

How we consult with you

Plymouth's Statement of Community
Involvement and Compact Code of
Practice

Improving
partnership
working between
the public and
third sectors



1 Statement of Community Involvement

1.1 What is the Statement of Community Involvement?

What is this all about?

This Statement provides consistent standards for involvement in decision making in the city. It sets a minimum standard.

It is for everybody who wants to get involved in influencing Plymouth's future. This includes individual people who want to start getting involved or be pro active in raising issues and ideas.

It forms part of Plymouth's Local Strategic Partnership Compact.

The Compact sets out a shared vision, establishes principles for the relationship between partners and clarifies the expectations the partners have of each other. All relevant statutory bodies and community-based groups who are represented in the LSP can aspire to the spirit of the LSP Compact and will sign up to it.

Many groups and organisations will have much higher, or more detailed standards for community involvement, they set these out as an appendix to this document.

Statement of Community Involvement

Everyone needs to be involved in making Plymouth a great place to live, work and play. If you live in Plymouth, you know what is happening in your community and how it could be improved. If you are a local group or business in the city you will have information and ideas that can help shape the future of the city. By taking part you can make sure that decisions being made are the best for you and the city.

What is this statement for?

Community involvement is vital to make sure that Plymouth achieves its vision:

'To become one of Europe's most vibrant waterfront cities, where an outstanding quality of life is enjoyed by everyone.'

This requires consistent good quality, coordinated engagement by all the organisations who want to help improve the City, and for people to understand how to get involved in making decisions.

This statement sets out these values and standards.

Plymouth's Local Strategic Partnership is called Plymouth 2020. Many issues facing the city and its community can only be tackled and resolved if all parts of the community work together.

The Partnership brings together many organisations and groups that are involved in making decisions that affect the future well-being of the people of Plymouth. The voluntary, community, business and public sectors are all represented within Plymouth 2020 Partnership.

Everyone in the Local Strategic Partnership will be asked to follow these commitments.

When you see this logo you know an organisation is a member of the LSP.



Who is this statement for?

This statement is for anyone who is interested in playing a part in improving Plymouth's future. This includes public and private organisations, the third sector (such as voluntary and community groups) and individuals.

This statement is written to be used by two groups of people:



People who are getting involved in making decisions

This includes individuals, community groups, businesses, voluntary organisations and anyone else who may get involved with helping to make a decision.



Organisations who are involving people in making decisions

This includes private businesses, public organisations such as the Council or the Police Service, and the voluntary and community sector (Third Sector). All organisations that are part of the LSP are signed up to this way of working.

Please contact 01752 304026 if you would like this document in another format or language.

What status does this Statement have?

This Statement is the Code of Consultation for the LSP Compact. It is also a statutory document for Plymouth City Council's Local Development Framework.

What is a community?

A community is defined as a group of people who have common characteristics. Communities can be defined by location (such as a street or a neighbourhood), race, ethnicity, age, occupation, a shared interest (such as cycling or local businesses) or affinity (such as religion, faith or belief) or other common bonds.

What is involvement?

This is the wide variety of communication and interaction that takes place between decision-makers and communities to identify issues and exchange views. Any involvement should be accessible, meaningful, worthwhile and enjoyable for all those taking part.

Please note: Words that you may be unfamiliar with are defined in the glossary.

2 Commitments and standards

2.1 Involvement commitments

Involvement is a two way process. This statement sets out eight commitments that all are asked to respect.

These commitments ensure that:

- Involvement is effective and influential
- People are linked to decisions being made
- Decisions better relate to community aspirations and needs
- There is trust and confidence in engagement processes

Involvement commitments:

Commitments	When asking people:	For people responding:
<p>Be honest and open</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Honest, accurate and unbiased information should be provided. • Be clear about what can be influenced and changed and how decisions will be made. • Be clear when consulting other organisations whether you expect the person to ask their members/ staff about it, or use their own expertise. 	<p>Anyone claiming to represent a group of people should clearly state their role (Chair, secretary etc), and should be able to demonstrate the scale and remit for their group. For example, by providing an attendance list or number of members.</p> <p>Any conflicts of interest should be declared. It should be clear if your organisation or group stand to benefit financially or otherwise from the outcome.</p>
<p>Listen to each others' views</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to other opinions and ensure everyone has a chance to contribute. • Recognise and respect differences of opinion and work to resolve them. 	<p>Listen to other opinions and ensure everyone has a chance to contribute.</p> <p>Recognise and respect differences of opinion and work to resolve them.</p>
<p>Be willing to learn new things</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be prepared to learn about people's views and opinions. • Help people to learn about the processes involved and how best to contribute. • Include collecting, considering and using views as an important and valuable part of the decision making process. 	<p>Learn about how you can get involved and influence decisions.</p> <p>Learn about the information being used to make decisions.</p>
<p>Include everyone</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand and accommodate the different ways people want to get involved. • Monitor who is taking part and take any necessary steps to ensure everyone has a chance to contribute if they want to. 	<p>Play an active role in advising or supporting involvement processes to help involve different communities.</p>

Commitments	When asking people:	For people responding:
<p>Communicate effectively</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide clear and accessible information, publicity and guidance to help people prepare in advance. • Give adequate time and resources to ensure people have a fair opportunity to contribute. • Any racist or inflammatory language should not be tolerated. 	<p>Where possible, make contributions on time and ensure comments state clearly how the plan, policy or decision can be improved.</p> <p>Any racist or inflammatory language should not be tolerated.</p>
<p>Consider and use all information available</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have clear processes in place to consider all the views and ideas expressed in an objective and unbiased way. • Demonstrate the difference made as a result of comments, including why and how decisions have been made. 	<p>Make full use of all the information provided and use this to help get involved and contribute in a meaningful way.</p> <p>Where appropriate gather evidence to help inform ideas.</p>
<p>Work together</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with other organisations where possible to save time and resources. This might mean sharing information or looking at ways to cooperate to help reduce consultation fatigue. • Invest in building relationships with communities to help them get involved. 	<p>Work with or establish groups to increase your capability to contribute.</p> <p>Work with organisations to advise on and develop the ways they involve people.</p>
<p>Keep in touch</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep people in touch with progress on decisions, feedback results, show how views have been used. • Let people know if they can or need to get involved again. 	<p>Keep organisations informed where necessary. For example, updating your contact details or contacting them if you know something that might be useful.</p>

2.2 Involvement standards

Taking part in influencing decisions should be a rewarding and enjoyable process.

- For people who are getting involved these standards are what you should expect when taking part
- For organisations involving people, you should aim to meet the five standards of good practice below



1. Who should be involved

- List who needs to be involved, think about who will be directly affected by the decision, who has expertise to offer, and who may need extra help to get involved
- Take advice on who to involve and how from other relevant organisations or groups
- Resources should be focused on making sure the people identified have a chance to get involved
- Think about who could work with you to make involvement more comprehensive or to share resources with

2. Why people are being involved

- Be clear why people need to be involved in making a decision
- Be clear what decision is being made
- Make sure people are properly informed of the facts and background
- Be clear what can and can not be changed

3. When people will be involved

- Resources should be focused towards early involvement when people can really influence the process
- It is recommended that consultation should be open for 12 weeks unless there are clear reasons such as statutory guidelines that say otherwise
- Any events should be held at a range of times to ensure a wide range of people have a chance to attend

4. How people will be involved

- Consultation should be planned in an environmentally sensitive way; for example, using local suppliers for refreshments and making sure that the venue is accessible by public transport
- Consultation should be planned in a culturally sensitive way; for example, being aware of religious festivals and dietary requirements
- Involvement should be at an appropriate scale depending on the impact the decision or policy will have. This needs to be carefully considered, it should not result in less involvement
- Accessible venues should be used where ever possible. Consideration needs to be given to physical access, proximity to those most affected by a decision, and access to services such as buses and childcare
- Use a range of methods to inform, consult and involve people (see table of methods below. Those in bold are suggested as a minimum)
- Creative and interactive methods should be used where possible to encourage people to take part, particularly seldom heard groups

