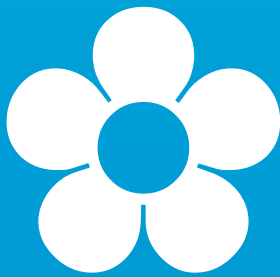


Your Manchester

Manchester Partnership's
Community Engagement Strategy 2011-15
March 2011



Foreword – Deputy Leader Sue Murphy



I am very pleased to present Manchester Partnership's Community Engagement Strategy for 2011-15. The strategy has been developed by the Manchester Partnership Community Engagement Task group and has been contributed to by many services, community voluntary sector organisations, and residents across the city. The strategy draws on the knowledge and experience of people who have been involved in and are committed to ensuring good community engagement is a priority in Manchester.

Manchester's Community Strategy¹ states that "everyone plays a part in making their neighbourhood, and Manchester, a great place". The strategy is a framework through which partners, businesses, voluntary and community organisations and individuals work together to achieve a vision for Manchester, based on resident priorities.

Community engagement plays a vital role in enabling Manchester Partnership to meet its vision for the city. Successful community engagement can help to:

- create safe, strong, cohesive and desirable communities
- build social capital and promote community spirit and pride
- encourage people to take an active role in their communities
- empower communities to find solutions to local issues
- support individuals and communities to reach their full potential.

We know the importance of community engagement in supporting the role of councillors as community leaders and ensuring services are accountable to communities. Now, more than ever, we need to involve communities in helping us to make tough decisions about services and spending priorities. We know that involving communities can lead to better decision making and getting services right the first time. We also know that people will get involved if they feel that they can influence change.

Throughout the strategy, we have maintained our commitment to working within and promoting the Manchester Compact. We value the role of the third sector in engaging communities but also in challenging services when engagement is not effective. Our challenge, and it is a challenge, is to ensure that we implement the strategy consistently across the whole of the partnership, ensuring that communities feel informed, involved and empowered.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sue Murphy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Deputy Leader
Sue Murphy**

¹The Community Strategy "The Manchester Way" has been developed by Manchester Local Strategic Partnership, partners and residents. A summary can be found at www.manchesterpartnership.org.uk

1. Who is this strategy for?

This strategy is for Manchester Partnership staff, from front line workers to strategic managers. Manchester Partnership includes Manchester City Council, NHS Manchester, Greater Manchester Police, Greater Manchester Fire Service, and Community Network for Manchester (CN4M)

The strategy is also a resource for voluntary and community sector groups and Manchester's communities, to show what they can expect when engaging with the Manchester Partnership.

Underpinning this strategy is the Manchester Compact, which is an agreement between the Manchester Partnership and the community voluntary sector.

2. What do we want to achieve?

The purpose of this strategy is:

“To develop strong, empowered and cohesive communities which can bring people together, influence decision making and lead on community action.”

The aims of the strategy are to:

- Improve co-ordination of community engagement activity across the city
- Improve engagement practice and the feedback we provide to communities following engagement activity
- Increase and strengthen the contribution of communities to the delivery of the Manchester Community Strategy
- Enable communities to influence decision making across the Manchester Partnership
- Support community action, enabling communities to identify needs and support them to develop their own solutions
- Increase the scope of community engagement to enable seldom heard groups to have a voice
- Support and enable future policy and service delivery that meets the needs of individuals and communities.

3. Why engage communities?

There are a number of benefits to effective engagement. Manchester Partnership believes that effective community engagement and empowerment can lead to:

- better decision-making and problem-solving
- active communities who are able to address issues that matter to them
- communities feeling a sense of place and belonging to Manchester
- supporting people to learn about each other and get on well together
- tackling inequalities and deprivation
- trust between the people of Manchester and local services
- greater involvement in the democratic process.

