

# A PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION FRAMEWORK

Putting people at the heart of what we do



Sefton Council



**YOUR SEFTON  
YOUR SAY**



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YOUR SAY**

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In this document, where we mention ‘people’, we mean everyone - adults - children and young people, their representatives, families, and unpaid carers, who live in, or work/study in or visit Sefton. They may or may not receive or take part in services or activities we provide or buy.

Communities are groups of people that are connected by where they live or by a shared interest.

There are several supporting documents to this Framework, including the Youth Voice and Participation Toolkit which maximises the strengths and opportunities for organisations to engage children and young people to make sure their voices are heard and valued.

## **What this Framework will do**

This Public Engagement and Consultation Framework is a document that explains how we and anyone we ask to do the work for us, will work with our communities and gives us clear information on how to speak with and listen to our communities and involve them in the work we do.

This means that we must ensure that adults, children, and young people are given opportunities to be involved in processes for decision making on issues that affect them. This means listening to what matters to them and taking their views seriously.

Best practice in many areas indicated that organisations adopt and be informed by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which includes a basic right to express their opinions and be listened to.

The Equalities Act 2010 say that we must make reasonable adjustments for people who have protected characteristics. Protected characteristics are age, sex, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, religion and belief and race.

Public Sector organisations like the Council, Health and the Police and Fire Authorities must also consider the Public Sector Equality Duties. These are specific rules for public services, including when we carry out consultation and engagement activity. The Public Sector Equality Duties applies also to the organisations that are asked to carry out consultation and engagement on behalf of the Public Sector.

The following organisations, will follow the framework.

- Sefton Council
- Sefton Partnership
- Sefton Council for Voluntary Service
- Healthwatch Sefton
- Sefton Young Advisors
- Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service
- Any other partner organisation that uses this Framework



By using this Framework, we will:

- Follow a set of principles and standards that influence the way we speak with and actively listen to our communities.
- Support and develop ways of working that recognises that everyone has an important contribution to make.

The aim of these principles, standards and ways of working is to make sure that we can improve the way we speak with, listen to and involve adults, children, and young people. It will help to ensure that adults, children, and young people are given opportunities to be involved in decisions that affect their lives. This Framework will give us better information which we can share with our partners. It will also stop us from doing the same engagement activity twice, which will then save us money and time.



**This Framework  
gives us clear information  
on how to speak with and  
listen to our communities  
and get them involved  
in the work we do.**

## Our Main Aims

We want to make sure that we support our communities to get involved in the services they receive or in projects that might affect them.

Our main aims are to:

- Know and work with our communities and understand their needs and views, (for example children and young people, people who have an illness, a disability or who are elderly).
- Make sure that we involve and ask our communities in identifying issues that are important to them or they have lived experience in.
- Make sure that we maximise the opportunities to collaborate and co-produce solutions.
- Ask our communities whether we have achieved the things that are important to them; and work with other partners (people using this Framework) when we want to speak with or listen to our communities, and we will tell our communities about what we find.

The Public Engagement and Consultation Panel will check that we are achieving these aims.



## The Public Engagement and Consultation Panel

Our Public Engagement and Consultation Panel makes sure that the way we speak with and listen to our communities is of a high standard.

The Panel is made up of:

- The Cabinet Member for Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services.
- Other Elected Members nominated to be a member of the Public Engagement and Consultation Panel.
- A representative from Sefton Partnership.
- A representative from Sefton Council for Voluntary Services.
- A representative from the Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service.
- A representative from Sefton Young Advisors (paid professional young people aged 15 to 21 who advise adults on how to work with young people).
- A representative from Healthwatch Sefton
- A Voluntary, Community & Faith Sector and Equalities representative.

The Panel will also receive feedback, assessment reports and presentations from our partners. This feedback will be about:

- How we carried out our work.
- The opinions of the people taking part on how they found the process.
- The number of people who took part and the costs of the different methods of getting them involved.
- How successful different methods were at getting the views of people, for example children, young people, and people with disabilities.

- What has worked well and what could be done differently.
- How feedback is being shared with people who took part.
- If there are opportunities to continue the engagement and involve people.



**Our Public Engagement and Consultation Panel makes sure that the way we speak with and listen to our communities is of a high standard.**

## Important principles

To maintain high standards in the way we work with our communities, we will use the following important principles in everything we do.

