

Welcome to the 52nd citizens' panel newsletter. This newsletter gives you a brief summary of the results of the 52nd questionnaire on the theme of "Community Empowerment" which you received in November 2024. Many of the questions asked in this questionnaire were asked previously in City Voice 47 which went out in June 2023. Where possible, comparison of these results with those of City Voice 47 have been included to allow comparison.

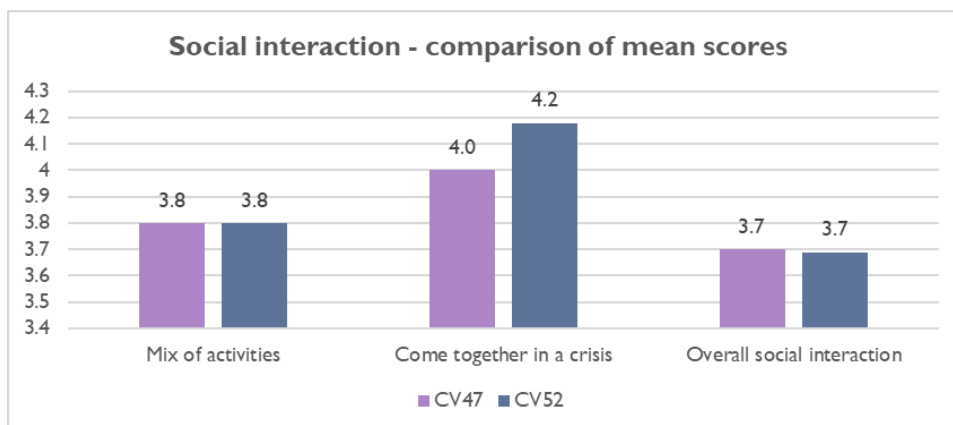
A total of 814 questionnaires were sent out to panellists and we received 303 completed questionnaires – equivalent to a response rate of 37.6%. This is considerably lower than the response rate for City Voice 51 (46.1%).

Your neighbourhood

In this first section of the questionnaire, panellists were asked to answer the questions with their local neighbourhood in mind, but to think about/consider the wider area it sits in if this helped them to answer the questions. In all the questions in this section, participants were asked to give a score on a scale of 1-7, where 1 = lots of room for improvement and 7 = very little room for improvement. The average (mean) scores for each topic were then calculated with a higher score suggesting a more positive response.

Social interaction

The first set of questions were around social interaction. The highest scoring response was for would people **come together in a crisis** with a mean score of 4.2 with is there a **mix of activities** scoring lower at 3.8. The mean score for **overall, how would you rate opportunities for social interaction** was 3.7. Comparison of results with when these



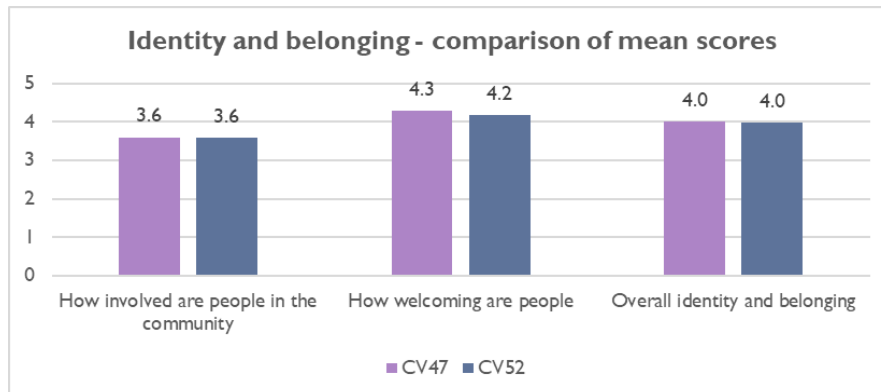
questions were asked in City Voice 47 (June 2023) shows the mean scores for questions were very similar to those in this questionnaire, with the response to would people **come together in a crisis** increasing slightly from 4.0 to 4.2 and scores for the other two questions unchanged.

