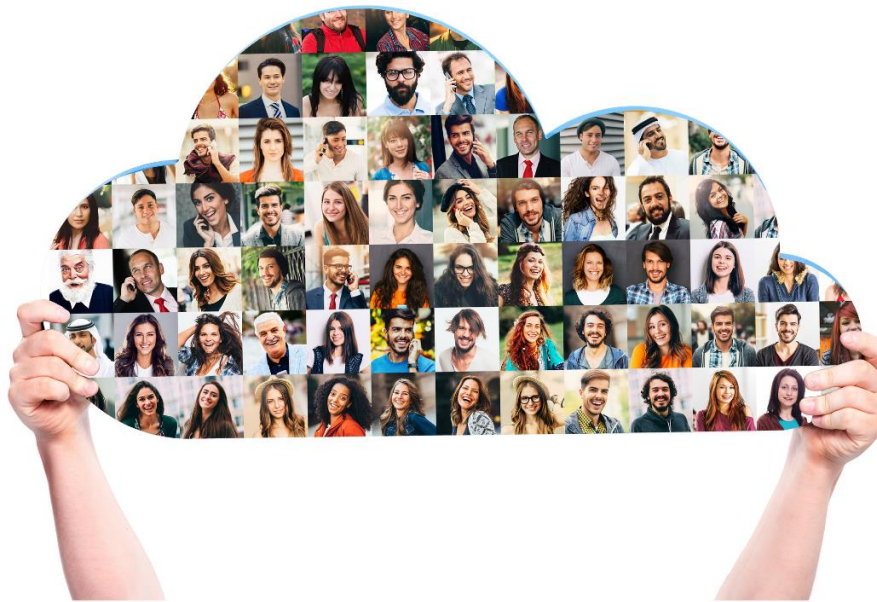




**Social
Enterprise**
Kent



Community Engagement Toolkit

Planning, developing, and engaging with communities

Social Enterprise Kent

Social Enterprise Kent is a Community Interest Company (CIC) and Social Enterprise which has operated for over 35 years with the overarching vision of “Improving Lives, Supporting Communities.”

“Every day we deliver a positive social impact, strengthen communities, empower people and improve lives.”

The Four Pillars of Social Enterprise Kent are:



Social Enterprise Kent supports individuals and businesses, working in partnership for the best outcome.

“As a social enterprise, we’re all about making a positive social impact in communities.”

Social Enterprise Kent’s Values:

Reliable	Innovative	Professional	Impact-Driven
We are trustworthy, reliable, and fair to our clients, partners, and staff	We strive to find creative and effective ways to work and new solutions to longstanding challenges	We are committed to high levels of professionalism in all areas of our work	We commit to making a tangible difference to the clients and partners we work with

For more information please visit:

sekgroup.org.uk

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Defining Engagement

Community engagement is a strategic process with the specific purpose of providers working with identified groups of people, whether they are connected by geographic location, special interest, or affiliation to identify and address issues affecting their wellbeing, to develop a working relationship between organisations and the community.

Community engagement is also active participation in your community and being invested in what happens in your community. This includes many different activities like community service, donations, voting, career work, and more. To engage effectively requires attention, focus, genuine interest, and care.

Community engagement can take many forms, and partners can include organised groups, agencies, institutions, or individuals.

Good community engagement ensures everyone can understand and act on the needs or issues of community experiences, helping to achieve positive change.

How would you define the community or communities you wish to engage with?

A population is externally defined.

A community is self-defined.

Remember to consider:

- Geographical boundaries
- Social characteristics
- Economic characteristics
- Interests
- Values
- Traditions
- Shared identity
- Shared experience

How would you describe the need of the community or communities you wish to engage with?

Felt need is one directly identified by community members themselves

Expressed need is inferred by observing a community's use of services

Comparative need is derived by comparing service use in a similar community

Normative need is derived by comparing measures of living conditions with a society norm or standard, often set by experts

What do you aim to achieve from your community engagement?

