

ADEPT President's Awards 2023

Entry form

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Award category Shaping Places for People

Project Title Community Assemblies Programme

Local authority entrant London Borough of Newham

Headline summary (150 characters max.)

The Community Assembly programme is London Borough of Newham's flagship programme of participatory budgeting and a beacon of best practice.

Shaping places for people: How was this project an innovative response to a significant concern? (150 words max.)

Newham has consistently received negative press on the 'state' of the borough over the years. Newham has experienced high fly-tipping rates, anti-social behaviour and high levels of pollution as well as 37% of residents living in poverty, the second-highest rate in London. Community Assemblies were introduced to Newham in 2018 to incentivise residents to make lasting improvements to the borough. It has become one of the largest participatory budgeting initiatives in the UK with more than 200 projects funded that have had a transformative impact on the borough. The Programme has improved engagement between the Council and residents and is recognised by Leaders in participatory democracy as a best practice example of what can be achieved. Residents lead on funded projects to transform their local area empowering them to take initiative and learn new skills. Newham's local communities are working together to achieve better outcomes for generations to come.

Shaping places for people: Please give evidence of the quality of outcomes obtained from the project (for example improved/more efficient services, increased inclusivity for residents, futureproofing the service). (150 words max.)

Newham's Community Assemblies programme provides the funding, skills and joint working relationships with residents to create innovative, environmentally friendly, accessible and safe places for residents to enjoy. Community Assemblies fosters local participation in creating projects that benefit the community and incentivises the residents to take pride in their neighbourhood. This has proven to motivate new residents to apply year on year for the upcoming cycles of Community Assemblies funding. Successful projects have included spaces to grow their own local produce and improve access to local attractions. The programme also offers all residents the opportunity to enjoy free local activities for the whole family. Improved quality of life and built new relationships. The programme offers residents the opportunity to build on work experience, project management and communication skills for the future.

Shaping places for people: Please give evidence of the level of collaboration between place and people services (both within the council and with external partners/providers). (150 words max.)

Collaborative working has been a great example to the success of the community assembly's

programme. The programme was able to engage with 1,187 residents and 82 community groups. The communication approach is open and transparent with all parties involved. Community Neighbourhood team, residents, voluntary faith groups, parks team, highways team and community neighbourhood managers including other relevant external and internal stakeholders meet regularly throughout the life cycle of the projects. Meetings include onsite visits and inspections, group forums and events with residents and Council staff to discuss the resident's vision on how the projects will progress and to give advice on best practice to discuss any risks or concerns. Community Assemblies is a resident lead programme of works. Residents lead during meetings to embed resident voices. Last year, young people developed a Young People's Charter and this year, will publish a Resident Experience Charter, defined by insight from resident engagement.

Shaping places for people: Please give evidence of the level of buy-in to the project or its goals from members of the local community, health and social care and external organisations. (150 words max.)

Newham's Community Assembly programme is one of the largest participatory budgeting programmes in the country. In the past four years, this programme has seen neighbourhoods allocate £3.2 million to community generated projects. Community Assemblies amassed more than 11,600 resident engagements from attendance at meetings, voting and participation in project delivery. Engagement levels in 2022/23 are set to exceed this. We have excellent feedback from residents taking part in the Assemblies, with 100% reported as being satisfied with taking part, with other feedback highlighting participants feeling they have made an impact on the Council, their community and developed new skills. This feedback has encouraged more residents and service areas to take part. Bringing residents together to develop recommendations, which inform significant investment, strategic decisions and funding allocation is proving more effective for communities that benefits multiple service areas. We also have significant support from our Mayor and councillors.

Shaping places for people: Please give evidence of the use or consideration of new sources of investment to fund projects. (150 words max.)

The Community Assemblies programme is funded by 'The Community Infrastructure Levy' (CIL) which is levied by local authorities on new developments in their area. An important tool for local authorities to use to help them deliver the infrastructure needed to support development in their area. In 2018 community assemblies started in Newham with a two-year cycle with £25k per area. In 2021, the budget allocated increased to £100k per area per year, for a total of £1.6m between 2021-2023. Since launch, the programme has become one of the largest initiatives in the UK with more than 200 projects funded that have had a transformative impact in local areas. At the end of 2022, an internal evaluation assessed the programme, and this highlighted the value of the programme creating a significant increase in resident engagement. For this cycle 23/34 Newham has allocated £1.6m with each neighbourhood receiving £200,000 over two years.

All categories: please add anything else that supports your award entry

The Community Assemblies programme constituted of eight neighbourhoods that covered the whole of the borough. Between 2021-2023, the Community Assembly programme created a total of 16,552 resident engagements - 11,616 resident engagements in 2021-2022 and 4,936 resident engagements in the year to date. This is a step change in engagement with residents since the first round of the Community Assembly programme. From 2018-2020, the first two-year cycle of the programme, there were 3,147 resident engagements.

89% felt more connected to their local area after coming to a Community Assembly.

85% felt that the Assemblies provide an opportunity to discuss and identify issues of local concern.

84% felt that the Assemblies provide an opportunity to be involved in decision-making.

82% felt that the Assemblies give a greater say in allocation of funding locally.

Residents involved in Community Assemblies appreciate the opportunity to get involved in their local community, make improvements to their local area and meeting other residents. Residents leading on project delivery feel that they could be more connected to each other across the borough. Increase recruitment of working group members and continue to encourage residents from all ethnic backgrounds to join Community Assembly events. This includes strengthening links to existing

participatory processes within the Council such as Newham's permanent Citizen's Assembly and Youth Assembly to increase exposure of the great work community assemblies achieves in the community and to attract interest to participate in future cycles.

Feedback from residents across the borough is uplifting and positive. Newhamco-create is an online participation platform and is an initiative by the London Borough of Newham. Its purpose is to provide an online portal where people who live, work, and visit Newham can participate actively in the decision-making processes. The platform does not aim to substitute face-to-face engagement, but rather to compliment it and make sure that it is reaching a wider audience.

On the platform residents can find all the different community engagement processes that are taking place in their neighbourhood, from ideas collection, voting, discussing, surveys, polls, participatory budgeting, online mapping, scenario planning, support for advisory boards and committees. Residents can follow the progress of the different projects and get updated on new participatory events both online and face-to-face.

Some of the resident's feedback can be found on the below link.

<https://newhamco-create.co.uk>

"Incredibly valuable work"

"Fantastic projects!"

"I've seen the murals at Rose Hill and all I can say is it's AMAZING! Brings colour and beauty to a otherwise dull boring wall"

"Amazing ideas that can be used by ALL the community"

Residents feedback and wanted to see an increase in place based environmentally friendly spaces. For example community gardens, nature trails, community litter picking events, new play equipment, bike hangers, planting of more tree's and many more.

Newham is improving links between local priorities and the Council's strategy so that funded projects can contribute to the Building a Fairer Newham Plan. This will be achieved by linking the Corporate Plan's priorities to local priorities at the beginning of the cycle.