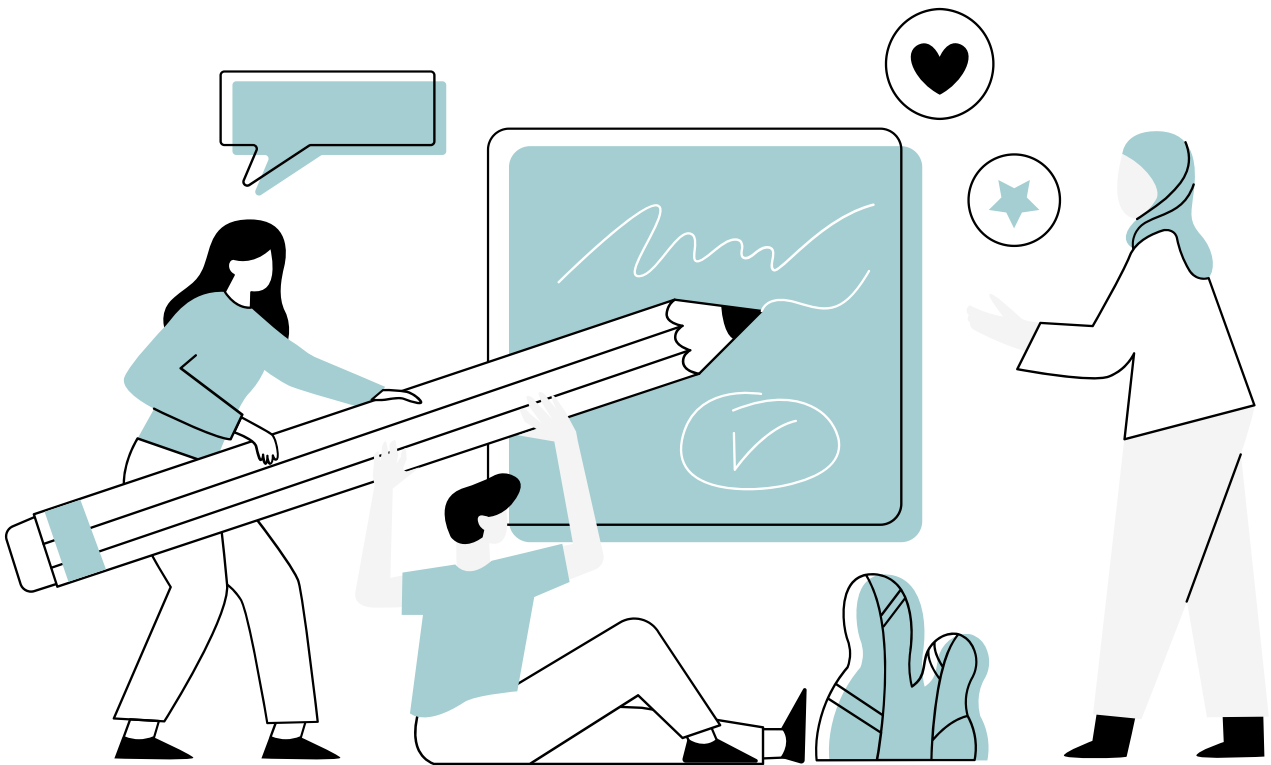# Curiosity and influence

Our framework and toolkit for community engagement, consultation and co-production

Welcome

We want to put the voice of our residents at the heart of our decisions to make sure that we truly serve our residents effectively and appropriately.

This framework and toolkit enable us to engage, consult and co-produce with our residents. When we say residents, we refer to those people who live, work and play in our borough, including our businesses, community groups, charities and other stakeholders.

We have ambitions to achieve excellence in everything that we do – embedding a culture of engagement will help us do that. And that's where our approach of curiosity and influence comes in.

Our approach is driven by professional **curiosity**. This means that we need to have the capacity and communication skills required to explore and understand what is happening within someone's life rather than making assumptions or accepting their versions of events at face value. As a 'listening organisation', seeking the views of our residents is at the heart of our culture – included as a key principle in our corporate strategy, our organisational values and our professional behaviours. What's more, the principles and approach outlined in this framework and toolkit underpin our practice philosophy in our services for both adult social care (known as *Making Practice Personal*) and children's social care (known as the *Bromley Relationship Model*).

