



Doncaster
Council

Community Engagement Strategy 2018-2021

Introduction

Doncaster Council and our partners are committed to ensuring high-quality, citizen focused services for the increasingly diverse communities that make up our borough. Our aim is to improve the quality of life for everyone who lives, visits or works in Doncaster. To achieve this we are aware of the need to base our services around the needs of our communities. Community Engagement is therefore vital to help develop and improve these services, to make sure they are fit-for-purpose for the people they serve.

Doncaster Growing Together is our borough strategy. Each of the areas for improvement identified within Doncaster Growing Together will need a significant amount of engagement in order to succeed. It is vital that we engage with communities in the right ways, at the right times, to make sure they can contribute in a meaningful way. This strategy is supported by our partners and a significant number of actions can and will be put in place collaborating closely with other agencies to maximise the impact across the borough.

This strategy is part of a wider Community Engagement Framework, which is made up of our Policy, our Strategy and our Toolkit. The Policy sets out our four commitments;

- We will listen and understand
- Doncaster people will inform our policy and we will keep people informed
- We will be inclusive and act with purpose
- We will make the most of what already exists in communities and where possible increase community capacity

Community Engagement Framework

1. Community Engagement Policy

The four [key principles](#) that are important to us

2. Community Engagement Strategy

What we will do and how we will do it

3. Community Engagement Toolkit

Specific tools and techniques to facilitate good community engagement

Communications and Engagement Strategy

How we maintain a dialogue with communities about the engagement opportunities created

Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Framework

How we to celebrate equality, inclusion and diversity whilst promoting good relations to ensure that our services are appropriate and accessible for everyone

The government has published their civic strategy¹ which outlines the government vision for helping organisations that ‘hold our society together’. This sets the context for the partnership between the individual and the social, public and private sectors to pull together to make places and lives better for people. This sets the context for this local strategy which sets out how this can be achieved locally.

¹ CIVIL SOCIETY STRATEGY: BUILDING A FUTURE THAT WORKS FOR EVERYONE 2018

How we got here

After deciding upon our key principles which make up our Community Engagement Policy, we wanted to hand over to the communities and people who work directly with communities to decide *how* to turn these high-level statements into a practical reality. It is those people who are best placed to tell us which types of engagement feel genuine and meaningful for them.

We facilitated interactive workshops and lively discussions with a cross-section of Doncaster communities, encouraging them to be honest as possible. We gathered a range of views and opinions, providing us with valuable insight into the relationships and connections communities feel they have with us, as a Council.

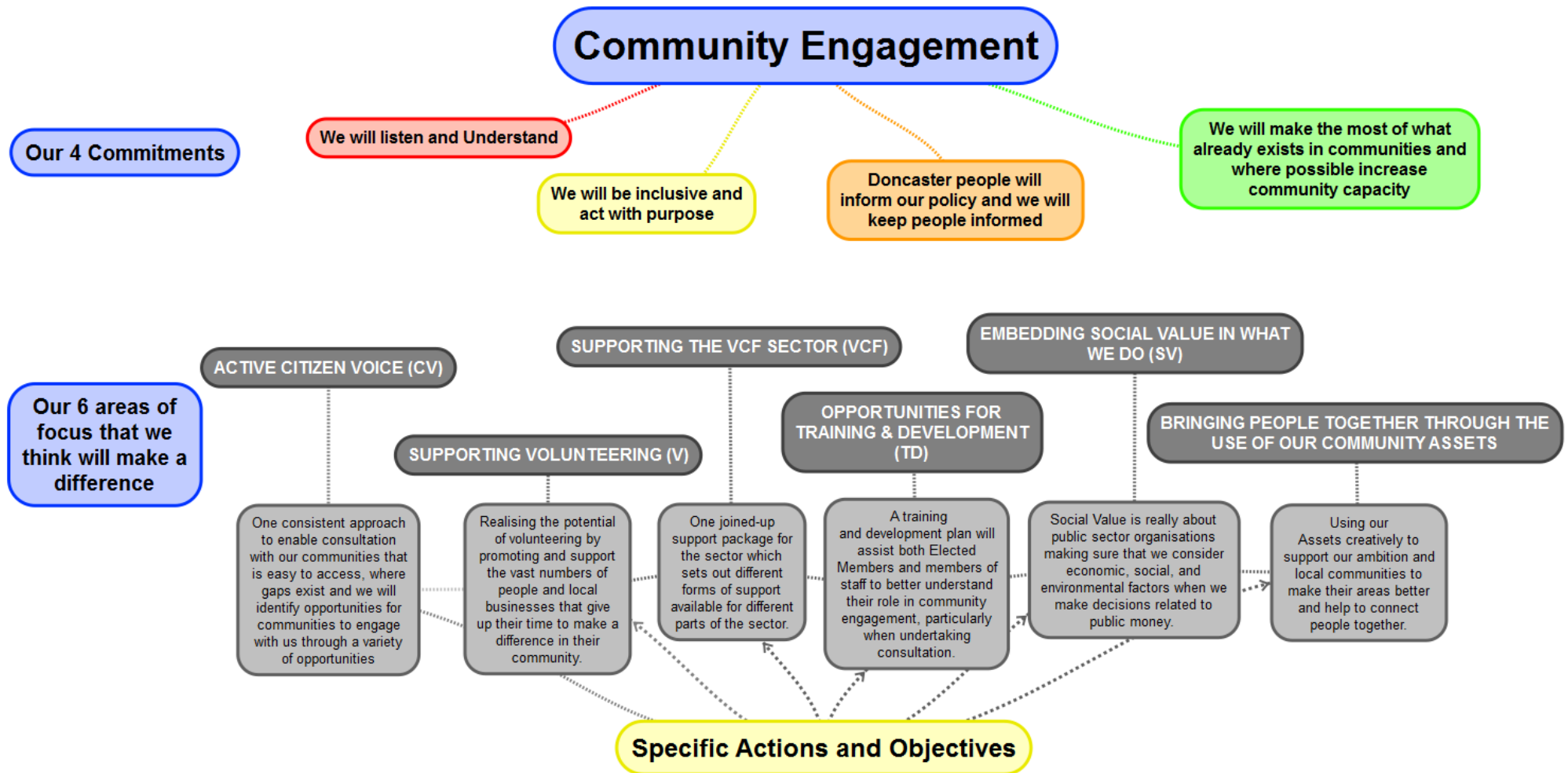
This highlighted lots of positive practice – instances where communities felt well-informed of an important policy change; fully engaged in a decision-making process or empowered to take action to help make something happen in a collaborative way. However, it also revealed where we can do better and create new, more creative opportunities for engagement.