We will:

- Put people at the heart of how we develop a service or project.
- Involve adults, children and young people in decisions that affect their lives.
- Treat the involvement of our communities as a developing process, which grows and improves over time.
- Look and improve the way we speak with and listen to our communities by sharing information with our partners.
- Give our stakeholders (people who have an interest in our organisation) feedback on the results of the work we do.
- Work in a fair and clear way and make sure that everyone can be involved.
- Make sure that anyone we speak with and listen to has all the information they need to get involved and this is in a format they can understand.
- Make sure people know how they can influence the decisions we make.
- Set standards for how we work with our communities and keep to them.

The Partnership Public Engagement and Consultation Panel will make sure we keep to these standards.



**Involving children and young people can help them feel valued and included and can develop important and useful skills.**

## **The standards**

We will use these standards to make sure that the work we do with our communities is of a high quality and fair.

These standards will help us get a better understanding of our communities and stop us from doing the same work twice.

### **Standard 1:**

The way we want to speak with and listen to our communities is clear.

We will make sure that our work:

- Has clear aims that explain what we are asking people's views on, what we are not asking people's views on and any limits we must work within.
- Includes a review of the other work we are currently doing, so we know this work is needed.

- Is linked with other similar work, so we don't do the same work twice.
- Follows all relevant legal requirements - for example, the Equality Act 2010, the NHS Accessible Information Standard 2016 and the Data Protection Act 2018.

### **Standard 2:**

**We identify all local people who are likely to be affected or interested.**

We will make sure that:

- We make a list of all local people - for example, members of the public (including children and young people and those that may experience discrimination or who may be vulnerable), elected members, staff, and other people who might be affected or interested by the issues.
- We make the work we are doing easy to get involved in, and that we clearly target the people we want to speak with, listen to and involve and remove any barriers to their involvement.

### **Standard 3:**

**We have a public engagement and consultation plan that is value for money.**

We will make sure that:

- The plan includes an equality impact assessment (an analysis to help us decide how our decisions will affect different groups).
- The plan has clear aims and realistic timescales, budget and resources.
- The plan includes different ways to engage people and approaches which are appropriate for the target audience.
- The plan allows everyone interested to give us their feedback.
- We choose an officer who has the relevant skills and knowledge to lead the work we are doing.

#### **Standard 4:**

All relevant information is available in appropriate formats and written in plain English for people who want to see it.

We will make sure that we:

- Develop a communications plan as part of our work and all information is available in accessible formats and written in plain English for people who want to see it.
- Make all background documents, supporting documents and information available at the time we carry out the work, including our reasons for carrying out the work.
- Are clear on reasoning for how decisions were reached.

#### **Standard 5:**

We record all responses accurately and fairly.

We will make sure that we:

- Record all the information we find from the work we do.
- Analyse the responses and the equality monitoring information.
- Upload information onto the Your Sefton Your Say Consultation Hub.

#### **Standard 6:**

We have a clear plan for giving feedback on the results from our work with the community.

We will make sure that we:

- Have a list of the people who took part and their views and comments.
- Give everyone who took part in our work the chance to see the results we found.

- Have a clear process to give feedback to people who did not take part, but who are still affected.
- Tell people about the suggestions we cannot use and explain why.
- Let people know what's coming next and how people can be involved.

### **Standard 7:**

The results of our work with the public and how it has influenced our policies and plans.

We will make sure that we:

- Use the information we have found to develop our policies and service plans; and tell people about any changes we make.

### **Standard 8:**

Looking at how effective our work is.

We will make sure that we:

- Look how effective and efficient our work has been.
- Share what we have learnt and use this for the next time we want to speak with, listen and involve our communities.

## What we mean by ‘engagement and consultation’

The words ‘engagement’ and ‘consultation’ can mean different things. To us, engagement is more than making information available or getting opinions and feedback. We should use the information we receive to help us make decisions on or changes to our service, plans or projects.

We believe it is important to get our community involved in designing and assessing services, as they have lots of ideas about how things could be done differently or better. This should improve things for local people and strengthen the relationship we have with them.

We must consider what we can do to communicate with all local people, so that everyone can have their say. It is important that the wider community understand how they can get involved in activities before they start, and that they feel able to do so. It is also important that we keep local people informed and tell them: -

- What is going to happen with the information they have given us.
- What changes we will make because of the work we have done with them.
- How else they can get involved.