Listening is only the beginning. Once we have listened we are obliged to learn and respond to the feedback. People who give their time to tell us their thoughts expect and deserve to be able to **influence** our system, policies, programmes and practices. This doesn't mean that we must do everything they ask, it means that we must listen, reflect and consider what is possible, and it means that we must feed back to them what the outcome of their feedback was. It is reasonable to recognise that feedback will result in varying levels of influence based on many factors.

Engagement can be challenging – both in terms of resources to undertake it and also in terms of hearing the messages that we receive. As an organisation we need to be confident enough to hear the feedback, mature enough to process what we've heard and insightful enough to learn about what we can do better. This framework and toolkit will help give us the processes to do this.

If you have any questions, ideas or thoughts about this framework and toolkit, please email **engagement@bromley.gov.uk** and one of our team will be able to help.

Naheed Chaudhry
Assistant Director: Strategy, Performance and Corporate Transformation

Understanding engagement

All successful and well-run organisations are shaped by the people who use their services.

Whether that's through the success of profit-making companies or the effective reach of non-profit-making organisations, all successful businesses must ask for, listen to and learn from what the people who use their services say.

And as a public sector organisation we are the same. We touch the lives of everybody who lives in, works or visits our borough.

But why engage?

Before we consider that, we will answer a key question – what actually is engagement?

What do we mean by "engagement"?

Engagement is a process of working with and through identified groups of people who are connected by special interests or similar situations, to enable them to influence their own set of circumstances.

It proactively invites people into a conversation to influence improvements to systems, policies, programmes and practices. Our approach is driven by curiosity.

What do we mean by "curiosity"?

Curiosity is having a strong desire to learn or know something. We need to develop the habits of exploring, learning and discovering.

In a professional sense, curiosity is the capacity and communication skills required to explore and understand what is happening within someone's life rather than making assumptions or accepting their versions of events at face value.

Curiosity is a mental muscle that fades if we don't exercise it regularly. This framework will help us to do this at each level.

What do we mean by "influence"?

Whilst we have a culture of open and active engagement where we seek the views of everyone, we also recognise that there are some services and some interactions which are delivered in line with statutory requirements. This doesn't mean that we can't ask for feedback on those services - it just means that we may need to adjust what we ask for feedback on.

That's where the term influence comes in. By influence we mean the ability of our residents to offer suggestions to improve our systems, policies, programmes and practices.

Engagement without influence has no impact. It is a waste of our time and resources, and it is a waste of time for those that take part. **Clearly defined areas of influence for each engagement activity can help to clarify and focus that activity.**

The benefits of engagement

There are numerous benefits to organisations when they proactively engage with the people who use their services. The benefits to the Council include:
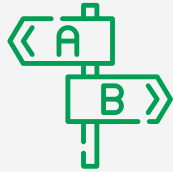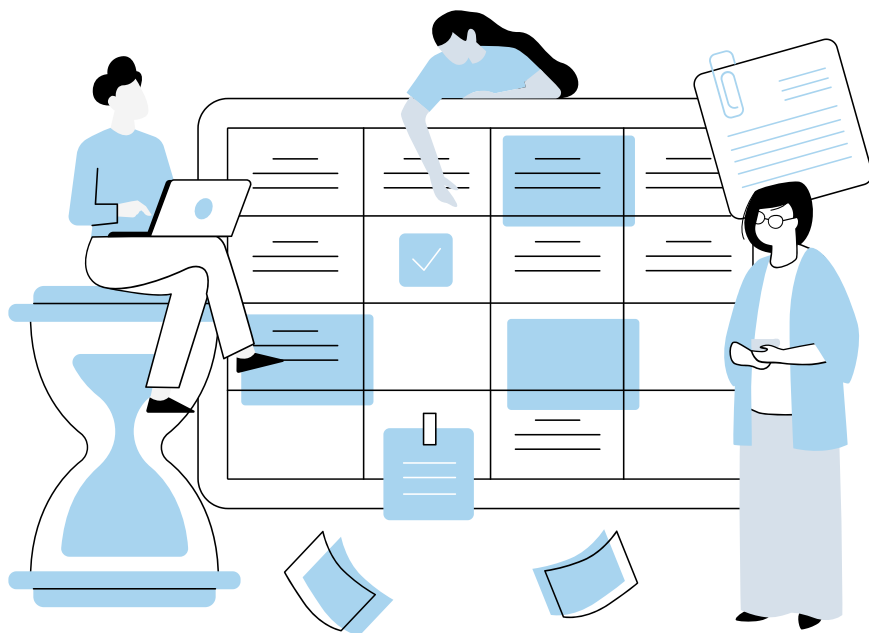
Our decision-making will be better

