

One Nottingham

**Community
Empowerment
Strategy**

**‘Strong, Active and
Inclusive Communities’**

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There isn't a single service or development in Britain which hasn't been improved by actively involving local people'

(Rt Hon Hazel Blears MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government).

'Community Empowerment is the giving of confidence, skills and power to communities to shape and influence what public bodies do for or with them.' (Action Plan for Community Empowerment October 2007, Communities and Local Government).

Introduction

This Community Empowerment Strategy aims to support strong, active and inclusive communities, who are informed and involved in decision-making and enable us to improve public services to enhance quality of life across Nottingham. By this we mean:

- **strong communities**, who can form and sustain their own organisations, bringing people together to deal with their common concerns
- **active communities**, where people are supported to improve the quality of life in their own communities
- **inclusive communities**, where all sections of the community feel they have opportunities to be involved in decision-making and influence public services.

In addition to improving local services and democratic accountability empowering communities has significant wider benefits for individuals and communities. Informed, active individuals gain confidence and skills which help them reach their goals. Communities are more cohesive when local people feel empowered and able to influence and improve their areas; for this reason the forthcoming Community Cohesion Strategy is closely linked.

Our vision of empowered communities in Nottingham

- Our vision is of a Nottingham where local people, from all areas and groups, feel they can influence decision-making in the public sector, where residents know their local Elected Member and feel able to work with them to tackle local issues.
- We are working to ensure local people can choose how involved they want to get, from speaking to a local Elected Member at a surgery, right through sitting on groups and boards, to helping to run a service with a number of other volunteers.
- We want to co-ordinate our efforts meaning more people can be supported to become active because organisations do not overlap their work, but work together. We want to ensure local people know what is happening locally and are able to see the results and effects of local people's contributions in the past.
- Our vision is of an even stronger Voluntary and Community Sector (sometimes called the Third Sector) providing relevant services meeting the needs of the community.
- Our vision is of more active citizens. We want to help people become volunteers, by developing and advertising clear volunteering roles. We will retain volunteers by making sure they are valued and trained in the skills they want and need. Volunteers can start small and choose to take on bigger responsibilities and challenges as their confidence grows. In turn the public sector will look to empower local people and volunteers by enabling them to manage assets such as buildings.

What do we mean by empowerment?

The following definitions have been agreed by partners who have developed the Community Empowerment Strategy. They are based on the Scottish Standards for Community Engagement, and Aronstein's Ladder of Engagement, but have been amended to reflect the views of Nottingham's empowerment practitioners.

"Community Empowerment is the giving of confidence, skills, and power to communities to shape and influence what public bodies do for or with them"

"Community Engagement is the process whereby public bodies reach out to communities to create empowerment opportunities"

Ladder Rung	Definition and Examples
<p>5. Individuals and groups making decisions and delivering services</p>	<p>Individuals and groups taking full responsibility for their decisions and services without reference to agencies or keeping agencies at 'arms length'. Examples; securing independent funding streams – through owning/and or managing assets. Delivering public sector contracts through local voluntary and community organisations.</p>
<p>4. Sharing power and resources, and joint decision-making and/or delivery.</p>	<p>Sharing resources and joint decision-making. Examples; Compact Plus, Implementation groups in neighbourhood management pilots having a budget to spend in their area as they see fit. Working together to design locally appropriate services.</p> <p>Creating opportunities and removing barriers to enable individuals and groups to tackle problems in partnership with agencies. Examples; a volunteer led project supported by community workers to develop a community garden or a group of volunteers supported by workers to manage and run community centres.</p>
<p>3. Capacity building and involvement (deciding together)</p>	<p>Supporting volunteers and developing their skills. Examples; providing training and helping people to understand how they can play a role in decision making.</p> <p>Developing the capacity of local organisations and groups to provide a good service to their community. Examples; working to improve grant based relationships, develop umbrella and joint groups to improve the sustainability of the voluntary sector organisations by enabling them to better compete for funding.</p>
<p>2. Consultation (opinion sought)</p>	<p>Talking to a community in order to understand its needs and views. Involving people in decisions about the things that affect them. Responding to what a community tells you. Examples; one-stop shops/surgeries, consultation, events specific consultation on draft plans or strategies.</p>
<p>1. Information sharing</p>	<p>Sharing information with residents and groups about what is planned, what has been achieved and developing communities' understanding of issues. Examples; Nottingham Arrow, Nottingham's free council magazine. Websites run by many of the partners plus local events and centres providing information.</p>

The first two rungs, information sharing and consultation, describe community engagement; this strategy seeks to go beyond community engagement to empowerment. The remaining three rungs describe community empowerment, in which the community can take an active part in decision-making and service delivery.

