaged authority.

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Pillar K: From satisfaction to trust

How to engage, and measure your success, on a continuous basis

Earlier in this document, **Foundation I** included some of the different ways you can try and measure satisfaction and trust. **Foundation VII** described the importance of evaluating your consultation and engagement activities – with part of the aim being to see if they've improved trust in decision-making.

However, it's important to be clear that satisfaction and trust are different.

Service satisfaction is potentially brittle. It doesn't require residents to understand competing priorities and pressures. It won't necessarily last if the quality of a service fails.

Trust, on the other hand, is a more 'earned' quality. It's defined less by how good people feel bin collections are, and more by how engaged they feel and how much they sense the council is on their side.

Bridging the gap between the two is tricky. Satisfaction is generally easier to achieve than trust. Satisfaction with services often remains high (despite reduced budgets), yet political trust is lower. This is sometimes known as the 'performance paradox', in which services improve but the authority doesn't get the credit.[84]

This paradox is hard to explain, but part of it comes from public sector organisations seeing their role as purely service driven. The council may provide for residents, but it doesn't speak for or to them.

How you turn this round is the million-dollar question, of course.

Firstly, to answer this question, you need to shift the balance away from unavoidable or forced engagement, by speaking to people before things go wrong. The more sophisticated your approach to engagement, the less you'll need to rely solely on evaluations of individual consultation exercises – and the more you can use continuous forms of engagement, wedded with continuous measurement of satisfaction and trust.

84 Ben Casselman describes this in relation to The Iowa Paradox, where voters in the US are sceptical about economic improvements despite all supporting evidence

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In an ultra-responsive council, engagement and satisfaction measurement should become virtually intertwined, with regular listening exercises done to involve residents and gain insights. Consulting a neighbourhood about a proposed change won't be as daunting when the situation comes around, because you'll already have been speaking to people on a monthly basis. You'll know the terrain and have designed your consultation accordingly. In return, you might be given more benefit of the doubt.

In the long run, this means you'll have less and less forced engagement or statutory consultation – and more and more positive listening exercises and day-to-day engagement.

This is the engagement equivalent of fixing the roof when the sun's shining; speaking to people when you don't have to, so that you cultivate more trust, understanding and solutions for when a problem does happen. Slowly, over time, this type of ethos can change how people view a council. It can alter the perception among some residents that authorities "only bother asking us when they want something". A great example is the listening event run by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and **written up in this case study** around housing and planning.

Secondly, it's important to use more qualitative techniques. As things stand, residents are often surveyed quantitatively, about bin collections or roads. However, they're less frequently taken into a room and asked how they feel about the council, or what ideas they've got.

Engagement processes that achieve this, if done regularly and taken seriously – and especially if done with influential community leaders – can make it more likely that local people will credit the council for improvements in its individual services.

In doing this, it's also important to work out where your problems come from.

The **'competence versus intentions'** tool offers a way to work this out. Ask people questions specifically about service satisfaction – and then specifically about performance – so you can hone in on exactly where the problem lies. The more trust is the issue, then the more good engagement is likely to be the answer.

Ultimately, there's no neat ABC to delivering these sorts of things. However, the key components are:

1. an emphasis on engaging when you don't need to
2. an emphasis on measuring through qualitative types of approach based on a two-way dialogue, instead of numbers-based surveys

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3. an emphasis on measuring trust as much as service satisfaction

If councils can move in this direction, then engagement and satisfaction can form a virtuous circle. Whereas engaging reactively, sporadically or retrospectively has only limited benefit, sustained engagement builds trust and improves relationships with residents.

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The **Hackney**, **Staffordshire** and **Harlow** pilots are particularly relevant to this section

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Story: 'Kensington and Chelsea community debate'

At the end of 2016, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea held an unusual event at the town hall; a community debate with a deliberately loose agenda, on the single issue of planning. The council advertised the debate using conventional channels six weeks before it took place, encouraging all residents to come along with their views and questions. Leader of the council, Nick Paget-Brown, later described the successful event in a blog post.

