

**A review of lack of community engagement in
local council activity in England: Focusing on the
hard to reach**

**This dissertation is submitted in partial
completion of a Masters degree in Public
Leadership and Management at De Montfort
University**

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March 2023

DECLARATION:

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March 2023**

Policy Briefing

A review of lack of community engagement in local council activity in England: Focusing on the hard to reach

Local councils (the collective term used for town, parish and community councils in England) aspire to engage with every person within the community. Invariably, each community has demographics which means some people are harder to reach than others, this includes those in deprived areas. Various methods are employed by local councils in an effort to attain valuable engagement that ultimately leads to fully informed decisions that enhances the lives of the residents. However, local councils struggle to engage with certain groups within the community which raises the question that the council is excluding some people through lack of suitable engagement. This policy briefing directed at policymakers summarises research into engagement and reports conclusions of a research project consisting of ten interviews with local council clerks from deprived areas of England. This document aims to support local councils to make decisions in relation to inclusive and effective engagement with their local communities and to understand the challenges faced with engaging those harder to reach and deprived people. The key finding of this research is that traditional engagement methods are not fully inclusive and new innovative ways of engaging are required. This includes more responsibility on local councillors to play an active part in their communities.

Diversity, learning styles and deprivation

Every person within the country is different, we all have different thoughts, views and needs. These differences make us unique and we should not feel discriminated against or excluded because of our differences. Differences include how we process information be that:

- ✚ visually,
- ✚ auditory,
- ✚ kinaesthetically or
- ✚ via reading and writing.

Invariably, these differences will mean that we engage in a variety of ways. Additionally, some people live in deprivation, be that social, physical, or environmental and this deprivation may affect the way in which this demographic engages with others.

Participation, engagement, and collaboration

The Localism Act 2011 aspired to place decision making in England directly into the hands of local people to shape services specifically for that community. In order to do this, engagement and collaboration are key to ensure all voices are considered so that facilities and services are representative and utilised. Without meaningful collaboration and engagement, people can feel ignored and excluded, the complete opposite of the aspirations of the Localism Act 2011.

Research undertaken and conclusions reached

The research project consisted of interviewing local council clerks who are at the forefront of local democracy, acting on behalf of the town/parish council.

Each participant was selected using the Indices of Deprivation 2019 and were all from the top 10% most deprived areas in England. The main findings were:

- ✚ Hard to reach groups differed depending on location and encompassed a multitude of demographics including children/youth, elderly population, dementia sufferers, veterans, and the deprived.
- ✚ Measuring success was a state of perception. Numerical measurement could be used in some engagement methods such as number of likes on a social media post however personal judgement was often used to measure successful engagement.
- ✚ Traditional engagement methods such as meetings and notice boards were not deemed successful; each council had preferred engagement methods, some of which they agreed were not successful.
- ✚ Engagement was not normally tailored to the needs of a variety of people. For example, those with lack of sight would not be catered for.
- ✚ Collaboration in different spaces (e.g., geographically, socially) was apparent but sparse. People were more engaged with an individual in a face to face environment and preferred to speak to a key person who disseminates information into communities.
- ✚ Those in deprived areas did not respond to engagement methods specifically tailored to them.
- ✚ Lack of understanding of the tiers of local government and lack of trust that issues and ideas raised would be taken forward and actioned by those in power.

Recommendations

The way in which local government engages with communities needs to be redesigned. Innovative methods of engagement should be designed collaboratively with the community to provide fully accessible and valuable collaboration and engagement to improve facilities and services in the local area. A variety of these methods needs to be used in order to reach full engagement.

This starts with local councillors playing an active part in their communities. Many local councillors have little interaction with the public or with only a select demographic. Local councillors need to be the key people in communities to disseminate information, consult and collaborate to bring the information back to the council for discussion and decision. They need to encourage local people to become more involved in the facilities and services that directly impact them.

Only when a diverse range of engagement methods are utilised in local government can we truly declare that we are not excluding someone because they are different or from a deprived background. Then it can be said that local government is representative and provides meaningful engagement which allows citizen power to ultimately improve the quality of life for residents in this country.

Changes are required to how local government operates and what is expected of a local councillor to reach this aspiration for full inclusion and participation.

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List of Abbreviations/Acronyms

DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
IMD	Indices of Multiple Deprivation
IoD2019	Indices of Deprivation 2019
LSOA	Lower Layer Super Output Area
MHCLG	Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government
NALC	National Association of Local Councils
SES	Socio Economic Status
SLCC	Society of Local Council Clerks
VARK	Visual, Auditory, Read and Write and Kinaesthetic

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Engagement is at the heart of English local government. The UK Government's Localism Act 2011 aspired to shift power from central government in Whitehall to local communities in England via local councils. It was hoped that this shift would allow local people to design and benefit from services that directly affected them. Paramount to this aspiration is the ability for local councils to engage and collaborate with local communities effectively. However, effective engagement can be difficult, particularly in hard to reach areas and places that are deprived. Lack of representative engagement will result in partial involvement of community members. There is also the risk that the Council will then engage with a vocal minority and not the majority. Ultimately, this can result in discrimination and wasting tax payers money on services that are not fit for purpose.

This research project will examine what the researcher understands by diversity, hard to reach and deprived groups before considering participation, collaboration and engagement to identify successful engagement methods. Recommendations for change may help to ensure full engagement from the whole community.

1.2 Background

In England, local government is comprised of a tiered system. This can be two or three tiers (District, Borough, City, County or Unitary Councils) depending on the area one lives in. The first tier of local government is the closest to the resident, represented by people who live and work in the community with an aim to provide services that add value to the lives of the residents.

In order to be fully representative, Councillors must understand their local community both environmentally and socially. Diversity is apparent in all areas of society and as such, decision makers must recognise this when considering what services to provide.

Diversity can be defined as the differences between us (Thompson, 2020), encompassing many dimensions such as race, gender, sex, disability and social class. Even though the Equality Act 2010 exists to protect certain characteristics, many people are discriminated against because of this diversity. Put simply, discrimination is when someone is treated unfairly for being themselves (Mentally Healthy Schools, 2021).

Diverse communities can also have groups that are seldom heard, that is those who are ‘perceived to be disengaged’. These groups are often referred to as ‘hard to reach’ however this implies that these groups are difficult to engage with (Ali, 2020).

Vinson (2007:1) suggests that those who are ‘hard to reach’ are commonly facing some form of deprivation which prevents them from participating. Deprivation can be defined as ‘demonstrable disadvantage’ (Townsend, 2009) and is measured in the UK using seven different domains including income and crime (MHLCG, 2019a).

1.3 Aim and Objectives

The overall aim of the research project is to provide ways to engage with all members of the community, particularly those who are in the deprivation category or are hard to reach within England. This will allow Council services to bring the most public value to the community.

The objectives of the research are:

Objective one	To investigate whether people are ‘hard to reach’ and what groups are ‘hard to reach’.
Objective two	To investigate whether an individual’s personality and learning styles have any bearing on whether someone is hard to reach.
Objective three	To investigate which engagement methods are most successful overall and whether they are successful with deprived communities.
Objective four	To investigate what proximities (spaces) for collaboration are most successful overall and within deprived communities.

Table 1: Objectives of the research

1.4 Report Structure

Following the introduction, the literature review examines and analyses secondary research carried out by practitioners, academics and professionals. The research was gathered from books, journals, websites, Government papers and policies. The literature review forms chapter 2.

Following the literature review, the research methodology examines and analyses different research methods, the advantages and disadvantages for these methods along with limitations and the design of the methods for the primary research gathered. It also explains bias and ethics. The research methodology forms chapter 3.

Following the research methodology, the results, analysis and discussion examines and analyses the primary research gathered using the research methods identified in chapter 3. This forms chapter 4.

Finally, following the results, analysis and recommendations, the conclusions and recommendations considers what the research has found. It suggests recommendations for change and highlights gaps in the knowledge where further research is required. This forms chapter 5.

This chapter has explained local councils and the diversity of the communities that it represents. It has confirmed the aim of the research project and the objectives required to reach that aim. It has also explained the reasoning behind the chosen subject and provides an overview of the chapters to the research project.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will analyse and review the literature on diversity and examine the different types of deprivation faced. As part of the diversity theme, the literature review will examine personality types and learning styles when considering how information is processed by different people. Following this, participation will be examined including engagement and collaboration whilst considering those groups which are seldom heard or hard to reach. The themes identified relate back to the objectives of the research project as identified in chapter 1.

2.2 Diversity

In order to investigate the diversity of a community and whether an individual or group of individuals are hard to reach (objective 1), an understanding of these terms and the differences between individuals is required.

The term 'hard to reach' is considered vague and therefore contested (Cortis, 2011), though can be defined as being difficult to identify and engage with (Barrett, 2008; Doherty et al, 2003). It refers to a group within a larger population or community that are harder to engage with using traditional methods (Qureshi, 2021). This results in individuals being marginalised from facilities and services (Liamputtong, 2007). Understanding the diversity of a population may assist to engage the harder to reach groups.

As a social asset that enhances a situation (Thompson, 2020), diversity covers people's traits and backgrounds, understanding that these are wide ranging whilst recognising the value of difference' (Home Office, 2018). It encompasses different 'strands' (Rajesh, 2019:7), things that make us unique such as gender, race and disability. Protected characteristics are enshrined in the Equality Act 2010 to stop discrimination though this is still a reality. Innovation and creativity are empowered when we recognise and celebrate the differences between us (University of Edinburgh, 2022). Sanders et al (2014) suggest that discrimination is apparent both against individuals (egocentric discrimination) whereby this occurs due to a person's protected characteristic and against groups of people (sociotropic discrimination) where a group of people with a certain characteristic are targeted. Examples of these groups include young people (Youth Citizenship Commission, 2009) and those from ethnic backgrounds who may feel excluded. These groups are often referred to as hard to reach though this terminology suggests that the individual is difficult to engage with or not interested in engagement (Ali, 2020). However, it is common that the engagement methods employed or the

services themselves are hard to reach (Crozier and Davies, 2007:296) for these groups meaning that they are not easily available for residents to access. Vinson (2007) suggests that those who are hard to reach are facing some form of deprivation.

2.2.1 Deprivation

An understanding of the different types of deprivation will ascertain if this impacts whether an individual is hard to reach (objective 2).

Social norms or expectations set the conduct and conditions that are acceptable for those within a community (Rimal and Lapinski, 2015). Those who do not live within acceptable social conditions or have unmet needs (McLennan et al, 2019) are classed as deprived (Townsend, 2009). Ethnic minorities in the UK are systematically more likely to live in deprived areas of the UK (Sanders et al, 2014). Deprivation links to poverty and disadvantage and is viewed more widely in monetary terms in relation to household income or financial resource (Haughton and Khandker, 2009; Guilloteau et al, 2020), a standard to meet basic needs (Coudouel et al, 2002). Inequalities in wealth leads to the individuals 'social rank...referred to (as) social economic status (SES)' (Greitemeyer and Sagioglou, 2016:178). Disadvantage can be described as '...a range of difficulties that block life opportunities and which prevent people from participating fully in society' (Vinson, 2007:1). However, living in deprived areas can affect an individual's health, education and social status and support (Cohen and Wills, 1985; Turner and Lloyd, 1995; Conner and Norman, 2005; Poortinga, 2012). Townsend (2009) agrees suggesting that deprivation can be distinguished from poverty as it applies to different conditions, namely, social, environmental, and physical.

2.2.1.1 Social deprivation

Social deprivation in its simplest form can be described as 'lack of interaction with the rest of society' (Guilloteau et al, 2020:2) and being restricted in participating in the community and suppressed social contact (Saunders, 2008). Similarly, Stephens et al (2021) suggest that social deprivation is made up of both SES and the individuals education level, social standing and available resources.

This can be evidenced by the inability participate in society, for example volunteering or the lack of opportunity to access certain services such as the internet (Tanton et al, 2021). This lack in connections results in loneliness and can lead to problems with mental health (McKenzie et al, 2002).

Sung et al (2021:784) suggest that an '...individuals' wellbeing and health are influenced by how one's income compares to others'. To expand, a person experiences deprivation dependant on that

person's social group meaning that deprivation is relative and not unconditional (Bernburg et al, 2009; Merton and Rossi, 1968; Runciman, 1966). However, relative deprivation is often accompanied by feelings of anger, frustration and resentment if the person judges themselves to be worse off than others in their social group (Smith et al, 2012). It is suggested that there is a direct link between social position and a person's health (Macleod et al, 2005; Davey Smith, 1997).

2.2.1.2 Physical deprivation

One of the main indicators to deprivation is poor health, both physical and mental (Tanton et al, 2021). Indeed, people with low SES or disadvantaged communities are more likely to suffer poor health (Greitemeyer and Sagioglou, 2016; Portinga, 2012).

A report into health equity in the UK in 2010 found significant differences in health between those living in the wealthiest areas compared to the most deprived areas (The Marmot Review, 2010). This was reviewed in 2020, suggesting that the gap between rich and poor and between deprived areas had grown. Life expectancy in deprived areas of the north east was 5 years less than the deprived areas in London (Institute of Health Equity, 2020).

2.2.1.3 Environmental deprivation


Everyone, no matter their make up, should have equal access to a clean environment (environmental justice) and that everyone should be protected equally against environmental harm (environmental inequality) (Lee, 2002). Unfavourable environments include a range of issues such as water quality (Hales et al, 2003) and heat waves (Harlan et al, 2006). However, those who are deprived have increased likelihood of experiencing of unfavourable environments (Pearce et al, 2010; Lee 2002). Indeed, studies in the UK have found that air quality and exposure to various pollutants such as carbon monoxide and nitrogen dioxide was concentrated in the most deprived communities (Environment Agency, 2003; Mitchell and Dorling, 2003).


2.2.1.4 Indices of Deprivation


The UK Government via the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) carry out research and report their findings in a release called the English Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) (MHCLG, 2019), the most recent being 2019 (IoD2019). This document measures the levels of deprivation in small areas within England; the report reviewed the previous data gathered in 2015 for comparison.

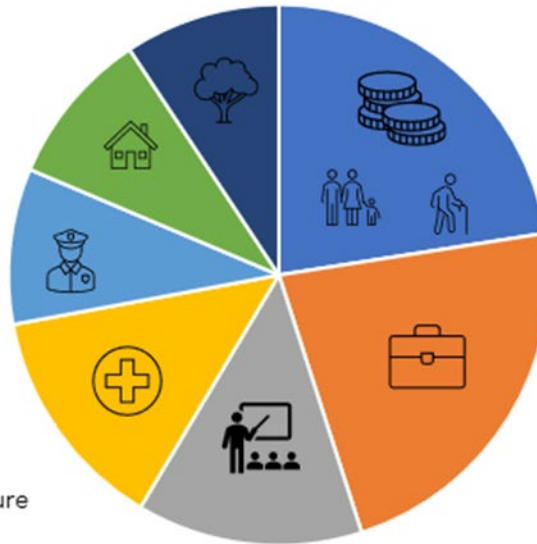
The most recent findings cover 39 indicators over seven domains (see figure 1) which are weighted to calculate the IoD2019. A percentage of each domain contributes to the final ranking.


 **Living Environment (9.3%)**
Measures the quality of both the indoor and outdoor local environment.


 **Barriers to Housing & Services (9.3%)**
Measures the physical and financial accessibility of housing and local services.

 **Income (22.5%)**
Includes Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) and Includes Income Deprivation Affecting Older People (IDAOPI).
Measures the percentage of people facing financial deprivation (low income).

 **Crime (9.3%)**
Measures the risk of personal and material victimisation at a local level.



 **Health (13.5%)**
Measures the risk of premature death and the impairment of quality of life through poor physical or mental health.

 **Employment (22.5%)**
Measures the involuntary exclusion of working age people from the labour market.


 **Education (13.5%)**
Measures the lack of attainment and skills in the population.

Figure 1: Domains of the IoD 2019

For the purpose of the IoD2019, areas have been placed into neighbourhoods, each named as a Lower-layer Super Output Area (LSOA). The LSOAs are then ranked according to their level of deprivation compared to other areas. The higher the ranking, the more deprived the area is deemed to be. Deprivation is ranked on a relative scale, so a neighbourhood ranked 100th is more deprived than the neighbourhood ranked 200th but is not necessarily twice as deprived.

There are 32,844 LSOAs in England each with an average population of 1500 people. These LSOAs are ranked from severe deprivation (the top 10% most deprived areas within England) to low deprivation (within the top 50% least deprived areas in England).

The information within the IoD2019 can be used to explain the types of deprivation in England the areas that are most affected.

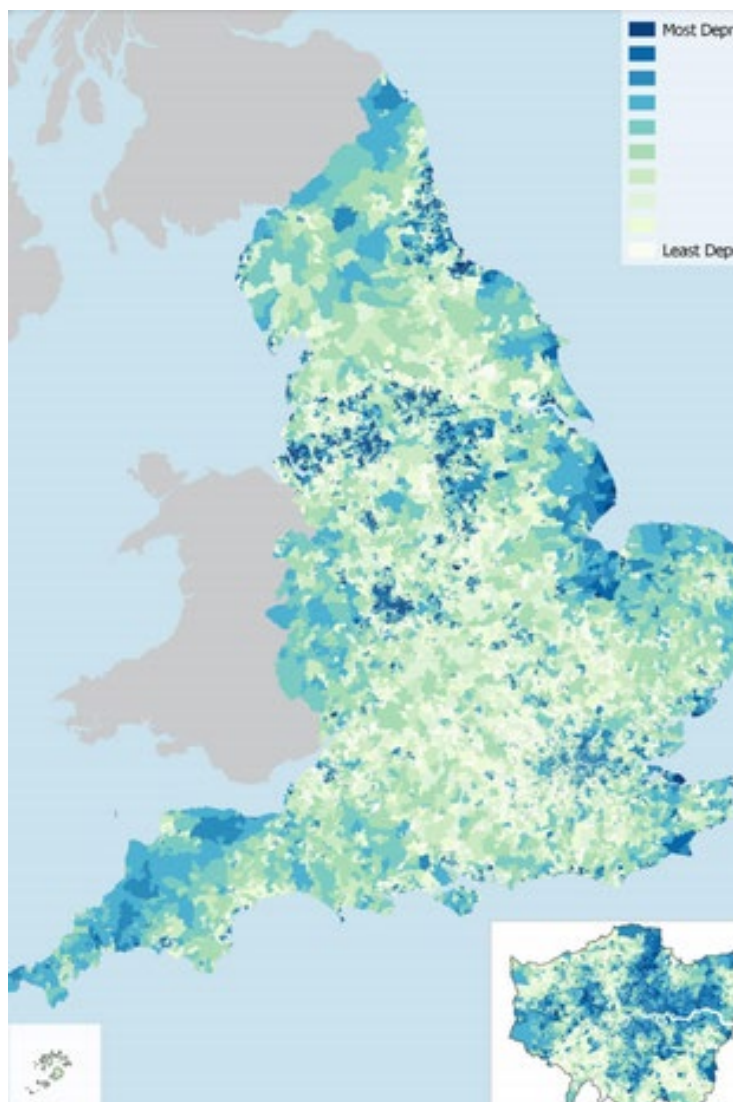
The IoD 2019 can be used to....

The IoD 2019 cannot be used to....

- ✓ Compare small areas
- ✓ Identify the most deprived LSOAs
- ✓ Understand and explore the domains of deprivation
- ✓ Compare larger areas such as a local authority area
- ✓ Analyse changes over time

- ✗ Quantify how deprived the LSOA is
- ✗ Identify deprived people
- ✗ Claim how affluent an LSOA is
- ✗ Compare other small areas in other UK countries
- ✗ Measure absolute change in deprivation over time.

Map one shows the areas of deprivation within England with the dark blue areas representing the most deprived.



Map 1: Most Deprived Areas of England (MHCLG, 2019)

Upon investigation, 19 of the top 20 most deprived LSOAs in England did not have a parish or town council. Further investigation would be required to identify the full extent to which deprivation and lack of local council are connected if at all.

2.2.2 Personality and Learning Styles

As with characteristics and deprivation, people are diverse according to their personality. Understanding this type of diversity may inform whether this impacts the likelihood that an individual is harder to reach than another (objective 3). Some people are introverted (shy) whilst others are extroverted (outgoing); it is suggested that there are specific functions of the human personality such as sensation, feeling and perceiving plus sixteen personality types, all of which contribute to how we receive and process information (Jung, 1954; Allen, 2016; The Myers Briggs Foundation, 2022; Human Metrics, 2022).

Similarly, we all differ in the way in which we learn; Fleming and Mills (1992) suggest that learning styles can be categorised into modals (visual, auditory, read and write, kinaesthetic) referred to as the VARK model. Understanding these differences will allow engagement methods to be designed to ensure the best possible outcomes.

2.3 Participation and Engagement

An understanding of participation and engagement allows the evaluation of successful engagement in a general sense and whether methods employed are successful for those harder to reach groups (objective 4).

Participation and engagement refers to a variety of stakeholders (public, private and voluntary sectors, service users and residents) working together collectively make decisions that add value to the community (Casey, 2016). Participation is defined as the “...cornerstone of democracy” (Arnstein, 2019:24)

The political arena is described as ‘a self-serving political system which is reluctant to acknowledge its own limitations’ (Mycock and Tonge, 2012:139; Russell et al, 2002) particularly in regard to engagement. Studies suggest that public sector engagement and trust has fallen in recent years (Uberoi and Johnston, 2021). However, in 2011, the UK Government introduced the Localism Act with a vision to empower residents at the lowest possible level to shape services that directly affected them. Participation at this level could result in empowerment to improve public services, build social capital, potentially then addressing the ‘democratic deficit’ (Barnes et al, 2003:379). Empowering people not only enhances the outcomes for the individual but also increases the level and quality of

engagement received (McDonald, 2010). Encompassing interaction, feedback and strength, the 'double helix of community participation' (Rolfe, 2016:103) can provide representative social outcomes from community strength and activity. End users could be involved in service design resulting in the end user taking ownership of the service (Thinyane et al, 2020). This produces positive change (Alsop et al, 2006) and representative outcomes (Morris, 2006).

Without the opportunity to participate through engagement, people could feel unheard and ignored (Hirschman, 1970; Purdue, 2005). Many desire the opportunity to be heard, to be given the opportunity to participate in decision making (Involve, 2020) but are not given the platform to do so which in turn leads to disempowerment. This can lead to unethical behaviours from both decision makers (e.g. withholding engagement findings to support its own agenda) and members of the public (e.g. an uprising). Referring to young people and the UK riots of 2011, Penny (2011) suggests that it is not usual for violence to be mindless, and that the youth may just feel unheard (Mycock and Tonge, 2012).

A variety of engagement methods should be employed to empower service users to engage in decision making and service design (Qureshi, 2021). Effective engagement methods will give a voice to the participant's goals and will favour diversity through a variety of methods (Ianniello et al, 2018). Arnstein's (2019) 'ladder of participation' (appendix one) considers levels of engagement from the lowest level (non-participation) to the highest level (citizen power). Traditional engagement methods (Taylor, 2000) such as meetings will not meet the optimum level of citizen power, alternative innovative and collaborative methods should be employed to meet the diverse needs of the community.

2.4 Collaboration

Collaboration involves multiple parties (private sector, public sector, users, and citizens) (Ansell and Gash, 2007) working together to achieve a common purpose by sharing knowledge and resources (Chabbat, 2019) to provide an end product (Bommert, 2010) which meets the needs of the users. Greater understanding allows the analysis of whether collaboration is successful on the ground with particular reference to deprived areas (objective 5).

Involving members of the community makes services more relevant and useful (McDonald, 2010). Ansell and Torfing (2021: 218) agree that co-creating services brings '*...public and private sectors together to engage in innovation to achieve public value*'. Nesta (2018) discuss collaborative principles including support from the decision maker, targeting specific audiences and well informed participation methods. They go on to discuss a competency framework based on particular skills such as collaboration, communication, critical thinking and creativity (Burnage, 2018; Soderlund,

2020). These skills coupled with certain behaviours and characteristics such as trust (Fawcett et al, 2012) can shape innovation (Nesta, 2018).

Drawing on the social capital of a community via collaboration achieves project outcomes (Ansell and Gash, 2007). Social capital is described as a way to create 'a valuable resource' (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998:243) providing 'collectively owned capital' (Bourdieu, 1986:249) via social connections and networks. These networks involve utilising strong emotional connections between people referred to as bonding capital and outward connections, bridging capital (Putnam, 2012) which allow knowledge to be shared effectively (Chiu et al, 2006). A mix of bonding and bridging innovation is best placed to produce the most effective outcomes (Svendsen and Patulny, 2007) via the use of different proximities.