The Manchester Partnership will use the following methods to engage and empower communities:



Communicating

Researching

Involving

Consulting

Devolving decisions

**Supporting
community action**

- **Communicating**
giving information about events, a decision, services available or changes to services using a variety of ways. This can include newsletters, leaflets, websites and meetings.
- **Researching**
investigating or finding out something new about an area or population in order to improve service delivery. This can include questionnaires, surveys, census and focus groups.
- **Involving**
including people in decision-making processes. This can include service planning, development or improvements to an area.
- **Consulting**
seeking comments or feedback on a question or a proposal, which can lead to change. This can include service planning, development or improvements to an area.
- **Devolving decisions**
empowering communities to make final decisions. This can include decisions on budgets, service planning or development, or improvements to a local area.
- **Supporting community action**
power, influence and responsibility are given to communities and support is provided by services. This can include supporting communities through grants to improve their local area, or supporting them to develop local initiatives.

4. Commitments

To help deliver the aims of the strategy, the Manchester Partnership has identified a number of commitments. These are:

1. Working together to provide a consistent message so engagement will be more transparent, co-ordinated, effective, and meaningful
2. Taking every reasonable step to engage with communities or representatives of communities on issues they consider relevant to them
3. Working creatively with communities and exploring new ways of engaging
4. Being clear on why we are engaging, our methods of engagement and the reasons for choosing these methods
5. Using different ways of communicating to reflect Manchester's diverse communities and ensure our communications are carried out in the most effective and appropriate ways. We will use plain language and ensure information is easy to find.
6. Giving clear timescales for engagement activity and sufficient time for consultations in line with the Manchester Compact.
7. Staff carrying out engagement activity are clear on the decision making process and are aware of other factors that may impact on decisions being made.
8. Staff communicate the decision-making processes to communities and are clear on what can and can not be influenced and how.
9. Giving clear, timely feedback following engagement. We will be open and honest and say what has happened as a result of engagement and why.
10. Learning from engagement in order to improve future engagement processes.
11. Increasing the ability of individuals and small groups to engage.
12. Creating and developing structures and processes that bring together communities and enable them to lead on community action.
13. Embedding sustainable, low carbon lifestyles into our communities.

5. Supporting this strategy

There are a number of documents to support this strategy:

- [An annually updated delivery plan to show how we will implement the strategy](#)
- [A Community Engagement Guide to support partnership members who engage with communities](#)
- [Community Engagement Website to help co-ordinate engagement activity across the city.](#)

Definitions

What is a community?

“A feeling that you belong... you are in the right place at the right time, that the place has rhythm.”

Manchester Residents

The word community means ‘group of people’ or ‘collection of individuals’. Communities often define themselves and people often belong to more than one community. It is important to recognise some people may not define themselves as belonging to a community by choice and not all individuals within communities will share the same needs, views and aspirations.

The definitions below apply at every level, including working with large communities or small groups of people. Communities can be:



‘Communities of Place’ where people identify with a defined geographical area like Moss Side, Cheetham, Chorlton. It could also be a housing estate or small neighbourhood.

‘Communities of Identity’ as defined by those people, such as ethnic groups, people who share a particular experience, interest or stake in an issue, or characteristics such as young people, older people, disabled people, ethnic groups, or lesbian, gay and bisexual people.

‘Communities of Interest’ where people share a particular experience or interest, which might include tenants and resident groups, allotment holders, people involved in environmental projects, or people who come together to use services such as parks, green spaces, or community buildings.

One person can belong to several communities at once. Manchester has a diverse range of communities that bring creativity and vitality and are a great asset to the city.

What is community engagement and empowerment?

Community Engagement

The Manchester Partnership uses the Community Development Foundation definition of Community Engagement:

“Developing and sustaining a working relationship between public sector bodies and community groups so that both understand and act on the needs or issues that the community experiences.”

Community engagement is about making sure people can participate in lots of different ways to make Manchester a great place to live, work, study and play in.

Community Empowerment

Manchester Partnership uses the Network of Empowering Authorities and I&DEA² definition of Community Empowerment:

“Community empowerment is the outcome of engagement and other activities. Power, influence and responsibility are shifted away from existing centres of power, into the hands of communities and individual citizens.”

Community empowerment is about enabling people to play an active role in their communities through involving and devolving decision-making and enabling and supporting communities to lead on community action.

²The NEA is a network of 18 councils, chosen by the Government to help champion community empowerment and supported by the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA).