

## Halton Strategic Partnership

### Community engagement factsheet

The Halton Strategic Partnership Board is committed to engaging with the local community to help ensure that those who live and work in Halton have the opportunity to contribute to improving their own neighbourhoods.

By engaging with local people, Halton Strategic Partnership Board believes it will produce better results for the people who live and work in Halton.

The Government says in its guidance on local strategic partnerships that effective engagement with communities will be essential to a partnership's success. The guidance states

“Involving local people and communities is vital for the successful development and implementation of community strategies and local neighbourhood renewal strategies, and key to achieving lasting improvements. There is a wealth of resources and activity within communities that are not available to the statutory sector.”

The following diagram outlines different levels of community engagement.

#### *Levels of Community Engagement*

<b>LOW</b>	<b>1 Information Giving</b>	This is the simplest level of engagement and is simply about providing information to the community. Information giving underpins all other levels of engagement, and may sometimes be appropriate on its own. Often done on a 'take it or leave it' principle.	<b>LOW</b>
<b>Empowerment</b>	<b>2 Consultation</b>	The objective of consultation is to seek views and opinions to help decide the next course of action. This method is not about working with others or putting their ideas into action.	<b>Need for support and capacity building</b>
	<b>3 Involvement</b>	People are involved in the decision-making process and deciding together decisions that affect their lives. This can give citizens the power to choose, without fully sharing the responsibility for action.	
	<b>4 Acting Together</b>	This involves both deciding together and acting together, and also sharing responsibility.	
<b>HIGH</b>	<b>5 Supporting</b>	This level of engagement aims to maximise community empowerment and capacity building. It is about helping communities to develop and implement their own plans.	<b>HIGH</b>

The Halton Strategic Partnership Board produced a Community Engagement Strategy that outlines its objectives for engaging with the community. These aim to ensure that engagement activity is co-ordinated, systematic, and appropriately targeted and resourced.

The Halton Strategic Partnership Board undertakes its own engagement activity through several routes, for example, through focus groups and surveys, and Halton Borough Council Area Forums.

Each Specialist Strategic Partnership also has its own methods, for example, the Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods Specialist Strategic Partnership undertakes surveys to assess local people's fear of crime.

Initiatives receiving Neighbourhood Renewal Fund monies must also engage with the community as part of their contribution to the overall activities of the local strategic partnership.

In order to find out about what methods of engagement are being used and the results this is yielding for projects, we will be monitoring the community engagement activities of initiatives receiving Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. This will be done as part of the standard quarterly monitoring process.

There are a wide variety of methods through which initiatives can engage with the community and some of these are looked at below:

### ***Area Forums***

Area Forums were established by Halton Borough Council to encourage local people to be involved in making decisions about their own neighbourhoods. There are seven Area Forums in Halton, each covering a few electoral wards. They meet three or four times a year and can be used to pass on information or to consult with local groups and people on particular issues.

For more information contact Halton Borough Council on 0151 424 2061 or log on to [www2.halton.gov.uk/content/councilanddemocracy/forumsandboards/areaforums?a=5441](http://www2.halton.gov.uk/content/councilanddemocracy/forumsandboards/areaforums?a=5441)

### ***Halton Together***

Each area receiving Neighbourhood Renewal Fund also receives support from the Government through the Community Empowerment Fund to establish a network to support community and voluntary organisations in becoming effectively involved with the local strategic partnership. In Halton this network is called Halton Together. The network can be used to engage with organisations with a particular interest and/or with organisations covering a particular area.

For more information contact Halton Voluntary Action on 01928 592405 or log on to [www.haltontogether.org.uk](http://www.haltontogether.org.uk)

### **Surveys**

A common method of engaging with the community is by using surveys. These can be used to assess what perceptions people have, what they want and/or need when planning a project, and to assess their opinions during and after a project's delivery. There are often many different organisations carrying out surveys of local people and the Halton Strategic Partnership Board encourages partners to link their work together to avoid residents becoming frustrated with endless questionnaires.

### **Statutory consultations**

Some initiatives will have consultation that must be carried out due to statutory requirements, for example, consultation on planning decisions. Just because it has to be done does not mean it cannot be used as an example of community engagement. The statutory minimum in such cases can also be enhanced to consult with people at a deeper level, for example, through planning for real exercises to assist in the re-development of areas.

### **Service user involvement**

Involving service users in the planning of a service can be a highly effective method of engagement. It allows the gathering of in-depth views of users on a regular basis and the opportunity to use that information quickly to improve the way services are delivered and respond to users' needs.

### **Community development**

Community development activities across the borough provide another dimension of networks and mechanisms for generating community involvement. Community Development Officers work alongside, with and on behalf of communities to tackle issues positively which affect their quality of life.

Community development is about developing the power, skills, knowledge and experience of people to support them in having a key role in local issues. There are many tools and techniques which are used to ensure communities can be involved in an open, inclusive, and meaningful way.

Halton Borough Council have a team of Neighbourhood Community Development Officers working across the borough. There are also many other agencies delivering community development across Halton who meet together at a Practitioners Forum to provide a cohesive and co-ordinated approach locally.

For more information contact Halton Borough Council on 0151 424 2061.

These methods are only suggestions – projects should use whatever methods they feel are appropriate, that they are comfortable with, and lead to the highest level of engagement possible.