Respondents were also give the opportunity to comment on their responses. A total of 83 comments were received. These will be passed to the service for full consideration, however a small sample is given below to give a flavour of responses:

- Community centre could be used more. No sense of community.
- Often opportunities for mixing and meeting others are not advertised or known.
- Everyone stays indoor in their flats. No form of mixing or meeting with neighbours.
- Everything is run on Facebook these days. I'm not on Facebook and would not consider using it - I struggle with social media. These online only organisations are excluding and discriminatory
- Good activities both at community centre, church and local hall.
- It would helpful that if there were activities available in the area that they were more widely advertised in the area, such as a notice board etc

- My neighbourhood offers a range of activities and opportunity to interact with neighbours/others.
- Opportunity to meet exists for some demographics, for example mothers with school age kids or churchgoers. Harder for some other groups.

Identity and belonging



This set of questions was on the theme of Identity and belonging. The highest scoring response was for **how welcoming are people in this place** which had a mean score of 4.2. The lowest scoring was **how involved are people in the community** which had a mean score of 3.6. The mean score for **overall, how strong is the sense of identity and belonging** was 4.0. These

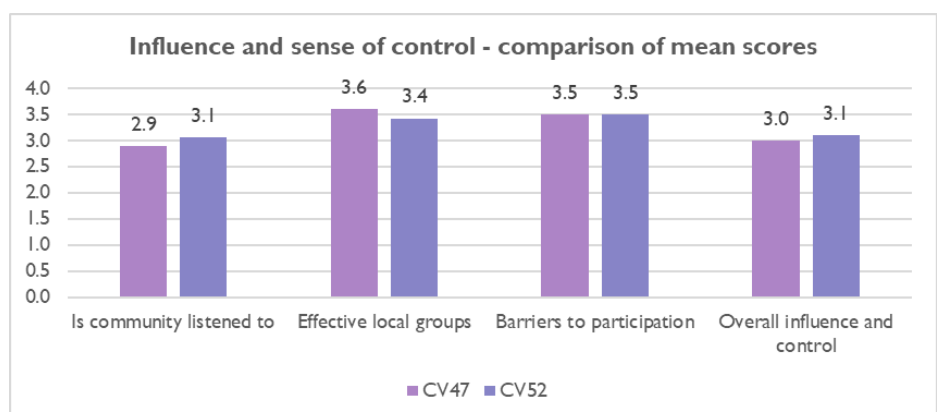
questions were also in City Voice 47. As with the previous set of questions, the mean scores for each question were very similar to those in this questionnaire, with the response to **how welcoming are people in this place** decreasing slightly from 4.3 to 4.2 and scores for the other two questions unchanged.

Respondents were given an opportunity to comment on their responses. A total of 54 comments were received. These will be passed to the service for full consideration, however a small sample is given below to give a flavour of responses:

- I have little or no interaction with local people except in the shops
- Generally, my neighbours are friendly and would help in a crisis but the sense of community, in general, is very lacking.
- I live in an area of deprivation, it has a bad reputation but some of the people who live here feel a strong sense of belonging and there is a fairly strong sense of community spirit.
- Lots of rented accommodation means tenants do not look out for neighbours, don't put wheelie bins back, remove leaves or snow from pavements outside their homes.
- Some people do a massive amount but there is too much unpleasantness on local pages on Facebook etc
- The questions above do not allow for the possibility that some residents do not get involved with anything in the community, such as myself. I was involved when my family were much younger but not now as I'm not fully aware of what is available.
- Too many new houses have been built in the immediate area with no corresponding increase in education or medical facilities. this tends to make existing residents feel ignored or undervalued.

Influence an sense of control

The last set of questions in this section were on the theme of Influence and Sense of Control. On the whole the mean scores in this section were lower than in the previous two sections. The most positive response was for **are there barriers to participation for some people** which had a mean score of 3.5, followed by **are there effective**



local groups with a mean score of 3.4. Both **is the community listened to** and **overall, do you feel able to participate in decisions and help change things for the better** had a mean score of 3.1. Again, comparison of results with those from City Voice 47 shows broadly similar mean scores, with slight increases in **is the community listened to** (from 2.9 to 3.1) and **overall, do you feel able to participate in decisions and change things for the better** (from 3.0 to 3.1). The mean score for **are there effective local groups** fell slightly from 3.6 to 3.4, and the score for **are there barriers to participation for some people** remained the same at 3.5.