Spaces for learning and participation are referred to as proximities, an understanding of proximity assists to ascertain whether it successfully impacts collaboration in general and in deprived communities (objective 6). The utilisation of the five proximity dimensions (cognitive, geographical, institutional, organisational and social) (see figure 2) when collaborating are key to enhance collaboration (Boschma, 2005). However, proximities could have drawbacks such as lack of flexibility and conflict. 'Lock in' can occur meaning that the same processes are repeated automatically resulting in an unwillingness to consider new ideas (Boschma, 2005).

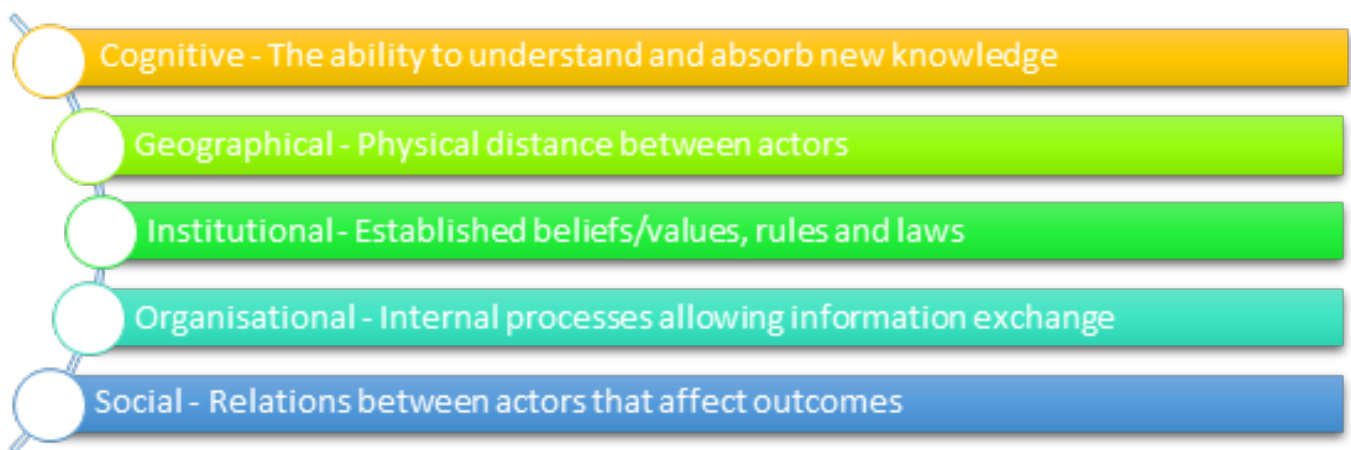


Figure 2: Proximity Dimensions

Multiple actors working collaboratively with positive interaction and feedback, coupled with local understanding and strength (Rolfe, 2016) can provide outcomes that are fully representative that benefit more people in a community.

2.5 Summary

The literature review suggests that society is diverse with different personality types, learning styles and deprivation. All of these affects how we participate, engage and collaborate with each other and with those who make decisions that affect our lives. Ultimately, working together collectively can enhance lives.

This chapter has analysed evaluated the literature relating to diversity including deprivation, participation, engagement, collaboration and understanding the need to engage those people and groups in the community who are seldom heard. The next chapter will discuss and explain the research methodology for the project.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

When conducting research, the researcher must be aware of and address various elements relating to the research project. This will ensure that the research conducted is ethical and valid.

This chapter will explain the author's interest and positionality in the subject and discuss ethical considerations and the reasoning behind the use of the selected research method. Details of how the research was conducted from start to finish along with the advantages and disadvantages of the selected method are also discussed. The limitations of the selected method are presented before validity and data analysis are examined.

3.2 Author's interest in the subject

Positionality identifies the researcher's position in relation to the topic being researched/investigated, the participants involved and the design and process of the research project (Holmes, 2020). For this research project, the author's positionality relates to the topic being researched and the design of the process.

The author is a local council clerk at a Council that represents an electorate of just over 1000 people of varying ages and backgrounds. There is little ethnic diversity. In 2019, a small development resulted in 15 new social houses. This brought the total number of social housing properties in the village to 35 dwellings. As the demographic of the Councillors is generally upper working class/middle class, there can sometimes be difficulty in understanding the needs of all residents. There is a lack of understanding on how to successfully engage with this demographic and as such, the voices of these residents are seldom heard. The Council could be accused of unconsciously discriminating against people who are not from the same social class as they are. Public value of services offered by the Council could potentially be greatly affected if those services are not meeting all needs or those that the service was set up to benefit.

From studying at Master's level, the author is more acutely aware of the lack of participation and engagement of the local council with the harder to reach communities, particularly those in more deprived areas of the village. The author's sister lives in a shared ownership house on the new estate and shares the difficulties some of her neighbours face.

3.3 Ethical Considerations

The strategy is to understand the most successful ways to engage and collaborate with hard to reach and deprived people within a community.

Research projects must be carried out ethically ensuring no harm is caused to responders or to the researcher (DMU, 2016:6). Accordingly, the Code of Ethics from the Government Social Research Unit (2007) was adhered to throughout the study. Participants were reassured that confidentiality would be followed when undertaking the research and that the data gathered would be anonymised. The researcher can face consequences if she did not act ethically during the project. Abiding by research ethics protects all parties and assists to create reliable and valid research (Resnick, 1998).

Informed consent was received from each participant via a research information document (see appendix two) and signed consent form (see appendix three). Participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and were aware of how their data would be used. In addition, anonymity and confidentiality were observed, following the interviews all information associated to a participants identity was deleted.

Research bias refers to the researcher collecting, analysing and interpreting the data gathered according to their own thoughts, beliefs and feelings on the subject. Researchers should ensure that they remain objective whilst understanding their own views on the subject in question and the impacts that this may have on the research project (Aurini et al, 2016). The researcher is a Clerk to a small Council and has small pockets of deprivation within the Council area for which she is employed. Personal experience was considered throughout the study to ensure objectivity (Denscombe, 2017) and that the researchers own opinions did not affect the research data. The data gathered reflects the findings from the research and not the views and prejudices of the researcher.

3.4 Data Collection

Considerable secondary research has been identified relating to engagement and collaboration. However, the research studies select a single method of engagement to study and do not justify the reasoning for this selection. In addition, many studies centre around the medical arena; there is very limited research in relation to local government and delivering public services. Secondary research centres around engagement generally and does not consider those who are hard to reach such as those in deprived areas. There appears to be a gap in knowledge and research whereby engagement, hard to reach and deprivation are considered together holistically.

The research population was local council clerks in deprived areas of England. Qualitative data collection methods, namely interviews, were used to collect data that could produce insight into the

research question via people's experiences, perspectives and feelings (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). Data gathered this way can be easily checked for accuracy to ensure validity and as interviews can be scheduled, result in a higher response rate. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with each of the participants; open ended questions linked back to the research question and objectives (see appendix five) to understand the participant's personal feelings and experiences (Aurini et al, 2016). This allowed research theories already identified to be tested and allowing new findings and understanding to emerge (Galletta, 2013). The researcher was aware that this type of interview could sway into unrelated areas (Ruane, 2016) and that participants could potentially omit information to please the researcher or others known as social desirability bias (Denscombe, 2017; Nederhof, 1985).

Due to this risk, nonprobability, exploratory sampling was carried out to 'produce accurate findings' (Denscombe, 2017:33) that would allow for the findings to be generalised for the research population (Šimundić, 2013). The limitations of a small sample size meant that the findings would be illustrative, i.e. showing trends and opinions, and not representative of the local council sector as a whole. Some have questioned the accuracy of nonprobability sampling, however the cumulative approach was based on good judgement (Hoinville et al, 1985) to provide data from experience to answer the research question. Sampling allows the researcher to continue to interview and gather data until no new information is provided from the research population (Tuckett, 2004; Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

3.5 Responder profile

3.5.1 Local Council Clerks

In 2011, the UK Government introduced the Localism Act in England with a view to shift power from central government directly to local communities (Local Government Association, 2016) see diagram 1. Shifting this power meant that it was important that local people could directly influence decisions that affected them in their local areas.

In England, there are approximately 10,000 local (parish and town) councils (National Association of Local Councils, 2022), all varying in size. The Council as the corporate body issue instructions to the officers (SLCCa, 2022); regular consultation is part of the officer's normally working requirements. This means that they are 'fully briefed on current issues' (SLCC, 2022) and are best placed to share their knowledge and experiences in engaging with the local community. This could provide insight into successful and inclusive engagement methods for collaboration. In addition, they can identify those methods that proved least successful and provide reasoning behind this.

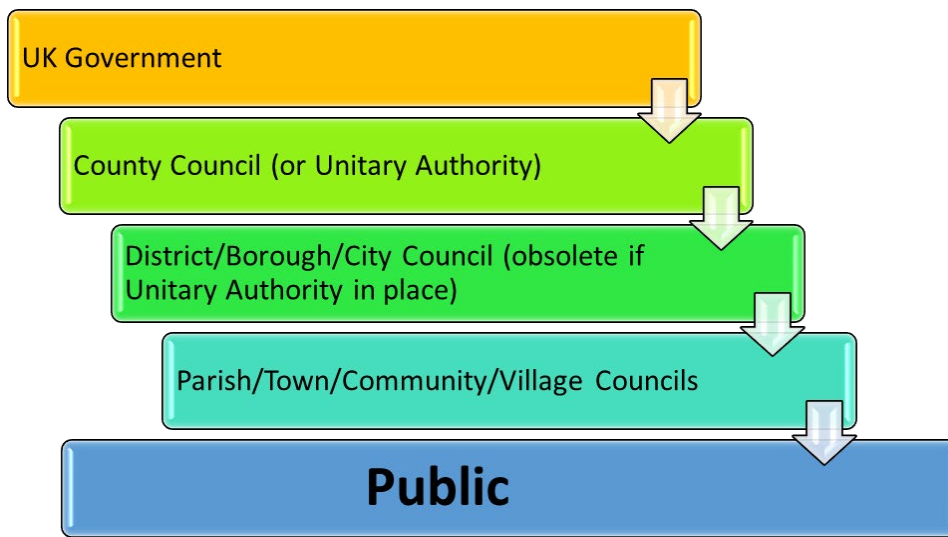


Diagram 1: UK Government Structure

3.5.2 Deprivation

The official measure of deprivation in England is via the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) (MHCLG, 2019) which encompasses different areas of an individual's living conditions. Nine local authority areas were selected from the IoD2019 map based on the percentage of high to severe deprivation faced in the area. The areas selected were:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 🚧 Amber Valley (map 2) | 🚧 Mid Sussex (map 7) |
| 🚧 Cornwall (map 3) | 🚧 Milton Keynes (map 8) |
| 🚧 East Suffolk (map 4) | 🚧 Swale (map 9) |
| 🚧 Folkestone and Hythe (map 5) | 🚧 West Suffolk (map 10) |
| 🚧 Mid Devon (map 6) | |

The researcher identified over one hundred local councils within the nine targeted areas and contacted each of the parish and town councils via email. The goal was to interview at least one person from each of the nine areas selected to ascertain whether engagement was carried out differently depending on where you were located in England. Only one willing participant was found for each of the areas with the exception of Folkestone and Hythe where two agreed to participate. All participants were Clerks to parish and town councils, table 2 shows the split in terms of geography.

Geographic area	Number of responses
Amber Valley	1
Cornwall	1
East Suffolk	1
Folkestone and Hythe	2
Mid Devon	1
Mid Sussex	1
Milton Keynes	1
Swale	1
West Suffolk	1

Table 2: Geographic split of responders

As a result of this email communication, agreement to take part in the interviews was received from ten local council clerks who worked in councils who had LSOAs within the top 10% for high to severe deprivation.

All of the participants worked for larger authorities with precepts ranging from £211,242 to £1,975,790. The Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities (DCLG, 2014) suggests that a smaller authority is that with a turnover of less than £25,000. The Transparency Code 2015 (DCLG, 2015) suggests that a larger authority is that with a turnover exceeding £200,000.

3.6 Validity

There are no guarantees that the research gathered reflects reality and is completely valid. Instead, the context and objectives of the project can be used to evaluate the validity (Maxwell, 2013).

