University of Southampton

Understanding Pride and Heritage In Your Communities

A place-based creative toolkit for community workers, housing teams, and neighbourhood volunteers

by Joseph Owen, Joanna Sofaer, Isaac Fravashi, and Cara Headon

AndTowns

SOUTHAMPTON INSTITUTE FOR ARTS AND HUMANITIES

PATHWAYS TO HEALTH
THROUGH CULTURES OF NEIGHBOURHOODS

CONTENTS

MEET THE TEAM

DOCTOR JOSEPH OWEN

Joseph is a research fellow in English at University of Southampton and a senior researcher for **And Towns.**

PROFESSOR JOANNA SOFAER

Jo is Professor of Archaeology at University of Southampton and Co-Director of **Southampton Institute for Arts and Humanities**. She led the **Pathways to Health** project.

ISAAC FRAVASHI

Isaac is a doctoral researcher in English at University of Southampton and a specialist in creative methods.

CARA HEADON

Cara is a Community Development Officer for Abri and the lead partner on the **Mansbridge Heritage Project.**

MEET OUR PARTNERS

Mansbridge Primary School

'Learn More, Remember More, Be More'

round about café

Abri

This TOOLKIT is for community workers, housing teams and neighbourhood volunteers who want to engage people on housing, heritage, and pride in place. It uses creative methods and a place-based, collaborative approach to make conversations meaningful and inclusive.

Housing associations increasingly recognise that pride and heritage are essential drivers for tenant satisfaction, wellbeing, and community cohesion.

We have worked with Abri, one of the largest social housing providers in the South of England, to better understand these drivers in the context of hyper-local places.

Heritage isn't just about historic buildings. It includes everyday experiences, memories, and traditions that shape how people feel about where they live.

Understanding and valuing these elements builds trust, strengthens connections between neighbours, and reduces stigma about social housing, especially in mixed-tenure estates.

Research shows that mental and physical health, wellbeing, and overall quality of life improves when people feel connected to their community.[1]

By exploring these ideas, you can:

- → Strengthen trust and engagement with residents
- → Support better Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)
- → Evidence the value of community investment programmes
- → Create more resilient and cohesive neighbourhoods

We hope this TOOLKIT will be particularly useful for housing associations, local organisations, policymakers, community groups, volunteers, and beyond.

With these groups in mind, this TOOLKIT aims to:

- → **Explore** collective ways for understanding pride, which are most valuable if focused on local areas
- → **Share** methods that challenge traditional approaches to understanding investment in communities, culture and regeneration
- → **Cooperate** across many areas engaged in pride, heritage, and housing by sharing findings to inform effective practice and policymaking
- → **Create** new understandings of the complex roles that pride, heritage and civic engagement play in place perception and local decision-making

By addressing these points, a place-based approach can support existing knowledge, frame the rationale for decision-making, and develop the strategic case for neighbourhood-level interventions.

WHY DO PRIDE AND HERITAGE MATTER?

Pride in place is defined by how people feel about where they live. It is linked to identity, belonging, and community life. It can be positive or negative and changes over time. It can be felt by long-term residents and newcomers. It is linked to being accepted by a community and finding a role within it. Comfort with, familiarity of, and longevity in a place all influence feelings of pride. Pride in place means more than people's satisfaction with local services. It is a felt connection to where they live and who they live with.

Heritage is that which is inherited from the past. It not only refers to historic buildings, but to people's lived and felt experiences, memories, and everyday activities that give meaning to a place.

Heritage awareness is defined by the ability to recognise, understand, and use heritage—both built and lived—to shape decisions. It can help create trust, reduce stigma, and forge stronger connections in mixed-tenure communities. It is a way of seeing how history in a place can shape how people live with each other and develop a sense of community.

Place perception refers to the emotional connections and meanings that individuals attach to a place. These attachments are affected by people's lived and felt experiences of that place. Pride in place and heritage awareness contribute towards place perception.

Why pride and heritage matter When residents feel connected to and respected by each other, they feel that they belong in a place and attach positive emotions and experiences to it. These attachments can improve wellbeing, tenant satisfaction, and community cohesion, making neighbourhoods more resilient and inclusive. The Mansbridge Heritage Project has led to changes in how Abri understands, engages with, and supports the lives of residents.

For housing associations, pride and heritage can provide insights that support:

- **Neighbourhood renewal:** understanding what residents value helps shape regeneration plans.
- **Community cohesion:** activities drawing on place heritage bridge generational and cultural divides.
- **Tenant voice:** heritage-based conversations open different forms of conversation beyond surveys.
- **Reporting and compliance:** findings could feed into Tenant Satisfaction Measures, social value reporting, and board papers.
- **Fostering trust:** collaborative events demonstrate that change is not imposed on a community but co-created with residents.

Top Tips

Frame heritage broadly: not just as historic buildings, but as residents' lived experiences, memories, and everyday activities.

PRIDE AND HERITAGE IN NATIONAL POLICY

This toolkit is in dialogue with the UK Government's Pride in Place Strategy and recent agendas such as Levelling Up that have invoked pride in place. Pride, heritage, and community engagement are essential for wellbeing, cohesion, and economic resilience. Housing associations play a critical role in delivering these outcomes at the neighbourhood level.

The Mansbridge Heritage Project demonstrated in practice how sustained, hyper-local engagement can achieve the following national ambitions:

Building stronger communities: toolkit methods can build trust in mixed-tenure estates.

Celebrating heritage and identity: heritage awareness approaches help to recognise and protect built and lived heritage.

Tackling loneliness and improving wellbeing: activities such as heritage walks and memory maps create a sense of belonging and reduce isolation.

Empowering local voices: practical tools such as emoji mapping and timeline drawing include residents in shaping their environment.

Creating thriving places: asset mapping can align estate plans with national funding priorities.

Reducing stigma and promoting inclusion: heritage-based engagement reframes estates as places of resilience and shared identity.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT:

1. A PLACE-BASED APPROACH

What work have we done in place?