Every type of involvement is important in the community empowerment process and different methods should be used depending on the activity and circumstances. Sometimes it may be appropriate to inform or consult on some activities, for example with a number of mainstream public services which need to be delivered to a set standard but can be tailored to a community need within that framework. Where possible we will seek to involve communities and individuals in much greater depth, in the design and/or delivery of services themselves. We have used the ladder to illustrate how One Nottingham's partners wish to develop more opportunities for people to be empowered. However we also want to make sure individuals can be involved at whichever level they feel is most appropriate.

Setting our Objectives

What are the objectives of the Community Empowerment Strategy?

The objectives below identify how we can ensure that the Community Empowerment Strategy delivers an effective and coordinated approach to community empowerment for the benefit of all citizens and the diverse communities of Nottingham. We will:

- develop further the role of Elected Members as community champions representing and acting on the problems local people bring to them, through Area Committees and the Council's structures, but also in scrutinising services provided by partner organisations in Nottingham
- provide opportunities for communities to shape and influence the development and delivery of quality services and policies that reflect local needs and priorities
- support the use the Empowerment Standards as the basis of future empowerment activities to ensure they are properly conducted and provide variety, flexibility and choice
- enable sharing of community engagement skills and knowledge of putting the community at the heart of services
- develop the capacity of public sector officers to work with local communities and organisations in designing, commissioning, delivering and performance managing public services
- increase opportunities for local people and organisations to directly manage assets and resources for the benefit of their communities
- develop, strengthen and sustain opportunities for local people and groups to influence what happens in their communities and to participate in the delivery of services in the city, as volunteers or paid staff.

How will we achieve the objectives?

A detailed action plan is being developed which details how we will achieve our objectives set out above. The action plan will be continually monitored and reviewed to ensure it is a flexible and evolving plan that responds to the changing needs of our communities and community empowerment activities.

Our initial priorities include:

- Improving **coordination** and governance of community empowerment activities, by the development of protocols, toolkits and a performance management framework.
- **Developing expertise** in finding the views and opinions of people and groups who are often missed out of community empowerment activities.
- Raising awareness of **volunteering** opportunities in the city and supporting volunteers to find appropriate placements while building skills in organisations to **support and capacity build** volunteers effectively.
- Rolling out **enhanced, more accessible and inclusive** ward and Neighbourhood Management structures linked to Area Committees and One Nottingham.

Our Community Empowerment Standards

One Nottingham and its partners commit to use the following standards in conducting empowerment activities. These standards were developed in response to what community development workers and local people told us they wanted from empowerment and consultation activities. These standards will be developed further into a Community Empowerment guidance document as part of the Action Plan for this strategy.

In conducting empowerment activities we will:

Work in partnership and co-ordinate our efforts

- Co-ordinate community empowerment activities with partners, to avoid duplication and 'consultation fatigue', caused by too much consultation and too little action and feedback.
- Provide leadership from the top, to ensure that citizens' voices influence services and plans.

Be inclusive and open up access to services

- Ensure that we take into account particular needs and overcome any difficulties people may have to enable them to participate.
- Involve communities that are usually excluded.
- Ensure that there is equal access to services, and that services meet the needs of all communities.

- Ensure adherence to health and safety regulations.

Be clear what we are asking and why

- Only use community empowerment and consultation processes when there is a real opportunity for people to influence and change decisions and services.
- Be open and honest about the aims of community empowerment activity and what it hopes to achieve.
- Ensure that community empowerment activities are realistic and that expectations are not raised unnecessarily.
- Have clear processes to feed back on community empowerment activity and outcomes and give reasons if not able to deliver on expectations.
- Ensure participants know what they are agreeing to take part in and how the information will be used.

Act with respect and honesty

- Ensure that participants are aware of the purpose of research and that those undertaking research know and adhere to the relevant legislation.
- Ensure that community empowerment activities are voluntary, and that participants can withdraw at any time.
- Ensure that information obtained from community empowerment activities is honestly interpreted.
- Ensure that the rights and dignity of all participants are respected at all times.
- Give careful consideration to activities, information and questions to ensure that they do not offend, cause distress or embarrassment.