Again, respondents were given an opportunity to comment on their responses. A total of 73 comments were received. These will be passed to the service for full consideration, however a small sample is given below to give a flavour of responses:

- A lack of social contacts/network/family prevents participation.
- I contribute to many consultations but if I'm honest I don't think comments and contributions are taken into account particularly by the council, many of the council decisions go against the wishes of the citizens of Aberdeen
- I could get more involved if I chose to.
- I feel there is a good atmosphere which encourages people in the community to communicate and also physically to help ones neighbours.
- I have a fatigue disability. I have been enabled to come by having online meetings. Disabled people need more than wheelchair access. By telling people what accessibility methods that are possible it would encourage people to participate in a way then can manage.
- If there are local groups where do you find out about them? Where do you find out when/where to discuss these things? Do we have a community council?
- Lack of community council and no community centre means there is no physical or virtual hub in my area.
- Mainly too busy to get involved
- Too much domination by individuals e.g. on Community Council and other local initiatives. Little incentive to join these if they are less than inclusive.
- There are active local groups but how effective they can be depends on whether decision makers are willing to listen to them. There are barriers put in place, some processes like planning and community ownership transfer are complicated and there is a lack of support or recognition that many groups are run by volunteers.

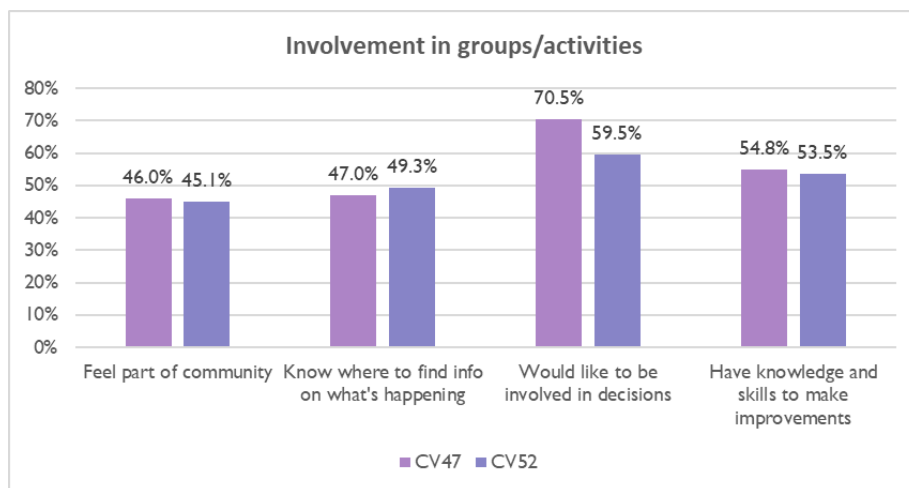
Your role in the community

Involvement in Community Groups/Activities

In this section of the questionnaire, panellists were asked to rate their agreement (Strongly agree, Agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Disagree and Strongly disagree) with a range of statements relating to involvement in community groups or activities. Agreement was highest for **I would like to be involved in decisions which affect my community** with 59.5% of respondents agreeing (strongly agree or agree) with this statement. Over half of respondents (53.5%) agreed with the statement that they have the **knowledge and skills to work with others to make improvements in the community** and just under half (49.3%) agreed that they **know where to find information about what is happening within my community**. At 45.1%, levels of agreement were lowest for **I feel part of the community where I live**.

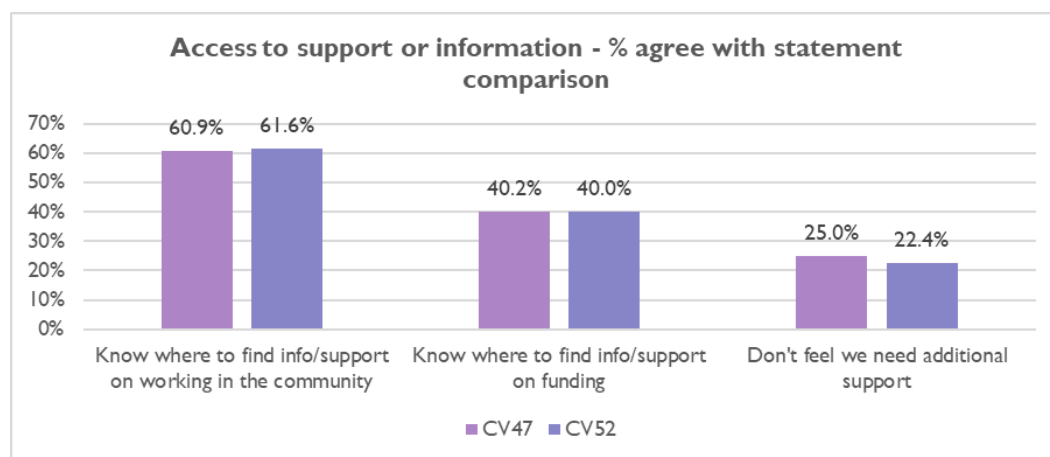
As with the previous section, some of these questions were asked in City Voice 47. The chart shows the percentage who agreed (strongly agree, agree) with these statements for City Voice 47 and City Voice 52. On the whole, the proportion of respondents who agreed with the statements is similar in both questionnaires. The exception is in the percentage who agreed that they **would like to be involved in**