And Towns is a series of projects funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and led by the University of Southampton. They explore the role of place and identity in communities, sharing knowledge to better understand the relationship between pride, civic engagement, and place perception. Also funded by the AHRC, **Pathways to Health Through Cultures of Neighbourhoods** (Pathways) worked with young people age 14–18 in disadvantaged areas of Southampton to understand what they see as cultural and community assets, using this information to reimagine an integrated care system. Our recent work in **Mansbridge, Southampton**, focuses on how heritage can improve residents' feelings about where they live and support community connectedness. Our place-based approach uncovered hidden, shared, and contested histories among residents, who spoke of secret tunnels, Bob Marley gigs, and carp fishing.

What is a place-based approach?

There are multiple ways to learn about places and how different policies affect residents' understandings of place. Our place-based approach builds on a scoping project, Towns and the Cultural Economies of Recovery[2] and the Pathways project, focusing on the relationships between the tangible and intangible elements of place:

- → physical spaces such as buildings and parks
- → social conditions within a defined neighbourhood
- → the relationships within communities
- → and the public and private services that determine people's lives

By considering many factors of people and place, it offers detailed understandings about communities at the neighbourhood, or hyper-local, level. This approach is key for understanding how pride influences people's specific attachments to, and perceptions of, the places where they live, work and volunteer.

What is pride in place?

"Pride in place" is a term intended by policymakers to capture people's satisfaction in their local areas. It is increasingly used to understand the types of activities with which people engage in their communities. It also functions as a measure of place-based policy, such as the UK City of Culture and Historic England's High Street Heritage Action Zones. Beyond this definition, pride includes a variety of felt, emotional and relational responses people have about where they live.

What does pride mean when we talk about housing?

Pride through an appreciation of well-maintained communal gardens, a feeling of belonging fostered by community events, or a sense of satisfaction taken from improvements to shared spaces such as parks and play areas.

Neglected estates, poor communication during regeneration projects, and anti-social behaviour can diminish pride and even

lead to feelings of frustration or shame. Understanding these dynamics helps housing associations to design initiatives that strengthen community identity and encourage residents to feel proud of where they live.

Why should you use a place-based approach to understand pride?

Pride in place is a complicated emotion:

- → it works at various scales, e.g., national pride, civic pride, and local pride
- → it interacts with other forms of pride, such as pride in one's job or in one's group identity
- → it is fragile: it comes and goes quickly, and it can lay dormant for a long time
- → it is the product of many overlapping, complex relationships and histories.

Pride is subjective, making it difficult to "capture" and accurately represent in traditional methods. It is not always fully articulated by people themselves. Questionnaires and surveys rarely allow for this complexity, and measuring emotion through wellbeing, crime, and housing does not consider the experience of pride.

Case Study

Our partners told us that they had a better understanding of how pride and heritage awareness affects their local area after using methods that exceeded surveys and questionnaires.

Here and now

The financial crisis of 2008, Brexit, the COVID-19 pandemic and Levelling Up have provoked tough questions about people's feelings, affiliations and identities, and have brought into focus the impact on unequal geographies. They have also revealed a lack of appropriate methods to understand them. New and geographically specific approaches are required to understand the impacts on people in place, especially those which can develop views "on the ground" or "from within".

Creative methods

Engaging with residents in innovative ways is crucial to successful co-production and consultation. By being creative with new and established methods, we can better understand the needs of communities. They allow residents to express feelings and ideas that are not always easy to put into words, they allow housing colleagues to ask deeper questions in response to residents' unique stories, and they take account of the simple fact that every place is different.

Flexibility

Choice of methods depends on many factors: participants, situation, officer's experience and confidence, and the subject of your engagement. Some topics might not be suitable. Face-to-face, in-person engagement means that some participants might feel uncomfortable disclosing personal and potentially highly sensitive information. In these cases, think of supporting your study with a remote option—such as an online or paper survey—which can be completed in private, reducing potential embarrassment, anxiety or stress.

Be open to surprises

Have a clear idea of what you understand as data. Your engagement should be verifiable and transparent to produce robust findings and credible reporting. In our case studies, creative methods were used to open a safe space for critical discussion on pride and heritage.

2. PLANNING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Planning and preparation are essential before you undertake any form of community engagement, and particularly if you want to learn more about pride and heritage awareness in your place. For addressing housing priorities, try to link your activities to existing estate plans, anti-social behaviour reduction initiatives, and service improvement strategies.

In this section, we offer some key considerations for your place-based development work, including practical solutions from the And Towns, Pathways, and Mansbridge Heritage projects. These examples are only a guide. You will know your place best, so don't be afraid to adapt these methods to support people's needs in your area.

Before you begin your community engagement, think about any ethical issues that could come up and plan how to handle them. This checklist includes:

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI): make sure everyone has a fair chance to take part.

Data protection and privacy: follow organisation rules on storing and sharing personal information.

Confidentiality: keep personal details private and only share information with consent.

Quality and fairness: be transparent about how you intend to collect and use feedback.

When asking about feelings or personal experiences, remember responses can be very subjective. That's part of what makes this work so important because it engages with the messy reality of lived and felt experiences. It also means that you won't always get the same response and it's important to account for these differences sensitively.

Collect EDI information to understand who is taking part and check if you're reaching underrepresented groups such as young people, or older residents. Always use a privacy statement approved by your organisation.

Safeguarding

Clearly explain to residents the nature of your engagement and the methods you intend to use. This information must be added to an activity risk assessment, in which you should give details of any psychological or physical discomfort, distress and other negative effects that they may experience during and after your engagement.

State how you intend to alleviate these issues if they do arise. Questions and conversations about people's lives can bring up difficult experiences and memories. Be mindful that people may feel pride in their local area, but this might be because of personal reasons. They may have other feelings, such as shame, anger and fear.[4] Be aware that residents may share sensitive stories about stigma, housing conditions, or displacement.

Top Tips

If you are engaging with children who cannot legally give consent, it is important to obtain their assent. Assent is an agreement to proceed when fully informed consent is not applicable. Assent does not replace the need to obtain adult consent, but it respects young people's autonomy and development.

Top Tips

Complete an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) at the start of your activity. This approach will help to make your work more inclusive, identify potential barriers for protected groups, and demonstrate compliance with the Equality Act 2010.

Informed consent

Before an activity, it is important to make sure that residents understand what they are agreeing to take part in. This process is called informed consent. It protects residents and your organisation.