Method recommended when:	creating a plan/ major decision	finalising a plan/ major decision
Informing - making sure people find out about it		
Advertise locally	✓	✓
Create and update web pages	✓	✓
Articles in local paper and other publications	✓	✓
Newsletters, leaflets or summaries	✓	✓
Exhibitions	✓	✓
Posters, fliers and promotion	✓	✓
Briefings		✓
E-mail notification	✓	✓
Consulting - asking people for their views and evidence		
Key stakeholder discussions and forums	✓	✓
Documents/information available in offices and on-line	✓	✓
Documents/information sent directly to stakeholders	✓	✓
Structured feedback form included with documents	✓	✓
Meetings with community groups	✓	✓
Interactive exhibitions	✓	
Public workshops	✓	
Questionnaire/ survey	✓	✓
Online consultation	✓	✓
Councillor's public meetings or surgeries (e.g. area committees)	✓	✓
Involving - discussions to develop ideas together		
Key stakeholder workshop to identify issues and shape options	✓	
Public visioning events	✓	
Public workshops	✓	
Online discussion forums	✓	

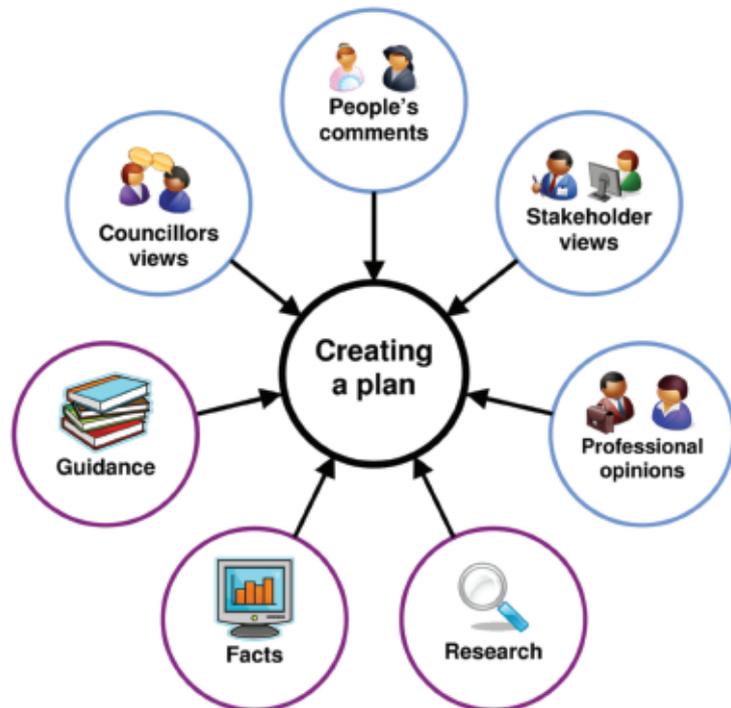
5. What happens to the results

- Agree how results will be reported on and when.
- Be clear how you have met the values and standards in this statement.
- Show how results have been used to influence final decisions.
- Any consultation or involvement does not finish until the results and the decision are fed back to those who took the time to get involved.

2.3 How are decisions made?

The information used to make decisions is called an evidence base. Consultation and individual comments are only part of the information used to make decisions. In addition there is a range of research and information collected from a variety of sources, including advice from experts in related fields. The diagram below shows the range of opinions that need to be considered. Creating a policy or making an informed decision requires consideration of all the information available. This often requires understanding conflicting opinions.

All of this information forms part of the evidence base, and should be made public so that everyone has a chance to see what information there is and how it is being used to influence a decision. This includes responses to people's comments and an explanation of how they have been considered.



Top tip: For your comments to have the most impact you need to say how you would change the plan to meet your concerns.

2.4 Building capacity

To enable people to get involved, groups, communities and individuals need to have the opportunity to learn about the relevant processes, and develop skills and knowledge on how to influence decisions. This is called 'building capacity'.

This can have added benefits, as organisations learn more about communities' needs as well as communities learning more about the decision making process. Over time this helps to improve relationships and the quality of involvement that takes place. Opportunities to do this should be provided at appropriate times to ensure people can prepare for their involvement. This is particularly important for people representing community groups who often have very limited time and resources.

