

# How we will deliver good community engagement

## What we understand to be a “community”

A community is a group of people who share something in common. They can be:

- People living or working within a defined geographical area (for example a ward, neighbourhood, or housing estate)

and/or

- People who share a particular identity or interest (for example people of a similar age, who have a disability, practice the same faith or are students) or are linked by a common issue (for example housing demands)

We recognise the term ‘decision-making’ to include personal actions (for example choosing which

activity would best help yourself) and community actions (for example deciding how a service can be improved to best meet the needs of a community).

## What is community engagement?

Community engagement is both the process and the result of working together to ensure the whole population influences the decision-making processes that affect their lives. Community engagement is the development and sustaining of working relationships between public bodies and community groups and citizens to assist all of them to understand and address the needs and issues experienced by particular communities.

## Use the four types of activity in the Community Engagement Wheel

### Example: Alley-gating

Seedley & Langworthy Trust (SALT) work in partnership with the community and statutory agencies to deliver an alley-gating programme in the area. Alley-gating has enabled local residents to take ownership and responsibility for a communal space that was previously neglected, unused or caused them nuisance.

SALT work intensively with residents before the alley-gates are installed. This ensures that there is a sustainable residents group willing to take responsibility for the gated area.

Residents are able to delegate responsibility for tasks such as sweeping and weeding, manage the use of city council funding and raise further funds, select their own committee members, and devise and review key holding agreements.

This programme has really contributed to a sense of community pride in the local environment.

### Example: Your Guide to Local Health Services

Your Guide to Local Health Services is an annual publication produced by Salford Primary Care Trust (PCT). It is delivered to every household in Salford. The purpose of the guide is to provide accountability and transparency about decision-making and spending and to inform people of decisions and future plans.

The guide includes a section called ‘how your money is spent’ and information about how people’s views have made a difference to services. As a result, there has been an increase in the number of people signed up to the PCT Patient Panel and an increase in the number of people accessing the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS).

### Example: Prince’s Park BMX Skate Park, Irlam

The local community in Irlam identified the improvement of Prince’s Park as a priority. The community committee set up a parks and open spaces sub group and developed a coordinated approach to improve parks in the area.

Young people had already identified the need for a BMX skate park and were supported to form the BMX Bandits with their own constitution.

They joined the Prince’s Park steering group and were trained with adult members in consultation methods. The Bandits took an active role in consulting their peers, distributed flyers, ran focus groups and helped to evaluate the consultation findings; influencing the design of the new BMX skate park and raising over £20k towards the project.