What you need to do:

- Explain the purpose of the activity in plain language: why you're doing it and how their data will be used.
- Make it clear that taking part is voluntary and they can stop at any time.
- Keep personal details confidential and do not share anything to identify someone without permission.
- If you plan to use quotes or photos, get specific consent for these elements.
- When working with children under 18, you must get consent from a parent or guardian. If relevant, get school permission. It is also good practice to obtain assent from young people if they can understand the information being presented.

Top Tips

Before starting any engagement activity, always check your organisation's safeguarding policies and procedures. Make sure you understand your responsibilities, know how to report concerns, and have the right contact details for safeguarding leads.

Consent form template

Name: _____

Date: _____

Activity: _____

I consent to: (tick all that apply)

[ ] Participation in activity

[ ] Use of quotes anonymously

[ ] Use of photographs

Signature: _____

Anonymity

Responses should be anonymised to avoid personal identification and to protect participants from having their identity disclosed. This point matters, because your findings may occasionally present conflicting views about local issues, and it is imperative **not to jeopardise your participants' professional relationships.**

While participants can be cited anonymously within reports, you can also provide a full, separate list of contributors, if required. When they are discussing pride and heritage, people may have personal stories and private views that they do not want in the public domain.

Data management

Under data protection law, "personal data" means any information that relates to and can identify a living individual. Personal data collected from your study should be used only for the purposes of carrying out your engagement and handled according to data protection law.

If any personal data is used from which a participant can be identified directly, it cannot be disclosed to anyone else without their consent. To safeguard their rights, you should use minimal personal data to achieve your objectives.

Triangulation

To get a fuller picture of what residents think and feel, do not rely on just one method. Combining methods can help you to understand your community better and make your findings more reliable. This approach is called triangulation.

To triangulate, you can use:

- → Conversations and group activities (also known as qualitative research): talk to residents in workshops or focus groups and use creative methods
- → Surveys and questionnaires (also known as quantitative research): collect numbers and identify trends to see patterns.
- → A mix of both (also known as a mixed-methods approach): use creative activities alongside short surveys for a combination of views.
- → By using more than one method, you can answer questions like:
- → What does pride in place mean to residents?
- → What do residents see as their place-based heritage?
- → How does heritage affect how people feel about their neighbourhood?
- → How connected do people feel to their place and to each other?

Case Study

The Mansbridge Heritage Project used a combination of resident surveys and creative methods. Triangulating between them enabled us to understand what, how and why residents felt about the place where they live. This mixed approach addressed several challenges in Mansbridge: it lowered barriers to engagement and allowed us to engage with people who were otherwise seldom heard.

Language and definitions

It is important that you and your participants understand the vocabulary of your work on pride and heritage. The meanings of pride and heritage are often historically situated, culturally dependent and place specific.

Case Study

We found that terms such as "pride in place" or "civic pride" were not clear to many communities, who conflated these issues with LGBTQ+ pride.

When we work on local projects, we need to think about the bigger picture. Catchy slogans often come from political parties and funding programmes, but they may not address the needs in your community. Phrases such as "levelling up" can sound positive but are specifically linked to financial streams and policy priorities, so they might not be obviously relevant to people in some areas.

Clear, easy-to-use language helps us to measure things like local pride, heritage awareness, and how connected people feel to their area. Right now, the tools we have are still developing, and we are looking for better ways to understand what really matters to communities.

Engagement sites

An engagement site is a place where you conduct your work on pride and heritage. Sessions may need to run in communal lounges, playgrounds, or outdoor spaces where residents already gather. Choosing sites of engagement depends on several factors, including:

- How residents in a proposed site for redevelopment feel about the plans
- How communities understand cultural and service assets on their own terms
- How communities understand policy impacts in their neighbourhoods on their own terms
- How communities identify as part of a local government funding submission
- How residents understand or resist definnitions of their community as "disadvantaged", "deprived" or "in need"
- How communities understand their area and how its geographical boundaries map onto political wards and constituencies
- How residents feel their area is perceived by others who do not live, work or have ties there
- How residents feel about the notion of "community" and the power of civic engagement

"Messy" fieldwork

Fieldwork is often messy and complicated. However much you plan and prepare, circumstances can easily change during your engagement. Participants could misunderstand what you are asking of them; they may no longer wish to take part; you may find that different methods are needed to obtain the information you want. During fieldwork, there is a value in **"just being in the field"**,[5] using the time in places to both understand and reflect on the needs and wants of different communities. Through fieldwork, you will often learn how to better reshape your question and subject focus. You may come across unexpected sources of people's pride or even shame.

Thinking long-term

Building authentic feelings of pride and strong heritage awareness in a community does not happen overnight. Talking to local people often shows how complex this work can be: mapping the area, understanding what makes people proud, finding ways to measure it, and making sure projects have a lasting impact. It also means securing funding that goes beyond quick fixes and short-termism. Towns and cities are complicated, so we need flexible approaches and patience when undertaking this type of engagement. It takes time.

Facilitator skills

Facilitating creative activities is vital for allowing voices from across the community to engage in places and for allowing officers to see in real time how these relationships and cultures operate in such places.

Creative methods allow officers to support non-traditional and social assets such as lived experience, networks, ideas, innovation and creativity.[6] Towns and cities can have a narrow collective vocabulary for imagining possibilities of renewal or transformation.

Places with an emphasis on a single narrative about themselves struggle to imagine their futures in plural or inclusive ways. There is often an "official story"[7] that dominates a place and people's feelings towards it. We underline the value of learning creative methods and developing facilitator skills for opening alternative spaces, modes, and languages.

Work with residents as co-facilitators and make sure to thank them for and, if possible, reward their input. Build heritage awareness by listening carefully to local stories, noticing unspoken community habits, and using what you learn to guide design and management decisions. Bear in mind the psychological safety of participants is vital to this work and should be at the forefront of how you shape these activities.

Case Study

Conducting asset and experience mapping in Mansbridge meant that Abri could engage residents at the local cafe, primary school, and assorted green spaces.

Above all, people need to feel comfortable and safe at your engagement site.

Case Study

Pathways to Health worked with young people and cultural organisations in Southampton, running workshops and conducting fieldwork with stakeholders including other young people, volunteers, charities, council officers, local community groups, and adult residents. We sought to understand the similarities and differences in their experiences of place.