Communicate what we are doing

- Ensure that those most directly affected by plans and decisions are aware of opportunities to get involved and/ or have their say.
- Engage with key stakeholders and/or representative groups in advance of specific community empowerment activities – to provide advance warning and to seek views on the most effective means of publicity.
- Ensure we feed back the results and their effects to communities, as soon as we can, through a variety of channels.

How will we measure our achievements?

It is important for us to know whether we are achieving our vision for this Community Empowerment Strategy and we will use a variety of methods to measure this, including:

- Using the annual Mori residents' survey to measure achievement of five of our Local Area Agreement targets:

- To increase ‘the percentage of residents who feel that they can influence decisions affecting their local area’.
- To increase ‘the percentage of residents who feel that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds can get on well together’.
- To increase ‘the percentage of people who affirm that they have carried out voluntary work in an organisation at least 3 times in the last year’.
- To increase ‘the percentage of VCS groups and organisations affirming growth in activity over the past year in terms of financial turnover’.
- To increase ‘the number of voluntary groups and organisations accessing capacity building help in the past year’.
- Measuring increases in voter turnout in the City particularly local elections, recognising that there will be many factors having an effect on voter turnout, it provides us with a snapshot of how engaged people feel with the political process.
- Using the monitoring arrangements from the ‘Making a Positive Contribution’ sub partnership of the Strategic Partnership for Children and Young Peoples and Families, including national comparators from the ‘Tell Us’ survey.
- Regular reporting on the performance against actions and measures in the delivery plans underneath this strategy to the One Nottingham Communities and Neighbourhoods Partnership and Elected Members in the Council.
- Acting on feedback from our inspections and external assessments of performance.

Who is responsible for this Community Empowerment Strategy?

One Nottingham’s partner organisations will implement this strategy, through working to the Action Plan, their organisational plans, and the Local Empowerment Plan in each area. This strategy supports co-ordinated community empowerment and consultation activities across partner organisations, so the key to successful implementation of the strategy is effective management and governance. The following structure provides a governance framework for this Community Empowerment Strategy.

- **The Communities and Neighbourhood Partnership** with an Elected Member Portfolio Holder represented will act as strategic oversight, and will be presented with annual progress reports. This is a Theme Partnership feeding in to One Nottingham Board.
- **Area Committees** led by executive Portfolio Holder responsible for Communities, will oversee the development and implementation of Local Empowerment Plans.
- **Community Empowerment Task Group (CETG)** will be responsible for overseeing the development and implementation of the strategy and will meet regularly to track progress and address any issues. CETG will

also have responsibility for overseeing the delivery of the City-wide Plan and the Communities of Interest and Identity Empowerment Plan.

Background

Nottingham has a long history of community development, Neighbourhood Management and extensive consultation. Now the city wants to move forward and build on its successes to further improve things for local people. This strategy will enable partners to co-ordinate their approaches so we can use our combined resources to maximum effect.

How did we write this strategy?