The researcher decided to continue to interview clerks until the same information was being repeated without new information being presented. This can be referred to as saturation which suggests that enough data has been gathered to answer the research question (Morse, 1995). The researcher believed that the quantity of interviews (thick data) was not as important as the content (rich data) of the interviews that took place (Fusch and Ness, 2015). Interview questions were created (see appendix four) that met the objectives of the research (see appendix five) (Brod et al, 2009). Saturation was apparent after nine interviews, the researcher decided to continue to the tenth interview as this had already been arranged. Of the ten interviews carried out, nine took place via Microsoft Teams and one was in person in a hotel in Leicester.

3.7 Data Analysis

The data gathered from the research method was analysed using a variety of methods in order to answer the research question.

3.7.1 Statistical analysis

Some responses were converted to numerical form in order to statistically analyse the information and present the information in a numerical format. This allowed a greater depth to the analysis to assist in creating an understand of engagement methods.

3.7.2 Experiences and Perspectives

The way in which each participant experienced and felt about engagement within the local government sector was analysed to allow a deeper understanding of why specific engagement methods were selected, what success looked like in practice and whether engagement was successful.

3.8 Summary

This chapter has explained the research strategy and the reasoning for utilising the selected research method. Limitations and ethical standards in relation to the research project were examined along with and ethical standards. It has also explained the process for respondent selection, bias and the way in which data gathered would be analysed. The next chapter will evaluate the results of the chosen research methods and present these findings.

Chapter Four: Results, Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will analyse the results from the primary research and provide an evaluation of those results to inform greater understanding of the subject area. Following this analysis, a discussion will link the findings to the themes identified in literature review (chapter 2). The findings will inform the conclusions and recommendations in chapter 5.

4.2 Objective One

To investigate whether people are 'hard to reach' and what groups are 'hard to reach'.

4.2.1 Results and Analysis

Without question, the research shows that every participant had 'hard to reach' groups' within their areas. There were six demographics that were identified by the participants as 'hard to reach', see table 3.

Hard to Reach	No. of responses	Percentage
Children/youth	2	15%
Dementia population	1	8%
Deprived	7	54%
Late 20's – 40's	1	8%
Older population	1	8%
Veteran demographic	1	8%
TOTAL	13	100%

Table 3: Hard to reach groups

Participants relied on historical information from residents coupled with their own local knowledge and access to Census data to identify who the hard to reach groups were. Experience was also a factor, from working within the local area, all responders suggested that they could gauge who they were not engaging with by analysing who they were successfully engaging with.

Some participants identified more than one hard to reach demographic within their area. Overall, over half of the hard to reach groups identified were deprived areas of the community. Social deprivation which was understood by responders to encompass lack of social interaction and loneliness, was commonly discussed due to the lack of services available that would provide social interaction for those who were socially deprived. Lack of resources and services therefore impacts socially deprived people.

Two participants mentioned the environments in which the deprived communities resided in and the issue of crime within those areas. This directly impacted engagement methods that were utilised as in person engagement within this environment would not necessarily be safe or the person engaging felt that they would not be safe.

There was no mention of physical deprivation from the participants.

Other identified hard to reach demographics were significantly lower ranging from 8% to 15%.

Many participants felt that they were employing methods to engage with the majority of their residents and felt that many residents did not want to engage with the Council.

4.2.2 Discussion

The research suggests hard to reach covers a multitude of demographics including deprivation and that an area's hard to reach groups will differ depending on the location. Social deprivation plays a part in preventing full participation in society. The lack of social interaction (Guilloteau, 2020) either because the person does not willingly interact or because they have not been provided the spaces to interact means that engagement is difficult. As one of the domains in the IoD2019, crime impacts engagement. The environment in which the deprived areas are located can be linked to higher risk of crime meaning that some face to face engagement methods are not employed.

Social deprivation, particularly education levels may impact whether someone is hard to reach so it is important that engagement methods are inclusive and sensitive to this. Social deprivation also has a strong link to physical deprivation particularly in relation to mental health (Macleod et al, 2005; Davey Smith, 1997). This connection means that it is important to ensure engagement to increase the individual's quality of life. These types of deprivation may mean that it is more challenging to engage but innovative methods could be used to receive participation. The lack of innovation and collaboration means that the type of deprivation may have no bearing on whether someone is hard to reach, it's just that the method of engagement does not fit the person's circumstances.

Findings indicated a large range of engagement methods were employed by local councils in different areas of the parish or town suggesting that the methods themselves are diverse and not hard to reach as discussed by Crozier and Davies (2007:296). Instead, some participants felt that people were not necessarily hard to reach just unwilling to engage or disinterested.

Though a large range of engagement methods have been identified as part of the research study, each council does not employ every method. Instead, the research shows that each council will select four or five methods that they deem, from experience, to be most successful. By using the same methods continually, the council may believe that they are successful as engagement and collaboration are experienced but they are in effect excluding certain demographics. This results in the council only hearing the views, opinions and experiences of the minority, not the majority. A

variety of methods will increase the likelihood of full exposure. This suggests that people may not be disengaged but the methods employed are not suitable for all demographics.

4.3 Objective Two

To investigate whether an individual's personality and learning styles have any bearing on whether someone is hard to reach.

4.3.1 Results and Analysis

The research shows that every participant was aware of different learning styles, but this was rarely considered when engaging with the community, see chart 1. Three participants provided information and engagement in alternative ways such as the use of infographics and QR codes that linked to an audio version of the information. One responder had considered the demographic and provided notices in different languages as they were aware of the different cultures within their area.

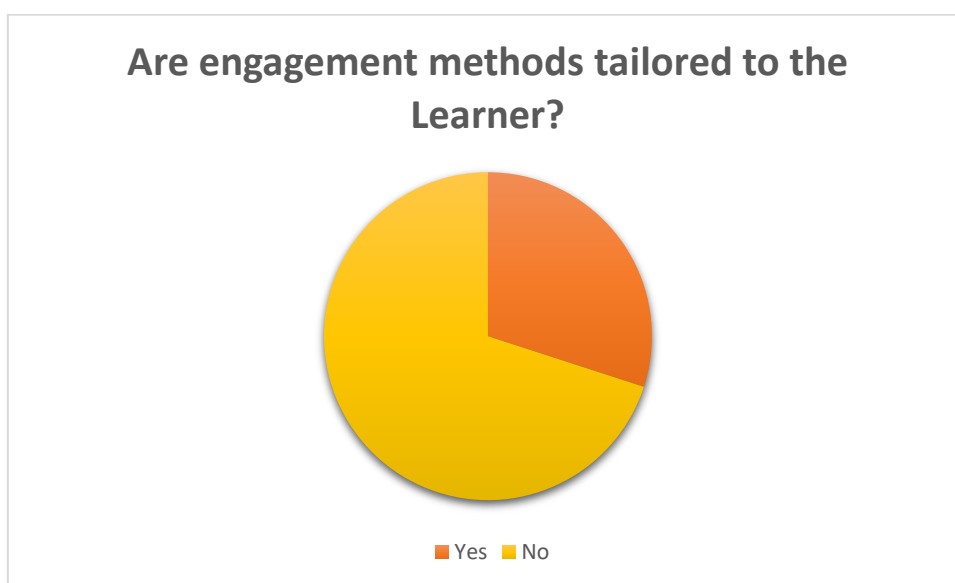


Chart 1: Are engagement methods tailored to the learner?

All participants felt that they should be doing more to ensure that council communications and engagement should be inclusive utilising tools for alternative learning styles and cultures.

Upon reflection, all participants agreed that by not providing engagement methods to include those with different learning styles was subconsciously excluding a large part of the community. They agreed that this demographic wasn't necessarily hard to reach – the participants didn't have enough evidence or experience to draw on to confirm or deny as they hadn't been providing this to their communities.

4.3.2 Discussion

There was an awareness of different personality types and learning styles however this was not considered before employing an engagement method. Alternative engagement was carried out by two councils to be more inclusive but this was not the norm. The variety of engagement methods

discussed covered the learning styles in the VARK model (Fleming and Mills, 1992) though there was a lack of kinaesthetic engagement. The research has shown that this is a significant omission in parish and town councils.

Councils are excluding a large part of society by not tailoring engagement methods to individual personality types and learning styles. There needs to be a greater understanding of which methods suit which type of learner, someone who is introverted will not be interested in a workshop of 50 people and someone who is a visual learner will be less engaged with an auditory method. The selection of methods generally covers all of the learning styles however innovative ways to reach kinaesthetic learners need to be considered. Personality and learning styles do not impact whether someone is hard to reach, the engagement method employed will impact whether they are. Ensuring that a selection of methods are carried out will garner more inclusive and representative results to ensure that no one is excluded.

4.4 Objective Three

To investigate which engagement methods are most successful overall and whether they are successful with deprived communities

4.4.1 Results and Analysis

The participants used a significant variety of engagement methods, see table 4.

Engagement Method	Number of responses
Banners	1
Collaboration with other organisations	5
Community Days	1
Consultation Boards	1
Council meetings	1
Councillor Surgeries	1
Digital Traffic Signs	1
Door knocking	3
Events	8
Face to Face	5
Focus Groups	1
Markets	2
Newsletter	5
Newspaper	1
Notice Boards	2
Office	2
Posters	2
Press Release	1
QR Codes	1
Radio	1
Schools	5
Social Media	8
Stalls at events	6
Surveys	5
Videos	1
Website	5
Word of mouth	1
Workshop	1
Youth Services	4

Table 4: Engagement methods

Successful engagement was measured by participants in numerical form, by the amount of likes or responses on social media or how many people attended an event or service. However, there was no performance indicator as to what constituted a good number of responses. The results presented are purely from the perspective of the participant’s experience as to whether the method was successful. Participants rated the success of their preferred method of engagement, not all methods they have used. Chart 2 shows the success rate of each of these methods using the Likert scale.

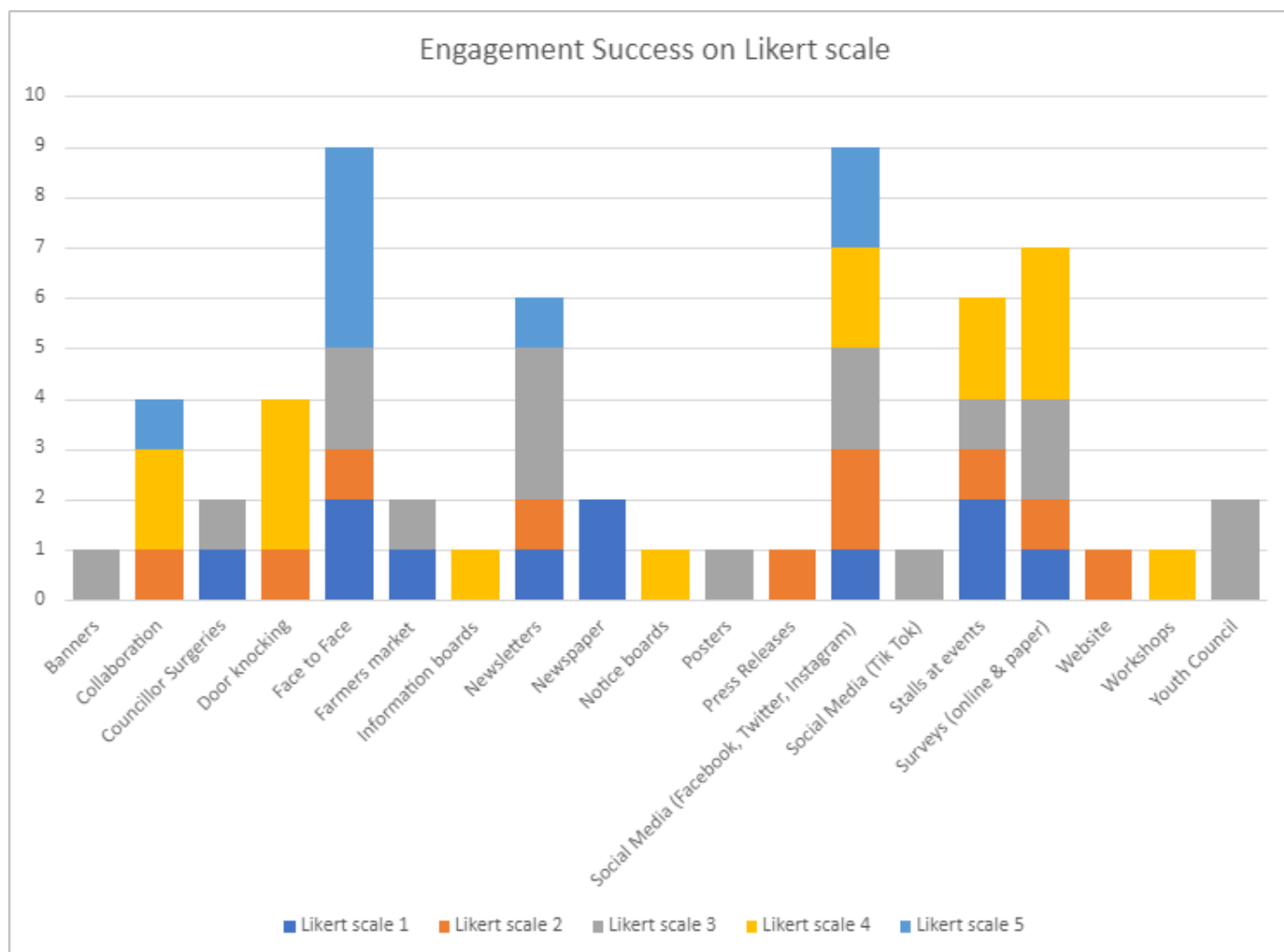


Chart 2: Engagement success on Likert Scale

Social media and face to face engagement were the most successful for engaging with residents, closely followed by surveys, and newsletters. These methods offer both informal (face to face conversations) and formal (surveys) interaction. Collaboration, door knocking, surgeries, newspapers, and youth councils were viewed as slightly successful.