Top Tips

Through stakeholder conversations, you can find active community members with whom to collaborate "on the ground". In our And Towns fieldwork in Darlington, we connected with a food charity to engage people in one area of the town, where residents were traditionally harder to reach.

Stakeholder mapping

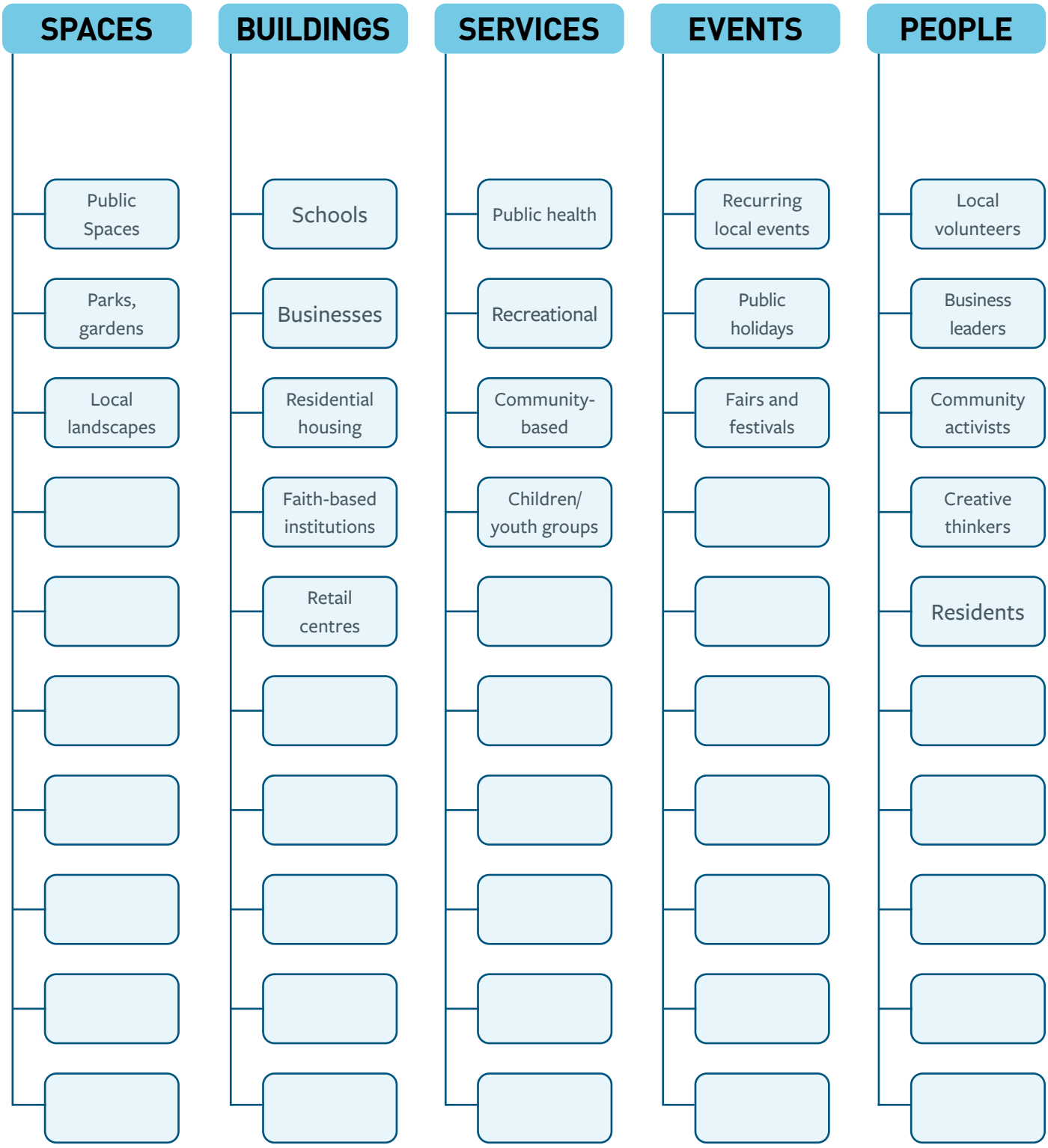
Identifying relevant stakeholders is crucial for your engagement. In a place-based approach, stakeholder mapping usually develops on a case-by-case basis. While key partners can be addressed through official meetings and workshops, engaging individuals and communities often happens through informal yet established networks. These discussions are key for **building relationships** that will help **to comprehend how pride is viewed and understood** in places.

Asset mapping

Mapping is a useful starting point from which to build a wider understanding of residents' views and the existing community groups, institutions, services and events that exist in a place. From an initial listing exercise, it is possible to expand on your identified institutions through **experience mapping**, capturing their community scope and reach. These exercises can be conducted on a regular basis over a long period to meet the evolving conditions of places.

Activity

Initial Asset Checklist (Add your own!)



Experience Mapping Example:

BUILDINGS

Schools

- → Outreach programmes, e.g. breakfast club
- → 'Care in the Community' kitchen facilities
- → Afternoon groups for local residents
- → Termly school fairs with input from community groups
- → Second-hand 'swap shop'

Businesses

- → Apprenticeship and mentoring opportunities
- → 'Open day' schemes for local engagement
- → Sponsorship of local events / teams

Residential housing

- → Resident groups and local neighbourhood support
- → Community rota for vulnerable residents
- → Campaigns for green spaces / safe spaces for children