Top tip: If you want to run your own consultation about a plan, perhaps with a group of people you know, ask the people producing the plan whether there is any support, information or resources to help you.

2.5 Including everyone

There are some people that very rarely get involved with what is happening in their local area or in the city. These may be people who do not know anything about what's happening, are not confident or able to get involved, may not wish to be involved or may be happy with the decisions being made. These people are sometimes called seldom heard groups.

Resources need to be directed towards monitoring and identifying those who are not involved and steps should be taken to make sure that they have the opportunity to do so if they wish. This is particularly important where a specific community may be directly affected by the decisions made.

There may be different seldom heard groups depending on the plan being considered. An Equality Impact Assessment (defined in the Glossary) would identify this and the resulting action plan should explain how this will be addressed.

Top tip: Let us know how we can include you or people that you know in any involvement we organise in the future.

This might include telling us where you meet, whether you have a newsletter or a way of sharing information, the types of venue you are happy going to, or producing information in a format that suits you e.g large print.

2.6 Who can you turn to for more support?

If you want to raise issues or have support getting involved in influencing decisions, the following people may be worth contacting.

• Your Ward Councillor

Your ward councillor is your elected representative. They are regularly updated on the progress of community issues from a range of sources. They can raise matters directly with organisations on your behalf if appropriate. They can also tell you about local meetings that are happening that might be useful, for example the local area committee.

All councillors are keen to encourage involvement at a local level. Local councillors attend exhibitions and drop-in sessions organised by the Council wherever possible within their area.

They can support you if you feel that consultation has not been carried out in accordance with this Statement of Community Involvement.

Find out who your local councillor is by going to:

www.plymouth.gov.uk/councilanddemocracy or by calling 01752 304489.

• Your MP

The job of an MP is to represent the people of his or her constituency (constituents) in Parliament. You only have one MP so even if you voted for another candidate and you disagree with the views of your MP's party, your MP is still there to help you with all matters for which Parliament or central government is responsible.

- Find out how to contact your local MP by going to:
www.parliament.uk or by calling 020 7219 4272

Change Up Consortium

Change Up is a national initiative launched by the government in July 2004. The initiative is driven by the vision of front line community and voluntary organisations playing their full potential in improving the quality of life of the communities they serve.

Plymouth's Change Up programme is organised and operated through a consortium of local infrastructure organisations and organisations who, at a citywide level, represent the interests of a diverse community.

The similarity between these organisations is that they are all involved in working directly with local people.

Membership of the Consortium

Plymouth Guild, Ernest English House
Buckwell Street, Plymouth PL1 2DA.

Tel: 01752 201766

Email: guild@plymouthguild.org.uk

Other members include: Fata He BME Development Ltd, Plymouth Race Equality Council, Routeways Centre Ltd, Neighbourhood Learning Consortium, The Zone, Wolseley Trust.

Top tip: There may be specific support groups or organisations that can support you influencing decisions. Ask the person who is involving you for suggestions. For example, the Local Involvement Network (LINK) supports people getting involved in health and social care issues:

www.plymouth-link.co.uk

If you can't find one you could always start your own!

3 Is this Statement working?

3.1 Is it working?

I'm not happy with how I have been involved in making a decision.

What can I do?

You can:

- Go to the relevant organisation in the first instance and raise your concerns
- Use formal complaint procedures if necessary
- Register your concern where statutory procedures have not been followed correctly

An example of when you might want to take these steps could be when an organisation does not properly inform you of the decision being made and what processes are being used to make the decision, or when they do not adequately publicise results or feedback to you.

If you would like more support with this it may be worth contacting the people suggested in section 2.6.



A person, group or organisation has not complied with the commitments or standards when getting involved in making a decision. What can I do?

You can consider:

- How much weight the comments should be given
 - If the relevant comments or information should be included for consideration at all
 - Removing contact details so they are not included in future consultations
- An example of a person whose comments should be considered in this way could be if they have misinformed other people to encourage support for their view, or if they have used inappropriate or racist language



Top tip: Some organisations may have a customer charter which sets out standards of service you can expect. This will usually include a complaints procedure.

