



achieving positive outcomes

community  
engagement  
plan

2013 - 2023





## Introduction

**W**est Lothian Community Planning Partnership is fully committed to the principles and practice of community engagement. It is our belief that only through this inclusive practice will we achieve well functioning communities.

“Community engagement is the actions that agencies take to enable them to consult, involve, listen and respond to communities through ongoing relationships and dialogue. Communities participate with other partners to develop solutions, shape and design policies and services. Communities are involved in shared decision making”. (Urban Forum, 2009)

We will build on and harness the existing good practice across West Lothian to develop structures which provide opportunities for people to get involved at the level they want. By establishing a clear, consistent and coordinated approach to community engagement, and providing appropriate tools and support to evaluate how we are doing, we will achieve meaningful community engagement.

## Context



**T**he Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 (LGiSA), created a framework around the concept of community planning, and established in legislation the role of Councils in initiating and facilitating the community planning process, at the heart of which is **“making sure people and communities are genuinely engaged in the decisions made on public services which affect them”**.

Our new Single Outcome Agreement and Community Plan has been developed through an extensive process of Community Engagement– ensuring that the wealth of knowledge, expertise and information within our communities helps us to understand the place we live in and agree what’s important to all of us. Our Current Community Plan, “Towards 2020”, was developed in 2009/10 and sets out the long term vision and aspirations for West Lothian. “Towards 2020” was developed through substantial community engagement using a range of methods and tools including Community Artists and visioning techniques that encouraged all who took part to help us set the vision for the next 10 years and agree our last Single Outcome Agreement. Since then, we have continued to develop our “Plan for Place” with the community and stakeholders through our Community Planning Partnership- wide strategic assessment, a substantial community engagement exercise undertaken with the Voluntary Sector , “Spring Forward” and through various partner engagements and consultations.

To help us further embed Community Engagement across the partnership, we have established a Community Engagement Practitioner’s Network to develop and progress our new Community Engagement Framework.

There have been four key policy drivers from the Scottish Government since 2011 which are relevant to the way public service providers engage with communities. All emphasise the importance of designing and delivering public services in partnership with communities.

- The ‘Commission on the Future Delivery of Public Services’ (the ‘Christie Report’), chaired by Dr Campbell Christie (June 2011) had as two of its underlying principles:
  - Reforms must aim to empower individuals and communities receiving public services by involving them in the design and delivery of the services they use.
  - Public service providers must be required to work much more closely in partnership, to integrate service provision and thus improve the outcomes they achieve.
- In 2011 the Community Council Short Life Working Group was set up “to consider and recommend how best to build the resilience, capacity, and capability of Community Councils in the future”. These recommendations were put out to public consultation in 2012 and a report of the findings is yet to be published.
- This was followed by the ‘Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill Consultation (CERB)’ on a range of ideas designed to strengthen community participation, unlock enterprising community development and renew our communities. The responses to the consultation and the input of the CERB Reference Group will help inform the development of a draft Bill to be consulted on in Summer 2013.
- In ‘Single Outcome Agreements Guidance to Community Planning Partnerships’ published in December 2012, the Scottish Government emphasised the need for Community Planning Partnerships to “develop a clear and evidence-based understanding of local needs and opportunities, underpinned by robust and relevant data and strong engagement with communities and third and business sectors.” Furthermore, it is recognised that “... communities have a key role to play in helping to shape and co-produce better outcomes and unlocking that potential requires CPPs to have a strong understanding of communities and to provide genuine opportunities to consult, engage and involve them...in identifying and prioritising the outcomes that are to be delivered, and working with communities to develop their capacity to contribute to community planning and to their achievement of their better outcomes”.

Engaging local people and actively involving them in decisions and service development is central to West Lothian Community Planning Partnership’s work. By ensuring that there is direct, open and meaningful communication between citizens and policy makers, and that individuals feel involved as equal partners we can deliver more responsive services that meet the needs of our communities and improve the quality of life of our citizens.



# West Lothian Community Planning Partnership Vision for Community Engagement

Community engagement practice is embedded in all activities by all partners and is undertaken in a consistent and coordinated basis.

## Our Aim

“To improve and embed community engagement across West Lothian Community Planning Partnership”

## Benefits of Community Engagement

- Enhanced wellbeing and increased citizen satisfaction levels – If people are genuinely involved in decisions that affect their lives, and feel valued and listened to, this can enhance a sense of belonging and individual and community wellbeing.
- Increased local ownership and enhancing civic pride and responsibility – if people feel valued and included they are more likely to want to participate.
- Increased dialogue and communication between individuals and organisations. Working in partnership with the community will allow better relationships between policy makers and our citizens.
- Increased openness and accessibility leading to improved accountability of the Community Planning Partnership and the individual partners
- Promotes social inclusion
- Increased sustainability – Sustainable change can only happen if communities are involved from the start.
- Bottom-up approaches will lead to development of responsive services that meet local needs, shape service development and provide more sustainable services.
- Reduced inefficiency and duplication in engagement practice through improved knowledge of need, existing engagement practice and available resources.
- Improved outcomes for local people.