Faith-based institutions

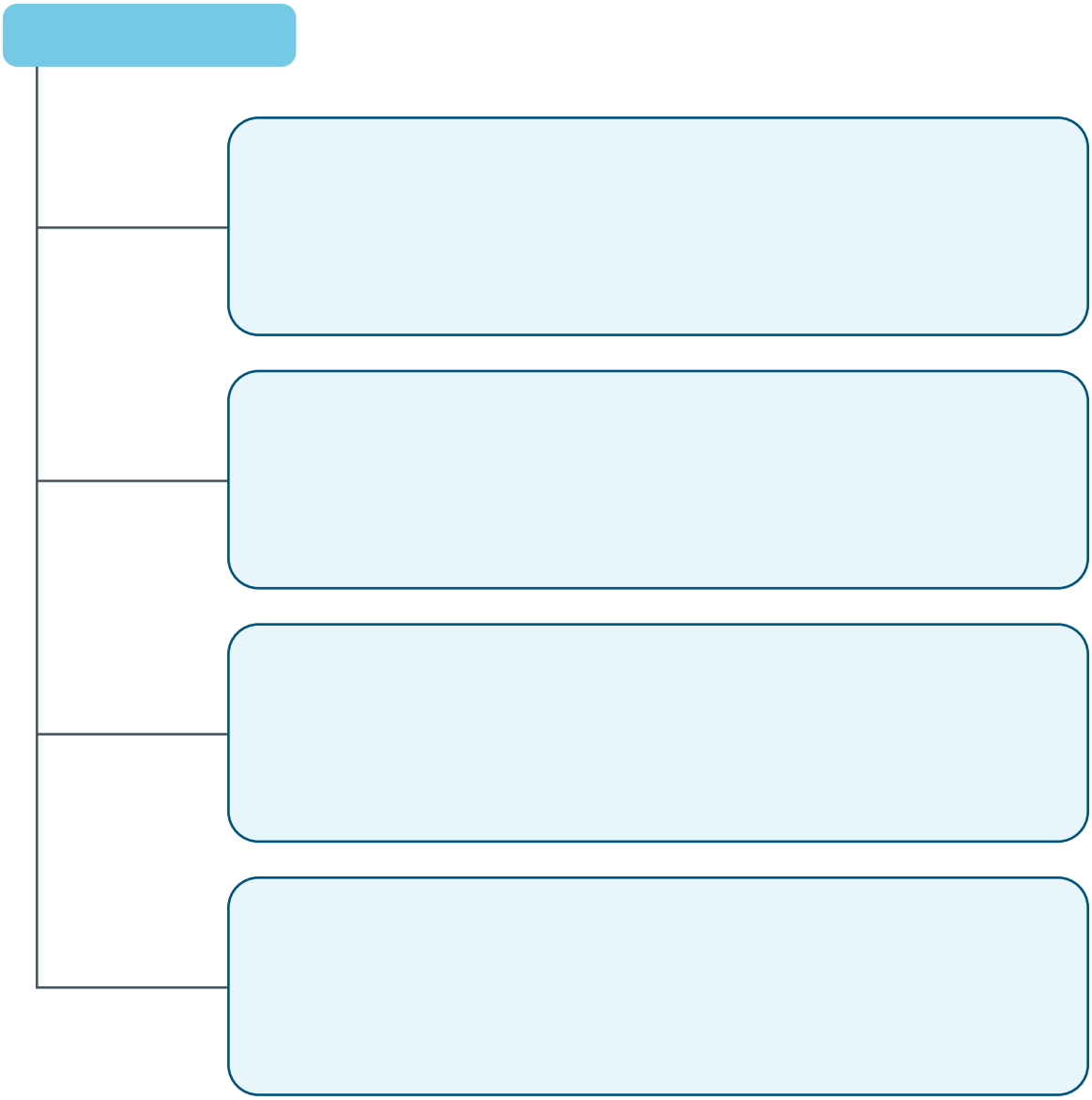
- → Coffee mornings and 'open days' to welcome the local community
- → Support schemes for homeless and vulnerable people
- → Established networks for community initiatives

Retail centres

- → Charity fundraising opportunities
- → Hosting special events and public holidays / festivals
- → Community engagement through public space

Activity

Experience Mapping Template (Add your own!)



Asset mapping works best when you involve members of the community.

Before conducting engagement, you should study social, economic and demographic data about the community and place you will be working in. This approach allows you to think about which creative methods are suitable for your project. You should consider questions like:

- How is the area represented in the local news and national press?
- Are there any live issues, any safety issues, or any issues that might cause participant bias?
- What are the levels of educational attainment?
- What might be the challenges and opportunities when working "on the ground"?

You must also reflect on your position in relation to the place of study. Community responses will vary depending on whether you are viewed as an outsider or an insider. These conditions may limit the amount people tell you, the nature of what they tell you, and the extent of your findings. Bearing these points in mind, the creative methods outlined in the next section give prominence to participant voices to prevent biases.

3. CREATIVE METHODS

Creative methods enlarge our capability to imagine futures, to develop and evaluate policy, and to engage multiple perspectives and stakeholders.

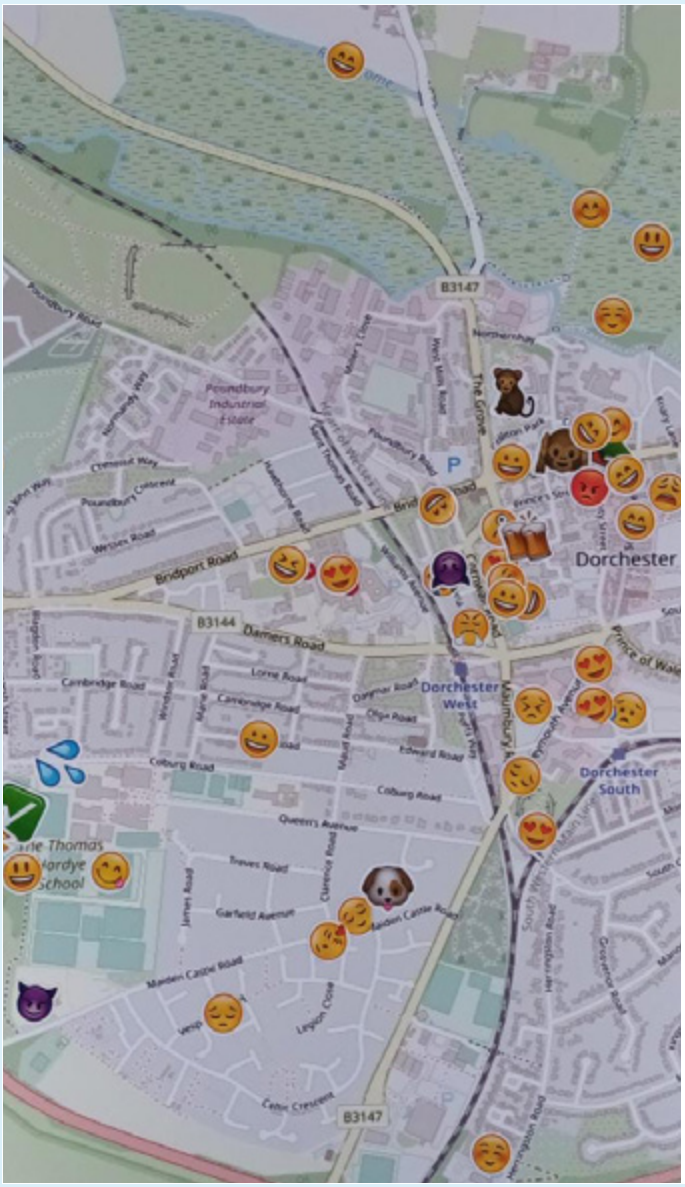
They present an important tool for moving from consultation towards genuine co-production with local communities, boosting participation in place development and policy.

