New Conversations 2.0: What’s changed?

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The original guide

- Released at the start of 2017 – interactive, comprehensive guide to C&E
- Two big sections of guidance: Covering the basics, Surpassing expectations
- Four pilots
What’s changed?

• Five new chapters
• Updated content across document
• Asset Library with all the original tools – plus more than 20 new ones
• Original pilots now in Asset Library
Structured decision-making

- Charettes, Planning For Real™
- Participatory budgeting, simulated financial choices
New Chapters

Engagement and cohesion

• Anticipating change
• Understanding the area
• Developing narratives
• Engaging locally
• Creating contact
New Chapters

Hard-to-reach groups

- Choosing channels
- Representative cross-sections
- Beyond usual suspects
- Social networks
- Meeting people where they are

Pillar J: Hard-to-reach communities

“No one is hard to reach, just more expensive to reach. It is important to put more effort and creativity in reaching these groups.” Paul Vidades, engagement consultant

Done badly, consultation can fall into the trap of disproportionately involving those who are keenly motivated or find it easy to engage. At best this is unrepresentative and at worst it can lead to poor decisions and the squandering of resources.

This highlights two challenges. Firstly, the people most energized to attend engagement events are not necessarily those who speak for the wider spread of opinion, but rather those with the strongest views, one way or the other.

Secondly, if you only speak to those already engaged, the chances are that you will not hear from those who are time-poor or money-poor. Likewise, those with lower levels of education, social networks, language skills, or confidence in their ability to change things. The loudest voices are sometimes those with the least to lose from the choices at stake.

The TCC rules of good practice focus on this, and everyone acknowledges that speaking to hard-to-reach groups is difficult. It is not possible to guarantee that the stakeholders you speak to are 100 per cent representative or inclusive. But there are many steps you can take to increase your chances.

Some of these are statutory, and are set out in Section 1. ‘Foundation III’ looks at how the medium you choose can help you hear a range of opinions. But beyond this there are several principles, techniques and considerations.

1. **Use the right channels and don’t just use one.** Unless you are engaging with a very specific group, it is important to have a strong presence online and offline (see Pillar M for more on digital engagement). Make sure your efforts go beyond just providing options, and find specific channels to reach specific audiences. For instance, you might try and do separate vox-pops, or home visits to a particular group, if you know they are unlikely to attend larger events.
Social media

• Monitoring and targeting
• Identifying the right channels
• Avoiding echo-chambers
• Balancing strategy with flexibility
Online consultation

• Importance of early decisions: why online and which platforms?
• Making sure digital engagement is inclusive
Asset Library

• External links out to relevant tools at end of each chapter

• All in one place via the online Asset Library, under main link to the guide
Asset Library

Surpassing expectations

Engagement is now central to how councils operate. Gone are the days of press release blasts and tick-box consultations.

Local authorities of the future will need to link together their speaking and listening functions, to build real trust and understanding. This is especially true in an era of falling budgets, rising expectations and low trust in national politicians.

A cocktail of globalisation, economic change, cohesion issues, social media,

Collective efficacy explained in a nutshell

Devolution and place

Engagement guidance around ‘double devolution’

Collective efficacy explained in a nutshell

Communities researchers in Croydon

Croydon Opportunity and Fairness Commission and the creation of Fair Rain

Engaging hard-to-reach groups in Worcestershire

Hearing the full range of regen perspectives in York

Key tips to mapping social networks

Narratives about change

Six key ‘motivation’ techniques

Survey builder for understanding your area

- Over 70 standalone PDFs in total
- Rules, Tools, Tests, Stories, Knowledge
- Resources/ info about four original pilots
- Over 20 brand new assets
Tool: BRAIN: getting the most from social media

UK internet-users now spend more time on social media than any other activity online. While this undoubtedly makes it an important means of communicating with stakeholders, online engagement is both easy to learn and hard to master. To make the process easier, it is worth engaging BRAIN:

1. **Brevity.** New content is constantly being produced on social networks, on every topic which might take a person's interest and—like it or not—social media tends to be a recreational activity, so very few stakeholders are likely to be looking for the opportunity to engage with a local authority. To encourage users not to gloss over your online engagement it is important to keep its content brief, regardless of whether it's a written post or a video. The less words you use, the more words get heard. TL;DR, keep it as brief as you possibly can.

2. **Regularity.** With the exception of paid advertising, social media is free. You need to either get them to connect to your channel or have social media look at it. Regularly you update your channel, the more likely it is to be of engagement activity its best chance of success.

3. **Images.** The old adage is true, a picture is worth a thousand words and make it easier for users to quickly get to grips with the information. Images are far more likely to be engaged with than those that are otherwise, in as much content as possible.

4. **Audience.** Knowing your audience is an important part of marketing. Different networks have different audiences, but it is also vital that you are looking to engage and other sharing that are likely to appeal to the stakeholders you are trying to engage. By doing this, we can engage them elsewhere.