These discussions formed the foundations of the Community Engagement Strategy, which we were then able to test and refine with our elected members, frontline staff and our partner organisations. Working together, we have developed a set of six areas of focus for delivery over the next three years.

This strategy has been developed and aligned to other key strategy documents including the Council's overall communications and engagement strategy to ensure we have regular, open and two-way communications with our residents, communities and staff; that promotes mutual understanding as part of our Team Doncaster approach, and engages as many people as possible in what we are doing now and in our plans for the future. It also aligns with the Council's Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion framework which sets out how we will promote inclusion and diversity, tackle inequalities and remove barriers which may prevent people from engaging and fulfilling their true potential.

We hope that this strategy will embed a culture change within our organisation. It will enable us to develop better relationships and engagement with our communities, who we recognise should have a role in shaping and informing our work wherever possible. Awareness-raising, training, and the development of our community engagement toolkit, part of the community engagement framework, which will support staff to ensure that our engagement is considered and well informed by local intelligence. Any improvement in our processes will impact positively across all communities and protected groups and will form part of how we embed community engagement into everything we do.

What we plan to do



Commitment 1: We will Listen and Understand

Objectives

- > **As a Council, we will make ourselves as accessible as possible using a variety of ways to listen to communities' views.** This will help us to build a better and more current understanding of how communities feel about issues affecting them.
- > **We recognise the key role our Elected Members and staff have in listening to communities.** We will take the time to understand what communities are telling us and either share, take action or empower others to do something about it.
- > **We will make best use of information we have access to and where possible, make it simple to understand and use.** We will value the importance of information and community knowledge and treat it responsibly.

Actions²

As a Council, we will make ourselves as accessible as possible using a variety of ways to listen to communities' views. This will help us to build a better and more current understanding of how communities feel about issues affecting them.

- We will establish a consultation hub where we can feed back to communities in a single place and promote the use digital consultation platforms to gather views, ideas and insights (CV)
- We have a variety of forums that already support citizen voice and we will continue to support them but we will support new forums to help advise on different topics and issues (CV)
- We will set up a borough wide community survey process to listen to your views (CV)
- We will explore new opportunities for communities to engage, for example, whole Council surgeries, an evening with...events, Q&A sessions, or a citizen's blog (CV)

We recognise the key role our Elected Members and staff have in listening to communities. We will take the time to understand what communities are telling us and either share, take action or empower others to do something about it.

- We will provide a training programme for staff and elected members in community engagement techniques such as Asset Based Community Development (TD)
- We will draw on the community knowledge of our frontline staff to better understand what is important to communities (TD)
- We will support shadowing opportunities in the community and other work areas (TD)

We will make best use of information we have access to and where possible, make it simple to understand and use. We will value the importance of information and community knowledge and treat it responsibly.