decisions which affect their community which has fallen from 70.5% in City Voice 47 to 59.5% in this most recent survey.



The next question in this section asked participants if they currently belonged to any community group (i.e. any local group that they give their time or support to). Over a fifth of respondents (22.2%, number = 72) said that they belonged to a community group. When asked, 59 respondents gave the names of the groups they were involved in, with 63.9% (number = 46) of these agreeing to be contacted to find out more about the groups. This information will not be given in this report but will be passed to the Community Empowerment Group for follow-up.

Skills and support needed to succeed



The next set of questions in this section were only for those who had indicated that they belonged to a community group (number = 72) and related to whether they felt they had the necessary support, tools or skills to succeed.

Participants were asked to rate their agreement with

a series of statements. Most respondents who answered this question (61.6%) agreed (agree or strongly agree) that they **knew where to find information, support and tools on working in the community**. A smaller proportion (40%) agreed that they **knew where to find information, support and tools about funding available to their group**. Only 22.4% agreed with the statement that they **did not feel they needed any additional support**. Comparison of results between City Voice 47 and 52 again shows very similar findings, although there has been a slight decrease in the proportion of respondents who agreed with the statement **I do not feel we need any additional support** from 25% to 22.4%. The chart above shows the percentage of respondents who agreed (Strongly agree or agree) with each of the statements.

Working with Community Planning Aberdeen

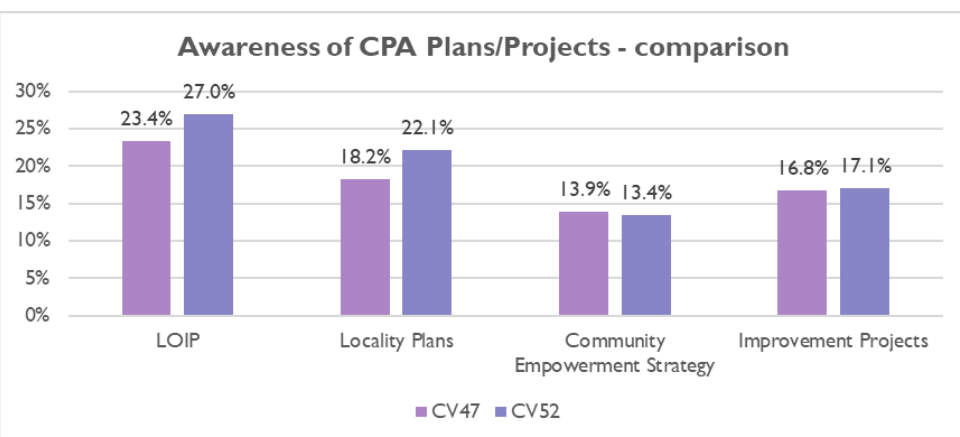
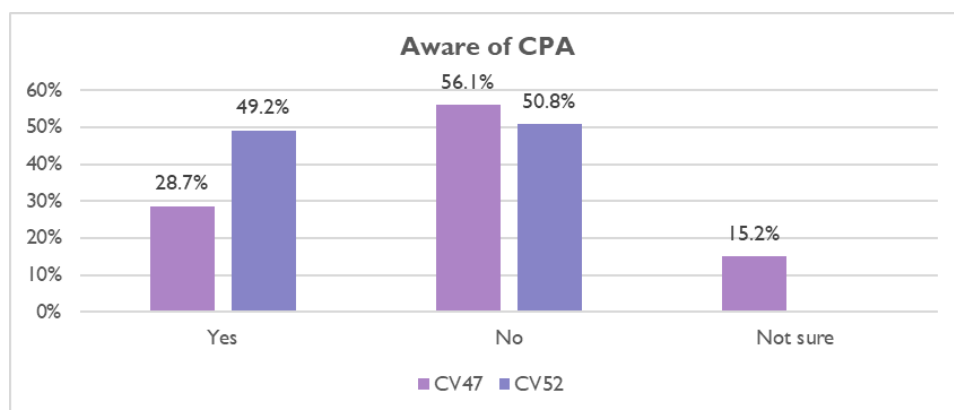
Aware of Community Planning