Some methods work better in specific settings: in Mansbridge, we developed a litter collage approach because it creatively addressed widespread concerns about fly-tipping in the area.

First, some things to think about:

- How is the room arranged? Are you face-to-face or sat in a circle? During the event, how is power being distributed?
- Make sure everyone gets a chance to speak.
- Make sure everyone understands and is ready to explore the key terms of your engagement.
- Emphasise non-judgemental approaches.
- Be playful, creative, and fun, but be wary of manipulating participants.
- Use warm-ups and icebreakers.
- What will participants take away with them from the engagement? Knowledge, understanding, agency?

In the following section, we outline five methods that can be adapted for housing contexts...



1. EMOJI MAPPING:

Using a laminated map of an area, the task is to ask residents to tag emoji stickers on places where they have a strong connection, memory or feeling, and to explain their reasons for doing so. Use estate maps to identify proud and problem areas. It works well in communal spaces or during neighbourhood events.

Benefits

- An easy, interactive and engaging approach for residents
- Elicits rich qualitative data when residents explain their choices
- Participants respond to others, leading to productive discussions

Challenges

- Emojis can be subjective and contain multiple meanings
- Requires the facilitator to be stationary; not easy on the move
- It can be hard to identify locations; some areas may not be included

2. PHOTO ELICITATION:

Using photographs taken by residents, the task is to ask participants to respond to pictures of their local area. You can invite residents to share photos of what makes them proud about their estate, and where they see room for improvement.

Benefits

- A portable method that can cover many participants in a short time
- Pictures can provoke imaginative, detailed responses
- Useful tool for identifying key sites of regeneration in communities

Challenges

- Can be difficult to show photos on a tablet in sunny or wet weather
- Requires a careful curation of images to avoid repetitive data
- Showing run-down local areas can overstate and be insensitive

3. TIMELINE DRAWING:

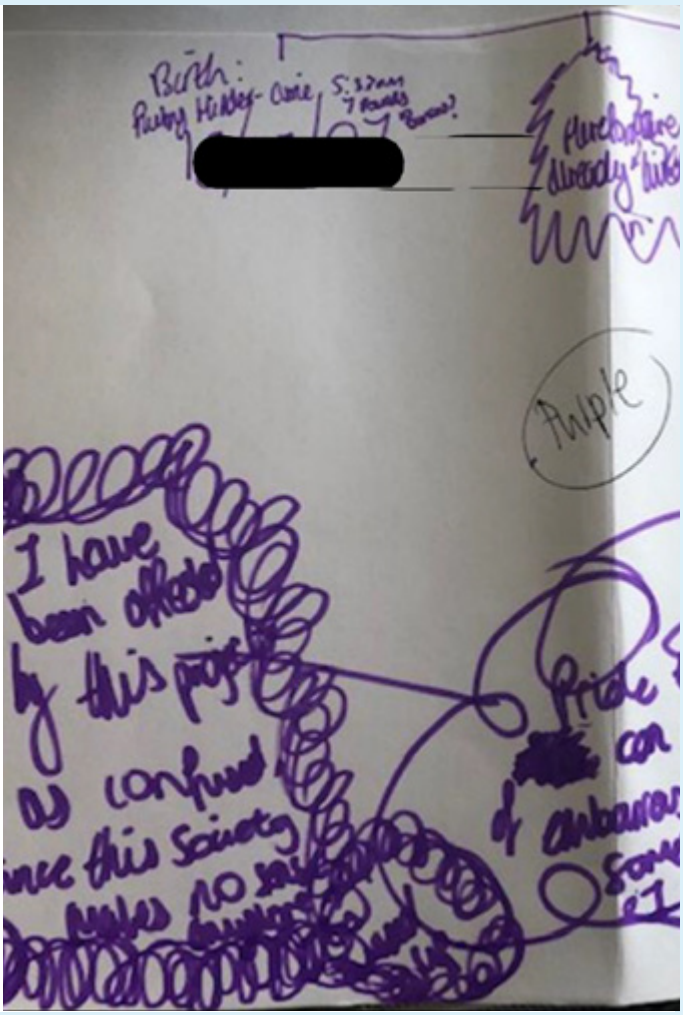
Using a pen and paper, the task is to ask residents to identify moments when they felt proud in their local area, writing or illustrating these moments on a timeline. Ask residents to plot estate celebrations, improvements, and personal milestones alongside difficult periods.

Benefits

- Shows how participants' views and feelings develop over time
- Allows for written and drawn responses to memory and place
- Encourages participants to think about and imagine the future

Challenges

- Difficult to start and sustain in busy places with many people
- It is a time-sensitive method that requires focus and patience
- The emphasis on a timeline can discourage responses on place



4. LITTER COLLAGE:

Using rubbish collected on a trip round the local area, the task is to ask residents to create an artwork out of the discards they have picked up. It can be combined with estate clean-up days: residents turn items into art that express frustrations and hopes.