Our services will make better use of our resources

Our community will trust us more

Our residents will be happier with our services

Strategic context

Our vision

Our corporate vision is set out in our corporate strategy, _Making Bromley Even Better_:

> 🗨🗨 _"A fantastic place to live and work, where everyone can lead healthy, safe and independent lives"_

To achieve this vision, we must embed 'Curiosity and Influence' across our practices. This will help our residents feel engaged and able to share their honest and holistic viewpoints about what it is like to live and work in the borough.

This engagement framework is a key contributing factor to us achieving the fifth ambition of _Making Bromley Even Better_:

> 🗨🗨 _"to manage our resources well, providing value for money, and efficient and effective services for Bromley's residents"_
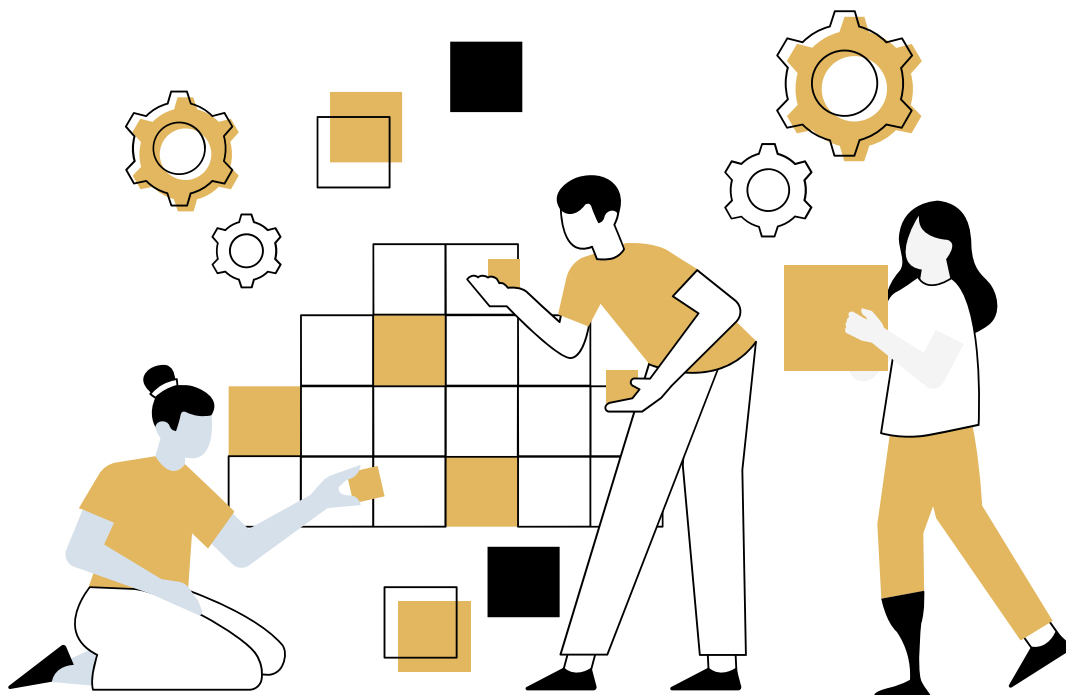
Our values

Listening to the voice of our residents sits hand-in-hand with our _corporate REAL values_: Respect, Empower, Ambition and Learn. These four words define the fundamental standards which govern the behaviour of our staff and underpin all of our engagement work.

Respect

This means we must have respect for ourselves, the people we work with and the people that we deal with when providing our services. Through this framework we will show the greatest respect to our residents as through the implementation of our approach we are proactively seeking to listen to them and show a significant interest in their life and their daily experiences.

Empower

This means we must empower ourselves, other agencies and the community to deliver services that meet the needs of our residents in the most appropriate and efficient manner. Through this framework we will empower our residents to share their experiences, ideas and concerns in a safe environment with the information they need to make informed decisions.

