

# Participatory budgeting

Using a community engagement initiative to encourage engagement and empowerment within communities.

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## Key details

Does it work?	Promising
Focus	Prevention Diversion Reoffending
Topic	Anti-social behaviour Community engagement Crime prevention Diversity and inclusion Drugs and alcohol Ethics and values Neighbourhood crime Violence against women and girls Violence (other) Vulnerability and safeguarding
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## Key details

<b>Region</b>	North West
<b>Partners</b>	Police Business and commerce Community safety partnership Education Health services Local authority Private sector
<b>Stage of practice</b>	The practice is implemented.
<b>Start date</b>	January 2023
<b>Scale of initiative</b>	Local
<b>Target group</b>	Adults Children and young people Communities Families General public Victims

## Aim

The aim of participatory budgeting (PB) is to:

- identify community assets and groups resulting in enhanced cohesion and collaboration
- strengthen community resilience
- enhance trust and confidence in policing and partners
- create safer and stronger communities
- allow local people to make necessary changes to their community outside of statutory agency involvement

- invest assets and cash seized as part of [Proceeds of Crime Act](#) from crime groups to reinvested locally to support the community deliver services and interventions
- provide opportunities for training, development, and diversion

## Intended outcome

The intended outcomes of PB are to:

- identify the current community assets and community priorities for investment
- increase the ability of community assets to deliver meaningful interventions and diversions
- increase of trust and confidence in policing and partners (measured through community contact, engagement and relationships)
- reductions in crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) in the community
- increase of community intelligence

## Description

Merseyside Police hold PB events throughout their force. The aim is to empower communities and increase trust and confidence with the police through community engagement. These events have proved successful, with large turnouts and positive engagements, especially with hard to reach groups.

The first PB event resulted in 36 community groups applying for funding. This created opportunities for conversations with large communities. For example, a sports club engaging with young people who were disengaged with or not attending school applied for funding. The police then had a way to reach these young people who were potentially vulnerable to criminality.

As a result of the improved relationship between the young people and the police, the sports club members have since assisted the police and council in litter picks around their local area. This demonstrated that empowering communities and listening to their needs improves trust and confidence in the police.

## Planning

The funding used for PB is secured through various means within Merseyside. In some instances, Home Office funding for the community is used. In other cases a superintendent has gone to

partner boards and explained the benefits of PB, in which agencies like housing associations have provided funding for PB. The PB process is not specific to certain funding streams and has been used to address anti-social behaviour (ASB), organised crime groups (OCGs) and other crime types in different communities.

## Deciding which community area to address

To decide where PB should take place, Merseyside looked at areas they felt had low levels of trust and confidence in the police. This was supported by various indices of deprivation and crime rates in the areas. This process had several purposes.

- To understand why and how the chosen area would benefit from PB. A good way of doing this is by holding community cafes to reach out to community groups. These events are a good way to discover what works well in the area or what is lacking. This is also a good way to promote the upcoming event and generate interest.
- To consult the relevant community safety partnership at an early stage as this can assist in securing partner support.
- Allow the decision to be informed by community analysis. The current community asset mapping knowledge for the partnership joins the dots in provision, reducing duplication and providing a basis for longevity after the PB event.

Once funding is secured, a PB Coordinator is appointed to the community that has been chosen. The PB Coordinator is usually a neighbourhood sergeant tasked to be a PB coordinator by a superintendent. The superintendent briefs the PB coordinator explaining the importance of the role, and provides contacts of PB coordinators in different areas to create a support network.

## Working group

A working group needs to be established which includes all relevant partners that are community minded and passionate about delivering outcomes. This can include various partners including the local council and housing agencies. Where funding is not readily available, the PB Coordinator can liaise with partners to gain further financial contributions by explaining the positive benefits of the outcomes in vulnerable areas. Partner resources are not just financial contributors, they may be unable to contribute financially but may be able to offer other support for example, IT support, graphic design or free refreshments.

The PB Coordinator appoints internal and external deputies or allocate roles and responsibilities as they see fit. This could include a media lead or a meeting planner for example. Officers in that area are then tasked to go and speak to the community, explaining funding is available and that the public can be involved in choosing how the money is spent.

## Branding

A need was identified to create a strong brand for the event and this prompted a collaboration with the working group.

- The branding is often linked to the local community, for example 'LIVE NOW' which incorporated both Liverpool and Knowsley local authority areas.
- Previous examples used in Merseyside so far are 'Speke Up,' 'Speke Up Louder,' 'Leasowe United,' 'Parr-Ticipate,' 'Rootin' For Newton,' 'Summat For Sutton,' 'Our Croxteth,' 'Power to Park Lane' and many others.
- In some PB events it has been the community who have decided the name of the event, however often one of the first questions the community asks is "What is it?"
- Establishing a good working group collaborating on branding means the brand is more likely to connect with the community.

## Planning

The question from the community of "When is it?" prompted the following considerations:

- Meeting with the finance department of which ever organisation is holding the funding, to ensure that they have the capacity at the time chosen to hold the event to pay the groups in a timely manner.
- Event clashes in the finance department such as year end could result in the delay of payment to the winning groups. This could damage the impact of the event in building community trust.

A key element of the planning phase is establishing and agreeing the application criteria for future applicants who bid for funding. This can include that any project awarded funds must impact on a particular area or demographic. It could also include a specific issue such as health and wellbeing, improving environment, youth engagement/intervention or community cohesion.

## Funding

Other decisions need to be agreed such as the type of community groups allowed to be awarded funding. For example, these could include charities, community interest companies (CIC's), businesses, non-profit organisations, constituted or non-constituted groups.

The maximum amount a group can bid for needs to be stipulated along with how that funding will be awarded. Transparency is key.

There were several considerations during the process of bidding for funding.

- Electronic forms are a good way to pull together applications as it makes it easier for the coordinator to keep track of how many groups have applied. It also highlights the accumulative total of the bids and what areas of business the applicants are bidding for. This can help ensure a healthy competition in terms of bids and that the projects are of a wide variety. It can also help identify if there is a gap in a certain demographic or category.
- Electronic submissions and the use of software packages such as Microsoft forms, and Office 365 allow automatic analytical products to be created. This can allow you to track whether there are local groups to the PB area applying for funding or it is an out of area group. Work can then be done to get more locally based groups to apply for funding before the deadline.
- Applications can also be submitted via a designated email address. Physical locations to drop off applications have also proved successful. This includes dropping an application at a nominated police station or partner building.
- Accessibility considerations such as hard of hearing, visually impaired and dyslexia, should be promoted to the public so that they are aware the police can assist in submitting applications.

## Marketing

Marketing steps should be considered to ensure the success of the PB events.

- A bespoke logo on relevant communications, social media, and associated merchandise such as pens, t-shirts and signs has worked well for previous events.
- Although social media will reach a large audience, word of mouth or going out to speak with the local community groups is also effective.
- The more engagement with the community the better the outcome of the project. Workshops or community cafés are a good way to promote the event. They can also be used as a way of guiding groups through the application process especially if it is decided to use electronic

applications.

## Relationships

The relationships built with the public during the initial phases are invaluable providing genuine and sustainable community networks. The following actions need to be considered:

- public decision-making sits at the heart of PB and is fundamental to building trust and confidence
- effective leadership is essential
- everyone has a role in maximising engagement opportunities, and everyone needs to be an advocate for PB and do all they can to get people excited about it
- police community support officers (PCSOs) and partners all have an essential role in generating interest in the PB work

## Choosing a venue

- A smaller venue is needed for local planning, public consultation meetings and community cafes. Community venues make great venues for these.
- A bigger venue is needed for the main PB event. This will need to be booked in advance and considerations need to be given to logistics such as the venue capacity and parking. Booking the venue well in advance of the PB event will avoid the disappointment of it becoming unavailable.
- Ensure the venue has the appropriate IT facilities and a public address system (PA). Establish if they will provide refreshments or allow refreshments to be brought in. The best venues are those that are close to the area targeted area for example, hotels or sports clubs. Alternatively, community centres and schools would also be suitable.

## Deadlines

A deadline needs to be set for applications and this should be communicated across the community. Once the deadline is set the following process is implemented:

- once the deadline for applications has elapsed, a paper sift exercise will be necessary to quality assure the submitted bids
- sifting is not to assess whether the bid deserves funding but purely to ensure the bid meets the set criterion

- to demonstrate transparency, the paper sift exercise should be completed by the PB working group so that the process has public oversight
- it is suggested as good practice that at this point due diligence including vetting is completed to ensure that any potential successful groups can receive funding if successful at the main event

All bids that meet the set criterion and pass vetting should progress to the pitching phase at the main PB event. The following should be considered:

- all bidders should receive a formal invitation to the event
- applicants will need to demonstrate to the public why their project should be funded and will seek public votes
- thought should be given to hosting the pitching workshops
- when applicants pitch their project to the public, it will require passionate, enthusiastic public speaking which can be daunting

Pitching workshops can help people to establish the best approach to take to have the best chance of securing public votes. It is important to set rules around the pitch so that each candidate has an equal platform. This may include for example, deciding if the use of props or electronic presentations be allowed.

## Main event

There are several important aspects to consider for the main event.