Two experts led the discussion rather than a political presence: Professor Tony Travers of the London School of Economics and Trudi Elliott, head of the Royal Town Planning Institute. They guided the debate and answered questions from the audience. Sometimes they pushed back at audience members, challenging them to suggest solutions to problems they had raised. The issues that came up during the debate reflected the fact that Kensington and Chelsea is the UK's most expensive borough to live in – regeneration schemes, overseas buyers, mega-basements – all with the potential to create planning headaches and sour relationships. Travers explained the kind of challenges that the borough is likely to face in the coming years, pointing out that they're more manageable than in many other places. Unsurprisingly, consultations and enforcement came up a lot.

As the debate progressed, some residents re-evaluated their more entrenched opinions and the council got a better grasp of where they were really coming from. Paget-Brown wrote: "Freed from championing their particular patches and opposing particular developments, most of the residents present seemed to appreciate that planning is an extremely difficult task that in virtually every case produces winners and losers." The atmosphere was for the most part lively rather than heated with the council even being praised at points and this had a lot to do with how the council framed the debate. It didn't want to inform or consult residents about clear plans. Instead the event was a blank slate on which the audience could write its own agenda. Residents had the opportunity to raise any planning-related issue they wanted, to be heard by respected experts.

This is a good example of how regular engagement can create better understanding, bringing locals into the relationship before the point where consultation has become unavoidable. The more your authority makes these types of event the norm - and the more you can start to monitor outcomes or attendance, as a metric for trust - the less you'll have to deal with expensive consultations or relationship breakdowns with the community.

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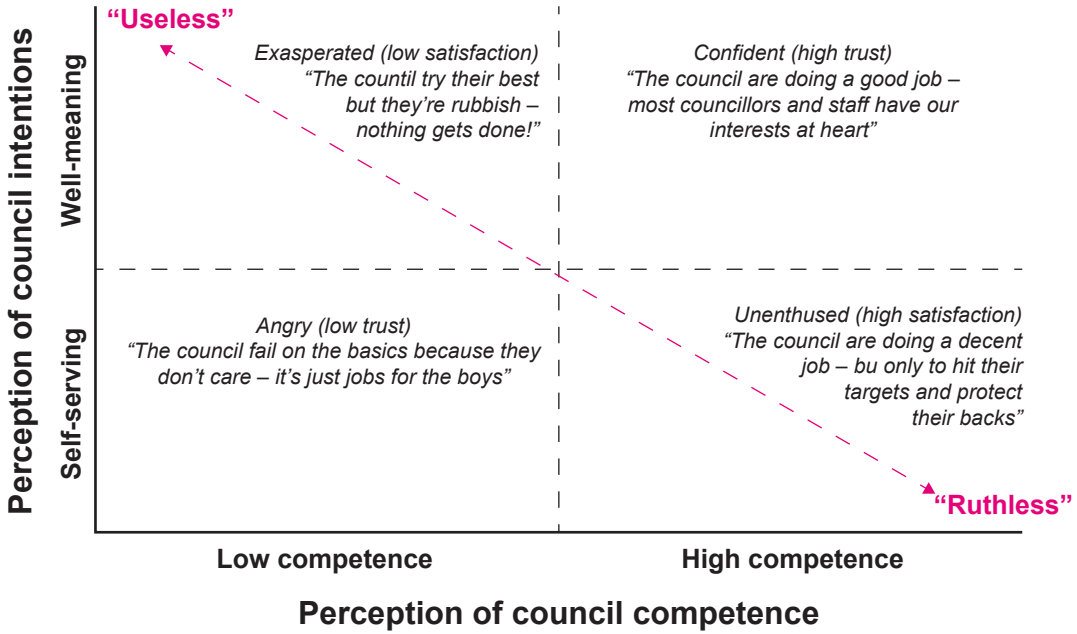
Test: How is your council perceived on the competence versus intentions axis?

The scale below is a way of testing where your council is when it comes to satisfaction and trust.[85]

It uses two axes. One axis is for how your council is thought of in terms of competence – are you seen as able to deliver good services? The other axis is for perceptions of how good your council's intentions are – do people believe you're motivated by the right things?[86]

There are four possible ways you might be perceived, according to the test:

- self-serving and incompetent – leading to anger and low trust
- well-meaning but incompetent – leading to exasperation and low satisfaction
- self-serving but competent – leading to high satisfaction but low enthusiasm
- well-meaning and competent – leading to high trust and confidence.