On the opposite end of the scale, there were several methods that were viewed as the least successful. These included both remote engagement such as banners and press releases but also in person methods such as workshops.

In relation to hard to reach and deprived areas, the results were mainly unchanged. One participant suggested that newsletters were less successful and social media was more successful in deprived

areas. However, the remainder of participants scored the same for engagement methods in general terms and for deprived communities suggesting that the method has no bearing or does not need to be tailored for hard to reach and deprived communities.

4.4.2 Discussion

There was a range of engagement methods used by the participants (Ianniello et al, 2018) in an effort to provide an opportunity for residents to be heard and contribute to decision making processes (Involve, 2020). Efforts were made to empower communities to be involved to move from non-participation to citizen power (Arnstein, 2019) (see appendix one). Traditional engagement methods (Taylor, 2000) were widely used by participants with little innovation evident. One participant discussed the use of QR codes and digital traffic signs but could not measure the success of these alternative methods.

To reach full citizen power and empower service users to engage in service design and delivery, innovation is required. This involves thinking outside of the council norm to design new ways of two way engagement. There was evidence of face to face engagement but this was sporadic and usually at an event. Similarly, social media garnered two way engagement however, this is not the most effective platform to provide valuable engagement and results. There is a significant risk that the public are feeling ignored and disempowered because the platforms for them to be heard are not diverse enough to be able or feel comfortable to engage with.

The research gathered would suggest that councils are providing tokenism, that is informing and consulting the public but not truly working together in a meaningful way to enact change and ultimately improve quality of life.

4.5 Objective Four

To investigate what proximities (spaces) for collaboration are most successful overall and within deprived communities

4.5.1 Results and Analysis

Chart 2 shows that 40% of responders collaborated with other organisations (e.g., principal authorities, voluntary enterprises) to engage with their residents. This manifested in general as working with the higher authorities, i.e. district/borough and county councils, however other collaboration was with local community groups such as the historical society and local schools.

There were two examples of a Multi-Agency Support Hub (MASH) which were supported by the Council. The MASH was formed of various agencies but operated by a prominent member of the public; the Parish/Town Council provided support by means of free hall hire. Though not specifically a Council driven service, the MASH was very successful and provided opportunity to engage with a variety of residents in an informal way. However, in another area, the MASH was not deemed to be

a success; it was felt that this was because the MASH was operated by the County Council and not driven by the local community themselves.

Another successful face to face method was to identify specific people (residents) in each area of the parish/town to collaborate with. Information is passed to the person who then disseminates it within their area via word of mouth; this could be to inform residents of something that directly impacts them or to publicise an event. Similarly, information is then fed back to the Council by this person. This was deemed to be a success as there was a higher likelihood that more people were reached. An example of this was given by one participant. The Council had written to each household in an unadopted road regarding installing bollards to reduce fly tipping and received responses from 10% of the residents. On the last day of the consultation, a man attended the Council offices to advise that his neighbour had told him about the consultation, he was unaware of the proposals as he couldn't read. Word of mouth was imperative in this instance.

Upon analysing the data, table 5 shows which methods were linked to each proximity and the capital (Putnam, 2012) that would be utilised in the engagement. For example, events are allocated to the geographical and social proximity as they are local to the council and involve a social aspect. Events usually involve bonding capital as people are often informed of the event via friends and family and often attend events in a social group. The methods shaded blue represent the preferred research methods identified by participants. The research shows that all methods cover at least one of the five proximities identified by Boschma (2005). None of the participants specifically considered proximity when engaging with the public but were aware of the notion. Engagement methods were not selected by the proximity for which they covered but instead appeared to be selected by personal/organisational preference. However, the methods employed covered all five proximities. When considering all engagement methods, geographical proximity was most popular followed by institutional and social proximities. Within the preferred engagement methods geographical remained as the most popular followed by institutional however cognitive and social proximities were evenly split.

In reference to bonding and bridging capital (Putnam, 2012), 58% of the methods covered bridging capital even though all participants felt that face to face interaction was most successful and beneficial. Similarly, disseminating information to specific people in the community to then use their networks to spread the word was also considered successful. Both of these methods use bonding capital.

As consideration had not been given to proximity and capital generally, participants could not comment on what proximities were successful in deprived communities.

Method	Proximities					Capital
	Cognitive	Geographical	Institutional	Organisational	Social	Bonding = BO Bridging = BR
Banners		✓				BR
Collaboration	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	BO
Community Days		✓			✓	BO
Consultation boards	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	BR
Council meetings		✓	✓	✓		BR
Council surgeries		✓			✓	BR
Digital signs		✓				BR
Door knocking	✓	✓	✓		✓	BR
Events		✓			✓	BO
Face to face		✓			✓	BO
Focus Groups	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	BO
Markets		✓			✓	BR
Newsletter	✓					BR
Newspaper	✓		✓			BR
Notice boards	✓	✓	✓			BR
Office		✓	✓	✓	✓	BR
Posters		✓				BR
Press releases	✓		✓			BR
QR codes	✓	✓				BR
Radio			✓			BR
Schools		✓	✓	✓	✓	BO
Social Media	✓		✓	✓	✓	BO
Stalls at events	✓	✓	✓		✓	BO
Surveys	✓	✓	✓		✓	BO
Video	✓		✓			BR
Website	✓		✓	✓		BR
Word of mouth		✓			✓	BO
Workshop		✓	✓	✓	✓	BO
Youth services		✓	✓	✓	✓	BO
TOTAL (all methods)	14 (48%)	22 (75%)	18 (62%)	10 (34%)	17 (58%)	Table 5: Proximities and capital of engagement methods
TOTAL (preferred methods)	11 (61%)	13 (72%)	12 (66%)	6 (33%)	11 (61%)	

4.5.2 Discussion

There was a lack of evidence to demonstrate full collaboration with multiple parties (Ansell and Gash, 2007) though the foundations for successful collaboration were apparent. Some Councils shared resources and local knowledge (Chabbat, 2019) when collaborating. The research did not show evidence of a collaborative competency framework (Nesta, 2018) based on skills and well informed participation which would then involve the community to design and deliver services to add public value (Ansell and Torfing, 2021).

A small percentage of participants collaborated with the higher authorities and occasionally with community groups, however optimum collaboration with public sectors, private sectors, users and citizens was not apparent. Without full and effective collaboration the chance of creating meaningful public value is very slim. A good effort was made with the MASH initiative which was deemed to be very successful when it was run by a member of the public who had support from other agencies. This initiative could be built upon to empower engagement with service design and decision making at a local level. Interestingly, at no point did the participants suggest that the councillors should be the person disseminating the information in the various pockets of the community. Local councillors are elected to represent their communities by feeding back to the Council, leading to the question – if they aren't engaging in their communities are they fulfilling their role?

Well informed participation methods to target specific people with the skills and characteristics to innovate are severely lacking. It could also be argued that the lack of trust in the government (both national and local) is the reason why the MASH initiative run by the Council was less successful.

A mix of both bonding and bridging capital was apparent in the results thus agreeing with Svendsen and Patulny (2007) that the use of both is optimum to share knowledge and resources. Similarly, Boschma (2005) suggests that collaboration is enhanced if all five proximities are utilised within engagement methods. Understandably, the geographical proximity is most prevalent in all methods as councils need to engage with residents within their area. There was an almost even split when comparing the proximities of the preferred methods, however organisational (internal processes) could be improved.

When removing geographical proximity from the discussion, generally the methods appear to be weighted more towards institutional suggesting a willingness to collaborate with others and social suggesting the understanding of the importance of bonding capital. However, there appears to be less methods provided on a cognitive level suggesting that those who prefer this type of engagement may be underrepresented when engaging. When considering the preferred methods, there is an even split covering four of the five proximities. More thought into proximity and engagement could provide alternative methods that encompass the organisation proximity.

Overall, the methods employed by local councils cover all of the proximities and there is an almost even split of bonding and bridging capital to ensure effective collaboration. When designing new methods for greater engagement, capital and proximity should be considered.

4.6 General feedback relating to engagement

Each of the participants felt that there were issues that they faced when engaging generally and with those who were hard to reach/deprived, see chart 3. One third of participants felt that there was a disconnect and lack of understanding between the levels of local government. Many residents believed that the Parish/Town Council were responsible for services that fell under the remit of higher authorities. Similarly, if a higher authority did not deliver on a promise, residents felt that the Parish/Town Council were responsible. Other common issues faced included not knowing who the deprived and hard to reach groups were and time pressures on staff to engage with every demographic within their area.

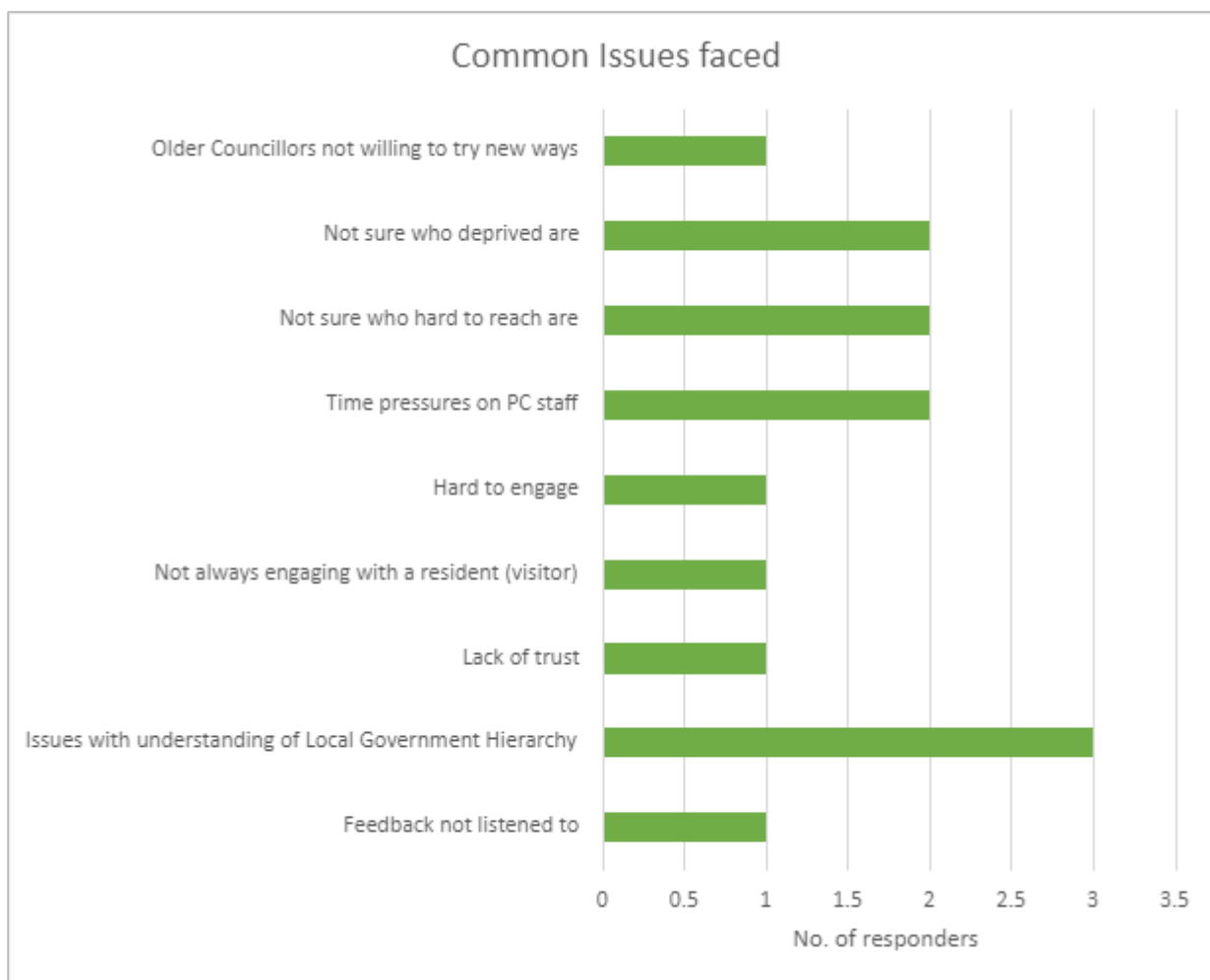


Chart 3: Common issues faced

Common issues faced would need to be addressed to ensure that engagement generally was successful and valuable before considering how to engage with those who are harder to reach or deprived.