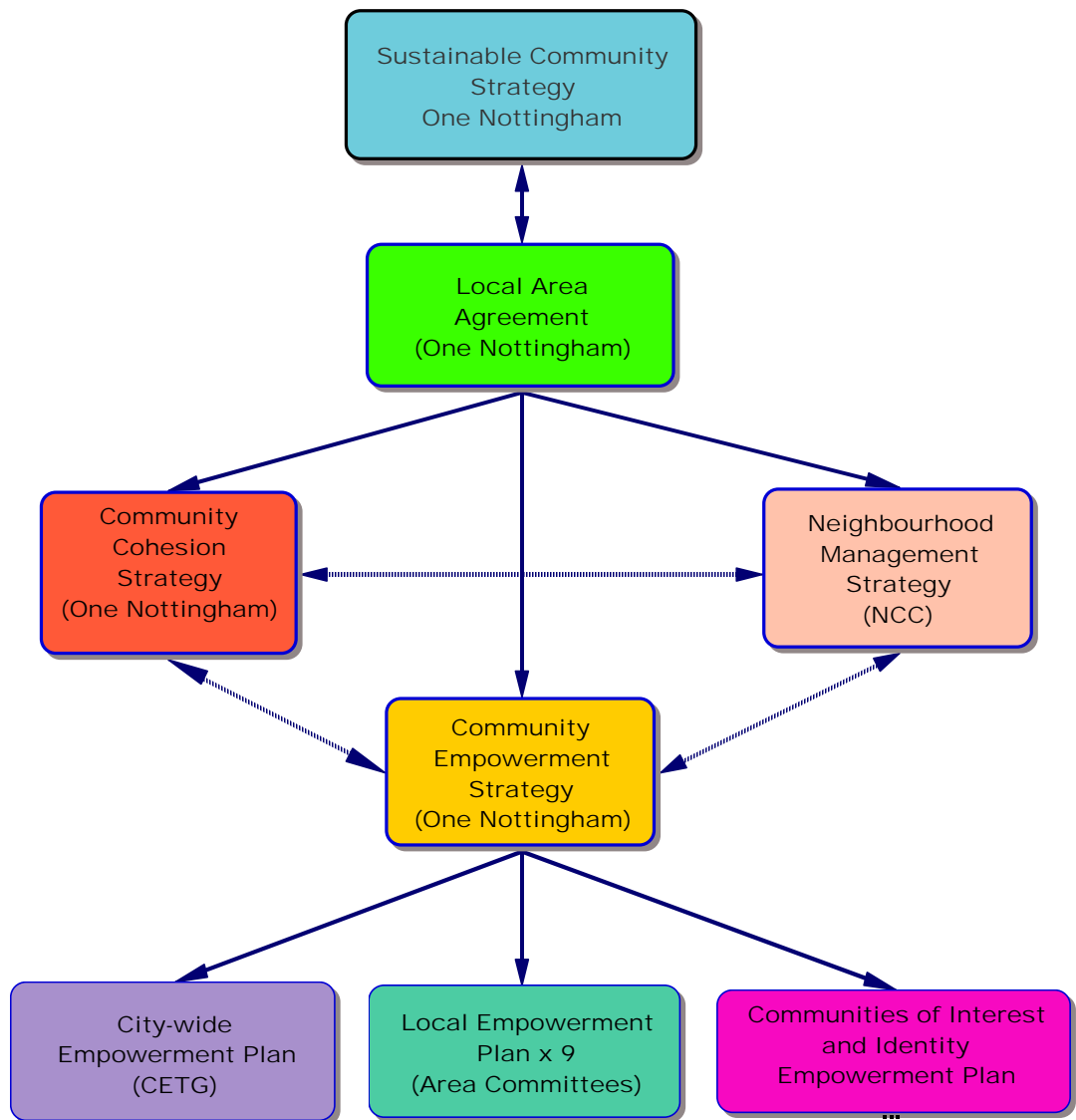
A Community Empowerment Task Group (CETG) was set up to look at the issues around empowerment and develop a strategy to improve local working. CETG has members from; One Nottingham, Nottingham City Homes, Nottingham Community Network, Nottingham City Council, and Nottingham Primary Care Trust (NHS). In addition to commissioning research from a local consultancy team (Bright Ideas) to collect evidence of good practice and holding focus groups with residents to work out what local people wanted from the strategy, this group has held a development workers' event, to collect their views on empowering Nottingham's communities. CETG also worked to identify areas of good practice nationally and locally and to gain agreement to the principles behind this strategy across their organisations.

Local Policy Context

Sitting alongside a revised approach to Neighbourhood Management this strategy will enable Nottingham to have a consistent approach to empowering communities, developing more active communities, where people feel they can influence decisions and work together to effect change in their area. As part of the Action Plan, Local Empowerment Plans will be developed for each of Nottingham's nine areas to ensure that our activities are joined up at the grass roots so this strategy can be delivered and monitored locally as well as across the City.

Empowerment is integral to the Community Cohesion Strategy currently being developed by One Nottingham. One of the four key aims of the Cohesion Strategy is 'to increase community engagement, sense of belonging and pride', this is based on the knowledge that respect for others and the environment grow when communities feel pride in their area. In addition the strategies recognise that by developing more legitimate routes for individuals and communities to influence services and agencies we can reduce the need for individuals to express themselves through violence or anger.

The diagram below represents the local context of this strategy.



This strategy supports One Nottingham’s vision, expressed in the One Plan. The five themes: Choose Nottingham, Respect for Nottingham, Young Nottingham, Active and Healthy Nottingham and Transforming Nottingham’s Neighborhoods are complex, they do not have easy answers and therefore require considerable input from local people if we are to achieve our goals. This strategy provides a focus for all empowerment activities, policies and processes to support One Nottingham’s goal to ‘bring together the public, private, community and voluntary sectors based in Nottingham, so that every one living or working in the city has the chance to have their say about its future’.