Benefits

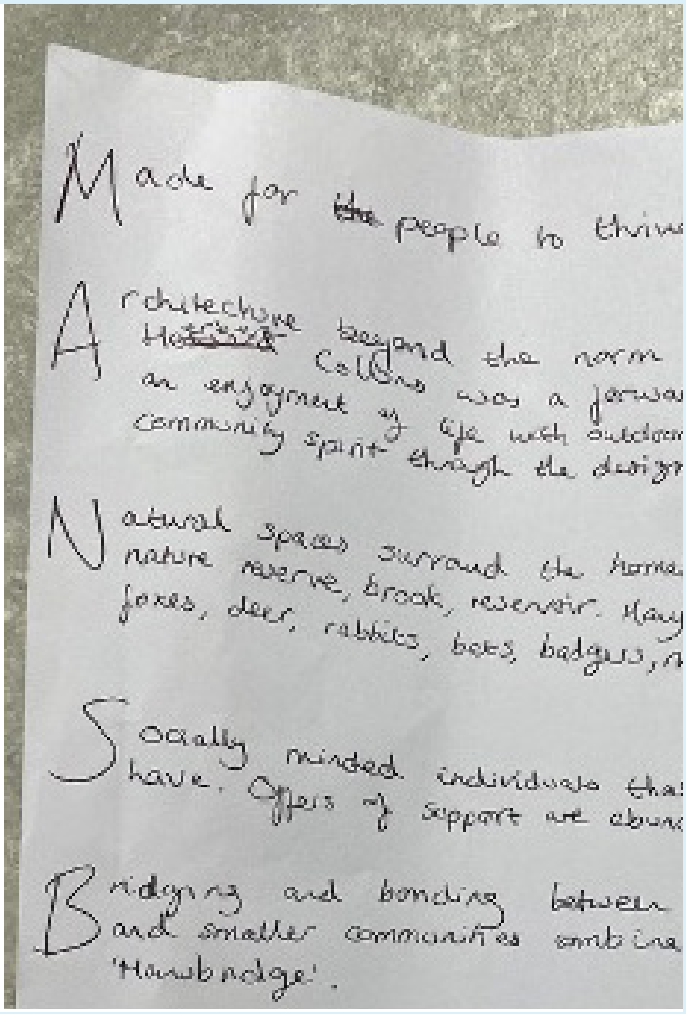
- Participants recall place stories relating to objects they have seen
- Allows for artistic expressions of memory, heritage and place
- Encourages participants to translate grievances into hopes

Challenges

- The activity is most effective when undertaken in one enclosed space
- It is an involved method that asks for attention and openness
- The emphasis on the artwork can discourage responses on place

5. POETRY WORKSHOPS

Using a pen and paper, the task is to ask participants to write down questions and answers about pride and heritage. Participants mix their responses and match them with others to create a poetic collage. The act encourages reflection on pride, belonging, and shared history.



Benefits

- Using poetry allows for thoughtful, nuanced responses and reflection
- Focus on language and form expresses different ideas on place
- Creating an artefact encourages non-judgemental collaboration

Challenges

- Emphasis on poetry can sideline discussion on pride and heritage
- Invites self-selecting participants with relatively high literacy
- Takes time and resources to publicise, organise, host, evaluate

A poet-facilitator for the And Towns projects, Joanna Nissel[8], explains the rationale for the poetic collage method:

"Rather than quiz people in an interview setting, we wanted to find out whether a more fluid, creative approach allowed volunteers to better express how and why they feel the way they do."

Case Study

Abri produced and hosted a heritage walking tour in Mansbridge, Southampton, where residents shared stories of the estate's development, drawing together personal memories with their hopes for the future. This activity developed trust and insights for both the community and housing executives.

4. REFLECTION AND EVALUATION

You've engaged with the community. What's next? In the following section, we offer key points about reflecting on and evaluating your work.

Influencing housing outcomes

Reflection and evaluation can translate engagement into practical housing outcomes. Housing colleagues should:

- **Measure impact:** record how pride-based engagement improves tenant satisfaction, participation, or wellbeing.
- **Feed into reporting:** align findings with Tenant Satisfaction Measures, community investment frameworks, or funding reporting.
- **Close the loop:** report back to residents, showing how their voices shape decisions on changes to communal spaces and priorities for the area.
- **Sustain engagement:** use pride and heritage conversations to support ongoing activities or co-designed processes.

Reporting back to stakeholders

You should report your findings back to partners, who will want to know how you have used the information they have shared with you. It is also useful to gather evidence that shows the impact your work has had on stakeholder planning and practice. This type of reporting and information gathering illustrates the need for better connections between regional stakeholders because good relationships between local councils, industrial partners, and the wider community develop skills that feed into productivity.[9] Working together, institutions can begin to more effectively understand the complexities of pride and heritage.

Sharing findings imaginatively

Stories and "storying"—ways of telling stories—are fundamental to how humans make sense of the world: to understand who they are and where they fit in. Stories and, importantly, re-storying, are key elements of the creative place-shaping toolkit. There is significant potential for harnessing storytelling to imagine future places and inform policy. People often have long-standing, intimate and affective relationships with places. It is crucial to understand how these views are shaped through individual and collective narratives.

Case Study

We have worked with community artists to creatively share findings about pride and heritage. Artists were briefed on key questions, scope and terminology. They brought unique skills and approaches to the workshop design and delivery. Each workshop had different activities. Participants in Mansbridge, Southampton worked with photographs and maps, words and doodles, litter and keepsakes. Details, images and artefacts produced from the workshops were hosted at local venues, including the primary school, and disseminated online.

Darlo Matters

A lyrical Essay composed by Lisette Auton from discussion with Darlington residents

Fight and flourish – Support – Resources – Skills
Short term – Self reflection
Placemaking prickly
Material survival – Recuperation
Fill gaps – Interpret the spaces
Placemaking with a string of pearls

How do you capture how people feel?
Loneliness and isolation
Community – Care – Pride – Include
Heritage and celebration
Human Capital – Digital literacy – Co-production – Giving back
What are our other pasts?

Welcoming space
Everything comes at a cost
Needs don't just stop
Not agreeing is good - a community is being built

Level up... What then?
How can the gap not be bigger than ever?
Involving the residents
Name groups, specifics, don't blob us all together
Levelling up is the idea of the left behind

What is the value of pride?
Alternative – Circular – Gift – Donut
Sustainability – Economy – Natural accounting
We measured our value in sheep and sacks of wool
A complex mosaic – A promise written – Emotional dynamic
Sustainability – Economy – Whose Heritage?