Ambition

This means we must have ambition for ourselves and our community which drives our efforts to improve services and find new ways of working – we should never accept second best for our residents.
Through this framework we will remain ambitious for our borough – we want our borough to thrive and the people who live and work in it to achieve their ambitions. Our approach will help us to understand these ambitions and understand how we can help nurture an environment where they can be achieved.

Learn

This means we must learn from others and our own experiences to improve and extend our own performance and that of the organisation. Through this framework we will remain open-minded and curious to learn from the lived experiences of our residents, from our own experiences and from the experiences of our organisation. This learning will help us enhance and extend our performance and to identify what we do well, what we need to do better and what else we need to do to serve our residents.

Our behaviours

We have a set of <u>four key behaviours</u> that we believe are fundamental to building and maintaining the kind of organisation we want to be. They form the core of our competency framework for all our staff and are at the heart of everything we do, which is why they sit hand-in-hand with our engagement approach.

Accountability and responsibility

Through this framework we will be creating opportunities for our residents to provide their feedback on our actions and behaviours. This increased accountability brings an increased risk of receiving criticism and hearing negative views. However, creating those opportunities is essential for evidencing how we are delivering our responsibilities to our residents. The framework will ensure that as an organisation we are mature enough to deal with the accountability.

Building relationships

Good engagement is all about relationships. Relationships that are built on openness, integrity and equity foster trust, confidence and a feeling of inclusion. If these elements are missing, people can be reluctant to fully participate in engagement activities or, if they do, may have a negative mindset when providing their responses. What's more, without trust people may feel nervous about providing their honest feedback.

Communication

Engagement must be developed around communication that meets the needs of our residents and the Council. Quite often engagement will need to be conducted using a mix of channels that are tailored to the needs of the audience and which meet accessibility needs. When communicating directly with our residents, we need to be honest about what is in scope – and what is not – and we need to present our messages in planned, compelling and tailored ways.

Continuous improvement

If we are not willing or able to improve and do better from the feedback we have gathered, the question must be asked why we are undertaking the engagement activity. All activity must form part of our corporate continuous improvement programme. The lessons from engagement must be acted on and we must be open in sharing the impact of engagement. This intelligence must be shared internally too so that we can enhance and expand our corporate knowledge.

Our practice philosophy

The principles and approach outlined in 'Curiosity and Influence' underpin our practice philosophy in our services for both adult social care (known as *Making Practice Personal*) and children's social care (known as the Bromley Relationship Model).

Adult Social Care
Making Practice Personal

Making Practice Personal is our whole service approach to community practice, personalised enablement and new models of commissioning across adult social care. It is built on a philosophy of 'strengths-based' practice.
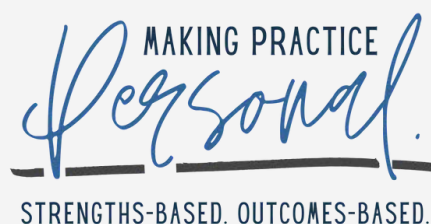
Strengths-based practice is a collaborative process between the person supported by services and those supporting them, allowing them to work together to determine an outcome that draws on the person's strengths and assets. In strengths-based practice the individual is empowered to have as much choice and control as possible and encouraged to propose options and solutions to enable them to have the life they want.

Learn more:
https://bit.ly/makingpracticepersonal

Children's Social Care
Bromley Relationship Model

Our children's social care practice is driven by the *Bromley Relationship Model*. This underpins and informs how we work with children, young people, young adults, their families, colleagues and partner agencies.

Like *Making Practice Personal*, the *Bromley Relationship Model* builds on the strengths of the child and their family through open conversations and compassionate work. Every conversation and interaction between our practitioners and a child and their family is used as an opportunity for change and reflection. The model makes sure that the wishes and feelings of every child, young person and family is consistently sought, heard and considered.

Learn more:
https://bit.ly/brm_guide

Curiosity and Influence principles

Guiding our approach is a set of four principles which will result in continuous improvement and drive practice development across all our services.
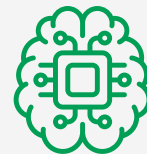
**Principle 1:
Shaping our casework**

**Principle 2:
Shaping our systems**

**Principle 3:
Shaping our place**

**Principle 4:
Corporate intelligence**

Principle 1: Shaping our casework

In line with _Making Practice Personal_ and the _Bromley Relationship Model_ we will curiously engage the person supported by services and those supporting them, allowing them to influence plans about them.