Nottingham’s Local Area Agreement sets out community involvement as a key priority for One Nottingham and makes a firm commitment to ensuring that a diverse range of voluntary and community groups are involved in decision-

making, resource allocation, neighbourhood renewal and service delivery across the City and in neighbourhoods.

Nottingham City Council has a key objective 'to create an improved quality of life by working with people and partners, devolving decision-making and empowering individuals and communities to contribute and influence services'.

In Nottingham's Children and Young People's Plan, Making a Positive Contribution outlines the vision 'that children, young people and their parents and carers will be listened to, will be involved in all decisions that affect their lives; and will be supported to achieve, value difference and to make informed decisions'.

Compact Plus, the Compact between the Council and voluntary and community sector specifically highlights issues of empowerment and engagement as priorities for the first year. Nottingham is also a pilot area for the transfer of assets from the local authority to the voluntary sector and is developing an Asset Management strategy, aiming to build capacity to take on assets within communities.

National Policy Context

Nottingham needs to respond to a changing government agenda, which places a stronger focus on involving communities. The Local Government White Paper 'Strong and Prosperous Communities' (October 2006) placed greater emphasis on empowering local people in order to improve services and outcomes for local people. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill (December 2006) makes engagement with communities a statutory function for local authorities. Through Children's Act (2004) local authorities have a duty to give children and young people more influence and power to improve their lives. These three documents from Communities and Local Government form the basis of national policy around empowering communities. The Treasury and Cabinet Office report 'Future role of the third sector in social and economic regeneration' (July 2007) further develops government thinking in this area.

Nationally government is concerned with democratic renewal, engaging more people in the processes and structures of governance and increasing participation in decision-making processes which affect their area. The most complex problems which society faces today are about people and their interrelationships, there is a need to involve communities in devising and implementing the solutions to these problems. There are strong links between empowering communities and community cohesion, developing legitimate routes which people can use to resolve problems.

What has been achieved so far?

Nottingham is already leading the way in engaging with its communities, and has recently been selected by Communities and Local Government to act as

an 'empowerment champion' sharing our expertise in empowerment with other areas to help them learn from our approach. There is already much excellent work being done across the city, and this strategy seeks to improve the co-ordination of this work and to encourage its expansion.

Some examples of the types of great work already happening in the city are outlined below:

Nottingham Volunteer Centre provides a well-regarded service in brokering placements of volunteers and is currently delivering a local volunteer brokering service in disadvantaged communities in partnership with community based organisations.

The Change Team has been working with voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations on health checks and developing their capacity to tender for contracts. One member of the Change Team has worked with key public sector agencies and with One Nottingham to increase awareness of the potential role of the VCS in delivering public sector contracts and the barriers that exist.

Nottingham Community Network is the community empowerment network for Nottingham. It links voluntary and community groups to One Nottingham so that people most affected by poor service delivery can get involved in discussing and planning how the services should be changed.

One Nottingham use Community Network to communicate with voluntary and community groups to make sure their views are being considered in any important decisions. Examples of activity include:

- Recruiting voluntary sector representation onto the theme partnerships.
- Consulting the VCS on the Compact, Community Justice, and the Local Area Agreement.
- Commenting and organising consultation on documents such as the Community Cohesion and Neighbourhood Management Strategies to ensure that they work for the VCS.

Nottingham Community Network works closely with Nottinghamshire Black Partnership (NBP) who work specifically with Black and minority ethnic community and voluntary groups across Nottingham City. They work with One Nottingham to ensure an equalities perspective is heard.

Local area partnerships are neighbourhood groups working in deprived areas of the city. They help to keep local residents updated with what's happening in the area and work to improve the local area by making it a safer, cleaner, better place to be. These partnerships also support residents with specific issues and training to help improve people's lives in their community. Each local area partnership has a good understanding of their local area's needs and work closely with residents and other local community and voluntary groups. The local area partnerships' work is focussed around empowering communities and reducing disadvantage in their local area. Nottingham Community Network provides strategic support and co-ordination

to the Local Area Partnerships and advocates on their behalf, through the **Involving Communities Project**.