- Identifying a suitable individual for the event is essential. The event could last a few hours, so the host needs to be engaging and confident in what they are doing. If they fail to keep the event interesting, it could result in the audience becoming disengaged.
- The main PB event will be the culmination of months of hard work by a lot of people. It should be seen as an exciting, celebratory event to be part of for all involved, including the police, partners, and the public.
- The venue should be set up and ready at a suitable time and date that meets community needs. Event organisers and facilitators from all agencies should be easily identifiable through either matching clothing or badges. T-shirts with the PB logo works very well. Consideration should be given to dignitaries and guests.



- Chief officers, police crime commissioner (PCC) and local mayor should all be considered, and a table set aside for them as appropriate.
- A democratic public approach should be applied and if elected members or councillors are in attendance, it may be prudent to exclude them from the vote to ensure complete public autonomy and remove the potential for self-interest. This can be decided early during the PB working group.
- Each bid for funds should have an equal number of ticketed supporters in attendance to maximise the perception of procedural justice, fairness, and integrity of the process. If there are remaining tickets, they can be offered to the general public to help reach the venue capacity.

A scoring system should be established digital, written or hybrid. Having a backup plan in case the technology fails is essential. Previous events have worked well with a sliding scale score sheet.

- All attendees must score all acts taking into consideration of having the rule of you can't vote for yourself as this gives transparency to the process.
- Making the vote system fair is essential, previous events have allowed each group to have a certain amount of voting slips no matter how many individuals are within one group.

For example:

- group A has 6 members – they will get 3 voting slips.
- Group B has 2 members - they will still get 3 voting slips.

This is to ensure that applicants are not disadvantaged by having a smaller group. Each applicant should be given an equal amount of time to pitch their project to the audience.

- Two minutes has worked well in previous events as it means pitches are punchy and dynamic.
- Pitches should be completed within a reasonable amount of time to enable networking and time for the vote count.
- Each project will be scored by the public in attendance and after all applicants have completed their pitch, the scores will be counted and verified.
- Those applicants with the highest scores should be announced on the day and will receive their allocation of funding following further basic vetting to ensure public money is safely used.

## Monitoring and development

Once payments have been made and the winning groups are delivering their projects it is important that the PB working group stay in contact and are able to be a part of the good work that is now being delivered because of the event. This will aid evaluation of the event and the impact that is having or has had on the community.

- The PB working group can then help these community assets combine until a suitable time to step away once they're self-sufficient.
- Previously community advisory groups (CAGS) have been formed on the back of PB events. These have secured long-term working relationships and can share ideas, projects and resources. This results in a stronger community who are better equipped to deliver what they need to enhance their environment. This provides longevity after the PB event enhancing the community assets in the PB area.
- The PB working group should also conduct an internal evaluation for their own learning identifying what worked well and what lessons have been learnt. This will help streamline future events.

## Overall impact

These impacts have been observed within the community where members of the public have been positively engaging with officers on the streets. After the PB, officers have also been invited to provide input to community groups.

An example of this is a girls' sports group who, after the PB, asked officers to come into their session and deliver advice and warnings on county lines. The outcome of the session were increased:

- community trust
- community cohesion and accountability
- interventions/diversions and community assets
- ability for community assets to deliver services or initiatives

Furthermore, the increase in community engagement and trust feeds into the build section of [clear, hold, build](#) an initiative seen as standard in policing. The build section of this process is to create stronger ties to prevent crime. By investing in and empowering deprived communities, PB can help in reducing crime long term.

The PB event not only improves connections between communities and policing, it also improves connections between community groups. During the planning stages, group discussions around what each community organisation needs creates opportunity for groups to help each other.

These impacts highlight the longevity in PB results, showing the short-term positives such as increasing trust and confidence within that community but also the long-term impacts of reducing crime.

## Learning

- Leadership support is pivotal to the success of PB. By having leadership support it is easier to procure funding and arrange coordination throughout the process. By setting out the advantages of community engagement and highlighting how it works within any [clear, hold, build](#) strategy there is potential to increase stakeholder/leadership buy-in.
- Be proactive with engagement, to get a broad section of community groups applying for funding, provide informal assistance to bid writing, and encourage local groups to apply, joining dots and facilitating where appropriate so bidders can collaborate to make a stronger bid.
- Ensuring the team are familiar with the finance protocols and procedure to avoid any blockages further down the line. This includes where possible completing due diligence checks prior to event and having the required format such as written signatures of financial documents.
- Ensuring that there is a fair voting system in place to avoid complaints and having a contingency plan should any systems fail.
- Ensure there is longevity, by creating a community network, or community advisory group from participates to increase community assets and reduce duplication.
- A refreshment break will enable community networking opportunities and some entertainment (local dance group for example). It can showcase good work already ongoing in the community. It will also the allow time needed for the votes to be counted and verified.
- It is important to manage the groups expectations of when they receive funding to avoid any frustrations.

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## Tags

Community engagement   Neighbourhood policing   Crime reduction