It is essential to be clear about the scope and purpose of the engagement process.

Asset-based community development is a way to sustainably approach community-driven engagement. It is focused on linking assets with the environment and exists beyond the engagement of a particular community. Communities can drive development themselves by identifying and mobilising existing but often unrecognised assets. This creates local social improvement and economic development.

1. Collect stories
2. Bring together a core group
3. Map gifts, capacities, and assets
4. Find and engage connectors
5. Empower the community
6. Allow self-mobilisation through association
7. Leverage knowledge to secure resources and investments

Engagement Process

What are the planned outcomes?

Agreeing on a clear purpose will help identify engagement objectives, anticipate outcomes, and help to determine the scope and depth of the engagement. This can range from consultation to involvement in decision-making through to delivery of projects.

Specific
Measurable
Achievable
Relevant
Time-bound

How are you planning on engaging?

- Identify and prioritise needs
- Define priorities
- Develop consensus on a proposal
- Inform decision-making
- Improve service delivery
- Develop collaboration
- Review an existing plan

Demonstration

(show and tell)

Body Language

(eye contact, position)

Verbal

(explaining, simplifying, Q&A)

Written

(handout, mapping, literature)

Community Participation

Communication materials should be jargon free, in plain English, available in accessible formats, and provided in alternative languages as appropriate.

How will you incentivise people to engage?

How will you identify stakeholders?

How will you measure the overall engagement process?

Are there any limitations?

How will you implement feedback and changes?

What is your budget and how will it be distributed?

What techniques and engagement methods will be used?

Is there a need for any independent facilitation?

What are the locations and accessibility considerations of the venues being used?

How many engagement events of each type will there be?

Are there any transport requirements?

Are there any childcare needs?

What will be the format and content of the communication and publicity materials?

Will interpreters or signers be required?

Is there a need for outreach activities?

How are you planning on overcoming common barriers?

Language

Rapport

Access

Relevance

Responsible Practice

Providing information on proposals, plans, or services is part of any communication plan to support engagement but is not in itself community engagement. Engagement is not a broadcast but an ongoing series of interactions.

It will be essential to utilise a range of mechanisms and avenues to facilitate the widest possible participation from any interests. Local community development networks and support organisations should be involved in identifying community stakeholders, their particular interests and needs, and how best to engage with them.

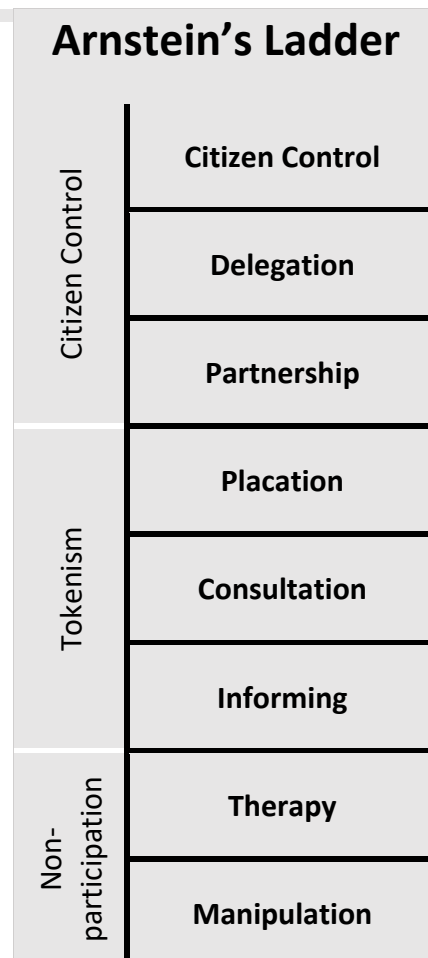
Engagement will typically require the following:

- Input by staff, volunteers, and stakeholders
- Background information or briefing papers on issues or proposals
- Independent facilitation
- Communication and promotion, venue hire, transport, childcare, translation
- Printing and circulating a report on the output of the process and for provision of feedback
- Resourcing local community and voluntary groups to support people in understanding and responding, commission research, convene meetings, and prepare reports or proposals

It is the responsibility of the provider organisation and partners to:

- Maintain a safe and welcoming environment
- Health & Safety, Data Protection, Safeguarding
- Protections for wellbeing of participants
- Ensure all voices can be heard
- Keep up to date with community services
- Managing boundaries and engagement
- Deliver with honesty and authenticity
- Manage budgets and finance
- Gather feedback, share results, act upon findings
- Monitor and evaluate outcomes

Arnstein's Ladder



Utilitarian

Interventions that are based on a utilitarian perspective seek to involve communities in order to improve the effectiveness of the intervention.

Social Justice

Interventions that are based on a social justice perspective seek to empower communities in order to promote social and structural change by supporting people.

Activity Considerations

Key elements will need to be defined to influence how well that activity ultimately impacts on outcomes:

- Target groups, objectives, interventions, and programme components
- The degree of collective decision-making
- Activity timing, duration, and frequency

What conditions might affect levels of engagement?

Remember to consider:

- Communicative competence
- Empowerment
- Assertion and distribution of control
- Attitudes by community members and providers towards what expertise is important and who holds it
- The level of financial and other resources available to support participation

What harms could potentially result from your community engagement?

Community partners and decision-making organisations should collaborate to strike a balance between 'soft' relational outcomes and 'hard' policy impacts.

Remember to consider:

- Social exclusion
- Cost overrun
- Attrition
- Dissatisfaction
- Disillusionment

Feedback Gathering

Participants in any one stage of engagement should be informed of or offered the opportunity to shape the next stages of the overall engagement process. This will help to reinforce participation and encourage stakeholders to remain active as engagement evolves. It is also important to communicate during feedback on how stakeholder input has influenced, contributed to, or improved the overall engagement outcomes.

Information will be required on:

- How and when feedback will be provided
- Other elements or strands of the engagement process
- How and when decisions will be taken
- Further opportunities for engagement
- Whether community or voluntary groups can be involved at the implementation stage

When gathering feedback, consider:

1. What do you want to know?
2. How will you gather this information?
3. How will you measure these results?
4. What are you going to do with the feedback?
5. How will this inform future engagement?

What will your feedback process be?

- Set objectives and create a survey
- Deploy survey to the community
- Collect feedback
- Analyse and evaluate feedback
- Act on feedback

Case Study

Ageless Thanet

The Ageless Thanet project aimed to reduce social isolation and loneliness in people over the age of 50 and was run as a co-production involving people of that age with lived experience of isolation or loneliness.

Ageless Thanet was born prior to the project starting, during consultations meetings with older residents. These meetings were held to ensure that older people's ideas were reflected in the funding application for the project. People wanted somewhere they could meet on a regular basis, where they could do a variety of activities of their choosing. Once the project was underway more steering group meetings were held, giving people the opportunity to bring their ideas to life. It was key that the project listened to what older people wanted and supported them. Feedback from these meetings was compiled into actionable evaluation reports.

The Ageless Thanet interim evaluation reports showed a disproportionate gender breakdown, with significantly more women taking part in the project's Wellbeing Activities compared to men. The Wellbeing Team decided that this needed specific focus, so held consultation meetings with local older men, to see if a different approach was needed to attract more men to activities. These focus groups were very productive, with people coming up with lots of useful ideas, many of which were implemented and successfully saw more men take up activities.

Some of the suggestions tested were:

- Men-only activities.
- Focusing on task-orientated activities where skills were learned.
- Organised activities with limited socialising.

Asking the target audience directly meant that project staff could get a true understanding of what was wanted and needed. Undertaking focus groups meant that men were more open about their needs. Requested activities were more about learning or having a separate focus to socialising.