85 This chart builds on 2002 research into personality stereotypes, by Peter Glock, Jun Xu, Susan Fiske and Amy Cuddy. Their work charts competence against warmth.

86 These things are sometimes known as Cognitive or Affective trust. Cognitive trust is "a customer's confidence or willingness to rely on a service provider's competence and reliability." Affective trust relates to "care and concern". See Johnson, D and Grayson, K, 'Cognitive and affective trust in service relationships', Journal of Business Research 58, 2005

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'Useless' or 'ruthless'

The aim is to be both well-meaning and competent. This leads to genuine trust as opposed to just satisfaction among residents.

Most councils will be seen as more well-meaning than competent, or as more competent than well-meaning. The red 'Useless' to 'Ruthless' spectrum in the matrix above runs diagonally between these two extremes.

A council perceived as well-meaning but incompetent may have lost trust, for example, through losing resident details, messing up basic services, or making decisions which make the area a laughing stock. One perceived as competent but self-serving may have lost trust through an unpopular regeneration project, a children's centre closure or a scandal implicating the council in corruption.

Inevitably the two ideas feed each other. A council seen as useless is unlikely to be given the benefit of the doubt on a children's centre closure. An authority seen as ruthless might be tolerated if bins are being collected and streets cleaned, but it'll be given short shrift if things go wrong.

Inevitably, there's a 'chicken and egg' element. Being seen as incompetent increases your chances of being seen as self-serving, and vice versa. As the 'performance paradox' – described in the main Pillar shows, one of the hardest things is transforming basic satisfaction with the quality of services into a deeper trust that your council is on residents' side.

By addressing the issue of competence and intentions, you can start to begin building the sort of genuine trust that is won when people trust both your motives and your competence.

How to test it?

We all have an instinctive hunch about where our council is situated on the matrix, but by using quantitative data from residents we can get a clearer idea.

This can be done by testing satisfaction as well as trust. By asking residents whether how satisfied they are and how much they trust you, you can start to plot where you sit on the axis.

Among residents with low trust you could go further, with questions based on the 'useless' versus 'ruthless' spectrum, to understand why.

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Constructions for questions might include, for example, “How likely would you be to trust the council to make a decision that’s morally right?” and “How likely would you be to trust the council to deal with a technically complex issue?” By contrasting responses to the two you can start to see where the problem stems from.

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Section 3: Engagement in action – pilot projects

There is no perfect council when it comes to engagement. There are stronger councils and weaker ones, for sure. Most councils have elements they're confident about and elements they're less sure of.

But the important thing is that most councils are now trying to move in the right direction towards a relationship of mutual trust and understanding with those they serve.

Your council might be just starting out on this process. Or you might already be in a pretty good place. Either way, the aim of this section is to show how other organisations are making the same journey.

- **Hackney** is a London borough with a diverse and transient population. The council's story is about how they are taking the work they have done to understand fully how residents feel about Hackney as a place, and using it to build rapport and engagement around some tough issues. They have been using creative digital techniques and innovative engagement approaches to develop the borough's direction on schooling.
- **Greater Manchester Combined Authority** (GMCA) is the authority for the Greater Manchester city-region. Their story is about the role of councillors, staff, and engaging residents and communicating the core messages about devolution.
- **Staffordshire** is a large county council. Its story is about using networks, assets and data to be a more responsive local authority – and about the use of community-based engagement activities to help develop quality insight to support this.
- **Harlow** is a district council in Essex. Its story is about creating an organisational culture that local people feel is listening to them, including work to deliver channel shift in a way that includes residents and engages with local issues.

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The stories are based on pilots carried out specifically for this guide, between autumn and winter 2016/17. All four culminated in the creation of a practical guideline or tool.

The organisations all have different remits, different challenges, and serve different types of community. They all have strengths and weaknesses when it comes to the relationship with their residents.

The important thing is that all four are moving in the right direction in each case, and all have a story brought out over the course of a practical pilot that we can learn from.

If you would like to know more about any of these four pilot projects then email The Campaign Company, who supported the councils to carry out their engagement work, or call them on 0208 6880650.

What next?