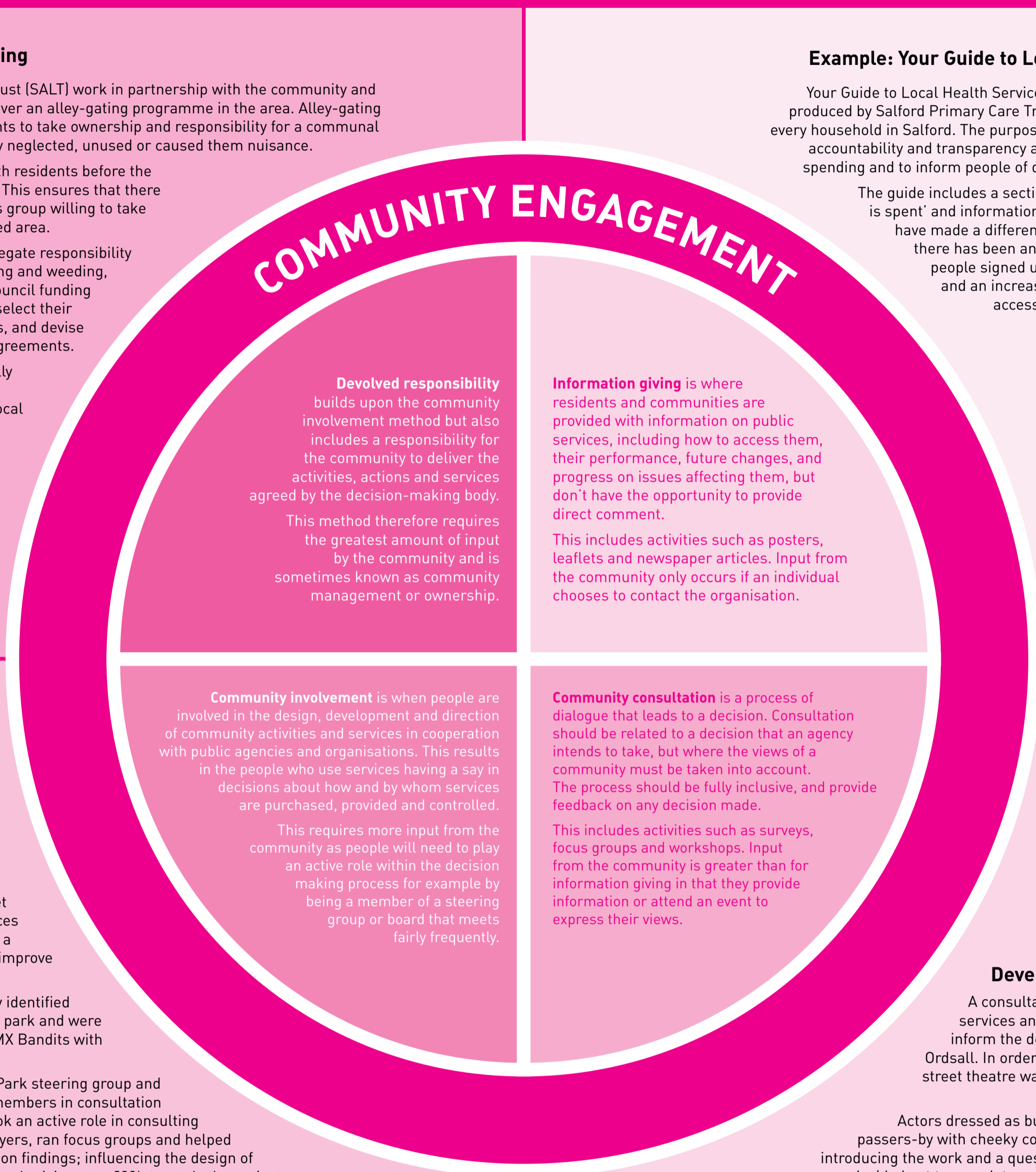
Throughout the eight week construction period young people continued to take great interest in their new park, occasionally ‘riding the ramps’ getting a sense of ownership. The BMX skate park is now the main meeting point for young people.

### Example: Ordsall Development Framework

A consultation regarding site use for services and shops was carried out to inform the development framework for Ordsall. In order to reach a wider audience street theatre was used to complement the wider public consultation.

Actors dressed as builders attracted crowds of passers-by with cheeky comments and succeeded in introducing the work and a questionnaire. Very few people decided not to complete one and 161 were submitted.

The evaluation showed that this method was useful in increasing interaction, communication, and receiving information, but is best used alongside other consultation methods and should be integrated into the full consultation process.



## Planning good community engagement

Before any community engagement activity is undertaken within the city all those responsible for conducting the engagement must plan their activities. This is to reduce the amount of over-consultation and engagement fatigue that has occurred in certain areas of the city and with some groups.

The minimum level of research that should be undertaken covers:

- 1 Has this activity been undertaken before?  
Who with?  
What was the purpose of the original activity?  
Are the results of the activity available?

Are the results of the original activity still relevant and recent?  
Can these results be used rather than repeating the engagement exercise?

- 2 If a new engagement exercise is needed then who should be included?  
Have all the potential communities affected by the service or decision been considered?  
Have your materials been assessed for readability levels to ensure all the community can access them?
- 3 Have all the types of engagement described below been fully considered and a full range of engagement tools explored to maximise inclusion?