5. **Networking.** There are already a wide range of social networking services, each with their own strengths and weaknesses. It is advisable, therefore, to make sure that you use the right tool for the job.
Story: engaging through digital in Newcastle

In 2011, Newcastle City Council wanted to give residents a say in how the city is run. They created a consultation website, Let’s Talk Newcastle, for stakeholders to give their views about how the council is run. The site uses a range of digital tools to better engage our residents and stakeholders, as well as information about what they want, but if they do then they can receive updates. To support this, Newcastle City Council uses social media to publicise consultations. The authority does this by using Instagram, Facebook and Twitter.

The council has also recently begun using Commend tablets. It allows users to engage with an interactive council – such as, for example, complaints about road closures can be made via a mobile phone which is then able to respond to these comments, enabling the council to improve services.

Story: Ward Action Groups in Hammersmith and Fulham

Hammersmith & Fulham Council (H&F) is committed to doing things with residents, not to them, so as to deliver cohesive communities, forming social bonds and reducing social isolation. The broader aim is to create a participatory culture in the borough, which facilitates social action.

As part of this, H&F has had ten resident-led commissions since 2015, including an Air Quality Commission, a Rough Sleeping Commission, an Older People’s Commission and a Disabled People’s Commission. The latter led to the council implementing a human rights approach to its policy and service development, using the UN Convention as the framework for change.

More recent approaches in H&F have led to the creation of ‘Ward Action Groups’, in late 2018. Led by local councillors, these follow an asset-based community development approach. Residents identify key issues that the groups wish to tackle, champion or consolidate, and seek to do so using the natural assets and talents in their neighbourhoods.
Asset Library

New Conversations 2.0
LGA guide to engagement

Story: engaging with what customers really want in Mole Valley
Mole Valley District Council’s Service Manager and Community Development Manager, Amy Steel, shares her experience of engaging with customers in Mole Valley. She discusses the importance of understanding customer needs and how they can be used to improve services.

Story: participatory budgeting in Cheshire
Participatory budgeting is a democratic process that empowers citizens by giving them a say in how public funds are spent. In Cheshire, the council has implemented a participatory budgeting process, allowing residents to vote on which projects they believe should receive funding. This has led to a more inclusive and equitable use of resources.

Knowledge: Participatory budgeting and the Porto Alegre Model
Participatory budgeting puts financial decision-making in the public’s hands. There are a wide range of ways it can be undertaken, but all of them involve setting aside some part of a local authority’s budget and providing a structure through which communities can set the priorities for its expenditure.

Modern participatory budgeting was born in the Brazilian city of Porto Alegre. It was part of attempts by the Brazilian Workers’ Party to create a participatory democracy in place of the outgoing dictatorship. At the start of each annual budget cycle, public assemblies were convened across Porto Alegre to enable residents to discuss how they would like to see the authority’s unfixed expenditure spent. These assemblies then selected representatives for each neighbourhood to review the priorities from every district, and then in turn to elect a Municipal Council of the Budget to reconcile all the various demands from across the metropole. This council produced the final version of the budget, which the city’s government would deliver over the following year.
Story: Engaging hard-to-reach groups in Worcestershire

Worcestershire County Council, along with members of the GRT communities were working with Gypsy outcomes among these groups. GRT communities tend to have poorer accessing services. The GRT community is a particularly hard-to-reach community. Along with the other organisations meeting engagement levels with the area’s largest A GRT Health Engagement Forum was set up to bring together members of the GRT communities and the GRT community agencies across the area.

Story: hearing the full range of regen perspectives, in York

Faced with major regeneration projects, City of York Council will try to engage with a wide range of people as possible. As such, over the past few years, residents on these big regeneration projects have been involved in the engagement process.

The new approach to public engagement was direct. Techniques included the ‘My Castle Gate’ survey tool which was used to find out what people thought about regeneration proposals for this part of the city, which was universally accepted by the community.

Following on from this the council used the same tool across multiple channels was used, including walking tours, media and social media played a key role in the engagement process.

Story: the link between engagement and cohesion in Bexley

The London Borough of Bexley serves an area with rapid migration. The council recognised that the non-white British population was the 18th fastest growing in the country.

In 2017, the authority received funding from central government to use to use Ordnance Survey data to map where migrant communities were settling, and specific cohesion challenges. The analysis also was used to identify areas where intervention is needed.

The council identified areas where engagement was needed and how the council thinks about services and engages with different communities. This insight led to the council identifying areas where engagement was needed and how the council thinks about services and engages with different communities.

Story: Community researchers in Camden

Camden Council has recruited a range of local people to sign up and be paid as “community researchers”, rather than relying on external and expensive agencies who don’t know the lie of the land. Researchers range from parents who need flexible hours to the long-term unemployed.

After receiving training (in participatory appraisal and quantitative research techniques) their work includes face-to-face interviews and raising awareness about local issues. So far they have gathered information on topics such as public health, and consulted residents on social housing policy.

It’s a classic example of a place-based approach: training local people, tapping into the ethos of the area, recognising and partnering with the local academic sector. Most importantly, it’s about getting insight from the people who live in the area, and who are already established in the community. It therefore helps the council to be more directly engaged than if they just hired an external agency.