> Find out more about our case studies: **Hackney**, **Staffordshire**, **GMCA** or **Harlow**

> To view the tools generated during the four pilots click here

> Scroll down to start with Hackney

> Skip on to the **Further Reading** section

> Go back to one of the first two sections, **'Covering the basics'** or **'Surpassing Expectations'**

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Hackney, a place for everyone

Like many inner London boroughs, the pace of socio-economic and demographic change in Hackney has been rapid and has impacted on the council's relationship with residents. As house prices have risen, socio-economic divisions between private renters, owners and social tenants have grown, creating contrasting experiences of living in the borough and interacting with services. This has created a greater need for the council to develop a shared vision for the type of place residents want to see.

Engagement has been viewed as a vital part of this task, as a basis for place leadership and for building the networks and capacity to involve residents in shaping the council response to challenges. It has been viewed as a long-term process, where relationships are valued and trust earnt. To achieve this, focus has been placed on engaging early and extensively – with the aim of building a shared agenda to allow meaningful dialogue about specific service changes.

Hackney are part way through this journey. They began with a borough-wide research and engagement piece ('Hackney: A Place for Everyone'). Initial engagement provided an opportunity to trial new forms of engagement alongside traditional types. To mitigate against the risk of the 'usual suspects' turning up, a range of activities were designed to reach out to different groups and amplify their voices. Council staff attended more than 50 locations, including markets, train stations, festivals, health services and cultural events, to do this. New techniques gave residents a chance to tell their stories on camera in the back of a specifically-designed 'I Love Hackney' black taxi.

Bespoke engagement with hard-to-reach segments was developed to engage young black men, those with disabilities, those in temporary accommodation and the LGBT community. Co-produced, policy emerged through smaller sessions. These included deliberative discussions on specific issues like licensing and housing.

Alongside these engagement approaches, a 1000-sample representative survey was conducted and over 3000 questionnaires returned. Together these provided a robust evidence base to complement the data collection from the other forms of engagement.

The findings, learning and brand from this process has provided a platform for future internal and external engagement. Internally a staff engagement piece sharing the brand – 'Hackney Change for Everyone' – has embedded the messages and approach as part of a unified internal narrative.

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Externally, as part of the pilot the learning, relationships and themes from 'Hackney a Place for Everyone' have been used to assist a pre-engagement exercise around education, called 'Hackney: Schools for Everyone'. Rather than launching into specific consultations, this is a borough-wide engagement around the type of school residents want, how that fits in to their sense of place and the role of the council in this area.

Several groups were highlighted as likely to yield lower responses or have specific needs with regard to schooling, and bespoke methods were used for the engagement. As part of building engagement capacity across the organisation, social housing tenants were engaged through a 'whole citizen approach'. This meant rather than these tenants being engaged with by different departments of the authority depending on the issue, the staff with the closest relationships were used to conduct the engagement work. This has the advantage of being efficient, through processes already being in place and enabling the development of more meaningful relationships between residents and the organisation to be built.

A key element of this engagement was deliberative events and bespoke activities with hard-to-reach groups. The deliberative events were recruited using Hackney's 'e-panel'. The e-panel used quota recruitment methods to achieve a range of participants' representative of Hackney as a whole. This targeted engagement allowed the council to fully represent resident groups with historically low levels of participation in council consultation exercises. This includes social housing tenants, and those with specific needs relating to the issue of schools (such as the orthodox Jewish community).

At the events themselves, independent facilitators, officers and cabinet members guided focused discussions to directly capture residents' views. The goal was to move discussions from one-way insight gathering, satisfaction exercises, to meaningful two-way engagement. This 'deliberative approach' allows a dialogue around decision-making to be shaped through discussion.

Through developing assets, networks and relationships to assist with upcoming engagement challenges, Hackney is, therefore, moving towards a relationship with residents based on shared understanding, meaningful dialogue, and the inclusion of all elements of the population.

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> Click here to read Achieving place leadership through engagement: a learning guide – the final tool developed during the pilot

> Skip straight on to the **Harlow pilot**

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Embedding community engagement through change in Harlow

Harlow is a place with opportunities and challenges both familiar to other areas and unique to itself, as well as opportunities and a will to succeed together. A product of the first wave of 'new towns' following the Second World War, Harlow's growth was rapid. It was designed with a concept of community at its heart – as a town for new residents that housed them around communal and commercial areas, or 'hatches', in each neighbourhood.