4.7 Summary

This chapter has analysed, evaluated and discussed the primary research gathered to the objectives set forward. The analysis covered the knowledge, experience and opinions of officers parish and town councils. The key findings from the research are:

- ✚ councils tend to stick to a specific set of engagement methods even if they prove less successful than others.
- ✚ engagement is not tailored to different audiences.
- ✚ collaboration is successful in some places if it is driven by the community, specifically by one prominent person in an area.

The next chapter will provide conclusions from the research and suggest recommendations for the sector as a whole.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

The results from the research show that all local councils have areas of their communities that they consider to be harder to reach compared to other areas. There was a general idea of who these groups were but there was sometimes difficulty and confusion trying to identify which were in the harder to reach bracket. In order to engage with residents, local councils use a variety of methods and many thought that the methods that they used engaged with the majority of residents. It was also thought that many residents did not want to engage. When considering deprivation as a hard to reach demographic, the research showed that all three domains of deprivation, that is social, physical and environmental deprivation, were apparent in each community and that social deprivation in particular had an impact on whether someone was hard to reach.

Engagement was very occasionally tailored towards different learning styles, but this was not the norm. Some engagement methods fell into the categories of the VARK model but there was a lack of approach for those who were kinaesthetic learners. Similarly, accessibility for those with other difficulties such as partially sighted or English as a second language was not really considered.

Successful engagement was measured numerically by counting likes on social media posts, visually at events and from the perspective of the councillors and officers but there were no performance indicators to measure whether the engagement could be deemed as good or successful. Councils had a selection of four to six preferred engagement methods that they employed whenever they wanted public opinion. These selected methods varied in success but Councils still used the less successful methods. Face to face interaction and collaboration were viewed as most successful as was social media. This was mainly unchanged when engaging with those in deprived areas of the community suggesting that there was not a preferred methods for this demographic.

Collaboration overall with all stakeholders (public, private, voluntary, users and residents) and in deprived areas was viewed as a successful method, however was garnered to be less successful in the community if collaboration was driven by the local authority. Local authorities and agencies working together to provide a facility or service was needed however, when delivering this on the ground, using key people in the community would determine if the facility or service was a success. In deprived areas, collaboration was important as often those communities have a greater need to access the services provided.

Proximity and capital were not considered when employing engagement methods in the community and as such, this could not be investigated in relation to deprived communities. In general, each of the five proximities for collaboration were covered by the different engagement methods, however

in general, methods that covered cognitive proximities were not as popular. Of the favoured methods, there was an almost even split between the proximities. Bonding and bridging capital was also almost evenly split between the engagement methods though this was not done consciously.

In general, common issues were faced when engaging the public such as lack of understanding of local government leading to lack of trust and uncertainty who were hard to reach and deprived.

5.2 Recommendations

The aim of the Localism Act 2011 was to shift power from central government to the local people to directly influence what happens in their communities. In order for this to happen, to allow the people to really take control, design services that best fit them and reach citizen power, fully inclusive engagement is essential. The research within this dissertation has reached its limits and as such the following recommendations are made to reach the government's ambition:

5.2.1 Variation

To ensure full inclusion, councils must provide triangulation by utilising a variety of engagement methods and not stick to the preferred few such as posters, social media and events. Having variety will expand the reach of the council with its communications increasing the likelihood of full exposure. This will ensure that the views, opinions and needs of every demographic in the community are considered when making decisions and also increase the likelihood of collaboration with all parties to bring value to the community.

5.2.2 Innovation and Collaboration

Generally, new collaborative innovative methods of engagement are required but within harder to reach and deprived communities this is vital to ensure that the methods fit the person's circumstances. The engagement methods that are currently used are reaching some people but by employing the same methods continually there is a risk that the council will be engaging with the minority and not the majority. When designing new methods, capital and proximity should be considered to ensure wide reaching engagement. Councils should also work with all areas of their communities to design new engagement methods that work for everyone. This will then lead on to collaboration and innovation in facilities and services that best fit the community.

5.2.3 Learning styles

When engaging, councils must consider different learning styles, nationalities and accessibility. Providing traditional engagement methods guarantees that someone will be excluded. Thinking innovatively and considering which method suits different demographics, the council could alter

existing methods to incorporate different learning styles, nationalities and accessibility requirements without much resource to provide each method in alternative formats. Those with different needs will then feel included and valued by the council and within the community. Again, by utilising traditional methods, there is a significantly high risk that people are being excluded due to their learning style, nationality and accessibility.

5.2.4 Key people

Face to face engagement is considered to be successful with key people spread across the community providing that face to face link to residents. These key people could not only disseminate information on the ground but encourage engagement in other methods. Local councillors are supposed to consult their residents before making decisions at council meetings. These people are best placed to be the key people in the community. They should be encouraged to be more active in their communities to become the key people that the communities need.

5.3 Summary

This chapter has drawn conclusions from the primary research in chapter 4 and made comparisons to the secondary research identified in chapter 2. It has provided recommendations for consideration by policymakers. Further investigation is recommended as a result of the research findings to fully understand how engagement is carried out on the ground and to identify innovative ways to communicate. This could ensure that every person has the same opportunity to voice their thoughts and opinions to ultimately shape where they live and improve quality of life.

Word Count: 10,903

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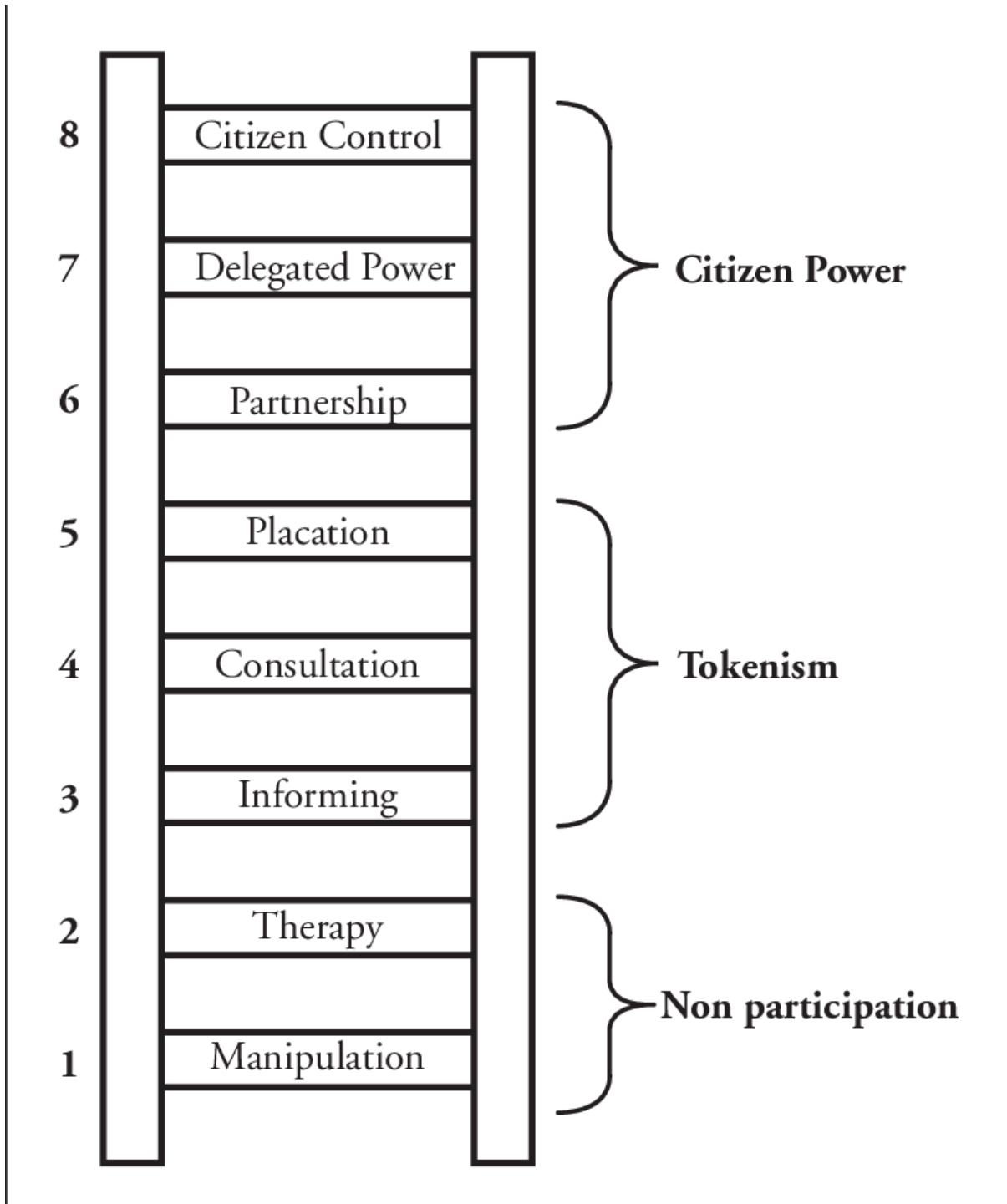
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Appendix One: Arnstein's Ladder of Participation



Appendix Two: Research Information Document

Research Participant Information Sheet

Title of Project: Engagement methods for 'hard to reach' groups

Name of Researcher(s): Kelly Holland

You have been invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether to take part it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with friends and relatives if you wish to. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether you wish to take part or not. Thank you for reading this.

What is the research about?

I am a student on the Public Leadership and Management Masters with De Montfort University and am undertaking research as part of the dissertation module.

The research seeks to investigate whether there are tried and tested methods to engage with those groups within a community that are labelled as 'hard to reach'. I am particularly interested in engagement methods for those in deprived communities. The findings from the research will assist to create a best practice approach for engagement which can be fully inclusive.

What does the study / participation involve?

Participants will be asked to take part in a one-hour interview via Microsoft Teams at a mutually convenient time. The questions will be in relation to how Council Clerks engage with their communities generally, whether different methods are employed to include the hard to reach groups and which methods were most successful.

Participation will be on a voluntary basis and participants will have the ability to withdraw at any time. Data gathered will be anonymised however, my supervisor will have access to the data whilst the research is taking place. Should you wish to withdraw, any data gathered will be destroyed immediately and not included in the research study. A consent form will be provided for completion.

Who is doing the research?

Kelly Holland
Public Leadership and Management MA student
De Montfort University

If you have any concerns about this research, for any reason and at any time, you may contact my supervisor, Milan Gyanwali. His / her contact details are provided at the end of this information sheet.

Who is funding the research?

This research is funded by the researcher and no external funding has been received.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen to take part in this research project as you are a local Council Clerk who is employed by a Council based in one of the most deprived areas of England.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

I am interested in taking part, what do I do next?

Contact Kelly Holland
07720 947665
P17033324@my365.dmu.ac.uk

What if I agree to take part and then change my mind?

You can withdraw from the study at any time, without giving a reason. Any data collected will be destroyed immediately and not included in the research study.

What is the procedure that is being tested?

No procedures are being tested as part of this research study.

What happens to the information I provide?

- a) The research data will be used to create a report to form part of a dissertation as part of the Masters degree in Public Leadership and Management.
- b) Data will be stored securely in password protected files. No names will be used in the report.
- c) A copy of the completed report will be available upon request.