The small scale of local imagining
4 1/2 minutes with the chancellor - no metric on which to judge
How do we measure success?

Agricultural capital – Global capital – Mercantile beginning
Quakers – Entrepeneurs – Flaxtastic
Horses - Bondgate
Cattle - High Row
Gaggle of geese - Prospect Place
16 pennies depending on age and beauty - buy yourself a cat

Sunshine on the railway line
He lived in Domino's pizza parlour -
most important building in the history of the world
Best Kebab One -
Edward Pease, Father of the Railways met
George Stephenson, Father of the Locomotive
Guardians of the line

History of railways dominate Darlington
Prize our other histories
Heritage and culture – An alternative future
Change up the narrative – A stake in the area
Combatting loneliness together
Honour the stories told – Fill in the gaps
Who had the power?
How do you make a grand building a space where people feel they can cross a threshold?

Market town – Sport – Garden Street
Quaker heritage – Allotments – Food
Skerne Valley – Beekeepers – Railways
Town centre – Football club – Nightlife
Large parts in need of regeneration
People – Place – Skills
Symbiotic relationships – Tensions tangible
How do we get the most out of things?

Become more than the sum of their parts
Skills gaps – Want to branch out
Narrow – Disadvantaged – Unemployment
Knowledge sharing – Understanding – Day to day living
Look more widely
Resources and engagement – Challenge of the short term

Shaped by attitudes – Let down by those in power
Focus on what we have now and the future
How will it look?
How can we make it together?

How will you engage us?

Top Tips

Share stories in different media (posters, newsletters, estate boards, online updates) so residents see themselves represented.

Case Study

In the Mansbridge Heritage Project, we co-created a public event to celebrate the history of the area with the local community, which attracted 400+ visitors. Residents displayed improved pride, understanding of local heritage, and place perception because of this event. Executives at Abri noted that this heritage work demonstrated what the organisation "aspired to be."

Monitoring responses over time

It is important to keep track of how residents feel about their neighbourhood and whether your activities are making a difference. Pride in place and community connection can develop slowly, so regular check-ins can help you to understand what is working and what needs more attention. These feelings can be hard to measure, but they matter. They show whether people feel proud of where they live, connected to their neighbours, and involved in decision-making. By monitoring these feelings over time, you can spot improvements, identify challenges early, and show the impact of your work.

The tools for understanding and measuring civic pride—like other metrics about feelings, such as wellbeing—are relatively undefined and unexamined in many policy documents, practice and evaluation. **Yet civic pride, place perception, and civic engagement play vital roles in governance.** An understanding of these factors helps us to communicate the values and aspirations that local political and community representatives pursue. While this work is difficult, it should not be ignored.

Integrating evaluation into funding bids

When applying for funding, you may be asked to measure the impact of your project. Funders want to see that you're thinking about the long-term, not just quick wins. It can be useful to include the impact of your work on pride and heritage awareness to improve place perception. Evaluation plans should include:

- **Community input:** make sure that local voices shape the project and its goals.
- **Clear measures:** how will you track changes in pride in place, heritage awareness and place perception?
- **Sustainability:** explain how you will keep learning and improving your service after the funding ends.
- The data does not have to be complex, but it should tell the story of what is changing and why it matters. Strong evaluation makes your bid more competitive and helps secure future investment.

Case Study

Our research shows that as "pride in place" has become more prominent in national policy, organisations are increasingly expected to measure residents' feelings of pride and belonging to demonstrate that investments are having a positive impact.

Research-led approaches

This toolkit brings together ideas from real-world practice, research, and policy. Combining these approaches helps us to understand what pride and heritage mean to residents and how to strengthen these connections in local communities.

Working with partners such as housing associations, local authorities, and universities can make projects more effective and provide access to extra skills, resources, and evidence. This approach to collaboration is essential for **understanding people's pride and heritage awareness in hyper-local communities.**

Top Tips

Consider reaching out to local universities or colleges to collaborate on projects and research. Partnerships like the one between Abri and the University of Southampton show how academic expertise can support community engagement, provide evaluation tools, and help evidence the impact of your work.

Based on the Mansbridge Heritage Project, here are some final points to consider in your engagement with residents:

1. **Residents and policymakers have very different understandings of how to define and what is meant by "pride" and "heritage".**
2. **You can address this disconnect by offering your own definitions of "pride" and "heritage", which you can leave as open, multiple and descriptive.**
3. **You can allow residents to interpret "pride" and "heritage" at scales that are meaningful for them.**
4. **By placing pride and heritage at the centre of community development, you can unlock deeper insights into residents' experiences, build trust and create stronger, sustainable neighbourhoods.**

5. RESOURCES

[1] S. Gattino, N.D. Piccoli, O. Fassio, C. Rollero (2013) 'Quality of life and sense of community. A study on health and place of residence' *J. Community Psychol*., 4, 811–26.

[2] N. Marsh, C. Clarke, M. Howcroft and W. May (2022) Towns and the Cultural Economies of Recovery. Available online: **https://www.andtowns.co.uk/reports.**

[3] UK Government (2021) Levelling Up Fund: Prospectus. Available online: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/levelling-up-fund-prospectus.

[4] M. Howcroft., N. Marsh and J, Owen (2025) Levelling Up, affective governance and tensions within 'pride in place'. *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space, 43*(2), 387–405.

[5] H.F. Wolcott (2004) *The Art of Fieldwork*, 2nd edn (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press), pp. 57–78.

[6] G. Crossick, (2009) So who now believes in the transfer of widgets. Knowledge Futures Conference. London Goldsmiths.

[7] D. Roer-Strier and R.G. Sands (2015) Moving beyond the 'official story': when 'others' meet in a qualitative interview. Qualitative Research, 15(2), 251–68.

[8] J. Nissel, (2022) Can writing poetry help us to understand pride in place and the experience of volunteering? Available online: **https://www.andtowns.co.uk/post/can-writing-poetry-help-us-to-understand-pride-in-place-and-the-experience-of-volunteering**.

[9] Stuart, M. and Shutt, L. (2021) Catching the wave: harnessing regional research and development to level up. HEPI Report 144.

DOI
https://doi.org/10.5258/SOTON/P1267

ISBN
Print: 978-1-912431-61-8
Electronic: 978-1-912431-62-5