The town has always taken pride in its sense of community, and the district council has enjoyed a close and direct relationship with residents. However, with economic and other pressures affecting both the community and the council itself, maintaining that positive relationship has become increasingly challenging. Reductions in local government funding has led to a decline in capacity at district level, and there is now a need, embraced by the council, to do more with less.

Community engagement is recognised within the council as an area where improvements can and should be made. Our work followed and built on a previous LGA review of community engagement. We were able to harness insight gathered through a further scoping exercise that had begun to identify the key challenges. The council Leader, Cllr Jon Clempner, signalled a particular interest in improving community engagement throughout the organisation.

Work with Harlow sought to uncover the assets at its disposal, particularly in terms of its people and the knowledge and experience they harbour. The aim was to suggest steps the council might take, over time, to develop a 'whole system' approach to consultation and engagement. The long-term aspiration in Harlow is that community engagement should provide solutions to significant capacity pressures by enabling more effective knowledge sharing and partnership working, both internally and externally. Evidence suggests there are plenty of examples of good engagement – and that there's willingness to build on this. However, a more joined-up approach will be key.

The role of councillors in this process is recognised as vital. Many have expressed a strong desire that the organisation engage more effectively. We therefore considered how to support councillors better and align their role with the organisation's wider engagement aims.

Working with a range of officers from across the council and councillors (including cabinet members, and front line councillors from majority and minority parties), key areas for action have been pinpointed. The action required in these areas is to be driven by an engagement narrative for the council as a whole. This tells the story of the approach to engagement throughout the organisation, endorsed by the leadership and understood by all.

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The Harlow Council pilot coincided with its customer service review. This is an area where there's a particular need to engage with residents to better understand what the community requires, in a wider sense, in terms of their relationship with the council. This will be a key testing ground for the tools and approaches that have been recommended as part of this work, and those have been supplemented with some guidance on best practice examples of channel shift engagement that Harlow Council could consider adopting. Not all will work perfectly, but this learning provides a useful internal case study which the council can adapt for wider use to inform their broader engagement approach.

Like district councils throughout the country, Harlow is seeking to change appropriately and quickly to equip its members, staff and partners with the right skills and systems to engage better in changing times. The lasting legacy of the New Conversations work in Harlow should be a confident approach to engagement, which itself can build capacity and help the council deliver honest and effective engagement throughout the organisation as a whole.

What next?

> Click here to read Embedding community engagement through change: a three-phase checklist – the final tool developed during the pilot

> Skip straight on to the **Staffordshire pilot**

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Laying the groundwork in Staffordshire

Like many local authorities, Staffordshire County Council has been through significant transformation over recent years. Throughout this period of change has worked towards a compelling vision for the future – a connected Staffordshire where everyone has the opportunity to prosper, be healthy and happy.

To achieve this, the council recognises the need to rethink its approach to public consultation and engagement including new and creative ways to capture, collate and analyse public opinion and to reach a broader cross-section of residents.

The challenge of achieving this vision of 'connected citizens' continues against a backdrop of significant change in public sector funding and reform and requires a shift in the way the council works and communicates with its residents and communities.

To meet the challenges of the future Staffordshire County Council has moved away from traditional client/provider relations and is instead working to create a culture of shared responsibility, encouraging participation and leadership from staff, partners and communities.

To support this Staffordshire County Council were keen to use this pilot to look at the benefits of using new methods of engagement including networks of influencers and social media channels, as well as existing consultation routes such as neighbour panels and partnership groups to stimulate different conversations about the role of public services.

Within this context, the council is using two pilots to inform their approach:

- A 'place-based' approach designed to harness the existing capacity of partners, communities and local assets to ask questions in new ways
- Testing new community based activity, social media networks and innovative outreach work to reach new audiences and increase participation

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The pilots are being used to inform two strategic public reform priorities for Staffordshire:

Priorities	Approach to be tested
Development of a new model to support Staffordshire's vulnerable children and families.	Use of local partnership arrangements to generate customer insight through sharing data and intelligence at operational level to increase understanding of needs.
Identifying priorities for Staffordshire's Police and Crime Strategy and Plan in partnership with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.	Helping staff, partners and community 'influencers' to collect quick insight on local priorities around community safety as part of 'business as usual'. 'Influencers' involved in this activity include barbers, hairdressers, school children, and front-line staff.