In this final section of the questionnaire, panellists were asked questions relating to their awareness and understanding of Community Planning Aberdeen (CPA).

The first question in this section asked panellists **Are you aware of Community Planning Aberdeen?** Responses to this were fairly evenly split with 49.2% saying that 'yes' they were aware of Community Planning Aberdeen and 50.8% saying 'no'.

A similar question was asked in City Voice 47, although the wording was slightly different asking '**Before joining the City Voice panel, were you aware of Community Planning Aberdeen?**' which would likely have resulted in fewer respondents answering 'yes'. Additionally, as well as **yes** and **no** options, there was also a

not sure option (potentially splitting 'yes' and 'no' responses). Therefore a direct comparison is not possible. However, to allow some level of comparison, the chart above shows responses for both surveys.

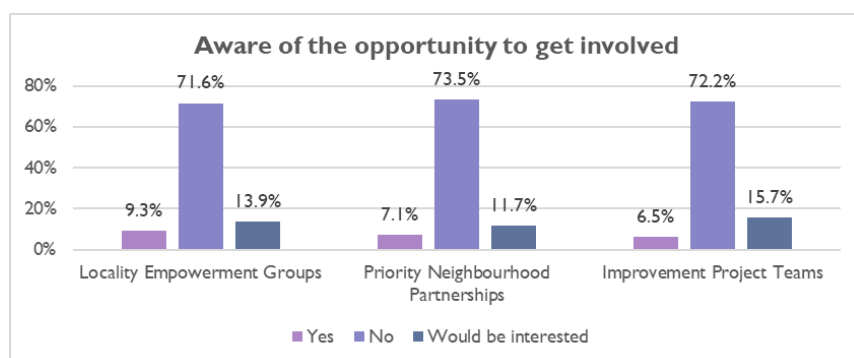


The next question asked participants if they were aware of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) and other complementary plans and projects (Locality Plans, Community Empowerment Strategy and Improvement Projects). Most respondents said they were not aware of any of these. Awareness was highest for

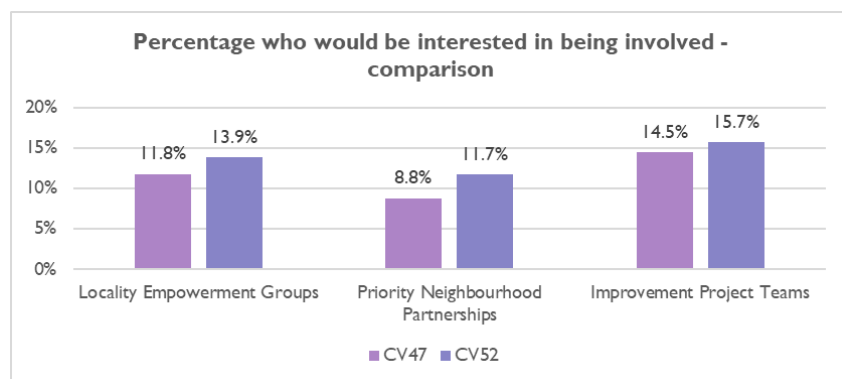
the LOIP at 27%. These questions were also asked in City Voice 47, although again a **not sure** option was included meaning a direct comparison is not advised. The chart above gives the percentage who said 'yes' for both surveys.

Panellists were then asked if they were aware of the opportunity to get involved, or would be interested in being involved in:

- Locality Empowerment Groups
- Priority Neighbourhood Partnerships
- Improvement Project Teams



Levels of awareness of the opportunity to get involved was very low – less than 10% for each of the options. Interest in being involved was also relatively low, being highest for Improvement Project Teams at 15.7%.