## Our Objectives and outcomes

Objective	Related outcomes
1. All partners, including communities and community organisations, will develop and roll out effective community engagement	Establish an agreed understanding of community engagement and its desired outcomes across all partners and stakeholders
	Increase the capacity of staff, community groups and individuals
2. Coordinate the consultation and engagement activity of partners across West Lothian	Increase the sharing of information on planned community engagement activity
	Increase the sharing of findings of community engagement activity with other partners as relevant
3. Provide opportunities for communities and individuals to get involved in decisions that affect their lives	Improve processes for agreeing who needs to be engaged with, at what level, for individual issues
	Improve processes which consider the most appropriate ways to involve and engage communities
4. Measure the success of the community engagement action plan	Coordinated community engagement is having an increased impact on specific outcomes





## All partners, including communities and community organisations, will develop and roll out effective community engagement

Outcomes (what change we will make)	Outputs (what we will do)	Inputs (who will do it, what resources are needed?)	Outcome indicator (how will we know we are achieving our outcome?)	Timescales (when we will do this by)	Impact (what difference have we made?)
Establish an agreed understanding of community engagement and its desired outcomes across all partners and stakeholders	Agree a Community Engagement Plan	CE plan Staff time - WLC officers and reference group	CE Plan agreed and adopted by partners	Draft by April 2013	There is agreement across all partners on a common understanding of community engagement and its desired outcomes
Increase the capacity of staff, community groups and individuals	Design and deliver an Initial training programme based on needs audit	Targeted training programmes for all stakeholders		December 2013	All stakeholders have an individual and collective understanding of community engagement, increased knowledge of tools available and range of methods for different community engagement activities which leads to improvements in quality and coordination of community engagement activity
	Design and deliver an annual training programme			Advertise programme January (annually)  Deliver programme March – September (annually)  Training needs audit October (annually)	
	Develop a Community Engagement practitioners network to facilitate sharing of resources, knowledge and skills		We will hold 3 network events per year	Initial event to launch plan June 2013	
	Establish a database of good practice in community engagement				



## Coordinate the consultation and engagement activity of partners across West Lothian

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Increase the sharing of information re planned community engagement activity	Create a shared calendar of community engagement activity to merge activity where possible, reduce duplication and avoid 'consultation fatigue'		We will have a calendar of planned activity for next 12 months detailing who, what, why and when (web based for ease of access to input info and see what else happening?)	September 2013	
Increase the sharing of findings of community engagement activity with other partners as relevant	Design a community engagement information sharing protocol	VOICE online tool	Partners will be contributing to the shared calendar and disseminating findings to others as relevant, appropriate (drop-box type facility?)	December 2013	







Provide opportunities for communities and individuals to get involved in decisions that affect their lives

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Improve processes for agreeing who needs to be engaged with, at what level, for individual issues	We will develop; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a consistent method to categorise stakeholders to ensure inclusive, credible and equitable representation in community engagement processes.</li> <li>a database of potential stakeholders.</li> <li>effective working relationships with stakeholders.</li> <li>ways to identify potential “hard to reach” stakeholders and barriers to accessing those stakeholders</li> </ul>				
Improve processes which consider the most appropriate ways to involve and engage communities	We will create a framework to assess required level(s) of community engagement and identify the most appropriate tools and methods to be used				



## Measure the success of the community engagement action plan

Outcomes (what change we will make)	Outputs (what we will do)	Inputs (who will do it, what resources are needed?)	Outcome indicator (how will we know we are achieving our outcome?)	Timescales (when we will do this by)	Impact (what difference have we made?)
Coordinated community engagement is having an increased impact on specific outcomes	<p>Measure the impact of community engagement activity against 2 agreed outcomes in the SOA (and use findings to inform future community engagement practice by);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ developing evaluation measures that suit partner needs and resources.</li><li>■ gathering quantitative and qualitative data to ensure comprehensive evaluation.</li><li>■ evaluating our processes against set objectives and use the information gathered to improve outcomes.</li><li>■ establishing a feedback loop to gain maximum benefit from the evaluation process.</li><li>■ creating a template to simply, clearly, and accurately record evaluation measures.</li></ul>	National Standards for Community Engagement			







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