The next steps will involve evaluating the two pilots to capture lessons learnt and to understand how the good practice can be transferred to larger-scale consultations. This will involve reviewing the quality of the insight and assessing the extent to which it has led to positive behaviour change amongst commissioners and communities.

Ultimately the project will support the council in refreshing its approach to consultation and engagement through unlocking new channels of communication and doing more to capitalise on existing networks.

Through these mechanisms the council hopes to create an affordable and sustainable approach to consultation based on genuine engagement and meaningful outputs.

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> Click here to read Helping communities help themselves: a guide to action – the final tool developed during the pilot

> Skip straight on to the **GMCA pilot**

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GMCA: Towards a democratic powerhouse

Greater Manchester's councils are no strangers to working together – the 10 local authorities that make up the region (Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan) have worked informally across traditional boundaries for years, to be as effective as possible on the issues that matter to everyone.

This relationship was formalised with the creation of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority in 2011, through which the area is working to achieve its key objective of becoming a prosperous, self-reliant city-region by 2020. The region is trailblazing the devolution concept, and others looking to follow in their footsteps are watching and learning from their journey.

The challenge for this diverse place, which is home to more than 2.7 million people and represented by 644 councillors, is to move from working together behind the scenes towards a public, democratic powerhouse. Good consultation and engagement is essential if GMCA is to turn the devolution process into something local people feel a part of, and regard as a success.

In May 2017, the region elects its first mayor. This is a major milestone. Greater Manchester has to take residents, staff and elected councillors on a journey: raising awareness, and building trust and motivation in this new democratic system which promises more localised powers and regional prosperity.

GMCA's pilot began by exploring the current awareness, attitude and engagement levels amongst staff and elected councillors. Understanding this provided GMCA with a baseline from which they could build engagement and communications as well as offering insight into the type of support, tools and information that each stakeholder group would find useful in engaging residents about devolution.

An online survey was cascaded through the ten local authorities and this was supplemented with in-depth interviews with councillors and senior officers. This, and other local evidence, demonstrated the need for investment in engagement of staff and other stakeholders. With the creation of a new body, relationships and responsibilities for explaining and advocating for GMCA are developing. There's little doubt that engagement and communication should be tailored and adapted for the different audiences across the GMCA region. In the meantime there's an overarching human narrative that needs to be developed and built upon by the GMCA and the local authorities.

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Several strands of work are now underway to address this. Firstly, there's the refreshment of the engagement and consultation framework. Secondly, there's a brand development project and thirdly, the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee established a communications task and finish group, which reports back with its recommendations early in 2017. Each of these are playing a valuable role in shaping the GMCA's story, making it real for everyone.

Meanwhile there was a pressing need to provide the basics for staff and stakeholders, so they feel able to become ambassadors for the GMCA, and devolution, and are able to articulate what this means to residents across the region.

The pilot identified a significant opportunity to work with councillors and support them in their role moving forwards. The research showed there is a real appetite and positivity among councillors to know and understand more, which can be built on. The challenge is to equip councillors to talk with confidence about devolution and what this means for Greater Manchester, and the people living and working in the region.

Working with GMCA officers, councillors and members of the communications task and finish group, a resource pack for councillors was developed to assist them in engaging residents and communicating the core messages about devolution for Greater Manchester. The idea was that the pack distilled the devolution idea in ways that people could explain it to friends and family.

The resource pack includes:

- Three infographics explaining the structural and political changes, and the timeline
- A short strategic communications document including message-house and Q&A
- Prompt cards and an accompanying slide deck for a ten-minute speech
- A series of two-side leaflets, aimed at different readers: 'What GMCA means for you as…'

The pack is being developed and given to councillors, to be rolled out and explained in first six months of 2017, in the run-up to the election of the new mayor.

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> Click here to read The GMCA, our new elected Mayor and devolution: an information and resource pack for members – the final tool developed during the pilot (for the actual resources go here).