For this partnership Public Engagement and Consultation Framework, people can get involved at four levels:

### Information-giving

Where communities are informed but have no influence on the decisions that are being made. We need to explain what is happening and be clear.

### **Consulting (getting people's views)**

Where residents can inform decisions, but don't have the final say. There is room to work with our communities on what happens next.

### **Co-production**

Where things are done jointly, acting together – there is lots of room to shape the decision/service.

### **Supporting Citizen Power**

Where residents leads and the Council/organisations stands back- long-term involvement.

*Adapted from the Local Government Association New Conversations Guide to Engagement.*



## More information about co-production

Co-production is a way of involving people in the development of services, projects, practice, and policy from the start of the process in a way that is inclusive.

Co-production is:

- People who use services, their families, carers and professionals coming together as equals.
- All people are involved in every step of the process.
- No one is left out, everyone involved gets to share their experiences as part of the process.
- Meetings are structured in such a way that everyone understands what is happening.
- Everyone get the chance to have their say in making real changes
- Building on existing skills and developing new ones

Co-production requires deeper engagement than traditional consultation. The guiding principle is that people with lived experience are often best placed to advise on what support and services will make a positive difference to them. It means that adults, children, and young people know what is important to them and have ideas for the solutions to problems/issues and what works.

It's about doing things together, not just talking about things together and we value their contribution.



## Examples of Co-production

### Sefton's Improving Information Group

Sefton Council, people who have different communication needs and other partners are working together to change the way information is provided to residents. The project is driven by the passion and drive of all those involved, and they are spreading the word across the whole of Sefton that making information accessible is everyone's responsibility.

In 2017 the Council looked at customer experiences of financial benefits and identified the need to improve how it communicated with people who had different communication needs. This review included the lived experience of people receiving Council information, who told us that they didn't always understand the information they received which caused them stress and uncertainty.

Following the review, the people with lived experience and representatives from wider groups, including People First Merseyside, Merseyside Society for Deaf People, Healthwatch Sefton, Crisis Café (for mental health), Sefton Advocacy, Sefton Partnership of Older Citizens and Southport Access for Everyone wanted to work together to help the Council improve the way it communicates with people and to make sure that everybody can understand the information they receive in a way that suits them.

The Group meets regularly and has agreed its own objectives and identified areas where improvements were needed. This is the work that the group has developed so far: -

- A top tips guide for communicating in an accessible way
- A contact list sharing the details of organisations that support people who use different ways to communicate in Sefton.

- A short film made by the group sharing their experiences of receiving communication from the Council in a format they cannot use.
- An accessible information e-learning training session for the Council and partners.
- The development of an Accessible Information Advocate programme and council wide training and skill development.

The Group has successfully engaged with Council departments and regularly act as a critical friend by reviewing and guiding on things such as new policies, consultations, and service redesign. This has led to real improvements for people in Sefton.

*“Being part of the Improving Information Group is important to all the members of People First Merseyside. We have campaigned for a long time for information in a way we can understand, and this group has shown that if we all work together, we can make a difference.”*

Phil, People First Merseyside



## SEND Local Offer website refresh

The SEND Sefton Partnership received feedback from the SEND parent/carer survey that the SEND Local Offer was difficult to follow.

Following a review, the Council decided that the current Local Offer website needed to be improved.

The SEND Local Offer Officer created a group of young people and a group of parents/carers. Young people from Sefton's Buddy Up, a mentoring and befriending service for young people with additional needs also formed a focus group so members could share their ideas.

We worked together and had lots of discussions. The young people choose the homepage layout, colours, and icons. All changes were co-produced with young people and parents and carers. The SEND Local Offer website has been refreshed to improve access and the look and feel. The Local Offer homepage was also completely redesigned following user testing and feedback. Recite Me software was also added to the Local Offer website which has improved accessibility.



The Young Person's group really enjoyed working together to drive the improvement to the look and feel of the local offer website. The young people made new friends and they learnt new skills, they learnt how to complete research, website testing and they learnt how the local offer website works.

The group continue to meet on a weekly basis and has expanded and agreed on the name of The Young Person's Get Talking Group. They are involved in coproducing pieces of work, meet new friends, and have fun. The young people are going to produce a video that will tell people about their involvement and their thoughts about the website before and after the improvements. Schools and the Sefton Parent Carer Forum have helped to promote the new look website to parents and carers and children and young people.

