

# People Power Toolkit: Key Principles and Approaches

*An introduction to participatory ways of working*

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# Principles of Participatory Working

**Recognising people as assets:** People are seen as equal partners in designing and delivering services, rather than as passive beneficiaries or burdens on the system

**Building on people's capabilities:** Everyone recognizes that each person has abilities and people are supported to develop these. People are supported to use what they are able to do to benefit their community themselves and other people

**Developing two-way reciprocal relationships:** All co-production involves some mutuality, both between individuals, carers and public service professionals and between the individuals who are involved

**Encouraging peer support networks:** Peer and personal networks are often not valued enough and not supported. Co-production builds these networks alongside support from professionals

**Blurring boundaries between delivering and receiving services:** The usual line between those people who design and deliver services and those who use them is blurred with more people involved in getting things done

**Facilitating not delivering to:** Public sector organisations (like the government, local councils and health authorities) enable things to happen, rather than provide services themselves. An example of this is when a council supports people who use services to develop a peer support network

# Delivering Through Participatory Approaches

Many councils across the UK are building in participatory work as part of approaches to engagement and service delivery. For example:

Islington Council have built co-production into their approach to cross-council service delivery through their [Fairer Together Approach](#).

Wigan Council changed their organisational culture to focus more on co-production and collaboration through the [Wigan Deal](#). There is a helpful [video](#) highlighting the work of the Deal in residents own words.

Cambridgeshire Council's [Think Communities](#) approach shares a similar ethos to the Wigan Deal. Their key aims are to improve services whilst reducing demand by better targeting support, making it easier for people to understand services and making more of community assets. A useful video summary can be found [here](#).

# Participatory Work - Community Decision Making

**What is community decision making? The direct participation in, ownership of and sharing of collective benefits from projects, by and for a local community.**



Participatory approaches use deliberative and participatory tools to involve residents more meaningfully in local decision-making. It can be used to involve residents in macro-decision making e.g., voting in local referendums or to transform micro-decision making e.g., street improvements.

People have the right to participate in decisions which have an effect on their lives and wellbeing. It is about involving local communities in decision-making and ownership of the outreach process and outcomes.



# Community Decision Making Tools

## Citizen Assemblies

A group of people who are brought together to discuss an issue/s and reach a conclusion about what they think should happen. The people who take part are chosen so that they reflect the wider population in terms of demographics or relevant attitudes.

They give members of the public time and opportunity to learn about and discuss a topic before reaching to conclusions. They are most effective when the goal is:

- ✓ Examining broad policy objectives/horizon scanning to create new ideas and propose solutions
- ✓ Assessing policy options to develop recommendations
- ✓ Gaining insight from the public about the efficacy of existing practice

Case Studies and Useful Literature:

[Hate Crime, Waltham Forest](#)

[Democracy Commission, Kirklees Council](#)

[Local Government Association](#)

[Strengths and Weaknesses of Citizen Assemblies](#)



# Community Decision Making Tools

## Citizen Juries

Usually formed from a group of 12-24 people from all walks of life. They are brought together to have an honest conversation and find common ground on an issue that matters. They reflect the wider population in demographics and attitudes. They are relatively inexpensive and the process takes anywhere from 2-7 days.

Normally citizens deliberate over clearly framed question(s) and will reach a decision following deliberation on the issue by consensus or voting. They are particularly helpful for:

- ✓ Policy issues
- ✓ Where knowledge is contested
- ✓ Where there might be important ethical or social repercussions

Case Studies and Useful Literature:

[Citizens Climate Jury, Southwark Council](#)  
[Health and Social Care Jury, Southwark Council](#)  
[Deep Dive, University of Edinburgh](#)



# Community Decision Making Tools

## Participatory Budgeting

Citizens are involved in the process of deciding how public money is spent. Local people are often given a role in the scrutiny and monitoring of the process following the allocations of budgets. Costs can vary based on the size and scope of the project but tend to range between £400-£40,000.

Power is delegated to citizens, but the decision process varies. In the UK, most cases have been small scale for grant allocations. This has found to have the following benefits:

- ✓ Improvement of confidence in individuals, organisations and providers
- ✓ Encouraged greater local involvement
- ✓ Increased resident control over the allocation of resources

Case Studies and Useful Literature:

[Mini Publics, Fife Council](#)

[Local Government Association](#)

[Porto Alegre, Brazil](#)

[Participatory Budget Network](#)



# Participatory Work – Guidance and Support

Southwark is undergoing widespread organisational change to ensure that we work in a **people powered way**.

We are taking a more collaborative approach which will deeply involve **communities as equal partners** and will aid the shift away from more traditional ways of working.

To support staff in developing new skills, expand their knowledge of people power and gain confidence in practice, Southwark has developed the following tools that can be accessed:

- [Southwark's Approach to Community Engagement](#)
- [People Power Toolkit](#)
- [People Power Peer Mentors](#)
- [The Consultation and Involvement Team](#)
- [Digital Consultation Hub](#)
- [Conversation Hub](#)
- [Consultation and Engagement Toolkit](#)
- [The Source's Consultation and Engagement Page](#)



# People Power Toolkit: Community Capacity and Assets

*An introduction to building community capacity and assets*

# What are Community Capacity and Assets?

For residents to take part in local decision making, service development and to shape local communities they need to be supported with the resources and skills needed to mobilise and participate in local action.



This can involve the transfer of money, assets and community governance to build and strengthen community knowledge, skills, cohesion and connections as well as local resources. The social, physical and economic infrastructure within a local area needs to be supported.

There are a number of ways to build community capacity and assets which include asset transfer and asset-based community development approaches. The Communities Team are developing the Southwark Civic Leadership Programme to build community capacity and upskill residents to participate more formally in civil society.



# Community Capacity and Assets Tools

## Community Asset Transfers

The community can own and manage facilities that might otherwise be closed if the local/public authorities are unable to fund them any longer. It supports community empowerment by ensuring that the land, buildings or services are retained or transformed and then used for public benefit through community asset ownership and management.

Community ownership of assets can:

- ✓ Deliver social and economic purpose
- ✓ Change attitudes and relationships
- ✓ Move towards financial self sufficiency
- ✓ Build organisational sustainability

Case Studies and Useful Literature:

[Bramley Baths, Leeds Council](#)

[Par Track, Cornwall Council](#)

[Beehive Community Group, Wigan Council](#)

[Local Government Association](#)



# Community Capacity and Assets Tools

## Asset Based Community Development

Builds on the assets that are found in the community and mobilises individuals, associations and institutions to come together to realise and develop their strengths. It spends time identifying the assets of individuals, associations and institutions that form the community. The identified assets from an individual are matched with people/groups who have an interest or need for those strengths.

Communities are thought of as diverse and capable webs of gifts and assets. Each community has a unique set of skills and capacities it can channel for community development. It can:

- ✓ Create resident-to-resident relationships that builds interdependence and reliance
- ✓ Connect people and enable them to exchange skills and resources
- ✓ Help communities identify and take action on issues most important to them

Case Studies and Useful Literature:

[Community Builders, Gloucester Council](#)

[People Helping People Strategy, York Council](#)

[Community Builders, Leeds Council](#)

[Local Government Association](#)





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[southwark.gov.uk/people-powered](https://southwark.gov.uk/people-powered)  
to find out more.