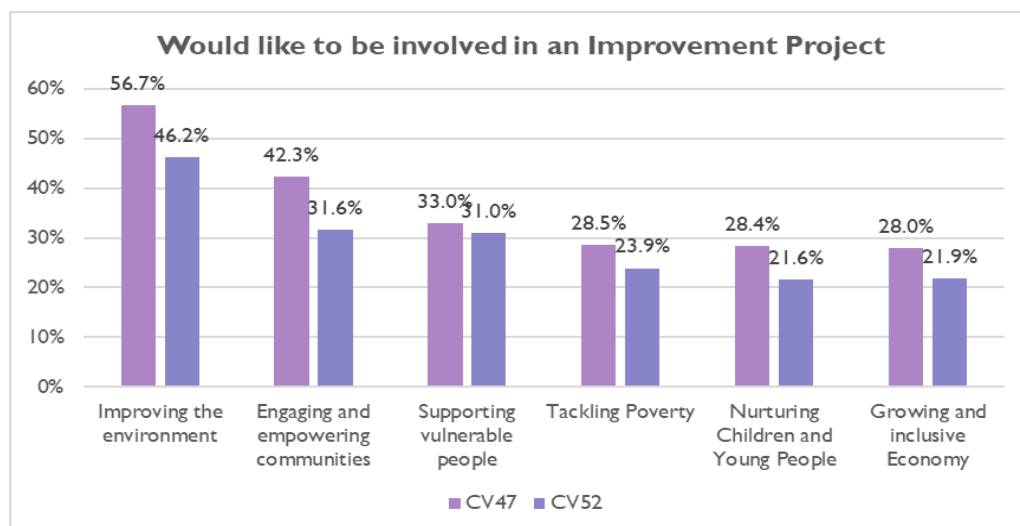


These questions were also included in City Voice 47 although, as in the previous question, there was also a 'not sure' option. Overall, however the results were broadly similar with **awareness** of the different opportunities to get involved being very low at 8.8%, 5.8% and 6.5% respectively for Locality Empowerment Groups, Priority Neighbourhood Partnerships and Improvement Project Teams. For each of

the opportunities, the percentage of respondents who said they would be **interested in being involved** was slightly higher in City Voice 52 compared to City Voice 47.

The final question was specifically about Improvement Projects and asked participants if they might be interested in being involved in any of these. The projects included were:

- Tackling poverty
- Growing an inclusive economy
- Nurturing children and young people
- Supporting vulnerable people
- Improving the environment
- Engaging and empowering communities



Highest levels of interest were for Improvement Projects around **Improving the Environment** (46.2%), **Engaging and Empowering Communities** (31.6%) and **Supporting Vulnerable People** (31%). Comparison with the results when these questions were asked in City Voice 47 shows a broadly similar pattern in terms of which Improvement Projects were most popular, however, the proportion of respondents who expressed an interest in being involved was lower in City Voice 52 than in City Voice 47.

Service Response: The questions included in this community empowerment edition of City Voice have been chosen by the members of Community Planning Aberdeen's [Community Empowerment Group](#). The Group's ambition is for all communities across Aberdeen to be equal community planning partners. The [Community Empowerment Strategy](#) sets out this ambition along with the different ways we will achieve this. To help us understand if the strategy is making a difference, we wanted to ask panel members about how empowered they feel in their local community now. Many of the questions have been inspired by the [Place Standard](#) which is a recognised framework used for assessing places. The responses will be used to inform the development of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan and locality Plans for 2026-36.

Social Interaction and Identity & Belonging

Our aim is to help create the conditions for community empowerment and support individuals to come together as a local community to take action and influence change for the better. This benefits the individual and the community because it creates strong social relationships and builds collective power. This line of questioning was about how connected to their community people currently feel. We learned that on a scale of 1-7 people scored 3.7 for overall opportunities for social interaction but scored more positively (higher) when breaking down their answers. For example, people scored 4.2 for coming together in a crisis and 3.8 for opportunities that everyone can join and mix. People scored 4 overall for sense of identity and belonging. When breaking down their answer, people scored 3.6 for how involved people are in the community and scored 4.2 for how welcoming people are in this place.