Nottingham City Council

- **Elected Members.** The White Paper, published in October 2006, talks about strong local Elected Members, representing their communities, at the heart of democracy and strong visible leadership. There is a belief that greater pressure from citizens and communities is essential to drive up service standards and encourage community cohesion. In addition to traditional case work and party based representation, Elected Members have developed their role. Overview and Scrutiny communities now investigate partner agencies' decisions as well as examining those made by the Council. The role of Elected Members in Area Committees demonstrates their commitment to devolving decisions to the most appropriate level. In addition there is now the opportunity for the public to pose questions to full Council meetings. In developing a structure to respond to community calls to action Elected Members are further empowering communities.
- **Neighbourhood Management** are strengthening Area Committee structures and Neighbourhood Working arrangements to allow more people to become engaged in local activities and, where possible, devolving decision-making about services to the local level. There are also Health Action Officers working with local people to develop awareness around food and exercise, leading walks and developing healthy eating courses. Neighbourhood Action Officers in the Neighbourhood Management Teams are supporting a range of groups in their area, to develop and manage their activities as well as empowering them to influence services by building their skills and knowledge.
- **Neighbourhood Action Officers and Community Development** workers undertake targeted community capacity building and community empowerment, with a particular emphasis on promoting equality and diversity and involving communities in plans for their area. The work of the Council's Community Development Service ranges from developing community associations involved in community centre management to developing and helping fundraise for specific groups such as; play groups, healthy older people's groups, community mediation, volunteering, and environmental groups. They also work with groups who come together because of a shared identity or interest; for example a shared faith, ethnicity, age, gender, disability, or sexuality. The service is also home to the Single Gateway, providing grant aid and service level agreements to a number of voluntary sector organisations and groups.
- **Customer Service Strategy** has developed a comprehensive consultation framework for involving residents and customers in relation to the delivery of services. This is an integral part of the development and delivery of the Council's network of Customer Service

Centres that provide a range of public services and information at a community level.

- **Children's Services** and its partners see children, young people and their families' engagement as a key element to service delivery and improvement. Together with children and young people they have developed a Children and Young People's Participation strategy that is ensuring children and young people are listened to about decisions that affect their lives. This coupled with their Parenting Strategy, which sets out requirements for the empowerment and involvement of parents and carers in service planning and delivery, is creating more personalised and more effective services for all children, young people and their families.
- **Planning and Development.** In September 2006 the Council adopted a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). The main objective of the SCI is to encourage wider involvement in the land-use planning process by setting out when and how people can have their say on both the city's statutory planning documents (Local Development Framework) as well as planning applications (Development Control).

One Nottingham. As well as working on this strategy One Nottingham has done a significant amount of research into local needs and national best practice which has gone into developing the **Community Cohesion Strategy**. In addition to work to reduce inequalities and promote understanding and interaction the Community Cohesion Strategy focuses on giving a voice to communities. They are also working with the Council to develop the next sustainable community strategy with consultation initially focusing on local people's visions for 2030. The partnership is also heavily involved in coordinating and overseeing much of the work which partners undertake in engaging communities.

Nottingham City Homes. As well as Tenants' and Residents' Associations, who provide a valuable link to the community in raising issues, there is a range of ways in which Tenants and Leaseholders can get involved in influencing and shaping the housing service they receive and developing plans to improve neighbourhoods in partnership with other agencies. There are nine Area Panels which link into the Area Committees as well as Forums for Repairs, Tenant and Estate Management, a Leaseholder Forum, BME Forum (Black, Minority Ethnic), Homes 4 Us Disability Forum and the Sheltered and Tele Care Users Forum. Individual tenants and leaseholders can be recognised local contacts where there isn't a recognised tenants and residents association in their area or become a Tenant Inspector. Less formal involvement includes Estate Inspections, Weeks of Action, One Stop Shop sessions in Area Housing Offices, focus groups and working groups, fun days and an annual Tenants and Leaseholders Conference. A programme of training is available for all tenants and leaseholders involved in participation as well as expenses for travel, childcare and carers costs.

Primary Care Trust. A considerable amount of consultation work goes on within the trust, from researching patients' views on specific clinics and surgeries, to the more strategic Public and Patient Involvement Forums which

look at whole areas of work and resource use. There are plans to develop a Local Involvement Network (LINK) within Nottingham which will ensure local people can influence all aspects of healthcare by working with the Council's Adult Social Services and Health department. The Improvement Foundation and PCT are working to develop a Healthy Communities Collaborative, there will Currently deliver a project called Healthy Communities Collaborative-Cardiovascular disease which involves local community members in decision making for the project, sharing ideas, consultation, raising awareness.