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Below is a range of useful links for exploring some of the ideas behind this document in more detail.

The Bridge, Compass, 2014

Making Digital Default, Deloitte, 2014

State of Trust, Demos, 2008

Trust in Practice, Demos, 2010

Ties that Bind, Demos, 2014

Ten Super-connected Cities Announced, Department of Culture, Media & Sport, 2012

The Relational State, IPPR, 2012

The Condition of Britain, IPPR, 2013

Many to Many, IPPR, 2014

Understanding and Redefining Civil Society in the North, IPPR, 2014

Leadership for the Digital Age, Leadership Trust Foundation, 2015

Reputation to Trust, LGA, 2013

Rewiring Public Services, LGA, 2013

Building Trust, LGA, 2013

Connected Localism, LGiU, 2013

For Good Measure, Localis, 2010

Future Service Partnerships, Local Government Information Unit, 2012

Co-production, New Economics Foundation, 2008

The Challenge of Co-production, New Economics Foundation and Nesta, 2009

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Public Services Inside Out, New Economics Foundation and Nesta, 2010

Right Here, Right Now, New Economics Foundation and Nesta, 2010

Digitally Positive, New Local Government Network, 2014

Smart People Smart Places, New Local Government Network, 2014

Demystifying Data, New Local Government Network, 2015

All Together Now, New Local Government Network, 2016

Leaders who Collaborate, New Local Government Network, 2016

Smart Devolution, Policy Exchange, 2016

The Local State We're In, PriceWaterhouseCoopers, 2016

Beveridge 4.0, Participle, 2008

Clubbing Together, ResPublica, 2012

Connected Communities, RSA, 2010

N Squared, RSA, 2010

The Future of Joined-up Public Services, 2020 Public Services Trust at the RSA, 2010

The Civic Pulse, RSA, 2011

Power Lines, RSA, 2011

Person-to-person Social Justice, RSA, 2015

If Mayors Rule the World, Yale University Press, 2013

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Asset Mapping: This is the process of identifying the strengths and resources within a community to as to find solutions and build on the good things already happening.

Citizens' jury: A group of stakeholders consider a complex issue together. They gather evidence, deliberate and hear from expert 'witnesses'. Finally, they recommend actions to the council, who must then decide what to implement.

Citizens' panel: A panel which can have a small number of people (dozens) or a large number (thousands) who are representative of the local community, who are periodically surveyed through questionnaires and focus groups.

Channel shift: Changing how stakeholders are interacted with eg letters or emails.

Collective efficacy: The willingness of neighbours to intervene for the common good, often in small ways, leading to a reduction in crime.

Community forums: An event in which a panel of experts share their knowledge on an issue and then stakeholders can ask questions. Similar to a focus group, but less formal and usually with more participants.

Community mapping: Identifiying the community resources (both physical and organisational) of a local area to discuss with stakeholders the positives, negatives, the challenges and opportunities. Participants are often broken into small groups to generate and discuss ideas.

Community narratives research: The search, collection and recording of stakeholder stories about the local area. Narratives collected from a broad enough range of people can amount to a comprehensive picture of life in the local area. Where there are differences it can expose issues that engagement can help to address.

Consensus-building exercise: A range of stakeholders meet to discuss and make decisions on an issue. Whilst there may be a chairperson, their job is to ensure that all participants are equally heard.

Co-production: Engaging stakeholders including service users in practical design and delivery as equal partners, not just 'doing it to or with them'. This is a good way to build trust. It implies an equal relationship between professionals, the people using the services, their families and their neighbours. The NESTA Co-production Catalogue provides some good examples.

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Crowd sourcing: Getting information or help on a particular issue from a number of people, usually via the internet. It is a general term that encompasses everything from sourcing support through a petition to identifying providing resources for a particular project i.e. skills and expertise needed.

Deliberative event: Where people come together to learn about and discuss an issue in depth before giving a considered view. A 'citizens' jury' is one such event (see above for a definition).

Digital by Default: A government standard for digital services on GOV.UK. It consists of 18 points and is designed to support the Government's aim of encouraging people to access its services online rather than offline.