- We will make community information available and update it at least annually (CV)
- We will map customer enquiries to local areas to better understand local issues (CV)

² We have aligned each action to the 6 areas of focus – (CV) Citizen voice, (V) Volunteering, (VCF) Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector Support, (TD) Training & Development, (SV) Social Value, (A) Assets

Commitment 2: Doncaster people will inform our Policy and we will Keep People Informed

Objectives

- > **The information we collect will inform our decisions.** We will capture communities' stories and experiences to inform our work.
- > **We will ensure there is feedback when Communities have helped to shape our policy.** We will present feedback in a clear 'you said, we did, you did' format
- > **We will engage with communities when we make changes to services and policy where appropriate.** We have an appropriate and consistent approach to engagement.

Actions

The information we collect will inform our decisions. We will capture communities' stories and experiences to inform our work.

- We will provide a training programme for staff and elected members in community engagement techniques such as Asset Based Community Development (TD)

We will ensure there is feedback when Communities have helped to shape our policy. We will present feedback in a clear 'you said, we did, you did' format.

- We will establish a consultation hub where we can feed back to communities in a single place and promote the use digital consultation platforms to gather views, ideas and insights (CV)

We will engage with communities when we make changes to services and policy where appropriate. We have a consistent approach to engagement.

- We will create a Community Engagement Toolkit for staff (TD)

Commitment 3: We will be Inclusive and act with Purpose

Objectives

- > **We will make information accessible to all.** We will consider how best to engage using a number of different ways and in a variety of formats. We will work hard to include all communities who have a stake in the matter.
- > **Our engagement with communities will be timely and meaningful.**

Actions

We will make information accessible to all. We will consider how best to engage using a number of different ways and in a variety of formats. We will work hard to include all communities who have a stake in the matter.

- We will test our information with communities and improve it where necessary (CV)

Our Engagement with Communities will be timely and meaningful.

- We will establish a consultation hub where we can feed back to communities in a single place and promote the use digital consultation platforms to gather views, ideas and insights (CV)
- We have a variety of forums that already support citizen voice and we will continue to support them but we will support new forums to help advise on different topics and issues (CV)
- We will apply the “make every contact count” principles (TD)
- We will create a Community Engagement Toolkit for staff (TD)
- We will commit to completing a simplified Due Regard statement as part of the consultation process (TD)

Commitment 4: We will make the most of what already exists in communities and where possible increase community capacity

Objectives

- > **Communities will have access to information, advice and guidance to help themselves, their friends, family, carers and neighbours.** We will build upon the strong sense of community which already exists within Doncaster and encourage people to look out for one another within communities.
- > **We will support local community and voluntary organisations to help ensure that they have the capacity to improve the lives of the communities they serve.** We will work in partnership, recognise the crucial role that these organisations play in our borough and celebrate the work they do.
- > **We will maximise the use of our community buildings.** We will open up our community buildings as much as possible so that they are lively and thriving places for people to meet, connect and engage.
- > **We will encourage new and existing opportunities for volunteering and draw upon the potential for businesses and other organisations to support the community.** We will promote the benefits of volunteering and 'giving back' locally.
- > **We will make sure that we spend public money in ways which contribute to the local economy and our local communities.** We will ensure that the work we contract to others fits in with our vision and helps to make Doncaster a better place to live.
- > **We will celebrate and draw upon the strengths of our communities.**
- > **We will work in partnership with our communities to produce solutions.** We will encourage communities to be actively engaged and help to deliver these solutions.

Actions

Communities will have access to information, advice and guidance to help themselves, their friends, family, carers and neighbours. We will build upon the strong sense of community which already exists within Doncaster and encourage people to look out for one another within communities.

- We will follow the Community Led Support principles – exploring what is already available in communities through different agencies and organisations and wrapping these around the individual (CV)
- We will explore how we can use people in their community to deliver key messages to reach more people (CV)
- We will run awareness-campaigns to deliver relevant information to communities (CV)

We will support local community and voluntary organisations to help ensure that they have the capacity to improve the lives of the communities they serve. We will work in partnership, recognise the crucial role that these organisations play in our borough and celebrate the work they do.

- We will create a clear partnership position on support for the sector including funding advice, training opportunities, infrastructure support. (VCF)
- We will develop a portal to support VCF organisations to access support and connect to opportunities across the sector. (VCF)

- We will explore new opportunities to invest into the sector, including the potential to co-ordinate funding across the partnership to support common objectives (VCF)
- We will explore an annual celebration event for the work the Voluntary, Community and Faith sector do (VCF)

We will maximise the use of our community buildings. We will open up our community buildings as much as possible so that they are lively and thriving places for people to meet, connect and engage.