These answers give us some confidence that in the main, communities do have the right conditions for community empowerment where people have the opportunity to meet and take part in their local community. However, sub analysis of the data shows that this is not the case for people across all communities. Feeling isolated can be damaging to our health and wellbeing and a person's sense of identity and belonging can affect how they interact with their local community. Our Locality Planning Team is reaching out to people to encourage all individuals who have the available time, resources and capacity to be active in their community and help make a difference in their area through helping develop and deliver their Locality Plan. The sub analysis has been shared with the Locality Planning Team to help them take a more targeted approach to supporting neighbourhoods which do not have many opportunities for social interaction and/ or a strong sense of identity and belonging. The results will also be shared with members of our [Locality Empowerment Groups](#) and [Priority Neighbourhood Partnership](#) for consideration when developing the refreshed Locality Plans.

Influence and Sense of Control

Ultimately, we believe community empowerment is when people have a voice and ability to influence what happens to them and their community. Therefore the success of our Community Empowerment Strategy is measured by the answers to the questions we ask the panel about influence and sense of control. The overall score for influence and sense of control was 3.1 out of 7, with 22% of people scoring 5 and above. This is higher than when we last asked this question in 2024 (16.7%), however lower than in 2021 (24%) and in 2020 (27%). When breaking down the answers, the lowest score was 3.1 for the community feeling listened to, which gives us some indication for the reason for the low score overall, however this has increased by 0.2 since last asked. It is imperative that we explore the reasons more fully with communities and are doing this as we develop the Local Outcome Improvement Plan and Locality Plans for 2026-36.

In the meantime, we are acting on the feedback from this survey that communities do not feel listened to. The Fairer Aberdeen Board allocated £25,000 to undertake a Participatory Budgeting event in the Rosehill, Stockethill and Cornhill area during October 2024. A steering group made up of partners and community representatives prioritised the funding for initiatives to improve the community, support social inclusion, and tackle isolation and loneliness. Funding was awarded to six initiatives supporting parents and toddlers, youth work, and community activities. In addition, the Locality Planning team led the delivery of a UDECIDE Participatory Budgeting process. There was £60,000 of funding available to community groups, £40,000 from Community Planning Aberdeen and a further £20,000 from the Fairer Aberdeen Fund. This provided a total of £20,000 available for each of the three localities. Applications were open to community groups who were able to demonstrate how their projects and activities related to one or more of the community ideas detailed within the Locality Plans. Proposals needed to be in one of the 13 identified Priority Neighbourhoods. Funding was awarded to 23 projects across the three localities and 3 projects were partially funded. You can read more about the projects and the process here: [UDECIDE Report 2025](#).

We also continue to ensure that we report back to communities how we are using their feedback to make improvements. This service response demonstrates the continued commitment of the Community Empowerment Group to model best practice behaviours and engage in honest dialogue with our people and communities.

Using the steps within the [community empowerment toolkit](#), and the Participation, Accountability, Non-discrimination and equality, Empowerment and Legality (PANEL) principles, Community Planning Aberdeen ran its “Your Place, Your Plans, Your Future” engagement in March 2025.

This built on the community engagement which took place in 2023 using the Place Standard tool to inform the refresh of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan in 2024, engaging 470 people. This year the approach has been enhanced and adapted to enable the single engagement to help inform a number of plans and strategies being developed by the Partnership. We have ensured we reported back to communities on the outcome of these engagements and as the plans develop we will feedback on how the outcome has informed these new plans.

Involvement in Community Groups

We are extremely fortunate in Aberdeen to have so many community groups making a vital contribution to the City’s people, place and economy. Community groups are led by local people and rely on volunteers giving up their time and sharing their knowledge and skills. Community empowerment cannot exist without community involvement. This line of questioning was to understand people’s levels of motivation to get involved in their community and to increase our awareness of the community groups operating in Aberdeen. Although a majority of people answered that they would like to be involved in decisions which affect their community (59.5%) this is 19% lower than when last asked (70.5%). Similarly, there has been a reduction in the number of panellists involved in a community group (24.5% to 22.2%). We are grateful to the 46 respondents who shared the name of their group so that we can find out more about them.