It was really important that men felt listened to and that their voices were heard. At the beginning of the project the brand marketing was pink, which discouraged men from taking part. By changing our brand's focus to a secondary colour, Ageless Thanet saw more men get involved in activities.

Case Study

All In

All In was created by Eastlight Community Homes—the largest community-led housing organisation in the UK. Their vision was simple: to empower local people in Essex and give them tools to transform neighbourhoods. They understood that true transformation required putting power directly into the hands of the people residing in these communities.

With this ethos at their core, Eastlight set out to create the All In Community Teams. They sought out passionate individuals from the neighbourhoods they served and provided them with an incredible opportunity. Each team member was offered a year-long salary, enabling them to focus entirely on making a difference in their own communities. These teams brainstormed brilliant ideas to tackle the pressing issues that affected their community and were driven by a shared determination to bring about positive change.

Armed with their innovative ideas, the All In Community Teams ventured out into the community and connected with their fellow residents, engaging with them and sharing their vision for a better future. Recognising the importance of unity and collaboration, the All In Alliance was formed, which aimed to gather members of the community and encourage them to participate in public meetings. These meetings served as a platform for like-minded individuals to come together, discuss the issues close to their hearts, and determine the best course of action.

Within the All In Alliance, participants were granted the power to decide on the matters they cared about deeply. They had access to funding and resources that could help them address these issues effectively. It was a transformative experience for everyone involved, as they witnessed the power of collective decision-making and community-driven initiatives.

The ideas presented within the All In Alliance were as diverse as the communities themselves. One group proposed the establishment of a new club aimed at combating social isolation. They wanted to create a safe space where individuals could connect, form meaningful relationships, and find support. Another team envisioned a new social enterprise that would provide opportunities for young people; their goal was to empower the next generation by offering training, mentorship, and employment prospects.

Throughout the journey, All In provided unwavering support to the individuals involved. They ensured that each team had the necessary funding, training, and mentoring to bring their visions to life. By doing so, they empowered the community members to become agents of change, actively shaping the future of their neighbourhoods.

Case Study

The Community Resilience Fund

The Community Resilience Fund was a one-off capital grant fund that was set up to support community and voluntary organisations in Bristol to:

- Recover from the pandemic.
- Increase their sustainability.
- Continue the vital work they do for the long term.

The fund sought to extend its helping hand to organisations working tirelessly in the most deprived areas of the city, as well as city-wide equality groups. These organisations were the unsung heroes, striving to address the pressing needs of their communities and create a positive change that resonated far and wide. It embraced a community-led decision-making process, acknowledging the importance of local voices and expertise.

From July to October 2022, voluntary and community groups engaged with a lead organisation situated in their respective communities. The lead organisation took on the role of a compassionate listener, capturing the dreams, aspirations, and project ideas of these remarkable groups. They provided support where needed, guiding the groups in submitting their outline project proposals.

Between January and May 2023 a diverse group of VCSE organisations, along with councillors and residents, were recruited as a decision-making group. This assembly of dedicated individuals brought together a wide range of perspectives, ensuring a balanced and inclusive approach to selecting the projects that would receive support. The group also invited specialised input to ensure the suitability of proposed projects for funding.

In May 2023 the successful projects were chosen, with the first grants set to be awarded from spring/summer 2023. Realising that the journey toward creating lasting change required more than just financial support, the Community Resilience Fund committed to nurturing recipients of the fund, granting time and support to refine and develop proposals, ensuring that they were primed to make the most of the opportunity bestowed upon them.

With the Community Resilience Fund, the power of unity, resilience, and collective decision-making was discovered. It embarked on a path of healing and progress, with the determined and passionate community and voluntary organizations leading the way. Together, they transformed adversity into opportunity, and worked towards improving the long-term well-being of Bristol.

Notes

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