Double devolution: An 'earned autonomy' approach which involves the devolving of powers to principal authorities in return for them passing powers to town and parish councils who want to take on more responsibilities, grow in stature and deliver locally tailored services

Elevator pitch: A succinct and persuasive pitch of an idea, lasting no longer than an elevator ride.

Focus group: A group of stakeholders brought together and asked their opinions on a particular issue.

Future Search: A two- to three-day conference exploring the past, present and future of a community, with the aim of producing a strategic plan.

Gunning principles: A set of four rules, which a judge uses after a judicial review has been raised, to determine whether a public consultation is lawful. You can read more about these by **clicking here**.

Information drive: The process of releasing new information – or information which has recently become more important – into the public domain using all available channels.

Judicial review: A procedure by which a court can review an administrative action by a public body and (in England) secure a declaration, order or award. Stakeholders would have grounds for a judicial review if, for example, they legitimately expect to be consulted on something but aren't. You can read more about this by **clicking here**.

Listening event: Any event where the council, or an individual councillor, listens to stakeholders to get their views. Usually tends to describe situations where the council wants to really understand an issue or grievance, rather than something driven by an imminent choice or decision.

Local authorities, authorities or councils: Used in this guide to mean metropolitan borough councils, London boroughs, unitary authorities, district councils and county councils

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Local Councils: Used in this guide to mean town and parish councils

Localism: Transferring power from central to local government and/ or configuring services around local people.

Open space technology: A meeting with a leader where the participants choose the agenda. Good for large numbers of people or the airing of conflicting opinions.

Parishing: This is the process in which councils and local communities decide to establish a parish council, which is the lowest tier of local government in England. Since 2007, district councils, unitary councils and London borough councils have had the power, following community governance reviews, to establish a parish or town council for themselves. This usually reflects a decision by the community to take the initiative.

Person-centred approach: Putting the experience of individuals rather than the system at the centre of research, deliberation and decisions.

Place-shaping: Local stakeholders using their collective influence and abilities to create attractive, prosperous and safe communities, places where people want to live, work and do business.

Planning for Real ©: An engagement approach simulating planning decisions. Stakeholders use models of a local area to suggest what they would like to see eg allotments in specific places. Finally, the council uses the cards to inform an action plan.

Pre-engagement: Discussions which take place between a consultor, key influencers and key stakeholders, with a view to clarifying the issues, determining the scope and considering the processes of a forthcoming consultation.

Public meetings: Events where people can hear a speaker, express their opinions and/or plan a strategy. Large numbers of people can be consulted like this, but breaking them into small groups can be a useful way of helping everyone to get involved.

Qualitative: Relating to the quality of something rather than to its quantity. Qualitative research, such as that done in a focus group, explores people's opinions and motivations in a relatively free manner.

Quantitative: Relating to the quantity of something rather than its quality. Quantitative research, such as online polls, produces data that can be transformed into useable statistics. While quantitative research can include face-to-face interviews, it is much more structured than its qualitative cousin.

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Social capital: The networks of relationships among people who live and work in a community, which enable it to function effectively.

Social value: A broad term encompassing all the effects of an activity on an area. The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 requires local authorities to consider how procuring a service might affect the economic, social and environmental well-being of an area.

Stakeholders and stakeholder analysis: The process of identifying the individuals or groups that are likely to affect or be affected by a proposed action, and sorting them according to their impact on the action and the impact the action will have on them.

Street stalls: These are outdoor displays, such as idea or graffiti walls, used to capture the views and comments of many people. Maps and plans for an area or project can be displayed and passer-bys are asked to comment, generate ideas or cast votes.

SWOT analysis: A study to identify an organisation's internal strengths and weaknesses, and external opportunities and threats.

Town hall event: A discussion event or debate with questions and answers where the public are invited to attend. The term was first coined in American politics

Visioning exercise: An activity designed to develop a plan, goal or vision of the future.

Vox pop: Informal comments of stakeholders, often expressive of public opinion and usually filmed or recorded as audio.

Web based consultation: Consultations done online, usually in the form of surveys or questionnaires. You can read more about this by in **Pillar I**.

Workshop: Like a focus group but about more than one issue. It provides an open atmosphere for people to exchange information, discuss a project, obtain ideas or produce an action plan.

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