As you are sharing your details with DMU, we want you to know how we use your personal data and what your rights are. You can find this information at <http://www.dmu.ac.uk/policies/data-protection/data-protection.aspx>

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

All information which is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept on a password protected database and is strictly confidential. You will be given an ID code which will be used instead of your name. Any identifiable information you may give will be removed and anonymised.

Raw data is normally kept for 5 years after a study has been completed. The supervisor will also have access to the data and members of the faculty, human research ethics committee may require access to check that the study has been conducted in accordance with the approval.

Will anyone know that I am taking part?

Data gathered will be kept confidential as far as possible however, if you tell me that [a criminal offence has, or may have been, committed – for example...] I have a duty to pass that information onto the [police/ other agency]. Only in those circumstances would I have to reveal your identity.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

Results from this research study will be used to create a report. Participants can receive a copy of the report upon request.

What are the possible advantages and disadvantages of taking part?

The main advantage of taking part is to inform best practice when engaging with local people. This, in turn, will help to provide an effective solution to engagement methods to ensure that no one is discriminated against. One of the disadvantages of participation will be you giving up an hour of your time. The interview questions should not cause upset or raise emotive issues, however if this is the case, the interview will cease so you can gather yourself if you wish. As this is a very low risk, sources of support will be investigated should the need arise.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Assist to provide real world evidence on fully inclusive engagement to inform the debate at a national level.

What if something goes wrong?

If you are harmed by taking part in this research project, there are no special compensation arrangements. If you are harmed due to someone's negligence, then you may have grounds for a legal action but you may have to pay for it. Regardless of this, if you wish to complain, or have any concerns about any aspect of the way you have been approached or treated during the course of this study, the normal University complaints mechanisms should be available to you.

Who can I complain to?

If you have a complaint regarding anything to do with this study, you can initially approach the lead investigator. If this achieves no satisfactory outcome, you should then contact the Administrator for the Faculty Research Ethics Committee, Research & Innovation Office, Faculty of Business and Law, De Montfort University, The Gateway, Leicester, LE1 9BH or BALResearchEthics@dmu.ac.uk

You can also complain to Milan Gyanwali
0116 366 4603
Milan.gyanwali@dmu.ac.uk

Who is organising and funding the research?

This research is organised and funded by the researcher; no external funding has been received.

Who has reviewed the study?

This study has been reviewed and approved by De Montfort University, Faculty of Business and Law Research Ethics Committee.

Contact for Further Information

Kelly Holland
07720 947665
P17033324@my365.dmu.ac.uk

Thank you for taking the time to take part in this study.

05/01/2023

V1.0

Appendix Three: Participant Consent Form

Research Participant Consent Form

This template should be adapted to the needs of the particular study. The version adapted must be approved by your supervisor.

Title of Research Project: Engagement methods for 'hard to reach' groups

Name of Researcher: Kelly Holland

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet [05/01/2023, v1.0] for the study above. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
2. I agree to my data being anonymised and stored. I agree to it being shared in a relevant archive in this form.
3. I understand that my participation is voluntary. I also understand I am free to withdraw at any time- without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. I can decline to answer any particular question, or questions.
4. I agree that non identifiable quotes may be published in articles, used in conference presentations, or used for standard academic purposes such as assessment.
5. I agree to the interview being digitally audio recorded
6. I agree to the interview being digitally video recorded
7. I understand that the data collected during the study may be inspected by a supervisor from De Montfort University. I give permission for the supervisor to have access to my data.
8. I also acknowledge that if I am being interviewed this date may be transcribed by a third party, authorised by the university to undertake such duty.

Please tick and initial all boxes if you agree

.....
Print name of participant	Date	Signature
.....
Print name of person taking consent	Date	Signature

A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be placed with the project file which must be kept in a secure location.

Appendix Four: Dissertation Questions

1. How do you engage generally?
2. Do you know who your hard to reach groups are?
3. Do you have different methods to engage with hard to reach groups?
4. Are you aware of the deprived areas in your area?
5. Do you have different methods to engage with those in deprived areas?
6. Do they tailor the engagement method to the demographic?
7. Using methods you identified earlier, can you rate each method (on Likert scale) to tell me which methods were most successful? (Go prepared with a list of methods)
8. Using methods you identified earlier, can you rate each method (on Likert scale) to tell me which methods were least successful? (Go prepared with a list of methods)
9. How do you know that it was/was not successful?
10. If you had a good response, was there a specific demographic that responded?
11. Do you have a plan on how to engage with hard to reach people?

Appendix Five: Mapping Objectives to Interview Questions

How do you engage generally?	Objective 4
Do you know who you hard to reach groups are?	Objective 1, 2, 3
Do you have different methods to engage with hard to reach groups?	Objective 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
Are you aware of the deprived areas of your community?	Objective 2
Do you have different methods to engage with those in deprived areas?	Objective 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
Do you tailor the engagement method to the demographic?	Objective 5, 6
Using the methods you identified earlier, can you rate each method (on Likert scale) to tell me which methods were most successful.	Objective 4, 5, 6
Using the methods you identified earlier, can you rate each method (on Likert scale) to tell me which methods were least successful.	Objective 4, 5, 6
How do you know that it was/was not successful?	Objective 4
If you had a good response, was there a specific demographic that responded?	Objective 1, 2, 3, 5
Do you have a plan on how to engage with hard to reach people?	Objective 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

Appendix Six: Transcript from One of the Interviews

Speaker 2

I'm just on. Excellent so OK. Just got a couple of things. We right these. Questions I've written down to remind. Me of what I need. To make sure I please so. So, I'm doing a dissertation on engagement. Mm-hmm, and in particular those that are harder to read and from deprived. Areas, so just to. Start with have you? I just wanted to get an idea of what your Council does for engagement. Generally, methods you have.

Speaker 1

OK, so generally we use a variety of methods so. The normal things like questionnaires, surveys and we do those online and paper based because we've got a demographic that's predominantly older in the main part of ***. So a lot of them on online or anything like that, and and we've done workshops in the past as well. Trying to think about Ray's radio, you know, trying to get the message out there.

Speaker 2

Is that like adverts or interviews, OK?

Speaker 1

A bit of both actually. With the the we've got a local radio station that we seed funded to set up who are always happy to. Do things for us. So you know, like doing interviews on the councillors or.

Speaker 2

OK.

Speaker 1

You know, put an advert out there, so yeah.

Speaker 2

No, never come across that before. Hey, that's right, that's really interesting, actually.

Speaker

OK.

Speaker 1

OK, it's not our radio station you. Understand we. We just as much as the money enjoy as well.

Speaker 2

Absolutely no. So, thinking about your area then so. Question is, do you know? Who your hard to reach? People are, yes.

Speaker 1

Pretty much they are the younger people on in Fuller Slade we don't have any problem at all in. Engaging, getting the sort of. 42 The 7080 year olds engaging it is predominantly young people on an area called Fuller Slade, which, as you pointed out, is one of the top 5% on the deprivation index in the country. So at the moment we're, which is what I'm probably gonna do for my research is.

Speaker

OK, I'll I'll come down.

Speaker 1

Sustain sustainable communities project. We're just about to set up youth club youth provision, not calling it a club, actually. So, to do that we've had?

Speaker

I'll be staying here.

Speaker 1

Nice to see you again, right. Yes, yeah, and I thought I'd get a new picture.

Speaker 2

For my little.

Speaker 1

Yeah, OK. We just leave it look like me anymore. Fair. So, see you soon, Sue. Right, so so yeah, we've set setting up this. Youth provision so. I've been working with the two our principal authority engagement officers. I've got a base over on for the Slade, so they're actually there in the thick of it. You know with all the anti-social behaviour that goes on and all that sort of thing. Trying to make a difference. And and we've applied for a 60,000 pounds lottery fund, which I found out last week we hadn't got. But that, well, no.

Speaker 1

We need to. I'm fine and we're fine and we just need to get some more stats for them. Sorry not stats. What they want is young people to.

Speaker 1

Do the project really and be engaged right at.

Speaker 2

OK.

Speaker 1

The very beginning. Yeah, so, and we've got that data because we had a company, an organisation that company, an organisation called reaching our communities who had a bus and where they did activities for the young people. One of the ways they've been engaging with them. The community engagement officers and the reaching our communities. People had laptops and they were just asking them questions and chatting with them. Not, they weren't get they. If they could, they would fill it in, but some of them can't. Obviously can't read or write in English. And so, you have to think about that. You know the people you're trying to reach is English their first language? Have they been to school from have been school, different learning abilities, so yeah. So, they were. They were doing that for me.

Speaker 2

Yeah, different learning yeah.

Speaker 1

I have to say I wasn't involved so I was going to say I think. You're one of the things you might think about doing for your project is reaching out to those engagement officers that at. Milton Keynes city. And I've got. I've got their contact details. I can give them to you. They'll be fine. Yes, **knocking on doors** has been another way we've engaged with people. So in Fuller slate and in the main in the main areas that's normally been councillors. The ward councillors going out to do that for us.

Speaker 2

Is that in this in for this?

Speaker 1

But it could quite easily. Their company I don't **survey**s. We haven't had great success with over there because I think people just. Get the **survey** and throw it in the. Bin or. Or don't just don't follow the link all the way through, so I honestly think. Talking to people one to. And face to face, they're hard to treat people, so if you can identify who they are by either going to your principal authority and saying you know. Who are who? Are they specifically? Because I'm saying we know we only know. By being in the community and talking to the. Kids that are hanging around? Yeah, do you know what means? We haven't got statistics that say the you know these people are out. What is it not in employment, education or something like that? Need? No need, not it not in education or something or. Employee, I can't remember the acronym. There's an acronym. There's an acronym for it. There's always an acronym, yeah? So yes, so yeah, so that's it really. So that's you mentioned that you're.

Speaker 2

Right, OK? Isn't that just? Wait, you're harder to reach of those under 40, and those in for us though, yeah. So presumably all your youth provision that you've got there that you're talking about. Yeah, is dealing with the younger. People, have you got anything for the ones that are kind of? You know that that **late 20s to 40s**?

Speaker 1

No, because a lot of them don't engage because they're either out of work or out at work. Or in some nefarious activities. Not saying anymore, no, that's so. But we do, we do?

Speaker 2

Fair enough, that's absolutely.

Speaker 1

Have so rather than. Do engagement per say for that age group I speak to. Who the lady that runs the centre there? The children's Centre so she sees all the parents that come in with the children. So it's getting information a slightly different way, so I went to her and said, you know? What do you think is needed here and she said she? Said things for them to do so we set up a sit and fit. Class in the day. So they do that.

Speaker 1

And that's once a week, but it's not as successful as the sit and fit in that we run in the main part of ***. So we in our library so.

Speaker 2

So it's not. Necessarily it's is engaging with thing because you've got that there, but it's not as successful in the main part.

Speaker 1

Every reason absolutely so I need to do some research on that, why it's why it's not been as successful. But again, it's all about time, isn't it late? That's why this is brilliant because. You you've got the time, you've kind of given yourself the time. Haven't you to be able to get the stats on this sort of thing so and the census the new census results? They're only just, they're all just drip being drip fed, aren't they?

Speaker 1

So and it seems to be inordinately difficult to get hold of those. Results tell me.

Speaker 2

About it

Speaker 1

Yeah, no, and that's what I could do with. I could do with, you know how many of each age group are in. ***. How many of each age group were in work? Yeah, you know, all those sorts of stats. Well, how do you get them?

Speaker 2

Yeah, because they're. The 2019 now is it? It's a long way out of date, so using that data is a bit. Difficult it is, yeah. So you've found, then again, talking about the children's centre that.

Speaker 1

Ohh **face to face**, absolutely yeah absolutely. I think face to face they're hard to reach people is the approach they don't really or and doing things for them. So like they're reaching our communities. Have this bus where they have activities for the young.

Speaker 2

Face to face again is that is the approach.

Speaker 1

Thing to do, you know and holding workshops works as well, because if people are interested in something or giving away free stuff, I find worse. I've done that. And you know, free pizza, pizza and. Drink night.

Speaker 2
And drink.

Speaker 1
Food, food, food and drink always works. Yeah. Absolutely, yeah, so OK.

Speaker 2
You've already answered some of this, which is in the list. If we think about, well, I talked to no, this is the whole point. You're supposed to be talking to me. I'm not supposed to. Be talking. Too much at all, so the methods that you've. Already identified. Yeah, have you had to rate them on a Likert scale? One to five, one being the least successful, 5 being the most yeah?

Speaker 1
OK, Yep.