Is this statement making a difference to people?

The LSP will monitor whether people are getting involved and whether they feel they are having an influence by looking at two National Indicators:

NI 3 Civic participation in the local area - this looks at how often people get involved in volunteering or unpaid work such as residents groups and community projects.

NI 4 Percentage of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality - this looks at how well people feel they can influence decisions and if they would like to be more involved.

Both of these are measured by the Place Survey which will be completed every year. This survey is posted to a sample of people in the City. It asks for opinions about aspects of the quality of life in your local area (such as community safety, local services etc) which we know are important to local people. The findings from this research will be used to see how well the LSP are doing at delivering the services that matter to you and to decide what needs to be done differently in the future.

The baseline for these indicators was set by the responses received after the first survey in Autumn 2008.

Is this statement being used properly?

There will be a logo that organisations can use to show they are complying to this statement. Anyone who has signed up to the Compact will be listed on the LSP website www.plymouth.gov.uk/plymouth2020. The LSP will be proactive in encouraging their members to use the Compact.

The LSP has a procedure in place to resolve any disputes as part of the Compact. This will be used if someone is challenged on whether they are conforming to the Compact.

For further information about the dispute resolution procedure and the Plymouth Compact please contact:

Plymouth 2020 Local Strategic Partnership, First floor, Civic Centre,
Armada Way, Plymouth PL1 2AA. Tel: 01752 304026

Email: lsp@plymouth.gov.uk www.plymouth2020.co.uk

The performance of the Statement of Community Involvement will be monitored by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (this is a group of Councillors that advise and monitor decisions made in the city's Cabinet or Council, or hold enquiries on matters of local concern).

Appendix

Glossary

Community:

This is very difficult to define as there are lots of varied interpretations. In this statement it is considered as a group of people who have common characteristics. Communities can be defined by location (such as a street or a neighbourhood), race, ethnicity, age, occupation, a shared interest (such as cycling or local businesses) or affinity (such as religion and faith) or other common bonds.

Consultation:

A more structured form of participation. A dialogue between individuals or groups, based upon a genuine exchange of views, and normally with the objective of influencing decisions, policies or programmes of action.

Engagement:

Actions taken to establish effective relationships with individuals or groups so that more specific interaction can then take place.

Equality Impact Assessment: This looks at what we are doing and makes sure that it meets the rules and regulations we have to meet. It is one of the ways to make sure we talk with people from a range of backgrounds and gather information to do the very best that we can to deliver services in a fair, equitable and needs-sensitive way. The six equality strands – age, disability, faith and belief, gender, race and sexual orientation are covered in EIAs. By completing them, we get a better idea of what impacts there might be on those groups. We can then make sure we have thought about and put in place a plan of action to address any negative impacts identified.

Involvement:

Applies to a wide variety of interactions between decision makers, individuals and representative stakeholders to identify issues and exchange views on a continuous basis.

Key Stakeholders:

Organisations selected on the basis of their interest in the outcomes.

Local Strategic Partnership:

Plymouth has a Local Strategic Partnership called Plymouth 2020. Based on the principle that many issues facing the city and its community today can only be tackled and resolved if all parts of the community work together, the Partnership brings together many organisations and groups that are involved in making decisions that affect the future well-being of the people of Plymouth. The voluntary, community, business and public sectors are all represented within Plymouth 2020 Partnership. Go to www.plymouth.gov.uk/plymouth2020 to find out who is involved and for more information.

Participation:

An all round term that describes the extent and nature of activities undertaken by those who take part in public or community involvement.

Place Survey:

A survey carried out across the country to find out people's opinion on a wide variety of local issues. The survey will be held annually in Plymouth.

Stakeholder (see Key Stakeholder).

Statutory:

Required by law (statute), usually through an Act of Parliament.

Third Sector:

This is made up of organisations that are not in the private or public sector, for example, voluntary organisations and community groups.

More information

If you are interested in getting involved in decision making you may find the following link informative:

Communities in Control:

- Real People, Real Power - www.communities.gov.uk
- The Empowerment Fund - www.communities.gov.uk/empowermentfund