We know already that one of the barriers to people getting involved in the community is that they don’t know how to or they lack the skills and confidence to work with others in a community setting. This was identified as an area for improvement in our Community Empowerment Strategy. Through our capacity building project, with engagement from both communities and children and young people, we have co-produced an [online community empowerment toolkit](#). The toolkit provides a single platform that staff and communities can go to for help and support to select the most appropriate and meaningful collaboration methods and processes to use; or to access advice on overcoming the obstacles. Community members can find out a wide range of information, including getting in touch with their local Community Council, where to get help with funding, useful data to support projects, and how to connect into existing groups and organisations. For organisations looking to undertake community engagement, the toolkit provides a step-by-step guide, with lots of useful resources to help support good community engagement. While the toolkit has been developed by Community Planning Aberdeen, the community engagement section can be used for any location.

As well as the toolkit, a new introductory training course ‘Foundations of community engagement’ has been developed and launched for community engagement practitioners across Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire and Moray. This course is for staff who want to learn the basics of community engagement and apply these skills as part of their job role. Since it launched in March, 51 people have booked on.

Funding is another known barrier with 40% of panellists stating they know where to find information, support and tools about funding. Through our community funding project, we are testing how small funding pots can be utilised to encourage local residents to have a greater sense of control and influence within their community, and therefore to become more actively involved in Community Planning activity in their local area. Further detail on this below.

Working with Community Planning Aberdeen

We wanted to gauge how aware people and communities are of Community Planning Aberdeen and their experiences of being engaged by the Partnership overall and individual partner organisations. The answers provide us with an important indication of where we currently are on Community Planning Aberdeen's [ladder of empowerment](#)

49.2% of respondents said that they had been aware of Community Planning Aberdeen before joining the panel, a 20.5% increase since last asked in City Voice 47 (28.7%). Similarly there has been an increase in the percentage of respondents who said they were aware of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (23.4% to 27%); were aware of Locality Plans (18.2% to 22.1%) and Improvement Projects (16.8% to 17.1%). The increase we feel is reflective of the improvements made and aligns with the 60% increase in community members currently participating in community planning at a meaningful level (From engaging to co-production) through the following methods:

- Locality Empowerment Groups
- Priority Neighbourhood Partnerships
- Woodside Decides
- UDecide Participatory Budgeting
- Fairer Aberdeen Board
- Place Standard Community Engagement

We also recognise that people may connect with community planning primarily through their involvement and engagement with a partner organisation or community group and may not recognise this as working with Community Planning Aberdeen. For example, young people engaging with Police Scotland as part of Community Planning Aberdeen's project to reduce anti-social behaviour. A family accessing affordable food through one of our community pantries as part of Community Planning Aberdeen's food poverty project. A community member joining a Locality Empowerment Group as part of our integrated locality planning model with the Health and Social Care Partnership. We celebrate and exploit the power of our member organisations to reach and engage more people, groups and organisations in our shared improvement activity. We also recognise that the formal community planning structures are not right for everyone and part of our ambition is to align more closely with the work that is organically taking place in communities.

We will continue to increase awareness of Community Planning Aberdeen and promote the benefits of working together, at the same time as ensuring that our scarce resources are channelled to where they are needed most – improving outcomes for all our people. The information specific to individual partner organisations will be shared with them for their own particular consideration and action.

Thank you City Voice panel members for your thoughtful and considered responses to our questions. We really do appreciate your feedback, suggestions and ideas for improvement. If you are interested in getting involved in working with Community Planning Aberdeen, please contact us by emailing communityplanning@aberdeencity.gov.uk.

Best wishes from the Community Empowerment Group.

And finally.....

This newsletter, together with the detailed report of the 52nd questionnaire, is available to view on the Community Planning website [City Voice - Community Planning Aberdeen](#).

If you have any further queries or would like to feedback your comments, please contact:

City Voice Co-ordinator

Email: cityvoice@aberdeencity.gov.uk

Useful web addresses:

City Voice: <https://communityplanningaberdeen.org.uk/city-voice/>

Community Planning Aberdeen: <https://communityplanningaberdeen.org.uk/>

Opportunities for communities to get involved in our work:

<https://communityplanningaberdeen.org.uk/ourcommunities/>

Join the Community Empowerment Network: <https://communityplanningaberdeen.org.uk/community-empowerment-network/>

Sign up for receiving more information through community update emails:

<https://communityplanningaberdeen.org.uk/community-updates/>

Community Empowerment Strategy: <https://communityplanningaberdeen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Final-Community-Empowerment-Strategy-Nov-2022.pdf>