Speaker 2
If we go through. So let's look at the surveys. What would you rate surveys generally and then for your deprived area? One and one. Oh OK.

Speaker 1
Well, maybe no OK. But the normal area maybe two and then one for the deprived area. Let's do that, yeah.

Speaker 2
OK workshops you just mentioned those.

Speaker 1
I think 4. For the** itself and maybe yeah, maybe 4 for Fuller Slade, but only if you give away free stuff.

Speaker 2
OK with the is that just for the deprived area? With the free stuff or the boat.

Speaker 1
No, yes, but no. Just for the deprived area because the other. People came to the main workshops when we were doing the redevelopment of the building because they were really interested and they wanted to be part of it and felt like. They would do. I think we'd like to feel like they're framing. They're helping to frame what happens next?

Speaker 1
Right?

Speaker 2
Yeah, that makes sense, doesn't.

Speaker 1
It. That's why people feel you know, voting people. A lot of people don't vote because they feel disenfranchised. I think if we felt that our vote counted more than it does, then then we might be more like more willing to vote absolutely so.

Speaker 2
Yeah great. OK, So what about radio?

Speaker 1
Got to know what your what the. The listenership is OK, and because it's at the radio station that we are using is only a very small. We don't because they weren't DAB, we couldn't get their listener figures. I think their DAB now, but at the time so I can't tell you how successful that was.

Speaker 1

I didn't put it this way. I didn't get loads of people playing to me or I heard you heard.

Speaker 1

You on the. Radio or I? Heard councillor dude yeah I didn't get it so I don't think you can score that one really.

Speaker 2

No, that's fair enough. What else have we got on there? So when you talk about your roof bust provision? So how would you score that? And is that just in?

Speaker 1

In in fillers and I would say that was. That was a four. I'm only saying I would have probably given it a 5, but I didn't design the questions and. I would have asked different questions so it wasn't my project I had. A bit of input into. It, but it was run. It was predominantly run by the Milton Keynes. Engagement workers so. But yeah, I would. I would say a four really because they you know they picked up people and.

Speaker 2

Right, OK, that's fair enough.

Speaker 1

And sort of spoke to them and asked them what they wanted. We'd like to be asked what they wanted. Yeah, and I think you need to split the surveys as well.

Speaker 1

OK, because I've done 2 sorts of surveys. I've done a tick box exercise survey which I don't think. People are that engaged with. Yeah, OK, but my last survey I did was a long answer. Survey and. It was just to. Get a feel. I did. I didn't even call it a survey. I think I'd called it sort of a poll of.

Speaker 2

Your views.

Speaker 1

We want your views.

Speaker 2

OK.

Speaker 1

Ohh people had a lovely time.

Speaker 1

Ohh reams we got which is Yep. Super hard to, however. If you if you just. Pick out the keywords which Facebook the analytics in the SurveyMonkey does beautifully. I mean, it's it. It's fairly simple to pull off those. It's my information, I know how to do it. My information officer did it this time. But it they. You know there are keywords, they all use that we could sort of hang our hats on and say this. Many people did this. I did one. I did one question that asked them how happy they were. Which is quite a. Quite hard to quantify, but we just wanted to get a feel just a general. Feel for how happy they were, generally living in *** yeah and lovely. They all four.

Speaker 1

Average brilliant so that was that was the only one that was a tick box. You know right?

Speaker 1

On scale of 1 to 5, how happy are?

Speaker 2

The rest was all they could just say, write whatever they. Wanted to write.

Speaker 1

Like whatever they want it right, yeah? So what? What new activities?

Speaker 2

OK, that's interesting.

Speaker 1

Do you want to? See what you know. I can't remember. I can send you my questions. You know that's fine but it. People loved it.

Speaker 2

Yeah, because that's the voice thing, yeah?

Speaker 1

And I've had because they've got a voice they feel like they've. Got a. Voice, yeah, you know. And actually for the Council it evidence that they were doing the right things, we, we are doing the right things and we're doing the things that the people want except giving them new shots which we have no control over. That no we. Can't do that so.

Speaker 2

OK, that's really interesting. So what about door knocking?

Speaker 1

Door knocking is. But that does that does yield results as long as you don't get them slammed in your face and you know when to and you know when to do or not, because obviously lots of people are at work in the day, so you'd have. To do it. You'd have to. You can't just do that on its own. You'd have to be I find in conjunction so.

Speaker 1

In all the you know you could do I when I do **survey** I try and do everything. Yeah, you know.

Speaker 2

Cover as.

Speaker

Well, this.

Speaker 2

Is your time again?

Speaker 1

Cover as much as you can because. You know that people all respond, we we're all unique and everyone responds in different ways. So you know when you say it's **survey** you can't just do a paper **survey** or an on or an online **survey**. You definitely gotta do both of those and maybe do workshops as well. If it's something like. We did the redevelopment of the building. And if it's young, well, anyone really go out and see them and try and talk to them. So I went to practitioners last week. That's what I wanted to tell you. Shrewsbury Town Council have had great success. I went to the seminar, can't remember the. Clerk's. Sorry sure so anyway great success in reaching hard to reach. Young people.

Speaker 1

And they literally sent out their. They've got about 17 youth workers that work from, so they're big, yeah, and they sent them out on the streets to find them and got the intelligence. Like I've said to you from the principle authority and things like that. And they've set up this. Curriculum an alternative curriculum for these kids which is.

Speaker 2

OK.

Speaker 1

I knew she would say this to be fair because when you're doing something like that, it's the quality that counts, not how you know youth club. How many people attend this week? All dirty or lovely or this you can't? You can't do that. You have to. You know, tailor it to the person. The people that are there, and it may only be. Two or three that you're making a difference to. But then the. Knock on effect is as they grow up because when they so they told us the stats for the police, you know.

Speaker

So this.

Speaker 1

One young lad had his own police officer following him half the time. A social worker, this and that. So that's costing hundreds of thousands of pounds for one for one person. If you can get that person young and really make a difference in their lives, that's fascinating. Sorry, I went off a bit on a tangent.

Speaker 1

But it is all to do with engagement. They engage by. Basically, you know, grabbing them off the streets and twisting them as early as possible and.

Speaker 2

As early as.

Speaker 1

You know? Finding what made them tick? Yeah, because. It's all about making. Finding out what makes people tick, isn't it really?

Speaker 2

Yeah, what appeals to them? Yeah that's brilliant. I'll have a look and see if I can contact them.

Speaker 1

Yeah, absolutely so ohh.

Speaker 2

If you had. To write down looking, what would you give it? For effectiveness.

Speaker 1

I'd still say Thor for both. For both, because you can't just do any one of these things on it on their own.

Speaker 2

Yeah no I agree.

Speaker 1

OK, so that's kind of the conclusion, if you like.

Speaker 2

Yeah, yeah, I think what I'm trying to. Find is. Is there? No, yeah, so for ways that are the best ways to actually talk to these people. Yeah, there's so many different ways of engaging them. Of that won't be gonna be. One way.

Speaker 1

Yeah, I think putting on events is a brilliant way of engaging. So what I've said to my councillor is when we have events like we, we run two events a year, Apple Day and which is all free. It's all free. They don't pay anything to come, they don't pay anything. All, it's all you know, free activities and things. Yep. I said you need to have a stool there because you've got a captive, it's when. You've got a captive audience. So, so I think that's yeah, absolutely so I think that's one of the best ways to engage. I would probably give that a four as well, so, uh. There's a picture here, isn't. Yeah, you've got I know so well I don't know about that. I mean they're I just find they're that's they're the best ways to do it, yeah.

Speaker 2

Lots of fools. You've obviously nailed it.

Speaker 1

A few times, though, I suppose so. It's what works in our community. And to be fair, I think that would work.

Speaker 2

And it's what works in your community, yeah?

Speaker 1

In most communities. You know, if you put on an event for people and you're doing. You're giving them. Something they're much more likely to come. And talk to you. So how would you how?

Speaker 2

Would you judge? All of these different methods have been.

Speaker 1

Accessible, I think by the number of people that you that respond really.

Speaker 2

OK, so drop that to two numbers.

Speaker 1

And talk you. Yeah, it's gotta be down to now there's no other way to quantify things. Is there really?

Speaker 2

Thinking do you? Can you say no? You probably can't say, but could you say quite confidently that? You are reaching as many people as you possibly could.

Speaker 1

No, no, because we.

Speaker 2

Haven't got the capacity to do that. OK, so it's a capacity issue, OK?

Speaker 1

Capacity is, it's all. Something like this is really labour intensive. Yeah, so we're just about to do a new consultation on designing the high streets, redesigning the High Street which. You know the Council's principal. Authority said we wouldn't.

Speaker 1

And egg situation because we want to know that the count the Community is behind us before we go any further with it, which is applying to Milkings City Council for capital funding which will only come from the government because it's. Probably gonna be in the. Region of a couple of million. Pounds yeah OK so.

Speaker 1

You don't really wanna go any further until you. Know that they're broadly behind. Them so.

Speaker

We've got the design.

Speaker 1

We've got the concept design, and we've just we've been working with. The well, I've been working with my working group and the.

Speaker 1

They're called Open University because they're gonna analyse the results for me. OK, OK, The Council and so we've written the questions they're being reviewed at the minute. They're one lot. I mean, we're this. We're on our 10th iteration now. The questions concept design was done by. Jacobs, so that's done. But people will keep things we'll need to keep reiterating that this won't be done. You know, this will only be done with capital funding. So yeah, because we don't wanna raise, that's what the principal authority worried about raising people's expectations. Yeah, OK, so that's one that's one sort of caveat on this, but. Some of the ways that we're gonna be engaging with people are having a shop front with posters. Yeah, yeah. Filling the windows and empty shop front, we've got a big we're get. We're getting drone footage to show people you know what it? Will look like. Walking down the newly designed High Street in comparison to now, so that's quite exciting and I think people. You need to put you need to. Sight people, that's what you need to do. That's why a blank piece of paper and.

Speaker 2

Dave, Dave Everyone the same. In fact, what you do with a bit. Of paper or are you?

Speaker 1

Exactly, even a link. Do you really wanna do the link through to this survey? No. No, not ever so much. I like, I think. The other thing I really like is when they say to you at the beginning of a survey. This will take you 2 minutes for them. Please yeah, but then you do say 2 minutes. Is that survey really worthwhile? So there's gotta be a there's gotta be a balance you know and I know there's some surveys you get no say take you 10 minutes to complete. I think 6 minutes is probably about right, 5 to 6 minutes anyway. So that's an aside so.

Speaker 2

Interesting that you know all this you clearly, because you've actually done it so many times. You know what the sweet spot is?

Speaker 1

I think so. I yeah. I mean no one ever. Knows people how people. Feel on the day, doesn't it? So that's why you.

Speaker 2

Yes, yeah.

Speaker 1

Need to give. A couple of weeks for these things. You know. Three weeks is too much in my opinion and from experience two week. This is about right. Yes, you know, and through that time you need. To be running. You know workshops having people go out, so we're gonna have some councillors go out on the streets with iPads talking to people filling in the filling in the questionnaire because again not everyone feels confident writing.

Speaker 1

But they might talk to you and say ohh yeah, and we'll do that for you. So which is what? Ohh you know I said to. You about captive audience. We ran a for the cost of living crisis. We bought a load of. Stuff to help with keeping it home warm and gave it away free and did that question there you know that recent question there that I said to you about one of my counsellors very kindly took a load of paper copies and the iPad and she talked to people that.

Speaker 1

Came along to that event so. Free stuff to help. To help you in your, you know in your hour of need you know we spent a lot of money. It wasn't our money, it was the principal authority said. Here's the money. So ohh, there's good stuff with it. So we.

Speaker 2

Do it. Did and when you had them with their getting their free stuff, you were asking them.

Speaker 1

Exactly, yeah, so yeah, I hope this has been.

Speaker 2

It is actually really helpful to hear a different perspective. It's already done one interview and it and it was the completely other the opposite end.

Speaker 1
OK ohh really.

Speaker 2
Really interesting to hear what it is working in your Council and you know it's a other Council which what I'm trying to do as many.

Speaker 1
As I can ohh, I'd be really interested to get read your, you know? Was a final report.

Speaker 2
Yeah, I'm happy to send it to you if.

Speaker 1
Yeah, really yeah really interested. Yeah.

Speaker 2
You want it, you know.

Speaker 1
I might have to get. Some lunch now it's one.

Speaker 2
Yeah, that's absolutely, absolutely fine. Thank you so much for taking the. Time to talk.