Some feedback from the young people:

*"We love the colours and icons and are pleased we were involved in making it."*

*"We worked together as a team to co-produce the refreshed website, improving the design and how it works".*

*"We worked well as a team, to share our ideas, and research for the website. We learnt a lot of new things and gave feedback about the changes we had made".*

*"We think the refreshed website is easier to use and looks a lot clearer than the old one".*

For more information about the Local Offer visit:

[www.seftondirectory.co.uk/localoffer](http://www.seftondirectory.co.uk/localoffer)

## The Sandbrook co-production group

The Sandbrook co-production group helped the Council with developing a new short-term assessment unit. It started so that Sefton Council can work with people with expertise through lived experience.

This unit will help people with autism or learning difficulties who need extra support. It will give them a place to stay for a short period of time. Staff can also assess their needs and come up with a support plan.



The co-production group is made up of people with lived experience of complex care needs. This includes parents, carers and service users. People First Merseyside worked with Sefton Council to create the group.

The group helped to design different areas of the unit, including the gardens and sensory room. In later meetings, they worked together to pick the colour of furniture in the unit, and the individual apartments.

The group will continue to meet to share their ideas around how the service will be run.

The co-production group will also help Sefton Council to watch the service once it is open. This will give us the expertise needed to continually improve. If you would like to find out more, visit <https://www.sefton.gov.uk/stau>.

## How will we know if it is working?

By reviewing our progress, we can make any changes or improvements we need to. We will also be able to make sure that local people are receiving the best possible services. We understand that everyone has a part to play in creating strong, safe, successful, and healthy communities that put the people at the heart of what we do.

## How will we know if we have been successful?

The Public Engagement and Consultation Panel is responsible for managing how we perform. To check whether the Framework is having an effect, the Panel will use the following scorecard to identify areas we need to develop, and also areas where we are showing good practice.

<b>Results of the public engagement and consultation framework</b>	<b>How we will know we have been successful</b>
We know and work with our communities and understand their needs and views, for example children and young people, people who have an illness, a disability or who are elderly).	We have completed an equality impact assessment for our activity to get people involved in our work.  We have collected equality monitoring information and looked at this as part of developing our service or project.  We can show that we have spoken with and listened to local people according to the Standards for Engagement and Consultation.

<b>Results of the public engagement and consultation framework</b>	<b>How we will know we have been successful</b>
<p>Make sure that we involve and ask our communities in identifying issues that are important to them or they have lived experience in.</p>	<p>We have provided information in accessible formats and removed any barriers so people can take part.</p> <p>We are working together with people who use services and their carers and value their lived experience and involvement.</p> <p>We can show that we have made changes to how we deliver services, because of the work we carried out with the local community.</p>
<p>We have asked our communities whether we have achieved the things that are important to them.</p>	<p>We have built time in to review our consultation and engagement activity and check if the activity is making a difference to people’s lives.</p>
<p>We have worked with other partners when we have wanted to speak with and listen to our communities, and we have told our local communities about what we have found.</p>	<p>We can show that we are working with partners to plan, design and deliver our work with the local community, and that we are sharing the results of the activities.</p>

## Other documents and supporting information

New Conversations 2.0 Local Government Association guide to engagement, 2020

Website: <https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/new-conversations-20-lga-guide-engagement>

Youth Voice and Participation Toolkit 2022

Contact: [Georgia.ribbens@seftoncvcs.org.uk](mailto:Georgia.ribbens@seftoncvcs.org.uk)

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child – Save the Children

<https://www.savethechildren.org.uk/what-we-do/childrens-rights/united-nations-convention-of-the-rights-of-the-child>

The Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duties

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance>

WCAG – Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.

Understanding accessibility requirements for public sector bodies

<https://www.gov.uk/service-manual/helping-people-to-use-your-service/understanding-wcag>

New Realities – A ‘can-do’ collaborative agreement between Sefton Council and Sefton’s Voluntary, Community, and Faith Sector New Realities agreement

<https://www.sefton.gov.uk/media/5514/sefton-new-realities-role-of-cvs.pdf>

## Contact details

Jayne Vincent

Consultation and Engagement Lead, Sefton Council

Email: [Jayne.vincent@sefton.gov.uk/](mailto:Jayne.vincent@sefton.gov.uk)

Web: <https://yourseftonyoursay.sefton.gov.uk/>

Investsefton

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20 October 2022

Julie Swarbrick  
Business Growth Adviser

Sefton@Work

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