Alongside the voice of the people who use our service, we will actively engage, when appropriate, with their support network (including family members, personal networks, community groups and elected members) so that they can influence our casework.

> We will proactively provide opportunities for individuals to shape and influence case and direct work.

> We will create opportunities for family members and personal networks to influence case and direct work, where appropriate.

> We will facilitate access to local advocates, impartial advice and support.

> We will learn from the intelligence gathered through Councillor engagement activities and enquiries.

> We will harness the routes that businesses, business owners and enterprises can use to share their views and thoughts.

Principle 2:
Shaping our systems

We will create opportunities for the people who use our services to influence our processes and systems and, where appropriate, we will seek the views of their support network too. Their experiences will be used to improve services for all our residents.

By using their personal experiences, we can understand the pathways and journeys that our residents go through when using our services. This intelligence will be used to improve what we do and how we do it.

> We will survey the people who use our services so that they can tell us about their experiences.

> We will facilitate forums, conferences and events for our residents to share their thoughts and ideas on specific service areas, topics or themes.

> We will provide opportunities for family members, friends and community groups to give their thoughts, ideas and feedback to help shape the services and support that people need, where appropriate.

> We will invite our residents to take part in elements of our service commissioning processes.

> We will draw out the themes from any complaints, enquiries and compliments we receive and share these through our annual complaints reports.

> We will use the 'community intelligence' held by our partner organisations (such as the voluntary sector, local community groups and user-led bodies) to improve the 'offer' which is available across our borough so that we can improve the lives of our residents.

Principle 3:
Shaping our place

We will design spaces for our residents to help shape 'Bromley the place'. Our residents will be invited to help shape the natural and physical environment they experience every day to influence the design of 'Bromley the place' for now and the future.

This will help them to shape our strategies, policies and approach for improving the key issues that affect their lives, which will influence our role in shaping our local community.

> We will conduct open, accessible and well publicised consultations and surveys which inform our service and strategic planning and developments.

> We will facilitate forums, conferences and events for residents and businesses to share their thoughts and ideas.

> We will invite our residents and other community members to take part in elements of our strategic commissioning and planning processes.

> We will encourage residents to proactively participate in activities which have a positive impact on their lives, their local community and their local neighbourhood.

> We will maximise the voice of our residents, our businesses and our local communities when we are shaping the future design of our physical and natural environment.

Principle 4:
Corporate intelligence
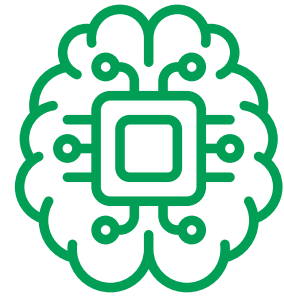
We will build our skills across our whole organisation to engage in good quality, ethical and impactful user voice activities. This will enhance the opportunities offered by our services, teams and practitioners for our residents to share their thoughts, opinions and experiences.

By making sure that the learning from our engagement is shared across the organisation, our corporate intelligence will be maximised. We will use this intelligence to demonstrate the impact of their involvement in a range of ways to those who participate. This is to ensure that participants can see the value of their involvement and will be motivated to continue to contribute.

> We will provide clear, accessible and well publicised 'You Said, We Did' reports from our activity to share learning and evidence impact.

> We will share good practice and training and encourage teams to expand their own capacity, skills and knowledge on methods for engagement.

> We will provide good practice guidance and training for our staff on meaningful and ethical approaches to capturing and learning from the voice of our users.

> We will support our commissioned services to put the voice of the user at the heart of their work and approaches.

> We will use the intelligence gathered from other organisations (local, regional and national) to maximise our understanding of the views of people who receive services.

> We will ensure that our 'key decision' committee reports will include thoughtful summaries of engagement activity undertaken.

Our approach and toolkit

We want our staff to feel empowered and confident when they are delivering this framework.

At the same time, we understand that engagement with residents can feel daunting and many people don't know where or how to start.

That's why we have developed a simple three step approach and toolkit to provide a hands-on guide. It has been designed to help us adopt or adapt ideas that can deliver better results for our residents.

Step A:
Before you start

Before you start any engagement activity it is important to answer a few key questions. Working your way through these questions will help you to make sure that you are reaching the right people in the right way. We know that everybody is busy and that quite often engagement activities are part of the 'day job' and so it has to compete with your many other priorities. By putting some energy and time into this section it will help you truly hit the ground running.

Identifying the purpose

Start by completing the short **engagement thought capture sheet** (Tool A1). It will help you to identify and define the following:

- the purpose of the engagement activity
- the outcome you are looking to achieve
- the areas that the respondees can influence and what they cannot
- the timescale for the engagement
- the resources available to support the engagement

This will also help you identify who you need to report to within your governance structure, including who will authorise you to begin your engagement activity.

All activities will have boundaries about what can be, and what cannot be, influenced or altered. Our **red underlines tool** (Tool A2) will help you to identify what falls inside these boundaries. This should be made clear to all residents who may potentially get involved so they understand the parameters. This will help focus the conversation, manage expectations and provide clarity to all.

Useful tools

- Tool A1 - Engagement thought capture sheet
- Tool A2 - Red underlines tool

Identifying your audience

Next you need to consider who is in your audience. Start by thinking about the current people who use the service – who are they and what is the best way of engaging with them? Our engagement **person profiler tool** (Tool A3) will help you do this.

Then move on to thinking about the wider stakeholders you may need to engage. Will the family members or carers of the people who use your service want to be involved? Do your colleagues or our partners need to be involved? What about Councillors? Our **stakeholder onion** (Tool A4) can provide a visual tool to identify who you need to talk to.

How will you ensure that no participant is excluded on the grounds of sexual orientation, age, gender, religious belief, ethnic group or disability? By using the **engagement equality checklist** (Tool A5), you can make sure that you meet our duties under the Equality Act 2010.

One of the benefits of being one of the 152 top tier local authorities across the country is that we are not the only ones who are delivering statutory services. What research have similar local authorities completed? What about non-similar authorities? What research is there available locally, regionally and nationally? Our **beyond the fence tool** (Tool A6) will help you to think about the places to look.

Useful tools

- Tool A3 - Engagement person profiler tool
- Tool A4 - Stakeholder onion
- Tool A5 - Engagement equality checklist
- Tool A6 - Beyond the fence tool

Identifying the timing

Consultation fatigue is a real thing. This happens when we are uncoordinated in our approach and some of our residents are receiving multiple engagement requests in a short period or continuously throughout a longer period. We need to make sure that this does not happen. The first thing to do is to check the **calendar of engagement activities** (Tool A7). This will show you whether someone is talking to the same people that you need to talk.

You can register your engagement activity on our engagement register form (Tool A8) so your colleagues are aware of what you are doing.

Useful tools

- Tool A7 - Calendar of engagement activities
- Tool A8 - Engagement register form

Step B:
Doing it right

We want you to do engagement right. We want it to be ethical, effective and proportionate. We want you to use tools that work during the actual engagement processes. And we want you to make engagement activities worthwhile for our users.

Identifying the methods

There are endless methods for undertaking your engagement activity, but some will fit your project better than others. Our **engagement method menu** (Tool B1) sets out a number of different options. The use of each one depends on the needs of your audience and the scope of your activity.

'Digital by default' is our organisational standard, therefore engagement activities should include a digital element first and foremost. But how will this be shared with those who need to know about it? Our **digital engagement fan** (Tool B2) will help you think about what digital options are available to you.

Quite often there will need to be a non-digital approach, such as face-to-face sessions, forums and focus groups. Our **offline engagement tool** (Tool B3) will help you to set out the options available to you, especially for those who we seldom hear from.

We are pulling together a **library of templates** (Tool B4) that you can use and customise as required which we hope will be useful. The template library will be regularly updated and expanded.

Useful tools

- Tool B1 - Engagement method menu
- Tool B2 - Digital engagement fan
- Tool B3 - Offline engagement tool
- Tool B4 - Library of templates

Information security

Data security is paramount to any engagement. Any data breaches will undermine confidence in us and may lead to the involvement of the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). That's why it is essential to think about the data you will collect, how you will store it, how long it will be retained for and then how it will be destroyed. The **Information Management Team** (Tool B5) have provided a raft of guidance and advice and are always available for a chat to talk through your ideas.

Useful tools

- Tool B5 - Information Management Team SharePoint site

Learning from others

We have a wealth of experience across the Council. Our **engagement champions** (Tool B6) are people who have been there and done that. These people are available to offer advice and a listening ear. We are also exploring a set of learning sessions to share good practice from our engagement champions.

Useful tools

- Tool B6 - Engagement champions

Harnessing your connections

As the old saying goes – it's not what you know, it's who you know. And in engagement that's especially true. There is a vast network of connections out there in our community. Knowing who to talk to and how they can help can make a massive difference to the success of your engagement activity. Our **groups and people list tool** (Tool B7) will help you identify existing groups, forums and systems that you can make use of.

Useful tools

- Tool B7 - Groups and people list

Step C:
Evidencing the impact

You've done the hard work. Many people think that's it. But it's not. Closing the loop is essential. It helps us evidence our impact. It helps us learn and improve what we do. And it helps encourage our users to participate in the future if they can see the impact of their previous interactions.

Capturing the learning

Our **key takeaways template** (Tool C1) will help you capture what you learn as you go through the engagement process. In a similar manner to the 'lessons learned' process used in project management, this will help you keep track as you go through it so you can fully reflect at the end.

Useful tools

- Tool C1 - Key takeaways template

Sharing the learning

By using our **You Said, We Did cards** (Tool C2), you can easily capture the key lessons that you have identified and what you will or will not be changing as a result. This can then be shared both internally and externally. This tool provides a simple and consistent product that we can use across all of our services.

Once you have captured the 'you said, we did' learning and reported back to your governing board, we recommend that you pull together a public report which outlines your engagement activity. This creates a positive and active way of pulling together the learning and the steps we need to take to improve. Our **closing the engagement loop** (Tool C3) template will help you do this.

All of these reports, lessons and improvements should be sent to our Engagement Strategy Manager to update our engagement register (*engagement@bromley.gov.uk*).

Useful tools

- Tool C2 - You Said, We Did cards
- Tool C3 - Closing the engagement loop
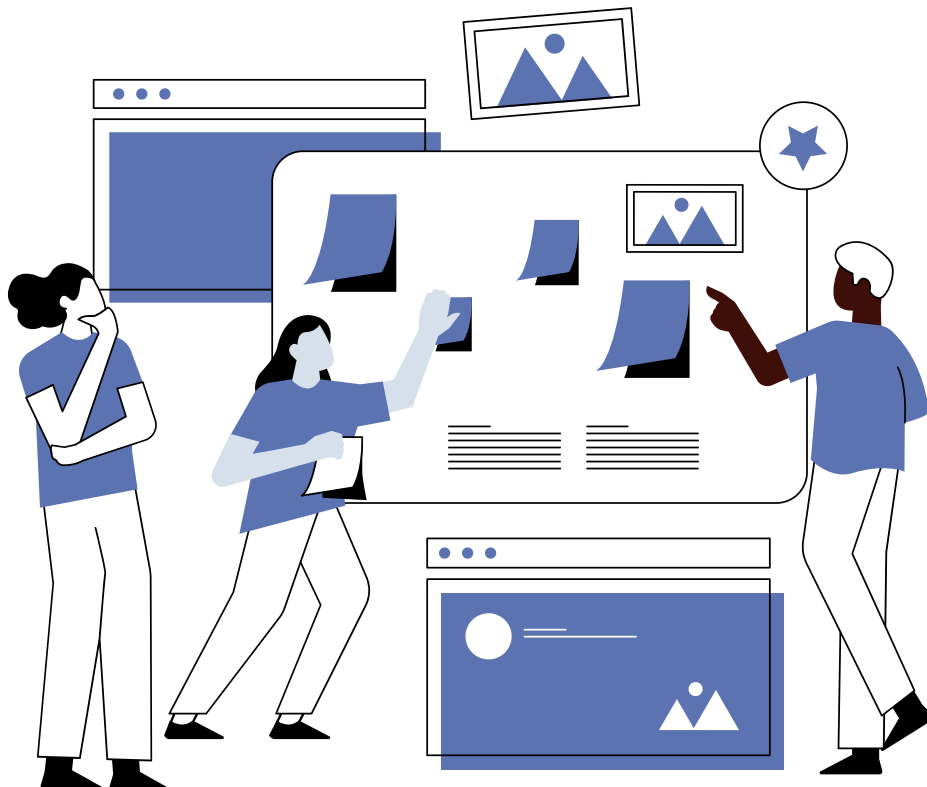
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