- We will work with our Team Doncaster partners to create a clear plan across the public estate to maximise use in local communities and develop clear disposal and development opportunities (A)
- We will review the processes around community lets (A)
- If appropriate, we will make our community assets available to local communities (A)

We will encourage new and existing opportunities for volunteering and draw upon the potential for businesses and other organisations to support the community. We will promote the benefits of volunteering and ‘giving back’ locally.

- We will support the development of a volunteering standard (V)
- We will support the development of a space for promoting volunteer opportunities (V)
- We will have a clear policy around staff volunteering (V)
- We will recognise the importance of volunteering and the impact it can have by including it specifically in a potential annual VCF celebration event (V)

We will make sure that we spend public money in ways which contribute to the local economy and our local communities. We will ensure that the work we contract to others fits in with our vision and helps to make Doncaster a better place to live.

- We will support and grow our Social Economy through our inclusive growth plan (SV)
- We will maximise Social Value through the implementation of our policy (SV)
- We will explore different ways to encourage local giving (SV)

We will celebrate and draw upon the strengths of our communities.

- We will tell more local stories and share community knowledge (CV)
- We will follow the Community Led Support principles – exploring what is already available in communities through different agencies and organisations and wrapping these around the individual (CV)

We will work in partnership with our communities to produce solutions. We will encourage communities to be actively engaged and help to deliver these solutions.

- We will encourage more positive perceptions of Doncaster as a place – ‘This is My Doncaster’ campaign for example, enabling community litter picks, sharing positive examples of community action in the sector (VCF)
- We will encourage community ownership of assets and leadership through initiatives like crowd funding (A)
- We will build upon our use of social impact bonds and continue to take a more creative approach to community issues (VCF)

Your part to play

We cannot deliver this strategy without your help.

Community Engagement is all about getting involved, forming relationships and playing an active role in building stronger communities.

If across the borough we can foster more informed, inclusive and engaged communities, we will be better able to make Doncaster a place which truly works for all of us.

There are three simple things you can do to help:

1. Speak up

2. Share

3. Act

Speak up

...and make your voice heard! If you feel strongly about a certain issue or if you would like to change something locally, let people know. **Give us feedback** on the things we do. If the information we publish is unclear or if you require it in a different format, please tell us so that we can do something about it. We want to hear about when you have positive engagements with us, but we also want to know where we can improve and do better.

Share

... and inform others. If you come across something that can help other people, share it. Signpost people to useful information and share knowledge of what's going on in your community... If we want Doncaster to feel like the kind of place where people pull together and look out for one another, it's really important that we share information with others as much as possible.

Act

...and make a difference in your local community. Communities are a sum of their parts and every individual contribution counts! From popping round to check on a neighbour, helping out with a community event, cleaning up a nearby green space or volunteering with a local organisation, there is something for everyone. In order to feel proud of where we live, we must take an active role in trying to shape and improve our local areas.

Ways to engage

MyDoncaster Social Media on Facebook: <https://facebook.com/MyDoncaster> and Twitter <https://twitter.com/mydoncaster>

Contact your local councillor: <http://www.doncaster.gov.uk/services/the-council-democracy/member-support>

Contact the Mayor: <http://www.doncaster.gov.uk/mayor/mayor-home>

Attend a Your Life Community Conversation Point:
<https://www.yourlifedoncaster.co.uk/s4s/WhereILive/Council?pagelD=4346>

Attend a local community group listed on the Community Directory:
www.yourlifedoncaster.co.uk/groups

Attend your local Tenants and Residents' Association:
<https://www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/getinvolved/customer-involvement-team/>

Attend your local Town/Parish Council: <http://www.doncaster.gov.uk/services/the-council-democracy/town-and-parish-councils>

Crowd fund for a community project: <https://www.spacehive.com/movement/doncastermovement>

Start volunteering: <http://www.doncaster.gov.uk/services/work-jobs-training/volunteering>
<https://do-it.org/>

Attend your local library: <https://library.doncaster.gov.uk/web/arena>

Contact Customer Services via the website on: <http://www.doncaster.gov.uk/services/get-in-touch/contact-the-council> or get the My Doncaster App

Attend a Police and Communities Together (PACT) meeting:
<https://www.southyorks.police.uk/contact-us/feedback/pact-meetings/>

Become a member of Youth Council: <http://www.doncaster.gov.uk/services/schools/doncaster-youth-council>

Get involved with the St Leger Young Persons' Engagement Board:
<https://www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/getinvolved/customer-involvement-team/young-peoples-zone/young-persons-engagement-board/>